



# 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*

## Annie Beery Geil, 1866 - 1950

On the opening page of his *Church Record Book*, which Bishop Lewis J. Heatwole began in 1887, he quoted Exodus 17:14, "Write this for a memorial in a book." I remember coming across this verse that L. J. Heatwole so very much liked when I was writing the Weavers history book. The Bible verse from Exodus 17:14 has never left me and has become a guiding star for my writing and research.

Lewis J. Heatwole's voluminous writings help us today learn about events in the Virginia Mennonite world from the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He wrote pages and pages with pen in an elegant cursive style of writing. Today, we type our articles and historical research, and we post our findings on the internet for a broader audience to see and read.

For twenty-seven years, an informal association of people in Virginia and beyond has subscribed to and supported the *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*. It's where we "write it in a book," as the prophet Moses wrote. The *Historian* is where writers like Eunice Geil Showalter and Rebecca Suter Lindsay publish their articles. Eunice and Rebecca are among a



Annie Beery Geil, from her wedding photo, December 8, 1885. Plain dresses and coverings were introduced to Virginia Mennonites about 15-20 years after this photo was taken.

Photo contributed by Eunice Geil Showalter

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Peake Mennonite Church (above), Rockingham County Va., as seen March 13, 2021  
Photo by Editor

handful of regular contributors to this quarterly journal. While the Eastern Mennonite University archives keep Bishop Heatwole's writings safe deep inside their vault, our website and print periodical are available for many to read. The times have changed since Heatwole began his *Record* book 134 years ago.

A special thank you to James L. Hershberger, who chairs our Historians organization. For years James has helped guide, encourage, and lead the Historians. Please do read his Chairman's report in this issue. I pray that our work "writing history in a book" can be God-honoring and help future generations know the story of Virginia Mennonites. by Elwood Yoder, Editor

### **Annie Beery Geil (1866-1950)**

by Eunice Geil Showalter

In the year before I was born, my great grandmother Annie Geil died. She was born in 1866, a year after the Civil War ended, and was the mother of six children, twelve grandchildren, and eleven great grandchildren. Records show that her father Noah Beery served in the Confederate army in the 58th Virginia Militia Regiment as a Private. At the age of nineteen in 1885 she married a man eight years older than herself. Joseph Wenger Geil was twenty-seven years old, the youngest child and only son of Jacob Geil. His grandfather was Bishop John Geil. Joe, as she called him, seemed destined to become a preacher and he was ordained on January 12, 1896.

Annie's father Noah listed his religion as Dunker Brethren and he maintained his Brethren ties all his life. Her father-in-law Jacob Geil was a Mennonite Deacon before the Civil War. He was a Union sympathizer who testified before the Southern Claims Commission

and successfully won a payment for grain and animals confiscated by Union troops during the Civil War. His home was known as a depot that men used to escape North to avoid service in the Confederate army. As a Deacon, Jacob Geil was tasked with raising funds to help poorer members of the church pay fees and fines exacted by the government. Imagine serving a meal to Grandpa Geil, Jacob, and Pappy, as she called her father, Noah Beery. I have always wondered if they exchanged memories or opinions about the war.

Annie Beery Geil was born into a large middle class farming family with five sisters. Her one brother was a doctor. Education was valued. She married the only son of a conservative Mennonite farming family. Her husband received his education in the public schools and later continued his education at the Shenandoah Institute at Dayton, Va. He taught in the public schools near his home before marriage. Education was a part of their children's lives too. Her son Wilmer was among the first to attend the Mennonite School in Hesston, Kansas.

Work was a constant theme with hard physical labor for all members of the family. The head of the family, Joseph Wenger Geil, her husband, described his daily routine in his 1896 daybook. Days were filled with chopping/splitting wood, butchering, plowing, digging ditches, hauling manure, smoking meat, trimming apple trees, and selling bacon, lard, eggs, grain, poultry, and livestock for cash. Imagine the time spent traveling to Harrisonburg, Linville Depot, Wenger's Mill, and Broadway by buggy.

