



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH – JOHAN SIMON CLAR

For the benefit of those members of the Blair County Chapter, SAR, who were unable to attend the gravesite dedication ceremony at Bedford on the 21st of September, 1991, the text of the Biographical Sketch on the Patriot (as presented by compatriot Bernard R. Smith) is presented here.

The Palatinate region of southwestern Germany is an area from which quite a number of early settlers of Bedford County came. It is the land which the Clars came from in the early 1700s. Our ancestors' German homeland lay to the west of the Rhine River and just north of the French and Swiss borders. The Rhine River has its beginnings in the Swiss Alps, and flows northwestward to the Atlantic Ocean, passing through Germany and the Netherlands. At a time when Germany, as a distinct nation, did not even exist, the lands which lay just north of the Swiss Alps and to the west of the Rhine River were divided up into a number of small semi-independent duchys, which were under the rule and control of powerful overlords. The name "Palatinate" referred to a collection of these small duchys which, in turn, were under the control of a more powerful lord (known as the Elector Palatine). The lands of western Europe, thusly, were still set up in a system much like they had been in the medieval period. Powerful overlords held complete control over the tenant-farmers within their domains. Although the tenant-farmers benefited from the protection that the overlords could provide, their life was somewhat rigidly controlled and they were little more than servants to that overlord. Many of them left that homeland when word of the new lands on the other side of the Atlantic began to spread across Europe. The Clar family was one of those tenant-farmer families which decided to leave Europe in search of a better life in America.

Johan Simon Clar's paternal grandfather was Balthasar Clar, who was from Canton Bern in Switzerland. One of the tributaries of the Rhine River originates in the Jura Mountains of northwestern Switzerland in the canton of Bern. Balthasar Clar, a widower prior to the year 1698, traveled in the direction of that tributary and came to settle in the duchy of Pfalz-Zweibrücken, in or near the small farm village of Mimbach. It was there that he met Elisabetha, the widow of Barthel Wolf. They married on the 14th of January, 1698 and bore at least one son that we know of: Jacob. Jacob Clar was baptised on the 23rd of November, 1698. He grew up in the town of Mimbach and married a woman by the name of Anna Maria at some time circa 1727. Their first child, Johan Michael was baptised in February of that year. He was followed by Maria Louisa in 1730, Johan Simon in December of 1732, Barbara in 1735, Wilhelm in 1737, and the sixth and last child, Nickel in July of 1739.

The third child born to Jacob and Anna Maria Clar was baptised under the name: Johan Simon Clar. His baptismal record in the Kirchen protocol of the Evengelical Reformed Church of Mimbach-Webenheim was dated December 12, 1732. He was probably born just a few days before that date. The baptismal record shows the first given-name of Johan as abbreviated to the letters J O H. We have chosen the spelling of J O H A N, ending with only the one N because that was a spelling characteristic of the French and Swiss region, from which Johan Simon's grandfather, Balthasar, came.

In the year 1740 Jacob Clar applied to the authorities of the duchy of Pfalz-Zweibrücken for permission to leave the Palatinate. His request to move to America was recorded in the Zweibrücken Manumissions Protocol (or record book). The word "manumission" comes from the word "manumit", which means "to release from servitude". Although it is true that the common man in the early 1700s did not live a life of direct servitude, as he had in the medieval ages - the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries saw small groups of powerful families taking control of and owning the majority of the land throughout the Germanic regions. The common man did not actually own the land he lived upon; instead he tilled the soil and gave a share of the harvest to the overlord in exchange for the right to live there and to be protected by the overlord. Because of such an arrangement, the overlord held the right to either allow or deny any individual to leave or move into his duchy. Taxes were often imposed upon those who wanted to move away from their current residences - the purpose of which was to deter the inhabitants from wanting to move out. But human nature has always been the same - some people would move away secretly in a gamble that they would not be caught, and thereby avoid having to pay the taxes. The rate of taxes a head of household had to pay for the priveledge of manumission depended somewhat on the number of the male members of his family who wished to leave. Males who might someday join the workforce and army to increase the riches and wellbeing of the overlords were seen as prime bargaining material. Higher taxes would be levied on families which had a large number of males in order to intimidate them from leaving. For this reason, a father might request manumission

only for himself or his wife, and then secretly take the whole family out of the region. This was probably the case of the family of Jacob Clar, in which there were four male children, because the Zweibrücken Manumissions Protocol lists only Jacob as requesting to move to America.

