

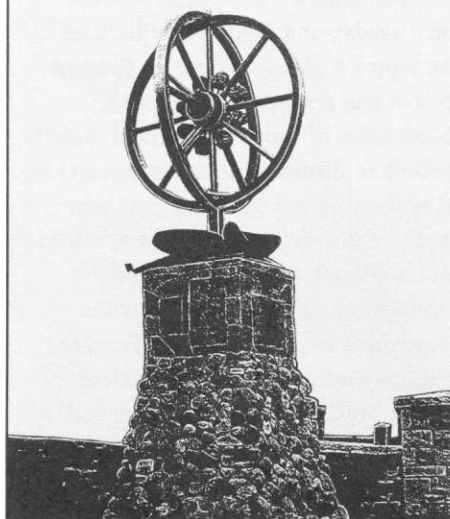
Ontario Mennonite History

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Kropf/Baden Cemetery Restored

By Marion Roes and Barb Draper

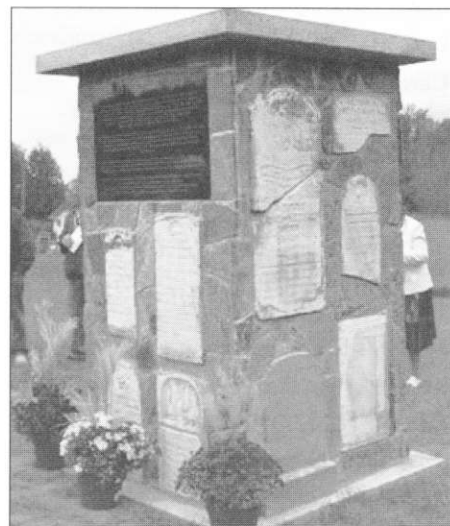
On September 26, approximately 80 people gathered for the dedication of the Old Kropf/Baden Cemetery cairn. Recording, research and much digging by Lorraine Roth, Ruby Hammer and Darryl Bonk (Ontario Genealogical Society, Waterloo Region Chapter) resulted in a list of names of those buried and believed to be buried there. Ralph Shantz, Donna Hartzler, Township of Wilmot staff and descendants worked with Jim Clair Masonry, Baden and The Stone Centre, Kitchener, to complete the project: a distinctive cairn of fieldstone, granite and gravestones. The stones will be preserved and the pioneers' burial location won't be forgotten.

For many years the Kropf/Baden cemetery on Snyder's Road in Baden was a sorry sight with its broken tombstones. In 2010 the Township of Wilmot partnered with descendants and friends of those buried there in order to preserve and restore the cemetery and the tombstones that remain. On September 26, 2010 a large cairn was dedicated; the cairn incorporated the remaining headstones, the names of those buried, and a short history of the cemetery.

In 1830, Jacob Kropf laid claim to lot 13, north of Snyder's Road, and received the patent to the front 50 acres in 1835. He was ordained as the deacon for the Wilmot Amish Mennonite settlement in 1824.

When Christian Stuckey and his wife, Barbara, died in 1830 and 1831/32, it is believed that Jacob Kropf provided a burial place for them at this site. There was also a school at this site by 1845.

In 1866 Jacob and his wife, Magdalena (born Rothacker) together with the school trustees, conveyed this parcel of land to Nicholas Klein and Peter Spenler for a burial ground "for the use of all denominations of Christians" with the intention that trustees were to be replaced as needed. Burials in the cemetery dropped sharply after



Remnants of old tombstones were incorporated into the Kropf/Baden cemetery cairn. (Photo by Marion Roes)

the 1870's and 1880's as local people began using the Fairmount cemetery (off Foundry Street in Baden) or the Steinmann's cemetery (west of Baden). Through most of the 20th century the old Kropf/Baden cemetery was not used. There is no record that the trustees were ever replaced and this burial ground was neglected and occasionally vandalized.

Lorraine Roth and Ruby Hammer collected and compiled the information available on the headstones in September, 1978. It was updated in August, 2010 by Heritage Wilmot.

