

Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

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

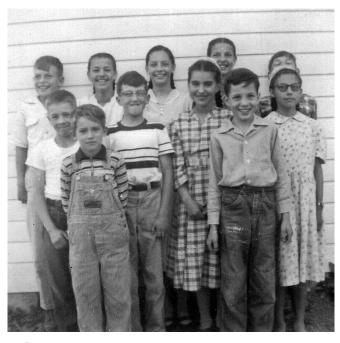
Mt. Carmel Parochial School, Harrisonburg, Va., 1943-1957

The Shenandoah Mennonite Historians are pleased to present John L. Ruth's documentary film *Is There a Lesson?*, at Harrisonburg Mennonite Church, October 21, 7:00 PM. We have moved the showing of Ruth's film to HMC from the previously announced location. See page two for more details.

Our Shenandoah Mennonite Historians Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, November 10, 9:00 AM, at the Eastern Mennonite High School Auditorium, Harrisonburg. After a brief business meeting, we will hear from Darvin L. Martin, historian, lecturer, scientist, and author. Read more details about Darvin Martin on page two.

Paul Kratz has written an important article on the history of Mt. Carmel Parochial School, a Mennonite school in Harrisonburg that operated 1943-1957. Paul has worked diligently in recent years to research and write this relatively unknown story of Mennonites in Virginia. We publish this article to ensure that it does not get lost for future generations.

Weavers Mennonite Church (above), where Warren and Mary Kratz, long-term members of the Middle District of the Virginia Conference, and founders of Mt. Carmel Parochial School, often attended.



IN THIS ISSUE:

- John Ruth Presentation in Harrisonburg
- Darvin Martin Lecture and Annual Meeting of Historians
- Voices of Conscience exhibit at EMU
- Engaging a Vision: A Brief Account of Mt. Carmel Parochial School 1943-1957, by Paul Kratz

Mt. Carmel Parochial School students, 1955-56 (above). Identified are Harold Heatwole, Helen Showalter, Jewel Harman, Reba Showalter, Winfred Miller, Alma Coffman, and Mary Shaffer.

Photo by Jewel Harman Shank, Paul Kratz collection

John L. Ruth Video Presentation October 21, 2018 Harrisonburg Mennonite Church 7:00 PM

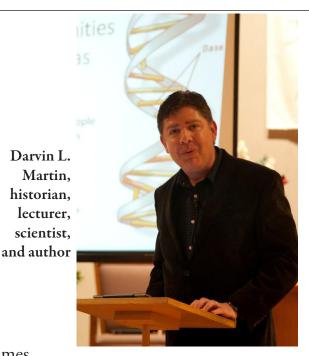
This fall a ninety minute documentary entitled "Is There a Lesson? Forty-five Years with John Ruth and TourMagination," will be introduced in a dozen American Mennonite communities. Locally it will be premiered by the Shenandoah Mennonite Historians on October 21, 2018, 7:00 p.m., in the Harrisonburg Mennonite Church sanctuary, 1552 South High Street, Harrisonburg. Woven by John and Jay Ruth from four decades on the trail of Anabaptist history and life on four continents, the colorful program moves from still photography of the 1960s through film footage to video from John's last of over sixty tours. Interpreting its colorful story by the twinned motifs of sword and song, the video allows former travelers to review the experience, while sharing it with those who were never able to do so. Admission is free. though an offering will be received.

Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians Lecture & Annual Meeting Saturday, November 10, 2018 9:00 AM, EMHS Auditorium 801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg All are welcome, free of charge

Darvin L. Martin began to construct his own family tree by the age of ten, and at that time could not have even dreamed about the future ways science would enable us to

connect everyone into a world family tree. Always passionate about history, particularly local history not found in common textbooks, Martin blended a career of scientific research with the pursuit of his own ancestry, seeking to determine the cultural, religious and societal norms that shaped the choices of his forebears. Martin has degrees in both agriculture and analytical chemistry, a combination which oriented his interests towards scientific instrumentation, eventually leading him to the Swiss homeland of his ancestors. For the last decade Martin has worked in product management and technical sales for two separate Swiss companies focused in the agricultural, environmental and pharmaceutical industries. He has also chaired the Lancaster Family History Conference since 2003.

