

“Mannheim”

Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

Vol. 12, No. 4 Quarterly Publication of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians Autumn 2005

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

ANNUAL MEETING:

PARK VIEW MENNONITE CHURCH
NOVEMBER 12 FROM 9-11 A.M.

Featuring the next MENNO Round Table on many memories of growing up in the “burg” of Park View. Jim Rush and Harold D. Lehman will lead the memory walk. (More details--back cover)

ANNUAL TOUR

OCTOBER 29, 2005 from 12:15 until 8:00 p.m. (note the unusual time)

DESTINATION: Green and Madison counties, Virginia to learn about the history and life of the Beachy Amish communities there.

TOUR LEADER: HARVEY YODER

COST: \$42 for members, \$44 for non-members. Evening meal included. See more details on back cover.

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The Coffmans at “Mannheim” on Wengers Mill Road and the Slave Trade

On Wengers Mill Road, just off Rt. 42, one mile north of the Lindale Mennonite Church, stands the plantation home long known as “Mannheim,” where the Coffmans lived. Across the road from the stone house are two small brick buildings that have traditionally been called slave quarters. The large stone house has been registered with the National Register of Historic Places.¹

Since so many Coffmans in Rockingham County are of Mennonite descent, the inquiry has often been made whether this place with slave quarters was owned by people of Mennonite descent and how are they related? Furthermore, what about the two Samuel Coffmans during Civil War days—one the bishop for Middle District (some of which is now called Central District). Who’s the other one who seems to be a politician, and are there any connections.

Extensive hours of research revealed considerable disagreement between sources and some obvious factual mistakes in some sources.² Who’s right?

¹Special thanks goes to Carl and Agnes Weaver, owners for the last decade, who provided entrance on Aug. 9-10, 2005 and congenially shared information, including extensive documentation related to the application to the United States Department of the Interior for the house to be placed on the National Register.

²One example is the recent source, E. H. T. Traceries, Inc. “Historical Architectural Survey of Rockingham County,” 2000, which would have us believe that the stone mansion was built by Michael Kauffman, which other sources claim as the first Mennonite minister in Rockingham County., and that “he broke ties with the Mennonite Church after he became involved in the African slave trade.” That is hardly believable! Furthermore, he died in 1788. Another example—Charles Fahs Kauffman, *A Genealogy and History of the Kauffman-Coffman Families*. (York, PA: Pub. by author, 1940, contains some confusions and misstatements. Despite that it becomes a basic source to try to connect families together.

Unless further primary documentation turns up to change details, we believe the following to be correct. To arrive at our conclusions we thought the best primary sources to be the documentation of the National Register of Historic Places, along with Agnes Kline, *Stone Houses on Linville Creek and Their Communities*, published by the author in 1971, as well as the Kauffman- Coffman genealogy, For the politician, Samuel Augustus Coffman, we rely on the 1861 newspaper *Rockingham Register and Advertiser*.

MICHAEL KAUFFMAN, EARLY MENNONITE MINISTER

The story does begin with Michael Kauffman (1714-1788), believed to be a very early Mennonite minister in Page County, who in 1758, at the time of serious attacks from Native Americans (Indians), returned to Lancaster, Pennsylvania with his family. It is said another reason for returning to his place of origin was to help settle an estate.

While in Pennsylvania he became one of the several ministers who wrote the Dutch Mennonites, pleading for help for the suffering Page County Mennonites. Around 1765 he returned to Virginia, this time settling in the Linville Creek area, thereby becoming probably the first Mennonite minister in Rockingham County.

Some sources would have us believe that this Michael Kauffman built the fine stone house, possibly as early as 1771. Agnes Kline, interviewed some family members in 1950 who reported that the “family tradition” has been that Michael Kauffman built the house. The National Register says there is no evidence to support this

date. In all likelihood Michael's son David built the house.

Michael would have been 57 years old in 1771. One would wonder if early Mennonites on the frontier would have built such a fine house with beautifully carved walnut wood on the interior. Hence, it is more likely that David (1747-1815), Michael's son, built it. He and his family do not seem to have stayed with the Mennonites. The National Register documentation indicates that the house was built in 1788, the year in which Michael died in December at age 74. As far as is known Michael became the second adult buried in the Lindale Mennonite Church cemetery, a community burying ground begun when Abraham Breneman set a half acre aside to bury his first wife Maria and infant daughter.

