

# MHC Quarterly

Mennonite Heritage Center

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## *A Riot of Color: Quilts from the Community*

Enjoy the variety of patterns and riotous color combinations that reflect the Pennsylvania Dutch culture of early to mid twentieth century Pennsylvania Mennonite women. The exhibit features numerous colorful pattern and scrap quilts from the Mennonite communities of Bucks and Montgomery Counties and will be on display until March 2, 2017.

# MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTER

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## Mennonite Heritage Center

565 Yoder Road

Harleysville, PA 19438

Telephone: 215.256.3020

Fax: 215.256.3023

e-mail: info@mhep.org

Web: www.mhep.org

## Museum & Library Hours

Tuesday - Friday

10 am to 5 pm

Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm

The mission of the Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania is to collect, preserve, and interpret the Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage in order to educate, inspire, and witness to the church and broader community.

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Eric Clymer, left, advising Joel Alderfer on organic cheese selections at the December 3 Farm Market in the Nyce Barn. *Photo by Steve Diehl*

## Looking back, looking ahead

Thank you for your support of the Mennonite Heritage Center in 2016. The year rolled along rapidly, with staff working on organizing archival collections, installing exhibits and carrying out programs, events, workshops and bus tours. The year included events such as historian Ben Gossen speaking on German Mennonite response to Nazi rule, a bus tour to the restored Hancock Shake Village, Massachusetts, and an Old Order Hymn Sing. Board member John Ruth extended the invitation to the group to have their annual hymn sing in the Nyce Barn on our campus. The sound of the a capella singing wafting over the hot summer evening breeze is a special memory for me.

The Nyce Barn was also utilized for a new event - a farm market on Saturday, Dec. 3 in which local vendors sold locally produced winter vegetables, organic cheese and meats. The Nyce Barn is a welcoming, attractive site for events and we are currently working to install an interior wheelchair lift to comply with accessibility standards. The barn will be available for a limited number of wedding rentals in 2017 through *All About Catering* - please contact them at 610-584-6212 if you are interested in possibly reserving the Nyce Barn for your event.

I am thankful for the good year at the MHC and am looking ahead to great programs and exhibits in 2017. The quilt exhibit, *A Riot of Color* opened in November and will be on exhibit until March 2017. After the quilt exhibit and a February exhibit of landscape paintings by area artist David Page, we will open a special exhibit on Mennonite immigration to Pennsylvania in April (more information on p.10.)

The Board of Trustees is looking ahead to developing a new strategic plan in 2017. They also want to recognize two board members who have contributed time and talent to MHEP. Trustee Jeff Godshall is stepping down after 16 years on the Board. We thank Jeff for the many years of leadership and financial expertise that he brought to MHEP. Gene Wampler is also ending his term of service on the Board. Gene was instrumental in developing Church of the Brethren involvement in MHEP and has been actively involved in MHEP Committees and events.

In light of these board changes, the Board of Trustees is recommending that Stuart Suter be approved as a member. Prior to his retirement, Stuart R. Suter served as Vice President and Patent Counsel for SmithKline Beecham Corporation (now GlaxoSmithKline Corporation) of Philadelphia where he was employed for over 27 years. He is an active member of Ambler Church of the Brethren and has served as the Chairman of the Board of Administration, a member of the Finance Committee, a member of the Personnel and Nominating Committee and as church Moderator. He also served on the Community Home Services Board. He received his B.A. from Bridgewater College; M.S. from the University of Michigan; Ph.D. from the University of Virginia; and his J.D. from Temple University. He has served on the Board of Directors of PBC for twelve years total and previously as Chairman for five years. He resides in Ambler.

Below is a ballot to affirm/not affirm Stuart Suter for the Board of Trustees. Members are invited to return their ballot to Director Sarah Heffner, Mennonite Heritage Center, 565 Yoder Road, Harleysville, PA 19438 or email their ballot decision to heffners@mhep.org.

Sarah Heffner  
Director

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\_\_\_\_\_ I affirm Stuart Suter to serve on the Board of Trustees.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not affirm Stuart Suter to serve on the Board of Trustees.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Summer and Winter Food by Alan Keyser

In former years, seasons pretty well controlled what people ate. Most food began life within a few miles of where it was finally brought to the table. Artificial refrigeration had not yet been developed, and before 1850 few filled ice houses for natural summer refrigeration. Under these conditions they preserved foods by several methods. Seasons and availability determined what foods were on the table at any meal. In the summer food fresh from the garden was important.

