

Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

Vol. 12, No. 2 Quarterly Publication of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians Spring 2005

JOHN M. BRENNEMAN

This issue features the Virginia pioneer Abraham Breneman and his two wives who lived on 800 acres of land in the Linville Creek area near Edom and Greenmount. He had 16 children and 111 grandchildren and, of course, many thousands of descendants. Throughout the generations since Abraham a rather considerable number served the Lord and became church leaders.

Among Abraham's many grandchildren John M. Breneman stood out as a major influence on the Mennonite Church. John's parents, Henry and Barbara (Beery) Breneman, were Virginia newlyweds when they decided to move to Ohio frontier territory, settling in Fairfield County, not far from Columbus. In due time John married Sophia Good in 1837 and shortly thereafter they both joined the local Mennonite church.

Seven years later (1844) Bishop Henry Stemen, a western Ohio bishop who was something of a circuit rider, ordained John to the ministry. Since John couldn't read or write, it is said that he at once started to school along with several of his older children. In 1848 the family moved to nearby Franklin County, where he ministered to a small struggling congregation. A year later Henry Stemen ordained John as a bishop. In 1855 the family moved to Elida, Ohio, which became his home base, as he often turned farm work over to son Joseph and traveled throughout Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri to preach to small struggling congregations.

Of prime concern to J. M. was the welfare of the church as he attended conferences, ordained ministers, visited widows and the sick and studied, prayed, preached, and tried to be a peacemaker when church troubles arose. His fluency in both German and English stood him well in his prime era during Civil War times. The war deeply troubled him as he saw young men from Mennonite homes go off to war. In 1862 he drafted a petition to President Lincoln outlining Mennonite views on the war and begged a fellow minister from eastern Ohio to take it to Washington. Apparently, it never reached Lincoln. John also wrote a booklet on nonresistance.

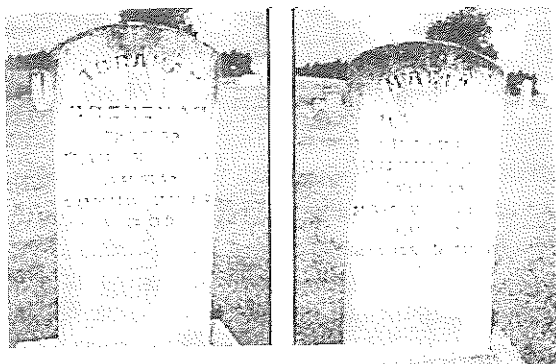
In May 1863, J. M. and fellow minister and friend Peter Nissley from Lancaster, PA stopped in Chicago to visit the young entrepreneur, John F. Funk. They went along to Sunday school and were impressed. A strong friendship sprang up between them. Funk also wrote a booklet encouraging nonresistance, then he published both his book and Breneman's. Funk began talking about producing a church paper. That delighted John M. who became Funk's most vocal and loyal supporter. In the first year of issues (1864) of the *Herald of Truth* and its German counterpart Breneman had articles, sermons, poems or travel accounts in nearly every issue. He

(continued on page 6)

Abraham Breneman: Ancestor to Many Who Influenced American Mennonite History

Interest has been expressed in pulling together a list of living descendants of Abraham Breneman. That is a major challenge. This issue of the newsletter may help a bit, but the primary source is the *Abraham Breneman Family History*.¹ Abraham is believed to have built the mill now called Turners Mill on Brenneman Church Road. The mill is now in the possession of the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center and is being restored and renovated. Built in 1804 it was one of the few mills spared during the terrible burning of barns and mills in 1864, during the Civil War.

Abraham and Marie (Reiff) Breneman moved to Rockingham County in 1770 from Lancaster, PA. Later that same year their first child was born on December 6, 1770. Over a 17-year period Abraham and Marie had seven more children. On March 22, 1788, within a week after the eighth child was born, Marie and the child died. The child may have been buried in her mother's coffin. Since there was no cemetery nearby Abraham set aside a half-acre of his land for a community cemetery.



¹ Charles D. Breneman, *A History of the Descendants of Abraham Breneman* (Elida, OH: Pub. by author, 1939). Many of the early family members spelled the name "Branaman."

Helpful also for the Elida, Ohio area is James O. Lehman, *Seedbed for Leadership*. Elida: Pike Mennonite Church, 1974. Elida, OH was an especially fruitful place to raise ordained men.

