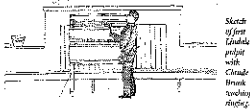


First Lindsdale meetinghouse as painted by Sillie (Helen) Weaver, 1902



Sketch of first Lindsdale meetinghouse. Church built by Claude Brunk, 1800-1805.

Method by Sillie Weaver about 1902



First Lindsdale benches were made of pine.

Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

Vol. 10, No. 3 Quarterly Publication of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians Summer 2003

Virginia – West Virginia Tour Planned

Reserve Saturday, September 20, 2003, for an interesting tour following the steps of Mennonite and Brethren circuit rider preachers from Brocks Gap to Wardensville. We will see old school houses, churches, houses and Fort Hogg. Like last year, we will hear historical interesting chatter along the way. Our guides will include writer-historian Pat Turner Ritchie and Michael Shenk.

Our bus will leave EMHS's upper parking lot at 8:30. At noon we'll have lunch at a restaurant in Wardensville, West Virginia and we'll return between 3:30 and 4:00 p.m.

The cost for the day's activities is \$28 for SVMH members and \$31 for non-members. This covers bus fare, lunch and honoraria. Come learn more and invite others to join us.

Fill out the registration slip found within this newsletter and send it along with your check as soon as possible. Direct your mailings and questions to Jim Rush, 780 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22802. Phone: 540-434-0792. E-mail: rush@emhs.net.

Annual Meeting

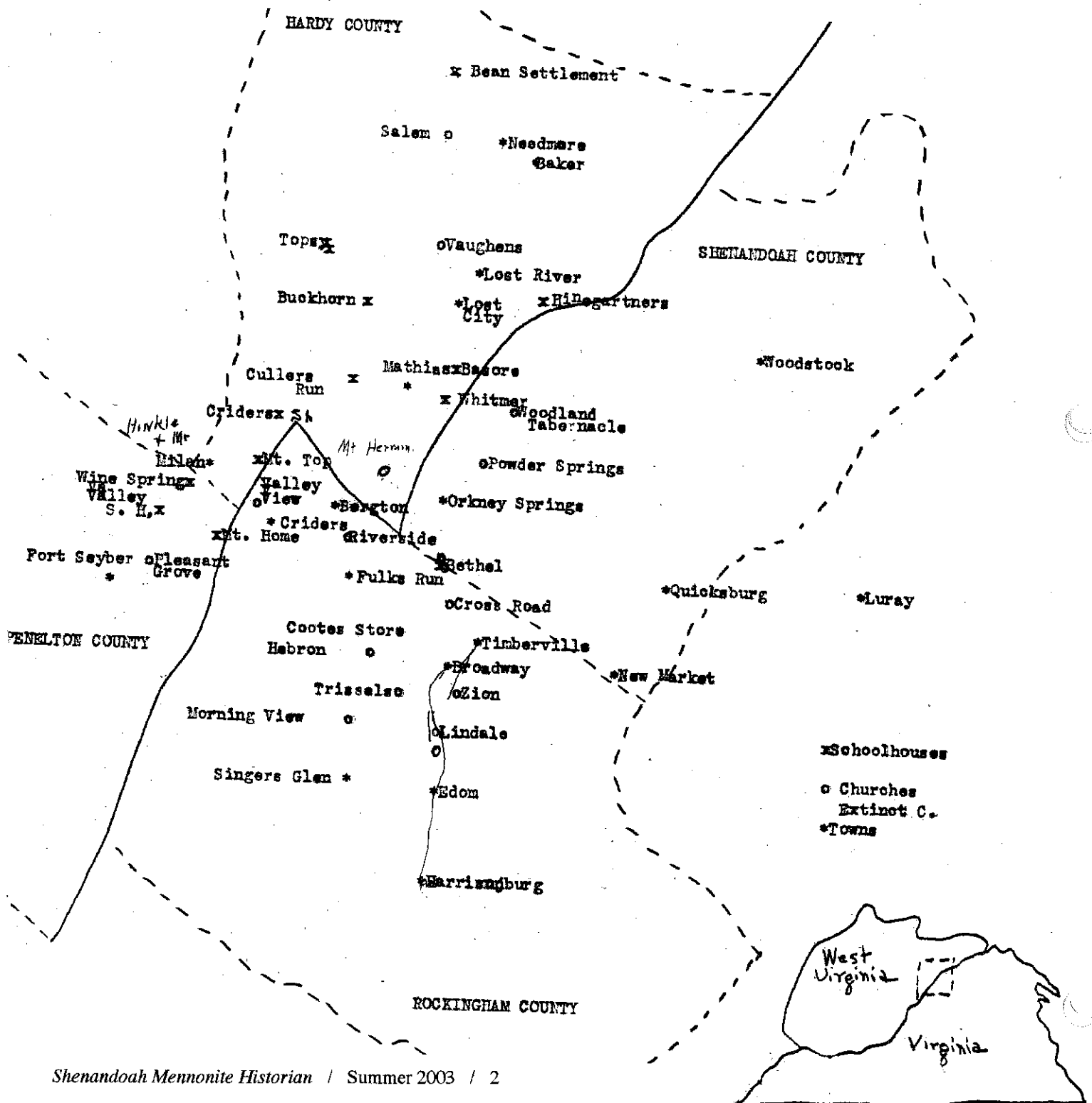
Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians

The annual meeting will be a breakfast meeting at the Park View Mennonite Church on Saturday, September 27, at 8:30 a.m. The speaker is Harold D. Lehman, who will talk on "Ten Things I've Learned While Writing the History of the Park View Mennonite Church."