Annie Beery Geil kept a journal from 1900 to 1903; so I glimpsed what she found impor-

tant. The journal painted a picture of life in the early 1900s for a traditional Mennonite farming family. A weather report often ended each entry; one commonly used description was *tolerably cold*. Joe and the children were frequently mentioned. At the time of writing she had five living children from the ages of twelve to three years old. 18 Dec. 1900 - *If Paul was living would be eight years old*. At the age of one year, third son Joseph Paul died of pneumonia shortly after Christmas in 1893. Annie was four months pregnant with my grandfather Arthur Daniel Geil at that time. 28 Mar 1900 - *Anna was sick with whooping cough. Was taking care of her most all day*.

Church activities took priority over all farming activities. Each week followed a rotation of churches visited for preaching - Trissels, Lindale, Brennemens and Zion along with New Dale and Plains infrequently. Churches at a distance involved overnight stays. She and Joe attended council meetings, harvest meetings, funerals, and communion services in addition to regular services. Sunday School became a regular addition for Sunday afternoon. 22 Apr. 1900 - *Organized Sunday School at Zion in the afternoon*. 11 May 1900 - *Went to Springdale to Conference. Was there all day. Went to Tim Wenger's for supper and to Adam Wenger's all night. Fair and cool*. 03-04 Oct. 1902 - *Joe and I went to Trissels to Conference. Bro. E. J. Berkey and Coz Tim Wenger here tonight*. 10 May 1903 - *We all went to Baptist church for preaching*. Often she identified the preacher along with the text used for the sermon. Funerals Joe preached and community deaths were included.

Could we call this a revival meeting? 02 Jun. 1900 - *Joe to Pendleton*. 03 Jun. - *To Trissels for preaching. Bro. George Brunk of Canton*



Eunice Geil Showalter and Ruel Showalter. The couple attends Trissels Mennonite Church, Broadway, Va. Eunice has written two feature articles in previous issues of *Historian*. In 2013, Eunice wrote about the Geil family in Virginia, and in 2001 she wrote about the Trissels cemetery. In this *Historian*, Eunice writes about her great grandmother Annie Beery Geil. Eunice serves on the Virginia Mennonite Conference History Book Committee, and she serves as a congregational historian at Trissels Mennonite Church. In 2006 Eunice wrote *Treasure Hunt*, a Shenandoah Valley mystery for youth. Eunice also serves on the Trissels Mennonite Church bicentennial book committee.

Photo from Trissels Mennonite Church

*Kansas preached*. 04 Jun. - *Joe home from Pendleton. To Lindale for preaching that night*. 05-09 Jun. - *Preaching at Lindale at night*. 10 Jun. - *Lindale preaching in morning and again at night*. 11-15 Jun. - *Lindale preaching at night*. 16 Jun. - *Preaching at Lindale in afternoon and again at night*. 17 Jun. 1900 - *Went to Lindale in morning. Thirteen baptized. Preaching again at night*. Annie recorded fifteen days of consecutive sermons.

Almost monthly Annie watched her husband leave for an overnight trip in horse and buggy to preach in Pendleton or Hardy County, West Virginia, leaving her and the hired help to manage the farm. 24 Aug. 1902 - *Joe and Perry (Shank) went to Liberty*. 5 Sept. 1902

- *Joe and George (Showalter) started for Pendleton.* 6 Oct. 1902 - *Joe went down to Liberty to see David Graybill.* 01 Aug. 1903 - *After dinner we went up on the mountain to meeting at Pleasant Grove in evening. We spent the night at John Trumbo's.* She was very fortunate to have hired help on the farm. 10 Nov. 1902 - *Joe came back from Hardy. Susie (Shipe) came this evening....* Susie would later marry Timothy Showalter, son of George B. Showalter.