Those Buried and Believed to be Buried at the Kropf Baden Pioneer Cemetery:

Kropf family burials:

Catherine Kropf 1819-1840

Henry Kropf 1817-1855

Jacob Kropf Sr. 1784-1875

Jacob Kropf Jr. 1812-1848

Jacob N. Kropf 1842-1889

Magdalena (Rotheracker) Kropf
1786-1878

Peter Kropf 1849-1871

Susanna (Mayer) Kropf 1843-1916

~ Continued on page 2 ~

**Neighbours believed to be buried here:
(* represents a child)**

Christian Besinger 1819-1862
 Marie (Eicher) Boshart 1787-1850
 Catherine Erb * 1828-1830
 Christian Erb 1792-1875
 Elizabeth (Schultz) Erb 1799-1873
 John /Hans Erb 1796-1865
 Susan (Schwartzentruber) Erb
 1833-1861
 Veronica (Schwartzentruber) Erb
 1805-1863
 Veronica Erb* 1840-1847
 Barbara (Erb) Gascho 1831-1876
 Four inf. Sons of Menno & Catherine
 (Myers) Gascho* 1890's
 Christian Mayer 1805-1868
 Magdalena (Petersheim) Mayer
 b. 1803 d. 1850s
 Jacob Miller 1790-1841
 David Oesch* 1835-1841
 Mary Oesch* 1838
 Michael Ramseyer 1843/44 – c.1873
 Jacob Schrag 1753-1838

Henry Schultz c.1764-1840
 Magdalena (Erb) Schultz 1805-1886
 Barbara (Oswald) Schwartzentruber
 1791/92 – 1848
 Catherine (Schmucker) Schwartzentruber
 1778-1850
 Christian Schwartzentruber 1816-1873
 Jacob Schwartzentruber 1771-1841
 Michael Schwarzenbruber
 1771-1859
 Catherine (Kennel) Spenler
 1818-1875
 Barbara (Kurtz) Stuckey
 c.1800-1831/32
 Christian Stuckey unknown – 1830
 Anna Wagler* c.1850
 Anna Wagler* 1860-1861
 Christian Wagler Sr. 1774/5 – 1851
 Christian Wagler Jr. 1810-1887
 David Wagler* 1853
 Magdalena Wagler* 1845-1850
 Maria (Sommer) Wagler
 1783- c.1850
 Maria (Wagler) Wagler 1815-1855

Those buried (headstones in cairn):

Herman Elwood Kemkes* 1875
 Philip Erbach* 1865-1868
 Theodor Jakob Franke* (twin) 1861
 Gottlieb Hermann Franke* (twin)
 1861-1863
 John Giesler 1820-1870
 Adam Kaufmann* 1862
 Lisette Kaufmann* 1859-1874
 Barbara S. Miller 1789-1857
 James Morley – dates unknown
 Nathaniel Myers 1862-1887
 Elisabeth Schultz* 1838-1840
 Georg Schultz 1801-1847
 Peter Schumm 1802-1875
 Sophia – dates unknown
 Unknown name 1837-1875
 Wilhelmine (Stephan) – unknown dates
 (mother of twins)
 Margaretha (Fischer) Zinn
 1835-1860

Mennonite Brethren Celebrate 150th Anniversary

By Linda A. Huebert Hecht

This year the Mennonite Brethren Church is celebrating its 150th anniversary. Celebrations began in India in January, continuing in April and May in Mexico, Panama, Japan, the Ukraine and Germany. In Brazil they will celebrate in early November. From July 12 to 18, Canadian and U.S. delegates gathered in Surrey, British Columbia, for the North American celebration which included a pre-conference symposium. Today over 4,000 Mennonite Brethren live in Ontario and a number of them, including the author were present for the week-long meeting in Surrey.

The Mennonite Brethren Church grew out of a religious renewal movement in the Molochna Colony in the Ukraine. On Epiphany, January 6, 1860 eighteen brethren signed a letter of

secession from the Mennonite Church. Another nine brethren added their names on January 18. These 27 families made up the charter membership of around 50 people. They were led by Heinrich Huebert, Johann Claassen and Jacob D. Reimer. The group sought a deeper faith and more faithful discipleship and were very mission-minded. The symposium and the conference meetings of this past July indicated that mission work is still at the heart of the Mennonite Brethren Church today.

The North American Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission organized the pre-conference symposium, entitled *Renewing Identity and Mission: A Mennonite Brethren Consultation*. The goal was to discuss the 1860 historical events as well as the issues

facing the church today. Over 300 people attended the symposium. Alfred Neufeld of Paraguay challenged the participants with an opening address on recovering the vision of 1860.

