Local artists sell unique gifts

Now through the end of the year, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society is selling hundreds of pieces of locally hand-crafted folk art in its bookstore and museum beside Tanger Outlet Center on Lincoln Highway East.

The third annual Pennsylvania German Folk Art Show & Sale includes the work of nearly 30 artists in a dazzling variety of media, including tin work, toleware, scherenschnitte, ceramics, fraktur and fiber arts.

During the 1700s and 1800s, these art forms were part of everyday life in Pennsylvania’s Swiss and German immigrant communities. Today, items inspired by traditional designs and techniques are prized for their unique character and quality construction.

“Toleware” comes from the French words for sheet metal and often refers to painted tin boxes and kitchen items. Scherenschnitte, or “scissor cuts” are patterns and scenes cut out of paper, sometimes hand-painted. Fraktur refers to a “broken” lettering style and decoration used to embellish manuscripts such as birth and marriage certificates.

“I learned that the things we use on a daily basis could be both useful and beautiful,” fiber artist Janet Mast wrote in an artist statement.

The show is organized by bookstore coordinator Jonel Ness, with fraktur artist Lynn Sommer and decorative painter Jim King.

“King, Sommer and other artists transform the store into a gallery,” Ness said—“but everything is for sale.”

The exhibition is open Tuesday through Saturday, 8:30 AM–4:30 PM, through December 31.

The Historical Society is located at 2215 Millstream Road, along Route 30 in Lancaster. Parking is provided.

Bookstore, tours support business convention

Guided field trips and an on-site bookstore were among the services Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society offered to participants at Business as a Calling 2011, the annual convention of Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) held in downtown Lancaster, November 3 to 6.

On Thursday, November 3, tour guides Mike Salamh, Joanne Hess Siegrist and Lisa White coordinated an original tour of Lancaster County history, weaving together stories of African American, European American and Native American history.

Also on Thursday, Daniel Ness and an Amish businessman directed a tour of Amish-owned businesses in Lancaster County. The tour group was very engaged in talking about the challenges of maintaining a modern business while remaining within the guidelines of the Amish church, Ness said.

On the convention center floor, seven tables featured books on faith and business including titles by 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winner Leymah Gbowee, local author and entrepreneur Phyllis Pellman Good and Executive Director of Mennonite Church USA, Ervin Stutzman, one of the convention’s plenary speakers.

“MEDA has become a respected worldwide faith-based organization for business people to help alleviate suffering and bring about justice,” said Society director Rolando Santiago. “We’re pleased that MEDA asked the Historical Society to provide resources on business and faith among Anabaptist groups in Lancaster County.”

Through the end of December, the Society will offer a 30% discount on cookbooks and titles featured at the MEDA convention, bookstore coordinator Jonel Ness said.

Fraktur artist Emily Smucker-Beidler talks with visitors at the opening of the 2010 Pennsylvania German Folk Art Show & Sale. This year’s sale continues Tuesday–Saturday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM through December 31.
Lancaster Roots—a series of Lancaster County cultural events organized by the Historical Society and the 1719 Hans Herr House—will continue in 2012, a planning committee announced this month.

The schedule will include long-standing events from both organizations as well as community favorites added in the last two years.

“Deep Roots: Using DNA to Unlock Your Family’s Ancient Past” will be the theme for the 33rd annual Lancaster Family History Conference, April 19-21. The conference attracts genealogists and family historians from across the US and Canada. Lancaster native Darvin L. Martin will deliver the keynote address.

On September 10, a Storytelling Night will feature Arli Klassen, Executive Director of Mennonite Central Committee, and former Eastern Mennonite Missions president, Richard Showalter. The Storytelling Night, introduced this year, asks two exceptional people to tell seven brief, formative stories from their career or personal life.

On February 27, another pair of respected leaders will contribute to the Historical Society’s quarterly lecture series. Howard Zehr, Professor of Restorative Justice at Eastern Mennonite University, and Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz, Restorative Justice Coordinator at Mennonite Central Committee U.S., will give “A Brief History of the Victim/Offender and Restorative Justice Movements.”

At the 1719 Hans Herr House, director Becky Gochnauer will continue this year’s popular “Music in the Orchard” summer concert series, the annual Snitz Fest, and arts classes to follow two sold-out blacksmithing workshops this fall.

The 1719 Herr House also will continue to offer many educational opportunities for children, ranging from summer day camps for grades three to eight to Girl Scout Badge Days, where Brownies or Juniors can earn three badges for completing projects related to early American history.

A complete calendar of Lancaster Roots 2012 events will be released in January. Printed brochures will be mailed to Society and 1719 Herr House members and a partial schedule will appear in each issue of this newsletter. Information about current and past events is available online at LancasterRoots.org.
New book signing, talk and tea

Duane Kauffman will sign his new edited book, Your Son and Brother Sol: Letters from Solomon E. Yoder While Serving with the American Friends Service Committee in Post-World War I Europe, on Thursday, December 8, from 7:00 to 7:30 PM and will present a brief talk with readings from the letters from 7:30 to 8:00 PM.

