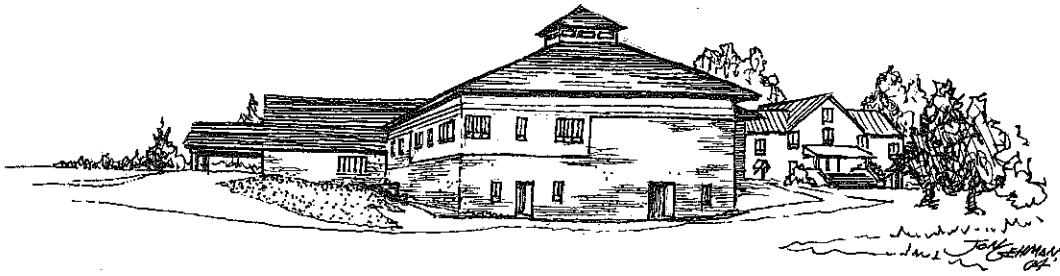


Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

Autumn

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“LIFE OF PEACE IN A TIME OF WAR”

The new video produced recently by WVPT served as major input at the recent annual meeting of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians in their annual meeting held in early September. Al Keim helped produce it and commented on its production and how it came about. Here is his description of how this film had its origin. (Ed.)

The original idea for a film on Valley COs came from JMU philosophy professor Dr. William O’Meara. He arranged for us to meet with WVPT, and then wrote the grant proposal to the Virginia Council for the Humanities, which agreed to provide some of the funds for the project. WVPT provided its facilities and video-production equipment as well as the services of their videographer, Morgan Hook and cameraman Joe Bly. My role was to work on the narrative and arrange for interviews with CPS [Civilian Public Service during World War II] men and commentators. The result was a film which tells the story of CPS nationally and in the Valley.

In the mid-1990s I wrote a major paper for the special state project on WWII on the home front, part of a decade-long effort to remember WWII domestically. The longish paper became the basis for much of the film. It is of some interest that the Valley was the scene for more CPS men than any other comparable place in the nation.

I think at one point some 400 men were congregated in the several camps in the Valley, which included the Mennonite camps of Luray and Grottoes, and a unit at Western State Hospital and camp in southern Virginia at Galax. The Brethren had a camp at Lyndhurst and a unit at a mental institution at Lynchburg, [called the “Lynchburg State Colony for the Feeble-Minded and Epileptics.”] The Friends and Brethren had units at Central and Eastern mental hospitals in south- side Virginia.

The draft board in Rockingham County drafted nearly every able-bodied man of draft age. There were few deferments. Nearly all Mennonites elected CPS service, while many Church of the Brethren chose some form of army medical or quartermaster service, or served in the military. Just why this difference existed is hard to determine, but clearly the Brethren were more assimilated into Valley and national culture at that point than Mennonites.

Eventually the film will be available for distribution in VHS or DVD. The Valley Brethren Mennonite Heritage Center will distribute the film through its auspices when it becomes available.

Albert N. Keim

Peace / Nonresistance in War Time

These positions suffer in war time. During World War II, the long-standing tradition of Mennonites to hold a **nonresistant** position may have been strong in Virginia, but less strong in West Virginia. In many places throughout the country, men took a variety of positions.

The word nonresistance is less often used today. In its place one often speaks of the peace position or pacifism, a position often seen as more activist and less passive. For example, Eastern Mennonite University has a strong graduate program called "Conflict Transformation" and its undergraduate program is listed as "Justice Peace Conflict Studies."

Many Americans saw WWII as the "good war—a clear case of good versus evil, freedom versus tyranny." How could one possibly choose not to fight against Hitler and the evil he represented. "It was a hard call for many pacifists and most elected to fight the Nazis."¹

Of all the kinds of Mennonites who registered for the draft, 54 percent chose military service and 46 percent entered CPS.² All told only 12,000 men became involved in CPS, a miniscule number compared to nearly 35 million men who registered for the draft. Of those who joined the military a number took noncombatant service or made choices that would prevent them from killing. A small number were jailed for refusing to participate.

