

MHC Quarterly

Mennonite Heritage Center

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You may have childhood memories of summer that include trips to the shore, playing baseball, swimming, and...interminably long rows of beans in the garden that had to be picked and cleaned. This photograph by Anna Guntz illustrates just how long those bean rows could be. In the early 1950s, Anna Guntz (1913-2005) bought an Argus C3 camera and began taking slide pictures. From our perspective, we can see that she was gifted at capturing day-to-day scenes of her life, her family and community. As an aunt in a close-knit farming family, Anna either lived with or visited often the families of each of her brothers and sister, usually bringing her camera along. In the process, she documented the life and growth of each of these families, especially of her nieces and nephews, whom she loved dearly. Her picture-taking spans from the early 1950s through the 1970s, giving us intimate, colorful glimpses of life in a still-rural Mennonite farm family of the third quarter of the 20th century.

Photo credit: Allen H. Guntz

MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTER

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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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Joel Alderfer told the story of his ancestor, Frederick Alldörfer, at the April 28 Heritage Banquet.
Photo by Steve Diehl

From Croquet Tournaments to Blogs



Beny Krisbianto, pastor of Nations Worship Center, Philadelphia, speaks at the Heritage Banquet at the Mennonite Heritage Center on April 28.

Photo by Sarah Heffner

organizations. The Senior Tournament and Survivor Youth Tournaments were played on Friday, June 2. See page 10 for photos of the winning teams. Thank you to all our sponsors and our volunteers for making this event possible.

Along with inviting the community to our campus, we have also been increasing our online presence. The feature article in this issue by staff archivist Forrest Moyer complements our website's blog. The blog has been featuring the stories of Mennonite immigrant families to eastern Pennsylvania and their contributions to the community over the generations. If you have roots in this area, check out the blog to read stories of Allebach, Bean, Cassel, Clemens, Detweiler, Hunsicker and other area families.

These events and other programs have helped inform our strategic planning discussion. Board and staff met with museum consultant Anne Ackerson on May 18 to brainstorm for a vibrant future for the Mennonite Heritage Center. This is a time of change for museum and heritage organizations, and leaders in the museum field are emphasizing that organizations work to engage visitors with innovative programs and more online accessibility to collections. We want to continue with traditional strengths of exhibits and publications but explore how to collaborate with schools and area organizations on new programs. I would welcome your ideas – please contact me at heffners@mhep.org or 215-256-3020, ext.112.

And we will be conducting our annual membership drive in July. I invite you to renew or join as a member, and thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,
Sarah Heffner
Director

The spring season of events and programs at the Mennonite Heritage Center has been an interesting and full one. We have hosted several events centered around the new exhibit *Opportunity & Conscience: Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania*. The Annual Heritage Banquet on April 28 featured pastors from three congregations of New Americans. (These congregations represent the growth in Franconia Conference with immigrants now comprising approximately 10% of Franconia Conference.) Plains Mennonite Church and Salford Mennonite Church brought their Sunday School classes to tour the exhibit and hear Joel Alderfer give his presentation as his ancestor Frederick Alldörfer. If your congregation would like to bring a group, either on an evening or Sunday morning, please call 215-256-3020 to schedule a visit. We would be happy to host you.

The ninth annual Whack & Roll Croquet Tournament was a fun-filled fundraising event on Saturday, June 3, where teams representing twenty-six nonprofit organizations vied for cash prizes for their

Our Immigrant Heritage: Some Germantown Families

By Forrest Moyer

On the MHC blog, we've been telling stories of families descended from 18th-century Mennonite immigrants to eastern Pennsylvania, in connection with our current exhibit *Opportunity and Conscience: Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania*. The focus is on families who came from the Palatinate, high (southern) Germany and Switzerland beginning in 1709.

However, a number of Mennonite families came to Pennsylvania before 1709 from lowland Germany and the Netherlands. This article will share some of their stories.

