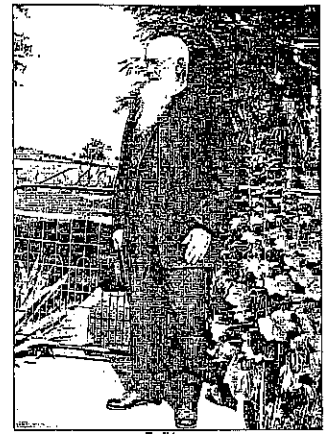


L. J. HEATWOLE

A Granddaughter's View



Shenandoah Mennonite Historian



Vol. 14 No. 4 Quarterly Publication of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians Autumn 2007

OF THE CIVIL WAR AND THE MAKING OF BOOKS!

Was it Solomon who said, "Of the making of books there is no end?" (Oh, if only his gem of a library would have been saved!)

These days we may alter that statement slightly. Of the making of Civil War books there is no end! No event in American history stirs up as many new books as the Civil War. (I believe it is said that more books have been written about Abraham Lincoln than any other U. S. president.)

No, this issue does not primarily deal with Civil War battles. Enough already about major and minor battles and skirmishes, and significant and insignificant military leaders! The two books reviewed in this issue deal largely with civilians—what they thought about involvement in the war, what they experienced by way of soldiers helping themselves to foodstuffs owned by civilians.

Norman Wenger, David Rodes and Emmert Bittinger have produced a series of books that are real eye-openers to the Virginia experience. Vol. IV has now appeared and we provide a few glimpses. The other book *Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War* covers for the first time in a major way the experience of people of conscience—at

least Mennonite and Amish people, and their involvement or lack of it with regard to the most devastating war in American history.

And to provide a respite from war and to think about a totally different topic, we look at Virginia's famous Lewis J. Heatwole and his great hesitancy to go through the lot to become minister. How different Rockingham County and Virginia Mennonite history would read, had L. J. refused to go through the lot!

THIS ISSUE

Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War – a review

"The poignant tragedy of the American Civil War as experienced by Mennonites and Amish"

Through the Lot Again--Become a Minister Perhaps or Refuse to Go Through It?

What was really the Lord's Will? "To be or not to be" a Preacher?

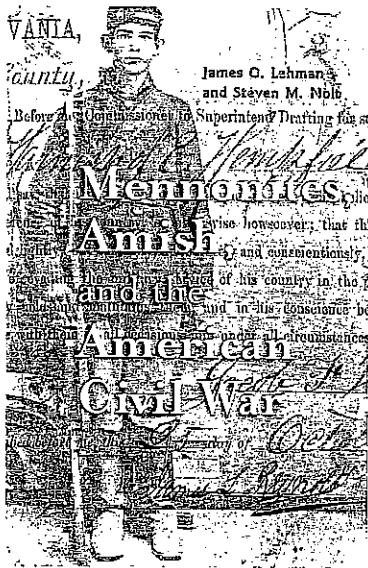
Unionists and the Civil War Experience in the Shenandoah Valley, Vol. IV – a review

Including two testimonies from Broadway Virginia men who became preachers. It's very clear on which side their support lay.

Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War,

James O. Lehman and Steven M. Nolt

The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007.
Illustrated, documented extensively, indexed,
376 pages, \$39.95.



Reviewed by Al Keim, Emeritus Professor of History, EMU.

“In 1864 (Old) Mennonite Christina Herr of Medina County, Ohio, wrote her cousin ‘the sorrowful news’ that her three oldest brothers went to war.’ It was very hard to see them go, she said, ‘but it cannot be helped.’ Someone must go, she decided, drawing on popular apprehensions, ‘or else we must lose our country.’ Worse yet, we might even ‘be treated like the slaves are.’”

“In the same letter her father, John Herr, poured out his own sorrow. ‘I little thought that wee was raising children to goo to war . . . But it realy now is so and I am often overcome

that I can’t keep back the tears when I think of the thousands which have already gone to an untimely grave.’ His wife Barbara ‘wept bitterly day and night,’ but ‘tries to be resigned to [God’s] will.’”

