

✧ AN AMISH BEGINNINGS NOVEL ✧

*The
Newcomer*

SUZANNE
WOODS
FISHER


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To those pioneers in our life,
grandparents and great-grandparents (and so on),
who forged a trail through uncharted wilderness
for the rest of us to follow.



All the wilderness seems to be
full of tricks and plans to drive
and draw us up into God's light.

—John Muir

Cast of Characters

Bairn (Hans) Bauer—ship carpenter on the *Charming Nancy*, son of Jacob and Dorothea, had been separated from family as a boy and raised by Scottish sea captains. Recently reunited with family

Anna König—childhood sweetheart of Bairn who emigrated with her church from Ixheim, Germany, on the *Charming Nancy*

Jacob Bauer—Amish bishop of church of Ixheim; emigrated one year prior (1736) to claim land for church to settle

Dorothea Bauer—wife of Jacob Bauer, mother of Bairn and Felix

Felix Bauer—eight-year-old son of Dorothea and Jacob, brother to Bairn

*Benjamin Franklin (and wife Deborah)—printer in Philadelphia

The Newcomer

Christian Müller—Amish minister of church of Ixheim;
emigrated on *Charming Nancy* (1737)

Maria Müller—wife of Christian Müller

Catrina Müller—ten-year-old daughter of Christian and
Maria

Isaac Mast—church member, widowed father of Peter

Peter Mast—sixteen-year-old son of Isaac

Josef and Barbara Gerber and twin toddler boys—church
members

Simon Miller—church member, elderly bachelor, on the
lazy side of lazy

Henrik Newman (*The Newcomer*)—immigrant from Ger-
many who arrived on another ship (1737) and joined
the church of Ixheim

Captain Charles Stedman—captain of the *Charming
Nancy*, the ship that carried the church of Ixheim across
the Atlantic

Captain Angus Berwick—captain of the *Lady Luck*

Countess Magdalena von Hesse—German noblewoman
who came to the New World to find her missing hus-
band

*Maria Saur (Sister Marcella)—wife of printer Christoph
Saur

*Peter Miller (Brother Agrippa)—one of the brothers at

Ephrata Cloister who, after Father Friedsam's death,
ran the Cloister

*Conrad Beissel (Father Friedsam)—a charismatic preacher
who, along with his faithful following, started Ephrata
Cloister

*nonfiction

Glossary of Historical Terms

anchor home means the anchor is secured for sea. It usually rests on the outer side of the hull, at the bow of the ship.

barque is a three-masted, square-rigged sailing ship designed to haul cargo.

binnacle is built-in housing for a ship's compass.

boatswain, pronounced 'bō-sən, is the ship's officer in charge of equipment and the crew.

bollard is a large ball on a short pedestal.

bowsprit is a spar extending forward from a ship's bow to which the forestays are fastened.

cleat is a low fastener with a horn on each side.

coaming is a raised border around the hatch of a ship to keep out water.

companionway is a set of steps leading from a ship's upper deck down to the lower deck.

fo'c'sle deck is a raised deck at the bow of a ship.

forecastle or *fo'c'sle* is the forward part of a ship below the deck, traditionally used as the crew's living quarters.

Fraktur is both a German style of lettering and a highly artistic folk art created by the Pennsylvania Dutch in the 18th and 19th centuries.

galley is the ship's kitchen.

Great Cabin is the captain's quarters.

halyard is a rope used for raising or lowering sails, spars, or yards.

land warrants were official documents (though, in the 1700s, they were often scraps of paper) authorizing a person to assume possession of a specific plot of land.

larboard was the historical term for the left-handed side of the ship, looking forward. In early times merchant ships were loaded from the left side. *Lade* meant "load" and *bord* meant "side."

leeward is the side sheltered or away from the wind.

Mutza is a traditional coat worn by Amish men to church and other formal occasions. The coat has no collar, pockets, or lapels. Normally black, some coats from 18th- and 19th-century Europe were red.

oakum, from the word *off-combing*, is loose fiber obtained by untwisting old ropes, used to caulk wooden ships.

