

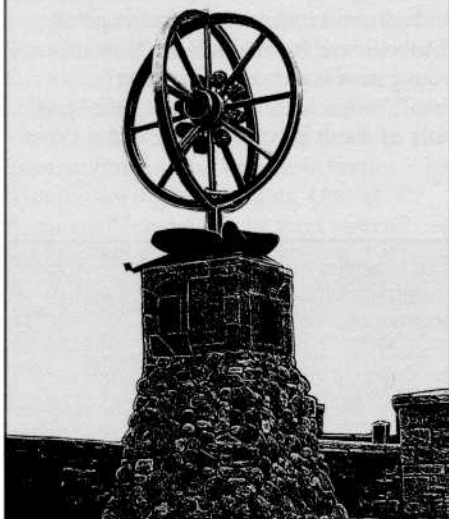
Ontario Mennonite History

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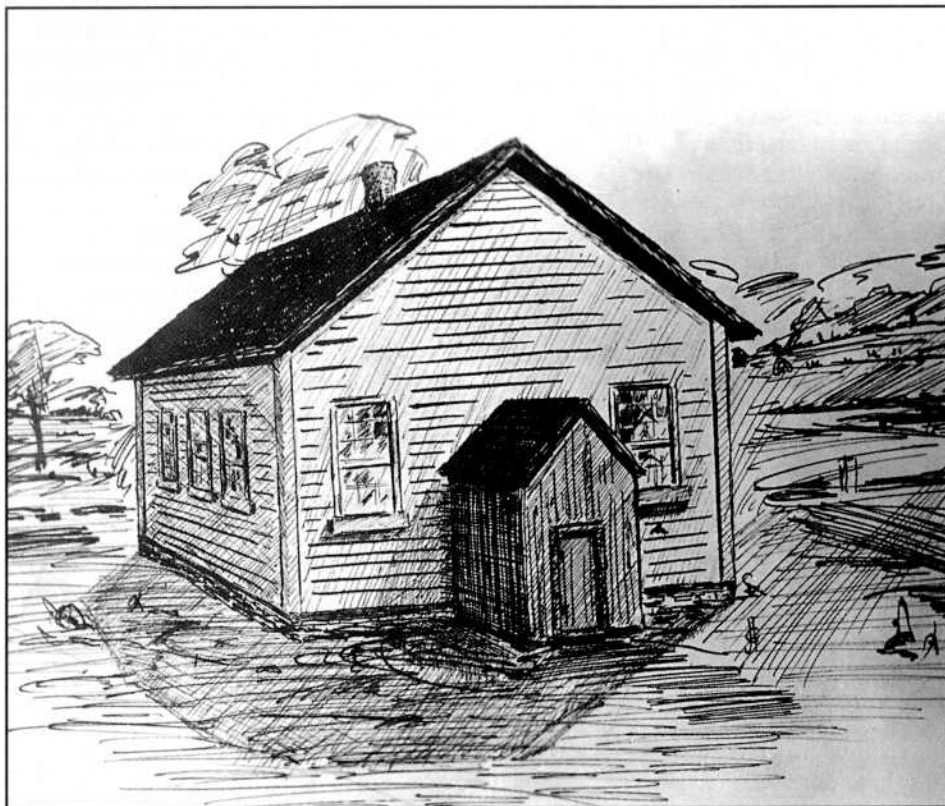
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1 Mennonite Settlement in Port Elgin

Isaac R. Horst



Port Elgin Mennonite Church built circa 1861 on the Benjamin Shantz farm about a mile from the lake.

On Thursday, 7 Jan., 1864, two men in a cutter started off from Waterloo County to visit Saugeen Township, where Port Elgin now stands. They were Samuel Weber of Lexington, east of Waterloo, Mennonite preacher for 'Martins and 'Schneiders churches, and his brother-in-law, Joseph Martin of West Montrose. As was customary at that time, they likely stopped at Hanover, Elmwood and Culross along the way up and back, to hold church services there for struggling congregations.

On 5 July 1994, 130 years later, two men in a car revisited Saugeen Township. They were Ed Bearinger, retired businessman of Elmira and myself. Like the bear who went over the mountain, we went to see what we could see. We came, we saw, we conquered. At least we accomplished what we came for.

Early Settlers in Port Elgin

Among the first settlers in the Port Elgin area were the Ebys, the Samuel E. Bricker family, the Benjamin Shantz family, and the Amos Bauman family. Descendants of George Eby, cousin to Benjamin, the bishop, were influential in the development of the Port Elgin church

and community. Peter, a son, married to Magdalena Erb, a sister to my great-great-grandmother, Salome Erb, (Mrs. Samuel Reist) was one of the pioneers in Woolwich. Their son, Jacob E. Eby married to Anna Bowman, a sister to my great-grandmother Maria (Mrs. Peter G. Martin) was a pioneer in Saugeen Township. His sister and two brothers and his Uncle John Eby's three sons, pioneered at Port Elgin. Of the latter, Moses had a book store, Samuel a grocery store, and Martin was a druggist as his father had been. Jacob's wife Anna Bauman, was an aunt to both Amos Bauman and his wife Barbara. Obviously, the Ebys were more progressively minded than most Mennonites. Obviously, too, the family ties, though distant, are the reason for my interest in Port Elgin.

Last, but not least, Jacob's uncle, Martin Eby who arrived in 1854 was one of the first settlers at Port Elgin. In 1858, he was ordained as the deacon for the young church. His son, Solomon Eby was ordained to the ministry on the same day. No doubt this strong Eby influence guided the church into more evangelistic channels than what was acceptable among the old Mennonite church.