In these comments the authors capture the poignant tragedy of the American Civil War as experienced by Mennonites and Amish. It was a brutal war, with 620,000 dead and over a million maimed and wounded. The first modern war, the Civil War forced Mennonites and Amish to face the dilemma of being both citizens of a nation-state and nonresistant Christians of a pacifist church.

For Mennonites and Amish it was only the first of a century and a half of American wars which forced them to choose between their faith and the demands of the nation-state. By highlighting the first response of Mennonites and Amish to this wrenchingly existential dilemma, this book becomes a powerful witness to faith under test.

Not only did the Civil War illustrate the dilemma for pacifist Christians who are also citizens. The erratic response of Mennonites and Amish to the war was not only because it was a new conflicted dilemma, but also because there was no well-developed theological framework where the issues could be tested.

What was in place, however, was a powerful people-hood rooted in a church versus world dichotomy. “Die Stille im Lande” mentality gave some shape to the Mennonite and Amish response to the war.

It is important to remember that in the other big war in American history, World War II, only

about half of all drafted Mennonites opted for conscientious objection. While the theological framework for non-participation in nation-state wars was much more pervasive in the WWII era, "Die Stille im Lande" awareness had become less pervasive. Not so of course for the WWII era Old Order Amish, whose draftees chose conscientious objector status in the 90% range. The Old Orders still had a pervasive "Stille im Lande" awareness. Nationalism had not yet insinuated a replacement for faith identity.

Needless to say, I found this book fascinating. It is an easy read, with lots of arresting stories of faith under test. Its amazingly thorough research, which comes through on every page, makes the book convincing. After reading the book I was convinced I had just acquired an accurate understanding of my forbears response to the Civil War.

For Shenandoah Valley Mennonites, who are steeped in their stories of life in the Confederacy, it is interesting to compare their direct experience of being occupied by both the armies of the Confederacy and the Union, with that of their fellow believers in Pennsylvania and the Midwest. While most Mennonites in Virginia were Unionists, the pull of loyalty to the Confederacy (rooted partially in a deep-seated sense of obedience to state authority) was also conditioned by the hostility of their neighbors to anyone dissenting from loyalty to the Confederate state. It is worth noting that actually the response to the war by Virginia Mennonites was not much different from that of Mennonites in the North.

The book begins with a fascinating local story. In November of 1860 David Hartman, living just west of Harrisonburg, sent his son Peter to

town to get the local paper, the *Rockingham Register*. The family was eager to hear the outcome of the Presidential election. An older sister read the news aloud to the rest of the family. "The first thing my sister read," Hartman recalled, "was that Lincoln was elected." Hartman remembered that the news "made us all weak," and "made the blood run cold." They were not against Lincoln's election, but sensed that his election was a portent of much violence and suffering to come.

This is not a book that sets out to show the triumph of peacefulness over violence. The Civil War had profound consequences for Mennonite and Amish identity. The authors sum it up well. "A two-Kingdom people in a world of multiple identities, Mennonites and Amish, faced the challenges of faithfulness and relevance, and formulated divergent responses to that tension."

Since the Civil War we Mennonites and Amish have lived in a society where dying for one's country has replaced dying for one's faith. It is a hallmark of democracy, but not unique. It is as old as human history. The cross of Christ stands as the antidote to such a demonic value. Reading this book should help us rekindle the vision of a "peaceable kingdom," where lion and lamb rest together in amicable harmony.

NEWS FLASH !!

The first box of books just arrived at the editor's apartment in Park Village!

THROUGH THE LOT AGAIN— BECOME A MINISTER PERHAPS OR REFUSE TO GO THROUGH IT?

