We are gathered here at Heimwald Park, much as the descendants of Casper Glattfelder have done for over 100 years. But there is a little more to celebrate today as we mark the arrival of our immigrant ancestor in America, 275 years ago.

While we are mainly concerned with Casper in America, we'll take a brief look at his forbears. Perhaps it is appropriate that the first reliable evidence occured on this day in 1570 with the marriage of Adam Glattfelder to Verena Sigi, who were likely Casper's great-great-great grandparents. They were followed by Hans and Margret, married in 1596; Joachim and Anna; Felix and Barbara; and Casper's parents, also named Felix and Barbara, who were married on Jan. 22, 1695.

Casper was born in 1709 and baptized on July 25 -- we do not know the exact date of his birth. He was one of eight children, with Casper and John Peter the only sons to reach adulthood. Casper married Elisabeth Laufer on April 3, 1731, and they had seven children, with four dying in infancy.

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In the 1700s, many Germans and Swiss were inspired to seek new lives in the new world. As we know, among them was Casper.

In 1743, the family joined others from Glattfelden, Switzerland, in making the trip down the Rhine River to Rotterdam. There, they boarded the ship Francis and Elizabeth, which may have looked similar to the ship in this photo, and traveled the 3,000 miles to America, disembarking in Philadelphia on August 30, 1743.

Along with Casper were several children of brother John Peter, who passed away in Switzerland before the family could embark for America. Casper's wife and son John apparently died on the voyage to America or very soon thereafter. Solomon was the lone son who survived the voyage.

Within a month after arriving in America, Casper, along with brother-in-law Henry Walter, purchased a tract of land in what is today Newberry Township in northeastern York County for 66 pounds, 10 shillings. Three years later, they sold that land as they searched and found an area of York County that reminded them of home. The two claimed land along the south branch of the Codorus Creek, which you can see around us today. The survey made for Casper in 1770 referred to the tract as Beaver Dam; Henry's was called Crooked Meadow.

Numerous Glattfelder descendants who have visited Glattfelden, Switzerland, have remarked at the similarity of the land along the Codorus Creek and the area around Glattfelden.

Soon after arriving in America, Casper remarried. With Anna Maria, whose maiden name we don't know, he had six sons (including one, Jacob, who died young). Most Glattfelders trace their roots through ne of the sons: Solomon, who was born in 1738 in Switzerland, or Felix, John, Henry, Michael or Casper, born between 1747 and 1758 in York County. We have no record of daughters to his second marriage, though his will indicates there were some.

An inventory of Casper's estate, made in 1775, reveals that he was a farmer, as well as a carpenter or cabinetmaker. He also took on duties assigned by the county as a road supervisor and a constable, which were of one-year terms.

Casper was baptized into the Swiss Reformed church. In York County, there was only one German Reformed minister for many years, Jacob Lischy, who baptized at least three of Casper's children. For some years, the Glattfelders considered themselves members of the Reformed congregation in York, and they may have helped organize the Reformed congregation at Shuster's Church.

Casper died in 1775, at age 66, here in York County, not long before the beginning of the American Revolution. A tombstone placed by our association in 1954 marks his likely burial spot in Bupp's Union cemetery near here. His sons and their descendants -- Casper had at least 55 grandchildren -- spread

across the county, the state, the country and the world. As the descendants spread to various locations, the Glattfelder name also took on various spellings.

While Casper was not alive for America's fight for independence, numerous relatives were and did join the fight, with descendants also putting their lives on the line for all of America's battles, which were documented in recent reunion programs.

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Solomon, who was baptized Feb. 23, 1738, is buried in Salisbury in southwestern Pennsylvania, with many of his line having settled in that area and in northern Maryland. Most of their names were and are spelled Glotfelty.

A new tombstone for Solomon was placed in 2005.

Felix, the first son born to Casper in America about 1747, inherited the family homestead and enlarged it over the 40 years he owned it. The stone house, which he built sometime between 1800 and his death in 1815, still stands here across the meadow. Anybody today is welcome to walk across the meadow and take a look at the house. It replaced a log or frame house which was standing on the property at the time of the federal direct tax in 1798.

Among our merchandise items today is a Cat's Meow replica of the homestead.

Felix married Maria Elizabeth Rennoll, and they had 10 children. The probable site of Felix's grave is marked by a tombstone placed at Bupp's Union by the Association in 2005.

One of the oldest surviving artifacts of Glattfelder interest is a bible located in the Glatfelter Room at the Lancaster Theological Seminary. It belonged to Felix's son Jacob, who left York County in 1800. The bible, which was printed in Ephrata, near Lancaster, in 1795, eventually made its way to our association. The CGAA gave the bible to the seminary in 1991 to place in the Glatfelter Room. The room was named in honor of former Association president Rev. J. Richard Glatfelter, who was a seminary graduate and administrator.

John was baptized July 30, 1751, along with twin son Jacob, who died young. John purchased a farm in what is now Springfield Township and reared his family on the 240-acre tract, located near Friendensaal's (or "White") Church, which was another stop on the bus trip yesterday. John and his wife Catherine, whose maiden name is unknown, had eight children. He is buried in that same White Church cemetery, with the association also placing a tombstone for him in 2005.

