



This Old House Schedules Bicentennial Celebration with Memories and Open House

By JACQUI L. HERSHBERGER



PHOTO CREDIT: ANALEIA HERSHBERGER

Cliff Lehman, Jane (Amstutz) and Lloyd Miller, Jacqui (Miller) Hershberger and Mary Moser, daughter of Mark and Lise (Miller) Moser, have all lived in this 200-year-old house on Jericho Road.

This summer, several Kidron-Sonnenberg area houses are turning 200 years old. One of them is planning to celebrate the special occasion on Saturday, August 13.

The land the 200-year-old Kidron house sits on was in a 160-acre plot sold to Henry Swan with paperwork signed on January 6, 1820 by President James Monroe.

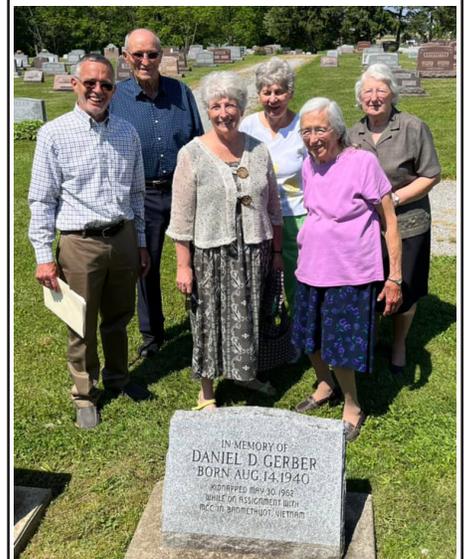
Several years back, the current owners of the home, Jane (Amstutz) and Lloyd Miller, reached out to the College of Wooster to find out what year it was built. Growth rings from a sample of

the original house wood showed 1822, which is how they base the age of the home. They also had deeds from the previous owners.

“I had all those deeds, and I gave them to Ray Leisy. He spent about a year on it and came back and made this wonderful book for us. He had fun doing it and he was really excited about it,” said Lloyd. “The historical notebook Ray made is a masterpiece, and he presented it to us along with Gladys Amstutz (my mother) and Uncle Clifford (Gladys’ brother) at Sonnenberg Village,” said Jane.

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Daniel Gerber Remembered 60 Years Since Capture



Daniel Gerber (1940-1962) arrived in Vietnam under Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) in October 1961. On May 30, 1962, he, Dr. Ardell Vietti and Rev. Archie Mitchell were captured at the leprosarium where they were serving, never to be heard from again.

Daniel's life, sacrifice and example were honored during the morning worship service at Kidron Mennonite Church, Daniel's home congregation, on May 29, 2022, 60 years after his capture. A transcript of the Moments in Mission read by his brother, Norman, is available at <https://youtube/5H4R3iZAsuE> (21:30 mark).

Pictured at his marker in the Kidron Mennonite Church cemetery are Daniel's family members, Norman and Kathy Gerber, Barbara Steiner; back: James Gerber, Barb Gerber and Leora Gerber. Daniel's oldest brother, David, and youngest brother, Aldis, were unable to attend.

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Although the house is 200 years old, Jane's family has only lived in it for 89 years. Jane's great-grandfather, Jacob M. and Lina (Sommer) Gerber, bought it in 1932 for his daughter Hilda, and her husband David J. Lehman.

The book of deeds the Miller's own has a paper that says, "By 1932 the house was in bad shape. The sagging long front porch was replaced with the one standing today. New wood siding was put on the whole house. Stairways were in poor condition and torn out and changed. These and many other repairs were done by the Gerber's before David J. Lehman's moved into the house."

They moved into the house in 1933 on a land contract and bought it in 1942. Their daughter, Gladys, and her husband, Myron J. Amstutz, bought it in 1962. In 1976, their daughter, Jane, and her husband, Lloyd Miller bought it. The house has been family-owned by four generations for 90 years. Jane has lived in that house for most of her life, about 57 of her 71 years. "It has always been sold to and passed down through the daughters," said Jane.

"As far as anyone remembers, the vegetable garden has been the same place through the years, and it is a great location. I call the flower garden nearby the 'Grandma flower bed' because whatever Grandma Hilda and Mom Gladys planted, I basically maintain, and I like the variety that is there," said Jane.

Before being owned by Jane's ancestors, the house went through various owners. According to "Historical Sketches of Kidron Ohio," written in 1936 by Levi Amstutz, it was "formerly called the 'Hartman Farm', where since many families lived. It must be over a hundred years that Mr. Hartman came in possession of the farm and so was the pioneer. The house that still stands was built by him over a century ago....The house was very substantially constructed and originally consisted of six rooms and an old fashioned fireplace built in, which has since been removed, and the house otherwise altered and repaired several times. After the Hartman's, the farm belonged to George Jameson of whom we have no history. They sold the farm to Nicholas Amstutz, who owned it for many years and rented the house to families who worked for him."

The house has mud walls, hewn

beams, low seven-foot ceilings, painted woodwork, and some distinctive door latches.

Two different businesses started at this location. "Elias Peter 'E.P.' Gerber started his lumber and planing business in 1901 in the chopping and cider press building about ½ mile east of Kidron (13653 Jericho Road). It was run by a water wheel powered by the Kidron Creek. He purchased train car loads of lumber which came from the northern states to Apple Creek and then were hauled by team and wagon to Kidron to be sold. In 1902, E.P. moved his business to his present location in Kidron," wrote Betty Lou Geiser in "Historical Sketches of Kidron Businesses" 1994 (Kidron Diamond Centennial). It is now called Gerber Lumber & Hardware.

