



## Sonnenberg Church Moving to Sonnenberg Village



The 106-year-old Sonnenberg Church was pulled over the cribbing and planking, and across Hackett Road on a cold but partly sunny April morning. By noon, the church was positioned in the Sonnenberg Mennonite Church parking lot, ready to continue its journey westward through the woods, across the fields and to its permanent position in Sonnenberg Village where the structure will serve as the village's welcome center.

2013 Heritage Center Exhibit

## Sonnenberg: The Early Years

In 1819 a group of Swiss Mennonites traveled from the Sonnenberg Valley of Switzerland to Wayne County, Ohio. Although the 200th celebration of their immigration is six years away, the 2013 Heritage Center exhibit focuses on the early years in the Sonnenberg-Kidron region and features many original items from the early Swiss settlers, including some items from private collections.

A replication of rooms in the Lehman House and the Tschantz Cabin includes furnishings which will be displayed in those buildings at Sonnenberg Village.

The exhibit opens immediately following the annual members banquet, and will be open during regular Heritage Center hours or by appointment.

### Annual Meeting

## Once Upon a Time in Wayne County ...

Paul Locher, author of *When Wayne County Was a Whippersnapper*, told 50 guests at the annual KCHS meeting of how, once upon a time, people in Wayne County considered it bad manners to broach the subject of money, and frugality was a rewarding challenge; farm kids knew the ways the moon affected their lives, and appreciated the trees that provided lumber, food and protection; were ever thankful, and when the door was latched for the night, they paused to thank God for the blessings of another day.

Once upon a time "plow Monday," the first Monday after January 12, was the day when preparation began for another planting, and the first Sunday in August was a day of thanks for the harvest; people

in Wayne County were more godly and the church was a center for worship and community events.

Once upon a time burial grounds were next to the church, death was considered part of life, and graveyards were places of reverence.

While we can't capture 1812, we can recognize that the past is an important part of our present, and our heritage is now our responsibility to preserve for the future.

In the business meeting, the secretary and treasurer gave their reports, Wayne Liechty and Glenn Gerber were approved to continue on the board for another three years, and Ray Leisy commended the volunteers who have worked tirelessly on the Sonnenberg Village project.



Wayne Liechty presented Esther and Lloyd Lehman with a photo of the Lehman House set in an original Lehman House window frame. The Lehman House is in the process of being restored at Sonnenberg Village.

## From the Director's Desk



Can it get to the place that saying "thank you," a phrase that our parents taught us was important to say at an early age, becomes hollow, over-used, an empty statement? I truly hope not since I spend a considerable amount of time writing thank-you letters and cards, calling people to thank them for a donated item or service, and consistently telling our visitors "thanks for stopping."

And here I am again taking up valuable space in our newsletter for the sole purpose of conveying our overwhelming thankfulness for your very generous response to our year-end letter.

We are very fortunate to have so many wonderful members and friends who continue to show their support of the work being done by the Kidron Community Historical Society to preserve the history of this area. We covet your continuing support and again I say, "Thank you."

Prudy Steiner, Heritage Center director

### New Annual Members

Billie Blosser, Erie PA

Jim & Belinda Holzaepfel, Orrville OH

### Visitors Coming

Sonnenberg Village and the Heritage Center will be two of many stops on April 30 for a group of 24 visitors from Switzerland.

### Upcoming Events

**April 12, 13**

**Annual SAGA meeting, Metamora IL**

[www.saga-omii.org/meetings.htm](http://www.saga-omii.org/meetings.htm)

**Tuesday, April 23 – 6:30**

**Annual Members Banquet**

*Invitations mailed to current members*

**April 25 – December 28**

**2013 Exhibit**

**Sonnenberg: The Early Years**

## Members Banquet and Auction April 23

As has been the tradition at the annual members banquet, there will be an auction of items unique to the Kidron-Sonnenberg community. Items slated for this year include two pieces of Jim Spires pottery, a wooden bowl by Glenford Gerber, a wreath by Allyson Leisy, a pottery piece by Nicole Myers, a gift basket from Pioneer Farm, a carved wooden bowl by Tim Shue, a jeans blanket and pillows by Judy Amstutz, heirloom garden plants from Karen Geiser, an intarsia piece by Bob Romey, a Lynn Sommer fraktur (see photo) and a Wade Wilcox print.



Annual members of the KCHS who have paid their dues for 2013, Lifetime and Heritage Club members should have received invitations in the mail. If you are a member and did not receive an invite, call 330-857-9111. The banquet will be held at 6:30 on Tuesday evening, April 23 at the Kidron Mennonite Church Fellowship Hall.

## Boone's School Reunion DVD

A DVD has been released of the Boone's School Reunion held at the Heritage Center in the fall of 2012. Jim Bixler has edited over four hours of footage (including interviews) down to 50 minutes, presenting a compact but comprehensive overview of the event attended by more than 70 people.

