



Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

Volume 23, No. 2
Spring, 2015

Published by the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians
Elwood E. Yoder, Editor

A quarterly periodical dedicated to the history and culture of Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, USA

MENNONITE TEACHERS IN ONE AND TWO-ROOM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Vera's Journey Tour

Vera Heatwole's life will be featured in a tour sponsored by the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians, Saturday, July 25, 2015, 9:00-11:15 AM. Vera's granddaughter Kathy Rhodes and others will be our guides and storytellers. Glendon Blosser will also be along to add Virginia Middle District history. See the enclosed tour registration sheet.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries over seventy-five Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley taught in one and two-room public schools. Harold D. Lehman has assembled information on Mennonite teachers in these small schools, basing his work on the research of Dale MacAllister and Larry R. Huffman. In this issue we present Harold D. Lehman's work.

What Harold D. Lehman's work shows is that many Mennonite teachers taught in Rockingham County one and two-room public schools. Elsie Lehman, for instance, wrote that her EMS class of 1940-41 had twelve education majors. She indicated that many of them got their first experience

teaching in the Park View public school house. Elsie taught in three one room schools during the 1940s and early 1950s, including Park View school. Elsie graduated from Madison College, and then joined the faculty at EMS in 1956.

The Lambert Mennonite Church, Wymer, West Virginia, pictured above in a photo from 2013, had its origins over a hundred years ago when Mennonite ministers began preaching in the tiny Lambert schoolhouse. After attending the Virginia Mennonite Conference delegate session in the summer of 2014, where Lambert was released from VMC, the Editor asked Bishop Glendon Blosser, who preached at Lambert Church many times, to write a history of the congregation, which we've included in this issue. Lambert Church had been a congregation of Virginia Mennonite Conference from 1913-2014.

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Mennonite Teachers in One and Two-Room Schools

Compiled by Harold D. Lehman

In 2010 Harold D. Lehman compiled a list of Mennonite teachers who taught in small Rockingham County public schools. Harold provided the following introductory comments, a list of teachers, and a list of one and two-room schools.

These schools were used in the era before consolidation in Rockingham County, Virginia, which took place in the mid-20th century. By 1950 most of the small schools had closed, though Park School and Dale Enterprise school closed in the 1960s.

The teachers' names appear in the list as they were recorded at the time of employment. Many of the teachers attended Eastern Mennonite School, earning either a two-year Normal Certificate for teaching at the elementary level, or a four year teaching degree.

Thirty-three elementary schools are listed, which was less than one-third of the small elementary schools in Rockingham County during the early 20th century. Harold worked from information gathered from the research of Dale MacAllister and Larry R. Huffman, and they gave permission to print this research.

Mennonite Teachers	Years Teaching	Rockingham Schools
Verdie Alger	1921-22 1922-24 1927-37	Cedar Run Mayland Park School
John Scott Bender	1964-65	Park School
Pauline Blosser	1926-27	Park School
Ida Boyer	1927-28 1930-34	Smith Park School
Ruth M. Brackbill	1934-35	Park School
Christian H. Brunk	1875-77	New Erection

Mennonite Teachers	Years Teaching	Rockingham Schools
J. H. Brunk	1886-87	Rushville
Lillian Brunk	1943-45	Roadside (Simmons Gap)
Marie Brunk	1922-24 1924-25	Peach Grove New Erection
John D. Burkholder, Jr.	1931-32 1932-38 1935-38	Capon Run Fairview Peach Grove
Nellie Coffman	1918-21 1921-22 1922-2	Oakland View Caplinger Greenmount
Emma Emswiler	1942-43	Caplinger
Ray Emswiler	1929-30 1931-33 1933-41 1941-47	Bennetts Run Caplinger Dale Enterprise Caplinger
Mabel Erb	1943-44 1950-51	Mountain Top Park School
Esther Eshleman	1941-43 1947-51 1952-57	Roadside (S.G.) Roadside Roadside
Harold Eshleman	1932-34 1934-35 1935-63	Maple Spring New Erection Dale Erection
James Eshleman	1941-42	Maple Spring
Mabel Eshleman	1939-43	Mount Pleasant (Stonewall District)
John F. Garber	1939-42	Fox Mountain
Ruth Garber	1936-37 1939-42	Peake Rushville
Cora Gehman	1929-30	Smith
Frances Good	1933-37 1937-38 1938-44	Rushville Peach Grove Genoa
Irene Halterman	1946-47 1949-51	Runions Creek Bennetts Run
Annie L. Heatwole	1912-13 1914-19 1920-26	Dale Enterprise New Erection New Erection
Elizabeth Heatwole	1914-15 1916-17 1918-19 1920-21	Rushville New Erection New Erection New Erection