However, in the summer there was seldom any fresh meat. Smoked meats such as ham and bacon were used in warm weather when fresh meats were chancy. By the same token *Schnitz* replaced fresh apples after the last wrinkled spotted apple in the cellar or buried in the garden was gone in the winter. The *Schnitz* season ran from late winter until the first apples ripened just after grain harvest in July. A rhyme from the hills south of Kutztown gives the season.

*Ebbel schnitz un beera hutzla  
Macha n rechter guuter pie,  
Wann mer schunsch nix besser hut  
Fun December bis July.*<sup>1</sup>

Apple *Schnitz* and dried pear slices  
Surely make a perfect pie  
If we have nothing better  
From December 'til July.



Jonas H. Nyce in his apple orchard, circa 1905-10, somewhere near Harleysville, Montgomery County. Mennonite Heritage Center Collection.



Elderberries can be gathered from fencerows and painstakingly picked off the stems for a favorite Pennsylvania Dutch pie. Photo by Alice Keppley

Keeping the cellar within a cool temperature range summer and winter was critical for food preservation. In winter the cellar windows had to be stopped shut with either straw, manure or corn fodder to eliminate cold drafts and keep things from freezing. By the first of November, fruits and vegetables were in and secured for the winter.

In the summer ventilation and air circulation was needed, because heat and dampness caused problems. To stop everything from growing a layer of gray or yellow mold, they opened cellar windows to circulate air. To keep the temperature cooler in the summer, the first thing every morning, they opened the outside bulkhead cellar door to allow warm air to escape and cool air to circulate. Once the outside temperature felt warmer than that of the cellar, they closed the doors.

The cellar temperature was cooler than the rest of the world in the summer, and thus slowed molding. But mold formed none the less. Not all cooks were concerned by a little mold. Some ate it without regard. Mold concerned others. One woman commented, “Friday is baking day, but in the summer, when mould abounds we bake twice a week.”<sup>2</sup> Even if pies did not mold, with time quality declined in the cellar. Paul Weller said that his mother’s Friday baked goods were “not too fresh by the end of the [following] week, but we ate it anyway.”<sup>3</sup>

Just as there was a prescribed order to putting things into the bake oven, there was an order to eating the baked goods. Sallie Landis said, “We ate the custard pies and *Kaeskuche* - cheese pies first, then the fruit pies.” Custards, if kept too long, got watery and spoiled. In the summer fruit pies were soggy by Wednesday, so they fired the oven and baked them for a short time to refresh them.<sup>4</sup> In Pennsylvania Dutch this was called *iwwer gebacke* -rebaked.

On farms fresh pork and beef were normally available only during the coldest season. During the summer dried, salted or smoked meats were the rule. Smaller animals such as chickens, or veal were the exception. Butchers and others would sell a quarter of veal or a cut of beef to a single customer. The quantity was small enough that lack of refrigeration was only a minor inconvenience in the summer.

Pork was a favorite. During most of the summer and early fall pigs roamed freely on the farm. This allowed them to forage for food in the barnyard, woods, *Baschdard* (pasture) and other uncultivated places on the farm. Dielman Kolb’s will granted his widow the “liberty to raise a Hogg yearly & every year which shall go in common with the other Hogs in & upon the premises (except for fatening)...”<sup>5</sup> Christian Berger’s estate inventory located his hogs on the farm in November: “4 Swine in the pen and 8 in the woods.”<sup>6</sup> The four were penned for fattening. In the late 1820s tourist Anne Royall wrote of southeastern Pennsylvania, “The valleys [are covered] with large black walnut, large farms, and fine orchards; the largest apple trees I ever saw; fine barns and houses, large sleek cattle, few sheep and few horses in sight, but a number of fine hogs running at large in the woods.”<sup>7</sup> As late as the American Civil War at least one Northampton County farmer still let his pigs run loose until they were to be fattened. On November 1, David Heckman, “Penned up seven pigs to fatten them.”<sup>8</sup>

Once the weather had sufficiently cooled they thought of a day or two of butchering. Both pork and beef butchering season was most active just before Christmas. When butchering they divided the pig into traditional cuts. The pieces that were for summer or later use were salt preserved, in either brine or by a dry salt rub for weeks.