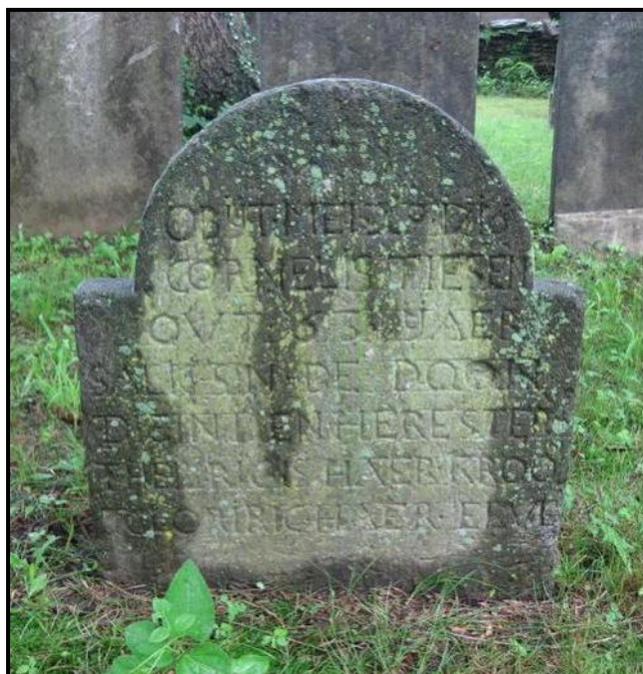
These early immigrants settled at Germantown near Philadelphia, which was the only 17th-century Mennonite community in Pennsylvania. In following generations, the families spread north and west, intermarrying with High German, Swiss and English people; eventually losing their knowledge of Dutch language and Low German cultural markers. It is said that Dutch was last spoken locally in the 1820s by descendants of the Tyson and Godshalk families.¹

Tyson

Cornelius Tyson (1652-1716) is believed to have come to Pennsylvania in 1684, emigrating from Krefeld in Germany's Lower Rhine Valley. His brother Reiner, a Quaker, had arrived the year before with the first Germantown settlement group.

Cornelius may not have been Mennonite himself, though many descendants were, and his wife Margaret is listed as a member of the Mennonite congregation in 1708. Cornelius died May 9, 1716, and was buried in the Upper Burial Ground. The Dutch-German inscription on his gravestone, while poorly spelled, is poetic and well-carved.

Obÿt Meÿ 9 1716	Died May 9, 1716
Cornelis Tiesen	Cornelius Tyson
Out 63 ÿaer	Age 63 years
Salig sin de Doon	Blessed are the dead
die in den Here sterve	who die in the Lord
theilric is haer Kroon	Hallowed is their crown
tgloriric haer Erve	Glorious their inheritance



Cornelius Tyson gravestone, Germantown.

Image source: findagrave.com

Descendants of Lower Rhenish families often married one another, even after they were living among Swiss-Germans in Skippack, as can be noted in the story of a Tyson artifact in the MHC collection. A book of sermons by Jacob Denner, a north German Mennonite preacher, contains a note that Matthias Rittenhouse purchased it from John Tyson in 1821 for \$2.67. Several generations after immigration, both Matthias and John had almost completely Dutch and Low German ancestry, with one English line each—but no Swiss. John married an Op den Graeff, continuing the tradition of Low German marriage, but Matthias broke with tradition, marrying two different Swiss Mennonite women.

An important 20th century descendant of the Tyson family was Samuel Tyson Moyer (1893-1972), a missionary to India. "S. T." Moyer was raised in the Zion Mennonite congregation, Souderton. After study at Witmarsum Seminary, he married Metta Habegger, and they left for India in 1920. For the first few years, they lived in tents and temporary housing "with Christ on the edge of the jungles" as Moyer titled his memoir.² Eventually they developed a church through indigenous evangelism, an innovative approach at the time, for which Moyer became known throughout the missionary community of northern India.

Rittenhouse

Arriving at Germantown in 1687/88, William and Gertrude Rittenhouse came from Amsterdam and earlier from the Lower Rhine Valley. Though not raised Mennonite, they had converted while living and working in Holland's capital city. William was a papermaker, the first to bring that trade to the British colonies, building a mill on the Monoshone Creek at Germantown. Today the miller's house and nearby buildings are preserved as a museum, Historic RittenhouseTown.

William was the first Mennonite minister ordained in America, in 1698. He served ten years until his unexpected death on February 18, 1708 at age 64. Gertrude died soon after from the same sickness which had swept through Germantown village that winter, taking several lives.³

Their son Nicholas "Claus" Rittenhouse (1666-1734) also served as a minister in the Germantown congregation and continued his father's paper milling operation on the Monoshone. It was there that a grandson, David, was born in 1732 to Matthias Rittenhouse and his Welsh wife Elizabeth Williams. Old preacher Claus likely could not imagine that his grandson would go on to a thoroughly English and educated life, becoming one of America's great early scientists.

