

Marin Snapshot: David Shirk over the moon about his Oscar for 'Gravity'



By Megan Hansen
Marin Independent Journal
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WHILE THE FILM "Gravity" sent astronauts floating through space, it's recent Academy Award win for best visual effects sent senior animation supervisor David Shirk over the moon.

Shirk, 46, of San Rafael has worked on more than a dozen other films such as "Elysium" and "Transformers," but "Gravity" brought him his first big-time award. And getting there wasn't easy. He spent 19 months in London where he worked on "Gravity" with animators at Framestore, a visual effects house.

"My wife stayed back here and just came to visit as much as she could. The film required my undivided attention when I was there," Shirk said.

This film image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows a scene from "Gravity," directed by Alfonso Cuarón. The film is nominated for 10 Academy Awards. The 86th Academy Awards are on Sunday, March 2, 2014, in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/Warner Bros. Pictures) Courtesy of Warner Bros. Picture

But attending the Oscars, and spotting a glance of his favorite actor Bill Murray, made up for any rough patches Shirk may have had. He said the award ceremony was an overwhelming and exciting experience that still has him reeling.

Q: How long have you lived in Marin?

A: I moved to California 10 years ago, and we've been here ever since. I worked at Industrial Light & Magic when it was in San Rafael.

Q: What were your job duties for the film "Gravity?"

A: I was the animation director on the film. I was working alongside an animation supervisor with Framestore. I oversaw a team of about 30 animators, and I also helped out with the layout team. I also worked with the simulation team, doing motion for things such as tethers attached to characters. There was a tremendous amount of detail, and I think there needed to be as things become pretty stark in space. It was critical to director Alfonso Cuarón that viewers were looking at what appeared to be documentary footage.

Q: What was the most difficult part of the animation team's job?

A: There were many things, but the most daunting task was the actual simulation of zero gravity. Until you really step back and examine the problem, you don't realize that so much of our perception is based on how things move up and down. You couldn't do things like hang actors upside down to simulate zero gravity because it didn't look right. So we had to solve those sorts of problems.

Q: What was it like to attend the Oscars? This film image released by Warner Bros. Pictures shows Sandra Bullock in a scene from "Gravity." (AP Photo/Warner Bros. Pictures) Uncredited

A: The whole experience was pretty unreal for us. When you're in the process of making a film, awards are the furthest thing from your mind. When it does actually happen, it seems very unreal. The really amazing thing is the level of interest people have had in the work we've done. People are just absolutely fascinated by what we created in the film. We've been thrust into the foreground of that curiosity.

Q: What went through your mind when it was announced that you won?

A: The one thought I remember was "Don't trip on the steps." I didn't want to embarrass myself in the excitement. Your heart is just pounding.



David and Cathy Shirk

Contact Megan Hansen via email at mhansen@marinij.com

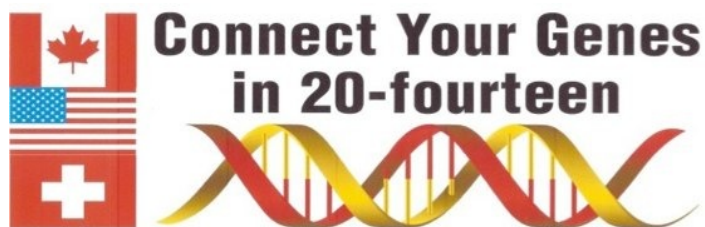
David Shirk's Geneology

- E:** Ulrich Schürch (August 23,1728 Immigrant to the port of Philadelphia aboard the ship Mortonhouse)
- E1:** Peter Scherch (Scherck)
- E16:** Joseph Scherch (Scherick)
- E167:** David Shirk
- E1672:** John G. Shirk
- E1672E:** Peter N. Shirk
- E1672E3:** Walter H. Shirk
- E1672E32:** Harold L. Shirk
- E1672E321:** David A. Shirk



David Shirk's Pennsylvania Family Fan Club
Bottom row: Lorraine Shirk; Gretchan Shirk; Clarice Shirk
Top row: Laurence C. Shirck (E8162884); Walter H. Shirk (E1672E3); Harold L. Shirk (E1672E32); Thomas A. Sherk (N16A643).

Missing/photographer: Doris E Shirck



Visual effects artists Chris Lawrence, Tim Weber, Neil Corbould, David Shirk attend the Oscars held at Hollywood & Highland Center on March 2, 2014, in Hollywood, California.