For a long time it was know as the Breneman Cemetery until the Lindale Mennonite Church was erected adjoining the burying ground, then it began to be called the Lindale cemetery.

Eventually Abraham married again—this time to Magdalena Shank (1761-1851). She was 24 years younger than Abraham. Their first child was born in 1791, when she was 22 and the pioneer was almost 47. Abraham and Magdalena had eight children also, the youngest being born in 1805, when Abraham was 60. With 16 children and 111 grandchildren it is most likely that Grandpa Breneman never saw quite a few of his grandchildren.

The youngest son, David, who was only nine when his father died, described Abraham as "tall and slender, smooth shaven and of a robust constitution."

Abraham and Marie (and later Magdalena) were highly respected by fellow Mennonites as they were quite involved in the local church that developed. In their day Mennonites had no meetinghouses, so they met in homes, one place being Breneman's large log cabin on the first farm north of Lindale Mennonite Church. Abraham set a good example for his large family in serving the Lord. It was said of him that he was often seen leading a funeral procession with the dead body of a child resting on the saddle in front of him.



Abraham was never chosen as a minister but a remarkable number of his descendants became bishops, ministers or deacons and numerous women descendants married a man who eventually became an ordained church leader. Most of them were Mennonites.

Abraham's sons and grandsons built one of the early meetinghouses in 1826 in the EDOM-Linville area and it was named Brenemans Church southwest of EDOM. For many years before public schools developed, the worship house was also used as a school during the week. By 1919 it had been replaced by Lindale and the early meetinghouse was sold and taken down. The photo below is the second Brennemans Church, built in 1875.



Abraham and Marie's children:

- Magdalena
- Elizabeth
- Melchior
- Frances
- Anna Barbara
- Daniel
- Abraham Jr.
- Eve Margaret

In turn we take each of the children and their descendants involved in church work.

#1

Magdalena: married Frederick Rhodes a VA minister. Son Anthony became a

deacon. He married Elizabeth Showalter and they were the parents of Frederick A. Rhodes, a Virginia deacon who became the father of Fannie Rhodes. Fannie married Joseph N. Driver, who became a well-known bishop in Augusta County.

Magdalena Breneman and Frederick Rhodes' first daughter was Elizabeth who married Samuel Weaver. That Weaver family had a number of church leaders. Daughter Frances became the wife of the later well-known Bishop Samuel Coffman of the Civil War era. Samuel and Frances Coffman were the parents of the pioneer Mennonite evangelist John S. Coffman. In turn, John S. Coffman was the father of the Canadian Mennonite bishop, Samuel Frederick Coffman.

Elizabeth and Samuel Weaver also were the parents of John Weaver a Middle District Virginia minister. John and Magdalena (Heatwole) Weaver raised Sem S. Weaver, a minister, and a daughter Nancy who married Abram B. Burkholder, a minister in West Rockingham.

Elizabeth and Samuel Weaver's son Joseph Weaver served as a Mennonite minister in Missouri (and in turn his son Jesse also became a minister, but in the Congregational Church.)

Elizabeth and Samuel Weaver's daughter Mary (Polly) Weaver, married George Brunk a minister in the Broadway area. The Brunks were the parents of Samuel C., Brunk, a deacon at Elida, OH. and Perry E. Brunk a minister at Elida.

The story goes on and on at Elida as Samuel C. and Anna (Shank) Brunk raised Gabriel H., a minister and Solomon, a deacon.

Gabriel's son, Norman became a deacon. Solomon's son, Leonard S. served as a minister in PA and son Arthur was a deacon at Elida. Grandsons of Samuel and Anna Brunk included Lawrence a missionary to Argentina and Kenneth, missionary to Jamaica.

Another daughter of Elizabeth and Samuel Weaver was Anna who married John Brunk. Two of their sons, Martin W. and Elias were Virginia deacons.

#2

Abraham and Marie Breneman's second daughter, **Elizabeth, married Michael Miller**. The Millers first daughter was Frances who married Jacob Shank who became the parents of Henry Shank. Their numerous descendants are described with the Breneman wife on page 6.

Jacob Shank, Jr. (brother of Henry), was the father of Erasmus C. Shank a minister in Augusta County, VA. One of Erasmus Shank's brothers was Isaac, father of Otho B. Shank, a minister at Elida, OH.

The third daughter of Elizabeth Breneman and Michael Miller was Nancy who married Daniel Showalter, a Mennonite minister in the Broadway area. The Showalters had a daughter, Nancy, who married Abraham Shank, an outstanding bishop in the Northern District (VA).

