

Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage



Volume 43, Number 4

October 2020



MCC Centennial 1920–2020

Contributors to this Issue



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Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage (ISSN: 0148-4036) is the quarterly magazine of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602. Periodicals postage paid at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602-1499. Address changes should be forwarded to the circulation manager six weeks in advance.

This magazine focuses on the historical background, religious thought and expression, culture, and family history of Mennonite-related groups originating in Pennsylvania. Articles are annotated and indexed in *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life* and *Genealogical Periodical Annual Index*. Views expressed in *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage* are not necessarily those of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society.

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Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage is printed by Executive Printing, Inc., Elm, Pennsylvania. The body text is 10.5-point Palatino. Type and graphic elements are electronically assembled on an Apple iMac computer using InDesign CC and Adobe Photoshop CC. Halftones are scanned on a Toshiba e-Studio 2830C scanner. The text paper is Husky Opaque Smooth Offset White. The cover paper is 65-pound Springhill Ivory smooth. Issues are printed on a Heidelberg Press and Canon Image Press.

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Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage



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ON THE COVER

Pax building team in Greece was involved in helping people in the Panayitsa region by building an experimental farm and other development projects. Pax Service began as a way to meet the housing crises following World War II. Conscientious objectors served in Pax as an alternative to military service from 1951 to 1975.

Left to right: Norman Kennel, Iowa; Chester Kurtz, Morgantown, Pennsylvania; Ernest Steffen, Apple Creek, Ohio; Panayitsa village president; Robert Stauffer, Lancaster, Pennsylvania; Luke Martin, New Holland, Pennsylvania; Panayitsa friend of the Pax men: Demetrius Strangelis, Nettie Redekopp, Winkler, Manitoba, our Panayitsa MCC patron; Donald Schierling, North Newton, Kansas; Alexander Mavrides, Salonika, Greece, our Panayitsa interpreter; John Jantzen, Plymouth, Nebraska; Loyal Klassen, Mountain Lake, Minnesota; David Peachey, Belleville, Pennsylvania (photo provided by Luke Martin)



For one hundred years, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has served “In the name of Christ” worldwide. MCC’s ministry has blessed people and communities. In its centenary year, it is important also to note how MCC has had a positive and transformative impact on the families and congregations “back home.” Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, is one Mennonite community that has been blessed and transformed by MCC.

Dear Ones Back Home

By Joe Miller

On a cold February 1949 evening, the New Holland Mennonite Church youth gathered in Lancaster County to hear the young adult Frank Shirk share about his time with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in Europe. Recently returned home after serving with MCC for five years, Shirk was sharing in his home congregation.

A 1946 high school graduate and conscientious objector to war, Shirk left New Holland to serve in Civilian Public Service (CPS). He surprised folks back home when he served two more years as an MCC Reconstruction and Transport Unit (RTUF) volunteer in Europe after finishing his CPS service rather than returning to New Holland, Pennsylvania.

Now, on that cold winter evening, February 11, 1949, not only was Shirk home from his European MCC service, he had his Alsatian Mennonite bride, Erica Hege, with him. Likely, the Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC) folks of Groffdale and Weaverland Districts were as eager to meet Erica Hege Shirk as they were to hear the “hometown boy” sharing about his travels and service with MCC. For the rural and settled Mennonites of Lancaster County, one of their own having traveled the world as he served the church and married a European was a phenomenon not to be missed.¹

Most of the people in the New Holland and Weaverland community had direct ancestral roots in the county that went back well over two hundred years. Generation after generation had farmed and pros-

pered on the rich and fertile limestone soil of the Earl Townships in Lancaster County.

MCC service workers were slowly and incrementally transforming Lancaster County Mennonites. MCC’s Pax program would take, for the first time, significant numbers of young Mennonites worldwide. Initially, these Mennonites from Lancaster County volunteered in Europe, and later to other countries, in Pax service. MCC’s fifth and final goal for its Pax program was to positively impact families and congregations from which the Pax service workers originated.

The goal was “to bring to the church constituency a greater consciousness and fuller realization of the suffering and hopelessness found in the world, thus helping Americans be better stewards of their spiritual opportunities and abundance of material wealth.”²

There was a great difference between the professional missionary and the Pax program and other MCC service opportunities. In Pax, “ordinary people in the pew” could participate in actually making a difference in people’s lives. It was one thing to hear reports of seasoned and mature missionaries share about their work. It was quite another thing to hear about the ministry of a young person sharing in church. “I could do that,” was a paradigm shift for Mennonites in Lancaster County. In telling the Pax program’s story, Urie Bender shared how an ordinary Mennonite young adult realized that he could also serve with MCC. This epiphany is just one example that was repeated time and again in church settings in Lancaster County.

1. Email, Luke S. Martin to Joe Miller, June 30, 2020. See also, Darvin L. Martin, *A People on the Way: History of the New Holland Mennonite Church* (New Holland, PA: New Holland Mennonite Church, 1997), 78-81.

2. Calvin W. Redekop, *The Pax Story: Service in the Name of Christ 1951–1976* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2001), 129.



Erica and Frank's wedding photo in the afternoon after their church wedding at the Geisberg Mennonite Church in France. Frank scraped together enough money to hire a French tailor to make a Lancaster Conference plain suit. After the Shirks arrived in the United States, they had a church wedding at the New Holland Mennonite Meetinghouse. Frank Shirk was ordained as a minister at New Holland on December 31, 1958. (photo, Sylvia E. Shirk)

"Early in the Pax program, when I was quite young, Ken Imhoff and Harold Neuman visited our community. They had just returned from Pax. I don't know where they served. I can't recall whether they had slides or not. Nor can I remember much of what they said. But the fact that they, as young men, had been able to do something worthwhile made a tremendous impression on me. I couldn't get over the realization that ordinary persons, like these two could make a significant contribution to people."³

This article posits the argument that the sending families and congregations of MCC service workers who remained at home in Lancaster County were also changed and shaped by MCC staff and service workers.⁴

Urie Bender caught in one phrase the reality for Mennonites going on MCC service assignments. Bender calls MCC assignments "the risk of service." Bender's book, *Soldiers of Compassion*, recounts the testimonies of Pax workers. Because of an MCC assignment, provincialism is swept away, there is less focus on materialism, more commitment to helping hurting and suffering people, increased self-confidence, deeper faith in Jesus, greater commitment to

the church, and determination to help the church at home grow in faithfulness.⁵

In a 1965 study on service and the Mennonite Church, one important value was how church members engaged in voluntary service benefited their home congregations.

"Voluntary service seeks to strengthen and enrich the life and service of home congregations, through the spiritual revitalization of the life of volunteers. By providing a resource of personnel motivation, widened vision, some experience, and a sharpened sensitivity to human needs, voluntary service seeks to assist indirectly in the mission and outreach of the local congregation and the larger mission of the church."⁶

Inter-Mennonite organizations and Lancaster Mennonites

The first significant inter-Mennonite relief efforts that Lancaster people joined was sponsoring Russian and Prussian Mennonites to immigrate to the United States. Driven by John F. Funk, Mennonites across the United States and Canada felt deep empathy for their suffering fellow Mennonites who were being coerced into military service by the imperial powers of Russia and Prussia. Mennonites in Lancaster County raised significant sums of money to help their fellow Anabaptists flee the Russian empire and bring them primarily to the United States.

Preacher Amos Herr served as the chair for the Lancaster Russian Aid Committee. John Shenk, who lived along the Little Conestoga River and the Marietta Pike, served as secretary of the Pennsylvania chapter of the Russian Emigration Fund. Lancaster County Mennonites' assistance to their European sisters and brothers to escape mandatory military service paved the way for what would become the Mennonite Central Committee in 1920.

Mennonite leaders in Lancaster had not forgotten the help they received from Dutch Mennonites in the eighteenth century for their migration from Europe to the British colony of America. Thus, Lancaster County strongly supported the nineteenth-century relief effort to bring Russian Mennonites to the United States. Importantly, Lancaster folks were supportive as long as the effort did not involve evangelizing, something in which "worldly churches" were involved. Twenty-two years later, Lancaster Conference tentatively began mission work. Notably, this Lancaster mission effort, which would become

3. Urie A. Bender, "The Prophetic Gift of MCC," *Soldiers of Compassion* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1969), 242. See also "Non-professional Missionaries," Wilfred J. Unruh, A Study of Mennonite Service Programs, Unpublished (Elkhart, IN: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1965), A-81.

4. MCC is not the only organization that has helped to shape Lancaster County Mennonites into who they are today. Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), Eastern Mennonite University (EMU), Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), Brunk Revivals, Lancaster Mennonite schools, Mennonite Economic Association (MEDA), People's Place, Mennonite camps, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, and other organizations have also played a role in shaping Lancaster County Mennonites.

5. Unruh, "Non-professional Missionaries," A-31.

6. Bender, "The Prophetic Gift," 255-265.

Eastern Mennonite Missions (EMM), was not an inter-Mennonite project.⁷

Mennonite Relief Commission

Lancaster County Mennonites' involvement and commitment to MCC and one of its precursor organizations, Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers, was significant. In fact, Lancaster had a stronger commitment than any other region of Mennonites in the United States. The commission, recognizing Lancaster Conference's major role in financial support, met at East Chestnut Street Mennonite Church in January 1919. Two young Mennonite men from Ephrata Mennonite Church in Lancaster County were selected to be part of a nine-person team to serve in the Near East. The inter-Mennonite organization Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers was supported, managed, and staffed by various Anabaptist groups.⁸

The two young men from Lancaster County joined other Mennonites for work with a much larger quasi-governmental organization called Near East Relief (NER) dedicated to relieving suffering caused by the Armenian genocide by the Turkish Ottoman government.

David Zimmerman and Orie O. Miller sailed from New York City on the *Pensacola* on Saturday, January 25, 1919. Orie had grown up in northern Indiana in the home of the influential Bishop David D. Miller. Marrying Susie Elta Wolf and joining his father-in-law's successful shoe business had turned Orie into a Lancaster Conference Mennonite.

John L. Ruth offers a succinct description of Orie:

"During the months of the draft, the devout young newcomer [from northern Indiana] was rapidly earning a favorable impression with the Lancaster bishops. Having already served as a licensed minister in Michigan, he was a surprising combination of personal initiative and submission to church authority. So acceptable was this alumnus of a school the bishops deeply distrusted (Goshen College) that

when they decided to give the young Ephrata congregation its own resident minister in July 1918, Orie was allowed to be one of the candidates."⁹

Especially noteworthy are the letters and photographs sent home to friends and family in Lancaster County by Orie and David. The amazing descriptions to their Lancaster audience of their travels and the people along the way were unique. The folks in Lancaster often personally knew the writers, Miller and Zimmerman. Equally significant are the first-hand descriptions of the physical needs of people suffering from war and violence. One example is the letter David Zimmerman sent home to his childhood friend Elmer Metzler, a lifelong farmer and caretaker of the Metzler Mennonite Church.

Will try and give you a brief history of our work here in Syria, and our relation to it . . . the committee [Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers] cares for only the very poor, at present. Of course, there are thousands of these, who receive one meal a day and clothing. In all, they have nine thousand people . . . the only real need to be taken care of is the six orphanages which form the most interesting and worthy part of our work in Syria. Alone the American Committee [Mennonite Relief Commission] cares for about five thousand children . . . you can imagine the work and the money it takes to care for these poor creatures, a great many problems are involved that one does not think of at first, it takes food and clothing of which there seems to be no end. Always there are some sick and then others are coming in. [There are also children who] are claimed by a mother who thought her child was dead. So, the number is continually changing.¹⁰

David goes on to report where the other Mennonite workers are serving and describes visiting the Dead Sea, the Sea of Galilee, Damascus, and Jerusalem. The provincial world of Lancaster County Mennonites became a less inward-looking place.

Miller and Zimmerman's work in the Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers impacted not only the people in the Middle East but also the folks back home in Lancaster County.¹¹

One can safely assume that Elmer Metzler, working his farm just down Metzler Road from the Metzler

7. "Aiding the Russian Mennonite Immigrants," *Mennonite Research Journal* 15, no. 2 (April 1974): 22–23. See also, "To the Wheat Fields of Nebraska," *Mennonite Research Journal* 13, no. 2 (April 1972): 13, 22. Guy F. Hershberger, "Historical Background to the Formation of Mennonite Central Committee," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 44, no. 3 (July 1970): 220.

8. John Landis Ruth, *The Earth is the Lord's: A Narrative History of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 869–873. It would be worth studying the five Mennonites from Lancaster County who served with the American Friend's Service Committee in Relief and Reconstruction Work in the aftermath of World War I. Of special note is that Orie Miller's older brother Trueman served with the Friend's Relief work. Jacob B. Flory, Chester S. Graybill, Lloyd E. Hershey, Mervin S. Meyers, Walter N. Rutt, Ralph W. Snavely, and John S. Zimmerman participated in this service. *Mennonites in France in Reconstruction Work*, 1919, no title page.

9. Ruth, *Earth*, 868. See also Guy F. Hershberger, *Near East Relief*, preliminary draft. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 1, folder 1, MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

10. Letter, David Zimmerman to Elmer Metzler, June 8, 1919. Jane Metzler Zimmerman personal papers.

11. Other Mennonites who eventually served with the Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers from Lancaster County were Leon Myer (second group 1919 Samsun-Constantinople) and Roy E. Myer (fifth group 1920 Beirut). Hershberger, *Near East Relief*, preliminary draft, MCC Archives.

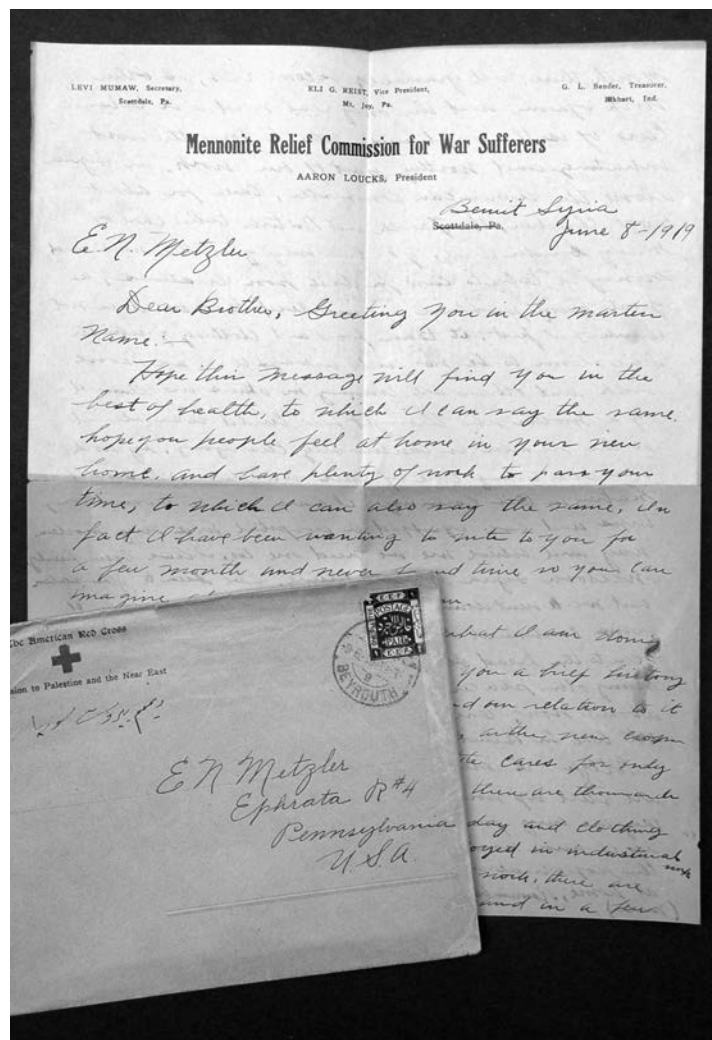
Orie O. Miller and Elta are on the left. Ernest is next to Orie, and their brother Trueman is on the far right, ca. 1910–20. (photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)



With Lois Wolf Miller, born September 23, 1916, Orie Miller at home in Akron, Pennsylvania. (photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)



Elmer and Clara Martin Metzler on the right when Elmer's childhood friend David Zimmerman served with the Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers. (photo, Jane Metzler Zimmerman)



David Zimmerman sent this letter from Syria to Elmer Nolt Metzler, his childhood friend and lifelong Lancaster County farmer. (photo, Jane Metzler Zimmerman)

Mennonite Meetinghouse, must have often prayed for his friend serving in Mennonite relief work so far away from Lancaster County. How many evenings after his farm chores must Metzler have returned to his friend's letters, postmarked from Syria. Picking the envelopes up, again and again, studying the stamps, and rereading the letters, realizing that by extension, he was also serving in Syria among people suffering from the devastation of World War I. And then the salutation from the June 8, 1919, letter postmarked, Beirut, Syria. "Remember me to all at home. Your brother in faith, David."¹²

It wasn't only through personal letters to family and friends that David Zimmerman and Orie Miller kept Lancaster County Mennonites engaged in the Mennonite relief efforts. David's father, Martin M. Zimmerman, was so enthusiastic about his son's involvement in the Mennonite Relief Commission's work that he submitted most of David's letters home to the weekly *New Holland Clarion* newspaper.

