

Pequea Amish Mennonite  
Church

Twenty Fifth Anniversary

2  
Our  
Godly  
Heritage



September 4-6 1987

## "Hitherto Hath the Lord Helped Us"

The history of this congregation as concerning events which brought us to where we are today is a study that does reveal some very interesting facts:

Progress is a moving forward. Not all progress is beneficial however, often times that which is considered as beneficial progress may not be spiritual at all, as seen later by the results.

In making this study I am reminded of a statement made by John S. Mast, former bishop of the Conestoga Mennonite Church, soon after the turn of the century.

He said, "We have come a long way since the time when we sang those old slow tunes," he also added, "the bad has come with the good."

The lessons we learn from history seem to indicate that we are "hard learning", or we would benefit more from the lessons of the past generations. We do well to ponder over the history of the Anabaptist Churches of the past. Then we can have real appreciation for the benefits we enjoy today.

"That the generation to come might know, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children." Psalm 78:6

Aaron S. Glick

## Our Godly Heritage:

Our forefathers have their origin in Switzerland. Many of them also came from Southern Germany, and some from Alsace in France. But their origin was really in Switzerland.

It seems that some of the Swiss Brethern were invited to settle in Southern Germany to reclaim the farm lands that were devastated by the thirty years of war. Their superior farming methods made them sought after by the rulers, but their religious faith was not looked upon with favor by the state.

The story concerning the Amish and Mennonites begins in the Reformation period of the 1500's. All the Amish are Mennonites, their group being formed at a later date.

When Ulrich Zwingli withdrew from the Catholic Church in Switzerland in 1523 to found the Reformed Church, several of the brethern who were with him felt that he compromised by not going far enough with his reforms. He was unwilling to reject the state Church with its practice of infant baptism, etcetera, and to organize a believers fellowship, as was expected of him.

Therefore a group was founded known as Swiss Brethern on January 21, 1525, by Felix Manz, George Blaurock, who with several others had themselves baptized upon confession of their faith; and reinstated Biblical believer's baptism. For which move the majority of them were later martyred for their faith.

It was on these following issues that the Swiss Brethern stood firmly, even unto death.

1. Separation of church and state.
2. Voluntary Church Membership.
3. Adult, believers baptism (rejecting infant baptism).
4. Priesthood of the believer.
5. Non-Resistance (Conscientious Objectors to war and violence.
6. Non Swearing of oaths.
7. The church must be a Believers Fellowship in which Scriptural discipline will be administered when needed.

This movement seemed to spread like wildfire through Northern and Western Europe. In 1535 a Catholic priest in Holland by the name of Menno Simons had a conversion experience, and cast

his lot with these people. Because of his strong leadership, the group was then called Mennonites. He had a price on his head by the state, but he was spared and died a natural death.

In the next several hundred years many of these believers, called Anabaptist, were burned at the stake, beheaded and martyred in various ways for their faith. Many whose experiences and steadfastness is found recorded in *Martyr's Mirror*.

The Amish-Mennonites were founded in 1693 by Jacob Amman. He was a Swiss Brethern Elder who had settled in Alsace, France. He differed somewhat with the brethern in Switzerland. He believed they should adopt the Dortrecht confession of faith of 1632, the same as the Mennonites of Holland. This included feet washing at Communion Service, the bann and shunning. Almost all the churches agreed with this except some of those in Switzerland. Because of the controversy created by this there was a division in the groups and those who followed Jacob Amman were known as Amish-Mennonites.

Our forefathers were called Anabaptist (or rebaptizer) because they completely rejected the baptism they had received as infants, and were baptized as adults on their confession of faith.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" Mark 16:16.

The rise of the Anabaptist movement brought with it a wave of persecutions from their government and the state churches. These people were considered as dangerous Utopian citizens. As late as 1750 there were Swiss Mennonites sold as galley slaves. Because of the persecution and harassment our forefathers experienced in their native Switzerland, they were glad to accept William Penn's invitation to come to Pennsylvania.