The workshops which followed on Tuesday and Wednesday focused on topics such as Mennonite Brethren pietist and Anabaptist roots, their confession of faith, evangelical identity, beliefs in discipleship and peacemaking, how their hymns have shaped them and the global church and its mission. International speakers enriched the symposium and illustrated what is happening in the Mennonite Brethren church worldwide. They included: Nzuzi Mukawa, academic dean and professor at the School of Missiology in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of

Congo; John Shankar Rao, director of evangelism and church planting in the India MB Conference; Cesar Garcia, former pastor, professor and president of the MB churches in Colombia, currently studying at the MB Biblical seminary; and Johann Matthies, leader of MB missions in Europe and Central Asia. The many workshops provided a wealth of information as well as opportunities for feedback, informal discussion and a chance to make new acquaintances.

The conference attracted an estimated 900 people, over 500 of them delegates. It began Wednesday evening with a celebration service open to everyone. Inspiring words from Nzuzi Mukawa and John Shankar Rao enriched the worship experience. The Friday evening celebration service featured Samir Youssef, the "Billy Graham of North Africa" who ministers to Arabic speaking communities through radio and television. Among other things he said, "I don't speak about conversion but about following Jesus," and "the Muslims need the peace witness."

On Thursday American and Canadian delegates met jointly to hear from their bi-national organizations, institutions and committees. Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services administrators and missionaries gave interesting reports on mission work in India, Central and North Africa, Thailand, and Germany, past and present. There are now 18 conferences in 15 countries working together as partners in an organization called ICOMB – the International Community of Mennonite Brethren.

Reporting for the Canada/
US Mennonite Brethren Historical

Commission, Abe Dueck, the executive secretary, spoke about the crucial role of the commission in preserving church documents, providing resources for events like this anniversary and publishing books, the most recent one being, *The Mennonite Brethren Church Around the World Celebrating 150 Years*, launched at this conference. Earlier this year in Hillsboro, the commission launched a book on the work of Katie Funk Wiebe. All the churches in North America receive annually several issues

of the *Profiles of Mennonite Faith* series in which short biographies and stories of leaders and ordinary members, both past and present, are published. These are also available at www.mbhhistory.org. The commission seeks to understand the past, of which we are a product, so that together we can shape the future.

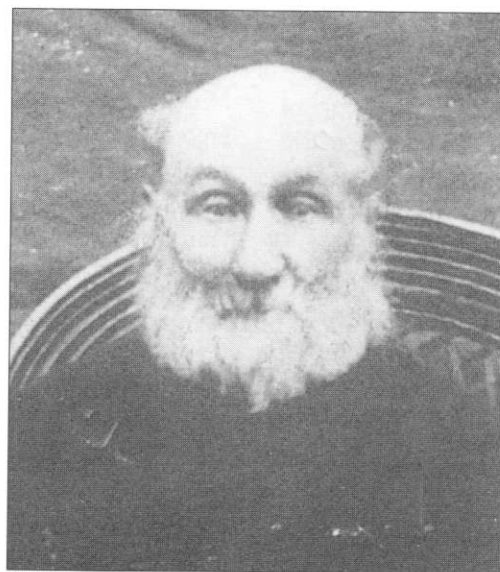
A celebration for the Mennonite Brethren seminary in Fresno, California followed, with discussions about its future. The seminary will now become part of Fresno Pacific University. The day came to a happy end when Lynn Jost, president of the seminary, conferred an honorary doctorate on David Manuel, for

his pioneer ministry to East Indians in Abbotsford and beyond for over 30 years.

Following this rich day of international reporting, Canadian and American delegates met separately and the Canadians celebrated 100 years of

service as a Canadian conference. On Friday delegates again met separately for their individual conference business sessions.

An excursion to the city of Vancouver on Saturday gave delegates opportunity to visit new churches being established by the



Heinrich Huebert, 1810-1895

British Columbia Mennonite Brethren Conference. They met pastors working with Chinese and Asian people and other church planters. One of the newest groups meets on beautiful Granville Island where delegates enjoyed their lunch break. The final rally at the Vancouver Convention Centre focused on mission work in British Columbia.

Today Mennonite Brethren members in India and Africa outnumber those in North America. Despite the persecution of some of its members in Asia, the Mennonite Brethren Church is expanding world wide indicating that the vision of 1860 still continues today. *

Ontario Mennonite History is published semi-annually by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G6, and distributed to all members of the Society. It is distributed free of charge to public libraries and school libraries in Ontario, upon request.