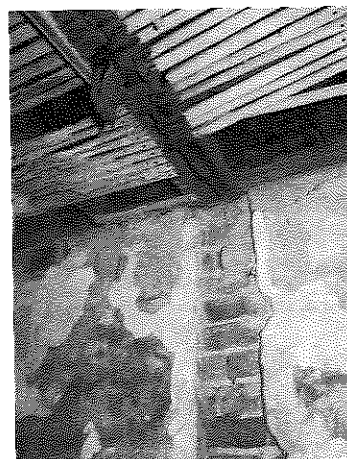
Preacher Michael was married to Barbara Haldiman who died in 1764, six days after their youngest son Michael was born. Other children in this family in order of birth included Anna (married to Peter Breneman of Pennsylvania, David, who married Anna Lionberger, Samuel H, who was married

three times (Elizabeth Reiser, Anna Hoffman, Barbara Brumback), Elizabeth, married to Andrew Correll, Magdalena, married to Jacob Myers, Barbara, married to John Shank, and Michael (1764-1812) who remained single.

Most of Michael's children lived in Pennsylvania and it is unclear how many were Mennonite. The first son (second child), David, married to Anna Lionberger was a considerable landowner in Virginia. If David built the house at "Mannheim," as it would appear, he and his wife might have been interested in building a house that one source said was fitting to "rural gentry," and other sources indicated that it smacked a bit of aristocracy.

A BIT OF VIRGINIA ARISTOCRACY

David and Anna (Lionberger) Kauffman had a number of children. Their oldest son Samuel L Coffman (1784-1841) married Margaret Gore and Mary Moore. For years Samuel L and his family lived at "Mannheim."



Three photos of slave quarters, one exterior and two interior. Note that they were duplexes and that each 12 x 17 room had a small fireplace.

(Photos by Alan Lehman)

The children of Samuel L. and Margaret (Gore) Coffman included Adelaide, Erasmus (Rockingham County clerk), Eliza, Maria, Dewitt, another Eliza, Anna, Elizabeth Margaret, Samuel Augustus, Isaac Gore (killed in the Civil War) and Michael David (1829-1901), a soldier in the war who was wounded in an early battle. Several in this family, either sons or sons-in-law became involved in politics.³

SLAVE-HOLDING

Given the kind of environment the Samuel L. Coffmans engendered at "Mannheim," it is not surprising that slave-holding crept into the family. Most likely it began in the era of Samuel L. because it is said that slave-holding began around 1830. Samuel L. died in 1841. This grandson of minister Michael Kauffman, was born after his grandfather died. When Samuel died, he was buried in the community burying ground at Lindale, in the same row and a few graves away from his grandfather Michael. A grave marker indicates his grave. If his wives are buried there, no grave markers survive. It is unknown whether the Lindale cemetery has other former slave-holders buried there.

Now it was several generations down the line from preacher Michael Kauffman. With a large and flourishing estate, fine living, politics, military service, and education (Samuel L's son Samuel Augustus was a doctor), they had become used to what one source says—living in a house and on a plantation that had three social classes—the upper class of Coffmans and their friends, the white hired help, and thirdly, the black slaves.⁴

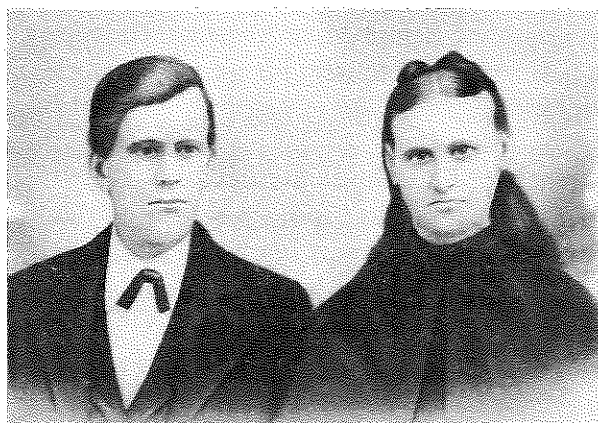
After Samuel L.'s death, it appears that his single son Michael and another son Dewitt, with his wife, Christina Harnsberger, lived in the stone house until it left Coffman hands around 1880.

