Candlelight Tours at the 1719 Hans Herr House

On Friday, Dec. 7, 6-8:30 pm and Sat., Dec. 8, 5-8:30 pm, step back in time with candlelight tours of the 1719 Hans Herr House, located five miles south of Lancaster city in Willow Street, Pa. Amid the warm glow of candlelight, costumed guides in different rooms of the house enrich your enjoyment of this colonial landmark through reenactments, caroling, and the Christmas story in German. Afterwards, warm up with hot cider before a roaring bonfire while nearby, frontiersmen tell stories of life in the Pennsylvania wilderness. Cost is $6 adults, $3 for children. More info at 717-464-4438.

Holiday Tour, Dec. 8

A few seats remain on our tour to Longwood Gardens and the Brandywine River museum on Sat., Dec. 8, from 11:30 am to 10 pm. Enjoy the delights of the Brandywine, festooned with whimsical, natural “critter” ornaments, and of Longwood, which boasts a living tree made of silver-foliaged plants, blossoms, and Spanish moss, aglow with frosty ornaments.

December 18

Landmark Book Release

Dutch Mennonite Aid to Swiss Anabaptists

Swiss Pioneer Preservation Associates will host the book release of *Documents of Brotherly Love, Volume I: Dutch Mennonite Aid to Swiss Anabaptists, 1635-1709* (Ohio Amish Library, 2007) on Tuesday evening, Dec. 18, at the Christian Aid Ministries warehouse along Route 322, three miles east of Ephrata, near Hinklestown.

*Documents of Brotherly Love* comes from a treasure trove of Dutch documents that for 300 years was largely inaccessible due to their archaic, script hand-writing. The book’s 82 source documents (letters, civic records, court mandates) tell an inspiring and unsettling story of suffering and assistance, exile and encouragement in 760 pages.

Wealthy Mennonite congregations in the Netherlands in the 17th century established the “Committee on Foreign Needs” to plead with Reformed church leaders to stop their persecution of the Swiss Brethren Anabaptists and to provide material aid to the Swiss refugees in migration to America.

Meticulously, scholar James Lowry... - Continued on page 2
Landmark Book Release - Continued from page 1

has transcribed and translated these documents from Dutch and German into English with careful annotation and an introductory overview, aided by his wife, Mattie. His linguistic skills, extended research in the Netherlands, and appreciation for this history have combined to yield a highly regarded work.

At the book release, author James Lowry will sign books beginning at 6 pm. A program will follow at 7 pm with remarks from James as well as from the book's editors, John Ruth and David Rempel Smucker.

John Ruth will discuss contemporary reconciliation events between Swiss Reformed Church and Mennonite believers during Taufjahr07 (Anabaptist Year 2007) as compared to relations 300 years earlier. David Rempel Smucker will discuss the book's contribution to genealogical research. An offering will be taken to support the project.

This book is the fruit of ten years of concerted effort on the part of the US-based Amsterdam Archives Committee to bring these rare documents to light. The Committee expects subsequent volumes at later dates. An introductory book on Hans Landis was published in 2003.

Anyone wanting to learn more about the convictions and conditions of various Anabaptist groups before immigration to America will be fascinated by this story, which makes a major contribution to the study of Anabaptist-Mennonite European history.

This book is available from the Society by mail order or in-store purchase for $35 in hardcover.

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 significant people and events in the life of the Society as we work toward compiling a history of our first half-century.

by Randy Keener and Beth Graybill

Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society was born in large part from the devotion of Ira D. Landis (1899-1977) – a Mennonite genealogist, minister, and historian.

As Ira researched and wrote historical articles and collected records and artifacts for the church, he firmly believed that a society was needed a consultation to address the questions: “What is MCC? What has MCC been? What is MCC becoming?” Submissions are invited from a wide variety of disciplines – international development, missiology, history, theology, economics, anthropology, conflict transformation, sociology and communications. Deadline for submission of these one-to-two-page proposals is February 1, 2008.