Lewis J. Heatwole's name is well-known in Virginia Mennonite history as the minister and later bishop of the Middle District, who had great influence on the history of the area, because he was such a tremendous writer, correspondent, almanac and weather man. He was the bishop during the break that came when the Old Order Mennonite group was separated from Virginia Mennonite Conference in 1900-01. He loved history, and had he not kept such voluminous diaries and records and written so much, we would be much the poorer in our knowledge of the intricacies and complexities of Virginia Mennonite history.

What is not so well known is that he almost refused to go through the lot in 1887, the time when the lot chose him as minister. If he had done so, the course of Virginia Mennonite history might have a different complexion.

The Virginia Conference archives has tremendous records kept by Heatwole who wrote about church affairs with meticulous detail and all sources mentioned below are found there. So we do some quoting from what L. J. said regarding his willingness to go through the lot, knowing that he might be chosen against his will.¹

Heatwole's remarks in 1887 are all the more interesting in light of his going through the lot twice without being chosen—in 1880 for the ministry and in 1883 for deacon. And also for what he wrote in March 1880 to Emanuel

¹Grace S. Grove, a granddaughter, culled through Heatwole's writings and in 2001 published a 211-page book entitled *L. J. Heatwole: A Granddaughter's View*. This article expands a great deal upon her brief remarks in that volume regarding his ordination.

Suter, the famous potter, who felt he should become a minister. Suter and others like Bishop Jacob Hildebrand of Augusta County (who wrote a supportive letter) were troubled that Suter could not obey his conscience to enter the ministry. The lot had not chosen him and Virginia Mennonites refused to put him into the ministry without the use of the lot.

So what was L. J. saying in 1880 to Suter in his letter?² Suter had apparently written a "treatise" saying the church was in error to hold "exclusively to this method of choosing her ministers" and have this "unalterable rule." Heatwole sympathized with Suter, but he stood with the church's position "What is chance to man is the appointment of God." He pointed out that when a "male" enters Mennonite membership by baptism "he pledges his word and honor . . . that if he be selected as a candidate for the ministry, he must signify his willingness to enter the Lot."

Four months later Heatwole found himself in the lot for the choosing of two ministers, which took place July 25, 1880. The night before, Heatwole had a restless night but he had no one to "confide in or reveal my feeling." Of the eleven men in the lot that Sunday at Weavers Church, L. J. picked up his book last.³ His book did not contain the lot.

In January 1883, from a group of 12 and a service at the Bank Church, L. J. went through the lot for two deacons. The suspense was "most painful" because he felt "very much" he would be chosen. To his relief he wasn't.⁴

On Tuesday, June 14, 1887, once again, Heatwole was one of 12 men nominated to go through the lot for two ministers to be chosen. The following Sunday (the 19th) he submitted a strong plea to the ministers and deacons that he be released as a candidate.

"Since the announcement of my name as a candidate for the ministry I confess to having already passed through a great conflict of mind, and perhaps if the person or persons who

²Lewis J. Heatwole to Emanuel Suter, March 27, 1880

³L. J. Heatwole Diary, July 25, 1880. Joseph F. Heatwole and Abraham B. Wenger were chosen.

⁴Heatwole Diary, Jan. 21, 1883.

presented my name knew how unfit I am for the great responsibility they desire to place upon me they would in all candor recall it from the list. After mature thought I feel impelled to submit for your consideration several reasons for asking at your hands my release from the Candidacy.

Reason 1st I possess no talent for speaking in public and for that reason alone I could never be able to honor the calling of a minister.

Reason 2nd Inasmuch as I have been presented before the Lord once before, for the same position and was rejected, it seems unreasonable that I should be presented before Him a second time.

Reason 3rd Should the Lot unfortunately fall upon me I should of necessity be compelled to break away from the very profession by which I make a living and support my family—viz, Teaching—and Almanac Calculating and Weather Science, which is just beginning to make me some returns for the long years of study I have devoted to these subjects. To make all this sacrifice is with me a very weighty matter though it may appear ever so trivial to others. The great problem with me is: --shall I take the responsibility in my own hands to withdraw from the number, or quietly submit my destiny into the hands of Him who doeth all things well.

