

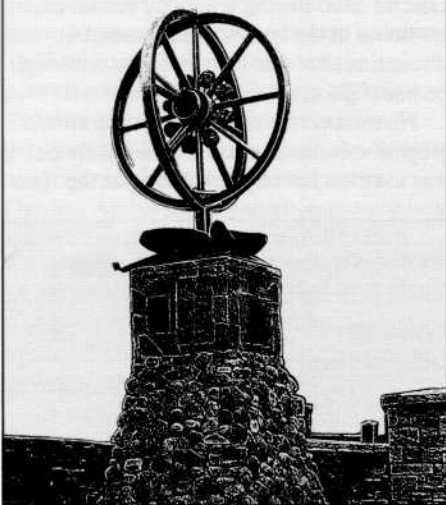
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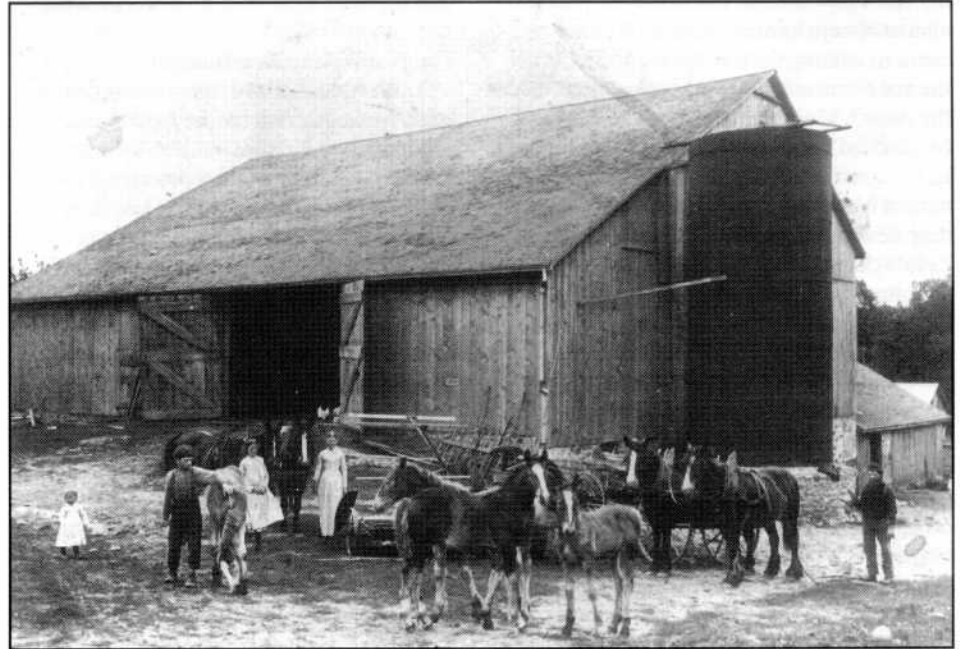
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The Amish Mennonite Division in Ontario, 1886-1891

by Lorraine Roth



Daniel and Mary (Gerber) Wagler farm ca. 1906. Daniel (far right) was son of Jacob Wagler, bishop of the Wellesley congregation during the 1886-1891 division. Daniel and Mary were married in 1891 and were the first generation that did not host worship services in their barn or house as Amish Mennonites had done for centuries.

Introduction

In Ontario, the Amish Mennonites experienced a major and permanent division between 1886 and 1891. It was precipitated primarily by the building of meetinghouses in two congregations, although there were other issues which caused tensions in the Amish Mennonite constituency between those who were "change-minded" and those wishing to remain with the old *Ordnung*.

Origins of the "Amish" Name

The division among Swiss/South German Mennonites in Europe in the 1690s begs for further study, but I do not propose to do that here. Conferences commemorating the tri-centenary of that event later this year will, no doubt, provide new insights. Leroy Beachy, a Beachy "Amish Mennonite" from Ohio, has done extensive research and hopefully his interpretations will be published.

Jacob Ammann, a key figure in the dispute, came to represent the Mennonite group which practiced shunning according to the stricter discipline of the Dordrecht Confession of Faith. The most accurate descriptive term to describe the members of this group, who migrated from Europe to Ontario between 1820 and 1869, is "Amish Mennonite." In Europe, however,

many of them were not used to being identified either as "Amish" or "Amish Mennonite." The Wagler family, for example, lived in a part of Alsace where the "Mennonites" were exclusively "Amish," and they had never heard the term "Amish" before coming to Ontario. Their family tradition says that when they came to Waterloo Township, the Mennonites, recognizing them as Amish, told them the Amish lived farther on in Wilmot Township. The Waglers wondered among themselves who the Amish were, because they thought they were *Täufer*. Other descriptive terms the Waglers may have been familiar with were probably "*Häftler*" for those *Täufer* who used hooks and eyes on their clothing and "*Knöpfler*" for those *Täufer* who used buttons.

It was in North America that the terms "Mennonite," "Amish," and "Amish Mennonite" have come into broad use, but even here we are aware that society in general has difficulty with our designations. Even those of us within the Mennonite/Amish Mennonite tradition are often ambiguous, because we also tend to reduce the term "Amish Mennonite" to "Amish."