Martin first embraced the idea of using DNA to trace family history while reading Brian Sykes' book, The Seven Daughters of Eve, in 2002. During his second year of chairing the Lancaster Family History Conference, Martin invited noted genealogist Megan Smolenyak to describe the upcoming world of DNA analysis and how this applies to family history. Soon after, Martin began his own epic DNA journey. Eventually the time would appear when anyone could quickly, with little cost, find a genetic connection to anyone else on the planet. That time has now descended upon us as more and more people have decided to look within their own bodies to expand their genealogies beyond the standard paper trail. Martin initiated a DNA pilot project through the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society in October 2010, which has currently tested over 300 individuals and is providing the basis for specifically constructing family lineages from before the time of



surnames.

The project was renamed "Mennonite and Amish Immigrants to Pennsylvania" in order to channel interest in these particular families, but it is open to anyone no matter what connection they have to these families.

Martin will outline some of the findings from this project, as well as looking into the variation of DNA found within descendants of Mennonite families who settled in the Shenandoah Valley and other early American pioneers, and those who lived here even earlier—the Native Americans. Martin will describe which tests to take (depending on your interest), how to get tested, and how to interpret results.

Voices of Conscience is a traveling exhibit focused on men and women who resisted U.S. involvement in World War I. On loan from the Kaufman Museum in Newton, Kansas, Voices of Conscience is on display in the Eastern Mennonite University Hartzler Library, October 1-November 17, during regular library hours. It's been a hundred years since WWI, and you are encouraged to visit this exhibit at EMU and consider the meaning of the Great War for today.

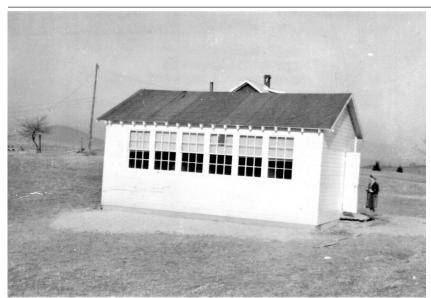
Engaging a Vision: A Brief Account of Mt. Carmel Parochial School 1943-1957

by Paul Kratz

Strange as it may seem Mt. Carmel Parochial School¹ had only a fourteen-year life, but it impacted several hundred students. The school building was located on a hill south of Harrisonburg on what is now Pear Street, on Warren and Mary Kratz's farm. Mary had taught at Eastern Mennonite School and Maryland before marriage. Then both she and Warren spent the early years of their married lives teaching in public schools in West Virginia. Evangelism was a major focus in those settings. This was directly in line with the philosophy of EMS at that time.

Another emphasis was the establishment of Christian day schools. Mary's father, Amos D. Wenger, was a primary proponent of both. In his travels throughout the Mennonite Church as a young man, he became aware that thousands of young folks were lost to the Mennonite Church because little was done to encourage them spiritually or to attract them to church membership. Other denominations were much more aggressive in drawing young folks, and as a result many Mennonite youth were drawn away. A.D. Wenger developed a passion to stem the tide. This insight stimulated him to reach out to the youth in whatever ways he could. One of those ways was to encourage Christian education with an Anabaptist perspective. Thus he was interested in the establishment of Goshen College and served on its Board of Directors (1901-1915).

^{1.} Parochial school – a private school supported by a religious group and charging tuition. It is interesting that "Parochial" was not included in most Mennonite school names. There is no extant explanation as to why it was used in this case.



Mt. Carmel Parochial School, 1944, Harrisonburg, Va. Paul Kratz collection

He was asked to serve as president of Hesston College—which he declined. He was involved in the establishment of Eastern Mennonite School from its earliest beginnings and served as its president from 1922 until his death in 1934.2

But he was also a proponent of elementary schools. He wrote in the Gospel Herald in 1930:

We waited nearly one hundred years too long to begin, or rather we should have kept our own schools when we had them. One hundred years ago the Mennonite Church educated her own children. There is one brother, living yet who, ninety years ago, attended a Mennonite Church School that was held in one of our church-houses. He says, "The Mennonites should have always kept their own schools like some others did."3

Another time Amos D. Wenger wrote an article in the Gospel Herald, which was reprinted in the Christian Monitor. In that article he said:

Those who believe the Bible and oppose evolution are regarded as ignorant by many educators and we need able Christian men and women not only to overthrow their false arguments but to write better textbooks, especially for our own schools, for evolution is now found in nearly all school books where it is possible to have it.

