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Events

Saturday, August 2: Heritage Day at the 1719 Herr House, 9 am to 4 pm; colonial crafts and food

August 13-16: 27th Annual Bookworm Frolic used book sale, Weds-Sat, 9 am to 7 pm daily, closing 4 pm Saturday.

Friday, Sept 12: Book Auction, rare and used books, 6:30 pm at the Society

Sunday, Sept 14: “Down by the Old Millstream,” 50th Birthday Party; 3-7 pm

Saturday, Sept 27: field trip, “Native Americans in Lancaster County”

Saturday, Oct 4: Snitz Fest apple celebration, 1719 Herr House

Saturday, Oct 18: field trip, “The Newport Road Mennonites and Brethren”

Monday, Dec. 1: quarterly meeting, Mennonite Global History Project, with panelists Jaime Prieto of San Jose, Costa Rica, (writing the Latin America volume) and Congolese Pakisa Tshmika, who edited the Africa volume

Society Receives Complete Set of Deeds: “this land to have and to hold”

Recently the Society received a valuable donation of a complete set of Myer land deeds donated by the children of Titus and Anna Hess, dating to 1758.

What makes this collection unique is the unbroken chain of title through descendants of the Abraham Myer family to the present day. These documents tell a family history through its ties to the land, and show how the property was subdivided through inheritance.

The first white settler on this property, John Stump, applied for a warrant from the Penn family in 1733, and later divided his land among his heirs, “to have and to hold.”

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Herr House Available Sundays

Your wedding or church event can be held amid the incomparable scenery of the historic 1719 Herr House. Sunday hours are now available for your church or small group to hold a worship service and host a potluck afterward. Staff can assist with this unique opportunity. Call director Becky Gochnauer at 717-464-4438 for information.

Society Plans Tour to Native American Sites in Lancaster

They are remembered by the names they left behind – Conestoga, Susquehanna, Cocalico, Pequea. They were here long before Captain John Smith of Jamestown, Virginia, explored up the Chesapeake Bay to the Susquehanna River and first encountered them in the 17th century. And they were here perhaps a thousand years before Lancaster County’s first European settlers arrived in 1710.

How did the local Native American Indians live at the time of white Mennonite settlement in Lancaster County nearly 300 years ago? Where were they located and what do we know of

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WHAT'S GOING ON

Summer Folk Art Classes
Enjoy a Saturday Folk Art Class at the Mennonite Heritage Center, 565 Yoder Road, Harleysville, this summer. Take a creative break for a day and learn a traditional art. You can choose from a range of different classes. Introduction to Rug Hooking will be held on July 12, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Introduction to Wood Carving on July 26, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Handmade Paper on August 2, 10 a.m. to 12 noon. Class size is limited and pre-registration is required. Nominal fee. Check the Mennonite Heritage Center website: www.mhep.org for registration information or call the center at 215-256-3020 to request a class brochure.

July 20, Historical and Inspirational Meetings
Bowmansville Mennonite Church will host three meetings on “Ancient Roots, Living Faith” with Jeff Bach, Director of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College on Sunday, July 20. At 9 am, Bach will speak on ancient Christianity and at 10 am, he will speak on faithfulness in the Middle Ages. At 6:30 p.m., Bach will speak at the outdoor service at the Alleghany Mennonite Meetinghouse, in Alleghenyville on “Reform and Renewal: From the Reformation to Today.” Bring your lawn chair and Church and Sunday School Hymnal to this service. For more information, call (717)949-3475 or (610)777-3003.

June 28 – July 6, Kutztown Folk Festival
Join the summer crowds at the annual Kutztown Folk Festival. As always, there will be a large quilt sale, fiddlers and folksingers on six different stages, craft demonstrations, and loads of great Pennsylvania Dutch food. Open 9 am-6 pm with daily admission of $12. More information at www.kutztownfestival.com

August 2, Herr House Heritage Day
Visit the historic 1719 Hans Herr House in Willow Street, Pa. on Sat, Aug. 2 from 9 am to 4 pm for a fun-filled farm festival featuring 18th and 19th century craft demonstrations. Plan to spend the day and bring your appetite for authentic Pa. German favorites such as smoked sausage, roasted sweet corn, homemade ice cream and root beer to wash it all down. Admission is $6 adult, $3 child. More information at 717-464-4438.