We don't know exactly when the Clar family left the shores of Europe or what ship they sailed on. One thing that gives us a slight clue is the manumission request that Jacob made in the year 1740. But the fact that the request was made in 1740 does not mean the family left during that year; they might have left in 1741. We do have a second item that sheds a little light on the matter - In May of 1747, Barbara Clar placed an advertisement in a newspaper published by Christopher Sauer in Germantown. Sauer's newspaper had a very large circulation in the 1740s. An ad placed in that newspaper had a very good chance of being seen by most German immigrants in the vicinity of Pennsylvania. Barbara's advertisement not only gives a clue to the year in which they arrived in this country, but also reveals that the parents, Jacob and Anna Maria, must have died enroute to the new world.

The advertisement published in the May 16, 1747 issue of Sauer's newspaper is well known among researchers of the Clar line. It reads: "Simon Klaar arrived in this country six years ago and was indentured as a servant. His sister Barbara became free two years ago and she seeks her brother."

The fact that Barbara stated that Simon arrived "six years ago" prior to her placement of the ad in May of 1747 would help to pinpoint the ocean journey to either 1741 or late 1740. In the year 1740, there were six ships which arrived carrying German immigrants. Of these six, all arrived in the Fall of that year. In 1741 there were nine ships which came to these shores bringing German immigrants: one in May and the rest in the Fall of that year. Barbara's statement at least corroborates with the manumission request date of 1740.

We have no way to determine which of the fifteen ships that arrived at this country might have been the one on which the Clar family sailed. Their names do not appear on any of the passenger lists. Some researchers have made the assumption that they sailed on the Samuel, because of the fact that Nicholas Zoller immigrated on that ship, and that his name had been recorded in the Zweibrücken Manumissions Protocol just before Jacob Clar's. Unfortunately, that assumption is flawed because the simple fact that two individuals decided to go to the authorities to request permission to leave, and their names were recorded sequentially, does not prove that they chose to sail on the same ship. One might have left the very same day that the request was made while the other might have needed to prepare more for the journey.

The lack of the parents' names on any ship passenger list and the reference Barbara made that her brother had been indentured as a servant -and that she also had become "free two years ago" give us the source to make the assumption that Jacob and Anna Maria would have died on the journey. When a ship left a European port, no list of the passengers was made, there was no real need for that on embarkation. But when the ship arrived in the new world a list would be made up as the passengers disembarked. The purpose of the disembarkation list was to make an accounting of the people who would be contributing to the total headcount of the colonies. England's claims to the colonial tracts of land in the new world were based on the numbers of her people who were settled there. That, in fact, was a primary reason for the encouragement that England made for German families to move to the colonies beginning in the year 1709. This helps to explain why there was no need for a list to be made of the passengers leaving Europe - if any died on the trip over, they would not count toward the population total anyways. The list was made on the ship's arrival in the new world of those who arrived healthy and alive. When those immigrants prepared to disembark, they were also required to sign an oath of allegiance to the king of England and become English subjects. If they refused to do so, they would not be permitted to leave the ship. From the two lists, the one made by the ship's officer and the signed oaths of allegiance, the actual physical entry of an individual could be proven. One problem still exists, though - only the males over the age of eighteen were required to take the oath of allegiance. Wives and minor children were seldom recorded even if the male head of the family died enroute. If both parents died on the passage, any minor children became the property of the ship's captain, to do with as he wished. The captain rarely needed orphaned children, and as their common-law legal guardian, he would sell them into indentured servitude.

The statement made by Barbara Clar that she and her brother had been indentured as servant when they arrived in America points clearly to the fact that their parents must have died on the journey.

Most people do not understand the true nature of indentured servitude. They tend to think that it was a form of slavery, much like that which Black Africans were subjected to. The name "indentured Servant" explains the true nature of the situation in itself. An indenture is an agreement, or contract, made between two parties. The word "indenture" originally came from the verb "to indent", meaning to separate the various part of a written contract by marking them with a notch or mark to identify one from the other. In a contract, such as a Will, where only one party needs to agree with any terms, an indenture is not required. In the example of an estate Deed, on the other hand, there will be more than one party concerned. The seller of a piece of property, and the buyer of that property must both agree to the same terms, and their individual parts of the document are indented for the clarity of each other.

