



Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

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Elwood E. Yoder, Editor

A quarterly periodical dedicated to the history and culture of Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, USA

Twenty-five Years of Shenandoah Mennonite Historians

Twenty-five years ago a group of Mennonite leaders met to plan for and launch the Historians organization. They had a vision for publishing articles about Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley, conducting occasional tours, and hosting meetings and lectures.

After twenty-five years, we know that our readership extends into other states, and with a website that hosts past issues, folks from anywhere can access our journal. Our website address is listed on the back of this issue. A number of new members have joined recently, and our current subscription base is well over two hundred, with many more readers.

Recently, the Historians facilitated a showing of John Ruth's new documentary video about TourMagination, with a great attendance on October 21, 2018. We also hosted Darvin Martin, November 10, 2018, to lecture about DNA testing among Mennonites.

The Editor is grateful for articles submitted by readers, suggestions, and words of encouragement for the *Historian*. Thank you for continuing to support our quarterly publication. It is by God's grace that we carry on this inter-Mennonite work in God's kingdom.



Jim Hershberger (right), President of Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians, introduced Darvin Martin, speaker at the Historians Annual Meeting, November 10, 2018, at Eastern Mennonite School.

Photo by Editor

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Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, November 16, 2018 (above left). Park View Church was established in 1953.

Photo by Editor

Dale Enterprise School

A 2018 book by Edith Layman Rhodes

The Editor met Edith Layman Rhodes at Eastern Mennonite University's Homecoming, October 13, 2018. At a book fair table displaying my books I was glad to meet Edith and her husband Gene C. Rhodes.

In 2018 Edith published a 352 page book detailing the history of Dale Enterprise School, Rockingham County, Va. The school is briefly described in my 2015 history book about Weavers Mennonite Church. Many children who attended Weavers in the early to mid-twentieth century attended the Dale Enterprise School.

Edith Layman Rhodes followed up our conversation with an overview of her book. I was able to borrow a copy of the book from the Massanutten Regional Library. This is a book many will want to access and read, as it is filled with many photos, names, and details of the Dale Enterprise School.

Edith Layman Rhodes is a great-great-granddaughter of Peter S. Heatwole, who provided land for the Dale Enterprise School. She attended Dale Enterprise for the first four grades. Her father, Wilbur Layman, and brother, Richard Layman, also attended Dale Enterprise School. Edith lives with her husband in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Here is Edith's overview of her book:

The little red brick schoolhouse on Route 33 west of Harrisonburg has an interesting history closely connected with the Mennonite families in the Dale Enterprise community. Bishop Lewis (L. J.) Heatwole, a meticulous record keeper, and his daughter, Annie L. Heatwole, preserved details of the earliest schools in west central Rockingham County. A new book, *Dale Enterprise School*, by Edith

Layman Rhodes tells the story of this three-room school and the four smaller schools that preceded it.

Dale Enterprise School was open as a public school from 1909 to 1963. Eleven of the thirty-eight teachers were Mennonites—Effie Showalter (later Mrs. Amos Heatwole), Annie Heatwole, Florence Wenger, Pauline Heatwole (later Mrs. Mahlon Blosser), A. W. Hershberger, Ray Emswiler, Harold Eshleman, Vada Heatwole, Alice Keeler, Ruth Hobbs, and Marian Miller.



Cover of Edith Layman Rhodes' new book about Dale Enterprise School.

Over 1,000 students passed through the school, many of them from Mennonite and Old Order Mennonite families. The most common family names among these students were Heatwole, Showalter, Shank, Burkholder, Good, Wenger, Rhodes, Knically, Suter, Layman, Bowman, Rohrer, Miller, Martin, Blosser, Driver, Deputy, Coakley, Trissel, Benner, Brunk, and Kiser. The percentage of Mennonite students was around 60% in the

early years and increased to about 90% in the last few years the school was open. Other common last names among the students included Smith, Senger, McDorman, Sharpes, Ritchie, Corbin, Moubray, Roadcap and Sponaule.