The letter writer, Solomon E. Yoder, was born and raised in a Mennonite family in the Belleville, Pa., area. He served in France and Germany with fifty other Mennonites and many Quakers, attending to the needs of people on both sides of the conflict.

Kauffman will sign books between 7:00 and 7:30 PM and will present a brief talk with readings from the letters from 7:30 to 8:00 PM.

Director’s Reflections: Can we make peace on Earth real?

by Rolando Santiago

For nearly 500 years, Anabaptists have tried to remain faithful to Jesus’ teachings about peace.

Anabaptists believe that peace is an integral part of God’s grace which transforms the hearts of human beings from a fallen state to a new creation. This newly restored life leads Christians to not only believe but practice peace daily in life. Believing, practicing and proclaiming Christ’s peace for all people is what we may refer to as the “peace witness.”

This peace witness is biblically grounded in God’s desire for all creation to experience jubilee, as articulated clearly in the Old Testament. In the jubilee event, which the people of God were called to practice every fiftieth year, debts were cancelled, slaves were freed, the land rested and people returned to their homes and families. The vision of jubilee, still relevant today, is for people to attain a state of health, well-being, and peace—spiritually and physically—within themselves, with each other and with creation.

What we do not know is the extent to which the Anabaptist peace witness, based on the jubilee vision, is making a difference in the world. Some might say that making a difference is not the Christian’s concern. It’s God’s concern. We only need to remain faithful. Yet, Jesus clearly asks us to follow. Following is not passive belief, but active discipleship. It generates results.

The peace witness of Anabaptists in the 16th century, based on beliefs of nonresistance and nonretaliation, was powerful. It unfortunately resulted in martyrdom and did not necessarily reduce violence in Europe. But to this day, Anabaptist martyrdom remains an inspirational symbol of steadfast faith in Christ for Anabaptist Amish and Old Order Mennonites.

In his recent book, The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined, Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker claims that the Age of Reason and the European Enlightenment in the 17th and 18th centuries, with parallels around the world, represented a period in human history sometimes called “The Humanitarian Revolution.” He identifies Anabaptists as a significant religious group that helped introduce systematic pacifism.

During the Revolutionary War and the Civil War in the 18th and 19th centuries, Anabaptists demonstrated their peace witness through objection to bearing arms. During the Revolutionary War, they paid militia fines, served jail time or found substitutes. In the Civil War, they paid “commutation fees” to the Union government in places like Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The result of these actions was a consistently low number of enlistees in Lancaster. But at the same time Anabaptists paid war dues to the government’s military efforts.

Ervin Stutzman, in his recent book From Nonresistance to Justice: The Transformation of Mennonite Church Peace Rhetoric, 1908-2008, argues that today’s Anabaptist peace witness has moved from a relatively narrow view that emphasizes nonresistance and conscientious objection to war, toward a rich, well-thought and multifaceted set of peacemaking practices intended to create an increasingly just world. The focus is on results.

Leymah Gbowee, one of the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize winners who trained at the Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at Eastern Mennonite University, exemplifies the results of an effective peace witness. She organized a coalition of Christian and Muslim women in Liberia who nonviolently confronted a ruthless president and rebel warlords to lay down their arms. She tells her story in her memoir, Mighty Be Our Powers.

I believe the Anabaptist peace witness is having an impact today. The results are being felt around the world. Like Gbowee’s, there are many stories to tell and celebrate. In this Advent season, take time to reflect on how you, your congregation or your country can help reduce violence and bring about peace—thus fulfilling the good news of jubilee for which Jesus was born.
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Year-end book auction

The year’s final rare-book auction will be held at 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster on Friday, December 9 from 6:30 to 8:30 PM.

It will include 130 lots of books from the Ivan Glick collection that did not fit into a special auction in November. A rare copy of *Annals of the Conestoga Valley* by C. Z. Mast and Robert E. Simpson will be sold.

Phone and mail-in bids must be received by Thursday, December 8 at 4:30 PM. For guidelines and an auction catalog, go to www.lmhs.org.

The Society thanked volunteers like Ruth Umble, above, at an appreciation luncheon on November 13. Each year, dozens of volunteers contribute hundreds of hours to preserve Mennonite heritage and faith. Umble assists with book auction catalogs.

Your skills needed

Do you enjoy projects that require attention to detail? Do you like to look through old books? Are you on friendly terms with the computer?

The Historical Society needs an organized volunteer to help Library Assistant Lloyd Zeager prepare catalogs for rare-book auctions. These auctions preserve Pennsylvania history while generating critical income for the Society. Flexible hours. For more information, call Peggy Erb at (717) 393-9745 or e-mail perb@lmhs.org.

See inside:

- Original Christmas gifts
- Duane Kauffman book signing
- Making peace on earth