

# FAMILY REGISTER



Jacob Criss born May. 15. 1778.

Hannah Rittenhouse born April 6. 1781.

They above Married Nov. 25. 1799.

Elijah Criss born September. 1. 1800.

Mary Criss born March. 24. 1802.

William Criss born Feb'y. 24. 1804.

John Criss born January. 24. 1806.

Jacob Criss born March. 1. 1808.

Jacob Criss deceas'd Sept. 1. 1808.

Sarah Criss born June. first. 1809.

Nicholas Criss born August. 27. 1811.

Hannah Criss born July. 27. 1813.

Henry Criss born November. 1. 1815.

Rittenhouse Criss born Sept. 17. 1817.

Jacob Criss born June. 19. 1819.

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DATA - STEWART FAMILY,  
(Eliza Jane Stewart, wife of Rittenhouse Criss)

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GEORGE STEWART.

Born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania  
Died in Hancock County, West Virginia, 1801.  
Wife: Susannah Wilson, born 1761, married 1779, died  
Hancock County, W. Va., 1843. (Originally Brooke Co., Va.)

SAMUEL STEWART.

Son of George Stewart.  
Born Lancaster County, Pa., 1780 (No record date of death)  
Wife: Elizabeth McCarty. (No record date of birth or death)

ROBERT STEWART:

Son of Samuel Stewart.  
Born 1810 (~~Lancaster County~~ Hancock County, Pa.) died 1876  
near Bethany, West Virginia.  
Wife: Margaret Wilson, born 1812, died 1855.

ELIZA JANE STEWART.

Daughter of Robert Stewart.  
Daughter of Robert Stewart, born 1835 near Bethany, West  
Virginia (now West Virginia) married Rittenhouse Criss, 1859,  
died Eldersville, Penna., 1916.

CHARLES L. CRISS.

Son of Eliza Jane Stewart.  
Born Feby. 1, 1866 near Eldersville, Pa.  
Wife: Lucy V. Criss, born New Wilmington, Pa., 1871.

JEANNE STEWART CRISS.

(Mrs. Edward Robert Stearn) born  
Pittsburgh, Pa. Daughter of C. L. and L. V. Criss.

CHARLES RITTENHOUSE CRISS.

Born Pittsburgh, Pa. Son of C. L. and L. V. Criss.  
Wife: Florence Large, born Inlay City, Mich.  
Daughter: Winnifred Jeanne Criss.

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EXTRACTS FROM PENSION RECORDS, Department of the Interior, U.S.A.

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GEORGE STEWART. Date of Enlistment in Revolutionary War, 1776.  
Service, until close of war. Rank, Major, Lt. Colonel, and  
Colonel of the Militia of Lancaster County, Pa.  
Battles, various, including Yorktown. Residence, Lancaster  
County, Pa.

Application by widow for pension, September 1841, res-  
idence at time, Brooke County, W. Va. Age stated on appli-  
cation, - born June 14, 1761 Application further states date  
of marriage April 22, 1779, to Susannah Wilson.....

(See Penna. Archives, 5th Series, Vol. 7, pages 31,  
457, 463, 464, 637.)

About the year 1785 he moved west and settled on a  
tract of about 500 acres situated on Robinson's Run, in Wash-  
ington County, Pa. the title to which he acquired. (Records  
of Wash. Co., Deed Book 1, Vol. 1, Page 580.)

George Stewart sold his lands in Washington County, Pa. in 1795 (Tech. Co. Deed Book 1, Vol. 1, Page 280) also Book L, Vol. 1, Page 567) and moved across the state line to what was then Brooke County, Virginia, now Hancock County, West Virginia, where he died in 1801.

A short sketch of his life including reference to his military services in the Revolutionary War is found in the History of Hancock County, West Virginia

NOTE: Samuel Stewart, son of George Stewart, appears to have removed to the "Robinson Run" tract with his father, and there married Elizabeth McCarty, and here Robert Stewart was born in 1810.

