



# Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

*Vol. 16, No. 1 Quarterly Publication of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians Winter 2009*

## TRIBUTE TO THE SEVEN DAUGHTERS OF TIMOTHY AND NANCY SUSAN "SUSIE" SHIPE SHOWALTER

Our last issue featured Bishop Timothy Showalter, long-time deacon, minister and bishop in Northern District of Virginia Mennonite Conference. As the Autumn 2008 issue pointed out he was quite interested in Northern District history. The summer 2008 issue published his list of a large number of preaching points and churches where ministers had gone to bring the gospel in the hills and mountains of West Virginia and Virginia.

Timothy and Susie had seven daughters and one son. Most became well educated and went various directions in terms of professions or work interests. Most of them at one time or another worked in various roles related to church work. This issue gives tribute to the significant work of these seven daughters from that family. They had one brother Daniel and a foster brother Teddy Hartman.

Bishop Timothy was so much of a Northern District man and very involved in preaching at many points that his daughters became quite

involved in mission work, teaching Summer Bible School, and Northern District work that they provide an interesting window into significant roles of women in church work, even if they were not licensed or ordained as church workers. Their home church was Zion.

All seven sisters have passed off the scene, so we could not interview them for this issue. But last year Thelma Estep Showalter finished the work her husband Lowell had begun and published a huge Showalter book that is helpful.

### Contents of this issue

Review of Showalter Book  
Tribute to the Seven Daughters  
Early John L. Stauffer Letter  
Current news

## Review of New Showalter Book

Thelma Estep Showalter, *George B. & Elizabeth Blosser Showalter Family Records*. Published by compiler, 2008. Illustrated extensively with many family photos, appendixes, indexed, 744 pages, \$45.00.

Many Virginia Showalters are related to each other. Quite a few became ministers. This volume helps make some of those connections as it deals with the large George B. Showalter family from Broadway.

George B. was in the ministry. Though this book does not always mention it if someone was in the ministry, a glance at the 2003 Minutes of Virginia Mennonite Conference confirms that fact. Since the lot was used to choose ordained men it is interesting how many Showalters from this family ended up in the ministry. George B.'s grandfather, Daniel (1802-89) began in the ministry about 1835 and served 55 years.<sup>1</sup> George B. (1857-1921) served 20 years at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Son Timothy (1887-1957) was a deacon, minister and bishop in the Northern District and often preached in the mountains. Son Lewis P. (1890-1979) preached 50 years and was a circuit rider on horseback to fill appointments in West Virginia. Son G. Paul (1890-1970) a twin of Lewis P. often served in West Virginia also. Son Mark C. was a businessman and late in life a licensed minister who helped begin the Stephens City Mennonite Church at Winchester. Grandson Omar V. preached 20 years in Pennsylvania.

Women were not allowed to be ministers, but daughter Elizabeth was a schoolteacher, editor of *Words of Cheer* and wrote curriculum materials. Numerous women and men from the family were

---

<sup>1</sup>Harry A. Brunk, *History of Mennonites in Virginia*, Two volumes published by the author, 1959, 1972, vol. 1, 256. Brunk will be used periodically in this issue because he fills in details not readily available elsewhere.

Mennonite church workers. Bishop Timothy Showalter frequently preached in various schoolhouses and churches away from what is sometimes home-base churches (Brennemans, Lindale, Trissels, Zion) and his seven daughters became quite involved in teaching summer Bible school and Sunday schools at various places.

It is a good family record book with a very understandable organization and hundreds of photographs, most of them of excellent quality—obviously done by a good printer. The text is of rather good size, which older folks will appreciate.

Emphasis was placed on listing and including photos of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Omar Showalter has taken a special interest in the book, since it involves his family. He has counted 884 descendants of George B. Showalter. However, he also found problems with the indexing, so he's providing the compiler with a better index. Eighty copies were printed in this first printing. He says the compiler promises the better index that Omar is providing.

Anyone doing genealogy in the general area would do well to check this volume to see if there are connections. If more families had large compilations like this one, doing genealogy would be much easier! For some people a fair amount of information is given regarding occupation or life work. One might wish more of this were done regarding the descendants of George B. and Elizabeth Showalter but given the size of the print and the large number of people, it would increase book size and drive the cost higher.

