PACIFIC NORTHWEST MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter

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Common Threads

By John Sharp, with Tony Brown and Ken Rodgers
Presented at the PNMHS Fall Meeting, September 19, 2010

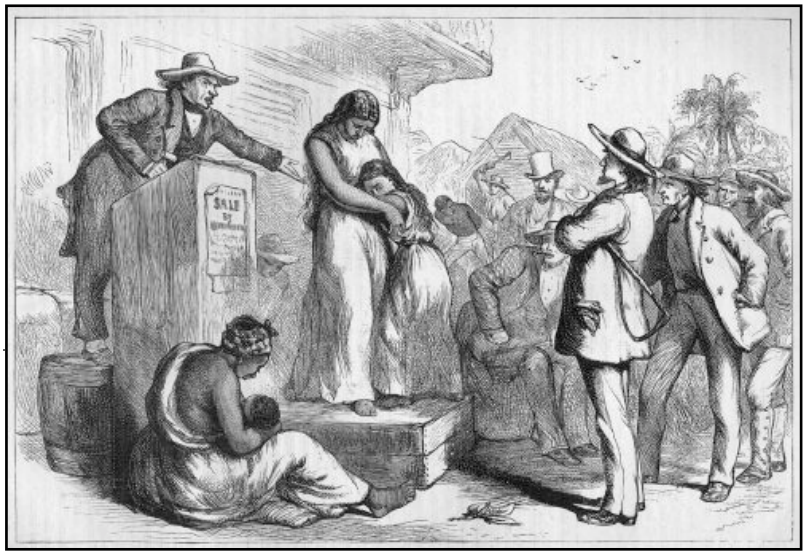
Introduction: United in Suffering

These are the stories and songs of two groups of people on two continents separated by time, race, culture, and the Atlantic Ocean. Both groups suffered at the hands of legitimate governments, so the law protected the oppressors.

On one hand are Anabaptists who were born during the Protestant Reformation of 16th century Europe. These radical reformers are, of course, the spiritual forebears of the far less radical Mennonites, Amish and Hutterites. All Free Church traditions—all who baptize as adults—are also heirs of the Anabaptists.

Persecution of Anabaptists ended in stages in Europe depending on geography and the whim of the authorities. In Switzerland, where the Swiss movement was born, the last execution was carried out in 1614 when the elderly Hans Landis was beheaded in Zurich. Still into the 1700s, Swiss governments banished Anabaptists from their homes and confiscated their properties.

On the other hand are enslaved Africans on American soil. When Hans Landis was executed in Switzerland, the African American slave trade was in its early stage—although Native American slavery had existed since the time of Columbus. For nearly 300 years, enslaved Africans produced a large percentage of American wealth. The U.S. outlawed the slave trade in 1808, but slavery continued until the 13th Amendment was passed at the end of the Civil War.



A print from "The Slave Trade and its Abolition," edited by John Langdon-Davies, Jonathan Cape, London, 1965; one of the many images used in John Sharp's presentation, "Common Threads."

While only 5% of the 12 million Africans imported to the Americas came to the United States, we focus on their songs and stories. Unlike Anabaptists who joined the movement voluntarily, African Americans had no choice. They were forced into slavery.

But both groups found strength and meaning in their faith. They were utterly confident that God's purposes would, in the end, prevail. Their stories

and songs have not typically been linked, but we believe it is useful to do so. In our presentation, we weave together their common threads to create a visual and auditory tapestry that we hope will capture your imagination and inspire your compassion.

God's Gonna Trouble the Water

Irish folk singer Tommy Sands said in a concert at Hesston, "The winners write history, which is not new," but then he added: "the losers write songs." Indeed, it was the Reformed historian Heinrich Bullinger who chronicled the turbulent Swiss Reformation story. And Felix Mantz left us a hymn, "I Sing with Exaltation."

We hear in his hymn his critique of the Zurich authorities who wielded the sword to force its people to conform. But Mantz does not play the part of a victim in the Swiss Reformation drama. His hymn is also joyful, vibrant, and triumphant.

In direct reference to the state church's use of the sword, the Christ who Mantz knows invites us, but does not force us, to join the redeemed community of faith. Only they who choose to follow Christ, who have repentant hearts, and are sealed with true baptism are assured of heaven.