Amish Mennonite History in Ontario

During the 19th century, the Amish Mennonites and Mennonites of Ontario

lived cordially side-by-side as neighbours, especially in Wilmot Township, but kept their congregational fences well-mended. There were almost no intermarriages between the two groups. There were more Amish Mennonite/Lutheran marriages and, interestingly enough, the Lutheran partner almost always became Amish. When it came to naming their religious affiliation in the state census and other official records, the Amish Mennonites did not hesitate to be counted under the Mennonite umbrella. In the census records they were usually named Mennonite; only occasionally were they designated as Amish. On Dr. Peter Zehr's death card in 1898, the funeral was announced as taking place at the East Zorra Mennonite Church. That may have been the funeral director's or printer's slip, but it indicates that for the person responsible, the "Mennonite" part of the name was more important than the "Amish" part. The point of this argument is simply that "Amish" has been tacked on to "Mennonite" following 1693; "Mennonite" was not tacked on to "Amish" following further divisions in the 19th century.

In Canada, another good reason for the Amish to identify with the Mennonites was that military exemption was limited to Mennonites, Quakers and Tunkers. Had the Amish insisted that they were not Mennonites, they would have been excluded from this exemption.

The term "Amish Mennonite," according to Paton Yoder, also is descriptive of the Amish on the rest of the American continent during much of the 19th century.² The *Dienerversammlungen* (ministers' meetings), held between 1862 and 1878 used the term "*Amischen Mennoniten*." These ministers' meetings were meant to serve the total Amish constituency, although many of the more conservative tended not to participate — notably those from the older settlements in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

The generally accepted date for the division among the Swiss Mennonites in Europe is 1693, although there were events leading up to it for several years, and Leroy Beachy would date the finality of the division a few years later.³ Paton Yoder's discussion in *Tradition and Transition*

gives ample evidence that the many divisions between the "change-minded" Amish Mennonites and those who wished to retain the old *Ordnung*, were an extended process in several localities, and at different times. The Ontario experience was also a process over a period of time.

The North American Context

It is rather difficult, one hundred years later, to reconstruct the scenario which produced the division of 1886-1891 in Ontario. Because of the subsequent shunning, there was almost a total break in relationships, and because a break in relationships is always painful, it was not talked about. Hence these stories tended not to be passed on. So why try to resurrect them now? A hundred years is probably long enough to be able to look at the situation without feeling the pain, but one needs to look at the painful and unpleasant experiences as well as the good ones in order to learn life's lessons.

It seems that the issue of meeting-houses, primarily in Wellesley (now Maple View) and Mornington (now Poole) precipitated the division in Ontario, but there were also other factors. Although the meetinghouse was a contentious issue in the broader Amish Mennonite constituency in all of America, it was not usually the meetinghouse which provoked the division elsewhere. In eastern Pennsylvania, for example, the Conestoga congregation at Morgantown divided in 1877. One group built a meetinghouse in 1882, but the two groups maintained fairly amicable relations until 1897 when a rift ultimately occurred over a particular case involving shunning.⁴

In 1881 several congregations in Somerset County Pennsylvania and in neighbouring Maryland built meetinghouses. These congregations retain their Old Order affiliation to this day, although when ministers come from other areas of the country, meetings are held in barns in order to accommodate them.⁵

Meetinghouses in Ontario

When did the Amish Mennonites in Ontario first think about building meetinghouses? According to the statistics one can glean from census records, they should have thought about it long before

they did something about it, or they should have made other provisions. In the 1851 Wilmot census, one finds about 600 Amish Mennonite men, women and children in the Wilmot congregation. How can that many people meet in a house, a barn or even one meetinghouse at the same time? The only conclusion one can come to is that not everyone was expected to go to church every Sunday or even every other Sunday. The Amish now are accustomed to dividing into "church districts" when the group becomes too large. Wilmot, of course, was a small geographical area, especially when compared to widely scattered communities from which the settlers had come in Europe, but it never seems to »have occurred to them that they should do something about providing adequate meeting places for such a large number of people by dividing into smaller congregations.

Both the Wellesley and East Zorra congregations constructed small buildings beside some of the cemeteries they were using. These were shelters for people waiting for a burial to take place and not for funeral services. In East Zorra, this building seems never to have been used for any other purpose. The Amish Mennonite Society Cemetery, just south of the Wellesley Township boundary, had a "funeral chapel" which was also used as a school. Another one was also constructed at the cemetery on the Third Line in Wellesley Township in 1871/72.⁶ There is some evidence that the latter building was also used for worship services.

In 1880 David Gascho of Musselberg, Ontario expressed concern in *Herold der Wahrheit*, about possible divisions over the building of meetinghouses and the holding of Sunday schools.⁷ Was David Gascho only thinking about the possible building of a meetinghouse, or was he already concerned about the disunity in the Wellesley congregation over the use of the funeral chapel for worship services? Gascho tried having a Sunday school in his home in the next several years, but discontinued it due to opposition, although he had a good attendance.⁸

Historians of the Maple View congregation indicate that the funeral chapel was used exclusively for shelter at the time

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of a burial and that it was replaced in 1886.⁹ No doubt, their sources were oral tradition. Jacob R. Bender wrote concerning the Wellesley congregation: "A church house had been built in the early years for funeral purposes only. In 1886 the congregation began to hold regular preaching services in this building."¹⁰ Bender indicated that he was relying on manuscripts written by John Gascho and Christian M. Bender in 1890 and 1901, respectively.