David began sending letters home every few weeks, filled with details and observations gleaned from his diary entries. He had picked up a box camera before leaving New York and was often able to send snapshots along with his letters. This correspondence proved endlessly fascinating to David's Lancaster relatives, most of whom hadn't traveled more than a couple hundred miles in any direction.¹³

That two local young men from Lancaster, who were part of the first workers with the Mennonite Relief Commission, must have induced Mennonites in Lancaster County to subscribe to the denominational publication, the *Gospel Herald*. The motivation was to stay current with the regular "Relief Notes" that maintained a steady stream of updates on the Relief Commission's work. There might have been a reticence to subscribing to the *Gospel Herald* by many Lancaster Conference Mennonites, who considered the magazine too liberal. But there was the stronger pull to stay prayerfully informed about the Relief Commission's work. The sturdy Mennonite farming families must have also found the adventures of the Mennonite Relief Commission a welcome diversion from the long hard days of agricultural life.

In a remarkable April 8, 1919, report from Beirut, Orie Miller casts a vision for what would become MCC. The Relief Commission already foretold of the wide Anabaptist support from which MCC

would benefit. The Old Order Amish, Defenseless Mennonites, General (Central) Conference of Mennonites, Lancaster Mennonite Conference, Franconia Mennonite Conference, and other Anabaptist groups supported the Relief Commission. The Relief Commission had its eye on helping Mennonites in Ukraine, but that would not be possible until the Russian Revolutionary War was settled.¹⁴

In the report, one can see a glimmer in Miller's eye of a future MCC as he documents that the Middle East is already so full of western mission groups that there is almost no room for the Mennonites. He also notes that the other western Christians' intense evangelization is not the Mennonite way of serving people. Miller makes several salient points synthesized into three recommendations of the Mennonite Central Committee as we know it today.

1. The Middle East is filled shoulder-to-shoulder with various western Christian mission groups. Anabaptists valued winning people for Christ but did not want to start a Mennonite church in the Middle East. Mennonites should see how they can work with the existing church and support their mission efforts.

2. Mennonites should remain involved in the Middle East because the physical needs are overwhelming. World War I caused profound dislocation and destruction in the lands that had been the Ottoman Empire for six hundred years in the Levant.

3. Miller suggested that Russia would be a better location for Mennonites to put most of their energy and resources. He observed that other western mission organizations were not working in Russia, one of the three empires brought down by World War I.

He noted that Russia was a much more rural setting that would suit Mennonites more naturally than the often urban Middle East. Orie Miller wrote on April 8, 1919:

It seems to me that the most logical solution would be to look out at a different field. The conditions that prevent us from doing the work here that we had in mind do not necessarily apply to other places. They are certainly not true of Russia. As a mission field, that country has not yet been occupied by the Protestant churches. It was not possible under the old system [the Russian Empire] of government. People who have recently come from there seem to think that the conditions that have made Russia dissatisfied with her government also affect their attitude toward the Czar's religion. As a field where reconstruction is necessary, and a more needy one could hardly be imagined. Russia is largely, made up of rural people, a

12. Letter, David Zimmerman to Elmer Metzler, June 8, 1919.

13. Philip Ruth, *O'er Stormy Seas: The Far-Flung Family of Mart and Mattie Zimmerman* (Denver, PA: David L. Hollinger, 2009), 133.

14. Hershberger, "Historical Background," MQR, 235-236.



Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers workers gathered along the Sea of Galilee in October 1919. Left to right: B. Frank Stoltzfus, Ernest E. Miller, William Stoltzfus, Silas Hertzler, Jesse Smucker, David Zimmerman, Amos M. Eash, Chris L. Graber, Orie Miller. (photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)



Mennonite Relief Commission for War Sufferers in their uniforms. (photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)

Bottom: The family seeing Orie Miller off once again at the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, about 1930. (photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)

class to whom the doctrines of simple living, for which we stand, appeal more strongly in America than any other. The climate does not have the disadvantage of the India field. A few of us had the Russian field in mind, before the one we are now in was thought of. Up to the present time, it has been impossible to get into the country. That is a condition that will likely change very soon.¹⁵

Orie Miller becomes a “Mennonite Celebrity”

Two major life-altering events grew out of Orie’s service in Beirut with the Mennonite Relief Commission. First, he honed his leadership skills. During his time in the Middle East, he learned the exceptional management skills he would use to empower Mennonites to serve others through evangelism, relief work, and other church organizations dedicated to serving people. And he learned how to think big. He would put these skills to use the rest of his life. Prov-



identially, Orie was mentored in high-level administration during that formative season by Major James H. Nichol, chief of Syrian relief operations, with the Near East Relief agency.

Second, he became well known and respected, especially throughout the (Old) Mennonite Church. But Mennonites of all stripes wanted to hear Orie speak about his adventures. People in Lancaster County experienced through Orie, now “one of their own,” a vision for how they could markedly expand their evangelizing and relief work worldwide. It was a special moment of Lancaster Mennonites’ readiness and Orie’s experience and skill that came together.

15. Report, Orie O. Miller, Beirut, April 8, 1919. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 1, folder 1, MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

Mennonite Central Committee is born

When Orie finally returned to Lancaster County and his home in Akron, he began an extensive speaking schedule in Mennonite congregations. John E. Sharp captures the keen interest people had in hearing from Orie, not just by Lancaster people but by the entire church.

At home, Orie found himself something of a celebrity. In the next sixteen weeks, he spoke eighteen times to audiences from Akron to Middlebury, Indiana, and Knoxville, Tennessee, to Ocean Grove, New Jersey. His diaries, letters, and articles for the church press had made his a household name. He also had opportunity to speak to other audiences, but when invited by the NER [American Committee for Relief in the Near East] to speak to other groups, Orie said, as he would so often in the future, that his first obligation was to the congregations “of my own church.”¹⁶

The organization he had served under as a Mennonite Relief Commission worker in the Near East Relief had begged him to accept a five-year contract as one of their top leaders. It was a difficult decision, but Orie turned down their offer. He was committed to his people—the Mennonites.

When the Mennonites and Amish of the United States and Canada decided they must do something concrete to help fellow Mennonites in Ukraine (Russia), multiple Mennonite relief and missions organizations wanted to be involved. There was a meeting with thirteen representatives from five different branches of Anabaptists who gathered in Elkhart, Indiana, on July 27, 1920.

The group agreed that because of his experience with the Relief Commission, Orie was the person to lead a team to investigate Ukraine’s situation. But the group was unable to proceed because none of the current relief and missions groups were unanimously accepted to be the lead organization. Finally, a decision was made to form one central committee that would have shared ownership.

P. C. Hiebert, from the Mennonite Brethren, was asked to be the chair of the central committee, Levi Mumaw, from the (Old) Mennonite Church, was secretary-treasurer, and Maxwell Kratz, from the General Conference, served as vice-chair.

Orie would be the leader of the group to travel to Ukraine. Arthur Slagel and Clayton Kratz traveled with him.¹⁷

In the mid-1920s, when Russian relief efforts were ending, the question was posed if there should be an ongoing inter-Mennonite relief ministry. Orie Miller, P. C. Hiebert, and others thought a permanent and ongoing institution that would take over the “temporary” work of the Mennonite Central Committee was indeed needed and would be supported. At a December 30, 1924, meeting, it was decided to create a permanent inter-Mennonite relief organization called the American Mennonite Relief Commission. The Lancaster Mennonite Conference (LMC) and Russian Mennonite groups pledged to support and join the American Mennonite Relief Commission.

But the (Old) Mennonite Church refused to join. Thus, the “temporary” Mennonite Central Committee continued to be the inter-Mennonite relief organization. MCC in the late 1920s and much of the 1930s was nonfunctioning.¹⁸ Edgar Stoesz, a long-time MCC administrator, says of those quiet years and then a new ministry season:

MCC was essentially in recess during the 1930s. It had neither a permanent staff nor a headquarters. The office moved from Scottdale, Pennsylvania, to Akron, Pennsylvania, in 1935 when Orie O. Miller was named executive secretary.

As the 1930s were coming to a close, Mennonites felt threatened by war clouds in Europe that culminated in World War II. To populate the United States military forces, the Selective Service System was brought into being. When its long arm reached into rural Mennonite communities, it found draft-age men who refused to go to war. They were assigned to Civilian Public Service camps, administered by MCC, scattered across Canada and the United States.¹⁹

The seeds of a calling

That cold and snowy 1949 evening at the New Holland meetinghouse, fourteen-year-old Luke Martin and his sixteen-year-old sister, Mary Martin (Zehr), were soaking in Frank Shirk’s stories about serving in faraway Europe. As Shirk showed slides and talked about serving in MCC’s work to rebuild a war-torn and broken Europe, the germ of a calling to also serve with MCC was sown into teenager Luke Martin’s spirit. The possibility of doing something other than staying home and farming the verdant ground of Lancaster County began tugging him toward another

16. John E. Sharp, *My Calling to Fulfill: The Orie O. Miller Story* (Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2015), 98.

17. Paul Erb, *Orie O. Miller: The Story of a Man and an Era* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1969), 143–144.

18. John Sharp, *My Call*, 160–162. See also Edgar Stoesz, “MCC: In Giving, We Have Received,” *Mennonite World Review* (April 9, 2020).

19. Edgar Stoesz, “MCC: In Giving, We Have Received,” *MWR* (April 9, 2020). <http://mennoworld.org/2020/04/09/the-world-together/mcc%E2%80%88in-giving-we-have-received/>



Winifred Friesen hanging up Pax t-shirts in Algeria in 1965. She and husband, Alvin Friesen of Dinuba, California, were MCC relief workers 1962–1965. MCC's Pax program provided conscientious objectors in the United States an alternative to military service, and, in post-war Europe, helped to rebuild war-torn areas. Almost all participants were men, but a handful of women also volunteered in Pax locations. By the time the program stopped sending volunteers in 1976, about 1,180 men had served in nearly forty countries worldwide. (photo, MCC, Bruce Leatherman)

course. If a Shirk could follow a different path, maybe a Martin could too!

Luke reflected on how God opened the way for him to break with generations of Martins, who had lived and farmed in the Weaverland and New Holland community.

Why did I go into the MCC Pax service five years later? No one would have anticipated that. My father held the view that post-elementary education was not necessary for farmers, and that "higher education" was inimical to Christian faith, so I did not attend high school.

When I turned eighteen, I registered with the Selective Service System as a conscientious objector to war. Working both at home and on a neighboring chicken farm, I secured an agricultural deferment. When a neighbor farm man, a bit older than I, was drafted and sent to Korea in 1953, I decided it was not right for me to stay at home and informed the draft board that I was giving up my deferment.

After I was reclassified, I was ordered to perform 1-W service in place of military service. Not wanting to work in a hospital near home, I went

to the MCC's Akron office on February 25, 1954, to see what they had to offer. I was willing to consider going to Germany in an MCC Pax building unit. This would cost \$1,800, and neither the Lancaster Mennonite Conference [LMC] nor the New Holland [Mennonite



Luke Martin's photo for his first passport. (photo, Paul Russel)

Church] congregation had any program to help support this at the time. I also learned of a possible opening in Kings View, the MCC-related mental hospital in Reedley, California.

Ten days later, on March 8, I spent an evening with Frank Shirk, along with my younger brother, Aaron, and a close friend, Robert "Bert" Weaver from the Weaverland [Mennonite Church] congregation. That evening I wrote in my diary: "I have a big decision ahead of me. Shall I go to Germany or California? Or neither?" On April 6, I received a letter from the draft board wanting to know my plans. I called MCC Akron and learned the vacancy at Kings View was filled. "So, I guess (it's) PAX in Germany," I wrote in my diary. I cannot deny that the example of Frank Shirk might have been a factor.²⁰

Also serving those at home in Lancaster

It is often gratefully observed that MCC had a significant positive impact on people worldwide in its one hundred years of ministry. A much less celebrated MCC legacy is an often untold and underappreciated

20. Email, Luke Martin to Joe Miller, May 7, 2020. Martin worked in the construction unit in Backnang (near Stuttgart) from July 1954 until February 1956, then was assigned to Panayitsa, Greece, with several other Pax workers to build a dairy barn for Brown Swiss heifers. He was with the Greece Pax workers in Panayitsa to receive heifers as they were unloaded from the ship. Martin was then asked to stay and work with the Greece teams in Panayitsa and Tsaknos throughout the summer. Two other Lancaster Mennonites were part of those teams, Robert and Lemar Stauffer, and an Amish man, Omar Lapp. Martin worked briefly in southern Germany that fall, gathering food supplies from Mennonite *hofs* with Lucinda Snyder, then went to European Mennonite Bible School's three-month winter term (in Arisdorf that year before the Bienenberg was purchased). Finally, he returned home to New Holland in February 1957.

part of the MCC story. The transformational impact on the families and congregations, who sent out MCC workers, have themselves been powerfully shaped.²¹

At times, MCC's transformative impact on the folks back home in Lancaster County was welcomed and easily received. Other lessons growing out of MCC's work were, for the folks back home, stretching and even painful.

On the ground, the first-hand experiences of MCC service workers within the United States, Canada, and far-flung locations worldwide were especially impactful for the sending families and congregations in Lancaster County. The reports of MCC service received back home were made by trusted family and church members. The letters and photographs they sent home were treasured by the folks back home.

Yet, Hershey Leaman observed that when church workers returned for home visits, they often measured their words. What is the level of sharing that my people back home can or will try to integrate into their lives? Leaman talked about the "absorption capacity" of the folks back home. Leaman lamented that sometimes there was a feeling in the United States that other cultures didn't have anything to teach people in the United States.²²

The quiet *and* the wealthy in the land

Lancaster County Mennonites have had a reputation for being so deeply rooted that they find it nearly impossible to leave the county. One wonders why this rootedness has been so endemic.

Might it be that even considering leaving Lancaster County would stir up long-ago memories of ancestors casting themselves onto the ocean and setting sail to an unknown place called Pennsylvania?

21. I credit Walton N. Hackman (1937-1985) for alerting me to the reality of how Mennonite families and communities were shaped and transformed by sending their daughters and sons in MCC volunteer service assignments. Walton was a close friend and mentor. He served in various roles with MCC. When there was no one to manage the family farm, he returned home—to farming, to the land and community that had nurtured him, and that he loved. [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hackman,_Walton_N._\(1937-1985\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Hackman,_Walton_N._(1937-1985))

Credit also goes to Robert Rodgers, who served in Honduras through the MCC's Pax Program, 1968–1970. Bob wrote the most interesting letters home while serving with Pax. His letters were read during our worship services at the Whitestone Mennonite Church in Hesston, Kansas. I was in high school and found Bob's letters the best part of the worship. His letters described the people he worked with and gave us a glimpse into another culture. Bob's letters also were full of good humor. I remember feeling that his letters drew us closer to each other as a congregation as we listened to one of our own serving with MCC, closer to Bob serving far away in Central America, and closer to the Honduran people. Two years after Bob returned home, I, too, would go on an MCC assignment."

22. Interview, Hershey Leaman with Joe Miller, July 20, 2020.

Once on dry land and settled on the lush farmland of Lancaster County, might there have developed a culture resolved never again to venture forth?

Lancaster County Mennonites, for much of their three hundred years, have self-identified as the "Quiet in the Land." They have also been the wealthy in the land. Harnessing together a strong work ethic, the bountiful farmland, a community of mutual aid, and proximity to major markets was central to Lancaster County Mennonites' prosperity. Jacob B. Kauffman noted that it was not until the mid-twentieth century that Mennonites in the United States systematically included stewardship of money into their theology. This new financial stewardship focus dovetailed into MCC's enlarging vision and opportunity for Christian service.²³

An even greater sentiment

In the face of this settledness and prosperity, there was an even greater sentiment of sensing God's call to serve others in Christ's name. Thousands of Mennonites traveled the globe as they answered the call to serve with MCC. For one hundred years, MCCers from Lancaster County would have a tale or two to tell, to the folks back home. And for those who left the county, they were never the same. MCCers' experiences and stories, from around the globe, shaped Lancaster County Mennonites. When MCC service workers came home, their testimonies within their circles of family, friends, and congregations were spiritually and culturally leavening.

Robert Kreider, whose entire life was deeply interwoven with MCC, paints MCC's image as not just an organization serving hurting people in need of justice but also as an educational institution.

Many Mennonite volunteers to MCC service come from limited horizons of experience—lives bounded by a routine job and a small community. MCC service in mental hospitals, inner cities, or abroad opened up a strange, exciting new world that rocked them with culture shock. Some caught a vision for an alternative to a conventional, materialistic existence; some saw a reason for living other than money and the traditional rewards of success.

Some entered MCC service weary of their church, dubious of its relevance to our day's great issues—indifferent or alienated. Many discovered their Mennonite identity for the first time in the withdrawal experience of living apart from their home communities. They found a new sense of

23. Jacob B. Kauffman, "God's Managers," December 19, 2019, blog, *Anabaptist Historians: Bringing the Anabaptist Past into a Digital Century*.



