



OMHGS Newsletter

OREGON MENNONITE HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

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The Yoders of Yoder Oregon, and Their Amish Mennonite Connections

Part 1: Amish Roots in Pennsylvania and Illinois by James Grant Yoder

THE LEARNING CURVE

My first taste of family history as a child in Canada was hearing my father tell Yoder, Lantz and Swartz stories from Yoder, Oregon. My father, Grant Yoder (1886-1972), was brought to Oregon from Missouri in 1888. He attended the Evergreen School here. In 1909 he went to Alberta to homestead. My grandfather, Levi David "Lee" Yoder, lived in Yoder until his death in 1941.

In 1942, we received a copy of "Mahala's Journal", diaries kept in the 1870's by a great-aunt in Illinois. Copied and mimeographed by Roberta Daniels of Canby, they listed all my grandfather's siblings. For the 1976 Yoder Reunion, Joel Daniels transcribed a number of older articles about Bishop Jonathan Yoder and other ancestors back to the widow Barbara, along with articles about Oregon by his great-uncle Perry Yoder. These materials stirred my interest in our history and in 1995 my family and I drove through Pennsylvania on a trip from Toronto to New Brunswick. We drove through Stormstown where Bishop Jonathan had lived. At nearby State College a white-haired librarian on the Penn State campus told me that "Hugh Gingerich had compiled a genealogy of all the Amish of Big Valley". We were directed to Belleville in Big Valley --- in the heart of the Amish and Amish Mennonite country of Mifflin County.

In Belleville, friendly Amish Mennonites helped us find Harvey Yoder's gospel bookstore at the entrance to his dairy farm. Besides many Christian books, we found racks loaded with family history books, including *Amish and Amish Mennonite Genealogies* by Hugh Gingerich and Rachel Kreider as described by the librarian. I bought an armload of Amish and Mennonite histories including the Gingerich book. A new world of family history had opened.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY YODER MIGRATION TO PENNSYLVANIA

You will know that the majority of the Amish and Amish Mennonite Yoders in America are descended from two brothers who brought their families to Philadelphia on the same ship in 1742. First names are unknown for both the

Continued on page 7, **ROOTS**

Part 2: Bishop Jonathan Yoder Family-The Prairie Years by Joel E. Daniels

If I were to name a patron saint of our Yoder family, I would not name St. Theodore of Switzerland from whom the name Yoder is derived, nor the good Bishop Jonathan Yoder, arguably one of the best known and most respected Amish men of his day. Nor would I name his sons Elias or Asa, both of whom were enlightened leaders of their community. I would not name any of their sons. Instead, I would think first about a young woman who has inspired many of her descendants by the eloquent journal she wrote that has been preserved through these many years - a testimony to life in Middle America in the middle of the 19th Century.



Mahala L. Yoder, daughter of Elias and Lydia (Plank) Yoder

Continued on page 12, **PRAIRIE YEARS**

Part 3
Growing up with Yoder and the Yoders
by Muriel Van Veen

INTEREST IS KINDLED

I grew up in the heart of Yoder, in the house where my great-grandfather Lee Yoder spent his last years, and around the corner from the home built for his family when they came to Oregon from Missouri. When their oldest daughter died in childbirth, Lee and Jacobine raised the baby - my mother, Doris. Although the old homestead was out of the family by my day, my sister and I were sometimes allowed to play in the wooded pasture or - best of all - in the wonderful playhouse Mother's father had built for her in the side yard.

She gave me "Mahala's Journal" to pass the time when I was 10 or 12 years old, recuperating from some childhood disease, and a few years later I read the materials Perry Yoder had compiled about the early Yoders. Family pictures, letters and diaries, along with Mother's recollections of stories told by her grandparents, aunts and uncles, piqued my interest in Yoder history. Kindred spirits like Jim and Joel have helped to gather and expand this wealth of information from published and anecdotal sources, and to begin combining it into an integrated whole. In May of 2000 I was fortunate enough to be among the group of cousins who visited Missouri and Illinois on a Yoder heritage tour organized and led by Joel.

WEST TO OREGON

The Yoder migration began about 1873, when Elias' younger sister Catherine, with her husband Gideon Lantz, left Missouri and settled in Clackamas County. Over the next 15 years crops in the Midwest were disappointing, nor were the Yoders encouraged by their investigation of land in Nebraska and South Dakota. Early in 1887 Elias' daughter Mary Schwartz wrote to her aunt, inquiring about opportunities in Oregon. Intrigued by her descriptions, the extended family started looking westward.

That summer Mary's husband, Joe, and her Uncle Asa Yoder's oldest son, Dave, visited the Lantzes. They were so impressed with the area that Joe secured an 80-acre farm and instructed Mary to sell the Missouri farm, pack up, and bring the family out to Oregon. By November, assisted by Asa's son Ed, she was able to make the train trip with her four young daughters (Nancy, not yet two years old). During a layover of several hours in Denver, they took dinner with their cousin "Snip" (Annie), Amos Yoder's daughter. A few weeks later Mary wrote to her brother John back in Illinois, although "Our house is not finished and is real cold with everything open that way,"... "I know I can be well contented here if things grow like they did this season." Dave Yoder also remained in Oregon instead of returning to Missouri.

All that winter, letters making their way to Missouri contrasted the fertile Willamette Valley with the barren hardscrabble farms in Dade County. Early in 1888 Asa's son,

Will, arrived with his bride, Jennie Reagan. By June, his cousin Jonathan had decided to see this Eden for himself. Borrowing \$80 on a lot of feeder hogs, he left Barbara and the children to manage the farm while he spent about four weeks visiting the relatives and inspecting property in Oregon. Although it rained every day that month, Jonathan was not discouraged. He found 80 acres for sale on Cedar Creek, adjoining Joe Schwartz's property. When he returned to Missouri early in July, he instructed Will to purchase the property for him as soon as he could sell the farm in Dade County.

That September brother Lee made the move to Oregon with his wife Jacobine, five daughters and three sons -- baby Joseph only two months old. (Their youngest child was born in Oregon, in 1891). They rented while a house was built for them about a quarter mile south of Jonathan's tract. Brother John P., a school principal in Illinois, contracted for land and started making payments about this same time, though he did not make the actual move until five years later. His property was southwest of Lee's, on the community's main north-south road.

The land at that time was largely covered with dense forest and thick brush. The only way through part of Will Yoder's property was on hands and knees. Land sold for about \$10 per acre uncleared -- \$15 if cultivated or planted to orchards. Men would get together in a "bee," to cut and slash second-growth timber, which was later burned. Mary Schwartz wrote optimistically, "At first I thought there was too much timber here, but I like it better all the time," and described "Fearful" trees, "150 feet high and as straight as an arrow" that were considered more of a problem than an asset. Some logs could be floated down Rock Creek for milling, but thirty acres of fine timber might be burnt to clear a pasture. A pine tree near John P. Yoder's house was felled, and some of the limbs salvaged for firewood, but the log -- 187 feet long, and nearly 6 feet in diameter -- was burned where it lay. "No wagon in the neighborhood could haul the logs, and no sawmill could saw them."

By September Jonathan had sold his Missouri holdings for \$2,500 and directed Will to close the deal and begin building a house. Over the winter he chartered a freight car to transport household goods, livestock, wagons, farm machinery and sawmill irons. The emigrant car that left Kansas City in February 1889 was nearly filled by Jonathan and Asa Yoder's extended families. The freight car did have room for a keg of sauerkraut, but the boys' homemade wooden bicycle had to be left behind. They watched with regret as the station agent tossed this favorite toy aside, remarking, "This old ride horse, I schling it as far as I can!"

Jonathan's son Louis had the job of riding with the livestock and caring for them on the 2-week trip. His brother Perry, 13 at the time, later recalled a passenger sitting in the vestibule, blazing away at prairie dogs with a revolver as the train rolled across the plains. As the train slowed for steep grades in the Rocky Mountains, the boys jumped off to jog alongside -- then scrambled wildly to climb aboard again as it

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gained level ground and picked up speed.

Upon reaching Oregon the first week of March 1889, Jonathan moved his family into their partially completed house on the north side of Cedar Creek. As soon as possible, trees were cut on the south side so the sawmill could be erected. By midsummer, powered by a 10 horsepower steam engine, it was producing lumber for the neighborhood. Some of the first timbers were used for a long bridge spanning the creek, replaced many years later by a culvert.

Asa's family stayed with Will until their own house was finished, on the northeast corner of [now] Schneider and Kropf Roads. Lee's home was so close, the family could hear Catherine singing as she did the chores. Before leaving Missouri Asa had sold a team of horses on credit; his descendants finally received payment about 65 years later. But, his favorite Boston Rocker, which was shipped west, never reached Oregon. He often remarked that he hoped someone was enjoying that comfortable seat.

In October 1889 Dave Yoder married Judith Zimmerman, whose grandparents came west in 1845 by wagon train to Dr. William Keil's Aurora Colony.

In July 1893 John P. Yoder, his wife Rebecca and their four children left Illinois for Oregon. In the Panic of 1893, with depression abroad, crop failures in the Midwest and falling prices all over the country, John was forced to accept less than he wanted for his Marseille house. "Saving at every corner," they scraped together money enough to finance the trip and tide them over until the farm began producing. To help ends meet, Rebecca took a job teaching the Needy School. By Thanksgiving they were "pretty well supplied with eatables," and entertained more than fifty Yoder relatives of all ages in their "far from finished" house.

