

# SHENANDOAH MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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Quarterly publication of the  
Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians

## Annual Meeting a Success

The annual meeting of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians convened in the West Dining Hall of Eastern Mennonite University on October 1, 1994. The program consisted of a short business meeting and a very informative and interesting discussion of Civilian Public Service during the 1940's by some who served in various roles at these camps.

Those who remember those times were reminded of scenes from their own past and relived a period of their lives which only storytelling can revive. Others were challenged by the faith and service of these CPSers.

During the business meeting, several actions were taken concerning the future of this organization. A slate of officers was presented and approved as follows:

### Two year terms

Vice president: Michael Shank

Secretary: Jim Rush

Treasurer: Linden Wenger

### One year terms

President: Laban Peachey

Newsletter editor: Randy Shank

Assistant secretary: Lois Bowman

The position of Vice President is a new office. We are happy to welcome Michael onto the Executive Committee and look forward to his leadership, especially in program planning.

A new dues schedule was also proposed and accepted. Single memberships will now be six dollars (\$6.00) and memberships for husband and wife will be ten dollars (\$10.00). This increase was needed to cover the cost of printing and mailing newsletters.

Lois Bowman prepared and distributed a questionnaire and

membership form in which input was requested concerning several aspects of the organization's future. The executive committee would greatly appreciate any suggestions for program and newsletter topics as well as other ideas which any member may wish to share.

### Valley Mennonite Churches

## Trissels - First Va. Mennonite Church

The first Mennonite settlers in present day Rockingham County moved into the Linville Creek area in the 1770's and 1780's. Some had come from Page and Shenandoah County settlements, but a greater number came directly from eastern and central Pennsylvania.

At first homes served as meetinghouses where German was spoken and sung. It soon became evident to some that church buildings were needed in Virginia. Even though several homes were built expressly to serve as meeting places as well, the rooms were just too small to accommodate the increasing families of the Linville Creek area. Also, neighboring denominations had church buildings and by the early 1800's there were already some 40 Mennonite churches built in Pennsylvania.

Trissels' Church, the first continuing Mennonite church in Virginia, was erected on land purchased from Abraham and Catherine Neff sometime around 1822. It was built north of the cemetery which had been established as early as 1798.

Constructed of logs and later weatherboarded, it was 20 feet wide by 25 feet long. Two doors, one for ladies and one for gentlemen, allowed entrance into a room divided down the middle by a railing.

Unpainted, the church sat among the tall oaks on top of the hill overlooking Cedar Run. Early worshipers were Ackers, Beerys, Branners, Brenemans, Drivers, Geils, Holsingers, Minnichs, Funks, Showalters, Shanks, Rhodes, Brunks, Trissels, Roadcaps, Shoemakers, Brocks, Allebachs, and others.

# Abraham Breneman ( 1744 -1815)

Abraham Breneman was born December 3, 1744 at New Danville in Lancaster County Pennsylvania. He was the third child of Melchior Breniman and Anne Good. Abraham and his first wife Marie Reiff moved to Rockingham County Virginia around 1770. He bought farm land near Edom on the Linville Creek and there he raised his large family. Marie was the daughter of John Rife and Anna Garber, and was born in Pennsylvania July 29, 1746. She died following the birth of her eighth child on March 29, 1788.

Abraham married for his second wife Magdalena Shank who was the daughter of Adam Shank and Magdalena Eyeman. Magdalena was born January 22, 1769. They also had eight children.

Abraham was a Mennonite farmer who instilled in his children the importance of education. He is described as a tall, slender man, smooth shaved, and of a robust constitution and highly respected by the Mennonite church and by his neighbors as well. Church services were held regularly at his spacious home. He donated the ground for Breneman's Cemetery just north of Edom where later in 1898 Lindale Mennonite church was built. The cemetery was then called Lindale Cemetery. This burial ground served the community

of early settlers, Abraham and his first wife are buried there. Later on two of his sons were instrumental in establishing another cemetery and church by the name Breneman's on another part of the homestead. Some of his children and their families moved to Ohio where Magdalena went to live in her old age. Tradition has it that she is buried in Fairfield County Ohio.

Abraham Breneman died March 8, 1815 of camp fever which he contracted from the soldiers who had returned from the War of 1812. Of his sixteen children, fourteen grew to adulthood.

**Magdalena**, born 1770, soon after they came to Rockingham, married Frederick Rhodes. He was the son of Anthony and Madalene Rhodes. He was a farmer and Mennonite minister. They lived just south of Harrisonburg and had six children.

**Elizabeth**, born 1773, married Michael Miller. He was the son of Samuel Miller and Magdalena Wiley. They were farmers and lived just two miles west of Harrisonburg. They were Mennonites and had seven children.

**Melchior**, born 1775, married Elizabeth Burkholder. She was the daughter of Peter Burkholder and Margaret Huber. Melchior was a farmer and Deacon in the Mennonite Church. They lived on part of the Edom homestead. He and his half brother Christian were instrumental in establishing Breneman's Church which served until 1919 as both a church and day school

during the week. A cemetery still exists on this site southwest of Edom. Melchior and Elizabeth had five children.

**Frances**, born 1777, married John Landes. His father was also John Landes and his mother's maiden name was Miller. She is buried at Mossy Creek in Augusta County Virginia. He went to live with a son in Indiana where he is buried. They had nine children.

**Anna Barbara**, born 1780, married Jacob Hildebrand. His parents were Henry Hildebrand and Margaret (Musselman?) They lived about five miles north of Waynesboro Virginia. They were Mennonites and had four children. Their son Jacob Hildebrand Jr. became a Mennonite Bishop.

**Daniel**, born 1782, married Anna Magdalena Burkholder. She was the daughter of Peter Burkholder and Margaret Huber. They moved to Danville, Ohio in 1820 where they were farmers. Members of the Mennonite Church during their younger days, they later joined the Methodist Church. They had nine children. This family used the spelling Brannaman.

**Abraham Jr.**, born 1785, married Elizabeth Hartman. They were farmers near Mt. Solon Virginia and members of the United Brethren Church. They had six children.

**Eve Margaret** was born in 1788 and died in infancy.

**Henry**, born in 1791, was the first child of Abraham and Magdalena. He married Barbara Beery the daughter of George

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# Notes & Queries

**Baumgardner:** Did MICHAEL Baumgardner leave the Shenandoah Valley for Maryland? He appears, 16 May 1773 on the records of St. Benjamin's (Kreider's ) Church, Pipe Creek, Frederick Co. MD. --Doris Rex Schutte, 164 4th Street, Bonita Springs, FL 33923-7366

**Genealogy Conference:** The Seventeenth Annual Genealogy Conference of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society will be held on March 25, 1995. The conference includes speakers, workshops, and a banquet. Registration is open to both members and non-members. for information write --Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster PA 17602-1499

To become a member of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians and to receive future copies of this newsletter, send name and address and 1995 dues (\$10 per couple, \$6 for single) to:  
Jim Rush, 780 Parkwood Drive  
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)b 2)b 3)d

*Elwood Yoder*