Source: Frazer Harrison/Getty Images North America)

David Shirk – The Facts!

- Oscar:** Best Special Effects - *Gravity*
- Hometown:** New Holland, Pennsylvania
- Secondary Education:** Garden Spot High School
- Higher Education:** Pratt Institute, film major, fine art and illustration minor
- Spouse:** Cathy
- Her Occupation:** Accountant for Director George Lucas
- Residence:** San Rafael, Marin County, California
- Recipient:** Clio Award
- Other Projects:** Transformers, Pirates of the Caribbean, Mission Impossible, War of the Worlds
- For More:** <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1874068/?ref%20=fn%20a%20nm%201>

This is the second of four installments of an article analyzing some important new documents provided by the Rev. J. Harold Sherk to the Schürch Family Association of North America

Revelations from Code H4 Joseph Schürch Documents

Justin Kirk Houser

Joseph Schürch was born in 1738, the son of Code H immigrant Casper Schürch and his wife, Magdalena Foulk. In April, 2004, this newsletter reported the results of the research of our cousin René Schürch of Bern, Switzerland, wherein he placed Casper as the son of an earlier Casper Schürch (born 1649) and his wife Verena Burkhart (born 1665). This Casper was the son of Jakob Schürch (b. 1627) and his first wife, Anna Mumenthaler (1627-c1655), and a grandson of Casper Schürch (born c. 1585) and his wife Margaret Trüssel (b. 1589). Christian Emig's Research conducted by René Schürch and Christian Emig in Swiss land records shows that this family was part of the Schürch family which resided at Schürchtanne, Sumiswald. Tracing back the lineage of the Schürchs who owned Schürchtanne, we arrive at the following possible lineage from Casper: Hans (born c. 1545), Hans (born c. 1505), Hans (born c. 1465), Uly (born c. 1395), and Friedli (born c. 1365). Casper and Verena married in Sumiswald in 1688, and became the parents of four children there: Verena (1689), Barbara (1691), Ulrich (1693), and Madlena (1695). These children were baptized in the Reformed Church of Sumiswald, although their parents were Anabaptists, because at that time Canton Bern mandated that all children born there be baptized in the state church.

During the 17th century, the Mennonites of Switzerland were greatly persecuted for their religious beliefs. Accordingly, many of them left for other regions. It is therefore not surprising that we find no record of Casper Schürch and his family in the records of Sumiswald after this date. Based on their relationship with the Brechbühl family, wherein Christian Brechbühl wrote to Casper Schürch in America asking for help purchasing land, and because Jakob Schürch's second wife was Christina "Stini" Brechbühl, it has been concluded that Casper is the son of Casper. Further research is necessary to establish this connection. It has also been hypothesized that Joseph Schürch (c. 1700-1770), Code C immigrant of 1727, was a child in this family, although DNA records show that his

descendants bear a somewhat different DNA profile than those of Code H Casper. This connection is hypothesized because Joseph and Casper were neighbors to each other in Lancaster Counties in the 1730s. It is not clear whether the mutation arose in Joseph or Casper (suggesting that they were possibly brothers), or somewhere further back in time (suggesting that they could not have been brothers). Two resources also suggest that Code C Joseph had a bachelor brother: Fayette County, Pennsylvania, by John W. Jordan and James Hadden, 1912, pages 527 – 530; and A Short History of the Sherrick Family, by Harvey O. Sherrick, August 1928. The record of Joseph's immigration on the ship James Goodwill indicates that he was traveling as a party of three. Furthermore, in I. Daniel Rupp's book, Thirty Thousand Names of Immigrants in Pennsylvania 1726-1776, there is a document entitled Names of Early Settlers of Berks and Montgomery Counties, Originally Philadelphia County, who were naturalized January 9, 1729 to 1730, Some from Bucks County, From Chester, and From The City of Philadelphia, which mentions that Johan Jacob Scharch and Johan Joseph Scharch were naturalized in Berks County. They may be brothers. It could be that, instead of being sons of Casper (b. 1649), Joseph and his possible brother Jakob, and perhaps Andreas, could be sons of Hans Schürch (b. 1670), the Anabaptist of Sumiswald, and his wife Christina "Stini" Schmid. That couple did have a son Jakob in Sumiswald in 1700. This connection would make Joseph and Casper second cousins, once removed. Further research is necessary. Another hypothesized child in the family of Casper (b. 1649) and Verena is Anna, wife of Hans Wenger of Lebanon County, Pa. See below for information on this connection.