If our children will be educated anyway by compulsion, and to some extent erroneously if we do not educate them, let us arise to this important task before it is too late. Russia is now trying to stamp out every vestige of

the Christian religion as well as of every other religion and make atheism the only faith of 150,000,000 souls. America seems headed the same way. Let us all do our bit as Christians to offset such a reign of almost unthinkable terror in our own land."4

His writings and the writings of others convinced Mennonites in many areas to establish Christian day schools. A. D. Wenger must have also been convincing even in his own family, because all seven of his children, who lived to adulthood, became teachers in public schools, private schools, and schools overseas. Three of his children were involved in starting Christian day schools on their farms— Amos, near Fentress (now Chesapeake), Virginia; Paul, in Augusta County, Virginia; and Mary, in Rockingham County, Virginia.

Warren and Mary Kratz moved from West Virginia in 1940, with the hope that their children could get a better education in the

^{2.} John C. Wenger and Mary W. Kratz, A. D. Wenger: Faithful Minister of Christ (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Park View Press, 1961),

pp. 11, 27, 34).
3. A. D. Wenger, "The School Problem," *Gospel Herald*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3 (April 17, 1930), p. 75.
4. A. D. Wenger, "Four Requirements for a Successful Church School," *Christian Monitor*, (August 30, 1930), pp. 241-242.

Shenandoah Valley. However, World War II had begun, and the war spirit was running high—especially in the larger public schools. There were smaller public schools where Mennonite teachers moderated that spirit. One example was Rushville, where Ruth Garber [who later married Amos Erb] held forth. But in most public schools the teachers supported the United States' involvement in the war, idolized warriors, taught patriotic songs, promoted buying war bonds, and fostered the war spirit in whatever ways they could. Children from Mennonite homes were often hassled by other students, who with distain called them "CO's" (conscientious objectors) and added other distasteful slanders. One example of mistreatment was Dwight Heatwole, who was grabbed by some of his classmates, and because he had admitted that he was a conscientious objector, they put him down in a posthole headfirst. Naturally, he was unable to get himself out and thought he was about to die before some others came and rescued him.

According to the Middle District Council Minutes, on April 23, 1943, Warren appealed to the Council for permission to begin a Christian day school on the Kratz farm. The request was granted, and Warren proceeded to build a one-room school building just across the fields south of the Pleasant Hill Elementary School. There was no transfer of land. Warren is remembered to have made a comment to the effect that this building might be used only temporarily as a school building, and if something more substantial would be built somewhere else, he just might use this building for a shop!

The building had no indoor plumbing. There were two outhouses—one for the girls

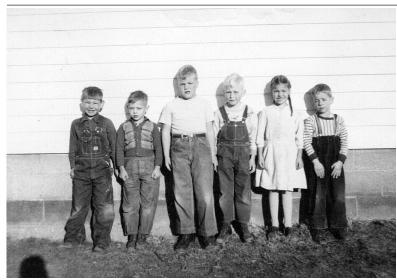


Mt. Carmel Seventh Grade Graduates Helen Showalter and Jewel Harman, 1955-56 Paul Kratz collection

and one for the boys. An outside faucet at the corner of the building supplied well water for drinking and washing hands.

But school sessions actually began in the fall of 1943, before the school building was finished. For some weeks, classes were held in the Kratz home. That first year, Warren taught the Bible classes and Mary taught all the other subjects from grade 1 through 7. Warren continued constructing the school building as he had time. After the building was completed, Mary taught all the classes.

Each morning, when devotions were finished, Mary would have each grade come forward in turn and sit around a table to work together on the various subjects such as reading, writing, arithmetic, history, or geography. At designated times she read stories for the benefit of all the students. One series, well remembered, was the "Susie books," by J.



Mt Carmel students lower grade; Larry Showalter, Harold Kephart, Carl Harman, Conrad Brunk, Lois Lambert, and Winfred Miller

Paul Kratz collection

C. Brumfield. This series boldly called children to faith in Jesus. She also selected stories from "*Uncle Arthur's*" series.

Singing was a vital part of each morning's devotional time. In addition to well-known hymns, songs were sung like "Never Say Fail," "Nellie Gray," "The Handwriting on the Wall," "When You and I Were Young Maggie," "We Are Climbing Learning's Hill," and "Autumn" which included verses written by Mary. One other song, written by F. M. Lehman, began with:

"There's a very noxious weed, fed by appetite and greed, that is chewed by worms and goats and foolish man....

It is not enough to frown, we must break this evil down..."

Mary enjoyed teaching along with homemaking. She often sang as she worked at home. One song she sang occasionally related to teaching. It may have been her own version of a well-known song in those days. The lines went like this: Oh, dear, what can the matter be? Dear, dear, what can the matter be? Oh, dear, what can the matter be?

