



# OMHGS Newsletter

OREGON MENNONITE HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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## Salem Hospital's Mennonite History by Lorraine Kauffman

I have been asked to share a little about the Mennonite heritage of Salem Hospital. The source of my information is John McMillan's book, "A Century of Service," produced for Salem Hospital's centennial celebration in 1996. I'm Lorraine Kauffman, a Salem Hospital retiree who had the privilege of working there for 21 years, and also the privilege of working as secretary to Irwin Wedel, long-time Salem Hospital administrator, prior to his retirement in the late 1970's.

The Wedel family descended from a group of Mennonites who moved from Holland to Prussia and then to Ostrag which was Russian Poland in the early 1800's. Members of that group emigrated to Western Kansas and founded a hospital there in 1900. Members of that group and others selected Salem, Oregon as the location of a medical mission. My boss, Irwin Wedel, was born in 1916, the same year that members of his family founded the Salem Deaconess Hospital. He was the third member of the Wedel family to serve as Administrator of the hospital, and he followed his father and grandfather's footsteps in this important role. The founders of the hospital were Irwin's grandfather, Franz (or Frank) Wedel and four Mennonite deaconesses, Sister Marie Wedel, Sister Martha Wedel, Sister Marie Duerksen and Sister Anna Duerksen. Their commitment was to minister to the spiritually needy as well as the physically ill. The articles of incorporation indicated that the hospital's purpose was to provide "Care, nursing and maintenance of the poor and those who need loving Christian ministry, all of such service to be rendered for compensation or as a public charity, the training and preparation of Christian young women and widows without children to be nurses and deaconesses,

and the sending of such nurses and deaconesses into private homes to aid in the care of the sick and injured, for the establishment and maintenance of a hospital for all of such purposes, said hospital to be conducted consistent with the rules and teaching of the Mennonite Church." Franz Wedel and the four deaconesses made up the hospital's first Board of Trustees, and the then 12-bed hospital was opened in December, 1916, in the former Capitol Hotel located on the site of the current Salem Hospital. Early records of the Deaconess Hospital indicated that its Board meetings included prayer, Bible reading, and reports from its chaplain.

By the early 1920's, Deaconess Hospital and Home was actively competing for business with the first Salem Hospital, which had been founded in 1896. The competition between the two hospitals continued over the years, until they merged in 1969. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

By around 1930, the management authority of the women deaconesses was replaced by control of male Mennonite ministers, according to Mr. McMillan's History. Franz Wedel died in 1931 and was succeeded by his son, Frank, who then became the hospital's manager. Despite its financial pressures, Deaconess continued to expand, in 1935 constructing a residence for nurses and in 1936 opening a 40-bed wing. Esther Seamster, one of the first residents of that nurses' home, reported that she was paid \$35 a month and room and board and clean uniforms!

By 1940, Deaconess Hospital had an annual patient population of 4,458. It's first pharmacist was hired in 1951. In those days, the hospital operated its own ambulance service, which was often called into the foothills of the Cascades to transport injured loggers.

After World War II, Deaconess sought to continue its mission of not only treating the sick but also providing a home for the elderly and ministering to the homeless and delinquent youth. The hospital

also sponsored an evangelical radio program. But the hospital was having financial trouble, with its charitable practices undermining its financial stability. McMillan's book speculates that another factor in the hospital's problems may have been public antagonism towards the Mennonites during wartime due to their pacifist beliefs. Whatever the reasons, by spring of 1947, the Salem Deaconess was near financial collapse. This led to a reorganization under the leadership of Irwin Wedel who by then was assisting his father in administering the hospital. On November 19, 1947, Salem Deaconess Hospital and Home became Salem Memorial Hospital, a community hospital with oversight by a community Board of Trustees made up of local businessmen. Irwin F. Wedel, grandson of Franz B. Wedel, succeeded his father, Frank F. Wedel, as hospital superintendent on January 16, 1948.

Irwin continued as Salem Memorial's Chief Executive Officer, and at the time of the merger with Salem General Hospital in 1969, he administered the combined hospital which was operated by a board composed of representatives of the formerly competing organizations.

In closing, Salem Hospital has continued to grow and develop. In 1997, the Duerksen Skilled Care Nursing Unit was opened, named in honor of Sister Anna Duerksen. Construction is currently underway of a building to house outpatient services and physician offices, being connected by skybridges across Winter Street. Although the names and faces at Salem Hospital continue to change, I am sure the hospital's Mennonite roots will not be forgotten. I will now share a brief video for you which pictures the role of Deaconess Hospital in the overall Salem history.



**In 1896,**

Grover Cleveland was president . . .  
 Women couldn't vote . . .  
 The invention of the radio was still 30 years  
 away, and . . .  
 Salem Hospital opened its doors.

