



Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

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Elwood E. Yoder, Editor

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Becoming a Worldwide Communion

In October 2023, I helped sell doughnuts and coffee in the large auction arena during the Virginia Mennonite Relief Sale. Mennonites from many groups attended this annual event to raise money for international relief through MCC. At one point, I raised my bid number several times and bought a beautiful comforter made by women from a local Mennonite church, which I plan to give as a Christmas gift. The Relief Sale raised the highest preliminary total in its 57-year history.

My wife and I attended the Mennonite World Conference in Harrisburg, Pa., a few years ago. These two global Mennonite organizations, MCC and MWC, are the focus of Nancy Heisey's lecture, which she will give on November 11, 6:00 p.m. See page five for details. I hope you can attend!

Elwood Yoder, Editor

Morning View Mennonite Church, pictured above, Singers Glen, Va., welcomed about 140 people to its centennial celebration September 10, 2023.

Photo by Elwood Yoder



Nancy Heisey introduced Bishop Danisa Ndlovu from Zimbabwe, at the Virginia Mennonite Conference, held in the EMU Arena in 2011. From 2003-2009, Nancy was president of Mennonite World Conference. Nancy will give a lecture on November 11, 6:00 p.m., at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, with live-cast available. See page 5 for details.

Photo by Elwood Yoder

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Centennial of Morning View Mennonite Church, Singers Glen, Va.

By Elwood Yoder

Morning View Mennonite Church began in 1923 when Mennonites organized in the Brocks Creek School House, Singers Glen, Va. They met in a nearby vacant house when the school building was unavailable. By 1928, the Mennonites built a new meetinghouse with help from others in the Northern District of Virginia Conference. During the 1930s, John R. Mumaw preached at the Church with support workers coming from Zion, Trissels, and Lindale congregations.¹



First Summer Bible School teachers at Morning View Mennonite Church: Emma Garber, Susie Snyder, and Emily Kraybill.

Photo from Sara Kreider and Thelma Showalter collection

Ernest G. Gehman, an Eastern Mennonite College English Composition and German professor, served as the pastor, 1938-1941 and 1946-1975. Twenty-two college students attended Morning View one year in the late 1950s.² With forty-eight in Sunday school and 30-40 attending weekly prayer meetings, the rural congregation needed to expand its small

building. In 1956, members built a new church next to the old structure, including a furnace, basement, and bathrooms. In its renovated building, Morning View Mennonite Church hosted Northern District Highland churches on August 5, 1956, with over two hundred in attendance.

As a result of the building renovations, students from the Eastern Mennonite College Young People's Christian Association attended and participated.

Between 1955 and 1997, Clayton D. Showalter served Morning View as a deacon, treasurer, and song leader. Clayton's wife, Thelma, assisted Clayton in many of his church tasks. In 1997, at a Northern District Meeting, with nineteen in attendance, Bishop Linden M. Wenger gave testimony, in his eloquent southern style of speaking, to the forty years of effective and faithful deacon service in the Northern District by Clayton D. Showalter.³



Martha Jane Turner Getz (1894-1962), first Mennonite in the Morning View community, a school teacher, and Sunday school teacher.

Photo from Sara Kreider and Thelma Showalter collection

1. Raleigh Rhodes history essay, August 2023.

2. "Morning View Mennonite Church History," unknown author, Morning View Mennonite Church collection, VMC Archives, Box 1.

3. The February 3, 1997 Northern District meeting convened at Mount Jackson Mennonite Church, Elwood Yoder, chair.



WMSC at Morning View Mennonite Church, 1958, with Mary C. Donovan, Thelma Showalter, Bertha Stroop, and Pearl Rollins.

Photo from Sara Kreider and Thelma Showalter collection

Rachel Gehman grew up in the Morning View Mennonite Church, Singers Glen, Virginia. A registered nurse, Rachel taught nursing at Rockingham Memorial Hospital. On January 1, 1957, Rachel married James Metzler, from Alabama,

also an EMC graduate. Rachel's parents, Ernest and Gertrude Gehman, served in pastoral ministry at Morning View Mennonite Church. Myron Augsburger, the pastor of students at EMC, married the couple.

In September 1962, Rachel (Gehman) and James Metzler began a ten-year term of



Summer Bible School teacher at Morning View Mennonite Church, Thelma Showalter teacher, 1946 or 1947.