Unusually early fall rains in 1893 rotted potatoes in the ground and delayed plowing and sowing. Early the next spring, after record rainfall all winter, John "took cold from working in the wet and sleet." Never robust, he tried to continue working as usual and developed what he thought was pneumonia. The doctor called it "Malarial typhoid." John died June 1, 1894. For two more years Rebecca, who was only 35, stayed on and taught at Needy. Then she sold the farm and moved to Forest Grove where the three older children attended Pacific University. They were living in Oakland, CA., where Jane attended nursing school, during the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

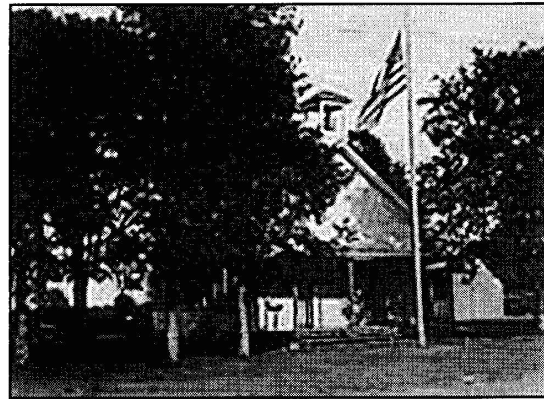
Mary Yoder Swartz and her family moved from Yoder to the Carver area east of Oregon City in 1908. A letter to her niece Nellie in 1927, when Mary was 73, finds her busy with garden work. "I would rather hoe than mow. Then I had spading and planting to do, worked almost too hard at it for several days. I think that is a trait in our family to try to do too much. I know your father was that way too, and if John had not been so ambitious he might be living yet."

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

In 1889 a one-room school was built on a site donated by John P. Yoder, with lumber furnished by Jonathan's mill. It was called the Evergreen school. Classes were held that winter with Asa J. Yoder as schoolmaster. Some of the young Yoders who studied at Evergreen later returned to teach there. In one early photo the teacher is Lee's daughter, Maude Yoder, and two of the students are her cousins Katherine and Florence.

Until desks could be purchased, the children sat on

benches at plain, home-built tables. Part of the wall was painted black for a chalkboard, and blocks of wood covered with sheepskin served as erasers. Drinking water was brought in a bucket from Will Yoder's farm nearby. An iron box stove in the center of the room provided heat. During February 1899, when eight inches of snow fell and the temperature dropped below zero, school was probably closed until the weather moderated. Lee's granddaughter, Gwendolyn Watson, who graduated from Evergreen in 1919, told of winter days too cold for regular lessons, when pupils huddled close to the stove, perched on large chunks of firewood, and sang to keep warm. All but Gwen, who had to accompany them on the parlor organ, far from the warmth! (Emerson Yoder, who spent his first three years at Evergreen, recalls the stove in his day as seeming far away, at the east or "eighth grade" end of the room).



Evergreen School, founded by the Yoders after they came to Oregon in 1889. Asa Yoder was the first teacher. The school was located on S. Kropf Road, South of the Yoder School which replaced it in the 1920's.

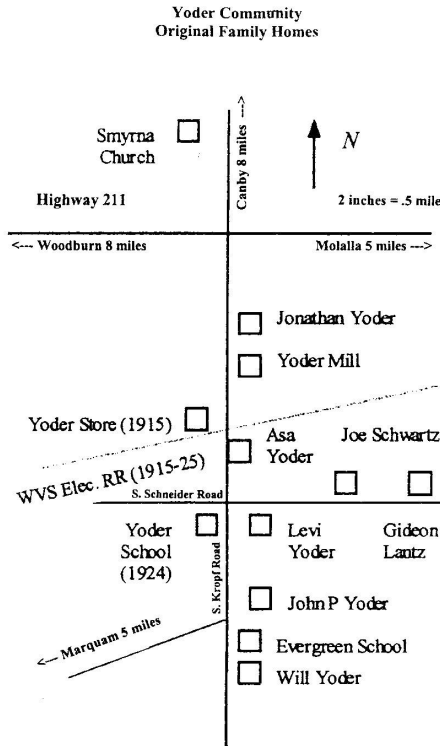
Fifteen of the 31 pupils listed in an early commemorative booklet from the Evergreen school are members of the Yoder clan, as are the school clerk and two of the three board members. The 42 students in a 1924 school picture include six Yoder descendants -- four from the Rosa Yoder - Jim Watson family. In 1948 ten out of 48 students came from the Yoder line.

District 92 was enlarged in 1923, and the school - now called Yoder - moved into a new building. It was first occupied in January 1924 and served the district for more than 35 years. This was a two-classroom structure with basement, indoor plumbing and a wood-burning furnace. The teachers were responsible for stoking the furnace. As late as the 1940's, when the Yoder mill delivered a load of cordwood, classes might be suspended for an afternoon while youngsters were conscripted to "throw in" wood.

Through the years, school programs, graduations, potlucks and picnics were community events, not necessarily limited to families with children enrolled. Lee Yoder, who lived to the age of 93, enjoyed strolling over to the school, where he might entertain the students by reciting one of the many poems he had memorized. The PTA organized in the late 1940's sponsored a popular Halloween carnival, and a

highlight of it's monthly meetings was the ultimate show-and-tell: reading aloud the unexpurgated, student written "Polecat News." A concrete-floored gymnasium was constructed in 1947.

In 1962 the Dryland, Eby, Rural Dell and Yoder schools were consolidated as Rural Dell District 92. For part of a year upper-grade students continued to use the Yoder building, but all students were transported by bus to Rural Dell after facilities there were enlarged. That location, in turn, was absorbed into the larger Molalla River District on July 1, 1993. The Yoder building was purchased by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which continued to use it as a school.



BUILDING A COMMUNITY

In addition to custom sawing for farmers who brought in logs from their own timber, the Yoder mill initially ground grain every Friday. Most farmers brought their grain to the mill and had it ground on shares. Many times Barbara Yoder had extras for the noon meal if a customer's grinding wasn't finished. In 1887, when lumber prices fell to \$5/M and there was little market even at that price. Jonathan acquired Will Yoder's kilns and turned to making bricks. When the mill burned in 1901, Jonathan's son Aaron, who had recently finished school at O.S.C., salvaged parts and helped his father rebuild, working in the old blacksmith shop that had survived the fire. A shingle saw and planer were added when the mill was rebuilt. Aaron took over full management of the mill in 1907, the same year he married Edna Conrad.

Yoder never had its own post office. Beginning in 1855, mail was received weekly at Needy, the logical market center between Yoder and Aurora depot. Anyone taking butter and

eggs to "trade," on horseback or afoot, carried a flour sack to bring back mail for all the neighbors. In September 1903 a rural mail route from Hubbard was established, with Fred Palmer as the first carrier. Even when poor roads prevented most people from getting through, Fred never failed to make the trip. Later the Molalla post office sent a route in from the east, turning south at the crossroads and abutting the Hubbard route that extended north and west. Our house was on the Molalla route, but during my childhood occasional pieces of mail still came to a box at the corner, on the Hubbard route. My great-grandfather had retained it in protest, because the Molalla carrier refused to serve a "non-regulation" (house-shaped) box! Those rural carriers provided personalized service, selling stamps and delivering packages (though some were said to read postcards and magazines).

After the steam-powered threshing machine made its appearance about 1890, Asa and Lee Yoder acquired and operated one. Asa Yoder had the first telephone in the neighborhood. In a 1908 letter, my grandmother commented that her niece Dorothy "tho't it great fun" to phone her Grandma Watson. The automobile came to Yoder in 1913, when Ed Porter purchased a secondhand Buick for \$185. He also assembled the first radio, a crystal set with earphones, in 1921.

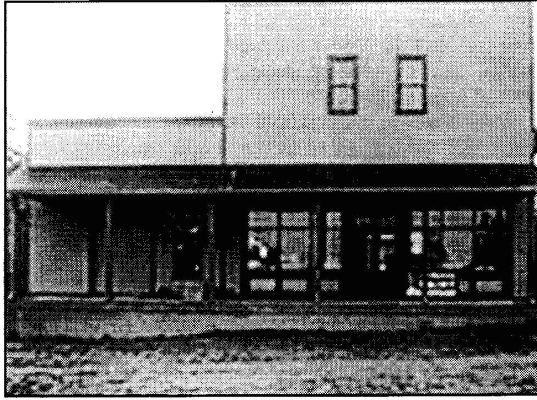
Another fire struck the Yoder mill in April 1915. It was again rebuilt, once more using the original castings. When the mill burned for the third time in 1934, Aaron's son Nolan was ready to join his father in rebuilding the business. The mill switched from steam power to electricity about 1960 and is still in operation today, run by Aaron's youngest son, Russell, and his grandson David.

Together with the mill and the school, the Yoder store helped give the community its identity. When the Willamette Valley Southern Railway from Portland to Mt. Angel was under construction, Jonathan Yoder planned a market center in the area. He erected a store building on his son Albert's property and leased it to the Louis Wrolstad family, who opened their store in June 1915. Terms of the lease included no Sunday business and no punchboards. The store remained closed on Sundays for many years. Chickens, butter and eggs were taken in trade, with aluminum "store money" given if produce exceeded the purchases.