Perhaps he composed this hymn while he was imprisoned in the cold and damp Wellenberg Tower in the Limmat River which flows through Zurich on its way to the Rhine. Here the doctors of theology pressed him to give up his alien practice, but he said he would continue to rebaptize members into the true church because it was biblical, and because a church that used the sword and served the Lord's Supper to unrepentant masses was a fallen church.

Zurich's reformer Ulrich Zwingli, who had once been Mantz' mentor, wrote about him to a colleague at Basel: "The Anabaptist, who should already have been sent to the devil, keeps disturbing the peace of the . . . people. But I believe the ax will settle it." As it turned out, it was not an ax, but instead, a scornful third baptism of water that ended Mantz' life.

On a cold day in January 1527, Mantz was taken from the tower, and rowed to the fish market where he heard his death sentence. As he was led through the crowd of spectators, his mother and brother called out urging him to stay the course. At 3:00 in the afternoon, he was rowed downriver to a fisherman's hut. On the platform his hands and feet were shackled, and a rod was forced over his elbows and under his knees. His final words: *Domine, in Manus tuas commendo spiritum meum* ("Lord, into your hands I commend my spirit"). Then from a boat, the executioner yanked the rope that pulled Mantz backward into the icy water.

During the revival movements of the 18th century, Africans converted to Christianity in large numbers. They came to understand that God's great gift of love and redemption in Jesus was for them too. Jesus' declaration that he had come "to preach good news to the poor . . . and to proclaim liberty

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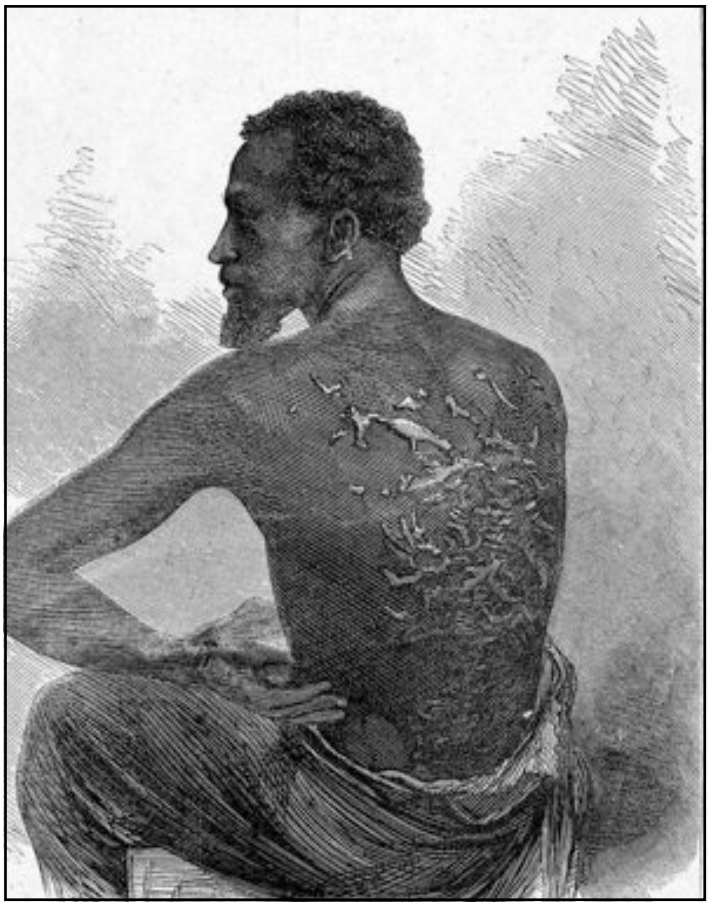
to the captives," lifted their spirits and renewed their hope.

They read the same Bible as their enslavers, but found inspiration in different texts. While slavers, traders, and planters quoted the *submission texts of Paul* to justify slavery, enslaved Africans called on *the God of the Exodus* to deliver them from American Pharaohs in a modern Egypt.

While water ended Mantz' life, water could save enslaved Africans on the run. In the old spiritual, "Wade in the water; God's gonna trouble the water," they sang of the healing waters Bethesda, and of the cleansing water of baptism.

But embedded in the text was the hidden message that wading in the water would frustrate the tracking bloodhounds. The Ohio River was to them the great Jordan River marking the boundary between the enslaving South and pockets of freedom in the North. Real safety lay far beyond the river in the land of Canaan—Canada. The coded language instructed the escapees to look on the north bank of the river for the one who would lead them to safety—the one dressed in white, blue, or red.