At least there was a viable alternative during WWII. The first World War had been difficult because the men had to go to army camps, and there decide how much to cooperate.

¹Albert N. Keim, *The CPS Story: An Illustrated History of Civilian Public Service*, Good Books, 1990, 8.

²Melvin Gingerich, *Service for Peace: A History of Mennonite Civilian Public Service*, MCC, 1949, 91-92.

Anecdotal Examples From WWII

It has been said that most Virginia Mennonite men went to CPS camps. Justus Holsinger was a local Virginia teacher and school principal, but when he took a conscientious objector position he found himself in a lonely place among his peers. He went to Puerto Rico. At one point his bishop, John L. Stauffer, of the Northern District, wrote him a gentle letter congratulating him on his marriage. Stauffer went on to summarize what had happened in his district—30 young men had gone to CPS camps and over 40 had chosen the armed forces. The bishop said that in the latter category nearly all were from the rural areas. Only eight who lived east of North Mountain had gone off to war.³

Camps often had women in charge of food and nursing service. Irvin B. Horst says that Mary Emma Showalter, as a trained dietitian, ran something of a dietitians school at Grottoes to train other women to serve at CPS camps. Ava Rohrer (later Mrs. Irvin B. Horst) and Edna Ramseyer also worked at Grottoes as instructors. Mary Emma worked at Grottoes for two years, but she also traveled to other camps to review dietary programs there.⁴ Altogether about 2,000 women were involved in CPS, as some wives were permitted. Some found jobs nearby for a while as did Marjorie Guengerich, wife of Paul T.

Churches varied considerably on the directions young men took. Kidron Mennonite (MC – Mennonite Church) had 35 men in CPS camps and eight, either in noncombatant or combatant roles in the military. Nearby Sonnenberg (MC) young men went to CPS as did most men from the Martins Church (MC).

Salem Mennonite (GC), close to Sonnenberg and Kidron, on the other hand, had 38 young men in service, seven in CPS, and over 30 in various forms of military service. One began in CPS,

³Unless indicated otherwise the illustrations come from the congregational histories the author has written.

⁴EMU Archives, II-MS-22.

became disenchanted and became a noncombatant in the army. One woman joined the Army Nurse Corps. One who was in the Navy was a good shot with a rifle. When he was offered special rifle training, he turned it down and went to work in the post office. One well-thought-of young man went off to war, was killed, and his tombstone reads, "He died so that we might not perish?"⁵

That same church had a young man, Adrian Amstutz, who looked for some excitement to fulfill his draft obligations, so he took a job with the local Ohio Congressman. He was duly impressed with seeing so many soldiers in D. C. Later he became a guard at the Lewisburg, PA prison, where several Lancaster County boys from a very conservative Mennonite home sat in prison for not cooperating with either—CPS or the military. When their grandfather died, the young guard, who was known to be a Mennonite, was sent by his supervisor to take the Lancaster young men to their grandfather's funeral!

In another large MC church a boy not old enough yet to be drafted, kept a sharp eye on the two bulletin board lists. The CPS list ended up with 18 men and the military list had 19 men. Other local pressures arose too. Once an American flag was hung across the entrance doors of the church and another time local boys stole yellow paint to paint the panels on entrance doors.

Grace Mennonite (GC), Pandora, Ohio, provides another illustration. Forty-three went into military service, a number of them into noncombatant service. Seven went to CPS camps. One family had four sons in the military, one of whom lost his life. Another family had one son in CPS, one in noncombatant military service and a third son carried a gun in the military. During the war the pastor wanted to have a special time of remembrance for men in service. At least one father was unhappy that CPS families were included in the evening candlelight ceremony.

