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Opportunity & Conscience: Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania

Image: Palatine emigration, 1709

Credit: German Americana Collection of Dr. Helmut Schmahl, Alzey, Germany. Used with permission.

Three hundred years ago, in August 1717, three boatloads of Palatine Germans arrived in the port of Philadelphia, including numerous Mennonite families. This was the first large group of Mennonites to immigrate to Pennsylvania. In recognition of this anniversary, the Mennonite Heritage Center has mounted a special year-long exhibit, highlighting the experience of 18th century Mennonite immigrants, their motivations and process of migration, and how they settled in eastern Pennsylvania. The exhibit includes a fascinating simulation by local craftsman Earl Ludwig of a passenger compartment on an 18th century immigrant ship, and a depiction of a *Stube* (or parlor/living room) in an early immigrant home, furnished with original artifacts of the 18th century. Enlargements of scenes and images from the period further illustrate the theme.

Another feature of the exhibit is a collection of stories of recent immigrants to the Delaware and Lehigh Valleys, some of whom have connected with local Mennonite churches. Many similarities can be observed between the motivation and experience of today's immigrants and those of the 18th century from whom many Americans are descended.

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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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Volunteer master carpenter Earl Ludwig working on the passenger ship recreation for the *Opportunity and Conscience* exhibit. Photo by Sarah Heffner

The Value of Stories



Evangelistic tent meeting led by George Brunk, Jr. in 1951. *MHC collection*

The feature article by MHEP Board member and historian John Ruth in this issue focuses on the time period 1917-1958 in Franconia Mennonite Conference. (The other local Mennonite conference at this time in the area was the Eastern District General Conference Mennonite Church.) Some Franconia Conference members were beginning to reach out to and interact with those outside their local congregations, while others had hesitation about new ideas and different opinions on how to live out one's faith. Those familiar with the individuals and congregations in this account will remember the challenges and rewards of connecting with other communities and cultures for missions work.

The MHC works to preserve and share stories about communities, congregations and individuals to inform our own times. As part of

that mission, the MHC is opening a significant exhibit: *Opportunity and Conscience: Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania* that will be on display from April 1, 2017 until March 2018. The exhibit depicts the journeys of European Mennonites to Pennsylvania in the early 18th century along and contemporary stories of immigrants also making long, perilous trips to build new lives in America.

Throughout the year, our new web blog will feature stories and artifacts related to families descended from 18th century Mennonite immigrants written by archivist Forrest Moyer. He is planning on featuring three different surnames a month-check out the blog at mhep.org/blog.

We also have a number of interesting programs coming up this spring. Plan to join us for three programs by Mennonite authors. Historian Ben Goossen will speak on "Mennonite Immigration and International Violence" in conjunction with the release of his new book, *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era* on Thursday, May 27 at 7 pm. And on Sunday, June 11 at 2 pm, author Ervin Stutzman will speak on his book *Christian's Hope*, the third in his Return to Northkill trilogy. And then on Thursday, June 15 at 7 pm, Luke Martin will speak. He is the author of *A Vietnam Presence: Mennonites in Vietnam During the American War*. At all three programs the authors will sign copies of their book. More about the programs on pp. 14-15.

Sarah Heffner
Director



Delphin Monga and his siblings' difficult journey to America is featured in the *Opportunity and Conscience* exhibit.

Turning to Missions in the Franconia Mennonite Conference: 1917-1958

By John L. Ruth

The following article was written as a possible introduction to a forthcoming book by Dawn Ruth Nelson about Claude Good's international Worm Project. The author thanks the editors, who selected two or three pages for the new book, for permission to present here the full-length article.

After two quiet centuries, could eastern Pennsylvania Mennonites move beyond selling their butter, eggs and produce into sharing their faith? From the Schuylkill to the Delaware, on foot and by horseback, then by wagon, train and truck, they had reached out into Philadelphia, Allentown, Quakertown, Norristown, Reading or Spring City.

It has been guessed that in one generation there had been about 200 local Mennonite families in marketing. Around 1945 a dozen families in the Blooming Glen congregation still either had "stands" in markets or household "routes" serviced from trucks. The five percent of Conference area Mennonites making their living that way struck a Philadelphia observer as "naturally born market people," who brought along "homemade preserves, cakes, pies, and a variety of little things, even catnip."

They had what people wanted: quality. The celery raised by Solomon and Catherine Gehman at Bally, who went to both Norristown and Philadelphia, was so attractive that when a hired man entered it (without their permission) in the Harrisburg Farm Show, it won a prize. Pleased as they were, the Gehmans declined to display the ribbon with their celery. For it was a typical Mennonite trait to be modest, even to the point of not being overly verbal, especially about yourself -- and even your faith. You surely wouldn't "preach" at somebody.

A reputation for trustworthiness was a business advantage. Souderton's Lester Trauger, having started young in 1947, would thrive in the business for thirty-two years. Serving as Treasurer of the Eastern Pennsylvania Butter and Eggs Association, he went through five different trucks. He carried along on his "route" a ring with twelve keys that let him into customers' houses when they weren't home.

Could such quiet values have a spiritual counterpart -- when local Mennonites were finally ready to reach out with the Gospel that defined them at home?

It took time. In the 1840's, the example of Baptists, Methodists and other denominations had stirred Franconia Conference Mennonites into a discussion of education and missions which polarized and split their fellowship. While the progressives soon organized a congregation in Philadelphia (which would split too), it would take the "Franconia" wing another cautious half-century to acknowledge Christ's "Great Commission" as their own call to reach outward.

