

Jesus Christ. These peace-making people have a unique response during the crises and cultural issues since the Civil War. We have chosen to be compassionate relief workers after weather-related disasters and global conflicts and as stewards of the land, its resources and relationships. We even share a common hymnal to inspire our faithfulness to Jesus Christ.

The proposed farm homestead design for the Center invites visitors to consider the "battles of conscience" these two groups encounter when we engage our faith in the issues of our living. The mission of this Heritage Center is *to share and celebrate the story of Jesus Christ as it has been reflected in the lives of the Mennonites and Brethren in the Shenandoah Valley*. We pray you will join us in sharing our "journey of faith" with its "battles of conscience" as an alternative story to the historical and contemporary events and issues of the culture.

--Paul Roth
Vice President, VBMHC
Pastor of Linville Creek Church of the Brethren

Joint Meeting Announced

There will be a joint meeting of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians and the Valley Brethren Mennonite Heritage Center board of directors on October 27th. The 7:00 pm meeting will be held at Shady Oaks, Weavers Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va.

The Historians agenda will feature a talk by Gail Nardi, regarding her study of the history of the Mennonites in Virginia. The Heritage Center will introduce Al Keim, the new interim director, and also show a video that will be used in promoting the objectives of the center.

A dessert will be served after the program to allow for more informal interaction and discussion. A freewill offering will be held to help cover expenses for the rental of the facilities, the dessert, and ongoing expenses of both organizations. Please reserve this date on your calendar.

--Cal Redekop, VP of SVMH
President VBMHC

Book Review

Grace. S. Grove, L.J. Heatwole, A Granddaughter's View, published by the author, 2001, 211 pp. \$18.00, plus \$3.00 for postage and handling.

Lewis J. Heatwole, known in adult life as L.J., was born to David and Catherine Driver Heatwole on December 4, 1852. Young Lewis, an observant curious child, was early interested in the phases of the moon and in the stars. In book learning, he was a precocious scholar. As the eldest child in this mid-19th century Mennonite home in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, Lewis participated in the chores of rural life; planting and harvesting, butchering and soap making, picking berries and chopping wood.

But a dark time was coming. With the presidential election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860 and the subsequent secession of the Southern states, the Mennonites in Virginia found themselves within the battle lines of both the Confederate and Union forces. The Shenandoah Valley was regarded as the "granary of the South." Marauding parties from both sides ravaged the farms for food, horses, grain, and straw. During General Sheridan's raid in October 1864, the Heatwole family spent a chilly night in the meadow while watching their barn being torched along with dozens of other barns and mills within the immediate community.

Twenty years later L.J. published an eloquent article describing the effects of the Civil War on the Mennonites of the Valley, with the title "The Civil War Unvarnished" (included in the book). As a youth he had observed the peace stand taken by young men who refused to bear arms. Some hid in the mountains to the west; others fled to Union territory; others were imprisoned for their stand.

For this era, L.J. had unusual opportunities for formal education. After elementary schooling he attended Normal Institutes at Bridgewater and Harrisonburg, Virginia. Thus prepared as an elementary school teacher he taught in seven different one-room county schools for a total of 24 years. Meantime he enrolled in a summer term at the University of Virginia and through correspondence work was granted a bachelors degree and a masters degree from Oskaloosa College, Iowa, by 1914.

On November 11, 1875 L.J. was married to Mary Alice Coffman, daughter of Samuel Coffman. To this union were born seven children, six of them surviving to adulthood. Although L.J.'s activities often took him away from home, his first love was his wife and children. He kept meticulous diaries of family activities and records of family finances.

It is in weather observations and astronomy that L.J. made a unique public contribution. At age 15 he began to keep weather records in his diary. Beginning in 1884 he was recognized as a weather observer, sending regular reports to the U.S. Weather Bureau and to newspapers. The weather station he founded at Dale Enterprise, Virginia, is still in operation, now the third oldest in continual use in the nation.

Kindred interests of L.J.'s were astronomy and almanac calculations for sixty almanacs worldwide. His proposals for a permanent calendar to correct the inconveniences of the Gregorian Calendar were presented to the Calendar Revision Congress of the League of Nations in 1913. L.J. understood the sciences of his day as reflected in his book Key to the Almanac and the Sidereal Heavens, published by the Mennonite Publishing House in 1908. He was intrigued by the connections between religion, astronomy, and meteorology. He wrote articles and gave lectures on his scientific interests.

L.J. thought his talents lay more to writing than to public speaking. His diaries, notes, newspaper articles, travelogues, and scientific papers left an unusual paper trail of his life. Added to these are his religious articles and sermons, all attesting to the broad interests of this Mennonite leader.