Henry, who was born Aug. 13, 1752, bought a 139-acre farm in Springfield Township east of Bupp's Union Cemetery in 1782. In 1802, he bought from his brother-in-law a farm near Stoverstown, where he died in 1833. Henry married Margaret Heilman, and the two had eight children. He was the last surviving son of Casper and is buried at Wolf's Church north of here.

Michael bought a farm in 1781 in what is now Springfield Township and sits on property now owned by Brown's Orchards and Farm Market, which was our stop for lunch on the bus trip. While the Browns are currently caretakers of Michael's former homestead, there is further significance because the wife of orchard founder Earl Brown, Margaret, was a Glattfelder descendant through Felix. Sadly, three of Earl's kin -- son Stan, Stan's wife Nona and their son David -- passed away within the past year.

Michael and his family lived there for 28 years before moving to Washington County, in western Pennsylvania. He married Anna Maria Hesson on Sept. 5, 1780, and they had seven children. The exact date of Michael's birth is unknown, but he died in 1824 and is buried in western Pennsylvania; his estate papers refer to him as Michael Clodfelter.

The younger Casper, born in 1758, also purchased a farm in what is now Springfield Township in 1785.

He purchased the land from Jacob Kersh, who it is believed was the father of Casper's wife, Maria Eva. Casper and Maria Eva had 13 children, most of whom left York County. When he died in 1823, Casper owned 174 acres. He is buried at St. Peter's "Yellow" Church and his was the third marker placed by the association in 2005.

Among the more precious items in our Association archives is a worship book dated 1801 that was bequeathed by the elder Casper to his youngest son.

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One of the great themes in American history is the movement of people into new lands. Casper had at least 55 grandchildren, most who were born after his death, and many left York County in search of better opportunities. In fact, the emigration actually began with Solomon.

Among the descendants of note are former Pennsylvania Governor George Leader; former U.S. Representative Bill Goodling; former Temple University president Millard Gladfelter; Arthur J. Glatfelter, who was well-known in York County for his insurance agency and philanthropy, and was a major contributor to our Association; and Philip H. Glatfelter, who founded the P.H. Glatfelter paper mill in Spring Grove in 1864 and who Glatfelter Hall on the campus of Gettysburg College is named for.

All have passed away and aren't here with us today, but all, except Philip, were here at the 250th Anniversary Reunion in 1993, and appear on the video of that celebration, which can be seen on a laptop in the Historical Building and is available for sale.

While all but Philip, who didn't attend the first reunion in 1906 and passed away before the second, appeared at reunions at one time or another, many other descendants of Casper and his sons have been coming to York County for over 100 years, to a park within sight of the old homestead at Glatfelters Station: Heimwald Park. As Dr. Charles H. Glatfelter, a York County native, longtime Association board member, past president and historian, would say about those attending a reunion for the first time, they're returning home, to Heimwald, the "home woods."

Dr. Charles put many, many hours into the association. He furthered the historical research begun by Dr. Noah Glatfelter, who was born and became a teacher in York County, before going on to serve in the Civil War, become a doctor in St. Louis and a renowned botanist, and wrote an early family history in 1901. Both Dr. Charles and Dr. Noah, as of today, have plaques honoring them here at the park.

In 1906, three Glattfelder descendants, Rev. Adam Stump, Samuel Glatfelter and Granville Glatfelter, "a self-constituted committee" as they called themselves, began plans for a reunion, the first of which was held September 8, 1906, in woods on the property of James Messersmith, not far from here near Loganville. By all accounts, including by the editor of the Glen Rock Item newspaper, who estimated that there were 1,200 in attendance, it was a success. By newspaper accounts, the largest attendance was nearly 2,500 in 1919.

The reunion's location from 1907-1912 was on the property of Solomon Falkenstine, located just north of here. In 1907, "the scene was a remarkable one for this or any other county of the state," one York newspaper reported.

The railroad tracks that run along the York County Heritage Rail Trail were in use during the time of the early reunions, and a report in the 1907 Glen Rock Item estimated that about 500 people came to the reunion by train.

Heimwald Park was purchased in 1913, from Martin Glatfelter, one of the Association's directors, on land that was owned initially by Casper's brother-in-law, Henry Walter. The reunions have been held here ever since.

Reporting on the 1913 reunion, the York newspapers declared that, "so far as is known, the Casper

Glattfelder Association of America is the only organization of its kind in the United States today incorporated and owning its own meeting ground." It is possible the same can be said today.

In his book, The Casper Glattfelder Association of America: The First 100 Years, Dr. Charles wrote, "Anyone who has attended many reunions and studies the registration book long enough will repeatedly encounter many familiar names. As a result, faces and personalities will return to mind: a reunion leader; someone who sang a solo or delivered a recitation; a person remembered for nothing more dramatic than coming year after year to reunions, and just being there; the spouse of a Glattfelder, who over a period of time has become one in fact as well as name; or a seventh, eighth or ninth generation Glattfedler for whom the annual return to Heimwald is a given."

Thank you for coming today, for the 113th reunion, to celebrate our Glattfelder heritage, and to honor our immigrant ancestor, Casper, who came to America in 1743, 275 years ago.