

# OMHGS

# *Newsletter*

OREGON MENNONITE HISTORICAL AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

Volume 3, Number 2

September 1990

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## **Albany Mennonite Church**

Historical sketch by Jerry Brenneman

The first Mennonites in Albany assembled for worship in 1898 about four miles east of the city in a Methodist Church called the Geisendorfer Church. Later in the same year, church was held in the Price School house about 67 miles east of Albany. Enrollment at that time numbered forty people. From here the congregation moved to the Methodist Church once more. It was here that the congregation was organized in 1899 by David Garber of Nampa, Idaho. Services were held in this church until 1905, when the congregation moved to a school building across the Willamette River in Benton County where they met from July, 1905 until October 1908.

L. J. Yoder, the first minister at Albany, was born at Millersburg, Ohio in 1844. He was ordained deacon at Eugene in 1893 by Joseph Schlegel and ordained minister in 1895. In 1924 he let Albany to become minister of the Zion Congregation at Hubbard, Oregon.

The early church at Albany was weak and growth was very slow, prompting L. J. Yoder, the minister, to write a letter to the Herald of Truth (now the Gospel Herald) that said, "if you think enough of the principle of our faith to hold together and care for what we have in the Mennonite fold, please come or send some of our Mennonite Bishops and ministers to visit us for we need the prayers and the aid of our fellow workers." George R. Brunk held the first evangelistic meetings at Albany in the year 1900.

In 1905 a Sunday School Conference was held at Albany, but it was disapproved by many and was considered worldly. The congregation felt the need for missionary outlets, however, and a group of six men were chosen by the congregation to look into the possibility of mission work in Portland.

In 1906 the congregation numbered 20 members, by 1907 there were 22, and by 1980 there were 28 members, and by 1911 membership totaled 39.

Since there was no bishop over the Albany Church, it was decided in the Second Church Conference for the Pacific Coast District held at Albany on October 23-24, 1907, that Bishop J. D. Mishler of the Hopewell Church should also serve the Albany congregation. Bishop Mishler served the Albany church until J. P. Bontrager was ordained Bishop and relieved him of his duties.

J. P. Bontrager moved to Nampa, Idaho from Lancaster, Ohio in December of 1900. He moved to Albany in June 1905 and was ordained minister of the Albany church in the home of Rachel Mishler. The ordination was in charge of T. M. Erb. On March 18, 1912 he was ordained bishop at the church by David Hilty and J. D. Mishler.

In July of 1909 the Evangelical Church building, which stood where the Armory building now stands, was purchased and moved to West 12th Street on a plot of ground donated to the church by C. R. Widmer. In 1952 this property and building was sold to the Nazarene church for 8,000 dollars.

The church was known as the 12th Street Mennonite Church throughout its history. The building was paid for by selling lots off the two acres that were donated, by subscriptions, and several donations from churches in the East. Fifty dollars came from the Hopewell congregation from the sale of the Eugene church because many of the old Eugene members had located at Albany.

During the early 1900's the ministers of the Albany Congregation preached for the members living near Airlie, Oregon until the group there established a church called the Firdale Church. The Albany Church decreased by about 20 members as a result of this organization. J. P. Bontrager conducted the first service at Firdale in October, 1914. Their membership rose to 68 before the church died out completely in 1924.

On March 18, 1912, M. E. Brenneman was ordained deacon. He had been in Albany in 1905 but returned east where he was married in 1906 at Roseland, Nebraska to Orpha Mishler, a member of the Albany Church whom he had met here. They returned to Albany in the fall of 1909. On November 7, 1915, he was ordained to the ministry by J. S. Shoemaker and S. G. Shetler. M. E. Brenneman was senior minister at the Albany church for many years, and one of the outstanding members in the church's history.

The 12th Street church kept on growing and by 1918, at the time of the 12th Pacific Coast Conference, had reached a total of 123 members to become the largest of the Old Mennonite churches in Oregon. It was at this conference that a resolution was drawn up calling for the Oregon churches to "lay aside all worldliness and superfluities such as neckties, gold watch chains, fashionable plush caps, and auto caps .... large lace collars and such like..."

In that year also was the world-wide flu epidemic and the 12th Street church had to close its doors for four weeks because of the ban on public meetings and the closure of public meeting places.

On June 6, 1920, N. A. Lind was ordained bishop by J. D. Mishler, J. P. Bontrager, and S. G. Shetler. He remained bishop until the 40's when he asked for his resignation, after which he went to Sweet Home.

Internal difficulties hit the church in the early 30's, brought about largely because of administration of discipline and difference of opinion. Some members left the church for other Mennonite churches, and some for other denominations.

Because of drought in Montana in 1938, and also because of an invitation from the Albany congregation to help in the ministry, George Kauffman moved to Albany with his family. His help was needed because of the shortage of ministerial workers. He served as minister of the 12th Street church for approximately 12 years.

In 1940 Bishop Lind was released of his duties at Albany and went to Sweet Home. Nineteen forty-two saw George Kauffman placed in charge of the Albany church as a result of a vote of the congregation.

In 1946 a Sunday School was organized by the church approximately 6 miles southwest of Albany in the Riverside community. Several members of the congregation served as superintendent of this Sunday School which at times had an attendance as high as 60. This work is no longer carried on.

On August 29, 1948, Paul Yoder was ordained pastor of the church at Albany. He was a member of the faculty of Hesston College, Hesston, Kansas at the time. He completed the school year of 1948-1949 before assuming his duties as pastor. N. M. Birky of Fairview, C.I. Kropf of Zion and J. P. Bontrager had charge of the ordination. This was the first time that full support was given an ordained man by the congregation. His work began July 1, 1949.



In 1950, J. P. Bontrager died, leaving the church without a Bishop. Bishop C. I. Kropf of the Zion congregation assumed the duties of bishop of the Albany church after Bishop Bontrager's death until the naming of Allen Erb as bishop.

