



Volume 20

January 2008

Issue 1

## The Kidron Community Historical Society Newsletter

### Upcoming events: annual meeting, Members Banquet, display opening

Mark your calendars for these exciting events in the life of KCHS. First is the annual meeting on February 26 at 7 p.m. at the Heritage Center. Ray Leisy will speak on the topic, "Broken Banks of Wayne County, 1815-1863." This is also the title of Leisy's recent book.



The 2008 Members Banquet will be held on Tuesday, April 29 at 6:30 p.m. in the Kidron Mennonite Church Fellowship Building. It will be followed by a program, auction and grand opening of the CommuniTree display.

The CommuniTree display will be open for visitors starting on April 3. The exhibit will celebrate the past and present of our local tradition of excellent woodworking. The exhibit was inspired by the felling of many old area trees during the storm of June, 2006. Some of the trees lost during the storm have been saved and sawn into lumber which has been given to a number of woodworkers. These artisans are making different types of wood items for display.

The newly made items are being donated to the Society and will be auctioned at the annual members banquet in 2009. All proceeds will be placed in the endowment fund, thus perpetuating the life of these trees. Also in the display will be some wood items from our collection including a curly maple secretary along with a variety of wood items not previously displayed.

### Sonnenberg Village prep continues

Work at the Sonnenberg Village site is projected to begin in the summer of 2008. The land has been surveyed and deeds are being prepared. Meanwhile, Central Christian High School students have been in consultation with the Division of Soil and Water for the proposed pond and wetlands and will complete the grant application process in January.

This month's featured Sonnenberg Village building is the Tschantz House. Around 1821, John and Anna Tschantz and their son Abraham and his wife, also named Anna, arrived in Sonnenberg. By 1824 they had built their own house which is still standing.

Abraham and Anna remained in the house throughout their lives and raised five children there: John, Abraham, Elizabeth, Peter and Anna. The house has remained on the same site upon which it was built, but eventually passed, along with the farm, outside the family.

Leonard and Nada Geiser, owners of the farm where the house stands, contacted the Kidron Community Historical Society and offered to donate the house to the Society provided it was moved. They also offered a small parcel of land on Hackett Road upon which to

*see Sonnenberg page 3*

### Neuenschwander retires from KCHS service

Saying goodbye to a friend is never easy; saying farewell to one of the movers and shakers in a small non-profit is an even bigger challenge.

Paul Neuenschwander, one of KCHS's founders and its first board

*see Neuenschwander page 2*



Paul Neuenschwander with great-grandchildren Henry Hochstetler Wyse and Lillian Ann Monger at Christmas.

#### Special Sonnenberg Village Meeting

We are having a "Sharing the Dream" meeting of all the project members on Saturday, January 26, beginning at 9:00 a.m. at the Heritage Center. If you are interested in hearing about the progress or becoming involved with the Village project, this would be your chance to participate. Please join us.

*Neuenschwander continued*

president, is no longer able to be actively involved in its operation due to health reasons.

An avid interest in history and an ability to remember details and relationships are two of the assets Paul has brought to his work at KCHS. Board member Fritz Sprunger says, "Paul was often kidded as the 'old guy.' But it was precisely because of his age, experience, and keen memory that he was able to bring a unique perspective."

KCHS Executive Director Prudy Steiner notes, "Paul grew up with my mother. They were first cousins. Since my mother's passing, Paul has taken time to tell me interesting stories about her and the olden days. He can make the past come alive."

Paul's daughter Shirley Hochstetler says, "Dad protected the past because it helped him understand the present. Even though recalling the past may bring painful memories along with the pleasant ones, Dad has a way of putting it all in perspective and still finds a way to add a little humor to pain."