A reference to the use of this funeral chapel for more than just a shelter at funerals is found in one of John Gascho's letters to Samuel and David Miller, bishops in Holmes County, Ohio. They had challenged Gascho that the Canadian bishops, John Jantzi of Wellesley and Peter Litwiller of Wilmot, both now deceased, had been against the use of meetinghouses. Gascho refuted this statement by saying, "As far as Litwiller and Jantzi are concerned, I think you were informed that in Jantzi's congregation a church house was built long before ours, and Litwiller and all the other ministers preached in it without believing there was anything wrong with it..."¹¹

It is difficult to reconcile all of these discrepancies. It seems to this author that the letter cited above strongly suggests that the so-called funeral chapel was used, at least occasionally for worship and preaching services, before 1886. Whether it was then used regularly in 1886 or replaced is still open to question.

In May of 1871, Daniel Schrag and Peter Zehr of the East Zorra congregation, attended the *Dienerversammlung* in Livingston County, Illinois.¹² The Waldo Amish Mennonite congregation in Livingstone County had built a meetinghouse in 1867 and started a Sunday school in 1868.¹³ Was it this experience that convinced Schrag and Zehr of the desirability of a meetinghouse? The congregation at East Zorra would be the first to build one, but more than a decade would elapse and many conversations and correspondence take place before it did so.

No record has been found of the conversations which took place within Ontario. However, surviving correspondence of John Gascho from the Wilmot congregation indicates that the entire Ontario Amish Mennonite community was involved in them. In June of 1884 Gascho wrote to his friend and fellow bishop, Manasses Bitchi (Beachy) in the Somerset County, Pennsylvania/Maryland, area:

We have had very many difficulties in our church for quite a while over the building of a church house. One was built in East Zorra last summer, and this summer one is to be built for

our congregation [at Steinmann's], and there were still some quite hard against it. Others, however, were strong for it, which (as you well know) makes it very difficult for the ministers. As for most of the ministers, they would rather not have built since the space was sufficient. But when I saw that such a large number wished to build, I left it up to the congregation, if a very simple house will be built. Since I wished to remain in unity with the other churches, I wrote many letters to them asking whether they can to such a degree have patience with us. As we are all called of God, as Paul writes, to pursue peace, I was also, upon request, in Kansas. With this opportunity I also came through Indiana, in Elkart and Lagrange Counties. I also came through Iowa, [in] Johnson Co[unty]... [and] Henry Co[unty]... There was one of the co-ministers (Michael Kennel) with me. We found the churches and ministers demonstrating much love toward us as far as we came. But yet there is much going on in the Indiana churches over the church houses. Yet I am hoping that if we, with God's help, can keep the churches in simplicity so after all the bond of love may not be broken through the church house. It made me heartily joyful to see in the churches that there are some yet which maintain the conservative and plain stand, which is well pleasing to God.¹⁴

One can make a number of observations from the above excerpt. First of all, John Gascho took a great deal of responsibility in the negotiations surrounding the meetinghouse question. He wrote many letters and, fortunately, a few of them have survived. His visit to Indiana, Iowa and Kansas was probably not primarily to present his cause, but he used the opportunity to do so. His over-riding concern was the unity of the church, and he was worried that the building of meetinghouses could break that unity. Although the group in Pennsylvania to which the above letter was addressed had built meetinghouses in 1881, Gascho was not going to presume that the congregations in Ontario could do so without serious consequences. And finally, one senses that Gascho's sympathies were with the Old Order. For him, the building of a meetinghouse was not intended as a movement away from the old *Ordnung* toward acculturation.

It has already been noted that a meetinghouse was built in East Zorra in

1883. The Wilmot congregation built one at Steinmann's in 1884, and another one at St. Agatha in 1885, still considering itself one congregation. The congregation at Hay (Blake) built one in 1885-86. In 1886 the Wellesley congregation began having regular services in the funeral chapel or in a new meetinghouse on the same site. In 1886 the majority of members in Mornington decided to build. Jacob R. Bender dates construction of the Poole meetinghouse in Mornington at 1890.¹⁵ The Wellesley record book indicates a large number of donations to help the Mornington congregation with its debt in 1890. All of these buildings were of plain, rectangular, frame construction except the one at Hay, which was brick.

The Wellesley and Mornington congregations, including the ministry, were divided over the issue. Joseph Gerber was bishop in Mornington and Jacob Wagler in Wellesley. Both bishops remained with the meetinghouse groups, but in Mornington both ministers and a deacon were not in favour of the meetinghouse, giving the non-meetinghouse group a great deal of support, and they continued to meet in homes.

We have few records of what transpired between 1886 and 1890 in either Mornington or Wellesley. How much John Gascho or any other ministers were involved in the dispute is not known. In 1886 he reported to Manasses Bitchi that he was going to visit the Mornington congregation the following Sunday and then commented, "I suppose it is known to you that we had great trouble in our church. Yet the good Lord, He who can help distressed hearts, has given us peace again. (To him be everlasting praise."¹⁶ Did the statement about peace apply to the congregation in Wilmot, or did Gascho at this time feel that there was also peace in Mornington? If Gascho also had Mornington in mind, his optimism was short-lived.

If the Wellesley congregation had been using the funeral chapel before 1886, perhaps its more regular use in 1886 would not have precipitated a division. Only one deacon eventually left with the non-meetinghouse group. Unless his leadership was exceptionally strong, it would probably not have carried the movement. The crisis in the Mornington congregation, with the non-meetinghouse group's strong ministerial support, was much more likely to lead to a full-fledged schism.