August 3, 86th Annual Brubaker Families of America Reunion
This event will be hosted at the Church of the Apostles in Rohrerstown, Pa. Bring your Brubaker genealogy information, stories and memorabilia of interest to share. Lunch buffet at 12:15. For more information and lunch reservations, please call Jane Barge at 717-393-4639 or email handybird@verizon.net

August 22-24, Wertman Family Reunion
Wertman gathering will take place in Ashland County, Ohio, Fri – Sun, August 22-24. A family picnic, business meeting and auction will be held. For further information contact Frank Strickling at 1-419-289-3158 or email at fjstrick@bright.net

August 27, Talk on Cocalico Mollingers/Mellingers
Phil and Scott Melling will share their research on Mellinger ancestry and artisan production at a meeting of the Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley. Meeting to be held at 7:30 pm at Eicher Art Center in Grater Park, Ephrata. Information at www.cocalicovallyhs.org

September 27, Annual Meeting
The 2008 annual meeting of the Brethren in Christ Historical Society will be held Saturday, September 27 at the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church. The meeting will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Society’s Journal and is open to anyone who wishes to attend. Activities begin at 5:30 with dinner being served at 6 pm. The cost is $10 per person including the meal. Registration closes September 12. For more information call (717)766-7767 or email msider@messiah.edu

Successful Mennonite History Day Concludes
Don Sensenig spoke at 23 area Mennonite schools this spring as a part of Mennonite History Day, a program that we sponsor each year. Using props such as a Vietnamese hoe and conical hat, Sensenig told stories from his experiences as a mission and service worker from 1963-1973 in Vietnam. For Mennonites, the war presented a basic test of loyalties between church and state and a testing ground for Christian reconciliation amid violence and pain, which Sensenig discussed.

Sensenig’s stories touched the hearts and provoked thought in the minds of the children who heard his tales. Some kids realized for the first time that there were options other then fighting in a war, and that the pacifist decision is often harder to make and stand by then fighting. One child noted in a thank you to the speaker, “I was challenged. I have to wonder, would I do that?” Another student remarked, “When I am older, and if I get asked to be a soldier, I won’t do it.” Students learned about Mennonite peacemaking as an essential part of our overall Christian witness.

Through support from the CRELs and Weidman Foundations, this year’s Mennonite History Day program reached more than 800 students.
Their history? The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society is planning a one-of-a-kind field trip on Saturday, Sept. 27, to address these questions, entitled, Following the Iroquois in 1675. The Susquehannocks traveled the river that bears a derivation of their name, following its length as prime hunting and fishing grounds, in addition to cultivating maize, beans and squash in fields near their villages. (Susquehannock appears to have been an Algonquin name meaning “people of the Muddy River.”) Dr. Fred Kinsey, archaeologist who supervised the dig at Washington Boro, is serving as a consultant to this tour.

We will also visit Conestoga Indian Town at Turkey Hill, where Susquehannock refugees resettled near the river on land granted to them out of the Penn family’s manor just a few years before the first Swiss-German settlers arrived in 1710. There they became known as Conestoga Indians, from the location of their village, and made a living from farming, hunting, broom- and basket-making. Many were converted by Quakers, forming a peaceful Christian village. Their numbers declined through out-migration as white settlement increased, before their final massacre.

The tour will also cross over into York County and visit the Indian Steps Museum along the Susquehanna, taking in their fine collection of local, Native American artifacts.

We will return by way of the Conestoga Historical Society, noting their exhibit on ancient Indian petroglyphs. The tour will discuss the interactions between Native American and white settlers, covering related historic sites along the way. Lunch will be en route.

The bus will leave the Historical Society at 8:30 am and return about 4:30 pm. Cost of the tour is $55 for members, $65 for non-members, including transportation, admissions and guides. Experienced leaders Henry Benner, retired history teacher, and genealogist Darvin Martin will conduct this tour.

Contact Dorothy Siegrist at 717-393-9745 or dsiegrist@lmhs.org for more information.

Library Notes

by Steve Ness

One of the primary functions of a library is to connect people who have questions with resources that can answer those questions. Over the last year and a half, we have been looking for ways to continue this function by making use of available technology. For instance, we now have computers for patrons that provide high-speed Internet access for easier searching. The high-speed connection was necessary as we transitioned from a card catalog to a computer-based catalog that allows anyone with an Internet connection to search our holdings twenty-four hours a day from home.

We have also begun to provide access to U.S. census data, online books of family and local history, periodical indexes, and more through a subscription to HeritageQuest. (You can access this resource in our library but not from home.)

The next stage in the computerization process is to find ways to make more of our own unique genealogy resources available electronically, which we are exploring. This, of course, requires time and funding, so we are very grateful for the support we have received, and will continue to receive, from people like you.

