What's Inside

• What's Going On
• Library Wed. Evening Hours
• Täuferjahr Calendar & Event
• Mennonite History Day
• New Booklet: Never Again
• Intern Helps Library Upgrade
• Educational Series at GSV
• Happy Birthday To Us
• Family History Month
• Field Trip: Holiday Tour
• Frolic Survives Weather

Events

Tuesday, October 2: “Patchwork of Old Order Amish Lives,” at Garden Spot Village (GSV) in New Holland with authors Pauline and Richard Stevick, 7-9 pm

Saturday, October 6: Apple Snitz Fest at the 1719 Herr House in Willow Street, Pa., 10 am-4 pm

Sunday, October 21 (note date and time change): Nickel Mines Memorial Concert at the Lancaster Mennonite School fine arts center, 3-5 pm

Tuesdays, Oct. 15-Nov. 12, “Introduction to Lancaster County’s Plain People” series of speakers, 7-9 pm at Garden Spot Village, open to the public

November 22: Closed for Thanksgiving Day

Monday, December 3: Quarterly meeting: “Switzerland’s Täuferjahr07: Celebration of Anabaptism in Story and Visuals,” 7 pm, East Petersburg Mennonite Church

Friday, December 7: Benefit Book Auction, 6:30 pm

Dec. 7-8: Christmas candlelight tours at the Herr House; Friday, 5-8:30 pm and Saturday, 6-8:30 pm

Society Receives Valuable Gift of Fraktur

Last month the Society was pleased and honored to receive a donation of three frakturs (decorated calligraphy) from Thomas Richards and his wife, Ellen, Society friends from Arlington, Virginia.

Tom became associated with the Society through family history research. Readers of Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage will remember several genealogical articles that he has co-written with Denise Witwer Lahr, most recently in the July issue.

The frakturs passed to him through his uncle’s and mother’s family line of Witwer, which dates to 1720 in New Holland. Tom said he “wanted to give the frakturs to an organization with ties to my ancestors to be preserved and exhibited in the place where they belong.”

This generous gift was reported in the Lancaster newspaper (August 24 New Era), under the headline, “Artful storytelling: Donation of fraktur reveals the ups, downs and milestones in the lives of one Amish-Mennonite family.”

In that article Tom is quoted, “When I visited the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, I knew that they would care for these pieces. I was very impressed with the collection of fraktur that they had.”

Archivist Carolyn Wenger, who - Continued on page 2
Valuable Gift of Fraktur - Continued from page 1

has been at the society for 35 years, said she is delighted with the quality of the pieces.

The most unique piece is by a Jonathan Miller, son of an Amish-Mennonite minister in the Reading area and father of 11 children (his ten-year old daughter Mary painted the second donated fraktur, and the third is a birth certificate for Jonathan’s son-in-law, pictured at right.)

Jonathan lived from 1807 to 1885 and wrote the fraktur history of his life in English, despite his native German. By his own words, he admitted, “I am an poor speller.” He completed this fraktur about a year before he died, as evidenced by the shaky handwriting at the end after the bolder script written by a younger man at the beginning.

Carolyn noted that much of the life story that Jonathan memorialized in this fraktur is spelled phonetically. For example, Miller reported that his father “dite” in 1832, that he himself quieted farming after 44 years, and that he “Build Dis house war we Leav.” As Jonathan faced the end of his long life, he writes that he is at “Peas” with God and asks that the “grase” of Christ be with us all.

Most likely Jonathan felt compelled to do his fraktur in English to communicate with his children, who were probably bilingual and, as they grew older, preferred English and married largely outside the church.

The fraktur by Mary, Jonathan’s daughter, is beautifully ornamented using brilliant colors of red, green and yellow for the decorative birds, grapes, hearts and tulips.

The Society is deeply grateful to Thomas and Ellen for these generous gifts of fraktur which we expect to display in 2008 during our anniversary year.

Library Begins Wednesday Evening Hours

At the request of Eastern Mennonite University in Lancaster, our library and archives will remain open Weds from 8:30 am to 8:30 pm, through Dec. 12, to accommodate working students. While here, try out our new Internet access thanks to a grant from the Library Services and Technology Act. Use lower entrance after 4:30 pm. Come take advantage of these extra research hours.
**Täuferjahr Calendars Available**

At right is a black/white reproduction of one of the 12 vibrant color photos by Fritz von Gunten that highlight the 2008 Täuferjahr calendars with trilingual historical vignettes about Anabaptism by Hanspeter Jecker, a Swiss Mennonite historian, translated in German, French and English. Calendars sell for $20 in our bookstore. Not easily available, since they are printed in Europe. Stock up now for great Christmas gifts.