"Gordon Under Medical Inspection," an image appearing in an 1863 Harper's Weekly, shows scars the slave received after being lashed for attempted escape: another image Sharp used to tell the slaves' stories, in juxtaposition with Anabaptist martyrs.

The Terrible Transformation

Inspired by the American Revolution, enslaved Africans on the French island of San Domingue revolted against their oppressors. In 1803, after repelling three European armies, they proclaimed Haiti a free republic—the second in the Western hemisphere.

Fearing it would inspire slave rebellions in the United States—which it did— the American government refused to recognize Haiti's independence. Thomas Jefferson, our slave-owning president, one of 12 such presidents, imposed economic sanctions against Haiti, which lasted nearly 60 years. These sanctions helped ensure Haiti's long slide into poverty.

Terrified slave holders believed every African capable of insurrection. In desperation they whipped, tortured and executed suspects. State legislators—Southern *and* Northern—rushed to enact a series of restrictive Black Codes to protect slave owners.

In what is called the "terrible transformation" indentured servitude—that is a limited time of service that ended in freedom—was transformed into life-long slavery based on race. In 1705 the Virginia legislature made that "terrible transformation" legal and complete. Here is the transformative language: "All servants imported into [this] Country…who were not Christians in their native Country . . . shall be accounted [as] slaves. All Negro, mulatto and Indian [servants] within this dominion . . . shall be held [as] real estate."

Among the Black Codes were the following:

- The enslaved could not leave their plantation without permission;
- Those found guilty or suspected of murder or rape would be hanged;
- Those guilty or accused of stealing could get sixty lashes of the whip—and there was ample evidence.

For offenses, such as associating with whites, they were to be whipped, branded, or maimed, yet they could not assemble without a white person present. Teaching African Americans to read and write was a crime, punishable by a fine of at least $500 and up to six months in prison. Since marriages were not legally binding, owners split up families and sold fathers, mothers, or children as they pleased to gain the most profit.

And yet, the hotheaded reactionaries—whom we now call founding fathers—had justified their rebellion against the yoke of British bondage with these eloquent words: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

While Thomas Jefferson was in Philadelphia drafting this proclamation, he was attended by Robert Hemings, one of the 175 or so people he owned. There is no question, the "Declaration of Independence" was a dazzling proclamation of liberty, but it simply did not apply to African Americans—enslaved or free.

When drafting the U.S. Constitution, a dozen years later, the founders made a major concession to slaveholding states, by allowing them to count an enslaved African as three-fifths of a person to boost their representation in Washington, and by promising that the federal government could have no jurisdiction over the states' rights in the matter of slavery for 20 years.

Two generations later, President Lincoln shocked his second inaugural audience with these words: "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'" In other words, "We had it coming." Unprotected by the U.S. Constitution (even after Emancipation) and excluded from its "We the people" language, Africans in America found hope and identity in a greater document as "a holy nation, a people belonging to

Sons of Maeyken Wens search for her tongue screw among her ashes, Antwerp, 1573. Engraving by Jan Luiken in Martyrs Mirror.

God." Many learned to read, using the Bible—thus satisfying both spiritual and literary needs.

The Blood of the Martyrs: the Seed of the Church

God's word as the sure foundation brings to mind Menno Simon's key verse: No other foundation . . . We go now to Menno's country in the low lands, more specifically, Belgium, for the next narrative. Maeyken Wens was arrested and imprisoned in Flanders during the time of the infamous Spanish Inquisition.

On the day of her execution, 15-year-old Adriaen brought 3-year-old Hans to the city square. They watched the executioner lead their mother to the stake.

An execution was high drama in 16th century Europe. "Bloody Theatre" Thieleman Van Braght, author of the *Martyrs Mirror,* called it. Large crowds came to see God's wrath poured out on the heretics. The sword of the state became the instrument of the church in its bloody ritual of discipline.

But, as you know, a strange thing happened. The final prayers and songs of the dying martyrs drew many out of the *persecuting* church into the *suffering* church. As church father Tertullian wrote: "The more ye mow us down, the more we grow; the blood of the martyrs [you see] is the seed of the church."

To stem the tide of such defections, authorities began clamping tongue screws onto the tongues of the condemned. Hot coals applied to the tip of the tongue caused it to swell, preventing the tongue from slipping out of the clamp—and preventing the victim from making that powerful final testimony.