Pax Tsaknos, Greece, harvest lunch with local workers, Luke Martin and Omar Lapp. (photo, Luke Martin)

worth, a new sense of mission, a new appreciation for their Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage.²⁴

This article underscores Kreider's thesis and adds that the "MCC education" was not just for those who served but also for the extended families, friends, and fellow church members back home. Admittedly, the folks back home had a much less immersive MCC education, but they did go to the MCC school through the lessons brought home by MCC workers.

Over the past one hundred years, Lancaster County parents, sisters, and brothers nervously packed their own bags and made trips worldwide to visit their MCC service workers. These pilgrimages from the settled and predictable village life of Lancaster County would never have taken place if "one of their own" had not gone out on an MCC assignment. These trips were powerfully transforming because the travel was not five-star curated tourist vacations.

Instead, family and friends visiting their MCC workers were "on the ground," meeting their MCC service workers' local colleagues and friends. They traveled, ate, and slept the local way and saw the world with new eyes. The visiting family and friends learned to know their MCC workers' host families



Kreider farmhouse near the village of Willow Street Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The date stone is 1817. Today this farmhouse is the golf pro shop for the DoubleTree Resort. This house is an ancestral home of Robert S. Kreider, quoted in this article. (photo, Joe Miller)

and communities on these visits. And they, too, saw their own extended families, villages, and congregations with new eyes after returning home.

Writing in 1970 at MCC's fiftieth anniversary, Robert Kreider reflected on MCC's impact on Mennonite congregations and how MCC volunteers enlarged the sending congregation's interests and vision.

It is also the story of the expanding interests of [the MCCer's] home congregation. The congregation must accommodate to the strange bride he brings home. The members see slides of faraway places in the church sanctuary. They send two carloads of men for a week of work in a disaster area in the deep South. A trainee from Germany works in the community and worships regularly with them. Three young people enter MCC overseas service. Parents of two volunteers take their first trip overseas to visit their children and also to visit the Holy Land—the tour arranged by MTS [Menno Travel Service]. The pastor travels to the Mennonite World Conference in Amsterdam, travel arrangements are made by MTS. The Women's Missionary Society is constantly working on clothing projects for MCC. A representative from Akron visits the community and takes orders for crafts in the self-help projects of Haiti and Jordan.²⁵

In his book, *A Vietnam Presence: Mennonites in Vietnam During the American War*, Luke Martin proved this article's point. Writing four decades after the war, he stated that EMM missionaries and MCC service workers in Vietnam were uniquely positioned to

24. Robert Kreider, "The Impact of MCC Service on American Mennonites," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 44, no. 3 (July 1970): 249. Robert Kreider (MCC) and Donald Jacobs (EMM) were the main visionaries for the Teachers Abroad Program (TAP), which began in East Africa in the 1960s. See Robert S. Kreider, *Coming Home: An Autobiography of my 1952-2011 Years* (North Newton, KS: Robert S. Kreider, 2012), 61-74, and Robert S. Kreider and Rachel Waltner Goossen, *Hungry, Thirsty, a Stranger: The MCC Experience* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1988), 98-105.

25. Kreider, "Impact," MQR: 252.



Pax volunteers. Left to right: Ken Von Gunten, Berne, Indiana; Stanley Gerber, Walnut Creek, Ohio; Gordon Walters, Etna Green, Indiana; Ken Hershey, Bird-in-Hand, Pennsylvania; Herman Zuercher, Wooster, Ohio; and Robert Beyeler, Wooster, Ohio, with their mopeds in Germany in 1960. Some of the mopeds had as many as five or six owners as Pax men after Pax men handed them down. Ervie Glick writes about buying and selling a moped during his Pax service, in *Letters Home*. Beyeler (right) served as a unit leader at the Pax house in Enkenbach. Volunteers in MCC's Pax program contributed muscle and man-hours so that Mennonite refugees could have new homes and new hope. (photo, MCC, Jim Juhnke)

speak about the Vietnam War's realities to the folks back home. In a church often fraught with strong disagreements regarding the Vietnam War, someone with on-the-ground experience in Southeast Asia was invaluable. "Many of the missionaries came from these congregations. Some of the missionaries were known personally, their message was more readily accepted; their concerns could not be easily dismissed."²⁶

MCC Pax program

Frank Shirk (RTUF) and then Luke Martin (Pax) were a part of one of the first international service programs of MCC that sent significant numbers of Lancaster County Mennonites overseas. Earlier, Mennonite young men and some women had left their Lancaster homes to serve in CPS. But it was the Pax program that introduced international service for significant numbers of Mennonites. And, ironically, this was brought on by the United States government's military draft.

The American writer Studs Terkel gathered the reminiscences of soldiers who served in World War II and heard that the war was a "good war" because, as one soldier remembered, "to see fascism defeated, nothing better could have happened to a human being."²⁷

For Amish, Mennonites, and Brethren people, saying no to participating in the so-called "good war"

had been extremely difficult. The anger of their neighbors tested Anabaptist Christians' conviction of being conscientious objectors.

It is not surprising that the Amish, Mennonite, and Brethren people had pent-up energy that had grown during a "good war" they could not support. There was a deeply felt desire to do something meaningful after World War II. Some relief work was mostly cottage industry. The pent-up energy to help others overflowed from Anabaptist communities into all manner of relief and rebuilding. Quilts, Christmas bundles, and clothing were collected and packed; meat was canned and shipped to Europe.²⁸

This first-ever largescale international experience by Mennonites from the United States would prove to have a significant impact on the communities and congregations that sent out their young adults for overseas service. Robert Mullet, who grew up in Dawson County, Montana, found an excellent word to describe what MCC service did for him and his home community. He called his MCC experience a leavening. "In my opinion, the significant effect of the Pax experience was more felt by the Pax personnel who went, and the 'leavening' influence of their home communities when they returned."²⁹

26. Luke S. Martin, *A Vietnam Presence: Mennonites in Vietnam During the American War* (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 2016), 283. See also chapter 22, "Public Statements Against the War," 197–204, for a study on Mennonites serving in Vietnam pushing the church back home to speak out forcefully against the war.

27. <https://www.amazon.com/Good-War-Oral-History-World-ebook/dp/B005LXC99G>.

28. MCC acknowledges their history with Old Order groups during World War II and into the 1960s was not especially supportive and respectful of Old Order people. Mennonite institutions generally assumed that Old Order young people would abandon Old Order life when they "saw a better way" as shown by Conference Mennonites. One senior Old Order Amish leader has recently said of his work with MCC that he always appreciates the respect he experiences today from MCC.

29. Redekop, *Pax Story*, 106.



Pax matron Anne Driediger, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, is amused as Pax man Elwin LeFevre, of Sterling, Illinois, looks to see what is cooking. In 1955, LeFevre was the unit leader and Driediger was matron at the Pax house in Bechterdissen, near Bielefeld, Germany, where Pax men were helping to build houses for refugee families. (photo, MCC)



On the left, Geraldine Ebersole with Palestinian refugee women in Jericho, West Bank, receiving layettes in 1951. MCC workers began a layette project for pregnant refugee women and gave guidance on caring for their babies. Myron and Geraldine Ebersole served as MCC relief workers in Jordan, 1950–1952. They oversaw the distribution of clothing, Christmas bundles, and school supplies. The Ebersoles were among the first MCC workers in Jordan after the war in 1948. Because of the abundant water supply, many refugees, fleeing Palestinian villages, went to Jericho where International Red Cross divided the refugees into four camps and set up tents for them. (photo, MCC)

Ervie L. Glick, who served in Pax from 1960 to 1962, declares in his letters home that Pax represented an opportunity for a Mennonite farm boy to come of age. “During two years of college, I met more newly returned Paxers, who not only told exhilarating stories of travel and cultural experience, but they exhibited a sense of world-mindedness and facility in new languages. I wanted that experience.”³⁰

Humanitarian reconstruction

First, there was a commitment by MCC’s Pax program to help rebuild the physical destruction of World War II. Tons of food and clothing were shipped from the United States and Canada to Europe and given out not just to Mennonites but also the general population.

MCC was also committed to building new homes for people displaced by the war. Thus, in 1951, MCC created the voluntary service Pax program that brought United States draft-age Mennonite and Amish

young men to Germany, Holland, and France to help rebuild the shattered countries.³¹

Rebuilding a commitment to Christian nonresistance

In the shadow of two horrible world wars, European Mennonites had experienced being on different sides of the wars, viewed each other as enemies, and served in opposing armies. After World War II, MCC’s second rebuilding project was to rekindle for European Mennonites a commitment to Christian peace.

MCC saw the possibilities of Anabaptist volunteers from the United States serving as witnesses of Anabaptist nonresistant faith to European Mennonites. Calvin Redekop, one of the MCC workers serving in Europe, remembered:

“The first [goal] was to provide a model for the emerging [general population’s] pacifist sentiment in Europe and the second to encourage Mennonites to begin to think of nonresistance as a viable option since [European] public opinion was beginning to turn toward denying war as the only way of solving world problems.”³²

Dutch, French, German, United States, and Canadian Mennonites began working together, not just rebuilding houses but also rediscovering their shared Anabaptist theological roots.

The Pax unit in Backnang, Germany, and their work in constructing housing units for war refugees also initiated activities for the refugees. Pax men and

30. Ervie L. Glick, *Letters Home: Memories of a Pax Boy*, Self-published, 2020.

31. MCC’s Reconstruction and Transport Unit (RTUF) ran from 1946 to 1948. The MCC program Pax ran from 1951 to 1976.

32. Redekop, *Pax Story*, 43.



Lois Martin (left) and Marian Friesen (back) chatted with a Greek woman (name unknown) at the creek while they washed their clothes in 1962. From New Holland, Pennsylvania, Martin assisted as a matron at the Pax demonstration farm in Aridea and did community work in nearby villages during her two terms with MCC, 1961–1963 and 1964–1966. From Steinbach, Manitoba, Friesen and husband, John Friesen, served with MCC in the European program from 1961 to 1963. (photo, MCC, Vernon Cross)



MCC Relief Worker Badge, Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection. (MCC Archives)

women helped form singing groups and offered religious, educational, and recreational programs.

In addition to engaging in their relief work, a handful of these men dug into the Anabaptist story in fresh ways. They found original records in European archives written in German, Dutch, French, Flemish, and Latin from the earliest years of Anabaptism. These scholars, known as the Concern Pamphlets Movement, began writing and publishing in English what they were discovering. Their research had a new and profound influence on what it meant to be a Mennonite in Europe, the United States, Canada, and eventually worldwide.³³

Another effort to rebuild a commitment to Christian nonresistance among European Mennonites was establishing Peace Camps. These youth and young adult camps usually ran as ten-day retreats and brought together different Mennonite groups with the goal of learning to forgive and trust each other.

33. Calvin Redekop writes that the *Concern Pamphlets Movement* is the name given to a series of pamphlets initiated by a group of young American Mennonite graduate students, relief workers, and missionaries who met in Amsterdam in 1952 to address issues confronting the Mennonite church in Europe...They felt led to further discussions focusing upon the condition of the American Mennonite church in relation to its founding principles as represented by the *Anabaptist Vision*. https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Concern_Pamphlets_Movement. The Concern Pamphlets Movement should not be confused with the "Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites."

MCC was determined to teach Mennonites from different cultures and nations to see their Christian faith, in an Anabaptist context, as foundational. The goal was to help European Mennonites see in their common Anabaptist faith and heritage something that was of greater importance than loyalty to country or ethnicity.³⁴

Additionally, MCC began an exchange effort, the Trainee Program (today IVEP), that brought European young adults to the United States and Canada for one-year of volunteer experience. Young adults from the United States and Canada, in turn, spent a

34. MCC's different efforts to rebuild Anabaptist values within the European Mennonites contained reciprocity. In the late nineteenth century, when Mennonites in the United States were, at times, indifferent toward Anabaptism, it was a German Mennonite who significantly helped to rekindle Anabaptist theology and practice. In 1887, twenty-year-old German Mennonite John L. Horsch arrived in the United States to escape German military service. Horsch wrote over two hundred articles on Anabaptism, Mennonite history, and doctrine in the Elkhart, Indiana, *Herold der Wahrheit*, the German edition of the *Herald of Truth*. A telling historical note is that Harold S. Bender, the author of what is often thought to be the seminal document, *The Anabaptist Vision*, married Elizabeth, the daughter of John and Christine Funk Horsch. It was Elizabeth who served for many years as the translator of original Anabaptist German documents into English. Additionally, Harold Bender, Cornelius Krahn, C. Henry Smith, and Melvin Gingerich's massive four-volume *The Mennonite Encyclopedia: A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement*, is an obvious English language stepchild of the earlier German, *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, co-edited by Christian Neff of the Weierhof, Germany, and Christian Hege of Frankfurt, Germany.



Pax man Kermit Yoder (right), of Goshen, Indiana, and MCC interpreter Alex Marvides visit with the unidentified wife of a farmer and their Brown Swiss cows in Greece ca. 1959. The calf was the second generation of those imported into Greece by MCC in 1956. The Lancaster Conference (Pennsylvania) Material Aid Committee purchased twenty Brown Swiss heifers to send to Greece in April 1956. Pax men worked with farmers in northern Greece to bring idle land back into cultivation and improve farming methods. They were also planning a project for livestock improvement and care, and the distribution of the heifers to Greek farmers was part of the project. (photo, MCC, Norman Wingert)



Pax matron Lois Martin (second from left), from New Holland, Pennsylvania, teaches sewing to young girls in Greece in 1963. Martin assisted in the matronship at the Pax demonstration farm in Aridea and did community work in nearby villages during her two terms with MCC, 1961–1963 and 1964–1966.

MCC's Pax program provided conscientious objectors in the United States an alternative to military service and, in post-war Europe, helped to rebuild war-torn areas. By the time the Pax program stopped in 1976, about twelve hundred men and a few women from the United States and Canada had served in nearly forty countries worldwide. (photo, MCC, Peter Dyck)

year as volunteers in European Mennonite communities in the Intermenno Program. The goal was to create strong Christian and Anabaptist links and shared values as a way of avoiding the lamentable reality of Mennonites from different countries seeing their fellow Anabaptist brothers and sisters as enemies.

Civilian Public Service

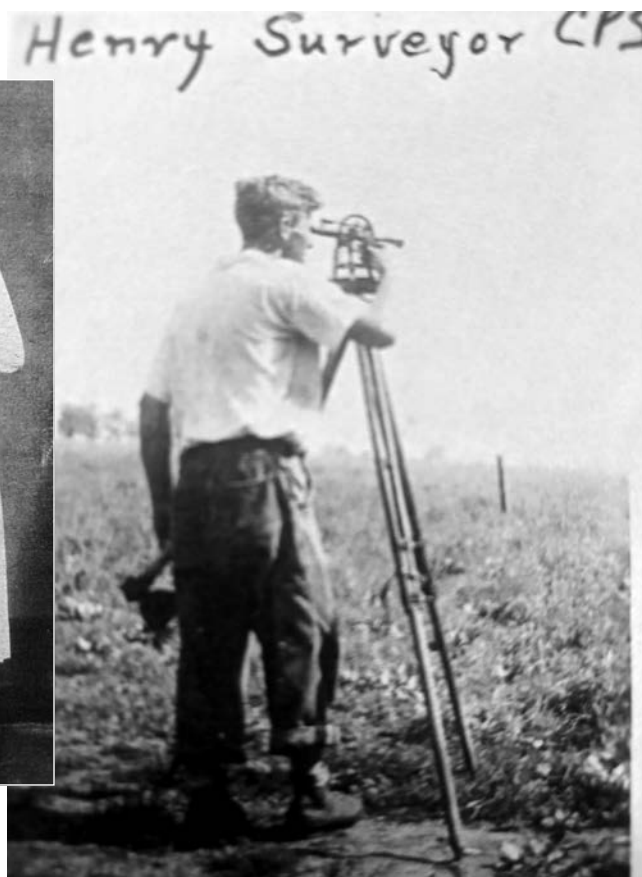
Henry H. Stauffer, of the Mount Joy Mennonite Church, was born in the shadow of World War I and married in the shadow of World War II. He was born forty-three days after the official entry of the United States into World War I in 1917. Twenty-four years later, he married Florence Miller of the Good Mennonite Church on November 15, 1941. Twenty-six days after their marriage, the United States was once again at war with Germany, and Henry was drafted. Any kind of normal married life would have to wait while he fulfilled his national duty by doing alternative service in the newly-formed MCC program called Civilian Public Service (CPS). Camp #24 would be his new home while Florence remained on her childhood farm near Bainbridge, Pennsylvania.

Henry and Florence Stauffer's experience is representative of hundreds of young Mennonites. When the United States entered World War II, and MCC launched the CPS program, there was a tectonic shift in the Mennonite Church. As Mennonite COs lived and worked in CPS camps, there was no going back to what had been life as a Mennonite. Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill articulate the shifting Mennonite realities.

As the ominous clouds of World War II began to form in the '30s, nine out of ten Mennonites in North America were farming in rural enclaves, beyond the reach of urban influence. Most were still farming with horses, some were listening to radios, but television, of course, had not arrived. The Great Depression had slowed the acceleration of Menno-

Henry and Florence Miller Stauffer's wedding photo.
(photo, Ann Stauffer Kulp)

Henry Stauffer helping with surveying while in CPS camp. (photo, Ann Stauffer Kulp)



nite mobility, rural roads were poorly developed, and new cars were too expensive to buy.