With \$752 in cash raised in a public solicitation and gifts of linens, blankets and furniture, a small group of local doctors and citizens incorporated Salem's first hospital.

**Through the years . . .**

**1896**

On January 13, in a five-bed converted school at 204 12th Street NE, Salem Hospital treats its first patient, sewing machine salesman Fred Demeler.

**1916**

Franz B. Wedel and four Mennonite deaconesses buy the Capital Hotel at 665 Winter St. SE (Salem Hospital's current location) and establish Salem Deaconess Hospital and Home.

**1917**

Ground is broken for a new hospital at 2561 Center Street NE. However, the campaign to raise funds for the new facility fails, and construction stops.

**1919**

Staff at Salem Deaconess treat 664 patients, including a butcher, shipbuilder and a couple of weavers.

**1927**

Salem Hospital changes its name to Salem General Hospital.

**1938**

Charles S. Campbell, Salem's first accredited specialist in internal medicine, begins to practice.

**1943**

Almost half of the professional staff at both hospitals are sent to serve in World War II. The Red Cross trains students and volunteers as nurses aides.

**1947**

Mennonites turn Deaconess Hospital over to a board of Salem citizens. Deaconess changes its name to Salem Memorial Hospital.

**OMHGS NEWSLETTER**

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**1953**

General Unit breaks ground for the Morse Building. Memorial auxiliary holds first High Fever Follies as a fund raiser.

**1954**

Television sets were installed in all patient rooms.

**1964**

A flood hits the Salem area. Patients are evacuated by the National Guard.

**1969**

The General Unit announces a merger with the Memorial Unit. The Board adopts the Salem Hospital name. Maternity services are centralized at General; emergency services at Memorial.

**1987**

All acute care services are consolidated at Memorial.

**1996**

Salem Hospital celebrates 100 years of service to the community.

**1997**

The Sr. Anna Duerksen Care Unit opens on 6 South. Ground is broken for the new Center for Outpatient Medicine.

**1998**

A new 552-space parking structure opens and work continues on the Center for Outpatient Medicine.

## Menonite Participation in the Lebanon Community Hospital by Gene Kanagy

### Foreword

*Many people with a variety of interests and resources worked together to create, develop and sustain the Lebanon Community Hospital in a joint effort which has extended over the past fifty years. This paper will not attempt to reorganize all of them but will outline the participation of Menonite people in the work of the Lebanon Community Hospital.*

*Limitations of space and information will mean that not all Menonite people involved in the hospital can be mentioned.*

Three Lebanon physicians, Doctors Booth, Miller and Badrick, opened the first hospital in a residence on the corner of Main and Oak Streets in about 1918. In 1922 hospital services were moved to another residence on the corner of Second and Ash Streets. Two nurse sisters, Martha and Mary Schuler, operated Lebanon's only hospital. Fourteen years later Doctors Booth, Irvine, Miller, Herron and Langmack built an additional building on the site with 24 beds which the Schuler sisters operated for twelve more years.

In the mid-forties the Schuler sisters began to tell the doctors that they should secure other operators for the hospital. The doctors began to search for someone to succeed the Schulers. They approached the ministry of several denominations. They contacted the Catholic Sisters at Sacred Heart Hospital in Eugene and even the Catholic Archbishop in Portland. There seemed to be no one interested in providing hospital services to this small town. By July 1947 the Schuler sisters had given notice that they would withdraw from the hospital work in one year.

Two sisters who were graduates of the LaJunta, Colorado, School of Nursing, Inez Snyder and Irva Snyder Vandiver, worked at the Lebanon Hospital at varying times after 1937 though Irva says they never worked at the same time. Their work was well-respected by the Schulers and by the doctors of Lebanon. In the spring of 1946 Dr. Irvine one day remarked to Irva Vandiver, "Say, why don't the Menonites buy the hospital." Irva thought Dr. Irvine was just joking and didn't give the remark further thought. About a week later Dr. Irvine again asked, "What have you done about the Menonites?" and said, "I am serious about this." Irva took this message to her father, C. U. Snyder.

Mr. Snyder took this suggestion to the Pacific Coast District Conference where it was rather coolly received at first. However, enough interest was generated to justify the appointment of a study committee. On June 7, 1946 at Sheridan, Oregon, this action was taken:

"Inasmuch as there is a possibility of securing a hospital in our district in which to give a Christian service and testimony in Lebanon, Oregon, and since this hospital can be secured without any solicitation of funds,

be it resolved that a committee of three brothers be appointed to investigate this opportunity and give a report to the proper body at conference for immediate action, be it further resolved that in case this hospital be secured for the district, the entire oversight and supervision be under the direction of the district mission board.” Floyd Emmert, Dan Nofziger and Floyd Whitaker were appointed to that committee.