Little is known about Joseph Gerber and his leadership abilities. Did he not pursue peace and unity as diligently as did John Gascho? If the majority of the Mornington congregation had decided to build in 1886, and if the meetinghouse was

not complete until 1890, and then with the help of the Wellesley congregation, it would appear that considerable time was given for a process of coming to an agreement. Probably no amount of discussion and extended time would have changed the opinions of either faction in the dispute.

From a later letter from Samuel Miller to John Gascho,¹⁷ we gather that the Holmes County Old Order had not responded favourably to John Gascho's plea for patience and tolerance if the Ontario churches built meetinghouses, and by the fall of 1890 they responded to the non-meetinghouse groups' request for help by sending Samuel and David Miller. Evidently, these men refused an invitation to minister at Wilmot and did not even meet with Gascho. In November, following their visit, Gascho wrote to the Millers, chiding them for not ministering to his congregation and for not calling a general meeting so that complaints could be aired. Gascho wondered whether the meetinghouse was the only issue. He suspected that other "worldly" practices were also a problem. He expressed his desire to uphold the old customs, and indicated that all congregations had those problems to deal with, not only those which had meetinghouses.

It was in this letter also that Gascho indicated that he had agreed to the building of a meetinghouse because members complained that they often had to go home without having their spiritual needs satisfied—no doubt because of their inability to hear the message. Gascho had searched both Old and New Testaments diligently and found many references to people meeting in many places, but no indication that they should not have a meetinghouse.

Gascho closed his letter by explaining why he was so concerned about the problem even though it was not in his congregation: he had felt the Ontario congregations had always been united and was concerned that a rupture in this unity was not the will of God. He made one last plea for counsel as well as for the privilege of being heard.¹⁸

On 1 January 1891 Gascho addressed another letter to the Miller which contained a strong rebuke:

The brothers and sisters that had requested you to come have no their own congregation. Is the matter of God and pleasing to Him, then He will bless and give light to see it. My dear brethren, this thing is in need of serious consideration. Over forty years ago there was disunity in the Canadian

congregations. Men were called in and a separation happened. Now through prayerful and wise counsel (as I believe) it was possible to bring about a costly peace and remained until now. I think about forty years.

Dear brothers, because you were called to help along in this important matter, it is my sincere desire that you deal wisely in this matter. Divisions are human and against God's will, and whosoever is guilty in the matter will, before God, with difficulty go free. Should a division happen among us and you see that I or we are at fault, so deal with us in love and show us with God's Word, and if we do not hear you or accept advice then do as God's Word teaches. I have confidence that there are many ordained men in your congregations (and I trust taught in God's Word). I hope that you will always counsel together with each other. Tomorrow we have called together a ministers' meeting. I am deeply concerned that the unity may be restored and that the church may go on with Christ's teaching as their guide, for this we need the help of God to be our final help and guidance. We commit you to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen. Remember us in your prayers. I desire to do the same for you in my weakness. So much in love, I plead for patience, and expect an answer to reveal my failures.¹⁹

Sam Miller responded to this letter on January 18, and, after a few preliminary and loving remarks, came directly to the point:

I was grieved at heart to hear you blame us concerning the division in the church. Was this not begun long before we were there? You noted many beautiful scriptures concerning working for or teaching peace. I am in agreement with these; did you do this when you became aware that quite a few stayed back and were not in agreement with [meeting]houses?²⁰

Miller then went on to speak to statements that Gascho made in earlier letters — one of them obviously was one of those many letters written before the Ontario congregations built their meetinghouses:

You also mentioned that some whom you consider faithful members and diligent builders of the church of God complain that they have to go home spiritually malnourished. I do not want to refute such. We also went through that here. Such complaints are also found here. My congregation and D. A. Troyer's congregation were one congregation for many years. I and D. A. Troyer became ministers in one congregation and served together many years. But when the number of people became too many, we went to work and divided the congregation into two groups, as was our accepted procedure, and I am still in agreement with this, and I believe if you had done the same, then we would never have been called to keep the people together without obstacles to peace. You have also somewhat blamed us that a meeting was not called. In these circumstances, it would have helped nothing. We could have spent a day with these things, and we would [not] have been any further ahead by the end of the day as at the beginning. . . . Now I wonder about two ministers from the Gerber congregation [Morningson] and two from the Wagler congregation [Wellesley] who were not united and yet went ahead with a spiritual unity, how does this correspond with what our Lord taught when he said if you offer your gift on the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, then leave your gift on the altar and go your way and be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift, etc.²¹

Sam Miller then reminded Gascho that in their response to his letter of six years ago, they had counselled among four other bishops and some other ministers and they were unanimous that they were not in favour of building church houses and that they could not conscientiously serve in congregations where they had them. In his last, long paragraph Miller described the disruption of brotherhood in all the places where meetinghouses had been built.

In June of 1891, Gascho wrote to his friend Manasses Bitchi, describing the situation and his involvement:

As to what further concerns the church matters, it appears to be about the church house question. The thing now is decided, that is to

say, Sam Miller and another minister Joel Yoder from Holmes County came again to Canada in May or the beginning of June.