³ Kauffman, *Genealogy*, 547-61.

⁴ Kline, *Stone Houses*, 46-47.

The 1850 census shows Dewitt Coffman owning 13 slaves, a larger number than most slave owners in the Valley. Some sources indicate slave trading occurring on this estate.

Father Samuel L. Coffman was a man of public affairs and a member of the 1829 Constitutional Convention in Richmond. Of his nine children, son Dr. Samuel Augustus (1824-1885) built the large brick house directly east of "Mannheim" at the intersection of Rt. 42 and Wengers Mill Road. He called it Malmaison. That is the house that for more than a century has been known as the Isaac Wenger place.



Charcoal Sketch of Isaac and Lydia Wenger
ca. 1850. Artist Unknown
(Photo: Courtesy of Evelyn King)

An interesting tradition still makes the rounds in the Wenger family.⁵ Isaac and Lydia Wenger watched the huge house being built and Lydia was said to have remarked "I could never live in such a fine house." Isaac and Lydia were Mennonites. On the morning of the auction held at Mannheim in 1863, Isaac, who with his wife Lydia was living in a log house, told her that he was going to the auction a while. He ended up staying all day. When he returned home he

⁵ Interview with Evelyn King, Harrisonburg, VA, Aug. 19, 2005.

announced to his wife, "Well, pack up, we're moving. I bought the house!"

The large house was situated across the road from a mill that Isaac Wenger owned and operated. A year later (1864) General Sheridan's men came through and burned the mill. Isaac rebuilt, erecting a large four-story mill which operated for many years into the twentieth century.

VIRGINIA CONVENTION TO DISCUSS THE CONFEDERACY

Along with his medical practice Samuel Augustus Coffman was interested in politics. When the Civil War threatened, of course, the major question of the day was whether Virginia would go with the Confederacy or stay Union. There were strong Unionist feelings in Rockingham and Augusta counties, as the newspapers amply publicized. Each county was entitled to three delegates to the Convention.

S. A. Coffman became a delegate for Rockingham. Preceding the public vote for delegates, a number of them wrote lengthy pieces in the *Rockingham Register* to proclaim their viewpoints. Coffman's piece in the paper was shorter and more succinct (see next column) When the votes were taken on February 4, 1861, Coffman garnered 2,588 votes the highest number of the three Rockingham delegates.⁶

All six men from Rockingham and Augusta counties were understood to be declaring for the Union when they went to Richmond. In the vote of April 4, 1861, all six voted for Virginia to stay in the Union. Then the war began and everything changed overnight! In the final vote on April 17 five stood with the minority for Union, but Samuel Coffman voted for the Confederacy!⁷

⁶*Rockingham Register*, Feb. 8, 1861. See the column on the next side and decide how "firmly" Coffman stood for Union!

⁷ "Members of the Virginia Convention of 1861: The Secession Convention," p. 1, *Internet*.

TO THE VOTERS OF ROCKINGHAM

"At your County Court, on Monday last, I announced myself as a candidate for the State Convention, to be held on the 18th day of February next.

In so doing, I stated, briefly, my views upon the issues that will come before that Convention. I feel deeply the responsibility of the position in which I have been placed by the partiality of my friends. The importance of the questions that are now distracting our country cannot be over-estimated. To the Convention the honor and interests of Virginia will be confided.

It is, therefore, your right and your duty to know the opinions of those who solicit your suffrages. I feel no hesitation in saying that, if I should be honored with a seat in the Convention, my purpose will be not only to save the union, but the honor and integrity of Virginia. I am neither a disunionist *per se* nor a submissionist. I contend that Virginia should secure all her rights and preserve her honor *in* the Union, if possible; if *not*, then she should seek her independence out of it. I consider a dissolution of this Union the direst calamity that could befall us, save and except the loss of State honor. I should, therefore, exhaust all honorable means to preserve it, before I could resort to the dread alternative of disunion.

I sincerely trust that we can obtain redress of our present grievances, and security against other aggressions without resorting to secession. I would have the Convention to act calmly and deliberately, to prepare a full and fair statement of her wrongs, and to lay down the terms upon which Virginia would continue in the present Union, present them to the North, demand a full acquiescence or rejection, and if not accepted, then I would secede, *and not till then*.