In addition to baking, cooking, canning, preserving fruit, washing clothes, and "Saturday work," Annie writes of sewing, patching, darning, cutting out clothes, gathering ice, setting hens, butchering, and taking off honey. She was fortunate to have regular deliveries of fresh bread from the Cora Mason Bakery in Broadway, so that task was avoided. I enjoyed following Annie's gardening routine which seem to extend year-round. There are no details of the menus she served, but there is a sense of achievement in documenting plantings, work finished, and goals reached. 05 Apr. 1900 - *Transplanted tomatoes in hotbed, planted onions. Took off 24 little chickens and set four hens.* 11 Apr. 1900 - *Boiled 5 kettles of soap grease. Sewing. Set 2 hens, Cool and rainy.* 12 Apr. 1900 - *Melted over soap. Aunt Polly Shank, Mollie Fitzwater, and Katie Showalter here... Finished cutting out soap on 14 Apr.* 25 Apr. 1900 - *Planted more beans, beets, cucumber, parsnips, salsify, mushmelons and cashews in the garden. Clear and warm.* I found it interesting that family animals had first names. 15 May 1903 - *Joe sold Mike and Bill for \$270.00.* 19 May 1903 - *Joe bought Julia for \$42.50.*

Annie Geil's journal recorded a steady stream of neighbors, friends and family in and out of the home eating meals, staying

overnight, visiting, and helping with work. 21 May 1903 - *We all went up to Grandpa Geil's.* Grandma (Mary Wenger Geil) was seventy years old. In addition to visitors in her home, she kept track of a continuing round of homes at which they ate meals and churches they visited. It appears that homes closest to the church that had preaching on Sunday hosted visiting members from more distanced churches and then reciprocated when visited during their rotation. 31 May 1903 - *We all went to Zion to Communion meeting. Bro. A Burkholder preached. Fifteen strangers here for dinner.* 26 Jul. 1903 - *We all went to Zion for preaching. Lewis preached Text Eccl. 12:13. Aunt Mary Showalter and Albert and girls here. Joseph Shank's and Henry Wenger's here for dinner.*

I asked several community people to describe Annie Geil and learned that she was a person who expressed her opinions. She was a hard-working, supportive wife and a mother with high expectations for her children. She would have been considered a strict mother who expected obedience. She had strong beliefs of right and wrong and her life revolved around the Bible's teachings. Like the women of her time, she followed her husband's guidance and he was focused on abstaining from the appearance of worldliness and evil. She had firmly held beliefs. Linden M. Wenger details in his book *Fifty Years in Northern District* that she expected her son Wilmer to preach without written notes because this allowed the Holy Spirit to direct his words. Annie's obituary in *Gospel Herald* described her as "A faithful and lifelong member of the Mennonite Church, she was always glad for an opportunity to serve her Lord in any way she could, especially in helping the needy. She was concerned for the unsaved and was devoted to her family."<sup>1</sup>

1. *Gospel Herald*, Vol. XLIII, No. 19, May 9, 1950, pages 454-5.

## Chairman's Report

### Shenandoah Mennonite Historians

### 2021

by James L. Hershberger

Last year, 2020, saw the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians greatly curtail our activities beginning in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We had several summer tour ideas and plans as well as beginning conversations about the annual meeting in November. We put these meetings, tours and other activities on hold. However, we kept in communication throughout the year, pushing ahead on some things such as publishing the *Historian* and plans for the Mennonites in Virginia history book as best we could. In January and February of this year we had several Zoom meetings in which we began laying plans for activities of this current year. As more and more people are vaccinated, we believe we can begin public activities including our annual meeting in November, 2021.