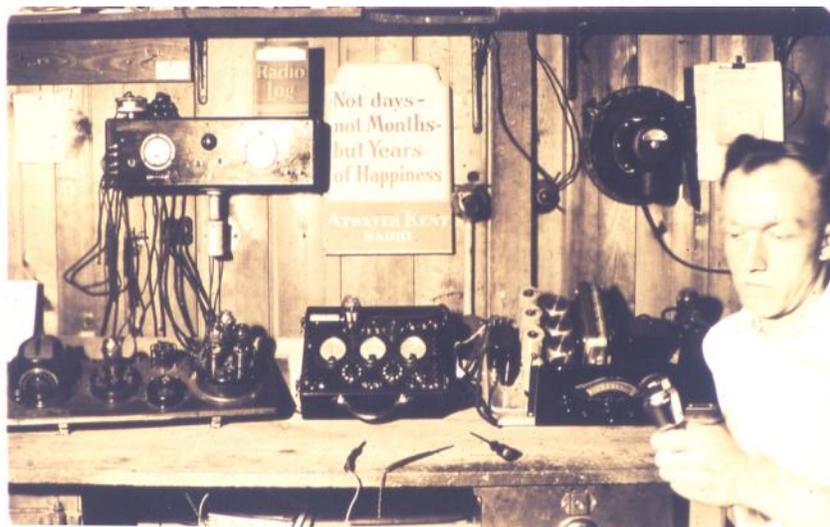
Finally, in 1898, "the heart yearning" for mission of a marketman-butcher, Isaac Kulp of Danboro, had moved him to help Mennonites from the Lancaster Conference begin their first "home mission" in Philadelphia. Isaac, who had a store in the city, and several other "Old" Mennonites living in town, helped with the mission "work." But they were ahead of their country cousins, who would not organize a Franconia "mission board" until 1917, nor start an actual mission until 1919 (in nearby Norristown). Finally, in a rush after 1930, a corps of eager lay "workers" would open a spate of missions around the edges of the Conference at locations like Pottstown, Rocky Ridge, Finland, Spring Mount and Perkiomenville. There the Sunday School pupils were taught to sing:

We are but a band of children, we are few and weak and small,
But we want to work for Jesus, and there's work enough for all;
We are a missionary band, a missionary band, a missionary band
We are a missionary band, doing all we can.

Throughout the Conference there were awakened young couples and singles no longer satisfied to sing, pray, listen to sermons and teach Sunday School in staid old congregations. Some critics said they were “too lazy to work,” and that the cars in which they were picking up children for Sunday School weren’t yet paid off. In 1937 Lester Hackman of Elroy in Franconia Township, unwilling to wait longer for official outreach, moved with his Blooming Glen wife Mabel Wenger to New Orleans, to begin mission work at nearby Des Allemands. Before long Bishop A. O. Hinstead of Doylestown traveled down to ordain Lester as deacon. Also at Franconia, Linford Hackman, standing at the back of the meetinghouse packed with a thousand worshippers, mused, “I’m not needed here,” and dreamed of going north in mission work with his friend Llewellyn Groff.

Young men returning loyally from World War II experience in conscientious objector camps, and even younger ones who had sailed the Atlantic with postwar relief “cattle-ships,” brought home a freer atmosphere. Soon to become Secretary of the Mission Board was Jacob R. Clemens at Plains, coming back with wife “Mim” from relief work in Ethiopia. The 16-mm film footage “Jake” brought home, including shots of Emperor Haile Selassie, had a double effect: while his eye for a scene or event and his steady hand produced historic footage, his Pennsylvania Dutch frugality kept almost everything in viewer-frustrating three-second bursts.

Yes, growing up now was to feel a new audiovisual presence whose power the bishops distrusted. They had tried to be proactive, warning against the effect of radio entertainment and already in 1937 outright forbidding ownership of a television. Film cameras were not ruled out for use at home, but conscientious parents required their children to leave public school classes when “movies” were shown. Bishop Arthur Ruth’s son Paul was amused by the local fascination for movies. After wartime years as a CO in a Civilian Public Service Camp, he was among those like Irene Bishop of Blooming Glen who had left for relief service in war-ruined Holland and Germany. When he returned for a visit, word got out that he had taken some “movies” of his experiences. Movies!! This was a time (1946) when there was no way even non-moving “slides” could be permitted in or outside a meetinghouse. So someone suggested Paul show his films in the brand new tractor showroom at I. G. Rosenberger’s in Silverdale. Wondering, as he drove up “the 113,” what kind of an audience he might attract, Paul was shocked to find no parking place left among the many cars of people already there to see his pictures.



Walter Rush, Mennonite radio dealer, circa. 1935.
MHC collection

Media-wise, it had been radio more than the movies to which young Mennonites sneaked that were making the greater impact on their fellowship. “Bill” Detweiler of the Blooming Glen congregation saw this in positive rather than negative terms, and after moving to Ohio would establish a radio program called “The Calvary Hour”. The bishops resented this, and were crisp in urging their preachers not to “remain silent, but condemn the worldly, foolish as well as the heretical doctrines” now piped directly into members’ homes. Considered particularly dangerous were the teachings of “eternal security” and “premillennialism” - the novel

dispensationalist interpretations of such authors as Cyrus Scofield and R. A. Torrey. These ideas, much less boring than the often droning sermons of preachers who had never been even to high school, were taking root in some local congregations. Members at Salford, Towamencin, Souderton and Blooming Glen were gathering privately for Bible Studies on radio-promoted Bible doctrines rather than simply following Jesus. Fundamentalist orthodoxy, personal salvation, and evangelism were the exciting themes on the radio, without the constant Mennonite stress on being “separate from the world.”

