

Swiss German Speakers

## How Do You Say It in Swiss?



**Dr. Mike Putnam listens to Tilman Neuenschwander and Louis Lehman tell of Christmas memories, speaking in the Swiss-German dialect they learned as children.**

The stories were understood by the handful of local folks who still know the Swiss-German dialect as learned in their homes many years ago. Dr. Michael Putnam, Associate Professor of German and Linguistics at Penn State University, led the Swiss-German conversations at Sonnenberg Village. Acknowledging that the local use of the language brought to the area by their Swiss ancestors in the 1800s is fast becoming rare, Putnam urged the 50 guests to regularly speak Swiss-German and teach the language to their children and grandchildren. The Swiss-German dialect was the first language for many of those who listened, tried their rusty conversational skill or still speak fluently to their neighbors.

Kidronite Til Neuenschwander paired with Louis Amstutz, who grew up in Kidron and has been a long-time resident of Albany, Oregon, to tell Putnam about their childhood memories of Christmas. Looking at a picture book without words, Til consulted with Glenn Neuenschwander and Jesse Steiner in telling the story as they saw it. Clarence Neuenschwander told the story of the Three Little Pigs and led the audience in singing “Gott ist die Liebe” and the traditional “Neujahrslied” (The New Year Song) in the Swiss-German dialect.

Putnam and his Penn State colleagues will use what they are able to learn from the Kidron area folk in their research on the Swiss-German dialect. They plan another visit next spring to continue their study of what Putnam considers an important cultural treasure.

## Bixler House Reunion and Dedication



**James, June and John Bixler in conversation with their nephew, Jerry Bixler.**

A birthday party for John D. Bixler was held at Sonnenberg Village on August 9, the day of his 150th birthday. The evening included presentations by Wayne Liechty and Ray Leisy on the history of the KCHS and Sonnenberg Village, and how the Bixler House became available to the KCHS. Clair Bixler, John D.’s great-grandson, talked about the family’s history and funding for the Bixler House. Memories were shared before Carl Wiebe, current pastor of the Kidron Mennonite Church, led the dedication and prayer.

The Bixler House was located on Emerson Road east of Kidron behind the Sommer Fruit Farm. William Elliot bought the land from David Ocher in 1830. John D. Bixler bought 40 acres and the house from John J. Bixler in 1914; he sold the farm to Levi S. Swartzentruber in 1940.

A group from The College of Wooster tested the logs of the house using the science of dendrochronology to determine when the Bixler House was built. After taking numerous samples and testing, they determined that the structure was likely built the year following the logs’ cut date, in 1832. The core samples and tree-ring data are archived at the Wooster Tree Ring Lab, housed in the Department of Geology, The College of Wooster.

## Who Beats in Beets



Ivan Weaver planted two rows of Lutz beet seeds in his Kidron area garden and brought more than two dozen beets to the festival.

Helped by the weather, this year's Beet Festival drew the largest crowd in the nine-year history of the event. It was possible to predict that possibility with the favorable weather forecast and the fact that the Kidron Historical Society/Sonnenberg Village website had more than 1,000 visits the week before, most to the Beet Festival announcement and to the map directions page.

The crowds were steady throughout the early part of the event and the food vendors were pleased, some selling out by the end of the day. There were many cars in the parking lots from out of the county and many people visited the Sonnenberg Village buildings, open this year for the first time during the Beet Festival.

Festival organizer Keith Schloneger provided packets of heirloom Lutz beet seeds for gardeners hoping to grow the hearty deep purple vegetable into specimens worthy of entering the Beet Festival contest next fall.

Beets were boiled, pickled, roasted, baked and juiced for sampling and entering in the prepared food contest.

All contest entries were judged by Certified Chef de Cuisine Deb Geiser of the Quince Bakery and Café on the square in Kidron and Rita Shisler, owner of Shisler's Cheese House at the intersection of Route 30 and the Kidron Road.