The first electric train came through Yoder in January 1915, providing both passenger and freight service. With five passenger trains running each way daily, residents of Yoder could ride the train to Portland, spend several hours shopping, and be back home around 6:30 PM. Students also took the train to Molalla High School. The Yoder Warehouse Company was formed the same year, to facilitate the handling and shipping of 50-60 carloads of potatoes that left the community each fall. Business prospered, and the warehouse was enlarged several years later. Until sub-zero temperatures in 1919 decimated local orchards, cider apples were also an important crop, with several loaded boxcars shipped to Portland every year.

Early roads were nothing but dust in dry weather and mud when it rained. The Yoder mill had furnished sawdust to fill the mud holes and slabs to form roadside sidewalks, from home to school and church. Now carloads of gravel were received on the railroad siding, and neighbors with teams and special wagons hauled it onto the roads. The first automobile in the area had arrived in 1903. Improved roads led to more travel by car and less reliance on rail passenger service. In a

1994 interview, Jonathan Yoder's grandson Nolan remarked, "The problem with the WVS was it was financially broke when it started and it was broke when it quit." The electric train was discontinued in 1925, and the first paved roads (concrete on one side only, thus going twice as far) were laid in 1925 and 1926. Electric lights were new in 1926, replacing oil lamps or carbide gas.



Yoder Store. Soon after it was built in 1915 Jonathan Yoder built the store to take advantage of the Willamette Valley Southern Railway that was to arrive soon. It was owned and operated by the Louis Wrolstad family until 1969.

Ivan Kropf built a sawmill on his farm in 1934, and in 1941 he moved it to a new site on Rock Creek.

In 1935 Tom Dybvad began dealing in eggs and poultry, with operations across the road from the store. I recall peering into the semi-darkness with a grade school acquaintance whose mother was one of the egg candlers working there. From such modest beginnings grew today's Willamette Egg Farms! Lorin Wrolstad brought turkey raising to the area in 1937, and other local farmers followed his lead.

In 1945 Sanford Wrolstad added a warehouse to the store building and two years later, as postwar prosperity came to Yoder, he remodeled the interior of the store itself and opened another addition with frozen food lockers. That same year Vernon Sinclair opened the Yoder Garage just south of the store.

HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH

After Christmas in 1889, a Sunday school was organized at the Evergreen School. Asa Yoder served as superintendent until his death in 1905, when his son, Will, succeeded him, serving until he died in 1941.

Soon, plans were underway for a church, and in June 1890 a Presbyterian church was organized with twelve members. The Rev. Frederick W. Parker of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in Woodburn preached the first Sunday of each month at both the Needy and the Evergreen schoolhouses. The two congregations decided to unite at a central location, and ground at this site was broken on January 31, 1891.

In Asa Yoder's words, "The people were poor, but they

went to work with a will. They cut the logs, and hauled them to J. S. Yoder's sawmill, then hauled the lumber to the place of building, and with their own hands, put up the building on a piece of land given for that purpose by Bro. Benjamin Rupe [Roop]." The building was sufficiently enclosed for the first service on April 5 of that year. The pews - still in use today - were constructed by "homemade carpenters" Will Yoder and his cousin Iddo Hein, of lumber sawed at the Yoder mill. During the first service, the Rev. Mr. Parker suggested that because the congregation was poor financially, but rich in zeal and spiritual life, it should be known as Smyrna (from The New Testament book of Revelation).

Within just a few months, Rev. Parker decided to become a Congregationalist. Wishing to keep him as pastor, and because the Congregationalists were then the only denomination allowing women to hold church office, Smyrna voted to change its affiliation also. With a membership of 47, the church was dedicated December 1, 1892, with Rev. Parker and State Superintendent Rev. Cephas Clapp presiding.

Charter members included Mr. and Mrs. L. D. Yoder, Mr. and Mrs. Asa J. Yoder, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Schwartztruber and Asa's daughter Mrs. Susan Yoder Henley Richey.

Catherine Yoder Lantz the earliest "Oregon Pioneer" of the Yoder family, was the first person to be buried in the Smyrna cemetery, in 1891.

A Ladies' Aid Society was soon established to help maintain and support the church and its activities. As early as 1897, donations to the church treasury are recorded often just a few dollars at a time. Donations were also sent to missions in Armenia. During World War I, the society turned its time and effort to Red Cross work. Beginning in 1900 and for some forty years thereafter, Smyrna made a yearly contribution toward the support of an orphan boy or girl in India.

In addition to regular church and Sunday school, visiting ministers were sometimes brought in for special evening prayer meetings and young people of the yoked Smyrna, Elliott Prairie and Hubbard churches sometimes held joint Christian Endeavor meetings or ice-cream socials. My grandmother's diary from 1899 mentions her cousin Rosa's departure by train for a Christian Endeavor convention (probably in Portland). Sunday school records show that 86 adults and children were present at Smyrna on Children's Day in 1909.

In the 1940's and 50's volunteers from nearby Mennonite churches held a daily vacation Bible school at the Rural Dell school and community hall, picking us up at home and dropping us off after the morning's activities. Probably none of us realized then that we were continuing a link with the Yoder family's early religious tradition. I do know it gave me a wonderful foundation of memorized Scripture!

Most of the extended family was clustered along approximately two miles of what later became Kropf Road, or on nearby side roads, with the Smyrna church at one end, Evergreen school at the other, and the Yoder mill midway. When Asa's older offspring were already beginning to marry and start their own families, Lee and Jacobine and the Swartzes still had children under five.

Despite long hours and few labor-saving devices in those early days, people managed to enjoy life. There was a good deal of entertaining or just "dropping in" for a meal, especially among the young folks - many of them double cousins - living in such close proximity.

Cousins Ida, Jane and Margaret were especially close, and a group of the younger girls - Nell, Rebekah, Maude, Nan and Lottie - were known as the "Foolish Five." Even after they married and had children of their own, they continued to correspond and visit one another regularly. Rebekah's daughter Ellen recalled picnics with all the families long after the "Five" were adults.

On rare occasions when there were no guests, Sunday dinners were still special occasions. A birthday, anniversary or holiday might be celebrated with an oyster supper, and little excuse was needed to whip up a batch of homemade ice cream or candy. For young people, "play parties" featuring folk dances such as "Skip to My Lou" or "The Jolly Miller" were popular.

Group singing around the parlor organ or piano highlighted evening get-togethers. Some even studied music by correspondence course. Ed, Wes, Ralph and Nellie Yoder all played the violin; Joe, the cornet. Wes' "graphophone" livened up a Fourth of July celebration along with plenty of fireworks and the ever-present ice cream.

Authors, croquet, bean bags, Parcheesi and Krokinole were popular games. A Literary Society was organized at the Evergreen schoolhouse in 1899. Nor were the sciences ignored; a few weeks later, folks "sat up and watched for the meteors but did not see them." School held elaborate "exhibitions," complete with musical presentations and fan or flag drills.

A trip to the beach meant several weeks of camping, eating clams and mussels, collecting shells, fishing and paddling in the ocean. When the Chautauqua movement came to Oregon, family tents were pitched at the Gladstone campgrounds. (Sometimes setting up was easier said than done. In July 1899, after a four-hour trip to Oregon City, my grandmother recorded in her diary, "Our tent was not there... Father went to Portland to see about it. It had been sent. We girls slept in Mrs. Johnson's tent. Aunt Mary had sick headache"). As chores at home allowed, individual family members came and went, attending classes, lectures, gymnastic exhibitions, concerts and baseball games.

The Yoders who migrated to Oregon were so closely related already, there was little of the intermarriage common in larger "Pennsylvania Dutch" population centers of the eastern and midwestern states. Asa Yoder's daughter Hattie did marry her first cousin Iddo Hein, the son of Asa's sister Anna. Because of the relationship Asa frowned upon the marriage, but the young couple obtained a license in Hubbard (Marion County), expecting to be married near Yoder. Yoder, however, is in Clackamas County, and the justice of the peace refused to marry them. So Iddo and Hattie took dinner with relatives, saddled horses, and rode back to Marion County for a civil marriage.

Lee's daughter Anna and her cousin Rosa married two of the Watson brothers, creating another generation of "almost double" cousins. In the next generation, Rosa's daughter Edith married a Willis Yoder, descended from the "YR2" family mentioned in Jim's paper. (A neighbor with "other Yoder" connections kept insisting, "If you go back enough generations, you'll find out we're all cousins somehow." Jim's research seems to indicate that her statement was pretty accurate).

On June 24, 1928, the first documented "Yoder reunion" was held in Portland's Laurelhurst Park, occasioned by the visit of I.H. "Ike" Yoder from Lilly, Illinois and C. C. "Kit"

Yoder from Cotter, Arkansas. This was probably the last time they were together with their sister Mary Schwartz and brother Lee. For some years after that, and possibly curtailed by travel restrictions of World War II, the family gatherings were irregular, but the 1947 reunion at the Clackamas County fairgrounds in Canby was recorded as the "12th annual" such event. The 66th annual Yoder picnic took place the first Sunday in August 2001, here in Smyrna's Friendship House. Eighteen of the families on the reunion mailing list still live in the community, on Kropf and Schneider roads, although not all still have the Yoder surname. Most are descended from Jonathan Yoder, including great-grandson Paul Yoder, who owns and operates the store.

When I was in grade school, someone discovered Yoder, Oregon was actually listed in the World Book Encyclopedia atlas, with a population of ten. My high school friends from the "metropolis" of Molalla were amused by the single post near the store, with a "Yoder" sign mounted on each side. Current estimate is seventy-five persons, about one third being Yoder descendants. Although I haven't lived in Yoder in more than 40 years, I consider myself fortunate to have grown up here and still feel very much "at home" whenever I return.