Nancy and Daniel Showalter also had a son Michael Showalter, whose son was George B. Showalter, a minister in Virginia and grandfather of several ministers. Son Noah D. was the first librarian at Eastern Mennonite School and father of Paul, a minister in Ohio and Elmer and Omar, both of whom were ministers in PA.

George B. Showalter became the father of three ministers—Timothy, a well-known bishop in Northern District., L. P (Lewis Peter), a minister, G. Paul, a minister, and Mark C.

George B's sister Mary, married Daniel A. Blosser. Their daughter N. Pearl, married J. Early Suter, who was a Virginia minister. Blosser's son Mahlon Blosser and grandson, Glendon Blosser, served as long-time bishops and overseers in the Middle District in VA.

Mary and Pearl's brother Franklin B., had a son named Earl who was a minister for a while at LaJunta, CO. Another of Michael Showalter's daughters, Nancy V., married Jacob Snively Martin, a minister.

The youngest of Michael Showalter's children was Walter, who became a United Brethren minister.

Now to return to Nancy and Daniel Showalter. They had a son Daniel who married Mary Heatwole and lived at Broadway. Their daughter Emma Elizabeth married Joseph Shank, a minister. The Joseph Shanks had a daughter Mary Catherine, who married Noah Wilmer Geil, who was ordained a minister at Lindale. Mary Catherine's brother, Samuel A. Shenk was also ordained at Lindale for Northern District. Another brother was Ezra Abram Shank who was ordained to the ministry at the Canton, OH Mennonite Mission.

Another daughter of Nancy Miller and Daniel Showalter was Elizabeth, who married Samuel Cline, a Church of the Brethren minister. Their son Daniel became a COB minister and a daughter Lizzie married David B. Wampler another COB minister.

#3

Melchior Breneman, the first son of Abraham and Marie became a very early Virginia deacon and with his sons, Abraham and Peter and his half-brother Christian were the builders of the Brenemans Church. That meetinghouse became an important school in the area. Melchior's son Peter became well-to-do, but during the Civil War it is said that much of his wealth was dispersed to keep his sons out of the military by paying the \$500 fee a number of times for them. Melchior was married to Elizabeth Burkholder, daughter of the famous Virginia bishop, Peter Burkholder.

Melchior's son Peter, had a son John who became disabled from an accident. He then took up teaching and Bishop L. J. Heatwole said John was the most sociable and loving teacher he ever had. John Breneman also served as Clerk for the Commissioners of Revenue of Rockingham County.

Melchior's grandson Jacob Breneman had a daughter Anna, who was married to Joseph G. Good, a deacon in Missouri. Another of Jacob's

daughters, Mary Esther Good, remained single and taught for many years at Hesston College.

#4

Frances, fourth child of Abraham and Marie Breneman, married John Landes of York County, PA. Many children and descendants ended up in Indiana and Iowa but most of them were not Mennonite. One son enlisted in the Civil War.

#5

Anna Barbara, married **Jacob Hildebrand, Sr.** of Augusta County, VA. Their daughter, Magdalena married David Rhodes, who became a Middle District (VA) minister.

Their youngest was Jacob Hildebrand, Jr. who became the outstanding Mennonite bishop of Augusta County in the last half of the 19th century. The bishop's son, Samuel, worked deep in the mountains of what became West Virginia during the Civil War and thereby escaped military service. His father strongly urged him to not join the army and promised him, "I will reward you well." The bishop was a large landowner and did community threshing.

#6

Daniel Breneman, married Anna Magdalena Burkholder, daughter of Bishop Peter Burkholder. They lived in the Danville, Ohio area for much of their lives. Daniel "was possessed with a very enthusiastic disposition religiously," says the Breneman book. That family changed the family name to "Brannaman." Some of the descendants had a "rare gift of music."

A grandson died in the Civil War. Most of the children became Methodists. Many descendants lived in Kentucky and Indiana and a few ended up in California.

#7

Abraham Breneman, Jr. married Elizabeth Hartman. They joined the United Brethren Church. Some lived in Augusta County,

Daughter Catherine married Robert Thuma, who was killed in the Civil War. Numerous descendants ended up in the Midwest.

#8

Eve Margaret, the baby who died in 1788, when her mother Marie died.