Park View will be celebrating the 50th anniversary of its origin during the Thanksgiving weekend, and Harold has written a history to be released that weekend. At the annual meeting Harold will give a preview of the book. Please call Debbie Turner at 433-7383 or e-mail her at joanna6@aol.com if you plan to attend the light breakfast.

FEATURING NORTHERN DISTRICT

In this issue we feature the Northern District of the Mennonite Church, which was formerly called "Lower District" because geographically it lies lower than other Mennonite districts of Virginia Mennonites. We begin with Ida R. Showalter's map and extensive term paper, "History of Expansion of the Mennonite Church in Northern District of Virginia Conference," of 1951-52, which due to its length has been abridged and revised considerably.



Mennonites first came to Page County in the early 1700s and to the Shenandoah Valley by the 1770s and 80s. Later, after the Civil War which was very hard on Virginia Mennonites, a number of families moved to Frederick County, some settling north of Winchester and some between Stephen City and Winchester. They flourished for a number of decades, but upon the death of the colorful and a bit eccentric minister, Christley Brunk, who died in 1906, the Kernstown Church also died.

Farther to the south, in Rockingham County, for years Mennonites met in homes to worship. The first meeting-house built was Trissels (1822). However, a number of Mennonites lived in the area around New Market and westward, so two extinct churches for those people were the Plains Church (1826) and the New Dale church (1871). Church of the Brethren had two-thirds interest and Mennonites one-third in the New Dale church. Mennonites eventually gave up their involvement.

An early meetinghouse was Brenneman's (1826) two miles west of Edom along the road called Brenneman's Church Road. The Liberty Church was built in 1849, one-half mile west of Quicksburg and also used as a school house. Mennonites, Brethren, Adventists and Progressives eventually sharing its use, with Mennonites using it every fourth Sunday until about 1920. Near Basye, 12 miles west of Mt. Jackson, was Powder Springs, built for school and church in 1858, with the Lutherans owning half interest, and the Mennonites and Brethren each one-fourth. This may have been the first outpost of Northern District. By the 1940s Woodland Tabernacle, four miles north of Orkney Springs replaced any Mennonite involvement with Powder Springs.

Around 1850 a few Mennonites moved from the Linville Creek valley into the Brocks Gap area, some half dozen or more miles west of Broadway. By 1881 the Mennonites, in partnership with the United Brethren built a house for worship called Mt. Carmel, about one and a half miles south of Fulks Run. By the early 1900s the church building passed into the hands of the United Brethren. Later, services were again held in two schoolhouses, Mt. Pleasant and Shoemaker River. In 1915 a frame building called Hebron was built along the Shoemaker River.

Another early effort in rural evangelism occurred six miles north of Salem, a little church at Needmore in Hardy County, WVA. Soon after the Civil War ministers from the Broadway area traveled some 45 miles to that point and preached at a schoolhouse in the Bean Settlement, and later also at the Mine Spring schoolhouse seven miles nearer to Broadway and closer to where the Salem building (1927) now stands.

Services were also held at Vaughans schoolhouse, three miles west of Lost River post office in Hardy County. About the same time Zion was built (1885), work was begun at Pleasant Grove, three miles north of Ft. Seybert in Pendleton County, WVA. Services were first held in an old

tannery and in schoolhouses. A frame church was built in 1903.

Also, in the 1880s services were held in the Upper and Lower Coves, small valleys nestled between mountains east of Mathias, WVA, again in schoolhouses such as Whitmer, Basore and Hinegardner. Furthermore, around 1880-85, a rural witness began at Valley View near Criders, VA. For some decades preaching was done in schoolhouses or in Caplingers Chapel (United Brethren) nearby, until the Valley View Church was built in 1922. Five miles from Bergton on top of the Shenandoah Mountain was the Mountain Home schoolhouse, where the preacher stood in West Virginia and his audience sat in Virginia.

Then, of course, there was the Mt. Hermon church for many years along 259 in West Virginia, as well as Bethel, four miles north of Cootes Store where two Baptist girls began a Sunday school under a tree. Later, church was held in an old store building. Mennonites were invited to take the work over and purchased the store in 1918. Then there was Crest Hill, purchased from the Presbyterians in 1924 and located three miles north of Wardensville, WVA.

Services began around 1930 at Cullers Run schoolhouse about five miles southwest of Mathias, as well as at Buckhorn schoolhouse four miles west of Mathias. Buckhorn represents a continuation of services held earlier at the Strawderman schoolhouse, a few miles east. By the 1970s several of the small congregations in the general area of Mathias, WVA combined to form the Mathias Mennonite Church. For years services were also held at Riverside, an Evangelical United Brethren Church, three miles north of Fulks Run.