The earliest Amish settlers did not originally locate in what is now known as Lancaster County, but circumstances of which they had no control did cause them to settle later in Eastern Lancaster County (the Conestoga Valley).

#### The Northkill Congregation:

Nearly all of the Amish immigrants arriving in Philadelphia traveled northward through the Schuylkill Valley and settled along the banks of the Northkill Creek in the vicinity of what is Hamburg, now known as Upper Berne township, at that time a part of Lancaster County. The Northkill colony of Amish developed into the first organized congregation in America.

#### Earliest Amish Families:

The earliest Amish immigrants consisted of widow Barbara Yoder, with eight sons and one daughter (her husband died and was buried at sea) this was in 1714. They were followed by Kauffmans and Fishers in 1732. By 1752 the Amish settlements had the following names among them: Kurtz, Beiler, Hochstetler, King, Lantz, Mast, Miller, Zook, Lapp, Glick, Hertzler, Stutzman and Hooley. The Stoltzfus family came in 1766.

These pioneers are the ancestors of the greater number of the Amish in Eastern United States. Local Mennonite congregations that were Amish at one time include Conestoga, Millwood and Maple Grove. Most of the Mennonite churches including Johnstown, and from there west, were Amish in origin.

#### The Indian Massacres:

The Amish settlers (our foreparents) at the Northkill prospered until the time of the French and Indian war. From 1754 to 1764 many pioneers were killed by the Indians. Among those massacred were many Germans, many Amish including Hochstetlers, Millers and Glicks. In some cases nearly entire families were wiped out overnight. Following the Indian attacks many of the Amish moved southward into the vicinities of Leesport and Shillington for more safety.

The settlement of Amish there had grown from later immigration by the Schmucker and Stoltzfus along with a few other families.

### Their Faith Tested:

It was said that during the Revolutionary war the Amish were again tried for their faith. Because they refused to serve in the army, they were imprisoned and sentenced to be shot. A day was set for their execution - this included Christian Schmucker, John Hertzler, Jacob and Stephen Kauffman, Jacob Mast, John and Christian Zug (Zook).

Through the leading of the Lord, a pastor of the Reformed Church, Henry Hertzell, from near Oley, Pennsylvania, walked the twenty miles into Reading and appealed to the authorities in behalf of those who had fled from Europe to escape military service and religious persecution. His appeal was honored and the prisoners were set free. (From records of C.Z. Mast).

### Amish Settlements in Lancaster County:

Among the first group migrations into the Conestoga Valley was one headed by Jacob Mast in 1760. It was due to indian disturbances that they left the Northkill. The Beiler family, descendants of Jacob Beiler had settled in Oley Valley and later moved near Myerstown. After living about fifty years near Myerstown, his son Christian Beiler purchased land along the Conestoga Creek in East Lampeter Township near Binkleys Bridge.

Christian Beiler was the father of Solomon Beiler, a bishop at Belleville and David Beiler (the writers great-grand father). David Beiler was a noted leader and writer. One of his publications is a book entitled Wahre Christeentume. This book has only recently been reprinted.

### Devisive Issues, Nationwide:

The issues that divided the Amish Churches during the third quarter of the nineteenth century, were the result of differences between their liberal and conservative leaders.

In many congregations one of the most prominent issues was the use of meeting houses for worship: The liberals who favored a few changes were then known as the Meeting House Amish, the more conservatives as house Amish.

The liberals also proposed other changes, such as baptism in a stream (not immersion, but kneeling in a running stream), Sunday School, less use of the discipline of shunning, the introduction of fast tunes and four part singing in worship services. The practice of non-conformity was challenged and in many cases left to the decision of the individual.

The changes in dress came at the initiation of the members and were resisted by most of the ministry, including those who had taken a liberal position on some or all the other issues.