After a number of weeks in salt it was hung to dry in smoke to dry it and improve the flavor damaged by salt. The earliest method of smoking, according to a manuscript cookbook, was chimney smoking. “In farm houses where dry wood is burnt Hams are often smoked by hanging them up in some cool part of the chimney.”<sup>9</sup> In the settlement period, meats were carried to the house roof and suspended in the chimney from rods or wooden pegs close to the top. Since the hearth fire burned constantly, smoke was always available. Hanging near the chimney top the meat was cool, but not frozen, and not so warm that the fat began to melt and drip, nor did the meat spoil.



Hog butchering, early 20th century, on a farm in Milford Township, Bucks County. The men are scalding the pig carcass so that they can scrape off the skin bristles before the hog is processed.  
*Mennonite Heritage Center Collection.*

“Smoked Pork in the Kitchen \$12.00” was inventoried in Catharine Spaecht’s estate. This is a large amount of smoked meat in the kitchen. Since it was inventoried on February 27, the inventory does not say, but it may have been hanging in the chimney in smoke.<sup>10</sup>

To smoke more than a few hams, shoulders and two sides of bacon, they began building smokehouses. They were first mentioned about 1750 in real estate ads in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for farms close to Philadelphia. By about 1760 the Pennsylvania Dutch began building smokehouses. The earliest ones were all one style, square with a four-directional hipped roof, one door and a vent or two to control the temperature. All had wood shingle roofs. Some were built of log and others of stone. A few stone smokehouses survive. All but one log smokehouse are gone.<sup>11</sup> Some of stone were round, but even they had hipped roofs. After 1800 the number of forms grew, and they were no longer square with just the four-way pitch roof. Some had a two-way pitch roof, were of brick, and all had one entrance door with a bar or chain with a hasp and a pad lock. Others were incorporated into a bake oven woodshed combination.

Dorothy Fry said for smoking meat they used wood: “Something that gave heat and was green. They liked hickory, but used any green wood.” Asked whether women did the smoking she said. “Well they did not split the wood, but they tended the fire. You could not let the fire go out.”<sup>12</sup>

The meat was ready to come out of smoke in mid-March. An old practice said “You do not cut any hams until you have heard the phoebe call (*Mer schneid ken Schunga aa bis der Bivvi gegriscche hot*). The good news is the phoebe was one of the earliest migratory birds to return in the spring.

Two cuts of beef, rounds and briskets, were preserved for summer use as dried beef. Making this required a brine soak in a wooden tub. At Christian Hoffman’s 1821 estate vendue in Lancaster County they sold the “beef tub” he

used for this soak.<sup>13</sup> The brine solution poured over the beef in the tub was this: “For Curing Beef, To 80 lbs of beef 7 lbs of salt 3 lbs of sugar and 2 oz of salt petre.”<sup>14</sup>

A recipe “To make a pickle or brine for beef” in Christian Meyer’s music book of Deep Run, Bucks County says, “To eight gallons of water add half a pound of salt peter, one pound of brown sugar, and one quart of molasses with as much fine salt as will make it float an egg light, taking care that the salt dissolves lest it be too strong – skim it well and it is fit for use.”<sup>15</sup>

Vegetables formed a large portion of the diet, and people could barely wait for the first fresh green vegetable in the spring, dandelion. The growing season in Pennsylvania produced the first fresh green vegetables in April, the earliest fruit in May, and continued all summer until about the first of November when they closed the garden for the season. For four or five months every year there was no fresh produce. To enjoy summer vegetables in the winter, they were preserved by any of the time- honored methods of pickling in vinegar, or in salt, by fermentation, with sugar, by long boiling, by drying or kept fresh by burying. Cabbage was buried in a hole in the garden. Root vegetables and apples were cellar stored. Two vegetables, endive and celery, were preserved alive by covering to keep them from freezing and alive until after Christmas. These would be the last fresh vegetables until spring, three months away.

Foods were seasonal, and abundances peaked in season. When the cows produced more milk and cream on the farm than they could use in the normal way, waffles became a summertime main dish. They made waffles; put them on a plate; sprinkled brown sugar on them, added sour cream or milk. They enjoyed this cold soup in the summer made with waffles instead of bread.<sup>16</sup>

Amos Long believed, that “Milk was primarily a by-product on the early farm.” He said then cows were milked only about six months of the year. Many “cows were dry during the winter months,” but even when they produced milk, yields were low. Israel Acrelius, Provost of the Swedish churches, wrote in the 1750s that the average “cow gave less than four quarts of milk a day when on pasture.”<sup>17</sup> James Lemon concluded, “A cow that produced four quarts of milk a day was considered very good, but perhaps 1 quart was more common. On an average farm if each cow yielded a quart or so, and if two were producing at a time, the supply would have been 2 to 3 quarts per day.”<sup>18</sup>