Available for only \$5 (plus postage if required), the DVD comes in a plastic case with a picture of Boone's School on the cover, and about 15 different speakers listed in order on the back to make it easier to identify who is talking.

Contact Prudy Steiner, Heritage Center director, for your copy, and be among those enjoying some of the highlights of the fun time for those who attended the reunion.

## Taufer Travel Trunk

*Taufer: A Swiss term for Swiss Brethren known today as Mennonites or Anabaptists.*

Interested in Swiss Mennonite history? Planning a trip to Switzerland? In either case, the Taufer Travel Trunk may capture your interest. The trunk contains over 45 items pertaining to Swiss Mennonites, including books and booklets, CDs and DVDs, periodicals (e.g., Mennonite Family History) and travel/tour information.

Some of the topics dealt with are a recent history, in English, of the Bernese Anabaptists, an account of emigration to America, martyrs in the past, and lots of useful material on the Reconciliation Conferences (dialogue of Reformed and Catholic churches with Anabaptists) of the past decade.

There are excellent guidebooks for walking tours in urban centers like Zurich and Berne and hiking to ten important Anabaptist and Reformed sites in more rural areas.

If you like music, there are CDs/DVDs featuring family groups or larger church choirs, and the alpenhorn. Some material deals with Swiss specialties like chocolate and cheese. If novels are your thing, there are several to peruse. A few resources are in German for those who can handle the language.

The materials in the Taufer Trunk were put together by Joanne Hess Siegrist, the visionary coordinator for the project. Besides Kidron, a Travel Trunk is located in Lancaster, Pa., and another in Harrisonburg, Va.

This is a great opportunity to avail yourself of the material, especially in preparation for a trip. Any or all of these items are available on loan. Please contact Prudy Steiner at the Heritage Center for more details on sign-out of items.



**Kidron Korner**  
by Celia Lehman

# Sonnenberg Church: The Focal Point of the Community

Twenty-seven Swiss pioneers immigrated to Ohio in 1819 and founded the Sonnenberg community in southeastern Wayne County. They came from Sonnenberg in the Jura Mountains in Canton Berne, seeking economic betterment and escaping from religious pressures. These Mennonites were a people whose life had deep religious significance, and they wished to maintain the historic faith. They survived by helping each other, sharing problems and joys, and serving God the best they knew.

At first they worshipped at home, but with the second migration came John Lehman, an ordained bishop. Now an official was present to establish congregational life. He organized the first Sonnenberg Church in the fall of 1821.

There were more migrations and the congregation became too large to meet in their modest homes. The first building, a 30'x30' log structure, also used as a school, was built in 1834. By 1860 the community had grown to 300 including the children, thus a larger church was needed. Much growth has continued since then and so have the churches.



First church built in 1834



Second church built in 1862



Third Sonnenberg Church built in 1907



Fourth and current Sonnenberg Mennonite Church built in 1989

## Offshoots

Due to changes in how people thought the church should function, several new churches started in the area. The Salem Mennonite Church was established in 1886, the Kidron Tabernacle in 1919, the Kidron Mennonite Church in 1936 and the Bethel Mennonite Church in 1953. A few house churches were also started in the community.



Salem Mennonite Church 1886



Kidron Tabernacle 1919



Kidron Mennonite Church 1936



Bethel Mennonite Church 1953

## The Focal Point In the Community

The church was the central focus for the community. Though isolated from the world, here dwelt a prevailing benevolent spirit where neighbors helped one another—they remembered the widows and poor and worked together in unity (most of the time).

They met to worship together on Sundays; had catechism classes, baptismal services, and marriages; celebrated births; held funerals; and worshipped at German hymn sings. Later came choirs, Sunday school, boys and girls clubs, youth activities, prayer meetings, women's sewing groups, married people's fellowship and revival meetings.

Over the years the congregations have moved from an authoritarian style ministry to more democratically oriented ministries. There is less emphasis on outward form but the inward spirit still upholds the Anabaptist traditional practices which prioritize Christ-centered living.

*Basic information obtained from Sonnenberg: A Haven and A Heritage by James O. Lehman, published in 1969*

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SPRING 2013



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**Membership Fees**

Individual Annual Member ..... \$15  
 Husband and Wife Annual Member..... \$25  
 Organization Annual Member..... \$35  
 Individual Life Member ..... \$250  
 Heritage Club Member .....\$1000 or more

**Annual memberships are due in January.**

Membership expiration information is on your mailing label.

**Thank You!**

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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.

Send checks to **Kidron Community Historical Society • Box 234 • Kidron, OH 44636**

**Kidron-Sonnenberg  
 Heritage Center**

13153 Emerson Road • Kidron, Ohio

**JUNE – AUGUST**

**APRIL – MAY**

**SEPTEMBER – DECEMBER**

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

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**