Pictures and Cantions submitted by Joel E. Daniels

ADDITION OF HERITAGE COLLECTION TO WILSONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

We recently received the following communication from the Wilsonville Public Library which we were asked to share with our membership.

The Wilsonville Public Library announces the formation of its new Heritage Collection for the use of genealogists, local historians, and other interested parties. The Collection was made possible in part by a grant from Wilsonville transient lodging room taxes and the City of Wilsonville.

Initially focused on Oregon and Southwest Washington, the collection includes all Oregon Federal Census microfilms (1850-1920, and 1930 when available), a large variety of local and county histories and biographies, birth, marriage, and death records, newspaper microfilm, various indexes, and access to free and paid online databases, among much else. Many items are not widely available in Oregon. Some significant resources useful for pursuing genealogical research outside Oregon supplement the strong resources for the state.

Several members of the library staff have backgrounds in genealogical research and are willing and able to assist the public in all aspects of their searches. Experienced volunteers are being recruited to augment staff resources.

Now about 1,500 items, the collection is rapidly growing, and appropriate donations are gratefully accepted. A major expansion of the library building is now under construction, and the Library intends for the Heritage Collection to become a significant regional resource within two to five years.

NOTE: The Wilsonville library is located at 8200 SW Wilsonville road, Wilsonville, Oregon. Phone is (503) 683-2744. We have been advised that the new library is not yet completed and the Heritage Collection is not as completely organized as it will be when the building is completed. It might be more satisfactory to wait a few months before visiting the library to examine this collection.

father [YR] who died in Europe and of his son [YR1], who died at sea on that voyage. His widow -- the famed "Barbara" - arrived in Pennsylvania with her nine children, all of whom married in that state. The second brother, Christian [YR2] and his wife, Barbara [?], arrived with eight children, at least six of whom are known to have married in the New World. Less known Amish Yoder immigrants included Yost Yoder [YRB] and Samuel Yoder [YRC]. Yoder descendants of these original families often married Yoders from the other lines to keep the gene pool a bit larger.

The first Yoder to arrive in America was Hans Yoder [OH] who came to settle in Oley Valley of Berks County, PA, about 1709. He was a Lutheran who joined a Reformed church in the Oley Valley. His brother Yost Yoder [OY] came by 1720. The Conrad Yoder family who settled in North Carolina about 1755 were also Lutherans. Other Yoder family heads included Melchior Yoder, Jost Yetter, Christian Yotty and Samuel Yetter.

A great many non-Amish Mennonites are descended from immigrant Hans Yoder [YB] and his wife, Anna, of Great Swamp through their sons, John Jr. [YB1] and Casper [YB2].

ANCESTORS OF THE YODERS OF YODER, OREGON

The Yoders of Yoder, Oregon are descendants of Jonathan Yoder (1795-1869) and Magdalena Wagner (1798-1866).

Our first ancestor born in the New World about 1763 was David Yoder [YR12a]. He was among the first generation of Amish Yoders born in Pennsylvania, the 10th of the 11 children of European-born Christian Yoder [YR12]. David married Jacobina Eash [ES2], who arrived in Philadelphia from Hesse, Germany, in 1776, with her parents, Christian Eash and Esther Miller.

Jonathan Yoder was born in Berks County, PA., on Sept. 2, 1795. Jonathan [YR12a3] was the third of eight children of David and Jacobina, the youngest of which, Leah, married Yost Yoder [YR2576]. Two of Leah's sisters married brothers of Yost. About 1811, the David Yoder family moved from Berks County to Mifflin County.

Jonathan joined the Amish church in Mifflin County by 1815, and married Magdalena Wagner about 1816. Her father was a Hessian brought to America as a mercenary soldier during the War for Independence. Jonathan was a carpenter and farmer and was said to be "a man of great physical strength and more than average intelligence." Though largely self-educated he became a teacher in "subscription" schools. He began to preach among the Amish and was elected to be an Amish minister in Mifflin County in 1827. There his first six children were born - including his son, Elias.

About 1830 Jonathan moved to Center County's Halfmoon Valley near Stormstown where other Amish families had lived since 1813 among peaceful English Quakers and Presbyterians. Jonathan again served as a minister there. His four children born there included Asa, Catherine and two who died as small children. All the Amish families moved away by 1840. Jonathan moved to Juniata County in 1836 and joined the Tuscarora Valley church that later ordained him as bishop. His eleventh child, Anna, was born there in 1840. His son Elias married Lydia Plank there about 1843. The three sons of Elias and Lydia born in Juniata County grew up in Illinois and spent their last years here in Oregon: Jonathan Samuel "J.S.", John Plank "J.P.", and Levi David "Lee".

THE MIGRATION FROM PENNSYLVANIA TO ILLINOIS

Pennsylvania Amish families moved west to McLean County, Illinois in 1848 and 1849 including Jonathan's sons Elias and Amos, his brother Joseph Joder [YR12a4], his sister Leah with her husband, Yost Yoder, as well as Lantz, Zook, Kaufman and Stutzman families. Moving in 1850 were Solomon Stutzman, Yost Zook, and Jonathan's daughter Leah with her husband John Sharp.

John Ritter in Illinois urged his friend, Bishop Jonathan, to move to Illinois. So in 1851 along with Isaac Schmucker, Jonas Troyer, Jonathan Lantz and Levi Lantz, Jonathan and Magdalena and their younger children moved to Illinois along with Samuel S. and Joel Yoder, Jonathan's cousins from the YR127 line. [John Ritter soon moved on to Shelby County, MO., and in 1855 went to Needy, OR. For safety he traveled from Missouri as far as Walla Walla with the first of William Keil's great wagon trains which went on to Fort Willapa, WA. The next year Keil led his group to Oregon to establish a colony at Aurora. We wonder if Ritter later helped lure the Yoders to Oregon.]

Jonathan helped form the Rock Creek Amish congregation in McLean County in 1851 and was minister and bishop there until his death in 1869. The Rock Creek church was often referred to as the "Yoder church" in the community.

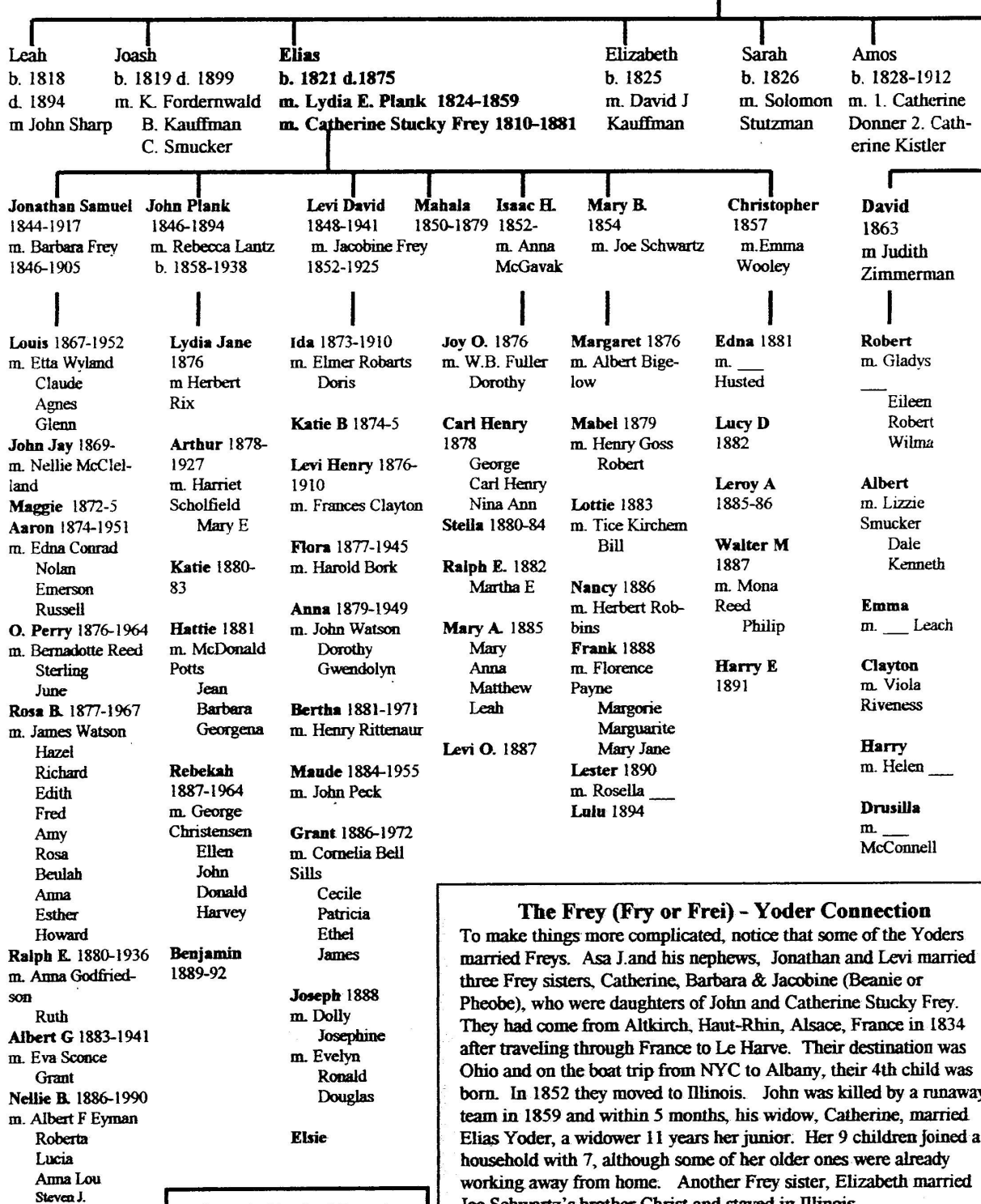
THE ILLINOIS TWO AMISH STREAMS CONVERGED

In Illinois in 1851, winds of change were touching the eighteenth century Amish who came from Pennsylvania and Ohio. The 100,000 of so of eighteenth century Amish had a strong commitment to retaining traditional customs. They had kept German in worship services and used both German and English in their homes for over 100 years as Old Order Amish have continued to do into the twenty-first century. They required plain clothing and excluded buttons in favor of hooks and eyes. They worshipped biweekly in homes and did not favor building meetinghouses.