In attempting to assemble the foregoing data concerning the Criss and Stewart families in proper order, there are many omissions of dates, etc. and more or less important facts, owing largely to the conditions surrounding the early settlement and scattering the records about in three states, - Virginia, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Much of the data was secured by H. R. Criss, Attorney, as opportunity offered for search of the records in various places where it was possible for him to have been taken or filed, and the work of many years has resulted in ascertaining the more important facts. It is also recognized that in the early days of settlement of those districts bordering on the Indian country there were many matters more pressing than record keeping.

Prepared by  
Charles L. Criss, Pittsburgh (16) Pa.  
December 24th, 1944.

Record of the Criss (Crist - Christ) family of  
Washington County, Pennsylvania, from Colonial period to  
the present generation.

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NICHOLAS CRIST.

The first settlement was made by Nicholas Crist on the Monongahela River, about 25 miles south west of Ft. Pitt, (Pittsburgh) who removed from Virginia and took up land embracing most of the site of the present city of Donora.

This land was surveyed and granted to him by the so called Virginia Certificates in 1767, the colony of Virginia then claiming most of the territory within the great loop formed by the Monongahela and Ohio rivers.

This property, designated as "Strasburg Plantation" and other properties owned by him were operated by slaves.

Nicholas Crist was commissioned by the Governor of Virginia as a Lieutenant of Virginia Militia. (Presumably the so called "Virginia Rangers", maintained by the colony for the protection of the settlers from Indian raids, this being at that time the extreme western border?)

With the settlement of the territorial dispute between Pennsylvania and Virginia (1780-1782) the lands owned by Nicholas Crist became a part of Washington County, Pennsylvania, and the Virginia title invalid; new titles were later issued by "The Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania".

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania abolished slavery so became effective in 1794. Nicholas Crist disposed of his properties and removed to Kentucky.

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JOHN CRIST.

John Crist, son of Nicholas Crist, settled on a tract of land (then Virginia, now Washington County, Pennsylvania) located on Harmon's Creek about 8 miles east of the present city of Steubenville, O. and designated "The Hermitage", consisting of 349 acres. (Hanlin Station on the Pennsylvania Railroad is located near the center of this tract.) This settlement was made about 1772 or 1773.

John Crist was a member of a company of Virginia Rangers (Ensign) being mustered out at Ft. Pitt upon the adjustment of the territorial dispute, and became a member of the Washington County militia (Captain Kidd's Company) in 1781.

When the Virginia Certificate for the lands designated as the Hermitage became invalid, he secured a patent from Pennsylvania, issued on survey of 1785. (This patent is in possession of Charles L. Criss, Pittsburgh, and reads in part as follows: "Granted to John Christ..... upon payment of 2 Pounds, 18 Shillings and 4 Pence..... reserving to the Commonwealth one fifth part of all the gold and silver mined on the premises, to be delivered at the pits south free of all charges.")

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JACOB CRIST (Also spelled Criss), *born \_\_\_\_\_ died 1867*  
Jacob Crist, son of John Crist, succeeded his father in ownership and occupancy of the Hermitage property.

In this period the original spelling of the name became changed from Crist to Criss. The most plausible explanation appears to be on account of the old fashioned letters, particularly B and T, it became so spelled on records and was simply accepted and allowed to stand.

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RITTENHOUSE CRISS. - *born 1817 - died 1882*

Rittenhouse Criss, son of Jacob Criss, succeeded his father in ownership and occupancy of one half the original Hermitage property.

After his death in 1882, it was occupied by members of his family until about 1910, when it was rented for some years, and later sold (1918) so passing out of an unbroken line of ownership from the Colonial period.

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CHARLES LOUIS CRISS. *born 1866 - died 1959*  
Son of Rittenhouse Criss.

JEANNE STEWART CRISS (Mrs. Edward Robert Stearn) *born 1900 died 1985*  
Daughter of Charles L. and Lucy V. Criss.

CHARLES RITTENHOUSE CRISS. *born 1911*  
Son of Charles L. and Lucy V. Criss.

WINNIFRED JEANNE CRISS. *born 1942*  
Daughter of Charles R. and Florence Large Criss.

