

**Rev. Hans George Bechtel**

Hi KKC Extended Family,

I would think most of us in Southeastern PA would agree that we have had enough snow for the year. So hopefully, winter will be gone in a few weeks.

For the next few newsletters leading up to the reunion on June 14th, I will provide some background for Bob Gerhart's impersonation of Rev. Hans George Bechtel. This month is about George Bechtel.

**Looking forward to seeing everyone on June 14<sup>th</sup>!!**

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**Rev. Hans George Bechtel (1706-1759)**

Hans George Bechtel was born in Mannheim, Germany, about 1706 (some sources say 1710). He became a Mennonite minister in the Palatinate in 1727.

It is believed George was nephew of Bishop Hans Jacob Bechtel (d. 1739), who came to Pennsylvania about 1720, settling north of present-day Pottstown. Jacob's property included what was later known as "Ringing Rocks Farm." He ministered to those groups of 2-4 families on what was then the frontier, along the Manatawny Creek watershed of the Schuylkill River, stretching from the Pottstown area into Hereford. Jacob ministered with Bishop Daniel Langenacker (arr. 1719/1722). Needing help with this growing region, Jacob summoned George, to Pennsylvania to help minister.

The following year, George or "Jörg Bechtell" boarded the Ship Mortonhouse, with John Coultas the Master, in Rotterdam, bound for Deal, England. After gaining clearance in Deal, the ship sailed for America on 15 June 1728, arriving in Philadelphia on 23 August 1728. He took the oath of allegiance the next day and was naturalized by an Act of the Pennsylvania Assembly passed on 6 February 1730/1.

George settled north of Pottstown at Bally, near Hereford, in what is now, Washington Township, in southeastern Berks County, Pennsylvania. He was a farmer and weaver. He married Maria ---, possibly the daughter of a Kolb, and they had seven children, six sons and a daughter.

Peter Moll (a close friend and possibly his brother-in-law) arrived in Philadelphia the following year on 19 August 1729 on the same ship, also settling near Hereford. Both probably had groups of Mennonites travel with and homestead with them in this area. Together, George and Peter became ministers of the Hereford and Manatant Churches from 1728-1759. They first met in family homes, but established the first meeting house in Hereford in 1732, which was torn and replaced with a larger structure in 1755.

The Bechtel Family Bible, published in 1720 in Basel (now Switzerland), was sent to George by his father in 1730. It was rebound in 1874 by another family member and today is part of the collection at the Mennonite Heritage Center.

During the time of George's ministry, three major events occurred: the publication of the Martyrs Mirror in America translated from Dutch to German; in 1740, the preaching of English evangelist George Whitefield at the Henry Antes House in Skippack to over 2,000 people, including many German settlers; and the French and Indian War (1754-1763).

George himself became a Mennonite Bishop shortly before his death.

On 19 March 1759, Peter Moll and George Bechtel died hours apart on the same day.

The present-day village of Bechtelsville was laid out by George's grandson, John S. Bechtel (1786-1868).

**Sources:**

History of the Hereford Mennonite Congregation at Bally, Pennsylvania

[https://www.ancestry.com.au/imageviewer/collections/14660/images/dvm\\_LocHist000802-00007-1?ranMID=50142&pld=20](https://www.ancestry.com.au/imageviewer/collections/14660/images/dvm_LocHist000802-00007-1?ranMID=50142&pld=20)

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