Also, during the war, a flag was brought into the church and belatedly the church council approved it. The flag is still there, but it has caused discord more than once. It is estimated

that between three and four percent of MC USA churches have flags, most of them coming in during WWII. About three fourths of them are GC churches and one fourth MC. Only a few have removed flags since the war.⁶

At the largest Mennonite church, First Mennonite (GC) at Berne, IN, 150 men were called for service. Only 20 chose CPS. Their pastor strongly promoted noncombatant service, which is what most of the 130 men in the military chose.⁷ Noncombatancy became a specially thorny problem because of the meanings attached to it and the disagreement between some church leaders about that position. In Oklahoma some Mennonites referred to CPS camps as "picnic grounds" because the second camp to be opened was Grottoes in the "beautiful Shenandoah Valley."⁸ Apparently they thought CPS too easy.

CPS provided challenges and opportunities.. It was very costly to the churches who had to pay for the camps and the people living there. Sometimes their work was not of major importance or challenging; time dragged for some fellows; occasionally, discord arose as men from a variety of denominations were thrown together and expected to live peacefully. GCs provided the largest number of camp managers but had the smallest number of CPSers.

Much good came from CPS. One emphasized frequently is the mental health work which helped improve future mental health directions. Camps provided educational and other opportunities. Camp became an eye-opener for men coming from rural and parochial areas. Some, such as Grottoes, had well-stocked libraries. CPS experience became a change agent for numerous young men. The Mennonite world would be different after World War II.

J. O. Lehman

⁶Gordon Houser, *The Mennonite* (July 2, 2002), 12-13.

⁷Naomi Lehman, *Pilgrimage of a Congregation*, First Mennonite, 1982, 372-73.

⁸Paul Toews, *Mennonites in American Society, 1930-1970*, Herald, 1996, 138-75.

⁵The largest erosion of the nonresistant position occurred among General Conference Mennonites.

Paul T. and Marjorie Guengerich and CPS

Paul T. and Marjorie know first-hand what CPS was like. P. T. spent 44 months in a total of four different camps. For some he served as director. He kept a diary and has written two short manuscripts and a number of published articles about his experiences, one example of which appeared in the July 25, 1943, Youth's Christian Companion. Here through the eyes and words and thoughts of Paul from the above sources and from talking with them is a collage of their experiences: (Ed.)

I attribute my convictions in opposing participation in war to the teachings received from my church, East Union Mennonite [Kalona, IA] during childhood and youth. When I enrolled at the University of Iowa in 1932 my bishop, D. J. Fisher, helped me petition the University to be excused from the required ROTC training. This was granted.

After a year at the university I taught one-room rural schools for 7 1/2 years. After completing my BA degree in 1941 I taught and coached in a small public high school in Iowa. I enjoyed it and expected to spend the rest of my life that way.

But Uncle Sam had other plans for me. The draft snagged me in the spring of 1942. Marjorie Yoder and I got married May 24, 1942, and we had to postpone our honeymoon one day because I had to go for a physical exam.

FORT COLLINS, COLORADO

I chose Civilian Public Service which was an alternate to military service. I was assigned to the CPS camp in Ft. Collins, CO. However, only camp directors were allowed to have their wives along, so we could not live together. Boarding the bus at Washington, Iowa with me to go to Ft. Collins were Herman Ropp and John A. Hostetler.

Camp No. 33 (Ft. Collins) was also called the Poudre Canyon Camp and there was a permanent 50-man "side camp" near Bucking-

ham, CO, 60 miles east. CPSers worked with the Department of Agriculture on farm-crop research. Periodically, their work was interrupted to fight fires.

I spent my first several months cooking. I learned how to make "hot-cakes" for 100 men and surprisingly they were fit to eat and none were left for the dog! Communication with Marjorie was by letter. Before long, however, she decided to come near Ft. Collins to look for a job. She soon found one and rented a two-room apartment. Thus more opportunities arose to be together whenever I could find a way to town. She worked at night and each morning I was able to call her after breakfast. Camp activities settled down to a routine that included educational opportunities, softball, football, devotions, church, Sunday school and prayer meeting.