During the winter of 1950 the youth of the church affiliated with the National Mennonite Youth Fellowship organization. In June, 1950 the M.Y.F. sent delegates to the national convention in Goshen, Indiana.

On Sunday afternoon, August 27, 1950 a ground breaking ceremony was held 3 miles north of Albany on Highway 99E by the Albany congregation in preparation for the building of its new church. Lester Kropf, chairman of the building committee, presented the spade to his father-in-law, H. L. Burck, one of the earliest members of the congregation, who broke the first ground. Excavation for the basement was begun on Saturday, September 2, 1950.

The last series of meetings and evangelistic services at the old 12th Street church was held starting April 6, 1952 by J. C. Wenger of Goshen, Indiana. Church services began in the new church on the first Sunday in July, 1952.

A church constitution was written and adopted at a specially called members meeting July 12, 1954, marking a new era for the church. This constitution, with revisions, served the congregation until a new one went into effect on June 1, 1972.

The upstairs of the present church building was first used in February of 1955 and the church was officially dedicated on Sunday, Sept. 25, 1955. The cost of the church and grounds amounted to about \$75,000, which came from donations, gifts, and pledges. Work was largely donated by members and friends, greatly aiding in holding the cost of the building to a minimum.

Bishop Allen Erb in 1955, upon recommendation of the ministerial committee of the church, went to Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, to see H. S. Bender, head of the Bible Department at Goshen, to seek candidates for the ministry at Albany. Upon the recommendation of Bender, David Mann was selected. He and his wife Mona moved to Albany in August of 1955, where almost a year later, on July 8, 1956, he was ordained by Bishop Erb.

July 1956 saw a loss of 14 members to the Logsdon Church, near the coast, where the work was carried on largely by these members from Albany. There was another loss of membership in April 1957 when the Lebanon church was organized. Bishop Erb took his membership there.



The congregation was saddened on May 18, 1957 when it was learned that Mr. E. Brenneman had passed away. He had served the Albany church in many capacities for over forty years.

August 16, 1959 saw the 60th anniversary celebration of the Albany Mennonite Church. 1 An all day service took place with dinner in the basement. Several former pastors were on the program including George Kauffman, N. A. Lind, and Paul E. Yoder. Membership in 1959 reached 240 baptized members.

On Sunday, June 5, 1960 David Mann was ordained Bishop to replace Allen Erb, who resigned to move to Hesston, Kansas. The service was in charge of Allen Erb, assisted by C. I. Kropf, N. A. Lind and N. M. Birky. Paul E. Yoder brought the message. David Mann was bishop of the Albany church until leaving in 1970.

The first budget system for the Albany congregation went into effect in October of 1960. The dollar amount of the first approved budget was \$19,600 with \$2,175 designated as salary for the pastor. Membership in 1960 had reached 260.

In 1960 the congregation approved David Mann's serving as Bishop of the Lebanon Church and in 1961 David began serving in that capacity.

Daniel Mishler, the last surviving charter member of the Albany congregation, died on March 14, 1961. He had been attending regularly until illness and age forced him to miss services.

The Church Council approved a ministerial committee report on April 30, 1961 to establish for the first time a Board of Elders for the congregation. The Congregation in their annual business meeting of September 4, approved amendments to the constitution and bylaws and the Board of Elders plan was established. Those nominated were Claude Buerge, Amos Conrad, Isaac Kennel, Lester Kropf, Eugene Lemons, Milton Martin, Orpha Brenneman and Mona Mann. Election was held Sunday morning, September 24, and installation followed. The first elders of the congregation were Lester Kropf, Claude Buerge, Eugene Lemons and Mona Mann.

Because of the success of the budget plan for giving in 1960-61 it was decided to continue, and a budget of \$19,915 was approved for 1961-1962.

The Sewing Circle has been an integral part of the congregation for many years. The date of its organization is not known; however, records of meetings have been kept since October, 1923. For many years these meetings were held in homes, but after facilities at the church became available and adequate,

they met there.

The aim and purpose of the Sewing Circle has always been to help the needy--usually in the form of sewing clothing articles. In the early years it mostly included sewing and canning for the Portland Mennonite Mission dispensary. Then other needs were met, such as providing bedding and clothing for families whose homes had burned, sending dried fruit to India missionaries; in 1937-38 a considerable amount of relief in the form of bedding and clothing was sent to Russian Mennonites who had come to Canada. During World War II many, many quarts of fruit were canned for use in the civilian Public Service Camps, also camp kits were made and given to the young men of the congregation who served in these camps as conscientious objectors. Tons of good used clothing have been gathered, repaired, and distributed through MCC in the years since the war. The MCC projects of Christmas bundles, clean-up kits, layette bundles, leprosy bundles and school kits are still being promoted by the women's group.

At first the Sewing Circle treasury was financed by offerings taken at the meetings. However, on November 28, 1929 the congregation took this action: "As a congregation we appreciate the work of our Sisters Sewing Circle to the extent that we instruct them to make their financial need known to the deacon who shall take regular steps to supply them." Later the congregation took action designating one Sunday School offering per month for support of the sewing circle. This continued until the fiscal year of 1972-1973 when the WMSC became financed through the regular church budget.

In 1954 the name of the organization was changed from Sewing Circle to Women's Missionary and Service Commission.

Throughout the years the women's organization has cooperated with the District organization of the Conference. Several women from the congregation have also served as officers of the District WMSC.

In March, 1962, Lillie Steckly, longtime member of the congregation, donated to the church her collection of Mennonite Periodicals dating back as far as 1911. These included Gospel Herald, Christian Monitor, Mennonite Community, Christian Living, and Missionary Evangel. These were placed in the Library for historical and reference purposes, giving the Albany church one of the best resource libraries in the conference district.