As the quality of cattle feed improved in the nineteenth century, cows still had a summer season and produced higher butter fat milk. In a letter published in the *Farmer’s Cabinet*, a Bucks County farmer wrote the milk of

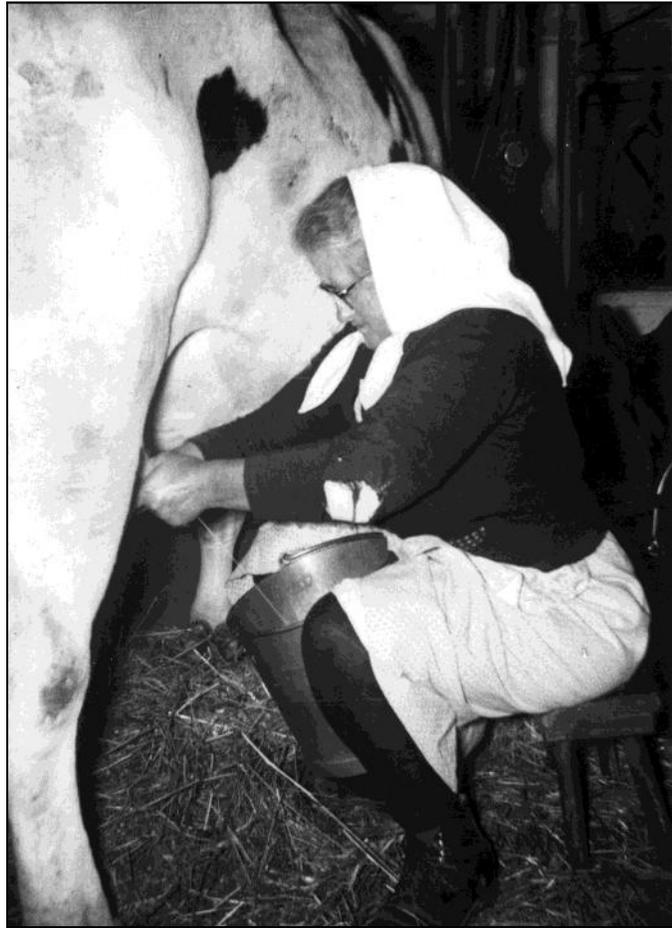


Picking strawberries in Franconia Township, Montgomery County, circa 1920. Mennonite Heritage Center Collection.

“four native breed cows” produced 740 pounds of butter from April 25, 1837 to the end of that summer season.<sup>19</sup>

“In this country chickens are not put in houses by night, nor are they looked after; but they sit summer and winter upon the trees near the houses; every evening many a tree is so full of chickens that the boughs bend beneath them. The poultry is in no danger from beasts of prey, because every plantation owner has a big dog....”<sup>20</sup> In spite of this comment, most farmers put their chickens inside on the second floor of the pig sty. But in the winter it was still cold.

Winter cold and daylight hours controlled the egg season. On short days chickens laid fewer eggs. Dietrich Fahl’s 1785 will defines the egg season this way. He left his widow “six eggs every week from Easter to Michaelmas [September 29] every year.”<sup>21</sup> Another Berks County woman was willed “Twelve dozen eggs yearly between the month of March and the month of September.”<sup>22</sup> A York County will specified a three months longer egg season. That widow was to have “In every month two dozen of eggs. ...From the first of March till the first of December.”<sup>23</sup> It seems this widow had no eggs for three months. A Lancaster farmer was more generous. The yield rather than the season determined the quantity. “If the eggs are plenty then to give her every weak one dozen and a half dozen, and if they are scarce, then only one dozen weakly.”<sup>24</sup>



Mrs. Swartley milking her cow in Franconia Township, circa 1940. *Photo courtesy of John L. Ruth.*

Ball cheese making had a season too. According to one ball cheese maker, “The manufacture was usually kept up during the entire fall and winter, the balls being intended for use the following spring and summer.”<sup>25</sup> Another woman said she started making ball cheese in February and made several dozen balls every two weeks until the end of March “when the flies came.” She began a new batch of cheese at the beginning of the week so the odor would be gone from the house by Sunday when visitors would most likely come. Shelf aging was usually finished by Friday, Saturday at the latest. In the cook stove era, one informant said her mother would sometimes cook brown sugar to rid the kitchen of the cheese odor.

