



The Kidron Community Historical Society Newsletter

Sonnenberg Village: Where past and future meet

The vision began with half-serious wishes of “wouldn’t it be nice if we could . . .” and slowly burgeoned into a bold plan for the tiny town of Kidron and the members of the Kidron Community Historical Society. Preserving entire buildings from Kidron’s past is no longer wishful thinking.

KCHS president Wayne Liechty and Ray Leisy, a member and active supporter of KCHS, along with Bill O’Brien of the Cuyahoga Valley Historic Railroad, unveiled the plan to make the community’s preservation dreams come true at the society’s annual members banquet in April.

The story is simple. The society already has or has recently been offered eight buildings of importance to the history of the Sonnenberg area. These buildings include the Floyd Saurer blacksmith shop and its contents, the Glenn Gerber barn, the Leah Lehman house, the Tschantz log house, the Sonnenberg one-room

schoolhouse, the third Sonnenberg Church, a wagon shed and one or more buildings that have been dismantled and are being stored. The KCHS board of trustees asked themselves, “Now what?”

Liechty, Leisy and O’Brien advised the trustees that the best way to handle the situation would be to find some land in close proximity to the area and place all of the buildings on that land instead of attempting to preserve them in their original locations. And “Sonnenberg Village” was born.

The Leonard Geiser family graciously donated two acres with frontage on Hackett Road and are permitting the society to purchase three adjoining acres that are adjacent to land owned by Central Christian School. The KCHS board proposes to relocate all the buildings to that site and build a few additional structures to complement the “Sonnenberg Village.”

A workable plan exists for the first buildings to be moved in June, 2008.



Sonnenberg School is one of several buildings that will become part of the new Sonnenberg Village.

All buildings will be built, or rebuilt, “green.” That is, they will use the most modern, energy-efficient construction and plan to develop some of their own power sources. Eventually some of

See Sonnenberg page 2



The faded word “Blacksmith” on the sign above signals the urgent need for restoration.

Frakturs bring the community together

Locals and visitors alike are experiencing the rich tradition of fraktur at the Kidron-Sonnenberg Heritage Center’s 2007 annual display, *Celebrations and Memories: Fraktur’s Impact on Sonnenberg.*

The display runs through December 2007 and can be visited during regular hours or by special arrangement.



Annual Members Banquet presents challenge, generates excitement

The eleventh annual KCHS Members Banquet was held on April 24 at the Kidron Mennonite Church Fellowship Building.

Following a welcome by society president Wayne Liechty and a prayer by KCHS member and volunteer, retired pastor Eldon King, the 250 members present enjoyed a delicious meal.

The program opened with recognition of 47 volunteers who had donated more than 10 hours of time in 2006. Paul Neuenschwander, who both volunteers and serves on the Board of Trustees, was recognized for his active work for the 30 years that the KCHS has existed. The auction which followed was conducted by auctioneer Joseph Mast and generated more than \$1,300 for the KCHS general fund.

The 2007 display, *Celebrations and Memories: Fraktur's Impact on Sonnenberg*, was introduced and a message from Leanna Packard, the OSU student who designed the display, was read by her father. Packard was unable to attend due to final exams. At the conclusion of the banquet, members were invited to the Heritage Center for the display's grand opening.

Sonnenberg continued

the buildings will be "rented" to artisans who will operate businesses compatible with our history.

In order for this project to be successful, your help is needed now in the form of donations of cash or pledges. This money in hand can be used as the matching funds required by granting foundations and government programs to whom KCHS has applied. You can be assured that any money donated will be at least doubled by these grants.

Later we will need volunteers to help with construction, particularly volunteers with equipment.

Since the project was announced to the public, KCHS trustees have been approached by more building owners

The remainder of the program was devoted to a presentation titled "The History of Sonnenberg, Part II." The presentation opened with a video of local buildings that are historical treasures, residents discussing the dream of preserving these buildings and the Neuenschwander brothers singing together in Swiss. (To order a copy of this video in either DVD or VHS format, please see the order form on page 3.)

Following the video, a live presentation announced the beginning of an ambitious preservation project titled "Sonnenberg Village" involving KCHS and the surrounding community. (For more details, see the article on page 1.)

The KCHS Board of Trustees wishes to thank the volunteers who worked to make the banquet proceed smoothly and the local businesses who sponsored the meal.



Wayne Liechty and Joseph Mast encouraging bidding on Anna Sommer Amstutz's crocheted Doily.

with donations of other interesting pieces of our heritage. Ray Leisy met with Central Christian School students and faculty who will assist in and be a part of the continuing educational outreach of this project. KCHS has also been approached by artisans who would like to rent one of the buildings for projects and sales.

Please support this project by completing the donation form included with this newsletter. If we do not do this now, this part of our heritage will be lost forever as many of the buildings are in serious need of repair or they will disintegrate before our eyes. This is something we need to do for those who came before and those who will come after us.

Thank you, banquet sponsors!

