

MAH News and Notes

MICHIANA ANABAPTIST HISTORIANS

Established 1992

Fall 2015

www.michianaanabaptisthistorians.org

Vol. 24, No. 2

Stories from Local Research in October 24 Meeting

The Fall 2015 meeting of Michiana Anabaptist Historians will be held at First Mennonite Church in Middlebury, 203 E. Lawrence, on Saturday, October 24. Registration and coffee will begin at 8:30, followed by a business session at 9 a.m. and presentations at 9:30 and 11 a.m. Non-members are invited to this public meeting, which will emphasize local historical research. Please use the south entrance of the building.

Rachel Nafziger Hartzler, vice-president of MAH, will discuss local church history sources and their interesting stories that she used in writing the history of Pleasant Oaks Mennonite Church in Middlebury, now re-united with our host church, First Mennonite. The title of her presentation is "Searching for Stories and Strings: Uncovering the History of Mennonites in Middlebury."

A photograph of Rachel and a review of her book, *No Strings Attached: Boundary Lines in Pleasant Places* appeared in the Spring 2014 MAH newsletter, which is also available on the MAH website.

Wanda Kauffman Hoffman, in "Cemeteries: Though Silent, They Speak," will recount interesting discoveries she has made while doing research in local cemeteries for the Elkhart County Genealogical Society. She says, "I've

learned there's more to cemeteries than just names and dates and will be sharing some examples through pictures and stories."

An active member of the genealogy society, Wanda's responsibility is to answer requests for information about deaths and burials in Elkhart County, which often require her to visit cemetery grounds to establish facts. Wanda also volunteers for the Goshen Historical Society and the Elkhart County Historical Society and is past vice-president of Michiana Anabaptist Historians.

During the October 24 business meeting MAH members will elect president and treasurer. Both Ervin Beck, president, and Miriam Yutzky, treasurer, have served one of two allowed three-year terms in those offices. They have been nominated to serve second terms by a committee consisting of Wilmer Hollinger and Leonard Gross. Other nominations from the floor are welcome, if those nominees have agreed to serve.

Chester Weaver will report on a September 10 meeting that an ad hoc group from MAH participated in with Ervin Stutzman, Executive Secretary of MC-USA, regarding the future of the MC-USA Archives at Goshen College.

Project Reports



Colleen McFarland, who spoke about the Mennonite Church USA Archives at the March meeting, has taken a new position as archivist

for Sisters of Charity in Leavenworth, KS. Before she left, she wrote: "On behalf of the MC-USA Archives, I thank the Michiana Anabaptist Historians for

the generous contribution of \$300 towards the restoration of the 1857 Daniel and Susannah Brenneman wedding photograph. The restoration, to be completed by spring 2016, will allow the archives to add an important and unique image to its already strong holdings on the Brenneman family. Given Daniel Brenneman's significance to the history of Anabaptism in Elkhart County, this restoration is an important investment in our cultural heritage."

The MAH also contributed \$100 to the restoration of St. John's Lutheran Church west of Goshen, as approved at the Spring 2015 business meeting. The roof has been

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Please post this newsletter in a public place. Thank you.

JCW Cemetery Research

At the Goshen Folk Festival in 1981, J. C. Wenger told Mennonite and Amish stories at Berkey Avenue Mennonite Church:

The very first Amish bishop was Isaac Schmucker. When he wrote German he wrote his name Schmucker; when he wrote English he wrote his name Isaac Smoker. And his half-brother founded the Smoker Lumber Company at New Paris, which is still in existence. Isaac Schmucker was a broad-minded man and he ordained, almost as soon as he got here, a man named Jonas D. Troyer. And for a long time nobody knew where his tombstone was. I had good reason to believe he died in 1897. By the way, there was almost good reason to believe he never existed. In Elkhart County Court Records, there is no estate settlement. There's no will of a Jonas D. Troyer. No record of Jonas D. Troyer ever having been in this county. However, I finally found his tombstone at the 5-square school near Middlebury. The name "Jonathan D. Troyer" was on the tombstone, apparently because the presiding minister asked the stonemason to make a headstone for "Yohn," which he interpreted to mean "Jonathan" rather than "Jonas."

replaced and the building is now being re-painted.

MAH is one of fourteen Anabaptist groups that have contributed funds to the Anabaptist Mennonite Digital Collaborative. With a major grant of \$16,000 from the Schowalter Foundation, the project of digitizing *Gospel Herald* (1908-1998) and *The Mennonite* (1885-1998) will proceed. Gradually the digitized contents will be available online. Google "Digitized Mennonite Periodicals" to find the issues that have already been posted on the internet.

Chicago Home Mission Remembered



In the photo are three natives of Illinois who here recall their experiences with the Chicago Home Mission, which was a subject discussed at the March meeting of MAH: (from left) Lois Schertz, Marj Schertz Liechty, Milton Cender.