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David B. Eby's Retirement House

By Terence Scully

David Eby, a 22-year-old, emigrated from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to Waterloo County in June of 1807. He married Elizabeth Bechtel on May 8, 1810, and then bought and farmed Lot 32 of the German Company Tract (GCT), located at the junction of present-day Erb Street and Fischer-Hallman Road. The Zehr's shopping mall presently occupies the site of their homestead.

David B. (Bechtel) Eby was the ninth child of David and Elizabeth Eby, born on August 26, 1827. A document dated October 7, 1850, indicates that David B. Eby, who is qualified as a cooper, agreed to purchase roughly the southern half of his father's property, Lot 32 GCT consisting of 219.5 acres for the price of £900. The sale carried the condition that the son continue to care for one horse, two sheep and eight apple trees belonging to his father.

David B. married Lydia Bauman (b. 1831) on January 21, 1851; they had ten children. A plot of half an acre on the southeast corner of the Erb Street/

Fischer-Hallman intersection was sold by David B. Eby in July of 1851 (for seven and a half pounds sterling) for a Mennonite meeting house. Two years after Lydia died in 1882, David B. married Mary Kercher (b. 1853), the widow of Hiram Hewitt.

David B. Eby had planned for some time to retire to the town of Waterloo and in 1880 he purchased two lots from Moses Springer on the south side of the present-day Dupont Street East. Eby held onto that land until 1889 when it was transferred to Henry D. Becker, but never built on it himself.

Benjamin Devitt of Waterloo developed a Survey (Plan 512) which subdivided a parcel of land that he owned (GCT Lot 14) into ten lots on the west and east sides of Bellevue (now Tweed) Street. At its meeting of September 7, 1885, Waterloo Town Council approved a motion, moved by Mr. Killer and seconded by Mr. Hoffman, that "Bellevue Ave and Gore St. as laid out by Mr. B. Devitt" be accepted. Gore St. was a very short street between Bridgeport Road (now Laurel Street) to just past the end of Willow Street. On June 24, 1885, for the sum of \$400, David B. Eby purchased Lots 1 and 2 of that Survey from Benjamin and Nancy L. Devitt.

Eby seems to have begun building a house there immediately. He oriented the house (78 Erb Street East) to face onto

Erb Street. The depth of those lots form a spacious sideyard to the house, with a frame stable/driving shed now located toward the foot of Lot 2. When Gore St. was widened in 1968, the

City expropriated a triangular piece of the present frontage on 78 Erb Street, cutting mostly into the sideyard but leaving the house, too, a little closer to the roadway.

In the 1887 Assessment Rolls, Lots 1 & 2 are listed under the name of David B. Eby and evaluated at \$200. The 1888 Rolls show that six persons were living in his house and the assessed value of the land and building was \$1200. In the 1890 Rolls, David B. Eby is listed as joint owner along with Menno Devitt ("merchant, age 44"), who likely held the mortgage. Six people lived there and the assessed value of land and building was \$2700. In 1891 David B. Eby, still qualified as "farmer," aged 64, had discharged the mortgage and is listed as sole owner.

David B. Eby died March 19, 1897. At 10:30 on Sunday, March 21, the funeral procession made its way from the house at 78 Erb Street East to the Mennonite church at Erb Street and Fischer-Hallman Road where a service was conducted and the body interred.

On 10 May 1905, eight years after David B. Eby's death, the property at 78 Erb St. E. (Lots 1 & 2 of Plan 512), was sold to Martin B. Snider, "gentleman." The assessed value of the property varies over the next few years between \$1940 and \$2140, and the number of residents at that location is recorded as either four or five.

Architectural description:

The Eby-Snider house has Italianate design elements found in houses built in the last two decades of the 19th century for relatively affluent citizens. Those design elements include a hip roof, wide eaves overhang, paired eaves brackets, symmetrical arrangements of the details of elevations, and windows in pairs, arched, tall and narrow, with relatively large panes of glass. *

From a presentation given by Terence Scully at the unveiling of a Heritage Plaque on November 22, 2009.



78 Erb St. E., Waterloo

A Tribute to Ephraim Gingerich

October 11, 1917 -
June 18, 2010

By Herb Schultz

Ephraim was ordained as a minister by the voice of the congregation at Blake Amish Mennonite Church (near Zurich) in 1947. He was united in marriage to Elsie Martin in 1948.



Ephraim Gingerich in 1950 (Mennonite Archives of Ontario photo)



1983 (Mennonite Archives of Ontario photo)

Following their marriage they spent two years at Eastern Mennonite College, now University, in Virginia.