Before we visited Port Elgin, Ed and I stopped at the Bruce County Museum in Southampton. In the library and archives, we found several books which were quite helpful in our search. There were maps of Port Elgin, Saugeen Township and the adjoining townships. There were histories of the pioneers. Best of all, there was the statement that Samuel E. Bricker donated three acres of land for a cemetery. The maps showed that Samuel Bricker owned Lot 11, Concession 9, north of Gustavus Street, with the creek running the full length of the property, dividing it in two.

Samuel E. Bricker was the son of Sam Bricker and "Becky" Eby immortalized in Mabel Dunham's book *The Trail of the Conestoga*. Young Sam was married to Catherine Overult, and had farmed his father's large farm north of Freeport until 1854 when he and his neighbour, Benjamin Shantz moved to Port Elgin. They sold their farms to Preacher Abraham C. Weber, who had lived where the Goodrich factory later stood, in present day Kitchener, until the Grand Trunk Railway threatened to bisect his farm.

Benjamin Shantz was a brother to Bishop Henry Shantz, and a son of Christian (River)³ Shantz. Both he and his father had lived beside Sam Bricker. When moving to Port Elgin, they lived across the road from each other.

After having lunch in Southampton, we continued to Port Elgin. It seemed obvious that Gustavus Street was the line between concessions 8 and 9, so we drove east to the bridge. With the town going only as far as the creek, we turned north on the last street before the bridge. Finding this a dead end, we turned to the next street on our left, which brought us to the cemetery.

The sign showed this to be the Port Elgin cemetery. Were we at the right place? We were encouraged when we found numerous Eby and Eby related head-stones. I started scribbling down names and dates to compare them with existing records. On the highest point of the cemetery, we found an imposing monument to Samuel E. Bricker.

It seemed rather surprising that Sam Bricker would have donated land for a

public cemetery; but more surprising still, if he had donated land for a cemetery only, and not for a church. This would have been an extreme departure from Mennonite practice. We questioned several men who were mowing grass along the graves. Yes, they agreed that members of the Missionary Church were buried here. In fact, anyone could be buried here: even Catholics. However, they felt sure that no Mennonite church had ever been close to the cemetery.

"What you should do," one of them said, "is talk to Wilfred Schwass. He knows all the history of the area. He lives just down here on River Road". He pointed to the northwest, and gave a street number.

We found Mr. Schwass at home and ready to talk. He told us that he was the only man over eighty who had attended the Missionary Church all his life. He substantiated the claim that Solomon Eby, the preacher, was converted after preaching for eleven years. I asked him about the location of the church.

"Seems to me, they said it stood south of the cemetery, half way to the water tower," he replied.

After chatting for another half hour, we took our leave, and headed for the water tower. Between it and the cemetery lay two little fields, about two acres each, fenced separately. I passed through the first, to the second fence. There, in the middle of the field was a hollow, about thirty feet across and a few feet deep, with a growth of young trees in the middle. I found it easy to believe that when the old church was removed, the rubble and stone was pushed inside, and covered over. The centre would naturally settle down, while the old foundation would have prevented cultivation through the area; resulting in the unhampered growth of trees. In my mind, I am satisfied that we found the last remains of the old Mennonite church of Port Elgin.

Ed was still not totally satisfied. He felt that there had been enough Mennonites living in the Southampton area to warrant another cemetery there. After some searching, we found a Southampton

cemetery, containing the tombstones of Jacob Ziegler, of Chippawa Hill, Levi B. Eby, son of Jacob, Henry Zinkann, partner with Isaac E. Bowman in the tannery in Southampton, and Isaac's son Albert Frederick, who was also involved with the tannery and leather business. The company claimed to be next in size in Ontario to Beardmore, which is still a famous name in leather goods. The company was first established in St. Jacobs, which was Isaac Bowman's home. Besides the leather business, Isaac Bowman represented the riding of Waterloo North in parliament between 1864-78 and 1887-96.

As stated above, Solomon Eby preached at the Saugeen Mennonite church a number of years before he was converted. However, his type of "conversion" did not sit well with the church in Waterloo County; especially his statement that from that time on he would follow his own convictions without taking counsel from the mother church in Waterloo County.

Elias Eby, (a layman) son of the first Waterloo County bishop, Benjamin Eby, kept an interesting diary for the last six years of his life. His diary entry for 24 Nov. 1872, follows:

We were at Eby's church (at Berlin) in meeting. (Daniel) Wismer and Solomon Eby preached. I think the above mentioned Eby should first obey the church rules and regulations before he takes the liberty to preach in our meeting houses. It is well known and evident to him that it is not allowed for a preacher to baptize or to serve communion when a bishop is available, or offers to be at hand. On April 5, at the conference here in Berlin, Eby was plainly told by our bishops and other faithful ministers, and told again, that it is not proper for him to encroach upon the bishop's work; but without paying heed to this, he went home to Port Elgin, and did according to his own judgment, baptized and administered communion. A gross disobedience is evident here. Now this young man stands up in his own justification, in our meeting houses, and tells us about his conversion, and that out

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of love he would give his life for his Lord. If he were to resign his own will and obstinacy, I might possibly believe the above; but the way he conducts himself now, I can truly grant him little trust. On this day, none of our old ministers appeared here.