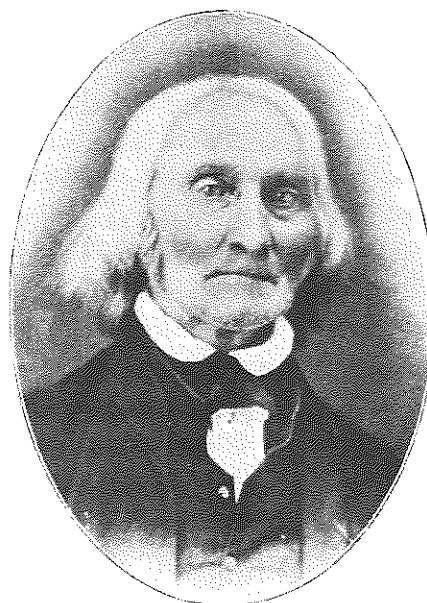
Now to Abraham Breneman's second family by his second wife, Magdalena Shank.

Their eight children:

Henry
Christian
John
Jacob
Mary
Susan
Catherine
David

#9

Henry, married to **Barbara Beery**. They moved to Fairfield County, Ohio not far from Columbus already in 1816, soon after Abraham died. Below is a photo of Henry.



Henry Breneman, born Nov. 1, 1791

The first two children of Abraham and Magdalena (Shank) Breneman produced grandsons and descendants that were quite involved in Mennonite leadership.

Henry and Barbara (Beery) Brenneman's oldest son, John M. became one of the best known grandsons of Abraham, as outlined on the front cover and inside the box below.

Continued from front cover:

traveled widely on the train and was sometimes gone for lengthy periods. One time his trip to various churches took him 1600 miles.

In one sense he almost became a national bishop as he carried a deep burden for Mennonites wherever he went and was especially concerned about small struggling congregations of which he visited quite a few.

In Mennonite history John S. Coffman has usually been considered the first major Mennonite evangelist who traveled about holding revival meetings. However, J. S. Coffman himself thought of John M. Brenneman as being the pioneer in evangelistic preaching.

J. M. Brenneman had a burden for lost souls as he pushed out Mennonite horizons. In one letter he wrote he said "We Mennonites are too slack in seeking souls." He also became an advocate for Sunday schools and strongly promoted Mennonite conferences.

One time when he visited Virginia Mennonite Conference, as we have covered in an earlier issue of this newsletter, he raised a question about divorce. Ohio and Indiana conferences did not agree with the Virginia answer, so upon that occasion J. M. Brenneman pleaded for a national Mennonite General Conference so controversial questions could be dealt with in a conference rather than in a public forum like the *Herald of Truth*. Brenneman's call for a national conference occurred more than four decades before Mennonite General Conference was finally formed.

John M. Brenneman married Sophia Good. Their first son Joseph married Nancy Hilyard. Joseph and Nancy's first daughter Mary, married George H. D. Ross, who was a Mennonite minister at Elida. One of their sons, I. Mark Ross, a minister, also did deputation work for Hesston College.

John M. Brenneman's first daughter, Susanna, married Christian B. Brenneman of Orrville, OH, a minister and evangelist. The third daughter Anna, married Christian Good of Mole Hill near Harrisonburg, VA.

John M's son Moses became a long-time minister at Elida and Moses was the father of Andrew a minister and grandfather to Timothy H. Brenneman a missionary to South America and a bishop in Indiana.

Several more of John M's daughters married ministers—Catherine to Daniel S. Brunk and Magdalena to John Blosser, a minister and bishop who served some time as president of the Mennonite Board of Education. A Blosser son served briefly on the faculty and as Dean at Goshen College.

Catherine and Daniel S. Brunk's oldest son Jacob B. became a Mennonite minister until 1927 when he changed membership to the Church of God. Jacob's daughter, Esther Marie stayed single and was a missionary in Argentina.

Catherine and Daniel S. had a daughter who was married to Amos W. Rhodes, a deacon at La Junta, CO, and a son John M. Brunk, a minister in Mississippi.

Henry and Barbara (Beery) Brenneman's daughter Susanna married Henry Shenk. After several children died young, John M. Shenk was born. He lived a long and fruitful life and became a strong minister and bishop. He had several sons in the ministry, including Amos M. of Nampa, ID, Simon G. of Elida and Daniel F. Shenk of Oregon.

Simon G. Shenk was the father of Stella who became the mother of the four Augsburgers brothers who became ministers—Fred, A. Don, Myron, and David. An Augsburgers daughter is married to Owen Burkholder the Virginia Conference Minister.