Ephraim was ordained as Bishop in 1952. To my knowledge he was the last surviving Bishop in what was formerly known as Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, or for that matter in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

When I was 17 years old, Ephraim wanted to have a chat with me. I vividly remember when and where this happened. He encouraged me as a young person wanting to follow Jesus. He also named several gifts and abilities that he thought I possessed and encouraged me to consider further education as a way to sharpen my skills and develop new ones—then he inquired..."Has it ever occurred to you that God may be calling you to prepare for some form of church ministry?"

This encounter forced me to do some serious soul-searching. With continued support and encouragement from Ephraim and other church leaders, plus my parents, I joined a group of men and women who ventured off to one of our church schools in the mid 1950's. As long as I have the gift of memory, I shall see Ephraim as a key player in that decision.

Over time, I experienced and observed the following about Ephraim. He was an encourager like Barnabas, gently affirming others, even stepping aside in order to help the gifts of others develop. Throughout his ministry he practiced a less restrictive form of church discipline than the norm at that time. Ephraim advocated a more consistent form of pastoral financial support for younger pastors who were being called to full time church leadership.

In addition to his faithful service at Blake and Zurich congregations, he also served as Overseer/Bishop at Nairn, Valleyview, Avon, the Wellesley Mission (Zion), and later as Interim Pastor at Steinmann, Mapleview, Cassel and Hanover-Chesley. This was some time before such a term was common. In these settings he worked at freeing local pastors and congregational leaders to use their gifts while he played a lesser role.

He also taught at the Wellesley Winter Bible school at Kennel's Hall. He loved music, and memorized and recited poetry and scripture.

Ephraim advocated a decentralization of power from the hands of the Bishops and voluntarily passed on these rights and privileges to all pastoral leaders. He really worked himself out of a job! As I review the above, I realize that there were at least three Bishops; the late Henry Yantzi, the late Orland Gingerich and Ephraim who acted as a team to bring about these changes during a time of unprecedented change in the church as we knew it. They each had different gifts but were united in purpose, acting in ways that benefitted younger leaders as they served the church. None of them fully benefitted from the fruit of their labours.

For some years Ephraim served as Moderator of the Christian Nurture Conference sponsored by the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference. According to front page newspaper articles in the *Stratford Beacon Herald*, *The Record*, and other local papers, up to 1000 people attended these annual Labour Day weekend events. Throughout all these years, Ephraim, in his calm, patient and unassuming way, shared his gifts while holding the plough and the pulpit in tension.

A funeral was held at Zurich Mennonite Church on June 21, 2010. *

Sam Steiner Wins Heritage Award

Congratulations to Sam Steiner who received the Dr. Jean Steckle Award for Heritage Education from the Waterloo Region Heritage Foundation in 2010. This award for excellence in heritage education is presented to an individual who has demonstrated leadership in heritage education through teaching, writing or by example, and who has encouraged and mentored others in the understanding and appreciation of the natural or cultural heritage of Waterloo Region. Marion Roes took the initiative on nominating Sam for this honour. *

Tribute to Roy (Swartz) Koch

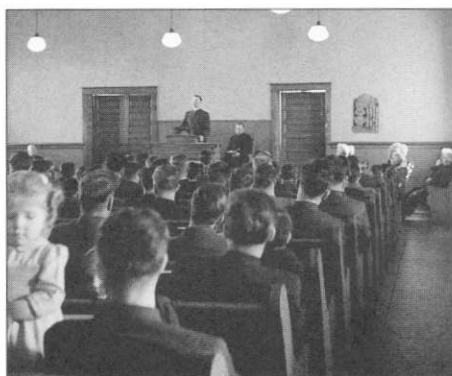
September 6, 1913 – June 12, 2010

By Elmer Sauder

A funeral service for Roy Koch was held at East Goshen Mennonite Church, on June 16 with burial at the Violet Cemetery in Goshen, Indiana. A memorial service was also held at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church where this tribute was given.

Roy S. Koch was born on September 6, 1913 on a farm very close to the Three Bridges near where the St. Jacobs Mennonite cemetery is located. Ludwig Koch, the first minister for the local Mennonite congregation was his great-grandfather.

