Lancaster Longhouse rises from central PA soil

Construction is now complete at the Lancaster Longhouse, being created on the grounds of the 1719 Hans Herr House in Willow Street, Pennsylvania. In October, workers tied final saplings onto the bark-covered sides of the 62-foot building, which is a replica of the kind of home Native Americans built in this area for hundreds of years before European settlement.

The longhouse is an educational initiative planned by Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, the 1719 Hans Herr House and Circle Legacy Center, a Lancaster nonprofit dedicated to empowering First Nations Peoples.

“Mennonites were the first permanent European settlers here,” Herr House director Becky Gochnauer said. “We have three generations of Herr family homes on this property but, until now, we had no way to represent the neighborhood the Herr family moved into.”

“A longhouse will enable our organizations to tell the Lancaster County story from the 16th century up to the turn of the 20th century,” she said.

Now work shifts to furnishing the inside of the house. Furnishings coordinator Ruth Py is working with craftspeople to create a long list of reproduction artifacts including spears, arrows, fish hooks, bowls, baskets, necklaces, boots and leggings.

If you or someone you know is skilled at working with stone, fibers, bone, clay, wood, metal, or hide please e-mail hhpysknk@ptd.net, Py said.

Monetary donations are also needed to complete the project. Due to the (Please see “Longhouse,” page 2)

Hannes Eby burial records reveal a lost Lancaster County

Just in time for Christmas giving, LMHS will release a seventh book in its Mennonite Sources and Documents Series—Hannes Eby Death and Burial Record: Life and Death in Old Warwick Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, 1806-1845.

The 272-page volume is the translation of a German ledger kept by John (“Hannes”) Eby (1767-1845), who lived along Hammer Creek northeast of Lititz, Pennsylvania. From 1806 until his own death, Eby recorded burials of relatives, friends, and acquaintances in “old” Warwick Township, Lancaster County; in neighboring counties; and even into Canada.

The original manuscript—beautifully written in flowing German script—descended through four generations of Ebys and Garbers and was gifted to LMHS from the estate of Mennonite minister Henry F. Garber (1888-1968), former chairman of Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities at Salunga, Pennsylvania.

Society member Denise Witwer Lahr, author of numerous Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage articles and coauthor of The Witwer Legacy (2010), spent the last decade annotating nearly nine hundred entries that had been translated by Society archivist Carolyn C. Wenger.

Lahr correlated the ledger information with primary sources, photographing gravestones of more than half of the individuals as well as several of their homes. In the course of her research she encountered a land swindle, an economic panic, a real-estate bubble and a hanging. In some cases, she documented towels, fraktur, nameplates and (Please see “Hannes Eby,” page 3)
Longhouse (Continued from page 1) unusual construction, the Longhouse project had unusual expenses, Gochnauer said. “This summer we received an important $50,000 gift, and we are hopeful that other donors will step forward to support this unique asset for Lancaster County.”

When complete, the Lancaster Longhouse will be one of the only interactive exhibits of Native life in Pennsylvania and one of few similar buildings in the nation.

The 1719 Hans Herr House receives visits from two thousand school children each year, and Gochnauer anticipates that even more students and families will be interested in the Longhouse.

Native American guides are preparing interpretive tours and demonstrations. June Heller—a former teacher, principal, and gifted-program supervisor for the School District of Lancaster—also has been working on a curriculum for elementary and secondary school groups.

“The Longhouse is a tangible expression of one community’s respect for another,” said Gochnauer. “We want to introduce visitors to Native Americans in Pennsylvania, to create a vision of Lancaster County’s cultural diversity, and to start conversations between people of different backgrounds.”

The Longhouse is scheduled to open in the spring of 2013. Donations may be made through the Web site, www.lancasterlonghouse.org, or by calling the Hans Herr House at (717) 464-4438.

Three years ago, as Lancaster County approached the anniversary of its first European settlement, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society and the 1719 Hans Herr House stepped forward with “Lancaster Roots 300”—a year-long celebration of festivals, lectures, exhibits, and concerts.

The year was so successful, it shaped the future of both organizations.

“Lancaster Roots has become a very effective way to promote activities at both the Herr House and the Historical Society,” LMHS director Rolando Santiago said.

Lancaster Roots 2013 will include annual favorites, like a Music Night in February or March, the Bookworm Frolic in August, and the Snitz Fest in October. It will also feature new events:

• As a follow-up to “Music in Worship,” which drew 1,100 people to sing hymns from five Anabaptist traditions, LMHS and the Swiss Pioneer Preservation Associates will introduce “Amish and Mennonite History, Faith & Culture” with contributions from different Anabaptist groups.