No doubt, quite a few might squirm at the cost of this book, but we have to face facts, that a book with so many photographs cannot be done inexpensively. People often need to be reminded that the cost of good books has gone up like the cost of automobiles, farm equipment, houses and many things we deal with. If you are a Showalter descendant of George B. you will likely want to empty your piggy bank in order to have this convenient reference book at hand.

## TRIBUTE TO SEVEN SISTERS, daughters of Timothy and Susie Showalter

In order of birth:

Anna Belle 1911-1980

Mary Magdalene 1912-85

Ada Elizabeth 1913-95

Emma Frances 1915-89

Martha Susan 1918-98

Ida Ruth 1919-2007

Grace Irene 1925-90

They had a brother Daniel (1916-2003) and a foster brother, Teddy Hartman, born 1934 and still living. However, in this issue we focus on the seven sisters. Information comes from the Showalter book reviewed on page 2, Harry Brunk's history and other sources. None of the girls ever got married. All went various directions in their service to the Lord. Most of them attended Zion Mennonite Church when they lived in Virginia. They sometimes spoke freely about defending their faith and cultural issues.

**Anna:** (graduate of EMS)

On Northern District Summer Bible School Committee. In 1952 she reported 16 schools in the district with 1,047 pupils and 64 teachers. She served on a committee to study bonnets, and became secretary of the Northern District Sewing Circle. She helped with SBS and in the early 40's was the only "sister worker" at the Knoxville, Tennessee Mission. Brunk doesn't tell us who preached if she was the only worker at the time! When Jacob A. Shenk became president of the mission board he saw to it that mission workers like Anna at least got a small amount of pay.

Later in life she worked many years at EMC as an administrative assistant in the student life office and other duties until she retired. Numerous times she wrote reports published in the *Missionary Light*. In September 1949 she reported on several evangelists working on the "harvest" of souls and was particularly impressed

with George R. Brunk II's message that "our responsibility is more than supporting the evangelist and praying for the meetings. We do not fully obey our Lord's last command until we actually go and witness." Later in life she taught the professional women's Sunday school class at Zion for years.

**Mary:** (graduate of EMS and from Business School at Harrisonburg)

She served as a bookkeeper at Shenandoah Manufacturing Co. at Harrisonburg, then became a bookkeeper at Long's Feed Mill, New Market, Virginia. She was quite involved in SBS.

**Ada:** (Jr. College at EMS, then a bachelor's degree from JMU and a Master's degree from Ohio State University.) She lived for years at Elkhart, IN where she attended the Prairie Street Mennonite Church and served as a dietitian at the Elkhart General Hospital. For two years she served in voluntary service at a refugee camp in Ethiopia. She lived in Elkhart until her retirement in Virginia.

**Emma:** (Junior College at EMS, then a bachelors's degree from Temple University, Philadelphia, PA). She attended the Norris Square Mennonite Church. Her vocation was to be a Medical Technologist at Temple University. She served two years in voluntary service in Puerto Rico under MCC as a laboratory technologist.

**Martha:** (Graduated from Rockingham Memorial Hospital School of Nursing and was registered in Radiographic Technology) She helped found the school of Radiographic Technology at RMH and served as its director. She lived at Harrisonburg until retirement she moved to her home place near Broadway.

**Ida:** (Graduated from EMHS in 1937). Worked at the Mennonite Publishing House in Scottsdale, PA from 1944 to 52, then began two years of voluntary service under the Mennonite Board of Missions & Charities. In 1965 she received a degree in liberal arts from Shenandoah College (now University) at Winchester. She was registered as a medical records administrator in 1964 and director of Medical Records at Winchester Memorial Hospital from 1958-69 and the Harlan Appalachian Regional Hospital in Kentucky from 1969-81. She then retired at Broadway.

With materials she obtained from her father who was historian of Northern District, she wrote a fine comprehensive two-part article on Northern District expansion in the July and October, 1951 *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* published by the Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church. She gives helpful details on early congregations that long ago passed out of existence.

**Grace:**

*(Following is a description written by Lois Bowman who worked with Grace for decades.)*

Grace was a native Virginian, a graduate of Madison College (B.A.) and George Peabody College of Teachers (M.A.). Early experience included bindery work at Mennonite Publishing House at Scottsdale, PA, teaching at Vincent Mennonite School (Spring City, PA) and at Iowa Mennonite School.

She was on the faculty of EMC from 1953-55 and 1957-1990. For six years her load was divided between library work and teaching of English (earlier also History). In 1957 she was appointed Librarian of the Menno Simons Historical Library/Archives. For some years she worked half-time in the MSHS/A and half time in the College Library.