We continue to build on the activities and programs of the past. For instance, the very first issue of the *Historian* published in the winter of 1993-1994 was the culmination of over a year of meetings headed up by Linden Wenger, James Rush, and Laban Peachey, joined later by Lois Bowman and Randall Shank. The purpose for this new group was to, "bring together persons interested in Valley church history, to collect historical information about churches, families and individuals and to assist the church community and individuals tell the story of their past." The activity of that first year was a tour of early Mennonite homes in Page County. In that first decade the dream of a living Brethren and Mennonite museum was conceived and is now developed into the Brethren & Mennonite Heritage Center. We

continue to work and live into this vision of collecting and writing the story of Mennonites and related topics in the Shenandoah Valley. Our current officers are James Rush, Secretary; Norman Wenger, treasurer; Lois Kreider, Gerald Brunk, Elwood Yoder, and James L. Hershberger as chair.

We appreciate all who are renewing their subscriptions. Our \$10/year fee just covers the cost of mailing and paper for the four issues of the *Historian* each year. We encourage you to pass on copies of the *Historian* as you read them and encourage others to subscribe.



James L. Hershberger, Chair of the Shenandoah Mennonite Historians, at his farm along Wengers Mill Rd., Rockingham County, Va., March 2021. James is the pastor at Mt. Clinton Mennonite Church and he enjoys managing his farm. James' wife Ann Hershberger is Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Executive Director.

Photo by Editor

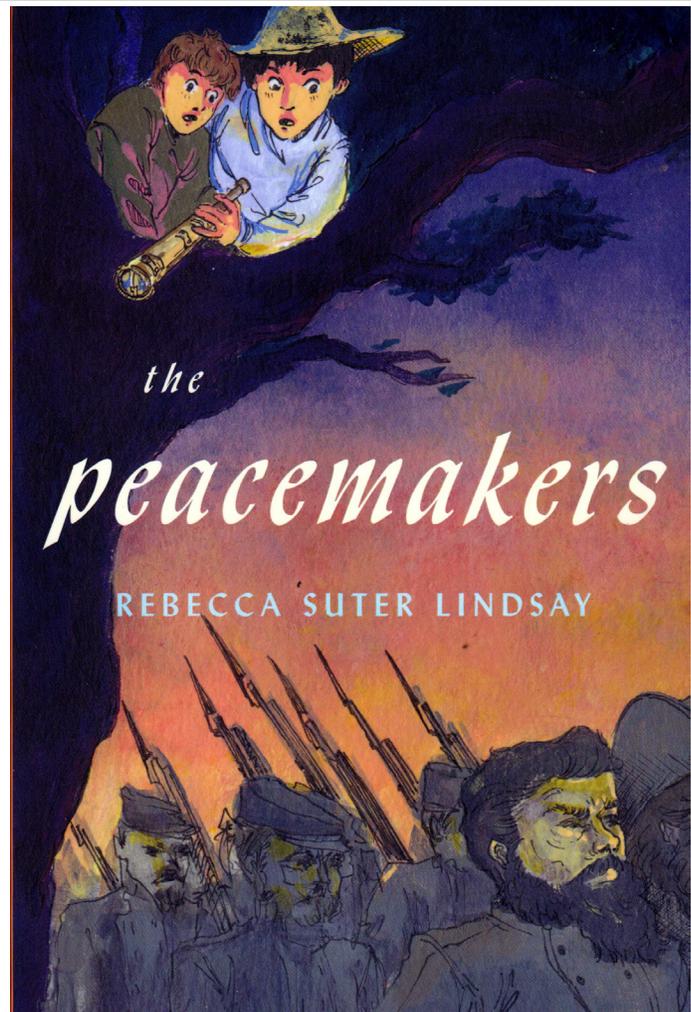
## Book Review of *The Peacemakers*, written by Rebecca Suter Lindsay

Reviewed by Sidney Rhodes

As a young Mennonite raised on a small farm in rural Shenandoah Valley, this book resonates with me on more than one level. Lindsay's beautiful imagery and well-researched detail transports the reader into the rolling hills of Virginia with Manny as he experiences the tensions of Anabaptists during the Civil War. Situated comfortably in my own community of nonviolent family and friends, I've only heard of the stories of conscientious objectors in the wars of our country. *The Peacemakers* brings a new perspective and understanding to simply learning of these stories, and also perfectly narrates the life of a Mennonite family in the valley.