In 1925 several men from Lindale organized a Sunday school at the Brocks Creek schoolhouse. Some time previously, people of that community had begun to meet for worship services and were served by Church of the Brethren, Baptist, Presbyterian and United Brethren ministers. By July 1922, the colorful J. Hopkins Turner "Hop Turner," preached the first Mennonite sermon. Eventually, Mennonites were invited to take over the work and it became the Morning View Mennonite Church.

Cross Roads is a community church not far from Timberville. Built by popular subscription for religious services it was used by a number of groups, primarily by the Baptists. When it fell into disuse Northern District Mennonites picked up the work around 1933.

Prior to 1900 the church activity in the mountains was confined to preaching services. Between 1900 and 1930 church growth was rapid. Membership almost tripled from about 250 in 1901 to 744 in 1930. At the present (1951) the membership in the mountains accounts for three-fifths of the total membership in the Northern District. There are eighteen ministers, five of which are natives of the highlands.

Majestic mountains, shaded hollows, clear streams, dusty trails, humble homes, beauty, fragrance, air, and life—this is the picture of the highlands. In this arena of nature where many people have lived, worked, played and loved, largely unmindful of and unnoticed by the society outside in the commercial world.

Hospitable, loving, lonely, poor, friendly, frank, open-hearted, simple, individualistic, hearty, and religious—this is the people. A visit in their homes will reveal even more.

Face to face with grim realities: struggling against poverty, meeting mountain wild life and storm; enduring loneliness, tragedy and death; being without adequate educational facilities, suffering without the comfort of medical aid; growing up without Christ—these are the problems which confront the highland folk.

What a challenge is ours! What an opportunity! Certainly much has changed in recent years. Handicaps are lessened because of modern advancement—road building in particular. Ministers today do not take three days to reach the farthest preaching point, neither do they go in horse and buggy. What was once a muddy trail from Broadway, the nearest railway station, through Brocks Gap to Lost City, West Virginia, is now a modern highway. Increased income has brought modern conveniences into some homes—refrigerators, electric lights, and radios.

Yes, much labor has been done by consecrated Christians in the past who were not appointed by a mission board or an evangelistic committee, but who because of the love of God in their hearts for their neighbors took to the trails and started visitation work and won the hearts of these dear people.

The future holds more opportunities than have ever been opened before. Now is the time to build a Christian community life.

Quoting Ray Emswiler, a long time pastor in the mountains, "The work has been hard and trying and will continue to be so. But let us not be discouraged, 'For in due season we shall reap if we faint not.' With him the future is bright."

#

Thus Ida R. Showalter saw it in 1951-52. How times have changed since then in the last half century. Bygone days have passed. Schoolhouse preaching which eventually resulted in established churches, seems to have fallen by the wayside. Now it's Highland Retreat Camp and Center that get the attention. However, some churches have survived, even flourished—Valley View, for example, and others. There are still faithful witnesses today.

Editor

Through Streams and Over the Mountains

Circuit riders, whether by horse, buggy or automobile, were a hardy lot. But they had the gospel of Jesus Christ to share. Numerous stories abound, but here's two examples related by Ida Showalter.

Bishop Lewis Shank was one who often rode his buggy to a distant point. Once, on his way home he was so weary that he fell asleep. The buggy was being pulled by a sorrel horse with an unpleasant disposition. After a good nap, he awoke to find that the lines had fallen from his hands and were lying over the whipple tree close to the horses' heels.

Now that was a predicament. If he had a gentle horse it would have been no problem to lean forward and regain his lines, but this horse would kick him in the face! The horse watched him out of the corner of his eye. After a little thought Shank took a mighty leap over the buggy wheels, hoping to catch the horse. He landed on his feet but he was still 15 miles from home. The horse, "with a horse laugh, no doubt," left him behind with a burst of speed.

Each time he almost caught up, the horse would trot off, leaving his master to follow as best he could. Finally, Shank figured out that on the mountainous curves he could take a shorter steep route and get ahead of the horse. But he found no tracks when he got to the roadway. So he followed the roadway down the mountain and found the run-away in custody of some men by the roadside. For the last 10 miles the buggy doubtlessly never rode so well!

* * * * *

One time on the way to Hardy County, Samuel Shank, father of the above Lewis, and Joseph Geil, needed to cross a river. But the waters were considerably higher than normal. After driving all day, they were not of a mind to turn back home.

First, they placed all their baggage on the buggy seat. Geil then took his perch on top of the buggy and Shank mounted the horse, so as to have a high perch as well, and to help the horse to have more traction.

They started in. All went well until about midstream where it was the deepest. Shank, seated on the horse with his feet held high to prevent them from getting wet, looked back to see how his partner was doing. Seeing Brother Geil perched high on the buggy so amused Brother Shank that he forgot himself and began to laugh and laugh. Without thinking he dropped his feet down into the water.