**“Switzerland’s Täuferjahr07: A Celebration of Anabaptism in Story and Visuals” at December Meeting**

The Society’s quarterly meeting on Monday, Dec. 3, will feature a report on the exciting events that took place in Switzerland during “Anabaptist Year 2007.”

The USA Liaison Team for Täuferjahr07 – Sam Wenger, Lois Ann Mast, Joanne and Don Siegrist – will be speaking and presenting DVD footage.

This event will take place at 7 pm at East Petersburg Mennonite Church, located along Route 72 just north of the square in East Petersburg, PA. Free and open to the public. All are welcome.

**Resolve Now for Mennonite History Day 2008**

Don Sensenig stands outside a mausoleum in Hanoi, Vietnam, on a recent trip.

All area Mennonite churches and schools recently received a mailing about our Mennonite History Day speaker for 2008, Don Sensenig (Call the Society for more brochures.)

An excellent communicator, Don will tell stories from his Vietnamese experiences over several decades, focusing on Mennonite responses to war, and on efforts to include peacemaking as an essential part of our overall Christian witness.

A Mennonite pastor, Don served in Vietnam with his family during the war years and later helped Southeast Asian refugees resettle in the United States and Canada.

If you would like Don to visit your school or church during March and April of 2008, contact Beth Graybill at the Society.

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**Booklet, “Never Again: A Lesson on Anger, Violence & Forgiveness”**

The Society has written a Sunday school lesson for adults and teens to commemorate the one-year anniversary of Nickel Mines. Designed to help churches look at tragedy from an Anabaptist perspective, this booklet focuses on biblical responses to violence. It probes the role that anger and resentment play in our lives as Christians, and helps us reflect on a compassionate response. Designed for Sunday school classes or small group study. Available in print from the Society or downloadable from our web site.

**Intern Helps with Library Upgrade**

We were delighted to have Jennifer Jeffery, pictured below, working in our library this summer. She provided valuable assistance in bar-coding to help the library serve you better through computer automation.

Jennifer came to us through Clarion University, Harrisburg campus, where she is studying toward her Master’s in Library Science. Serving at the Society was a way for her to gain library experience toward her goal of becoming a school media specialist.

Originally from Pittsburgh (where she obtained her MA in teaching) Jennifer lives in Lancaster, PA, and teaches 8th grade at Avon Grove School District in neighboring Chester County.

Her interests are reading, scrap-booking, walking and traveling. Thank you, Jen, for all your valuable assistance!
Society Plans Educational Series, “Introduction to Lancaster County’s Plain People”

The Society has joined with Garden Spot Village (GSV) retirement community in New Holland to offer a special series of free classes for GSV residents as well as the general public on six Tuesday nights in October and November, 7-9 pm. Come to one session or to all. Complete series is listed below:

Oct. 2, Week One: “A Patchwork of Old Order Amish Lives” with Pauline and Richard Stevick, former professors at Messiah College. Both authors published books on the Amish within the last year and will share their reflections. A book-signing will take place after the talk.

Oct. 9, No classes

Oct. 16, Week Two: “Overview and Comparison of Anabaptist Groups in Lancaster County” with C. Nelson Hostetter, co-author of Anabaptist World USA and Stephen Scott, author and researcher at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College.

Oct. 23, Week Three: “Old Order Mennonites: Following the Old Way by Auto and by Buggy.” Charles Bauman, who works with Green Pastures, an outreach of Philhaven Behavioral Healthcare to Amish and conservative Mennonites, will lead this session along with members of the Old Order community.

Oct. 30, Week Four: “Amish Forgiveness and the Tragedy at Nickel Mines” with Ken Sensenig, assistant director of Mennonite Central Committee East Coast and Diane Umble, communications professor at Millersville University.

Ken interacts with the Amish through his role as MCC liaison and Diane has studied media response to the events of last October.

