



Leora Gerber Concludes 32 Years on KCHS Board

A long-time commitment to the Kidron Community Historical Society has been one of Leora Gerber's passions. Beginning in 1988 as the KCHS board membership chair, she recently stepped down from board membership; she also served as board secretary from 1989 to 1997. Leora scheduled faithful volunteer docents in the museum and genealogy library and is encouraged when "younger ones continue on to preserve and share our rich heritage to future generations."



For many years Leora has faithfully worked with Fritz Sprunger every Monday morning on accessioning museum items. Heritage Center Director Dick Wolf said, "She knows so very much about family connections and where everything is in the Heritage Center. She is always friendly and positive with guests and hardly anyone with a Swiss Anabaptist connection leaves the building without a pedigree chart, relationship chart, and 90 percent of the time (or so it seems) learning they are related to her."

Meeting visitors from many places, entertaining and hosting several tour groups from Switzerland, and a Dutch group from the Netherlands, and helping visitors research their genealogy are highlights of Leora's memorable experiences.

During her tenure on the board, Leora participated in several particularly interesting projects, including the celebration of the 175th and 200th Kidron anniversaries in 1994 and 2019, the dedication and opening of the Kidron Sonnenberg Heritage Center in 1994, the ground-breaking at Sonnenberg Village in 2007, and the dedication and opening of the Roger N. Geiser Family History Library in 2019.

Leora and her husband, David E. Gerber, have

Rare Froschauer Bible Accessioned

John and Becky Hostetler believed the Heritage Center would be the best place for the 1560 Froschauer Bible inherited from John's maternal family. John's mother, Evelyn Jean (Ammon) Hostetler, acquired the Bible from her father, John (Clara) Kiener. Hostetler's only memory of the Bible is that it was carefully stored in his mother's drawer along with other sentimental items. The 1560 Froschauer Bible was printed 315 years before Johannes (John) Kiener III immigrated to America from Switzerland in 1875.

The Bible is missing the inside cover page, as is the case with most of the known

Froschauer Bibles. The early Swiss Anabaptists preferred Bibles printed by Froschauer, contrary to the local government. When the authorities visited Anabaptist homes, they asked if there was a Bible in the house. If so they opened the front cover to determine who had printed the Bible. Froschauer Bibles were confiscated, so the Anabaptists cut out the inside cover plate; therefore, the authorities were not able to identify their Bibles with Froschauer and left the Bibles in the homes.

The Hostetler/Kiener Froschauer Bible contains one colored and numerous black and white illustrations and is in excellent condition. The Bible was printed in Switzerland and is believed to have been rebound by the respected three-generation Baumgartner family book binders before it was brought to America.



This 1560 Froschauer Bible was donated by the family of John and Becky Hostetler. John's mother, Evelyn Jean Kiener Hostetler, acquired the Bible from her father, John Kiener IV, who in turn acquired the Bible from his father, Johannes (John) Kiener III, who immigrated to America from Switzerland in 1875. (Johannes Kiener III is descended from Johannes Kiener I who was born in Zetzwil, Switzerland in 1803.)

lived on the 1822 Gerber Home Farm settled by Dave's great-great-grandfather, Jacob Gerber. There has never been an auction on the farm, "so everything is still in the family," Leora notes.

The Gerber family often wonders how their ancestral families lived before them, and what stories they could tell.

Among the fascinating items

continued page 3, Leora

2021 Heritage Center Display

Works of Artists Past and Present

BY CHRISTA WOLF

We are looking forward to the opening of the new “Local Artists and Artisans” exhibit in the museum. It will feature a variety of works that showcase a wide range of talent from the Kidron community.

In the last *Bit o' Vit* we announced that we were seeking creative works from local artists. That announcement was reiterated in an article by Christina McCune, managing editor at *The Dalton Gazette-Kidron News*, in March. Since then the response has been very encouraging!

The idea for the exhibit took root when the Kratzer family donated a large number of paintings from deceased artist Rudeen Kratzer (1948-1988). According to information we received, she lived a quiet life as an unmarried woman, expressing herself primarily on canvas. Several of her works will be displayed alongside that of others, like Janice Geiser, and Emma Hostetler (a high school junior, our youngest contributor), who seem to view the world as their canvas – painting on wood, metal, fabric, and even rocks.



One particularly unique art form showcased in the display is that of *scherschnitte* – the art of delicate paper cutting – by Virginia Hofstetter, a teacher, mother of six, and wife of 57 years to the late Harley Hofstetter (2018). Carved and lathe wood works, florals, photography, sculpture, and written works will also be on display.

The exhibit is set to open in May, with hopes of several meet-and-greet opportunities with some of the artists in the coming months.



Mother and Daughter Research Ancestors



Linda (Fahrney) Freeland of Allen, Texas, and her daughter, Valerie Harris of Dalton, visited the Heritage Center in late winter to learn more about their Swiss ancestors.

Linda is the 3x great-granddaughter of original settlers Peter and Barbara (Boegli) Lehman. Linda's grandmother, Clara (Schwartz) Fahrney is the daughter of Christian and Maria (Gerber) Schwartz. Clara, and her husband Fred, lived in the Dalton area.



Clara (Schwartz) Fahrney 1891-1959

Linda and Valerie were given printed pedigree charts processed in the Roger N. Geiser Family History Library.