Oath of Allegiance was created in 1727 by the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania and administered to all immigrating male Germans in the Philadelphia Court House. The Oath required an immigrant to disavow ties to his

former monarch and pledge allegiance to King George of Great Britain.

round house is the chartroom where the ship's progress was planned and plotted.

spar is a thick, strong pole used for a yard.

starboard comes from *steor* meaning "helm" or "rudder" and *bord* meaning "side." At one time, a boat or ship had rudders tied to its side. The modern word, starboard, refers to the right-handed side of a vessel, looking forward.

stern is the rearmost part of the ship.

trammel is a hook in a fireplace to hold a kettle.

triangle trade is an historical term indicating trade among three ports. Sugar (often in the liquid form of molasses) from the Caribbean was traded to New England, where it was distilled into rum. Profits from the sale of sugar were used to purchase goods; those goods were sold or bartered in West Africa for slaves, who were then brought to the Caribbean to be sold to sugar planters. The profits from the sale of the slaves were then used to buy more sugar.

upper deck or *waist* was the middle part of a British ship. This large area, lower than both the raised forecastle deck toward the bow and the even higher quarterdeck toward the stern, was where passengers could congregate if there was no maneuver requiring the area to be cleared for action.

yard is a horizontal spar on a ship's mast for a sail to hang from.

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Philadelphia

October 15, 1737

Bairn was suffocating. Not literally, mayhap, but as close as a man could get. Hardly a week had passed since he had been joyfully reunited with his father, and then, with each passing day, joy slipped away, and in its place swept anxiety, disappointment, frustration, even panic. He felt a jumble of feelings for his father—part of him loved Jacob Bauer as a son ought to love his father, part of him resented him mightily.

The first night they were all together in Port Philadelphia, Bairn had told his parents the story of how he had been snatched from the ship as a boy, sold off as an indentured servant to an evil man, and his father informed he was dead. He had been treated brutally by his master, tried to escape, and was sold off in a gambling game. He ended up as a cabin boy for Captain John Stedman, the first man in the New World to treat him well. The captain educated him and taught him ship-faring skills, and he learned quickly. He was given more responsibility, and eventually promoted to ship's

carpenter. Anna König helped him translate the story to his parents, because his German dialect was rusty from disuse.

For the rest of his life, Bairn would remember standing in the carpenter's shop of the docked *Charming Nancy* ship, waiting for his father's reaction. He would remember how quiet it was. He would remember dust dancing in shafts of light filtering through the door left open to let air circulate. He would remember how tired his father looked, how old he'd grown. Streaks of gray now colored his beard; his skin bore fine white lines in the squint wrinkles that creased his eyes.

And he would never forget what happened next.

Jacob Bauer listened to his son's story one time—only *one* time—and when Bairn had finished, his father smoothed the long beard at his chin and calmly said they would speak of it no more. As if those years had not occurred! His father insisted on calling him Hans, his birth name. Bairn felt such detachment from his childhood that he didn't even realize his own mother was speaking to him when she called him Hans. That boy was gone for good.

Bairn had lived an entire life that his parents didn't want to know about, or hear about, or think about. They wanted him to be the son they remembered, the boy they had lost. They wanted to pretend his disappearance had never happened, to pick right up where everyone left off as if he had been away on a lengthy visit to a grandparent. But such thinking was impossible. He wasn't that boy any longer. He was a grown man, a seaman, shaped by a thousand different influences. Most all of them considered, by the church, to be the devil's influence.

How would Bairn ever be able to stand a farmer's life in

the wilderness of Penn's Woods, under the narrow constraints of the Amish church, with his even more narrow-minded father as bishop?

Jacob Bauer had chosen the farthest place under British boundaries to claim for land warrants—right up against the Blue Mountain range. A metaphor, Bairn realized, for how his father planned for the church to live—separate, isolated. Cut off from the rest of the world.

Bairn's dialect was inadequate to express his concerns. English was best. So tonight, before supper, with his darling Anna's help as translator, he gathered his courage to question his father's wisdom to choose land so far north, near the frontier, rather than west on the trade route. The group had to remain in the *Charming Nancy*, docked, until the men went through the process of getting naturalized. Normally, it was a swift procedure but the portico at the Philadelphia Court House had been crowded with late arrivals. Soon, though, they would be cleared. And that's what concerned Bairn. "Why did y' choose land so far from civilization?"

Jacob's eyes stayed on Bairn as Anna interpreted. "Most of the land around Philadelphia has been claimed, but the area northwest of the city is unsettled."

"Aye, 'tis unsettled for a reason. Y'll spend years clearin' land in the wilderness. It will require hard, physical labor."

"We are not afraid of hard work." Jacob's fingers tapped on the wooden chest, a mannerism Bairn had forgotten, a sign of growing irritation. His father did not like to be challenged. "The land up north is made for farming. Soil, rich in limestone. Spring-fed creeks. The trees provide good building material for the cabins." He narrowed his eyes. "I chose

well. It's an ideal place to settle. You'll see that for yourself, soon enough."