Then the laugh was turned the other way! But they made the crossing and eventually dried out.

@ @ @ @ @

Now a historic tour resurrects memories of the days when circuit riders by horse or buggy (later automobiles) took preachers to the highlands to witness for the Lord.

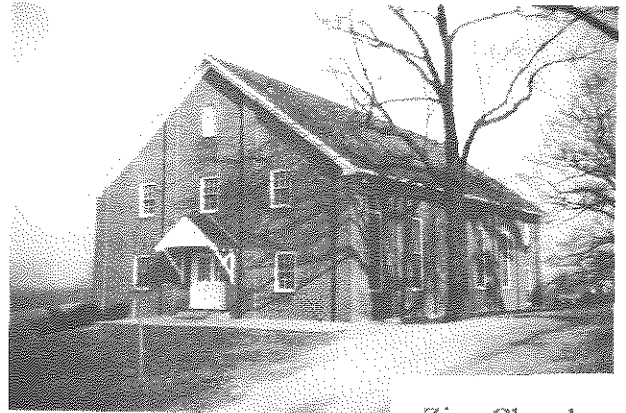
1949-53 Photos of Church Buildings and Schoolhouses

Home-Base
Churches

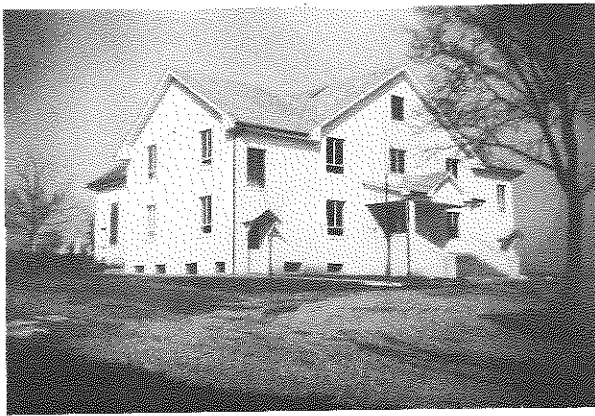
Trissels,
Zion
Lindale



Trissels, Old and "New"



Zion Church



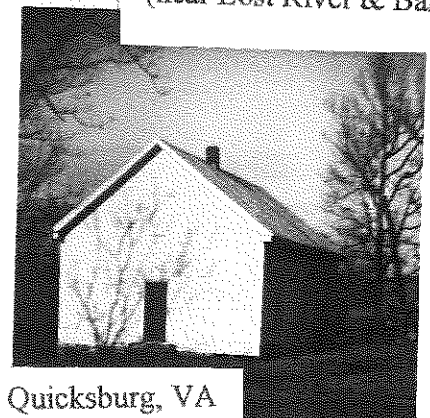
Lindale Mennonite Church



Bachman Church
Hardy County, WVA
(near Lost River & Baker)



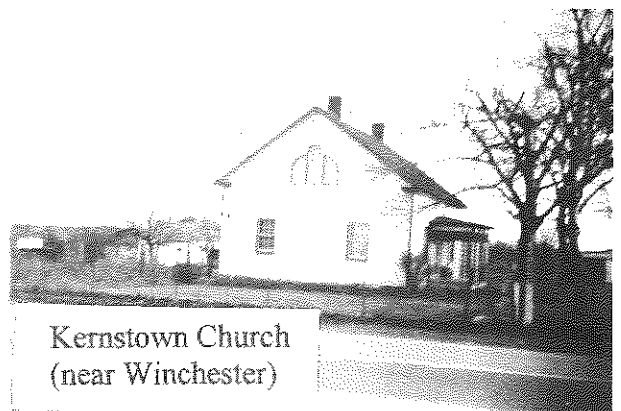
Plains Church
(Between Timberville
and New Market)



Liberty Union, Quicksburg, VA



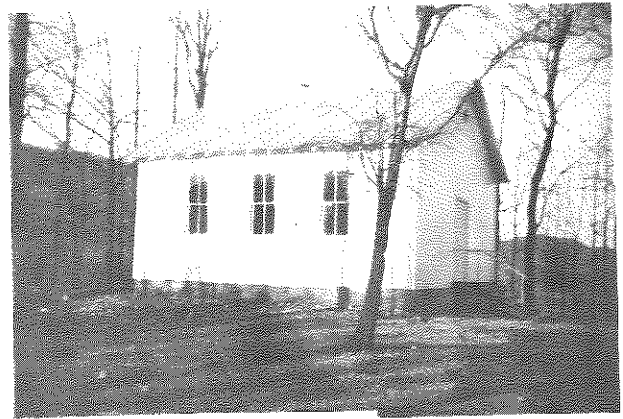
Powder Spring Church
(near Orkney Springs)



Kernstown Church
(near Winchester)



