

SHENANDOAH MENNONITE HISTORIAN

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Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians

Randall Shank, editor

Mennonite History Seminar Planned for May 9-10

John L. Ruth's historical drama "The Strains of Zion's Harmony" will be presented at Eastern Mennonite University on Friday, May 9, 1997. The setting is the Franconia Mennonite community north of Philadelphia 150 years ago, when the Eastern District Mennonite Conference was formed. All but one of the characters are based on historical figures. Joseph Funk, visiting from Singers Glen, provides a

key link to events among Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Music from the period is a major feature. The drama is part of a larger two-day conference titled "The Riddle of Things Past". At a dinner preceding the play, John Ruth will address the theme for the weekend.

The conference which continues on Saturday is geared for congregational and conference

historians, pastors, teachers, and others interested in history. The SVMH is one of the sponsors for both the drama and the conference. Cost for the Friday evening dinner (Campus Center at 5:00 pm) and drama is \$15.00, and for the drama alone (Martin Chapel, Seminary, at 7:30 pm) is \$7.00. Reservations and tickets are available through the EMU bookstore (432-4250). **PLEASE ORDER YOUR TICKETS BY MONDAY, MAY 5, TO ASSIST PLANNERS.** For a program of the entire two-day conference, contact Nate Yoder (432-4255) or Jim Lehman (432-4169).

-Nate Yoder

Old Folks' Singings In The Valley

According to Harry Brunk's History of the Mennonites in Virginia 1900-1960, the Old Folk's singing movement probably started on January 1, 1903. These singings, using the Harmonia Sacra hymnal published by Joseph Funk, were began to allow a time of worship and praise while singing the hymns that many had learned at singing schools.

First begun at Weaver's Mennonite Church, they have continued to be held there on New Year's Day, until the present, except for 1919 and 1929, which were postponed until March because of influenza outbreaks. Old Folk's Singings were also held in many other churches in

Rockingham, Shenandoah, Augusta, and Page counties, both by the Mennonites and by other denominations, including the Brethren, Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, and Reformed. There was even one held at the Rockingham County Court House.

In 1952, at the fiftieth anniversary meeting, it was suggested and decided to change the name from Old Folk's Singings to Harmonia Sacra Singings. This was done to attract more young persons to join in.

At present there are still a small handful of churches that continue to hold Harmonia Sacra Singings. Some, such as Weaver's, never ceased to have

theirs. Others have in recent years been added to the list of those who continue in a tradition of the Valley in singing the great songs of Joseph Funk's Harmonia Sacra.

Hymnsing Schedule

Weavers	New Years Day
VMRC	2nd Sun. Feb.
Harrisonburg	Easter Day
Trissels	1st Sun. May
Hamburg	1st Sun. Aug.
Bethel	1st Sun. Sept.
Rawley Springs	4th Sun. Sept.

Times vary with each church

Heritage Center Work Continues

May 10 is the deadline for submitting nominations to be considered in the appointment of a Site Selection Commission for a Mennonite heritage center in the Shenandoah Valley.

Authorization to appoint this committee came at the end of an all-day working session in March. Over fifty individuals participated in the various deliberations throughout the day. Participants in the planning day approved the concept of cooperation between a not-for-profit heritage center and various appropriately related commercial establishments. The membership also asked the officers to incorporate the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians as a not-for-profit entity.

The Site Selection Commission is to be composed of two or three representatives from SVMH and two to four from the business, professional and investment community. This body will be authorized to select a site, secure an option for its purchase, and pursue funding. The Commission will report to the Executive Committee of SVMH who will keep the membership informed of activity and events.

Nominations may be submitted in writing by May 10 to any member of the SVMH Executive Committee. Please include the

name of nominee (may be oneself); category (member of SVMH or of commercial community); qualifications of the nominee; and name and telephone number of person making nomination. Members of the executive committee are: Lois Bowman (432-4177); Randy Shank (896-1205); Elroy Kauffman (434-9727); Michael Shenk (432-4531); Cal Redekop (433-4930), or Nate Yoder (432-4255).

The working day took place on March 13 at the Lindale

Mennonite Church. Key resource persons from outside the community included architect LeRoy Troyer from Indiana, heritage interpreter Jan Gleysteen from Indiana, restaurateur Levi Troyer from Ohio, and journalist Ross Baughman currently from Arkansas. A further consensus of the working group was that the SVMH take possession of an eighteenth-century log house being offered by Baughman. Steps are underway to dismantle and preserve this building.

President's Note

This issue of the newsletter reports significant developments toward a Mennonite heritage center for the Shenandoah Valley.

Various persons have noted that such an undertaking is quite a challenge for an organization as small and young as ours. Many of those same voices suggest, however, that now is the time to move ahead. Probing questions stimulated much thoughtful discussion at Lindale Mennonite Church on March 13. The enthusiasm which rose as consensus emerged was contagious.

Other activities in which the SVMH has a stake continue to increase. Note the conference on the campus of Eastern Mennonite University on May 9-10 for which we are one of the sponsors. Many of you will want to take in the dinner and drama that Friday evening. Planning for our annual events late this year is also underway. Increased activity means increased work. We would welcome volunteers in a

variety of areas. Someone with computer skills could create a database of persons who have expressed interest in a heritage center. We need persons to manage ongoing publicity regarding developments with the center. It's not too early to express your interest in particular aspects of the center where you would like to invest your energy-- design, artifacts, fund raising, publicity, etc. Randy Shank, as editor of this newsletter, is also in continual need of articles related to the history of Mennonites in the area.