At first it seemed that the project could not go forward. However, by the end of 1947 Dan Nofziger and Floyd Whitaker reported to the Mission Board. After a lengthy discussion it was decided to ask Allen H. Erb, administrator of Mennonite Hospital in LaJunta, Colorado, to consult with the committee. S. E. (Sam) Eicher was appointed to take the place of Floyd Emmert on the committee during his absence.

Sam Eicher called Allen Erb requesting his assistance and on January 10, 1948, Erb and the committee met with the Lebanon doctors and other committee representatives. Laurence Morley, a young local attorney, presented the interests of the community. They proposed that the community was ready to raise a fund of about \$100,000 to give to an organization which would accept operation of the present hospital building and equipment and use the money to improve and add to the building.

Two days later Brother Erb and the committee reported back to the District Mission Board. The Board accepted the reports and authorized the committee to make a proposal to the Lebanon representatives. They also directed the committee to report their findings and recommendations to the congregations of the Pacific Coast District Conference. This was done by a letter to each congregation. The following proposal was then made to the Lebanon community representatives by the District Mission Board.

1. That we will accept the Lebanon City Hospital free from all indebtedness July 1, 1948.
2. That we will assume responsibility for operation and control.
3. That we will operate the hospital according to the licensing laws for hospitals of the State Board of Health of Oregon and the standards of the American Hospital Association.
4. That we will maintain a medical and surgical staff open to all regularly licenses physicians who are eligible for membership to the County and

State Medical Societies.

5. That we will expand the hospital according to the amount of funds contributed by the City of Lebanon consistent to the joint council of the Representative Boards.
6. That no operating funds be allocated to any place but the hospital.
7. That we will be motivated to maintain this service to the sick as an expression of love toward God and love toward fellowman. That it shall be an expression of the Church given in the name of Christ.
8. That we will receive all patients without respect to class, race, creed or color.

The Lebanon representatives accepted the Mission Board proposal and began an attempt to raise the money necessary to build a new hospital. By June only \$16,000 had been raised. In addition the Schuler sisters had made a demand to be paid \$20,000 for their interest in the equipment of the hospital. At a meeting which included Allen Erb and the hospital committee, the Schulers, the doctors and community leaders, Mr. Morley negotiated an agreement by which the doctors would borrow sufficient money to pay the Schuler sisters their price for the equipment. In addition pledges in the amount of \$40,000 would be transferred. Since this was far less than needed to build a new hospital the hospital committee did not immediately accept the community proposal. In consultation with the District Mission Board it was decided that if the community campaign gave evidence by July 15, 1948 that there was serious intent to build a new hospital, the Mission Board would accept operation of the old hospital for one year. If no new hospital was assured they would have the privilege of withdrawing and returning all property and all pledged funds.

This decision was presented to the community group. It was decided to make another effort within the next few weeks to raise the funds. Mr. Max Tucker, President of Cascade Plywood Company, called a dinner of business leaders. He pledged \$50,000 to the campaign and challenged others to pledge. In spite of these efforts the expected \$300,000 goal was not reached. A suggestion was made by the Mission Board that the funds be placed in a Lebanon Community Hospital Foundation and that further efforts be made to raise the necessary funds. The Mission Board would assume operation of the hospital for one year. A management contract was drawn up between doctors and the Pacific Coast District

Conference.

At midnight, July 19, 1948, operation of the hospital under the Mission Board of the Pacific Coast District Conference began. Allen Erb was asked to serve as itinerant administrator of both Mennonite Hospital in LaJunta and the hospital in Lebanon. Milton R. Martin was appointed acting superintendent and Charity Kropf, R.N., served as Director of Nurses.

Brother Erb describes the employment of Charity Kropf in his memoirs entitled "Privileged to Serve."

"One of the blessings of God in our beginning administration was the guiding of the Lord in securing a director of nursing. Charity Kropf, R.N., was a Mennonite Hospital School of Nursing graduate resident in Oregon. I asked her uncle, Bishop Clarence Kropf, whether he thought she would be qualified for such an assignment. He waited a few days and then reported to me a very enthusiastic recommendation qualifying her for the position.

"Besides this recommendation I found out that Charity had been employed in a doctor's office in Silverton, Oregon. The hospital in that city had accepted the resignation of the nurse administrator and was seeking someone to fill the vacancy. Her doctor employer was sharing responsibility in seeking a successor. He had asked Charity whether she would accept the position. I reasoned that his close experience in assessing her abilities was a significant sign of her qualifications.

"I then spoke to Charity. She gave her acceptance quite readily. From our school in LaJunta she was an alumna. I asked the students in training each to give a pledge to give at least one year of service to the church as the Lord may lead. She told me afterwards she thought that meant free service. Her acceptance was made with that understanding. This indicated with what dedication she began her service. But she did receive unexpectedly a fair but modest salary."