She served many years as archivist for Virginia Mennonite Conference as a member of the Conference Historical Committee. She was also

historian of Northern District of Virginia Mennonite Conference. In 1975 she broke the male-oriented barrier of EMALA (Eastern Mennonite Associated Libraries and Archives) from 1975 until her death in 1990, several days before she was to retire.

A bibliography which she compiled, *The Music Books of Ruebush & Kieffer, 1877-1942*, was published in 1975 by the Virginia State Library (now Library of Virginia). By the time of her death she had prepared a manuscript on the letters of Joseph Funk (1778-1862), planned for publication by the State Library. She also wrote articles on historical and genealogical topics and a large number of poems, many of which appeared in various church papers.

Her reputation as a local historian and genealogist was widespread, and she was frequently asked to speak to community, church and professional groups on the subject of Mennonites in Virginia. Genealogical researchers from across the United States asked for her by name.

*Lois B. Bowman*

*(Grace had concerns regarding Virginia Mennonites undergoing change with the coming of Eastern Mennonite School in 1917. The July-August 1976 issue of Missionary Light published a two-page article by Grace on "The Virginia Mennonite." Here are major excerpts and summary from that article that Grace thought defined Virginia Mennonites. Ed.)*

## **"IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO MAKE A VIRGINIAN"**

With that old quote Grace began her article. If a Virginia Mennonite is at least 50 years old, he understands the statement, said Grace, because he knows about the Virginia that existed prior to the influx of Mennonites from other states. After the advent of EMS in 1917, Virginia no longer stood isolated from other Mennonite communities. A new Virginia Mennonite began to emerge as people from other areas brought with them their own culture and set of religious teachings.

What was the nature and shape of the old Virginia personality? Virginia was on the frontier of the South, not the West. Here the German culture met head-on with the English, which influence was strongly present. Many of the prestigious, prosperous, and leading non-Mennonite families were English and Scotch-Irish

Virginia was one of the few states where Mennonites lived and worked with an active slave-holding society. The problem of hiring and trading labor with slave-holding neighbors led to an 1864 action by Virginia Conference that forbade anyone to hire a slave unless that slave be entitled to receive the pay for such labor. But where neighbors exchange labor, the labor of slaves may be received, said the action.

Virginia Mennonites suffered the shock of seeing their home ground become a battlefield. Both Union and Confederate soldiers robbed them of their goods. At the final stages of the war they witnessed their barns and sometimes their houses being consumed by Northern flames. Perhaps that drew the people in an unusual way to become Southern in sympathy but Northern in beliefs.

Because they were sparsely populated, Virginia Mennonites did not join field to field and farm to farm as Mennonites in other states. The average Mennonite family had several non-Mennonite neighbors. What did this do to the Virginia Mennonite? Both good and undesirable things happened. On the negative side there was a great loss of young people. On the positive side the people did not become culturally ingrown.

They adopted some of the culture of their English neighbors. For example: titles of respect, such as "Aunt" and "Uncle" or "Mr." and "Mrs." for older persons were taught to the young. It was considered rude to address your elders on a first name basis. Other subtle English refinements became evident.

In Virginia the German language and its culturally protective arms were cast aside early. In 1837 *The Confession of Faith* was printed in English. In 1847 the first Mennonite English

hymnbook was published by authority of the Virginia Conference. With the language barrier gone, Mennonites could interact more freely with their neighbors—in both giving and receiving.

One thing they shared outside their own denomination was their faith. They sent ministers into the rural and highland areas. By 1920 they had about 20 preaching points. This new thing began to be called "Schoolhouse Evangelism." This perhaps more than anything else shaped the Virginia Mennonite outlook. Mennonites learned they needed to be flexible and relax some of their culturally rooted practices. They learned to accommodate themselves to changes which did not affect principles. New surnames appeared on membership lists and the vision of the church was broadened. Adding members from another culture broadened brotherhood, love, and respect.

The Virginia Church was a singing church. Joseph Funk, his sons, and grandsons began a singing school and publishing tradition. Their influence can never be fully measured. Funk's songs affected the faith and life of the people.

True to the South, the Virginia Mennonites were hospitable and friendly. Perhaps early newcomers to the state wondered at both the religiously liberal and culturally conventional nature of the people. They found in Virginians a spiritual reserve not to be mistaken for coldness. Spiritual growth was not to be flaunted, nor was it measured by quick emotional "highs." Some did not believe they could presume on the mercy of God; to them salvation was a hope, not a certainty. Others had a faith and serenity that was reflected in their quiet testimony.