• In November, Hispanic Mennonite historians will speak on the history and missions of Lancaster’s Hispanic Mennonite community.

• Young historians will be invited to present original papers for discussion at a fall gathering.

This year’s Lancaster Family History Conference was the largest ever. The 2013 conference will feature genealogist and author John Philip Colletta with the theme “Family History for Smarties (and Others, Too).” Field trips preceding the conference include a tour of Columbia, Wrightsville, and Gettysburg, 150 years after the Battle of Gettysburg.

Five summer concerts are planned at the 1719 Hans Herr House as part of Music in the Orchard, which has grown in popularity.

“History is a part of everyone’s life,” Santiago said. “We try to plan events that bring diverse people together. We look forward to hearing the questions and ideas that you bring.”
Hannes Eby (Continued from page 3) previously unknown artifacts also came to light.

“These records give voice to persons who otherwise no longer exist in collective memory,” Lahr said. “Eby’s precision in identifying relationships, geography and occupations demonstrates the interaction of diverse religious, secular, and industrial communities within a unique rural area.”

Today “old” Warwick comprises Warwick, Penn, Elizabeth, and Clay Townships, including Lütitz Borough. “Place names that no longer exist or have been reduced to mere road signs take on new meaning when one views Eby’s neighborhood from the perspective of foot and horse transportation,” Wenger said.

Eby, well respected in his community, was known for instigating one of the famous mutual-aid stories of Mennonite history. At a meeting in his home in 1804, he successfully persuaded Pennsylvania Mennonites to aid distressed Mennonites in Waterloo, Canada. In response, twenty thousand silver dollars were sent by horse and wagon over five hundred miles to Canada.

Hannes Eby Death and Burial Record combines more than two hundred black-and-white and color photographs with twenty-seven sidebars and a detailed index to deliver fresh insight on the legal, political, economic, religious, medical, and industrial complexities of the early nineteenth century.

It is available at $29.95 from the Society bookstore by visiting www.lmhs.org or calling (717) 393-9745. Members receive a ten percent discount.

Hannes Eby’s grandson and great-grandson, Henry N. Eby (1837-1909) and Amos F. Eby (1864-1921), kept a similar record in English, over a thousand entries, which were transcribed by Steven L. Ness and published in the Society’s Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage magazine in January and April 2000. This record also resides in the Society’s archives.

Recent Library Acquisitions

Religion


Biography/Genealogy


Remembering Annie Funk (and the Titanic). Branch Valley Productions, 2012 (BX8143.F86 R46 2012 (DVD))


History

Nibbrig, Christa A. Hart. A thief in the church: how the Plain Community was taken for more than $65 million--by one of their own: a true story. Archangel Investigations, LLC, 2012 (HV6698.P4 N53 2012)

Miscellaneous


Director’s Reflection

I don’t think about Advent anymore!

By Rolando Santiago

How much do I think about Advent these days? Not a whole lot. Why? I am too busy working. I sit back, enjoy a seasonal concert, a Christmas Eve service, a holiday movie, and have others do the thinking for me. Worse yet, I am turned off by constant advertisements asking me to buy things during this season. Thinking about Advent is the last thing I want to do anymore.

How do I get out of this rut?

In graduate school, I worked for Judith Langer, an educational researcher who believes that writing shapes thinking. She also said that learning occurs when teachers ask questions and engage in discussions that provide opportunities for students to say what they do and do not understand. Later, at Mennonite Central Committee, I learned that ideas are also shaped by action.

To engage Advent this year, we must write about it, talk about it, and act on it. Here are some ideas:

- If writing shapes thinking, let’s write a personal reflection about Advent to trusted friends. This could be in a traditional Christmas card, in an end-of-year letter, or even a post on Facebook.
- If talking leads to learning, let’s discuss the meaning of Advent over a cup of coffee with a family member, a sister or brother in church, or someone we are trying to befriend.
- If taking action transforms, let’s donate to a just cause, send a letter to our U.S. Senator advocating for peace, or volunteer with an organization in support of the poor in our community.

Finally, consider acquiring Take Our Moments and Our Days: An Anabaptist Prayer Book, Volume 2, Advent through Pentecost, published by Herald Press (available at the LMHS bookstore). Follow the daily meditations, and allow the Holy Spirit to touch your heart on the true meaning of Advent.

At the end of a very productive year, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society thanks its dedicated volunteer board: Charles Bauman (chair), Merle Good, Linda Herr, Marcy High, Mary Lou Weaver Houser, Matthew Martin, Dan Mast, Harold Mast, John Rutt (treasurer), Marvin Sauder, Kenneth Sensenig (vice-chair), Darrell Yoder, and Tim Yoder (secretary).