Respectfully submitted
Lewis J. Heatwole”

He submitted that request to quite a group of Middle District ordained men: Bishop Samuel Coffman, Ministers Daniel S. Heatwole, A. B. Burkholder, Peter S. Heatwole, Joseph F. Heatwole, Gabriel D. Heatwole, Solomon Beery and Abraham B. Wenger, and Deacons F. A. Rhodes, David E. Rhodes, Simeon Heatwole, Michael Shank, Christ Good and Dan H. Good.⁵

L. J. had also hastily written a letter to his good friend at Elkhart, Indiana, John S. Coffman, a brother of his wife Mollie.⁶ By now J. S. Coffman, a native Virginian, was the first major Mennonite traveling evangelist.

Coffman replied immediately. He tried to comfort Heatwole and told him that at a time like this he should “look up to Him who numbers the hairs of our heads, and without whose notice not a sparrow falls to the ground, and say ‘Father, thy will be done.’” Coffman noted that it takes consecration and submission. “I’m afraid, Brother, you are worrying a little too much” wanting to take matters into your own hands rather than to allow God to order “all the events of your life.” Perhaps your years of teaching and study “have given you such an extended knowledge of human nature . . . as to fit you for this work.” And if you are chosen, “a wonderful field of labor” will open before you to “gather golden sheaves with the highest satisfaction earth can give.” Furthermore, your work as “meteorologist and almanac calculator” would not be a hindrance.

But Heatwole was heavily burdened and could still hardly reconcile himself to the thought of possibly becoming a minister. Right up to the evening before June 26, he had “almost made up his mind to withdraw his name.” At nearly the last moment he resolved “to leave his destiny in the hands of the Lord.” He would see what would happen if he picked up the last book.

He positioned himself at the end of the bench and beside him was Israel Rohrer, Jr. However, Israel went and picked up the last book (which should have been Heatwole’s in the order they sat), leaving L. J. to finally pick up the second last book. In that book was the slip of paper “Dear Brother the Lord has chosen you to preach his holy gospel.”

Interestingly enough, others in the lot included Emanuel Suter, who once again was passed up for the ministry! Immediately after the note was found in L. J.’s book, his father-in-law, Bishop Samuel Coffman, ordained him to the ministry. But Heatwole was crestfallen. He went home from church “in dejected spirits generally” he confided to his diary. But Mollie lovingly encouraged him and promised to stand by his side. L. J. Heatwole ended up being a minister and bishop for a number of decades and was heavily involved in much church work.

J. O. Lehman

⁵L. J. Heatwole, “Church Record Book”

⁶Grove, L. J. Heatwole, reproduced the letter, pp. 122-23.