Parents don't visit the school!

Scripture memorization was actively promoted. Some remember the chart on the wall where a star was placed after the name of each student who had successfully memorized a verse.

Church leaders were invited to come and speak to the children from time to time. These included persons like Bishop Noah Mack, Bishop Daniel Lehman, C. F. Yake, Ross Metzler, James and

Rowena Lark, Lloyd, Sr. and Sara Weaver, Mrs. M. T. Brackbill, and many others.

Former students remember having fun on the swings and seesaws, playing games like Annie over and prisoner's base, jumping rope in the middle of the dirt road that ran by the school, playing soft ball on the school lot, and sledding on the slopes adjacent to the school grounds (off limits when there was no snow).

Over the years, Ira Miller, Educational Teacher Training Instructor, brought students from Eastern Mennonite College to observe how teaching could be done in a one-room setting. Martha Kauffman Coffman Weaver remembers visiting the school as a student, not suspecting that one day she would actually teach there!

Early on, a board was chosen to give direction to the school. The first members were John W. Harman, president; Ira Huber, secretary; and Amos Coffman, treasurer. John Harman served as president for the first eight years, followed by James Eshleman, and later M. J. Heatwole. Ira Huber served as secretary for three years, and was followed by Joseph D. Heatwole, Oliver Keener, Willis J. Miller, and James Eshleman. Amos Coffman was Treasurer for six years, followed by Frank Harman, Hubert Showalter, and Joseph Heatwole.⁵

Before the second year was over, Mary was asked to summarize her experience. With Warren's help, she wrote:

Though our school has been in operation less than two years, we are grateful for the results already evident. The change we can see in children formerly under the influence of the atmosphere of state-controlled schools is very gratifying. Nearly all who have reached the age of accountability have since accepted Christ as their Saviour. Now these babes in Christ can be shepherded in the schoolroom. It would be painful indeed to see them go back again under their former influences. The children themselves take a greater interest in school, do better work, and are making more progress in Bible study, character building, and spiritual growth. Thank God for this movement of "Back to church-controlled schools."6

The enrollment the first year was 12. "Twenty-three pupils were enrolled in 1945."⁷ It increased to 27 by the 1948-49 school year, at which time a second room was added to the building. Some of the carpenters who assisted Warren in constructing the second classroom, plus two cloak rooms, were Willis Miller, Hubert Showalter, and the King brothers,

Harold and Sanford.

When the addition was finished, Mrs. Grace Bear became the second teacher. She taught along with Mary Kratz for two years through the 1950-51 school year. Mary was designated as principal for those years. Then, because her aging mother



Martha K. Weaver, Mt. Carmel teacher, about 1955 Paul Kratz collection

needed care, Mary asked to be released from teaching. Martha Kauffman then became principal and taught with Elda Edgin (1951-52) and with Mabel Horst (1952-1953).

Martha remembers that each teacher received a salary of \$125 per month, but was issued a bonus gift of \$200 at the end of each year. Copies of Frank Harman's financial records as treasurer, preserved in Amos Coffman's files, proves this to be the case. They also reveal that not all the patrons were able to pay the full amount of tuition, and every once in a while, Frank would donate a hundred dollars or more to fill in the gaps!8

In the next two years the enrollment began to decrease. Mabel Horst was the only teacher. After Mary Kratz's mother passed away, Mary returned and taught with Mabel Horst for the 1955-56 school year. By that time the

^{5.} J. Lester Brubaker, History of Elementary School Movement, (A dissertation presented to the faculty of the School of Education of the University of Virginia in the candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Education), June, 1960, pp. 200-201.
6. Paul Graybill, editor, *Christian Day Schools for Mennonite Youth*—Promotional Manual for Elementary and High Schools (Lancaster,

Pennsylvania: Lancaster Conference Schools, Inc., 1945), p. 113.
7. Harry Anthony Brunk, *History of Mennonites in Virginia*, 1900-1960, Volume II (Verona, Virginia: McClure Printing Company,

^{8.} Information provided by Martha Kauffman Coffman Weaver who married Amos Coffman in 1988, after his first wife, Naomi, died. Martha taught two of Amos' children at Mt. Carmel Parochial School during 1951-53 school terms. After Amos' death in 1991, she married David M. Weaver, who died in 2012.