Mennonite leaders were unprepared for the upheavals that would rock their rural solitude when the war struck and forced them to face the world. A new diaspora was about to begin.³⁵

Remembering his experience of being uprooted from his agrarian life and sent to a CPS camp, Henry observed that one of the great surprises for him in Camp #24 was discovering the wide variety of Mennonites.

I grew up in the sheltered and inward-looking Mennonite community of Lancaster County. My world was the Mount Joy congregation and the farms and small towns between Mount Joy and Elizabethtown. I had been taught that to be a faithful Christian and Mennonite meant that you wore "plain clothing." I wanted to be obedient and to serve the church, so I bought a plain suit.

When I arrived at the camp near Hagerstown, I discovered Mennonite men from the General Conference. They were wearing neckties. I thought that you could not be a faithful Christian and a Mennonite and wear a tie. What I realized living and working with those men was that they were actually better Christians than I was. Without CPS, I don't know how I would have ever learned to know and love a wide variety of people.³⁶

Stauffer's testimony points to something that likely would not have happened if he had simply remained on the farm. Stauffer, along with his wife, Florence, learned of a larger world, were invited into a lifetime of service, and gained a sense of being a Mennonite that they had not articulated before their involvement with MCC's CPS program.

Henry Stauffer reflected on how the friendships he made with other CPS men were "closer than a brother, and we remained lifelong friends."³⁷ He also had wonderful memories of how well the CPS men ate. "We had an old Pennsylvania Dutch woman from Lancaster County who was the head cook. The meals were just like what I knew from my home back in Lancaster County."³⁸ The head cook he refers to was Lydia Stauffer Sauder Mellinger (1878–1952), who grew up in Farmersville in Lancaster County. Along with her second husband, Jacob D. Mellinger (1885–1979), they served as leaders of the CPS Camp #24.³⁹

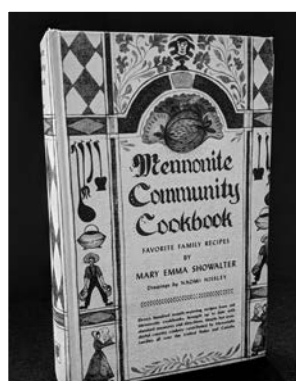
37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Lydia Mellinger was a woman dedicated to serving others. In 1899, she partnered with Noah Mack in the ministry to the Welsh Mountain Community. In 1911, along with her husband, she managed the Millersville Children's Home. During World War II, along with her second husband, she was in charge of the Leitersburg, MD, CPS Camp, where she was called "Mom." In the last seven years of her life, she served as the matron of the "Mennonite Old People's Home." *Gospel Herald* 45, no. 31 (July 29, 1952): 758; and *GH* 39 (July 7, 1946): 331.

35. Leo Driedger and Donald B. Kraybill, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1994), 71.

36. Interview, Henry Stauffer with Joe Miller, December 23, 1977. Mennonite Historical Library and Archives at Bethel College, Oral History Collection, North Newton, KS.



Henry Stauffer's fellow campers and staff. Henry is standing beside Lydia Stauffer Sauder Mellinger, the co-leader of the camp. CPS # 24, Hagerstown, Maryland, Unit 1 campers and staff. September 1942. (photo, Ann Stauffer Kulp)

Mennonite Community Cookbook. (photo, Joe Miller)

CPS Camp # 24 men peeling potatoes. (photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)

Mary Emma Showalter had been assigned by Orie Miller to serve as the dietitian for the CPS camps. She traveled among the camps and saw that the CPS men were eating both nutritiously and in keeping with the meals back home. She also taught cooking classes to CPS camp cooks. Melodie Davis recalls the significant impact Mary Emma had on the CPS camps and several generations of Mennonite cuisine. Mary Emma

Showalter's "visits to the camps became the seed for creating *Mennonite Community Cookbook*."⁴⁰

For the men from Lancaster County, the CPS camps' kitchen and table became the synecdoche for life back at home. "Wherever she went, Mary Emma

40. Melodie Davis, "The woman behind 'Mennonite Community Cookbook,'" *The Mennonite* 18, no. 2 (January 30, 2015): 12-17.

observed that Mennonite cooking was much the same. The dishes the men hankered for came from their home communities."⁴¹

The transformational power of CPS was that the experience cut across economic, geographical, and educational lines. CPS camps included persons who had finished the eighth grade, experienced farmers, businessmen, fellows in graduate school, and teachers when they were drafted in the 1940s. When asked at the end of their CPS days to name three experiences they appreciated about CPS, 13 percent said that it was the work projects, 7 percent replied that it was the administration, 51 percent said that it was the religious life and peace convictions of the camps, and finally, 29 percent offered that they appreciated the educational opportunities in camp.⁴²

Howard D. Kauffman, from Landisville, Pennsylvania, served in Grottoes, Virginia, and Terry, Montana. Like fellow Lancaster County CPSer Henry Stauffer, Kauffman bears testimony in his reflections on what CPS did for a generation of Mennonites from Lancaster County and beyond to how in CPS, he realized there were different types of Mennonites.

In CPS, there are quite a few branches of the Mennonite faith and quite a few other religious affiliations other than that of Mennonite heritage. Now how shall we stand amidst this conglomeration of religious teachings and beliefs represented in a CPS camp?

I am certain that quite often we draw too forcibly the line of distinction between the various Mennonite beliefs and in so doing become too much encased in our own belief to the extent that we become an isolated group instead of fulfilling the Great Commission of going into all the world and preaching the Gospel, we are content to indoctrinate our own small group and fail to expand the great and glad news of salvation.⁴³

While still in his twenties, Robert Kreider served as Secretary of Education for MCC's CPS Camps. Many years later, he wrote of CPS men's process moving through spiritual, emotional, and intellectual maturation stages. He writes how young men moved from order—to disorientation—to reorientation so that many CPS service workers found themselves quite transformed by their MCC experience. These

men returned to their extended families and congregations with much to offer the folks back home.

"MCC domestic and overseas service units have often been arenas of intense interpersonal distress, discomfort, and tension—a crucible of internal discontent. These were voluntary communities of persons with allegedly common objectives who had not chosen one another voluntarily. They were put together. College and non-college youth are asked to serve together in the same unit. Forced to live intimately with a strange new collection of colleagues, the MCC volunteer often has had the painful task of trying to make the best of a difficult situation. Personal strengths and weaknesses were laid bare."⁴⁴

Henry and Florence Stauffer's oldest daughter, Kathleen Stauffer Peifer, believes that her parents' openness to seeking a deeper spirituality was at least partly a byproduct of her father's CPS experience.

"I believe my parents' involvement in the 'East African Revival' is somehow connected to their CPS experience."

"There was in Tanzania [Tanganyika before October 29, 1964] and Kenya a spiritual revival that did not have its origins from the Lancaster Conference missionaries. The revival had its roots in Africa and it was African Mennonites who embraced the revival."⁴⁵

That spiritual movement amazingly traveled from East Africa to the United States and to Lancaster County. My parents were very involved in the East Africa Revival's blessings here in Lancaster County. Our whole family and many of my aunts and uncles also were involved. There was a spiritual hunger for something more than just obeying the rules and regulations of the church. So yes, I believe it was during their CPS years when my parents were rubbing shoulders with a variety of Christians and Mennonites that God started planting spiritual seeds in their lives and stirred something in them. Many weekends our father would come back to Lancaster County from the CPS camp. Or our mother, along with other CPS wives, would travel to Hagerstown. The world of the Stauffer and Miller families got much bigger than just Bainbridge and Elizabethtown.⁴⁶

41. Ibid.

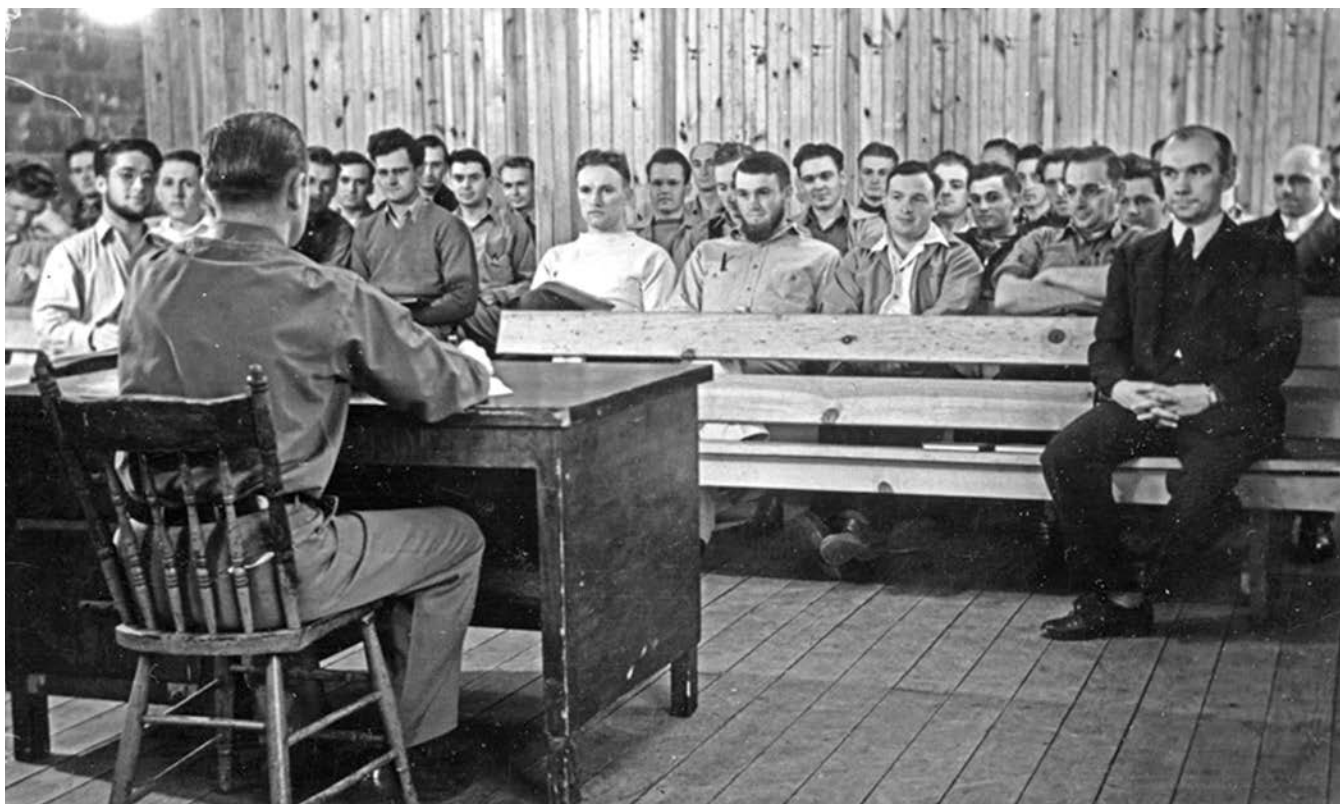
42. Melvin Gingerich, *Service for Peace: A History of Mennonite Civilian Public Service* (Akron, PA: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1949), 284–285.

43. Peter Lester Rohrer and Mary E. Rohrer, editors, *The Story of the Lancaster County Conference Mennonites in Civilian Public Service*, Harold D. Kauffman, "Responsibilities to the Church and Home Folks" (no date), 25–26.

44. Kreider, "Impact," 249.

45. "The East African Revival movement began in northern Rwanda and southern Uganda in the mid 1930's. Anglican Christians were first among the early persons energized by this movement which quickly spread among other denominations, including Mennonite Christians in Tanganyika in the 1940's." Email, Hershey Leaman to Joe Miller, July 3, 2020.

46. Interview, Kathleen Stauffer Peifer with Joe Miller, June 19, 2020. For more on the East Africa Revival's impact on Mennonites in Lancaster County, see Richard K. MacMaster with Donald J. Jacobs, *Gentle Wind of God: The Influence of the East Africa Revival* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2006).



Civilian Public Service Camp #24, Hagerstown, Maryland, campers. (photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)

Dorothy Smoker, an EMM missionary, and her husband, George, shared a testimony regarding the East African Revival in a letter back to the United States with the news of what must have brought joy, amazement, and likely some concern among Mennonites in the United States.

"I want to quote a little of the good news we received since here about the revival in Africa. 'On August 9th at Shirati after Hezekiah had given a message, and they had turned to prayer the Spirit came in power. Like a wind, he moved over the audience and men and women began to weep for their sins. They broke out in crying and weeping that caused attraction to those outside and up to the hut for the sick and beyond. We surely are anxious to get there.'"⁴⁷

CPS-age young adult men and women, along with the home congregations and extended families, needed to decide, in an environment of a "popular war" against fascism, if they were indeed conscientious objectors to war. While in CPS camps, the young men were taking classes in their off-hours on Anabaptist/Mennonite history and the biblical back-

ground for not going to war. Life in CPS camps was profoundly transforming for CPS men, their families, and home congregations. Melvin Gingerich describes the CPS experience.

It gave thousands of young men the opportunity to witness to their religious convictions not only by the act of going into CPS but also by the way in which they lived together and in the quality of work which they did. It gave young men an opportunity to build the kind of camp community life that covered all areas of life—physical, social, educational, cultural, spiritual . . . It widened their knowledge of Mennonites, it brought about a re-examination of their peace position, it taught them new skills and introduced them to new areas and environments, it taught them and their elders that young people could be trusted to carry responsibility, and it aroused their interest in new areas of service, particularly in mental hospitals and in public health work as well as in conservation.⁴⁸

Coming of age away from the farm

Generation after generation of Lancaster County Mennonites came of age behind a plow, in the garden,

47. George and Dorothy Smoker Collection, Letters, *Dearest Family*, December 16, 1942. Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, box 1.

48. Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), see Melvin Gingerich, "Civilian Public Service." https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Civilian_Public_Service



Bunkhouse at Civilian Public Service Camp #24, Hagerstown, Maryland. (photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)

and in the farmhouse kitchen. Like father and like son. Like mother and like daughter. For generation upon generation, life in Lancaster County changed very little from well before the Revolutionary War into the twentieth century. Most Mennonites in Lancaster County had been born, came of age, married, and died on the same land as their ancestors.

World War II changed all that immutable generational stability. When World War I forced Mennonites into the military without the workable option of conscientious objector status, cracks developed in the Mennonite Church. The steady and predictable life of Mennonites in Lancaster County was beginning to change. But it was World War II that caused the most dramatic change.

That a generation of Mennonite men came of age not behind the plow but in CPS camps caused a significant shift in Mennonite church life and culture. This Mennonite coming of age was, in fact, parallel to that of their non-Mennonite peers who also were coming of age in the army.

Along with their regular work, CPS men were provided with an academic level of Christian formation classes. For most of the young men, this was the first serious Bible education. After returning home to Lancaster County, these men would apply what they learned within their congregations. From New Hol-

land, Jacob Sensenig, who served in Luray, Virginia, and Clear Spring, Maryland, outlined the CPS education's foci:

1. An overview of the Bible.
2. In-depth study of different books of the Bible.
3. The work of the church, which included church history, missions, and service.⁴⁹

While serving as president of the Mennonite Bluffton College, Robert Kreider made this intriguing observation about MCC. "The MCC may someday be recorded as the most significant of our Mennonite educational institutions. It has a current student body and staff of seven hundred. Has no credits, no formal curriculum, no diplomas, no grades, relatively few academic requirements, no tuition and fees, only slight incidental costs."⁵⁰

CPS was a different kind of teacher than the military and war. There was a new commitment to service, peace, and nonresistance, integrating one's Christian faith and business, inter-Mennonite relationships, and being an Anabaptist-Mennonite. These lessons were learned as CPS men and women were brought back to home communities across Lancaster

49. *The Story of Lancaster County Conference Mennonites in CPS*, Jacob Sensenig, "Christian Worker's School," (n.d.), 37

50. Kreider, "Impact," 247.

County and were shared in a thousand ways with the “folks back home.”

The size and scope of MCC dramatically grew as it managed the CPS program. That growth necessitated more staff at MCC headquarters in Akron. Mennonites from General Conference congregations were unwilling to subscribe to the “Rules and Discipline” of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference. An alternative that fit with Mennonites from outside the Lancaster Conference tradition was created in 1944 with the beginning of the Bethel Mennonite Church, a part of the Eastern District (today Mosaic) and then Monterey Mennonite Church, a part of Ohio and Eastern (today Atlantic Coast Conference).

A double blessing: Ada and Ida Stoltzfus

Could it be that an excellent preparation for international MCC service is growing up in a large Amish Mennonite farming family? That seems to be part of the reason twin sisters Ada and Ida Stoltzfus from the Conestoga Amish Mennonite congregation, in eastern Lancaster County, were such resilient MCC workers in Palestine and Israel. These intrepid sisters served with MCC in India and Palestine. They were first in India (1947–1949) and then beginning in 1952 in Hebron’s ancient biblical city.⁵¹

Nothing seemed to cause these women to have a spirit of timidity that kept them from their work and service. When they saw a need, they rolled up their sleeves and got started. Perhaps it was the Amish gift of a spirit of humility, combined with seeing what was possible, a farmer’s readiness to put in a “full day,” and being deeply connected to a kinship group back home that made their years with MCC so fruitful.