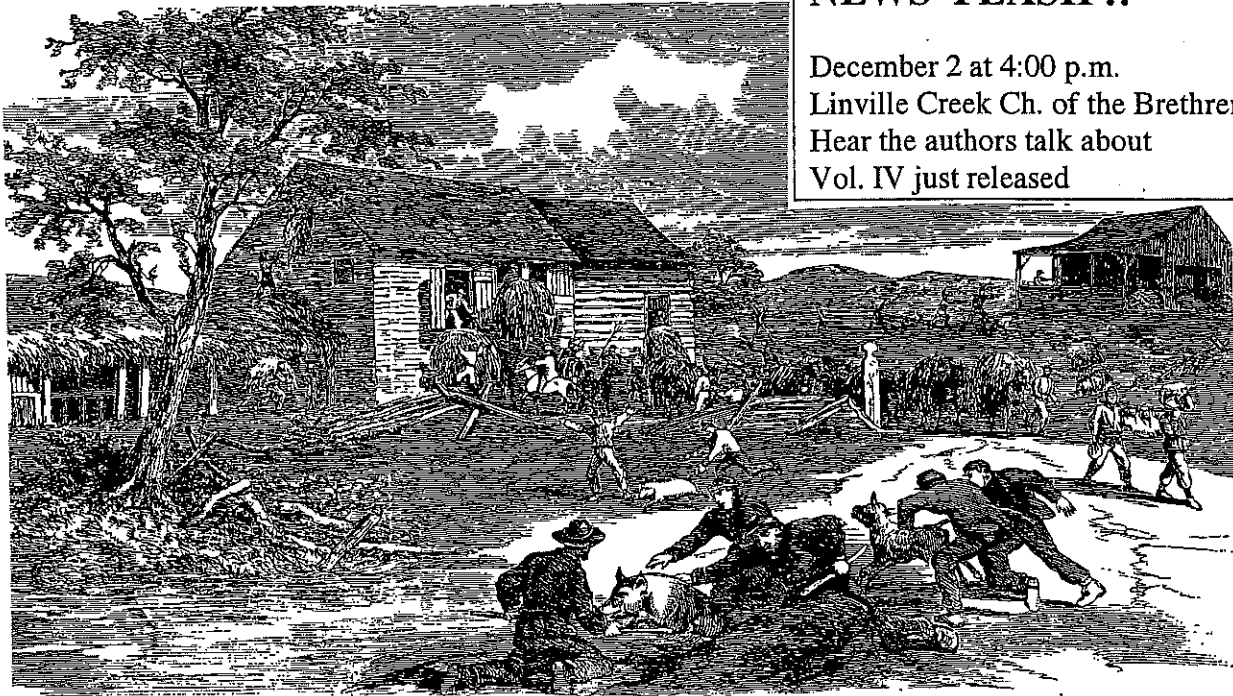
UNIONISTS AND THE CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCE IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY, Vol. IV

Broadway, Cherry Grove, Singers Glen, Timberville and Surrounding Area, Rockingham County, Virginia

Compiled and Transcribed by Norman R. Wenger and David S. Rodes; Editing and Introduction by Emmert F. Bittinger. Published by The Valley Research Associates and The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, 2007. Illustrated, indexed, 1090 pages, \$49.95.

NEWS FLASH !!

December 2 at 4:00 p.m.
Linville Creek Ch. of the Brethren
Hear the authors talk about
Vol. IV just released



WILSON'S CAVALRY FORAGING IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY.
FROM SKETCHES BY J. R. TAYLOR.

Reviewed by James O. Lehman, Editor, *SMH*

They've done it again! Here is the fourth volume of the multi-volume series that documents many Tunker (Church of the Brethren), Mennonite and other Rockingham County claims to the Southern Claims Commission after the Civil War to press for reimbursement of losses sustained during the war.

This series has proved itself invaluable in getting a much fuller understanding of the numerous Rockingham County people who were Unionist in outlook rather than following the chorus of Confederate drumbeats.

These large tomes bring us the details and witness statements from records that previous publications have referred to briefly but never as massively and exhaustively as these volumes do. Thereby we learn a great deal more what civilians were thinking and saying.

In the many Civil War volumes that keep streaming off the presses these days, few have dealt seriously with what Dale MacAllister, President of the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County Historical Society mentions in the Preface—the **“twin issues of loyalty to the Federal Government and religious conscience faced by members of the ‘historic peace churches’ and others.”** As is becoming well known Rockingham County had two of these “historic peace churches”—the Mennonites and the group officially known as German Baptist Brethren, but colloquially known as “Tunker, Dunkard, or Dunker” (now Church of the Brethren).

The extensive introduction gives good background information to understanding these two peace churches. He labels both as Anabaptist because of their similarity of beliefs and faithfulness to the tenets of the historic movement that began in Europe in the 16th century. Both groups considered war and slavery as “gross evils in the sight of God,” says editor Bittinger. Both were “mostly passive and non-active politically and militarily” due to their faith. Many, however, often went to the polls to vote. The two groups freely got involved in personal assistance to their own members and non-members, “especially to men seeking to flee or hide.” They established what became known as the “Unionist Underground Railroad.”