Roy felt a conviction to become a minister while he was in his teens. On a Sunday afternoon, October 4, 1936, nominations for a new pastor for St. Jacobs took place. Instead of the traditional way of choosing a minister by lot, Roy had a strong feeling that God was calling him to the ministry. Roy had just turned 23, but surrendered to the will of God. He was nominated, he answered some doctrinal questions and he listened to the counsel of the bishops—C.F. Derstine, Manasseh



Roy Koch preaches at St. Jacobs in 1940. The interior of the church was re-modelled in 1954. Notice that only men (and children) are sitting on the right-hand side. (Mennonite Archives of Ontario Photo)

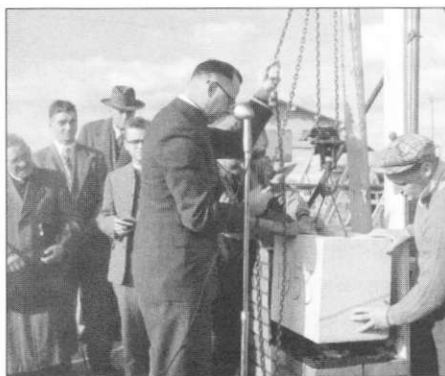
Hallman and Oliver D. Snider. Curtis Cressman, Rueben Detweiler and Simon B. Martin joined in commending Roy to God and the ministry. Probably never again would a congregation nominate, examine, ordain and install a person as pastor in the space of one hour.

Community Bible School began in St. Jacobs in 1935 with J. B. Martin as superintendent, but from the following year on, Roy was very involved with summer Bible school.

In 1936 membership stood at 296. These numbers led to the enlargement of the church building. In 1938 St. Jacobs began having preaching (worship service) every Sunday morning instead of every second week. There were no salaried ministers until the early 1940's when partial support was started. Pastor Roy had to supplement his income by raising turnips, raising broilers, working in a factory, teaching at Ontario Mennonite Bible School and conducting evangelistic meetings.

During Roy Koch's 21 years of ministry at St. Jacobs, there were annual revival or evangelistic meetings, usually at least one week in length, with a large attendance. There was special music and efforts were made to reach the unsaved and restore the backsliders. Roy also served many times as an evangelist in other locations.

Quite a few of Roy's siblings served as Sunday School teachers at St. Jacobs.



Roy Koch lays the cornerstone for the Preston Mennonite Church, October 12, 1953. (Mennonites Archives of Ontario photo)



The Koch family in 1957. From left: Robert, Roy, Arlene, Rodney, Martha, Richard. (Mennonite Archives of Ontario photo)

Many people remember sitting in Sunday School classes taught by Gladys, Vera, Lester, Orton and Oliver.

Roy did not go to high school. He had 36 weeks of formal Bible Study when he was ordained and he then took another 36 weeks of advanced training at Ontario Mennonite Bible School. In the fall of 1940, Roy was accepted at Waterloo College as a mature student without high school. Roy said the tuition was really high—\$62.50 per semester! Roy graduated in 1944 with a B.A. and was head of the class. He then enrolled in Goshen Biblical Seminary, graduating in 1945 with a Bachelor of Theology, then a Bachelor of Divinity followed by a Master of Divinity. Martha took a year at Goshen College in 1942 and graduated from the Bible department.

Roy married Martha Horst on August 8, 1942. They had four children born in Ontario and then two more born after they moved to Ohio in 1957. Today there are 18 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

While Roy was at St. Jacobs the congregation began using assistant pastors. Serving at St. Jacobs during this time were: David Shank, Peter Wiebe, Paul Swarr, Robert Witmer and Tilman Martin.

There were quite a number of families living in the Hawkesville area attending the St. Jacobs Mennonite Church. Membership in 1949 had risen to 417. That year a church in Hawkesville became available for \$100 and after renovations, church services began there on January 1, 1950. Roy

gave the main address that day.

While Roy was pastor at St. Jacobs, he officiated at many weddings and funerals. He was a very busy man as a husband, father, pastor, speaker, teacher, writer, bishop, administrator, principal, etc., etc., but he always had time to talk and listen.