But routines could be interrupted by the howl of coyotes or the fellows getting into a hot discussion on divine healing and predestination until midnight! Or a bunch of fellows went to search for a lost deer hunter. When it was time to get peaches for canning, it was a 330-mile drive into the beautiful Rocky Mountains. We struck a bargain with a farmer who had a small orchard and we picked 30 bushels of peaches and paid only \$1.50 per bushel. One evening a large crew showed up to can about 250 quarts of peaches. Meanwhile, I learned more of the finer arts of cooking such as baking 20 apple pies.

Already that fall MCC, along with Selective Service, decided that administrators should be found within the camps. I was chosen to be one of about 14 young men with a college degree who were called to receive training at MCC, Akron, PA and Selective Service in Washington, D. C. to prepare for administration.

HILL CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA CAMP

I was then assigned to Hill City, South Dakota, Camp #57, but misfortune struck on the ride to South Dakota when a pickpocket lifted my billfold. At Hill City I spent a year, mainly

-serving as an assistant and being educational director.

Though separated from my wife, I found things to do, whether it was crafts, educational activities, going to worship services, and sometimes other religious activities such as a panel discussion of the New Testament basis for pacifism. I also attended staff-council meetings, taught a Mennonite history class and Sunday school, took first-aid classes and dealt with cold as low as minus 34 degrees. One time I took 12 fellows to Hill City to play basketball and our CPS boys beat the town team 52 to 26.

Morale was high in February 1943. Of course, it helped that I got two letters from Mrs. Guengerich that day! On June I observed that morale was so high that I considered it a rich experience to meet so many Christian young fellows. The camp had 116 fellows.

I did office work and helped with the camp paper. I occasionally did some kitchen duty at Hill City camp too. A number of times that summer, Marjorie was able to come for a visit at the camp. I loved to go fishing for trout and sometimes Marjorie was along.

In August of 1943 Marjorie decided that she might as well go back to teaching in Iowa since we could not live together. Then came quite a surprise on August 23 when Marjorie was asked to become dietitian at our camp. But within a week she was supposed to start teaching school! So she dashed off to try to get a release from teaching. The school board agreed if she finds a good sub. I worried that those chances were slim and my spirits were very low.

Marjorie started teaching since she couldn't find a substitute. Meanwhile, if my schedule allowed it I would take off and go fishing to relax! Sometimes my workload was so heavy that on my day off I stayed in the office to work. Having tasted administration, I vowed I would never become a director of a unit!

In late October, 1943, MCC paid my way to Newton, KS to attend a conference. I still had no word from Marjorie that she could be relieved of teaching and come to camp. Alas, she had to teach the whole year and could not join me.

WISCONSIN DAIRY UNIT

Meanwhile, in January 1944, MCC asked me to become supervisor of the Wisconsin Dairy Unit. With the shortage of farm labor the government asked CPS men to volunteer for jobs on dairy farms. The Wisconsin unit was spread over five counties with 20 men for each county—a Unit total of 100 men. My job was to keep in touch with the men, their placements with the farmers, and work with county agents. Besides individual contacts I planned Sunday group meetings with the men on a rotating county basis. Here I was, doing a good bit of administrative work!

In Wisconsin, as well as at Hill City, we often attended various Christian church services that were available to us. Wisconsin involved a lot of personnel work and sometimes having to deal with problems, as for example, the CPSer who insisted he "must live with his wife." I could relate to that idea! Working it out was another matter. So I lost sleep. I never thought I'd lose sleep over worry!

There were challenges to face and problems to solve. On top of that I got a request, asking me if I wouldn't transfer to Greystone Park, New Jersey, to become unit leader—and work full time in administration. It was one of the largest hospital units (95 men) and things had not been going well. They wanted someone with experience and maturity. Now it was almost time for school to dismiss and Marjorie and I were looking forward eagerly to living together at Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. Her last day of school was May 12.

Marjorie came to visit in mid-April. After some long talks together I called MCC to say I could not accept the New Jersey job. Finally, in May 1944, my wife and I could begin to live together. We would have been happy to stay there until the end of my CPS days, even if there were periodic stresses and strains dealing with the CPSers and the farmers they worked for. It was great to have Marjorie along frequently as I traveled my large area throughout the counties of Outagamie, FonduLac, Dodge, Dane and Green.