Old-line Virginians were slow to take on new programs and express themselves freely in public meetings. How can such undemonstrative persons show such beautiful serenity? There is nothing strange about it. They just reflect a Mennonite culture that grew in a different setting.

*Grace Showalter*

## JOHN L. STAUFFER on Worldliness

*Stauffer, a long-time leader in Virginia Conference, Eastern Mennonite School teacher and president, and bishop of Northern District was well known for his concerns about worldliness among Virginia Mennonites. He began his long tenure at EMS on Nov. 5, 1918 and served over 30 years. Less than two years after his arrival, he wrote this major trumpet call to the local resident bishops. Perhaps it somewhat illustrates what Grace Showalter was writing about (pp. 4-5.) (EMU Archives)*

Mennonite Station, Harrisonburg, VA. 8/27/20

To brethren: Brunk, Heatwoles, Shank, Garber and Rhodes<sup>1</sup>

Greetings in Jesus name. I am taking the liberty to address you brethren in a single letter because I have been impressed to do so for some time to give my voice and convictions regarding the separation question as it affects our people, especially the Valley because I am more familiar here. I am writing to urge a thoro threshing out of this question at the coming conference. I hesitate to express my self in Conference as I expect to in this letter because I am just a new member and am already recognized as a crank along this line.

Again I may be too radical which is oftentimes a characteristic of young men and if so, I desire to be set right and straight and will count it a favor if you brethren will be free to do so.

It is evident to me that there is somebody or something that exercises great influence and power at work in our midst that is responsible for lack of conscience on the Bible teaching of separation. I would not like to say who or what it is that is responsible, am not sure I know where the trouble lies.

The great truth of separation is being crucified in our midst and if left go at the present rate, it will soon be meaningless, I almost said it is a question now whether some believe it should be observed literally, or only recommend it as a good thing to those who desire to practice it. It is part of the great truth of God and represents the holiness of God in separation from that which is satan controlled and God controlled. God cannot have part with satan. The resurrection will prove it an everliving principle.

I feel certain that our inconsistency along separation lines will soon develop into an open wide policy when everything will be tolerated, or a closed policy to everything unscriptural and the exercise of discipline on those what are unequally yoked.

The Conference rulings of last year appear to have been treated as a mere scrap of paper as they were freely violated. It seems in general there is no conscience on separation and world conformity is on the increase.

1. There were more who voted in political elections since the ruling than in previous years according to reports.

2. Some of our members have attended a wild west show (or circus) where sin is made attractive, some who you would least expect to do so.

3. Some of our members are officially connected with the County Fair association, one being chairman and another sec-treas. Nothing about a doings of this kind contributes to I Cor. 10:31 that I have ever learned of, neither the displaying of our ability to produce fine fruit and cattle. Who did it, us or God? Who gets the honor? When I expressed surprise, a brother said "hush, they do these things in Virginia."

---

<sup>1</sup>Virginia bishops - George R. Brunk, L. J. Heatwole, A. P. Heatwole, Lewis Shank, David Garber, S. H. Rhodes. The letter as reproduced here is quoted verbatim as Stauffer typed it.

4. One, perhaps more, are connected with the Short Horn Breeders Association. In doing personal work, one brother admitted he was unequally yoked, but did not seem to take it seriously.

5. Others, some officially, have joined up with farmer's club or union that is sweeping over the county. If this is tolerated, then I plead for the poor brother mechanic who should also be privileged to join a mechanics union for self protection and advantage.

6. I see the "A. A. A." on one brother's automobile which tells to the world that he is a member of the American Auto Association. What information I have heard which I do not give as accurate, would forbid any Christian who would please God from being associated with it.

7. One brother who is a Bank director admitted to me in the presence of a witness that he was "unequally yoked," but said he has thot [thought] of getting out because they have their meetings at night and he does not get there anymore.

In doing personal work this question is continually thrown at you as a mouthstopper, "how about the telephone company, is that not an unequal yoke also?" Brethren the way I figure it out we dare not let a single thing stop our mouths for God. My answer has been "I haven't gone into, but you cannot justify one wrong by another if the telephone organization is wrong." If we tolerate a new association just because we have already tolerated an old one on the same principle, we will soon have the whole family of evil associations in our midst. We must get a stopping place somewhere.