New Books

The Fugitive: Menno Simons, Spiritual Leader in the Free Church Movement

by Myron S. Augsburger; Herald Press, 2008, $14.99

The author – renown evangelist, pastor, and former college president – has pieced together a thought-provoking narrative from the few historical details that we know about the life of Menno Simons, Dutch leader for whom Mennonites are named. The resulting story, about Menno’s
Stutzman Audio CDs Available

If you missed the Society’s June quarterly meeting of Ervin Stutzman’s fine talk about his book, *Emma: A Widow among the Amish*, we have CD recordings available (though not the PowerPoint).

Author Ervin Stutzman, pictured below with his twin sister, Erma, spoke on June 3 about the unexpected blessings he discovered in writing his mother’s story. Stutzman referred to her as “heroic in everyday life: someone who put one foot in front of the other, prayed for her children, and died in peace,” leaving all of her children a small financial inheritance, accumulated penny by penny, through a lifetime of thrift and hard work.

Ervin’s talk was entitled, “Serendipity, Sweat, and the Sweet Taste of Telling a Family Story.” CD copies are available for $2 (plus shipping); call us to order.

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This bright, engaging book with full-color drawings focuses on the centrality of song in one family’s life. Using songs to praise God, the Stranowsky family grows and learns, in spite of the chaos that a large family inspires. The song that the family sings is included on a CD that comes with the book.

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**Sept. 14 Fiftieth Birthday Bash**

Plan now to join us on Sunday, September 14, from 3-7 pm, for a “Down by the Old Mill Stream,” 1950s party to celebrate our 50th anniversary. There will be continuous musical performances in a variety of styles from barbershop to a cappella hymns, costume displays with opportunity for photos of yourself in antique clothing, a classic car rally, hayrides, and refreshments at 1958 prices.

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**DIRECTOR’S REFLECTIONS**

**Recent**ly the following quote came across my desk, attributed to Daniel Burnham, urban planner and organizer of the Chicago world’s fair in 1893:

“Make no little plans! They have no magic to stir our blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work ... Remember that our children and grandchildren are going to do things that would stagger us. Think big.

I was reminded of this quote during a recent planning meeting of the Society’s education committee, as we met together to plan for events and activities to commemorate the 300th anniversary of permanent European settlement in Lancaster in 2010.

Recently, in an article about the 300th, we were cited in the local newspaper as “a small organization with a big vision.” It is a big but stirring vision – the opportunity to mark not just Mennonite settlement but the beginnings of the cultural mix (French Huguenots, Welsh, Scots-Irish, African Americans, and later Latinos and Asian Americans) who would become the peoples of Lancaster County today. We also plan to honor the Native Americans who were displaced by white settlement.

We plan to commemorate 2010 as the beginning of this cultural meeting ground with a variety of events directed both at Mennonites as well as the larger community. Mennonite initiatives include plans to produce church histories of each local Mennonite congregation and to hold a worship service at the Herr House in the spring of 2010.

Community-wide initiatives include the commissioning of original paintings of the Herr House in four seasons and holding a Herr family reunion in the summer of 2010, developing a tour booklet of early settlement sites from Strasburg to Willow Street, and replanting chestnut trees and other native species prevalent in the area 300 years ago. In addition, we plan to recreate the first settlers’ arrival by an ox cart and walk to Willow Street. A variety of related field trips will also be offered. Beyond the 300th, we are embarking on other big projects as well. We continue to upgrade service and computerization in the library, and are looking to put some of our one-of-kind genealogical resources on computer, as well.

We are exploring possibilities for expansion of our physical space and services in years to come. And we are planning to undertake a major capital campaign for projects both at our Millstream headquarters site and at the 1719 Hans Herr house location, as well.

None of these are little plans. All require major investments of time, support, and above all, the belief that we can turn these dreams into reality, for us and for the generations that will follow. But they stir my imagination, and hopefully yours as well. Thank you for joining with us as we continue to aim high.
Our deed collection begins in 1758, when eldest son, George Stump, and his wife, Cathrina, (women’s names were often recorded when they were a member of the party selling the property), sold his fifth portion to a neighbor in 1758.

Then in 1759, as recorded in the next deed in our collection, second eldest son, Elias, sold off the remaining four-fifths, a total of 234 acres of land “together with all the Buildings, Improvements, Orchards, Gardens, Meadows, Fields, Woods, Waters, Waterways, etc.”

The purchase price for the plot was “333 pounds, 6 shillings and 8 pence” paid by Abraham Myer, or only about $3 per acre, compared to $10,000 per acre today. Remaining deeds in the collection record land transactions of the Myer descendants.

