

Who Was Jacob Hibshman, the Congressman from Lancaster County?

John Gerhard Hibshman was a native of Switzerland, and came to this country in 1732, at the age of 19 years. Five years later, returning to his native land for his wife, he sailed on the ship St. Andrew, September 24, 1737, from Rotterdam, Holland, for the land of his adoption—America. He settled in Lancaster County and purchased a farm for his new home. It is now owned by Israel Miller and lies four miles north of Ephrata.

John Gerhard Hibshman had four children, viz.. Wendel, Henry, Catharine and Elizabeth. Michael inherited the farm of his father, and married Hannah, daughter of John and Elizabeth Hefley, early settlers of Ephrata township. He had five children, Jacob, Henry, Hannah, Mary and John. Wendel Hibshman became prominent and held the honorable position of Major in the Revolutionary War, in the Third Battalion of the Lancaster County Militia, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Bower, August 26, 1780, to April 15, 1783. In the military records of the State I find the name spelled Hipshman, and when taking the oath of allegiance it is written Gernard Hipshman. Wendel Hibshman and family are buried in the private burial ground of their ancestral home.

The most prominent of this noted family, in our county, was Jacob, the son of Wendel Hibshman. As a Jeffersonian Democrat, he entered the field of politics. He was a scrivener and

Justice of the Peace for many years; elected Associate Judge of Lancaster County, January 24, 1811—serving until December, 1819, when he resigned. He was a member of the 16th Congress, to which he was elected in 1818, having defeated James Buchanan in the Congressional contest and serving from 1819 to 1821—two years and one term.

He was a very prominent and distinguished member, as Mr. Eshleman has shown. The Congressional District at that date was composed of the counties of Lancaster, Lebanon and Dauphin. He was appointed by the Governor appraiser of damages suffered by landowners in consequence of public improvements at that time—viz., canals, etc.

Jacob Hibshman was elected Surveyor of the counties of York, Dauphin and Lancaster, a deputy under the Surveyor General for many years. The first of whom there is a record was Jacob Hibshman, who was commissioned December 18, 1813, and served until 1819. In that year the counties were divided into two districts—Northern and Southern. He was again elected June 7, 1824, and May 25, 1836, of the Northern district.

Jacob Hibshman was not only prominent in the civil organizations of the State, but held the rank of Brigadier General for twelve years in the Fifth Division of the Pennsylvania Militia.

In 1824, when General Lafayette visited the United States, he was chairman of the committee appointed by the people of the town and county of Lancaster to do him honor, and had the compliment of introducing this distinguished Frenchman who had so nobly helped to gain our liberty. The Revolutionary soldiers entertained Lafayette.

Jacob Hibshman married Elizabeth Atkinson, daughter of Thomas and Salome Atkinson, and they had the following children: Polly, Lydia, Edward, Jacob, Elizabeth, Amelia and John. He died May 19, 1852, at his residence in Ephrata, aged 80 years, 4 months and 19 days. His wife passed away May 4, 1811. Both are interred in the Hibshman burying ground.

Henry Hibshman, a younger son of Wendel, and brother of Jacob, also held positions of prominence, as we find him a member of the State Legislature from 1811-1815-1821; and elected to the State Senate in 1833.

He also inherited the military spirit of his family as a member of the State Militia, retiring with the rank of General, and was also a commissioned officer in the War of 1812. Henry Hibshman was Recorder of Lancaster County from 1824 to 1830.

Mr. Harry Hibshman, a member of the Lancaster County Historical Society, a resident of Ephrata, Pa., is a great-grandson of Jacob Hibshman.

Mr. George Hibshman, of Ephrata, now the Representative from the Northern district of Lancaster county in the Legislature, is a grandson of Jacob Hibshman.

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