Gerber requested me to come to him. We then were at J. Gerbers together and talked much about the things and worked to bring everything to a satisfactory agreement. But it did not seem to me that they had one mindedness to work toward making it work to have come up with an agreement in which harmony with Holmes County could again be possible. For there are those in Holmes County, men who are so very much against the meetinghouses. They are then going forward in weighty matters and have baptized some young people, held communion and ordained a minister in their church, but up to this time no bishop. They have three ministers and two deacons now....²²

No doubt, the bishops from Holmes County sensed that the time for discussion was over and that any further attempts at reconciliation would be futile. Meetinghouses had been built. Those who wanted to use them would not tear them down, leaving those who did not want to use them only one option — to organize themselves into independent congregations. Whether a complete break in fellowship would have been necessary may be open to question. The involvement of the Holmes County bishops, who had decided to refuse fellowship with meetinghouse Amish, did result in a complete break.

Following the Schism

With the ordination of a bishop in the Old Order congregation later in 1891, the division in Ontario was complete. John Gascho's tireless efforts to maintain unity had failed. It is quite clear that for Gascho, unity was not so much a matter of having or not having meetinghouses, as not breaking fellowship over the matter. It is not quite as clear what he expected the shape of unity in Ontario would be. Did he expect that in counselling with each other, the meetinghouse majority could convince the non-meetinghouse minority to also come to the meetinghouse and not establish another congregation? Or, did he simply want the non-meetinghouse group not to apply the principle of shunning the rest of the Amish-Mennonite community? No doubt, it was the first option he had in mind. In his letter of June, 1891 to Manasses Bitchi, Gascho indicated that the Mornington congregation had not yet

ordained another minister, because they had hoped the schism would be healed again.

Since the Holmes County bishops, who had by this time unanimously agreed not to serve in congregations with meetinghouses, and since they were the ones to respond to the non-meetinghouse group in Ontario, not only was a congregational division inevitable, but a complete break in fellowship accompanied the schism. Gascho pled with the Ohio bishops to indicate to him what the problem was — was it simply the meetinghouse or were their other issues? There was no answer to the question — except that meetinghouses would lead to further disunity. Paton Yoder's conclusion was that in Ontario the meetinghouse issue caused a division and south of the border it did not.²³ It was with the help of congregations south of the border, however, that the Ontario Old Order group was able to organize itself. Among the meetinghouse Amish, the non-meetinghouse group came to be referred to as "Old Order," as in other parts of North America, but also as "Holmesers," because of the Holmes County connection.

Although East Zorra and Wilmot did not have any divisions, there were members who continued to sympathize with the "Old Order." There were at least two families, one with children already married, who moved from East Zorra to the Wellesley-Milverton area early in the 1890s in order to be part of that group. Two families in the Baden area also affiliated with the Old Order but did not move to Wellesley or Mornington.²⁴

Although Gascho had consistently maintained that he was in favour of maintaining the old *Ordnung* — except for church houses — the meetinghouse Amish in Ontario gradually became identified with those who institutionalized the term "Amish Mennonite" by forming conferences, although the organization of the Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference did not occur until the 1920s.

Gascho had no sooner come to terms with his failure with the Old Order when he was tossed into the fray on the other end of the spectrum. Several of his members were trying to bring other practices into the church, such as Methodist-like prayer meetings. Four of these people, he reported to Manasses Bitchi in 1892, went to Michigan to be baptized by the "Egle" people and five by the New Mennonites.²⁵ These people, instead of causing a division, left for Michigan to join the groups of their choice. John Gascho died in 1909 and the Amish-Mennonite community continued its steady acculturation.

Both the Mornington and Wellesley congregations ordained persons to fill their ministerial ranks later in 1891. Bishop Joseph Gerber left Poole in 1893 and migrated, with other Ontario families, to Minnesota. Nicholas Nafziger replaced him as bishop in 1896.²⁶ Both of these congregations experienced another division shortly after the turn of the century — Mornington in 1903 and Wellesley in 1911/12. Both of the new congregations built meetinghouses, the former known as "Nafziger" and the latter as "Lichti" (after their founding bishops), but they objected to other innovations such as Sunday school and abandoning the *Ausbund* for other singing styles. The use of buggies with tops has also been mentioned as an issue. These congregations have remained independent, but in more recent years have developed fellowship with Beachy Amish churches in the United States.

The Nafziger (now Mornington Amish Mennonite) and Lichti (Cedar Grove Amish Mennonite) congregations began burying their dead in cemeteries adjoining their meetinghouses. The Old Order, however, continued to use the cemeteries at Poole and Maple View until the 1920s when they established their own — one on the Fifth Line in Mornington (also called Edgcomb) and one on the Fifth Line in Wellesley (between Crosshill and Millbank).

Another interesting point of cooperation between the various groups of Amish has been the Amish Mennonite Fire and Storm Aid Union which had been organized in 1872. It seems that the break in fellowship did not have to include a disruption of mutual aid in times of natural disaster. As the Amish Mennonites became progressively more mechanized, the differences became almost insurmountable even on this level, but with the conciliatory diplomacy of the Old Order representative, Harold Carter,²⁷ satisfactory solutions were found. This Aid Union continues to this day and includes members of the former Western Ontario Mennonite Conference.

