

One Family's Life in Post-Civil War Central Pennsylvania

by Milton Loyer, 2002

This article is a story within a story. The inner story is the daily account of a New Cumberland area extended family immediately following the Civil War. That story is presented in a series of letters from the Kohler family in Pennsylvania to their Bovenmyer relatives in Iowa. Luke 2:52 states that Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man – suggesting that we are beings with four dimensions: mental, physical, spiritual and social. The Kohler-Bovenmyer letters chronicle growth and development in each of these areas over an extended period.

The outer story is the account of how the letters were acquired by conference archives, and the amazing series of relationships that unfolded as background material was gathered to interpret both the content and the context of the correspondence. *The Chronicle* wishes to thank all those from Pennsylvania to California, from Iowa to Texas, who have provided information and spent countless hours of research to produce the article in the form in which it is now presented.

The Story behind the Letters

In the search for materials relevant to United Methodism in Central Pennsylvania, the conference archives noticed five post-Civil War letters for sale at a modest price. They were written in New Cumberland and purported to tell of protracted meetings, a Negro camp meeting, and other religious phenomena. Since both the Methodists and the United Brethren were active at that time in the area, and since the references to protracted meetings and camp meetings made it highly probable that at least one of these predecessor United Methodist denominations was involved, the letters were purchased.

The religious context of the letters was indeed Methodist. To early circuit riders, what is now the Baughman United Methodist Church in New Cumberland was known as the Longshore appointment. The writer of two of the letters was later, in 1872, married in the Baughman Methodist Episcopal Church to John Willett, a grandson of the original Longshore patriarch. Furthermore, the 1904 funeral for the recipient of the majority of the letters was held in an Iowa Methodist Episcopal church and conducted by a United Brethren pastor.

But it was the family context of the letters that yielded the most remarkable results. The letters were from the Kohler family in New Cumberland PA to the Bovenmyer family in Toledo IA. It was apparent from the letters that Mrs. Kohler (nee Leah Hoffman) and Mrs. Bovenmyer (nee Mary Hoffman) were sisters, and that their children were first cousins. The letters contained much news

about other relatives, most notably other Hoffman siblings and their families in northern York County – Ann Hoffman Shaffer and Elizabeth Hoffman Fishel. There is also mention of a Hoffman brother somewhere between Pennsylvania and Iowa, and another possible Hoffman sister in Kansas.

Initial contacts with genealogists in the Kohler, Bovenmyer, Shaffer and Fishel families to learn more about the Hoffman family were met with skepticism and disbelief. When told of the four Hoffman sisters, each genealogist wanted to know what evidence there was of such a relationship. In every case, the family had been traced back to a g-g-g-grandfather marrying a Hoffman – but there the trail ended. None of the genealogists had been able to discover anything about their mysterious Hoffman g-g-g-grandmother, and none had any idea that there were at least three other genealogists pursuing the same ancestral family through a different descendant.

The conference archives connected these persons in California, Texas, Ohio and Iowa to pool their information. The first stumbling block was that no Hoffman family with daughters Leah, Mary, Ann and Elizabeth could be found in any census records. Within a few months, however, much information was reconstructed about this lost Hoffman family. By 1850, Mrs. Hoffman was deceased and the children were living as follows: Ann (24) with her husband John Shaffer in Monaghan township, Mary (23) with the Michael Cocklin family in Upper Allen township, Leah (21) with her father in the house beside the John Shaffers, Henry (20) with the Christian Herman family in Monroe township, Elizabeth (18) with the Samuel Gleim family in South Middletown township.¹

Furthermore, the letters purchased by the conference archives were only the tip of an iceberg – for a large collection of letters from Pennsylvania to the Iowa Bovenmyers was being sold in pieces. The letters were written by Hoffman-related adults and children to their Bovenmyer in-laws and cousins. They give news of the relatives and other mutual acquaintances back in Pennsylvania. The letters were saved by the primary recipient, Sarah Bovenmyer Mericle, and passed on to her daughter Sarah Nellie Mericle Benjamin. When Nellie (as she was known) died in Toledo IA in July 2001 at the age of 98, the letters escaped notice of the family and were sold with miscellaneous items at public auction.

While the New England dealer who ultimately acquired the letters was not particularly interested in helping Bovenmyer descendents or other interested

¹ Each of the families that “took in” a Hoffman child appears in the post-1863 records of the Mechanicsburg Reformed Church, now St. Paul’s United Church of Christ. Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer’s obituary states that she was raised in the Reformed Church and held to those beliefs all her life. It appears that the Hoffmans were active in the local Reformed congregation and that upon the death of Mrs. Hoffman other church members offered their homes. While pre-1850 church records could confirm this, and even supply a death date for Mrs. Hoffman, they do not exist. The Mechanicsburg congregation was formally organized in 1863, and their records date from that event. From 1825 to 1863, local Reformed families gathered regularly in the Mechanicsburg Union Church and/or Cocklins Union Church. They were served by circuit riders and the pastors of the now-abandoned Peace Church in Hampden township, but apparently no formal records were maintained.

persons reconstruct any family history, the previously mentioned genealogists agreed to work together behind the scenes to purchase other letters as they became available. It now appears that all of the letters have been sold. Some of the letters were purchased by other collectors simply interested in late nineteenth-century Americana, and most of them have graciously shared the contents of their letters with “the Hoffman Group.” It is unknown how many letters there were in the original Sarah Bovenmyer collection, which apparently also included correspondence from friends and relatives unrelated to the Hoffmans – and maybe even correspondence from the suspected Hoffman relatives in Kansas.

The letters reproduced in this article are the ones from the Kohler family of New Cumberland – the five original ones that started this investigation, and others purchased by the archives and/or the Kohler genealogist. They are presented in chronological order. Relevant information gleaned from the Shaffer and Fishel letters and other research appears in the comments preceding each letter. For the purposes of this article, each letter is assigned a chronological number by year-month-day – so that a letter written on February 14, 1875 would be designated 750214. This system allows all letters regardless of present ownership or original authorship to be discussed with a common reference point, and it allows for the insertion of newly discovered letters. A cross reference matching this identifying number with other information is being maintained for all known Bovenmyer letters.

The Families

All of the people mentioned in the letters are connected in some way to the family whose father was George Hoffman. Most are spouses or children of the Hoffman siblings. A few are mutual friends and/or persons whose exact blood relationship has not been established. This section is not intended to give the history of each family mentioned, but to present a cast of characters. Included for each family is the husband, wife, all known children (whether or not they are mentioned in a letter), and other information that makes the letters more interesting and/or understandable. The Hoffman family is listed first, and the others follow in alphabetical order.

Hoffman family [York County] – originally from Lancaster County PA, but the township in which they resided and the year they left have not been determined.

h: George – apparently died before 1867, the date of the earliest letter

w: Sarah – nee Bower, apparently died before 1850.

Ann (1826-1902) – married John Shaffer and settled in Monaghan township, York County PA.

Mary (1827-1904) – married Samuel Bovenmyer in York County PA 1/14/1855 and moved immediately to Toledo IA. Her obituary states that she was born in Lancaster County.

Leah (1828-1891) – married William Kohler and settled in Upper Allen township (1860 census) and New Cumberland (1870 census) before moving to Eudora KS. She was born in Lancaster County.

Henry (1830-1907) – a resident of Mesopotamia, Trumbull County OH. His Civil War records report that he was born in Lancaster County. He moved west with his uncle Jacob Bower (born 1808 in PA), and in 1867 married Jane Hardman (born 1837 in OH).

Elizabeth (1832-1902) – married George Fishel and settled in Monaghan township, York County PA

Bishop family – unknown, but possibly suggesting there was yet another Hoffman sister who married a Bishop. There were Bishops in Monaghan township, where at least two of the married Hoffman sisters settled – and also in nearby Monroe township, adjacent to the Cocklin property. The fact that the Bishops are not routinely mentioned in the letters, together with the reference to Kansas, suggests that they, like the Bovenmyers, may have already moved west.

Martha – In letter 761116, she is an adult living in Kansas. It appears from the letter that she may be recently married (and no longer a Bishop?) or engaged, but no details are given.

