

## What is a “pannebakker”? Maker of Tiles

Samuel W. Pennypacker had a strong interest in his family’s genealogy. The name Pennypacker derives from the Dutch name Pannebakker which translates as maker of tiles. Panne is a clay tile and the bakker is the one who makes it and puts it in the kiln, the baker.

In 1463, Holland disallowed thatch or straw as a roofing material. The family made clay roof tiles at that time, and were therefore known by the name Pannebakker. Samuel travelled to Holland in 1890 and again in 1897. He found the family coat of arms in a church window in Gorcum, now known as Gorinchem. The coat of arms consists of three roof tiles on a shield. After the Hundred Years’ War, the family moved from Holland to the areas around Worms, Germany and spelled the name Pfannebecker.



Hendrick Pfannebecker was born on March 21, 1674 and emigrated from Crefeld to Pennsylvania on September 2, 1698, spelling his last name as Pannebecker at that time. He married Eve Umstat on October 14, 1699 in Germantown and had eight children, one of which was Samuel W. Pennypacker’s great-great-grandfather Jacob. By the late 1700s, the name shifted to Pennypacker and over 50 other variations. Proud of his family name, Samuel W. Pennypacker not only used an image of a single roof tile in his bookplate, but also placed tiles on either side of the front and side doorways at Pennypacker Mills, and in 1906 he roofed the summer kitchen with them as well after purchasing some as antiques from a local farmer in Kulpsville.



Because the tiles are fireproof, they were often used on buildings like summer kitchens which had the constant threat of sparks igniting wooden shingles. Regionally, local farmers were often potters because they could make ware in the winter when they couldn’t be out in the fields, and they usually had an abundant supply of clay along streams that ran through their property.

The tiles are not glued or nailed in place. They are made with clay tabs on the back which rest on slats that run across the roof rafters. Just the weight of the tiles holds them down. The tiles have ridges pressed into them when they are made, that direct the rain water down to the center bottom of the tile, and then because the tiles are laid in straight vertical rows, the water is directed down onto the tile below. If a tile should break, the vertical row can easily be removed to get at the tile that needs to be replaced.