David Rittenhouse (1732-1796) was a clockmaker, mathematician and astronomer who studied the stars with Benjamin Franklin and created an orrery of the solar system that was lauded by Thomas Jefferson as "a machine far surpassing...anything of the kind ever before constructed." ⁴ Rittenhouse also served as Treasurer of Pennsylvania from 1777 to 1789 during the War for Independence, and as first Director of the United States Mint. Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia is named for him.

Returning to the Mennonite Rittenhouse's, a branch of the family persisted in the rural congregations at Plains and Franconia into the 20th and 21st centuries. One notable descendant was Hannah Rittenhouse Clemens (1880-1977). Born into a more cultured Mennonite family of Towamencin Township, she married a schoolteacher who played the violin, Jacob C. Clemens. From teaching he moved to a career in banking, but this was cut short when he was nominated for the ministry at Plains in 1906 and the lot fell to him. Hanna grieved, knowing some of what the new role would demand. The ministry would take Jacob away from home and his work at the bank; the family was expected to farm, and to set an example of plainness and discipline for the church. This was not the life they had envisioned, but they could not refuse without forfeiting church membership.⁵

As Hanna matured, she became a sage mother of the church, her children and grandchildren going to work in various aspects of ministry; and her memory of the rapidly disappearing Pennsylvania German culture was a gift to folklife historians of the mid-20th century. There are several interviews of Hanna in the MHC collection that provide details of life in previous generations.

Nice / Nyce

A puzzle surrounds the immigrant ancestors of the Nice family, Mennonite brothers Jan and Hans Neuss of Krefeld. No one knows why both brothers were named John—"Jan" being the Dutch form and "Hans" an abbreviation of the German "Johannes". Historian Wilhelm Niepoth, looking at sources in Germany, wrote that "Johann Neuss and his brother Hans Neuss, the sons of the married couple Nelis Wienands and Olletgen (te) Neuss, emigrated with their wives to America in 1698. Their descendants use the name Nice." ⁶



Hannah Rittenhouse Clemens, 1973.
MHC Collection



Abraham Nyce's factory building, Vernfield, circa 1908. Photo by Jonas H. Nyce.
MHC Collection

Both were ordained in the Germantown congregation, soon after their arrival—Jan as deacon in 1699 and Hans as minister in 1702. For some reason, Hans left the Mennonite fellowship within a few years, though ironically most Mennonites named Nice—sometimes spelled Nyce—are descended from him. His son John (1698-1743) moved to Frederick Township, where he was a member of the Reformed Church. John's grandson Abraham Neis (1756-1818) of Franconia married a Mennonite, Magdalena Landis, and it is from them that the Mennonite (and Brethren) families descend.

Abraham's youngest son Henry L. Nice (1804-1883) married a daughter of the Mennonite bishop, Jacob Gottschall, and was himself called to the ministry. Henry provided leadership for the conservative majority during the conflict in 1847 that divided Franconia and Eastern District conferences. His nephew Henry C. Nice (1822-1892) was also a Mennonite preacher and bishop, who moved to Morrison, Illinois. According to a daughter-in-law, Henry C. was "commanding in appearance, strict in discipline, impressive in speech, using the German language entirely."⁷ His wife was also of Lower Rhenish descent, Levinah Z. Tyson (1818-1908). A towel that she decorated with unusual drawn work and embroidery is in the MHC collection.

John L. Nice (1777-1856) married a Brethren woman, Catherine Price, and their descendants have been prominent in the local Church of the Brethren. Their grandson Abraham (1860-1924)—who spelled his name Nyce with a "y"—and his son William were businessmen who developed the village of Vernfield next to the Indian Creek Brethren meetinghouse in Lower Salford. Abraham started a clothing factory in Morwood in 1884, and in 1898 moved out to the Sumneytown Pike, where he built a three-story brick building to house the factory. Employees built homes around the factory (many of them also members of the Indian Creek congregation), and Nyce opened a post office in the building, naming the new village "Vernfield" in honor of his three-year-old son Verner.

William G. Nyce (1888-1958) started a post card factory in his father's building, and in 1924 built a modern factory nearby. The Nyce Manufacturing Company operated until a decade ago, and the building is now used by a church and several businesses. William was a book collector, and one of the most interesting pieces of fraktur in the MHC collection came from his collection through Isaac Clarence Kulp—a large bookplate for Catherine Fretz, circa 1825, featuring a unique bird and what Kulp called humorously a "sausage tree".