Matthew – In his 761200 letter to Samuel Bovenmyer, William Kohler refers to him as “cousin Matt Bishop.”

Bovenmyer family [Toledo, Iowa]

h: Samuel (1826-1891) – the recipient of four of the letters that follow. Son of Philip Bovenmyer and Hannah Goheen, he was born on the family farm in (Lower) Allen township, Cumberland County.

w: Mary (1827-1904) – nee Hoffman, see the Hoffman family.

infant (1856) – the birth date is given as 10/31/1856, and the child apparently failed to survive.

Sarah Uhrich (1858-1936) – the recipient of most of the letters, and the one who passed them on in the family. She was born in Iowa and at the time of the letters had never seen her Pennsylvania cousins. She married Emanuel Mericle (1857-1934) 12/24/1880. They had 4 sons and one daughter. It was their daughter Sarah Nellie Mericle Benjamin (1902-2001) who ultimately saved the letters. Sarah was a first cousin to the Uhrich children – but her Kohler, Fisher and Shaffer cousins were not.

Andrew Jackson (1860-1912)

Ulysses Grant (1865-1912)

Samuel (1868-1937)

Cocklin family [Upper Allen township, Cumberland County] – the patriarch of this branch of the family was Jean Jaques (Jacob) Caquelin (Cocklin) who was born in Waldersbach and came to America with his father. He purchased Spring Dale farm in 1772. The property passed to his son Jacob (1770-1840) and then to

Michael. In addition to farming, Michael served in the State General Assembly 1832-36 and as a Cumberland County judge 1856-66.

h: Michael (1795-1878) – In letter 760216, not reproduced in *The Chronicle*, Mary A. Shaffer writing to her cousin Sarah U. Bovenmyer refers to “Uncle Michael Cocklin.” It was with the Michael Cocklin family that Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer resided after her mother died, and so the “uncle” likely denotes an emotional rather than a biological connection.

w: Elizabeth (1807-1890) – nee Hopple. Michael and Elizabeth are buried in Cocklin’s Cemetery.

Henry M. (1836-1916) – married Elizabeth Himes and had six children: George M., Clara A., Mary J., Emma E., Andrew R. and William H. Elizabeth died in 1869, and in 1870 Henry married the widow of his brother Andrew and had one more child: Nevin Harbaugh. Henry was a trustee of the Reformed Church’s seminary at Lancaster.

Andrew J. (c1839-1868) – married Caroline F. Gardner and had three children: Adda I., Michael G. and Lura M.

Sarah Elizabeth (1841-1929) – married widowed Samuel Crist (1825-1912) 2/17/1867 and bore Andrew M. (c1867), Caroline Eve (c1872), Henry Deitrich (c1876) and Ida M.. Sarah Elizabeth and Samuel are buried in Cocklin’s Cemetery.

Fishel family [Monaghan township, York County] –married 1/23/1851 in Siddonsburg, George and Elizabeth attended Filey’s Lutheran Church in Monaghan township. Letters to the Bovenmyers from the Fishel family are not printed in *The Chronicle*, but transcriptions of them are available in the conference archives.

h: George (1828-1896) – buried at Filey’s

w: Elizabeth (1832-1902) – nee Hoffman, see the Hoffman family; buried at Filey’s.

Henry W. (1852-1910) – married Sarah C. Singer 12/23/1879. He is the author of letter 730222. He went into business with Samuel N. Bailey, who married Mary Uhrich.

Edmund H. (1853-1926) – married 8/25/1878 Laura Ann Squibb (1860-1902), buried at Filey’s. He is the author of letter 770508.

Gerald (1855-1928) – moved to Iowa, married Mary Ellen Phillips. He is the author of letters 730321, 740120 and 741231.

Daniel W. (1857-?) – moved to Illinois, married Sarah Good

William A. (1859-1943) – moved to Illinois, married (1) Emma A. Garten (2) Mary E. Sheward

George B.M. (1862-1889) – buried at Filey’s

John A. (1865-1937) – married Jennie A. Kohler (no known relation to William Kohler family), buried at Mt. Pleasant Church of God in Monaghan township

Peter A. (1867-1940) – married Jennie May Myers (1875-1940), buried at Mt. Pleasant COG

Devoe O. (1870-1946) – married 1st 4/21/1898 Inza N. Ort (1874-1918), 2nd Jennie McGuire, buried Paddletown Cemetery, Newberry township
Frank E. (1872-1874) – buried at Filey's

Kohler family [Lower Allen township, Cumberland County]

h: William (1831-1893) – author three of the letters that follow. Born in York County, he farmed in Lower Allen township and supplemented his income by working as a lime-burner in the iron industry before moving to Douglas County KS in 1879. He relocated to Riley County in 1882, but permanently returned to Eudora township in Douglas County in 1882, where he owned and operated a farm of 175 acres.

w: Leah – nee Hoffman, see the Hoffman family.

Frances (1852-1873) – married Francis Caraher, who was born in Ireland. She died young, leaving the Kohlers to raise her daughter Florence.

Elsetta (1854-1933) – author of two of the letters that follow. She married John Arthur Willett (1849-1914) on 12/19/1872. The record book at Baughman Memorial UM states that the wedding took place at house of the father of the bride, near Bridgeport [Lemoyne]. They apparently moved with the Kohlers to Kansas. John died in Lawrence KS, and Elsetta died in Eccelsior Springs MO.

Mary Ann (1856-1926) – author of two of the letters that follow. She married Thomas Latimer Daugherty (1849-1926) on 12/12/1875.

John G. (1858-1938) – author of two of the letters that follow, he eventually settled in Farwell TX. He was married to Mary Lawson, who died in 1904, and then in 1938 to Lula Marlin Landis.

William (1862-1862) – lived 11 months, from January 13 to December 11.

Andrew J. (1864-1936) – married to Alice R. (1879-1941).

Herman M. (1866-1886) – married Minnie M. Bishoff (1869-1951) of Eudora KS. Miss Bishoff, who apparently was widowed at the age of 17, was the daughter of Dr. C.N. Bishoff – a native Dauphin County PA who was educated at the Evangelical Association's Union Seminary in New Berlin and operated a drug store in Lykens before becoming a physician and moving to Kansas.

Devaux R. (1870-1955) – never married

Rife family – apparently they had already moved to Kansas and were known to all the parties involved, but no relationship has yet been established. In 1885 they lived in Pleasant township, Lincoln County KS.

h: Jacob R. (c1838-) – before moving to Kansas, he served in the infantry November 1862 to July 1863 with Company B of the 165th Pennsylvania Volunteers

w: Elizabeth (c1845-)

Sarah Jane (1850) – died at 1½ months, buried in Cocklin Cemetery, Upper Allen township. The surname on this tombstone is Reif, but she is listed as the daughter of Jacob and Elizabeth. This information comes from Zeamer's 1903 tombstone transcriptions, and the stone can no longer be identified. The date is

problematic – even if it is a misreading of 1860, the mother would have only been about 15. It may be that Sarah Jane is a sister to Jacob R., although repetition of the parental names Jacob and Elizabeth would be quite a coincidence.

female E (1865-)

Shaffer family – the parents are buried at Filey's Lutheran Church Cemetery, Monaghan township. Letters to the Bovenmyers from the Shaffer family are not printed in *The Chronicle*, but transcriptions of them are available in the conference archives.

h: John (1820-1890)

w: Ann (1826-1902) – nee Hoffman, see the Hoffman family

Mary A. (1846-1907) – author of letters 750920, 751205, 760216, 760517, 770429 and 790513. She married John T. Sadler.

Andrew (1849-?)

female (1850-?) – married a Mr. Burns.

Uhrich family – When Samuel Bovenmyer's father and mother died in 1842 and 1846, Samuel and his younger brother Daniel went to live and work on the farm of their brother-in-law Jacob Uhrich in Upper Allen township, Cumberland County. They built a barn in 1862 that has their names on the cornerstone – still standing in good repair, it is now used for general storage. Sarah Bovenmyer's middle name Uhrich derives from this connection.

h: Jacob B. (1818-1889) – buried in Chestnut Hill Cemetery, Upper Allen township

w: Sarah (1823-1900) – buried in Chestnut Hill Cemetery, Upper Allen township. Sarah was the older sister of Samuel Bovenmyer.

