

THE AMISH
SETTLEMENT IN SOMERSET COUNTY,
PENNSYLVANIA

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A. EARLY AMISH SETTLEMENTS IN EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

Opinions vary as to the exact date for the beginning of the Amish immigration to America. Milton Gascho gives the date as 1712,¹ while John A. Hostetler estimates that the immigration began about 1710.² The late C. Henry Smith found 1714 to be the year which marked the arrival of the first Amish in the New World.³ Grant Stoltzfus reports no Amish name in a public document before 1749. While opinions vary as to the date on which the immigration began, there is no difference of opinion as to the reason for its beginning. The Amish, like their Anabaptist cousins, the Mennonites, came to this country in quest of the religious liberty that was denied them in their native Switzerland during most of the first quarter of the eighteenth century.⁴ The Amish were glad to seek relief in the New World from this religious persecution, and they were among the large group of German-speaking immigrants who landed at Philadelphia in the years before the Revolution.⁵ The largest number of Amish immigrants to arrive in the City of Brotherly Love came between the years 1725 and 1750.⁶ By 1754 the French and Indian Wars had almost stopped the immigration except for a few latecomers, and it was not resumed on a large scale until the close of the Napoleonic wars, almost a century later.⁷ The Amish chose Pennsylvania because of the generous offer of William Penn's land agents. In fact Penn's colony was a haven of refuge for many religious minority groups. After the colonies had won their independence, the state of Pennsylvania practiced religious toleration

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¹ M. Gascho, "The Amish Division of 1693-1697," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* XI (October, 1937) 266.

² J. A. Hostetler, "A Brief History of the Amish," *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* (Scottsdale) IX, No. 2 (April, 1948) 2.

³ C. H. Smith, *The Mennonite Immigration to Pennsylvania* (Norristown, 1929) 225-28.

⁴ Smith, *op. cit.*, 144-56.

⁵ R. B. Strassburger, *Pennsylvania German Pioneers* (Norristown, 1934) I, viii

⁶ Hostetler, *op. cit.*, 2

⁷ Smith, *op. cit.*, 238.

Henry Hertzell, a pastor in the German Reformed Church, interceded for them.¹⁸

1. *The Growth of Early Settlements in the Northern Part of Somerset County.*

Possibly because of this freedom from persecution on the frontier, the Amish began to move west in fairly large numbers at the close of the Revolutionary War. The first resident Amish bishop of Somerset County was a Christian Yoder. This Christian Yoder was the son of another man who bore the same name and was sometimes referred to as Schweitzer Christian in order to avoid confusing his identity with that of his son.¹⁹ Schweitzer Christian, as his name implies, came from Switzerland. He arrived in Berks County, Pennsylvania, in 1744 and lived there until 1776. In that year he moved with his wife and four children to what is now Somerset County, and bought a large tract of timberland near the site where the town of Pugh now stands, for the sum of \$968. The deed for this property was dated October 9, 1775. There were no roads and the nearest neighbors were five miles distant.²⁰ The first wife of Schweitzer Christian died shortly after the family arrived in Somerset County. He then married Barbara Hooley, and eleven children were born to this union. The birth date of the Christian Yoder who became the first resident Amish bishop of Somerset County is given as 1758.²¹ The year of his ordination to that office is not known. However, Amishmen are not ordained to any office in the church before they are married. It is not likely that Christian Yoder was married before his twentieth birthday, and not probable that he was ordained as bishop before he was thirty. The probability is rather that he was older and that it was near the turn of the nineteenth century before the Amish settlement in Somerset County could boast of a resident bishop. This settlement later became known as the Glades settlement.

From 1767 to about 1800 then the Conemaugh congregation, which had been started by the settlement of Christian Blauch, and the Glades congregation, which was started by the settlement of Schweitzer Christian, had to look to the older Amish settlements for such spiritual ministry as they received. This spiritual ministry of the pioneer days was provided by Bishop Jacob Mast. Bishop

¹⁸ C. Z. Mast, *A Brief History of Bishop Jacob Mast and Other Mast Pioneers* (Elverson, 1911) 691.

¹⁹ D. B. Swartzendruber, letter dated March 20, 1950, Kalona, Iowa.

²⁰ Blackburn, Koontz, and Welfley, *op cit.*, III, 116-17.

²¹ J. A. Hostetler, "Amish Pioneer of Somerset County," *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* X, No 4 (October, 1949) 1.

Mast is said to have landed at Philadelphia on the *Brotherhood* on November 3, 1750. He was a native of Switzerland.

Bishop Jacob Mast proved himself a leader of considerable ability promoting the welfare of the church with all the vigor that he was able to muster. He had charge of all the Amish Mennonite settlements in America during the greater period of his bishopric. The settlements at that time were confined to the colony and later to the state of Pennsylvania. He had three districts west of the Susquehanna River which he generally visited on horseback. They were known as Kishacoquillas Valley congregation in Mifflin County and the Glaydes and Conemaugh congregations in Somerset and Cambria counties.²²

Probably these visits from Bishop Mast were no longer necessary by the turn of the century, the Glades and Conemaugh congregations having by that time ordained ministers and bishops from among their own number.

Who the first resident minister or bishop of the Conemaugh congregation was is not known. But at a conference of the three Amish congregations in Somerset County (the third was located in the southern end of the county and will be discussed later) held somewhere in the county on March 18, 1837, those who signed as ministers of the Conemaugh congregation were Jacob Oesch, Christian Miller, Joseph Miller, and Jonas Yoder.²³ No Amish congregation would be blessed with five ministers unless it was of more than average size. The Conemaugh congregation probably reached the peak of its population around 1850. The first half of the nineteenth century saw the colony grow rapidly. Johnstown, made famous by the flood of 1888, was founded by Joseph Shontz or Jons in 1800.²⁴ Mr. Jons was of the Amish persuasion. He is perhaps the only Amishman to give his family name to what later became a thriving American city. Today the great-grandson of the Amish pioneer is the minister of the Unitarian Church in Hartford, Connecticut.²⁵ The Amish were in Johnstown and its vicinity in sufficient numbers to give their name to one of the city's suburbs. Even after the congregation had become almost extinct, this suburb was known for a long time as "Der Amish Hivel," because at one time it was practically all owned by Amish people.²⁶

²² Mast, *op. cit.*, 696.

²³ H. S. Bender, "Some Early Amish Disciplines," *MQR* VIII, No. 2 (April, 1934) 93-95.

²⁴ *Johnstown Centennial, 1800-1900 History of the Centennial Celebration of Johnstown*. Published by authority of the Centennial Committee, 33.

²⁵ From a personal interview with the Rev Payson Miller, April, 1950.

²⁶ S. G. Shetler, "Bishop Moses B. Miller," *Gospel Herald* (Scottdale) XXII, No. 18 (August, 1929) 379-80.

The pattern of growth was much the same for the Glades congregation as it had been for the Conemaugh congregation. At the ministers' conference of 1837 those who signed their names as ministers of the Glades congregation were Christian Yoder, Sr., Christian Yoder, Jr., Abraham Miller, Jacob Miller, Jacob Swartzendruber, and David Yoder.²⁷ A table giving the return of taxables in Brother's Valley Township for the years 1783 and 1784 shows that at that time there were nineteen family heads in the area who bore Amish names. Among the names recorded on this list are Bondrager, Gnagey, Hostetler, Livengood, Miller, Mishler, Stutzman, Schrock, Troyer, and Wenger.²⁸ The Amish then as now had large families, and the presence of these nineteen families in the region by 1784 probably means that more than a hundred people were living in the area at that time who were known by their speech and manner of dress as "Amish."