Reading the diaries and letters between the Stoltzfus sisters and their extended family and community back in Pennsylvania, it is clear they were a part of a loving and deeply connected community.

Ada Stoltzfus served meals at the MCC orphanage in Hebron, West Bank, in 1964. Ada and her sister Ida Stoltzfus came to Jordan in 1952 to assist with MCC’s welfare work in the Hebron area, including milk distribution, feeding centers, a needlework project, and humanitarian aid to tuberculosis patients. In 1955, MCC opened an orphan boys’ home in Hebron

51. J. Lemar and Lois Ann Mast, *As Long as Wood Grows and Water Flows: A History of the Conestoga Mennonite Church* (Morgantown, PA: Conestoga Mennonite Church, 1982), 250. The Conestoga (Amish) Mennonite Church is located on the eastern edge of Lancaster County. Berks and Chester Counties come together to form a triangle with Lancaster County. Church members come from all three counties. An additional connection the Conestoga congregation has with MCC is that its members were some of the first to hold an MCC Relief Sale in 1957.



Top: Ida Stoltzfus, teaching in a school run by MCC in Hebron. The school, though no longer associated with MCC, still exists as a Christian school and is commonly known as “the Mennonite school.” A picture of the sisters occupies a place of honor on the wall in the school. (photo, MCC)

Bottom: Ada Stoltzfus, fitting boys for clothing in Hebron. (photo, MCC)



Ida Stoltzfus, serving lunch to children in Hebron. (photo, MCC)

under the Stoltzfus sisters' direction. The Stoltzfus sisters' primary work was the orphanage's operation, but they also continued to assist with distributing clothing, food, and medicines to destitute families. From 1950 to 1967, the West Bank was part of Jordan but has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967. The West Bank was recognized as part of Palestine in 2012 by the United Nations General Assembly.

Ada and Ida were connected to sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, and senior church leaders back in Lancaster. That connection and supportive Lancaster County community stood the test of time and shared the Stoltzfus sisters' work for over forty years. Palestinians, who also place a high value on family and community, would have viewed the sisters' loyalty to their family and church community as something that contributed to their trust of Ada and Ida Stoltzfus.

It might be difficult for people outside the Amish Mennonite community to appreciate the deep and interconnected community of the Stoltzfus sisters' Conestoga congregation. One telling example comes from when one of the sisters taught in a one-room Lancaster County schoolhouse near the church. For several school years, every child, along with the Stoltzfus sister, had the Stoltzfus last name.⁵²

52. Ibid.

The time-honored Amish and Mennonite tradition of "visiting" served as a communal occasion for information sharing about the sisters' work and life in Hebron. Sundays were especially a time for visiting fellow church members and family. Before the modern advent of "being busy," the rural enclaves of Amish and Mennonites had unhurried time to update each other on the community "news." Information on MCC service workers Ada and Ida would certainly have claimed significant allotments of communal sharing. This information flow of what "their" MCCers were doing, their views, and insights would regularly be an informal communications system coursing through the community.

The short distance between Morgantown and Hebron

The physical distance between Morgantown, Pennsylvania, and Hebron in the Middle East is indeed great. But what becomes evident in the letters exchanged and Ada's diaries is that there was a spiritual and emotional closeness that was no respecter of physical distance when it comes to the heart's ways. Their MCC service had an auspicious beginning. Their family and community were not satisfied with just saying goodbye in Lancaster County. It is telling indeed that Harvey Beiler, from the sisters' home congregation, chartered a bus so that family and commu-

nity could accompany the sisters to New York City on July 1, 1952.⁵³

The entourage of thirty-two Mennonites could go onto the ship and see the Stoltzfus sisters' cabin on the ocean liner. It doesn't take much imagination to picture the "worldly" people's curiosity observing the plain dressing Amish Mennonites traipsing around on the ship. Not too much imagination either to consider the Mennonites' own slack-jawed amazement at seeing the Big Apple and the massive sea-going ships.⁵⁴

Robert Kreider might also have reflected on the "MCC education" of the Conestoga Amish Mennonites saying goodbye to Ada and Ida that day. The world was opened up, not just for the Stoltzfus sisters, but also for their kinship group. What were the ripple effects of that one trip to send off Ada and Ida Stoltzfus? After getting back home from New York City, cousins talked to cousins, and farmers talked to other farmers explaining (teaching) about what the world was like.

At a deeper level, what must have been the lessons for Amish Mennonite girls and boys to witness two single women from their own church, setting out to serve with MCC in the name of Christ? The possibilities of what could be done in life were enlarged exponentially, that day in New York. Even for those children who grew up and stayed on Lancaster County farms or family businesses, the world nonetheless was changed by one pilgrimage to say farewell and bless Ada and Ida.

Folks from the Morgantown area had prepared a packet of forty letters for Ada and Ida to read on the ship as they sailed to the Middle East. A new letter to be opened and read for forty days. One of the letters from back home: "By the time you read this you may be in the middle of the Atlantic or the Mediterranean Sea. We will be thinking of you every day and pray the Lord to keep you in the hollow of his hand and bring you safely to your girls at Beirut."⁵⁵

The letter writer, Martha Zook, tells the sisters that they do not need to write to her individually because the sisters' letters home will be passed around, so all the relatives have the chance to read the latest news from Hebron. Zook says that she is already looking forward to the stories the Stoltzfus sisters will tell when they see each other again. In the packet of let-

ters, there are heartfelt promises by family and church members to be praying for the sisters every day.⁵⁶

The sisters' mother, Lydia Hartz Stoltzfus (1882–1967), writes the kind of letters that are so welcome for service workers far from home. Minutiae like the fact that the clothes on the washline are not drying, that she picked the first beans of the summer season and they will be for supper, or that she is cutting her dress material for her sewing project, and that she would like to sweep upstairs, but Johnny is still sleeping—and it wasn't even Saturday!

And then the touching note that on the first Sunday after Ada and Ida had returned to their MCC assignment, the Conestoga Church Bishop Mast requested the hymn "Christ is All." It was selected by the bishop because that was the hymn they had sung as a congregation on the Sunday just before Ada and Ida were blessed and sent to the Middle East by the congregation.

In a letter postmarked January 26 (year unclear), the envelope is stuffed with notes from the family. One of the sisters at home reports they were glad to receive Ada and Ida's latest letter. The only problem was that their younger brother Grant had, "claimed it and nearly wore it out reading it. But that did keep him from eating too much cake."

Another way the whole community back home stayed connected to Ada and Ida and events in Hebron was with circle letters. One circle letter from July 1952 tells of the sisters' life and work in Palestine. It is sent home to Lancaster County to John Mast, the first of forty families who will eventually read the letter. Mast explains how the letter should be read and then sent on to the next family listed below their own name.⁵⁷

In a letter from their mother written on January 25, 1959, she shares news about life around Churchtown, Elverson, and Morgantown. She says that they collected quilts and took them to the Ephrata MCC warehouse to be shipped to Palestine. Their mother reports that they were at the Churchtown congregation for an evening worship service. Many people asked about them, including the bishop of the Weaverland congregation, J. Paul Graybill.

Transformation of the community back home was occurring one letter and one Sunday afternoon visit at a time. Ada and Ida's life and work were of interest to a multi-layered web of familial and church rela-

53. Ibid.

54. Diary of Ada and Ida [Stoltzfus], June 30, 1952. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 5. MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

55. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 2, folder 12. MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

56. Letter, Martha Zook to Ada and Ida Stoltzfus. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 2, folder 12. MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

57. Letter, Lydia Stoltzfus to Ada and Ida Stoltzfus. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 2, folder 18. MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

tionships. Having Ada and Ida serving with MCC in Palestine most certainly would have stirred many in their home community to “study up” on Palestine, Israel, Hebron, and the British Mandate. The “MCC class” was in session. The folks back home were being educated.

An October 26, 1958, letter from their mother, Lydia, demonstrates an amazing familiarity regarding the MCC work that the sisters were doing in Hebron. Their mother had traveled to Palestine for an extended visit. Even writing as she traveled to visit her daughters, she gave one letter to Ada and Ida the heading, “Sunday P.M. Expeditior Atlantic Ocean, September 19” [1957].⁵⁸ Could Lydia, who was born into an Amish family in 1882, have imagined she one day would be sailing to the Middle East on a ship called the *Expeditior*?

In her letter from 1958, Lydia asks questions that were specifically seeking details. One realizes Ada and Ida’s mother had both in-depth knowledge and a keen interest in MCC’s work in Hebron. Their mother even offered advice on several points regarding the sisters’ work. She noted with gratitude that John Hertzler paid for the sisters’ insurance as a gift. Their mother, as is the wont of mothers, additionally wrote that Ada and Ida should ask for help from the family back in Lancaster, Berks, and Chester Counties. She declared to the sisters that their kinship group back home was there for them and that “no burden is too heavy for the family on their [the sisters’] behalf.”⁵⁹

Ada’s diary from 1967 during the Six-Day War in Israel and Palestine is another example of how MCC workers’ “on the ground” experience could offer an alternative view of world news. It seems providential that Ada was back home in Pennsylvania taking care of the sisters’ mother during her declining health. Ada’s diary is the voice of one with a first-hand and intimate knowledge of the Middle East.

May 8 “We decided I should get ready to go home [to Pennsylvania] . . . mother is not well.

June 5 Today, fighting broke out between Egypt and Israel and Jordan, Syria. I was surprised, but there has been tension for the past three weeks. Iraq and Kuwait also promised to help, and now the fight is on!”

In her diary, Ada reported the confluence of hearing from her sister Ida who was still in Hebron in the

middle of a war zone, Ada’s own reality of taking care of their dying mother, and speaking about the war to the local Mennonite community. For two Sundays in a row, she was asked to share after Sunday school about the war raging in Palestine. She told about multiple invitations in formal settings and at larger informal gatherings to share her war perspectives.⁶⁰

In one of Ada’s diary entries from August 1976, there is an amazing combination of everyday concerns like meeting payroll and making sure the school had enough teachers. But there are also high stakes negotiations with the violence between the Israeli soldiers and the Palestinians living in Hebron. The sisters found themselves caught between the Israeli Defense Forces and their Palestinian friends, neighbors, and employees.

For the folks back home in the Conestoga congregation, at times inclined toward Christian Zionism, learning about the difficult experiences of the Palestinian people whom Ada and Ida worked with may have challenged their theology. Ada and Ida understood that an important part of their MCC work was to help people back home expand their understanding and compassion for people affected by the Middle East conflict.⁶¹

On the banks of the Mill Stream

At the same time Luke Martin was exploring Pax service with MCC, two other Lancaster County Mennonite young men were also asking God where they should serve their alternative assignment as conscientious objectors to war.

Chris Peifer and Hershey (Hersh) Leaman, from the Mellinger Mennonite Church, had grown up together near the village of Fertility, across a field just east of the Mellinger Mennonite Meetinghouse. These inseparable friends’ world was the watershed of the Mill Stream along the Strasburg Pike as it departs from the old Route 30 heading south towards Strasburg. Hershey Leaman recalls the boys’ world that has long since disappeared with modern housing developments and a Walmart Supercenter.

My life growing up along the Strasburg Pike was a wonderfully warm and familiar community.

58. Letter, Lydia Stoltzfus to “Dear Girls,” October 26, 1958. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 2, folder 18. MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

59. Susanna J. Stoltzfus, *God Blessed Their Hands: Ada and Ida Stoltzfus’s Fifteen Years in Hebron in Mennonite Central Committee Service: 1952-1967*, unpublished paper, Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 1, folder 1. MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

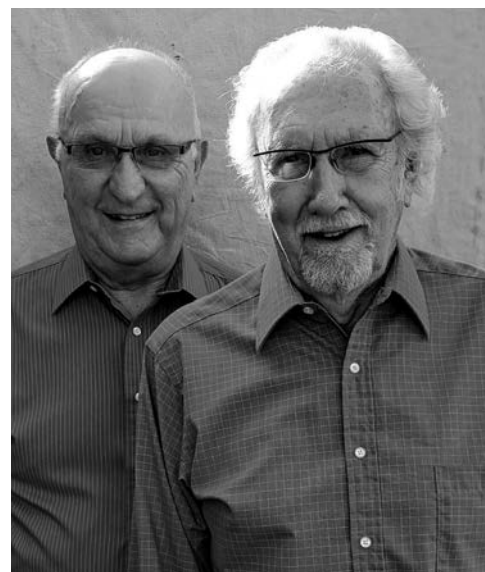
60. Diary, Ada Stoltzfus, 1967. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 5. MCC Archives, Akron, PA. See also Ada and Ida Stoltzfus, as told to Marie E. Cutman, “Bombs, Skirmishes, and Riots,” *We Sat Where They Sat: Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Thirty-Seven and One-Half Years in the Ancient City of Hebron* (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 1996).

61. Diary, Ada Stoltzfus, August 15-25, 1976. Ada’s diary is an Arabic publication and moves from right to left. It has an English and Arabic calendar. Ada and Ida Stoltzfus Collection, box 5. MCC Archives, Akron, PA.

Chris Peifer and Hershey Leaman just before leaving for their EMM/MCC assignment. (photo, Hershey Leaman)

Chris and Hersh, sixty-seven years later, July 1953 & 2020. (photo, Joe Miller)

Going away party for Chris and Hersh. (photo, Hershey Leaman)



It felt to me like there was no other place in the whole world that I'd rather be than this little corner of Lancaster County. It was for me a comforting blend of family and neighbors who nearly all were fellow members of Mellinger Church. Today I am startled to realize how incredibly provincial we were as a people back in the 1950s. I don't remember my parents or anyone else that I knew who had any real knowledge of the world that was out there. What I took for granted was that there were worldly people and then there were my Mennonite people. We were a settled and contented community. We could not imagine that there was any reason for ever leaving.

As a child a trip to a faraway place was when I would visit my cousins who were members of Hershey's Mennonite Church. It almost felt like a foreign country. I remember feeling lonely and like I was a stranger at Hershey's Church. That feeling of being a stranger and out of place for me as a child, proved the point in my mind, that my community, along the banks of the Mill Stream, was all I would ever need or want. When I visited my cousins, I could not wait to return home!

Growing up I always happily and contentedly assumed I would remain at home and a part of the Mellinger Church.⁶²

It was not meant to be. The world came knocking in the form of the Selective Service System. Both Chris Peifer and Hershey Leaman needed to find a place to fulfill their alternative service in keeping with the Mennonite Church's teachings. They resolved to do their service together. At first, they requested that MCC send them to serve as orderlies at Byberry Mental Health Hospital in Philadelphia. Going to serve in Philadelphia was close to home, and they could easily be home most weekends.

Unexpectedly, Paul N. Kraybill of EMM asked Chris and Hersh to change their plans and serve in Tanganyika, Africa. EMM asked MCC to serve as the official and legal organization for Chris and Hersh's alternative service. MCC had an official status with the Selective Service System for placing Christian conscientious objectors into their alternative service assignments.

MCC agreed to serve in this way with the expectation that Chris and Hersh would begin their alternative service assignment by participating in MCC's orientation on the campus of Messiah College and then several weeks in Europe in the Netherlands. This time in the Netherlands was one of MCC's efforts to bring together German, French, Dutch, United States, and Canadian Mennonite young people in post-World War II Europe.

This kind of agreement for Chris and Hersh to serve officially and legally under MCC but to

62. Interview, Hershey Leaman with Joe Miller, June 2, 2020.



Hersh Leaman and Chris Peifer working at Shirati, Tanganyika. (photo, Hershey Leaman)
 Hersh Leaman at Shirati, Tanganyika. (photo, Hershey Leaman)



be loaned out (seconded) to EMM has been one of MCC's great strengths. Serving as the facilitator for other Christian ministries has been a role MCC has often played in its one hundred years of work in Christ's name.⁶³

Leaman recalls processing the call to Tanganyika:

Chris and I had absolutely no idea where Africa was located, let alone the country of Tanzania. We were out of high school, and yet both of us had to look in an atlas to see where we were being called to serve. I don't think either of us wanted to go so very far from home! If years earlier, I felt lonely and scared ten miles away at Hershey's Menno-

nite, I could hardly imagine getting on a ship and going to Africa.

Missionaries from Lancaster County had already been working in Tanzania. In fact, Ray and Miriam Wenger had been serving in Tanzania since 1938. Miriam was the daughter of one of our pastors, David Landis. That the Wengers were in Tanganyika for sixteen years may have helped our families to be open to Chris and me going. But the Wengers were real missionaries. Chris and I were ordinary people (just kids really) and felt completely unprepared. And Chris and I viewed ourselves as totally naive about world-travel.

