

A tradition was brought to Pennsylvania during the 17<sup>th</sup> century by German, Dutch and Swedish immigrants. They had created symbology which was painted on homes and barns to protect and ensure good fortune.



The Mennonite and Amish are considered “Plain Dutch” and do not use hexology, whereas the “Fancy Dutch” do. Hex is the word for witch in German.

**Nine different colors are used each with its own meaning.**

**Black:** Protection, Blends & Binds Elements Together

**Blue:** Protection, Peace, Spirituality, Calm

**Brown:** Earth, Friendship, Strength

**Green:** Growth, Fertility, Success, Ideas

**Orange:** Abundance

**Red:** Emotions, Passion, Charisma, Lust, Creativity

**Purple:** Royalty, All Things Sacred, Religion

**White:** Purity, Moon Power, Free Flowing Energy

**Yellow:** Health, Love, Sun, Connection To God

## Animal Symbolism

- **Hereford Cow:** The Hereford cow protects farm animals and pets. It highlights the importance animals play in our lives.
- **Horse:** Ensures protection for farm animals and pets. Protects against disease and lightning. Commonly placed in five-point or eight-point stars. Original livestock hexes and barn blessings used horses as the horse played a major role in the early farm life of the Pennsylvania Dutch settlers.
- **Lambs:** Represents children. Commonly used in “Bless This Child” hex signs with the child’s name enclosed in a heart. Lambs can also symbolize wonder and innocence. Lambs are commonly painted on hex signs with *distelfinks* (luck), tulips (faith, hope, charity), and a heart border to represent everlasting love.
- **Snakes:** Represents temptation. Commonly shown in proximity to trinity tulips on marriage hexes.
- **Unicorn:** The mythological white unicorn had a horn and a lion’s tail. Unicorns symbolize piety, peace, contentment and virtue. Placing unicorns close to each other on the sign is designed to show how all of God’s creatures, even “wild animals”, can live in peace and harmony. Unicorn signs are often decorated with hearts and trinity tulips. They are commonly shown facing each other and painted on young women’s hope chest. This unconquerable animal was also believed to become tame when confronted by a maiden. He would lay his head in her lap and was easily taken by a hunter.



## Birds

- **Bird of Paradise:** Symbolizes the beauty, wonder, and mystery of life on earth.
- **Distelfink:** Symbolizes good luck and happiness. The distelfink was a bird that ate thistle seed and thus called the “Thistlefinch”. The Pennsylvania Dutch referred to it as a “Distelfink”. It is a stylized version of the common goldfinch, though some believe its features are more heavily borrowed from European varieties of goldfinches.
- Using two distelfinks together on a hex represents "double good luck." Depicting two Distelfinks crossed over each other or intertwined means “true friendship”.
- **Doves:** Doves represent friendship and peace in marriage. Referred to as the "Doves of Peace”. When doves are shown turned away from each other, this is also said to represent peace and trust in marriage.
- **Eagles:** Eagles symbolize strength, courage, and protection. Double-headed eagles are also commonly used in marriage signs. Double-headed eagles are paired with laced or scalloped hearts to represent Strength and Courage in marriage. Eagles may also be paired with trinity tulips to represent faith, hope, and charity.
- Some rare and older hexes depict a more Germanic Double Headed Eagle seen in German heraldry as well as versions similar to Abanian Eagles.
- **Roosters:** Like the eagle, roosters also symbolize strength, courage, and protection.



## Flowers & Plants

- **Leaves:** Leaves represent long life, strength, and nature. Maple and oak leaves are the most common leaves shown on Dutch hex signs and are often embellished with acorns as well. Leaves can also represent the diversity and beauty of life on earth. The oak leaf seems to carry a heavier symbolic weight than the maple leaf. Oak leaves are also used to symbolize strength in body, mind, and character. It can also symbolize smooth sailing in the autumn years of life or the representation of the strength of masculinity.
- **Pineapple:** Represents warmth and hospitality for all. The pineapple is often used in Welcome signs and home blessings.
- **Pomegranate:** A rare symbol used to symbolize abundance and fertility (due to the number of seeds it contains).
- **Shamrock:** Represents luck and the "luck of the Irish".
- **Tree of Life:** A different kind of hex sign that uses a tree with many branches containing different symbols. The symbols on the tree represent God's bountiful fruit. The symbols inside circles on tree are hearts, tulips, rosettes, stars, and similar geometric designs.
- **Tulips:** Tulips represent faith, hope, and charity, and can also be used to represent Holy Trinity. Tulips are frequently shown in multiples of three and are shown to represent a form of a lily. Another implied and eloquent meaning can include: "Faith in yourself, faith in what you do, and faith in your fellow man." Sometimes, a snake is shown on or around a trinity tulip in marriage signs to serve as a warning to resist temptation.
- **Wheat:** Wheat stencils represent abundance.



## Stars

Stars generally represent luck and protection.