The new ideas had little to do with the traditional Mennonite church housekeeping that maintained the practice of “close communion.” When Franconia ministers, in the spring of 1946, informed their entrepreneurial member Clarence Hagey that the uniforms his bus drivers were wearing and his occasional Sunday business would prevent him from “taking communion,” he and wife Elsie looked for other church options. One was the recently organized Grace Bible Church in Souderton, which had grown out of a radio-inspired Bible class begun by Towamencin Mennonites in 1937. Somewhat similarly, members of the Blooming Glen, Towamencin and other congregations followed Mennonites in Lancaster County in forming an independent congregation. Led by farmer William Anders who had resigned from the ministry at Towamencin, the new fellowship wrote a constitution calling itself the Calvary Mennonite Church, taught the “women’s veiling”, and anticipated joining “some Mennonite conference”. But after a few years the Mennonite name was dropped, along with its emphasis on church order.

A theme that was kept and more emphasized at both Grace and Calvary, was mission outreach. On that, the disappointed “Franconia” bishops could only agree. The church of Christ should reach out. They were further quite aware that their own people’s urge for outreach needed outlets. Young “Franconians,” pulling the somewhat cautious Mission Board behind them, were turning up in places anywhere from Puerto Rico to Vermont. Of course, new locations brought up new issues. At Peasville, Vermont, people joining from the community wanted to keep their wedding rings and their life insurance. After a charismatic breakthrough in Minnesota at Christmas 1954, participant Gerald Derstine was declaring a word from the Spirit that he would soon be part of an awakening “greater than at Pentecost”.



Quintus and Mirian Leatherman in England, circa 1961.
MHC collection

More modestly, Blooming Glen’s Quintus Leatherman, the intelligent President of the Franconia Mennonite Historical Society, was taking his family to England, to serve a new congregation born of relief work after the bombings in London. His Rockhill-born wife Miriam’s sister Ruth had spent time in Zurich, Switzerland with her scholarly husband John C. Wenger, and their sister Esther would soon be a missionary in Cuba. Deep Run’s Sarah Rush was ready to go to Africa, while Blooming Glen’s musical Marie Moyer and Spring Mount’s nurse Blanche

Sell were looking to India. Earl and Haidi Stover were in Puerto Rico, where Earl's draft board kept him for a double term.

Most of the enthusiastic young members were not rebels. As their bishops solemnly re-emphasized "nonconformity to the world", many of them were proving willing to show their faith by dressing more plainly – and uniformly. They were part of the Conference-wide movement-from Vincent to Doylestown-that in the fifty years after the mission board was formed in 1917 would triple the number of the Conference's "preaching points" from the traditional 17 to a total of 50.

Meanwhile the Mission Board president himself was none other than Blooming Glen's elderly I. G. Rosenberger, John Deere dealer at Silverdale. A main business competitor was Bishop A. O. Hestand's son Paul, who, while selling Oliver tractors at Doylestown, would become the pastor of a forthcoming mission at Trevese Heights. When "I. G." would be replaced as mission board president in 1951, it would be by up-and-coming businessman Marcus Clemens.

Amidst the young century's Mennonite network of farms and meetinghouses, deep-rooted but informal traditions were taking institutional shape. First had come an "old people's home" and then a bookstore in Souderton; a Mennonite-supported hospital at "Grand View," and a "Franconia Mennonite Aid Plan" to help after losses by fire (without using the worldly term "insurance"!). An elementary-grade church school appeared on the Cowpath and "the 113" in Franconia Townships. Before the 1940's only a few Mennonites had attended high school (which hadn't made them shy about working at missions), but now the church itself was founding one. Soon there would emerge a mental health organization, spurred by a physician at Grand View, Dr. Michael Peters, who recognized a double treasure in the local Mennonite sense of community and a young psychologist, Dr. Norman Loux, returning from wartime civilian service in Rhode Island.

One communal project that could not get off the ground in the Souderton School District was a public library. Franconia Conference Mennonites did not have an intellectual tradition. When progressive "Russian" Mennonites had begun a college in Kansas in the 1880's, Franconians had denounced it as an un-Mennonite thing. Ironically, when their own diaspora in other states at last permitted colleges, eastern Mennonites, where most of their people's money and tradition were, would have to ship their children to study in Indiana, Kansas and Virginia. And it would be from there, already in the 1930's, that enthusiasm for missions would be brought home.

Could Franconia Conference Mennonites' dual attitudes-traditional protectiveness and the impulse to reach outward with the Gospel-be a viable combination?

Conservatives would argue (and it was true) that for centuries, even from the beginning in Switzerland, their people had emphasized that the church should be distinct from "the world," and that this in itself was a "witness." This was the theme of the era-culminating book, *Separated Unto God* (1950), by one of Franconia Conference's brightest sons, John C. Wenger, who had grown up at Rockhill and Silverdale. "Nonconformity" had been not just an aspect but a profound hallmark of Mennonite identity from our 16th century beginnings. "Be not conformed to this world" was considered part of "the all things" that Jesus, in his "Great Commission" of Matthew 28, had called his followers to teach.

Young Wenger, when observing a session of Conference around 1935, had been awed at the solemn care with which "anything new" was considered. And one of the new things was the upwelling intensity of the drive for mission. Formerly the Pennsylvania Dutch language of daily life had been a kind of humble counter-influence to the loud, rapidly changing popular culture. Now young people might smile to hear "Jesus" mispronounced as "Cheesus," or cringe at a hymn-line quoted as "Prayer is the Christian's wital breass" (breath). A young Mennonite woman coming to her door in Levittown wearing slacks, was amused to hear a preacher-marketman from Deep Run bringing his basket to her door, stating cautiously, "I believe you and me are of the same face" (faith).