Photo from Sara Kreider and Thelma Showalter collection

missionary service in Vietnam. The Metzlers learned the language, assisted with English classes, led Bible studies, and witnessed for Christ near Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City). After the Metzlers transferred to the Philippines in 1971 as missionaries, Rachel used her nursing skills and cut the ribbon for a new hospital.⁴ James and Rachel Metzler and their children served in Vietnam and the Philippines with Eastern Mennonite Missions.

In 1975, Dwight Heatwole was licensed as a pastor and then ordained, serving Morning View until 1999. Philip Borntreger began as a deacon in 1989. Ric Gullman has served as a pastor at Morning View from 1996 until the present. Raleigh Rhodes has served Morning View as a pastor since 2007, and Steve Slabaugh began as an assistant deacon in 2013.⁵

Morning View was part of the Northern District in the Virginia Mennonite Conference until 2002. Due to changes in the Conference and denomination, several congregations, including Morning View, withdrew to form the Mountain Valley Churches. Overseers since withdrawing from Virginia Conference have included Roman Miller, Otho Horst, Arland Schrock, Steve Estep, Ric Gullman, and Daryl Driver, the current overseer of Morning View.

Morning View members participate with the Mountain Valley Churches in their Winter Bible School, Spring gatherings, marriage retreats, annual picnics, ministry training, and a joint Thanksgiving Day service.⁶ Morning View participates with Baptists, Methodists and the Church of the Brethren in a yearly

4. "Philippine Hospital Dedicated," *Gospel Herald* 66, no. 79 (May 8, 1973), 404.

5. Evelyn Heatwole Borntreger, Eileen Shank Campbell, David and Loretta Pence, and Raleigh and Pat Rhodes, *Morning View Mennonite Church 100 Year Anniversary, 1923-2023* (Singers Glen, Va.: Morning View Mennonite Church, 2023), 22-25.

6. *Morning View Mennonite Church 100 Year Anniversary, 1923-2023*, 29.



Ernest and Margaret Gehman. After Ernest's first wife Gertrude Nissley passed away, Ernest married Margaret Martin.
Photo from Sara Kreider and Thelma Showalter collection

Easter sunrise service. Morning View conducts Summer Bible School classes, a midweek Bible study, and annual renewal meetings. Morning View invites the community to their church parking lot for a yearly picnic. With a hay wagon for a stage, music groups perform for those who attend. Youth have a variety of activities and travel yearly for a service project.

The Mountain Valley Mennonite Churches include Bethel, Faith, and Morning View in Virginia and Salem in West Virginia. Morning View affirms and uses the 1963 *Mennonite Confession of Faith*. Attendance at Morning View is around 100, with 140 attending the centennial celebration on September 10, 2023. It was a joy for this Editor to worship with and



Clayton and Thelma Showalter, right, retiring deacons, and Philip and Evelyn Borntrager, commissioned as deacons at Morning View Mennonite Church, March 19, 1989.

Photo from Sara Kreider and Thelma Showalter collection

help celebrate a centennial with the folks at Morning View, especially to sing "Praise God from Whom" at the end of the service from *The Mennonite Hymnal*, #606.



Morning View Centennial (above), September 10, 2023. Photo by Elwood Yoder



Photos by Elwood Yoder

Becoming a Worldwide Communion

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, energized by reading other churches' reports about their mission work, North American Mennonites began to organize for "foreign missions." Although not in touch with their Anabaptist siblings in Europe and Russia, they were following the paths first laid out by those believers who had journeyed to Indonesia beginning in the 1850s. But it was the cataclysm of the Russian revolution and World War I that moved European Mennonites to ask why they were not fellowshipping and consulting with "the brethren" in North America. From those engagements, in addition to a host of conference-organized mission committees, inter-Mennonite organizations such as Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite World Conference emerged.

A century later, Anabaptist-related churches around the world number 108 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ national churches from 60 countries, with around 1.45 million baptized believers in close to 10,180 congregations. So, who are twenty-first century Anabaptists? This talk will describe some gifts and some questions that have emerged within the worldwide Anabaptist-related communion. It will describe the shaping of Mennonite World Conference's statement of Shared Convictions, and imagine where the Holy Spirit might lead our communion in the years ahead.