Daniel Kauffman, in his Mennonite Cyclopedia Dictionary supports Elias Eby's views. He says of Solomon Eby:

He became an aggressive champion of a more pronounced spiritual life among the membership. Becoming more radical, he declared his intention in 1869, to launch out in aggressive work, regardless of what the church had to say. His radicalism led him into an independent movement which resulted in the organization of a new church, soon making common cause with Daniel Brenneman of Indiana, organizing a church first known as "New Mennonites" now known as "Mennonite Brethren in Christ".

(In Ontario the Mennonite designation was dropped in 1947 when Mennonite Brethren in Christ congregations merged with the Missionary Church, another American denomination with Mennonite roots.)

Eby was one of the most active workers in this church until near the close of his life, when he gave his support to the Pentecostal movement.

Elias Eby comments on the above association of Solomon Eby with Daniel Brenneman:

Mar. 2, 1873, We were at Eby's meeting, where among other, Daniel Brenneman of Indiana preached. He gave us a rendition of a priestly sermon.

Feb. 24, 1874, This afternoon, (preacher) Sam Webers visited us, and went home late. Much was discussed about unity in the church.

Feb. 26, 1874, We visited (bishop) Joseph Hagey today. The wilful brethren cause the old bishop much sorrow and unrest. Too bad that peace has been lost. Since Jan. 23, D. Brenneman has been in this vicinity, where he and D. Wismer 4 hold meetings during the day and evenings, in schools here and there, in meeting houses, and in private homes, with professing Mennonites, United Brethren, Methodists - in short with all who support them - they carry on their activities, in German or English, without regard for the church's rules and regulations; yet they wish to retain the Mennonite name, because they know it stands firm and stable. Too bad that such men, who united and pledged themselves,

through the precious covenant of baptism, under these firmly established rules; and later by their sincere conduct gained the confidence of the church; according to the rules and regulations were installed as ministers of the Word, as teachers, and shepherds of the congregation; where they also performed for a time by God's grace.

Now they have gone so far astray that they associate with those who look on our nonresistant faith and regulations with scorn. Now I ask, how it can be possible that these men wish to be our ministers, while associating with those with whom they cannot be in agreement? Is this not being unequally yoked together? What can be the cause of this confusion? Is it not wilfulness and self-esteem? Instead of being the smallest, each one wishes to be the greatest and most prominent? This is not the meek spirit of Christ!

Brenneman handed out posters to announce his intention of being at a certain hall in Berlin (Kitchener since 1916) on the evening of the 24th, to proclaim "Peace, Peace". Too bad that this professing peace messenger did not begin at home. (The last sentence of course refers to the Brenneman controversy with the conservative minister, Jacob Wissler and his followers in Indiana. Wisler founded the Old Order Mennonite Church in Indiana and Ohio.)

By 1875, the New Mennonites had severed ties with the old Mennonite Church. This group included nearly all of Solomon Eby's Port Elgin Church. (One source says that only the Samuel E. Bricker family remained); Daniel Brenneman's followers in Indiana and Ohio; John Lapp and his followers in Clarence Centre, N.Y., and a minority in most other Mennonite churches. Since 1993 this group in Canada is the Evangelical Missionary Church which is still active in the Port Elgin area. The Mennonite church which was built and established within the present town of Port Elgin, no longer exists.

Or does it? Within the past five years, there has been Old Order Mennonite activity in Saugeen Township's backyard, so to speak. Today there are ten families living on their own farms throughout Elderslie Township, between Chesley and Port Elgin; a few of whom do their shopping in Port Elgin. Six additional farms have been purchased. One of our sons, two daughters, and a grandson are living in this area. It would seem as if the Mennonites had come full circle in the settlement of Port Elgin.

Endnotes

1. Martins Church is located north of Waterloo on the west side of the Grand River.
2. Schneiders Church (known as the Bloomingdale Mennonite Church since 1950s) is located on the east side of the Grand River near the village of Bloomingdale.
3. The farm of Christian (River) Shantz was on the west bank of the Grand River at Freeport. His nephew Christian Shantz owned land further west of the River.
4. Daniel Wismer, preacher, in the Waterloo District had identified with the New Mennonite movement. In 1876, he reconciled himself with the old church. A year later, he moved to Kansas, where he was ordained a bishop.

Isaac Horst, the author of this article is an active historian/writer from the Old Order Mennonite Church. He moved from the Waterloo area when an Old Order Mennonite community was established near Mount Forest.

Appointment of New Editor

The resignation of E. Reginald Good, editor of our newsletter since September 1991, was received with regret by the Mennonite Historical Society Board of Directors at their November 27th Board Meeting.

Upon request of the Board, this edition of our Society's Newsletter has been compiled by Lorna L. Bergery.

The Society is pleased to announce that Brent Bauman, writer of a history of the Floradale Mennonite Church during the seven years he served as church historian, has accepted our invitation to succeed Reg as editor of our newsletter.

Effects of the 1870s New Mennonite Division on Bloomingdale Mennonite Church

presented by Sam Steiner June 8, 1996 at the annual meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario.

I have been asked to talk about the effects of both the "New Mennonite" and "Old Order" movements on the Bloomingdale congregation in the second half of the 1800s. For a variety of reasons, primarily the time I had available for research, I've chosen to confine my comments to the 1870s division that saw the emergence of what we now know as the Evangelical Missionary Church from the Conference of Mennonite Churches in Canada West, or what we've traditionally known as the Mennonite Conference of Ontario.