Mennonite Teachers	Years Teaching	Rockingham Schools	Mennonite Teachers	Years Teaching	Rockingham Schools
Lelia Heatwole	1913-14 1917-25 1925-28	Greenmount White Hall New Erection	Esther Lehman	1942-44	Mt. Pleasant (Stonewall District)
L. J. Heatwole	1873-74 1904-05	New Erection New Erection	Harold D. Lehman	1939-40 1940-41	Caplinger Fulks Run
Marjorie Heatwole	1927-29 1929-30	Fulks Run Greenmount	Miriam Lehman	1942-44	Fairview (Plains District)
Pauline Heatwole	1923-24 1924-25	Cherry Grove Dale Enterprise	Elsie Martin	1932-33 1934-35 1935-64	Dean Mountain Oakland View Park School
Vada Heatwole	1923-25 1931-33 1934-35 1935-37 1941-43	Union <small>(Ashby District)</small> Caplinger New Erection Oakland View Dale Enterprise	Margaret Martin	1942-44	Bennetts Run
Edna Heishman	1929-31	Caplinger	J. Weldon Martin	1942-43	Fox Mountain
A. W. Hershberger	1923-30 1932-33	Park School Dale Enterprise	Grace Metzler	1945-46	Roadside
Elma Hershberger	1925-26	Tunis Creek	Frank Moyers	1938-39	Caplinger
Anna Mae Holsinger	1922-23 1923-24	Park School Oakland View	Preston Moyers	1935-36 1936-37	Mountain Top Genoa
Catherine Holsinger	1942-45	Fairview <small>(Plains District)</small>	Ruth Orendorf	1937-40 1940-43	Mountain Top White Hall
Fannie Holsinger	1921-22 1923-24	New Erection Genoa	Delphia Rhodes	1925-27 1928-33 1933-38	New Erection New Erection Caplinger
Justis Holsinger	1931-32	White Hall	Lucille Shank	1946-47 1947-49	Genoa Park School
Martha Holsinger	1933-34	Cross Road	Ezra Shank	1924-25	Dean Mountain
Mary Holsinger	1923-24	Genoa	Doris Shenk	1942-43	Oakland View
Cora Kraybill	1921-22	Park School	Mary C. Shenk	1927-29 1929-30	Fulks Run Cherry Grove
Alice Keeler	1930-31 1932-33 1936-39 1939-43 1943-51 1951-57	Bennetts Run Park School White Hall Biedler Oakland View Dale Enterprise	Theda Shetter	1939-42 1942-46	Mt. Pleasant <small>(Fawley)</small> Humes Run
Ruth Kurtz/Hobbs	1946-47 1959-60	Roadside Dale Enterprise	Elizabeth Showalter	1929-30 1930-34 1935-36 1936-43	Capon Run Whitmer White Hall Park School
Bertha Leasa	1941-42	Mountain Top	John R. Suter	1891-94 1896-97	New Erection New Erection
Anna Leatherman	1940-44 1944-47	White Hall Mt. Pleasant <small>(Stonewall District)</small>	Sem Swope	1926-30 1932-37 1937-38 1940-41 1941-44 1945-46 1951-52	White Hall Rushville Peake Mountain Top Fulks Run White Hall Fulks Run
Elsie Lehman	1942-44 1948-50 1950-54	Whitmer Genoa Park School			