If the telephone question is an unequal yoke, the quicker we find it out the better. I would rather have the phone cost me \$50 a year and rent it, than get it for \$10 and violate a principle and have the mouths of all of our ministers stopped so they cannot cry out against anything of a similar nature.

I was present in a ministers council when the question of the right or wrong of a mutual electric company was up at which time several argued for its validity, not from a Bible standpoint, but because it was not more of a violation of separation than the telephone business and the mouths of practically all the ministers were stopped because all had telephones, yet in this electric company one admitted that an unbeliever formed part of the company. I merely give this incident as an illustration.

Again, I am told that the last conference resolution is so indefinite that no one knows what is meant by it. The general consensus of opinion seems to be that it does not affect anything that is now operating in the valley with which our people are entangled, but it has been suggested that Bro. Brunk wanted something that would enable him to "keep his people from wrong financial investments such as Brooklyn lots, La. rice fields, gold mine stock etc. etc etc."

It seems to me that at the forthcoming conference a number of vital questions must be decided:

1. What constitutes an unequal yoke? Does yoking up with unbelievers if moral and honest constitute an unequal yoke, or must they become dishonest and immoral before it constitutes such?

2. Is the telephone mutual affair an unequal yoke, or does no mutual affair constitute an unequal yoke? I am in the dark on this because I cannot find a stopping place.

3. A resolution that will be lengthy enough to thoroughly set forth the Bible principles as they apply to the 20<sup>th</sup> century problems and definite enough as to leave no one in doubt as to what is wrong.

4. Have every minister and deacon commit himself to stand for it and teach it by precept and example or know the reason why.

5. The church's place in the world. I used to think that the church was all-sufficient and so completely organized by Christ that the world was unable to add anything to its effectiveness by way of organization. Is it necessary for a single member of the body of Christ to be yoked up with another organization outside of the visible church organization???

## My last appeal

outside of Bible testimony concerning these things is on behalf of the E. M. S. Nearly all of us brethren associated with the faculty are foreigners in Virginia and are placed in an embarrassing situation to be surrounded by a constituency that is more liberal on separation lines than the school. How long do you suppose the school will maintain its testimony against world conformity along all lines if it is continually confronted with violations in the community and that on the part of many of the most prominent members? This last fact is so serious. In other conference districts many of the world conformed members are the cold and worldly [worldly] ones, but here the most prominent ones. Virginia is advertised as a conservative conference and there where an effort is being made to have the church at large stand foursquare for the faith once delivered; should we not practice what we preach to other conferences?

*Stauffer has one more paragraph which we summarize and quote partially (Ed.)* He expresses concern on the "tobacco question." Will we seek to clear the church of this "subtle, vile, degrading and expensive lust of the flesh? I can have patience with the mountain brethren and sisters who were reared in it, but even they will get a conscience on it if enough positive teaching is done on it. The grace of God is sufficient for it." Not sure we should make it a test of membership but we should make the issue "real hot."

I close with this. My letter has become longer than at first anticipated, but I was real full of the subject. I trust you can appreciate my feelings in the matter and want to assure you that I seek only the welfare of our beloved church within whose borders I have been privileged to labor for the master.

Hoping and praying that our conference will be owned by the Lord in its deliberations and decision because of being in harmony with His word, I remain, Your brother,

*J. L. Stauffer*

## Upcoming Events

April 4 – EMALA – Historical Library, EMU  
Lois Bowman – "Book & Document Repairs"

May 9 – Public meeting at Shady Oaks Fellowship Hall, Weavers Mennonite Church, of SAGA (Swiss Anabaptist Genealogical Association). This is a **national meeting** of special interest to anyone doing genealogy or thinking of doing genealogy. Come and learn about the public website that has several million names and is a tremendous reservoir of genealogical information.

## Have You Paid Your 2009 Membership Dues?

\$6.00 per individual/\$10 a couple  
Send your dues to Jim Rush  
780 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg  
Virginia 22802

434-0792 [jameslrush@comcast.net](mailto:jameslrush@comcast.net)

Do us all a favor – encourage some more younger people to take out inexpensive membership in SVMH

---

*Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*

Editor: James O. Lehman

[lehmanj@myvmrc.net](mailto:lehmanj@myvmrc.net)

Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians  
780 Parkwood Drive  
Harrisonburg, VA 22802