The history of the Snyder (or Bloomingdale) congregation can't be really understood outside the context of the 19th century religious culture within which Mennonites in Waterloo County found themselves.

In some ways our task is simplified because the 19th century Mennonites in Waterloo County still used German in their daily life, and their social and religious relationships remained within the German speaking community.

I want to talk about two German-speaking denominational movements that had a particularly strong impact on the Mennonites in Ontario. These are the United Brethren and the Evangelical Association. In many ways these groups were quite similar, and in fact in 1946 they merged into the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and later most of these congregations merged again into the United Church of Canada.

The United Brethren in Christ have their roots in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in the late 18th and early 19th century. Martin Boehm, a Mennonite minister, and Philip William Otterbein, a Reformed clergyman, found they had similar attractions to the pietism and revivalism that was a major influence in both English and German speaking circles in the U.S. at the time.

Now church historians use the terms "pietism" and "revivalism" frequently, but sometimes it's not entirely clear to the casual listener what they mean. It's important enough to our story here today that we spend some time on their meaning, and how these influences moved Mennonites away from their roots.

Mennonites, particularly those from Switzerland and South Germany that came to Pennsylvania and later to Ontario, had retained "the sternness of Anabaptism, to use the words of Theron Schlabach.¹ The book that symbolized this community was the Martyr's Mirror, the stories of Anabaptist martyrs in the 16th century. This book's theology encouraged a perception that we are part of a small faithful community in a world dominated by evil. My membership in this community not only shaped my identity in this world, but this community also mediated my relationship with God. I worshiped in this community, I studied the Bible in this community. I must never be too far out of step from the understanding of this community. The Christian life was a spiritual discipline; my salvation depended on my faithfulness to God and my church community.

Pietism took quite a different approach. It laid particular emphasis on my personal religious experience. Although my association with fellow believers was important, my personal relationship with God was paramount, and the centrality of my religious community lessened. Cornelius Krahn called pietism a "heartfelt" religion "based on a personal emotionally experienced conversion." This conversion experience was called a new birth – or in 20th century language we call it being "born again." The result of this conversion experience would be the fruit of good works in my life. This would also include a certain nonconformity from the sinful world in things like dancing, card-playing, theater attendance and drunkenness.² As with the Anabaptists and Mennonites, the pietists took the Bible very seriously, though their more individual approach to salvation also encouraged individualism in biblical interpretation. By itself pietism was not particularly evangelistic. My own warm relationship with God and his son, Jesus, was central to my salvation.

Revivalism brought a second theological influence to the Mennonites, most often in tandem with pietism. One way to crassly put this is to say that revivalism was the coming of the industrial revolution to Protestant Christianity, especially in England and North America. Harold Bender in the

Mennonite Encyclopedia says that revivalism "has come to mean a "technique" by which emphasis is upon frequent religious renewal through specific methods adopted to produce a mass religious response, largely through special meetings with considerable appeal to religious emotion and definite personal commitment.³ The "technique" of revivalism delivered pietist theology to groups of persons very effectively – by attracting large groups to special meetings, and by building religious fervor through meetings held over a series of days or weeks. This had the effect of creating momentum and increasing responses to the message. If the meetings went well, the meetings might be extended additional days or weeks. The modern evangelistic crusade, like those of Billy or Franklin Graham, is a highly developed example of the revivalism technique.

The United Brethren that I mentioned earlier were both pietistic and revivalist. They sent "missionaries" into new fields of labor, fanning westward in the U.S. and eventually north into Canada. It was only in 1857 that a Canadian Conference of the United Brethren in Christ was authorized by that denomination's General Conference.⁴

A circuit rider, or missionary, for the United Brethren came to this area in 1860 and established a number of United Brethren congregations. These included revival meetings in the Bloomingdale area, and the founding of the Ebenezer Chapel at Crowsfoot Corners between Bloomingdale and Conestogo at the intersection of the road that goes to Winterborne. This chapel was part of a circuit of little United Brethren congregations that ranged from Hawkesville to Breslau to Freeport. The first United Brethren pastor in charge was Jacob B. Bowman from the Freeport area. Jacob Bowman was the son and grandson of Mennonite preachers John B. Baumann and Joseph Baumann.

By 1871 there were a significant number of United Brethren families in the community mixed among the Mennonite families that worshiped at Snyders – these included the families of William Erb, John S. Bowman, Jonas B. Snyder, Ben S. Snyder, Samuel S. Bowman, Owen Oberholtzer, Isaac E. Burkholder, and

others.⁵ Many Mennonites would have attended the revival meetings sponsored by the United Brethren, and Ontario Mennonite leaders were also influenced by the United Brethren theology. David Sherk, a leading Mennonite pastor and thinker in Ontario had several nephews who were leading ministers in the Ontario United Brethren community, and his own views about outreach to non-Mennonite folk in the community reflect this influence.⁶ Later in the 1870s, the United Brethren built their church in Bloomingdale.

The second group that influenced Mennonites in Ontario, including the Snyder congregation, was the Evangelical Association. The Evangelical Association also had its roots in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Jacob Albright was of Lutheran background but had a mid life conversion experience influenced by early United Brethren leaders. He also began to teach the need for a new birth, but found himself connected with the Methodist Church because he was attracted to their clearer church structure and orderliness.⁷ His own call was to minister to the German-speaking community, but the Methodist Church was not particularly interested in outreach in that direction at the time. Consequently the Evangelical Association, a German-speaking denomination with a Methodist polity, was formed in 1803.