Dale Enterprise School contains short biographical information on the teachers, lists of students with the years they were at Dale Enterprise, and memories contributed by eighty-eight former students. Photographs of teachers, classes, reunions, and school projects are scattered throughout the 352 pages. The author has tied the history of the school to the community through the Fence Corner Literary Society, the store across the road (Huber's Store, Wolfe's Cash Store, and Dale Superette), the Dale Enterprise post office, and other groups who have owned and used the school building since 1963.

Dale Enterprise School is available at the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Historical Society in Dayton, Rocky Cedars Enterprises west of Dayton, Amazon.com, or by contacting the author at edithlrhodes@gmail.com.

A Long Tradition: The Sunday Morning Radio Broadcast on WEMC

by John Horst

“Good morning. Welcome on this ‘cold sunny’ morning to Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Our theme for this morning is.... Our worship leader is ... and the song leader is” This opening announcement, or some variation, has been broadcast on WEMC for sixty-four years. WEMC, the oldest public radio station in Virginia, first aired from the Eastern

Mennonite University chapel balcony in December 1954, and sometime during April of 1955 began to carry the Park View Sunday morning and evening worship services which met in Lehman Auditorium until 1967.

What do we now broadcast? We fade in from “Mostly Mennonite, Mostly A Cappella” during the instrumental prelude, and return to the WEMC studio after the offertory/doxology and radio booth closing remarks. The four most recent Spring/Fall Arbitron surveys estimate an average listening audience of 200 listeners each Sunday morning.

The radio booth person dials up the phone connection to Scott Lowe at the WEMC studio across Harrisonburg at about 9:20 a.m. At about 9:29 we open the PA feed to the organ prelude and make appropriate opening remarks. After the offertory/doxology we make ending remarks, then fade back to WEMC. Where appropriate we include short informative comments during the service. Of course then he/she closes the connection.

Present radio booth announcers include: John Horst (lead person), Mark Brubaker, Margaret Foth, Christopher Clymer-Kurtz, and Paul A. Yoder.

Interesting facts...

WEMC studios: West side balcony of Lehman auditorium, December, 1954-1971; Astral Hall, 3:48 a.m. July 17, 1971-2007; WMRA facilities on the campus of JMU, Feb. 1, 2007 - present. The transmitter is still in Astral Hall and the dipole antenna is about 2/3rd the way up the tall telephone tower.

WMRA/WEMC: Matt Bingay, station manager, thinks the live Park View Mennonite Church broadcast is the longest running live radio Sunday church service in Virginia, and maybe even in the U.S!

Radio mixer locations at PVMC: Balcony of Lehman Auditorium 1954-1967; Balcony behind the present Fellowship Hall, 1971-1995: Radio booth behind the present PA sound system 1996 to present.

Oral Memories:

John Martin: WEMC was donated as a college and high school class gift in 1954. Their first choice was draperies for the chapel, but that was rejected by the administration (in retrospect, thanks).



John Horst, broadcasting a worship service from Park View Mennonite Church to WEMC radio station.

Photo from John Horst

James D. Lehman: He was involved in broadcasting the Sunday morning and Sunday evening services from WEMC's very beginning. Later he remembers being in the Astral Hall station and receiving the direct (no phone dial up) telephone line feed from the North Park View balcony.

Harry Brunk: He recalls that the service was

also broadcast by direct line to some homes in Park View before WEMC. He recalls having to "speak softly" when announcing before the sound booth was installed in Lehman Auditorium. He was also active in producing the 6-9 p.m. evening broadcast: a cappella music plus a variety of student and faculty produced programs.

Joe Longacher: Late 1950s he was WEMC program director as a student. In those days, long before cable, WEMC's FM frequency was close to the audio frequency of Channel 3, TV. During a Sunday evening PVMC service, a TV viewer called in complaining that they heard President John R. Mumaw praying during the Ed Sullivan Show! The 10-watt antenna atop Lehman Auditorium radiated forth! Ask Joe for more stories.