The book, however, does not only cover the troubles of the past, but also the problems of the present. As pacifists, we are always in "conflict" with the forces around us. Today, the divisiveness of politics and personal opinions sometimes threatens to tear the church in half. A similar divisiveness occurred in the book when the vote for secession was taken in the valley. Through Manny's struggles, we learn not only the importance of family, but also the importance of adherence to our morals as Christians, and what it means to follow God's will in difficult situations.

An easy read, *The Peacemakers* is a perfect book for history-loving middle and high school students, pacifist or not. I especially enjoyed the book as someone living in the valley, and would recommend it to students in this region. Engaging and beautifully illustrated, it was a delightful read.



*The Peacemakers*, a book of historical fiction, can be purchased at Shadelandhouse Press, on the internet at <https://smpbooks.com/product/the-peacemakers/>. The book tells the story of Manny Weaver, a Mennonite boy living near Harrisonburg during the American Civil War. Rebecca Suter Lindsay lives in Crestview Hills, Kentucky. Rebecca has written two articles in *Historian*, including "Emanuel Suter Family: Refugees Sent North," in the Autumn 2014 issue. Rebecca also wrote "The Witness of the Seventy-Two," in the Summer 2020 issue of *Historian*. Find both articles at <https://mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net/>



Sidney Rhodes, reviewer, is a junior at Eastern Mennonite High School. Sidney is a sixth generation descendant of Virginia Minister Frederick and Magdalena Rhodes. On Sidney's maternal side, she is a fifth generation descendant of Bishop Martin and Rebecca Burkholder.

## Uncle Jack

by Elwood Yoder

On a warm spring Saturday afternoon, Ida Goering met me at the Bank Mennonite Church Cemetery, Dayton, Va. I had learned about Uncle Jack, a former slave and a “brother” at the historic Bank Mennonite Church. From the church deacon, Ida learned Uncle Jack’s grave location in a large and sprawling cemetery.

I learned that the first Mennonite Church in the United States that baptized African Americans was a Pennsylvania church in 1897.<sup>1</sup> Uncle Jack lived from 1820-1900, and through long congregational oral tradition, reliable as a primary source, Uncle Jack was a member of the Bank Mennonite Church.<sup>2</sup> We may never discover uncle Jack’s baptismal date. My historical guess is that Uncle Jack, a member of the Bank Mennonite Church, and a part of the Virginia Mennonite Conference in the nineteenth century, was baptized soon after the War ended in 1865.

What I discovered in the Bank Cemetery is that Uncle Jack, remembered in that manner, with the southern style of respect for elders, was named Jesse James. His grave marker shows his name as Jesse James. That evening, after returning from the Bank cemetery, I searched every professional database I have access to, but I could discover no further information about this particular Jesse James.

Beside Uncle Jack’s grave marker are four more unmarked graves, where former slaves are buried in the Bank cemetery. Ida and I stood there and reflected historically about

what we were observing, she from the Southeastern Mennonite Conference, and I from the Virginia Mennonite Conference. “History,” Ida remarked, “is so important and interesting because it takes us back to our roots.”

Next to the five former slaves buried at Bank is a Confederate soldier’s grave marker. Abraham Hupp fought for the Confederacy and died during the War. Hupp (1829-1864) married Lydia Brenneman, a Mennonite woman from Rockingham County. So Ida and I reflected on the meaning of five slave burials, a Civil War veteran, and a sprawling cemetery filled with Euro-American Mennonites like Heatwole, Showalter, and Rhodes.

While we may never confirm that Bank was the first Mennonite Church in the United States to baptize African Americans, it certainly appears so to this researcher. And in the former Confederacy, nonetheless. By grace we are saved, and I am glad to live among Virginians who have graciously welcomed folks from many walks of life into their congregations. May it continue to be so in our day.



Ida Goering showed the Editor Uncle Jack’s grave marker in the Bank Mennonite Church cemetery, Dayton, Va., March

13, 2021.