All proposals will be reviewed by a project coordinating committee (Karen Klassen Harder, Jan Schmidt, Pakisa Tshimika, Nathan Funk, Bob and Judy Zimmerman Herr). Proposal submissions should clearly specify the question(s) the author will investigate; the resources to be consulted; and the methodological assumptions to be used. Authors of accepted proposals will commit themselves to completing their essays by February 1, 2009, for inclusion in an edited publication to appear by 2010.

Limited travel and research funds are available. To apply for these funds, please attach a projected budget with your submission. For more info and to submit your proposal (no longer than two single-spaced pages in length), contact project coordinator, Alain Epp Weaver at eppweaver@uchicago.edu
Happy Birthday - Continued
torical library and archives for the
church to operate independently.
On May 22, 1958, the first official
meeting of the Lancaster Mennonite
Historical Society took place, with its
library and archives temporarily locat-
ed in the basement of the mission
board building in Salunga, in western
Lancaster County.
Ira pled for people to donate
papers and records related to their
Lancaster County Mennonite and
Amish heritage (some of which had
already been lost “to the flames and
to the ragman”), and to support the
Society financially.
Around that same time, retired
businessman and deacon Christian E.
Charles donated his personal collec-
tion of 40,000 theological and church
history books to build the Society’s
collection.
As the Society continued to
expand, a bigger building was need-
ed to house its library and archives.
By June of 1963, Lancaster
Mennonite High School graciously
deeded a portion of its land for $1
for the Society to build an $95,000
building along Lincoln Highway East
which the Society occupied by June
of 1964.
In August of 1968, the Society
began operating the bimonthly used-
book auction that Provident Bookstore
(now Berean Christian Bookstore) had
conducted but was planning to dis-
continue; these sales have continued
at least quarterly for the last 39 years.
And our annual Bookworm Frolic has
been held since 1981.
The 1719 Hans Herr House, old-
est house in Lancaster County and
the oldest Mennonite meetinghouse
still standing in America today, also
has a place in the Society’s history.
In December of 1969, after much
angst and discernment, the Society’s
officers agreed to purchase the dilap-
idated Hans Herr House along with
two acres of land for $40,000.
Restoration of the house was
the responsibility of the Society, and
took place from 1971 through
June 24, 1974, when the Hans
Herr House opened to the public,
after archaeological work under the
direction of Fred Kinsey of Franklin
and Marshall College unearthed
numerous valuable artifacts.
The Society was so intent on prop-
er restoration of the Herr House that
they sent H. Elvin and Betty Herr to
Switzerland and South Germany in
search of hardware and door patterns
for the house.
Over the years, educational
activities played a big role in the
Society’s history. On February 26,
1965, the first educational meeting
was held, moderated by Daniel D.
Wert and consisting of a lecture on
Mennonite heritage spots in
Europe; quarterly meetings contin-
uue to be held. Since 1980 the
Society has also sponsored a speak-
er each year on topics related to
Mennonite history and peacemak-
ing to travel to local schools.
Ground-breaking Book on Mennonites and the Civil War Released

Two experts in Anabaptist studies have collaborated on the first scholarly examination of pacifism during the Civil War.

_Mennonites, Amish and the American Civil War_, by James O. Lehman of Harrisonburg, Virginia, and Steven M. Nolt of Goshen, Indiana, (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), explores the moral dilemma that tested the core of faith: how could Mennonites both oppose slavery and the war to end it? In the North, living this paradox marked them as ambivalent participants to the Union cause; in the South, it marked them as clear traitors.

The book describes the different strategies used by Mennonites and Amish in various communities from Pennsylvania and Virginia to Ohio, Illinois and Iowa. Some opted for greater political engagement (sometimes, in part, to secure conscientious objector status), others chose apolitical withdrawal, some fled conscription and the fighting, and some renounced their faith and entered the fight, with sons from Mennonite families on both sides of the bloodiest war in American history. Church-wide, there was no consistent response.

James Lehman is librarian emeritus at Eastern Mennonite University, archivist for Virginia Mennonite Conference, and the author of nine congregational histories and several books. Steve Nolt is professor of history at Goshen College and co-author of three books on Amish faith and life, two published by Johns Hopkins University Press.