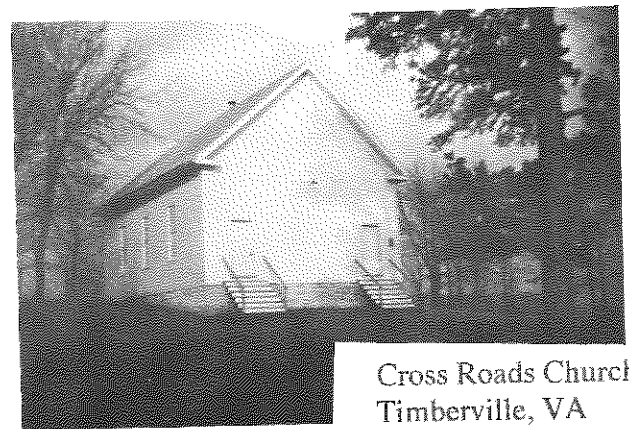
Woodland Tabernacle
Basye, VA



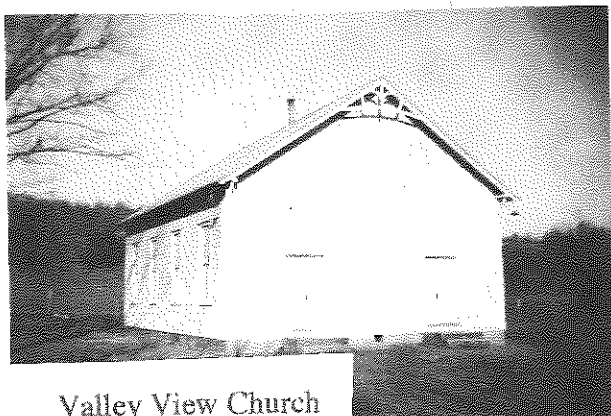
Morning View
Singers Glen, VA



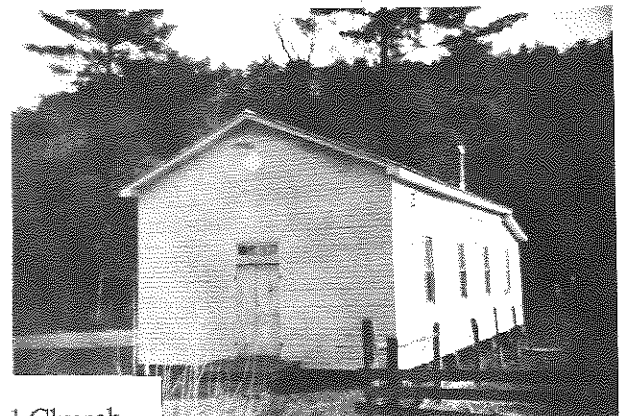
Hebron Church
Fulks Run, VA



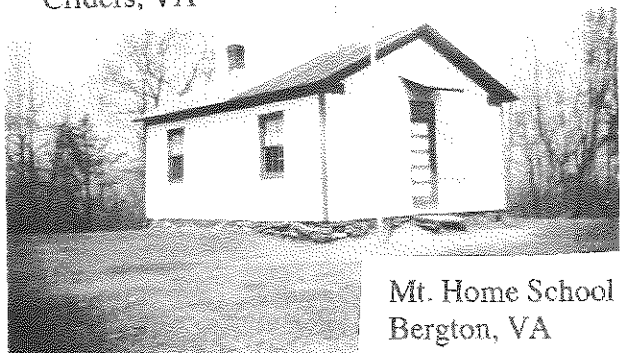
Cross Roads Church
Timberville, VA



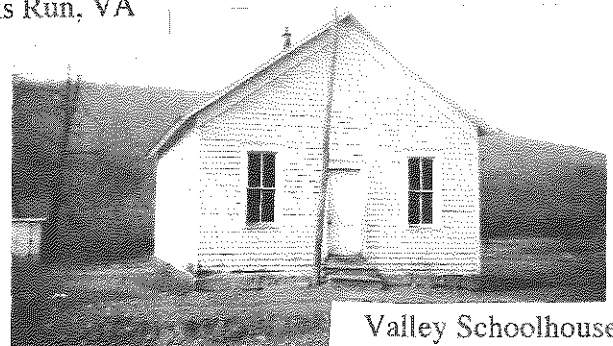
Valley View Church
Criders, VA



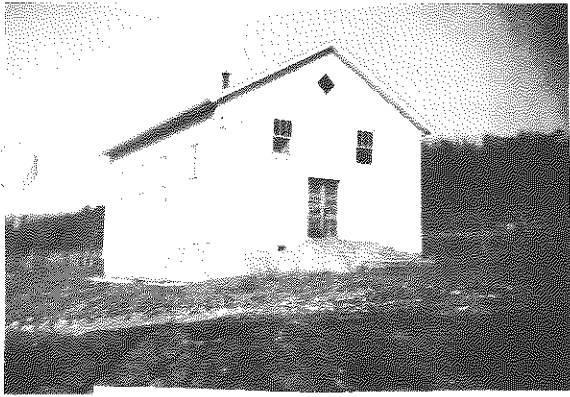
Bethel Church
Fulks Run, VA



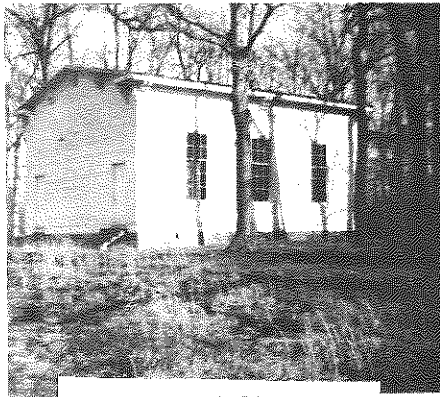
Mt. Home School
Bergton, VA



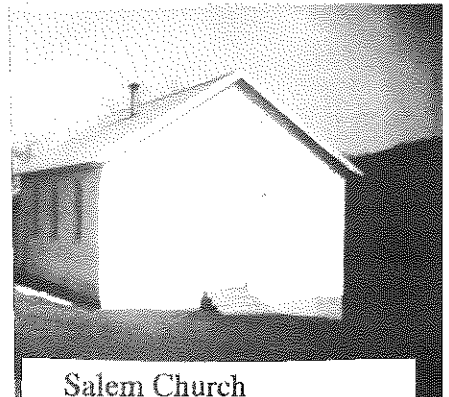
Valley Schoolhouse
Ft. Seybert, WVA
Pendleton County



Mt. Hermon
Hardy County, WVA



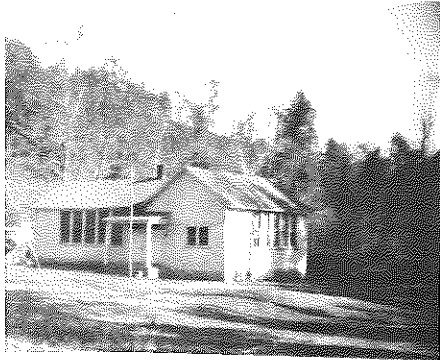
Crest Hill Church
Wardensville, WVA



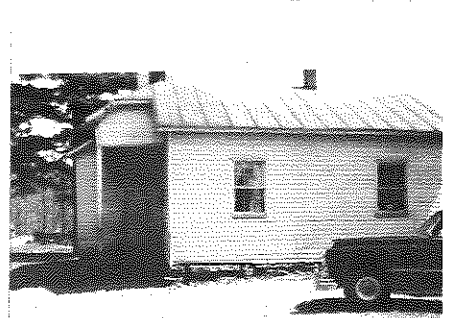
Salem Church
Baker, Hardy Co., WVA