Those from Pennsylvania were not the first Amish to settle in Illinois. Between 1817 and 1865 a second if smaller wave of Amish came from Europe, from the province of Alsace and Lorraine in France and from Hesse and other places in Germany. They came to Ohio, Ontario, Louisiana, Iowa, Indiana and Illinois. Besides the Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Episcopal and Mormon churches already established in Illinois, "mainline Mennonites" formed their first church in 1833. The Amish from Europe who came to Illinois via Ohio or Ontario also formed their first church in the state in 1833.

The Hessian Amish arrived in Illinois in 1837. They had a more relaxed dress code including the use of buttons. They permitted musical instruments in their homes, could grow mustaches and had less severe discipline. Gradual changes had accumulated among the European Amish over the hundred years since the eighteenth century Amish came to Pennsylvania. In the New World the earlier Amish diligently avoided changes to their traditions. In a similar dynamic, Christian immigrants from Hong Kong, Korea and El Salvador in the last twenty years commonly display unwieldy church structures, more conservative dress codes and other non-doctrinal traditions. Missionaries from North America fifty to a hundred years ago had taught them all these traditions. Like the Hessian Amish in Europe, the missionary-sending churches in North America had meanwhile gradually modified customs and practices through the twentieth century.

Bishop Jonathan (Yonny) Yoder, Sept 5, 179:



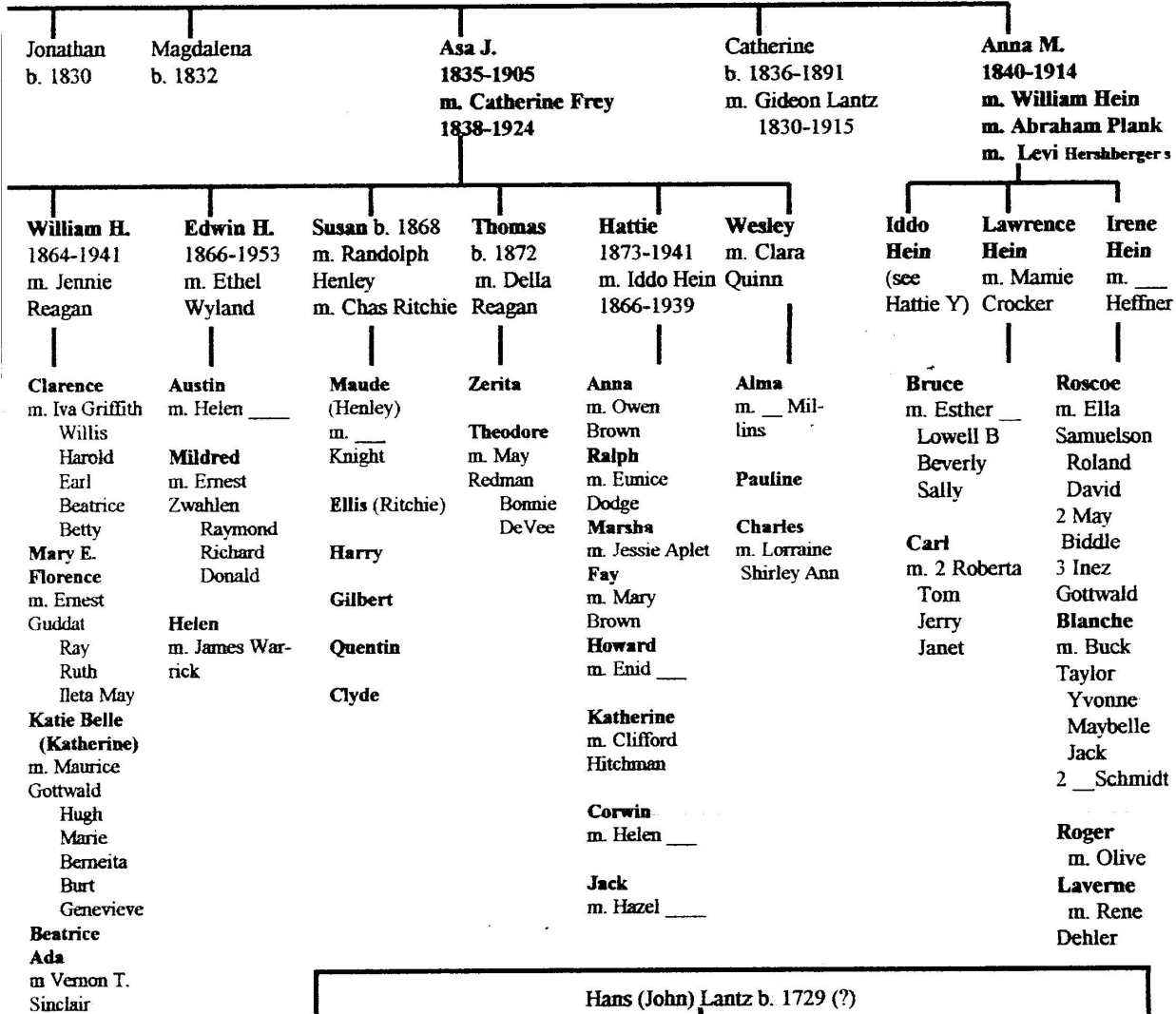
Compiled by Joel Daniels,
Revised August, 2000

The Frey (Fry or Frei) - Yoder Connection

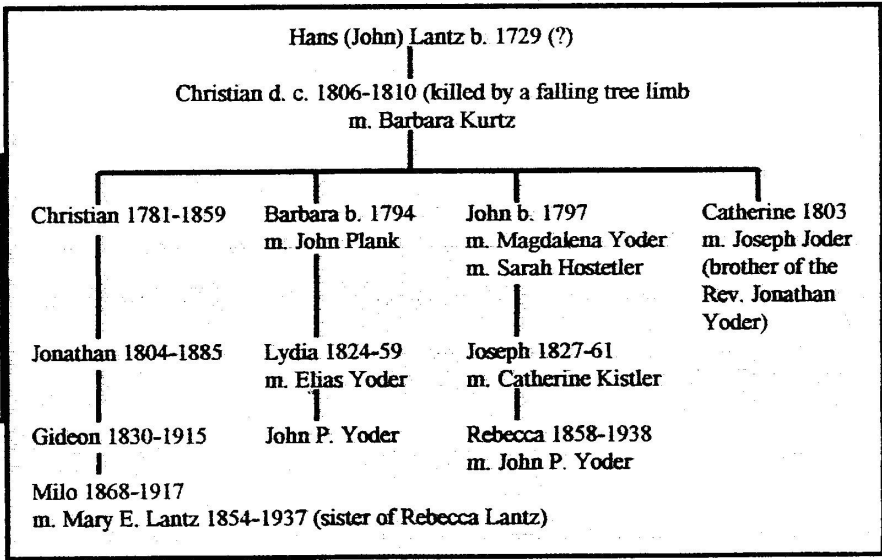
To make things more complicated, notice that some of the Yoders married Freys. Asa J. and his nephews, Jonathan and Levi married three Frey sisters, Catherine, Barbara & Jacobine (Beanie or Pheobe), who were daughters of John and Catherine Stucky Frey. They had come from Altkirch, Haut-Rhin, Alsace, France in 1834 after traveling through France to Le Harve. Their destination was Ohio and on the boat trip from NYC to Albany, their 4th child was born. In 1852 they moved to Illinois. John was killed by a runaway team in 1859 and within 5 months, his widow, Catherine, married Elias Yoder, a widower 11 years her junior. Her 9 children joined a household with 7, although some of her older ones were already working away from home. Another Frey sister, Elizabeth married Joe Schwartz's brother Christ and stayed in Illinois.

This information came from a series of articles written for the Illinois Mennonite Heritage Society published in 1991-2.

1869 m. Magdalena Wagner 1798-1866



The Lantz family interweaves with the Yoders throughout the years. When Joseph Lantz died, his widow, Catherine, married Amos Yoder, who lived next to Elias Yoder in Illinois. →



When the Rock Creek congregation grew to have a hundred members and could not meet in the small homes of the members, Jonathan in 1853 led the church to build a meetinghouse. Amish tradition was to subdivide a growing church into two congregations as often as necessary. This was only the fourth meetinghouse built by Amish congregations in America.

When Jonathan Yoder founded the Rock Creek Amish church, there was a Hessian Amish congregation nearby. The Hessians began to meet with the Rock Creek church after the meetinghouse was built. Despite differing customs they worshipped together peacefully from 1853-1859. Jonathan was strict in the disciplining of members. He even barred from communion the Hessian Amish preacher, John Michael Kistler, who would not accept the tradition of the "Yoder church" on the issue of wearing hooks and eyes. Because of the conflict between the preacher Michael Kistler and Bishop Jonathan, the Hessians resumed meeting separately. Only after Jonathan Yoder's death in 1859 did the two congregation merge to become the present North Danvers Mennonite Church.