The City of Albany was host to the Greater Albany Crusade for Christ with Myron Augsburger during January 13-27 of 1963. The Albany Church was instrumental in getting Augsburger to Albany and members of the church worked with other churches

in the area preparing for this crusade. The Wednesday night welcome was given by Governor Mark Hatfield of Oregon who gave his testimony to the large crowd in the auditorium of the old high school.

David Mann asked to be allowed to attend seminary in the summer of 1963 at Elkhart, Indiana, having been out of school for nine years and feeling the need for additional training. He was released for 3 months and the James Horsch family moved to Albany where James took over as student pastor for the summer. James went to Logsden during the winter to serve as pastor while Roy Roth studied in Germany. James was licensed as pastor while at Logsden with David Mann assisting in the installation service on September 1, 1963.

In 1963 several members living in the Corvallis area began the Corvallis Mennonite Fellowship, meeting for prayer and Bible study in homes almost every week. This fellowship met March 19, 1964 at the home of Herman Krehbiels to discuss their vision and plans for the future. In April, David Mann reported to the church council that the church had been filled to capacity each morning and that church expansion or "swarming" should be considered "seriously and prayerfully." On June 10, Virgil Vogt from Evanston, Illinois met with the Corvallis Fellowship to discuss the possibilities of his serving as Pastor if a new fellowship were to be established in Corvallis. This plan did not materialize but Sunday, August 2, 1964 saw the Corvallis Fellowship hold its first regular Sunday evening meeting.

On Sunday, March 14, 1965 David Mann announced to the audience that he was giving his 1,000th message since coming to Albany, including weddings, funerals, and messages, and meetings in other churches. David was given church approval to serve as Bishop of the Eugene Church in April of 1965.

Due to the problems of decreasing enrollments in the Seminary and the increasing need for pastors, the congregation discussed ways to encourage young men to prepare for the ministry. One practical way was the establishment of a fund to aid those who might wish to pursue full time Christian work. A seminary aid fund was established in 1965 and eventually several thousand dollars was collected. Part of this money was used to aid Byron Gingrich, a member of the congregation, in his seminary training at Eastern Mennonite Seminary in 1973-1974, and in securing his help in the congregation as assistant pastor for the months of July and August, 1974.

A Stewardship for Mission program occupied much time and energy during 1966, and several enlistment teams were sent out to visit every family in the church. Faith commitments amounted to \$31,335 for 78 commitments, including those of children. The 1965-1966 budget of the church was approved at \$25,768.50,



and increased substantially to \$31,437.50 for 1966-1967.

In April, 1967, the congregation discussed plans to convert the basement to classrooms and build a multi-purpose building on the northeast corner of the church to be used for WMSA, Literary, MYF, Boys Club, suppers and fellowship meetings.

On May 7, 1967 the first issue of a monthly newsletter called Lamplighter appeared, edited by Shirley Gerig. This informative newsletter continued for several years until it was discontinued.

N. A. Lind, long time leader of the congregation, died July 31, 1968 at the Mennonite Home for the Aged. He had served the congregation from 1919 to 1940 as pastor and bishop. August, 1968 saw J. B. Martin of Canada and father of one of the members serve as interim pastor during the absence of David Mann.

Because of the continued growth and crowded conditions mentioned earlier, a special business meeting was held November 24, 1968. At this meeting it was decided that rather than build on to the church the church should "swarm." A report was given that the Children's Farm Home Chapel was not in use and would be available for a new congregation. It is located on the Farm Home grounds, halfway between Albany and Corvallis on Highway 20. A meeting was held at the Farm Home Chapel on Wednesday December 18, 1968 at 7:30 p.m. to look at the facilities and to discuss and pray about the possible new work there. An evening service at the Albany Church on December 29, 1968 was given to a further report concerning the beginning of a church in Corvallis, and action was taken in the affirmative to begin at once. The vote taken was a strong 65 to 6 in favor. On Sunday morning, January 5, 1969, a consecration service was held for the Corvallis participants. Thirty-five members of the Albany congregation became charter members of the Corvallis Church. The first service was held at the Chapel on Sunday, January 12, at 9:30 a.m. with David Mann preaching. 1 Albany church attendance on the morning of January 5 was 223. The first Sunday of the Corvallis church meeting showed an Albany attendance of 1962, and that of Corvallis of 101. David Mann preached at both congregations on Sunday mornings until Elmer Yoder was installed as the first pastor of the Corvallis congregation on May 4, 1969.

In 1970 the church formed a committee to study the possibility of securing a youth director for the MYF program. After a long period of study and search James Wenger and his wife, Mary, were invited to Albany where Jim was to serve as Youth Director one-half time at a beginning salary of \$3,500 yearly. They arrived from Kansas in August, 1971. After a two year trial period, the congregation voted not to continue with a salaried Youth Director.

David Mann asked the congregation early in 1970 to allow him a one-year leave of absence to attend seminary in Elkhart. This request was approved and a farewell church picnic was held for the Manns on August 9 and the family left August 17 for Elkhart. Nelson E. Kauffman was called to serve as interim pastor for one year beginning September 1, 1970. David requested near the end of his first year of studies to remain in Seminary an additional year. He also felt that perhaps he should not return to Albany, as he had served as pastor many years, since graduating from Seminary, and that perhaps it was not good for congregations or pastors to be so long together. He suggested the Albany congregation could be better served by new leadership. David and Mona served ably and well from 1955 to 1970 and during this time their three children were born and grew up in the congregation. A long and difficult search for a pastor concluded with the congregation calling James M. Lapp of Perkaspie, Pa. in May, 1972.

Howard Charles, Professor of New Testament at Elkhart Seminary, held meetings at the First Christian Church in Albany in 1972, where he conducted Leadership Training Seminars for all the churches in Albany. Additional special meetings were held in the Albany Mennonite church on the subjects of Charismatic Experience and the Role of Women in the Church.

The Albany congregation hosted the National Mennonite Disaster Service annual meeting on Friday and Saturday, February 11 and 12, 1972 with Peter Funk from Pacific College in Fresno, California, as the banquet speaker.