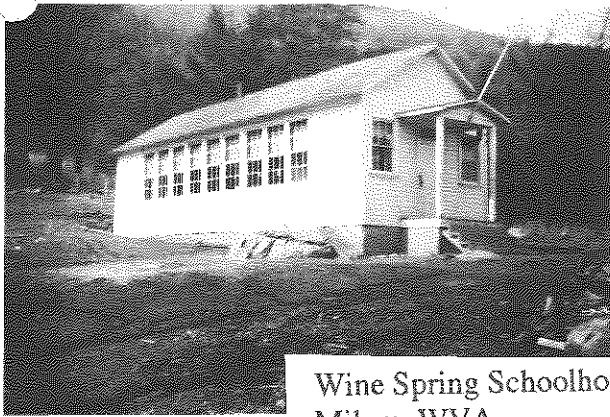
Holly Hill Church
Lost River, WVA



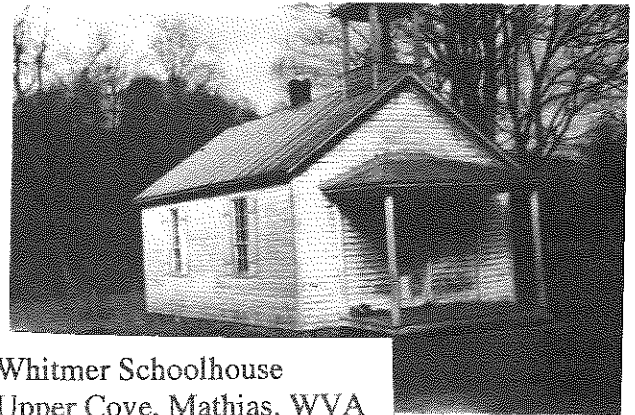
Vaughans Schoolhouse
Lost River



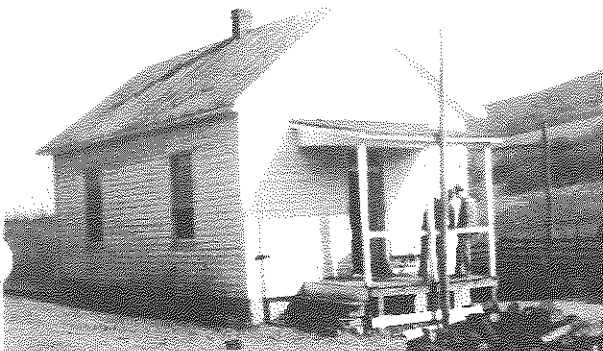
Cullers Run Schoolhouse
Six miles southwest of
Mathias, WVA



Wine Spring Schoolhouse
Milam, WVA
Hardy County



Whitmer Schoolhouse
Upper Cove. Mathias, WVA



Buckhorn School and Church, Mathias, WVA



Snatches from Timothy Showalter's 1937 Diary

Timothy Showalter from the Broadway area, first a deacon (1915), then a minister (1932) and finally a bishop (1943), did a great deal of preaching in Virginia and West Virginia. By 1937 he decided to keep a diary. He was busy every Sunday, often going far back into West Virginia, as his diaries indicate. His only living daughter, Ida R. Showalter, gave permission for publication.