You are invited to a public lecture at Park View Mennonite Church, Harrisonburg, Va., November 11, 6:00 p.m. The Shenandoah Mennonite Historians are sponsoring this free lecture by Nancy Heisey. Nancy's talk will be available live at pvmchurch.org.

Nancy Heisey (right) taught New Testament and early Christian studies at Eastern Mennonite University for 23 years. During that time, she served on the Mennonite World Conference executive committee for nine years, including six years as president. Before that she worked for MCC for 18 years, including two years when, together with her husband Paul Longacre, she visited Mennonite and other church partners in 45 countries around the world. She grew up among the Navajo people of New Mexico, where her parents served as Brethren in Christ missionaries.



Park View Mennonite Church in the 1950s

By Elwood Yoder

The Park View Mennonite Church in Harrisonburg became a Virginia Conference congregation in 1953, a decade when churches created distinctive identities. Some churches appointed resident pastors while the calendar system of different preachers speaking each Sunday faded away. Dr. Ira E. Miller, Registrar and Academic Dean at EMC, served as the first pastor of Park View Mennonite Church. Pastor Miller was not salaried, though he received an occasional gift of money from the church for his work.

Through a lengthy process, the Northern District, Middle District, Executive Committee of Conference, and those who attended the Eastern Mennonite School congregation expressed various opinions about creating a new church.¹ Since EMC began in 1917, a congregation met on the campus, using the college's facilities for Sunday meetings. Located on the Mount Clinton Pike boundary between Northern and Middle Districts, members of the campus church held their membership in other churches, generally Lindale or Weavers, even though they may seldom have attended those churches. District leaders and the Conference Executive Board sought to establish Park View Mennonite Church as an independent congregation yet find a way to forge a satisfactory path through its complex origins.

Bishop John L. Stauffer presided over

Park View Mennonite Church during the 1950s. Among the fifty-six charter members in November 1953, twenty-six held their church membership in the Northern District, seventeen in the Middle District, and thirteen in other Mennonite conferences. Upon its creation, a new church council came into being.² When lengthy deliberations took place on how to set up the congregation, the Executive Committee of Virginia Conference expressed concerns that the "advanced cultural out-look" of the church, set within the college community, should not influence its participation with the standards and practices of the conference.³

Standards of dress, practice, and lifestyle rapidly changed in the 1950s. While a revised 1953 *Rules* booklet mentioned the covering, girls like Joan Horst at Park View Mennonite Church wore a covering for their baptismal service, but "after that, we were free to decide."⁴ While the 1930 *Rules* booklet of the Conference called its guidelines "decrees to keep," the 1953 revision shows changes and openness to people making their own decisions. Life insurance, while strictly prohibited in 1930, was left to individual discretion in the 1953 revision. In the 1953 *Rules* booklet, there was a call for forbearance on the interpretation of unfilled prophecy, a change from an earlier era where one's millennial beliefs greatly mattered in church and college.

When Miller became the first pastor of Park View Mennonite Church, bishops no longer regulated the ordinances as they had

1. Harold D. Lehman, *Through These Doors: A Journal of Faithfulness: Park View Mennonite Church, 1953-2003* (Harrisonburg, Va.: Park View Mennonite Church, 2003), 6-9.

2. John L. Stauffer, "Park View Mennonite Church," *Missionary Light* 14, no. 3 (May-June, 1954), 14-15.

3. Harold D. Lehman, *Through These Doors*, 2003, 8.

4. Harold D. Lehman, *Through These Doors*, 2003, 13.

in early decades; instead, pastors administered them. During the 1950s, the weight of interpreting faith in relation to culture and how to conduct church ordinances began to fall to local pastors who worked with their bishops and districts.

Pastor Ira E. Miller led the Park View Mennonite Church during Sunday evening services, mid-week Bible Study and prayer meetings, and with baptisms, weddings, and other events. On Sunday morning, since Park View Mennonite Church did not build its own facility until 1968, the EMC campus pastor led the services during the school year, where students joined the congregation's adults. Myron Augsburg was the campus pastor at EMC when Park View Mennonite Church began, and the Augsburgs participated in the life of Park View Mennonite Church while they lived in Harrisonburg. Except for Sunday morning services, which met upstairs in the Lehman Auditorium, Park View's evening services and other activities took place downstairs. Young people who attended Eastern Mennonite High School used the Lehman auditorium during the week for classes and chapels. Then, the same facilities were used for youth and church activities, making it difficult for some to separate the school and church atmospheres.