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Vibrant Health Enterprises Ltd.
Village Antique Mall
Village Printing
Weaver Custom Homes
Weyrauch's Pharmacy

This project will not outgrow the endowment fund's ability to maintain the basic expenses of the Village project. Also, this project will in no way take the place of the Kidron-Sonnenberg Heritage Center. It will continue to function as it has for the past 13 years.



The Leah Lehman house will be a beautiful part of Sonnenberg Village.

KCHS in the national spotlight

The history of our early Sonnenberg community and the collections of the Kidron-Sonnenberg Heritage Center will be featured in a nationally prominent magazine later this year. *Early American Life*, a publication devoted to history, architecture and period furnishings for about 35 years, will focus on the Swiss community and its outstanding array of decorative arts in its October edition, due out sometime in September.

The article was written by Paul Locher of Wooster, a reporter for The Daily Record since 1973. Locher has had an ongoing involvement in and relationship with the Heritage Center and the Kidron Community Historical Society. Locher approached *Early American Life* with a proposal for an article about Sonnenberg nearly two years ago. Early in June he was given

the go-ahead to prepare the story. Just recently the magazine sent photographer Winfield Ross to the museum and throughout the surrounding countryside for an entire day of photographing items in the collection, as well as buildings that will eventually be moved to the new Sonnenberg Village. The village project will be detailed in a sidebar story, separate from the main article.

Locher says he believes the *Early American Life* article will give the Heritage Center and its collections long-overdue national exposure and increase visitation at the museum. For those who do not subscribe to *Early American Life*, the Heritage Center plans to obtain a limited supply of extra copies for purchase in the gift shop.

CommuniTree Update

Back in the October 2006 issue of this newsletter, the CommuniTree project was introduced. Nine months later we still need more people to participate in this creative idea. We need artists and craftspeople willing to make something from wood we supply for CommuniTree. Please contact Prudy or Wayne at 330-857-9111. We have the wood, now we need you. Time is running short. We need your help with this project of which you will enjoy being a part.



Thanks to our April, May and June Volunteers

George Breneman
Grace Bytheway
Esther Falb
George Falb
Priscilla Falb
Nancy Ganyard
Anna Gehman
John Gehman
Don Geiser
Em Geiser

Glenford Gerber
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Carolyn Haas
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Joan Martin
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Don Miller
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Bernice Nussbaum
Bessie Nussbaum
Delvin Nussbaum
Heinz Peter

Rosa Peter
Fritz Sprunger
Janet Sprunger
Bud Steiner
Jean Steiner
Walter Steiner
Cindy Strubbe
Sandi Suttle
Meg Wilkins
Carol Yoder

DVD / VHS Order Form

QTY

_____ Sonnenberg Village DVD (shown at the members banquet)

_____ Sonnenberg Village VHS

_____ Neuenschwander DVD (the four brothers as featured in the
Sonnenberg Village video plus additional footage)

_____ Neuenschwander VHS

_____ X \$10 = \$ _____

Clip, fill out and send this form with payment to:
KCHS, P.O. Box 234, Kidron, Ohio 44636

Welcome New Annual, Lifetime and Heritage Club Members

Ron & Joanne Amstutz-Wooster
Randy & Linda Geiser-Burbank
Ron Martin-West Lafayette
David & Eldina Nussbaum-Orrville

Forgot to renew your
annual membership?
No problem! Renew now!

Kidron Community Historical Society
P.O. Box 234
Kidron, Ohio 44636

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July 2007



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 Membership Chairperson Leora Gerber
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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!**

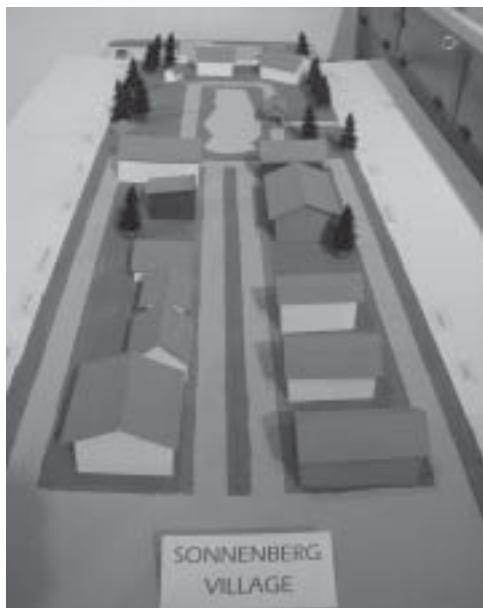
The Kidron Community Historical Society of Kidron, Ohio, founded in 1977, operates under the nonprofit charter granted by the State of Ohio. Your tax deductible gifts will help secure the future of the Historical Society and give you a part in preserving the heritage of this unique community. A reminder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

A diorama of the proposed Sonnenberg Village. For details on this project, see the story on page 1.



**Kidron-Sonnenberg
 Heritage Center**

13153 Emerson Road • Kidron, Ohio

HOURS

JUNE-SEPTEMBER

Thursday, Friday and Saturday
 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

APRIL-MAY, OCTOBER-DECEMBER

Thursday and Saturday
 11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

CLOSED JANUARY, FEBRUARY and MARCH

**Call 330-857-9111
 for group tours or special arrangements**