There is some indication that there may have been more than one congregation in the Glades region at one time. The Jacob Swartzendruber who signed as one of the ministers of the Glades congregation in the conference of 1837 later removed to Johnson County, Iowa. In the year 1949 the late D. B. Swartzendruber of Kalona, Iowa, was searching for some information that would enable him to write a biography of his grandfather, Frederick Swartzendruber. In the course of this search a note was discovered which had been written by his great-grandfather, Jacob, one of the ministers who had signed as a minister in the Glades congregation in the conference of 1837. This note was written in German and reads as follows:

Habe im Jahr 1869 eine Reise gethan mit Joseph Oesch. Erstlich nach Canada, darnach in Konistoga, von dort in Beckweh und in Tuscarawas Valley, hernach in die Kishacoquillas Valley, von dort in die drei Klatzer (Glades) Gemeinen, von dort in Ohio in Holmes Co., und dort in Elkhart Co., Ind. Und dort habe ich eine andre Haus Mutter genommen, nemlich Mary Miller, dem Daniel Miller seine hinter lassene Witwe; dem Völligen Diener früher wohnhaft in der Klatzer Gemeinde.²⁹

Jonas B. Miller, minister at Grantsville, Maryland, insists that there never were three Amish congregations in the Glades region. Jacob Swartzendruber, however, had lived there and served for a while as one of the ministers, so he should have been familiar with the region. A brief description of Somerset County published

²⁷ Christian Yoder, Sr., was the son of Schweitzer Christian, the immigrant of 1744, while Christian Yoder, Jr., was the son of Christian Yoder, Sr. Swartzendruber letter, *op. cit.* Also, Bender, "Early Amish Disciplines," *op. cit.*

²⁸ Blackburn, Koontz, and Welfley, *op. cit.*, II 139-43

²⁹ Swartzendruber letter, *op. cit.*, March 20, 1950

in 1843 states that in that year the county's population was chiefly of German descent and that German was the prevailing language. The sketch goes on to say that in 1830 the population was divided into the following religious sects: the Lutherans having seventeen churches; the German Reformed, twelve; the Methodists, eight; the Mennonites, five; the Baptists, four; the Amish, four; the Presbyterians, two; and the Roman Catholics, one.³⁰ It would appear then that in 1830 there were at least two congregations in the Glades, for the only other Amish settlement in the county lay in the southern end between what are now the towns of Meyersdale, Pennsylvania, and Grantsville, Maryland. Another possibility would be that the 1843 publication considered the southern settlement as two congregations as well as the northern settlement.³¹ The full solution to this problem will perhaps yield to further research. In any case it is evident that by 1830 the Amish were in Somerset County in sufficient numbers to be recognized by both county and state historians. The predominantly German-speaking population probably accounts for the fact that the first successful newspaper published within the county was published in the German language. This paper, known as *Die Westliche Telegraph*, made its first appearance in 1812. The printing house which printed the paper also printed books, among them an edition of the *German Quanto Bible*, which made its appearance in 1813. A statement from the preface of the Bible says that it was the first Bible published in western Pennsylvania.³²

2. The Decline and Disappearance of the Conemaugh and Glades Congregations.

Few Amish congregations which were once flourishing disappear completely, but such has been the case with both the Conemaugh and Glades congregations. No satisfactory explanation has as yet been found for their disappearance. One of the factors which led to the break-up of the Conemaugh congregation was the lure of cheaper and more fertile land in the West. The first Amish settlers left this area for the region of Elkhart and Lagrange counties, Indiana, in the spring of 1841.³³ By 1875 the families in the Conemaugh congregation had become so few in number that the practice of worshiping in the homes of the various members

³⁰ S. Day, *Historical Collections of the State of Pennsylvania* (New Haven, 1834) 616.

³¹ The southern settlement is at present divided into two sections known as the Upper and Lower settlements.

³² M. Hause, *A Somerset County Historical Notebook* (Somerset, 1945) 11.

³³ E. J. Bontrager, letter dated June 6, 1950, Shipshewana, Ind. Mr. Bontrager is a highly respected Old Order Amish bishop of Lagrange Co., Ind.

had become a burden. The meeting came to the same home too frequently. Earlier there had been enough families so that no one family was required to have the meeting more than once or twice a year. As the number of families became fewer through emigration, death, and failure to win the rising generation, some of the Conemaugh congregation proposed the building of a meetinghouse. There was some opposition to the proposal, but this was successfully overcome and two meetinghouses were erected. One was built on the farm of Isaac Kaufman near Davidsville in Somerset County and became known as the Kaufman Meetinghouse. The second was built on the farm of Bishop Moses B. Miller near Geis-town in Cambria County and became known as the Miller Meeting-house.³⁴ These meetinghouses, built in 1875, were, so far as is now known, the first Amish meetinghouses in America east of the Ohio River. Bishop Miller served the church from the time of his ordination as bishop in 1848 until his death in 1902. The fact that the Amish persisted in using the German language in their preaching services, except at funerals, caused many of the children of Amish parents to unite with the Mennonite Church.³⁵ So ends the story of the Conemaugh Amish congregation. The last bishop of the congregation died in 1902. It is not known when the last surviving member of the congregation died. It is hoped that further research will reveal more definitely when and why the congregation expired.

When an attempt is made to find an adequate reason for the disappearance of the once thriving Glades congregation or congregations, as the case may be, reliable information is even more scanty than in the case of the Conemaugh congregation. The reasons given by the various traditions are these: one, that the congregations became very lax in morals; two, that the larger part of the congregation moved westward in search of cheaper and more fertile land; three, that many of the young men either enlisted or were drafted into the armed forces during the Civil War and thus became lost of the church; and four, that so many of the congregation were being won to the Church of the Brethren, that the leaders of the group decided to leave and start a new community where they would again be isolated from other denominations. Some support can be found for each of these traditions. In support of the first tradition is the ninth item of agreement in the Discipline of 1837, which reads as follows:

With regard to the excesses practiced among the youth, namely that the youth take the liberty to sleep or lie together without any fear or shame,

³⁴ Shetler, *op cit.*, 379-80.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 380

such things shall not be tolerated at all. And when it takes place with the knowledge of the parents and something bad happens on account of it, the parents shall not go unpunished³⁶

It will be remembered that this discipline was drawn up at a conference of all the Amish ministers then serving congregations in Somerset County. Such an item would not have been considered by the conference unless the issue had confronted the churches in a real and troublesome manner. That this iniquitous practice of "bundling" (courtship in bed) was particularly troublesome in the Glades area is attested to by an epistle written by Jacob Swartzendruber and addressed to the Amish ministers' conference of 1865. Swartzendruber had served in the ministry for the Glades congregation for several years, after which he moved to the vicinity of Grantsville.³⁷ Jacob Swartzendruber had apparently tried to correct this evil in the Glades congregation, and when the other ministers either could not or would not support him he moved out.³⁸ In the epistle of 1865 Swartzendruber remonstrates against the levity which existed in Amish communities while men were dying on the battlefield during the Civil War.³⁹

In support of the tradition that many of the families moved to the West much evidence can be found. In the obituary file of the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, one finds many notices like the following:

Died Oct 12 in Lagrange County, Ind. Bishop Joseph Miller, aged 68 years, 10 months and 27 days. He was born in 1808 in Somerset Co., Penna., and in 1833 was chosen minister. In 1841 with his family and three other families he came to Elkhart Co.⁴⁰

Through checking these files it was found that the Glades congregation had lost a number of settlers not only to Indiana but also to Iowa. However, these are not sufficiently numerous to account satisfactorily for the total disappearance of the mother colony. The remaining two traditions must therefore also be examined.

The third tradition which says that many of the young men served in the regular army during the Civil War can be only partially supported. There were some who did serve in the army, but they were all draftees, and they were few rather than many. The names of these men are, furthermore, the only indication that they

³⁶ Bender, *op. cit.*, 93-95

³⁷ Swartzendruber letter, *op. cit.*, March 20, 1950.

³⁸ H. S. Bender, "An Amish Bishop's Conference Epistle of 1865," *MQR* XX, No. 3 (July, 1946) 225-26.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 229

⁴⁰ Obituary column, *Herald of Truth* (Elkhart) XIV, No. 11 (November, 1877) 181

were Amish, but this is usually evidence that is reasonably reliable. The names of the men who are known to have served as soldiers during the Civil War are as follows: Christian Berkey, John Hersberger, Joseph Miller, Tobias D. Yoder, and Jeremiah Yutzi.⁴¹

The fourth and last tradition finds some support in that a number of people who bear names of Amish origin still live in the vicinity of Berlin, Pennsylvania, but they have become members of other churches. An outstanding example of these is Jacob B. Schrock, who served at least one term and possibly more as a State Senator. He states that his ancestors came to that area in about 1772, and that they were devout Amish people.⁴²

The total weight of all four traditions put together does not seem to explain adequately the total disappearance of a once thriving Amish community. Exactly when the Glades congregation breathed its last as an organized group is not known. The last resident bishop of the Glades congregation was Abner Yoder, who moved to Johnson County, Iowa, in 1866.⁴³ In 1865 Bishop Yoder had attended a conference of Amish ministers in Holmes County, Ohio, at which time he signed his name to the discipline drawn up at the conference as a minister in the Glades congregation in Somerset County.⁴⁴ Possibly it was at this conference of 1865 that Abner Yoder learned of the Amish settlement in Iowa and decided to cast his lot with the new pioneers. Abner Yoder was the grandson of Christian Yoder, Jr., who had also served as a bishop in the Glades congregation, but probably not until the death of his father, Christian Yoder, Sr., in 1838.⁴⁵ Christian Yoder, Sr., and Christian Yoder, Jr., both signed their names as ministers of the Glades congregation in the Discipline of 1837.⁴⁶ Thus, for a period of one year at least, and possibly longer, father and son served as ministers in the same congregation.