The Dutchiness that had now become "dumb" had protectively slowed the impact of worldly culture on the Mennonite fellowship. Losing that protection had spiked a new Mennonite emphasis around 1900 on visual identity-especially in relation to clothing. With this concern being felt wherever "Old" Mennonites lived in North America, Franconia Conference rules were spelled out in 1940 more specifically than ever. A plain clothes store ("Allebach and Souder") had begun in Souderton in the 1920's, and thrived as "nonconformity" became a frequent, sometimes monotonous theme of conservative preaching. Men were asked to wear "the regulation coat" and

and women a modest cape and prayer covering. Surprisingly, many conscientious younger members accepted this, sometimes in order to be allowed to “serve at mission stations”. Marcus Clemens, business-wise son-in-law of Souderton’s bank president Clayton Gotwals and co-founder of a hosiery factory near the Rocky Ridge mission his family attended, was among men taking on plain suits. So were heads of the emerging Mennonite business network: Raymond Rosenberger (milk); A. F. Moyer (beef); Melvin Alderfer (bologna); John C. Clemens (pork); I. T. Landes (plumbing); Willard Bergey (electricity); Bishop Jacob Moyer (feed). Even Horace Longacre of Swamp, whose poultry market business was starting to grow, checked out where to get plain clothes for him and wife Liz in case the lot for deacon would fall on him.

Ordination, of course, made plain coats mandatory. Thus it was for Paul Lederach, Al Detweiler, Richard Detweiler, and John Ruth, all ordained by the age of 21 (with the lot also falling on Ralph Malin at 18 at nearby Frazer). Souderton’s businessman Jacob Moyer, ordained bishop in 1945, was even for requiring the new ministers to wear the traditional split tail or “frock” coats, helpfully tailored by the R. E. Hope company in Souderton.

It was thus the lot of a growing farm boy and youth fellowship president in the Oley Mennonite congregation (a grandson of deacons at Doylestown and Vincent), to feel in his own conscience the intersecting protective and outreaching vectors, and accept “the plain coat” for himself. Even at Virginia’s Eastern Mennonite College, the mission-promoting school Claude Good dreamed of attending, every male professor would have his own plain coat.

Both conservative and forward-looking notes could be heard from Bishop Moyer in 1953. Speaking about the postwar economic boom in a symposium at the new Christopher Dock High School, he was gloomy, warning, “Watch for the crash!” Likewise pessimistic was his remark about the novelty of “slides” that had been projected during that very program. Whatever they had cost, he noted, might have been better spent on missions. Yet in that sly criticism the backward-looking bishop was in line with the spirit producing in the Conference an average of a new “home mission” a year in this decade.

But what about Jesus’ commission to go farther-“into all the world”? Already in 1933-34 the Lancaster Mennonites had made a move overseas, taking Doylestown-born Ruth Hestand Mosemann into Tanganyika. Soon after that her relatives in Bucks and Montgomery Counties were reading the missionary letters sent home from Africa, and also from missionary Nelson Litwiller in Argentina. In response, devout “Franconia” families were sending contributions to both the “Eastern” Board in Lancaster and the “General” Board in Indiana.

Finally, by 1948, the Franconia Board recorded its “concern ... for some foreign mission effort on the part of our own conference district.” Members of both the Bishop and Mission Boards drove out to Hess’s Church in Lancaster County to seek advice from the “Eastern” Board “in bringing our concern for foreign mission effort into a working plan.” “We consider it expedient,” reported the Franconians, “to investigate ... countries in close proximity to the United States.” That meant that “Central America, West Indies or Philippines” were “worthy of our further study.” Members were asked to “pray earnestly” as investigators traveled to find “the place where the Lord would have our mission board to begin labors.”

The first exploratory trip led to Haiti, a place of overwhelming need, and Puerto Rico. From the latter field, Bishop John Lapp wrote home to Marcus Clemens, “Sixty per cent of the children have stomach parasites.” By January 1950 Haiti was ruled out, and by May there was a report from an investigation for a mission location in Mexico. Concluding that “entering Mexico for mission work at the present time would be extremely difficult,” the Board looked for “other fields.”

With the United States in an undeclared war in Korea, congregations were seeing many of their young men leave to fulfill draft requirements in either volunteer (VS) or paid (I-W) service. Some of them went to New England, where three families from Blooming Glen were establishing a new “post” at Bridgewater Corners, Vermont. Quite a few draftees served much closer to home, in New Jersey or at the Byberry State Hospital near Philadelphia.

In August 1951 the spiritual temperature in Conference life was decidedly raised by an unprecedented “tent” revival. For five weeks, fiery Virginia evangelist George R. Brunk, Jr. preached nightly to increasing thousands gathered in a field at Franconia Square. In its wake the campaign left an augmented corps of awakened young people ready to “do mission work”. An informal group met weekly for inspiration at Perkiomenville mission. A Conference-wide Saturday “Youth Meeting” occurred monthly. There was a youth chorus led by Hiram Hershey.

In September 1952, with the enterprising Marcus Clemens as its new President, the Board heard a report from Nelson Litwiller, veteran Mennonite missionary to Argentina, of a Summer Bible School in Cuba. This struck a chord. Within six months it was decided that this was the field the Board had been looking for. Out in Indiana, J. D. Graber of the "General" Mission Board offered help in organizing for foreign mission. The Franconia Board already had the promise of a recent graduate of Eastern Mennonite college, Aaron King, married to Richard Detweiler's sister Betty, of their readiness to go to Cuba. Arranging to have Aaron ordained to the ministry, the Board also recruited a young pastor at Plains, Henry Paul Yoder and his Souderton-born wife Mildred Clemens, with a little son Allan. Single young Lillian Frederick of Souderton was also ready to go.