Oral family tradition tells us that Casper, Code H, was born circa 1705 in the Prince-Bishopric of Basel, which was one of the major locations where the Swiss Mennonites settled. This ancient state, administered by the Catholic Bishop of Basel, and which is basically coextensive with the modern Jura region of Switzerland, was relatively more tolerant of Anabaptists. Christian Emig speculates that the Schürchs lived near Florimont, now in France, but just north of the Swiss border. This

continued on page 11

continued from page 10

village was in the historic Bishopric of Basel and was the home of many Anabaptists. Currently, inquiries are ongoing with the Anabaptist Historical Society of the Jura, because that group holds a record of 18th century Anabaptist relief records which might show that the Schürchs were living in the region.

It is also possible that the family moved northward into the relatively more tolerant Pfalz area of Germany or what is now the Alsace region of France. We know that Casper Schürch's (b. 1649) younger brother, Valentyne Schürch (1653-1685), moved to Eschentzwiller, Haut-Rhin, Alsace, France, where his descendants resided. They were not Mennonites; Valentyne converted from the Reformed faith to the Roman Catholic faith. A Mennonite named Andreas Schürch was listed in the **censuses** of 1738, 1743, and 1752 as a resident of Ibersheim, Pfalz, Germany. He was a linen weaver by trade and was living with a wife and apparently no children. He may have been another son of the Mennonite Casper (b. 1649), as Richard Warren Davis suggests, but this is by no means certain. A Casper Schürch appears in the marriage records of the Reformed church of Preuschdorf, Bas-Rhin, Alsace, France, in 1720, and a Hans Schürch appears in the marriage records of the Reformed church of Krautwiller, Bas-Rhin, Alsace, France, in 1696. Both men were from Wynigen, which is a village somewhat north and west of Sumiswald. René Schürch has informed this writer that Casper Schürch who married the widow Anna Maria Pfeiffer on February 6, 1720, in Preuschdorf, was probably the son of Hans Schürch of Wynigen and his wife Anna Lerch of Wynigen who was baptized there on September 17, 1676. René also indicates that the widowed Hans Schürch who married Barbara Müller in Krautwiller in 1696 was probably the father in this family. René has documented these families in his book, *Schürch von Sumiswald II*. Their relationship to our Code H line is probably quite distant, but these documents provide evidence that these families were moving into Alsace. The attached map shows the relationship of these territories to each other.

A record from the Mennonite Archives in the Netherlands, dated June 23, 1731 at Rotterdam shows that one Casper Schurger, with a wife and one child, received relief as part of the "Dutch Aid to the Swiss Brethren." The individuals listed in this aid document

were from the Pfalz. It is believed that this is our Casper Schürch just prior to his embarkation on the ill-fated ship, "Love and Unity," which has been described elsewhere. This ship departed soon after the document was signed. Suffice it to say that after an arduous journey at sea, in which the Captain attempted to starve the passengers to get at their valuables and, in the words of one passenger, "to keep from starving, we had to eat rats and mice," the passengers were transported to another ship which landed at Martha's Vineyard after 24 weeks. Casper was transported to another ship, the "Norris," and finally arrived in Philadelphia on May 15, 1732. He signed his name "Kasper Schirch" upon arrival. His wife and child had died and were buried at sea. One of the documents included in the Harold Sherk papers is a sketch of a "snow" ship which resembles the Love and Unity. Casper remarried to Magdalena Foulk in December, 1732, in Germantown, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.

Joseph was born in 1738, the fourth child in this family. Little is known of his early life, but he was probably born in what is now West Hempfield Township, Lancaster County, where his parents were then living. On October 5, 1738, however, when Joseph was likely an infant, his father obtained a land warrant for a tract of 200 acres of land in what is now Bethel Township, Lebanon County, adjoining lands of Charles Stout and Jacob Miller. A land warrant was a right obtained from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to survey a quantity of previously unowned land for possession. Casper obtained an additional 250 acres by land warrant on May 30, 1748, also in Bethel Township, and sold 170 acres of his 1738 purchase to John Wenger on March 1, 1749. This transaction is what has given rise to the claim that John (Hans) Wenger's wife, Anna, was the sister of Casper Schürch. This theory will be discussed further below. Casper also obtained 143 acres from his brother-in-law, Johannes Rink, on August 28, 1760, part of the estate of his brother-in-law, Peter Foulk. On February 21, 1764, Casper and Magdalena sold their 250 acre tract to his son, Casper, who built the old stone house there which is still standing and has been featured on so many Family Association bus tours.