His abilities to speak Swiss and converse with just about anyone have made him an invaluable tour guide and resource. Board member and volunteer Leora Gerber said, "Paul is a great historian and loves telling stories about the early days of Kidron. He enjoys conversing in Swiss whether it be on the phone to friends and relatives in Switzerland or to those here who could still speak the language." He was also called upon as a tour guide by Swiss visitors who counted on him for not only an historical tour, but also a rousing exploration relationships and the Swiss language.

KCHS President Wayne Liechty

says, "When we were building our museum, we needed state approval for everything. Paul had all the needed drawings, structural and mechanical, drawn, which was a big job done under time constraints. Paul called me one evening to say he would be leaving for Columbus early the next morning to walk the drawings through the approval process rather than send them and wait. He was going to get as much approved as he could and deal with the rest. That next evening at about 10:00 he called. I could tell he was very tired. He told me how he went from agency to agency. Then, when he couldn't hold it anymore, he told me that he had gotten them all approved. He did that in one day and I learned later that it just doesn't happen that way. That's our Paul."

Other KCHS projects credited to Paul include the creation of the Heritage Center's Swiss facade, preserving the Pioneer Cemetery, collecting the original photos to reprint *Sonnenberg: A Haven and A Heritage*, appearing in several videos to display his Swiss-language skills in story-telling and song, and producing a tour guidebook on short demand for a large tour group descending on the area.

The Apostolic Christian Home near Rittman is currently Paul's residence, but, as Shirley reminds us, "he still enjoys visitors, especially those that can sing! His long-term memory is amazing, but his short-term memory lets him down many times, and he struggles to keep the days straight."

Paul has been a source of vision for growth and been the "go-to guy" for getting things done. His undertakings have often been on a scale few have dared to imagine. KCHS will certainly miss his creativity and drive.

## Welcome New Annual, Lifetime and Heritage Club Members

Glenn D. and Mary Amstutz—  
Silverthorne, Colo.

Steve and Vicki Andrea—Wooster  
Barbara Dorr—Lansing, Mich.

Al and Mary Hostetler—Dalton  
Delbert and Connie Lehman—Dalton  
Ellen Sprunger—Orrville

January is  
membership  
renewal month.  
It's also a great  
time to start a new  
membership!

## The gift of a lifetime

KCHS was recently the grateful recipient of a gift from the estate of Vera Jeanne (Nussbaum) Keil.

Vera Jeanne lived most of her life in Kidron and was a KCHS member, volunteer and former board member.

Estate gifts are a treasured way of giving to KCHS. Not only does it allow our supporters to give one last gift, but it also reminds us all how valuable and important this organization is to our community. Contact us at 330-857-9111 if you would like to know more about including KCHS in your estate plans.

## Passing on

KCHS received word of the passing of Ralph Cornell, the oldest known former Kidron area resident who was featured in the Bit o' Vit a year ago, at the age of 103. He died in Massillon, March 15, 2007, two days after his 104<sup>th</sup> birthday. The serendipitous discovery of Ralph and the opportunity to meet and spend some time hearing his memories of Kidron was a treasure.

### New for annual members

The year that is printed on your address label is the first year for which dues are owed for your membership. If 2008 (or an even earlier date) appears, we had not received your 2008 dues as of the time of mailing. We hope this will assist in keeping track of when you need to renew. Please let us know if you have questions.



## Lifestyles of the Anabaptists

**Kidron Korner**

by Celia Lehman

A while back, my aunt Frieda Amstutz handed me an article found in the July 2006 issue of *Mennonite Quarterly Review* titled "A Different World: Childhood Experiences with the Swiss Anabaptists" and written by Dietrich Schwanitz. She said with a knowing smile, "I just relived my childhood days in Kidron by reading this."

The article, which describes the lifestyle our forefathers lived back in the Bernese Jura and emulated when they came to America, is available to read at the Heritage Center. It details both the good and not-so-good practices the author observed over the years he lived with them.