Richard Weaver: At first the Park View worship service was broadcast by direct line from the PA system to a speaker in several homes in Park View. He installed the 10-watt station in the Lehman Auditorium balcony and was the first announcer.

Harold Lehman: Sometime during the early 1950s, probably before the WEMC days, he recorded some Sunday School lessons in the Lehman Auditorium balcony which were broadcast Saturday mornings on WSVA. Radio was slowly emerging.

Hubert Pellman: From his history book, *Eastern Mennonite College, 1917-1967*: "In June 1962, the Religious Welfare Committee approved instrumental music for broadcasting over WEMC. They ruled out jazz, music in the popular idiom, hillbilly songs, light gospel songs, spirituals of irreverent character, and music...unacceptably performed."

Don Bomberger: Sometime during 1968-1971, he was at the Lehman Auditorium balcony radio booth and someone brought him a tape cassette of the service to broadcast

later. Park View Mennonite Church moved from Lehman Auditorium in 1968, and WEMC moved to Astral Hall in July, 1971.

Harold Kuhns: He moved from the Chambersburg area in 1980. One of his duties was to manage the technical aspects of WEMC and upgrade the power. He had plenty of experience, previously having worked for five radio stations. He later outfitted the tiny booth in balcony. The announcer no longer had to "speak softly." Later he ran the direct line to the present radio booth.

John Horst: I've had experience with the broadcast in all three locations. In the late 50's I briefly led an a cappella Lehman Auditorium balcony mixed octet for a Sunday morning music prelude, then ducked into the radio booth to announce. At North Park View the PA sound mixer perched on the balcony ledge and the radio mixer was in a tiny nook right behind (1971-1995). On occasion, persons scooted back and forth doing both.

Bill Fawcett: Present WMRA/WEMC technician. In 2007 EMU was planning to drop the station. Fortunately, Tom Duval, then station manager of WMRA, graciously agreed to pick up WEMC. At present the refurbished transmitter, still in Astral Hall, is rated at 2,000 watts with an approximate clear signal radius of 25 miles. It's also carried online at wemcradio.org.

Otto Pebworth: He connected up the present dial up telephone transmission line to the WEMC studio across town. He's the person to check when problems arise.

The physics of the signal journey: The compressional sound wave emanating from Pastor Phil Kniss's mouth excites the microphone that sends a signal back to the sound booth mixer which dispenses the signal many ways, one of which is to the radio booth mixer. A telephone picks up the signal from

that booth mixer and sends the signal by fax line over to the WEMC station studio about four miles across town. The station studio microwaves the signal back to the transmitter located in old Astral Hall back up on "The Hill" that amplifies the signal 2,000 watts of power to the dipole antenna about 2/3rds the way up on the telephone tower behind the old observatory. This antenna sends out a basic electromagnetic polarized carrier wave at a frequency of 91,700,000 cycles per second (wave length of 3.27 meters) which radiates for about 25 miles, in all directions, at the speed of light. It can even snake through the brick and plaster walls of PVMC. And the little portable radio in the radio booth picks up that electromagnetic radio signal and converts it back into a sound wave in the earphones. Time delay from Pastor Phil's direct acoustic voice to the earphones sound is about 1/10th of a second. Rather amazing, I think! Oh, by the way, the station studio also broadcasts online at wemcradio.org

Historians Annual Meeting

November 10, 2018

The 27th annual meeting of the Historians took place at Eastern Mennonite School, November 10, 2018. Around sixty were in attendance. Printed financial reports and minutes from last year's meeting were available for members.

Officers reelected for another two-year term were Gerald Brunk, James Rush, and Elwood Yoder. Darvin L. Martin spoke for approximately fifty minutes about tracing Mennonite and Amish ancestry using DNA. Questions and answers followed.

Many in attendance renewed their 2019 annual Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians membership.

Knoxville Mission

by Elwood Yoder

In our summer 2018 issue we made an appeal for good photos that help show the 100 year history of Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions. Conrad Baer, from Washington state, and a reader of *Historian*, generously shared several good photos from the Knoxville, Tennessee, mission.