- **4-Point Star:** The Morning Star, The Christian Cross, Star of Bethlehem. Native Americans also believed the morning star is a sign of courage and purity of spirit.
- **5-Point Star:** Good Luck, Compass, Nautical Star
- **6-Point Star “Hexagram”:** 6 Days of Creation, or the 6 attributes of God (Wisdom, Power, Majesty, Love, Mercy, and Justice)
- **8-Point Star:** Star of Redemption or Regeneration. Represents baptism in the Christian faith.
- **10-Point Star:** Harmony in natural kingdom, Spiritual well-being. Could also represent 10 of the 12 apostles. (Judas is omitted due to his betrayal of Jesus and Peter is omitted because of his denial of Jesus.)
- **12-Point Star:** Represents completeness. Also used to represent the Epiphany (12<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas)
- **Triple Star Motif:** Good Luck, Success, and Happiness. This motif is comprised of 3 nautical 5-point stars that are layered and rotated to reveal all points of all stars. When a brown outer ring is used, it symbolizes the cycle of life making this particular sign a wish for a lifetime of happiness.



## Common Shapes & Motifs

- **Barn Wheel:** Wheel of Fortune, most common with 32 spokes and often accompanied by a lucky star in the center.
- **Crescent Moons:** Shown in a swirl pattern to represent the 4 Seasons.
- **Daddy Hex:** One of the most popular hex signs used to bring "Good Luck All Year". Adding a rosette in a center circle is an added measure of good luck during difficult times of the year.
- **Haus Segen:** "Home Blessing" in German.
- **Hearts:** Hearts represent love. When used in a circle border it signifies "endless" love. Scalloped, laced, or intertwined hearts represent marriage.
- **Irish Symbolism:** Two distinct Irish symbols are commonly seen on Dutch Hex signs. Shamrocks are seen for luck and the [Claddagh Ring](#) is shown to represent love, loyalty, and friendship.
- **Raindrops:** Represents water and crop abundance. Raindrops are depicted in a paisley shape and can be large or small.
- **Rosettes (Oldest Symbol):** Good Luck. Six Petal rosette is most common. Red hearts are commonly placed between rosette's blue, red, and gold petals to ensure luck in love. 12 point rosettes represent good luck all year. Red is used to symbolize strength and green for life. Enclosed in scalloped border and means "Good Luck In Life". Wards off evil, disease, and pestilence. The rosette is one of the most basic and most ancient designs in western culture. The rosette appears on buildings, furniture, graves, and pottery dating all the way back to the Egypt.
- **Scallops:** Represent ocean waves and "Smooth Sailing Through Life".
- **Swastika:** Symbolizes good fortune and well-being, and is an ancient symbol dating back to ancient civilizations. Swastikas can be seen in "Sun Wheel" designs and may also be called "Swirling Ray Swastikas". Sun wheels are somewhat of a stylized swastika and represent warmth and fertility.
- **Sun, Rain, & Fertility Motif:** This motif is an 8-pointed star with a sun center. It has a substantial meaning: "Sun warms mother earth and lights our lives. Raindrops are shown in an endless circle, providing unending moisture critical to life. Together they provide all God's people with a bountiful harvest and renewed life. This design offers abundance in field, barn, and home."
- **Wilkommen / Wilkom-** Two different ways to say welcome in Dutch. Used for signs to display warm greetings to one and all.



# JACOB ZOOK ORIGINAL HEX SIGNS

By The Moyer Family

1  DOUBLE DISTELFINK Good Luck & Happiness	2  MIGHTY OAK Strength, Health & Long Life	5  IRISH HEX Luck of the Irish	6  SUN, RAIN & FERTILITY	7  LOVE & ROMANCE
8  WELCOME SIGN	10  ABUNDANCE & GOODWILL	11  DISTELFINK Happiness & Good Fortune	12  DADDY HEX Good Luck All Year	15  HORSE
16  HEREFORD	17  LOVE & MARRIAGE	18  PETAL ROSETTE Joy & Prosperity	19  AMERICAN EAGLE Strength & Independence	22  DOUBLE EAGLE Courage
23  HAUS-SEGAN House Blessing	27  MAPLE Life's Beauty	30  BIRD OF PARADISE WILKUM	31  GOOD LUCK, LOVE, & HAPPINESS	33  LOVE & FREINDSHIP
34  BLESS THIS CHILD	35  WELCOME PINEAPPLE Warmth & Hospitality	37  MORNING BIRD Health & Happiness	38  DOVES OF PEACE Peace, Faith & Trust	39  WILKOMMEN Happy Home & Many Friends
40  WHITE UNICORN Piety & Virtue Peace & Contentment	41  BLESS THIS HOUSE	42  DOUBLE DISTELFINK Double Good Luck & Happiness	44  FAMILY BLESSING	45  TREE OF LIFE Happy Life & Joyful Memories