In the search for a pastor to replace David Mann, James M. Lapp of Perkaspie, Pennsylvania was one of the persons contacted. They expressed interest in coming and were invited to visit the congregation in the spring. James and Nancy flew to Oregon from Perkaspie to meet with the congregation on May 13 and 14, 1972. They met with members of the church council and their spouses on Saturday evening and James preached morning and evening on Sunday, meeting informally after the evening service with the congregation in the fellowship hall. On the following Sunday morning conference, Minister Harold Hochstetler met with the congregation and delivered a sermon entitled "Decision Making in a Brotherhood Church." After the sermon he led the congregation through a time of discipline and discernment resulting in consensus on the calling of James Lapp to serve as pastor. Since that time, many of the major decisions in the congregation have been decided through the process of arriving at consensus rather than voting. James accepted the call to Albany, arriving with his family during the last week of August, 1972.

The congregation helped sponsor the Willamette Valley

Crusade for Christ with Bill Glass, evangelist, in August, 1972 with several members serving on the coordinating committee and as counselors each evening of the crusade.

A farewell service for Nelson and Lois Kauffman was held on August 27, 1972. A familiar sight in downtown Albany during their two years here was Nelson walking briskly down the streets, Bible in hand, memorizing scripture to be quoted in Sunday sermons. Many were envious of the tremendous spirit, energy, and activity of this couple while they served as interim pastor and wife.

A district meeting at the Albany Church was held November 14, 1972 with Paul Kraybill, Ivan Kauffman and Ross Bender, executive officers of the General Board, and the Board of Congregational Ministries to interpret the new Mennonite Church organization, introduce new fund raising procedures and introduce the role and function of the Board of Congregational Ministries.

On December 1- 3 of 1972, Albany hosted the Fiftieth Annual Mennonite Conference of the Pacific Coast on its anniversary date. Much time was spent reviewing and reminiscing the past 50 years and looked ahead to the future.

In 1973 the Fellowship and Caring Commission divided the congregation into 10 House Fellowship groups for worship, study, and fellowship. Four Sunday evenings during the year were given to meeting in homes in these 10 groups. This plan has been continued to the present time with new groups each year to facilitate getting to know more people in the congregation.

The MYF was busy during 1973 with Taco feeds, car washes, pancake feeds, paper drives, and box socials to raise funds for the Youth Convention at Grand Rapids, Michigan during August, and eleven young people and one sponsor attended the convention as a result.

Daniel Yutzy, Academic Dean of Eastern Mennonite College, visited the congregation on February 9 and 10, 1974 for a series of meetings promoting personal and congregational spiritual renewal which were valued by all attending.

During 1973 and 1974 many elective classes were offered during the morning Sunday School period. During this period, special efforts were directed to discernment of gifts and to a better understanding of what it means to be a member of God's fellowship in a loving, caring brotherhood.

In the September, 1974 business meeting, the largest budget in the history of the church was approved in the amount of \$47,293.00. In September and October, \$4,920.00 was raised



for Mennonite Central Committee African relief in addition to the regular budget giving, because of the drought and famine in the Sahel area of Africa. All the Mennonite Churches in the southern end of the valley were invited to join in this project. An ingathering service was held at Cascadia on Sunday afternoon, October 6, with a total offering of \$31,841.58 received!

The year 1974 marks the 75th year for the Albany congregation. The present membership is 299. From this church have come nine ministers and countless others who have been instrumental in furthering the work of God and carrying on the work of the church. In recent years, members of our church have served in various capacities in such foreign countries as Bolivia, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Congo, Nigeria, Ghana, Viet Nam, France, and Puerto Rico, as well as in Illinois, Michigan, Colorado, Florida, Arizona, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Texas, South Dakota, and other places in the United States.

Those who have served the church as minister, deacon, or bishop, in the order of their appearance in Albany have been David Garber who organized the congregation in 1899; L. J. Hoder, first minister; David Hilty, Bishop; J. P. Bontrager, Bishop; John Steckley, Minister; Joseph Whitaker, Minister; M. E. Brenneman, Minister; N. A. Lind, Minister and Bishop; Ephraim Martin, Deacon; J. H. Whitaker, Deacon; George Kauffman, Minister; C. I. Kropf, Bishop; Paul E. Yoder, Minister; Allen Erb, Bishop; David Mann, Minister and Bishop; Nelson E. Kauffman, Minister, and James M. Lapp, Minister.

The Albany Mennonite Church has had its ups and downs in the past 75 years. It has had its moments of happiness and joy, as well as disappointments and sorrows, but with God's continuing blessings the church will continue to grow and serve Him in the future as it has done in the past.

(Compiled by Gerald Brenneman from original research in 1953, revised and updated in 1959 and 1974.)

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Newsletter published twice annually by Oregon Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society.

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# The Widmer Family History

by Viola Kropf and Daniel M. Widmer

Christian R. and Barbara Roth Widmer came to America in 1883, and first settled at Wayland, Iowa. C. R. (as he was generally known) and Barbara came to America as newlyweds. C. R. was wage 18 and Barbara age 17. It is not known how this young couple was able to finance their passage to America. They settled at Wayland, Iowa because Barbara's parents had settled there shortly before this.

Grandpa C. R. Widmer was born at Tournedoze, France, on April 28, 1864. He died at Albany, Oregon, on August 7, 1945 at the age of 81 years. His parents were Daniel and Anna Graber Widmer. Both of his parents died of typhoid fever in 1868 only 3 months apart. 1 Thus Grandpa was orphaned at the age of 4 years. He had a brother, Peter, who died at the age of 6 years with measles, and a sister, Anna, who died at the age of 20 with tuberculosis. Grandpa and his siblings were raised by relatives. He was shifted about a good bit and had an unpleasant childhood. This may have contributed somewhat to the fact that Grandpa married at the young age of 18 years.