Mt. Carmel Children, 1943-44, with teacher Mary Kratz, standing in back. Left row: Hannah Propst, Joanne Kratz. Middle row: Merlin Harman, Ella Coffman, Doris Propst, Ruth Smucker. Right row: Janet Showalter, Irvin Coffman, Eula Propst, Shirley Harman, and Paul Smucker. Photo by Daniel M. Glick, from Paul Kratz collection.

enrollment was down to 26 students. The final year (1956-57), Mary taught all the grades (1-7) alone. When that school year was finished the Middle District Mission Board asked Warren and Mary to return to West Virginia, where Warren was to serve as pastor of a couple of congregations. They answered the call, and within a month had moved to Job, West Virginia, where they served until Warren's death in 1968.

With the mission board's invitation for Warren and Mary to move to West Virginia, their presence in the community left a gap that was unfilled. Most of the children of the initial patrons who shared the vision for the school had finished elementary education, and there was insufficient initiative to maintain it in the absence of the Kratzes.

But there were other dynamics, which probably influenced its closing. For example, World War II was over, and the war fever had subsided. Mennonite children felt more comfortable in public schools again.

Then too, there was a move to consolidate the many small schools scattered throughout the county. However, not all of these schools were closed at the same time. There were those that remained for a while—some with Mennonite teachers. Park School, in Park View, with teachers like Elsie Martin, and Dale Enterprise, with Harold Eshleman, remained attractive alternatives for children from Mennonite families in those

communities.

But even before there was any hint of Mount Carmel closing, several patrons caught the vision of establishing a Christian day school four miles west ("as the crow flies"), on what is now Bank Church Road, right beside the Bank Mennonite meetinghouse. Quite a number of Mennonite children had attended the Rushville (public) School in that community, one mile south of the church, but the county school board had begun the process of closing it with the intent of busing children to newer and larger facilities. So the Mennonites in that area welcomed the idea of establishing a Christian day school. A request was submitted to the Middle District Council and a committee was appointed to consider this possibility. Warren Kratz is named in the January 8, 1949 Middle District Council Minutes as the one who brought the proposed constitution for the new school to the council. It passed with several amendments. Land was

9. Judy Yoder, Vera's Journey (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Vision Publishers, 2009), p. 549.

purchased and a brick building was erected. From that point the Bank School was basically under the general control of the Middle District Council until Southeastern Mennonite Conference withdrew from Virginia Mennonite Conference in 1972. At that point grades 9-12 were added and it was renamed: "Berea Christian School." 10

Soon after the Mt. Carmel School closed, much of the furniture, including the students' desks, and the playground equipment, such as the swings, were donated to the Bank School.

By 1988, the school building next to the Bank Church meetinghouse had become inadequate, so a new building was erected at 1351 Garber's Road and retained the name: "Berea Christian School." It is located near the northeastern corner of what once was the Jonas Blosser farm, on a piece of land owned, at that time, by Martha E. Showalter (Mrs. Hubert).¹¹ It was also next to a plot where Frank Harman had a small quarry, from which he excavated limestone for two houses. The first was smaller and was built just across the road (now Erickson Avenue). As the family grew he built a larger one on Rawley Pike (Route 33 West). The quarry also provided stone for the Weavers Mennonite meetinghouse.

Interestingly, the new Berea Christian School is exactly one mile from where the Mt. Carmel school had been located.



Mt. Carmel children, 1950-51, with teachers Mrs. Grace Baer (left) and Mrs. Mary Kratz.

Paul Kratz collection

Today Berea has around 140 students with 12 full-time staff plus a number of part-time persons.

Since the Mt. Carmel school building had been built on Kratz property, and was essentially owned by the Kratzes, there was no need for the appointed board to dispose of it.

For the following five decades the building was used as a residence by numerous persons, including Mary Kratz herself, who spent her last years there (1968 to 1976). After her death, the school building and grounds were deeded over to William Charlton, who had grown up in the Kratz home. He and his family lived in it for several years. Eventually, Dan W. Brubaker purchased the property, and on October 24, 2015, the building was demolished.

Though Warren never used the temporary chool building for a shop, it could be

school building for a shop, it could be
10. Historical Committee: Marlin Ebersole; Lewis Good; Stanley G. Shank, Secretary; Lloyd S. Horst, Chairman, *Leaders and Institutions of the Southeastern Mennonite Conference*, Volume I (a paperback book with no printer indentified. No date. No page numbers.)
11. Historical Committee: David Heatwole; Ornan Huber; Lloyd Horst, Chairman; Stanley Shank, Secretary, *Leaders and Institutions of the Southeastern Mennonite Conference*, Volume II, 1991 (paperback book with no printer identified. No page numbers.)



