

SHENANDOAH MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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Mennonite Settlers Come To Page County

Some of the first settlers in the Shenandoah Valley were Mennonites from Pennsylvania. They were a part of the "Massanutten Colony", having bought land in or around 1727 from the two five-thousand acre tracts granted to Jacob Stover by Governor Gooch of Virginia. This settlement was on the banks of the South Branch of the Shenandoah River in present day Page County.

This original group of settlers consisted of about eight families from Germany by way of Lancaster Co., Pa. Several of them were Mennonite, others were Lutheran and Calvinists. How many of this group were Mennonite can not be completely ascertained. We do know that Martin Kauffman, Sr. and John Roads were, however, since they were listed in several places as Mennonite ministers.

Other families soon followed, no doubt looking for abundant and less expensive land. By 1758 there were at least thirty-nine Mennonite families living in the area. We know of this number through a letter sent to the church in Holland asking for some monetary aid due to the hardships occurring from Indian raids on the settlement.

Life in the Valley in these early days was no doubt very difficult. Few fields had to be plowed and planted, homes built from materials found nearby, and provision had to be

made to withstand the winters. Early dealings with the Indians were friendly as far as we can tell. In fact there may have even been some attempts made by the Mennonites and Quakers to pay the Indians for their land.

This relationship changed, however, when in 1756 the Indians under the influence of the French, began raiding the settlements and homes along the western frontier. This included the Massanutten Colony and other inhabitants of Page County. At least one Mennonite family was massacred before 1758 and much of the John Roads family was killed in 1764 when a band of Indians led by a white man apparently came to Page with robbery as a motive. The French and Indian War ended in 1763.

Difficulty in Researching Page Co. Records

One of the problems confronting researchers into the early history of Page County Virginia is the fact that many of the early court records and documents are located in other counties. Page began as a part of Orange County. Later it became a part of Augusta County, then Dunsmore. It continued to change names as it was next a portion of Frederick and lastly it was included as part of Shenandoah County.

The early Mennonite church of Page County was apparently not strong. Whether this was caused by poor leadership or other causes is not known. Two of the earliest settlers, Martin Kauffman, Sr. and John Roads, are known to have been preachers. The church was an extension of the Pennsylvania Church and got at least some measure of oversight from the Lancaster County brotherhood.

Most of the neighbors of the Mennonites in Page County were German Baptists. A large number of Mennonite families evidently fell in with this group. Others migrated to the Linville Creek area of Rockingham County. By the late 1800's the Mennonites of Page County no longer met as a group to worship because they were so few in number.

This means that as research is done, it may be necessary to visit all of these counties in order to search out the will or deed in question.

Another factor in the study of the Mennonites of Page County is that they evidently did not write much of their own history. Much of what we have comes to us through the writings in Moravian diaries and Baptist church records.

Page County Historical Tour Planned

Page County, site of some of the earliest Mennonite settlements in the Shenandoah Valley, is rich in Virginia Mennonite history. Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians plans an historical tour of the area on Saturday, Sept. 17, 1994. Due to lack of adequate parking and the fact that much of the information about each site will be forthcoming during travel time, we ask that everyone please join us on the bus instead of in automobiles.

We will leave the EMHS parking lot at 8:00 a.m. by air conditioned bus and visit all or most of the following points of interest: Massanutten Colony memorial, honoring the first settlers, many of whom were Mennonites; old cemetery along Route 211 containing memorial to Martin Kauffman Sr.; the WhiteHouse, built by Martin Kauffman Jr. as a home and place of worship; cemetery where preacher David Kauffman is buried; Hamburg Church (Mauck Meeting House) which Mennonites helped build and used as a place of worship; site of the preacher John Rhodes home, where he and part of his family were massacred by Indians; Strickler Cemetery; and Walbrook, home of the Brubaker family.

We will have lunch at the Mimslyn Hotel in Luray. Cost will be \$4.25 for soup and salad bar, \$5.75 for full lunch buffet. Drink and gratuity are extra. Please pay individually. Bus fare and other incidentals will be \$12.00 per person. Please fill out registration card and send along with your check as soon as possible to insure your spot on the bus. The tour is limited to the first 45 registrants.

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Quick Quiz

-Answers on last page

- 1) The only colonial German church west of the Blue Ridge still standing is or was called:
a)Mauck Meetinghouse b) Mill Creek Church c)Hamburg
d) all of the above
- 2) The name given to the point in the river where the John Roads family was massacred is:
a) Massanutten Bend b) Bloody Ford c) War Branch
d)Indian Crossing
- 3) How many members of the John Roads family survived the Indian massacre:
a) none b) three c)seven d)nine

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Urgent!

The Historical Library and Archives of EMC&S is in need of a few copies of Connections (Vol. 3, No. 2, December, 1992). The need is for 3, 4 or more copies as several extras should go into storage. Please send copies to Harold Huber, Historical Library, EMC&S (EMU).

Annual Hymn Sing at Historic Page County Church

One mile west of Luray on Rt. 766 in the village of Hamburg, stands Mauck's Meetinghouse. Constructed of pine logs around 1770 it is a lasting testimony to the Mennonites of Page County in the early years of this country, although it served the Baptists as well for some time.

It is here on the first Sunday of August that people have come together every year since the 1920's for a day of singing and fellowship. Again this year, at 10:00 a.m., singers and songleaders will gather to sing from Joseph Funk's Harmonia Sacra, a hymn-book first published in 1832. Following a noontime basket lunch, the singing continues into the afternoon hours.

