

Step Back in Time

The House of Yoder – Grantsville, Maryland

Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

Nestled in the Mountains of Western Maryland, just ½ mile east of Grantsville, MD, The House of Yoder, a living history museum, offers the opportunity to experience life in early America. Located at Spruce Forest Artisan Village and Penn Alps Restaurant, The House of Yoder was built in the late 1900s by Yoder descendants through donations and volunteer labor for the purpose of preserving Yoder family history, developing an archive, and providing a center for family functions and educational study.

The construction of the house incorporates European design (the Yoder's immigrated to America from Switzerland), and Eastern Pennsylvanian design from the pre-1750s using materials and techniques of that era.

The house has two front doors, as was the custom. The kitchen door was used for everyday family activity while the door to the living room was for company and religious activities. The layout of the first floor is a typical three-room style, with the kitchen at one end separated from the living room and bedroom by a massive fireplace. The sandstone fireplace and chimney is the dominant feature of the house. The 4' x 12' walk-in fireplace was the center of family life. This style fireplace was typical until about 1750; however, they were inefficient and took up too much room. Later examples were built smaller and were moved to the ends of the house.



Mayla Yoder and grandsons, Robert E. Dickey, IV (left) and Carter A. Dickey, in period costumes, enjoy a warm spring day reading a story outside The Yoder House.



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Below: The first floor is a typical three-room style separated by a massive fireplace.

Constructing The House of Yoder in the late-1900s was labor intensive due to using old material, instead of new, and because of using techniques of the 1700s and early 1800s. Logs, beams, girders, joists, pole rafters, and floor boards came from a number of old barns, an old church building, and early houses in the area. An immense beam, approximately 40 feet long, runs the length of the house – one can only imagine how large the tree had to have been in order to yield a beam this large. It is estimated that an excess of 100 tons of stone were taken from local woods and country-side (many from the Philip Bender farm) and hauled in to build the massive fireplace and chimney, root cellar, stairways, entrance and exterior walls. The windows were built by L. Merrill Yoder and his son Brian, of Tilford, PA. Utilizing lumber from the Grantsville, MD area, the windows were mortised and tenoned, using wooden pegs for the joints. They used 280 pieces of antique glass for the window panes.

In 1776, Christian Yoder came from Berks County, PA and settled near Brotherton in the “Glades” north of





Above: The 4' x 12' walk-in, sandstone fireplace is in the center of the first floor and the dominant feature of the house — Mayla Yoder and grandsons Robert and Carter, enjoy its warmth.

Right: The Casselman Bridge can be seen through the trees on the grounds of The Yoder House. When completed in 1813, the bridge was the largest single span stone arch bridge in the U.S. It served travelers on the National Road from 1813 to 1933.

Berlin, PA. His wife had died, leaving him with four children. With his second wife, Barbara Hooley, he had eleven more children. His nearest neighbor lived five miles away and there was no road to his property. He acquired more land, and by 1794 was able to transfer 400 acres to each of his three sons.

He was a leader in establishing the Amish brotherhood in the Glades, and his son, Christian, Sr. was the first Amish bishop ordained in America, serving from 1785 to 1838.

Whether your curiosity is in antiques, genealogy, construction or period history, a visit to The House of Yoder presents a wide range of interests for all ages. During your visit be sure to inquire about the Yoder Family Crest, the root cellar, the soul window, and the pouring stone.

The House of Yoder is open to visitors from the last week in May until the last week in October. Please see our website at: houseofyoder.org.