James and Steve discussed the writing process at a book-signing on Nov. 17 in Virginia. James became interested in the Civil War in 1979 while researching and writing Virginia congregational histories. During a sabbatical, he and his wife, Dorothy, visited more than 50 historical libraries and small archives from Pennsylvania westward, scouring local newspapers and church records, since responses to the war varied so much by geography and by individual congregation.

By the 1990s, James had developed a manuscript and contacted a publisher who advised him to cut down the length and find a co-author to help organize the massive wealth of information. James contacted Steve, who was then teaching courses on the Civil War at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana, and had noticed how religion was missing from most historical treatments of the war.

At the book-signing, Steve described how the book highlights Mennonites’ changing understanding of civic engagement. In Europe, Anabaptists had seen themselves as subjects who lived under a ruler’s authority and petitioned for privileges. But in America, these first-and-second generation immigrants were coming to see themselves as citizens who possessed rights (including the right not to bear arms) and responsibilities to support their country, even in wartime. This may explain why Mennonites during the Civil War were more likely to claim equivalence (paying a tax or a substitute to fight in their place) instead of requesting exemption from all military demands, as did the Quakers.

This book forms a compelling, cohesive story, with source material from five states, including excellent content contained in its 832 footnotes. It is available from the Society by mail order or in-store purchase for $40 in hardcover.

---

April 18-19, 2008 Genealogy Conference

Plan now to attend our 29th annual Lancaster Family History Conference co-sponsored with the Lancaster County Historical Society. This year’s exciting conference looks at how modern crime-fighting technology, such as DNA analysis and forensic science, can be applied to family history research.

Keynote speaker, Colleen Fitzpatrick, Ph.D., is the author of two bestselling genealogy books. Her innovative book, _Forensic Genealogy_, has been widely cited. See her web site at [www.forensicgenealogy.info](http://www.forensicgenealogy.info/)

Her second book, _DNA & Genealogy_, was commissioned by Family Tree DNA in 2005 and has been called by readers “the ideal handbook to get someone running a surname project using DNA tools.” She has been featured on NPR and has written cover articles for _Internet Genealogy_ (June 2006), _Family Tree Magazine_ (April 2006), and _Family Chronicle_ (October 2005).

Colleen writes a regular column for _Ancestry_ magazine.

On Friday, the conference will include a research bus trip to your choice of the National Archives, Library of Congress, or DAR library in Washington, DC. Saturday’s keynote and workshops run 9 am to 4:30 pm, followed by a 6 pm banquet with Erik Puffenberger from the Clinic for Special Children discussing genetic research in the Lancaster County Plain community.

Conference brochures will soon be available; for more information, contact the Society.
Society Concludes Popular “Plain People” Series

The Society recently concluded our educational series for Garden Spot Village retirement community, entitled, “Introduction to Lancaster County’s Plain People.” Scholars, writers, and members of Plain groups themselves presented lectures, gave PowerPoint presentations or read from their books about the Amish, Brethren, and Mennonites.

Attended by both residents and local community members, appreciative audiences averaged 250 per night, many of whom attended all six weekly sessions. We are grateful to Garden Spot Village for hosting this series.

Cassette tape recordings of some of the sessions are available for $3 (call the Society if interested in other sessions not listed below):

• “A Patchwork of Old Order Amish Lives,” with Pauline and Richard Stevick, former professors at Messiah College, each of whom have published books on the Amish in the last year;

• “Pennsylvania Pietists: The Brethren and the Ephrata Cloister,” with Jeff Bach, director of the Young Center for Pietist and Anabaptist Studies at Elizabethtown College;

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

Spring Pennsylvania German Classes Forming

“Once you learn Pennsylvania German, you’re not only dealing with words; you’re getting a feel for the warm and lively culture behind it...Learning the language is showing an interest in people.”

—Pa. German student

This spring the Society will again offer ten-week language classes for beginning or advanced students of Pennsylvania German. We are the only educational institution in Lancaster County to offer these courses, and one of the few in the nation to offer in-class conversation with Old Order native speakers for whom it is a living language.