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For additional information see "Public Records of the Criss Family" compiled by N. R. Criss from public records in various places. (On account the boundary dispute during the Colonial period, early records are scattered about, - some in Virginia, some in Pennsylvania, and also in West Virginia.)

Records of families and dates, etc. so far as available are appended hereto.

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From both tradition and apparently authentic records, it appears that in making settlement on the extreme western border, John Crist was accompanied by two brothers, - Alan and Andrew Poe, who settled a few miles to the north in what is now Beaver County, Pa. Both became noted Indian fighters, and were members of the Washington County Militia. Andrew previously served as a Virginia Ranger and mustered out with John Crist.

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No record is had or known to exist concerning the date or place of birth of Nicholas Criss, founder of the family in Western Pennsylvania.

He was reputed to be of German birth or descent, and it is known that the Colony of Virginia made special efforts to secure settlers of German descent for the territory then claimed, embracing the present counties of Washington, Greene, and part of Allegheny and Beaver Counties, and many were from Western Germany and Alsace, then held by Germany. The fact that he named his new plantation "Strasburg" (the name of the principal city of Alsace) may or may not have any significance, although as of those times and customs it might have.

Such records as were kept of the early settlements in "Augusta" and "Ichogany" counties (Virginia) may be found not only in Virginia and West Virginia, but in the bordering counties of Pennsylvania as well as the counties within the then disputed territory. Thus the task of collecting reliable data is made very difficult.

The report of the Commission on Boundary appointed by the two states (upon which The Honorable David Pittenhouse represented Pennsylvania) and its survey was finally accepted in 1783. This invalidated the titles of those holding lands within the disputed territory on "Virginia Certificates", and it became necessary to secure titles for their lands from Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvania title granted to John Criss for the Hermitage property reads in part as follows:-

"Know ye that in consideration of the sum of Two Pounds Eighteen Shillings and Four Pence lawful money paid by John Criss into the Receiver General's Office of the Commonwealth, there is granted to the said John Criss a certain tract of land called The Hermitage, situated on Harmon's Run, in Washington County, beginning at a white oak..... which tract was surveyed for the said John Criss in pursuance of the orders of the Board of Property of the 15 September, 1784 and 7 March, 1785 for which a warrant of acceptance issued the 9 January instant..... To have and to hold.... free and clear of all restrictions and reservations as to mines, royalties, quit rents and otherwise, excepting and reserving only the fifth parts of all gold and silver ore for the use of the Commonwealth, to be delivered at the pits mouth clear of all charges."

This patent was granted by "The Supreme Executive Council of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania" under date of January 11, 1788, and signed by its Vice President, the Hon. Peter Muhlenberg. It is now in the possession of Charles L. Criss, Pittsburgh, Pa.

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There is today probably not a single mark or object of those enumerated in the patent for the Hermitage tract by which it could be located and identified definitely.

In 1890 Rittenhouse Griss, then owner of half the original tract, had it surveyed by Captain Lysander Patterson, county surveyor for Washington County. On one of the lines the distance overran the fences and markings to such an extent that a careful re-check was made, and showing the same result. A large oak tree standing about two feet from where the line ran and ended was examined, and markings found which established it as a line tree of a former survey. A section was saved and cut out, and it was found that the cuttings or marks designating it as a "line tree" could be traced through the rings of growth for over 100 years. As nearly as could be determined this carried the date back to about 1772.

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The first house erected on the Hermitage tract was a log cabin located near the central part, - about one hundred yards from the present Hanlin station.

This was succeeded by a larger house of two stories, constructed of hewn logs, located one half mile to the south west. Loop holes were cut in the logs of the second story for defense uses.

A third dwelling was later erected near the site of the second, partly of frame construction, near the site of the present dwelling.

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In the period of the first and second houses the nearest "fort" at which settlers gathered during Indian raids was near Cross Creek, about five miles to the southeastward. However, both on account the distance and the uncertainty of such alarms, the family commonly made use of a "hide out" on the Hermitage tract, under the roots of a copse of pine trees on a bluff overhanging Harmon's Creek, where women and children remained while Indians were in the vicinity. The place was well hidden and easily defensible. Both the bluff and the trees were destroyed in the building of the Penna. Railroad through the property.