1. “Black History in the Mennonite Church,” <https://www.mennoniteusa.org/resource-portal/resource/african-american-mennonite-history-timeline/>

2. Regina M. Goering, *A History of the Bank Mennonite Church*, published by Bank Mennonite Church, 1989.

## *Holy Experiment: The Warwick River Mennonite Colony, 1897-1970*

An informal overview of a new Herald Press book written by Jo Anne Kraus  
by Elwood Yoder

Joseph Longacher, one of our Historian members, alerted me to a new Herald Press book about the Warwick River Mennonite Colony. Joe loaned a copy to me, and during the first weekend of April, I began reading and could not lay the 393-page book down. What follows here is not a formal review but an overview of author Jo Anne Kraus' excellent narrative history of the Warwick River Colony in southeastern Virginia. The stories I've selected reflect my acquaintances with those who grew up in the Warwick Colony and how the story of Warwick intersects with the Virginia Mennonite Conference.

Joe Longacher does not remember his grandfather Daniel Shenk (1853-1943), who moved his family to the Warwick Colony soon after it began in 1897. Daniel Shenk served the Warwick Colony as a minister and was in the lot for bishop but did not choose the Bible with the slip of paper for bishop. Soon Minister Daniel Shenk found himself serving in ministry alongside Bishop George R. Brunk I. Daniel and Matilda Shenk lived into the early 1940s, serving faithfully at the Warwick River Mennonite Church. Minister Daniel Shenk worked in the Warwick community for forty-three years as a Minister in the Virginia Mennonite Conference, from his ordination in 1900 until his passing in 1943.

In the first decade of the Colony, 1897-1907, times were difficult for the Mennonite and Amish families that moved to the south-



Daniel and Matilda Shenk, from the Warwick Colony, in the 1930s.

Photo from Joseph Longacher

eastern Virginia Peninsula, with the Warwick River on the west and the Chesapeake Bay to the east. Jo Anne Kraus, the author of the book, writes of the slim meals the early pioneers ate, where all the produce and meat they raised went to the market to pay the bills. The early days were difficult, hacking out new farms in marshy and marginal land and creating new lives for their families in southeastern Virginia. Many of the early families moved in from Ohio, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, states from the former Union. Not only was the land different from Ohio or Maryland, but the southern culture was also dramatically different than what they had experienced.

From the beginning of the Warwick Colony, church relations reached the Shenandoah Valley and the Virginia Mennonite Conference. It seems that Minister Daniel Shenk's sister-in-law, Fannie Coffman Shenk, whose family moved to the Warwick Colony from Rockingham County, was a sister to Bishop Lewis J. Heatwole's wife. Fannie Coffman Shenk was also a sister to widely known and traveled evangelist John S. Coffman. Jo Anne Kraus uses letters, entries from *Herald of Truth*, and other primary source materials to draw the connection from Warwick to the Middle Dis-

trict of Virginia Conference. As the Warwick Mennonite Church got started, they came into the orbit of Bishop L. J. Heatwole and the Virginia Conference.

Joseph Longacher worked a career in the Richmond area as a physician and remained active in the Virginia Mennonite Conference. Joseph served as Moderator of VMC 1998-2004 and serves today as interim chair of the Faith and Life Commission of Conference. Joseph, who now lives in Harrisonburg, informed me of a half dozen other grandchildren of Warwick pioneers Daniel and Matilda Shenk who live in the Shenandoah Valley.

Jo Anne Kraus begins her account of Warwick Colony detailing the late nineteenth century Mennonite Church's desire to find new colonies for their people in southern states. She describes numerous southern attempts to establish new Mennonite colonies, but only Warwick Colony survived and thrived in the long term.