Jan. 3 – To Sweedlin Valley. Waters were full and roads bad down the valley on the other side of the mountain. About 24 at Pleasant Grove service.

Jan. 10 – Fairly large crowd at Powder Spring.

Jan. 17 – Susie [Timothy's wife] and Oliver Showalter along to Hebron Only 10 there in all.

Jan. 24 – To Divide for service; about 12 or 15 there. To Cullers Run schoolhouse for the afternoon. 35 there, then to the Cove for the evening service; about 20 there.

Jan. 31 – to Lindale for an all-day service. Three offerings today.

Feb. 7 – At Lost Creek Church; taught the Bible class and preached.

Feb. 14 – To Salem in a.m. and Holly Hill in eve; 8 there.

Feb. 28 – To Bethel in the morning; In evening filled appointment at Mt. Olivet. Not so many present.

March 7 – To Cross Roads. The crowd was small.

March 14 – Snowed all day. To Zion this morning; there were 101 there for S. S.

March 28 Easter Sunday – Ada [daughter] and I to Strawderman and Buckhorn. Small crowds on account of sickness, etc. After some visits, preached at Mt. Olivet Church. About 25 there.

April 4 – to Riverside Church north of Fulks Run for the morning service; about 26 there.

April 25 – to E.M.S. Raining. Expected to begin meetings at Bethel tonight but the water was too high.

May 2 – to Riverside Church for the morning service. In eve at Bethel where meetings were begun.

May 9 – to Roaring, WVA by way of Moorefield. Held meetings there for next two weeks.

May 30 – to Harrisonburg Mission in forenoon; in afternoon to Lindale for quarterly mission program. Preached at the mission at night.

June 20 – to Hebron for S. S. and communion. 26 members communed.

June 27 – to Buckhorn S. H. west of Mathias, WVA. Meeting at Strawderman S. H. in p.m.; to Trissels singing at night.

July 4 – to Valley View; 45 there for morning service. To Mt. Home on top of the Shenandoah Mt. for afternoon service and to Valley View for evening service. About 30 present.

July 11-25 – to Buckhorn S. H. and Cullers Run in p.m. Started a revival at Cullers Run and went for two weeks. Five converts.

Aug. 6-16 – to Concord, Tennessee for series of meetings.

Aug. 22 – to Salem. To Trissels singing at night.

Aug. 29 – to E.M.S. for services; about 80 there. Guy F. Hershberger from Goshen College there. Then came to Lindale for preaching and stayed for the p.m. service.

Sept. 5 – to Riverside but there was no service. Preached at Hebron [in p.m.] and in eve to Salem.

Sept. 19 – Susie and I to Bachman settlement for services. Came home by way of Needmore and Liberty Furnace. At Lindale this eve.

Sept. 26 – to the Divide, Cullers Run and the Cove. Crowds at the first two were small on account of the big day at Bergton.

Oct. 10 – to Powder Spring for the morning service..

Nov. 14 – Susie and I started for Bethel. In p.m. at Morning View. Preached there also. To Zion at night.

Nov. 21 – to Pleasant Grove, not so many there. To Valley S. H. in p.m. In eve to Zion's meetings which closed tonight [J. L. Stauffer]. About 23 confessions.

Lindale Church, 1898

Built by Mennonites and Other Community Folks

Tradition says that community people helped build the first Lindale meetinghouse in 1898. Through the courtesy of Eunice Geil Smith, we now have quite a few more names of Mennonites and others who subscribed money and helped to build that meetinghouse. These lists were not available to us when the 1998 history, *Lindale's Song*, was written.

Perhaps, since it was built next to the oldest continuous community cemetery beside a Mennonite church, various people from the community were willing to help. For more than a hundred years the cemetery was called Brenneman's Cemetery because the pioneer Abraham Brenneman gave land for such a community burial ground when his first wife died March 22, 1788. Because of the church house built there in 1898, it then became known as the Lindale cemetery. On a small hidden board found a few years ago and dated May 26, 1898, Henry Thomas had scrawled the message, "This house was built for the Menonites by G. Carr Spitzer"

