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Bookworm Frolic Brings Books Under the Big Top

Browse books without having to worry about rain or hot sun during this year’s Bookworm Frolic. It begins Wednesday, August 15, and continues through Saturday, August 18. The sale opens at 9 AM every day, closing at 7 PM.

Book prices start between $1 and $3, with prices dropping each successive day. During the final two days of the Frolic, there is a “box special” where prices are reduced even further—$15 per box on Friday, and $10 per box on Saturday.

The Society’s year-round bookstore will also be open, selling new and used books, folk art, music, games, and genealogical resources. There will be a ten-percent discount on all new books, and a twenty-five-percent to seventy-five-percent discount on select titles.

This event is free and open to the public.

Society Receives Significant Collection from Clarke E. Hess

Clarke E. Hess, of Lititz, Pennsylvania, recently gifted the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society museum a premier collection of artifacts. His lifelong passion has been to document the history, culture, and decorative arts of his Mennonite heritage, with which he has surrounded himself and become its chief interpreter. Hess began his collecting career in elementary school and over the years educated himself to become more knowledgeable and selective, upgrading his collection accordingly. For many years Hess served as chair of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society Museum Committee. In 2002 he authored Mennonite Arts and over the years served as a curatorial resource for exhibits in Europe, Ontario, and Pennsylvania.

According to museum curator Carolyn C. Wenger, this gift is “a curator’s dream.” She judges it to be the single most significant gift of material culture the Society has ever received, and “we want to prove worthy of the confidence Hess has placed in us to care for and exhibit these items for appreciation by the wider community.”

When catalogued, this collection will provide resources for a variety of exhibits and will be an excellent study collection for students of southeastern Pennsylvania Mennonite material culture. This collection enhances the Society’s reputation as the premier research location for scholars of Mennonite and Amish material culture. The collection includes a wide variety of artifacts from books, archival manuscripts, fraktur, and decorated towels, to grain/seed/laundry bags, privy bags, quilts, samplers, kerchiefs, clothing, household items, textiles and linens. Most artifacts contain initials, names, or notes identifying the maker, artist, or owner.

Hess notes that “Mennonite cultural heritage is an important ingredient of Lancaster County’s ongoing history. These objects help tell the stories of many local families who created our community. LMHS will provide a safe haven for these heritage artifacts, so that the stories told by these objects can by heard by future generations.”

Hess carefully and lovingly documented each artifact’s ownership and condition as he collected it. Detailed notes accompany each item with family history and descriptive information. Further, he tailored his donation to match the Society’s collection acceptance policy.

Among the important artifacts in the collection are a prized 1560 Froschauer Bible with hand-colored plates and family records of the Mayer family, an 1880 onion-skin-dyed Easter egg, and an elaborate sampler quilt with as many as 144 pieces of fabric creating a single quilt patch.
Voices of Conscience: Peace Witness in the Great War

A century ago, the United States had just entered “The Great War.” While many wholeheartedly endorsed this effort, there were persons who could not in good conscience be involved in the killing of other humans. Often at great cost, even including death in a few cases, they spoke through their words and actions of a different path.

The exhibit will be held in the Crossings Meeting Room at Landis Homes. Entrance is via the main entrance of the new Calvin G. and Janet C. High Learning and Wellness Center at Landis Homes from August 19 to September 26. It is open from 2 pm to 7 pm daily, with other hours by appointment. There will be an opening reception at 2 pm on August 19.

A series of educational meetings will be held alongside the exhibit, focusing on conscientious objection to war.

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A Mentor Makes All the Difference

Jean Kilheffer Hess, executive director

I didn’t have the guts to be a history major in college. The eighteen-year-old version of me couldn’t quite grasp what job might be at the end of four years of studying history. By blessed coincidence I did have the opportunity to work as a student assistant to Dr. E. Morris Sider in the Brethren in Christ Archives on the Messiah College campus. What an experience!

Computers had recently appeared in administrative offices, and my main role involved “word processing” correspondence and book chapters and archival reference labels, among other things, for Dr. Sider, a prolific author and respected historian. He assumed that a Mennonite from Lancaster was up-to-date on Mennonite matters, broadly speaking, so I scrambled to educate myself in order to be a worthy conversation partner.

We talked church politics, theology, and social movements while I learned about the priorities and work flow that happen behind the scenes in preserving, interpreting, and telling the stories of people following Jesus together as church. I became broadly interested in Anabaptist history, and suddenly the idea of career work in the historical realm didn’t seem so outlandish.

More than twenty years later, I am grateful to be part of an incredible team at Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, one of the most vibrant Anabaptist culture- and history-focused organizations in the world.

This story happened to me, but it’s not really about me. It’s about the importance of mentoring and calling young adults to excellence and understanding. It’s about historical connection that honors the wisdom of experience while opening doors for the energy of youth.

Dr. Sider became a friend, and I’ve been privileged for him to be present at important moments in my life and work. I was not at all surprised when I found a letter on my desk in his distinctive handwriting: “I was delighted to read . . . of your appointment. I send you my best wishes for success and enjoyment in your work.” Thank you, Morris. Thank you for everything.

July Auction Has Abundance of Valuable Books

The Society’s July 13 book auction promises to be an especially interesting one. There are three copies of John Ruth’s The Earth is the Lord’s; two copies of Amos Hoover’s The Jonas Martin Era; and a signed copy of C.Z. Mast’s Annuals of the Conestoga Valley.

Family histories include A Brief History of Jacob Mast and Other Mast Pioneers; A Branch of the Zimmerman Offspring of Glaune Zimmerman by Ezra Zimmerman; The Wenger Book with index volume; Hess Genealogy, The Descendants of 1717 Immigrants Hans & Magdalena Hess; Daniel S. and Anna W. Barkholder Family, 1833-1957; Richard Warren Davis’ Emigrants, Refugees and Prisoners (an aid to Mennonite family research); and all four volumes of The Landis Family Book by Ira D. Landis.

Unique items include an 1818 indenture between Abraham and Molly Herr of Manor Twp., Lancaster Co. and Jacob Getz for land in Monaghan Twp., York Co., Pa.; rubbings of the tombstones of Abraham and Elizabeth Hursh, Carroll Twp., York Co., Pa.; a fraktur for Anna Ladtermann, dated 1812 but probably a copy of the original piece; and a notebook containing lists of applicants for membership, Weaverland Conference, 1917-2015.

There is an especially nice collection of early leather-bound volumes in good condition including two copies of the 1785 AUSBUND published in Germantown and belonging to Ulrich Strickler and David Marty; Das Kleine Davidsche Psallertspiel published in Ephrata in 1795; the 1808 and 1820 editions of the Unpartheyisches Gesang-Buch; two editions of Die kleine geistliche Harfe der Kinder Zion; Die wandelnde Seele by Schabalie; and an 1811 EINCHRIDION by Dietrich Philip.

The entire sale catalog can be accessed at lmhs.org or paper copies are available for $5. We accept bids via the website, email, postal mail or phone until 4 PM, Thursday, July 12. We also invite you to attend the auction on July 13 at 6:30 PM at the Society.