Mennonite historian Henry F. Weber described Jonathan Yoder in the following quotation: "He was a man of great physical strength and endurance. He was able to earn a living for a large family and in addition perform the ministerial duties that devolved upon him. He was a man of more than ordinary intelligence, of reason and excellent judgment. He was of a generous and peaceful nature and yet very firm in his convictions. Although he was rather reserved, yet he had a kind and jovial disposition which made him beloved by all who became acquainted with him".

"He was a typical Amishman from Pennsylvania and was conservative in his views. He believed in the conventional form of Amish dress, bonnets and veils for women, hooks and eyes and long hair for men. Yet he was progressive when compared with the other Amish bishops of his day. He very often showed a liberal attitude toward new things that came up. The story is told that he met with a number of Amish bishops in Central Illinois to discuss the question as to whether young men should be allowed to wear neckties. After the bishops had assembled one of them brought the pipes and tobacco and gave a pipe to Yoder. He held it a while and then threw it down and said to the other bishops: We have met to consider whether the young men can wear neckties and yet we ourselves engage in this filthy habit of smoking. It is said that the meeting adjourned without discussing the question of neckties."

About 1866 Jonathan Yoder retired from active farming and with his wife, Magdalena, went to live with their son Amos in Dry Grove township. He remained active in ministry with his Amish congregation and was present when the first of sixteen meeting of Amish ministers in the United States was convened in Ohio in 1862. It met in the barn of Sam and Lydia Schrock. While Jonathan was not named among those arranging the meeting, his involvement in the planning is suggested by the fact that he presided in opening the meeting and calling for the election of a chairman. When another minister was nominated who declined, Bishop Jonathan was unanimously elected chairman.

A variety of questions had been sent to the meeting from various congregations. Some disputes were referred to committees and other questions were discussed, including discipline, the use of musical instruments and the

administration of baptism. Some ministers wished to perform baptism by pouring upon candidates kneeling in an outdoor running stream, while the general practice was to perform the baptism in the house or barn where a congregation worshipped. The proceedings of the meeting record that Jonathan Yoder frequently appealed to the ministers for tolerance and peace when agreement was lacking on various topics.

Jonathan Yoder was present and was elected assistant to the chairman at the second meeting of Amish ministers in 1863 in Mifflin County, PA. Jonathan raised a question about dealing with Amish members who married non-Amish spouses. In another discussion where the building of meetinghouses was challenged as a break in tradition, Jonathan briskly defended his own building of a meetinghouse at Rock Creek ten years earlier. On other topics, there was agreement that members should avoid public office, and avoid service in police and military agencies, and that photographs should not be taken because they disobeyed the commandment against graven images. Jonathan had spoken against the use of musical instruments as the ministers confirmed that position.

Jonathan's wife, Magdalena, died February 8, 1866. They had been married for about fifty years. Her life was described briefly in the 1889 biography of her oldest son, Joash Yoder: "She... Became a member of the Amish Mennonite Church, and lived and died in the faith of that communion. She was a kind and benevolent woman, and her chief aim was to rear her children in the love and fear of God. She was very industrious and frugal, and a good helpmate to her husband, and always managed to make things in and around the house look neat and comfortable. She spun all the cloth the family wore, from shirts to overcoats, and made nearly all the clothes with her own hands. Sewing machines were not then in use, but the children were always clean and well dressed. She was a mother in the true sense of the word."

After the death of his wife, Magdalena, in 1866, Jonathan had moved to John and Leah Sharp's home near Congerville in Montgomery Township, Woodford County.

Jonathan Yoder died at the John Sharp home on January 28, 1869. As Henry F. Weber recounted the event: "A ministers' meeting was held at the home of his daughter, Mrs. John Sharp... At the noon hour when Mrs. Sharp invited the ministers to the dining room, Rev. Yoder said he did not care to eat and would rather lie down and rest. The other ministers went to the table and after dinner when they came back into the room they found that he was passing away." Steven Estes continued the story: "Yoder... called them over, laid his crossed arms on his chest, and said, 'Come and see how a Christian dies.'"

Mennonite historian Steven Estes wrote that "Jonathan Yoder... was said to have been the best-known Amishman in the United States of his day." Steven M. Nolt referred to Jonathan Yoder as one of the "well-known Amish progressives." Jonathan died an Amishman and probably did not foresee that his church would ever cease to be Amish.

Joseph Stuckey had arrived from Alsace in France in 1851 and was a deacon in the Rock Creek church when the meetinghouse was built in 1853. In 1860 after the death of ministers in the congregation, Stuckey was ordained as a minister by Jonathan Yoder. Stuckey was a very evangelical young man, who studied the New Testament constantly, was a gifted and effective preacher, and often traveled to help other Amish churches. After Jonathan's death Stuckey became the

bishop.

By 1872 a problem arose around Joseph Joder, the brother of Jonathan Yoder. Joder in his writings embraced "universalism" - the teaching that "All men are saved and none shall suffer eternal hell or punishment." He was probably over-reacting to the harshness and gloominess of Amish discipline. Stuckey argued strongly against Joder's teaching, yet wavered at excommunicating him. Many other Amish ministers were outraged by Stuckey's wavering and unfairly accused him of teaching universalism. The outcome was a division among Amish churches called the "Stuckey division." Stuckey had gradually become less strict in maintaining old Amish traditions and at that point Rock Creek and other Illinois churches became part of a new group of Mennonite churches. The Rock Creek "Yoder church" and the nearby Hessian Amish church soon merged to become the present North Danvers Mennonite Church.

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEY OF JONATHAN YODER'S DESCENDANTS

All but one of Jonathan Yoder's children remained Mennonites throughout their lives including Joash in Ohio, and Leah, Sarah, Elias, Amos and Elizabeth in Illinois. Descendants of Leah Sharp and Sarah Stutzman are still to be found in the North Danvers Mennonite Church or among Mennonites in nearby states in the midwest. Catherine and her husband, Gideon Lantz were the first of the clan to come to Oregon, perhaps as early as 1873. They were considered the first Amish family in the Needy, OR., area, but settled in with local Mennonites by the time the Amish settlement failed. They had both Amish and Mennonites among their descendants. Anna, the youngest daughter, was the last of Jonathan's children to move to Oregon. She was an active Mennonite in Illinois, and then at Garden City, MO., after 1889. After she came to Oregon in 1909 she joined a Mennonite church at Hubbard, continuing until her death there in 1914. Her Oregon descendants included both Congregationalists and Baptists.

The one exception among Jonathan Yoder's children was Asa Yoder who became a Congregationalist in Oregon.

The second son of Elias, John P. Yoder, was a teacher who loved books and read with great interest English literary magazines from New York and Boston. He was fascinated by the world of ideas and culture far beyond the Amish community of his childhood. A gracious and winsome young man much beloved by his family, he has been quoted as telling his family that he considered the Congregational denomination the best one. His siblings, Mary B. Schwartz (entruber) and Levi David Yoder, along with their uncle Asa - helped organize both a Sunday School and the Smyrna Congregational Church here soon after coming to Oregon in 1888 and 1889. Jonathan S. Yoder first declared himself an Amishman after arriving in Oregon, but later joined the Smyrna church as did John P. Yoder when he moved to Oregon in 1893.

Many descendants of these families have continued to be active in Congregational churches. In one departure from this pattern many of the daughters of Mary Swartz as well as a daughter and granddaughters of Levi Yoder became Christian Scientists. In Canada my parents and our family became Pentecostals first and later became Baptists. Others of our clan in Oregon became members of Lutheran, Free Methodist and other churches.

REALLY COUSINS AFTER ALL

According to *The Yoder Newsletter* the 1900 Census listed 35 Yoder households. Of the fifteen Yoder households in Clackamas county, seven were Jonathan Yoder descendants. Two more descendant families in Oregon included Rebecca Yoder (widow of John Plank Yoder) in Washington County, and Thomas M. Yoder in Multnomah County. Among the rest of the Yoder families in 1900, James was of the YR121? line, Joseph S. of YR127, Abraham and Jonathan of YR125, Daniel J., Jacob. and William M. of YR233, and Tobias T. of YR134. The grandfather of a friend in Canada was Daniel David Yoder [of the YR125 line]. He was part of Amish settlements in Fort Dodge, KS. and Palm, TX. and moved to McMinnville in 1914. He worshipped with Mennonites and one or two of his now aged children are still in Mennonite churches in Albany. We recently met two Yoder brothers from Sheridan who had been Amish in Michigan until coming to Oregon about 1945. They were of the YR233 line. All of these and other Oregon Yoders were cousins of the Jonathan Yoder descendants.

We inherit important values from our Amish ancestors, including belief in Christ, confidence in the Bible, valuing family relationships, and valuing real community based local church life. I am not comfortable with the Amish rejection of missions. And although I would not choose to be Amish, I view with considerable respect the Amish achievement of maintaining for 250 years an impressive simplicity of lifestyle in a changing and increasing fast-paced world.

James G. Yoder is a retired Baptist minister who lives at 10060 Aintree Crescent, Richmond, British Columbia, Canada V7A 3T8.