The first Evangelical Association "missionaries" came into Waterloo County from New York state in 1836, and a Sunday school was established in 1837 in Berlin, and in 1839 the first campmeeting was held on David Erb's land between Waterloo and Lexington.⁸ The Evangelical Association also had an enormous impact on Mennonites in the Niagara Peninsula, and helped pull Daniel Hoch away from the mainstream of the 19th century Mennonite church and led to the formation of the "New Mennonites" in the late 1840s. This group included a few small congregations in Waterloo County, though not in the Bloomingdale area.

A third doctrine, in addition to pietism and revivalism, that influenced Ontario Mennonites was holiness, or sanctification that came from the Wesleyan Methodist tradition. This doctrine was a major point of discussion within the Evangelical Association during the middle of the 19th century. The holiness doctrine stated that "it should be the purpose of every Christian to attain to complete holiness in his life in which 'all self-will and selfishness (is) subdued,' (and) to 'gain the victory over any temptation of the

moment.'" This perfection builds gradually, but eventually the state of Christian perfection comes to completion "by a sudden and powerful influence of grace and outpouring of the Divine Spirit."⁹ This powerful movement of the Holy Spirit is called sanctification. J.C. Wenger has said that this theological view says that salvation comes in two steps – "first, the new birth and the gift of salvation through repentance and faith, but which ordinarily leaves the new convert less than a fully victorious child of God; and second, the second work of grace, or holiness, in which the Holy Spirit miraculously give full deliverance from the power of sin."¹⁰ Some prominent leaders in the Evangelical Association argued that persons would not attain full salvation and the reward of heaven unless they experienced this "entire sanctification."

By the 1860s the Evangelical Association was firmly entrenched in many of the same areas as the United Brethren and Mennonites because they remained German speaking with Pennsylvania German roots. In 1865 there were almost 3000 members in the Canadian Conference of the Evangelical Association, including many in the Waterloo County area.¹¹

Let's return again to the Mennonite scene that concerns us today. Reg Good has outlined carefully in his history of First Mennonite Church the efforts in 1869 among Ontario Mennonite leaders to reconcile with the "New Mennonites" who had followed Daniel Hoch's earlier leadership.¹²

Events in Port Elgin, Ontario seriously undermined these efforts. The Evangelical Association held revival meetings in Port Elgin near the Mennonite church which was led by minister Solomon Eby. Eby was said to take his duties seriously, to the extent of holding services weekly though this was not the normal pattern for Mennonite churches at the time. Eby came to question the state of his own salvation, and wondered if he would be lost in case of death. This concern was surely increased by exposure to Evangelical Association teachings on sanctification. Eby experienced peace on this issue sometime late in 1869. Later writers said he was converted; I suspect he experienced the sanctification necessary for a sense of security about his salvation.

Eby began to hold regular prayer and edification meetings in Port Elgin. Moses Erb, who was ordained for service at the Snyder and Martins congregations in 1854, helped to lead prayer and edification

services in Waterloo County with his brother-in-law, Daniel Wismer, a Waterloo County minister who also had strong ties to the Snyder Church.¹³ Daniel Wismer was also one of three ministers who went to Port Elgin to investigate Solomon Eby's activity, and brought back a rather favorable report.¹⁴ Prayer and edification meetings were closely associated with the holiness movement, and were not as innocuous as they appear to us today. Prayer meetings as a popular movement were only twenty years old in 1870.¹⁵ Extemporaneous prayer by persons other than preachers was still uncommon. Prayer and edification meetings fostered more overt religious expression by lay persons; indeed the role of ordained persons tended to be minimized in these settings. Prayer meetings also diverted attention from the preaching of the word as the core of religious life, and could be seen as tending toward spiritual pride. As with pietism, prayer meetings also tended to be ecumenical; detracting from the authority of the community.

During the decade of the 1870s, the Snyder congregation had worship services every two weeks. This was normal for all the Mennonite congregations, including the large Christian Eby church in Berlin. However, the ministers (Moses Erb and Daniel Wismer) with which the Snyder congregation was most closely identified were leaders in the Mennonite revival movement in the Waterloo area. Persons from the Snyder congregation likely were among those who came to faith through these meetings and wanted to become members of the church. Unfortunately we do not know their names. We do know that Daniel Wismer led them in the usual baptismal preparation classes.

The bishops in Waterloo County were concerned about the discord the prayer and edification meetings were causing; enough discord that the congregational unity required to hold communion in the various meeting places was threatened. Bishop Joseph Hagey said he would baptize applicants who agreed they would no longer participate in the prayer and edification meetings. The concern was not to devalue the experience these young people had had, but rather to try to recover harmony within the community. The applicants declined, and Bishop Hagey refused to proceed with baptism.¹⁶

This issue dragged on for several years – I commend Reg Good's history of First Mennonite Church to any of you who wish more detail on this.¹⁷ The division between the Mennonite "holiness" preachers, as Reg calls them, and the

Bishops only sharpened during this time. The fallout from this in Bloomingdale was that Bishop Hagey did not serve communion at the Snyder church for several years. Combined with this alienation from the conference leadership was a disaster within the Snyder congregation itself.