The five Ontario Amish Mennonite congregations founded before 1886 formed a conference in the early 1920s — the first constitution was adopted in 1925 — under the name Ontario Amish Mennonite Conference. In 1963/64 the conference changed its name to Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, finally following all the other Amish Mennonite conferences in North America in dropping the name "Amish." In Ontario, however, the conference did not join the Mennonite conference as the Amish Mennonites had done in other areas, nor did it join the General Conference of the Mennonite Church until 1959. In 1987, the Western

Ontario Mennonite Conference joined with the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and Quebec and the Conference of United Mennonite Churches in Ontario to form the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada.

In 1891 Christian L. Kuepfer was confirmed bishop for the Old Order congregation in Mornington by the Ohio bishops. He had bishop oversight of the Older Order congregation in Wellesley until 1902, when Peter G. Jantzi was confirmed bishop. The Mornington and Wellesley congregations had services on alternate Sundays.

By 1985, the Old Order group had grown to four congregations (also known as church districts), comprised of about 150 families.²⁰ This group has also been involved in colonization further afield — Chesley, Aylmer, etc. A new, independent Amish-Mennonite congregation called Morningview has come out of the Old Order tradition and built a meetinghouse in 1987 in Mornington Township. The Beachy Amish churches have spawned some new congregations as well. Several Amish communities have also been formed by immigrants from the United States in more recent years. These are not included in the statistics at the beginning of this paragraph.

Paton Yoder observed that through the schisms, those who wished to maintain the old *Ordnung* (and became known as Old Order) “gained more vigor to resist technological change,” while the change-minded Amish Mennonites became “overwhelmed by the flood of additional innovations,” which eventually accompanied their few carefully selected changes, such as meetinghouses.²¹ This certainly applies to the Ontario experience. The Ontario inheritors of the Amish-Mennonite legacy, even those who have become absorbed into the Mennonite camp, are probably somewhat more aware of their roots than are many of their brothers and sisters south of the border.

¹ This term is used by Paton Yoder in *Tradition and Transition, Amish Mennonites and Old Order Amish, 1800-1900* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991).

² *Tradition and Transition*, p.207.

³ Leroy Beachy, “Division of the Swiss Brethren,” oral presentation delivered at a conference on “Mennonites and Their Beliefs,” McVeytown, PA, 30 November - 2 December 1990.

⁴ 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), p.55.

⁵ *Tradition and Transition*, p.278.

⁶ A record book for the Wellesley “*Begräbniss [sic] Haus und Blatz*” (burial house and [cemetery] plot), 1871-1914, is retained by the Maple View congregation. This detailed record of income and expenses indicates that the burial house, or funeral chapel, was built in 1871/72. There is no indication that it replaced an earlier one on the same site. Consequently, this information cannot be reconciled with the the *Maple View Mennonite Church 1859-1984* history, cited below, which dates construction of the funeral chapel as 1867, and misinterprets the record book as collecting money for a regular meeting-house between 1871 and 1873, but then gives the date for replacing the funeral chapel as 1886.

⁷ *Herold der Wahrheit* 17(1880), 64-65. This was a German-language, binational Mennonite devotional paper.

⁸ Orland Gingerich, *The Amish of Canada* (Waterloo: Conrad Press, 1972), p.64.

⁹ *Maple View Mennonite Church 1859-1984* [Wellesley, ON: The Church, 1984].

¹⁰ Jacob R. Bender, “The Amish Mennonites in Canada” in L. J. Burkholder’s *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario* ([Toronto]: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935), p.231.

¹¹ AMC, Hist. Mss. 1-439, box 1, file 12 (hereafter cited as Gascho/Miller correspondence), John Gascho to Sam and David Miller, February 1891.

¹² Amischen Mennoniten Dienerschaft, *Bericht der Verhandlungen der Diener-Versammlungen der Amischen Mennoniten-Dienerschaft*. 1981.

¹³ Willard Smith, *Mennonites in Illinois* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1983), p.73.

¹⁴ Private collection in Grantsville, Maryland (hereafter cited as Gascho/Bitchi correspondence), John Gascho to Manasses Bitchi, 2 June 1884. The Amish Mennonites in Ontario generally called their meetinghouses “*Versammlungshäuser*.” In his letters John Gascho uses the term “*Gemeindehäuser*,” literally “congregational houses,” which I translate as “church houses.”

¹⁵ “The Amish Mennonites in Canada,” p.227.

¹⁶ Gascho/Bitchi correspondence, John Gascho to Manasses Bitchi, 15 August 1886.

¹⁷ Gascho/Miller Correspondence. Samuel Miller wrote to John Gascho on 18 January 1891 that “[s]ix years ago you, dear friend Gascho, wrote us a letter, namely to D.A. Troyer and your question was whether we would withdraw from you if you would build meetinghouses. It happened that the church [service] was at

our place, so D.A. Troyer came to us with the letter and we read it and took counsel. We were four bishops together and several other ministers. It was unanimously decided that we were not in agreement with such houses and did not intend to minister in congregations which have such houses, and I am still of that mind, just as we counseled then.” One would suppose that this decision was made known to Gascho, who could not have known at that time that the decision of the Ohio bishops would so directly affect the shape of the division which eventually occurred in Ontario.

¹⁸ Gascho/Miller correspondence, John Gascho to Samuel and David Miller, 20 November 1890.

¹⁹ Gascho/Miller correspondence, John Gascho to Samuel and David Miller, 1 January 1891.