Mennonite Teachers	Years Teaching	Rockingham Schools
Fern Trissel	1935-43 1943-55	Fox Mountain Humes Run
Gail Trissel	1930-32 1934-38 1938-45	White Hall Oakland View Rocky Bar (Island Ford)
H. N. Troyer	1918-20	Park School
C. C. Turner	1921-22 1922-23 1930-31	Cherry Grove Genoa Garbers
Edna Turner	1934-37 1937-47	Whitmer Genoa
Goldie Turner	1930-31	Caplinger
Zack Turner	1936-38	Orebaugh
Anna Mae Wenger	1924-25	White Hall
Esther Wenger	1943-45	Park School
Lucy Wenger	1925-26	White Hall
Raymond Wenger	1932-35 1935-36	White Hall Peake
Rhoda Wenger	1935-37 1937-39	Bennetts Run Park School
Ruth Wenger	1930-32 1933-34 1934-36 1936-37	Rushville New Erection Maple Spring Mountain Top
Edna Whetzel	1946-47 1955-57	Fulks Run Caplinger
W. H. Yankey	1922-23	Caplinger

Name and Location of Virginia Public Schools	
Bennetts Run School	One-room, near Bergton
Biedler School	One-room, later Two-room; On Route 620, a few miles south of Endless Caverns
Caplinger School	Two-room, at Criders
Cedar Run School	Two-room, north of Mt. Clinton Pike, on Rocky Lane
Cherry Grove School	Two-room, between Singers Glen and Broadway near Cherry Grove United Brethren Church

Name and Location of Virginia Public Schools	
Cross Road School	One-room, west of Wenger's Mill
Dale Enterprise School	Two-room, on Rawley Pike at Dale Enterprise
Fairview School (Central District)	Two-room, across from Spotswood Country Club
Fairview School (Plains District)	Two-room, on Mountain Valley Road, east of Tenth Legion
Fox Mountain School	Two-room, east of Elkton
Fulks Run School	Two-room, at Fulks Run
Fulton School	Two-room, west of Ottobine
Garbers School	Two-room, later one-room school, west of Timberville
Genoa School	Two-room, near northern entrance to Hopkins Gap
Humes Run School	Two-room, on road between McGaheysville and Shenandoah
Mt. Pleasant School (Stonewall District)	Two-room, east of Elkton toward Swift Run
Mountain Top School	One-room, near top of Shenandoah Mountain, west of Bergton
New Erection School	Two-room school, across from Cooks Creek Presbyterian Church
Oak Dale School	One-room, on Rawley Pike at intersection of road to Clover Hill
Oakland View School	Two-room, between Dayton and Dale Enterprise
Orebaugh School	Two-room, northwest of Timberville near Mount Olivet Church
Park School	One-room, later Two-room, later Three-room, across from Eastern Mennonite High School

Name and Location of Virginia Public Schools	
Peach Grove School	Two-room, on Port Republic Road, southeast of Harrisonburg
Peake School	One-room, near southern entrance to Hopkins Gap
Roadside School (Simmons Gap)	One-room, near Shenandoah National Park, southeast of Elkton
Rocky Bar School	One-room, later two-room, south of Elkton
Runions Creek School	One-room, northwest of Broadway
Rushville School	One-room, near Rushville
Smith School	One-room, west of Timberville
Sunnyside School (Stonewall District)	One-room, Swift Run Gap, east of Elkton
Tunis Creek School	One-room, along Runions Creek, near Smith School
White Hall School	Two-room, in Hopkins Gap
Whitmer School	One-room, northwest of Fulks Run

Timber Ridge School, Rockingham County, Virginia. Dr. Harry A. Brunk took this photo in 1956.

The building was constructed in 1929. It was located about three miles northwest of Port Republic, Virginia. While Mennonites did not teach at Timber Ridge, the building illustrates the many public schools that dotted the landscape of Rockingham County, Virginia, in the mid-twentieth century.