"But why not buy land closer to Germantown?" The earliest immigrants had developed the settlement into a prosperous place for Germans, including a town square like the ones in Europe. "Why must y' settle such a distance from the main colony?"

"Germantown is a hodgepodge. Lutheran, Reformed, Mennonites, Dunkers. They will work their wiles and take our children from us. And those settlers aren't farmers. They're weavers or carpenters or ironworkers, that sort."

That *sort*? Jacob Bauer spoke as if plying a trade was right up there with the devil's handiwork. Farming, in his mind, was the only vocation blessed by God. "Y' should be grateful that there are craftsmen who can make wagons and iron tools t' purchase. And y'll need a market to sell yer produce."

"We will produce all that we need to survive."

"Tis no way the church can be entirely self-sufficient." Bairn's frustration was growing. "At the very least, consider letting the women and children winter in Germantown while the men survey the land and build shelters."

"No," Jacob said in that firm, dismissive tone. "We won't be separated. That time is done."

"Think of the winter cold," Bairn said.

"It's been a dry summer and fall, which augurs a mild winter. I've built a snug cabin that will provide shelter."

Bairn looked at him. "What of the natives?"

"Oh dear." His father sighed. "Not that old chestnut."

Bairn had brought that worry up before. "Tis not to be trivialized. Yer heading into the heart of Indian territory.

They've lived there far longer than William Penn and his land agents."

Anna's brows rose at that. She hesitated before she translated that last bit, and when she did, her voice, always soft, became even quieter. But the words spoken were not without impact. The room went utterly still, no one breathed. Bairn's mother was the first to speak, saying aloud what everyone else was thinking.

"Into the *heart* of Indian territory?" Dorothea said. "Jacob—you never said anything about that. You said you had met only one."

"He was friendly," Jacob said, his voice rising momentarily. "He helped me build the log cabin. All summer, he worked alongside me."

"Y've seen only one Indian?" Bairn said. "Trust me, plenty have seen you. They're everywhere y' fail t' look. Y' have to be on guard all the time. Yer heading right into their hunting grounds." That was when Anna looked Bairn in the eye, a warning, and dropped her voice again as she translated for Jacob.

"They're *friendly*," Jacob insisted. "William Penn took care to treat them fairly."

"Was this one who helped y' a Delaware or an Iroquois?" The two groups were bitter enemies.

"Delaware."

That was good to hear, as the Delaware were not as aggressive toward Europeans as the Iroquois. Still, Bairn knew it was wrong to use fear to make his point. His mother feared her own shadow. He changed his tactics. "Most of the Menonites trade blankets and baskets and other goods for skins and furs from the Indians. Someone will have t' learn the languages. 'Tis a way t' show y' mean t' be good neighbors."

“Not necessary.” Jacob’s features hardened in a look of disapproval. “We will be self-sufficient. Separate from those influences that have gone west.”

“Aye, they’ve all gone west for good reason, those Mennonites and Dunkers. They know they need the trade route to survive, t’ buy and sell supplies. The roads are good, goin’ west. If y’ go north, yer headin’ into uncharted territory. Y’ll be havin’ to clear Indian trails as y’ go, assumin’ you can find them.” His voice became more forceful and he tried to moderate it judiciously, but he could feel a flush starting up his cheekbones. *Say it*, he thought. Someone had to say it to him. “The Mennonites and Dunkers know that the British border is not a secure one. They know the French want to claim those borders. They know the French have the Indians in their circle. The French are able to negotiate treaties with Indians. The British only antagonize the natives.”

His father rose without warning, startling the group who’d been watching the quarrel escalate between father and son, wide-eyed and open-mouthed. “Enough!” Jacob thundered, but Bairn saw his hands were trembling. “You’re frightening your mother with your talk.”

Jacob’s gaze swept the room, locking eyes with each church member. You could see the calm come over him as he slipped back into his role as bishop. Cool again, he said, “Let us thank God for bringing us here and ask Him to bless our choice of land.” The group circled Jacob and bowed their heads in prayer.

All but Bairn. He quietly slipped out the door to walk down by the Delaware River.

He could not join in on such a prayer. These people were

naïve in the ways of the world and put themselves in jeopardy, then expected God to have mercy on their foolishness.

He couldn't see himself living a life of such foolishness. He felt a growing, desperate panic rise within him, something he couldn't even tell Anna, though he knew she sensed his troubled spirit. He loved her, yet she would not understand why he was suffocating. And then there was Felix, his brother. He loved that laddie as well. Where did his obligations lie? To himself or to his family? To his dreams or to their dreams? That was the swirl of emotions that he couldn't seem to untangle from his gut.