The Knoxville mission actually was operating before the Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions was organized in 1919. William and Anna Jennings served for years in Knoxville. Minister Jennings attended the Virginia Mennonite Conference meeting at Zion Mennonite Church, October 17, 1919, when action was taken to establish a Conference wide missions agency.

The Knoxville mission included many workers over the past century, and today the Knoxville Mennonite Church is a member congregation of Virginia Conference. In 2017 the Knoxville Mennonite Church celebrated their centennial.



Paul T. Yoder with children at Knoxville Mennonite Mission, Tennessee, late 1940s.

Conrad Baer photo



Church workers at Knoxville Mennonite Church mission, Tennessee, late 1940s (above). In photo to right, J. Irvin Lehman (left in photo) met with Russell Baer at Knoxville Mennonite Mission, Tennessee, late 1940s.

Conrad Baer photos



DNA Ancestry Studies

by Elwood Yoder



**Knoxville Mennonite Church and Parsonage,
Tennessee, late 1940s.**

Conrad Baer photo



**Gladys Baer with Bible School students, Knoxville
Mennonite Mission, Tennessee, late 1940s. In the
lower photo Russell and Gladys Baer, with Omar
Stahl (rear), and others, at Knoxville Mission,
Tennessee, late 1940s.**

Conrad Baer photos



Darvin L. Martin, from Lancaster, Pa., spoke to a group of about sixty attendees on November 10, 2018. This event was sponsored by the Historians. Martin gave an overview of DNA testing and what that means for Mennonites in a study of genealogy and ancestors.

Perhaps most important is a file that Martin presented at the lecture. His file is called “Virginia Anabaptist Families.” He includes thirty-seven family surnames that hail from Virginia, from Bachman to Wenger. If you want to read this file, the Historians have posted the file for you to see at our website, which is <https://mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net/>

There are several websites to use if you want to test your DNA in order to learn more about your ancestry. Darvin Martin manages a site called Mennonite and Amish Immigrants, at <https://www.familytreedna.com/groups/mennoniteand-amish-immigrants/about>

Martin explained that there are three types of DNA tests: Autosomal (tests all chromosomes), Mitochondrial (traces mother’s line) and Y DNA (traces male line). He recommends using the Y 67 test. He mentioned at least three other websites that do DNA testing, but his is focused on Mennonites, Amish, and their descendants.

Martin explained that surnames didn’t begin in Europe until around 1200 – 1250 A.D. He stated that probably Charlemagne, 9th century A.D., is an ancestor of all of us.

It seems that DNA testing for ancestry study among Mennonites and Anabaptists is a frontier that some have entered and others, like myself, are only now learning about.



The former WEMC radio station (right), Astral Hall, and a water tower on the hill behind Eastern Mennonite University. Though the studio is no longer used, the transmitter for WEMC is still in Astral Hall. Since 1955 Park View Mennonite Church has continually broadcast their Sunday morning worship service through radio station WEMC. The Editor worked as an announcer for WEMC during college years and helped manage some of the Sunday morning services that were broadcast.

Photo by Editor, December 26, 2018

The *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian* is published quarterly by the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians, established in 1993.

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 Chair, James L Hershberger
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 Secretary, James Rush
 Lois Bowman
 Gerald R. Brunk
 Elwood E. Yoder, Editor

If you have an idea for an article or picture for the *Historian*, contact the Editor at elyoder@gmail.com.

Shenandoah Mennonite Historian issues from 2004-2018 can be found at mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net. This site includes a link to over 1,340 photos related to Mennonites in Virginia, provides a way to subscribe to *Historian* online, and connects readers to the Editor's history blog.

An annual individual membership fee for the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians is \$10.00 per year, which includes a subscription to the *Historian*. Additional family memberships are \$5 each. Send membership fees to James Rush, e-mail at jameslrush@comcast.net, phone 540-434-0792, or U.S. mail to James Rush, 780 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 22802.

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