Pennypacker

Hendrick Pannebecker (1674-1754), of Dutch ancestry, came to Germantown by 1699, and moved to Skippack in 1702, where he worked as a land surveyor. He was a member of the Reformed Church, though like Cornelius Tyson his ancestors were Anabaptists, and his children married Mennonites. Late in life, he was a source of frustration for Lutheran church leader Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, who sent a report to Germany complaining of Pannebecker as a "great reviler of our church" who "poured out angry speeches" when Muhlenberg's church attracted several of his grandchildren. When Pannebecker died unexpectedly, Muhlenberg wrote: "The old man has now by a sudden death been sent into eternity! What nothings are all men, and yet they live so securely." ⁸

One grandson, Matthias Pannebecker (1742-1808), was a Mennonite bishop in Chester County. He was a miller on the Pickering Creek, and a very conscientious man. His great-grandson, S. W. Pennypacker, wrote that Matthias "was so strict in his conduct that when loaning money to struggling friends, as he often did, he refused to take note, bond or mortgage. He would not permit a door in his house to have lock or key. He was the first person in that part of the country to discountenance the use of liquors in the harvest-field.... When he died, his funeral was attended by people from five counties...." ⁹ Matthias suffered from both sides during the War for Independence—the British destroyed his mill machinery and the Americans fined him heavily for non-participation in the war effort.

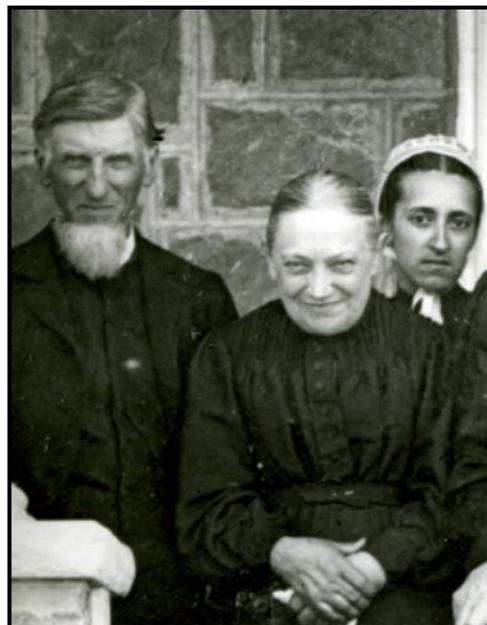
Samuel W. Pennypacker (1843-1916), historian, lawyer, judge and Governor of Pennsylvania, 1903-1907, though not himself Mennonite, learned more about early Pennsylvania Mennonite life than most Mennonites of his day, who were more interested in their farms and families than in history. Pennypacker—who interestingly began his autobiography with the statement "I was born...upon a Sunday and, therefore, gifted with the power to pow-wow and to see fairies as the opportunity arises" ¹⁰—gathered in his home at Pennypacker Mills, Schwenksville, a remarkable collection of books, fraktur and other manuscripts that documented Pennsylvania German life. Much of the fraktur is now in the collection of the Schwenkfelder Library & Heritage Center, Pennsburg (for examples, see *MHEP Quarterly* 16:4, Winter 2013). A number of letters and documents are in the Mennonite Heritage Center collection, gift of Pennypacker's granddaughter-in-law, Margaret Haussman Pennypacker.

Johnson

The Mennonite Johnson family is descended from Lower Rhenish immigrant Nicholas "Claus" Jansen, who came to Germantown circa 1700. He soon moved to Skippack, where he served as a minister in the Mennonite congregation. Conrad Jansen, who was deacon at Germantown, may have been his father or brother.

In the mid-19th century, the Skippack congregation (up to that time the leading Mennonite congregation in eastern Pennsylvania) was fractured by personality conflicts and disagreement over innovations. The leader who retained control of the meetinghouse and cemetery was bishop Henry G. Johnson (1806-1879). For over a century, the (Lower) Skippack congregation was independent of any larger conference, and were called "Johnson Mennonites" by some, because influence rested largely with the Johnson family. Henry's son and grandson, Henry H. and Henry M. Johnson, also served as ministers (though it should be remembered that Amos Bean, not a member of the Johnson family, was bishop during this time).