Nov. 6, Week Five: “Pennsylvania Pietists: The Brethren and the Ephrata Cloister,” with Jeff Bach, director of the Young Center at Elizabethtown College and Michael Showalter, museum educator at the Ephrata Cloister. Bach has researched and written on the Ephrata Cloister, Anabaptist and Pietist history, and the history of the Church of the Brethren.

Nov. 13, Week Six: “Amish Tourism: Plain People in the Public Marketplace,” with Beth Graybill, LMHS director, Brad Igou, president of the Amish Experience, and Jeff Landis, director of the Mennonite Information Center. Panel will reflect on Amish tourism from those who work in the field.

DIRECTOR’S REFLECTIONS

Recently, as I was musing over the ways in which genealogy and history can help us understand our identity, I remembered an event at my son’s summer day camp.

One day all the campers were invited to bring in a food, song, story, or costume commemorating their cultural heritage. My son enjoyed eating rice-and-beans and learning a few reggae steps with his Puerto Rican and African American friends. And he was able to share a little about his own Pennsylvania German Mennonite background (thanks to the third-grade curriculum on Pennsylvania history and a children’s Sunday School class on Anabaptism — and a little prompting from his mom).

But many of the other Anglo children at camp couldn’t participate because they didn’t know what their roots were. How sad. All of us come from somewhere, and there is power and security in knowing our cultural heritage.

As Ardie Goering wrote in a recent column, “My Mennonite faith is part theology and part identity with a culture and a history that makes me feel valued because I am part of something larger than myself.”

We know who we are if we know where we came from.

October is Family History Month (see box, this issue, for ideas), which makes fall a great time for learning about your heritage. And we have lots of resources here at the Society to aid you in your search.

I believe that the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society is called to hold together two truths: All of us come from a distinct racial/ethnic group with an important history, and all of us are united as people of God.

As the Society moves toward our 50th anniversary next year, we are so very grateful to those who went before us. We want to honor contributions in the past while recognizing that we are called to live into the future with open invitation and inclusivity.

Sometimes in the past Mennonites have erred on the side of a narrow parochialism, clinging to an insular view of history that failed to welcome the diversity that all of us bring as members of God’s family. I am reminded of a word from Don Sensenig, our speaker for Mennonite History Day 2008 (see box, this issue) as he worshipped in Asia not long ago with Vietnamese and Cambodian peoples, historic enemies to each other, and on whose countries the US dropped countless bombs during the war.

Despite this history of enmity, Don says, “Here we were singing praise to God together across racial and cultural barriers. We are brothers and sisters serving the same Lord, who brings us together into one family.”
Dreaming of Christmas
- Continued from page 6
adorned with traditional Christmas flowers and frosty ornaments.

En route home, the tour will drive through the dazzling field of Christmas light displays on the grounds of Herr Snack Foods in Nottingham.

Daniel Ness leads this tour, which departs at noon from the Society and returns at 10 pm. Cost is $75 for members of the Society and $85 for nonmembers. Reserve your space by sending in registration form and down-payment today to Dorothy Siegrist at the Society.

Herr House Hosts Fundraiser at Isaac’s
On Sunday, Oct. 28, Isaac’s Restaurant & Deli in Strasburg will host a fundraiser to benefit the 1719 Hans Herr House, oldest building in Lancaster County. Bring your family and friends to enjoy great food and 25 percent of the total cost of your meal will be donated to the Herr House. More information is available at info@hansherr.org or (717) 464-4438.

New Books
Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy. Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, David L. Weaver-Zercher. Jossey-Bass, 2007. 256 pp. (hard). Explores the many questions this tragedy raises about the religious beliefs and habits that led the Amish to forgive so quickly. It looks at the ties between forgiveness and membership in a cloistered communal society and asks if Amish practices parallel or diverge from other religious and secular notions of forgiveness. It also addresses the matter of why forgiveness became news. “All the religions teach it,” mused an observer, “but no one does it like the Amish.” $25.00

Plain Diversity: Amish Cultures and Identities. Steven M. Nolt and Thomas J. Meyers. Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2007. 256 pp. (hard). In the first book to describe the complexity of Amish cultural identity, Steven M. Nolt and Thomas J. Meyers explore the interaction of migration history, church discipline, and ethnicity in the community life of nineteen Amish settlements in Indiana. Their extensive field research reveals the factors that influence the distinct and differing Amish identities found in each settlement and how those factors relate to the broad spectrum of Amish settlements throughout North America. Nolt and Meyers find Amish children who attend public schools, Amish household heads who work at luxury mobile home factories, and Amish women who prefer a Wal-Mart shopping cart to a quilting frame. $48.00