Dorothy Sauder, in her history of this community, suggests the original church on this location was probably destroyed by fire. In any event, in early 1872 subscriptions were sought "for the purpose of erecting a Mennonite meeting house near Bloomingdale known as Snyders meeting house. Twenty-eight names are on this list, reflecting a significant and healthy worshipping community here."¹⁸

Not all of these persons are members at Bloomingdale. It is interesting to note that Moses Erb and Daniel Wismer both gave substantial contributions. Some, like Peter Shirk and Elias Eby would have given modest donations as interested persons from outside the immediate congregational community. Isaac Burkholder was United Brethren.

A name on the list that is important for the continuing story is Menno Bowman. Menno and his wife (she was the granddaughter of the community's founder) had been baptized in the Grand River on May 25, 1863, an unusual practice for Mennonites.¹⁹ This was more common in the United Brethren church, and possibly this already reflected that influence in the community.

Returning to our story of discord between the congregation and the conference leadership – in early 1872 the Snyder congregation asked Bishop Joseph Hagey to administer communion at this meetingplace – was it perhaps even in the brand new building? Hagey consented to come, but he read a statement that said:

I justify myself this day before this church, that I want to remain within the ordinances which I confirmed at my baptism, and do not wish to depart from it, with God's help and assistance. I am willing to serve communion to all those who are in agreement with this gospel rule, according to the duty of my calling.²⁰

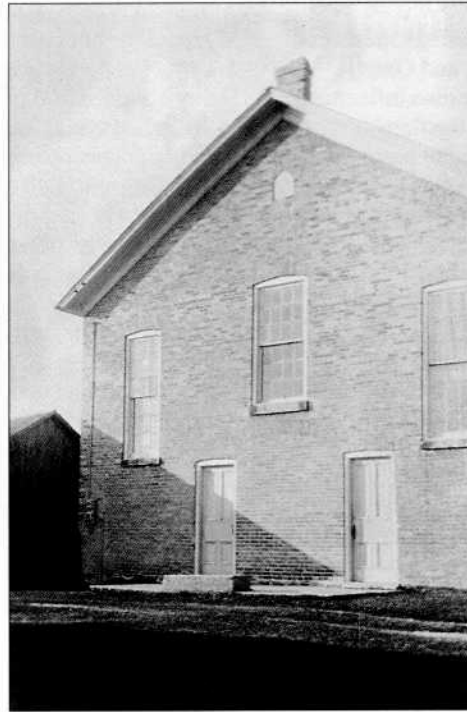
The communion service did not proceed.

The controversy between the revival ministers led by Solomon Eby and the conference leadership continued.

On April 2, 1874 Moses Erb and Daniel Wismer, with six other ministers and four deacons, signed a petition to the semi-annual conference sessions calling for an apology from the bishops both for their treatment of the persons seeking baptism and the discord between Bishop Hagey and the Snyder Church.²¹ Another petition, signed by 191 laypersons, called for a continued hard line by the bishops. The deliberations were not successful and a "division was pronounced."²² Solomon Eby's followers did not participate in the communion service scheduled for the following Sunday. It's reported that several weeks later Solomon Eby and Daniel Wismer provided communion for their followers at the Snyder church, symbolically important since this community had not been able to have communion served by the local bishop.²³

In May 1874 the Reform Mennonite Church was established in a meeting at the Christian Eby meeting house in Berlin, and the new movement began its separate identity.²⁴ This had immediate impact on the Snyder congregation. By the end of the 1874 when the Calendar of Appointments for worship services in the conference in 1875 was published, the Snyder congregation had been dropped from the list, and neither Moses Erb nor Daniel Wismer was listed as a minister in the conference. The Snyder congregation was not listed in the Calendar of Appointments until 1880 indicating they had returned to favor sometime in 1879.

In March 1875 an important meeting was held in this building. The Reform Mennonites and the New Mennonites, the group initiated by Daniel Hoch, met at the Snyder meeting house in a meeting that saw the formation of the United Mennonites. In that meeting they essentially adopted an Evangelical Association church polity. Later the United Mennonites would unite with a Pennsylvania group to form the



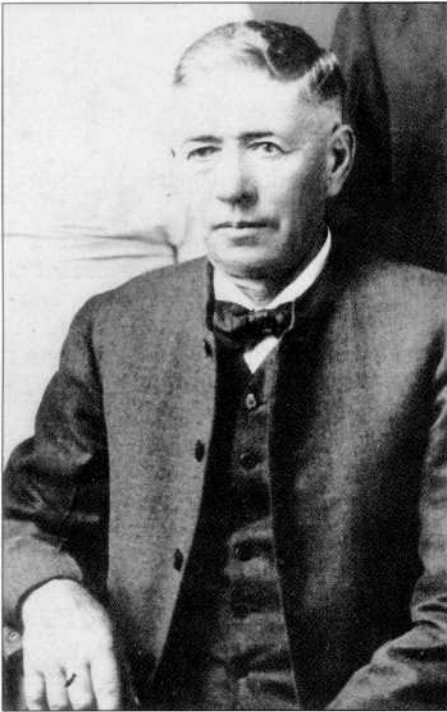
Snyder Mennonite Church (known as Bloomingdale since 1950s) was built in mid 1870s on land deeded by Jacob Schneider for church purposes in 1826 when the first meetinghouse was built.

Evangelical United Mennonites, and in 1883 with an Ohio Brethren in Christ faction to form the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. Daniel Wismer attended the March 1875 meeting and actively participated in the discussion, though he is not listed as one of the signatories to the proceedings. Moses Erb apparently did not attend, and may have already reconciled with the Mennonite Conference leadership. Although he continued to preach occasionally in conference churches, Erb was not again listed as a minister in the Calendar of

Appointments until 1877. Daniel Wismer in December 1876 made a public reconciliation with the conference, not long before he moved to Kansas.