²⁰ Gascho/Miller correspondence, Samuel Miller to John Gascho, 18 January 1891.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Gascho/Bitchi correspondence, John Gascho to Manasses Bitchi, 28 June 1891. *Tradition and Transition*, p.275.

²⁴ Mark Kuepfer, “Nicholas and Mary (Kuepfer) Herrfort Family,” in *Roots and Branches of the Herrfort/Herford Family, 1992* by Bruce Jantzi and Lorraine Roth (New Hamburg, ON: The Herrfort/Herford Family Book Committee, 1992), p.241.

²⁵ Gascho/Bitchi correspondence, John Gascho to Manasses Bitchi, 29 July 1892.

²⁶ *A History of the Poole Mennonite Church, A People on the Way, 1874-1986* [Poole, ON: The Church, 1986]. The compilers of this history do not discuss the dynamics of the divisions. They do, however, give a list of the events and the names of the leaders involved in the divisions as well as those who helped to rebuild the congregation.

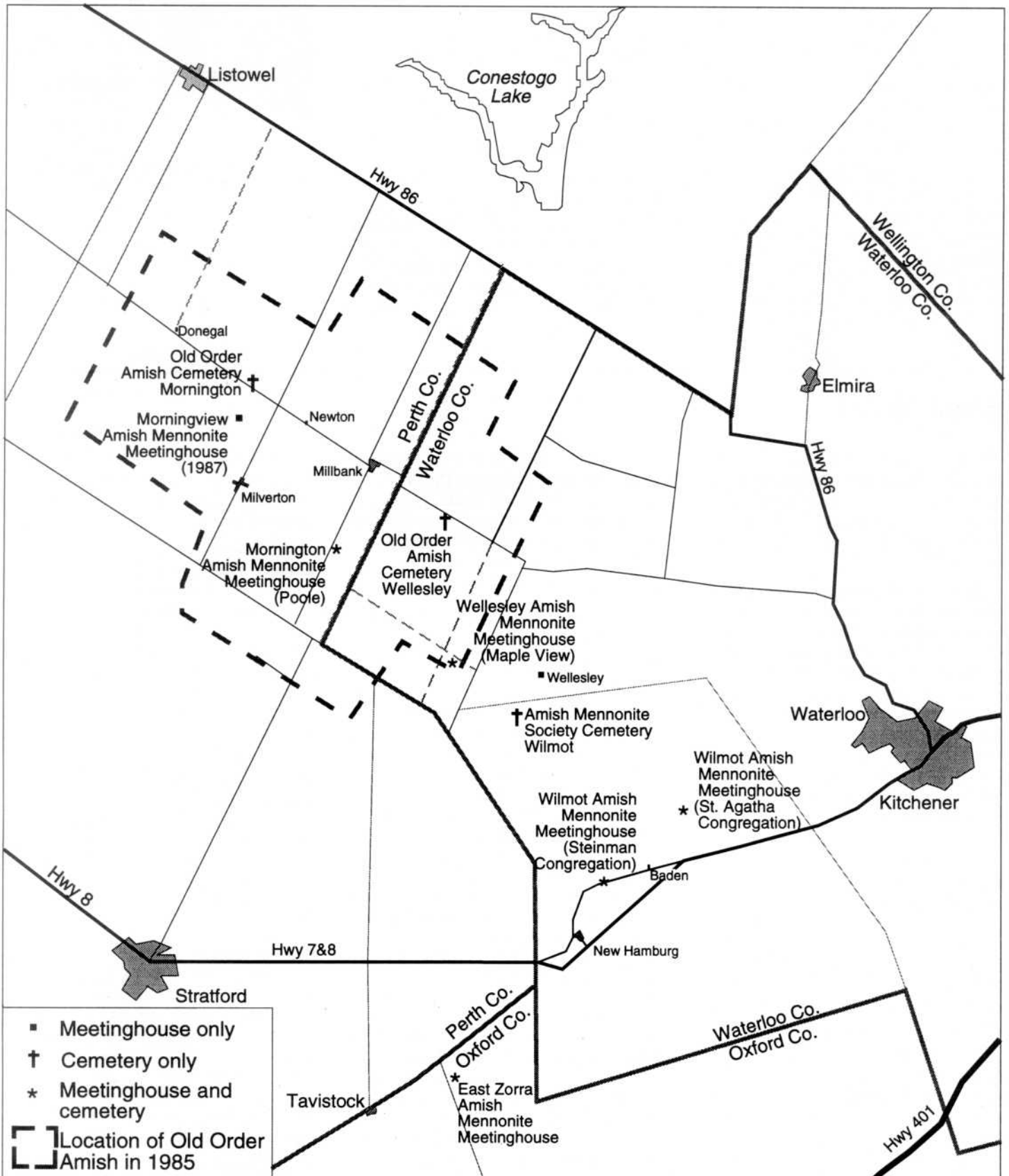
²⁷ Carter, an orphan from England, was taken into an Amish home. He married an Amish girl and became a member of the church. His son, William, is now bishop of the Morningview Amish Mennonite Congregation.

²⁸ Lorraine Roth, “Milverton Amish Locations,” unpublished survey, 1985.

²⁹ *Tradition and Transition*, p.27.

Lorraine Roth is a prolific family and church historian. She wrote 150 Years, the story of Amish Mennonites in Ontario, and Willing Service: Stories of Ontario Mennonite Women which will be reviewed in the next issue of Ontario Mennonite History. In addition Roth has produced sixteen genealogies and contributed to seventy-five others.