Samuel Bailey (died as an infant) – buried in Chestnut Hill Cemetery. The middle name Bailey and the fact that daughter Mary married a Bailey suggests some long-term association between the two families.

Mary A. (1847-1931) – married Samuel Nelson Bailey (1841-1903). In 1870, he was a charter member/investor of what evolved into the Harrisburg & Potomac Railroad. In 1889, he and Henry W. Fishel were president and secretary respectively of the Dillsburg Manufacturing Company (leather and cotton goods). Mary and Samuel had two boys: Logan Uhrich (1867) and Frank Eugene (1869). Letter 791222, not printed in *The Chronicle*, indicates that Samuel filed for divorce because Mary was "too sociable with Thomas Elcock. They went to Lancaster together and different other places." Even though the 1880 census lists Samuel as divorced, it appears from other secular histories that there was a reconciliation. The entire family remained in the Dillsburg area and are all buried in the Dillsburg Cemetery.

John H. (1849-1910) – he and his wife Lizzie B. (1853-1881) are buried in the Chestnut Hill Cemetery

Margaret J. (1852-)

David A. (1854-)

Jacob (c1856-)

Sarah A. (1859-) – died as a child, buried in Chestnut Hill Cemetery

Carrie E. (1862-1890) – not married, buried in Chestnut Hill Cemetery

Minnie A. (1865-)

The Letters

Letter 670915: William Kohler to Samuel Bovenmyer. This is the earliest letter that has survived. Samuel Bovenmyer was born in Cumberland county in 1826. After their father and mother died in 1842 and 1846 respectively, Samuel and his younger brother Daniel went to live with their married sister and brother-in-law, Jacob and Sarah Bovenmyer Uhrich, in Upper Allen township. Mary Hoffman, born in 1827 and also without a parental home, was living on the adjacent farm of Michael Cocklin. Samuel and Mary married in January 1855 and left that same year for Iowa. Apparently Mary made regular trips back to Pennsylvania to visit her sisters Mrs. William Kohler, Mrs. John Shaffer, and Mrs. George Fishel – usually stopping en route to visit her brother Henry Hoffman in Ohio.

Friend Samuel Bovenmyer
Dear Sir,

New Cumberland
September 15, 1867

I got a letter from you this morning. Your wife is all right. She arrived here on the sixth in good health. On Saturday my wife drove her up to Uhrich's, Cocklin's, then to John Shaffer's, and she is up there yet.

Henry Hoffman was to see us and just left the day before Mary arrived.

You spoke about rain. It rains nearly all the time here. We can't get out our seeding. I sowed some on the fifth, and none since. It rained hard all night, and the fields are very wet.

Mary thinks of going by way of Henry Hoffman home.

You must excuse my short letter. I was not very well when Mary arrived. I had a sore back but am pretty well now. The rest are all well.

You better come in and go to the Centennial. You will hardly live to see the next. I shall go the last of the month.

I am not done cutting corn yet. The potatoes are not raised yet.

Yours truly,
William Kohler to Samuel Bovenmyer
New Cumberland, Cumberland County, Pa.

Letter 701206: Elsetta Kohler to Sarah Bovenmyer. Elsetta is 16 and her cousin Sarah is 12. Apparently only the adults traveled back and forth between Pennsylvania and points west, although there seems from other letters to be a sort of rite of passage for a male to make such a trip at about age 17. The "protracted

meeting” was a series of evening evangelistic services that ran for a week or more. It is assumed these took place at the Methodist Episcopal church in New Cumberland – which was then the home for an eight-appointment circuit that also included Marysville, West Fairview, Salem (on the Carlisle Pike), Boiling Springs, Dillsburg, Wellsville and Lewisberry. The congregation of 1870 worshipped in the 1858 building, now torn down, that stood on the west side of Bridge Street between Second and Third.

Bridgeport
December 6, 1870

Dear Cousin,

It is great pleasure for me to write you a letter, for it is the first letter I ever wrote to you. It is very much pleasure for me to write to a cousin I have never seen yet. But I expect to see you some day, for Mother is talking about you folks every day.

It is very pleasant weather for this time of the year. We have a protracted meeting in here and they have eight mourners, and there is one going to start in to church. And dear cousin, I wish you were here to attend them.

We have all our thrashing done, but it is not all cleaned up yet. The men are plowing, and the rest of the children are going to school. I don't go, but I stand in need of going. I haven't went to school for four years.

We are all well and hope you are all enjoying good health. I was sorry to hear that your brother got his arm broken. Mother and Father send their love to you and all the rest. Also, my love to you and all the rest.

I must go to bed, for me and my sister are going to Harrisburg. Father gave us 17 dollars. Don't forget to write soon, and look over all mistakes and bad writing.

I remain

Yours forever,
Elsetta Kohler to Miss Sarah U. Bovenmyer
New Cumberland, Cumberland County, Pa.

Letter 720205: Elsetta Kohler to Sarah Bovenmyer. The baby is Elsetta's brother Devaux. Fannie is Elsetta's sister Frances Kohler, the oldest of the Kohler children, who was two years older than Elsetta. Frances was married to a Mr. Carsher and had a baby daughter. Mary is Elsetta's sister Mary Ann, who was two years younger. Aunt Liz Fishel is the former Elizabeth Hoffman, a sister to Elsetta's mother Leah and Sarah's mother Mary. The description of the location of the house is a good one, verified by old photographs.



Elsetta Kohler, about 16 years old

Miss Sarah U. Bovenmyer
Dear Cousin,

New Cumberland
February 5, 1872

I received your kind and welcome letter some time ago and read it with pleasure. We were all very glad to hear from you once again. We are all enjoying good health and wish you all the same blessing.

The rest of the children are all going to school, with the exception of me and the baby. He is almost two years old. My birthday is on the 17th of this month, and his is on the 27th. Fannie's family is all well. She has one little girl. She is going on three years old.

I wish you were here. There is a fair going on in New Cumberland. I put in several chances and didn't draw anything yet. Father drew a table spread. They say it is worth \$50. It cost him ten cents. They have some splendid articles there to chance off. They have a sewing machine worth \$80. The fair is for the benefit of the Sabbath School.

The folks are all well in York County the last report we had of them, with the exception of Aunt Liz Fishel. She has her foot scalded very bad.

Mother is just now telling me to put in this letter that she thinks your Mother and Father might come in here and spend several months with us and the rest of the friends. I am sure they couldn't enjoy themselves better than to come. We live at a very pleasant place. We can see all over Harrisburg from the end of our porch. We live right on the river bank, and the railroad is on one side of the house and the road on the other.

I must tell you some of the market prices. Butter is worth 40 cents a pound. Eggs are selling at 30 cents per dozen, and chickens are one dollar a pair. I don't know how grain is selling now.

I must say your hair is all very pretty. If I had time just now I would do up some of our hair and send it in this letter. As time will not permit me, I will send it some other time. But I will send one of Mary's pictures in this. She had them taken last winter. I think I will get mine taken before long.

I wish you were here to see us all. Mother's hair is the same color it always was, and everybody thinks she looks young yet. I wish you were here. Then we would have a fine old talk.

I must close for this time. I would write more, but time won't permit me to. Please look over all improper spelling and bad writing, as I was in a hurry. They all send their love to you all. Also my love to all, and a good share for you.

I remain

Your loving cousin,
Elsetta Kohler
New Cumberland, Cumberland County, Pa.

Please write soon, and I would love to have one of your pictures. Do send some.