NOTE: The designations YR-- after names is that person's identification used in the book *Amish and Amish Mennonite Genealogies*, by Hugh F. Gingerich and Rachel W. Kreider, c 1986, published by Pequea Publishers, Gordonville, PA. 17529

Mahala L. Yoder was born in McLean County, Illinois in 1850, daughter of Elias (1825-1875) and Lydia Plank Yoder (1824-1859). Joining the migration of Amish to Illinois, they came from Pennsylvania in 1848 with their three sons, Jonathan Samuel (1844-1917), John Plank (1846-1892), and Levi David (1848-1941). Arriving with them were, Joseph and Catherine (Lantz) Joder and Yost and Leah (Yoder) Yoder. They came by canal and tramway to Pittsburgh boarded a steamboat, the *Belle of the West*, that carried them down the Ohio River and transferred to another boat, which took them up the Illinois River to Pekin, Illinois. On October 31, 1848, they bought 40 acres on the north edge of Danvers Township where they lived until 1850 when they moved to Brown Grove on some timber land which Elias purchased. They must have lived in small log cabins along the creeks, where they could farm the land and raise their livestock. In the historic town of New Salem, Illinois, one can see hewn log cabins that must have been similar. They chose to settle in these areas since they reminded them of the landscape they came from in Pennsylvania. The prairie was thought to be uninhabitable because the sod was difficult to turn, and it was alternatively swampy or desert like. Elias was joined in 1851 by his father, Bishop Jonathan and Magdalena Yoder and their younger children. After they had moved several times, the prairie land opened up for settlement, and methods of breaking the sod were developed. By 1860 they had bought and settled on the 80-acre prairie farm where they would remain until after Elias' death. On adjacent farms lived Elias' brothers Asa J. and Amos. Simeon Lantz owned adjoining property and on it is the Lantz cemetery where many of the Yoder family are buried.

Tragedy struck on January 2, 1859, when Elias Yoder's wife, Lydia (Plank), died leaving the 38-year-old Elias with seven children between the ages of 2 and 14. In September 1859, a Catherine Stucky Frey in the community lost her husband, John, in a farm accident, leaving the 45-year-old widow with the eight younger of her twelve children still at home. In October 1860 Elias and Catherine were married, and the 15 children shared the Yoder home, although a few were old enough to be working for other families nearby. Catherine and John Frey had emigrated from France in 1834 where both were born of parents who had been driven from Switzerland in the 1700's. Catherine was traditionally Amish as were the Yoders.

An outcome of this second marriage was that Asa, Elias' youngest brother, married the eldest Frey daughter, Catherine, in 1862. In 1866, Elias' eldest son, Jonathan Samuel, married Barbara Frey and in 1872 his third son, Levi David, married Jacobine Frey. Descendants of all three couples in Oregon were "double cousins."

It is in this merged family that Mahala began her diary in a notebook given her by her brother John P. as a 21st birthday gift. It was intended to improve her writing skills and to give her a place to reflect. She was crippled, apparently from birth, perhaps suffering from something like rheumatoid arthritis and depression. Although education was extremely important to this family, and some of the brothers broke with Amish tradition going on to higher education and becoming teachers, Mahala was never able to attend school. By the time she began her writing, John was away teaching and came home with or mailed boxes of books for her. She read books such as the latest Mark Twain, Stanley's *How I Found Livingston,*

Little Women, The English Poets, Religious tracts and numerous periodicals. She comments frequently about her reading in the diary. I presume from one of her entries that reading novels was frowned upon, and she said some preferred to call them "stories".

One can infer from Mahala that there was some tension in this new family, which represented the blending of two cultures as well. The Freys were recent immigrants, German speaking, bringing Old World traditions and conservatism while the Yoders were part of the Pennsylvania Amish that had been in America for more than 100 years. They represented the New World, change-minded and progressive. The children were more comfortable speaking English. Mahala comments that one day the girls wrote a letter in German to their Frey sister, which was quite an undertaking. And, she wrote of going to church and hearing "Mr. Eicher preach such a sermon; not in horrid 'Pennsylvania Dutch', but in pure, rich German that apart from the substance of it, did ones very soul good to hear. I've read somewhere that some people are religious not because it is right, but because it is beautiful... This kind of religion might not be much of a prop in an emergency, but I know that my church-going today, did me more good because the sermon was delivered in simple, correct language."

The family had an organ, which would be taken to Grant School on their property when there was school or for Sunday school. They often entertained visitors, one a Frenchman who was such a fine organist. Mahala wrote, "He is a music teacher, and plays splendidly. It's almost as good as a show just to see him play. His fingers seem made of India rubber, so quick and easy are his motions over the keys... The last two nights a lot of our set were here to hear Mr. Rengel play on the organ. This evening they are going to have a come-together-ing at Asa's, for the same purpose." The young people would often gather in and play Authors or be in the yard until after midnight playing croquet, both diversions having been introduced by John. Despite the hardships of rural life, there was always time to put on elaborate productions, especially at Christmas. Mahala tells that "Asa was in town yesterday and got some more sheet music, for the exhibition. If this won't be the greatest exhibition ever held at the Grant Schoolhouse, it isn't for lack of 'things'. The young folks were together at Asa's nearly all day, practicing. In the evening they all came up to sing here and forgot to bring the "Music". Mary Fry said that shows how much they have their mind on singing." Mahala was put to bed one evening before she could finish hearing a discussion about dancing. Her father, Elias, thought it was never indulged in properly but always led to extremes. Her uncle Asa thought it could be wholesome if kept in bounds and if the parents joined in and watched over the young people. Brother John thought dancing was never good but did not know what activity to replace it with. This led to dancing parties at Asa's that Elias probably did not know about. Once Mahala was able to go and hear a violin "played properly" for the first time. Later she comments that her brother Kit had taken up the violin, and it suited him perfectly.

Christmas meant the gathering together of the large family despite the snow, sleet and rain. Excitedly Mahala writes, "John Plank is here... [H]e and Kit took the carriage and went for Ike... I suppose John is somewhere between here and Chicago, on his way home... After supper, -- Little did I imagine when I wrote that last line, who was on his way

home in this storm! The girls were ironing, and the boys sitting round the table... when footsteps were heard on the porch, and then the door opening and somebody walked right in. 'O, Lee', 'You dear old Lee', who was living in Missouri. What a joyful holiday that must have been.

Agriculture was not a sure thing given the vicissitudes of the elements. Crop failures occurred, and money was scarce. Mahala wistfully wishes that father could get out of debt for once. In an early entry, she says "the 'men folks' are very busy making hay. That is the only crop that the chinch bugs have left over. Father has no wheat, oats, barley, or corn, worth mentioning. 'There's one good thing,' said the girls, 'There won't be any big dinners and suppers to cook, and no piles of dishes to wash.' I call that looking at the bright side." Illness and death were a constant part of their life. 'Last night Phebe and Mary were watching with Mary Joder. She is very low, -- lingering out the last stages of that "death in life" consumption.' Mahala's father died of the same disease after a long illness, described alternately as rheumatism, intermittent fever and the ague. Elias' widow Catherine died a few years later of malarial fever, another disease plaguing the prairie. I remember hearing that in Missouri the bottle of quinine was always on the table at mealtime.

After five years, Mahala's journal ends. Perhaps it was that she had told her story. The family had grown up, moved away, and now there were only mother and Mary beside herself. A neighbor, Joseph Swartzendruber is hired to run the farm and eventually, he and Mary are married. There is a new baby, and the cycle begins again. Her last entry, "'And he took a little child and set it in the midst'. Therefore, all the family love clusters about, and centers in the baby... I have something to think of and something to do that is worthwhile. I helped to make her little clothes, and I rock her more than anyone. You can't rock a baby without singing for it, and you don't want to sing a baby to sleep with nonsensical songs. Nothing is nice enough but hymns, and you can't feel cross or have the blues while singing 'Ninety and Nine' or 'Heavenly Home'. Mahala dies a few years later in 1879, four days after her 29th birthday. We are blessed to have this document, such a rare and intimate glimpse into the life of a young woman of that era. Mary saved the journals through her moves to Missouri and Oregon keeping them private until her death. Several years later they were transcribed for all the family to cherish. One thinks how easily they could have been destroyed. Once Mahala left them on the table to be picked up by an uncle who started reading aloud. Mary said she would burn them if Mahala didn't keep them in a safe place.

In 1869 the oldest son of Elias, Jonathan, his wife, Barbara, and their two sons traveled by wagon 600 miles southwest to Dade County, Missouri to an Amish settlement to begin a new life. The journey took somewhat longer than expected as the result of an accident where baby John Jay fell from the wagon, the wheel running over his head. He recovered, and the family was soon settled in a new colony where Jonathan worked for a bachelor neighbor breaking the prairie and planting crops on new sod. About 1871, his brother Levi joined him with a plan of joining forces, renting land and working together at whatever came their way. Lee traveled back to Illinois, claimed another Frey sister, Jacobine, and brought her to their new home. The two families lived and worked together for about 10 years, living on a rented farm of about 120 acres. The story is told that the wives who

were sisters, wore the wooden spoon for stirring mush down to a point since one was left-handed and the other right. In 1874 Asa Yoder and family joined the others, and about 1881 the Joe Schwartz's move made the migration to Missouri complete.