The last surviving member of the Glades congregation was Benedict Yoder, grandson of Schweitzer Christian, the immigrant who first settled in the Glades in 1776. Benedict was born in 1817 and lived until 1910, when he died at the age of ninety-three.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Blackburn, Koontz, and Welfley, *op. cit.* II, 262-65.

⁴² J. B. Schrock, letter dated May 5, 1950, Berlin, Pa.

⁴³ Bender, *op. cit.*, footnote, 225.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 225.

⁴⁵ Bender, *MQR* VIII, No. 2 (April, 1934) 95.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁷ Hostetler, *op. cit.*, 1 and 3.

C. THE RIVER CONGREGATION

1. Origin of the Congregation

The River congregation received its name from the fact that it was located near the Casselman River in the southern end of Somerset County. The river received its name from Jacob Casselman, a hunter and trapper "who had his camp along the river on what is now either the John or Jacob Saylor farm."⁴⁸ It is impossible to tell from existing records when the congregational life of the Amish in this area was first organized. It is, however, known that individual Amish families entered Elk Lick and Summit townships at a very early date. This general area was opened for settlement by the Penns on April 3, 1769.⁴⁹ A farm which now lies between Salisbury and West Salisbury was sold to Peter Livengood by William St. Clair in 1773. The deed to Livengood states that St. Clair had applied for his warrant to survey the tract on April 12, 1769. This was just nine days after the land office opened.⁵⁰ Another interesting tradition connected with the Livengood family is that a daughter Elizabeth was born to them before they had had opportunity to erect a permanent dwelling place. This daughter later married Jacob Brenison and was still living in 1870, when her age was given to Michael F. Smith, Esq., a census officer, as ninety-eight.⁵¹ This would fix the date of Peter Livengood's arrival in Elk Lick Township in 1772.⁵²

Other early settlers in this area were Christian Gnaege and Jacob Saylor. Gnaege came from Switzerland and entered a tomahawk claim for 500 acres of land about two miles south of the present town of Meyersdale in 1774. "A surveyor's plot of 1784 shows that Gnaege's neighbors at that time were John Hochstetler, Michael Miller, John Yotter, Christian Berkey, and Joseph Farney."⁵³ Jacob Saylor, whose name appears among those of the early settlers, died in 1796. His will, which is one of the earliest to be recorded in Somerset County, leaves to his son John the family Bible and "the old Menno Simon book; which was printed in 1575."⁵⁴

2. Early Life and Ministers of the River Congregation.

By the turn of the century the Amish in Elk Lick and Summit townships appear to have been fairly numerous. There is not much

⁴⁸ Blackburn, Koontz, and Welfley, *op. cit.* II, 65.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* II, 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 502.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 71-72.

⁵³ Smith, *op. cit.*, 245.

⁵⁴ Blackburn, Koontz, and Welfley, *op. cit.* II, 65.

evidence of any organized congregational life in the area until 1809. In that year Benedict Miller was ordained to the ministry in the Amish Church. Benedict was the first Amish minister to be ordained in Elk Lick Township. He was the son of Jacob Miller, who had come from Berks County before 1787.⁵⁵ On Whit Monday in 1813 Benedict Miller was ordained as bishop of the Amish Church in Elk Lick Township,⁵⁶ and thus became, so far as is now known, the first resident bishop to serve the River congregation.

After Benedict's ordination the River congregation seems to have expanded rapidly. When the Amish ministers of Somerset County held their 1837 conference, two other men signed with Benedict as ministers of the River congregation. They were Yost Yoder and Hannes Gingerich.⁵⁷ Family traditions which are well established give us some revealing glimpses of the character of the first Amish bishop of Elk Lick Township. Part of the growth of the community during the first half of the nineteenth century is accounted for by the fact that the European Amish had started a new immigration to America. At the close of the Napoleonic Wars some of these found their way to Somerset County and the River congregation. The following account of the arrival of Wilhelm Bender from Hesse-Darmstadt shows that these immigrants did not always arrive under the most favorable circumstances. It also gives us a character portrait of Bishop Miller.

Wilhelm, the oldest son of the second marriage, it was decided, should go to America before he reached the age when young men must enter military training. But the family was very poor. Passage to America was beyond their means, and Wilhelm became a "redemptionner." Peter Kinsinger, an Amish friend who was coming to America, paid Wilhelm's passage. When they landed at Baltimore, they came in contact with the proprietor of a nursery who paid to Kinsinger the amount of Wilhelm's passage, with the understanding that Wilhelm would stay as a "redemptionner" and work out the sum he had paid for him. Kinsinger came west on the "National Trail," now United States Route 40, and joined the Amish settlement in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, and Garrett County, Maryland, while Wilhelm, a boy about fifteen years of age, was left near Baltimore, a stranger in a strange land.

When Kinsinger arrived in Somerset County, and the brotherhood learned of Wilhelm in Baltimore, bound out as a "redemptionner," the Amish bishop, Benedict Miller, took steps to have him redeemed and brought to Somerset County. One of the daughters of Bishop Miller said, "That boy may become a husband for one of us." She spoke more truly than she knew. Miller went personally to Baltimore on horseback, paid the redemption money, and brought Wilhelm to his own home. About eight

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 502

⁵⁶ Shetler, *op. cit.*, 379.

⁵⁷ Bender, *MQR* VII, No. 2 (April, 1934) 95

years later, in 1838, Wilhelm Bender and Katharine Miller (the girl who said the above) were married.⁵⁸

Other traditions regarding Bishop Miller for which no written evidence has been found state that after the Amish settlement was started in Holmes County, Ohio (see Chap. 4 of thesis), he frequently visited that colony on horseback and ministered to them. On one of these journeys he is said to have spent the night in Wheeling, West Virginia, in a tavern which was operated by German-speaking people. When the proprietor learned that his guest was a minister, he asked him to preach, and it is said that Bishop Benedict complied with the request.⁵⁹ It is also said that Benedict Miller had read his Bible through three times by December 14, 1836, and that he possessed both English and German copies of the Holy Scriptures.⁶⁰

From these glimpses it is possible to learn that Benedict Miller was a man of large sympathies and rather broad interests. It is also possible to learn that during his years of active ministry the River congregation had spread from Elk Lick Township in Somerset County across the state line into what is now Garrett County, Maryland. Many of the homes of these early Amish settlers were located in the vicinity of what is now the village of Grantsville, Maryland. Benedict died in the spring of 1837 or 1838 (the accounts vary) and was buried on the farm which he then owned. His grave may still be seen on the farm which is now owned by Amos Yoder, a short distance west of Springs, Pennsylvania. The grave was marked with a simple sandstone slab, and the wind and weather have all but erased the inscription which it once bore.⁶¹

After Benedict Miller's death the spiritual oversight of the River congregation passed into the hands of Jonas Beachy, who then lived on the farm which is now owned by Noah M. Beachy.⁶² It is not known whether this Jonas Beachy had been previously ordained to the ministry in the River congregation, but it is more than likely that he had. Since, however, he is listed as Miller's successor in various sources,⁶³ and since Miller died not later than 1838, it may be safely assumed that Jonas Beachy was ordained to the office of bishop of the River congregation shortly after that date.

⁵⁸ C. W. Bender, *Descendants of Daniel Bender* (Berlin, Pa., 1948) Foreword, 1.

⁵⁹ From a personal interview with the widow of the late S. S. Miller, a grandson of Benedict in July, 1950. At that time Mrs. Miller was in her ninety-sixth year.

⁶⁰ From the card files of Dr. Alta Schrock, Goshen College, Goshen, Ind., July, 1950.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Mrs. M. E. Hershberger, letter dated Feb. 17, 1950, Salisbury, Pa.