Of Casper Sr., the Mennonite encyclopedia says, "He was the preacher who went to Hammer Creek area and then to Sherksville Mennonite Church about 7 miles north of Lebanon (founded 1740). Casper and Barbara [sic, Magdalena] moved from Chestnut Hill to the farm from which the site for the meeting house was taken."



**MILLERSVILLE, PA.
AUGUST 1 AND 2, 2014**

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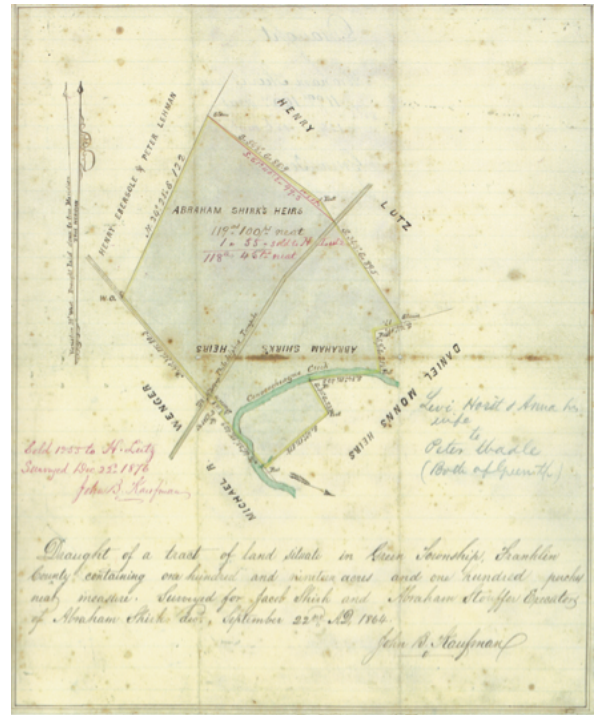
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Casper died sometime before April 5, 1770, for on that date, his son John appeared in court in Lancaster County Court, asking for a partition of Casper's remaining estate (the 143 acre Foulk tract). The court determined that the land could not be divided, and it was instead sold outright to Casper's son John, after his three elder brothers (Wendel, Casper, and Joseph) refused to take it. As part of this agreement, John agreed to pay his mother £4.10.0 yearly for the rest of her life. (Magdalena lived until 1796, remarrying to a widower named Michael Gingerich, who died in 1785.) The estate records also showed that, during his lifetime, Casper had apparently given each of his children approximately £100 to get them started in life, which was to be deducted out of their inheritance. This was a very common practice among the Pennsylvania Germans. He had given Joseph £104.10.0. Thus, at his father's death, Joseph stood to inherit a further share of £83.19.8-3/4.

With this start in life, Joseph had married on March 2, 1761, aged about 23 years. His wife was Barbara Kauffman, born April 19, 1738, the daughter of another family of Swiss Mennonites. Barbara's parents were Frederick and Elizabeth Kauffman. The Mennonite Encyclopedia online says of them that Frederick was a bishop in the Mennonite Church; he oversaw Kauffman's Mennonite Church two miles north of Annville, Lebanon Co., Pa., which was founded before 1768 on land of Benjamin Bowman. The date of his bishopric is established as 1773, at least. Kauffman's Church later moved east under Bishop Jacob Dohner, in 1851, and became Dohner's meetinghouse. The original Kauffman's site was claimed by the United Brethren in Christ.

Gravestones in the churchyard at the site of the original Kauffman's Meetinghouse bear the inscriptions "F. K. Oct. 8, 1789" and "L. K. Nov. 2, 1788." Undoubtedly these are the gravestones of Frederick and Elizabeth (Lisabet) Kauffman, Barbara's parents. Frederick Kauffman's will was proved in Dauphin County on October 27, 1789, which fits perfectly with the date on the gravestone. It was known that his wife Elizabeth predeceased him, but she was alive when his will was written in 1786. Thus, the gravestone for "L. K." beside Frederick fits perfectly with his wife Elizabeth. In his will, Frederick indicated that he had sold his homestead to his son Abraham, and divided the purchase money among his children. After his death, Abraham was to take care of his mother (an eventuality which did not transpire, as Elizabeth predeceased Frederick) and pay additional monies into the estate, to be divided with his sister Barbara.