John M. Shenk was not the only bishop in that family. His brother Andrew became a minister at Elida then a bishop in Missouri. Andrew's sons, Noah H., Perry J. and Gabriel D. became ministers and Gabriel was later made a bishop. And their sister, Mary M., married E. J. Berkey, also a Mennonite minister.

The Shenk list continues. Bishops John M. and Andrew Shenk had a minister brother Daniel at Denbigh, VA, a deacon brother Abraham P. Shenk, also at Denbigh, and a sister, Lydia, married to Henry J. Powell, a minister at Knoxville, TN.

Daniel Shenk married Rachel Stemen of Elida. Their son Raymond J. was a minister at Cottage City, Maryland, a suburb of Washington, D. C. Ray's sister, Alice, married J. Paul Sauder, a school teacher and a minister. The youngest of 14 children of the Daniel Shenk family was John H. Shenk, a minister and radio speaker.

The youngest of the phenomenal Henry and Susanna (Breneman) Shenk family was Abraham P. Shenk. A. P. Shenk's son Henry was the father of Fannie, who married Andrew Hartzler, a minister. Henry and his wife also had twins, the one being H. Michael Shenk, who has long been a minister at Valley View in Virginia Conference and who is also overseer of Highland Churches.

Another of A. P. Shenk's sons was the well-known deacon and businessman, Jacob A. Shenk, who ran a huge hatchery business, flew an airplane, and served as president of Virginia Mission Board. A sister, Martha May, married Ralph Palmer, who for years was an extra-ordinary distributor of religious tracts.

We return to the Henry and Barbara (Beery) Breneman, the first child from Abraham's second marriage. Their second son was George, who became a bishop in the Elida area. Their youngest son Samuel had a daughter Verna, who married Kenneth G. Good, a long-time minister.

Henry and Barbara (Beery) Breneman had a daughter Anna, who married John Huber. Their son Jacob B. became a deacon at Elida. Jacob had a son Simon G. Huber who became a deacon also in the Middle District in Virginia. A daughter of Jacob's, Lydia C., married Lewis J. Lehman who became a minister in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church. Another daughter Barbara married Daniel G. King and their daughter Hattie married Otho B. Shenk, a minister at Elida.

We're still on #9, Henry and Barbara (Beery) Breneman! Their daughter Catherine married George Mumaw, and their son, Henry A. became the founder of Elkhart Institute (now Goshen College). H. A. Mumaw also was the founder of the children's magazine, *Words of Cheer*.

From the Mumaw line came some more leadership. George and Catherine were the parents of Amos Mumaw, a minister in the Mennonite Church and father of Levi, who was secretary-treasurer of the Mennonite Publishing House. Another son was Amos B. Mumaw, father of Stanford Mumaw, long-time pastor at Martins Mennonite Church, Orrville, OH, and of Homer Mumaw, long-time faculty member of EMC.

Amos Mumaw's son Harry was a deacon in Wayne County, OH and the youngest son, John R. Mumaw served for 50 years at EMC as a professor and president for 17 years. He was a minister for many years also.

Continuing with the children of Henry and Barbara (Beery) Breneman, son Abraham died at age 8, and the next son, Henry B. was a deacon and did the children's pages in the significant John F. Funk magazine, *Herald of Truth*. H. B. and his wife had no children.

The youngest of Henry Breneman's sons was Daniel, a minister who made waves in the church in Elkhart County, IN as a minister. After some disagreement with John F. Funk and Jacob Wisler Daniel Breneman became the ministerial founder of a new group, the Mennonite Brethren in Christ.

That group went through a series of name changes as they picked up some small schismatic groups, two from the "Old" Mennonites, one from the General Conference Mennonites and two from the Brethren in Christ. In 1883 they adopted the name Mennonite Brethren in Christ, which they changed to United Missionary Church (except the Pennsylvania wing kept the old name until 1959 when they adopted the name "Bible Fellowship Church.") Furthermore, the United Missionary Church finally became the "Missionary Church" as it is known today.

Daniel Breneman and his wife Susanna Keagy were the parents of several who became college professors. One was Timothy H., a deacon in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church (MBIC). One of Timothy's sons, Jesse, spent 15 years in the Fort Leavenworth jail as a conscientious objector. Daniel's son, Josiah, was a deacon in the MBIC Church in Nebraska and Josiah had a son, Orval, who was a minister. A daughter of Josiah's was Phoeba who married a minister Paul Ummel and they became missionaries to Africa.