Such was the case with Maeyken Wens. She was chained to the stake, her tongue clamped and swollen. When the fire was lit, Adriaen fainted. When he came to, it was over. The image shows him rooting in the ashes, looking for the tongue screw. He took it home, and—I like to imagine—he took little Hans on his knee on occasion, showed him the tongue clamp, and recounted the story of the uncommon courageous faith of his mother. And then, perhaps, he did the same with his own children, and then his grandchildren.

That tongue screw, we're told, is still in the hands of a Dutch family today. What was meant to silence Maeyken Wens' song, is now, centuries later, the object of her ongoing testimony.

Nobody Knows the Trouble I See

Olaudah Equiano, formerly enslaved, gained his freedom and published an autobiography in 1789 describing the inhuman brutality of slavery. His book became a best seller. Greatly in demand as a speaker, Equiano traveled throughout the United Kingdom advocating abolition. "Is not the slave trade," he wrote, "entirely at war with the heart of man? . . . Why do you use those instruments of torture? Are they fit to be applied by one rational being to another? And are ye not struck with shame and mortification, to see the partakers of your nature reduced so low? But, above all, are there no dangers attending this mode of treatment? Are you not hourly in dread of an insurrection?"

Indeed, there were attempted insurrections —250 on record. But then the Slave Codes became even more restrictive, and the suffering increased. And so, from the cotton fields of Virginia, and the shops and kitchens of Alabama, enslaved Africans transformed cries of agony into songs of praise. As Richard Neuman wrote, "Spirituals were truly a living poetry, rooted in the experiences and sentiments of slave life."

"Nobody Knows the Trouble I See" was written by an enslaved African whose family—wife and children—were sold and shipped off. Buying and selling of enslaved Africans—whether by private transaction or by public auctions—reduced human beings to chattel, that is, articles of moveable property.

The song's writer, bereft of his family, sings a sad lament. He calls on his fellow believers to pray for the strength to overcome. He knows his troubles will not last forever, or as Dr. Martin Luther King, once put it, "no midnight long remains."

They Longed for a Better Country

Both enslaved Africans and Anabaptists were subjected to the evil whims of legal authorities, who determined the life or death, the freedom or enslavement of their subjects. Families were torn apart, separated by exile or auctions. According to an account from the *Ausbund*, "So many were taken we cannot name them . . . husbands, wives, pregnant mothers, nursing infants and the sick. . . Many became widows and orphans, and many were driven out of the land . . . and scattered . . . They took [our] homes and houses, [our] farms and goods."

Scattered and persecuted, like the first-century Christians of Asia Minor, Anabaptists thought of themselves as aliens and strangers in a foreign land. They longed for a better country—a heavenly city—whose maker and builder was God, to use the words from Hebrews 11. From plantations of the American South, as well as from dungeons in Europe, one can hear a longing for a city called heaven.

The Moses of her People

Harriet Tubman, who died in 1913, was known as the Moses of her people. During a remarkable ten-year span she made 19 trips into the South and escorted over 300 enslaved Africans to freedom. She was born in Dorchester County, Maryland, around 1820. Believing she was about to be sold in 1848, Harriet escaped. By night she followed the North Star to Philadelphia, Pa., where she found employment. With the money she earned she traveled back to Maryland and led her sister and her sister's two children north to freedom.

That was the beginning. Time and time again, this amazing woman returned to the South, often outwitting owners and slave hunters. Sometimes she "borrowed" a master's horse and buggy for the first leg of the journey. She carried a drug to quiet a baby if its crying might give them away. She even carried a gun, which she used when necessary to motivate tired or discouraged fugitives, telling them, "You'll be free or die."

She once overheard some men reading her wanted poster, which said that she was illiterate. She promptly pulled out a book and pretended to read it —and outfoxed them. By 1856, the price on her head was $40,000. No one ever collected that

The cover slide for "Common Threads," created by Nancy Miller, who juxtaposes an image from slavery with one from "Martyrs Mirror," reflecting the persecution and faithful witness of both slaves and Anabaptist martyrs.

bounty.

Of her 19 forays into and out of the south, her most challenging was the rescue of her 70-year-old parents. But never, she told Frederick Douglass, did she lose "a single passenger" on the Underground Railroad (Adapted from *Africans in America*, pbs.org). The 300 liberated by Harriet Tubman, are among the estimated 50,000-100,000 enslaved Africans who escaped their bondage.

For Harriet Tubman and the escaping enslaved Africans, timing was everything. It meant waiting: waiting for the right time, waiting for courage, waiting for the signal, waiting for nightfall, waiting for the next ride, waiting for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, waiting for the 13th Amendment ending slavery, waiting for ultimate redemption at the gates of Heaven.