## Sonnenberg Homecoming

# Coming Home to Music



Six Ohio Beauty reed organs produced by Abraham Tschantz (1821-1921) were played by Jeff Herr, Ann Tschantz, Norma Trotter, Kerry Bunn, Lila Smucker and Neil Jackson in the old Sonnenberg Church at Sonnenberg Village. The organs are currently in possession of the Schantz Organ Company of Orrville, Kidron Historical Society (2), Smithville Historical Society, Chester Gable and Rob Gregory.

Beloved hymns "Amazing Grace," "America the Beautiful," and "How Great Thou Art" were heard through the church windows at the Sonnenberg Homecoming as organists played the six Tschantz Ohio Beauty reed organs while the delighted audience sang along. Vic Schantz, president of the Schantz Organ Company, explained the history of the Tschantz organ and how a flow of air produced from bellows pumped by foot pedals across metal reeds causes the reeds to vibrate in melodic tones.

At the top of each hour local organists Ann Tschantz, Lila Smucker, Norma Trotter, Phyllis Lehman, Barbara Steiner and Louise Hersberger joined Schantz Organ Company employees Kerry Bunn, Jeff Herr and Neil Jackson in playing old-time favorites as duets, trios and even sextets on the reed organs neatly arranged in a semicircle on the stage of the Welcome Center. Ninety-year-old Bob Morrison, one of Stark county's legendary church musicians, also joined in the fun by playing his version of "Camptown Races."

Sonnenberg Village guests toured the Saurer Blacksmith Shop, the Lehman House and the Tschantz Cabin and observed Rob Gregory's fascinating band organ. Sonnenberg Mennonite Church women ran a well-stocked lunch stand, including homemade pie to go with Schloneger's homemade ice cream and the ever-delicious Kettle Corn. When the final striker was dead in the Kidron Nine versus Smithville Stars vintage baseball game, the Kidron Nine had tallied 11 runs and the Smithville Stars, well, not enough.

An idyllic day at the ninth annual Sonnenberg Village Homecoming came to a conclusion with sweet memories of parlor organ music and the crack of leather balls meeting wooden bats ringing in our ears.

*A video of Vic Schantz's presentation and all six Tschantz Ohio Beauty reed organs being played simultaneously can be found at <https://youtu.be/BCvvtSHRTWk> or the link on our website: <http://www.kidronhistoricalsociety.org>.*

### BEET CONTEST WINNERS

- Largest Lutz Beet: Betty Weaver (16 pounds), Kidron
- Largest Organic Lutz Beet: Ivan Weaver (10 pounds), Kidron
- Most Luscious Lutz Beet: Betty Weaver
- Best Heirloom Beet: Bulls Blood, Allyson Leisy, Wooster

### PREPARED FOOD CONTEST WINNERS

- Best Appetizer: Betty Weaver
- Best Salad: Bobbie Ballentine, New Philadelphia
- Best Dessert: Ben Ballentine, New Philadelphia



Samar and Mike Salvino picked up a packet of seeds at the Beet Festival last fall and brought their entry all the way from Louisville.

# Geiser Genealogical Library



Construction for a genealogical library began in August. The underground location will house Roger Geiser's extensive collection of genealogical books and records along with the current collection held at the Heritage Center.

## Upcoming Events

November 26

"Crossroads of Jericho" Heritage Center exhibit ends

February, March, April, May, 2017  
Sonnenberg Village Performance Series

Based on the success of the first performance series, contracts have been secured for four new performances February through May, 2017.

See enclosed brochure and the next *Bit o' Vit* for details.

## New Members

Tim Hauenstein  
Leipsic OH

Keith and Marcia  
Steiner  
Hendersonville TN

Bob and Kathy  
Zahler  
Galloway OH

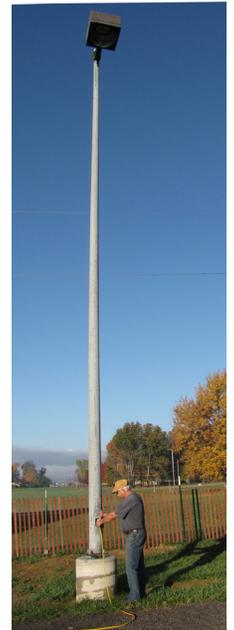
# Lights in the Parking Lot

The long-awaited lighting for the parking lot has been installed – a big step forward for Sonnenberg Village.