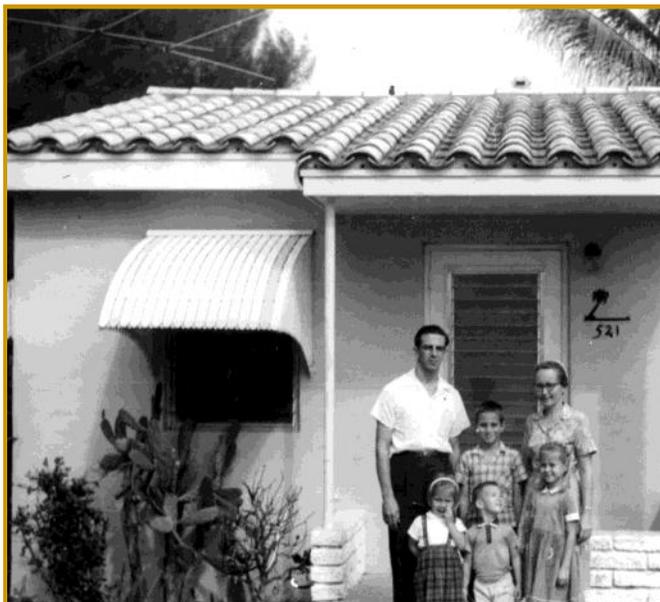
The team was commissioned in what felt like an epochal sendoff for the great Cuban venture at Souderton on August 23, 1953. Bishop John E. Lapp brought the "consecration message," in what Marcus Clemens called "his characteristic calmness and... appropriate solemnity." Hiram Hershey's YPI Chorus sang "Rescue the Perishing," and the congregation closed with an emotional "God be with you till we meet again."

Dressed reassuringly plainly (the women in black stockings), the new team headed for language school in San Jose, Costa Rica, soon to be joined there by Rockhill's Esther Detweiler. The culture shock they felt was profound. Lillian Frederick's reaction to a parade honoring the "Sacred Heart of Jesus" appeared in the Mission News: "There were many images of the dead Christ displayed everywhere," she wrote. "Young people were dressed to represent Christ and the Virgin Mary surrounded by angels. One could almost feel the evil of it all." Henry Paul Yoder, two-thirds through his language studies, agreed, writing that the Easter processions in San Jose had left him too "sad and sick at heart."

The Yoders, Kings and Lillian Frederick were doubtless unaware of the growth of the Catholic population in their own community back home, where the infant St. Marie Goretti church was being formed close to the Plains community. In the next five years, as the number of farms in Montgomery County would fall from 2,805 to 1,510, the membership of the new Catholic church at Hatfield would double.

The new missionaries left language school in San Jose in August 1954. Arriving in Cuba, they found Lillian Frederick emotionally overwhelmed. The culture differences also immediately raised concern back home, where the Mission Board discussed how "our principles of nonresistance and nonconformity" were to be applied in Cuba. Some kind of "veiling," it was decided, needed to be used as "a devotional covering." On the plain coat issue, "further prayer and meditation" were needed.

Bishop John E. Lapp noted that the position of the church was still "closed communion."



The Yoder Family in Cuba, 1955.
MHC Collection

Within a few months came the good news that several baptisms were already anticipated. But even before the first regular preaching service was held, it had all been too much for conscientious Lillian Frederick, and on November 13 the Board advised that she be brought home "at once." Though she would not return to the field, there were other women willing to serve, such as nurse Orpha Leatherman of Deep Run and Margaret Derstine of Souderton. Both would leave for Cuba in another year.

Meanwhile more new and practical expressions of mission spirit occurred on the home front. A small farm near Salford was bought for a "Mission of Mercy" where alcoholic men could be rehabilitated. While this venture would be a struggle, and given up after a few years, another response to people in need had unforeseen long-term consequences. The destruction of a hurricane named Diane brought Mennonite volunteers to the Stroudsburg area in such numbers that local people were favorably impressed. Ultimately this would lead to a generous offer by a Jewish owner of a resort in the Poconos that the Conference would develop into a church camp named Spruce Lake.

Independent of Conference or Mission Board control, the work of the Irwin and Susan Schantz in Ontario was heavily supported by local contributions. The "Northern Light Gospel Mission," leaping from lake to lake, drew Franconian volunteers with names like Halteman, Moyer, Hange, and Derstine. Salford's Guy and son Duane Heavener hauled up tons of donated supplies. While there was no conference supervision, the sympathetic supporters back home occasionally gave some brotherly counsel, raised money, and bought a Chevrolet car. A donated Cessna airplane complete with pontoons for the lakes, and piloted by Andy Rosenberger, made a spectacular landing and takeoff before a gathering of supporters at a lake in southern Bucks County. Brightly painted with the rising red sun of the "Northern Light," it was prayed over, and an offering of support was taken right there.

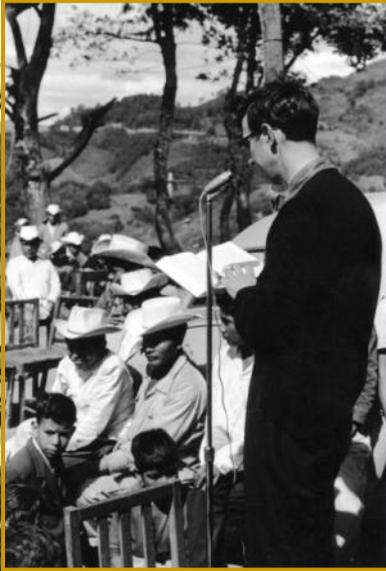
Meanwhile, the dream for a mission in Mexico was never forgotten. The Board called on pioneer Lewellyn Groff, now established in a mission church in Minnesota, to do another investigation, and consider making a mid-life change which would mean learning Spanish. By now (1956) the issue of "slides" had turned positive, with Lewellyn bringing back a shot of him boldly thrusting his arm into the mouth of a devilish-looking beast sculpture. His report to the Board back at Blooming Glen in April was colorful, especially in relation to Mexico's "eight million Indians." Though "reluctant to make any specific recommendations," he did prophetically mention "a tribe of 2,000 Indians living between two canyons" who were "in dire need of the Gospel."