Schwanitz, a German professor, was a World War II orphan who was taken to live in the home of Jacob and Louise Amstutz in the Belleley region of Switzerland in 1947. The Anabaptists were dairy farmers and horse breeders. Jacob owned cows and goats and a horse-drawn vehicle, no car or truck. It was the newly-acquired son's duty to watch his herds. "Time passed slowly. That's when you learn to observe how the earth breathes, how the bugs crawl, and how the rain rains." But over the years, this city boy learned to love the lifestyle of someone "who wasn't afraid of anything. They lived in complete harmony with themselves and resided at the center of truth."

The family lived as the Patriarchs in the Old Testament. There were large families, the large animal herds, and the ongoing conversations with God. Before any meal, there was prayer and after each meal, readings from the calendar and the Bible.

The family lived in an isolated Swiss community that worked together with the author noting in retrospect, "Its inhabitants . . . seemed to me spiritually more solid and, above all, morally incomparably superior. . . . I, too, was a victim of their severity, the inflexible patriarchal attitude, the ascetic work ethic and the lack of feeling for a child's world of experience. . . . The celebration of Christmas and Easter were considered pagan and emotional problems were ignored."

At age 14, the author had a conversion experience and became an Anabaptist. If given the choice at the end of the war, he would have remained with the family and inherited the farm, but he was returned to Germany. When his children ask about his childhood, he says, "I tell them about a world that will never let anyone go who has once been a part of it."

*Sonnenberg continued*

relocate the house. It was this gift that became the seed of Sonnenberg Village.

Project Director Ray Leisy and Board President Wayne Leichty contacted Vic and Peter Schantz and Dave Tschantz, direct descendants of Abraham Tschantz. These three men have agreed to create a family group to preserve the Tschantz House.

The house is in poor condition but the project is possible since Peter Schantz has training in log construction. It is hoped that the family can continue their project in the year 2008, but since it is independent of other construction projects, the family may move at a different pace than the rest of the Sonnenberg Village project. We are very fortunate that we have Tschantz (Schantz) family members in the area who wish to preserve their family heritage.



The Tschantz House is waiting patiently to be lovingly dismantled and accurately restored at its new location.

### Thanks to our October, November and December Volunteers

Anna Sommer Amstutz  
Esther Falb  
George Falb  
Nancy Ganyard  
Anna Gehman  
John Gehman  
Glenford Gerber  
Leora Gerber  
Melva Gerber  
Ann Groh

Glen Groh  
Carolyn Haas  
Carol Haven  
Gail Johnson  
Eldon King  
Eileen Lehman  
John Lehman  
Shirley Lehman  
Bill Moser  
Richard Moser

Clarence  
Neuenschwander  
Bernice Nussbaum  
Bessie Nussbaum  
Delvin Nussbaum  
Heinz Peter  
Rosa Peter  
Ella Rohrer  
Janet Sprunger  
Bud Steiner

Jean Steiner  
Clayton Steiner  
Walter Steiner  
Cindy Strubbe  
Sandi Suttle  
Meg Wilkins  
Carol Yoder

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

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January 2008



**Board Members**

President ..... Wayne Liechty  
 Vice President ..... 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*

**Upcoming Events**

**Saturday, January 26**

9 a.m. at the Heritage Center  
 "Sharing the Dream" meeting

**Tuesday, February 26**

7 p.m. at the Heritage Center  
 Annual meeting and presentation by Ray Leisy

**Thursday, April 3**

Heritage Center opens

**Tuesday, April 29**

6:30 p.m. at Kidron Mennonite Fellowship Building  
 Members Banquet, Auction and Grand Opening of display

**Kidron-Sonnenberg  
 Heritage Center**

13153 Emerson Road • Kidron, Ohio

**HOURS**

*CLOSED JANUARY, FEBRUARY and MARCH*

**APRIL–MAY, OCTOBER–DECEMBER**

Thursday and Saturday

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

**JUNE–SEPTEMBER**

Thursday, Friday and Saturday

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

**Call 330-857-9111**

**for group tours or special arrangements**