Joseph and his wife settled near her parents in the vicinity of Annville, in what was then Lebanon Township, Lancaster County. There he acquired 132 acres adjoining his father-in-law, and on April 9, 1764,



Survey of the Joseph Shirk tract made in 1864 following the death of Joseph's son, Abraham Shirk.

he purchased 100 acres from Peter Miller (part of the Adam Ulrich warrant) on April 9, 1764. Here Joseph and Barbara became the parents of several children: Elizabeth (October 10, 1762), John (December 30, 1763), Barbara (March 2, 1765), Casper (July 29, 1766), Frederick (October 20, 1767), Joseph II (February 3, 1769), Christian (May 6, 1771), Christena (April 23, 1772), Abraham (March 5, 1773), and Jacob (November 26, 1774).

On April 23, 1771, Joseph and Barbara sold their 132 acre tracts to Peter Slosser of Lebanon Township in payment of a debt of £66.16.0. Four years later, on March 14, 1775, they sold the remaining 100 acre tract to Abraham Kauffman, Barbara's brother and the husband of Joseph's sister Magdalena. Abraham and Magdalena Kauffman would remain in the area the rest of their lives, and they are buried in the Kauffman's Meetinghouse Cemetery.

It was at this time, however, that Joseph and Barbara decided to make their journey westward, and they did not do so alone. Joseph Shirk's brother Wendel came at about the same time with his family and settled nearby. Other Mennonite families also began the move west to what is now Franklin County. Harold Sherk indicates that a primary motivation for the move was cheaper land.

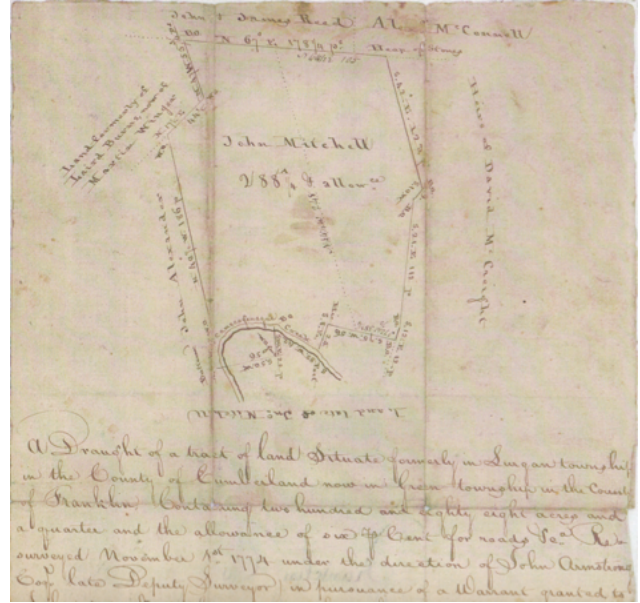
In 1775, Joseph purchased a tract of 288-1/4 acres in what was then Letterkenny Township,

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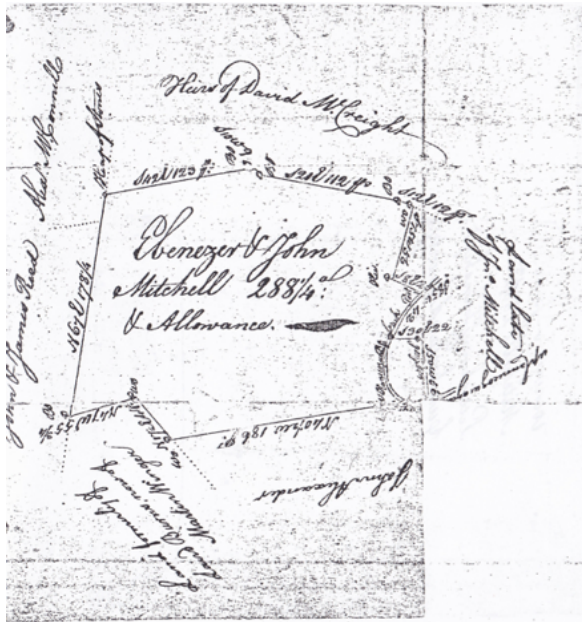
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Cumberland County, Pennsylvania, from the estate of John Mitchell Sr., who had died intestate. Ebenezer Mitchell and his wife, Jane, and John Mitchell, all of Letterkenny Township. Many of the documents in the Harold Sherk papers reference this particular tract of land, tracing its history. Franklin County was purchased by the Penns from the Native Americans in 1736. John Mitchell, the original owner, obtained a warrant dated July 10, 1752, which gave him permission to survey a tract of land in Cumberland County for his own use. At that time, it was located in Lurgan Township, Cumberland County, but in 1761 this area became part of Letterkenny Township. John Mitchell, Sr., died intestate in the 1770s, leaving a widow, Agness Mitchell, four sons, William, Ebenezer, John Jr., and Matthew, and one daughter, Isabel, wife of James Wilson. On November 1, 1774, the property was resurveyed, perhaps in anticipation of sale, and it came out to 288-1/4 acres. The Harold Sherk papers contain a copy of this survey, drawn up on November 11, 1813, by the Pennsylvania Surveyor General's Office. At the time of the original survey, the land adjoined property of John Alexander, Laird Burns, John and James Reed, Alex McConnell, and David McCraight, showing the prevalence of the Scots-Irish as the first immigrants to the region. On March 25, 1775, Matthew Mitchell of York County and Mary his wife, James Wilson of York County and his wife Isabel released their interest in the property to their brothers Ebenezer and John, who were serving as administrators of their father's estate, upon receipt of an advancement out of the estate of John