But there was for Chris and me an even stronger feeling than being afraid of traveling so far from home. That stronger feeling, I attribute to the teaching we received during our growing up years that was inculcated in us by the church and our families. It was reduced to the very simple teaching, "When the church calls, you must say yes!" I believe the sense of commitment to following Jesus and serving the church, however and wherever it calls you, was deeper than my fear. The easier and much more appealing MCC assignment in Philadelphia would have to be refused so that Chris and I could say yes to the specific call to Africa.⁶⁴

The world of Mellinger Mennonite Church, the village of Fertility, and Chris and Hersh's extended

63. The relationship between MCC and EMM has been very close and with mutual cooperation, especially in certain parts of the world. In East Africa (Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan), Vietnam, and Eastern Europe during the Cold War, the two organizations shared staff and administrative duties. In Tanganyika, where Chris and Hershey were serving while they were officially under MCC, they served with EMM and were supervised by EMM staff. I include Leaman and Peifer's story because theirs is just one example of how EMM and MCC worked in partnership in East Africa. The interconnections between MCC and EMM were often the result of Orié Miller's leadership in both organizations. Hershey Leaman would spend significant years leading the MCC Teachers Abroad Program (TAP), while still an employee of EMM. So close was the EMM and MCC relationship that the Mennonite Board in Eastern Africa (MBEA) was formed to serve as a tool for the shared MCC and EMM work in East Africa. For Luke Martin, the relationship between MCC and EMM was close. As a young adult, Luke Martin served under MCC, but he served with EMM in Vietnam for most of his life. From 1973 to 1975, Luke, while an employee of EMM, served as MCC's representative in Vietnam.

64. Interview, Hershey Leaman with Joe Miller, June 2, 2020.

families were themselves forever changed by their “boys” going to Africa. The new things folks back in Lancaster needed to contemplate and integrate into their understanding of church came steadily as missionaries and service workers fanned out worldwide.

Just one of those “new ideas” would be in the very place where Chris and Hersh would soon be serving in Tanganyika. For the first time, four Tanganyika Mennonite men were ordained as pastors. Ezekieli Muganda and Andrea Mabeba were selected as pastors in October 1950. Then in December, Zedekea Kisare and Nashon Nyambok were also ordained as pastors.

Dorothy and George Smoker, working and serving in Tanganyika, reported the joyful “new thing” to the Mennonites back in the United States. “Today was a great day here at Shirati. Their first two African pastors were ordained—that makes four now on our field and there is great rejoicing and something of a sense of coming of age.”⁶⁵

Only in God’s mind is it known how many families, Sunday school classes, and congregational prayers for Chris and Hersh helped to increase the awareness of Tanganyika by the folks back home in Lancaster County. The world did not just expand exponentially for Chris and Hersh; it also was enlarged for their families, friends, and church community. Like two stones thrown into a pond, the ripples of their service in Africa extended widely and impressively.

Leaman says that the two young men from the banks of the Mill Stream found themselves taken aback as they tried to absorb the reality of how big and diverse the Mennonite world was, outside the cocoon they had known. Those first weeks in the Netherlands found Leaman and Peifer participating in one of MCC’s young adult cross-cultural programs in Europe. MCC purposefully brought together Mennonites from Europe, United States, and Canada. The goal was to rebuild mutual understanding, trust, and a shared Anabaptist theology with an emphasis on peace. Again, Hershey Leaman describes starting their EMM/MCC service:

It was almost more than I could take in as I lived and worked with a household of other young adult Mennonites from France, Holland, and Germany. Chris and I almost couldn’t believe that these people who looked so “worldly” were Mennonites. In our letters home to our families, we described what we were experiencing and

learning. I am sure there were plenty of perplexed and stretching conversations at Mellinger Church about what their boys in voluntary service were experiencing. Chris’s foster father, Harry Lefever, one of the ministers at Mellinger, I’m sure worried about us! I can imagine there was considerable processing within the ordained leaders at Mellinger. Like us, our pastors back home also needed to try to absorb what their boys were encountering.

Actually, our experience in Europe was in many ways, the most stretching for Chris and me because when we arrived at the Mennonite church in Shirati we discovered a church community very much based on the Lancaster Mennonite Conference model. One of the things I was surprised to see was that the Shirati Mennonite Church was nearly the size of our home church at Mellinger back in Lancaster. Church life in Shirati was much more of what we were accustomed to than Mennonite church life in Europe.⁶⁶

Indeed, Mennonites in Lancaster County increased their understanding and concern for the world outside Lancaster County and the United States. They were also made aware of opportunities to apply their resources to address issues of food insecurity, peace, and justice.⁶⁷

Leaman eventually spent many years of his adult life serving in East Africa. In the 1970s, EMM and MCC recognized that their relationship was deeply interwoven and formed a shared administration by creating the Mennonite Board in Eastern Africa (MBEA). The first directors were Don Jacobs and Hershey Leaman. The shy boy from the Mill Stream, who wondered why anyone would ever want to leave Lancaster County, had discovered the world.⁶⁸

Earl Martin goes to Vietnam

Back in New Holland Mennonite Church, the seventeen-year ripple effect of Frank Shirk serving with MCC reached Luke Martin’s younger brother Earl. In 1966, war once again had Lancaster Mennonites serving in a war zone. This time it was another part of the world and a different war, but the New Holland congregation continued to be “leavened” by MCC. Earl Martin reflects on his MCC service in Vietnam.

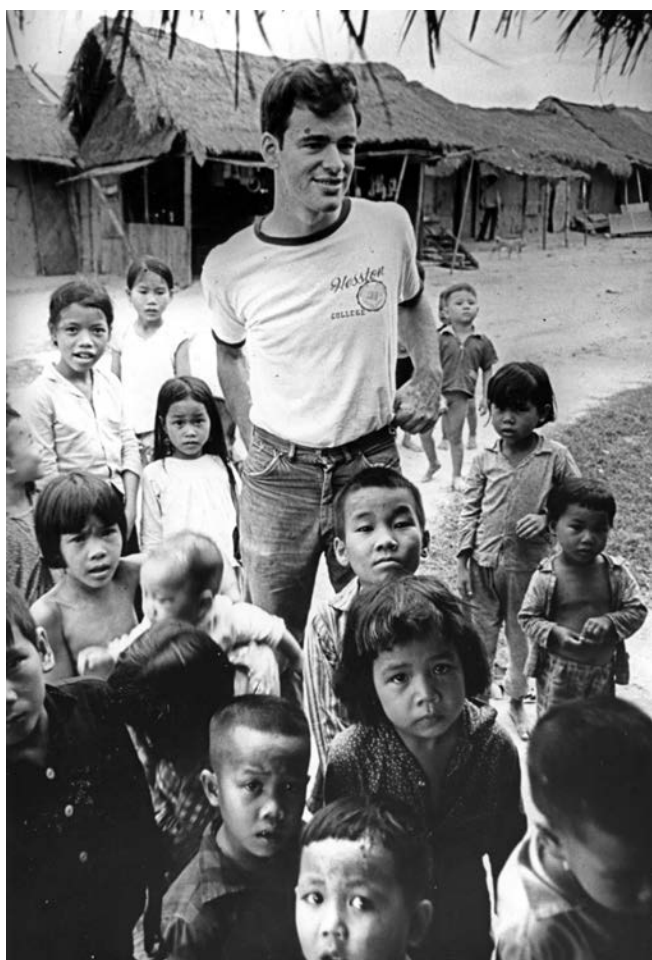
“Perhaps it was the missionaries in our home telling exciting stories about their work. Or maybe it was the current events class at Maple Grove when we talked about Australia and the Suez. Maybe it was the letters from my brother Luke in Germany [in Pax]. It

65. Letter, George and Dorothy Smoker Collection, box 1, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, “Greetings from Africa.” December 10, 1950.

66. Interview, Hershey Leaman with Joe Miller, June 2, 2020.

67. Redekop, *Pax Story*, 129.

68. Francis S. Ojwang, editor, *Forward in Faith: A Seventy-Year Journey 1942–2012* (Nairobi, Kenya: Kenya Mennonite Church, 2015), 64.



Earl Martin with children in Vietnam. (Photo, Mennonite Church USA Archives)

could have been the foreign exchange students in high school or college. Whatever it was, I had known for a long time that someday I would go.”⁶⁹

In his book, *Soldiers of Compassion*, Urie A. Bender takes an entire chapter to quote MCC service workers about how life-changing their assignments were to them personally. The vast majority of MCC service workers became deeply involved in their home churches after their voluntary service. And they often became congregational leaders within Anabaptist churches. In undoubtedly many cases, one is a Pax worker telling Urie Bender about becoming a pastor after his MCC assignment.

“You wouldn’t be interviewing me here if it had not been for Pax. I went over to serve as a farmer and cabinet builder. I expected to come home and be a farmer and cabinet builder. Instead, I’m a pastor.”⁷⁰

Most MCC histories tell how, by God’s grace, MCC service workers have blessed hurting people worldwide. And the stories are innumerable of MCCers always observing that they received much more than what they offered as an MCCer.

Much less has been documented on the impact of families and congregations by MCC service workers. Yet, anyone who has spent time in the average Mennonite family or church in Lancaster County knows there are numerous Sunday school teachers, youth advisors, church elders, deacons, and pastors who bring to these roles their MCC experience. James M. Lichti documented that in 1982, seventy percent of MCC alumni held positions of leadership within three years of their return home.⁷¹

After World War II, MCC’s robust feeding and resettlement programs made it an internationally known organization. After one hundred years, the Mennonite Central Committee remains the most broad-based relief organization within the Anabaptist family. In a world that is often still unsettled and in conflict, MCC continues, with God’s help, to do three things: relief, development, and peace in the name of Christ.

The Scriptures teach that, as followers of Jesus, we cannot imagine or even ask for all that God will make possible as we live and serve in the name of Jesus. What would the Mennonite community of Lancaster County look like if MCC had not helped to form the community into what it is today? For one hundred years, MCC has been an integral part of leavening Lancaster County Mennonites. There is commitment to being congregations and conferences that are spiritually healthy. There is a commitment to being meaningfully engaged and in partnership with other Anabaptists around the world. And there is a greater awareness and commitment by Mennonites in Lancaster County to being a blessing to neighbors close to home and neighbors worldwide.

69. Redekop, *Pax Story*, 52.

70. Bender, *Soldiers of Compassion*, 261.

71. James M. Lichti, *A Follow-Up Study of Former Mennonite Central Committee Volunteers to Third World Countries*, Master Thesis in Social Work, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ontario, August 1982, 63.

Part 1 of this article, published in Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage in April 2020, demonstrated Eby's library range. In Part 2, we look at more books that Eby was reading, what he was writing, and how he distributed his worldly estate.

The Hermitage of Peter Eby: Part 2

By Denise Witwer Lahr

The previous article introduced Peter Eby as someone who struggled with being a religious man and leading a good life, a life that would lead him closer to an understanding of God. In his extensive reading, he encountered many dichotomies.

Was it best to live in seclusion and quiet to avoid distraction and look inward to find God? Or, must one live in the world to experience the presence of God?

In terms of finding God's grace, was it better to withdraw and spend one's days in contemplation and praise of the Almighty or to go out into the world to act in the spirit of God's Word?

Was self-denial necessary to achieve a state where God's grace might be bestowed? If so, what things should be avoided?

And what was the role of religious institutions in man's quest?

As stated in Part 1, the Reformation brought revolt against the Catholic Church, resulting in the dissemination of new ideas. Europe saw the emergence of new theologies in Calvinism, Lutheranism, and others. But eventually, there was an uprising against even these new theologies as they themselves began to be perceived as too scholastic and doctrinal.

Pietism emerged first within Lutheranism as a reaction to the formality of the new institutions. It encouraged and gave validity to personal exploration in the quest for God.

Part 1 of this article demonstrated the range of Eby's library. In Part 2, we will look at more books that Eby was reading, what he was writing, and how he distributed his worldly estate.

Books of the eighteenth century and later

Most of these authors lived and produced their works in the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries. We will see that these works covered a wide range of religious and non-religious topics.

One of the most expensive items listed in Eby's library was "Berlenburger Bible," two volumes at four dollars each. The Berleburg Bible was a translation from Greek and Hebrew into German, one of the first such translations other than Luther's. It was produced from 1726 to 1742 by two Pietist brothers, Johann Frederick and Johann Jacob Haug, in the town Bad Berleburg and ran to eight volumes. The extensive commentary reflected Pietist views.

Another work related to Bad Berleburg and printed there in 1741 is a very rare two-volume work referred to in the inventory as *in Gott verborgen Lebens* (The hidden life in God). These are the collected writings of Jacques Bertot (1622–1681), a Catholic priest, who was extremely influential in the lives of both Jean de Bernières-Louvigny and Madame Guyon, French mystics mentioned in Part 1. Bertot came from a family of cloth dealers and spent some time as a hermit in Bernières-Louvigny's hermitage in Caen. He was extremely influential in some circles and wrote extensively. However, he would have been lost to posterity if Madame Guyon had not preserved his letters and treatises and mentioned him in her writing. Bertot's papers were published in French in four volumes in 1726, and selections were translated into German for the 1740 Berleburg work in *Gott verborgen Lebens*. Eby's inventory valued each volume at twelve and one-half cents.

The "poorest, most ignorant peasant or the most peasant woman can find the holy trinity truthful and essential, even so much as the most learned and holiest." — Jacques Bertot

Evangelische Psalmen is a work of poems and hymns by Ernst Gottlieb Woltersdorf (1725–1761), a

Silesian pastor, Pietist, poet, and hymnist. The work was produced between 1750 and 1752. Eby's copy was valued at fifty cents.

Johann Heinrich Jung Stilling (1740–1817) probably began work as a collier with his father but studied to become a tailor, and, later, was a physician and professor at universities, including Heidelberg. As a student, he attracted the attention of Goethe, and they were lifelong friends. He was also a prolific writer. Eby owned a copy of Stilling's *Geisterkunde*,⁷² in which Stilling described various apparitions and other psychic phenomena and used these appearances to prove that man had a divine spark, a soul, a luminous body separable from the earthly body. He further argued that when a man forsakes the outer world of the senses, the inner life of the soul is enhanced and can take control over the world of the senses. This book was valued at fifty cents.

Eby owned several books by Gerhard Tersteegen (1697–1769). Tersteegen was originally a member of a well-to-do family within the German Reformed movement. However, he became a hermit and weaver who studied mysticism, especially the French mystics, and eventually emerged out of his hermitage to become a prolific writer and speaker. He lived both in the inner world and then in the world at large. By 1728, he had given up all secular pursuits to devote himself to his Pietist writings.

Part 1 mentioned Tersteegen as the compiler of *Der Kleine Kempis* and the translator of the French mystics, Bernières-Louvigny and Madame Guyon. Among the other works of Tersteegen owned by Eby are the following:

- Das Geistliche Blumgartlein* (The Spiritual Flower Garden), first published in 1729, was a collection of hymns and poems that is still popular enough to be available in English in a Kindle edition for \$2.99. Eby's book was valued at forty-seven and one-half cents.
- Lebensbeschreibung Heiliger Seelen* (Biography of Holy Souls) was a multi-volume work produced from 1733 to 1753 consisting of twenty-six biographies of saintly persons, mostly Catholic mystics, whose lives ranged from the 1200s through the end of the 1600s. Tersteegen's exceptional devotion to this task was inspired by Gottfried Arnold's conviction "that a history of true Christians was a far better church history than one taken up by theolog-

ical disputations."⁷³ Eby may have owned all three volumes since the appraised value was an impressive four dollars.

- Perlen Schnur*, or *Kleine Perlen Schnur, für die Kleinen nur: hie und da zer zerstreut gefunden, jetzt beisammen hier gebunden*. This lengthy title presents a lovely image: "A small string of pearls, for the little ones only, found scattered here and there, now tied together here." This work was largely derived from Tersteegen's mystical studies. Eby's copy was valued at six cents.
- Geistliche Brosamen*⁷⁴ is another title of beautiful imagery: "Spiritual crumbs, fallen from the Lord's table: read by good friends and shared with hungry hearts." These "spiritual crumbs" consisted primarily of the content of speeches given by Tersteegen. Eby's copy was valued at seventy-five cents.
- Geistliche Briefen* in the inventory is probably Tersteegen's *Geistliche und Erbauliche Briefe über das inwendige Leben und wahre Wesen des Christenthums*, or "Spiritual and edifying letters about the inner life and true nature of Christianity." In the inventory, it is listed as two volumes at one dollar each.
- Weg der Wahrheit* (The Way of Truth) is a work of twelve treatises by Tersteegen concerning the path to godliness. It was valued at fifty cents.

Considering the arrangement of its title page, the entry "*Betrachtung des Menschen*" is likely a work by Johann Jacob Schmidt published in 1743. According to the title,⁷⁵ it is a description of "what happens in man's natural life and in the parts of his body, and in his many cases of accidents and infirmities, as well as in the preservation and restoration of his health." This work covered the many diseases mentioned in the Bible. Schmidt is described as "Preacher to Peest and Palow," areas which were Prussian at the time, but now in northwest Poland.

It is also possible that this entry refers to Peter Kaufman's 1825 work, *Betrachtung über den Menschen*, published in Philadelphia. This utopian work advocated populist and reformist views discussed in the next entry. Whichever work it was, Eby's copy was twelve and one-half cents.

72. *Theorie der Geisterkunde, in einer Natur-Vernunft und Bibel-mäßigen Beantwortung der Frage: Was von Ahnungen Gesichten und Geistererscheinungen geglaubt und nicht geglaubt werden Müsse.*

73. Douglas H. Shantz, *An Introduction to German Pietism: Protestant Renewal at the Dawn of Modern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 60.