Operating cash for the hospital was provided by loans given by Amos Roth and Dan Nofziger, who were two members of the hospital board. These notes were paid off within the first year.

With the continued management of Lebanon Hospital resolved for one year, the community again turned to the task of raising money for a new hospital. Max Tucker along with Laurence Morley were leaders in this effort but response was slow. The Lebanon

Community Hospital Association decided to employ a professional fund raising consultant who had managed successful campaigns in other Oregon communities. Louis D. Barr came to Lebanon in the spring of 1950. Barr recommended that an emphasis be placed on building a community owned and controlled hospital free from the Mennonites or any group. "The Mennonites" were largely removed from the remainder of the fund campaign and the design and construction phase. (The story of the campaign is told by Mrs. Peg Hatfield in "History of the Lebanon Community Hospital" written in 1975.)

The one exception to this was Dan Nofziger. Nofziger was one of the five-member board of the Lebanon Community Hospital Foundation. He was an active participant in the fund drive, going with others to solicit the Mennonite farmers in the area. When the Lebanon Hospital Corporation was formed later to own the new hospital, Dan Nofziger was a member of its board of directors. Nofziger was a member of the original hospital committee of the Mission Board and became chairman of the Mennonite managing board of the Lebanon Hospital. In these offices he was in a unique position to facilitate understanding between the community and hospital administration. He joined Allen Erb in many of the important negotiations with the community presentations. Dan Nofziger and his wife Lydia also hosted Allen Erb during many of his trips to Lebanon.

Dan Nofziger died tragically in an airplane accident in 1954. His son, Alfred, was elected to take his place on the board of the Lebanon Community Hospital Corporation, a position in which he served until 1983 when Al's son Mark Nofziger was elected to that board.

The vacated position of chairman of the Lebanon Hospital Mennonite Board was filled by Floyd Whitaker who served in that capacity until 1968. Amos Conrad was appointed chairman and filled that position for 25 years. Randy Springer was appointed Chair in 1993 and served until the Mennonite Board was discontinued in 1998.

After nearly two years of operation of the Lebanon Hospital by the Pacific Coast Mission Board it was decided that the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities should be asked to take over operation of the hospital. This was confirmed at the meeting of the Pacific Coast District Conference in June 1950. This request was accepted by the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities and the official transfer was made at the Fairview Church on July 14, 1950.

During the four years in the "old hospital," a number of Mennonite people were employed. Elsie White, Mabel Kauffman Shank and Winona Stutzman Wolfer were registered nurses there. Dora Schrock Willems, Wilma Gerig Sanderson and Bernita Nofziger Stutzman worked as nurses aides. Nadine Kuhns Nelson, Wilma Burkey and Edna Schweitzer Halsey worked in the kitchen. Lola Kennel Roth and Sophie Miller Schrock worked in the business office.



In 1952 two representatives of the Lebanon Community Hospital Corporation, Al Anderson and Laurence Morley, meet with Allen Erb and Dan Nofziger and offered to contract with them for management of the new hospital now nearing completion. A memorandum of contract was negotiated with the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities and approved by the Lebanon Community Hospital Corporation. The lease agreement was to last for 13 years with options to extend each 10 years thereafter. This contract was continued with minor changes until 1998.

Construction of the new hospital was nearing completion. A dedication service was held on July 20, 1952. The actual moving day for patients was August 15 when the Houston Ambulance made 24 trips from the old to the new hospital. Irva Vandiver, who had undergone surgery, was one of the first patients transferred.



It turned out that the Lebanon Community Hospital was the 100th hospital to be built under the Hill-Burton hospital grant program. This caught the interest of the Saturday Evening Post magazine and an extensive article was published in the September 13 issue. The article quotes Allen Erb in response to a question about what the Mennonites will get out of it, answering, "The privilege of service." In his book, "Privileged to Serve," Erb reflects, "This is the widest publicity I had ever received. It was a fulfillment of our philosophy for the church being in the hospital business. This confirmation of the philosophy of reaching the public in service was a satisfactory reward."

The opening of the new Lebanon Community Hospital required quite a few new employees. Some of those new employees included Joy Barber, a registered nurse. Esther Nofziger King worked as a nurse assistant. Fannie Schrock headed up the X-Ray

Department. Della Nafziger managed the housekeeping department. Harold Oswald was employed in maintenance. John Willems was one of quite a number of 1-W alternate service men who worked as orderlies and in the service departments. John later transferred to the x-ray department.

In 1954 Allen Erb accepted a call to return to LaJunta for one year. During his absence Don Snyder was appointed acting administrator, with Erb making a couple of trips to Lebanon to confer with Snyder. This successful experience gave Don Snyder a vision for hospital administration. He moved his family to Goshen, Indiana, and attended Goshen College. He later earned his Master in Hospital Administration Degree and worked in hospital administration in the mid-west for many years.