The families bought farms, but the crops were poor, and drought worsened. There was only one big wheat year in the 18 years from 1870-1888. They had reached a point where it was time to look for another home to raise their large families and achieve any degree of prosperity. In 1888 Will Yoder (Asa's son) and Joe Schwartz made a trip into Nebraska and South Dakota to see whether the farming conditions might not be better, but their report was discouraging, so the families stayed on for several years. Then Mary Schwartz contacted her Aunt Catherine Lantz who came to Oregon a decade before and after several visits to the Willamette, the Yoders in Missouri caught the "Oregon Fever." Within two years the families had all moved and all that remained of their Missouri years today is four tombstones in the Greenwood-Kistler Cemetery near Golden City, marking the graves of three babies who died probably of a scarlet fever epidemic and a young child.

Sources:

Steven R. Estes *A Goodly Heritage: A History of the North Danvers Mennonite Church*, Mennonite Press, Inc.: North Newton, Kansas, 1982.

Mahala L. Yoder, *Personal Journal 1871-1876*, an unpublished manuscript transcribed in 1942

Steven R. Estes and Myrna Park "Catherine Stucky Frey Yoder (1810-1811)": Part III and IV, *Illinois Mennonite Heritage* June and September 1992.

Orlando Perry Yoder "The Yoders in Missouri" an unpublished manuscript transcribed in 1976

Joel E. Daniels is great-grandson of Jonathan S. Yoder

Pictures and Captions submitted by Joel E. Daniels



Yoder Mill, before 1900. On the same site as the current Yoder Mill. Probably a Sunday afternoon. Everyone is dressed up and some of the boys have bicycles, including a high-wheeler.

Pictures and Captions submitted by Joel E. Daniels

SPRING MEETING

Our spring meeting will be held Sunday afternoon, March 17, 2002, 2:30 p.m. at the Albany Mennonite Church.

Our speaker will be Helen Grace Lescheid of Abbotsford, British Columbia. Her topic will be "Lead Kindly Light."

Mrs. Lescheid was among the multitudes who were forced from their homes in eastern Europe during World War II. She has vividly documented the story of her family's escape to the West in her book "Lead Kindly Light," which is reviewed below. Copies of this book will be available for sale at the meeting.

Come and bring a friend. The meeting is open to all.

BOOK REVIEW

Lead Kindly light by Helen Grace Lescheid, 1999

"Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me." Psalm 43: 3a.

Agnes (Neta) Loewen was born in the Chortiza Mennonite colony in the Ukraine, during the Russian Revolution, As a girl she worked on a Soviet collective farm (Kalkhoz). In 1931 she was one of thirty youthful Mennos baptized by Pastor Aaron Toews who not many years later was banished to Siberia. She and her family endured Stalin's famine of 1932-33. All the farm animals as well as pets and even mice in her village were eaten. She thought she would die of starvation.

Neta married Isaac in 1934 at her home church. It was the last service ever held in the Neuendorf Mennonite Church. The next week it became a Solviet granary. Next came the Stalin purges. Men, husbands disappeared with a dreaded knock on the door in the middle of the night. Would she lose Isaac?

Next came the invading German army and occupation. Would they finally be liberated from communism? By this time Neta was mother to four children. Isaac was drafted as a translator in the Nazi army. He was on the eastern front and seldom came home. After Stalingrad the Germans retreated. Nata's Neuendorf village was evacuated in 1943. She and her four small children fled for their lives. Refugees in Poland, Austria, and Germany from '43-'49, at times enduring untold suffering. Other times experiencing unexpected mercies and favors from strangers. Earlier, as a young woman undergoing pain and trials in the Ukraine, she had a vision of a kind Light Illuminating her path and saving her family. God would lead and care for her. And He certainly did in the end. Many times though she was discouraged and spent, but kept the faith.

In Austria completely separated from her people, she thought the only Mennonite in that country, she managed to feed her family by working at odd jobs. Then out of the blue Art Voth from the MCC found her and helped locate her mother, sister, and other relatives who were in other refugee camps in Germany. Finally in 1949 she and her children immigrated to Canada. Many new, big adjustments were faced again. Neta is now 89 years old and lives in Abbotsford, B.C. Her daughter, Lena is the author of this book. Another daughter is married to OSU History Prof. and lives in Corvallis.

Was Neta ever reunited with Isaac? This is powerful book you can't leave alone once you start reading. A copy, donated by Clif Kenagy, is in our AMC library. One last thought: If you have ever felt life was unfair, or if you think we and our children in this country are not soft, pampered, and assuming then read this book.

by Ray Kauffman

IN MEMORIAM

Katie (Yoder) Lind died at her home at McMinnville, Oregon, August 14, 2001, following a short illness. Death was due to bone cancer plus other complications.

Katie was 86 years old, having been born July 5, 1913 near Wellman, Iowa, the oldest child and only daughter of Chris J. and Mary (Miller) Yoder. She married Marcus Lind June 20, 1965, becoming his third wife. Marcus preceded her in death July 3, 1995. Her parents and younger brother, Curtis Yoder also preceded her in death. She was survived by one brother, Harold, of Wellman, Iowa and Marcus' children: Loren Lind of Toronto, Ontario; Mary Lind of Corvallis and Gerald of McMinnville who passed away December 14, 2001.

Katie was a multi-talented person who served her Lord and church in many ways: Sunday school and day school teacher, wife of pastor and bishop, speaker on many different occasions, writer, to name just a few. Katie was a story teller, loved her family and friends and liked to talk about them and tell of their experiences. She wrote a book about the history of the Amish Mennonites in her native Johnson, Iowa and Washington counties of her native Iowa. "From Hazelbrush to Cornfields," c1994 by the Mennonite Historical Society of Iowa. [The remaining copies of the book that Katie had have been given to OMHGS and are available at \$38.00 each with the proceeds being designated for furnishings for hoped-for new space for the archives and library. Contact any of the Executive Committee to obtain a copy.] She was also writing the story of her Yoder family and we hope it will be published posthumously.

Katie and Marcus were members of OMHGS most of the time since 1991 until their deaths.

Daniel M. Widmer, a native Oregonian born at Lebanon on May 3, 1919, son of Daniel and Elfie (Yoder) Widmer, died quietly in his sleep at Dallas, Oregon November 26, 2001.

Dan also had served his Lord and his church in many capacities: Western Mennonite School Board, Mennonite Aid Plan, Hope Village Board, Mennonite Disaster Service and others. He spent time in Civilian Public Service as a young man during World War II.

November 23, 1946 Dan was married to Grace Miller of Milford, Nebraska. She preceded him in death March 25, 1995. Surviving are their five children: Gaylord, Judy, Carol, Ellen Larrew and Dale Classen and six grandchildren.

Dan was a member of OMHGS from the outset and served as the first secretary for the Society. He was interested and knowledgeable in church history and genealogy.

Max G. Yoder was born January 13, 1915 at Harper, Kansas to Hiram and Rhoda (Shenk) Yoder and died October 18, 2001 at his home in Albany, Oregon. Max married Iris Wolfer December 24, 1939. She survives along with their 8 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Max gave many years to the service of the Lord as an ordained minister and bishop in the Mennonite Church, serving churches at Nampa, Idaho, and Sheridan and Grants Pass in Oregon. He was also instrumental in the development of Western Mennonite School and served on other conference committees and boards. Mission work was dear to his heart.

Max and Iris supported OMHGS by their membership for the past several years and with donations to the archives.



J. S. Yoder Family: Taken in the 1890's.
 Back row: Aaron, Petty, John Jay, Louis, Rosa
 Front Row: Albert, Ralph, Jonathan Samuel Yoder, Nellie, Barbara Fry Yoder.
 (Nellie was born in 1886 and was probably about 8 years old)
 Pictures and Captions submitted by Joel E. Daniels

Meet Our New Librarian

Charity Kropf who has served faithfully as librarian for the past several years has stepped down in favor of Violet Burley who has consented to take over. Charity has spent many hours organizing the library, cataloging books and trying to figure how best to use our limited space to accommodate our expanding collection of both books and pamphlets and periodicals. Her work is much appreciated. Charity continues as a member of the Society and will be helping out as she can with the library work. She lives in Hope Village in Canby, near an older sister and younger brother.

Violet has been a member of the Society since 1992 and has done extensive research on her Conrad and allied families. She is retired from working in the Canby Public Library for a number of years. Her home is in Canby. Violet's husband, Marlin, died in a motorcycle accident on September 12, 1989. She is a mother of three sons and two daughters and grandmother of two.

Welcome, Violet, as our librarian.

WE HAVE A NEW EDITOR

In our last issue we announced the sudden resignation of our editor, Suzanne Roth, due to health issues. Sue had served faithfully since December 1996. We thank her for her services during that time.

Our new editor is Ronald Diener. He is active in genealogy research, having put together an extensive account of his Diener family; interested in history; computer literate and willing to take on the job! I will let him introduce himself and tell us all a bit more of his interests and goals for the Society. Welcome Ron.
 OMHGS Executive Committee by Margaret Shetler, secretary

My name is Ronald G "Ron" Diener. I have lived in the Woodburn-Hubbard area for the past 20 years with, "Beth," my wife of 32 years, Oregon has been my home since I was three years old, except 6 years residency in Canada doing VS work.

My interest in genealogy began about 1980 and I started collecting information about my own ancestry. In 1990 I got my first computer and began to transfer genealogical information to digital form. Today I have about 1/4 million names in my database.

I have recently traveled to Missouri, Illinois, Indiana and Pennsylvania to get closer to my roots, and hope to soon publish a book on the Moses M. Diener family.

Favorite involvements or mine are: My grandchildren, My computer work, Genealogy/History and Family Reunions
 I hope you will share pictures and other Mennonite History with the Newsletter so we can share with others
 See the bottom of page 2 for contact information