Bairn had gone down the rabbit hole of doubt and he couldn't climb back up—he wasn't sure he wanted to. Not with the choices his father had made.

He could always walk away from a sea captain. But he could not walk away from a father.



Philadelphia

October 16, 1737

The tension that hung in the air last night lingered still.

Anna was on the upper deck of the *Charming Nancy*, spreading freshly washed laundry on a ship's yard to dry in the sun.

Bairn lowered his voice. "Is something wrong?"

"You tell me." Anna hung the last shirt over a rigging and leaned her back against the railing. "You seemed different after supper." She tilted her head. "Did your mood have anything to do with the quarrel you had with your father?"

The afternoon sun caught Bairn full on the face.

“Y’ think I was to blame for the quarrel, dinnae y’?”

“Truly, I don’t know.” Who was to blame for the quarrel seemed far less important to her than the anger that flared between them. In that moment they were no longer father and son, but strangers.

How could a man and son be reunited after years apart with such rejoicing . . . yet scarcely a week later, they had stood glaring, hands on their hips, legs stiff, thoroughly frustrated and exasperated with each other?

“Then am I mistaken in my thinkin’?”

“The land your father chose, he described it differently than you did.” For the last week, Jacob Bauer waxed eloquent as he filled everyone’s minds with images of pristine wilderness. A man could see a long way from anywhere, he said, the sky was *that* big, the horizon *that* far. He spoke of the clear, cold creeks and streams that crisscrossed the land and teemed with fish, the plentiful virgin timber for houses and fences and firewood, the wild game that was there for the taking, the untouched soil that was ripe to plow.

“Tis true what he said, I dinnae disagree. We are in the Land of Penn and Plenty. But there’s good reason the vast wilderness remains unsettled.”

“I heard your father refuse to consider your suggestion to go west to Lancaster.” Everyone heard. “He seems determined to see this through.”

“This thing Jacob Bauer has set out to do—he encourages at great risk.” He sat on the ship’s railing and looked out toward the mighty Delaware, at the wooded islands that dotted the river.

“You speak of him as if you don’t belong to him. As if he is another man’s father.”

“When I left the ship as a boy, I stopped being my father’s son.”

It isn’t true, Anna thought. *A man is always and forever his father’s son*. But what was true was that Jacob Bauer was not the kind of father, or bishop, that Bairn wanted him to be.

The initial excitement of arriving in the New World had disappeared quickly for everyone. They all had such high expectations, unrealistic and unfounded ones. Everyone assumed their troubles were behind them, left in the Old World.

Port Philadelphia was so young compared to ancient Rotterdam, the only other city she’d been to. From the docks rose a well-planned grid of wide streets, a few paved with cobblestones but most remained unpaved, lined with brick houses. Building was going on everywhere. Meant-to-last kind of buildings. The State House was half built, the steeple of Christ Church stood tall and proud. The young city was in a state of flux, with horses pulling carts filled with bricks to building sites or farm wagons filled with vegetables for sale at market.

And the sounds of industry that carried in the air! Steady hammers that sounded like woodpeckers, the rickety sound of metal wagon wheels on the cobblestones, the clip-clop of the horses. A riot of languages too. Swedish, Dutch, Norwegian, Russian—languages she’d never heard spoken. Anna had an ear for languages, a gift from her professorial grandfather, but the variety of tongues overwhelmed and bemused her. Accents too. So many variations of the King’s English—Irish, Scottish, and now she had learned to recognize a new accent, the American one, where it added *r*’s in some places and dropped them in others. A confluence of influences.

This New World was an exciting place to be and Philadelphia was at the center of it. A few days ago, Felix had brought a newspaper to her, the *Pennsylvania Gazette*. The headline reported Philadelphia as the fastest-growing city in the colonies, surpassing New York and Boston.

But travel due north or west a short distance and the roads were primitive, dirty, filled with ruts. And beyond that, toward the top of the Schuylkill River, a person would be face-to-face with wilderness.

And wasn't that the crux of last night's quarrel between Jacob and Bairn?

She watched Bairn for a while; his eyes did not leave the busy port. "The last few days, you've been so quiet . . . so removed," she said softly. "I'm beginning to think you wish yourself back at sea."

He turned to her. "But if that were so, then the girl I have loved since childhood would not be beside me."

"Do you love me, Bairn?"

He lifted his hand to touch her cheek, and creases angled at the corners of his gray eyes as he smiled. "How could I have ever stopped?"

But what she should have asked: Was love enough?