Harry A. Brunk collection, Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives



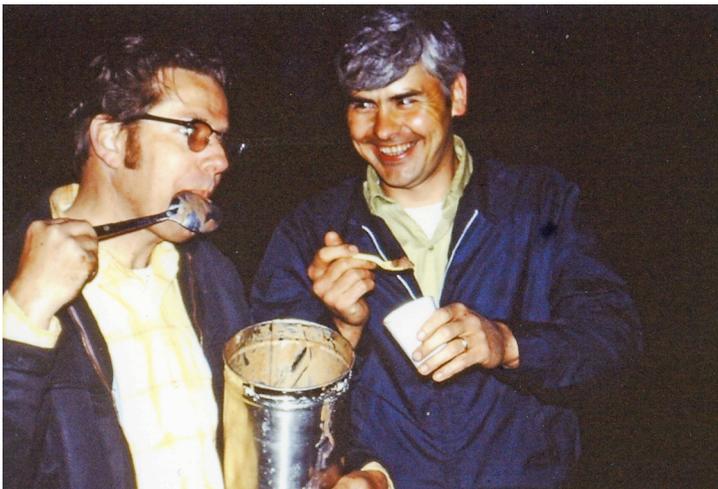
Lambert Mennonite Church, 1913-2014



Lambert Mennonite Church, 1965, in a picture taken by Harry A. Brunk.
Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives



Paul and Eula Good, left. Paul was the pastor at Lambert Mennonite Church, 1952-56.
Roy Good photo



Roy Good, left, was pastor at Lambert Mennonite Church 1968-82. Boyd Wyatt, right, has served as pastor at Lambert from 1982 to the present.
Roy Good photo

Lambert Church: A Church Started by “Circuit Riders”

by Glendon Blosser

Church leaders from Virginia Mennonite Conference prior to the twentieth century were active evangelists who rode horses across the mountains and through the rivers to West Virginia to preach the Gospel and baptize adult believers. Harry A. Brunk, the author of the two volume *History of Mennonites in Virginia* gives considerable space in volume one to the history of “Schoolhouse Evangelism in Middle District.” He notes that “the leaders of the church in Virginia were among the first to catch the imperative of the Word of God to go and preach the Gospel to all men. In its early years Virginia Conference adopted English preaching and writing and singing. This made it possible for the Mennonite Church in Virginia to give a witness to people who were not German in culture.”¹

Concerning the location and history of the present day Lambert Church it is found in West Virginia on Middle Mountain approximately 100 miles west from Harrisonburg, Virginia. Early preachers were usually the bishops that would take several days to travel by horseback across the five mountain ranges and use school houses as venues for preaching the Gospel. Brunk states that Bishop Samuel Coffman and Minister Joseph N. Driver went on horseback as early as the 1870s and used 15 to 20 school houses for preaching appointments.

Later in 1896 Bishop L. J. Heatwole and minister Abraham Burkholder covered much the same area on horseback with preaching appointments in school houses and found that Adonijah Lambert and his wife had heard from Bishops Coffman and Driver about the Mennonites, and were eager for baptism. From the meager information that we can find the Lamberts live on the slopes of Middle Mountain where the present Lambert meeting house is located. It has not been traced but it would seem possible that the present generations of the Ernest Lambert family that have lived close to the church are a legacy of that encounter yet today.

The story of the Lambert church building has been documented to show that the Lambert school house that was used in the early years became unavailable because one of the teachers raised objections to its use by the Mennonites. Middle District minutes record



Bishop Glendon Blosser peered into the lower door of the Lambert Mennonite Church, Wymer, Virginia, April 15, 2013, on a day-long journey to show the Editor Mennonite Churches in West Virginia.

Photo by Elwood E. Yoder

¹ Harry A. Brunk, *History of Mennonites in Virginia, 1727-1900*, Vol.I (McClure Printing Co. 1959), 361.

that funds and labor were donated that built a wooden structure on a mountainside location with a full basement in 1949.

At the time of dedication of this building the membership was around 30 persons. Numerous ministers from Virginia Mennonite Conference Middle District were asked by the Mission Board to take an assignment as pastor for the congregation. The Job mission home located seven miles east in Randolph County close to the Bethel and Horton churches were used as their residence.

Alvin Kanagy moved his family into the Laurel Fork community close to the Lambert Church in 1957. "The Home Mission Board had purchased a farm located on the road going to the church from a local owner for \$3000 in 1955. It was thought to remodel the farm house as a home for a pastor from Virginia. When the Mission Property Committee was told that Alvin Kanagy was available and had a family of eight children with two sets of twins, they made a decision to build a totally new house. A pole barn was also built to better accommodate the Kanagy family in earning a living."² Alvin's ministry gifts were well received by the congregation. When he transferred to the Weavers congregation as a full time pastor in 1969 the congregation had 30 members.