As positive as this moment was for the sending Conference, it was also one of severe clash between traditional and outward looking members, especially in the large, central Franconia congregation. Some members objected to the idea of a church high school, even though it was now a fait accompli. The most conservative of the ministers hinted that he had been secretly denied the office of bishop, and his mentally troubled wife walked out on visiting ministers. Conference sessions grew heated, and when the dissenting minister was expelled, his supporters engaged a lawyer. A subpoena was served to the very door of the Franconia meetinghouse during a conference session. This led to depositions in the Courthouse at Norristown, with a bemused Jewish Judge Morris Gerber postponing the process for months, telling his wife privately, and accurately, that the conservative plaintiffs "won't be back".

Deeply embarrassed by this negative conservative witness to the public, the bishops had to ward off, at the same time, criticisms from the opposite direction. Young and progressive Conference members were distressed that the bishops had not allowed Minister Charles Mininger of Vermont even to speak in a Conference session. He had wished to report from a mission at Peasville, where prospective Yankees were ready to join the congregation, but did not wish to take off their wedding rings, give up their life insurance or withdraw from the local Grange. So within months the Conference had "silenced" speakers from both right and left. All this, at a time when there were special meetings on the theme of Nonconformity, with Bishop Lapp reminding people at home that Christmas trees were of pagan origin! With perhaps unconscious humor Marcus Clemens wrote to the missionaries in Cuba that he hoped it wouldn't be necessary to send them a bishop for the fledgling fellowship to have a legitimate communion service. Nevertheless, weeks after the silencing of Franconia's Minister Elwood Derstine, John Lapp and Mission Board officer Harold Weaver went to visit the Cuban fellowship.

There had been "two years of seed-sowing" and almost a year of instructing the Cuban believers in Bible doctrine. Now six converts were baptized, with another one received on confession of faith. There followed a communion and feet washing service in the living room of a Cuban home. Just like back in Pennsylvania, Bishop John Lapp preached. A couple with nine children were at last legally married. A "first annual conference" was planned, testing the new congregation's "response to Biblical simplicity, and standards for the church".

Little could the hopeful new Cuban Conference imagine that by the time their membership had reached a total of 13, a national revolution would stop their movement in its tracks, with the result that the attention of the sending fellowship in Pennsylvania would shift to "starting a work in Mexico."

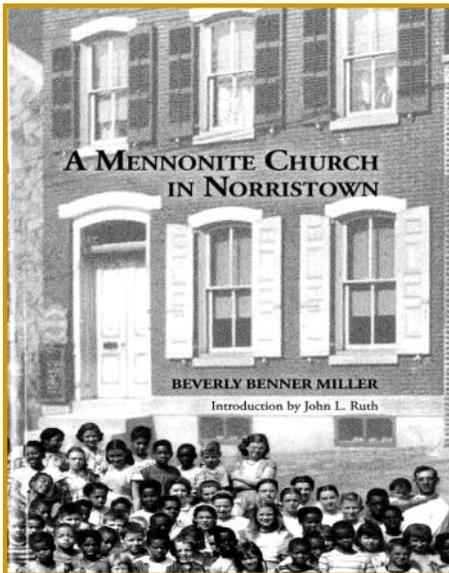


Claude Good reading the newly translated Trique New Testament, 1968. *MHC Collection*

How to begin again? In 1958 there was “a contact with a Mennonite sister” in Mexico City, “who is Mexican by birth and a member of the Glad Tidings Mission of New York City.” A missionary family—that of Kenneth and Grace Seitz—was ready to go. In addition there was a recently married couple, “Bro. and sister Claude [and Alice] Good,” who, though “still in school, were “preparing for the Mexican field, possibly in the Indian area.” The conscientious young couple had humbly thought about moving to New England, finding employment and being supportive to the emerging Mennonite presence there. What the Board had in mind was for the newlyweds to live and serve in a rural area in Mexico, while the Seitzes would live in the city. In 1959 the Board confidently declared, “Bro. Claude Good and his companion[!] are planning to go to language school this spring in preparation for further work in Mexico.”

Claude and Alice Longenecker Good were being prepared to take the Gospel as known on old Pennsylvania farms, where faith and works were one, abroad, and into other tongues. The Franconia Conference was responding to Christ’s “Great Commission.”

For further reading:



***A Mennonite Church in Norristown* by Beverly Benner Miller (2015)**

“This is an engaging history of the first outreach initiative of the Franconia Conference of the Mennonite Church. Particularly memorable is the dedication of ‘workers’ moving from their rural homes to serve this urban church, and their deep affection for the people served....” –Wes Cosand, Deep Run East Mennonite Congregation

“...A straightforward chronicle of how a mission...in time dramatically amplified into a multi-cultural fellowship.... It is also an insightful account of how the role of the three-century-old Conference, steeped in tradition, changed from that of a protective guardian to one of a supporting partner, trusting and encouraging the NV/NNL congregation to pursue their own quest, and joining them as fellow-travelers on the journey.” –S. Duane Kauffman, Perkasio Mennonite Congregation

Available in the MHC museum store for \$11.95.