The church called L.J. into the ministry of the Middle District of the Virginia Mennonite Conference in 1887. His occasional 10-14 day circuit rides on horseback to the scattered churches in West Virginia are recorded in his diaries. L.J. had a special concern for the salvation of young people and found himself frustrated by the objections within the district regarding Sunday Schools and "protracted" revival meetings.

In 1890 the Heatwole family took an interesting detour by moving to Garden City, Missouri. While there L.J. was called to the office of bishop with oversight of churches in Missouri and Kansas. While

he found the church situation less divisive there than in Virginia, the family returned home to the Shenandoah Valley within three years. Factors in the move included family illnesses and L.J. having experienced a close call in a deadly tornado in Kansas.

On L.J.'s return, his father-in-law Bishop Samuel Coffman called him to be an assistant. L.J. was soon caught up in the turmoil which eventually resulted in a church split and the birth of the Old Order Mennonites in Virginia. Although L.J. received support from prominent church leaders elsewhere, the local charges and counter charges took their toll on him.

As a churchman L.J. in his later years held memberships on publication, education, and music committees. In World War I an indictment for treason and a substantial fine were brought against L.J. for advising a West Virginia preacher to encourage his church members not to purchase U.S. war bonds and stamps.

Early on, L.J. was a supporter and the initial board chairman of Eastern Mennonite School. In 1926 his wife, Molly, died. L.J. was then taken care of by son and daughter. On March 11, 1928, L.J. preached his farewell sermon (included in its entirety in the book). He continued his weather observations and newspaper reporting until the last year of his life. His death occurred on December 26, 1932, at the age of 80.

This is a well-written biography by granddaughters Mary E. Suter (deceased) and Grace S. Grove. The writing, augmented by many quotations from their grandfather, provides a delightful blend of facts, stories, and feelings about this many-faceted man, about the social milieu of his day, and about Mennonite life a century ago.

-- Harold D. Lehman

"I can read poetry and plays, and things of that sort, and do not dislike travels. But history, real solemn history, I cannot be interested in. Can you?"

--Jane Austen
Northanger Abbey

The History of Park School 1918-1967

Many longtime residents of Park View attended Park School at some time or other. An elementary school was established in the village in 1918 following this publicity in the E.M.S. Annual Catalog of 1918-1919:

"Arrangements are being made for the organization of a Primary School to be located within easy reach from the Assembly Park, the same to be taught by Mennonite Teachers. Parents desiring to send children to a school of this kind and who may contemplate moving into the vicinity for the purpose of receiving the benefits of such instruction for their children (whether in the Eastern Mennonite School or the Primary School) will please communicate with the Principal. Splendid building sites are now available. A few private properties are also for sale."

This school was known as Model School and was conducted in a 2-room frame building near the western edge of Park Woods. The E.M.S. board had moved a building to this location and outfitted it with 20 desks and meager equipment. H.N. Troyer, the principal teacher, was assisted by students from Eastern Mennonite School—Mary Nofziger, Anna Heatwole, Elizabeth Heatwole, and Retta Boyer. Among the 30 pupils that first year were 1st-grader Clarence Heishman, his older brother and two older sisters.

By the next year the enrollment had grown to 48. Perhaps the increased support resulted from the stepped-up appeal appearing in the E.M.S. catalog of 1919-1920:

"...Only sound Mennonite teachers will be employed and we expect to inaugurate an ideal Course in Primary Education from a religious standpoint... Since youth is the best time in which to store the Word of God in the heart, the Thousand Best Verses will be graded and given as part of the course so that when the pupil enters the Academy, a good foundation will have been laid..."

This parent-controlled, tuition-supported private school lasted for only three years. By September

1921 the school was operated by the county as a public school and E.M.S. no longer listed a Primary Department. During most of the next decade the principal was A.W. Hershberger, a Mennonite minister. Pauline Heatwole was a teacher during this time as well as Verdie Alger who taught at Park School from 1927-37.

It was to this unpainted two-room school that I first made my way for formal schooling. The exciting event of my first year was the setting of a fire under the front porch by a truant boy one fall afternoon. By the time the blaze was discovered the flames were leaping about the front doors. The older children could jump over the fire but we little kids had to be handed out of the window by our brave teacher, Ms. Verdie. Fortunately the fire engine arrived in time to save the building.

Once a week Mr. Hershberger gathered all the children into his room for a devotional. He would lead some hymns, would often preach a short sermon, even sometimes giving an invitation for accepting Christ. (Religious practices were not yet taboo in public schools.)

1929-30 was an important year for Park School. Enrollment had grown so that three teachers were necessary. Miss Alma Kline, newly-appointed 3rd and 4th grade teacher, held her classes in an unoccupied room of the (old) Park Building that year. Meanwhile a new 3-room brick building was erected. By 1930 we moved into Park View's brand new school building.