The Roy Good family was living in the Job Mission home during that time and was asked by Central District to take the pastoral assignment at Lambert. Roy and his family were musically inclined with his ministry being a continuing blessing to the congregation until 1982. In 1977, Pastor Roy made a suggestion to Bishop Blosser, that initiative to provide local leadership be considered. Glendon along with Phil Kanagy, the son of Alvin Kanagy,

who was in a pastoral assignment with the Lanesville congregation located north of Harman, helped Glendon with a series of meetings to guide the congregation in choosing natives of West Virginia as new leaders. Boyd Wyatt was chosen as being qualified as a pastor and Richard White as deacon. They were both ordained in 1977 and have continued until the present with the exception of Richard White who deceased in 2009.

When Roy Good and his family terminated his pastoral assignment in 1982 and moved to Virginia these two men took serious their responsibilities as leaders for the congregation. Richard as deacon lived on the Lambert road only a mile from the church. His wife Betty was from the Lambert family that had longevity in the history of the congregation. Pastor Boyd did not grow up in the congregation having served for a time in the armed forces. Even though his mother lived quite some distance from the church at Belington, a small town west of Elkins, West Virginia, she was a devout member of the congregation and a major influence in Boyd and his wife Shirley and their family coming to Lambert.

Boyd has served since 1982 as the solo pastor for the congregation. His style is somewhat informal but he has held the respect of the congregation for the past thirty-three years. As a former bishop of the congregation and with an acquaintance with Boyd for over 40 years, he has given me many invitations to serve his congregation with sermons in weekend series and Sunday morning pulpit opportunities. My sermon records give a count of sixty-one sermons. His love for straight forward biblical messages has given me much fulfillment in being able to minister to the congregation.

The intimacy of the congregation is outstanding in relation to being a Sunday morning visitor. The warmth of an Appalachian

² Glendon L. Blosser, "Fifty Year History of Central District", (unpublished by author, 2013) p.17

handshake or hug gives a strong feeling of appreciation for the two hour drive to be present. Occasionally after the Sunday morning service the women would have a meal ready in the basement with fried chicken and when in season an option with fresh ramps gathered from the mountains.

Robert Wenger was appointed by Central District as Overseer for the Lambert church in 2009 to replace Paul Kratz. Having lived with his family in the Harman, West Virginia area for nine years as pastor of the Riverside congregation, he had a good feel for small mountain churches. He has served well as the assigned Overseer of the Lambert congregation.

In March of 2014, Robert reported to the Central District Council that he received a signed letter “from the congregation and leaders stating their intent to withdraw from MCUSA, VMC and Central District.”³ Robert explained that the pastor along with the majority of the membership signed the letter because they do not feel that Virginia Conference and the District is doing enough to take a restrained approach regarding the movement of the homosexuality issue. They would feel that scripture is clear in forbidding its practice for persons wanting to be followers of the Mennonite faith. After due process the Central District Council took action, “with deep sadness that we honor the decision of Lambert Community Church (formerly Lambert Mennonite Church) to withdraw from MCUSA, Virginia Mennonite Conference and Central District. We look forward to ways that we might still continue to worship and serve together in the future.”⁴

Their request to be known as a church without any denominational ties is rather a bold move after having a history of over one

hundred years as being supported and engaged with Mennonite connections. Besides being located in a community with a population decline and having limited resources for outreach and nurture, the future of the congregation may be in question.

³ March 2014 Minutes of Central District Council, (Unpublished Central District files, 2014) p. 2

⁴ Ibid, p.2



Ray Emswiler (far left) taught at the Dale Enterprise School from 1933-1941. This Rockingham County public school was located just west of the Weavers Mennonite Church along Route 33 and many children who attended the school also attended Weavers Church. This is Ray Emswiler's class from 1940-41.

In a forthcoming history book about the Weavers Mennonite Church, all the children in the photo are identified. The Editor is writing a history book about Weavers, and is hoping to finish the book by the end of 2015.