The Johnson preachers worked as schoolmasters, teaching in the Meetinghouse School next to the Lower Skippack meetinghouse. Grandfather Henry G. Johnson taught for some years while the school was parochial, before the switch to public education. He was a talented and imaginative fraktur artist.



Preacher Henry H. and Catherine Markley Johnson, circa 1905.
MHC Collection

Godshalk / Godshall

One of the last living of the Lower Rhine immigrants was Jacob Godshalk, who died in 1763 in Towamencin Township. He was a turner (furniture maker) who had come to Germantown in 1701 with his wife Altien, from Goch on the Netherlands-Germany border. A year after arrival, he was chosen to assist William Rittenhouse in the ministry at Germantown, though at first he felt confident only to read sermons, rather than preach his own.

In 1708, after the unexpected death of Rittenhouse, Godshalk agreed to move forward with the baptisms and communion that Mennonites in Germantown had been waiting for 25 years. By administering the sacraments he acted as bishop, though he had not been duly ordained by another bishop. When a properly ordained bishop, Henry Kolb, arrived the following year, some dissension arose in the congregation until, on advice from European church leaders, Henry confirmed Jacob's ministry, and they served jointly until Kolb's death in 1730.

Jacob didn't quite live to see the birth of his great-grandson Jacob Gottschall (1769-1845), who—like his namesake ancestor—later served as a bishop in the Mennonite Church. Raised in New Britain Township, Bucks County, Jacob studied in the German parochial school of John Adam Eyer, the great frakturist. Gottschall himself became a teacher and an excellent frakturist, as did his son Samuel after him.

Jacob Gottschall was one of those fourth-generation Lower Rhenish descendants who married a Swiss Mennonite, Barbara Kindig. It's interesting to see in Jacob's tunebook, circa 1800,¹¹ that he marked some tunes as "Schweizer Lied (Swiss song)", suggesting that as late as 1800, some Dutch-German families were still learning to appreciate Swiss-German culture, which by that time had become the dominant culture, especially in areas beyond Skippack and Germantown. Within a couple decades, memory of Lower Rhenish culture would fade.

When writing their name in English, descendants of this family have often used the spellings Godshall and Gottshall, though a Bucks County branch of the family used the spelling Godshalk, and one small branch around Perkasio used the more complicated Gottschalk. The Dutch version of the immigrant's name was indeed difficult for German and English speakers—Gaedtschalck.



Samuel Gottschall bookplate, 1834
MHC Collection

Endnotes

1. John L. Ruth, *Maintaining the Right Fellowship* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984), 203.
2. S. T. Moyer, *With Christ on the Edge of the Jungles* (Berne, IN: Mennonite Book Concern, 1941).
3. For much more information, see John L. Ruth, "William Rittenhouse as Minister: A Steady Presence in an Unsteady Context", *RittenhouseTown: A Journal of History*, Vol. 3 (2006), 20-58.
4. Daniel K. Cassel, *A Genea-Biographical History of the Rittenhouse Family...* (Philadelphia: Rittenhouse Memorial Association, 1893), 144. The orrery was purchased by Princeton University, and Rittenhouse built a second one for the University of Pennsylvania. Both can be viewed at those institutions today.
5. Hanna Clemens autobiographical writings, Mennonite Heritage Center, Harleysville, J. C. Clemens Papers (Hist. Mss. 3) box 2, folder 8. To understand the process of ordination by lot, listen to the audio recording of an ordination at Franconia in 1965, available on the Mennonite Heritage Center's Youtube channel.
6. Quoted in Hazel Nice Hassan, *Nice Family History: The Ancestors and Descendants of Joseph Nice...* (Goshen, IN: privately published, 1993), 25.
7. Elizabeth Dutcher Nice, quoted by her daughter Hazel Hassen, *The Nice Family History: Descendants of Henry Clemmer Nice* (Normal, IL: privately published, 1965), 37.
8. Samuel W. Pennypacker, *Hendrick Pannebecker: Surveyor of Lands for the Penns...* (Philadelphia: privately published, 1894), 128-130.
9. Letter of December 11, 1877, quoted in John F. Funk, *The Mennonite Church and Her Accusers* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Publishing Company, 1878), 125.
10. Samuel W. Pennypacker, *The Autobiography of a Pennsylvanian* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Company, 1918), 31.
11. Manuscript tunebooks were used by teachers and students in the absence of printed music books.