Exhibit Closes October 16

Through October 16, an exhibit on the suffering of Ukrainian Mennonites, "Women in the Mennonite Exodus from Ukraine: Paintings by Ray Dirks," will remain at the Library Gallery at Goshen College. The exhibit is on loan from the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg and came to Goshen College from Mennonite World Conference in Harrisburg. It documents in collage-like paintings and texts the difficult experiences of Mennonite women who immigrated to Canada and South America, with children but no adult male relatives, from 1917 to 1945 because of civil war, collectivization, famine and World War II.

Lois Schertz Memoir

My mother was Helena Matilda Albertina Drange, a first-generation American. Her father and mother emigrated from Germany and settled in Chicago. My grandfather worked as a carpenter, but he struggled with a drinking problem. The family was very poor.

My mother's father sent her to the corner tavern to buy beer. She remembered being afraid of the men lounging in the tavern.

When my mother was still quite young, her mother died of complications due to an abortion. My guess is that my grandmother was desperate for an abortion because the family lacked money to pay for food for yet another child. She may have also been depressed about the death of her youngest child.

Luckily, my grandmother's sister came from Germany to care for the children. She eventually married my grandfather. But my grandfather's drinking continued to drain the family's finances.

Helena's oldest sister Elsie went to work as a domestic laborer at the age of nine. Elsie ironed dresses and ran errands at a department store, giving all of the money she earned to her father.

When Elsie told a department store employee about her family's problems, the employee told Elsie about the Mennonite Home Mission. Elsie begged her father and step-mother to let her attend the mission.

When Elsie and her two sisters knocked

at the door of the mission, the people who opened the door gave the children food and invited them to come to Sunday School. Even though their step-mother was reluctant to let them go, the three sisters started attending Sunday school at the mission.

After Elsie started attending church, she would loudly sing "Anywhere with Jesus I can Safely Go" to allay her fears as she walked home after work through the dark streets of Chicago. My mother Helena sang "Jesus Loves Me" as she went to the tavern for beer.

Soon after the children started attending the Mission, they became ill with scarlet fever. In those days, anyone who contracted a contagious disease was quarantined. A big red sign was put on the outside of the house, warning that no one should go into the house.

When the people at the Mennonite Home Mission learned that the children were sick, the minister, A. H. Lehman, disregarded the red sign. He braved contracting the disease to enter the house, bring food to the children, and help care for them.

These acts of kindness convinced their step-mother to join her children in attending services at the Mission. The step-mother was baptized on August 19, 1898, by John Funk, the Mennonite bishop from Elkhart. Later that same year, Elsie and her father (my grandfather) were also baptized

and became members of the church at the Mission.

John Funk's diaries contain several references to John Drange, my grandfather, and the testimonies he gave in church regarding his new faith. Unfortunately, my grandfather's faith did not help him overcome his drinking problem.

The people at the Mission felt that it would help if the family could get away from the city. John Funk's diary tells about how the Mennonite Mission Board helped the family move to Cullom, Illinois, where they joined the small Mennonite church. My mother and her three sisters finished grade school and then went to work as domestics.

Later, all three sisters attended the Elkhart Institute (Goshen College). After college, Elsie, the oldest, sailed to India as a Mennonite missionary. Her brother Edward served as a Mennonite conscientious objector and volunteered for reconstruction work in France.

My mother, Helena, married a prosperous Mennonite farmer. Like my mother, I attended Goshen College, as did all three of my three children and one of my grandchildren.

To this day, I have a special place in my heart for the Mennonite Home Mission in Chicago and the way God used the Mission to save my family.

(Memoirs by Marj and Milton are on page 4)

Hutterites Visit Michiana



By **Daniel Hochstetler**

Recently two members of the Hutterian Brethren brought a collection of valuable historical codices (handwritten manuscripts bound like books) to the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College for safekeeping. When Hutterites immigrated from Ukraine to the Dakota Territory in the 1870s, they brought along many codices which have since then been handed down for several generations in the various family lines.

Minister Joe Hofer from Montana brought an early Epistel Buech, the only such book in existence, and an early version of a Gross Geschicht Buch, which chronicles Hutterite history to 1580. Hofer's cousin from Alberta brought along a Kirchen Register (church record) and fifteen small bound codices containing Bible teachings or sermons hand-copied in German script in 1787.

It was the Lehrerleut Hutterites' wish that these precious volumes be preserved

safely and be accessible for posterity. The visitors were also able to see, thanks to Joe Springer and John Roth, some of the extensive collection of other early Hutterite materials already in the Library.

Over fifty years ago my wife Arie and I were invited by Dr. John A. Hostetler to go to Montana and teach English school in Hutterite colonies and assist as informal field workers for research in his "Education and Marginality" study. This included an analysis of how children are prepared to become a part of the colony church and community, and of the process and result when a small percent choose to leave the colony. I taught the school of the Dariusleut colony near Grass Range for one year and the next year at the Lehrerleut colony near Choteau, where Joe Hofer was a teenager at the time.

Besides becoming acquainted with the people and the colonies where we lived, we also visited weekends most of the 21 colonies in Montana at that time, plus a few colonies in Alberta and a Schmiedleut colony in South Dakota for a wider perspective. In addition to some interviewing and a few other projects, we mostly observed colony life through the seasons and how the formal and informal activities contributed to the life and well-being of the colonies. We established close ongoing relationships with some of our students and others, and have visited back a number of times, always warmly received.