Opportunity and Conscience: Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania



South East Prospect of Philadelphia by Peter Cooper, 1720

Credit: Library Company of Philadelphia

Three hundred years ago, in August 1717, three boatloads of Palatine Germans arrived in the port of Philadelphia, including numerous Mennonite families. This was the first large group of Mennonites to immigrate to Pennsylvania. In recognition of this anniversary, the Mennonite Heritage Center has mounted a special year-long exhibit, highlighting the experience of 18th century Mennonite immigrants, their motivations and process of migration, and how they settled in eastern Pennsylvania. The exhibit includes a fascinating simulation by local craftsman Earl Ludwig of a passenger compartment on an 18th century immigrant ship, and a depiction of a *Schtubbe* (or sitting room/stove room) in an early immigrant home, furnished with original artifacts of the 18th century. Enlargements of scenes and images from the early immigration period further illustrate the theme.

Another feature of the exhibit is a collection of stories of recent immigrants to the Delaware and Lehigh Valleys, some of whom have connected with local Mennonite churches. Many similarities can be observed between the motivation and experience of today's immigrants and those of the 18th century from whom many Americans are descended. Students from English as a Second Language and Citizenship classes at Keystone Opportunity Center, Souderton also contributed their stories.

Thank you to the following organizations and individuals for their contributions to the exhibit:

Eastern Mennonite Associated Libraries & Archives, Franconia Mennonite Conference, Franconia Mennonite Church, Salford Mennonite Church, and Bergey's Inc. are exhibit sponsors.

Clarke Hess, Hans Herr House, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Muddy Creek Farm Library, Peter Wentz Farmstead, and Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center are lenders to the exhibit.

Special thanks to Earl Ludwig for his many hours on researching and constructing the ship passenger compartment. Mike Hart provided planks and timbers.

Thanks to Steve Kriss, Emily Ralph Servant and Marta Castillo of Franconia Conference, Susan Clauser of Keystone Opportunity Center, and pastors Mike Derstine, Rose Bender and Donna Merow for their assistance in collecting recent immigrant stories.

Kathleen Burns Alderfer assisted with educational programming. Mennonite Heritage Center volunteers Earl Alderfer, Henry Derstine, and Ivan Derstine helped with exhibit installation.

Nyce Barn



Jim King taught Dock Mennonite Academy middle school students how to make scrapple, sausage and lard at the Nyce barn on March 25, 2017 as part of a “Pig to Pie Workshop” led by teachers Melanie Baker and Alice Keppley.
Photo credit: Steve Diehl



In August 2016, we hosted the Old Order Alleghenyville singing in the barn. John Ruth invited the group - which usually meets at Alleghenyville meetinghouse - to have their annual hymn sing in the Nyce Barn. The photo above shows the men's hats on a barn beam.

Photo credit: Steve Diehl

In the photo on the left, carpenters Merv Zook and Ivan Derstine work on the wheel chair lift staircase in March 2017.

Photo credit: Joel Alderfer

The decision to build a reconstructed historic post and beam structure on our Yoder Road campus has proven to be a forward thinking one and the barn is an attractive asset to our campus and programming. We have been able to open the barn for the Apple Butter Frolic and a few programs, but in order to meet accessibility requirements and fully utilize the barn, we are installing a wheel chair staircase lift between the lower and upper levels. The lift is scheduled to be completed by the end of April 2017. Thank you to Chris Detweiler, Merv Zook, Ivan Derstine and Henry Derstine for their work on the lift.

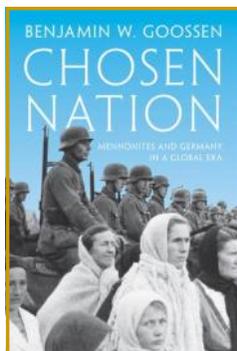
Along with programs and workshops, we can now also offer the Nyce Barn for wedding and event rentals. Consider the barn with its beautiful post and beam structure, new siding and oak flooring for your special day. We have limited dates starting in 2017 at an introductory price. To book the barn for a special occasion, contact All About Catering: 610.584.6212.



Upcoming programs

Sunday, May 7, 4 pm, at Frick Meetinghouse, Hatfield Hymn Sing. No reservation required. Open to the public. An offering will be taken to support the work of the MHC and the preservation of the meetinghouse.

Saturday, May 20. Mennonite Heritage Center bus tour to Lancaster County. The tour includes the Hans Herr House, the Lancaster Long House and the Ephrata Cloister. The tour fee of \$100 (MHEP members \$95) is all-inclusive (coach service, admission to both sites, hot buffet lunch at Bird-in-Hand Family Restaurant, and gratuity for the bus driver). Register by April 22 at mhpep.org or call 215-256-3020.

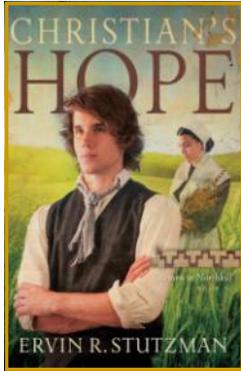


Thursday, May 25, 7 pm. "Presentation: Mennonite Migration and International Violence" by historian Ben Goossen. A century ago, the First World War transformed the global Mennonite church. While most Mennonites in North America abstained from military service, thousands of their coreligionists in Europe--swayed by militarist ideologies and an aggressive nationalist order--marched off to the trenches of France or killing fields in the East. Presenting research from his new book, *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era* (Princeton University Press, May 2017), Harvard historian Ben Goossen explores the entangled, tragic history of Mennonites' encounters with mass violence on multiple continents. Taking the story through the Bolshevik Revolution and into the 1920s, Goossen shows how--at a moment when debates over pacifism threatened to snap global relationships--Mennonites across the United States and Canada, Germany and France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Austria-Hungary found new solidarity in efforts to help their "brethren in need" in the collapsing Russian