Menno Bowman, who constructed this building in 1872, went on to become a leading minister in the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church. He became a probationary minister already in 1875 but would not have served in the Bloomingdale area, at least not for very long. He was the first minister at the Bright Mission, later the Bethel Missionary Church in New Dundee. He served as Presiding Elder for the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church in Ontario for fourteen years – perhaps the equivalent to Bishop. Although he ministered elsewhere, he retained his property here and retired here in later life.

Ministerial service for Bloomingdale seems to have been poor under the United Mennonites, with primary responsibility passed among various ministers from 1875-1879. Moses Weaver had responsibility for a short time.²⁵ Later Bloomingdale may have been part of the Berlin circuit under John McNally's charge.²⁶ We do know that meetings continued to be held here – Daniel Brenneman, a leader in the new group from Indiana, reported "it was (his) privilege to meet on Sunday (June) 8th 1879 with the dear brethren in public worship, at Bloomingdale in the forenoon,



Jesse Martin, ordained minister at Snyders, in 1903. Served until 1920s when Howard Stevanus, an associate minister, took full charge after Martin's death in 1933.

and at Conestoga in the evening."²⁷

Dorothy Sauder reported that a search was made for the deed to the church property during the years of United Mennonite control, and it was thought the deed was either lost or had never been registered. "Therefore, a handwritten conveyance – was made on January 15, 1879 by the survivors of Jacob Schneider to Jacob S. Snider, Daniel Shantz and Albert Snyder as the 'trustees of Sniders meeting house, Mennonite congregation.'"²⁸

She goes on to report that the first action taken by the "conservatives" was to close the large single entrance and to replace it with separate doors for men and women.

Although the Mennonite Conference of Ontario regained control of the building the congregation had been devastated. Although services had been held there every two weeks prior to the troubles, from 1880 until 1906 services were held only every four weeks, with a variety of ministers filling the pulpit each month. This even occurred several years after Jesse Martin was ordained in 1903.

One measure of the congregation's difficulty can be seen in a membership list compiled by Samuel Bowman of all the congregations in Waterloo County about 1900. His list for the Snyder congregation shows only 23 members:

Snyder Families	Members ²⁹
William Thomas	2
Abram Bauman	2
Isaac Moyer	6
Mrs. August Burgetz	1
Widow Weil	1
Isaac Horst	4
August Wilkie	2
Albert Schneider	2
Jacob Schneider	2
Mrs. Joseph Schneider	1

Some of the decline would also have been the result of the Old Order division in the 1880s, which I haven't been able to address today. It's a credit to this congregation that despite the convulsions created in this small community by discord in the larger Mennonite world, it managed to survive, and indeed to prosper 125 years later.

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Endnotes:

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4. A.W. Drury, *History of the church of the United Brethren in Christ* (Dayton, Ohio : Otterbein Press, 1924), p. 446.
5. "Tweedsmuir history of the Village of Bloomingdale, vol. 3, 1826-1968, p. 106-107; Ezra E. Eby, *A biographical history of the settlers and early descendants in Waterloo Township* (Kitchener, 1984 reprint), p. 25
6. See E. Reginald Good, *Frontier community to urban congregation: First Mennonite Church, 1813-1988* (Kitchener, Ont. : The Church, 1988), p. 77-81.
7. J. Bruce Behney and Paul H. Eller, *The history of the Evangelical United Brethren Church* (Nashville, Tenn. : Abingdon Press, 1979), p. 69-70.
8. *A century in Canada: the Canadian Conference of the Evangelical United*

- Brethren Church, 1864-1964 (Kitchener, Ont. : The Conference, 1964), p. 6-8.
9. Behney and Eller, p. 201-202.
10. J.C. Wenger, "Holiness movement," *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, p. 790-791.
11. *A century in Canada*, p. 11.
12. Good, p. 78-80.
13. L.J. Burkholder, *A brief history of the Mennonites in Ontario* (Waterloo, Ont. : Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 1986 reprint), p. 287; see the interview of Henry Goudie by L.J. Burkholder quoted in Isaac R. Horst, *Close ups of the Great Awakening* (Mt. Forest, Ont. : I.R. Horst, 1985), p. 107; See also A. Eby, "History of the Mennonites in Canada," *Mennonitisches Friedensbote* (Aug. 15, 1872, p. 22 (translated by Isaac R. Horst.)), p. (1).
14. *History of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*, J. A. Huffman, editor (New Carlisle, Ohio : Bethel Pub. Co., 1920), p. 42.
15. N. A. Magnuson, "Prayer meeting revival (1857-1859)," *Dictionary of Christianity in America*, p. 922.
16. Henry Goudie interview.
17. Good, p. 81-84.
18. Dorothy Sauder, *Trail's end the Oxbow* (1972), p. 9.
19. Horst, p. 109.
20. Quoted in Horst, p. 109.
21. The text of the petition is in Horst, p. 109-111.
22. *Diary of Elias Eby, 1810-1978*, Isaac R. Horst, trans. and ed. (Mt. Forest, Ont. : I. R. Horst, 1982), p. 24.
23. *History of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church*, p. 52.
24. Minutes of the meeting are printed in Hannes Schneider and his wife Catharine Haus Schneider: their descendants and times, 1534-1939 (Kitchener, Ont. : M.H. Snyder, (1943?)), p. 158k.
25. "Proceedings of the fourth annual conference of the United Mennonites," *Gospel Banner*, Vol. 1, no. (July 1878), p. 7.
26. "Minutes of the sixth annual Canada Conference," *Gospel Banner*, Vol. 3, no. 13 (July 1880), p. 101.
27. Daniel Brenneman, "Editorial correspondence," *Gospel Banner* Vol. 2, no. 8 (July 1879), p. 4.
28. Sauder, p. 10.
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Book Review

by Lorna Bergey.