In addition to burying in the garden, cabbage was preserved by fermentation. This 1819 method for making sauerkraut emphasizes the importance of keeping the wooden kraut tub clean and free of all contamination.

*Have a strong cask: cut the cabbage fine and put a layer of it in the bottom of the cask; sprinkle on salt and pound it till moist or wet with the juice. Put on another layer of cabbage; salt and pound as before; and so on till all the cabbage be thus packed down. Lay a cloth over it, a board cover and a heavy weight on it. In about a week after a thick scum will rise. Take off the weight, board and cloth, and with a wet cloth wash off the cabbage or it will smell. After washing the cloth put it on again with the board cover and weight. When you take out any cabbage for use, take it off even, wash the cloth, and replace all as before.*<sup>26</sup>

These are only a few examples of seasonal practices that influenced and provided foods for the Pennsylvania Dutch daily table. Many seasonal summer and winter foods came from just the orchard on every farm: fresh apples, dried apples, fresh cider, hard cider, apple pies, apple and peach fritters, *schnitz un gnepp*, apple dumplings, candied pears, quince honey and apple butter, to name a few.

### Endnotes

1. Alfred L. Shoemaker collected this from Oliver Strauser in Shoemaker file, Pennsylvania Folklife Society, Myrin Library, Ursinus College, #8-11 and 8-12.
2. Phebe Earle Gibbons, "Pennsylvania Dutch," *The Atlantic Monthly*, xxiv, (October, 1896) 484.
3. Interview of Paul Weller of Shanesville, Pennsylvania by Nancy Roan, 1979. His mother was the former Sallie Weidner b. 1878.
4. Sallie Landis interview, September 29, 1961. *Kaeskuche* are cottage cheese custards.
5. Dielman Kolb, Lower Salford Township, now Montgomery County, will dated July 8, 1748, Will book K, 22, City Hall, Philadelphia.
6. Christian Berger estate inventory, Bern Township, Berks County, November 21, 1774, in Register of Wills Office, Reading. It was unusual to still have 8 pigs running loose in the woods in this season.
7. Anne Newport Royall, *Mrs. Royall's Pennsylvania, or, Travels continued in the United States, by Mrs. Anne Royall*, (Washington, D. C.: Printed for the Author, 1829) 142. In the fall pigs fed on acorns in the woods.
8. David Heckman diary entry November 1, 1862, Bushkill Township, Northampton County.
9. Anonymous cookery manuscript [Mrs. Earl?] on one of the "A" pages at the front under the title "Continuation of the Preservation of Meats."
10. Inventory of Catharine Spaecht on file in her husband John Specht's estate file. John died in 1805. Catharine died in 1815 and her inventory was taken February 27, 1815 in Ruscombmanor Township, Berks County, Register of Wills Office, Reading.
11. Note: A square log smokehouse with a four -way pitch roof still stands just west of Westminster, Maryland in August 2009.
12. C. Richard Beam and Jennifer L. Trout eds., *Dorathy V. Eberly Fry: Pennsylvania German Teacher and Storyteller*, (Millersville, PA: Center for Pennsylvania German Studies, November 2014) 189. Interview June 29, 2005 part I, 189.
13. Estate vendue list for Christian Hoffman, Earl Township, Lancaster County, December 21, 1821.
14. William Hart Carr, c.1830 manuscript cookbook.
15. Christian Meyer *Notenbüchlein*, 1822, from Deep Run, Bucks County.
16. Dorathy V. Fry interview 3/26/2007.
17. Amos Long, *The Pennsylvania German Family Farm*, (Breinigsville, PA: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1972) 4, 492.
18. James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1972) 163.
19. *The Farmers' Cabinet; devoted to Rural Economy*, (Philadelphia: June 15, 1838) 2, 17, 343.
20. Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Gottlieb Mittelberger's Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750 and Return to Germany in the year 1754: containing not only a description of the Country according to its present Condition, but also a detailed account....* Carl Theodor Eben, editor, (Philadelphia: John Joseph McVey, 1898) 64 (1715-1779).
21. "Ferner soll sie jede Woche sechs Eier, nehmlich von Ostern an, jedes Jahr bis Michelstag haben." Shoemaker File, Dietrich Fahl's will, Braunschweig Township, Berks County, at Berks County Courthouse, Pennsylvania Folklife Society collection, Myrin Library, Ursinus College.
22. Fridrich Schönlein will, April 16, 1808, probated June 30, 1810, Colebrookdale Township, Berks County. This will indicates the heaviest egg production ran from approximately the vernal equinox to the autumnal equinox.
23. Jacob Haedrich's will, Codorus Township, June 16, 1789, at York County Courthouse. Shoemaker file, Pennsylvania Folklife collection, Myrin Library, Ursinus College.
24. John Flora will of May 10, 1780 at Lancaster Courthouse. Shoemaker File, the Pennsylvania Folklife Society collection, Myrin Library, Ursinus College.
25. "Early Cheese Making" *The Pennsylvania German*, (March 1907) 8, 3, 134.

