Swiss German Speakers

How Do You Say It in Swiss?

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 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 “Neujahrlslied” (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

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.
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.

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.
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 Zahller
Galloway OH

Sonnenberg Village

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.

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.

Heritage Center

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.

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.

Sonnenberg Village

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.
Kidron Community Historical Society
P.O. Box 234
Kidron, Ohio 44636
330-857-9111
kidronheritagecenter@hotmail.com
www.kidronhistoricalsociety.org

Address Service Requested

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
Board President .................................................. Wayne Liechty
Board Vice President ........................................ Steve Gerber
Board Treasurer .................................................. Richard Nussbaum
Board Secretary .................................................. Gloria Kaufmann
Board Membership Chairperson ......................... Leora Gerber
Board Member .................................................. Maxine Hershberger
Board Member .................................................. Fritz Sprunger
Heritage Center Director ................................. Prudy Steiner
Sonneberg Village Project Director ..................... Ray Leisy
Bit o’ Vit Editor ................................................. Judie Nussbaum

Kidron Community Historical Society Membership
Annual memberships are due in January. Membership expiration information is on your mailing label.

Name ________________________________________________
Address ________________________________________________
Type of Membership ____________________________ □ New □ Renewal
Membership Fee $______ General Donation $_________
Would you like a receipt? □ Yes □ No Thank you!

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