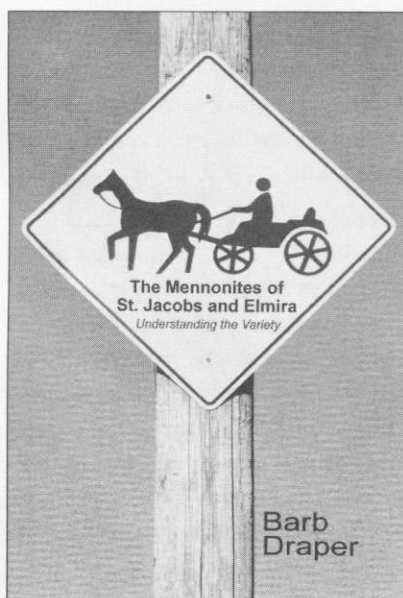
On October 2-5, 1986, St. Jacobs Mennonite Church had a congregational Homecoming and a celebration of Roy Koch's 50 years of Christian Ministry. The congregation has been very thankful for his 21 years of ministry he gave to St. Jacobs. *

New Book

The Mennonites of St. Jacobs and Elmira: Understanding the Variety.

Barb Draper. Pandora Press, 2010, 378 pages.

The first few chapters describe the Mennonite culture and theology of the nineteenth century in Waterloo Region. The major part of the book describes the historical development and customs of six different Mennonite groups: Mennonite Church Eastern Canada; Old Orders; David Martins and Orthodox; the Markham-Waterloo Conference; Conservative Mennonites (including Midwest Fellowship); and Old Colony Mennonites. *



Spring Presentation and Bus Tour

By Barb Draper

On June 12, 2010, at the spring meeting of the Ontario Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario held at Emmanuel Bible College in Kitchener, Sam Steiner presented "The Pursuit of Holiness," the early history of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church in Ontario. The term "Mennonite Brethren in Christ" was used until 1947; today churches go under the name of Evangelical Missionary.

In 1852 there was a thriving congregation of "New Mennonites" in the southern part of Waterloo Region. Today it is known as Bethel Evangelical Missionary Church in New Dundee. In 1874 after another revival in some Mennonite churches, three ministers and three deacons left the Mennonite Church and joined with the New Mennonites. Under the name Mennonite Brethren in Christ they grew quickly with many new congregations.

One form of outreach was camp meetings. In 1881 outdoor meetings over several days were held at the farm of Moses Brubacher in Breslau and on the Schneider farm in Berlin. By 1897 they had a city mission in Toronto and in 1895 William Shantz from Mannheim went to China as a missionary where he served for 35 years. This was the first overseas Mennonite missionary supported by a North American Mennonite group.

By the end of the 19th century, the Mennonite Brethren in Christ had 1500 members, more than the Mennonite Conference of Canada.

Emmanuel Bible College

By 1935, the Reverend Isaac Brubacher of Kitchener was concerned that there was no local school to provide theological training for the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. He prayed for a sign from God and when he received a letter

from his son with a note saying that God wanted Isaac to have the enclosed \$5, Isaac took that as a sign that he should start a Bible School.

The first Bible School classes began in 1940 with Ward Shantz as the principal. For the first three years the school was held from January to March at a church in Stouffville. In 1943 Emmanuel Bible School moved to Kitchener where they bought the old Metcalfe Mansion on Ahrens Street. That location was used until 1963 when it was overcrowded and they moved to the present location on Fergus Avenue which had been used as a campground for many years. (The property had been donated by Jacob Shantz in 1923.) The present dining hall is on the spot where the campground tabernacle had been.

Since 1981 Emmanuel has been accredited Bible College.

Bethany Missionary Church

One of the stops on the bus tour was at Bethany Evangelical Missionary Church on Lancaster Street in Kitchener. This congregation began as the Reforming Mennonites that held an organizational meeting at First Mennonite Church on May 15, 1874. They built a new church on Lancaster St. in 1877. Late in 1877 revival services were held at Bethany with Moses Weber and Peter Geiger preaching. At this point services were held in the Pennsylvania German language, but by 1900 German and English were used alternately.

Camp meetings were held between 1887 and 1910 in Samuel Schneider's woods on present-day Mill Street in Kitchener. Today the Missionary Church supports Evergreen Conference Grounds in Stayner and the Evergreen Camp at Round Lake near Pembroke.

In 1908 a new larger building was constructed on the original site. A large addition has added an enlarged entry, a gym and kitchen. Over the years Bethany has purchased and torn down five nearby houses as they have expanded. Today Bethany has two services on Sunday mornings and the building is used extensively for community programs. *

A Forward from the collection of letters to Bishop Christian Reesor

By George Reesor

The Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario printed a collection of letters received by Bishop Christian Reesor of Markham, Ontario in 2009.