#### Division in Lancaster County:

The issues that divided the churches further west did not come to a head in Lancaster County until the 1870's. To continue to fellowship with the Western Liberal Church leaders, was then becoming an issue that was dividing the liberal and conservative minded members in the Lower Pequea, and the congregation at Conestoga (Morgantown).

To continue to work with any minister with whom the following conditions existed, (was forbidden by the more conservative ministers of Millcreek and upper Pequea, even though none of these things existed among them), (I. Meeting House = Sunday School = Baptized in the water. This was in the year 1876. In the following year the Conestoga Congregation withdrew from the House Amish by having separate communion and bishop ordination.

It is apparent that the Lower Pequea division was also finalized at that time, (Millwood and Maple Grove), year 1876-77. Credit to Paton Yoder for refreshing my memory on details of church issues).

At the time of this division between "House" Amish and "Meeting House" Amish there was the agreement between two factions that they would practice no shunning among each other, an agreement which was kept until the mid 1890's. (See Penna. Mennonite Heritage, Vol. II, Number 3, July 1979, Page 23: Also Otto J. Miller, Millwood Mennonite Church District P.5; This was disregarded when Moses Hartz and his wife were placed in the Bann for joining the "Meeting House" Amish Church at Conestoga, 1896.

#### Weavertown Origin:

The Weavertown congregation has its origin in 1909 when the Old Order Amish decided to place those members in the Bann (after placing Moses Hartz and his wife in the Bann) who changed their membership to the "Meeting House" Congregations. Before that, as stated in earlier paragraph, they could change membership without the Bann.

Applying the Bann was also contrary to Scripture in Article 17 of the Dortrecht Confession of Faith which is ascribed to all by the Amish churches.

#### The Members Protest:

The decision to place those into the Bann who changed their membership to the "Meeting House" Amish brought protest from some of the members. They told the Amish ministers that if they, the ministers, would tolerate the opinions of this group and not force them to practice the strict meidung, they in turn would tolerate the views of those who would practice the strict meidung. The Amish ministers were unwilling to do this.

#### Schism of 1910:

At that time thirty five families withdrew existing Old Order Churches and started a congregation of their own. It was because of the strong convictions of the leaders of the dissenting group that they were willing to take a stand in this issue. This group was without ministers.

Since they were without ministers a number of these families assembled from time to time for Scripture reading and prayer during 1909-10.

#### The Opposition:

It was also apparent that the Old Order ministers of Lancaster County were not in favor of this group receiving any help from other Amish churches. There is evidence to believe that some of the Ohio Amish ministers were influenced by incorrect information about the Moses Hartz situation. A



letter from minister Sol Schlabach of Ohio to John A. Stoltzfus will confirm this statement. (Copy of this letter on file, A.S.G.).

#### Ministerial Help Received:

This group finally did receive help from the Old Order Amish Church of Belleville, Mifflin County. The bishops John P. Zook and David L. Peachy of the Amish churches there signed a statement of agreement to consider help for this group with the consent of their respective congregations. (Copy of this letter on file, A.S.G.).

#### More Opposition:

However Bishop David L. Peachy's later actions (having been influenced by some Lancaster County minister) were not in accord with the statement he had signed earlier. This action resulted in a division in the Valley Old Order Churches.

#### Beginning of Congregation Worship:

Services for this group were then held once a month, conducted by the Valley ministers. The first service was held on Feb. 17, 1910 by Samuel Peachy and John P. Zook. This group was then known as the "Peachy Church"; before Weavertown was established.

The first communion service was held November 4, 1910 and the next on April 10, 1911. At the second communion service two ministers were ordained by Bishop John P. Zook. John A. Stoltzfus and Christian King, who was later ordained bishop.

Moses P. Riehl was ordained deacon, October 22, 1911 by John P. Zook. Daniel B. Stoltzfus was ordained minister, May 7, 1922 by John B. Peachy.