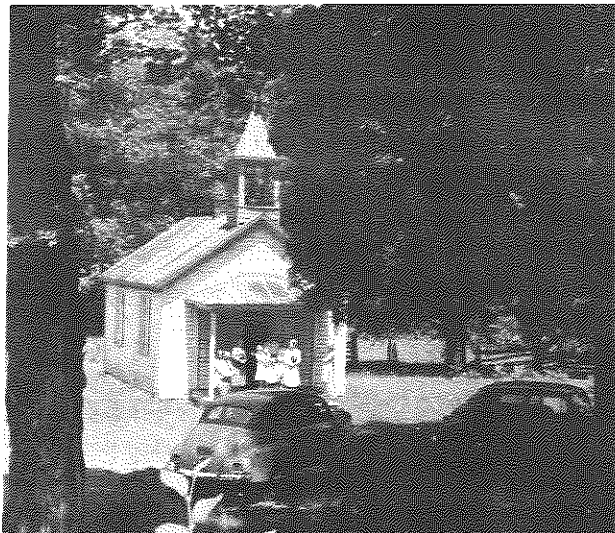
Following are the names of the people who subscribed money on the subscription lists. Many are Mennonite names but quite a few are not. Some names are given on more than one sheet, but we list them only once alphabetically. In some cases, instead of money, they supplied materials. Each list has the following message at the top of the page:

"We the undersigned, promise and bind ourselves to pay the amounts opposite our names, for the purpose of building a Mennonite Church 40 x 50 ft. near the Old Graveyard on the Jacob Wenger farm, on the road leading from Edom to Wengers Mill"

John Acker	5.00	M. A. Good	1.00	Jos. Shank	25.00
A Lady	.50	Frank L. Harris	2.50	Lewis Shank	20.00
T. J. Atchison	10.00	P. S. Hartman	2.00	Perry E. Shank	10.00
D. R. Beard	5.00	G. D. Heatwole	.50	Sam'l Shank	30.00
J. E. Beard	1.00	Aaron Hess	2.00	Geo. W. Shaver	5.00
Frank Beery	12.00	Noah Holsinger	8.00	J. H. Shirkey	2.50
I. N. Beery	50.00	J. P. Houck	2.50	Dan Showalter	16.00
Josiah Beery	25.00	Harve Kagey	.50	F. B. Showalter	16.00
N. W. Beery	2.50	John B. Kline	1.00	Geo. B. Showalter	25.00
Barbara Brannaman	1.50	Jos. S. Kline	2.00	Mary J. Showalter	25.00
D. C. Brenneman	25.00	Joseph Kratzer	3.00	Nettie Showalter	6.00
C. H. Brunk	5.00	E. H. Letcher	10.00	A. S. Spero	2.00
George Brunk	5.00	Wm. Ligget	1.00	Betty Spitzer	.25
J. D. Brunk	1.00	John W. Liskey	40.00	Noah Spitzer	2.00
J. H. Brunk	50.00	Daniel Mellinger	10.00	F. M. Stinespring	2.50
A. B. Burkholder	.50	J. S. Messerly	5.00	I. S. Wampler	1.00
Sam Burkholder	2.00	C. M. Meyers	2.00	D. Wenger "The Frame Up the Rafters"	
Cash	.50	B. A. Myers	1.00	H. H. Wenger	25.00
C. H. Chandler	.50	J. H. Nave	10.00	J. A. Wenger	5.00
Geo. Corad	.50	J. F. Neff	5.00	J. J. Wenger	50.00
Fravels Co. "took from their bill"	1.48	B. Ney & Sons	1.00	Jos. Wenger	1.00
P. H. Donovan	2.00	B. G. Paterson	1.00	D. N. Washington	2.00
C. D. Fletcher	1.00	P. W. Reherd	1.00	C. D. L. Williams	6.00
E. Fletcher	10.00	J. B. D. Rhodes "1 Keg of Nails"		Dr. Zirkle	5.00
Henry Geil	50.00	Martin Rhodes	.75		
Jacob Geil	100.00	Ruban Rhodes	5.00		
John Geil	50.00	Geo. Roudabush	2.00		
J. S. Geil "Rocks on Foundation"		Settlement Auction	3.21		
		Abraham Shank	20.00		

UPCOMING EVENTS

Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center



Upper Cove Schoolhouse/Church to be moved from Hardy County, WVA to Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, 710 Garbers Church Road, Harrisonburg, VA this summer. Above are two photos taken around 1950 of its original location.

August 15-17 – Drama “The Final Journey of John Kline,” by a group from Pennsylvania.

Aug. 15 – Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren, 7:00 p.m.

Aug. 16 – Lehman Auditorium, Eastern Mennonite University, 8:00 p.m.

Aug. 17 – Linville Creek Church of the Brethren, 10:30 a.m. and Mill Creek Church of the Brethren at 7:00 p.m.

[Free-will offerings will be taken – suggested amount is \$5.00]

September 7, 2003 – Dedication of Heritage Center Site, 4:00 p.m. Robert Alley will speak. Also to be featured are “Cherished Traditional Hymns” and a tour of the site.

September 25, 7:00 p.m., Massanutten Regional Library in Harrisonburg – Steven Longenecker, Professor of History, Bridgewater College, will give a review of his recent new book, *Shenandoah Religion: Outsiders and the Mainstream, 1716-1865.*

Shenandoah Mennonite Historian / Summer 2003 / 10

SHENANDOAH MENNONITE HISTORIAN

Editor: James O. Lehman

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