⁶³ Blackburn, Koontz, and Welfley, *op. cit.* II, 503

Very little is known about Bishop Beachy. The records show that he was married to Sara Gnaegi either in 1812 or in 1816, and that he became the father of eleven children.⁶⁴ The sources concur in fixing the date of his death as October 23, 1878, at which time he was nearly eighty-seven years of age. There is left to posterity at least one item of historical fact which indicates that Bishop Beachy was a man of considerable vigor. This item has come down through the generations in the form of a baptismal certificate which is now in the possession of Bishop C. W. Bender of Salisbury, Pennsylvania. The baptismal certificate has been framed and covered with glass so that it is well preserved after more than one hundred years. It is written in German and reads as follows:

Diesen behden Ehegatten als: Peter Petersheim und seiner ehelichen Hausfrau Susana eine geborene Millerin ist eine Tochter zur Welt geboren, den 20ten Tag Februar im Jahr unseres Herrn 1830. Diese Tochter ist geboren in der Klets (Glades) in Somerset County, im Staat Pennsylvania in Nord America und is getauft worden und erhielt den Namen Susana den 7thn Tag October im Jahr unsers Herrn, 1849, von Herr Jonas Bitsche.⁶⁵

From the above it is clear that Bishop Beachy had traveled from his home in the southern end of the county to the Glades settlement in the northern end of the county in order to conduct baptismal services. No doubt this distance of nearly forty miles was covered on horseback over unimproved roads. At the time of Bishop Beachy's death he lived on Keyser's Ridge nearly fifteen miles west of the village of Grantsville. It has not been clearly established that he moved to Keyser's Ridge before 1849. If he had, then the visit to the Glades settlement was a greater test of his physical strength.

Bishop Beachy continued to serve the church until his death in 1878 according to information received from his granddaughter, Mrs. Katharine Hershberger.⁶⁶ This information is apparently reliable, as the obituary of his successor, Joel J. Miller, states that Miller was ordained by lot and chosen as bishop on November 13, 1887.⁶⁷ This would leave a ten-year period between the death of Beachy and the ordination of Miller, when the River congregation appears to have been without a resident bishop. However, there is one other source which indicates that Joel Beachy, a brother to

⁶⁴ Gnagey, *op. cit.*, 69. This gives the date of the marriage as 1816 and the date of his birth as November 5, 1791, while Samuel Peachey gives the date of the marriage as 1812 in *A Memorial History of Peter Bitsche* (Lancaster, 1892) 54.

⁶⁵ Copied from the original by the writer on July 14, 1950.

⁶⁶ Hershberger letter, *op. cit.*, Feb. 17, 1950.

⁶⁷ Obituary column, *Gospel Herald* (Scottsdale) XVIII, No. 36 (December, 1915)

Jonas, was ordained as bishop in 1854.⁶⁸ This would indicate a period of about twenty-five years when the River congregation appears to have had two bishops. Though it cannot be positively stated from the evidence now available, 1850 or 1853 probably marks the time when the River congregation had grown too large for supervision by one man, and it was decided to divide the settlement into two districts, using the Mason-Dixon Line as a natural geographic division. Whether this division was made at this time or not cannot now be positively established, but it is a known fact that such a division did at one time exist after the above-mentioned dates. In 1865 at a large gathering of Amish ministers in Holmes County, Ohio, two ministers from the River congregation affixed their names to the discipline there drawn up. They were Joel Beachy and Daniel Hershberger.⁶⁹ It is known that sixteen years later this Daniel Hershberger was an associate of Bishop Manassa Beachy, who was then bishop on the Pennsylvania side.⁷⁰ No doubt Hershberger represented the Pennsylvania Amish and Joel Beachy the Maryland Amish at the conference of 1865. Joel Miller may have been ordained as bishop after Joel Beachy became physically unable to perform the duties of a bishop for those on the Maryland side of the Mason-Dixon Line. Joel Beachy died in 1894,⁷¹ while Joel Miller continued to live until 1915.⁷² Manassa Beachy, who was a son of Jonas Beachy, served as bishop on the Pennsylvania side for a number of years, but since the date of his ordination has not been found, it is impossible to tell how long he served in that capacity. He died on June 5, 1895, at the age of fifty-seven.⁷³ Though the Bible which he owned is still well preserved, it contains no notation in regard to the date of his ordination. However, Amishmen are not ordained to the ministry before they are married, and it is not often that a man is ordained as bishop until he has first served as a minister. Probably Manassa was at least thirty years of age before he was ordained as bishop, which would mark the date of his ordination as 1867, and he may well have been older. It is established that he was serving as bishop in 1885, when the Daniel Hershberger who attended the conference of 1865 with

⁶⁸ Gnagey, *op. cit.*, 174-75. An obituary reprint from a newspaper states that Joel Beachy was ordained as deacon in 1851, as minister in 1853 and as bishop in 1854.

⁶⁹ Bender, *MQR* VIII, No. 2 (April, 1934) 95.

⁷⁰ S. E. Hershberger, letter dated Feb. 23, 1950, Grantsville, Maryland.

⁷¹ Gnagey, *op. cit.*, 175.

⁷² Obituary column, *Gospel Herald*, 591.

⁷³ Obituary column, *Herald of Truth*, XXXII, No. 13 (July 1895) 207.

Joel Beachy died. The obituary states that Bishop Manassa Beachy had charge of the funeral services.⁷⁴

3. *The Years of Growth and Expansion.*

The period from 1850 to 1881 had been one of steady growth for the River congregation. Until the year 1881 the congregation had followed the practice of holding worship services in the homes of the various members. In 1881 this practice was discontinued, and four plain meetinghouses were erected in which the worship services were thereafter held. There have been numerous traditions as to why this was done, but the simple fact is that the community had grown so large that it was a burden upon any one member of the brotherhood to have the service in his home. This burden was added to by the fact that in those early days

A meal was always served by the owner of the house before the people went home, and as oftentimes several hundred people were present, all of whom were welcome to come to the tables, whether members of the church or not, it is easy to see that to have preaching at one's house was quite a tax on the resources of such as were so honored.⁷⁵

There are also well-founded traditions which say that the practice of serving meals was discontinued approximately ten years before the meetinghouses were built and that it was discontinued because so many outsiders who were not members of the church came simply for the meal.⁷⁶ Jonas B. Miller, minister at Grantsville, is of the opinion that the real reason for building the meetinghouses was that large numbers of the congregation were absenting themselves from the church services, particularly when it was held in the smaller homes, in order to avoid the overcrowded conditions. When the ministers saw this, they determined to do something about it, and accordingly the meetinghouses were built.⁷⁷ All four of the meetinghouses were of the simplest possible construction and all were built in the same year. They were scattered throughout the Casselman River region in such fashion as to be centrally located for the northern and southern ends of the settlement. Of the two meetinghouses in the southern end of the settlement, one was erected about a mile north of Grantsville, which became known as the Miller Meetinghouse because it was located on the farm of Jacob S. Miller.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* XXII, No. 13 (July, 1885) 205

⁷⁵ Blackburn, Koontz, and Welfey, *op. cit.* II, 503.

⁷⁶ From the card files of Dr. Alta Schrock, Goshen, Ind., copied by the writer in July, 1950. Dr. Schrock received this information from an aged woman who claims to have been present when the last meal was served at an Amish church service in Somerset County about 1870.

⁷⁷ From a personal interview with Jonas B. Miller, minister at Grantsville, Md., in July, 1949.

The other in the south end of the settlement was erected near the Cross Roads schoolhouse and became known as the Hershberger Meetinghouse, because it stood on or near the farm of Daniel Hershberger, a minister in the congregation. Today this is known as the Flag Run Meetinghouse.

Of the two meetinghouses in the north end of the settlement one was located near the village of St. Paul, and the other near the village of Summit Mills. All four structures are in use at the present time. After the erection of these four meetinghouses in 1881, it would appear that the River congregation should have forged ahead in another period of growth. Unfortunately differences of opinion led to strife and division only fourteen years later.