Photo from Byard (Doc) Deputy

Clarification:

In the previous issue of *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*, Volume 23, No. 1, Winter, 2015, page 7, the Editor should have written that Elizabeth Grove, Justus Heatwole, and Annie Heatwole were the children of Bishop Lewis J. Heatwole. Virginia Grove Weaver was the daughter of Elizabeth Grove.

You can find the photos of Lambert Mennonite Church in this issue and the photos of Park School at mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net. Search in the "James Rush Photos" album for the Park School photos and in the "Mennonite Meetinghouses" album for photos of Lambert Mennonite Church. A search by name in the search box on <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mennonitearchivesofvirginia/> will yield the same results.



Heidi Good (left) married Daniel Yoder (middle), December 29, 2014, at the Calvary Mennonite Fellowship, Mt. Clinton, Virginia. Both Good and Yoder are members of the Biblical Mennonite Alliance. Daniel Yoder, from Westcliffe, Colorado, is the Editor's (right) nephew. Heidi Good, daughter of Frank and Anna Good from Mole Hill, is a sixth generation descendant of Christian Good (1842-1916), the Virginia Mennonite who during the American Civil War wouldn't shoot at the enemy. When ordered to shoot Union troops, Christian Good responded, "they're people, we don't shoot people."

Park School

by James Rush

An elementary school opened in 1918 for Eastern Mennonite School's faculty and staff children. One year after EMS's first year at Assembly Park a school was needed for their children—and children from the neighborhood of Assembly Park would also be allowed to attend. A wooden building was moved from south of the large white Park Hotel building to the western edge of Park Woods and school opened for 30 pupils the fall of 1918 – half being Mennonite. The following year 48 students enrolled in this two room school. The first few years EMS supplied teachers and paid for expenses but in 1921 Rockingham County assumed responsibility for employing and paying teachers acceptable to the Mennonite community.

By 1929 overcrowding required additional classrooms. Local residents purchased a 1 ½ acre lot just southwest of Park Woods and the Rockingham County School Board paid for the construction of a three roomed brick building which opened January 1930. Park School served as a training ground for many student teachers of EMS/EMC. In 1964 Park School allowed the Ewell children, an African American family, who had recently moved to Park View to attend – most likely the first public school in Rockingham/Harrisonburg to do so. Park School closed

the spring of 1967 and Park View students went to larger consolidated county schools which some parents had been pushing for. EMHS purchased the building for holding Art and Industrial classes in it.



These two photos show Park School, Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1925. Teacher Abraham W. Hershberger (1875-1942), pictured center, right photo, moved to Virginia in 1920 to teach at Eastern Mennonite School. In 1923 he married Lessie Wenger (1890-1972). Abraham W. Hershberger was an ordained minister and served for seventeen years at the Zion Hill Mennonite Church. He and his second wife Lena Wenger Hershberger are buried at Weavers Mennonite Church.

Photos from James Rush collection





Lambert Mennonite Church was part of Virginia Mennonite Conference from 1913-2014. The church is located in Wymer, West Virginia. Photo from April 15, 2013, taken by the Editor.

The *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian* is published quarterly by the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians, established in 1993.

Officers of the Historians:

Chair, Jim Hershberger

Treasurer, Sheldon "Pete" Burkholder

Secretary, James Rush

Lois Bowman

Gerald R. Brunk

Elwood E. Yoder, Editor

Forthcoming *Historian* Topics in 2015:

- What congregations should include in the Archives
- George Brunk II's great-grandsons write essays about his life
- Songs used in the Brunk revival tent meetings

If you have an idea for an article or picture for the *Historian*, contact the Editor at elyoder@gmail.com.

Past issues of the *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian* can be found in PDF format at http://mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net/Shenandoah_Historian.html

On the cover is a photo of Lambert Mennonite Church taken by Elwood E. Yoder, in 2013.

An annual individual membership fee for the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians is \$10.00 per year, which includes a subscription to the *Historian*. Additional family memberships are \$5 each. Send membership fees or inquiries to James Rush, e-mail jameslrush@comcast.net, phone 540-434-0792, or U.S. mail 780 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 22802

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