Photos: Girl with Cat, Rudeen Kratzer; scherschnitte, Virginia Hofstetter; painted rocks, Janice Geiser; lathe works, Nathanael Wolf,



UPCOMING EVENTS

**May 1 – Opening of Artists Past and Present Display
Heritage Center**

August 14 – Sonnenberg Village Homecoming

Anniversary Book Is Still \$29

The special price of \$29 continues for Kidron's 200th anniversary book, *Keepers of the Heritage*, which includes tax and shipping. Contact the Heritage Center at 330-857-9111 or purchase at the Heritage Center bookstore during Saturday hours beginning May 1.

Sonnenberg Village

Building for Birds at the Village

Work began in Sonnenberg Village earlier than usual because of the warming weather. A new building was added to the village this spring, courtesy of Jim and Belinda Holzaepfel. The unique structure is made from metal parts. It is a sculpture, it is decorative, it is functional, and we hope that the birds find it useful.

Our first job for the year was to clean up debris and make small repairs around the village due to the effects of the winter weather.

Clair Bixler completed installation of the Bixler Family history display in the Bixler House which is now completed and still available for rent.

Walt Mullet and his group have a number of plans for the Saurer Blacksmith Shop. They intend to put a sturdier door on the shop and install a new motor and belt drive for the drop hammer as well as a line shaft to operate the remaining equipment. Plans are also in progress for another “Hammer In” this summer.

Work has resumed on the Zuercher House with installation of the final second floor windows and siding on the front. Later this summer a porch will be added to the building.

The dismantled pieces of both the Moser Buggy Shop and the Gerber Barn are in the village. Abe Troyer plans to begin creating the foundations for both buildings in May and then reconstruct the buildings in June. The Gerber Barn will essentially be completed without any more work on our part. The work group will then start the extensive repairs to the Moser Buggy Shop.



New building in Sonnenberg Village is for the birds

LEORA continued from page 1

included in the KCHS collection are several immigration documents. The 1822 shipboard diary that Jacob Gerber recorded was found in the Gerber “Grandpa House” in 1987. Having survived for more than 160 years, it was immediately taken to the KCHS board and is now housed under glass in the Heritage Center.

In 2004 Leora collaborated with a cousin in compiling a 374-page genealogy book for her mother’s Troyer family; that experience bolstered her interest in genealogy. In the mid 1960s, Leora compiled a genealogy book on her Hostetler grandparents and serves on the board of JHFA (Jacob Hochstetler Family Association). A long-time member and current board member of SAGA (Swiss Anabaptist Genealogy Association), Leora has more than 30 genealogy books in her collection along with many Anabaptist and history books on her book shelves.

Leora encourages anyone interested in family names and dates and who are wanting to discover more about their ancestors and make family connections to consider joining SAGA as a valuable resource. More than 50 genealogists contribute their databases to SAGA at www.saga-omii.org.

New Board Member Welcomed at Annual Meeting

Reports from the secretary and treasurer were approved by the nine board members and four guests in attendance at the annual meeting held February 22 at the Sonnenberg Village Welcome Center, and in accordance to the COVID-19 restrictions. Diane (Glenn) Miller was welcomed as a new board member, and Fritz Sprunger’s board membership was renewed. Leora Gerber was recognized for serving on the KCHS board since 1988. She was presented with a gift card and a tree will be planted in her honor at the Sonnenberg Village. Due to the pandemic, a program was not planned.

To request a copy of the annual meeting minutes and/or the 2020 financial report, KCHS members may call 330-857-9111 or email kidronheritagecenter@gmail.com.

New Members

Harlan Steffen, Syracuse IN
Ben Tobias, Findlay OH

In 2000, Leora began entering information in the Kidron database under Roger Geiser’s direction. The Kidron database is included in the SAGA collection of databases.

Dave and Leora have been married more than 57 years and have three children. Karen and Olin Geiser are taking over the Gerber Home Farm just east of Kidron with their five children who are now the seventh generation of Gerbers living on the farm. Marla and Brent Reinhardt and their four children live in Goshen, Indiana, and Nolan and Lori Gerber live in Kalona, Iowa, with their three children.

Leora has traveled with tour groups to Switzerland, to The Netherlands and Switzerland, and in 2019 to the Ukraine where MCC began 100 years before, in 1920. Leora is a member of the accordion group, Swiss Echoes; they have given programs for over 40 years.

The board expressed their gratitude for Leora’s commitment to the KCHS at the annual meeting in February and accepted her willingness to continue accessioning items into the Heritage Center collection and entering information in the Kidron genealogy database. A tree will be planted at the Sonnenberg Village to honor her service.

Kidron Community Historical Society
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www.kidronhistoricalsociety.org

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SPRING 2021



Kidron-Sonnenberg Heritage Center

13153 Emerson Road • Kidron, Ohio

OPEN MAY through NOVEMBER • SATURDAYS • 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

CLOSED DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH and APRIL

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	Art Neuenschwander	Board Member	Diane Sommer
Board Vice President	Steve Gerber	Board Member	Fritz Sprunger
Board Treasurer.....	Richard Nussbaum	Heritage Center Director	Richard Wolf
Board Secretary	Gloria Kaufmann	Sonnenberg Village Project Director	Ray Leisy
Board Member	Diane Miller	Bit o' Vit Editor.....	Judie Nussbaum

Kidron Community Historical Society Membership

Annual memberships are due in January and expire on December 31. Contact the Heritage Center if uncertain of your membership status.

Name _____

Address _____

Type of Membership _____ New Renewal

Membership Fee \$ _____ General Donation \$ _____

Would you like a receipt? Yes No *Thank you!*

Individual Annual Member \$20

Husband and Wife Annual Member..... \$35

Organization Annual Member..... \$50

Individual Life Member \$300

Heritage Club Member \$1000 or more

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