74. *Geistliche Brosamen von des Herrn Tisch gefallen: von guten Freunden auf gelesen, und hungrigen Herzen mitgetheilet.*

75. *Biblischer Medicus, Oder, Betrachtung des Menschen, nach der Physiologie, Pathologie und Gesundheitslehre.*

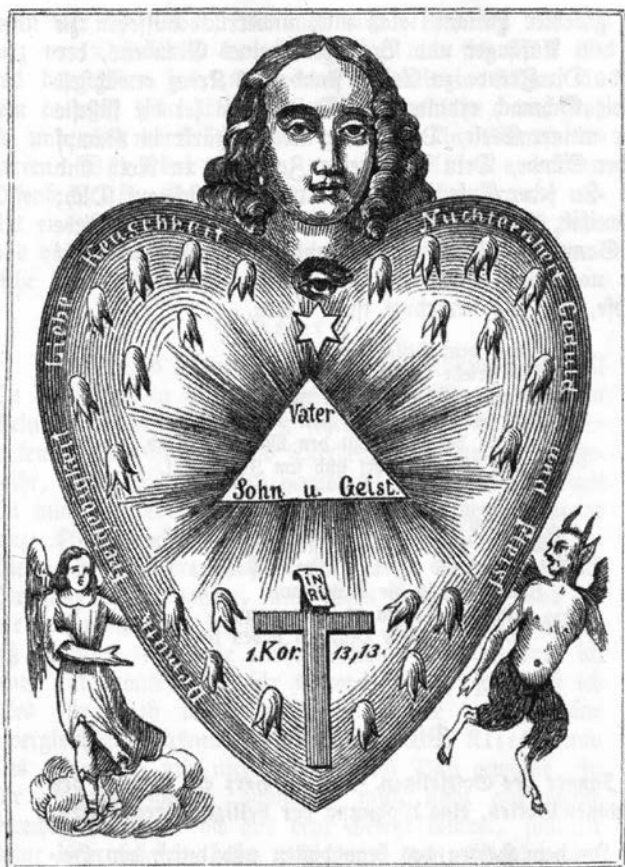


Illustration on page 21 of *Tempel Gottes* depicts the heart in its good state with the Devil on the run. The center triangle depicts the Trinity, "Vater Sohn u. Geist." Along the edge of the heart is written, "Demuth, Freigebigkeit, Liebe, Keuschheit, Nüchternheit, Geduld und Flaiss," or "humility, generosity, love, chastity, sobriety, patience, and diligence." The bottom of the heart references 1 Corinthians 13:13: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

Noth- und Hülfsbüchlein für Bauersleute oder lehrreiche Freuden- und Trauer-Geschichte des Dorfs Mildheim, or "A little book of needed help for farmers—or-educational stories of joy and grief in the village of Mildheim." Rudolf Zacharias Becker (1752–1822) wrote this small and very popular booklet first published in Germany in 1788. It resulted from the German Popular Enlightenment Movement, *Volksaufklärung*, of the late eighteenth century. Popular Enlightenment was aimed at raising the lower classes. Booklets were devised that would bring them ideas regarding agricultural modernization, natural science, and medicine. The movement was based on the premise that while the lower social classes were uneducated, they were not unable to learn. Eby's copy was valued at fifty cents.

Tempel Gottes, three volumes altogether, worth one dollar and fifty cents, is likely *Das Herz des Menschen, ein Tempel Gottes, oder eine Werkstätte des Satan, in zehn Figuren sinnbildlich dargestellt zur Erweckung und Beförderung des christlichen Sinnes*, by Johannes Evangelista

Gossner (1773–1858). This lengthy title translates as "The Heart of Man, a Temple of God, or a Workshop of Satan; depicted in ten figures to awaken and promote the Christian sense." Gossner was still a Roman Catholic priest in Munich when this book was first published in 1812. However, in 1826, he became a Protestant.

Theologically, he believed that true faith was found within the heart and outside the institutions of religion. Eight of the ten illustrations in the book are representations of the "Heart of Man." Each of the eight is heart-shaped with a human head, and the heart itself is like a throne room occupied by either God or the Devil. The remaining two illustrations are death scenes, one for the godly and the other for the ungodly.

Zerstörung Jerusalem, valued at twenty-five cents, was a German translation by Wilhelm Reichenbach of George Peter Holford's 1805 work, "The Destruction of Jerusalem, An Absolute and Irresistible Proof of the Divine Origin of Christianity." Holford (1768–1839) was a member of the British Parliament representing Bossiney in North Cornwall when he wrote this work. He was a philanthropist and advocate of prison reform. Eby probably owned the translation printed in Lancaster in 1810 by Joseph Ehrenfried.

Der wahre und selige Weg (The True and Blessed Way) was written by Johannes Herr (1782–1850), founder of the Reformed Mennonite Church. It was printed in 1815 by Joseph Ehrenfried, Lancaster.

Schule der Weisheit was valued at ten cents. This rather generic name may refer to *Die Schule der Weisheit 1ter Theil in Poësie als das hoch-teutsche A.B.C. vor Schüler und Meister in Israel*, or "School of Wisdom, 1st Part, in Poetry, a High-German A.B.C. for Students and Teachers in Israel." It was printed in 1750 by Christoph Saur. Otherwise, I could find very little about it.

[Im] *Reich der Todten* (In the Realm of the Dead) was valued at six cents. Martin Keen has tentatively identified this as *Gespräch im Reich der Todten, über die Begnadigten auf Erden, und über die Seligen im Himmel*,⁷⁶ published in Lancaster in 1793.

In addition to the above religious books, Eby owned a Bible in three volumes valued at three dollars each; another Bible valued at \$1.25; an English Bible worth fifty cents; three copies of a *Neue Testament*, fifty cents each; a *Psalterspiel* (*Das Keine Davidische Psalterspiel Der Kinder Zions*), or Baptist Brethren hymnal, fifty cents; a *Psalter* (Book of Psalms), twelve and one-half cents; and a *Martyrer Spiegel* valued at four dollars.

The *Martyrer Spiegel* is of special interest because its whereabouts are known. Following the publica-

76. "Conversation in the Realm of the Dead, about the Pardoned on Earth and about the Blessed in Heaven."

tion of Part 1, I received a wealth of information from Isaac Lowry of Hagerstown, Maryland. Mr. Lowry's father, James Lowry, is a scholar of *Martyrs' Mirror* history and was contacted by Pastor Kevin Munroe of Zion Reformed United Church of Christ Church in Hagerstown in 2017 when a rare *Martyrs' Mirror* surfaced. It had been passed down in the family of Victor Christ and turned out to be the one that was owned by Peter Eby. It was subsequently donated to the Washington County Mennonite Historical Library.

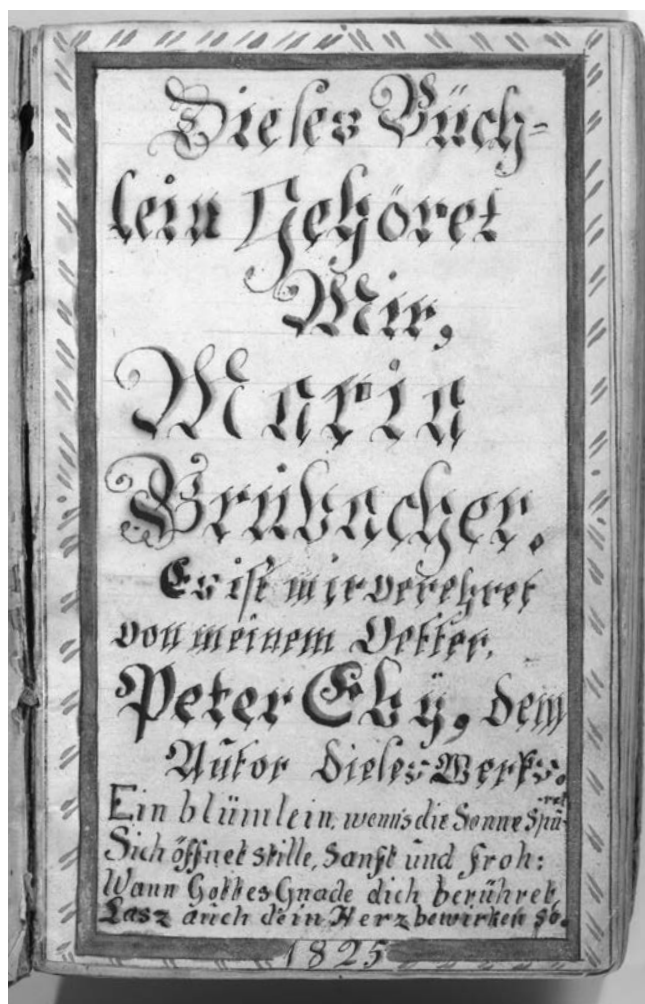
It is a 1748/49 copy printed at the Ephrata Cloister. The full title is *Der Blutige Schau-Platz, oder Martyrer Spiegel der Tauffs Gesinnnten oder Wehrlosen Christen*. It contains a family record for the children of Christian Eby (1698–1756) and Elizabeth Meyer,⁷⁷ together with other papers of relevance to be discussed later.

We can surmise that the *Mirror* passed to Christian Eby's son Peter Eby Sr. (1742–1819) because it is inscribed by Peter the Hermit stating that the book came to him in the division of his father's estate in 1820. The most likely path to Maryland would have been through Benjamin Eby, a long-time preacher at the Hammer Creek Mennonite congregation in Lancaster County. He died in 1866 en route to Hagerstown to assume leadership of the Witmer (now Reiff) Mennonite congregation. Benjamin Eby and his wife, Veronica Witwer, are both buried at Reiff Mennonite Cemetery.

To conclude the inventory, there are numerous secular publications such as [der] *Geschwinde Rechner* (The Ready Reckoner) by Daniel Fenning, valued at six cents. This book was in numerous editions of printed tables, often multiplication, to aid those engaged in business transactions. The collection also included a German reading book (*Lese Buch*), twelve and one-half cents; the Constitution of the United States (*Constitution der Vereinigten Staaten*), twenty-five cents; an astrological table (*Astrologische Tafel*), six cents; and the two-volume German to English and English to German "Hamilton's Dictionary," valued at \$3.50.

Some unknown entries include "Old Book," twelve and one-half cents; *Hausbuch*, fifty cents; twenty-three small books, fifty-nine cents; twenty-two books at twelve and one-half cents each; a *Tractat* (Treatise) book, fifty cents; and finally, eleven written books at twenty-four cents, possibly journals or personal writings. After Eby's death, his books were sold or given away as directed in his will:

77. This record matches that in the Christian Eby/Elizabeth Mayer family Bible which took a journey to Ohio with son Andreas Eby, was lost, then found, and finally returned to Lancaster, where it resides in the archives of LancasterHistory.org.



Credit: The Library Company of Philadelphia; item number frkb00130; wove paper, watercolor, and ink. The Library Company's records state that Frederick S. Weiser attributed the bookplate to the "H. B. Artist."

Touching my books, if person of property will be found, who would like to buy of such books there they shall sell the same at the appraised value thereof, but to poor brothers & sisters in Christ they shall give them a Inheritance without paying for the same.

Eby's book, *Die aufgehende Lilie*

Martin Keen has proposed that one of the groups of unidentified books may be the work of Eby himself. I had forgotten that Eby had written a religious book. After Keen's most welcome suggestion, I rechecked my notes from 2003 and discovered that, indeed, both Ezra Eby and Alexander Harris had noted that Eby had "written a small religious work, most copies of which were distributed after his death."⁷⁸

78. Alex Harris, *A Biographical History of Lancaster County* (Lancaster, PA: Elias Barr & Co., 1872), 185.

Eby's likely work, *Die aufgehende Lilie* (The Blossoming Lily),⁷⁹ was printed in 1815 by Wilhelm Hamilton in Lancaster. Surprisingly, Eby's name does not appear as the author anywhere in the publication. The attribution to Eby largely comes from a copy held by the Library Company of Philadelphia which has a decorated German fraktur bookplate dated 1825 that reads as follows:

"Dieses Buchlein Gehoret Mir, Maria Brubacher. Es ist mir verehret von in einem Vetter, Peter Eby, dem Autor dieses Werks," or "This little book belongs to me, Maria Brubacher. It was presented to me by my cousin, Peter Eby, the author of this work." The poem at the bottom reads, *"Ein blümlein, wenn's die Sonne Spüret, sich öffnet stille, Sanft und froh; Wann Gottes Gnadedich berührt, Lasz auch dein Herz bewirken so."* The translation is, "A little flower, when it feels the sun, opens silently, gently and happy: When God's grace touches you, Let your heart do the same thing."

Working from home during the pandemic, I was afraid that I would not be able to find a copy of this work. However, Duke University has a wonderfully preserved and digitized copy available online at <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100835378>.

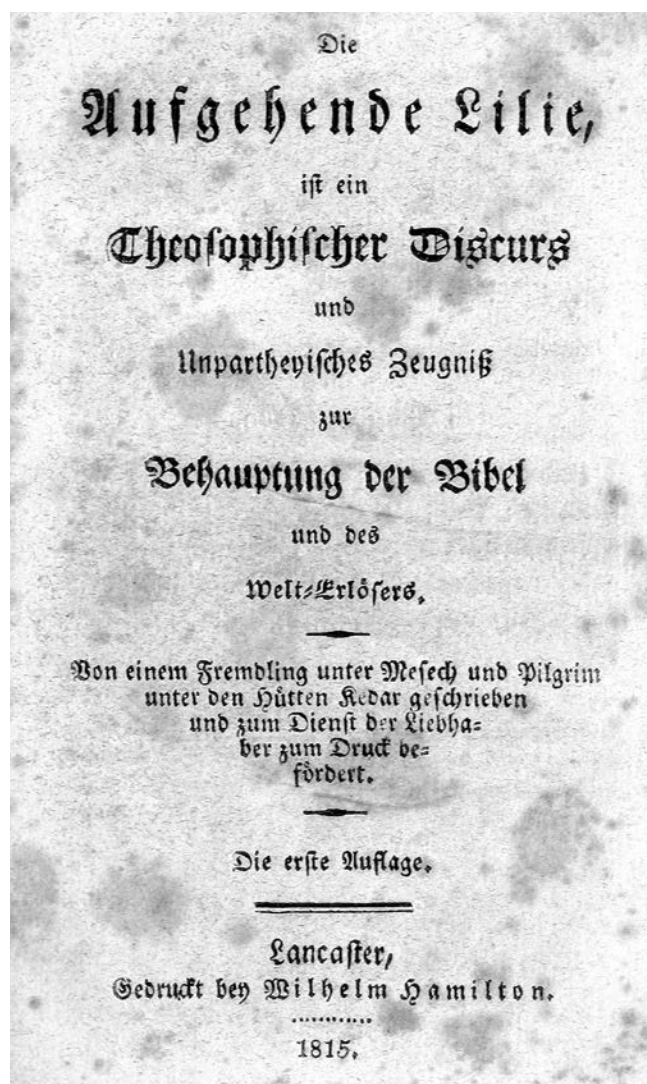
This copy contains 204 printed pages, and the introduction consists of a title page, a page with a stand-alone quote from 1 Timothy 3:16,⁸⁰ a "Reminder to the Dear Reader," and finally, a Preface. Each part deserves comment.

The title page presented here translates as "The blossoming Lily, a theosophical Discourse and impartial Testimony to the assertion of the Bible and the World-Savior from a Stranger under Mesech and a Pilgrim under the Huts of Kedar, written and for the Service of Lovers of printed Work." The references to "Mesech" and "Huts of Kedar" comes from Psalm 120:5: "Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell among the tents of Kedar!" The next verses which were not included are: "Too long have I had my dwelling among those who hate peace. I am for peace; but when I speak, they are for war!"

The imagery suggests that the writer felt that people hostile to his ways and ideas surrounded him.

79. James Lowry has suggested that the title may derive from a passage in the *Martyrs' Mirror* on page 352(b) of the Ephrata imprint: *"Als nun die Glaubige Wehrlose Albi-Waldenser eine Zeitlang in Ruhe gesessen waren, und die Lilie ihres rechtsinngen Glaubens und schön. . ."* ("When the believing, defenseless Albi-Waldenses had enjoyed rest for a season, and the lily of their true faith was beginning, in some measure, to grow and blossom, in all purity and beauty....")

80. "Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of our religion: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory."



Title Page. Credit: Courtesy of Hathitrust.org

The name Kedar was also applied to the first large building at the Ephrata Cloister.

Following the Bible verses is a page entitled "Erinnerung an den geneigten Leser." It roughly translates as:

Reminder to the Kind Reader: I've had to hear some reproaches these past twenty years, that I keep myself too lonely and hidden and do not allow myself to be used sufficiently for the edification of other people and souls, and that I shall, as they say, bury my pound in the ground,⁸¹ and so on. So whether that is really serious, I leave to you to decide.

As a result, a public testimony appears here; whoever is really serious and wants something

81. "bury my pound in the ground" is a reference to the parables presented in Matt. 20 and Luke 19. I believe that Eby is stating that he has been accused of not using his learning and talent for spreading the faith.

from me, he can have that. If you don't like it, please leave it to me and those who love it. I hope I have at least gotten rid of the aforementioned charges.