Such action, I believe, would meet the approbation, not only of the people of Virginia, but of the civilized world."

SAMUEL A. COFFMAN

(*Rockingham Register*, Jan. 25, 1861)

WAS BISHOP SAMUEL COFFMAN RELATED?

Apparently so, but the relationship was very distant. Bishop Samuel Coffman had come to Rockingham from Greenbrier County in western Virginia when he was a young man. During the Civil War Greenbrier became one of the counties that formed West Virginia.

Around 1788-90 several families of Kauffmans and Wengers from the Linville Creek area of Rockingham County and also from Shenandoah County moved to western Virginia. To get to the plateau where they lived they had to traverse perhaps 125 miles through streams and rivers and climb steep mountains. One of the families was that of minister Isaac Kauffman (1741-1824) and his wife Esther.

In Greenbrier County they established a small Mennonite community that never thrived. By Civil War times the last minister David Whanger (the name had changed to Whanger) died. There was periodic contact with Rockingham and occasionally Augusta County as ministers would go to Greenbrier to preach. And Rockingham County ended up with several significant Greenbrier persons.

Isaac and Esther's daughter Elizabeth became the wife of the famous Peter Burkholder of Rockingham County who published the Mennonite Confession of Faith. Samuel Coffman, leaving his siblings behind, went to Rockingham County. Here he found work and a wife in the Weavers Church area. The next time the Middle District cast lots for minister, Samuel, who had been nominated along with others, found that the lot had fallen on him.

After Martin Burkholder, son of Peter and Elizabeth died in his forties in December 1860, it was Samuel Coffman who succeeded Martin as bishop. Samuel was said to have become a strong voice for the Mennonite peace position, even

though his siblings had mostly joined the Methodist church back at Greenbrier. Several sources say that Samuel's brother David, had even gone off to war but not all sources indicate that. Much more research needs to be done on Greenbrier, because Harry A. Brunk in his two-volume history of Virginia Mennonites was only minimally aware of the Greenbrier community that apparently died by the 1860s.

Bishop Samuel Coffman is a descendant of Andrew Kauffman, according to the Kauffman-Coffman genealogy, while the Samuel Coffmans discussed earlier were descendants of Michael Kauffman, presumed to be a brother of Andrew. Thus it appears that the bishop was something like a third or fourth cousin of Samuel L. Coffman of Mannheim.

Jim Lehman

TIME LINE OF EARLY EVENTS LEADING TO CIVIL WAR

- November 1860 – Abraham Lincoln elected
- December 20 – South Carolina seceded
- January 9, 1861 – Mississippi seceded
- January 10 – Florida seceded
- January 19 – Georgia seceded
- January 26 – Texas seceded
- February 4 – Voters elect delegates to a convention to decide Virginia's course
- April 12-14 – War begins at Fort Sumter, SC
- April 17 – Virginia delegates vote for secession by a vote of 88 to 55
- May 23 – Virginia's general vote to secede

WATCH FOR VOLUME III OF THE MAJOR SERIES UNIONISTS AND THE CIVIL WAR EXPERIENCE IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY

Slated to appear in December will come a very significant volume for Mennonites. Compilers are David Rodes and Norman Wenger with Emmert Bittinger as editor. Publisher: Valley Brethren Mennonite Heritage Center and Valley Research Associates. This volume—almost 1,000 pages!

Emphasized in this volume will be the Weavers Church area, Dayton and Bridgewater. It will contain many Mennonite claims and depositions. As many Mennonites and Dunkers quietly engaged in the very risky business of assisting people to move on this “Unionist Underground Railroad” to the North, they engaged in a major instance of civil disobedience. Many considered the Confederacy as a “rebel government.” Nevertheless, it was the government in power during the war.

Gabriel D. Heatwole said, “I had a secret place in my house prepared expressly to conceal refugees and deserters and kept several persons there until there was opportunity for them to go through the lines and escape from the Confederacy. Michael Shank harbored refugees trying to escape from the “rebel army.” One time a rebel soldier came with a union soldier as a prisoner! Several claimed they assisted large numbers of persons. Weavers Church sometimes became a hiding place.