Letter 730919: Mary Kohler to Sarah Bovenmyer. This is the first letter in the Kohler collection written by Mary, now 17 years old. Now that Elsetta is married, Mary is the oldest child at home and apparently has inherited the responsibility of writing to their Iowa relatives. Frances' death apparently ended

all contact with her husband Francis Caraher – even the spelling of his last name is uncertain, and it appears in some family material as Carsher. Elsetta and John Arthur Willett were married 12/19/1872 at the Kohler home by the pastor of the New Cumberland Methodist Episcopal Church. Carleton Alonzo Willett, the four month old baby mentioned in the letter, was forced to leave home as a young man because his parents would not put up with his drinking and other habits. He was never heard from again. When Elsetta died in 1933, her will stated that they search for him for two years before the estate could be settled – but they were unable to locate him. Mary Shaffer, daughter of Ann Hoffman Shaffer, is a first cousin to Mary Kohler and Sarah Bovenmyer. The location of the Negro camp meeting and its sponsoring organization remain a mystery – even though that it was “about a mile” from the Kohler home places it within a limited area. While the reference to the Fishels now having ten boys probably caused each transcriber to check the handwriting and/or re-read the sentence looking for another meaning, it agrees with the family list at the beginning of this article. From 1852 to 1872, George and Elizabeth Hoffman Fishel had 10 boys and 0 girls.

Dear Cousin,

New Cumberland
September 19, 1873

I received your kind and welcome letter some time ago and was very glad to hear from you. We are all well at the present time.

I am very sorry to tell you folks that Frances is dead. She was buried four weeks on Sunday. She was confined, and the child had fever. Her child is dead, too. We have a little girl of hers. Her name is Florence May Caraher. She is four years old. Frances was 21 years and 6 months and 28 days old when she died.

Elsetta lives in New Cumberland. She has a young son. He is four months old. She calls him Carleton Alonzo Willett. We have a maid now. We have Lizzie Blair. She is a very good girl to work.

You said you expect me to slip off the handle some day. I am going to stay single for life and keep a maiden’s hall for bachelors to call.

We have a Negro camp meeting about a mile from here. I wish you were in here to hear them sing. It would do you some good.

There is going to be a circus here tomorrow. Mary Shaffer was to come down, but I don’t think they will come. They are not through with their work yet. She had a sore throat. The rest of the folks were all well. The Fishel folks are all well as far as I heard. They have ten boys now.

Father makes two dollars and a half now a day in the stone quarry and farms, too. He has his seeding all done. I want you to get your picture taken and send it in to me. Or come yourself, that will do better than all the pictures. Or tell your father and mother to come in here. Mother would like to see some of you folks come in.

As it is getting late it is time for me to go to bed, or I can’t get up in the morning. Send my love to all, and keep a good share for yourself. Please excuse all mistakes and blots. Write soon.

Mollie A. Kohler
New Cumberland, Cumberland County, Pa.

When this you see, remember me
Though many miles between us be

Letter 750214: Sarah Elizabeth (Cocklin) Crist to Mary (Hoffman) Bovenmyer. This is the only Iowa-bound letter printed in this issue of *The Chronicle* that was not written by a Kohler (or by Mary Bovenmyer when she was visiting the Kohlers). It is included because it documents the connection between the extended Hoffman family and the Cocklins, one of Upper Allen township's most prestigious pioneer families. In addition, a number within the extended Cocklin family were involved in the formation of the Shepherdstown United Brethren (now United Methodist) congregation, whose first meeting place was in the union church which stood in the Cocklin cemetery. This congregation and its ties to various persons associated with these letters are discussed in an appendix. When Samuel Crist returned from the Civil War to discover that his wife and children had died during his extended service, he married Michael Cocklin's daughter Sarah Elizabeth Cocklin – who was 16 years his junior. It was with the Michael Cocklin family that Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer resided after her mother died, and Sarah Elizabeth (commonly called "Lizzie") and Mary became like sisters. The other letters indicated that Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer always visited the Michael Cocklins (who raised her) and their neighbors the Jacob Uhrichs (who raised her husband Samuel) whenever she returned to Pennsylvania for a visit. The Jacob Cocklin (1797-1890) mentioned was a brother to Michael. The "Aunt Jane" was Christiana Jane Cocklin (1812-1875), a sister of Michael who never married. The identity of "Squire John Cocklin" is not clear – but he appears to be elderly. He is not a sibling to Michael and Jane, nor was he a sibling to their father Jacob (1770-1840) – for there were no Johns in those families.

Shepherdstown
February 14, 1875

Dear Friend,

You no doubt will be somewhat surprised to hear from me. Father is not able to answer Samuel's letter on account of having rheumatism, so it fell to my lot to answer it. I suppose you have almost forgotten me. I used to go by the name of "Liz" Cocklin. I am now married. I have been married eight years and have two children – the oldest is a boy we named Andrew, the little girl is Carrie and she is three years old. They both have the whooping cough, but they are getting better of it.

I often wish I could see you and your family. My husband's name is Samuel Crist. His sister lives with us. Father and Mother live with us. We all eat at one table. Mother is quite supple yet.

Mr. Uhrich's family are all well. Squire John Cocklin has got a stroke of the palsy and he cannot walk. Aunt Jane Cocklin was buried last Wednesday – she was sick only two weeks. Jacob Cocklin's family are all well, and are all the neighbors around here. There has been a great many changes since you left these parts.

I often wish I could have a talk with you. I hope you will try and make a visit in this way. We have had some cold weather this winter – plenty of snow. The folk had a good time of sleighing.

I was not out much as the children were sick all winter. I had to keep at home. There have been a great many sick this winter. I suppose you folk have cold weather out there, too, and no doubt plenty of snow.

I will soon have to close as my time is pretty much taken up with the children, since they have the whooping cough. I will close expecting to hear from you soon. We all send our love to you all.

Your friend,
Lizzie Crist

Letter 760419: Mary Kohler Daugherty to Sarah Bovenmyer. Recall that Mary's last letter said, "I am going to stay single for life." She married Thomas Latimer Daugherty (1849-1926) on 12/19/1875. Letter 760216, not printed in *The Chronicle*, from Mary Shaffer to Sarah Bovenmyer announces the wedding and adds "I don't know whether she is going into house keeping this spring or not – as she was not to see us since she is married." This letter suggests she is still living at home. Katy Rupp is unknown. Even though Mary calls her "your" second cousin and a "first cousin to your mother," any first cousin to Sarah Bovenmyer's mother Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer would have to be a first cousin to Mary Kohler's mother Leah Hoffman Kohler. Presumably either George Hoffman or Sarah Bower had a sister who married a Rupp. While the "Rupp" rendering appears fairly certain, "Reiff" is not out of the question. The "Columbia" is not identified – Lancaster County PA? Missouri? Kansas?

Bridgeport
April 19, 1876

Dear Cousin Sarah,

I take the pleasure of writing you a few to let you know that I received your kind and welcome letter along ago, and picture also. And I think it is a very good picture. I am almost ashamed to write, for I was so lazy and so good for nothing a girl. We are all pretty well except mother, father and myself. I was sick ever since Saturday, and I just feel some better today.

I wish you was in here. We would have a nice time this spring. I would take you all over the county, for I am going to sport this spring and this summer. I thought that your mother and your father would come to see us some time this fall or this spring. But we have not seen them yet.

I received a letter from your cousin Katy Rupp from Columbia. She is a second cousin of yours, and a first cousin to your mother. Uncle John Shaffer's folks are all well the last I heard of them. I have not been to see them for over a year, and yet it is not so far. It is about 9 or 10 miles from here. Andy [Shaffer] was down five weeks ago, but Mary [Shaffer] has not been down for nearly two years.

Well I will have to close for this time, for it is getting late. I suppose you heard that I am married. You said that when you wrote that would be the next thing. Father is out back of the house transplanting peach trees. There is a stone wall around the front yard, and it is going to be torn down. We have to move all the trees and the flowers. We are getting a new wall and a new fence in a week or so.

Well I will have to close now for sure, for I have nothing more to write. We have got an organ since the girls are all gone. John takes music lessons, but he don't need to go so far as you have to go. The man comes to the house twice a week.