A daughter of Daniel and Susanna Breneman, by the name of Phoeba, served in home and foreign missions. With her minister husband, Calvin Snyder, they worked some years in China under the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church.

Another son of Daniel and Susanna was Daniel Jacob who served as a minister in the MBIC and Free Methodist churches.

This finally brings us to the end of the Henry Breneman family!

#10

Abraham and Magdalena's second son, **Christian**, married Anna Shank. He helped build Brennemens Church. They reared a family of 12 children and are buried at Lindale. Numerous descendants scattered

widely geographically and denominationally. Daughter Magdalena married Christian Brunk a Virginia minister for years in the Winchester area.

Daughter Lydia, married Isaac Wenger, who owned much land and ran a large mill just north of Lindale Church. Their son John J. was a deacon and one of the founders of Eastern Mennonite School. Another son, Henry, served about 10 years as a minister. Isaac and Lydia's son Jacob C. had a family of 15 children, who were major participants in the Lindale Church. Their daughter Sallie married Henry D. Weaver, long-time business manager at EMC. The youngest one Lucy married the hatchery man, Jacob A. Shenk.²

Jacob C. Wenger's son Oscar was a deacon and their son Linden, who is still living, served many years as bishop and overseer in Northern District. J. C.'s daughter, Annie, married Perry S. Martin, whose son Weldon was a long-time missionary and pastor. Another son John was a pastor and faculty member at Eastern Mennonite Seminary. Two of Perry and Annie's daughters married ministers—Virginia to Norman Derstine and Ruth to Robert Harnish. Another daughter of J. C. Wenger was Clara, mentioned earlier as the wife of Ray Shenk.

Christian and Anna (Shank) Breneman's daughter Hannah married Jacob Wenger who lived at Greenmount, VA. Their daughter Anna married Benjamin Brenneman who became a deacon at Denbigh. Anna and Benjamin's son Aldine served long as a minister.

Christian and Anna's son, Amos Daniel Wenger, did evangelistic work, took a world tour and served 15 years as the second president of Eastern Mennonite School. A. D.'s daughter Anna May married John F. Garber, long time minister and bishop in Ohio. Another daughter, Magdalena married John J. Brunk, whose son, Menno Jacob was a minister and EMC faculty member.

²James O. Lehman, *Lindale's Song*. Harrisonburg: Lindale Mennonite Church, 1998

A. D. Wenger's youngest son, Chester, and his family spent many years in mission work in Africa. Several daughters married ministers and church leaders, one of whom is a bishop, and another is president of Eastern Mennonite Missions. One is on the faculty of Eastern Mennonite Seminary and has served as Assistant Dean.

The perceptive reader will observe that some people have been missed, especially current leaders. The Breneman book goes to 1939; since that time there have been many, no doubt, who have not come to the attention of the author of this long article. So there is vacillation about including sixth and seventh generation people (from Abraham Breneman). Apologies to those missed and hopefully, not too many inaccuracies occur. It would take massive research to bring the record up-to-date!

And furthermore, when one gets to sixth and seventh generations, how much genetic influence would Abraham Breneman have? We leave that question to the specialists in the field of genetics!

The youngest daughter of Hannah and Jacob was Catherine (Katie), who married George R. Brunk I. Nearly all their children became ministers or ministers' wives. Truman H. became a bishop at Denbigh and his son Truman, Jr. was a long-time minister. Stella married J. Ward Shank who served long as a bishop in Northern District, VA. Menno Simon Brunk became a minister.

George R. Brunk II became a minister, tent evangelist, and faculty member and dean at Eastern Mennonite Seminary. Son George R. III became a minister, missionary in Italy, and long-time Dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary.

Katie married John F. Shank, a minister, and they served as missionaries in Jamaica. Ruth Brunk, who was married to EMC faculty member Grant Stoltzfus, late in life was ordained as a minister. Lawrence, the youngest of George Brunk I, was a minister and tent evangelist.

11

John Breneman, the third son of Abraham and Magdalena (Shank) Breneman, lived in Virginia and Elida, OH and had children by three wives, all of them Mennonite. Son Noah was a minister.

Two deacons belong to this family as well as to Henry Breneman's family. They are Clarence S. Diller, the grandson of Jacob B. Huber. Very few in this family line became church leaders, but many were faithful Christians and Mennonites.

