



The Kidron Community Historical Society Newsletter

Exploring our heritage: frakturs

Everyone around here knows what a fraktur is, right? We thought so too until recently. Join us on a journey into the past of this beautiful art form.

In its simplest form, the German word *fraktur* means “fracture” or broken. Another meaning for *fraktur* is a style of printing, or font, created in the 1500’s using strokes that give a broken appearance to the lines of the letters. Yet another layer of meaning refers to documents that contain fraktur lettering.

It is this third layer of meaning that the residents of this area usually employ when we use the word fraktur.

When we use the word “fraktur,” we usually are also referring to the artwork that accompanies such lettering. In the case of the Pennsylvania and Ohio Mennonites, this artwork often depicts tulips, hearts, birds, and vines. This type of artwork is more accurately referred to as *illumination*.

To get a better understanding of illumination, we must delve into the past.

ArtLex.com, a dictionary of art terms, defines illumination as “decoration with drawings, usually in gold, silver, and rich colors. . . .” The earliest known examples come from Egyptian texts almost 4000 years old.

Medieval religious artists, usually monks, took the art form to its zenith. Illuminators were high-status artisans exempted from physical labor to preserve their hands and allow them to

practice their art as they produced beautiful illustrations in Bibles and other texts.

The advent of mass printing diminished the need for professional illuminators, pushing the art of illumination in the realm of folk art, practiced by ordinary people in their leisure time.

German settlers in Pennsylvania pioneered American fraktur with different religious groups developing their own styles. As these settlers dispersed, they carried this and other traditions with them. Historians identify 1790-1830 as the Golden Age of Fraktur.

The 2007 Heritage Center display, “Celebrations and Memories: Fraktur’s Impact on Sonnenberg,” showcases this artistic heritage. Included in the display are both historical and contemporary examples of fraktur. We invite you to visit the display opening April 5 and see the art of fraktur through new lenses as you appreciate its long tradition.

Eleventh annual members banquet Celebrating our past and our future

As KCHS’s 30th anniversary approached, the board began seeking a special project to commemorate three decades of success. About this same time, three different benefactors offered the donations of their historical buildings.

The board appointed a committee chaired by Wayne Liechty to determine what to do with these buildings. Consultants Ray Leisy and Bill O’Brian were contacted for input. The plan that the committee recommended to the board has fueled the imagination of everyone who has seen it.

This plan for KCHS’s future and a new video celebrating our Sonnenberg heritage will be unveiled at the Members Banquet on April 24, at 6:30 at the Kidron Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall. We guarantee that everyone at the banquet will be impressed. Do not miss this meeting! It will reveal the next phase of growth. You will want to be a part of this exciting future, as you have already been a part of KCHS’s past.

Danke schoen!

Leanna Packard, a second year history major with a minor in French at The Ohio State University, has been instrumental in helping put together the 2007 fraktur display.

Leanna plans to study in Great Britain in 2008, then attend graduate school. Leanna is thrilled to work with the KCHS on the new exhibit. Thank you, Leanna, for your assistance!





From the Director's Desk

by Prudy Steiner



There is something special about the "first times" in life, special first times that make our hearts race or our palms sweat. A first date, a first kiss, a child taking their first step or speaking their first word are all experiences that warm our hearts and make us happy.

Some "first time" events in our lives are not much fun: the first time our hearts are broken, the first argument with our spouse, sending our first child out into life.

My job at the Heritage Center involves a whole year of "first time" experiences. I have enjoyed my first edition of the *Bit o' Vit*, Tool Expo fund-raiser, and annual meeting, as well as the many small firsts that come with the job.

Now comes the biggest event: the annual Members Banquet. The board has assured me that this particular Members Banquet, my "first," will be unlike any in the past. They say, "There is BIG NEWS and EVERYONE will want to get on board." It might be one of your "first big mistakes" if you don't come and check it out. I know I'm not going to miss it!

Annual meeting celebrates friendship

The 2007 Annual Meeting took place at the Heritage Center on Tuesday, February 27. The main attraction for the evening was an informative talk and slide show given by J. Augspurger titled "East Africa Revisited: Old and New Friends."

In 2006, J., his wife Liz, and the Ted and Beth Gerber family visited East Africa where J. and Liz served in the Teachers Abroad Program (TAP) in the 1960's and 1970's. This visit was in response to an invitation to the Salem Mennonite Church of Kidron to go and see the results of their sponsorship of the Community Health Base Project (CHBP).



J. Augspurger shared the experiences of his fifth trip to East Africa.

During their stay, they visited old friends, made some new friends and visited CHBP medical facilities that specialize in education and treatment to stop the spread of AIDS.

Slides depicted the overwhelming need these under-developed hospitals face; for example, one hospital had only 200 beds, 300 patients and very few medical supplies for treatment. Other slides showed the beautiful wildlife and scenery they encountered.

In the business segment of the meeting, President Wayne Liechty welcomed the 25 members present, noted that this year is the 30th anniversary of the Society and hinted of exciting things to come that will be revealed at the Members Banquet.

Treasurer Richard Nussbaum disclosed the financial stability of the KCHS, with 2006's total income exceeding total expenses by \$10,419. The Endowment fund increased by \$3,079 and the 2006 Tool Expo fund-raiser brought in \$3,878.