God’s People Now: Face to Face with Mennonite Church Canada. Robert J. Suderman. Herald Press, 2007. 128 pp. (paper). In 2006, Robert J. Suderman, general secretary of Mennonite Church Canada, visited each local church of his denomination on a “listening tour.” Suderman presents what he heard in this book. Relying heavily on direct, unedited quotes from more than 300 hours of face-to-face meetings with the grassroots of the church, Suderman offers a glimpse of the denomination’s needs, wants, and concerns. $13.00

That Amazing Junk-Man: The Agony and Ecstasy of a Pastors Life. Truman Brunk. Cascadia Press, 2007. 216 pp. (paper). The stories reflect Brunk’s desire to help churches become open and welcoming, instead of exclusive and shunning. The story of Cap’n Jack, the oysterman living “outside the walls” of the Mennonite colony and welcomed into Brunk’s home church at Warwick River Mennonite Church, provides a memorable illustration of this. $15.00

Celebrate Family History Month
For the third year in a row the U.S. Senate has unanimously approved legislation to designate October as “Family History Month.” Experts say that in the United States, genealogy is now the second most popular hobby next to gardening. Ten great tips for teaching your children to be “ancestor detectives” are available from the Society or online at genealogy.about.com/cs/holidays/a/family_history.htm

Happy Birthday to…us!
In 2008, the Society will celebrate 50 years of operation. We invite you to send in your memories and reflections of early people and events in the life of the Society as we work toward compiling a history of our first half-century.

On May 22, 1958, almost 250 years after the first Mennonites settled in Lancaster County, the first official meeting of the Society took place.

On August 21, 1958 the Bishop Board allocated $200 (in response to a request for $500) for the Historical Society to carry on its work. The Board also recommended that the Society should freely accept donations for its use and take offerings at public meetings it conducted.

Collection of church and secular publications was also in progress by 1958. At the September 25, 1958 meeting it was reported that the Mennonite Publishing House would grant complimentary copies of its Mennonite books and periodicals.

On October 29, 1960 the first constitution of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference Historical Society was adopted. It’s mandate; to expand the Christian Charles Theological Library, to establish a historical, research and archival center for the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, and to develop a publication to promote historical research and publish the results for the benefit of the church and the public.
Plan now to join the Society’s field trip to the Brandywine River Museum and Longwood Gardens on Saturday, December 8, from noon to 10 pm.

First stop will be the Brandywine River Museum, home of the Wyeth collection. The museum will be festooned with fabulous holiday displays including an extensive O-gauge model railroad, an elaborate Victorian dollhouse, and thousands of whimsical, natural “critter” ornaments on Christmas trees.

After dinner at a nearby inn, the tour continues to Longwood Gardens. There we will celebrate the season with tickets to the breathtaking fountain and light display (pictured above) and to the beautiful ice skating performance. The main building at Longwood will be

Frolic Survives Bad Weather

Last month we completed our annual Bookworm Frolic through the generous support of volunteers who donated used books, sorted and stacked them throughout the year, or helped in so many ways during the sale by setting up, cashiering, directing traffic, cleaning up, etc.

Nate Hoover, pictured at left, graciously helped out again at Bookworm Frolic after nearly single-handedly organizing the sale in two previous years. Nate is a college senior at Shippensburg University, majoring in history, and attends Witmer Heights Mennonite Church in Lancaster. We thank Nate for his services and wish him continued success.

This year no presidential motorcades or bomb-snoozing dogs — just wind, rain and hail. Our dedicated summer, Josh Good, was running out in the rainstorm to reattach plastic whenever a rainy gust of wind threatened to saturate the books underneath it. (Thank you, Josh!)

The success of this event (it annually raises about $40,000) is dependent upon the many supporters and our hardworking staff and interns who undergird it with time and energy. We are grateful.

Hundreds flocked to the Society on Wednesday, the first day of the sale. Note the plastic tarps (in photo above) at the ready for storms which came later in the week.

The young and young-at-heart found bargains.