Mitchell, Sr., during his lifetime and £210 respectively upon signing the release. The mother, Agness Mitchell, quit claimed her interest in the property in favor of Ebenezer Mitchell and John Mitchell, two of the sons of John Mitchell, on June 6, 1775. The instrument was also signed by Jean Mitchell, perhaps a wife of one of the sons. There may have been some difficulty in securing a release from son William, or perhaps he was



Survey of the Joseph Shirk tract based upon the description in the original 1774 warrant to John Mitchell



Survey of the Joseph Shirk tract made in 1864 following the death of Joseph's son, Abraham Shirk.

already dead, for there is no release from him among the family papers.

These releases were apparently all executed in preparation for the sale of the property. Indeed, because our family has all of these documents, apparently they were all given to Joseph Shirk as part of his purchase of the property, to guarantee the title. A blank deed was drawn up, naming Ebenezer Mitchell and his wife, Jane, and John Mitchell of Letterkenny Township as the grantors, and describing the 288-1/4 acre Mitchell property in detail. The space for the purchaser's name and occupation were left blank, as was the date. These were filled in with the name Joseph Shirk, occupation farmer. Joseph Shirk purchased the property for £1100, which was also filled in after the deed was drawn up. Unfortunately the parties neglected to fill in the date. It seems that it must have been although it makes sense that it was on or soon after June 6, 1775, after the releases among the family members had been taken care of, and Ebenezer and John were in a position to sell. This deed was recorded in Cumberland County Deed Book E, page 148, on April 24, 1778.

Sports - - - -

Shirk Sled Team Wins Championship!

On Saturday, December 1, 2013 a human dog sled team powered and “mushed” by Shirks won the Palmyra (PA) Area Business Association’s 2nd annual “Mush in the Slush” dog sled race. The race is held in conjunction with the community’s Christmas parade and tree-lighting ceremony. The winning team was composed of Kenneth N. Shirk (H26112332) and his four sons. The sons are Chris, 41; Nathan, 38; Aaron, 33; and Elisha, 30. The Shirks also took home the championship trophy at the inaugural event in 2011. The winning sled was built by joining two BMX-style bicycles side-by-side and mounting a seat between the two frames to keep the center of gravity low. The race course is 150 feet in length down the main street of Palmyra in the town square. Father Ken serves as the musher, riding the sled while the sons power the sled to approximately 20 MPH.

The five Shirk families involved all live within a few miles of the homestead of their ancestor, Casper Sherrick (H), near Fredericksburg, PA. So far there are two grandsons among the family to carry on the name in the future and power dog-sleds for the Mush in the Slush.



Fishley Sisters Take Saskatchewan Hockey Championship

By Isabel Fishley

The Fort Qu'Appelle Female Flyers, led by Katelyn, H442521132, and Kelsey Fishley, H442521133, won the Saskatchewan Women’s Saskatchewan Midget A Hockey Championship on March 30. Previously, the Flyers won their fifth Southern Saskatchewan Championship. Clearly a Schürch family affair, they’re coached by John Fishley, H44252113, son of Isobel Sherrick Fishley, H4425211. John's older daughter, Carlie, H442521131, was a team member for four years. Under John's leadership the Flyers have won the Provincial Championship twice. Move over Sidney Crosby, your cross-state Flyers might someday tap into the Fishley “Flyers”!