An individual of legal age could enter into a contract with another to work as a servant in order to pay off some debt. Or in the case of a minor child, the guardian of that child might contract with the so-called "master" to take the child and raise it. As such, the child would serve as an apprentice to learn a trade, and the master would feed, cloath and shelter the child until he could work to pay the master back for the training he had received. To be sure, some indentured

servants might have received harsh treatment while under the contract that they had entered into, but they generally entered into those contracts on their own accord and free will. It should also be mentioned that the length of an individual's servitude varied; there was no particular age at which a person became "free" of the obligations to the contract. And although it appears harsh and cruel that children should be so-called "sold" into indentured servitude, it really would have been better for them to be raised under that system than to be left out on the streets to fend for themselves.

When Johan Simon and his sister Barbara came into the colonies, Johan Simon would have been only eight years old and his sister would have been five. Indentured servitude would actually have been beneficial to the two young children with no means of their own to obtain food or shelter.

Johan Simon Clar survived his experience of indentured servitude, and at some time prior to 1756, he met and married Anna Margaretha Klee. She was a descendant of Klee, Braun and Heyl ancestors, all of whom originated in the Palatinate. Anna Margaretha was the first American-born child of her family. Her parents, Johann Nicolaus, Jr and Anna Catharina Klee had emigrated to America in 1738. Anna Margaretha Klee was born on the 9th of March, 1741 and was baptised at the Conewago Reformed Church in York County. The Klee family were rather well-to-do; when Johann Nicolaus died in 1776, his estate was valued at £210 gold, or roughly \$44,000 in modern-day currency. The Klee family resided in the town of Hanover in York County, and Johann Nicolaus owned a male negro slave.

Johan Simon and Anna Margaretha married and took up residence in Manheim Township in York County. They bore twelve children, four of which would eventually move to and settle in Bedford County. Their last child was Frederick, born on October 30, 1780.

When the American Revolutionary War began, the German settlers in the eastern counties of Pennsylvania turned out in large numbers to serve in the militia. Although, historically, the German residents of Pennsylvania were apathetic to or sometimes openly against joining sides with their English-bred neighbors in armed warfare, the ideals prompting the American Revolution were ones which all citizens of the colonies could identify with and want to embrace. In 1776 the Continental Congress asked for 400 men from the county of York to join the Associated Militia to form a mobile reserve unit called the Flying Camp for the defense of the Middle Colonies. Over 600 men answered the call in York County, which was primarily German in ethnic make-up.

A complete roster of all the men who joined the militia in 1776 is not available, and we cannot know if Johan Simon Clar was one of them. The earliest record we have of his military service is a muster record for the Second Company of the Sixth Battalion of the York County Militia that was taken in April of 1778. In that muster roll, Johan Simon, with his name now anglicised and recorded just as Simon, was listed as the Second Lieutenant for that company. The Sixth Company had originally been formed in 1776, and so it is possible that Simon had joined as a private in that year, and earned the rank of Second Lieutenant by his interest and motivation.

The Seventh Battalion of the York County Militia had also been formed back in 1776, and when the muster roll for the First Company was recorded in 1779, Simon Clar was listed as its Captain. This was a position Simon would hold until the war had ended and would continue to hold for at least four years after the cessation of hostilities in 1783. In June of 1787, when a recruit asked that an account be paid off, it was Simon Clar who countersigned the request.

The militia of eastern Pennsylvania were employed in the defences of that region, and although records do not exist to detail any battles that the Sixth and Seventh Battalions specifically engaged in, it is possible that Simon did see action during the conflict. The way that the militia system was set up provided that a certain number of men would always be available for action, while the rest would be at their homes to defend their families and also those of their comrades who were on their tours of duty. Each company was divided into at least eight classes, and although the entire company would train together, when called out for duty, only the men in certain classes would be called out. This allowed for the rotation of the rank and file, but the captains and other commissioned officers would have been required to participate in most, if not all, of the tours.

The captain's duties would have varied quite a bit from those of the ordinary militiaman's. The captain of the company was responsible to exercise and train his men. It should be remembered that that is why General Washington welcomed Wilhelm Von Steuben's offer to train the troops of the Continental Line - their training by their own captains lacked a standard approach and method. Each captain trained his company as he thought suitable - sometimes the training was good, sometimes not so. We cannot know how Simon Clar would have handled his company, but we can assume that he enjoyed the job because he stayed with it so long. The latest dated reference to Simon Clar, that we find in the records of the York County Militia, was June of 1787.