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On a narrow bench about half way up the hillside in the rear of Hanlin Station as originally located, a number of the members of the earlier families were buried. The location was pointed out to G. L. Griss by Rittenhouse Griss, who stated that the names and the number buried there were not known. Upon the establishment of Bethel Church and cemetery this private burial ground was no longer used.

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The Genealogical Record of this line, and families, so far as ascertained at this time is as follows:

NICHOLAS CRIST.

Time and place of birth unknown. No record of his wife or family. (Other than his son, John Crist.)

JOHN CRIST.

Married Ursula (Hawkins ?)

William, Jacob, Henry, John, Nicholas, George, and Sarah.

JACOB CRIST. (Also spelled CRISS.) Died March 3, 1847.

Married Hannah Rittenhouse Died Sept. 11, 1838.

Elijah, Mary, William, John, Jacob (died aged 3 mos)

Sarah, Nicholas, Hannah, Henry, Rittenhouse, Jacob II, Ruth and Ann.

*born 1817 - died 1882*  
RITTENHOUSE CRISS. (First family, married Mary Fink. Hannah, John, Cyrus, and Sarah. Last three children and their mother died within one week of dysentery. Hannah married John Robinson, living only short time after marriage.)

Second Family: Married Eliza Jane Stewart, <sup>1857</sup> Mary Margaret, Stewart Wilson, Elmer Robinson, Charles Louis, Anne Ruth (Died) Robert Weldon, Nicholas Rittenhouse, and Harriet Blanche.

Charles Louis Criss. (First family, married Eva Gillespie.

Helen Marguerite, married George Phillips. Died within year.) <sup>1848</sup>

Second Family: Married Lucy V. Criss, Jeanne Stewart, Charles Rittenhouse.

JEANNE STEWART CRISS.

Married Edward Robert Stearn.

CHARLES RITTENHOUSE CRISS. <sup>Evelyn</sup>

Married Florence Large.

Winifred Jeanne Criss.

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HANNAH RITTENHOUSE.

Wife of Jacob Criss, mother of Rittenhouse Criss. Born April 6th, 1761. Direct descendant of William Rittenhouse, who settled in Germantown 1688, coming from Holland, but originally from Jersey. (Wilhelm Rittenhauser, "William of the House of Riders.") William Rittenhouse was a Mennonite preacher, and built and operated the first paper mill in America, located on Paper Mill Run, a branch of Wissahickon Creek, and now within the boundaries of Fairmount Park. Some of the old landmarks are still preserved, - an old cabin and the paper mill site.

The most distinguished member of this family was David Rittenhouse, a noted maker of fine instruments, patriot of the Revolutionary period and friend of Washington, and chosen for Commissioner of Pennsylvania in the settlement of boundary dispute with Virginia.

Another brother settled in <sup>Huntington</sup> Huntington County, N. J., and Hannah Rittenhouse was descended from him.

The Rittenhouse family was established by Matthias, a descendant of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, and was knighted by Ferdinand III of Austria "Matthias of the House of Knights," in Austria and Germany.

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ELIZA JANE STEWART.

Wife of Rittenhouse Criss, was born near Bethany, Virginia, (New West Virginia). She was descended directly from George Stewart, of Lancaster County, Penna., who served throughout the Revolutionary War as Colonel of Pennsylvania Militia and Provincial troops. His regiment was one of those chosen by General Anthony Wayne, under orders from Washington, to march into Virginia and intercept Lord Cornwallis in his march from the Carolinas, and she was present at the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown.

Shortly after the Revolutionary War George Stewart removed to Robinson's Run, near the present town of McDonald, Wash. Co., Pa., later removing to Chester, West Virginia.

It was said of him that although there was little or no recognition of holidays or anniversaries in those days, he scrupulously observed several "anniversaries", keeping the day in the same manner as the Sabbath, and permitting nothing but the most necessary work to be done throughout the day.

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ANN CRISS.

Daughter of Jacob Criss and sister of Rittenhouse Criss, married Thomas Boone, a grand nephew of Daniel Boone, pioneer of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley country, who resided near Orville, Ohio.

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