The business sense, confidence, and daring decision of two men in 1897 led to a purchase of 1,249 acres from the Denbigh Plantation, owned by Mr. Young. David Z. Yoder, forty-eight, an Amish Mennonite man from Wayne County, Ohio, and Isaac D. Hertzler, forty-five, from Maryland, made a business decision to buy the land. Jo Anne Kraus cannot find any official Mennonite Church communications that advertised the land to other Mennonite families once Yoder and Hertzler purchased the land. Instead, she writes, word spread by conversations and personal correspondence. In the next ten years, though, numerous Mennonite families moved to

the tidewater colony. The economic depression of the 1890s led some younger farm family couples to pick up and move to southeastern Virginia. They had little to lose. Within the first several years, David Z. Yoder's Amish background separated him away from the Mennonite moorings of Isaac D. Hertzler, and two churches emerged, the Providence Amish Mennonite Church and the Warwick River Mennonite Church. Both David Z. Yoder and Isaac D. Hertzler were ministers.

Wilmer Hertzler, from the Zion Mennonite Congregation, Broadway, Va., is a great-grandson of Colony co-founder Isaac D. Hertzler. Wilmer grew up in the Denbigh Colony until the age of ten. In 1955, Wilmer's parents Vernon and Alice Hertzler, moved their family with three sons to Rockingham County. One of Wilmer's brothers is named Isaac, presumably after the founder of Warwick Colony, and Wilmer's grandmother, Anna Hertzler, is featured in the nearly famous photo of the Warwick Mennonite Women's Sewing Circle from 1947. In the early 1940s, Wilmer remembers his father bringing a team of horses to haul out



Warwick River Sewing Circle 1947, from left Anna Hertzler, Alta Yoder, Phebe F. Krause, and Amanda Shenk.

Photo from Mennonite Church USA Archives

dirt from under the Warwick River Mennonite Church to make space in a basement for a Mennonite school.

Many in Rockingham County know H. Michael and Peggy Shenk. H. Michael Shenk II was pastor at Trissels and Valley View Mennonite Churches and worked for several years at Eastern Mennonite High School. What may not be known is that H. Michael Shenk II was born in the Warwick Colony, the son of Henry Michael Shenk I and Frances Showalter Shenk, who were early pioneers in the Warwick River Colony. Jo Anne Kraus tells the story that during World War I, Henry and Frances Shenk, in the Warwick Colony, could earn \$1.25 a plate for Frances' fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and gravy if Henry supplied the transportation by rowing soldiers across the river to their house. In 1934, Henry Michael Shenk I was in the lot for a minister with five other men when Truman H. Brunk Sr. and George R. Brunk II were chosen as ministers at the Warwick River Mennonite Church.

This year, in my teaching work at Eastern Mennonite High School, we have what appears to be the last of the fifth generation of Brunks to graduate from the school. In recent years, several descendants of George and Katie Wenger Brunk graduated from Eastern Mennonite High School, a school which George R. Brunk I helped start in 1917. George and Katie Brunk and their family moved from Kansas in 1910 and settled in the Warwick Colony. George R. Brunk I came with bishop credentials, and he served as bishop at Warwick until his passing in 1938. In chapter five of her book, Jo Anne Kraus creates a portrait of George R. that is lucid, clear and reveals the personality and actions of this influential early twentieth-century Mennonite bishop. Brunk

worked hard to define Mennonite boundaries, encouraged plain dress for men and women, and articulated Mennonite fundamental beliefs. Using Warwick Mennonite Church as his home base, Brunk's ideas and significant church presence could be felt and experienced far across the Mennonite Church. During his years at Warwick, for instance, Bishop Brunk launched *The Sword and Trumpet* periodical, which articulated conservative principles for a widely read audience. George R. Brunk's parents had fled the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War, and the family ended up in Kansas. In a circuitous pattern, George and Katie settled in the Warwick Colony, where they raised a large family, grew fruit trees, and defended early twentieth-century fundamental Mennonite beliefs. In 1919, at Virginia Mennonite Conference, Brunk was one of the writers of the *Fundamentals*, which became the norm for the Mennonite Church well into the mid-twentieth century.