Early deeds are known as Indentures and were important legal documents. The earliest Indentures in this collection are handwritten on sheepskin parchment paper. Copied twice on one sheet, deeds were cut apart along a scalloped edge into two documents, one kept by the seller and one given to the buyer. Matching the irregular wavy cut of the two documents ensured that the deed was genuine.

Land survey maps (pictured above) are also included in this deed collection; the earliest one dates to 1762. According to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, survey maps were usually drawn beginning at an obvious topographical feature. A stand of trees, preferably hardwoods such as hickory, chestnut, or oak, or stone piles were common landmarks.

In addition to map landmarks, the surveyor also noted all adjoining owners – in this case, Henry Snavely, Wolfgang Newcommer, and other neighbors Miller, Good, and Groff, as well as a nearby plot of some 1,060 acres, probably purchased by a land speculator for resale.

Deeds document the presence of a particular settler in a specific place at a given time, a good resource for family history. According to local genealogist, Jim Landis, deeds are invaluable research documents.

Jim says, “While the situation depends on each family’s circumstances at the time the deed was made, you might find a whole family tree spelled out for several generations, and therein lies the excitement. You never know what you will discover when reading in a deed.”

A properly composed deed identifies the parties involved in the transaction and states the history of how the seller(s) came into possession of the title to the property. The document names any person who held an interest in the property. When the deed involves the sale of the family farm by heirs, the recitation can be a goldmine of genealogical information. It might give the names of parents, children, grandparents, or perhaps cousins – anyone connected with the sale.

A good resource book in our library on deed research is, Pennsylvania Land Records: A History and Guide for Research by Donna B. Munger. The Society is most grateful for this rare and unique collection of official land records.

We are delighted to have the following college interns helping us this summer. Pictured left to right are Kelly Davis, Joanna Hoover, and Ben Wetzel.

Kelly, a Communications major at Millersville University, is doing publicity and promotion with us. Joanna is a junior at Eastern University and a member of Cedar Grove Mennonite Church in Greenscastle, Pa, an Atlantic Coast congregation. Among her many duties is organizing Bookworm Frolic. Ben, a history major at Grove City College, is doing research and library work with us this summer. We welcome them all, and are already wondering how we ever got along without them.
The Society was pleased to celebrate our 50th anniversary with an annual banquet and program in May, which included singing from the Mennonite children’s choir, barbershop quartet music, and an illustrated talk by John Ruth. Here are some excerpts from Ruth’s remarks; a CD recording of the entire evening’s program is available from the Society for $2 (plus shipping).

We Mennonites waited longer than most denominations and cultures to get ourselves an archive here in the East. Russian Mennonites who went down to Paraguay after World War II, and had their 50th anniversary jubileo in 1980, already had a museum and archive soon after they got there.

We were here about two and a half centuries before we got one. We didn’t think the role of archives and records was all that important. In fact, my own ancestors wrote to the Netherlands in 1742 and in 1745 saying we were really too busy to teach our children our own history, could you please print Martyrs Mirror for us in our own language and send it over? That happened again and again. ... It led some to ask, do your people really care about their heritage? Those are things we can think about. ...

[Fifty years ago] we did not have, here in the East, any great respect for what could be called “the life of the mind.” If Mennonites want to build a college in the cornfields of Indiana and Kansas, go right ahead. But don’t ask us to pay for it. We’ll send a president or two out there later, and some of our more restless people. But here’s where the people and the money are, in Lancaster County.

But here’s the paradox. The Mennonite experience has been characterized with such a strong element of community that even though we waited until almost too late, there is enough coherence out there that materials can flow into a central point and you can almost catch up in a way that surprises other groups. So it wasn’t quite too late.

And that brings me to one tiny little story: we wanted to build a historical facility in Franconia Conference. ... I remember going to visit a man, a cousin of my dad, who had made a lot of money in business. I thought, here’s a chance for him to invest in the future. And when I pointed out the potential for a place to archive our things, his response was, “It’s so late.”

Well, it’s always late. He and his money are gone, and he didn’t invest. But I like what Martin Luther said, “Even if I thought that Christ was going to return tomorrow, I would plant my apple tree today.” I think that’s our philosophy.

Thank you for joining with us as we build for the future!

Online Giving Now Available

We are now happy to receive your Annual Fund donation on line! Contributions to us are available via the Mennonite Church USA web site at https://giving.mennoniteusa.org/. Go to this screen and choose, “Other Mennonite Organizations,” scroll down and you will see us listed. This site is administered through Mennonite Foundation. You pay by credit card and the process is quick, confidential, and has an option for donating anonymously.