Right after Christmas, on December 28, I attended a conference with Albert Gaeddert and four regional directors. To my surprise, Gaeddert, at lunch time, told me MCC would like to “interchange” Dwight Yoder of the Luray Camp in Virginia with me.

That meant a move to the East. My first response was to request consideration to stay in Wisconsin until spring. P. C. Hiebert was also at this conference and he led an inspirational meeting on relief work. It was one of the most inspiring meetings on relief I had ever heard.

January 1945 had ups and downs with personnel work. I was also having some headache and stomach problems. On the 22nd came another letter from Gaeddert. I sent him a wire, my diary says, but I didn’t tell my diary what I wired him! I was weakening to the arm-twisting of Albert Gaeddert. We eventually agreed to make the move to Luray,

Our first son, Ronald, was born in Wisconsin on March 8, 1945. Soon it was time for me to train my successor, Dwight Yoder, and to say our goodbyes. In early April we paid a visit to Kalona IA, where Marjorie and the baby stayed with her folks. Early on the 9th of April I headed for Luray to get started with my work. On May 27 I returned to get the family and we traveled to Luray on June 1-3.

CAMP LURAY

The camp was a short distance from Skyline Drive and under the direction of the Shenandoah National Park. The 140 men worked on park maintenance, fighting forest fires, and even some emergency farm labor in the Shenandoah Valley. In less than three weeks I knew all the men, but also quickly got involved in helping to identify 35 men to be transferred to Three Rivers, CA.

Our camp setting on the crest of the Blue Ridge was beautiful. That spring and summer brought news regarding World War II as the European phase of the war closed in the spring and in August the war in the Pacific. Spirits were high as men anticipated their discharges. Things, however, did not move that fast.

Those inducted earliest were first to be released. Marjorie and I were fortunate to have Iowa friends in Virginia. Harry Wenger of Wellman was camp business manager and his wife, Mary, was dietitian. We lived in the same dorm with a common living room. To Ron, the Wengers were part of our family. In fact, Ron wasn’t always sure which man was his father! I was not discharged until March 6, 1946. We then moved to Parnell, Iowa, where we lived until moving to Virginia in August, 1964.

REFLECTIONS

Several things come to mind as I think about CPS. Experiences I had in camp administration served me well in what the Lord called me to do in subsequent years—namely pastoral work at West Union Mennonite Church, Parnell, Iowa (December 1947-August 1964) and as administrator of Iowa Mennonite School (January 1949-June 30, 1964).

When I was drafted in 1942, my only ambition was to return to high school teaching. During those 44 months of service came a growing conviction that the Lord had other work than going back to public school teaching. The CPS influence became much more readily discernible in hindsight. I have seen the same among many of my CPS friends who became congregational, missions and institutional leaders.

Another thing CPS taught me was to “never state what you will or won’t do.” You may need to eat your words as I did regarding my experience in becoming a camp director. Finally, CPS has convinced me that our youth need to do voluntary service—not just short term, but also longer periods where they can gain a new vision of God’s call for their lives. CPS, our “required VS,” was a blessing in disguise for many of us.

I resigned as principal of Iowa Mennonite School after 16 years and was invited to join the staff at EMC/EMU in 1964, where I served in various administrative roles, the last being in Alumni Relations, where I still serve part-time at age 91!

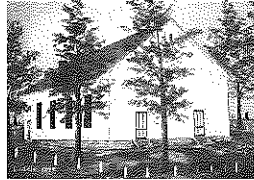
Paul T. Guengerich and J. O. Lehman

From the Historic to the Modern!

Lindale Mennonite Church Dedicates New Building

On the weekend of October 15-17 the Lindale congregation scheduled several events to celebrate the building of a major new building that includes a new sanctuary, church offices, several nurseries and a library. Later, a basement will be finished for Sunday school and other uses.