Mary F. Shenk introduced Park View Mennonite Church to the Mennonite Church



Park View Mennonite Church, Ira E. Miller pastor, 1963.

Photo from Park View Mennonite Church archives

(MC) in November 1956.⁵ She was grateful the church had established its own identity, and though it met on the EMC campus, Park View Mennonite Church had its own council and pastor. The attendance of adults and their families was 125. Mary acknowledged that a much larger crowd gathered on Sunday mornings for worship when students and staff from the college joined them for worship services. During the week, Mary worked as an administrative assistant to EMC Dean Ira E. Miller. Mary reviewed the growing Sunday school program at Park View Mennonite Church, the Summer Bible School classes, and their evangelistic meetings. She hinted at the church's unique character when she listed missionaries from Africa and Honduras, living in Harrisonburg because of the college, who spoke at Park View Mennonite Church. Mary asked for prayer for her pastor, Ira E. Miller, and invited all to join Park View Mennonite Church for worship in the auditorium at Eastern Mennonite College.

5. Mary F. Shenk, "Park View Congregation," *Gospel Herald* 49, no. 46 (Nov. 13, 1956), 1091.

Joseph Wenger's Eighteenth-Century Journey to Rockingham County from Lancaster County, Pa.

By Wayne Diehl

Joseph Wenger, 1747-1812, and wife, Barbara Hoover Wenger, 1765-1792, have many descendants living in the Shenandoah Valley.

Joseph Wenger's date of birth, August 8, 1747, and date of death, May 1812, were first published by his grandson, Joseph H. Wenger (1835-1919), along with co-authors Jonas G. Wenger and Martin D. Wenger in *History of the Descendants of Christian Wenger Who Emigrated from Europe to Lancaster County, Pa., in 1727, and a Complete Genealogical Family Register*, published in 1903.¹ Joseph Wenger was the ninth child born to Christian Wenger, 1698-1772, who immigrated to America in 1727. In the preface to the book, Joseph H. Wenger wrote of himself, "The writer from boyhood took great interest in family records and ties of relationship at which time he had a limited number of the older generations on hand." Joseph H. Wenger was born and raised in the Edom area of Rockingham County.

Writing of his grandfather, Joseph, he stated, "Joseph Wenger (1747-1812), my grandfather, and his brother Henry emigrated from the parental roof in Lancaster Co., Pa., in 1785 to about six miles north of Harrisonburg, then called Rocktown, and settled about one mile east of a place now called Edom, Rockingham Co., Va. His brother Henry settled a few miles south of Harrisonburg."²

Joseph's journey to the Valley, however, was not so direct as previously thought. This essay identifies the farm in Lancaster County's Manor Township, which Joseph purchased in 1770. The first twelve of the couple's children were born during their twenty-year residence there.

According to the Personal Property Tax Lists of Rockingham County, for the years 1785 through 1791, there were no Wengers in the county for the years 1785 through 1787. Henry Wenger made his first appearance in the years 1788 through 1790. Joseph Wenger, however, was not among the county's "taxables" until 1791. In the previous year of 1790, Joseph Wenger purchased 324 ½ acres of land from Jacob Eversole on Linville Creek.³ Accordingly, it appears that Joseph Wenger's arrival in Rockingham County was some five years later than Joseph H. Wenger thought.

Joseph Wenger was forty-three years old in 1790, which raises the question of his whereabouts in Pennsylvania as a young adult.

Examination of the Lancaster County, Pa. tax records for the years 1770 and 1780 reveals two Joseph Wengers living in the county, in Cocalico Township and the other in Manor Township.⁴ Joseph of Cocalico owned 300 acres of land, and Joseph of Manor owned 115 acres.

Christian Wenger's farm, where Joseph was raised, was in Earl Township, and it was about eight miles south of Cocalico and fifteen miles northeast of Manor Townships respectively. It was likely that, as the fourth oldest son, Joseph had to establish himself beyond the boundary of

1. Joseph H. Wenger, Martin D. Wenger, and Jonas G. Wenger, *History of the Descendants of Christian Wenger, Who Emigrated from Europe to Lancaster County, Pa., in 1727, and a Complete Genealogical Family Register* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Pub. Co., 1903).