Paul Neuenschwander and Wayne Liechty were both re-elected to 3-year terms on the board.

Refreshments were served at the conclusion of the evening.

Welcome New Annual, Lifetime and Heritage Club Members

Orris and Lois Basinger-Berlin
Dave and Nanci Bell-Colorado Springs, Colorado
Ralph Cornell-Massillon
Teresa Geiser-Apple Creek
Stephen R. and Ella Miller-Apple Creek
Pat Smucker-Sarasota, Florida
Jay and Wanda White-North Lawrence

There's still time to renew your 2007 annual membership before the Members Banquet, if you have not yet done so!

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• Have you visited the Kidron Database at www.omii.org?
• It's always being updated.
• Contact us with submissions and corrections.
•••••

Lots of help on a busy day

Even though the crowds on February 16 and 17 were smaller than normal for the Buckeye Tool Expo Show in Kidron, the Historical Society's food stand still made a profit of \$4,050.

It was a community of KCHS supporters that made it happen. A total of 38 individuals or businesses donated money to help defray the cost of the food and 33 volunteers manned the popcorn and lunch stands.

Each volunteer deserves a big thank you. Special thanks goes to Bessie Nussbaum, Grace and Joy Miller, Chet Miller, and Wayne and Joanna Liechty.



1907: It was a very good year

A century of service for L.E. Sommer & Sons

When Jacob “J.P.” Sommer and John J. Bixler built a grain elevator in 1907, Kidron was little more than a crossroad with a few tiny businesses. The village has changed a lot since then, but the grain elevator, despite several name changes is one of the “old dependables.”

J.P. Sommer bought out John Bixler in 1920, but then died eleven years later. The following year, 1932, J.P.’s

son Lloyd and his wife Anna purchased the business from his mother and changed the name to L.E. Sommer; “& Sons” was added at a later date.

KCHS celebrates the anniversary of this business that has weathered the ups and downs of a century of service to this community. Come see the Heritage Center display commemorating their 100 years of business.

Anna Sommer Amstutz celebrates 100th birthday

Despite the fact that medical science is constantly extending the human lifespan, not many of us frail vessels reach the century mark. Fewer still arrive in good health. But Anna Sommer Amstutz has done just that.

Anna was born in 1907 and grew up attending the Sonnenberg Mennonite Church. She and her husband Lloyd were married in 1928 and became charter members of the Kidron Mennonite Church in 1936. The couple had three children: Don, Carol (Yoder) and Ann (Troyer).

After Lloyd’s death, Anna married Benjamin “B.U.” Amstutz in 1983. They were married until his death in 1996.

Anna has been a volunteer for KCHS since the Heritage Center opened in 1994. Three of her quilts were included in last year’s quilt display.

One item Anna recently checked off of this year’s to-do list was getting her driver’s license renewed. Congratulations and best wishes, Anna!



L.E. Sommer & Sons in 2007 (below) and in days gone by (above). The buildings above, now just a small portion of the premises, were partially constructed of lumber from the dismantled second Sonnenberg Mennonite Church. 1907 also saw the construction of Sonnenberg’s third church.



Anna’s wedding photo with her first husband, Lloyd, in 1928; Anna at age 100.

Kidron Community Historical Society
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April 2007

Board Members

President Wayne Liechty
 VicePresident Paul Neuschwander
 Treasurer Richard Nussbaum
 Secretary Gloria Kaufmann
 Membership Chairperson Leora Gerber
 Board Members Fritz Sprunger, J. Augspurger
 Director Prudy Steiner
 Bit O'Vit Editor Kris Nussbaum

Membership Fees

Individual Annual Member \$ 1 5
 Husband and Wife Annual Member \$ 2 5
 Organization Annual Member \$ 3 5
 Individual Life Member \$ 2 5 0
 Heritage Club Member \$1000 or more

**Annual memberships are due every January.
 Thank You!**

The Kidron Community Historical Society of Kidron, Ohio, founded in 1977, operates under the nonprofit charter granted by the State of Ohio. Your tax deductible gifts will help secure the future of the Historical Society and give you a part in preserving the heritage of this unique community. A reminder will be sent when annual memberships become due each January.

Name _____
 Address _____

 Type of Membership _____
 General Donation _____

Send your check to: **Kidron Community Historical Society • Box 234 • Kidron, OH 44636 • Phone 330-857-9111**

Calendar of Events

Now–June 30

*Accepting craftspeople for participation in
 CommuniTree display.*

Call 330-857-9111 for information.

April 5, 2007

Heritage Center opens for 2007

April 24, 2007

*Annual Members Banquet and Auction
 Display Grand Opening*

April 28, 2007

*OMIII/SAGA annual genealogy meeting
 at Arcola, Illinois*

**Kidron-Sonnenberg
 Heritage Center**

13153 Emerson Road • Kidron, Ohio

HOURS

APRIL–MAY, OCTOBER–DECEMBER

Thursday and Saturday

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

CLOSED JANUARY, FEBRUARY and MARCH

JUNE–SEPTEMBER

Thursday, Friday and Saturday

11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Call 330-857-9111

for group tours or special arrangements