Excuse all bad writing and misspelling and mistakes. Hoping to hear from you soon. Don't do as I have done. I will do better the next time. We all send our love to all the family, and best wishes. Write soon. From

Your cousin,
Mary A. Daugherty

Letter 760906: Mary Kohler Daugherty to Sarah Bovenmyer. The details of yet another of Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer's trips back east are interesting. It almost appears as though people over 100 years ago did a better job of traveling around to see relatives than we do today. Whether it was the cost of the trip or the need to man the farm back in Iowa, Mrs. Bovenmyer again travels alone. It appears that Mary Kohler Daugherty is still living at home almost a year after her wedding.

Bridgeport
September 6, 1876

Dear Cousin,

I take the pleasure of writing you a few to let you know that your mother landed safe and sound. She got in Chicago the next morning. She took the train and got at Pittsburgh the next morning at seven o'clock. She took the train there and arrived here at Harrisburg at eleven o'clock, and she got here about three o'clock. Mother was so glad to see her she did not know what to do. When I came in I thought she was aunt Lizzie Fishel. Mother said I guess not. She favors her very much.

I wish you had come along. I would like to see you very much. Your mother looks young yet. I must close for this time. Hoping to hear from you folks very soon. I must go get supper. Your mother was nearly starved till she got here.

Well, I must quit scratching and scribbling. I can't write worth a cent. I can't write good any time, and not now any how. Good-bye. Write soon and let us know how you get along. If you can't read this writing, send it on and I'll write it over. I remain

Your cousin,
Mollie A. Daugherty

Letter 760914: Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer to Samuel Bovenmyer. Written eight days after the letter which described the trip out, this letter describes the visit and the plans for the return trip. The Uhrichs and Cocklins own the adjacent farms where Samuel Bovenmyer and Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer resided after their mothers died and before they were married. John Shaffer, George Fishel and William Kohler married sisters of Mary Hofman Bovenmyer. It is unknown which of the area Bishop families Mrs. Bovenmyer was visiting and whether or not they were relatives. The visit of brother Henry Hoffman from Ohio reinforces the comment for the preceding letter about travel among the relatives. "My grandmother" who died is assumed to be Mrs. Bower – mother of Sarah Bower

(the wife of George Hoffman) and Jacob Bower (the uncle with whom Henry Hoffman moved to Ohio) and the mother of the 4 Hoffman girls and Henry. It sounds as though the inheritance was a non-trivial amount, and it is possible that the Kohler family's move to Kansas in 1879 was an indirect result of this financial gain.

September 14, 1876

Dear Husband,

I am well and the folks are all well. I am at John Shaffer's now and this afternoon I am going to Uhrichs and Cocklins. I was at Fishels and Bishops – lots of good things all the time. I am going to William Kohler's on Sunday, and I want you to send me 25 dollars. I don't think it will take all, but I am going to Ohio for my fortune that I am to have through my grandmother.

Brother Henry was at Kohlers 2 days before I got there, and he said if I came to Ohio he thinks that he can pay me so I won't have to make another trip. When you send that money, send it to William Kohler, New Cumberland, Cumberland County, Pa.

I will be home as soon as I get the money.

Yours truly,
Mary Bovenmyer

Letter 761116: Mary Kohler Daugherty to Sarah Bovenmyer. This letter is addressed to “cousin and family.” [The accompanying envelope is addressed to “Mr. Samuel Bovenmyer” and indicates either the household in general, or her cousin Samuel Bovenmyer junior. Since Samuel junior is mentioned in the letter in the third person and all the other correspondence is through Sarah, we assume that Sarah is the “cousin” in the salutation.] The reference to “your mother” is addressed to Mary's cousin Sarah Bovenmyer, but the references to “since you left” and the peaches “that you pulled” are addressed to the Sarah's mother Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer. Cousins Sarah Bovenmyer and John Kohler are each 18. While Sarah has never yet made a trip east, John appears ready for the male “rite of passage” trip west. The reference to entertaining 25 folks since Mary left either refers to a big event or, quite possibly, people staying over as they visit Pennsylvania for the Centennial. The reference to a “fortune” and that mother is “done out” and “falls over still” suggests the inheritance from Ohio was larger than expected. Mrs. Kohler took the four pictures from Martha Bishop in Kansas and the ones from the Bovenmyers in Iowa to York County to show to the Shaffers and Fishels – and the language suggests that Martha may have recently become engaged or married. It is now clear that Mary has been living at home but is finally getting ready to go into house keeping in Shepherdstown with her husband Latimer. She calls him “my beau.” It is unclear whether he has been living with the Kohlers since the wedding – is it even possible the custom was to consummate the marriage only after the couple had gone into house keeping?

November 16, 1876

Dear Cousin and family,

I take the pleasure of writing you a few lines to inform you that we are all well at present and hope when this reaches you folks it may find you enjoying good health. We received your kind and welcome letter and were very glad to hear from you folks and that auntie [Mary Bovenmyer] got home safe and sound. Father was careless to answer your letter, and I will have to do it after all.

We all hated to see your mother start for home. She seemed like our own mother. John talks every day of coming out there to see Aunt Mary when he gets older. He was 18 years old the 14th of this month. Tell Andrew to write to him. Nobody writes but me, and I can't write half.

We had about 25 folks since aunt went home. Father has all his work done up. They are hauling wheat away to Harrisburg. He wants to send John to school next week. We will never get done. We have so much sewing to do. Mother is making Devaux an overcoat, and then the boys pants.

I have been sporting since you left. Our girl comes the next week. My husband is coming for me this week to clean the house. We will move the last of this month if nothing happens. Won't I be glad. Then I want you folk to come and see me. If the rest can't leave, you and your beau come and we will have a nice time of sporting.

Mother is going to have all the children's pictures taken and send them out there. John will bring his along when he comes out. I have my dress made and it cost me 10 dollars till it was done.

We butchered yesterday – killed two hogs, made pudding and sausage. Mother wants to know if your got your fortune out at uncle's. Mother is nearly done out. She nearly falls over still. The peach bushels are splendid that you pulled. When you have any peaches, pull some for me and I will help you in return.

Father wants uncle Samuel to come East through the holidays and go to the Centennial. I was down there – father and Andrew and Herman and Andrew Shaffer and myself and Latimer Daugherty my beau. I looked till my eyes were sore. It was such a nice day. We had a splendid time. We got home at half past ten o'clock. Lat went the next day and did not get home till after four o'clock.

I wish I could have a talk with you and your mother. I could talk for two weeks and not be half done. Martha Bishop from Kansas, she gave us all some of her pictures of the family. She has a very nice-looking man. Four [pictures] came at a time, and Mother went to York County with them. She took the pictures along of yours. They were all pleased to pieces with them.

Well I must quit. Lat has come for me to go along with him to clean that house of mine. I must close for the time at present. Looking to hear from you soon. I don't know who will answer your letters when I leave from home. If you don't write within 3 weeks, write to me at Shepherdstown, Cumberland County, Penna, in care of Thomas L. Daugherty. Write to the folks at home, too. Don't forget them. Father or John will answer.

Good-bye. Write soon. My love to the family. Mother's love to all of you folks.

Mrs. Mary A. Daugherty

Letter 761200: William Kohler to Samuel Bovenmyer. This undated letter has been assigned the date 12/0/76. Written after the November 1876 election, it appears to have been composed after the previous Mary Kohler Daugherty letter of 11/16/76 and before the following William Kohler letter of 12/26/76. Most interesting is the reference to the uncertainty of the 1876 election. Rutherford B. Hayes lost the popular vote, won the presidency by one electoral vote, and was not officially declared the winner until March 1877. “Cousin Matt Bishop” is unknown. One possible explanation is that he is a cousin to the children of William Kohler and Samuel Bovenmyer, that he is the son of Martha Bishop of letter 761111, and that Martha is another sister to Leah Hofman Kohler and Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer. He might be identified as “cousin Matt” to distinguish him from his father of the same name. It is unclear whether his news from Kansas came by letter or visit.

Friend Bovenmyer
Dear Sir,

New Cumberland
[undated: assigned December 1876]

I take the pleasure to write you a few lines to let you know how times are. Well, the election is over and we don't know who is President – but I hope the man that has the most votes.