Conclusion: Each Other's Light

Though separated by time, place, culture, and race, the common experience of faith and strength—forged in the fires of suffering—is a thread that ties these two groups together. And through hearing their stories and songs, we have had a common experience.

To use Tony Brown's words, finding common threads can offer humanity great promise. As human beings the world over, we are more profoundly *alike* than *different*. It is the idea of difference that forms the basis for racism, persecution and systematic oppression.

Our challenge is two-fold: to engage our differences with respect, and to find the common threads that unite us. As we become aware of the common threads, we will see in the other, not the face of an enemy, but the face of God.

Of course, we are centuries removed from the Anabaptist era, and generations removed from American slavery, but can they inspire us to meet our many contemporary challenges? Racism is still with us. New immigrants from the southern hemisphere seeking to improve their lot in life, as many of our ancestors did, are aliens in this foreign land. Perhaps you have noticed that we are becoming less and less hospitable.

And so, let us, with the steadfast faith of Maeyken Wens, and the undaunted courage of Harriet Tubman, resist the shackles of hate and prejudice that separate us. Let us be lights in our shadowed and broken world, so we can—in the words of Tony Brown—be "Each Other's Light."

PNMHS
Spring Meeting

Featuring
Lee Snyder on
"Everyday Mysteries"

Former president, Bluffton College
Author of *At Powerline and Diamond Hill: Unexpected Intersections of Life and Work*

Sunday, March 20
Salem Mennonite Church
2:30 p.m.

Reception to follow

The Amish Mennonites of Lane County, Oregon

by Regina Frey, Eugene

The Amish and Mennonite faiths are rooted in the medieval European Anabaptist movement. Persecution and conscription forced the believers to flee to Canada and America. Some settled in Oregon and other sections of the American West. An Amish Mennonite congregation existed in Lane County from 1887 to 1900. One family and some of the children stayed.

Amish and Amish Mennonite Settlements in Oregon

David Luthy in "The Amish in America: Settlements that failed, 1840-1960" describes two attempts to establish Old Order Amish settlements in Oregon. The first was near Needy in Clackamas County, 1879-1907; the second was near McMinnville in Yamhill County, 1895-1930.[1] The reasons why the settlements were not successful are not clearly understood. Many church and organizational problems arose. Some think the real problem was that those who came were seeking to be a little more "independent." Most moved back to the Midwest. Those who stayed did not remain Amish.

Luthy does not discuss the Amish Mennonite settlements. The first known AM were Peter D. and Rachel (Miller) Mishler. The Mishlers moved to Woodburn from Lagrange County, Indiana in late 1880 or 1881. By 1887, Peter Christner and several other families, including Benedict Miller and Levi J. Yoder, had arrived. A church was organized and Peter Christner was ordained bishop. Around the same time, many of the families moved to Lane County.[2,3]

Lane County Settlement

The first known families of the Lane County Amish Mennonite community were Peter Christner, Benedict Miller, and Levi J. Yoder. Peter Christner's land deed is dated 1 June 1887. His farm was located south of Franklin (also known as Smithfield). Benedict Miller and Levi J Yoder purchased adjacent farms just northwest of Franklin. Both deeds are dated 21 May 1887.[4]

Sometime before 1889, Solomon L. Miller started the homestead process for 160 acres northwest of Elmira. His land patent was filed 30 Oct 1894. In the *Herald of Truth* dated 15 Apr 1889, Solomon writes, "On the 20th of March, my house burned down which was a severe blow for me. I however saved some of the things. My wife was alone at home at the time otherwise we might have put out the fire in time to save the house."

The Community Builds

Others moved to the area over the next ten years. Approximately thirty families and single men have been identified as living in Lane County for at least a short period of time. Evidence for some is lacking; these are thought to have not stayed long. Many must not have purchased property as deeds could not be located for them or they started homesteads which were never completed.

Christian Nofziger purchased his 40 acres from Nicolas Strubhar, thus they were neighbors. Levi J. Yoder sold his original farm in 1894 and purchased the donation land claim of George F. Herbert, all 640 acres, just west of Elmira.

Other known settlers include twin brothers Jacob D. and Peter D. Mishler, Benjamin Emmert, Levi Hershberger, Christian I. Kilmer, Jeptha P. Stutzman, and John Henry Hamilton. No warranty deeds could be found for them.