Grandma Barbara Widmer was born in St. Louis, Alsace Lorraine, on Christmas Day, December 25, 1865. She died at Albany, Oregon, December 12, 1937 at the age of 71 years. Her parents were Nicholas and Catherine Stuffer Roth. Barbara had 6 sisters, only one of whom came to America. 1 This sister was Fanny, who married Peter Widmer. Their daughter, Anna Kennel, was well known in this community. Grandma's mother died in 1874 when Grandma was 81 years of age. Her father then married Madeline Yoder. Seven more children were born in this family, the youngest of whom was Anna who married C. R. Gerig of Albany. Grandma's parents immigrated to America and settled in the Mennonite community at Wayland, Iowa. They were living there when Grandpa and Grandma Widmer arrived in America. This likely was the reason our grandparents also settled at Wayland.

Grandpa and Grandma Widmer were lifelong members of the Mennonite church, which had its beginning in Switzerland, and has always practiced non-resistance. The members witness to a peaceful way of life, and even today, Mennonites are known for being conscientious objectors to war. Very soon after their marriage, in order for Grandpa to escape serving in the French Army, they came to America. In September, 1895, they moved to Albany, Oregon. It is not known what was the motive of their

moving west.

They first settled on a tract of farmland several miles east of Albany. In 1896 Grandpa purchased a farm in North Albany for \$5,400 and moved on to it. He built a large house, which tradition tells us cost about \$3,000 to \$4,000. He planted a prune orchard of about 40 acres. Interestingly enough, this orchard land is now the Springhill Country Club. Over the years, he was sometimes referred to as the "Benton County Prune King." He owned and operated a large prune dryer on the farm. Daniel's father, Dan, often spoke of helping cut the 20 or more cords of wood each winter to be used to fire the dryer furnaces the next prune drying season. Later, a large modern dryer was built which used oil for fuel. The new dryer was built with a lot of concrete, whereas the old one was entirely a wooden structure.

This farm also had a completely round barn Grandpa had brought the building plans along with him from the 'old country'. The thirty dairy cows were stationed all the way around the outer circle of the barn and the hay and feed were in the center. It was the only barn of its kind on the West Coast at that time. This barn also had another distinctive use. It was a wonderful place for the grandchildren to play 'hide and seek' when the families gathered at Grandpa Widmers for family get-togethers. Other fruits such as apples, cherries and grapes were grown, as well as a small walnut orchard. Grandpa brought with him from the 'old country' the art of making cheese. With a good sized dairy, he had the raw material with which to make this wonderful swiss cheese! And with Grandma Widmer's home-made bread on hand, there was a wonderful meal of cass and broth (cheese and bread)! Grandpa passed on this art of making cheese to his oldest daughter, Katie, and daughter-in-law, Elfie, but that art has been lost to the succeeding generations. Daniel remembers when his family lived at Sheridan and had a dairy herd, that his mother made 35 to 40 'wheels' of swiss cheese each spring while the cows were in their heaviest milk flow.

Daniel and I both have memories of Sunday School class in the basement of Albany Mennonite Church, then located on 12th Street in Albany. After the class period, we had a general assembly of the primary department, which at that time was about 50 children. The children's superintendent would sing with us and tell us a story before we would go up to sit with our parents, the boys with their fathers on one side of the auditorium, and the girls with their mothers on the other side. Daniel and I probably were biased, but we felt the superintendent was an expert at both singing and telling stores. That superintendent for a number of years was our Grandpa Widmer.

Another thing I remember about Grandpa was his interest in missions. Missions necessarily need money to operate. Each



spring Grandpa would give all the children in the primary department a little blue 'missionary box' in which we could put our pennies, nickels and dimes. Then on Fall Missionary Sunday we would bring our filled boxes back. As an encouragement for us to use these missionary boxes, they came with a starter of at least 5 pennies in them!

Neither Daniel nor I know of many particular happenings in Grandpa's life, but Daniel remembers one which I will relate. Grandpa and son Elmer drove to Corvallis one day in a Ford truck. They were involved in an accident at a train grade crossing. Grandpa was pinned under the front of the truck for a time and was quite badly scalded from the radiator water leaking on him. When Daniel's family went to visit Grandpa afterward, he remembers hearing him say that on that morning he had failed to have prayer before starting on their way. Grandpa had a practice of always having a prayer before he started to go anywhere, to town, to church, or prior to any journey from home. Family devotions of Bible reading and prayer was a daily part of life in the Widmer home.

The peace witness influence of Grandpa reached into the second generation. In about 1917, while World War I was in progress, son Herbert reached the age of 18 and was thus in the category in which the military was taking all young men into the armed services. Grandpa arranged for Herbert to go to Canada to avoid the military, just as he himself had done in France by coming to America. Herbert lived in Alberta for a time with a Mennonite family. Grandpa helped pay for his keep.

In 1940 World War II came along, and Grandpa's peace influence again surfaced in the fact that four grandsons, which was now the third generation, registered as conscientious objectors to war. These grandsons were Elmer Hartzler, Clarence and Willis Burck, and Daniel Widmer. By this time, leaders from the three Peace Churches -- Mennonites, Quakers and Church of the Brethren -- had met with government officials in Washington, D.C. and arranged for their young men who registered as C.O.'s to do work of national importance under church administration. this service was in lieu of military training. Grandpa C.R.'s influence also reached a grandson, Ron Whitaker, and three granddaughters who were married to C.O.'s: Priscilla Widmer married to Harry Kropf, Grace Widmer married to Robert Stutzman, and myself (Viola Burck) married to Lester Kropf.

And still later his peace influence reached into the fourth generation. Under Selective Service, those who registered as C.O.'s performed two years of service in various places such as hospitals, and Mennonite Central Committee assignments. These were Gaylord Widmer, Eugene Kropf, Arlen Widmer, Darrell Kauffman, Dennis Kauffman, Grodon Burck, and Darrell Fisher.