I am shipping our wheat. I will get done tomorrow if it don't rain. Our wheat crop is light, but good in quality. It overruns 4 bushels to the hundred. I will have six fifty in all. I get 125 and the bridge toll paid. My corn is good. I put it up in seven days. I will have about 15 hundred bushels. Corn is selling at 50 cents out of the field.

I have eight head of horses and nothing for them to do – and no sale. We have ten cows. I got 25 hundred weight of shents [?] today to feed them – at 18 dollars per ton.

Butter is 30 to 35. Eggs are 30. Cows are 40 to 60 dollars. Potatoes are \$1.00 to \$1.20. The wheat looks very well – the fly is the early sowing. Hay is bringing 15 to 16 per ton. Corn fodder is 10 dollars per ton.

I shall not take up much time at present, as Mary [Kohler Daugherty] has wrote you a long letter. You never wrote how Mary [Bovenmyer] got to Henry Hoffman's and what time she got there. I felt sorry to see her start. I felt like homesick for a few days. Cousin Matt Bishop speaks very well of Kansas. I should like very much to go there just for the climate. On the first and second day of this month, the thermometer stood at 84 and 86. It is bedtime and Mamy [Leah Hoffman Kohler?] is sleepy. I bid you good night.

Write soon and give all the news if you get these lines.

William Kohler

Letter 761226: William Kohler to Samuel Bovenmyer. While the Kohler farm was well-situated at the east end of Bridgeport [Lemoyne] on a hill overlooking the river, the land was not nearly as fertile as the lowlands in mid Cumberland County. The relation and location of Charles Kohler is unknown. Since daughter

Mary Kohler Daugherty lives in Shepherdstown, the reference to a Mary in Bowmansdale is unclear.

Friend Bovenmyer
Dear Sir,

Bridgeport
December 26, 1876

I received your kind and welcome letter in due time, and we were all glad to hear from you all – and glad to hear that you are all well. We are all well, and hope these lines will find you the same. Mary [Kohler Daugherty] has moved to her new house. We had a roast on Christmas. We had Christmas exercises on Monday evening in our church – singing, speaking, and then handing out the gifts on the tree. We was all drawn [for a gift exchange] and all got a gift but mother. Had a fine time of it.

It snowed nearly every day for the past four or five days, and there is still not much snow. It is snowing a little now. Good sleighing. The storm you spoke of on the eighth came through here on the ninth. It was strong and cold. The thermometer stood at zero on Sunday the 10th. That is the coldest we had this winter.

We have all our work done for the fall. I filled my ice house. It holds about 65 tons. I have all my threshing done but a little oats, and the money is spent. I sold 247 bushels at \$1.25. Splendid wheat – my crop was 640 of wheat. My corn is about 15 hundred of shelled, and worth 48 cents. Oats is 30 to 35 – that is light. I have the best corn I ever raised this year. I put all my corn in in about six days. I took in six and seven loads per day – at 80 bushels per load. If we done as much work ourselves as you, we could save more money. Two years ago I made my hay in 4½ days – about 85 ton when dry.

I took the children to the Centennial Exposition: A.J. [Andrew], Herman M., Mary A. John would not go. The children are all going to school. John is learning very fast on the organ this winter.

Our cows are doing pretty well. We make about ten dollars per week. The horses are all in good collar and will do lots of driving. If you was in here now, I would sport you all around the country – for I have nothing to do but haul water, go to mill and store.

Charles Kohler says we live too fast in here. He thinks we should live cheaper and do less work. If I had your soil in here, then I could farm. Our expenses are high – but if we sell, it brings in money. I should very much like to buy something to settle down on, but can't reach anything in here to suit me. My pile is too light. I could live here all my days, but would like to get something for the boys when I am gone.

I expect to see your place before next year if all goes right. It stopped snowing, and I shall stop for this time. Leah and I perhaps will go to Shepherdstown, or Bowmansdale to Mary, and come home tonight. Good bye. My best respects to all.

William Kohler

Write soon and don't delay. Mother wants Sarah to write and give all the news, and to let us know if she is married.

Letter 770907: John Kohler to Sarah Bovenmyer. Now that Mary Kohler Daugherty has gone into house keeping, the letter-writing responsibility has shifted to 19 year old John. Comments in both the body of the letter and the addendum state that William Kohler was out “west” – most likely to Kansas. The camp “two weeks ago up the valley” was the Methodist’s Cumberland Valley camp meeting, held each August near Oakville for several years beginning in 1871. A 1993 article in *The Chronicle*, page 51 reports: *This site was developed by the erection of 113 ground floor tents, 120 two-story tents, a tabernacle, two boarding tents, a commissary, a bookstore, a post office, and a barber shop. A boardwalk was built from the camp to the railroad station, and Sunday excursions brought as many as 10,000 people to the site.*

Miss Sarah Bovenmyer
My Dear Cousin,

New Cumberland
September 7, 1877

I received your kind and welcome letter about two weeks ago and was glad to hear from you. We are all well at present except Florence. The weather has been very dry. It was so dry that we could not plow.

Mother and Set [Elsetta Kohler Willett] went to the City of Brotherly Love. I was at camp about two weeks ago up the valley. We had a nice time.

The corn crop is not more than half a crop. The wheat crop is not very good. Pa sold some rakings for \$1.45 per bushel. It has come down since that – it is only \$1.35 now. The oats is better than it has been for six years. We are half done cutting off corn.

There is an excursion down to the bay tomorrow. Father and mother were up at Mary’s [Mary Kohler Daugherty] house on Sunday a week ago. I have not been up since pa was out west. The Lutherans had their picnic on last Saturday a week ago. We had a splendid time. They had a festival the same evening. It was well attended.

Pa gets papers from Kansas every week. They want him to come out to Kansas. He got a letter from one of his old friends that lived in here. He lives in Illinois. He wants him to come out. He says that he has farm for him of 150 acres. I would like to come out west to live. I am tired of farming in here. It is too hard work.

Our school begins on the seventeenth. This is my last winter for school in Pennsylvania any how. Well, I guess I will have to bring this scratching to a close for this time. Excuse all mistakes and bad scribbling. If you can not read this, guess at it.

You might come in this fall with your beau M.M. [Emmanuel “Manny” Mericle]. Tell uncle [Samuel Bovenmyer] that we will look for him to come in. Give my love to all the family. Write soon and tell us all the news.

I still remain your

Your affectionate cousin,
J. G. Kohler

[addendum in different handwriting]

Tell your father to be sure and come in this fall to see us. I expect to take another trip west this fall one year if all goes right. I hope these lines will find you all well. I am not very well, but I think I shall soon get well. I had the chill and fever for 2 weeks.

William Kohler

Letter 771226: Mary Kohler Daugherty to Sarah Bovenmyer. Mabel Daugherty was born 10/21/1877. Mrs. Willett is assumed to be a rather formal reference Mary's sister Elsetta Kohler Willett, although it could be that the family was gathering at the home of Elsetta's mother-in-law. It appears that "Nedy" is cousin Edmund Fishel, who married Laura Ann Squibb, but their 8/25/1878 marriage date is a year away – and that later date is supported by family records and by letter 790513, not printed in *The Chronicle*. One possible explanation for the discrepancy that Mary states only that she "heard" about the marriage – is it possible that she heard wrong and/or that the anticipated wedding was for some reason postponed for about a year?

December 26, 1877

Dear Cousin Sarah,

I take the pleasure of writing you a few lines to let you know that I am well at present and hope when this reaches you it may find you enjoying good health. I am at home to spend the Christmas with my baby. You ought to see my little girl. She is as fat as a little pudding. I call her Mabel Vincy Daugherty. In full, I am almost ashamed to write. I have not written for so long.

I got a table cloth and a pair of stockings, and the baby got a shirt and two night slips. I am going to see Mrs. Willett in about a half hour. I have hardly any thing to write. I heard that Nedy Fishel is married to Miss Squibb. Mother has the rheumatism in her arms, and her feet hurt so.

I must quit and go and dress for a start, for it is getting later. The next time I will write a big long letter. I will not wait so long. My love to all, and a good share for your mother. I would like to see her soon again, and all the rest. Excuse my scratching.