4. *The Division of 1895.*

This unfortunate incident is now known among the Amish of this region as "the split of 1895." The exact reasons for this division remain something of a mystery, even though it occurred during the life span of many who are yet alive. Probably the reasons were multiple and originated as a result of personality clashes among the ministers. It is an established fact that some of the young people had started attending "a sort of teachers' normal school"⁷⁸ at Springs, Pennsylvania, in preparation to teach in the public schools. This school was conducted by Daniel H. Bender, a Mennonite minister, who became very popular with the young Amish people. Among his students was a young man who later became Bishop C. W. Bender of Salisbury, Pennsylvania, and a companion, Milton E. Hershberger, deceased husband of the informant.⁷⁹

This new interest in education on the part of the rising generation raised a storm of protest among some of the older more conservative people. These now approached Bishop Joel Miller and his co-minister, Jacob S. Miller, and requested them to forbid this practice. This the two ministers, both of whom lived in Maryland, refused to do, since they saw nothing harmful or sinful in attending a normal school which was conducted by a Mennonite minister.⁸⁰

It is also an established fact that before the controversy ended in division, the matter of having Sunday school had become an issue. Sunday-school classes had been started not only on the Maryland side, but also on the Pennsylvania side, which appears to have had most of the conservatively minded people. As the dispute wore on,

⁷⁸ Hershberger letter, *op. cit.*, Feb. 17, 1950

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

the conservatively minded folk demanded that Sunday-school classes be discontinued and attendance at the normal schools forbidden, as their price for the restoration of harmony.⁸¹ That these two items were at the center of the trouble in 1895 is further substantiated by the fact that they remain prominent in the memory of two present-day Amish bishops, Lewis M. Beachy of Oakland, Maryland, and Alvin M. Beachy of Topeka, Indiana. Both men are sons of the deceased Bishop Manassa Beachy and were young men when the division occurred. They both recall Sunday school and attendance at high schools or normal schools as the chief source of trouble. Lewis M. Beachy is of the opinion that there was also some difficulty over the interpretation of the "ban" and some questions concerning dress, such as the cutting of the hair and the trimming of the beard among the men. But he states that these were not the real cause of the trouble.⁸²

By the fall of 1894 the feeling had become so bitter that no communion service was held in the Casselman River district. The following spring on June 2, 1895, Bishop Joel Miller decided not to withhold the blessing of the communion service from his congregation for a longer period of time. On the above-mentioned date services were held at the Miller Meetinghouse (later Maple Glen), and about sixty-three members partook of the Lord's Supper.⁸³ In order to avoid any further aggravation of the strife Bishop Miller strictly observed the boundary line of the districts and allowed no one from the Pennsylvania side to participate in the communion service. But the Pennsylvania brethren were unyielding. They would not have Bishop Joel conduct their communion service unless and until he instituted the reforms which they had requested; and their own bishop, Manassa Beachy, was too ill to lead them. On June 5, 1895, he died. His obituary states that "he had been sick for some time and was deranged."⁸⁴

Thereafter the Pennsylvania brethren were without a shepherd, but they would not have Joel Miller assist them. Instead they

⁸¹ J. B. Miller, interview, *op. cit.*, July, 1949. In this interview J. B. Miller stated that in the summer of 1894 some young people on the Pennsylvania side had secured the permission of Bishop Manassa Beachy to conduct Sunday-school classes. These were then voluntarily discontinued on the Pennsylvania side during the school year 1894-95, but not on the Maryland side.

⁸² Alvin M. Beachy, letter dated March 3, 1950, Topeka, Ind. Lewis M. Beachy, letter dated March 6, 1950, Oakland, Md.

⁸³ From memoranda compiled by Joel J. Miller and copied by Jonas B. Miller, his son, in 1934 at Grantsville, Md. Made available to the writer through the courtesy of the latter in July, 1949.

⁸⁴ Obituary column, *Herald of Truth* (July, 1895) 207. The letter written by L. M. Beachy of Oakland, Md., states that Manassa was paralyzed before his death, which may indicate that he had a stroke.

asked two men from a distance to come and conduct their communion service. The two men who came were Joseph Witmer of Davis County, Indiana, and Cornelius S. Beachy of Midland, Virginia. On June 26, 1895, these two ministers conducted a communion service for the Pennsylvania Amish in the Flag Run Meetinghouse. They were not as considerate as Miller had been four weeks earlier, for they now declared the boundary between the districts to be null and void and allowed thirty-four members formerly numbered with the Maryland congregation to participate in the service.⁸⁵

On November 3, 1895, Joel Miller's congregation again held a communion service at the Miller Meetinghouse, and this time they did not so rigidly honor the boundary line of the two districts. As a result of this more lenient policy fifty-five people who were formerly numbered with the Pennsylvania side were admitted to the communion service of the Maryland congregation.

The Pennsylvania brethren again retaliated by calling ministers Witmer and C. S. Beachy to conduct the communion service for those who were dissatisfied with Miller's leadership. This service was held November 17, 1895, in the Flag Run Meetinghouse, at which time Moses D. Yoder, who had formerly been a minister on the Maryland side, was ordained by the visiting ministers as bishop in the Pennsylvania district of the River congregation.⁸⁶ Thus the River congregation, which had endured for more than a century and had survived the hardships of pioneer days as a true "community in Christ," found itself a "house divided."

The Pennsylvania Amish continued to have full fellowship with the Old Order Amish in other areas of the United States, while Miller's congregation became independent and remained so until 1912, when it affiliated with the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference. The second annual meeting of this conference was held at the Maple Glen Meetinghouse near Grantsville on May 27 and 28, 1912.⁸⁷ The congregation has been active in the conference since that time and has grown in strength. A complete history of the Amish in the Casselman River region should devote more space to the growth and development of the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference than the present work allows.

⁸⁵ Joel J. Miller, memorandum, *op. cit.*, July, 1949.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *History of the Amish Mennonite Conference (Conservative)* (Scottsdale, 1925).

2. No author indicated on this pamphlet, which is a compilation of the proceedings of the conference, covering the period 1910-25.

After the division of 1895 the Pennsylvania Amish were faced with a new problem, namely, what should be their attitude toward members who left their congregation to affiliate with the Miller congregation, but against whom no other offense could be charged. Earlier practice in Somerset County, as seen by the Discipline of 1809, had been to regard as apostate persons all members who left the Amish Church to join other churches, and all such were to be considered as subjects for the "ban."⁸⁸ Apparently there was some difficulty in enforcing this decision, for the first article of the Discipline of 1837 reads:

"It is noted that decline has set in because the ordinance of God in the matter of the ban is greatly neglected. Decided that separation and shunning are to be practiced toward all disobedient ones without regard of persons, whether man or woman."⁸⁹

The Pennsylvania Amish were now confronted with a situation that had not previously existed in the county and was not covered by earlier practice. Previously there had been only one Amish Church in the Casselman River region. After 1895 there were two. Earlier disciplines had dealt with those who left the Amish Church to unite with other denominations, usually the Mennonites, but not with a situation such as the Pennsylvania Amish now confronted. There is reliable evidence that at the time of M. D. Yoder's ordination to the office of bishop he wanted the old ruling to apply in the new situation, and that Joseph Witmer, who ordained him, would not consent to this. However, after Witmer returned to his home in Indiana, he was frequently consulted by Yoder, and his advice was so interpreted by Yoder to the congregation that he succeeded in getting their unanimous vote that all who left the Pennsylvania Amish to join the congregation led by Joel Miller near Grantsville should be placed under the strict "ban."⁹⁰ Naturally this ruling

⁸⁸ Bender, *MQR* VIII, No. 2 (April, 1934) 90-93.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 93-95.

⁹⁰ This information is gleaned from the file marked "Letters of Importance," found among the personal effects of Moses M. Beachy after his death in 1946. He was bishop of the River congregation from 1916 to 1946. In one letter dated April 19, 1923, J. F. Swartzendruber of Kalona, Iowa, writes that he had heard Witmer say both in private and in public that he had opposed the use of the strict "ban" against those who left the Pennsylvania Amish to join the Miller congregation when there were no other charges against them. He further states that Witmer was much distressed when he learned that Yoder had acted contrary to his advice.

Another letter dated May 4, 1920, was written to the late R. M. Beachy of Meyersdale, Pa., by the above Swartzendruber of Kalona, Iowa. The letter, which is written in German, was a reply to a letter which R. M. Beachy had addressed to him earlier. Beachy's letter is no longer extant, but it is plain to see from Swartzendruber's letter that Beachy had asked him either to confirm or deny the report that Witmer had not agreed to the strict "ban" at the time of M. D. Yoder's ordination. Swartzendruber confirms this report with great emphasis in the following words:

"Ja ich kann volles Zeugnis geben zu dem was du schreibst dasz Peter Breneman euch erzählt hat. Ich hörte Witmer dasselbe zweimal sehr kräftig vor des Versamm-

could not well be applied to those who were members of Miller's congregation from the beginning of the strife that ended in division, so it was agreed that only those who left after a certain date should be considered subjects for the strict "ban."⁹¹

From the available evidence it appears that M. D. Yoder won the congregation to his point of view either by deliberate misrepresentation or else through serious misunderstanding of the advice received from Witmer through correspondence. In either case he had temporarily swung the congregation to his point of view. But a peace secured in this manner was destined to be short-lived, as later events were soon to reveal.