Letters to the *Herald of Truth* provide clues on some arrival dates:

6 Sep 1891: Jacob Nusbaum moved into our neighborhood from East Portland recently. Last week Jonathan Yoder and family arrived here from Brown Co., Kansas.

15 Dec 1892: Bro. Levi Hershberger and family from Nappanee, Ind. came here on the 30th of

October and will likely remain in the vicinity.

1 May 1894: Bro. Moses Evers of Elida, Ohio likes our country better since the weather is getting nice. He … will remain until autumn and if he likes it, he will make this his future home.

1 Nov 1897: Bro. Isaac Slabaugh and family came here on the 28th of Sept from Brewster, Minn to live in Lane Co., Oregon. Isaac is believed to be the last to arrive.

Jeans School 1904. The building was originally built by the Amish Mennonites as a church in 1896. It is located on what is now Jeans Road not far from Ellmaker Road. Photo Courtesy of Applegate Pioneer Museum,Veneta, OR.

The Church

The families met for worship where they could, primarily in each other's homes. Then in April, 1892, a letter was written to the *Herald of Truth*: "The Amish brethren in Lane County, Oregon, have purchased a house of worship that was built, but no longer used, by another denomination. The price of the house was $150.00. The brethren here are not very able, and if anyone should feel to contribute anything towards paying for it, they will receive it with thanks. All contributions way [sic] be sent to J. A. Yoder, Eugene, Oregon." This church was located near Oak Hill about six miles west of Eugene and the group is often known as the Oak Hill Congregation.

Peter Christner was the bishop initially. He had been ordained by Jonathan Smucker from the Indiana-Michigan Amish Mennonite Conference.[5] Thus the church was considered an Amish Mennonite church, although some of the members had come from an Old Order background, others from Mennonite congregations. Christner's bishoping skills may not have been the best. A letter to *Herald of Truth*, 15 Feb 1890 states "Bro. P. D. Mishler from Marion Co. was here and preached three … edifying sermons to our little band." The community consisted of six families at the time.

By 1891, Jacob D. Mishler had moved to Lane County and his brother followed in the spring of 1893. According to a letter to the *Herald of Truth*, 15 Aug 1893, Bro. Levi J Yoder had just been ordained deacon, Bro. Jacob D. Mishler was ordained minister, and Preacher Peter D. Mishler was ordained bishop.

Peter D. Mishler died from cancer 23 Jan 1894. On 3 Dec 1895, Levi J. Yoder was advanced from deacon to minister and Jacob D. Mishler was chosen as bishop.[6] Jacob was chosen bishop in spite of the fact that Peter Christner was still very much alive and living in the community.

In 1896, Alex Miller donated a piece of his land for a new church. The land was located along the road then called the Siuslaw-Eugene Stage Road just west of today's Fern Ridge Reservoir. The lumber had been cut the previous year. However, the building was not constructed immediately as the "lumber was too wet last spring and we did not have the means for the hardware material."[7]

Finally, Jacob D. Mishler sent a letter to The *Weekly Budget* dated 2 Dec 1896: "Our new church is now completed with the exception of some painting which will not be done till next summer. We had services three times already and there will be services again next Sunday." Moses Evers is said to have contributed the hardware and Levi J. Yoder built the benches.

Alas, the new church would be used for less than two years. On 9 Jan 1900, Alex Miller sold the lot with the church to the trustees of Lane County School District No. 72 for $200. J. D. Mishler wrote to *The Sugar Creek Budget* 30 Nov. 1899: "We sold our church building in Lane Co. for a school house and will use the money to build here [Hopewell Church.]" In later years, the building was again used as a church by the Seventh Day Adventists of Veneta. Today, the building and land are privately owned.

The Economy

Most of the families were farmers. Some had jobs with local businesses. But times were rough. No one seemed to have any money. The Panic of 1893 and resultant economic depression affected crop prices. J. D. Mishler reported the market prices on 2 Jan 1896: Wheat 40¢ , oats 20¢, potatoes 25¢, eggs 20¢, butter 20¢, hay $4. Later in the year, corn sold for 9¢ per bushel. "There is a scarcity of money."[8] "Everything is plentiful here except money."[9]

Some of the men worked as carpenters, brick makers, and saw mill workers. This work was not without its hazards. A son of Peter Christner lost his hand when falling into a brick machine. Jacob Berkey, stepson of Christian I. Kilmer, lost his right hand when it was cut by a circular saw about three inches above the wrist.[10] The women found lucrative employment picking hops.