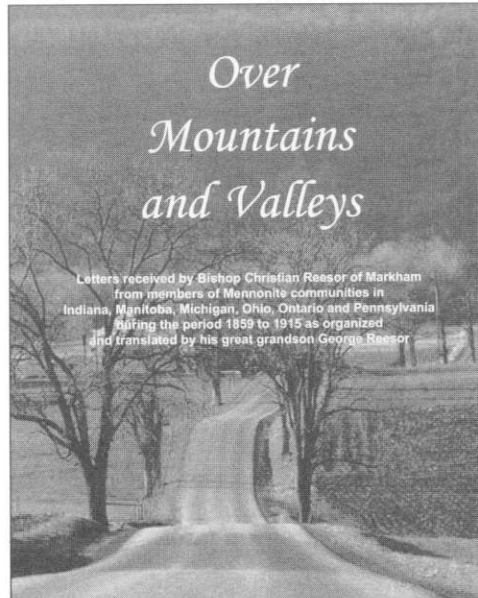
These are letters to Reesor from members of the Mennonite communities in Indiana, Manitoba, Michigan, Ohio, Ontario and Pennsylvania during the period 1859 to 1915 and are organized and translated by his great-grandson, George Reesor.

It was a nondescript old wooden box, partially filled with correspondence from an earlier era. When I received it in October, 2000, little did I suspect the captivating nature of its contents, nor did I realize from whence it had come. It would appear that throughout his many years of ministry and travel, my great-grandfather, Bishop Christian Reesor, had saved his correspondence by storing it in this old box. It would appear further that, upon Christian's death, his son, Thomas, who also became a minister, began using the box for the same purpose. Following Thomas's death in March, 1954, a family auction sale was held at the Reesor homestead. Apparently the box of old letters was purchased by Lorne Reesor, husband of Ruth (Baker) Reesor, who was an avid stamp collector. Lorne removed most of the stamps from the envelopes but the letters remained in the box. Through the intervening years, the box accompanied them to four different homes. When I received the letters from Ruth, she mentioned that many times she had considered simply disposing of them.

For many years I had lamented the fact that my great-grandfather had left scant written record of his ministry and personal life. When I realized that the old box contained his personal collection of letters, most of which were written in German, I was overtaken with the desire to attempt to pry open this window on his past ministry. Desire gave way to passion, then something akin to an

obsession during the eight years I spent in translating, organizing and preparing this collection of 477 letters for publication.

This has not been a solo effort. I am indebted to many individuals for their valuable contributions. First I thank Ruth Reesor for preserving Christian's letter



Over Mountains and Valleys.
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collection and more recently for making it available to me. Special thanks goes to Leonard Freeman, Amos B. Hoover, Noah Bearinger, Elizabeth Sauter, Gerhard Schroeter, Linda Wall and the late Isaac R. Horst for translations of letters written in the old Gothic script. Thank you also to Leonard Freeman, Peter Steckle and Emma Ruth Weaver for footnote information about the authors...

Christian Reesor (April 16, 1833 – December 26, 1915) was the third son of John Eby Reesor and Mariah Burkholder... He was born in southeast Markham on one of four farms located along the Markham-Scarborough town line acquired by his grandfather Peter.

On March 11, 1856 Christian was married to Esther Hoover. They had four children: Ketura, April 29, 1857; Elizabeth, December 18, 1858; Mary, October 3, 1862 and Thomas, March 18, 1867. Esther died one year and four months after the birth of her son.

On June 11, 1863 Christian was ordained to the ministry at Widemans Church by Bishop Jacob Grove and to the office of bishop on June 11, 1867 by Bishop Dilman Moyer of Vineland and Joseph Hagey of Waterloo. In connection with his office, he travelled extensively, as attested to by five travel diaries which record details of trips to Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana...

Christian's visits to those scattered Mennonite communities often lasted three, four or even five weeks. At the end of one five-week visit he notes, "places visited, 117." It is little wonder then that many enduring friendships were formed, a fact borne out by his extensive letter collection...

The challenges encountered in the translating of these letters were many. Since Pennsylvania German is not a written dialect, spelling varied greatly among the scattered communities. Letters from eastern Pennsylvania seemed to reflect a greater proficiency in High German than those from farther west. Many words or terms were unique to a given community or even among certain families...

Hopefully this publication will provide insights into the everyday lives of our Pennsylvania German ancestors as they shared the joys of family and community and together bore the struggles of illness and death, drought and floods, losses by fire and the constant challenge of remaining true to the faith of their forefathers. May we, their descendants, draw inspiration from the many examples of their faith, courage and fortitude. *