D. DAUGHTER COLONIES OF THE SOMERSET COUNTY AMISH

1. The Holmes County, Ohio, Settlement

Before going on to the later events referred to above it seems appropriate to discuss briefly the role which Somerset County, Pennsylvania, played in the westward migration of the Amish. Not only was Somerset County the first daughter colony of the old Berks County settlement, but it was also the starting point for the later westward migrations of the Amish.⁹² The Amish pioneers who settled in Somerset County were a restless lot. The virgin forests of the Somerset County hills had scarcely been brought under culti-

lung sagen. Natürlich zu zwei verschiedenen mal, und zuvor hat er mir dasselbe in einem privat Gespräch, sehr kräftig und eifrig gesagt, in gegenwart von anderen mehr."

A third letter written by the above mentioned Beachy to Mr. and Mrs. Jonas Kaufman at Arthur, Ill., on March 1, 1925, refers to a visit which he and his first wife had with the Peter Brenemans while on a trip to Iowa in 1905. The letter states that during the course of conversation Breneman, an Amish minister, asked Beachy who had introduced the strict "ban" among the Amish of Somerset County, Pa., whereupon Beachy informed him that they had done it themselves. This seemed to come as a surprise to Breneman, who said that Witmer had been severely criticized for this action while on a visit to Iowa, at which time he denied any responsibility for the action taken and said that the unanimous vote of the congregation had been secured nearly a year after he had last visited the Pennsylvania district of the River congregation.

R. M. Beachy was able to confirm this denial of Witmer from a previous conversation with Joseph Kemp of Indiana, who had come to Somerset County to visit. Kemp then asked how they, the Pennsylvania Amish, conducted themselves toward those who joined the Miller congregation. Beachy replied that ban and avoidance are to be observed in all such cases. Kemp then asked who instituted this and was told by Beachy that since Witmer had served them for some time in the capacity of bishop, he must have been responsible. Kemp then shook his head and said, "I know Witmer. If you will investigate that matter, I think you will find that Witmer did not advise you to take such steps." A record of this conversation together with other events was also found in the M. M. Beachy file. Apparently R. M. Beachy had intended to write a brief history concerning the division of 1927, but was prevented from completing it by ill health.

⁹¹ From a personal interview with Miss Annie M. Beachy of Salisbury, Pa., in July, 1950. Eldest daughter of the late M. M. Beachy, Annie was born in 1895, and recalls that the bitterness caused by the division was still a topic of conversation when she was a young girl.

⁹² C. H. Smith, *The Mennonites* (Berne, 1920) 216.

vation when these pioneers were on the march again, this time westward into the Ohio Territory.

It has not been possible thus far to identify positively the first Amish to arrive in Ohio. It is known from various sources that in the year 1808 a Jacob Miller, sometimes called "Yockle" Miller, and his two sons, Jacob and Henry settled in Holmes County, Ohio, near the present village of Sugarcreek.⁹³ This date and the characters are well established, but the identity of Jacob Miller, father of Jacob and Henry, remains shrouded in mystery. One tradition says that at the time he left for Ohio he was already a minister in Somerset County. Another tradition says that he was a bishop in Somerset County. The only Jacob Miller in Somerset County who is known to have been a minister settled near the present village of Springs in 1781. This Jacob Miller was the father of Benedict Miller, who later became bishop of the River congregation. There is no written evidence that Benedict's father had ever been a bishop in Somerset County, and it is therefore possible that the Jacob Miller who went to Ohio in 1808 with his two sons, Jacob and Henry, was also the father of Benedict.

An earlier reference to Benedict Miller cited a tradition which refers to him as riding to Holmes County on horseback to minister to the Amish community there. This would not have been necessary if the elder Jacob Miller had himself been a bishop. Another tradition connected with Benedict Miller states that he himself had planned to remove to Ohio, but that he was ordained to the office of bishop in the River congregation before he was able to carry out his plans. After his ordination it is said that he felt he should remain at his post of duty, and he told the elder Jacob and his two sons to proceed without him.⁹⁴

A note from L. A. Miller of Arthur, Illinois, gives the information that the elder Jacob assisted his two sons in the erection of two rude log cabins, after which he returned to Somerset County on horseback and then again returned to Ohio. In the fall of 1808 he returned to Somerset County and the following year moved to Ohio himself. L. A. Miller states that this Jacob Miller was his great-grandfather on his mother's side, and identifies him as "Bishop Yockle Miller."⁹⁵ Whoever this Jacob Miller may have been, he was apparently the officially appointed leader of an explora-

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 216. See also J. D. Guengerich, "Einige forkünden der ersten Amische Ansiedlung in Ohio," *Herold der Wahrheit* (Nov. 15, 1912) 306. Published at Scottsdale.

⁹⁴ From the card files of Dr. Alta Schrock, Goshen, Ind., July, 1950.

⁹⁵ L. A. Miller, letter dated April 8, 1950.

tion party that had been sent out by the Amish of Somerset County in the summer of 1807 to locate a place for a colony in Iowa.

This party traveled down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh and up the Mississippi to Iowa where observations on several sites were made but no decision reached upon a place for settlement. On their return the party traveled overland through Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. They passed through present-day Holmes County and were impressed by its fertile valleys, its springs of clear cold water and the general resemblance of the region to their home in Pennsylvania enticed them.⁹⁶

Apparently the findings of this exploration party resulted in Jacob Miller's decision to move to Ohio the following year.

In the spring of 1810 Susanna Miller, daughter of Jacob Miller, became the first child to be born of Amish parents in the state of Ohio. On Jan. 12, 1811, there was born to Mr. and Mrs. Jonas Miller, who had come from Somerset County a year earlier, a son whom they named Moses, and who was the first male child to be born of Amish parents in Ohio. In 1835 this same Moses Miller was ordained as a minister in the Amish Church, and twelve years later he was ordained a bishop in the same denomination.⁹⁷

Although the pioneer settlers were harassed by the Indians for some years after permanent settlement began, the hills and valleys produced abundant crops and famine was unknown. Among the early arrivals in Holmes County were Jonas Miller, Jacob and Joseph Mast, Charles Yoder, and Jacob Stutzman, members of the Amish faith from Somerset County, Pennsylvania.⁹⁸

The first Amish church service in Ohio was conducted at Shanesville in Tuscarawas County by Jacob Miller in 1810.⁹⁹ There is no indication in our sources as to what type of service this was. Only one of our sources states positively that this Jacob Miller was a bishop at the time he moved to Ohio. If he was not a bishop, it is possible that the Amish bishop, Benedict Miller of the River congregation, did occasionally visit the Ohio colony to administer communion or perform marriages or any of the other duties usually assigned to a bishop in the Amish Church. As the bishop residing nearest the new colony, he would logically have been the man to whom the colony would appeal in any situation with which the local ministers were unable to cope. While the records of those early years of the Amish in Ohio are very fragmentary, the results of

⁹⁶ I. R. Fletcher, "The Amish People of Holmes County, Ohio; A study in Human Geography," an unpublished Master's Thesis, Ohio State University, 8-9.

⁹⁷ Guengerich, *Herold der Wahrheit* (Nov. 15, 1912) 306.

⁹⁸ Fletcher, *op. cit.* 42. Source given as H. P. Karsh, in *Standard Atlas of Holmes County, Ohio*.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

their pioneer efforts are still bearing fruit. Today the colony which was started by Jacob Miller and his two sons has grown until it now numbers approximately 3,500 and embraces the eastern third of Holmes County and adjacent parts of Wayne, Stark, and Coshoc-ton counties.¹⁰⁰

2. The Indiana Colonies

Fortunately the records of the first settlement of the Amish in Elkhart and Lagrange counties, Indiana, have been better preserved than those of the Holmes County, Ohio, settlement. As frequently happens among the Amish, this is due to a keen interest in family history. The Amish have produced more family histories than any other type of literature since their arrival in America. It is to this interest in personal family history and to the larger interest in general Amish Mennonite history that the writer is indebted for much of the information which here follows.

It was in the year 1840 that the action was taken which was later to result in the coming of the Amish to Elkhart and Lagrange counties. In that year the Conemaugh Amish congregation located in the vicinity of the present city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, sent four men to the West on a tour of investigation.¹⁰¹ These men were Daniel S. Miller, Joseph Miller—a minister, Nathan Smiley, and Joseph Speicher.¹⁰² These four explorers followed much the same route that had been followed by the exploration party of the River congregation in 1807. Like their kinsmen in 1807, these Amishmen of 1840 went first to Pittsburgh, where they took a boat down the Ohio River.