But if I am going to rouse someone with this, assuming equality in the world to seek God and eternal salvation, [that is] what this work is intended for, so to God only the Glory.

The following page begins a lengthy, four-page preface, which is pure Eby: honest, instructive, skeptical of established religion (and sermons), but intrinsically tied to the Bible itself. The first few paragraphs translate as follows:

You, my readers, will say that there is no end to all the bookmaking, and a lot of preaching makes the body tired;⁸² there are so many books that there is no need to write more—those that we already have are not used, what an agony! Yes, too much of that is true. But how does one advise in this matter? Not with silence, either?

I must tell you one thing: Physicians and pharmacists have more than one medicine in their pharmacies because the diseases of people are many; also one medicine does not have the same effect on each and every person; that's why the pharmacist, like the doctor, in many ways, has a large assortment of medicines, so that when the first one is not taking effect, he tries another, and if this one does not [work] either, then he tries the third, and in the case that the third does not [work] then continues with the fourth, fifth and sixth until the desired improvement is finally achieved.

So, also, act wisely and do not reject this new little creation with hasty prejudice and disparagement.

You, who pretend to be doctors of the soul, do not want to spurn this newly prepared medicine until you have tried it. Accept it and keep it in the Christian pharmacy or library. The matter itself is old and new truth, pure and unadulterated, taken from God's archive. See and try, whether the Lord has blessed it, and if it meets a real need in the hearts of men and is a cure for many souls, who are sick of Naturalism⁸³ and Deism,⁸⁴ let it thrive; it will hurt a little, and afterward, it will be better.

The first part of the body of the work, pages 9 through 127, is a theosophical discourse in question and answer format. It begins as follows: "1st Question. Do you also believe that an Almighty God

exists? Answer. Yes, I believe it, and I am certain of it." There are sixty-seven of these exchanges, most with numerous Bible references. The page heading for the discourse is *Gott der Schöpfer* (God the Creator) on the left-hand page, and *Jesus, Welterlöser* (Jesus, World-Redeemer) on the right-hand page.

Page 130 is entitled "*An die Juden*" (To the Jew) and is a statement that should these writings fall into the hands of a Jewish person, they are faithfully admonished and petitioned not to harden their hearts to the message.

Page 131 begins an annotation to Question and Answer number fourteen from Part 1. The title is *Von der Sünde in der Heiligen Geist*. Page 134 is a list of times in the New Testament that God is referred to as father and Jesus as son. Pages 135–36 is a statement of the Ten Commandments. Page 137 recites the Nicene Creed, followed by Eby's reasons for including these last two items:

This symbolism and incomparable Christian creed of the old church fathers is so accurate and so complete, and the whole reason of the Christian faith is expressed in so short and few words that I am amazed at it and cannot be amazed enough about it, and is therefore of immeasurable value and deserves to be included in all godly books. And I cannot fail here to faithfully admonish all Christian-minded religious beliefs that they should learn the same thing, along with the holy ten commandments of God, to diligently learn and inculcate their children; yes, they should all be freely memorized; So it becomes a safe shield or tool against destructive Naturalism and Deism.

The section ends on page 138 with a version of the Lord's Prayer, and Part 2 of the body begins on page 139. It is a lengthy section entitled "Discussion of this Testimony and Discourse in General." Again, he follows the title page with a Bible verse (page 140), in this case, John 3:30–31.⁸⁵ The section then continues to page 154 with the page headings "*Christus in uns*" (Christ in us) on the left-hand page and "*die Hoffnung der Herrlichkeit*" (The Hope of Glory) on the right-hand page.

Page 157 begins the third major section entitled *Das Kleine Blumen Sträußgen* (The Little Bouquet of Flowers) and is a thirty-page section of twenty songs "dealing with different matters." Each song has a suggested melody. The quotation introducing this section is from Song of Solomon 2:12–13.

82. Eby appears to be paraphrasing Eccles. 12:12 of the Luther Bible: "Of making many books there is not end, and much preaching is a weariness of the flesh."

83. Belief that all things arise from natural causes and explanations without resort to the supernatural.

84. Belief in a creator, based on reason, but a creator that does not interact with mankind.

85. *Er muß wachsen, ich aber muß abnehmen. Der von oben her kommt, ist über all.* ("He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all.")



The graveyard near the Christian Eby homestead. No grave-stone exists for Peter Eby, as per his wishes.

The flowers appear on the earth,
the time of singing has come,
and the voice of the turtle dove⁸⁶ is heard
in our land.

The fig tree puts forth its figs,
and the vine is in blossom;
they give forth fragrance.

The last part of the book is an index of topics and songs and a list of printer errors.

Another copy can be found online at <https://archive.org/details/dieaufgehendelil1815haro>. This copy does not have the section of songs and ends with printed page 154. This fact raises the possibility that the book was bound in multiple ways and that perhaps the twenty-three small books at fifty-nine cents and twenty-two books at twelve and one-half cents each represent different bindings. More copies will have to be located to research this matter. All four copies at the Library Company of Philadelphia are of the longer version. One of them has the following notation on the title page: “*von dem Einseidler Elimelech*,” or “by the hermit Elimelech.” In Hebrew, Elimelech is “My God is King.” Did Peter adopt a biblical name like many of those at the Cloister?

The aftermath of the *Lilie*

It would appear that Eby received some criticism of his writing. Within the *Martyrs' Mirror* was a loose page penned by Eby which seems to be a draft document and relates the following:

It appears to me that I must have aroused the devil greatly to wrath by bringing out *Die Aufgehende Lilie*

86. Note, once again, the turtledove imagery associated with the Ephrata Cloister songbooks.

because immediately after publishing of the same, he brought so much vexation and ill will toward me and wanted to ruin my character. By this, however, I was reminded that it would set me in the black book and serve moreover that he would be ill-disposed toward me and so blacken the lily in its blossoming to make it to wilt and serve the further ill-disposed person on his part to use it as his tool.⁸⁷

At the bottom is an unrelated note dated January 17, 1829, to “Friend Valentine Unger” and states, “When Joseph Steiner brings you this letter, make for one of his children a pair of shoes. I want to pay for them. This is from my hand...Peter Eby.”⁸⁸

Eby's death, burial and estate

Eby lived more than twenty years after the publication of his *magnum opus*. He died on December 9, 1836, aged seventy years, eight months, and twenty-nine days.⁸⁹ At the end of his life, he may have suffered some debility because his estate includes a credit of \$550 for funds held by his Trustee, Leonard Miller, Esq.

His funeral directions⁹⁰ to Johannes Eby and Jacob Wisler, dated May 16, 1826, and written in German script, stated that he wished to be buried “on the hill belonging to Benjamin Eby⁹¹ at the place of old Christian Eby, where the two Christian Ebys are buried.” This family graveyard is north of Snavelly Mill Road and east of the Christian Eby homestead.

He further stated that “the burial clothes I want to wear are in two paper cartons in my bedroom. You are to avoid all unnecessary frills.”

And further: “When you have carried out my corpse, I would appreciate your singing at the door, the song which starts with ‘I say good night’ etc. Sing me at least the two first verses and the last one. When you have arrived at the grave site with my body, you may feel free to sing some more songs which are fitting. As soon as you have covered the grave, a man among you who can read well should read a portion from Paul’s Epistle to the Thessalonians, and begin with verse 13, chapter 4, and read to the end of the chapter. And if after that someone wants to add a prayer, he should not be denied this chance. After

87. Transcription and translation by James Lowry.

88. Ibid.

89. Jacob N. Brubacher, *Brubacher Genealogy in America* (Elkhart, IN: Elkhart Publishing Co., 1884), 10; Hannes Eby, Carolyn C. Wenger, trans., and Denise Witwer Lahr, *Hannes Eby Death and Burial Record: Life and Death in Old Warwick Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, 1806-1845* (Lancaster, PA: Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, 2012), 45.

90. Landis Valley Farm Museum, Accession No. FM2012.11.6

91. This is the same Benjamin Eby, who probably came into possession of the *Martyrs' Mirror*.

that, someone can say the ?? and close.⁹² You should welcome those who wish to return to the house for a bite to eat.”

Within the Nota or poem mentioned in Part 1, he added: “Do not set me a tombstone and cover it with your tear drops; for the ropes of death cannot hold me back down here. I shall rise again in another country.”

In a will⁹³ written himself in English script and dated May 24, 1825, he directed that his estate should all be given away and named “the poor brothers & sisters in Christ & needy widows & orphans” as his “nearest friends & relatives, and also as my lawful heirs, [to] whom I bequeath everything. But where I say, the poor brothers & sisters in Christ, it is easy to be understood that none else than such as are of good behaviour, are thereby to be understood.”

He named “two wise men,” John Eby and Jacob Wisler, as his executors, and directed them to sell his four pieces of ground and carry out his mandated distributions, regardless of “situation, sex, nationality, colour, persue⁹⁴ or religion.” He specified, however, that if in their capacity as executors, they were required to distribute anything to those “of mean behavior,” that the executors should “give them less & of poorer quality.”

As to how this was to be carried out, he directed John Eby to receive grain, give a receipt for reimbursement, grind it, and make the required distribution to the poor. John Eby was to contact other “honest” millers in other places to do the same, including one in Lancaster city. For the city of Lancaster, he suggested Jonas Eby.

All of this was to occur within four years of Peter Eby’s death. John Eby was Peter Eby’s cousin, the miller at what is now Snavely’s Mill, and compiler of the death record that the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society published in 2011. Jacob Wisler, the other executor, was married to John Eby’s sister Anna.

In his 1874 biographical work, Alexander Harris misidentified Peter as the son of a “Jacob Eby,” but verified that the distribution lasted “three or four years: two wagon loads were sent to Lancaster city, and there distributed from the hardware store of Geo. Louis Mayer.” He also confirmed that Peter “wrote and published a small religious work, most copies of which were either sold or distributed after his death.”⁹⁵

A final accounting of the estate is dated November 19, 1840.⁹⁶ His real estate sold for \$1,212.85. John Eby’s son Elias submitted receipts for \$844.95 for the distribution of wheat and rye flour and cornmeal to places as widespread as Lancaster, Mount Joy, and Manheim. Jacob Wisler’s son, who was likely operating a general store in Schoeneck at the time, submitted receipts for \$41.23 to deliver flour to various persons. The final accounting also verifies that Eby’s worldly goods were distributed according to his will.

Conclusions

Peter the Hermit found his way in a world in which he apparently did not feel at home. In his reading, he pondered many religious issues but did not seem to land firmly in any one philosophy or camp. Although he absorbed much from the Ephrata Cloister, the monastic life apparently was not to his liking since there is no record of him there. He lived alone.

Through solitude and quiet reflection, he could think clearly. I was amazed at how many of the mystics and religious philosophers Eby read were engaged in weaving or cloth-dealing. In a “Historical Introduction” to *The Quiet Way*, Peter Erb states that in 1717 Tersteegen “gave up his trade, supporting himself thereafter as a weaver,”⁹⁷ so as to enter into the fullest contemplation...⁹⁸ As I watch my husband weave, I have come to realize that it is a soothing and somewhat mesmerizing process. Eby did not weave, but he made weaving devices.

*“Your undertaking some external employment
is needful for you and well pleasing to God.”*

—Tersteegen

And I do not think that Eby lived in isolation to spurn the world. He seemed to care a lot about issues of inequality in society. And he certainly was benevolent.

He loved singing hymns but was not connected to the organized religious experience. He clearly did not care for “preaching.”

In his own work, he spoke from the heart but used evidence and reason in his arguments and discussed items thoroughly. He was a scholar.

92. This portion is illegible.

93. Will R-1-292, of Peter Eby (Jr.), Lancaster County Archives.

94. It is unclear what Peter Eby meant by “persue.” I suspect that he meant “pursuit” or occupation.

95. Harris, *A Biographical History*, 185.

96. LancasterHistory.org.

97. I have found references indicating that Tersteegen was a ribbon- or tape-weaver.

98. Gerhard Tersteegen, Emily Chisholm, trans., Peter Erb, intro., *The Quiet Way. A Christian Path to Inner Peace* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, Inc., 2008), xvii.

It has been a privilege to bring Peter Eby Jr. out of obscurity and into modern light. It was also a challenge. I have tried to bear in mind Conrad Beissel's theosophical maxim No. 33:

If you want to find the path to wisdom, then associate with all kinds of things which you do not understand, and do not speak of that which you do not understand, and when you understand it, then regard it at all times as higher than what you understand.

I wish to dedicate this study to Carolyn C. Wenger. I am greatly indebted to Carolyn for all that she taught me and the tremendous confidence she placed in me. I will miss her every day.

Further thanks go, once again, to Martin Keen for his knowledge of the books and to Isaac Lowry, who notified me of the *Martyrs' Mirror's* location. He and his father, James, provided me with much useful information and alerted me to many of the Bible references.

Book Review

Led by His Hand: Stories from Merle Burkholder's Forty Years in Missions, by Romaine Stauffer. Berlin, OH: TGS International, 2019. Color photos. 282 pp. Softcover. \$13.99. ISBN: 978-1-949648-87-4.

How often do adults walk in the footsteps of their childhood heroes? *Led by His Hand* is a collection of fascinating stories about the life of contemporary mission worker Merle Burkholder who read stories of missionaries when he was a boy growing up in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Years later, living and traveling in Northwestern Ontario, Haiti, and several Asian nations, Burkholder and his family joined local residents and fellow Americans to establish churches and build relationships. Instead of maintaining their North American standard of living, the Burkholders chose to live like rural Haitians, without electricity and other conveniences. They demonstrated humility when confronted with different cultural values in Haiti, among the First Nations peoples in Canada, and the various ethnic groups in Asia. The writer effectively shows how this enabled Burkholder to maintain a positive Christian witness among the disparate ethnic groups he served.

The book contains forty-five chapters, each a separate story. God was at work in miraculous healings, far from modern medical facilities. There are stories of people choosing to follow Christ after attempting to seek other ways of fulfillment. People are freed from alcoholism, abusive husbands learn to control their anger, and marriages are restored. The writer avoids sensationalism in describing these conversions. In Haiti, there is a confrontation with the voodoo religion at a Christian funeral where voodoo worshippers stole the body. In Bhutan, there is the overwhelming presence of Buddhism, and the story of Christians,

though few in number, seeking to be faithful. In Nepal, with both Hindus and Buddhists, Burkholder and his team encourage the minority Christians.

There are also stories of battles with nature. In Ontario, there was a fierce forest fire which threatened the Stirland Lake High School. The writer vividly describes a dangerous trip through a raging blizzard during an Ontario winter and surviving the destruction of Hurricane Georges in Haiti. There are also "mechanical miracles" when an auto trip was completed successfully despite the vehicle's totally dead battery.

The book deals with the challenge of sharing the good news of the Gospel in places where non-Christian religions are closely tied to ancestor worship and the culture of the people. This happened in Canada and Haiti, but even more so in Thailand and other Asian nations. The missionaries compared their witness to the Apostle Paul when he met the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill.

Other current themes surface in this book. Hunger and poor nutrition are experienced in poverty-stricken Haiti, as are threats of kidnapping and violence. Domestic violence is also common. There is an example of some "righteous anger" by Mrs. Burkholder, which effectively convinced an abusive husband that it was wrong to beat his wife.

The book describes how a Christian home, a Christian school, and church activities all helped to prepare young Merle Burkholder for a life of Christian service. Romaine Stauffer, a sister of Merle Burkholder, brings these stories to life. This enjoyable book will be an excellent addition to church and school libraries, and a great read-aloud book for families.

David L. Sauder
Akron, PA

Recommended Reading

Orders:

Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society
2215 Millstream Road
Lancaster, PA 17602-1499

Phone: (717) 393-9745

Fax: (717) 290-1585

Email: shop@lmhs.org

Please call the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society for shipping charges and book orders. Prices are subject to change without notice.

- Bach, Jeff. *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2003. 282 pp. (Hardcover). \$35.00. ISBN: 978-0-2710-2250-5.
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- Emery, Michael and Irwin Richman. *Living Crafts, Historic Tools: The Craftspeople and Collections of the Landis Valley Museum*. Schiffler, 2013. 160 pp. (Paperback). \$29.99. ISBN: 978-0-7643-4297-4.
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- MacMaster, Richard K. and Donald R. Jacobs. *A Gentle Wind of God: The Influence of the East Africa Revival*. Harrisonburg, VA: Herald Press, 2006. 403 pp. (Paperback). \$17.00. ISBN: 978-0836193183.
- Pencak, William A. *Friends and Enemies in Penn's Woods: Indians, Colonists, and the Racial Construction of Pennsylvania*. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004. 236 pp. (Paperback). \$35.95. ISBN: 978-0-2710-2385-4.
- Redekop, Calvin W. *The Pax Story: Service in the Name of Christ 1951–1976*. Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2001. 160 pp. (Paperback). \$29.00. ISBN: 978-1931038003.
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- Spero, Patrick. *Frontier Country: The Politics of War in Early Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. 343 pp. (Hardcover), \$39.95. ISBN: 978-0-8122-4861-6.
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- Voshage, Harold A. *A Defining Moment: A World War II Story of the Civilian Public Service Camp #64 at Terry, Montana*. Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 2018. 170 pp. (Paperback). \$16.00. ISBN: 978-1601265968.