Author Alan Keyser has studied Pennsylvania German material culture in the field for many years. He has written extensively for numerous publications on the Pennsylvania Germans. He has presented programs at the Mennonite Heritage Center on flax processing, fastnachts, baking in a bee hive oven and the Pennsylvania Dutch and their barns, and has served as co-curator for several exhibits.

## New Exhibits

### *Snow Comes to the Highlands*

You are invited to enjoy an exhibit of work by area artist David Page from January 24 through February 18, 2017. An opening reception is scheduled for Sunday, January 29 from 2 to 4 pm where Mr. Page will informally discuss his work. Refreshments will be served. The exhibit, entitled *Snow Comes to the Highlands*, celebrates the seasons changing from autumn to winter across the Pennsylvania Highlands.



### *Opportunity & Conscience: Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania*

We will have a special exhibit on early 18<sup>th</sup> century Mennonite immigration to Pennsylvania on display from April 2017 through March 2018. The exhibit, *Opportunity & Conscience: Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania*, will depict the trans- Atlantic crossing of 18<sup>th</sup> century European Anabaptists and their settlement eastern Pennsylvania. The exhibit will also include a component on recent Anabaptist immigration to the Delaware Valley.



Craftsman Earl Ludwig showing his “work in progress” - a replica of a passenger compartment on an 18th century British immigrant ship. *Photo by Joel Alderfer*

## Grant Award to Conserve Rare Froschauer Bible



The Schnebelli - Bachman Froschauer Bible.  
*Photos by Joel Alderfer*

The Mennonite Historians of Eastern Pennsylvania are pleased to announce that we have been awarded a grant for \$24,119 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency that provides funding for the nation's museums and libraries. The funding will support the conservation work of three rare items in the MHC collections: a 1536 Froschauer Bible, a family register of the Schnebelli-Bachman family associated with the Froschauer Bible, and a family register of the Sauter family associated with the Sauer Bible. Together, these Bibles and their family registers offer wonderful interpretive material for telling the story of the German migration and the establishment of the early Mennonite communities in North America. The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts, Philadelphia, will be doing the intricate conservation work.

Conservators will repair, reinforce, re-sew, and reline the spine and linings with new linen thread and mulberry paper of the Froschauer Bible. Detached spine leather will be reattached to the spine and the wooden cover fragment will be re-adhered to the front cover board. Some loose corner boss on the back tail corner will be secured and the cover hinges and cracks on the spine will be mended. In addition to work on the binding, the leaves of the text block will require surface cleaning. Conservators will mend major vulnerable tears and losses to some particularly fragile leaves

at the beginning and at the end of the volume. The media on the fraktur bookplate will be stabilized and losses to the paper support will be filled.

The Schnebelli-Bachman family record will be surface cleaned. Rust and tiny black accretions will be reduced by using a scalpel blade under magnification. The flaking paints will be consolidated using a fine brush. Conservators will surface clean and wash the family record by spraying a mixture of calcium-enriched de-ionized water and ethanol on a suction table to reduce acidity and discoloration in the paper support. Tears will be mended and losses inserted with acrylic-toned mulberry paper and wheat starch paste.

The Sauter family record consists of seven leaves in varying states of condition (poor to fair). As with the Bachman family record, the leaves will be surface cleaned and washed. Losses are much more significant in the Sauter family record and will require special attention with insertions of acrylic-toned mulberry paper and wheat starch paste.





**MHC Quarterly**  
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## You are invited

**Sunday, January 29, 2017 at 2 pm. Reception for David Page Art Exhibit.  
Open to the public, no reservations needed.**

**Sunday, February 19 at 2 pm. Presentation and Book  
Signing by Ken Reed, author of *Both My Sons*.**

The novel tells the Coming to America story of immigrants - Swiss-German refugees -in 1710. Mr. Reed will do a 15-minute dramatic monologue in costume; then he will speak on the topic "Observations about writing a historical novel." This will be followed by a Q & A with the audience and autograph books. Open to the public, no reservations needed.