First, there was a cemetery at this location. Marie, the first wife of Abraham Brenneman, and her baby daughter, died with childbirth complications in 1788. Not until 110 years later in 1898 was the first Lindale meetinghouse built. What better place than beside a cemetery to locate a desired new meetinghouse along a road from Harrisonburg to Broadway that was becoming busier?

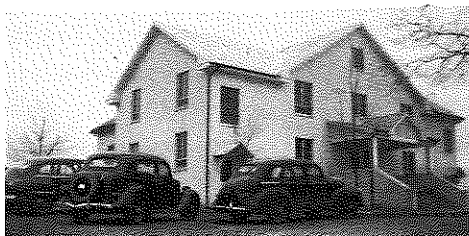


First Lindale meetinghouse as painted by Sallie (Wenger) Weaver, 1962

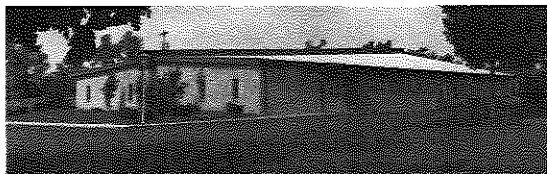
1898 first building. Note the two doors to enter the worship place, so that men and women could each have their own entrance and exit.



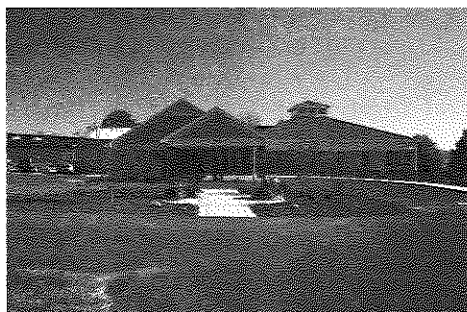
By 1937 it was decided that it was permissible for men and women to enter and exit through one door!



In 1948, major wings and improved entrances were built to accommodate the growing congregation.



After college students packed out the space to hear a popular preacher, a new and modern energy efficient worship building was occupied on Easter Sunday, April 15, 1979.



Exactly 25 years later (April 18, 2004) Lindale began worshipping in the current lovely new sanctuary.

ANNOUNCING THE MENNO ROUND TABLE

Interested in a cozy meeting with old friends to reminisce about the past? Then the Menno Round Table is for you. As an extension of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians and with your help, we are beginning small informal Mennonite Heritage discussion groups several times per year. If the idea floats successfully, they may replace the annual fall meeting. In order for these groups to form we need members to host or co-host meetings in their homes, churches or other locations of their choosing.

The **host or co-hosts** will choose their topic for discussion or SVMH executive board will offer topic suggestions. The **host or co-hosts** will also choose the time and locations of their meeting and provide light refreshments, if they choose. In order to preserve our Mennonite heritage, highlights of the meetings will appear in the *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*. Advertisement will be through church announcements, email notices, and "word of mouth."

For the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians to survive and grow it needs active participation from members. Please contact one of the following executive members by **December 1** if you are willing to host or co-host a meeting during 2005. Also, if you have email, please contact one of the following with your email address so that you can be notified of future meetings.

Debbie Turner: Joanna6@aol.com or 433-7383

Jim Rush: rush@emhs.net or 434-0792

Addendum to List of Congregations in Virginia

In the last issue (Summer 2004) we attempted to compile a complete list of Mennonite and Amish churches in the state of Virginia. Thanks to Kenneth Ranck of Mt. Crawford, he has alerted us to a few that were missed. Here they are:

SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

McDowell Mennonite Church, Highland Co. [13]

UNAFFILIATED CONGREGATIONS

Lucas Hollow Mennonite Church, Stanley [11]

Pine Grove Amish Mennonite Church, Catlett [36]

Island Creek Mennonite Church, Hillsville [20]

Add the above to your list.

SHENANDOAH MENNONITE HISTORIAN

Editor: James O. Lehman
Sketch (front cover) Jonathan Gehman

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