There is much more. You may want to begin saving your money for this significant book!

Jim Lehman

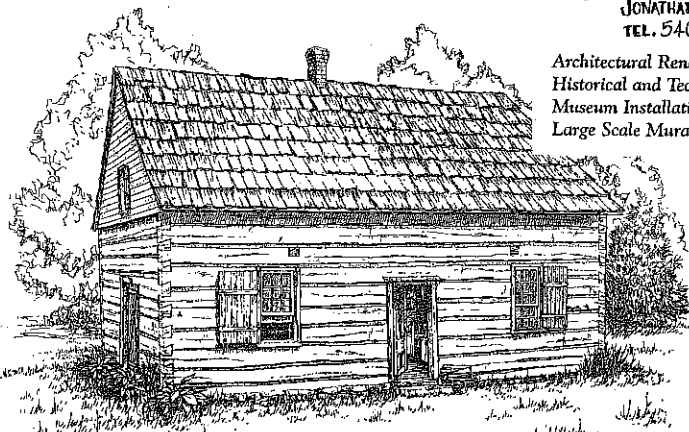
MIGHT YOU BE LOOKING FOR EXCELLENT SKETCHES?

JONATHAN GEHMAN is seeking opportunities for sketching. I recommend him highly. I worked with Jon for a decade with newsletter work. Here are two fine very recent examples of his work. (Ed.)

RED BARN STUDIO
JONATHAN GEHMAN
TEL. 540-271-2824

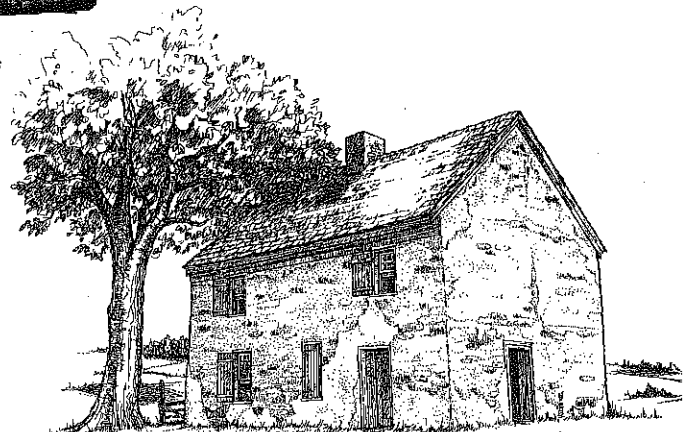


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MAUK MEETING HOUSE
HAMBURG VIRGINIA
Circa 1740

JON GEHMAN
2005



THE WHITE HOUSE, built in 1760 by MARTIN KAUFFMAN

JON GEHMAN
2005



ANNUAL MEETING

Park View Mennonite Church

November 12, 2005

9:00-11:00 a.m

Featured will be the next MENNO Round Table on lots of memories from bygone days of living in Park, the little "burg" that was a suburb of Harrisonburg.

Jim Rush and Harold D. Lehman will help lead our walk through memories. Come, bring your friends, photos and memories to share. Mark your calendars!

CORRECTIONS ON CHURCH LIST

Laneville, Dry Fork, WV Began 1954, closed 1996
Ridgeway, H'burg, VA Began 1946
Pilgrim, Amelia, VA Began 1956; it still continues

ANNUAL TOUR

October 29, 2005

12:15 until 8:00 p.m. (Note the timing!)

Purpose: to learn about the history and life of Green and Madison County Beachy Amish communities. Harvey Yoder, who is acquainted with these communities, will be our tour leader.

The bus leaves EMHS's upper parking lot at 12:15 right after lunch. We plan to visit Mission Home, Mission Home Beachy Amish Church, Yoder's Country Market, Mt. View Nursing Home and the Oak Grove Beachy Amish Church. We will have an evening meal at the Oak Grove Church, after which we'll leave for home at 6:15 p.m.

Cost: \$42 for members, \$44 for non-members

Please fill out the enclosed registration slip and send it along with your check as soon as possible to Jim Rush, 780 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.

Jim's phone: 504-434-0792

Email: rush@emhs.net

TIME TO RENEW FOR 2006

\$6.00 individual, \$10 per couple. Send to Jim Rush, 780 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, 22802

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