About three years later Brother Erb became interested in the concept of providing long term care as a special section of the general hospital. He also saw the need to add physical therapy services to the hospital. This latter service was temporarily developed in a patient room. After much study and discussion, the long term care plan was approved by the medical staff, nursing staff, Mennonite Board and the LCH Corporation Board. Brown & Brown Architects from Astoria were employed. Claude Buerge Construction was low bidder for this addition. When finished in 1957 it proved bright and airy rooms for 24 patients, a large lounge and a physical therapy department. Ruth Oswald who had come with her husband Harold from Nebraska and had worked as a county health nurse was employed to supervise the new "Convalescent Unit." Personal care was provided under her direction by nurse aids and orderlies. A crafts program was developed by the Hospital Auxiliary and worship services were conducted each Sunday afternoon by local churches.

One of the fruits of the Mennonite participation in the Lebanon Hospital is the Lebanon Mennonite Church. With a number of hospital employees moving to Lebanon to work in the hospital, there grew an interest in developing a Mennonite church in Lebanon. This began as an evening prayer group. As interest grew Allen Erb called a meeting of area Mennonite pastors and explained the vision and plans of the Lebanon group. The first regular Sunday service was held on October 7, 1956. Allen Erb served as Bishop with George Kauffman as Pastor. Gene Kanagy was elected Sunday School superintendant and John Willems assistant. The Lebanon Mennonite

Church was formally organized on May 8, 1957 with 32 charter members, 15 of whom were hospital employees or their family members. Land had already been purchased on the corner of Second and Kees Streets. Construction of a church building was begun in May of 1957 with the first service held in the unfinished building on August 10, 1957.

Allen Erb resigned his post as Administrator of the Lebanon Community Hospital, effective May 31, 1959. In a farewell dinner with the two boards and medical staff he was honored for 10 years of service to healthcare in Lebanon. At that occasion he noted that 23,936 patients had received inpatient care under the Mennonite administration of the two hospitals in Lebanon.

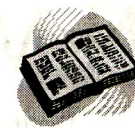
At this time, Gene Kanagy was appointed new administrator of the Lebanon Community Hospital. Following graduation from Goshen College and marriage to Wilma Leichty, Kanagy had served two years as orderly and general stores manager at Elkhart General Hospital. The Kanagy family, which now included a son, Bradley, moved to Lebanon in 1955 when Kanagy began work at the Lebanon Community Hospital as bookkeeper. After two years during which Leisa was born the family moved to Chicago for 10 months while Kanagy studied for his Master of Hospital Administration degree. They returned to Lebanon where Kanagy became assistance administrator and completed the requirements for his degree.

Dr. Benjamin E. Kenagy, a native of Albany, began his practice of medicine with Dr. Robert A. Daugherty in Lebanon in August 1959. Dr. Kenagy was a graduate of Goshen College and Northwestern University School of Medicine. He had practiced three years in the Mennonite Hospital in Aibonito, Puerto Rico. Dr. Kenagy was accompanied to Lebanon by his wife Kathleen and daughters Carol and Carmen. Dr. Kenagy later established an office in Brownsville and practiced there until 1976 when he and Kathleen went to seminary for two years and on to the hospital in Nazareth, Israel, where they served under the Edinburg Medical Missionary Society.

Millard Osborne accepted the dual responsibility of chaplain of the Lebanon Community Hospital and Pastor of the Lebanon Mennonite Church. Osborne, with his wife Joyce, had served four years in the voluntary service program of the Mennonite Church. They served for two years as directors of the V.S. unit in Mathis, Texas. Millard

served two years as assistant directory of voluntary service at Elkhart, Indiana. The Osbornes were both graduates of Goshen College and Millard graduated from the Seminary. The Osborne family which included daughters Myrna and Marilyn arrived in Lebanon in September, 1959. Osborne immediately began his duties as Chaplain and Pastor and he was formally ordained on May 29, 1960.

The work of the Chaplain included leading or arranging a brief meditation broadcast throughout the hospital and arranging Sunday afternoon worship services in the Convalescent Lounge. Most important was the Chaplain's direct ministry to patients. Calling on patients, leaving a few verses of scripture and a prayer had a lasting effect. Another phase of the spiritual ministry to patients was providing Christian literature. Chaplain Osborne continued his hospital work until he was called to work full-time as Pastor of the growing Lebanon Mennonite Church in 1967.



The Chaplain's position was then filled on a full-time basis by Donald King. Chaplain King served until his untimely death in 1976. LaVerna Dyck was interim chaplain until Katie Kehler was named chaplain. After her retirement in 1992, Byron Gingrich was called to the position which he now fills. The Chaplaincy program has always been an important part of the LCH ministry.