#### Christ King Withdrawal:

On March 15, 1925, Bishop Christian King and his son-in-law withdrew from the Peachy Church with a small part of the congregation. This group was then known as the Christian King Church, which however, only existed a very short time.

After the withdrawal of the Christ King group in 1925, Mose Riehl (deacon) was ordained to the ministry and John A. Stoltzfus to the office of bishop. George Beiler was ordained to the ministry, April 24, 1927, by John A. Stoltzfus.

#### Church Building Acquired:

The Weavertown church building was purchased by two of our brethren in 1928. It had formerly belonged to the Church of the Brethern. After April 6, 1930 worship services were held there. From this time forward, we were "Church Amish". When this congregation joined the Beachy affiliation we became known as a Beachy, instead of Peachy congregation.

#### Weavertown Ordinations, Before Pequea:

Aaron B. Stoltzfus was ordained deacon June 24, 1934 by John A. Stoltzfus.

Elam Kauffman was ordained minister by John A. Stoltzfus, later ordained bishop on April 3, 1960, by Eli Tice.

George Beiler was ordained bishop March 16, 1958, by Eli Tice. (He served in this office less than one year).

Aaron S. Glick was ordained minister November 15, 1953, by John A. Stoltzfus, (later assigned to Pequea).

Christian E. Beiler was ordained minister August 15, 1959 by Eli Tice.

Gideon Stoltzfus was ordained deacon December 4, 1960, by Elam Kauffman.

#### In Retrospect:

When our group separated from the Old Order Fellowship in 1909, they thought it was on the question of meidung; the practice of avoidance, (I was only six years old at that time, so I can't remember it myself), our older people have always maintained that was the issue. We have records in writing to support this.

### The Other Version:

But that's not quite how it was according to the way our Old Order brethren seem to remember it now-a-days. Recently a Mennonite brother talked to a number of Old Order brethren, and he discovered that they believe the issue was the telephone; that our folks separated because they wanted this modern invention.

They would admit that this was only a part of it, but still they think it was a major, if not the main item. Somehow I doubt the telephone was much of an issue in 1909. There was Jake Zook at Zook's Corner who had a feed mill and I don't know that he even had a telephone then and I doubt that anyone else had. There really weren't very many telephones in the country in the year 1909.

Does this tell us something about ourselves? It seems there's a natural inclination to see things from our own viewpoint and to believe them even when they're wrong. All of us have to guard against this. Unless we are honest with ourselves about the past, we just won't be able to benefit from the lessons the past would teach us.

*There's a widely-held idea among the Old Order Amish brethren to the effect that the "Spalding" of 1909 was partly the result of the telephone issue. But the members of the "new" group were forbidden to have telephones until much later. Only in the 1920's was the first telephone installed at a place of business.*

#### the Quiet Years:

The years following the time we became "Church Amish" could perhaps be best described as the quiet years. In Sunday School we read two chapters in class (in German) usually without comment. Most of the activities that we take for granted were not sanctioned at that time. We had no Young Peoples' Meetings, no Youth Bible study groups, no Summer Bible School, no revival meetings, etc., etc.

#### On the National Level:

There were hardly any of the newly started Beachy Churches that we were excited about. They were by and large only Amish groups with modern conveniences.

The congregation at Grantsville, Maryland, named after their bishop, Moses Beachy, was the first Beachy Church. The Weavertown congregation was then also known as Beachy. Mose Beachy was responsible for starting the first several Beachy Churches.

(The later fellowship churches in Ohio, also known as Beachy were started by David Miller and because they desired deeper spiritual living.)

#### Another Option:

The Conservative Conference ministers (quite conservative at that time) would visit Weavertown occasionally and preach for us. Some of us would attend their yearly conference. Also some consideration was given to our affiliating with that group. But here I want to give credit to our ministers for moving with caution. It can truly be said for our bishop, John A. Stoltzfus, that "he moved with fear," extreme caution, as he steered our frail ship between the rocks that were hardly visible at that time.