Annual Used Book Sale

Each year, for several days in July, thousands of good condition used books are for sale at the MHC's Annual Used Book Sale. The sale is held inside the air-conditioned museum building. Come take a break from the heat and pore over our great selection of books organized by topic.

This year the bag sale (formerly held only Saturday) will be extended to Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of the following week (the MHC is closed Sunday and Monday).

The book sale includes good condition used books of Mennonite and local interest, geography/travel, literature, history, cookbooks, fiction and nonfiction, self help, poetry, local histories/genealogies, and children's books; CD's, DVD's and puzzles.

This year, we have a large collection of REVOLUTIONARY and EARLY AMERICAN HISTORY.

Great books at low prices!

2017 Book Sale Hours:



Thursday, July 20, 10:00 am-7:00 pm

Friday, July 21, 10:00 am-7:00 pm (half-price)

Saturday, July 22, 10:00 am-2:00 pm (bag sale)

Tuesday, July 25, 10:00 am-5:00 pm (bag sale)

Wednesday, July 26, 10:00 am-5:00 pm (bag sale)

Thursday, July 27, 10:00 am-5:00 pm (bag sale)

Annual Membership Campaign

The Mennonite Heritage Center works to preserve and share 300 years of Mennonite and Brethren faith and life in southeastern Pennsylvania with the artifacts, stories and images that enrich our lives. Please help us with stewarding the memories of three centuries of community, congregational and family life. You will receive your annual membership renewal letter in July. If you renew your membership by August 30, 2017, you will receive free admission to the Apple Butter Frolic on October 7, 2017 where you can enjoy farming demonstrations, traditional crafts and great Pa German cooking! Renew by going to www.mhep.org or by filling out the enclosed form and mailing with your check to the Mennonite Heritage Center.

2017 Whack & Roll Croquet Tournament



Senior Tournament

First Place Traveling Trophy — Encore Experiences at Harleysville
Team – “Misfits” – Stan Krolikowski and Harold Wambold
Second Place — Living Branches - Dock
Team – “Grumpy Old Men” – Cliff Heizmann and Dan Lapp
Third Place — Living Branches - Souderton
Team – “Flower Power” – Ivan Derstine and Lorene Derstine



Survivor Youth Tournament

First Place of \$1,000 went to the Butter Valley Community Church “Butter Ballers” for their service project – kid’s camp in Haines, Alaska



Winners of the Novice Division: Pam Bedell and Carl Pennell took home first prize for COBYS Family Services. \$1000 will go to their work. The Novice division was added this year to give players who are new to the tournament or have never qualified for afternoon play to be able to compete, have fun, and win money for their organizations.

The Open Division First Place of \$5,000, sponsored by Bergey’s Inc., was awarded to Encore Experiences at Harleysville Team – “Misfits” – Harold Wambold and Charlie Law



Upcoming Programs

Sunday, September 10, 2 to 5 pm. Reception for *Julie Longacre: A Retrospective* exhibit.

Thursday, September 14, 7 pm. 1717 Immigration program by John Ruth. Open to the public.

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. Open to the public.

Saturday, September 23, 9:30 am to 4 pm. Tufted Wool Embroidery Workshop led by Shirley Sacks. Registration required.

Saturday, September 23, 9:30 am to 4 pm. Hearth Cooking Workshop at the Antes House, Frederick. Cosponsored by MHC and the Goschenhoppen Historians. Registration required.

Saturday, September 30, 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Basket Workshop led by Karen Wychock. Registration required.

Saturday, October 7. Apple Butter Frolic.

Thursday, October 19, 7 pm. DNA and family genealogy program by Darvin Martin. Open to the public. Admission by donation.

Thursday, October 26, 7 pm. "Diverse DNA among Swiss Mennonites and Amish" by Darvin Martin. Open to the public. Admission by donation.

Sunday, November 12, 2 pm. "Expanding the Narrative: Stories of WWI Conscientious Objectors in Their Own Words" by Anne Yoder. Open to the public. Admission by donation.



Horse drawn plowing demonstration at the 2016 Apple Butter Frolic.
Photo by Harry Anselmo



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565 Yoder Rd
Harleysville, PA 19438-1020



The Winter House by Julie Longacre

Exhibits

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

August 19 to November 4, 2017.
Julie Longacre: A Retrospective

Sunday, September 10 from 2 to 5 pm
***Julie Longacre* exhibit reception.** Join us
for conversation with the artist. Open to the
public; no reservation needed.