The limitations of time make it appropriate to discontinue this history at this point.

#### **Acknowledgements**

I thank Mark King, Vice President of Ancillary, Support Services and Senior Care of the Lebanon Community Hospital for help he and his staff gave me by providing informational materials and typing services.

I also thank Marjorie Nofziger for the use of very thorough and well-organized scrapbooks of clippings about the Lebanon Mennonite Church and its members.

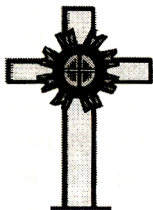
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Developments of Mennonite Operations of Lebanon Hospital, Author unknown, 1952.

Hatfield, Peg, History of Lebanon Community Hospital, 1975

Newspaper clippings preserved by Lebanon Community Hospital.  
Clippings and records of Lebanon Mennonite Church. Preserved by Marjorie Nofziger, 1957 to present.



## IN MEMORIAM

Deaths within the past months have included two either current or former members of OMHGS.

**Nora Hostetler**, widow of Claud Hostetler, died March 31, 1999, at the Mennonite Home in Albany. Nora was born March 20, 1916, in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, the daughter of Lehman K. And Alice (Myers) Horst. She and Claud were married in 1935. She is survived by two children, Philip and Claudia Cline, both of Portland; two brothers, Melvin Horst of Reno, Nevada, and Mark Horst of Albany; three sisters, Orpha Kurtz of Upland, California, Esther Eason of Salem, and Lois Weaver of Gresham; seven grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Following the death of Claud, the family deposited most of Claud's church-related papers in the archives. They have now given the remainder of those papers to the archives as well as books and personal items from Nora. All of this material has been organized and cataloged.

**Roy T. Christner**, who lived east of Hubbard and about a mile south of the Zion Mennonite Church, died July 7, 1999. He was born at Hubbard on September 2, 1911, the son of Levi and Ella (Hostetler) Christner and a grandson of song leader and auctioneer, Mose Hostetler. He is survived by his wife, the former Virginia Landwing, whom he married December 31, 1937, a son, Dick of Hubbard; brothers, Fred, Roscoe and Arnold of the Barlow-Canby area; sisters, Etta Beer of Brooks, Rovena Kallstrom of Canby and Berdina Brown of Oregon City; two grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Burial was in Zion Mennonite Cemetery.

## Notes from the Library and Archives

Al and Marjorie Nofziger of Lebanon and charter members of OMHGS recently donated a 486 IBM-compatible computer with Windows 95 and Microsoft Works to the archives and library and it is now located in the archives room on the Western Mennonite School campus. This gift is appreciated very much.

The sorting, organizing and cataloging of materials from the Pacific District Conference of the General Conference Mennonite Church has been completed and the materials are now available for use by researchers. The files are far from complete in many areas but the conference minutes, secretaries' reports and conference programs are almost all available. There are good records of the Young People's Union, women's organization and men's organization up until the conference disbanded in 1994. There is also correspondence and other documents and records from about 1930 through most of the 1970s so that a person can gain a fairly accurate and adequate idea of the workings of the conference during those years.

Other items received recently in the archives include the remainder of the Claud and Nora Hostetler estate (mentioned elsewhere) and several boxes of the records from the Sunrise Mennonite Church which closed last November.

The library is in need of any Mennonite Yearbooks before the year 1944. If you have some that you would be willing to donate, please contact Charity Kropf (503/651-2204) or Margaret Shetler (503/873-6406).

Recent books given to the library include: "The Leonard and Addie Grover Garber Family" c. 1999 by Hope Lind and Joseph Gascho. Several older books by Mennonite authors from the family of Archie Kauffman.

Please remember the OMHGS library if you publish a history or genealogy or if you have unpublished histories or genealogies of any sort.



These make valuable additions to our collections and may assist some other researcher.

We are still in need of someone who would like to help with the archives, sorting, organizing and cataloging materials on hand. Please contact Margaret Shetler if you have any interest in this type of work. 503/873-6406.

## Genealogical Research in Europe

*The following articles about research in Europe will be included in the OMHGS newsletter in several sections. This issue will include General Prerequisites and Aids and Switzerland, and Germany and France will be covered in later issues.*

### General Prerequisites and Aids

1. Name and birth date (or other significant date) of immigrant ancestor(s).
2. Precise name of town or village (of birth, marriage, residence, etc.  
— aids to finding these: The Atlantic Bridge to Germany series; Vol. II Hesse/Palatinate, Vol. III Bavaria, Vol. IV Saarland, Alsace-Lorraine, Switzerland, Vol. V Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen/Hamburg, Vol. 6 Mecklenburg (Order from Everton Publishers, P.O. Box 368, Logan, Utah 84321  
—Detailed atlases and maps (e.g. Michelin maps — do not have indexes)
3. Religious affiliation of ancestors (if wanting to use church records.
4. A working knowledge of German and French or the help of someone who does. (The archives in France do have their procedures written in English.)