Bank School, next to Bank Mennonite Church, Dayton, Va., 2018. Photo by Evelyn Kratz

concluded that Warren and Mary Kratz's vision for a Christian Day School was engaged in the field beside their house and is still being engaged 75 years later—just a mile from where it began!

Documents revealing the school's mission:

MOUNT CARMEL MENNONITE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

Harrisonburg, Virginia

PURPOSE OF THE SCHOOL

- 1. To bring glory to God.
- 2. To gain a greater knowledge of God Himself.
- 3. To gain a greater knowledge and appreciation for God's Word (stories, verses, truths, doctrines, promises, etc.
- 4. To learn reverence for God and His house.
 - 5. To learn respect for:
 - a. Church leaders (conference rules)
 - b. Parents and teachers,
 - c. Old folks,
 - d. Smaller children,
 - e. Each other better.
- 12. Documents supplied by Martha Kauffman Coffman Weaver.

- 6. To learn ways of practical Christian living:
- a. Learn to be friends to everybody.
- b. Make wrongs right—confess your faults one to another.
- c. Learn to obey without being forced to.
 - d. Be considerate to others.
- e. Non-resistance in speech and conduct.
- f. Non-conformity in speech, conduct and dress.
 - g. Speak and act truthfully.
 - h. Humility of heart and

conduct.

- 7. To prepare for future usefulness.
 - a. Learn to pray in public.
- b. Learn to talk about Jesus before others.
 - c. Learn why we keep the ordinances.
- d. Learn the Bible Doctrines to fortify us against Satan.
 - e. Learn to be soul winners.
- f. Learn obedience to God, the church, parents, teachers.¹²

RULES OF DISCIPLINE

Whereas we realize disrespect for authority in home, school, church and government is an outstanding evil of the day and sign of the last times, we require the following of all pupils, parents, and teachers who wish to become part of our school:

PUPILS:

a. We require all pupils to give due respect to the authority of school and teacher.

- b. All language on the school ground shall be truthful, free from slang, gossip, and profanity (Titus 2:8).
- c. Children shall leave the school ground immediately upon dismissal, or orders from teacher or parents.
- d. Clothing of both boys and girls shall be modest, simple, and in line with Bible teaching. Girls are required to wear either full length stockings or go barefooted.

PARENTS:

No child shall be permitted to attend this school unless both parents are in sympathy with the purpose, rules, and ideals of this school and give their signatures accordingly.

TEACHERS:

- a. No teacher shall be employed who is not in sympathy with the rules and discipline of the Virginia Mennonite Conference.
- b. The teacher is expected to cooperate with parents in training and discipline of pupils using firm but Christian discipline at all times and is authorized to suspend if necessary, but if further measures are necessary to ask the assistance of the Board.
- c. The undersigned hereby give assent to the foregoing purposes, rules and discipline of the school and pledge to cooperate with the Board and Teacher in all matters for the highest welfare.





Mt. Carmel School building, 2015, before it was demolished. Photo by Leanna Showalter Rhodes



Mt. Carmel students, 1945-46.

Row 4: Joanne Kratz, Ella Coffman, Doris Propst, Roy Driver, Merlin Harman, Irvin Coffman, David Garber.

Row 3: Rosalie Harman, Ruby Kratz, Rhoda Garber, Hannah Driver, Hannah Propst, Ernest Harman.

Row 2: Ruth Driver, Paul Kratz, Milton Coffman, Ralph Harman, Irene Propst, Phoebe Garber.

Row 1: Mildred Huber, Lois Garber, Clara Huber, Margaret Huber. Paul Kratz collection



Berea Christian School, 1350 Garbers Church Rd., Harrisonburg, Va., is a K-12 school that is operated by Southeastern Mennonite Conference, and was founded in 1988. Photo by Evelyn Kratz

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

Officers of the Historians: Chair, James L Hershberger Treasurer, Norman Wenger Secretary, James Rush Lois Bowman Gerald R. Brunk Elwood E. Yoder, Editor

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Shenandoah Mennonite Historian issues from 2011-2018 can be found at mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net. This site includes a link to over 1,350 photos related to Mennonites in Virginia, provides a way to subscribe to Historian online, and connects readers to the Editor's history blog.

An annual individual membership fee for the Shenandoah Valley
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