The Introductory class will be held on Wednesday evenings from March 5 to May 7. It is capped at 30 students and typically fills up quickly. The Advanced class will be held on Thursday evenings from March 6 to May 8. Both classes meet from 7-9 pm at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster. (We are located just off Route 30 East near Tanger Outlets.) Classes run for 10 weeks. Cost is $100 for members, $115 for nonmembers, with a $10 early bird discount before Dec. 31.

The Introductory class typically uses the text, Introduction to Pennsylvania German, which provides a gentle entry into the language for beginners. Accompanying CDs allow the student to work on pronunciation at home. Additional materials, including Pennsylvania Dutch songs and proverbs, supplement the text. Those completing the introductory courses will have a basic grasp of the language for simple conversation, including some grammar principles. In addition, the class will touch on the culture and way of life of the various groups of Pennsylvania Germans. Because class participants are encouraged to share their own experience, stories and anecdotes regularly enliven the language instruction. Individuals who have had no previous Pennsylvania German instruction should enroll in the Introductory course.

The Advanced class is designed for students with several years experience studying Pennsylvania German or for those who have lived at one time or another in a “Dutch” speaking environment. It resembles a college-level language class but without tests, grades and stress! Pennsylvania German is often the language of discourse in the classroom.

After completing this level students will have vastly expanded their Pennsylvania German vocabulary and conversation skills, and will be able to read almost anything written in the language. Students with prior Pennsylvania German experience or those who have some speaking ability and would like to become literate in Dutch may take the Advanced class with the permission of the instructor.

Those who plan to participate in the upcoming spring classes will need to register by returning the slip below with payment.

We hope that you will join us in sharing an important part of Pennsylvania German life and culture!
Tending the Roots of His Family Tree

Mark Hoover, age 13, worked enthusiastically on his ancestral fan chart at the Society for several weeks last fall while on furlough with his parents, Jon and Jacquelyn Hoover, mission workers in the Middle East, to where they have since returned. We wish Mark all the best as he works at “making history personal” through genealogy. (Note: the Society is open Christmas week if your family members want to begin the search, as Mark did.)

Crowd Gathers at Society for Amish Grace Book Signing with Authors

We were delighted to have a full house at Society headquarters when we hosted David Weaver-Zuercher, Steve Nolt, and Donald Kraybill (pictured left to right) in September to discuss and sign copies of their recent book, Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy. Copies are available at Society bookstore for $25.

New Books


Third photo book in the series published by the Lancaster County Historical Society (follows Cars, Trains, Buggies and Planes: Transportation in Lancaster Co., Pa. (2005) and Lancaster at Work: Business in Lancaster Co., Pa. (2006). Settle back, relax and enjoy these images of Lancasterians at play from the late 1800s through the mid-twentieth century. More than 130 photographs show Lancaster Countians in those golden hours between work and sleep — fishing, swimming, picnicking, performing and watching occasional parade. From sunny sandlots to quiet streams to rollicking clubs, these photographs show the many ways Lancasterians spent their leisure.

Dollars and Sense:

Law Allows Tax-free Donations from your IRA through Dec. 31

You can make a charitable contribution to the Society using money from your IRA (Individual Retirement Account) through year-end 2007 without paying tax. Due to the IRA Charitable Rollover Provision, persons over the age of 70 and 1/2 may make tax-free contributions to the Society from their traditional or Roth IRA.

Transfers directly from your IRA account to the Society (we are a 501c3 charity) count toward your annual Required Minimum Distribution (RMD). Up until now, any deductions from an IRA were considered taxable income. Depending on the size of your gift, the savings can be significant. This is good news for persons who would like to make a charitable gift to the Society from their retirement assets, but have been discouraged from doing so by potential income tax penalties. To take advantage of this window of opportunity, consult your financial advisor to plan for how you can invest in the Society before December 31.

German Names: A Practical Guide.

Helpful guide for researchers to deal with German names, both within Germany and when they were transplanted into America. Much more information including various grammatical endings on given names, local forms of given names, surname changes at and after immigration, spelling variants, dialect forms of surnames, locality names, epithets on names, adopted children, farm names — all precede a large section in the book listing variant forms of given names.