### Sources of Information and Where to Look for Them

#### Switzerland

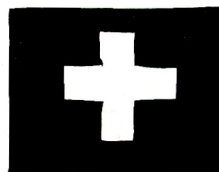
Records of births/baptisms, marriages, deaths and "Heimat" registrations are found in the "Gemeindehaus" of each town or municipality. (Or they can tell you where they are located.)

### Research by Correspondence

—Write for sample letters addressed to a "Mairie" of a town (for France) or a Departmental Archives to:  
European Reference Desk  
The Genealogical Department  
50 East North Temple  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150  
Departmental Archives do not search the records for you, but they will recommend researchers.

### Hire Someone to Visit Your Ancestral Home for You

1. James Derheim, 700 N. Meadowbrook Lane, Sioux Falls, S.D., 57103-6216 will photograph your ancestral place. Write for brochure and prices.
2. Jacques de Guise, Centre for Genealogical Research, Caisse Postale 114, 1218 Grand Saconnex (GE), Switzerland. Write for brochure. They will do some research and photographing. (Courtesy Ryan Taylor in Kitchener-Waterloo Record)



## Finding Your Roots in Europe: Switzerland

### Genealogical Research in Switzerland

As the title suggests, I am going to begin this presentation with Switzerland, and that is simply because that is where our story begins. That is not where one begins one's research — at least not generally. When people ask me how one goes about researching one's family, I always tell them to begin with what they know and who they know. Begin with your parents, grandparents — the oldest living people you can find and pick their memories and whatever documentation they can direct you to. Then you go backwards from there. Obviously, then we should not begin in Switzerland.

What I am going to do is suggest what resources there are in Switzerland and where to find them; so if and when your research gets you back to an

immigrant who came from Switzerland, you know how to approach research in that country.

But first of all, a little bit of history to give us some context. Most of us are familiar with the genealogies in the Bible: David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, or the other way around: Abraham begat Issac, Isaac begat Jacob, etc., etc. Today, we would be lost without surnames, but where and how did that custom begin? It really is not a very old custom in the total scheme of things, but Switzerland may be one of the earliest localities where it was used extensively. But even there it was not consistently used until the latter part of the 15th century. That is, after the invention of the printing press, about the time Columbus discovered America and shortly before the Protestant Reformation. In Holland, for instance, the use of surnames became common much later. In the Preface to the Mennonite Encyclopedia, H. S. Bender claims that surnames were not in general use in Holland and northwest Germany until the second third of the 17th century (that is, the middle of the 1600s).

Jews continued to use the custom of identifying persons by their father: David, son of Jesse, son of Obed, etc. until even later. While doing research in the files of a certain Alsatian village, I found a note, dated 1808, saying the Jews were to decide, once and for all, what surnames they were going to choose. Since they were rather randomly chosen several centuries after our Swiss ancestors had acquired theirs, any common names between Anabaptists and Jews are purely accidental. Sometimes I find Mennonites quite intrigued by possible Jewish ancestry. The Jews and Anabaptists in the dispersion sometimes lived in the same villages, but I suspect they kept their fences well mended. I have found no evidence of any intermarriages or conversions either one way or the other. That does not mean that none existed, but I have not found any.

In doing genealogical research there are at least three things one must know: there must be a name one is searching for, and then one must have a date to identify that person — birth, marriage or death, and then one must have some idea where to look for that person. Generally, people who are interested in doing research have the name of a person. A firm date identifying that person is sometimes problematic, but the name of a place to look for that person is frequently an insurmountable hurdle.

The Swiss have a fairly good idea where certain family residences were or are. Delbert

Gratz's booklet What is Your Name?, mentioned in the bibliography, is a good source to discover the possible location of your family name. And here we must introduce another Swiss custom — that of Swiss citizenship or "Heimat." In the late 1600s the Swiss developed the "Heimat" system. Persons were to establish where their "Heimat" (home) was to be. It could be their residence at the time or that of their parents. To maintain their "Heimat" they had to report their births, marriages and deaths at the townhall of the "Heimat," which in turn was then committed to care for any "citizens" who should return and need help at any time. Many Swiss expatriates have done that for generations, and it makes the home-grown Swiss a little nervous. If these expatriates would ever decide to come "home" en masse, they would be in difficulty. A village of 400 might suddenly have thousands!

Some of our ancestors left Switzerland before this custom was inaugurated, and those who left later probably did not make any effort to maintain a "Heimat" from which they were expelled. One family who came to Canada, the Kipfers, did have their "Heimat" or citizenship established in Sumsiwald, a town in the Emmental, although they lived in the Jura, and later some of them also lived across the border in France. Many Mennonites in France still keep up their Swiss citizenship, but the Kipfers who came to Canada never did.