John A. Stoltzfus had the vision for a spiritually growing church. He also had the insight of how to work toward that end and the stamina to stand for what he believed was right.

#### Winter Bible School:

The winter Bible schools that we seem to take for granted only came on the scene in 1936. Only a few from Weavertown attended

these schools in those early years. But those who did attend were greatly benefited by the experience.

#### The Awakening:

In those early years we were a lot like the church we came out of. There were many who grew up in this group and seeing the activities in the churches around us united with the neighboring churches. It seemed we were a sleepy church until the 1950's when the Brunk tent revivals held in Lancaster probably helped to start an awakening.

Many of our members attended these meetings and made commitments of their lives to the Lord. (It was said that some even disked down their tobacco crop; their experience was genuine.)

I think it was in the fall of 1951 at Counsel Meeting that twenty members gave their testimony, including some of our older members. It would be needless to say that from this time forward we were no longer a sleepy congregation.

#### The Youth Group Contribution:

This awakening so affected our youth group that they were determined by the grace of God to live on a higher moral standard than the existing one, and they upheld this standard.

Our youth group grew spiritually; they sensed the needs of our congregation and began to pray for the church. They had prayer meeting before special services at Christ Kauffmans, just walking distance from the church.

The youth also had lots of zeal and with their new outlook they desired many new activities. They encountered opposition from the church leaders. This however guided the forming of activities that were spiritual and not just for entertainment.

It is evident that the vision of our youth and the concern and restraint of the ministers and parents made possible the activities that we experience and are a part of the life of the church. There was a real working together of the youth with the ministers and parents.

### Results of Youth Dedication:

Except for the infusion of spirituality resulting from the prayers and lives of that youth group, I doubt very much if there would be a Pequea Church today. There would have been no need for a Grange Hall Sunday School for expansion.

### Bible Study Groups:

The youth also led the way for group Bible study, from which many of us have benefited in group Bible studies throughout these years. And many others are benefiting today; not only in our church, but also in neighbor churches.

Young Peoples' Meeting with the youth giving the topics, organized by the Weavertown ministry was approved by the congregation.

There were other activities such as mixed chorus, tract band, and missionary project started at that time.

### Summer Bible School:

The need for a Summer Bible School was seen by lay members. Already in the 1940's old Annie Kauffman was inviting Intercourse community children to her home for Bible stories. Her miniature Bible School soon outgrew the facilities available. Then Sim and Sarah Kauffman offered room for her Bible School. Elva Kauffman assisted her in this venture.

But the numbers who attended her Bible School here also soon out grew the facilities available. And Annie Kauffman was now too old to continue.

But Sim and Sarah Kauffman had a plan for more space. "Why not use our broiler house when the broilers go out?"

### The Broiler House:

Here was an opportunity for those who had a vision for this need to help to clean and scrub the floors of the chicken house. Yes, it still smelled like a chicken house, but the spiritual was such that one soon forgot that it was a chicken house.

Here the youth of our church could take part as teachers and

develop a vision, as to the spiritual needs among us, because of the various groups who attended--the response of the neighborhood to this Bible School was very good. The last year there was an attendance of 450 children, many of whom were Old Order.

Ben Lapp was superintendent during the years of this school--1950-1962. (The regular Bible study group met for their Bible study after the school session in the chicken house. Bible School was later held at the church.)

There were also other activities worthy of note, such as the sewing chircle where there was a real working together among our people.

It was the vision that our people had and their untiring efforts together that made our fellowship what it is today. That made Weavertown, as it were, overflow so that Grange Hall was needed and Pequea was necessary.

Sunday School was held in the Grange Hall near Honey Brook from March 20, 1960 to February 4, 1962. The first Sunday School service at Pequea Church was on February 18, 1962. There were thirty-four families present. July 1, 1962 was the date for the first church service at Pequea.

by Aaron S. Glick

--Credit to Ferne Eileen Lapp, Old family records,  
Records from John A. Stoltzfus collection