Good-bye,
Mary A. Daugherty
Shepherdstown, Cumberland County, Penna

Letter 780530: John Kohler to Sarah Bovenmyer. This is the last surviving Kohler letter. By this time next year they were settled in Kansas. Letter 790513 from one of the Shaffer cousins states: *You wanted to know where William Kohler's family is. They started for Kansas on the 8th of April, and we have not heard from them yet – nothing more than Mary Daugherty got a postal card that they had landed in Kansas City safe.* The "Reading road" is the Reading Railroad, which was formed in 1833 and by 1870 was reported to be the largest corporation in the world. Machons Island is unknown.

Sarah U. Bovenmyer
My Dear Cousin,

New Cumberland
May 30, 1878

I received your letter a long time ago and am almost ashamed to write after waiting so long. I will try and do better the next time.

The weather is very nice, but it is not very warm. We had frost last week. It froze the potatoes till they got black. We are done planting corn about three weeks ago. It is up, but it does not grow any. The weather is too cold yet. Oats and grass are growing nice. Tell Uncle Sam the wheat is better than it has been since we farmed. Pa thinks it will make forty bushels to the acre.

We were up at Mechanicsburg yesterday afternoon for our new reaper. We paid one hundred dollars and our old one.

I was up at Mary's [Mary Ann Kohler Dougherty] three weeks ago. They are all well. Lat [Thomas Latimer Dougherty] is still butchering. There was a festival at New Cumberland the other Saturday night. Some of the folks are making hay, but they have to have it in to the manure yard. It does not dry in the sun. It is not hot enough.

Pa got a letter from Jacob Rife, and he has bought a farm of one hundred and sixty acres in it. He says he has built a house on it already. He says there is a farm next to him of the same size that can be bought for one thousand dollars with forty acres of wheat on it. He wants Pa to buy it. Pa wrote out that he should find out all about it and let him know. There was an excursion left for Kansas on the 28th. They went by the Reading road.

There was a picnic on Machons Island today. There is a little steam boat running on the river now. They charge ten cents to take you down to the grove. There is an excursion to Gettysburg to see the battlefield and decorate the soldiers' graves.

Florence is learning to play on the organ. I am learning her. Tomorrow is the last day of summer school.

Well I guess I must bring my scribbling to a close. If you can't read it, guess at it. Please write soon and don't wait as long as I did.

I shall remain

Your affectionate cousin,
J. G. Kohler to S. U. Bovenmyer

Appendix A. Shepherdstown United Brethren Church

Shepherdstown and Upper Allen township play a recurring role in the drama unfolded in the letters. The Michael Cocklin farm, where Mary Hoffman (Bovenmyer) and Lizzie Cocklin (Crist) resided, and the adjacent Jacob Urich farm, where Samuel Bovenmyer resided, were in Upper Allen township. Mary Kohler Daugherty and Thomas Latimer Daugherty went into house keeping in Shepherdstown.

Situated between the two York County churches attended by the Fishels and Shaffers (Mt. Pleasant Church of God and Filey's Lutheran Church) and the churches in Mechanicsburg, the area saw no consistent religious services for many years. In 1851, Rev. John Fohl established a regular United Brethren

appointment at Cocklin's Church, a building erected in the Cocklin Cemetery to provide a place for worship whenever a preacher was available. This was the northernmost appointment on a large circuit that was centered in York Springs. Before erecting their own building, the present Shepherdstown United Methodist Church, this congregation met at Cocklin's Church 1851-53, the Levi Eberly home 1853-57, and the Shepherdstown Union Church 1857-1887.

While the Kohlers were Methodist, the rest of the extended Hoffman family were mainly Lutherans. The Methodists and United Brethren (essentially a Pennsylvania German brand of Methodism) took a more experiential view of religion than did the Lutherans or Reformed. In those days, one typically joined the Methodist or United Brethren church following a conversion experience – while Lutheran or Reformed membership followed catechism and intellectual acceptance of the historic creeds and doctrines. Letter 741231 from GERALD FISHEL to Sarah Bovenmyer states that Henry Fishel “got religious this winter, but the rest of us belong to the big church” [Filey's Lutheran]. This could be a reference to a conversion experience at the nearby Chestnut Grove United Brethren [now United Methodist] Church that started meeting at Filey's school house, across the road from Filey's Lutheran Church, in the 1850's and erected their own building the following decade.

The following names associated with the letters appear at various times on the Shepherdstown United Brethren rolls.

Cocklin: Christiana Jane Cocklin, a sister of Michael who never married, was a member for many years. David M. Cocklin, a brother of Michael, was a member with his wife Mary from 1849 until they moved to Carlisle in 1851. Emma E. Cocklin, the daughter of Michael's son Henry, married George E. Weber – a couple honored by one of Shepherdstown's stained glass windows. The Webers were very active in the congregation, and between 1891 and 1910 they 12 children – almost all of whom were also active in the congregation. As of the writing of this article, their daughter Lillian Mae Weber has been a member of the congregation for over 81 years.

Crist: Samuel Crist was originally from Adams County – one of ten children of John and Eve (Strayer) Crist. After his first wife and children died while he was serving in the Civil War, he came to Mechanicsburg in 1866 and engaged in the retail grocery trade. He married Michael's daughter Sarah E. (“Lizzie”) Cocklin in 1867 and eventually moved to Spring Dale farm, the Jacob-Michael Cocklin homestead. Samuel Crist was a very active member of the Mechanicsburg Reformed Church. In the 1850's, at least 3 of his Adams County siblings were members of other United Brethren classes then on the same large circuit as Shepherdstown. His grandsons Ray H. Crist and Guy Charles Crist, sons of Henry Deitrich Crist and Bertha (Spera) Crist, joined at Shepherdstown in 1915 and 1916 respectively. Dr. Ray H. Crist was born March 3, 1900. As this article is being prepared he still reports to his chemistry lab at Messiah College each day, at the age of 102, to conduct experiments and mentor students. He was an extremely active young man at Shepherdstown Church from 1915 until he left

the area in 1921 and reports that those spiritually formative years were a “very, very important part of my life.”

Others: Most early circuit riders, if they kept any records at all, recorded chronologically only the names of people who joined – and not the particular class on the circuit with which they identified, or any notation about their relationship to other members. The original circuit record book in the conference archives for the 1852 United Brethren circuit that included northern Adams County, northern York County, Cumberland County’s Shepherdstown and Lisburn appointments contains the following names:

164. George Hoffman

172. John Hoffman

173. George Shaffer

174. Isaac H. Bowers

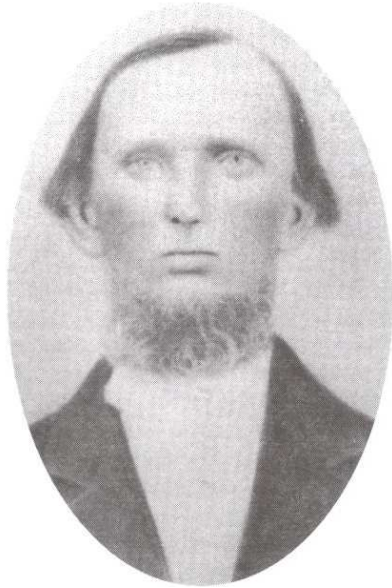
Whether or not George Hoffman is the father of our Hoffman clan cannot be determined. Also of interest is the consecutive Hoffman-Shaffer-Bowers listing, which may or may not indicate any connection between them, in #172-174. While the surnames are familiar, however, there is no known John among our Hoffmans, George among our Shaffers, or Isaac among our Bowers.

Beginning in 1853, the preacher recorded the class to which the new members belonged. Leah Gleim (#181) joined the Cocklin/Shepherdstown class in 1853, but her relation to the Samuel Gleim family with whom Henry Hoffman resided is not known. The Gleim surname was not uncommon.