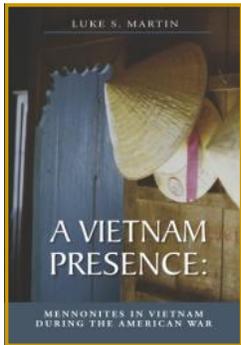
Empire. As communist soldiers, anarchist warlords, and counterrevolutionary armies swept through long-established Mennonite settlements like the Molotschna and Chortitza colonies along the Black Sea, a worldwide Mennonite welfare community began to mobilize. Aiming to save the more than 100,000 coreligionists living in the new Soviet Union from the horrors of famine and ethnic cleansing, new organizations like the US-based Mennonite Central Committee sponsored mass population transfers to the Americas. By the close of the decade, they had brought fully a quarter of all Mennonites out of the Soviet Union and helped form an autonomous "Mennonite State" in Paraguay. Told a hundred years after the First World War put Mennonites on a global stage, this story both illuminates the worldwide dispersion of Mennonite communities today and provides a warning against the rising tide of nationalism in our own age. Mr. Goossen will be available to sign copies of his new book *Chosen Nation: Mennonites and Germany in a Global Era*. No reservation required and open to the public. Admission by donation.

Friday & Saturday, June 2 & 3. Ninth Annual Whack & Roll Croquet Tournaments. Register your two-person team to play in the Senior Tournament on June 2 or play for participating nonprofit organizations on June 3. Information and registration at mhpep.org or call 215-256-3020.





Sunday, June 11, 2 pm. Ervin Stutzman, author of *Christian's Hope*, will discuss his *Return to Northkill* trilogy. Mr. Stutzman will reflect on the themes that prompted his most recent book—*Christian's Hope*—as well as the impulses that impelled the writing of the entire *Return to Northkill* series. Third-culture folks who have felt marginalized in their communities of origin will find some comfort here, since *Christian's Hope* shows a creative way to negotiate cultural differences. Most importantly, this third and last novel in the series gathers up the unfinished narratives from the first two volumes and brings them into a satisfying denouement. The author will have all of the *Northkill* books available for purchasing and signing. No reservation required and open to the public. Admission by donation.



Thursday, June 15, 7 pm. Luke Martin speaking on his book *A Vietnam Presence: Mennonites in Vietnam During the American War*. American military involvement in Vietnam during the 1960s called for a unique response from Mennonites committed to Christ's vision of service and peace. Living in Vietnam from 1962 to 1975, Martin experienced the war years firsthand—and the work of Mennonite Central Committee, Eastern Mennonite Missions and the development of the Vietnam Mennonite Church. The heart of the story is the challenge North American Mennonites faced to proclaim the gospel of peace in a nation at war. No reservation required and open to the public. Admission by donation.

Additional great programs on the calendar

Saturday, May 6, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Calligraphy Workshop led by Lori Yatron. Registration required.

Saturday, May 13, 9:30 am to 3:30 p.m. Advanced Book Binding Workshop led by Ramon Townsend. Registration required.

Saturday, May 20. Natural Dyes Workshop led by Ruth Konrad. Registration required.

Saturday, June 10, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Traditional Woodworking for the Kitchen Workshop led by John Munro. Registration required.

Saturday, June 17, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Book Repair Workshop led by Ramon Townsend. Registration required.

Saturday, July 8, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Paper Marbling Workshop led by Ramon Townsend. Registration required.

Saturday, July 15, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Pie Workshop led by Alice Keppley. Registration required.

Thursday, July 20 to Wednesday, July 26. Used Book Sale. Open to the public.

Sunday, September 10, 2 to 5 pm. Reception for Julie Longacre in Retrospective exhibit.

Thursday, September 17, 7 pm. 1717 Immigration program by John Ruth. Open to the public. Admission by donation.

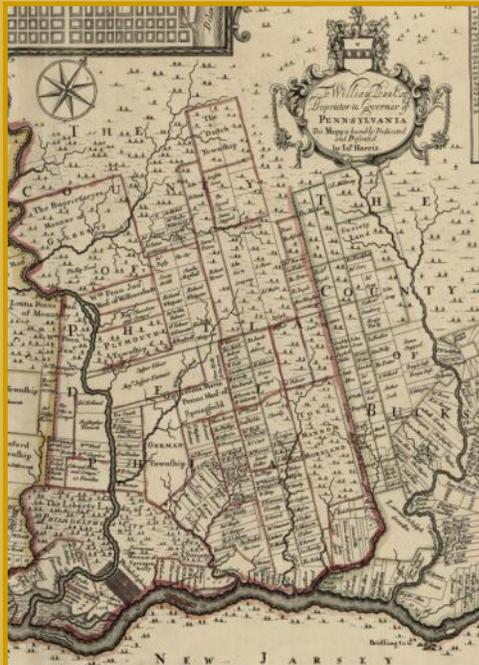
Saturday, September 16, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Paper Cutting Workshop led by Pam Hults. Registration required.

Sunday, September 17, 4 pm, at Klein's Meetinghouse, Harleysville - Hymn Sing. No reservation required.



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Thomas Holme map of Pennsylvania, 1687

Exhibits

April 1, 2017 to March 31, 2018.
Opportunity and Conscience: Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania.

March 28 to April 22, 2017. *Perkiomen Valley Art Center Membership Exhibit*

May 2 to May 27, 2017. *Penn View School Intergenerational Art Show*

August 19 to November 4, 2017. *Julie Longacre in Retrospective*