2. *Ibid.*, 22

3. Rockingham County Burnt Deed Book A, p. 355.

4. Gary T. Hawbaker and Clyde L. Groff, *A New Index Lancaster County, Pennsylvania Before the Federal Census, vol. 5 Index to the 1770 Tax Records of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania* (Hershey, Pa: Author, 1981).

the family's homestead.

Further research of the Pennsylvania records indicates that Joseph Wenger of Cocalico Township died by 1791. At that time, his executors sold three tracts of land to the son, Joseph Wenger Jr.⁵ The deed of sale stated that the land was in Cocalico Township. The death of this Joseph Wenger by 1790 eliminates him as a possibility for the Joseph Wenger who moved to Virginia and lived until 1806.

A closer investigation of the Manor Township Tax Lists for the years 1771 through 1792 implies that it was this Joseph Wenger who came to Virginia in 1790. In 1771, he was taxed on 115 acres of land. He also appeared in the tax lists for 1788 and 1789. Of note is an entry made for Joseph Wenger in 1790 and, then, crossed through on the original records. This, of course, is the same year that he was first recorded in Virginia. Joseph Wenger did not appear afterward in the Manor Township Tax Records for the years 1791 and 1792, having moved to the Shenandoah Valley.

Manor Township was the home of several early Mennonite congregations, including Habecker, which was less than three miles from the Joseph Wenger farm. It was a likely place for him to have relocated from the Earl Township of his youth.

David Martin sold "Joseph Wanger" 115 acres on October 24, 1770, for 600 pounds lawful money of Pennsylvania.⁶ The deed further stated that the 115 acres were part of an earlier tract of 265 acres originally belonging to Christian Martin and then conveyed to David Martin. The graphic, right, shows the location of the 265-acre tract in Manor Township.⁷ See "Heirs of Christian Martin" in top, center.

Using the meets and bounds and the Plat Plotter program by Jason Rushton, it is possible to locate the farm on a modern satellite view. It is about 1 ½ miles southwest of downtown Millersville, Pa. Unfortunately, much of the land has been developed and is no longer farmed.



Of the thirteen children born to Joseph and Barbara Hoover Wenger, twelve were likely born at this location. Only the oldest child, Eve, was born before 1770. The others were born between 1772 and 1789.

Why Joseph Wenger left Lancaster County to join his younger brother, Henry, in Virginia, is not known. He had lived on the Manor Township farm for twenty years and fathered a large family there. Regardless, his means were sufficient to purchase a large farm of 365 acres between present-day Edom and Linville in Rockingham County. The previous owner was Morgan Briant. The deed to this purchase does not survive, but the property boundaries and history were

5. Lancaster Co., PA Deed Book QQ, p. 212. The deed states that the property was in Cocalico Township.

6. Lancaster Co., PA Deed Book O, p. 308.

7. AncestorTracks.com, "Early Landowners of Pennsylvania: Scans of Lancaster County Township Warrantee Maps in the Pennsylvania Archives." Graphic taken from the Companion CD, CD #PS12. Used with permission.

described in detail by a survey done in 1801.⁸

Joseph Wenger's wife, Barbara Hoover Wenger, died in 1792, not long after moving to Virginia. Five of the couple's children had perished before reaching maturity. Newly widowed, Joseph had eight living children ranging from age four to nineteen. Within two years, he remarried to Anna Hockman on Dec. 1, 1793.⁹

There were no Hockmans living in Rockingham County in 1793,¹⁰ but a number of Hockman families were in the Strasburg area of neighboring Shenandoah County. Like the Wengers, they were Mennonites. There is no published record of a marriage bond between Joseph Wenger and Anna Hockman in Shenandoah County, nor is it known what brought the couple together across the fifty miles that likely separated them.

Joseph Wenger and his new wife, Anna, were the parents of five more children, the last being born in 1804 when Joseph was fifty-six years old.



Satellite view of the Joseph Wenger farm at Edom. Plat taken from meets and bounds of the 1801 survey. The estimate from the survey was 365 acres, but the actual acreage is 459.