Appendix B. Samuel Bovenmyer and Mary Hoffman

Gabriel Bobbenmeier (1749-1817) was born in what is now Northampton County PA and died in Lancaster County OH. He moved to Pennsboro township, Cumberland County, in 1790 and purchased a 184-acre farm known as Wicham. One acre of the land was deeded for a cemetery and church – known originally as Bobenmeyer’s Union Church. Today the site is in Upper Frankford township and occupied by St. Peter’s Lutheran Church. Gabriel’s son Philip Bovenmyer was born in 1791. He married Hannah Goheen, and they had 4 children: Sarah (1823), Samuel (1826), Daniel (1827) and John (1831). In 1838 Philip and Hannah purchased 120 acres in Allen township. Philip died in 1842 and Hannah died in 1846. They are buried in the Slate Hill Mennonite Cemetery with their son John, who died at the age of 8 months. It appears that the Bovenmyers and Hoffmans knew each other, for the Bovenmyer estate sale records for 1/17/1846 reveal that George Hoffman [the future father-in-law of Samuel] was present and purchased some meat hooks.

In 1846, Samuel and Daniel moved in with their married sister Sarah Bovenmyer Urich and her husband Jacob. The 1850 census lists 8 members for that household: Jacob and Sarah Bovenmyer Urich and their 2 small children, Samuel and Daniel Bovenmyer, and 2 other young females – Ann Crist (age 22)



Samuel Bovenmyer



Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer

[no known relation to Samuel Crist] and Magdaline Hetrick (age 16). The 1850 census further reveals that Mary Hoffman, also motherless, was residing on the adjacent farm of Michael Cocklin.

Samuel Bovenmyer and Mary Hoffman were married in York County 1/14/1855. That same year they left Pennsylvania for Iowa. They traveled by train to Rock Island IL, then the western terminus of the railroad, where they purchased a team and came to Tama County by way of Iowa City. They eventually settled on 320 acres in Howard township – equipped with a log cabin, in which all 5 of their children were born.

Samuel died in 1891, leaving the farm to his son Samuel Jr. Mary died in 1904. Her obituary states that she had been raised in the German Reformed Church – but unable to find congregation of that denomination where they settled, she “never connected herself with any other denomination, but continued throughout life steadfast to the faith of her girlhood. Her funeral was held in the Rose Hill Methodist Episcopal Church, and the service was conducted by M.R. Drury – one of the most eminent United Brethren pastors of the day!

The Drury family of Iowa gave the denomination two of its most prominent leaders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as subsequent generation of gospel missionaries. Indiana native Rev. Morgan Shortridge Drury (1826-1902) became a United Brethren minister in the Iowa

Conference in 1855. He and his wife Elizabeth Lambert, a native of Rockingham County VA whose family had direct contact with Otterbein and Boehm, served congregations in Iowa and California and produced two noted sons.

Marion Richardson Drury (1849-1939) was ordained in the Iowa Conference in 1875. He pastored churches in Iowa, Ohio and California, and he was an editor of the denomination's *The Religious Telescope* 1881-1897. Toledo IA was a United Brethren stronghold and home to the denomination's Leander Clark College. It was at the prestigious Toledo UB Church that Rev. Dr. Drury was serving when he conducted the funeral of Mary Hoffman Bovenmyer. A prolific author, he later served as president of Philomath College 1910-1913 and Leander Clark College 1913-1916. His son Philo W. Drury (1876-1968) devoted his life to missionary work in Puerto Rico and the establishment of a strong evangelical presence there.

Augustus Waldo Drury (1851-1835) was ordained in the Iowa Conference in 1877. An historian and theologian, his 1924 History of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ is still considered the definitive history of the denomination. He pastored churches in Iowa and Ohio before joining the faculty at Bonebrake [now United] Theological Seminary in Dayton OH – where he taught church history and theology and served as librarian, until his retirement in 1934. Three of his five children became missionaries – two serving in China, and one in the Philippines.

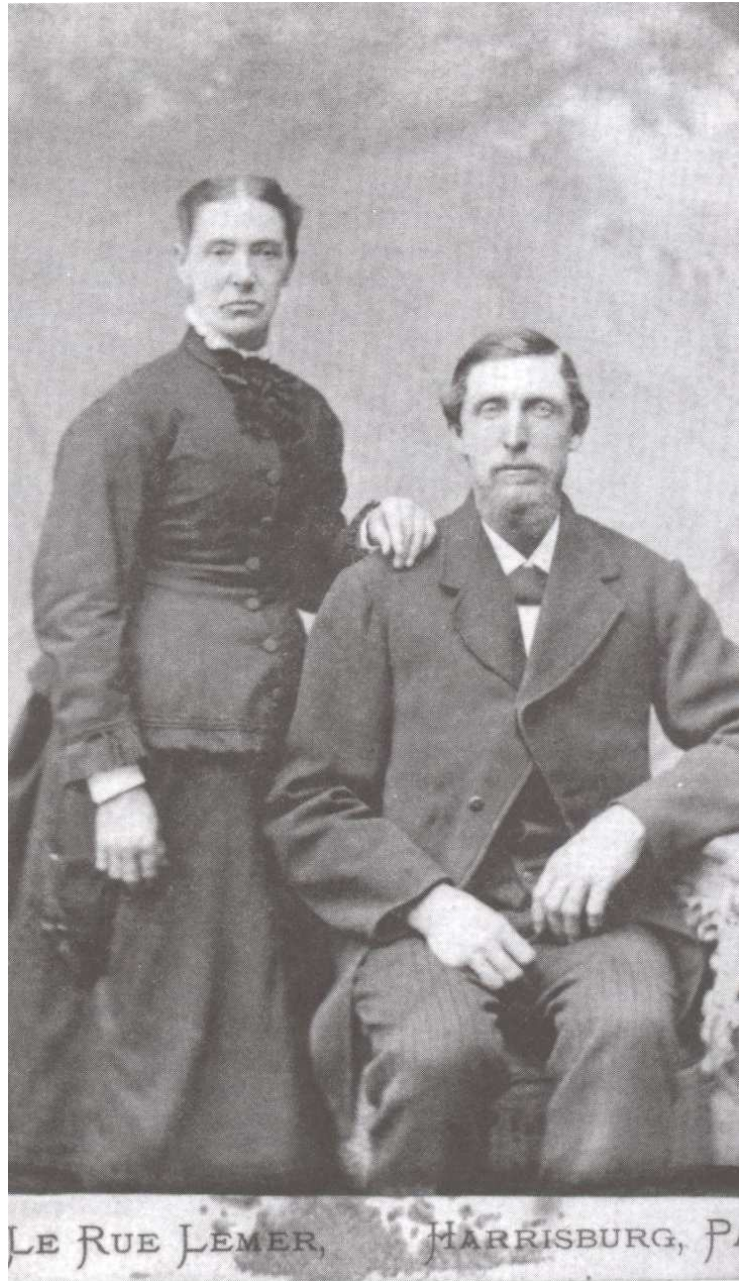
Appendix C. William Kohler and Leah Hoffman

William Kohler indicated he wanted to move west in order to have a more profitable farm to pass on to his sons. The family left for Kansas 4/8/1879. Apparently this included William and Leah, their 3 unmarried sons, and their 10 year old granddaughter Florence whom they were raising – but none of their married daughters. Florence married Charles Pitts, settled in Washington, and died in Yakima in 1941.

Letter 790514 indicates that Mary Kohler Daugherty stayed behind. It may have been hard for Thomas Latimer Daugherty to leave the area. The son of George and Anna M. Daugherty of northern York County, he was one of 9 children. An 1886 history indicates that all his siblings except Emma J. were then residing in Cumberland County. It appears that Mary and Latimer had joined the rest of the Kohlers in Kansas by then.

The Kohlers settled in Douglas County in 1879, moved to Riley County in 1881, and returned permanently to Douglas County in 1882 – four miles southeast of Eudora. It is likely that the Kansas friends or relatives with whom William had been communicating lived in one of those counties. While the letters suggest that such contact may have been with a Bishop or Rife family, those surnames have not been located in those counties during this time period.

Leah died in 1891. William remarried in March 1893 to a Mrs. Kingsmore, but died of cancer May 25, 1893, and was buried in the Hepser Cemetery.



Leah Hoffman Kohler and William Kohler, while living in New Cumberland