In the years after Bishop Brunk's passing, Mennonites in Warwick began reaching out to the black community in their region. They began offering Summer Bible School programs for black children in the 1940s. By the early 1950s, with leadership from Nelson Burkholder and others, an interracial church became established at the Calvary Mennonite Church in Newport News. For some years Nelson Burkholder and Leslie Francisco I worked side by side in ministry with deacons. By the early 1970s, the church became majority black, with Leslie Francisco I giving leadership. Burkholder and most of the white colony members left for other churches. By 1985 Calvary Mennonite Church relocated to Hampton, Virginia, about ten miles away, and rapidly grew in size. Today C3 Hampton, as Calvary was renamed, is one of the largest churches in Mennonite

Church USA. In her careful evaluation of the establishment of Calvary, Jo Anne Kraus captures the difficulties the Warwick colony Mennonites faced in the 1950s, '60s, and '70s in attempting to establish an interracial church. The efforts were sincere, she concludes, but the hurdles to break out of the Warwick Mennonite organization and worship styles could not be surmounted in the challenge.

Those with roots in the Warwick Colony will want to read this book. And anyone who wants a glimpse into the workings of the Virginia Mennonite Conference in the early twentieth century will want to read Jo Anne Kraus' excellent narrative history. Find the book for sale at [heraldpress.com](http://heraldpress.com) or [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

### **It's All Relative: Artwork of David Heatwole Descendants**

The OASIS Fine Art & Crafts gallery in Harrisonburg will feature a show on the artwork of the descendants of David A. Heatwole (1767-1842) and Magdalena Weyland Heatwole (1765-1850). David A. Heatwole worked as a cobbler and craftsman, a theme found in the skills of many descendants of this Mennonite family who moved to the Shenandoah Valley in 1796.

The OASIS Gallery, at 103 South Main Street, Harrisonburg, will host a show of seventeen living descendants of David A. Heatwole, up to the ninth generation, June 1-June 30, 2021. The show will take place in the mezzanine at OASIS, and includes paintings, metal work, pottery, photography, fiber, and sculpture. Participants include authors, art teachers, and a jewelry designer.

There will be an opening reception on First Friday, June 4, 2021, 5-8 pm. First Friday's are events in downtown Harrisonburg in which stores and art galleries are open to the public, usually well into the evening beyond their normal closing times. Many walkers and visitors come to Harrisonburg on First Friday for these events that are focused on the arts. Call 540-810-3229 for more information.

Descendants of David A. and Magdalena Heatwole number in the millions and are scattered across the United States. They include educators, doctors, deacons, and bishops in the Mennonite Church. Heatwole descendants are still attending many of the Mennonite churches in the Shenandoah Valley, and are involved in business, education, and the arts. The artistic flair held by many of them can be traced back to the cobbler, David A. Heatwole.



**Brenda Fairweather works at her potter's wheel in her Lacey Spring, Va., home. Brenda is one of the organizers of the David Heatwole Descendants OASIS art show. Brenda makes pottery and weaves baskets and sells them at art shows across the state of Virginia and**

**West Virginia.**

Photo by Editor



Peake Mennonite Church, Rockingham County, Va., in a photo from March 13, 2021. Located about nine miles west of Harrisonburg, Va., Peake is a member of the Southeastern Mennonite Conference. Peake was established as a congregation of the Virginia Mennonite Conference in 1910. Ministers include Elam S. Heatwole, David V. Miller, Jay W. Rohrer, along with Bishop Nathan Horst and Deacon Samuel Goering. Peake's membership is 106.

Photo by the Editor

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

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

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If you have an idea for an article or picture for the *Historian*, contact the Editor at [elyoder@gmail.com](mailto:elyoder@gmail.com).

All past issues of *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*, from 1994-2021, can be found at [mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net](http://mennonitearchivesofvirginia.net). This site includes a link to over 1,600 photos related to Mennonites in Virginia, provides a way to subscribe to *Historian* online, and connects readers to the Editor's history blog.

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