Will Grandpa's influence reach into the fifth generation? At this time that question has yet to be answered. I'm sure Grandpa's influence has reached into all branches of our family in many other ways as well.

In 1899, just a few years after the Widmers came to Albany, the Albany Mennonite Church was organized. Grandpa and Grandma Widmer were among the 18 charter members. Previous to this organization, a number of families had been meeting for worship at the Geisendorfer church about 5 miles east of Albany. Later they worshipped at the Fairmount School in North Albany. In the minutes of the first recorded business meeting of the congregation on January 1, 1906, the following is recorded: "An investigating committee of three brethren was appointed to see after a location for a church house for worship Also to investigate cost of erecting said house. C. R. Widmer, Dan Mishler and J. P. Bontrager were chosen as the committee." Business meetings of the congregation were often held at the C. R. Widmer home. In the January 25, 1909 minutes "J. P. Bontrager, C. R. Widmer and D. P. Mishler were appointed as the building committee. It was decided for the brotherhood to meet at the church location for the purpose of locating the building." Grandpa Widmer was the first chairman and treasurer of the congregation. He also donated the land upon which the church building still stands today. The building was moved onto the property on West Twelfth Street from the location of the old armory building in Albany. Grandpa was always very much interested in the mission work of the church, and for many years served as the Mission Board member.

In 1932 there was dissatisfaction over several things in the life of the church regarding requirements of the conference concerning plain dress and the problem of life insurance. AS a result, on November 24, 1932, fourteen members were dismissed by vote, including Grandpa and Grandma Widmer, and four of their children and their spouses. These people organized the Grace Mennonite Church and became a part of the General Conference Mennonite Church.

A life-long ambition and goal to visit the Holy Lands was realized by the Widmers in 1927. Son Herbert was at that time serving as a missionary in the Jerusalem area. He also was engaged to Nancy Evers. She accompanied Herbert's parents to Jerusalem. They were married on her arrival. After spending some time visiting the Biblical sites of Palestine, Grandma and Grandpa paid a visit to the relatives in France and Alsace Lorraine who they had left behind when they came to America 44 years previously.

C. R. and Barbara Widmer were the parents of fourteen children, ten of whom grew to maturity, married and had families

of their own. These children are:

Daniel	1884 - 1958, married	Elfie Yoder
Katie	1885 - 1965, married	Harley Burck
Joseph	1889 - 1960, married	Lydia Conrad
Barbara	1893 - 1923, married	Amandus Hartzler
Chris	1895 - 1919, married	Emma Brenneman
Leah	1896 - 1950, married	George Kenagy
Herbert	1899 - 1990, married	Nancy Evers
Elmer	1901 - 1979, married	Martha Aeschliman
Ezra	1905 - 1969, married	Marie Reeser
Gladys	1908 - , married	Floyd Whitaker

When Dan and Elfie Widmer were married they postponed their honeymoon trip until after Katie and Harley were married six months later. The two couples took their wedding trip together. Their destination was the coast at Waldport, Oregon. They travelled by wagon, pulled by a team of percheron mares. It took two days to make the 80 mile trip from Albany to Waldport. At the end of the first day, they were at Tidewater. It has been raining hard all day. They pulled into the yard at a farmstead. The farmer graciously allowed them to use his barn for the night. They set up their camp stove and prepared their evening meal. The hayloft was their sleeping quarters. The next day the sun shone. They arrived at Waldport and went boating. The trip lasted a week and was quite eventful.

Grandpa and Grandma celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in April, 1933. All the children and their spouses, and 35 of 36 grandchildren were present to celebrate this occasion with them. For a couple to live long enough to celebrate a 50th wedding anniversary in those days was a memorable occasion! Grandma died four years later at the age of 71. Grandpa remarried several years later to Martha Wilson. Grandpa died in 1945 at the age of 81 years.

In July of 1898, the Widmer Clan had a 3-day reunion at Canby, Oregon. Children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren gathered for the event. They came from a number of the western states. Approximately 235 were in attendance. It was calculated that there were 402 direct descendants of the Widmers as of July, 1989.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Your history is your identity. Your deeper identity comes from your heritage, your family". - Author unknown



## Items of Interest

"APART AND TOGETHER: Mennonites in Oregon and Neighboring States, 1876-1976", the new book by Hope K. Lind, is now available for \$26.95, plus 10% postage and handling. You can get your copy through any of the officers of O.M.H.G.S.

MEMBERSHIP FOR 1991. New memberships and renewals can be sent now to Treasurer Perry Schrock for the coming year. See information and membership form inside back cover.

DISPLAY BOOTHS will be open at the Mennonite Central Committee Fall Festival, Saturday October 13th. Hope Lind's book will be available there. Information about O.M.H.G.S. will also be available, and a number of older books, etc. will be shown. The new book will also be on hand at the OMHGS Fall Meeting the following day at the Zion Mennonite Church, Hubbard, OR.

TAX EXEMPTION. In June, 1990 O.M.H.G.S. received recognition from the Internal Revenue Service of our tax exempt status. The first \$7.00 of your dues or contributions represent services rendered by O.M.H.G.S., such as the Newsletter and library use; amounts above that are tax deductible.

LOGO CONTEST. Since very few entries have been received to date for a logo for OMHGS, we are extending the deadline to October 31, 1990. You can still get your design or idea sent in time. Send it to one of the officers of the Society.

THE FALL 1990 MEETING OF OMHGS is to be held at Zion Mennonite Church, three miles east of Hubbard, Oregon, at 6124 S. Whiskey Hill Road. It will feature the history of the Hopewell Mennonite Congregation, near Hubbard, and the history of the Mishler family. Presentations will be by Allen Schlabach on Hopewell, and Melva Lloyd on the Mishlers. See the separate program sheet for more information.

BROCHURE CORRECTION. Membership dues and/or contributions are to be paid annually, January to December (which is not specifically stated). Dues and/or contributions received after November 1, 1990 will be for your 1991 membership.