Joe and his cousin stayed with us in Goshen for three nights while they completed their mission with the codices.

Having a common Anabaptist origin with Mennonites and Amish, they were especially interested in observing how the Amish live and cope in the modern world. We visited Mennohof, watched the Shipshewana livestock auction and ate at the auction restaurant before visiting a duck farm (powered by solar units), a printing operation (driven by a generator), and a number of other Amish businesses and farms.

The next day we visited more homes and businesses in Clinton Township, including a lumber milling business powered largely by hydraulics. We visited with people and tramped through some cemeteries. They were intrigued with the variety of horses--their harnesses and shoes--and horse-drawn vehicles.

Hutterites, who live in diversified agricultural communities of from 50 to 150 people, from their beginning have held all things in common. Due to persecution they had fled eastward through Tyrol (Austria) and Moravia to Ukraine. One-hundred-forty years ago a remnant came to America and settled in three colonies, from which have developed several distinct groups. Today there are over 500 colonies scattered from Minnesota to the Pacific and in the Prairie Provinces of Canada.

Many Mennonites are familiar with many Amish, some Hutterites are acquainted with some Mennonites, and a few Amish know a few Hutterites. But rather few people have a long acquaintance with members of all three parts of the Anabaptist family in North America.

Publications by MAH Members

Tim Erdel published an essay in the July 2015 issue of *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*: "Better Right than Mennonite": From 'Egly Amish' to the Defenseless Mennonite Church to the Evangelical Mennonite Church to the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches."

Rich Preheim's new history of the Indiana-Michigan Conference of MC-USA will be published in May 2016.

Joe Springer's monumental two-volume book, *Montbeliard Mennonite Church Register, 1750-1958*, was published early this summer, following 25 years of research. The book offers

a transcription of the records (most in German, some in French) and an English translation, source documents related to Amish Mennonite communities in France, and comprehensive genealogical coverage of over 45 surnames.

Those family names are predominant in the Fulton County, Ohio, and Allen County, Indiana, Anabaptist communities, as well as Iowa, Ontario and other French-origin congregations. The surnames include Conrad, Eicher, Frey, Graber, Kaufmann, Klopfenstein, Krabil, Lichty, Miller, Rih, Richard, Ramseyer, Roth, Stauffer, Schad/Short, Schindler, Slagel, Schlunegger,

Schmucker, Stoll, Schwartz, Stucky Widmer, Yoder.

Genealogists and historians will find the Montbeliard book as valuable as the Kreider/Gingerich Amish genealogy.

The book is available from the Lancaster County Historical Society (\$49 per set, plus \$12 postage, tel. 717-393-9745). Copies will be for sale at the October MAH meeting. The book is a joint publication of the Mennonite Historical Society and the Association Francaise d'Histoire Anabaptist-Mennonite.

Marjorie Schertz Liechty Memoir

It was probably mid-September 1908 when my grandparents S. D. and Anna Garber Schertz of Lowpoint, IL, received a letter from Emma Oyer of the Chicago Home Mission. She asked if they would be interested in providing a home for a baby girl who had been left on the doorstep of the mission. We do not know whether Peter, 13, or Walter, 8, had any part in that decision, but we do know that the baby to be named Miriam Irene was accepted and dearly loved. Six years later she was legally adopted into the family and became my aunt.

In those years hundreds of children were welcomed to Sunday School and Christmas dinners at the Mission, so baby Miriam's mother undoubtedly thought that it was a safe and caring place to leave her child. The ties between the Home Mission and the Metamora congregation were especially strong, since Emma Oyer had spent her early years in that community.

My father's journal told of butchering days when an extra hog was prepared for the Mission and sent by train from Cazenovia to Chicago.

Miriam spent her first 28 years in the Lowpoint area, where she graduated from the local schools and then cared for her widowed mother who was dealing with cancer. Following Anna's death, quiet and soft-spoken Miriam left her home community for Chicago, perhaps in search of her roots. During the next 20 years she maintained ties with the Home Mission and Moody Bible Institute as she found employment in the city. In 1956 she returned downstate to Congerville when she married Delbert Walter, whom she met through Raymond and Frances Yoder, former Home Mission superintendents. Raymond was serving as pastor of the Congerville Mennonite Church.

As was true for countless persons, Chicago Home Mission was a strong and

positive influence on Miriam's life from beginning to end.

Milton Cender Memoir

My East Bend Mennonite Church near Fisher, Illinois, was 120 miles south of Chicago, and supported the Chicago Home Mission. Many of our members hosted "fresh air" children from Chicago during summer months in the 1920s and 1930s. Children were eligible for this treat if they attended Sunday School regularly at the Mission. They would ride on the train by themselves. One Chicago girl married a man from our church. Often the children, and later their younger siblings, would stay with the same family, year after year. Our church sent canned meat and vegetables to the Mission and also supplied Summer Bible School teachers. I remember attending a service at the mission led by A. H. Lehman.

MAH Executive Committee (2015)

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MAH News & Notes is published twice a year

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 Renew at meetings or send payment to Helene.
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