Plat Plotter program by Jason Rushton

You can read an extended version of this article with photos and more on Wayne Diehl's

website at <https://shenandoahvalleygenealogy932815865.wordpress.com/>

8. Rockingham County Burnt Deed Book A, p. 355

9. Joseph H. Wenger, Martin D. Wenger, and Jonas G. Wenger, *History of the Descendants of Christian Wenger, Who Emigrated from Europe to Lancaster County, Pa., in 1727, and a Complete Genealogical Family Register* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonite Pub. Co., 1903), 22.

10. Rockingham County Personal Property Tax List, 1793.

Tribute for Harold Huber

By Simone Horst, Special Collections Librarian, Menno Simons Historical Library at EMU, Harrisonburg, Va.

Harold Huber was a Lancaster County native and graduate of Elizabethtown College. I-W service took him to New York City, where he obtained a Master's degree in Education from New York University. New York City is also where he met his wife, Vida Swartzendruber. After his time in New York, he came to EMC to teach sociology, joining Vida who taught nursing.

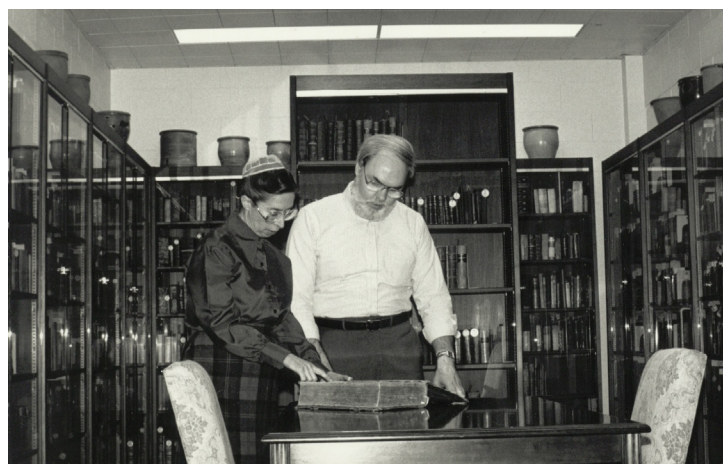
When their daughter, Heidi, was born, Harold made the unconventional decision to be a stay-at-home father. Harold returned to work half time in the EMC Archives in 1981 and in 1984 began as an assistant in the Menno Simons Historical Library. He continued this work until 2003, and since then was a faithful volunteer in the Historical Library and EMU Archives, along with his part-time work as Virginia Mennonite Conference Archivist from 2011-2017. He authored two books--a history of Greenwood (DE) Mennonite Church and a biography of Landis and Ellen Huber--and was the record-keeper for Broad Street Mennonite Church.

But Harold is not someone who can be easily summarized by a recitation of a resume. He was a deep well of institutional memory, a purveyor of Pennsylvania Dutch phrases and jokes, and an inveterate clipper of newspapers. He was also welcoming and kind, with a jolly smile and fantastic sense of humor. I first met Harold in 2008 when I started as a work-study student in the EMU Archives. In the fifteen years since then, I learned a great deal of EMU history and lore from Harold. Harold seemed to have a tale for every character and collection in the archives, and through him I felt a direct link to earlier generations of EMU folk and local Mennonites.

Harold (1939-2023) has left his mark all over EMU's Special Collections. His handwriting adorns innumerable folders and archival boxes, his newspaper clippings fill our vertical files, and his dedication to Mennonite history has enriched our collection. He is greatly missed.



Harold E. Huber, 1939-2023.
EMU Archives photo



Lois Bowman Kreider and Harold Huber in the Rare Book Collection room of the Menno Simons Historical Library, Harrisonburg, Va. EMU Archives photo



Harold Huber at work in the Menno Simons Historical Library, Harrisonburg, Va.
EMU Archives photo



Lindale Mennonite Church was established 125 years ago, in 1898. In 1948, Lindale added two wings to their 1898 building, pictured above. This undated photo, with an unknown photographer, was probably taken around 1948. Photo from VMC Archives

Officers of the Historians: Chair, James L. Hershberger; Treasurer, Norman Wenger; Secretary, James Rush; Gary Smucker; Gerald R. Brunk; and Elwood E. Yoder, Editor.

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

Past issues of *Historian*, from 1994-2023, can be found at mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net. This site includes a link to over 1,640 photos related to Mennonites in Virginia.

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 540-434-7890, or U.S. mail to James Rush, 780 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, VA 22802.