The music, chosen by bc the songleaders and on occasion by those who have a special request, ranges from familiar hymns to some that may be quite difficult to sing. When voices are about worn out, the service adjourns for another year.

All are welcome and encouraged to attend this event

EVENTS OF INTEREST

"ALL DAY" HARMONIA SACRA SING AT OLD HAMBURG CHURCH - AUG. 7, 1994

BUS TOUR OF PAGE COUNTY - SEPT. 17, 1994

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY MENNONITE HISTORIANS - OCT .1, 1994

Martin Kauffman, Sr. (-1749)

Early family records are often pieced together by studying land transactions, church records and wills. The family of Martin Kauffman is no exception.

Martin Kauffman came from Lancaster County Pennsylvania sometime between 1726 and 1736. At that time he bought three parcels of land from Ludowick Stone on the Gerundo (Shenandoah) River in Orange County (Page Co.) Virginia. These parcels contained 300 acres, in 1739 Lord Fairfax granted Martin Kauffman another 240 acres adjoining the homestead.

These early settlers were often followed into the area by other family members. Martin bought land for his brother Michael in 1739. Michael appears in local and church history frequently. Michael returned to Pennsylvania to settle his father's estate and when he returned in 1758 settled on the Linville Creek in Rockingham County. He is buried at Lindale Mennonite Church Cemetery.

Martin Kauffman was a Mennonite minister and a blacksmith by trade. In 1746 Louis Moyer was bound to Martin to learn the blacksmith trade. Martin owned many books and was well educated for his time. He was married to Barbara Stauffer and they had five children.

Martin Jr. married first Mary Limberger and then Mary Taylor. We will talk more about Martin Jr. later.

Anna, born about 1740, married

Henry Brumbach. Their farm was known as Spring Farm with a spring large enough to run a mill. **David** married Dorothy Strickler, daughter of Joseph Strickler and they lived along the Shenandoah River. David died in 1804 and his wife and children moved to Licking Co. Ohio.

Magdalena married John Strickler.

Nancy married Jacob Strickler a Mennonite minister, son of Abraham Strickler who was one of the original settlers from Lancaster Co.

Martin Kauffman Sr. died in 1749 and his will was probated May 17, 1749. His brother Michael was named as trustee until his children were of age.

Martin Kauffman Jr. was also a Mennonite minister, and the house he built is known as the White House. Martin Jr. was called "Whitehouse Martin" to distinguish him from "Hawkbill Martin Kauffman". The White House is one of Page County's most well known landmarks. The basement is built to withstand Indian attacks, the first floor was the home, and the second floor was the meeting place for area Mennonites.

In 1770 the Rev. John Koontz settled in the area. He was a Baptist minister who led the area in a revival of religious zeal. John Koontz succeeded in converting most of the Mennonites of the area to the Baptist faith. Martin Kauffman Jr. was one of his first disciples. He became a Baptist minister. They compromised on the issue of baptism, but when the Revolutionary War came the

"Mennobaptists" could not accept the idea of fighting. Martin Jr. and his followers separated from Rev. Koontz's group and once again met in the White House. The church had around sixty members and they were called the Mennonite Separate Independent Baptist Church. Martin Jr. submitted a petition to the General Assembly of Virginia requesting military exemption similar to that given to Mennonites and Quakers.

The petition was rejected. The Separatist Church began to disintegrate and many members were taken back into the Baptist Church. Martin Jr. was refused reentry into the Baptist Church twice.

Hoping to find more religious freedom, Martin Jr. and his followers moved to Ohio where they founded the town of New Lancaster in Fairfield County.

At the time of Martin Kauffman Jr.'s death in 1805 he is once again located in Virginia, but his son Martin Kauffman III had remained in Ohio and was a minister in the Pleasant Run Baptist Church.

Sources used :

A Genealogy and History of the Kaufman-Coffman Family in America by Charles F. Kauffman.

History of the Mennonites in Virginia (1727-1900) by Harry Anthony Brunk.

Old Homes of Page County Virginia by Jennie Ann Kerkoff.

The Virginia Germans by Klaus Wust.

Notes & Queries

Mericle- Need information on the families of Saloma Stihl (Steel) m. John Mericle 1801, Rockingham Co. Va. Saloma's mother, Catherina (Wine) Stihl m. (2) Jacob Bowman in Maryland and moved to Rockingham Co. where she m. (3) Christian Fry in 1804.

Who were the parents of John Mericle? Were the Mericles Mennonite? *** Sandra Kinter 1918 Little Farm Lane, West Bloomfield, MI. 48322

Shank- Does anyone know who was the first wife of "Hans" John Shank, son of Bishop Henry Shank? He had five children by his first wife. They were Michael, Henry, Barbara, Esther and Elizabeth. He then married Magdalena Smith and they also had five children. *** Janet Shank, P.O. Box 870 Broadway, Va. 22815

To become a member of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians and to receive future copies of this newsletter, send name and address and 1994 dues (\$5 per couple, \$3 for single) to Linden Wenger, 1570 Hillcrest Dr. Harrisonburg, Virginia 22801

Name _____
Address _____

The "Notes & Queries" section of this newsletter is meant to be a forum whereby the reader can obtain information about Shenandoah Mennonite families and happenings. If you have a need for such information, send us a letter with your inquiry. We also will consider short notes which may be of interest to others.. Be sure to send your name and address so that others can reply to you. We will attempt to print as many queries as space on this page allows. Send to Randall Shank, P.O. Box 870, Broadway, Va. 22815.

Quick Quiz Answers: 1)d 2)b 3)c

Elwood Jordan