#12

Jacob Breneman, fourth son of Abraham and Magdalena, also lived in Ohio. Like his father, he had eight children from his first wife and eight more from his second wife! Four children died in infancy. Two sons, David and Jacob R., from the second marriage, were Civil War veterans. Quite a few in the family drifted away from the Mennonites.

Daughter Rebecca married Daniel F. Beery. They lived in Michigan as did a number of others from this family. Rebecca's son, Abraham had the misfortune of losing three wives by death, so he married a fourth one.

Again, there were few, if any, who became ministers or church leaders.

#13

Mary, Abraham and Magdalena's first daughter, married Joseph Beery, but they also moved to Fairfield County, OH. They were Mennonite but by the next generation many drifted to other churches.

Mary and Joseph's daughter, Magdalena married Christian C. Beery of Singers Glen, VA. He was a minister at Caledonia, MI. Some of their children remained Mennonite.

#14

Susan, daughter of Abraham and Magdalena, was born in 1799 and died in 1807.

#15

Catherine, the next daughter of Abraham and Magdalena, married a person whose last name was Frank and first name is not known. She belonged to the Baptist Church and lived for many years in Champaign County, OH.

#16

The youngest Abraham Breneman child was David who became a member of the Christian Church and lived near Cairo, OH in Allen County. He married Catherine Moyer and fathered 12 children, most of them having the same names as many other cousins.

At one point David came back home to Virginia and put new stones in place for the graves of Abraham and Marie.

Son Abraham, a prosperous farmer, was said to have become one of the wealthiest men in Allen County. A daughter of Abraham and Magdalena was married to a Civil War veteran who died from his wounds. Another daughter married a Samuel Whisler from Broadway, VA and lived there. The youngest, Martha Angeline, at Cairo, OH, in 1938 was said to be the youngest living grandchild of Abraham Breneman when the Breneman book was compiled.

Concluding Comments

From the time Abraham's oldest daughter was born (1770) until the youngest son, David died (1892) a span of more than 120 years is covered.

It is interesting that the kind of record just completed above, makes it obvious that the oldest children of Abraham with wife Marie

and again with wife Magdalena became the ancestors of many Mennonite ministers and leaders, but from the younger children many drifted away from the Mennonites.

The record indicates that Abraham died in 1815 from "camp fever" contracted from soldiers who returned from the War of 1812.

A piece of trivia that has been passed on through the generations is that Henry, child #9 and the oldest of Magdalena's children, It is told of Henry that twice he made the round trip on foot from central Ohio to his Virginia birthplace!

And the mill that Abraham is presumed to have been responsible for building in 1804. To the frontier economy of that day, mills were extremely important. It is interesting that it was built of brick and that it has significant and well preserved wooden gears and that it was in use so long. It was used occasionally yet in the 1980s and now the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Board wants to restore it and again try to make it an operable mill.



Families were large in those days. Breneman's was not the only large frontier family in the area. The Joseph G. Wenger family (1747-1812) was another one. Joseph was married to Barbara Huber who bore 13 children before she died. Then Joseph married Anna Hockman and they had five children. That makes 18 children for Joseph Wenger! A son from the first marriage, Joseph II, was married to Barbara Beery. Their fourth child was Isaac Wenger, who married Lydia Breneman, thus joining these two significant pioneer families.³

Jim Lehman

³ James O. Lehman, *Lindale's Song*. (Harrisonburg: Lindale Mennonite Church, 1998), 3

FIRST MENNO ROUND TABLE SESSION

Approximately 25 people met from 9:00-11:00 a.m. at Lindale Mennonite Church to hear and discuss the history of Lindale and its predecessor, Brennemans Church. On display were photos of the early church and its Mothers' Room a diagram of the graves in Lindale Mennonite's cemetery, and a model of Wenger Hall.

Jim Lehman presented information, often referring to the history he wrote, *Lindale's Song*, in 1998. He also led discussion. The following comments came from different persons in the audience.