They went by boat all the way to Cairo, Illinois, whence they proceeded along the Mississippi to Burlington, Iowa. Then they traveled by foot through Henry, Washington, and Johnson counties in Iowa. Returning through Illinois they stopped at a small town called Chicago, where they crossed Lake Michigan and entered the St. Joseph River by boat. The latter part of their trip to Indiana they made on foot. The land around Goshen appealed strongly to them. With a favorable report on Elkhart County, Indiana, they returned to Somerset County, Pennsylvania.¹⁰³

As a result of the report brought back by these four explorers four families left the Conemaugh congregation to settle in Elkhart County in the spring of 1841. Bishop Eli J. Bontrager of Shipshew-

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁰¹ E. J. Bontrager, letter dated April 2, 1950, Shipshewana, Ind. Bontrager states that Daniel Miller was a brother to Joseph Miller, signed as minister of the Conemaugh congregation in the Discipline of 1837.

¹⁰² I. S. Johns, "Early Amish Settlers in Indiana and Clinton Frame Church History," *Mennonite Historical Bulletin* III, No. 3 (September, 1942) 1.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1.

wana, Indiana, tells the story of their journey in such an interesting fashion that it seems best to let him tell it in his own words.

The first Amish in the settlement in Elkhart and Lagrange counties came from Somerset County, Pennsylvania, from near Johnstown. Johnstown was founded by a certain Joseph Johns or (Schantz). The daughter of this Joseph Johns became the mother of the heads of two of the first four families that settled here, viz., Joseph and Christian Bontrager.

On June 3, 1841, four families left their former homes to settle in Indiana. They were Joseph Miller and family, his brother Daniel Miller and family, consisting of his second wife and several stepchildren besides his own, deacon Joseph (known as Sep) Bontrager and family, and his brother Christian and family, a total of twenty-four souls.

They came with four two-horse wagons and three one-horse rigs. They had to pass to the north of the almost impassable Black Swamp through southern Michigan, passing through White Pigeon and through Middlebury to Goshen, Indiana, where they settled temporarily. They later settled farther east in Lagrange County. The following spring eight more families came from the northern part of Somerset County to this new settlement. In the fall of this year, 1842, eight families arrived from Holmes County, Ohio.

In the following years many more came from the vicinity of Johnstown and from Ohio, so that by 1876 there were three districts. A desire for cheaper and more level land was the main cause for emigration from Pennsylvania to Indiana although some disagreement within their colony was a minor cause.

In 1890 there was still a small colony of Amish left in the Johnstown vicinity consisting of about a dozen members, including one minister, and he was an ordained bishop (See footnote 13). Several years later the colony was extinct, through death and a few leaving the country.¹⁰⁴

Ira S. Johns in the article referred to above states that the original party stopped for one week in Holmes County, after which they proceeded to Goshen over the route indicated by Bontrager. According to Johns this party of twenty-four souls arrived in Goshen on June 29, 1841, after twenty-six days of travel.¹⁰⁵

The Bontrager letter stated that these first settlers remained only temporarily at Goshen. This is supported by the obituary of Joseph Miller, which says that he died in Lagrange County on October 12, 1877. The account goes on to say that he was ordained as bishop in 1848,

which office he faithfully fulfilled until his end, in teaching, establishing new congregations, and ordaining ministers in the vineyard of the Lord. He was the first Amish preacher in this section.¹⁰⁶

This original Amish settlement in Indiana has since grown to be one of the larger ones in the United States, even though many Amish of this settlement became Mennonites when the Amish

¹⁰⁴ E. J. Bontrager, letter dated June 6, 1950, Shipshewana, Ind., when he was in his eighty-third year. It is known from the earlier study of the Conemaugh congregation that the bishop referred to in this letter was Moses B. Miller.

¹⁰⁵ Johns, *op cit.*, 2.

¹⁰⁶ Obituary column, *Herald of Truth* XIV, No. 11, 181.

Mennonites and the Mennonites of the Indiana-Michigan Conference merged in 1917.¹⁰⁷ The Old Order Amish in this area are at present divided into thirty-one districts and number about 2,790 baptized adults.¹⁰⁸

3. The Johnson County, Iowa, Colony

In the first westward movement of the Amish from Somerset County the pioneers were largely supplied by the River congregation. In the second westward migration of the Amish from this territory the pioneers were supplied by the Conemaugh congregation. These were given in such large numbers that their migration was a major contributing factor to the extinction of the colony in about 1900. In the third westward migration of the Amish from Somerset County, the River congregation again provided the earliest settlers. Some of these had, however, moved to the River congregation from the Glades congregation at an earlier date, while a few moved directly from the Glades congregation in northern Somerset County to what is now Johnson County, Iowa. Among these Johnson County pioneers was Joseph J. Swartzendruber from Allegheny County, Maryland. Allegheny and Garrett counties, Maryland, were an integral part of the Amish settlement in the Casselman River region, though they lay south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

In the summer of 1845, four years after the Elkhart and La-grange counties settlement, Joseph J. Swartzendruber and his half-brother, Daniel P. Guengerich of Fairfield County, Ohio, went on a land exploration trip to the Iowa territory. They traveled by steamboat as far as Keokuk, Iowa, and then overland to the vicinity of Kalona where they bought some land.

Joseph Swartzendruber then became discouraged and in the fall of 1846 went back to Grantsville, Maryland, his old home. The following winter he married. His mother-in-law did not want them to move away while she yet lived, so they settled on the Forks Mountain in Maryland and cleared a farm which caused much hard labor. His Hickory Grove tract in Iowa lay idle till in the year 1856 when he moved to Iowa and occupied it.¹⁰⁹

The first Amish church in Iowa was formally organized in the spring of 1851 with twenty-seven members. Eleven families from Maryland (Casselman River region) had moved into the settlement in that year.¹¹⁰ The organization of a congregation in

¹⁰⁷ Johns, *op. cit.*, 2.

¹⁰⁸ E. J. Bontrager, letter dated August 29, 1951, Shipshewana, Ind.

¹⁰⁹ S. D. Guengerich, "A Brief History of the Amish Settlement in Johnson County, Iowa," *MQR* III, No. 4 (October, 1929) 243-45.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 243-45.

1851 was made possible by the arrival of Jacob Swartzendruber, who had signed the Discipline of 1837 as a minister of the Glades congregation in Somerset County.¹¹¹ This Jacob Swartzendruber had been ordained as a minister in the Amish Church at Mengerhausen, Waldeck, Germany, in 1826 when he was only twenty-six years old. He served as a minister there until 1833, when he emigrated to Somerset County as a married man.¹¹² Here he remained until 1840 when he moved to the vicinity of Grantsville, and became a minister in the River congregation. In 1851 he moved to Johnson County, where he resided at the time of his death in 1868.¹¹³ In 1852 Jacob Swartzendruber was ordained bishop of the Amish in Johnson County and thus became the first Amish bishop to be ordained in the state of Iowa.¹¹⁴ From the time of his birth in Germany in 1800 until the time of his death in Johnson County in 1868, Jacob Swartzendruber had thrice become a pioneer for the sake of his religious convictions.

In 1866 Abner Yoder, who had formerly been a bishop in the Glades congregation in Somerset County, also joined the Iowa settlement.¹¹⁵ Thus for a period of two years Jacob Swartzendruber, who had served as minister in the Glades congregation under the leadership of Christian Yoder, Sr., as bishop, and later under his son Christian Yoder, Jr., labored in Iowa with Abner Yoder, great-grandson of the Amish bishop under whom Swartzendruber had begun his ministry in America.¹¹⁶ There is evidence that these two men knew each other well and they occasionally conferred with each other on matters of importance. Swartzendruber in his epistle of 1865, addressed to the Amish ministers' conference in Holmes County, Ohio, wished to have Abner Yoder's opinion on certain questions that are dealt with in the epistle.¹¹⁷ Abner Yoder continued to serve as bishop of the Amish in Johnson County until his death in 1883.¹¹⁸

Today this Amish colony in Iowa, which in 1851 had twenty-seven members, has grown in size until it consists of six districts and

¹¹¹ Bender, *MQR* VIII, No. 2 (April, 1934) 95.

¹¹² Bender, *MQR* XX, No. 3 (July, 1946) 222.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 222.

¹¹⁴ Swartzendruber letter, *op. cit.*, March 20, 1950. Note: The H. S. Bender publication referred to above says that the Amish Church in Johnson County, Iowa, was organized in 1864. However, D. B. Swartzendruber was a great-grandson of Jacob, and the information he sent was gathered from personal notes left by his great-grandfather. The earlier date would seem to be the correct one for the establishment of the Amish Church in Iowa.

¹¹⁵ Bender, *MQR* XX, No. 3 (July, 1946) 225.