Due to the geographic areas covered in this volume, Church of the Brethren cases are much more numerous than Mennonite cases. For this newsletter, we emphasize two Mennonite cases, both from the Broadway area. The one is Samuel Shank who was ordained a minister during the war, the other, George Brunk, became a minister after the war.

Samuel (1828-1901) was a son of Samuel, Sr. and grandson of Henry Shank, both Mennonite ministers. Samuel’s brother, Abraham, served as bishop in the Northern District for a generation. Samuel declared in his deposition how strongly Union he was (pp. 53-66). **“One thing is certain, I never would have fought against the union, I would have died first.”** He did not vote on the day when Virginians voted for secession. When he was drafted in 1862, he had a wife and five children, so he couldn’t hide or flee. He sent a substitute in his place and later also paid the \$500 fine. During the war he helped a man liable for service in the “rebel army” and another man with a family, whose life had been threatened, to go north. He considered the U. S. as his government and the Confederacy as a “rebellion.” He lost cattle, hogs, a horse, grain, hay, bacon, flour and 12 bushels of sweet potatoes. Worst of all, when Sheridan’s men came through in 1864 his barn was set on fire and the house soon caught the flames and went too. Most of his \$479 claim was allowed, but George Brunk’s \$300 claim was disallowed.

George Brunk (1831-1905), son of Christian, has his claim appear on pp. 557-612. It is one of the longer claims because it dragged on and on until George was a 70-year-old man. He was subjected to “an intense and difficult set of questions” designed perhaps to “confuse and discredit” him. George also sent a substitute and paid the \$500 fine early in the war. He also had not voted on the secession ordinance on May 23, 1861. He claimed the loss of two horses and 80 pounds of butter. From the beginning of hostilities against the U. S. and to the end his sympathies constantly favored the Union. He provided aid to several refugee families and draftees to go north. **“My feelings were for the Union, before the ordinance of secession was adopted I spoke freely for the Union. I did not express my sentiments openly afterwards,”** he said.

Like previous volumes, here we have important documentation at our fingertips from National Archives records.

PEACE CHURCHES FACE WARTIME DILEMMAS

FEATURING THE RELEASE OF NEW BOOK

MENNONITES, AMISH, AND THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

By James O. Lehman and Steven M. Nolt

(See review of book on pages 2 and 3 of this issue of *SMH*)

NOVEMBER 10-12, 2007

SATURDAY, NOV. 10;

8:30 a.m. EMALA (Eastern Mennonite Associated Libraries and Archives Meeting)
at Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, 1921A Heritage Center Way
(Off Garbers Church Road, Harrisonburg, VA)

(For those especially interested in various Mennonite historical developments in the East)

4:00 p.m. - Fall Lecture by Nancy Heisey, President of Mennonite World Conference
"They also serve: The Brethren-Mennonite Service Experience"
Garbers Church of the Brethren, 1275 Garbers Church Rd.

7:00 p.m. - General Public Session by Co-Authors of Book, Park View Mennonite Church
Mennonites, Amish, and the American Civil War
Book Signing by Co-Authors

SUNDAY, NOV. 11

10:30 a.m. Lindale Mennonite Church, 6255 Jesse Bennett Way, Linville, VA
Theme of the Morning: "Becoming Peacemakers"
Co-Authors to be interviewed by Pastor Duane Yoder

MONDAY, NOV. 12

7:30 p.m.- Civil War Roundtable (County Admin. Bldg, 20 East Gay St., H'burg)
with co-authors Nolt and Lehman - Emphasis on Virginia Mennonites and the War

SHENANDOAH MENNONITE HISTORIAN

Editor: James O. Lehman

Renewal Time!! \$6.00 for individual, \$10.00 for couple -- to Jim Rush, address below

Front Cover Photos from Grace S. Grove, *L. J. Heatwole: A Granddaughter's View*

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