Letters to the *Herald of Truth* and *The Weekly Budget* disclose some disagreements on the fertility of the land and the living conditions. Jacob D. Mishler wrote glowing letters, exhorting his readers to move to Lane County: "My dear friends in the east, I must say you have a nice country and some very good land, but when I came up the valley from Portland to Eugene, and looked out of the [railroad] car windows, over the beautiful grain fields and fruit orchards, I thought to myself this is truly the place for a poor man to live, and not only the place for a poor man, but any one that likes a good grain, fruit, and vegetable country. The crops are excellent this year, both grain and fruit; also vegetables. My wife had new potatoes for supper … and one of these potatoes weighed over one-half pound. I would invite all our brethren in the east, who are seeking cheap homes, to come and see our country before locating elsewhere. There is plenty of vacant land and good chances to buy or rent."[11]

Christian Kilmer was not so enthusiastic: "When I first came here I thought corn could be raised successfully everywhere, but I found out differently. They raise corn along the river and also in small patches well manured, but on the cheap land … there are hundreds of acres that will not raise any. It is flat, white soil and wet land. … If anyone wants to come to buy land, come in winter, when you can see where the wet land is. Do not buy or trade for land in Oregon without seeing it."[12]

Levi J. Yoder notes the differences between the Midwest and the Oregon climates: "My experience of 20 years in this Valley leads me to think that both of my brethren are rather extreme in their descriptions. Our climate on the whole is extremely mild. … I like the climate of this Valley so well that I should not like to exchange for any other place, …We have never had an entire failure of crops, and nearly all kinds of grain and fruit do reasonably well. This year thousands of bushels of apples, pears, prunes, and plums will rot on and under the trees for want of a market."[13]

The poor economy and the financial hardship imposed by a failed saw mill business eventually caused the disintegration of the community. In November 1894, Levi P. Hershberger purchased a saw mill from J. W. Crider of Polk County and established a business on leased property about three

miles north of Elmira. Levi did not have enough money for the purchase, but he thought he could pay Mr. Crider with the proceeds from the mill. He signed a promissory note to Mr. Crider dated 1 Nov 1895 for $1322.85. He also purchased surety bonds (guaranty of payment) from three of his fellow church members and he purchased some materials for the mill on time from another party.

But the mill did not do well and Levi was unable to pay what he owed. J. W. Crider and a Mr. Sears filed for a writ of restitution against Levi to regain possession of the mill. In June 1897, the court found in favor of the plaintiff and ordered the sheriff to attach the mill and associated materials for delivery to Messrs. Crider and Sears. There was just one problem: Levi no longer owned the mill. It was now in the possession of his son Noah Hershberger.

Noah filed for an injunction against the sheriff. After some arguments, the judge ruled against Noah 28 Apr 1898.[14] At this point, Moses Evers and Christian Kilmer were sent to negotiate with Mr. Crider, looking for a solution. Mr. Crider offered some suggestions, but wanted $1000 plus costs to settle the matter.[15]

The original suit by Crider and Sears against Levi P. Hershberger appears on the Lane County Circuit Court docket for October 1898. On 10 Nov 1898, the judge denied the motion to recall the original writ of restitution. The last paper in the case files is a note from the Lane County Sheriff's Office stating they cannot locate the order to remove Noah Hershberger from his mill and to deliver it to Crider and Sears. It is dated 27 Dec 1898.

How the matter was settled is not known for certain. Mr. Crider stated the mill was worth only $800, so if he did get possession of it, its value did not cover his complaint. It is thought that the bond holders were obliged to honor the guaranty of payment with considerable financial hardship to all.

Jacob D. Mishler wrote this sad letter to the *Herald of Truth* 19 Dec 1898: "We Mennonites who lived in Lane County, Oregon have changed our location. Some of us have moved along the line of Marion and Clackamas counties, while some have moved to other parts of the valley. … Two families of our people still live in Lane County." One of the families was Moses and Nancy Culp Evers who lived near Elmira for the next 50+ years. Jacob Nusbaum was still living in Lane County in 1900, but had moved away by 1910.

The Russian Mennonites

In December of 1890, a group of Russian Mennonites purchased farms totaling over 1,000 acres from C. W. Washburne in Lane County. These farms were located on land between today's Eugene Airport (Mahlon Sweet Field) and Fern Ridge Reservoir.