Although the new school was often referred to as Model School, its official name became Park School. The patrons had purchased and donated the 1½ acres of land to the County School Board, who erected the building. It was a great improvement over the former school in the woods—roomier, better-lighted and warmer in the winter. Even the outhouses were classier. And there was plenty of level playground space. One night, just months after the new school was occupied, the old school building mysteriously burned to the ground. There were few regrets.

Since Park School always served a predominantly Mennonite community, the County Superintendent was careful to provide teachers acceptable to the parents. With few exceptions all of the teachers were

either Mennonite or Church of the Brethren people.

Following is a list of the principals:

- 1921-22 A.W. Hershberger (?)
- 1922-23 Annie Holsinger
- 1923-30 A.W. Hershberger
- 1930-34 Ida Boyer
- 1934-35 Mrs. Ruth Brackbill
- 1935-64 Elsie Martin
- 1964-65 Jon Scott Bender
- 1965-66 Bobby May
- 1966-67 Charles Shipp

Among these persons, Ida Boyer was a highly respected and beloved teacher. She inaugurated the new school and made a strong contribution in music. She recalls "With head sponsorship from the County but detailed policy from E.M.S. (regarding student teachers), it was an experiment and the pupils sometimes resented being guinea pigs." Miss Elsie A. Martin, longtime principal, did much to establish a professional tone at Park School. She received a master's degree from Teacher's College, Columbia University, and inducted a whole generation of student teachers into the elementary teaching profession.

Among the teachers who served at least two years at Park School during the years 1930-67 were Verdie Alger (9 years dating back to 1927), Alma Kline (7), Elizabeth Showalter (7), Mrs. Reba Hartman (8), Mary A. Cline (20), Lucille Shank (2), Elsie Lehman (4), Mrs. Doris Flory (12) and Mrs. Sue Gangwer (5). Beginning with E.M.S.'s approval as a junior college in 1930 Park School became a training place for student teachers from the college. As an elementary student, I recall how we tried the patience of such budding pedagogues as Elizabeth Showalter, Paul Roth, (Masontown, PA), and Sanford Shetler. Later I did my own "practice teaching" at Park School in 1939. Park School conducted two summer schools in 1930 and 1931 to accommodate student teachers during the summer session.

In 1952 the building was modernized with an addition including an office, clinic and heating plant. However, the winds of educational change finally caught up with Park School. By June 1967 the school was closed and the next fall children were transported to nearby consolidated schools. The Daily News Record noted that Park School was the last of the

small schools in Rockingham County. It was the end of an era!

A Park School reunion on March 30, 1968, brought back Ida Boyer Bontrager and many of her students from the 1930s for a day of reminiscing, and singing the school songs of a former time.

-- Harold D. Lehman

Reprinted from The View, February and March 1979. Sources: historical file accumulated by Elsie Lehman, interviews with Verdie Alger and Clarence Heishman, Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-67 by Hubert Pellman.

European Heritage Tour

A twenty-day European Heritage Tour visiting Seven different countries has been planned for May 2-22, 2002, by Lemar and Lois Ann Mast (tour leaders for eleven previous European tours.)

Tour participants have the opportunity to submit ancestral villages for the group to potentially visit. The emphasis of this tour is on seeing the countryside because that is where our ancestors lived—not in the large cities.

The Masts are editors of the quarterly periodical *Mennonite Family History* now in its twenty-first year of publication. Write for a detailed itinerary of this tour with more information from European Heritage Tour, 219 Mill Road, Morgantown, PA 19543; mast@masthof.com

- Visit your ancestral homeland in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Belgium, Netherlands, and Luxembourg.
- Visit at least one of your ancestral villages.
- Hike to the Swiss Anabaptist Cave.
- Visit the Corrie ten Boom house in Holland.
- Enjoy the smells of a Dutch cheese factory.
- Delight in the colorful Holland tulips in full bloom.
- Tour a medieval castle in Belgium.
- Ride down the Rhine River.
- Participate in the filming of a Swiss documentary movie.
- Ride a train up into the snowy Alps.

From the Editors

With this issue we are concluding four years of editorship of the *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*. Our appreciation goes to the many who have written for the *Historian* and to you, our readers, for your interest and support. Special thanks go to our granddaughter Susan Lehman for the typing and layout of the paper and to our son Ken for the masthead.

We are happy to announce that James O. Lehman will serve as the next editor. James was formerly the director of EMU's library and is the author of a number of Mennonite congregational histories.

Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historian
1345 Hillcrest Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

"We confess our faith in the living Lord of history, who transcends history and stands both inside and outside human history."

--Howard Grimes
The Christian Views History

*"Oh God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come..."*

--Isaac Watts

Membership:

To become an active member of Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historian and to receive future copies of this newsletter, send name and address and year 2002 dues (\$10 per couple, \$6 per single) to:

Michael Shenk
1345 Hillcrest Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

James O. and Dorothy Lehman
1380 Mt. Clinton Pike
Harrisonburg, VA 22802