

March Meeting to Highlight Life of John S. Coffman

John S. Coffman will be the focus of a special presentation co-sponsored by the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians and Eastern Mennonite University. The program is Tuesday, March 26, 7:30 pm, at the Bank Mennonite Church where Coffman was ordained and served as minister.

One hundred years ago, it would have been difficult to name an individual more influential in the Mennonite Church than John S. Coffman. A native of the Shenandoah Valley, he moved to

Elkhart, Indiana in 1879 at the invitation of John F. Funk, Mennonite minister, statesman, and publisher. Coffman's own influence was most evident in his support for efforts in evangelism and education. His father was Samuel, ordained a Mennonite bishop in the Valley during the Civil War.

Susan Fisher Miller, from Chicago, Illinois, will be the speaker. She is the recipient of a Harry A. Brunk Award by the Menno Simons Historical Library and Archives at Eastern

Mennonite University. The grant supported part of her research into Coffman's life.

Miller's presentation will have special appeal to individuals interested in local church history or in the Samuel Coffman family. She will also be addressing a colloquium at Eastern Mennonite Seminary on Wednesday, March 27, at 12:15. For further information on either program, contact Nate Yoder (432-9326). The Bank Church is located on Route 752, two miles south of its intersection with Route 33 in Hinton.

New Executive Committee Chosen Following Civil War Program at Annual Meeting

The third annual meeting of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians met on September 22 at Weaver's Mennonite Church. A program built around the theme of the Civil War was presented.

Nate Yoder gave the history of the song, "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" after which Michael Shank led two verses of the song. Deputy Brubaker and Mary Emma Eby each told of Civil War stories they had heard passed

down through their families.

Samuel Horst gave the main address which he entitled "The Call to War and the Call to Peace: Three Men and Their Women in the Civil War Era".

A short business meeting followed, chaired by Laban Peachey. After several small changes to an earlier draft, a constitution was adopted. A slate of nominees was presented by the Nominating Committee and

accepted by the membership. Those elected to serve for two year terms on the executive committee were Nate Yoder, president, Lois Bowman, 6th member, Randy Shank, newsletter editor, and Calvin Redekop, treasurer. These will join with present members Jim Rush, secretary and Michael Shank, vice president, to compose the executive committee for 1996.

Suggested Winter Reading

With the winter very much upon us it is a great time to catch up on our reading. And what better way than to read local history. When we read stories and happenings from places nearby that have been a part of our personal history, it is so easy to imagine what the author wishes to convey. The purpose of this article is to make the reader aware of some of the books of local Shenandoah Valley Mennonite history.

Two authors whose general histories of the Shenandoah Valley area stand out are John W. Wayland and Samuel Kercheval. Although their writings are not Mennonite specific there are many references to and chapters about the early Mennonite pioneers. Kercheval's A History of the Valley of Virginia describes much of the early life of the settlers in the Shenandoah Valley along with 18th century history.

Wayland's A History of Rockingham County includes a section on the Mennonite Churches of 1912 and has numerous references to Mennonite individuals. Other books of Wayland's of particular interest include The German Element of the Shenandoah Valley, History of Shenandoah County, and Twenty-five Chapters of the Shenandoah Valley.

There have been several local writers of years past that have given us a glimpse of our heritage. Harry A. Brunk was one of these. He wrote the two volume History of the Mennonites in Virginia. He begins with the

earliest settlers and settlements in Page County in 1727 and continues to tell of the good and the bad times of the Virginia Mennonites until 1960. Brunk was also the author of several local genealogies including David Heatwole and His Descendants and The Progeny of Jacob Brunk I The Will-maker. Brunk wrote and arranged a book called Life of Peter S. Hartman as well.

Many of the older genealogy books are full of stories. Even if you don't belong to the family lines, the stories told can transport us to a different time in history. Some local genealogies to enjoy are History of the Heatwole Family by Cornelius J. Heatwole, A History of the Descendants of Abraham Breneman by Charles D. Breneman, and History of the Descendants of J. Conrad Geil by Joseph H. Wenger. Wenger also co-authored a History of the Descendants of Christian Wenger in 1903.

Books by local authors about their families include Six Little Orphans by Emma Shank Delp and By the Grace of God by Nancy Burkholder Hess. John L. Heatwole has just had published Shenandoah Voices, a collection of folklore, legends, and traditions of the Valley.

This list is by no means inclusive, but can give the reader, whether a newcomer to the area or a lifetime resident, a start toward learning more about the life and times of the Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley.

-Randall Shank

Heatwole, from page 3

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Magdalene was born in 1802 and died as a child. She is buried in Early's Cemetery.

Samuel "Shem" (1804-1858) married Elizabeth Shank (1803-1879) daughter of Bishop Henry Shank. They lived at Spring Creek and he was a shoemaker like his father. Shem and Elizabeth had 10 children.

John (1806-1857) married first Nancy Swank (1801-1804) and then Mary Frances Lilly. He was a farmer near Harrisonburg and had 10 children with Nancy and two daughters with Mary Frances.

Anna (1808-1835) married Daniel Suter (1808-1873). She died young of typhoid fever. They had 5 children. Their son Emmanuel apprenticed with his cousin "Potter" John Heatwole and learned the trade so well that collectors still covet a piece of "Suter Pottery" for their collection.