With a major lead grant from the Greater Wayne County Foundation matched by local donations, along with labor and four lights with poles donated by Gerber's Poultry, the parking lot is now lighted for evening functions at the village.

Trenching and wiring of the lights was managed by Kidron Electric. In the spring volunteers will fill in the trenches and seed the area.

The lights will be turned on only when needed so as not to waste electricity nor cause light pollution in a rural area.



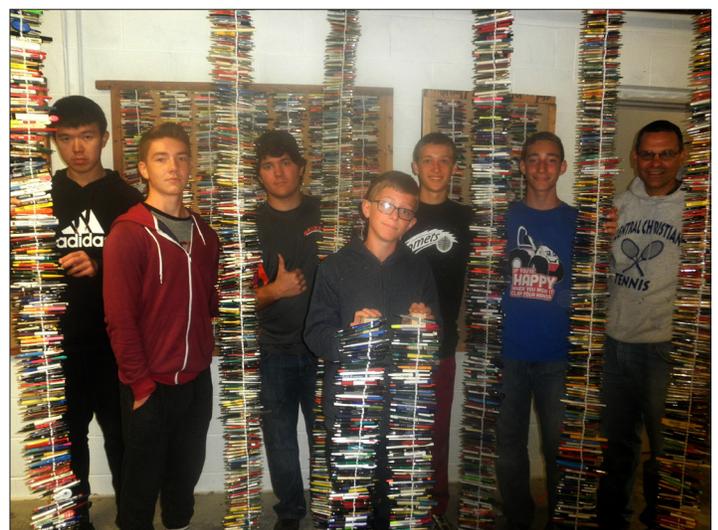
Mike Lehman connected the Sonnenberg Food Wagon to an outlet on one of the four light poles recently installed in the Sonnenberg Village parking lot.

# Students Help With Ongoing Projects

Six student volunteers from Central Christian School and their teacher, Bob Troyer, helped in the village for their Community Service Day. It rained the entire day, so most of the projects were inside. Four students helped Cliff Lehman in the basement of the Welcome Center to hang all of the boards with pens from Raymond Steiner's collection. Two students helped Dan Miller and Bob Miller build a stairway to the second floor of the Bixler House.

A student also worked with Bob Troyer to build a roof over the east emergency door of the Welcome Center. Because of the rain, that project went very slowly, but the mountings are finished; plans are for completion in the spring.

Ray Leisy was also working, mostly gathering materials for the work groups, and getting pizza for lunch, of course.



Central Christian School Community Service Day students Sky Mao, Branton Shepler, Chase Baker, Joshua Laird, Gage Haven, Brandon Swartz and teacher Bob Troyer with Raymond Steiner's impressive collection of pens.

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FALL 2016



**Kidron-Sonnenberg Heritage Center**  
 13153 Emerson Road • Kidron, Ohio

**OPEN APRIL through NOVEMBER • THURSDAY and SATURDAY • 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**  
**CLOSED DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY and MARCH**

**The Heritage Center is closed December through March but welcomes appointments for tours and to visit the museum or Sonnenberg Village.**  
**Call and leave a message at 330-857-9111 for information or to schedule an appointment.**

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.

**Administration**

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**Kidron Community Historical Society Membership**

*Annual memberships are due in January. Membership expiration information is on your mailing label.*

Name _____	Individual Annual Member .....	\$15
Address _____	Husband and Wife Annual Member.....	\$25
_____	Organization Annual Member.....	\$35
Type of Membership _____ <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	Individual Life Member .....	\$250
Membership Fee \$ _____ General Donation \$ _____	Heritage Club Member .....	\$1000 or more
Would you like a receipt? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <i>Thank you!</i>		

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