This "Heimat" custom is very helpful in order to establish the place of origin, because even though people moved around, their records are all found in one place. Unfortunately, it is not as helpful to many of us as we would like because of our early departure from the country and because our ancestors did not avail themselves of it.

Supposing you have found the possible location of your family, where and what records will you find? The church and state went hand-in-hand to order the life of society. The church kept records of births — at the time of baptism — marriages and deaths. Where does one go to find these records? — to the "Gemeindehaus." To us Mennonites that sounds like a "church house." The best English equivalent of "Gemeinde" is parish, but in secular parlance it is simply "municipality." So you go to the municipal office of the town, tell the receptionist that you are looking for the records of a certain family name and a certain time frame. They should be able to direct you to the citizenship records or to the

church records of baptism/birth, marriage and death records for that period. Early church records are frequently in Latin, so if your education included Latin, you can now put it to good use. I find the Latin easier to deal with than the gothic German, although I have found the Swiss records that I looked at to be much easier to read and that is probably because they did not use the gothic Herman script that one finds in Germany.

Although I said that one begins with the present and works backwards, I know persons who are comfortable with research in these records who are taking a family name and are researching it in their "Heimat," beginning with an early date, sorting out the information into family lines, with the hope of, at some point, meeting with the research done from this end. I used that method when I first began to seriously study the Amish Mennonite constituency in Ontario. I took the first census records, and listed all the families which I recognized as being Amish Mennonite. Then I went to the next census and tried to fit the new data into the families found in the first one and so on. As children married, I could fit them into their ancestral families. Then when I ran across these persons or families in my other research, I was able to establish family lists and family lines which my grandparents' and great uncles' memories could no longer supply. This is simply to illustrate that there comes a time when working at research from both ends can become fruitful.

In my earlier presentation, I mentioned the notes of Anabaptist court cases which Isaac Zurcher gleaned from the archives in the Canton of Bern. I am convinced that local municipal records would also include those kinds of tidbits if only one had the time and patience to look for them.

I mentioned church records above. Does one find the registrations of Anabaptists in the church books? I have noted that the research done by Jane Evans Best and published in Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage and Mennonite Family History and others have found many Anabaptists in the church records. That indicates to me that the Anabaptists were accommodating themselves to a certain extent. Allowing a child to be baptized would not harm him/her and seeking legal marriage in the Reformed church overcame the difficulty of having their children labeled illegitimate. The difficulties were not simply that of a bad name, but laws were also made barring illegitimate children from receiving inheritance.

I have spent only a few hours in a few villages in the Canton of Bern, trying to locate traces of possible family connections and have not been successful. That may be because I have not spent enough time, but I suspect that in Bern the Anabaptists may not have compromised quite as much as they did in Zurich.

In the village of Schwarzenegg, where I was looking for Oesch ancestors, I became intrigued by the number of familiar surnames and recorded them — most of them Mennonite names but some of them were names found among the non-Mennonite neighbors where I grew up — and found about sixty.

Research in Switzerland is possible, but success is not guaranteed.

### Notes

Below are a few of the more important resources.

#### The Atlantic Bridge to Germany series:

Vol. II Hesse/Palatinate, Vol. III Bavaria, Vol. IV Saarland, Alsace-Lorraine, Switzerland, Vol. V Schleswig-Holstein, Bremen/Hamburg, Vol. 6 Mecklenburg (Order from The Everton Publishers, P. O. Box 368, Logan, Utah 84321)

German Genealogical Research by George K. Schweitzer, 1995 (\$20.00)

—contains samples of addresses and letters in English and German, list of postal codes (Dr. George K. Schweitzer, 407 Ascot Court, Knoxville, TN 37923-5807)

Alsace Emigration Index — (1817-1866) on 6 rolls of microfilm (can be ordered and seen at LDS Family History Centers)

A-C on #1,125,002 D-G on #1,125,003  
H-K on #1,125,004 L-P on #1,125,005  
Q-S on #1,125,006 T-Z on #1,125,007

#### For Research by Correspondence:

Write for sample letters addressed to a "Mairie" of a town or a Departmental Archives to:

European Reference Desk  
The Genealogical Department  
50 East North Temple  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84150

Departmental Archives do not search the records for you, but they will recommend researchers.

Locations and Addresses of Departmental Archives:

Archives Departementales du Bas-Rhin

5 – 9, rue Fischart, 67200 Strasbourg

Archives Departementales due Haut-Rhin

Cite Administrative

3, rue Fleischauer, 68000 Colmar

There is another center especially for genealogical research at Guebwiller.

Archives de Meurthe-et-Moselle

3, rue de la Monnaie, 54000 Nancy