¹¹⁶ Swartzendruber letter, *op. cit.*, March 20, 1950.

¹¹⁷ Bender, *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

about 1000 baptized adults.¹¹⁹ Besides the Old Order Amish in the area, there are several thriving congregations of the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference and one congregation of the newly formed "Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches."

4. *The Moultrie and Douglas Counties, Illinois, Colony*

In the first and second westward migrations of the Amish from Somerset County the River and Conemaugh congregations supplied the pioneers for the new frontiers. In the third westward migration the Glades and River congregations shared in furnishing the pioneers, apparently the largest number coming from the River congregation. The second and third migrations were fatal to the Conemaugh and Glades congregations, or at least contributed to their extinction at a later date. The River congregation survived to provide pioneers for a fourth westward migration and remains in existence at the present time, though the original tree has been split into three different branches.

The fourth westward migration of the Somerset County Amish began in 1864 when two men in the River congregation tired of the rather strenuous labor which this region had always exacted from those who would be successful farmers. These two men were Bishop Joel Beachy of Grantsville, Maryland, and Moses Yoder of Summit Mills, Pennsylvania.¹²⁰ Grantsville is at the extreme southern end of the territory covered by the River congregation, while Summit Mills is in the northern end of the settlement. It will be recalled that Joel Beachy had been ordained a bishop on the Maryland side of the River congregation in 1854. Moses Yoder was the son of Yost H. Yoder, and Yost H. may have been the minister who signed his name to the Discipline of 1837¹²¹ along with Benedict Miller and Hannes Gingerich as ministers in the River congregation. The latter, however, is a conjecture for which no written evidence has been found.

When Beachy and Yoder started westward in June of 1864, Beachy was thinking of Wisconsin as a possible home and Yoder, of Missouri. It was not until their return that they decided to settle in the state of Illinois. They arrived at Pana, Illinois, on a Sunday, where they rested. During the day they walked from Pana to Onega, and noticed that the country appeared to be fertile. On Monday

¹¹⁹ J. M. Miller, letter dated Aug. 2, 1951, Kalona, Iowa.

¹²⁰ From an unpublished manuscript giving an account of the Moultrie and Douglas counties, Ill., settlement written by L. A. Miller of Arthur, Ill., in 1922, and sent to the writer by request in March, 1950.

¹²¹ L. A. Miller, letter dated March 8, 1950, Arthur, Ill.

they took a train to Mattoon, Illinois, and from there walked a distance of fourteen miles to Arcola. Here they met Joel Smith, who took them on a tour of the county. The two men liked what they saw of the terrain, but decided not to make any purchase until they had seen the same territory in late summer.¹²²

Their tour of investigation over, Beachy and Yoder returned to their homes in Pennsylvania and Maryland, where they remained until September. Then they returned to Illinois along with Daniel Miller and Daniel Otto, both from Summit Mills. On this second trip they traveled west of Arcola to the west side of the river to the region known as the "West Prairie." Here Daniel Miller bought a farm from Isaac Cosler and Moses Yoder, which he rented to Daniel Otto, and then returned to Somerset County. In November of the same year he returned to pay for the purchase which he had made, and then decided to buy the Henry Cosler farm in addition. Moses Yoder, Daniel Miller, and Daniel Otto, with their families, settled permanently in this new locality in the spring of 1865, arriving in Illinois on March 3 of that year.¹²³

Bishop Joel Beachy never moved to Illinois permanently. It is not known whether he returned at all after this second exploration trip of 1864. He died at his old home near Grantsville on June 8, 1894, at the age of seventy-eight.¹²⁴ His body was buried in the family cemetery where his grave may still be seen on the farm now owned by Irvin E. Yoder of near Grantsville.

While Joel Beachy himself never moved to Illinois, his son, Daniel, did. The time of his removal to the present-day Arthur, Illinois, is not known. It is known that he was ordained as a minister there in 1881 and as a bishop in 1885. In 1922 he was the oldest minister and bishop then living in the community.¹²⁵

By 1927 only two of the first Amish immigrants to Illinois remained alive,¹²⁶ but the colony which they had founded had grown to be larger than the colony from whence they had come. Emigrants had kept coming to this new Amish colony from various places in such large numbers that it was necessary to divide the settlement into two districts in 1888. One district was known as the D. J.

¹²² L. A. Miller, manuscript, *op cit*, 1

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 1-2

¹²⁴ Gnagey, *op cit*, 174-75.

¹²⁵ L. A. Miller, manuscript, *op cit*, 4

¹²⁶ Obituary column, *Herold der Wahrheit* (April, 1927) 240. Obituary of Daniel M. Yoder, son of Moses Yoder, immigrant of 1865 from Summit Mills, Pa. Daniel was born July 22, 1852, in Pennsylvania and came to Illinois when a lad of thirteen. Levi Yoder, a brother, and Mrs. Ben Schrock are mentioned as the two remaining immigrants in 1927.

Beachy or Moultrie County district, while the other was known as the D. J. Plank or Douglas County district. By December 7, 1902, it was found necessary to divide the Douglas County district a second time, and the same was true for the Moultrie County district in 1906. In 1922 the northern half of Douglas County district was again divided. The colony had grown from three families to eight districts in a period of less than sixty years.¹²⁷ Today there are eight districts in this territory which are served by eight bishops, eight deacons and sixteen ministers.¹²⁸ The exact number of baptized adults is apparently unknown.

The capacity of the Somerset County Amish for pioneering was truly remarkable. When it is remembered that their pioneering days lasted for more than half a century, 1808 to 1865, during which time the Somerset County Amish were pioneers in Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Illinois, the wonder is not that two congregations in Somerset County should have become extinct, but rather that any should have survived. One congregation did survive, however, and it was also to play a pioneering role among the Amish of America, though it did so without changing its geographical location. This congregation has since become the mother of the various Beachy Amish Mennonite churches that are scattered through Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Virginia.

¹²⁷ L. A. Miller, manuscript, *op. cit.*, 3.

¹²⁸ L. A. Miller, letter dated Aug. 3, 1951.

THE AMISH COMMUNITY AT ATLANTIC, PENNSYLVANIA

MAURICE A. MOOK*

Although the history of the two largest Amish settlements in Pennsylvania, those in Lancaster and Mifflin counties, is known in general outline¹, knowledge of the origin and history of the smaller and geographically more marginal Amish communities of the state remains largely in the minds and memories of the present and former members of these settlements. Information gathered during a visit in August and September, 1950, to the Amish at Atlantic, in southwestern Crawford County, Pennsylvania, may therefore be of interest. Perhaps especially so, inasmuch as aside from the ministers lists published annually in Raber's *Calender* and in the *Mennonite Yearbook and Directory*, and apart from the occasional letters from Atlantic Amish scribes which have appeared irregularly and infrequently in *The Budget*, nothing concerning this community seems to have been published.

Visits were paid to ten of the twenty-five Old Order Amish homes in the district and talks were had with twenty-four of the adult members of the church. The writer's longest and most frequent visits were with Jonathan J. and Susan (Gingerich) Byler, Andrew G. and Anna Mary (Byler) Byler, Emanuel J. and Mary (Miller) Fisher, and Joe M. and Mary (Wengerd) Miller. These individuals are the principal sources of information here offered concerning the history of the community. Sources for the history of the church were Bishop Eli J. Troyer and Preachers Ben A. Raber² and Neil D. Miller. In addition to the foregoing the writer wishes to thank Mary Ellen (King) Byler, Freeman J. Coblentz, Noah T. Detweiler, Sam A. Hochstetler, Iva J. (Wengerd) Miller, Uri D. and Lizzie Ann (Byler) Mullet, Katie Ann (Miller) Raber, Monroe D. and Mary Ann (Hostetler) Shrock, and Alvin M. and Susie

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¹ Calvin George Bachman, *The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County (Pennsylvania German Society, Proceedings, Vol. 49)* 1942, 51-59; Walter M. Kollmorgen, *The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (Rural Life Studies, No. 4, United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.)* 1942, 1-22; Joseph W. Yoder, *Rosanna's Boys* (Huntington, 1948) ch. 1, "Big Valley," 1-20; Samuel W. Peachey, *Amish of Kishacoquillas Valley, Mifflin County, Pa.* (Scottdale, 1930) ch. 3, 27-43.

² Preacher Ben Raber died in December, 1950. The *Diener zum Buch* vacancy was filled in May, 1951, when the lot fell on Andy G. Byler. There were nine in the lot at this time, the largest lot in the history of the Atlantic Amish Church.