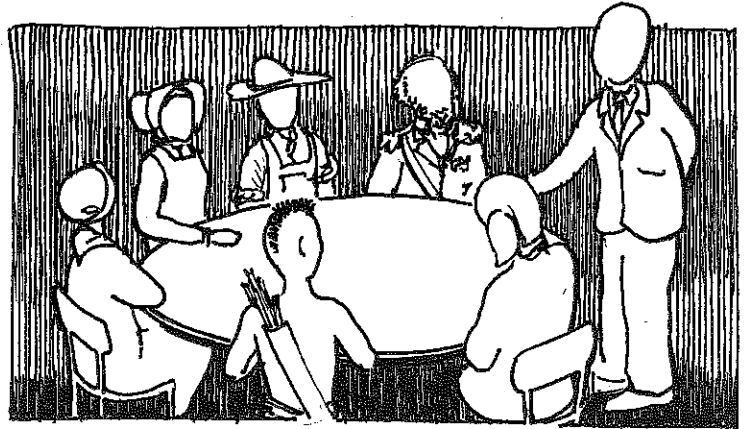
The Wenger/Whanger/Wanger family reunion held at Pipestem in WV each year. Isaac Wenger's house and the cemetery are available for tour during this time. The name changed to Whanger when a courthouse clerk said it would cost \$40 to change the way the name was spelled on a deed. Isaac decided that for \$40 he "could be a Whanger." This was the small Mennonite community in Greenbrier Co., WV that failed. Harry Brunk failed to say much about it, so more research needs to be done.

Christian (Christly) Brunk and sister, Barbara Brunk Brenneman died within a half hour of each other during the time Christly made the journey from Winchester to visit his sister. Lindale held a double funeral for them in 1905.

The 1852 small Brenneman cemetery near the Turner Mill is under the care of Lindale. More work needs to be done in caring for the cemetery.

Annie Fulk Geil, wife of John Henry Geil lost seven of nine children from 1880-1896. Annie died on 19 Dec. 1900 at the age of 43. Mother and children were all buried in the old Brenneman Church cemetery.

Bishop John Geil's daughter Lydia married Noah Holsinger, who served as an aide to



Stonewall Jackson during the Civil War. Jacob Geil, her brother, was a part of the Underground Railroad (to help men who didn't want to fight) go North. Mennonite and Brethren intermarried more in this community than in other areas.

The field where Brennemans Church stood was used later for grazing—not all evidence of the structure disappeared immediately. The mothers' room at Brennemans Church was actually an outhouse. A toy was dropped that years later was returned to its owner. The room was moved and used as a washhouse.

John R. Mumaw was asked to preach at Riverside Church around 1937. He took young Richard Weaver along with promises of a good lunch. However, no one invited them to lunch!

Comments were made about Lindale's sign "Meetinghouse of Lindale Mennonite Church." One attendee liked the sign, but it was noted that in the past not everyone liked the use of the word "Meetinghouse."

After adjournment at 11:00, a few took the tour of the new facility at Lindale.

Debbie Turner

SECOND MENNO ROUND TABLE COMING SOON!!

Where? Mt. Pleasant Mennonite church

When? Saturday morning, May 14: 9:00 – 11:00 a. m.

Tell me more about Mt. Pleasant Church:

Mt. Pleasant Mennonite Church was built in 1990. Before that, the congregation met in a small brick church east of Mt. Crawford, Virginia. Mt. Pleasant started in the mid 1950s and is affiliated with the Weaverland Mennonite Conference of Pennsylvania. The members drive cars but because of its worship service format and the lack of Sunday school it is considered to be Old Order Mennonite. Despite the present generations dislike of the label and the fact that it is no longer true, many people know it as the black bumper church. Membership has been up and down over the years and presently there are around 140 members.

Directions: From Rt. 42 in Dayton – Turn East on Mosby Road (Rt. 290). Take the first right on Pike Church Road. Be careful to stay on Pike Church Road at the “Y” by bearing left. Driveway to Church is mile on the right just before cresting the second hill. Watch for small church sign on fence post. Church is difficult to spot from the road.

From Rt. 11 South in Harrisonburg (South Main Street) – Turn west on Pike Church Road that runs between the church and the Rockingham Motel. Sign on Rt. 11 says “To 701”. Church is 1 mile on left a short distance past the greenhouse. Watch for small sign on fence post.

For Whom? **Anyone interested.** Bring your questions and learn the similarities and differences of this Mennonite group with other Mennonite groups in the area.

Discussion Leader: Norwood Shank

Host: Norman Wenger

SHENANDOAH MENNONITE HISTORIAN

Editor: James O. Lehman
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Photo Credits: Brennemans Church: Fannie Holsinger Good; Henry Brenneman: *Abraham Brenneman History*
Abraham Breneman Log House, Breneman Grave Stones, Turners Mill: Lehman, *Lindale's Song*, 1998

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