NEW OFFICERS. An election will be held at the Fall 1990 Meeting to fill the positions of President and Treasurer of OMHGS. Ballots have been mailed to all members. Any member not able to attend the meeting can mail their ballot to the Nominating Committee Chair John Fretz. The Nominating Committee, consisting of Goldie Heyerly, Charity Kropf, and John Fretz, met June 19, 1990. Nominees for President are Hope Lind, and for Treasurer are Perry Schrock and Melva Lloyd.

HISTORIC TOURS. Tentative plans are for OMHGS to have one or more tours of historic interest, for those attending the "Oregon '91" Mennonite (MC) General Assembly to be held at Eugene, Oregon during the summer of 1991. More information to be announced later.

100th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS were held June 22 to 24, 1990, at the Emmanuel Bible Church, near Salem, (formerly Emmanuel Mennonite), and at the Dallas Mennonite Brethren Church, Dallas, Oregon, on August 3 to 5, 1990. More information on each of these can be had by contacting the respective church.

THE SPRING 1990 MEETING of OMHGS was held May 20, 1990 at the Albany Mennonite Church, Albany, OR with 93 persons attending. Featured on the program was the history of the Albany congregation, given by Jerry Brenneman, a member of the congregation. The history of the C. R. Widmer family was presented by Viola Kropf and Daniel Widmer, both grandchildren of C. R. Widmer. A devotional meditation was given by Luke Birky, Albany, on Ruth 1:16, "Your people shall be my people....". Special music was provided by children of Daniel Widmer, Sr.: Alene Widmer, Pearl King, Pauline Wyatt, and Daniel Widmer, Jr.

THE SPRING 1991 MEETING plans are not yet finalized. More information will be announced in the next issue of OMHGS Newsletter and the next issue of Missionary Evangel (MC).

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HIGHLIGHTS. The OMHGS Executive Committee met on June 5, 1990 at Marjorie Nofziger's home, and following are some items that were discussed:

It was reported that we have received an affirmative answer to our application for tax exempt status.

It was decided that we should have a nominating committee, and names of persons were suggested. John Fretz was asked to contact these. Only members will be voting, and voting by mail or phone will be permitted for members not able to attend the fall meeting.

Ways to get others involved in the Society were discussed. One is that we have a consulting board with representatives from different groups in the area. These could also serve as consultants for the Newsletter; help determine times for meetings; and advise and bring suggestions in other areas wherever needed.

The matter of life memberships was also brought up. How much would the amount be? What would the money be specified for? Perhaps it could be for furnishings for the Archives when the WMS chapel space is finished. More to be discussed at the fall meeting.

It was decided that OMHGS be in charge of sales for the new Oregon Mennonite history book by Hope Lind.

Hope Lind distributed copies of three possible history-related tours which she has submitted to the planning people for Oregon 91 meeting next summer at Eugene. These will involve OMHGS personnel. We will also see if we can have some visibility for the Society at the Oregon 91 assembly.

Plans for the 1991 Spring Meeting were discussed. One possibility might be the C. B. Steiner church and the early settlement in the Silverton Hills area. The Emmanuel Bible Church (formerly Emmanuel Mennonite) was an outgrowth of this early settlement and celebrated their centennial this past June. More on this later.

A Society display is planned during the Pacific Coast Conference (MC) at Western Mennonite High School, June 15-17, 1990.

## Letters from Readers

I didn't know anything like this existed until E.M. sent me a copy. Am sending for a single membership for a year. Will be very interested to become a lifetime member.

Am so happy this is happening. Too much history that should have been saved is tossed and lost. Our heritage is something to be saved.

I'm sending six dollars for three back issues. We're very happy you're setting up a place to keep track of the people and churches on the west coast. It's a big job, but know that God will help and bless you for your labor.

- Ruth Yoder  
Indianapolis, IN

Enclosed is a check to cover two Newsletters, March 1990 issue. We have friends of Mennonite background in Kiwanis, who would like information, so want to send her a copy, then I want an extra copy -- I keep giving mine away.

There is a man, Hershberger, with Wycliffe Translators, who has just finished his first draft of the New Testament in Pennsylvania Dutch. We met him at the Wycliffe North America Camp at Canby (OR) in July.

Thanks for your help.

- Viola Evers Nisly  
Dundee, OR

\* \* \* \* \*

THE LOGO CONTEST deadline has been extended to October 31, 1990.

Anyone is invited to submit your sketch or drawing. It need not be professionally drawn, what we need now is your idea of what would represent OMHGS. Rough drawings will be cleaned up and made ready for final use as our logo.

Send your entries to any one of the Officers listed in this issue. Thank you!

\* \* \* \* \*

WE THANK THE MANY DONORS who have so generously given books to our growing collection. It is much appreciated!



# Book Donations

Donated by Eugene Mennonite Church:

Vernon - The Secret Church

From an unknown donor:

Wedel - Only Twenty Kilometers

Donated by Ray U. Kenagy estate:

Hostetler - Bishop Jacob Hertzler and his Family  
Cross & Hostetler - Index to Selected Amish Genealogies

Donated by U. E. Kenagy:

Horsch - The Mennonite Church and Modernism

Donated by Cliff and Lois Kenagy:

Brunk - Rightly Dividing the Scriptures  
Kauffman - Bible Doctrines Briefly Stated  
Lehman - Bible Survey Course, Unit III  
Longacre, ed. - Mennonites and Conscientious Objection in 1980  
MacMaster - Christian Obedience in Revolutionary Times  
Metzler - Die Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Russland, 1914 bis 1920  
- Why Another Look at Church-State Relations?  
Redekop - Making Political Decisions  
Shelly - Building on the Rock  
- New Call for Peacemakers

Donated by Verlene Kreider, as permanent loan:

Gingerich - The Mennonite Woman's Missionary Society

Donated by Cliff and Hope Lind:

Bauman - The Price of Church Unity  
Hostetler - Amish Life  
Redekop - Brotherhood and Schism  
Vogt - The Christian Calling  
Yoder - As You Go

Donated by Hope Lind:

Bender, ed. - Pilgerleben Pilgrims Peregrinos  
Horst, ed. - Instructions to Beginners in the Christian Life

Donated by the Lloyd Lind family:

Lind family - Favorite Recipes

Donated by Al and Marjorie Nofziger:

Augsburger - I'll See You Again  
Bartel & Bartel - A Study of Three Cookstove Models  
Beachey - Faith in a Nuclear Age  
Bender - Mennonites and Their Heritage, No. II  
Berkhof - Christ and the Powers  
Boshart - Institutional Poverty  
Burkholder - Mennonites in Ecumenical Dialogue on  
Peace and Justice  
Conference Record of the Kansas-Nebraska Mennonite  
Conference 1816-1914  
Culp - Bible Studies in Prophecy  
Cummings, ed. - Christian Zook Yoder: A Memorial and  
a Tribute  
- Full Circle  
Committee on Industrial Relations, ed. - Mennonite  
Community Life  
Enninger, et. al., ed. - Internal and External Perspectives  
on Amish and Mennonite Life, #2  
Epp - Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920  
Erb, ed. - From the Mennonite Pulpit  
Fisher - Farm Life and Its Changes  
Friend of Humanity: Glimpses of Amish-Mennonite Homes  
Funk, comp. - A Biographical Sketch of Bishop Christian Herr,  
also a collection of hymns  
Gingerich - Mennonite Attire Through Four Centuries  
Hartzler - Mennonites in the World War (two copies)  
Heatwole - Mennonite Handbook of Information  
Hershberger - The Mennonite Church in the Second World War  
Herr & Herr - Listening to the Church: Mennonite Ministry  
in South Africa  
Holt - The Seed from the East  
Horsch - Mennonites in Europe  
- The Mennonites, Their History, Faith and Practice  
Horst - Mennonites in the Confederacy  
Hostetter - How to Know You Are Saved  
Jeschke - Discipling the Brother  
Kauffman - Fifty Years in the Mennonite Church  
Kaufman - Walks and Talks in Hindustan  
Kisare - Kisare, a Mennonite of Kiseru  
Krahn - The Historiography of the Mennonites in the  
Netherlands  
Krahn & Schmidt, ed. - A Century of Witness  
Kuhns - Women in the Church  
Martin - Divorce and Remarriage  
Maxwell - Responses of Non-government Organizations to  
Conflict Situations  
Mast, ed. - The Letters of the Amish Division of 1693-1711  
Miller - Christian Community: Biblical or Optional  
- Our People  
- Servant of God's Servants  
Miller, et. al. - Farm and Community School  
NSBRO - The Origins of Civilian Public Service

Ratzlaff - The Coptic Orthodox Church: Five Essays  
 Rich - Mennonite Women  
 Ross - Early Days of Vyara, India  
 Sauder, ed. - Sesquicentennial of the Amish Mennonites in  
                   Canada  
 Schlabach - Identification with the People  
 Schmitt - Turn Again to Life  
 Schrock - One-Anothering  
 Shank - His Spirit First  
 Smith - Mennonites and Their Heritage, No. II  
 Smylie, comp. - Life in all its Fullness  
 Stoltzfus - Mennonites of the Ohio and Eastern Conference  
 Weaver - Confronting the Big C  
           - History of the Central Conference Mennonite Church  
 Weber - Centennial History of the Mennonites of Illinois,  
           1829-1929  
 Wenger - Can a Thinking Man be a Christian?  
 Wenger & Kratz - A. D. Wenger  
 Yoder - For Conscience Sake  
           - Mennonites and Their Heritage, No. III  
 Yoder & Yoder - New Men, New Roles  
 Zook - Debby

Donated by Aaron and Verna Ropp:

The Miller Cookbook

Donated by Bernice Kropf Schmucker:

Kropf Family Cooking

Donated by Lester and Joy Yoder:

Footprints of Noah and Deemy Yoder: Family Record 1864-1989

Donated by Clif and Lois Kenagy (omitted earlier):

Snyder - The Relevance of Anabaptist Nonviolence for  
           Nicaragua Today

Donated by Lois Zehr:

Kauffman - Manual of Bible Doctrines

\* \* \* \* \*

"You will despair about the future if there is nothing in your ancestors that you deem worth preserving for your posterity. To have identified such ancestors, such a past, is to have a cause to serve, a story to tell whose end is not yet".

- Unknown



## Membership Information

Membership in the Oregon Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society is open to persons or groups who are interested in and supportive of OMHGS and its purposes. Dues are payable annually, and will be effective from January 1 to December 31. Individuals wishing to make a contribution of \$10.00 or more annually, in lieu of membership, will receive the Newsletter, and will be informed of the Society's activities.

### Membership Form for 1991

I want to become a Member of, or Contributor to, the Oregon Mennonite Historical and Genealogical Society. I will be informed of all Society activities; will receive the OMHGS Newsletter; and as a Member will be eligible to serve on committees of the Society. My contribution is enclosed, payable to O.M.H.G.S.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Enrol me (please check one):

_____ Student	\$5.00	_____ Sustaining Member	50.00
_____ Single Membership	10.00	_____ Non-member Contributor	10.00 or more
_____ Family "	15.00	Life Memberships will be announced later.	
_____ Contributing "	25.00		

OMHGS is a non-profit organization and is supported solely by membership dues and contributions. The first \$7.00 of your dues or contribution represents services rendered by OMHGS, such as Newsletter and library use; amounts above that are tax deductible.

# OMHGS Newsletter

OREGON MENNONITE HISTORICAL  
AND GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
675 Elma Avenue S.E.  
Salem, OR 97301

**FIRST CLASS**

**Join Now!**  
**We need YOU**