Henry (1813-1888) married Barbara Culp. He lived in Indiana and was a Teacher, Physician and builder. Henry and Barbara had 11 children.

Sources used:

David Heatwole and His Descendants, by Harry Anthony Brunk, 1987

History of Mennonites in Virginia, 1727-1900, by Harry Anthony Brunk, 1959

History of the Heatwole Family, by Cornelius J. Heatwole, 1907

-Janet M. Shank

David Heatwole (1767-1842)

David Heatwole was born in Lancaster County Pennsylvania in 1767 to Mathias Heatwole and his second wife whose maiden name was Haas(Hess) . Mathias' first wife and two daughters died on the trip from Germany in 1748 aboard the ship "Two Brothers". David was the oldest of six children born to Mathias Heatwole in the New World.

When David was around nine years old his father died suddenly. As was the custom of the time David was indentured to a man of the name Bear who was to teach him a trade. Mr. Bear was of vile disposition, the scars of which David carried on his back for the rest of his life. When David could tolerate the abuse no more he ran away to a family by the name of Momaw where he stayed till he reached the age of 18. At that time he moved in with his Uncle Christian Haas who taught him the trade of shoemaker.

Born in Lancaster County Pennsylvania around 1765, was a young lady by the name of Magdalene Weyland whose family had moved to the Wyoming Valley about 100 miles north of Harrisburg to settle there. Twice the family was attacked by Indians with one brother being killed and another wounded. The second time when Magdalene was about 14 years old, she escaped by lying flat in a canoe and drifting down river. This time she elected to stay in Lancaster with a Grabill family. In this home is where David and Magdalene came to know each other and fall in love.

David And Magdalene were married in 1788 in Lancaster County where they lived for several years as he plied the trade of shoemaker. After their first son Gabriel was born they moved to Franklin County where two daughters and a son were born. Around 1795 David made a trip to the Shenandoah Valley looking for some land of his own. His Uncle Christian Haas (Hess) had moved to the Valley earlier and settled in the Turleytown area. While visiting his uncle, David found 85 acres just south of Harrisonburg which he bought for 300 pounds. David built a shoemaker shop and cabin into which he and Magdalene moved their family in 1797. Here in the Shenandoah Valley among many Mennonite friends were born seven more children.

David had two sisters living in the Valley. Anna Heatwole who was married to Samuel Weaver, they lived near Harrisonburg, and Peter and Anna Heatwole Bowman settled near Mt. Clinton at North Mountain.

David Heatwole was the first Mennonite Deacon in Va. He served the Middle district. In the 1907 History of the Heatwole Family it is said of David, "He was one of those plain, unassuming men of his time, and was a believer in, and a strong advocate of the non-resistant doctrine taught by Menno Simon."

David died on April 8, 1842 and was buried in the Blosser Cemetery beside Magdalene who had died November 23, 1840. David and Magdalene had 11 children:

Gabriel (1789-1875) married Margaret (Polly) Swank (1790-1870). They lived at Mole Hill and were blessed with 12 children. Gabriel was a successful farmer , a cooper and an "Herb Doctor". Their son Gabriel D. was a minister in the Mennonite Church.

Frances (1790-1852) married Michael Hildebrand (1783-1857). They lived in Augusta County and had 11 children. Their son Jacob R. Hildebrand was a Mennonite minister.

Elizabeth (1792-1836) married Henry Shank (1787-1839). Henry was the son of Bishop Henry Shank. They lived near Cherry Grove and had 12 children. Three of their sons moved to Missouri, the rest of the family has not been traced.

Christian (1795-1853) married Barbara Emswiler (1796-1884). They moved to Romney West Virginia. Christian and Barbara had three children of which only one lived to adulthood.

David (1797-1867) married Susanna Helbert, they had 5 children. Following her death he then married Eliza Garrison, they were blessed with 7 more children. After his second marriage he moved to Greene County Virginia. David was a potter and a silver-smith. One of his children was "Potter" John Heatwole.

Abraham (1799-1879) married Margaret Showalter (1790-1855). They lived at Dale Enterprise and had four children. Their son Daniel was ordained as minister in the Mennonite Church.

William S. Reed (Rudd) who was born April 8, 1799, died May 18, 1874 married Christina Wenger, who was born January 8, 1785, died December 23, 1850. Who are the parents / ancestors of William S. Reed. (See p. 182 of The Wenger Book by Samuel Wenger.) Les Singleton, Rt. 2, Box 533, Micanopy, FL 32667

Zion Mennonite Church.

Wanted to read, any pre 1940 records or diary entries covering activities of Zion Mennonite

To become a member of 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, VA. 22801.

Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians
780 Parkwood Drive
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Notes & Queries

Church. Jim Rush 780 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22801 (434-0792)

Lehman. I'm in the process of writing a book on Lehman/Wengers and would like to include personal stories. I have found considerable information on the Wengers, but would like more info on my Lehman line. My Grandmother was Ida Lehman

born 3/13/1884. I believe they lived in the Middle District and went to Weavers Church. Ida's parents were David H. Lahmor and Mary Anna Wenger. Grandparents, Michael Laymon and Anna Good. Joanne Blakley, 6493 Tahawash, Cochiti Lake, NM 87083

Zion Mennonite Church.

Wanted to copy, any pre-1950 photographs of Zion Mennonite Church. Jim Rush, 780 Parkwood Dr., Harrisonburg, VA 22801

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

Elwood Goder