There have been researchers who claimed that Johan Simon Clar was among those who spent the winter of 1777/78 at Valley Forge with the Continental Line who were bivouacked there during the campaign to defend Pennsylvania from the British takeover of Philadelphia. It is unfortunate that this claim is in error, but the truth of the matter is that the York County Militia did not participate in that particular campaign. Although we cannot claim pride in our ancestor having quartered at Valley Forge, his long-term devotion to the militia is something that his descendants can indeed be proud of.

At some time in the 1790s Anna Margaretha died. She was alive in November of 1790 and witnessed the baptism of a granddaughter who was named after her. By 1795 Anna Margaretha had passed on and Simon had decided to move to western Pennsylvania to the county of Bedford. He purchased Lot Number 6 on the main square of the town of Bedford.

A log structure occupied the lot. It stood on the main square catercorner to the court house that stands today. The structure had been the original log court house and jail that had been built in 1771, but used only a few years until a newer limestone structure could be built in 1774. Two previous owners probably had renovated the interior to where it resembled more of a house than a public building. It was in the town of Bedford, in a log building on the one corner of the public square that Johan Simon Clar would live the last years of his life.

In the 1790s, probably around 1795 after he moved to Bedford, Johan Simon married Eva Catherine Lingenfelder, a daughter of Abraham and Anna Barbara Lingenfelder. To Eva Catherine was born one child, a son that they named Samuel.

On the third Saturday in September, in the year 1812 Johna Simon Clar departed from this life. He would have been seventy-nine years of age when he died.

He had experienced the ultimate "American" experience: an orphan cast upon an alien shore who would survive and grow, just like his new homeland, into a unique individual. He grew into manhood during the birth and adloescence of this United States and, as a Captain in the York County Militia, helped to wean her from her mother country. We can only imagine the pride he felt in knowing he had been a part of the force and spirit which had set this nation adrift, like an orphan too, among the sea of nations.

Johan Simon Clar, along with his second wife, Eva Catherine, had worshipped at the Lutheran and Reformed Union Church on the corner of West John and Thomas Streets. This dedication ceremony is being held in a church which stands on the site of that original house of worship. A churchyard surrounds this structure, and in that yard Johan Simon Clar was laid to rest. His burial was one of the first here, and over the years the stone which marked his gravesite has disappeared. The purpose of this ceremony is to dedicate a new marker in honor of Johan Simon Clar, so that the memory of this Revolutionary War Patriot will live on in the hearts and minds of his many descendants.

a note from Larry Smith, Graves Registration Committee

I prepared the foregoing biographical sketch from my own extensive research on this Patriot, and was motivated to organize the gravesite dedication ceremony in as dignified and memorable manner as possible, with the sponsorship of the Blair County Chapter.

If you know of a particular Patriot's gravesite (in our Chapter's general area) which has not been formally dedicated by the SAR, and/or one which does not possess a tombstone or marker, bring it to my attention. We will attempt to organize a dedication ceremony similar in style and content as the Clar dedication. Of course, your input, in terms of historical information on the Patriot would be helpful for the production of any dedication program. Even if an elaborate, formal dedication ceremony is not held, we need to make sure that all gravesites are properly marked with stones.

QUARTERLY MEETING

Don't forget to attend the 4th 1991 Quarterly Meeting of the Blair County Chapter, SAR (to be held at King's Family Restaurant on Saturday, October 26, 1991 at 12:00 noon).

ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual Meeting of the Blair County Chapter, SAR will be held on December 14, 1991 at the Ramada Inn, Altoona. (Note that this is a correction from the information given in the 1st Quarter Newsletter in regard to the location of this event.) Your wives are invited to attend this year's Annual Meeting. The cost, per person, will be \$12, payable to Larry D. Smith, Treasurer. As always, payment for the meal can be either in advance or at the door, but please respond with the number who will attend by Wednesday, December 11 so that we can make the proper arrangements with the Ramada Inn.

We will be honored to have PASSAR Secretary, Marshall Lignian and his wife in attendance this year. Mr. Lignian will be on hand to install the officers for 1992.