“MENNONITE WOMEN of LANCASTER COUNTY: A Story in Photographs from 1855-1935” by Joanne Hess Siegrist was released by Good Books, Intercourse Pennsylvania in 1996.

This book provides a fascinating glimpse of women’s role in the home and community in that era. So little has been published about our Mennonite women. It is a delight to browse through more than 200 historic photographs spanning eighty years of women and girls’ activities as they prepared the apples for applebutter in the fall, cooked and served meals for family and friends throughout the year and on occasion for workers at a barn-raising bee. Young people’s social gatherings and outings in those days are also featured.

The panoramic view of elaborate Victorian clothing fashions worn by young women of a Mennonite community prior to the turn of the 20th century presents a sharp contrast to the conservative period of uniform dress which followed in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

An informative text presents an excellent documentation on the social history of Mennonite women in that era.

The author who holds a B.S. from Eastern Mennonite University has provided a helpful resource to various university persons in women’s studies to their thesis work.

The book is available at Readers’ Ink Bookshop, University Ave. West, Waterloo. \$21.70 Tel. (519) 746-2872.

More About The Author

Joanne Hess Siegrist, grew up on her family’s farm in Pennsylvania. She is a ninth generation descendant of 1722 immigrant Christian Bomberger who came to Pennsylvania with his wife, six daughters and two sons, Christian and John. She is a descendant of Christian II who became a minister in the Mennonite church. By coincidence Joanne discovered that I am a descendant of John Bomberger’s granddaughter Susanna, who married Peter Erb in 1806, making us 7th cousins!. The Erbs came to Canada in 1807.

One hundred and ninety years have passed since my Bomberger Erb ancestor left Pennsylvania to live in Canada. How did Joanne and I, complete strangers, make

a family connection after all these years?

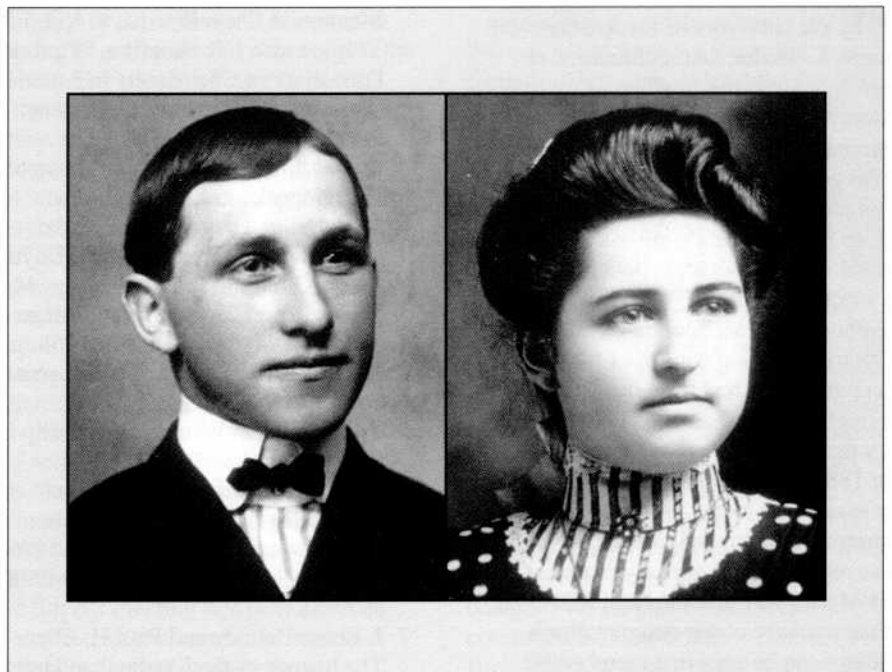
Joanne had a diary written by her grandmother Anna Nissley who married John BOMBERGER Nissly in 1906. Entry on Nov.1: “Left on a trip to Canada by train. ..Got off the train at Baden, Ontario. Overnight at the home of Noah Shantz’s”. (My paternal grandparents! LLB)!

After reading that notation sent by Joanne to Ontario friends, in the hopes of locating someone who could identify any relatives who may have hosted the “newlyweds”, I checked a diary kept by my g-grandmother MaryAnn Cassel, a granddaughter of Susannah BOMBERGER Erb, during her trip to Pennsylvania with my grandparents to visit relatives. Yes! they had visited the Bomberger and Nissly families in 1897.

Further in her diary, Anna, the young bride, records “ we went to [visit] Mrs. Cassel and we saw the silk stockings worn by her grandfather Peter Erb at his wedding to Susannah BOMBERGER in 1806. In 1997, I notified Joanne that I am custodian of this family heirloom, giving further confirmation of our Bomberger connection. LLB.



Noah & Susannah (Cassel) Shantz who resided 4 miles south of Baden, Ontario hosted her cousin John Bomberger Nissley and his bride Anna in 1906.



John BOMBERGER Nissley and Anna Nissley of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, a few years prior to their marriage in 1906.