Register your interests with any member of your executive committee: Lois Bowman (432-4177); Randy Shank (896-1205); Elroy Kauffman (434-9727); Michael Shenk (432-4531); Cal Redekop (433-4930), or myself (432-4255). Mail may be directed to me at Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

---- Nate Yoder

*The whole of history is
incomprehensible
without the Christ.*

--Ernest Renan, 1863

Henry Funk (1730-181?)

Henry was born in Montgomery County Pennsylvania in 1730. His father was Bishop Henry Funk.

He grew up in Pennsylvania and married Barbara Showalter the daughter of Jacob Showalter. They had 13 children. His daughter Susanna recounted the story of when her father Henry was pressed into service during the War of Independence to do transportation service with his team of four horses. It says in the Funk history that; " He was very reluctant to accept this service and assist the army in this war, finally Susanna said she would go with him and rode the saddle horse. As they were driving along a cannon ball struck the two horses on the lead, killing them both. This so shocked the father that he immediately determined to leave the service and go home, saying that he would refuse further service whatever the result might be."

Another anecdote told by Susanna tells of the great friendship her father Henry had with the local Indian Chief. The Chief told Henry to always look at his wigwam and if he saw no smoke coming out that meant Henry's family was in danger and should leave the area. One morning they saw no smoke rising from the Chief's wigwam so they gathered their belongings and left. That same day the Indians started on the warpath and destroyed everything in their way.

Henry is described as having a large and well proportioned frame, very muscular, with dark hair and eyes, a face indicat-

ing great firmness and resolution, and a body capable on enduring great hardships."

Henry and Barbara with their family, except the oldest son Jacob, came to Rockingham County, Virginia in 1786. One of the reasons he left Pennsylvania was because he was involved in the Funkite schism in Franconia Conference where his leadership was questioned for supporting the colonists in the revolution. Henry and his family settled about eight miles north of Harrisonburg. Henry took an active interest in promoting Church music and was also a minister in the Northern District of Virginia Mennonite Conference.

Barbara and Henry Funk had 13 children.

Jacob (1761-1817) married Mary Shelly. He was a minister in Pennsylvania and they had 9 children. He died following a paralytic stroke which he suffered in Church after having read the Hymn for the service.

Christian (1763 -1853) married Susanna Geil and they had 11 children. They lived near Broadway where he made sickles. He also died just after leading music at Trissels Mennonite Church.

Abraham married and moved to the Rocky Mountains. There are no known descendants.

Elizabeth married Jacob Showalter and they had 8 children.

Barbara married Anthony Miller.

Henry married Susanna Fry. In 1820 they moved to Fairfield County Ohio. They had 8 children.

Esther married Jacob Erbaugh. Originally from Bucks County Pennsylvania they first moved to Rockingham County the in 1834 moved on to Montgomery County Ohio. They were German Baptist and had 8 children.

Susanna (born 1775) married George Beery they had 9 children.

John married Mary Rader. They were Mennonites and moved to Henry County Indiana. John and Mary had eight children.

Samuel married Sarah Carrier. They were Methodists and had 13 children.

Joseph (1778-1862) married Elizabeth Rhodes and they had 5 children. After Elizabeth's death in 1814 he married Rachel Britton. Joseph is best known for his work with Church music. Joseph translated the "Mennonite Confession of Faith" from the German language and published it in 1837. He ran Singing Schools and started a publishing house near his home in 1847. Probably his best known work is "The Harmonia Sacra", a compilation of sacred songs.

Frances (died 1845) married Henry Culp and they moved from the valley to Fairfield County Ohio. Frances and Henry had 11 children.

Daniel (1781-1859) married Christena Safley. Daniel Funk was a Bishop in the Mennonite Church. He moved from Virginia to Ohio and then on to Indiana. They had 9 children.

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Henry Funk Continued from page 3

In his later years Henry remained a leader in the Northern District of the Virginia Mennonite Conference. The exact date of his death or the location of his grave are not recorded for us. Henry and Barbara's descendants are many, and they are spread all over the United States.

Sources used:
A Brief History of Bishop Henry Funk by Rev. A.J. Fretz.
Family Record of the Showalters by Preston M. Showalter, 1943 edition.
History of Mennonites in Virginia, 1727-1900, by Harry Anthony Brunk

--Janet Shank

Notes & Queries

In the next issue of the Shenandoah Mennonite Historian we will continue to look at the Funk family of Rockingham County. We will especially look at Joseph Funk, musician, publisher, and translator. If anyone has information about this family or this exceptional man, please feel free to send it to me. I will attempt to publish as much of it as possible in the next edition.

--Randall Shank
editor

To become a member of Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians and to receive future copies of this newsletter, send name and address and 1997 dues (\$10 per couple, \$6 for single) to:

Michael Shenk, 1345 Hillcrest Drive, 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 220, Broadway, Va. 22815

Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians
1345 Hillcrest Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22801