

JOHANNES CONRATH (CONRAD) NICODEMUS (D1C3B2A)
(1755 - 1834)
by Ivan Nicodemus

Conrad was the first child of Johann Frederick Nicodemus (1735-1816). He was born on 15 October 1755 as recorded in the Pennsylvania Archives, Series 6, Volume 6, pages 185/244 in the listings of baptisms by Rev. John Waldschmid. As such, Conrad was the first recorded Nicodemus born in America.

This listing states the mother's name as Elizabeth and no research to date has been able to identify her maiden name. The record is significant in that Rev. Waldschmid in this listing used the term "Godparents" and not his usual term "Sponsors" and moreover, there were five of these godparents instead of the usual two or three sponsors. The implication is that the mother, Elizabeth, had died.

Now there is a legend handed down by the ancestors of John Nicodemus, Conrad's half brother, that Elizabeth had died on the voyage of immigration. This legend is highly improbable because recent research suggests that Frederick immigrated in 1753 with his father. Secondly, the baptism is recorded as being only 11 days after the birth which is hardly a long enough time for travel from a seaport to this remote area of Lancaster Co., Pa. considering the added need for a wet nurse. Among the godparents was Johann Conrad Nicodemus, Conrad's uncle and name sake and Catharina Elizabeth Steindorff who I believe became Frederick's second wife - and Conrad's step mother.

A Special Census of Maryland in 1776 lists Conrad age 20 living with his father Frederick, and Catherine and Andrew, his half brother, in Elizabeth Hundred. On 28 December 1776 he married Margaret Hertel/Hartle the daughter of Hans Gorg Hertel and Margaretha (Hertz). Margaret was born 28 December 1756. This marriage date was taken from the Conrad Nicodemus bible from a fraktur pasted on the inside cover. The bible was owned in 1942 by Miss Lizzie Glass, Henrietta, Pa. and a note at the Pioneer Library, Bedford, Pa. states that the bible was in possession of Margaret Hartley in 1964 when she sent the bible to the Pennsylvania Historical Society. The fraktur was in color and listed in German all the births of Conrad's children with each birth in a different color. A photocopy of the fraktur was made by Mrs. Virginia Westhaeffer and the colors reproduced as exactly as possible. This copy is in the possession of her daughter, Caroline Westhaeffer at this writing. The bible was printed in Nurnberg in 1765. The fraktur was pasted on the inside cover with writing perpendicular to the width of the bible.

The DAR Patriot Index of 1966, page 497 lists Conrad Nicodemus but the date of death is incorrect. Also listed is his Uncle Conrad - his godfather - as well as his father, Frederick. Conrad took the Oath of Allegiance per Brumbaugh & Hodges in Washington Co., Md. at the March 1778 Court. Most likely Conrad did not serve in the Militia as did his father and uncle but was probably watching the family affairs while they and his half brother, Andrew, were away serving during the Revolutionary War.

A book FOUSE FAMILY HISTORY by Gavis Marcus Brumbaugh published in 1914 alleges that "Conrad Nicodemus of Bedford Co., Pa." accompanied one of the Fouses on the voyage of immigration and landed in Baltimore in October of 1784. Conrad Nicodemus did not move to Bedford Co., Pa. until 1788. This is a serious mistake by a writer of Mr. Brumbaugh's repute.