Locations of Amish Mennonite Meetinghouses and Cemeteries in South-Central Ontario, 1891



Information from Lorraine Roth

Map by P. Schaus

People and Projects

At the annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada in December 1992, it was recommended that all Mennonite archival centres in Canada test and use new **genealogical software** developed by a committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. For further details, please write to the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB R2L 2E5.

The Waterloo Heritage Foundation announces the publication of *Waterloo County to 1972: an annotated bibliography of regional history* by Elizabeth Bloomfield with Linda Foster and Jane Forgay (Waterloo: Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation, 1993), 768 pp. Prices: for prepaid orders received by 20 May, \$35; for prepaid orders after 20 May, \$45. Order

from: Waterloo Regional Heritage Project, 16 Caribou Cr., Guelph, ON N1E 1C9.

Leonard Friesen presented a paper entitled “**A Lamb Born of God: L.J. Burkholder and the Ontario Mennonite Church, 1894-1940**” at a Conrad Grebel College Faculty Forum on 22 March 1993. Friesen outlined a research agenda for studying the life and times of Lewis Josephus Burkholder, author of *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario*, 1935.

Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA 17022, is sponsoring a symposium on “**Three Hundred Years of Persistence and Change: Amish Society, 1693-1993**,” 22-25 July 1993. Registration fee is \$55. Deadline is 1 July.



A Lorraine Roth Appreciation Day will be held at the Wellesley Fellowship Hall in Wellesley, ON, on 18 April 1993, 2:00-5:00 P.M. Roth has published extensively on

Amish Mennonite family and church history. R.S.V.P. (519) 578-3453 or 662-1747.

Book Notes

Anna (Pauls Thiessen) Paetkau, author of *Memories and Reflections of a Widow* (Winnipeg: privately printed, 1991) 170 pp. describes her life in Russia and Canada. She lived in Ontario from 1957 until her death in 1983.

Peace Theology and Violence against Women (Elkhart, Indiana: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1992) 123 pp., edited by Elizabeth Gingerich Yoder, contains the papers of a 1991 consultation by North American Mennonite theologians and therapists about violence against women. Of particular note is Carol Penner's historical paper, “Content to Suffer: An Exploration of Mennonite Theology from the Context of Violence Against Women.” Penner is a doctoral student in theology at the Toronto school of Theology.

Steven P. Martin, author of “*The Presence of Violence in the Mennonite Church and Family Systems*,” (M.Th. thesis, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1990) 82 pp. explores the relationship between Mennonite theology and family violence. He concludes that some Mennonite beliefs distort reality, contributing to an environment where violence is more likely to occur.

Stephen Scott, author of *Amish Houses & Barns* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, [1992]) explores the history and cultural development of three Amish homesteads in Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana. Includes a photographic essay of typical Amish architecture in each of the three communities.

Rachel and Kenneth Pellman, authors of *A Treasury of Mennonite Quilts* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1992) have assembled an extraordinary collection of 149 dazzling quilts from Mennonite communities across North America. These quilts are monuments of beauty, providing links to earlier generations, serving as precious reminders of long-held values and traditions. Many stories and old photos are included.

Lorna Bergey, Secretary of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, obtained for the Conrad Grebel College Library a unique copy of a book censored and recalled by the Ontario Mennonite Conference (then called the Canada Conference) in 1880. The book, *Ein Büchlein, nämlich ein Auszug aus der Heiligen Schrift über einige Religions= Fragen unserer Zeit*, was written by Jacob Martin and published in Waterloo, Ontario under the date 1875. A supplement in the book, “Beilage für die Belesenen der heiligen Schrift,” is dated April 1879. Evidently copies of the book were destroyed because none have come to light before this time. A second edition of the book, published under the title *Ein Schifflein gegen den Wind Gerichtet* in 1883, was widely circulated. This edition was abridged and translated by Old Order Mennonite Church historian Isaac R. Horst in 1984. It contains some of the teachings of the Stauffer [Old Order] Mennonite Church, including support for the use of the ban to discipline errant members.

A comparison of the two editions of this book would shed light on the theological orientation of Mennonite ministers in 19th century Ontario.

Oliver Ramseyer donated to the Conrad Grebel College Library an undated edition of the *Ausbund* bound in 1792. The hymnal was originally owned by the Wenger family of Blumbergenwalt and brought to Ontario by the Schlegel family in the early 1800s. It descended into the Ramseyer family by way of Barbara (Schlegel) Ramseyer, daughter of Nicolaus and Barbara (Roth) Schlegel.

Grace Bowman, compiler of *My Heritage and Roots* (New Dundee, Ontario: privately printed 1992), traces the ancestral lines of Grace (Weber) and Mervin Bowman. The book is intended for private distribution only but a copy has been placed in the Conrad Grebel College library.

J. Craig Haas, author and compiler of *Readings from Mennonite Writings: New and Old* (Intercourse, Pennsylvania: Good Books, 1992), 436 pp. has assembled a remarkable collection of 366 readings on Anabaptist and Mennonite spirituality. Ontario writers include Walter Klaassen, Christian Reesor, E.J. Swalm, Esther Bowman, Nancy Sauder, Magdalene Redekop, David Waltner-Toews and John H. Redekop.