This small band of families was descendant from a community of Germanic Anabaptists who fled the persecution of the ruling aristocracy in the eighteenth century to a safe haven promised by Catherine the Great of Russia. They were given an exemption from military service and the right to use German in their schools, although these exemptions were revoked in the early 1870's. Tens of thousands of the Russian Mennonites fled to Canada and to the central and northwestern areas of the United States.

Social interaction between the Amish Mennonite community and the Russian Mennonites was inevitable. Ben Emmert married Anna, daughter of Joseph and Barbara Schrag. James Mishler, son of Jacob D. Mishler, was courting Carrie Schrag, Anna's sister.

Alas, the fields that grew ferns grew pitifully poor crops and after a few years, the group decided to move elsewhere. Most moved to the state of Washington and the rich wheat farming country. Several families returned to Dallas. Later, some would join Jacob D. Mishler's Mennonite congregation at Hopewell.[16]

Endnotes (The Amish Mennonites of Lane County)

[1]David Luthy 393-400.
[2]The bishop is the head of the individual church or group of churches and is responsible for administering discipline, ordaining new ministry, baptizing, and marrying members.
[3]Hope Lind 41-61
[4]Lane County, Oregon Warranty Deeds, 10 Oct 1854 through 31 Dec 1905. Available at the Lane County Courthouse, Eugene, OR.
[5]S. G. Shetler 12.
[6]Letter by an unidentified correspondent, *Herald of Truth*, 1 Jan 1896.
[7]J. D. Mishler, *Herald of Truth*, 1 Aug 1896.
[8]J. D. Mishler, *Herald of Truth*, 1 Jan 1894.
[9]J. D. Mishler, *Herald of Truth*, 1 Feb 1895.
[10] M. D. Evers, *Herald of Truth*, 15 Jun 1895.
[11] J. D. Mishler, *The Weekly Budget*, 18 Jul 1895.
[12]C. I. Kilmer, *Herald of Truth*, 1 Oct 1897.
[13] L. J. Yoder, *Herald of Truth*, 1 Nov 1897.
[14]Cases 4068 and 4192, Circuit Court of the State of Oregon, Lane County, and docket proceedings published in the *Daily Eugene Guard*, June 1897 – November 1898.
[15]Moses D Evers, *Herald of Truth*, 15 Jul 1898.
[16]Mildred Schrock 170-180.

RONALD GENE DIENER died December 22, 2010, after a two year battle with cancer of the esophagus. He was born July 7,1949, in California, Missouri, to Edward Lee and Rhoda Frances (Frances) (Magines) Diener.

Ron moved to the Macksburg area of Oregon with his family in the summer of 1952, where he grew up. He attended Bethel Mennonite Church and School, Western Mennonite School and graduated from high school at Elliott Prairie Mennonite School.

Ron married Ann ElizaBeth (Beth) Strubhar on July 25, 1969, at Aaron Nofziger's Park, near Macksburg, Ore. They had four children, Terrence Neal (1970); Anthony Jay (1971); Roxanne Joy (1973); and Douglas Jon (1975).

He served in Alternative Voluntary Service at Goodwill Industries of Oregon; Northern Light Gospel Mission, Red Lake, Ontario, Canada; and BC Indian Gospel Mission, Vanderhoof, British Columbia, Canada. His many occupations included carpenter, logger, mill worker, service station manager, car salesman, newspaper circulation manager, truck driver, mechanic, location manager and mechanic supervisor for Laidlaw Oregon, mechanic at Case Automotive of Woodburn, and bookkeeper at Waite Concrete Products in Canby.

Ron had a life long love of learning. He had a large personal library which included many subjects. It really didn't matter if you were related to him or not, Ron was interested in your family history. Many would be surprised to find their names in his genealogy file, which includes over 1.5 million people. Ron belonged to North Marion Community Church in Aurora. He was a member of the Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society and editor of the newsletter for nine years.

He is survived by his wife, Ann ElizaBeth(Beth) Diener of Woodburn; son, Anthony Jay(Tony) Diener and Christine Ann (Goertzen) Diener of Dallas; daughter, Roxanne Joy(Jeffrey)Crabtree of Brookings ;brother, Marvin and Ann Marie (Hart)Diener of Oregon City; and seven grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents Edward and Frances Diener, and two sons, Terrence Neal Diener (1970) and Douglas Jon Diener (1991).

Memorials may be made to Pacific Northwest Mennonite Historical Society Library/Archives Building Fund c/o Don Bacher 1650 Main St. SE Albany OR 97322.