The second business was started in the shop by David J. Lehman around 1944. He sharpened blades for cutting hay, lawn mowers, chopper knives, and he also filed saws. He continued this work even after they moved off the farm. His son, Clifford said, "Dad always enjoyed having customers stop by."

Clifford grew up in the home. After WWII, in either 1946 or 1947, his parents decided to dig out the rest of the basement so they could do the washing in the house. "It was a work saver for my parents," said Clifford. Before then, Hilda did the washing in the basement of the sharpening shop. David had to haul water from the milk house and start a fire to heat the water. They hired Sylvan Lehman for the job since David was too busy with his sharpening business. Clifford, Sylvan, and David, when possible, worked on it for a few months.

"I thought it was kind of fun. It was hard work. We got to drive the tractor and we hauled the dirt past the pond," said Clifford. The door out the back of the basement opened to the nearby clothesline so Hilda could hang the clothes outside. "The clothes were freeze-dried in the winter. We didn't have a dryer," said Clifford.

On September 4, 1822, the year the house was built, the electric age began. Electricity had already been invented for some time, but on this date, according to The New York Historical Society, Museum, and Library, <https://www.nyhistory.org/blogs/edison-lit-manhattan>, Thomas Edison lit up a block of New York City. However, it

wasn't until the early 1940's that this home got electricity, put in by Paul Neuenschwander of Kidron Electric. Once it had electricity, running water was installed.

At one time, for about 10 years, the house was empty. Goldie Breneman told Lloyd that when she was in about first grade, she had to walk by their house to get to Kidron School. "Goldie told me she always hated to walk past this place. One time, there was a hoot owl sitting and looking out the window on the east side attic window. She would run past the house because it was haunted," said Lloyd.

Haunted no more, the Millers enjoy living in their heritage home. "I like it because I think of my family tradition and it's a wonderful way to recycle," said Jane. "To me, an old house has character, and you think about all the people who lived in the house before," said Lloyd.

Even though the house has been owned by four generations, five generations lived in it when their daughter Lise (Miller) and Mark Moser family lived with them for 15 months, from June 2009 to August 2010. Gladys and Myron and Jane and Lloyd also hosted some Central Christian High School boarding students (Jane and Lloyd had five students for a total of about 10 years). Jane also provided preschool child care in the home for 14 families. With the gift of hospitality of all the owners, many people have been welcomed in this bicentennial house.

The house's 200th anniversary will be celebrated Saturday, August 13, 2022, from 2:00-4:00pm, at 13653 Jericho Road, Kidron, Ohio. There will be a tent with displays and light refreshments. Guided house tours will be available for small groups, and people can explore the grounds. Anyone who has ever lived in, been in, or is just interested in seeing the inside of a 200-year-old house, is welcome to stop by. In case of inclement weather, instead of having information on site, a display will be at the Sonnenberg Village Homecoming.

Jacqui L. Hershberger was the only one of her siblings who lived her whole childhood in this house. Her room had the most unique door handle, and a really good slam when she was mad! She resides in Sugar Creek Township, still on Jericho Road, just east a few miles, with a different house number.

Sonnenberg Village

Moser building reconstruction crew, left to right: Cliff Lehman, Dan Miller, Jim Swartzentruber and Ray Leisy.



Working in the Sonnenberg Village gardens, left to right: Rachel Hofstetter and Nancy Lilburn. Allyson Leisy oversees the village gardens.



Village Homecoming

Friday, August 12; 7:00 pm

KCHS benefit concert featuring Honeytown – \$5 suggested donation

Saturday, August 13; 10:00-3:00

Mainstage Presentations

- 10:00 Sonnenberg Children's Theatre performance
- 11:00 Barn dance (in newly raised barn)
- 12:00 Historical interpreters portraying early Sonnenberg settlers
- 1:00 Baseball old-time game

Ongoing Attractions

Garden and village building tours; live animals; Kinder Corner activities for children; demonstrations including blacksmithing, basket weaving, spoon carving, chair making, flax and wool fiber works, candle making, leather working, primitive cooking, calliope music; and wagon shuttle rides.

Food from the Sonnenberg Food Wagon and Schloneger's Old Fashion Ice Cream will also be available.

Admission to all homecoming events on Saturday: \$5 ages 13 and up; children 12 and under, free.

Wayne County Historical Society Community Band at Sonnenberg Village

Wed, July 20, 7:00 pm

Bring your own lawn chairs. If it rains, the band will move inside the Welcome Center.

Admission is free.

Homesteads Settled in 1822

In addition to the Millers, other land owners recognizing their properties as settled in 1822 include David and Leora Gerber, Jim and Ruby Neuenschwander, Elvin and Mary Beth Neuenschwander, and Ralph and Susan Hofstetter.

According to Jacob Gerber's diary printed in *Historical Sketches of Deacon Michael Gerber*, Michael Gerber and his five children, Barbara, Anna, Katharina, John M. and Ulrich; his brother, Ulrich; and nephew, Jacob Gerber; and a sister, Barbara, emigrated from Switzerland together. "The group reached the Sugar Creek in September 14, 1822." Michael Gerber sold 160 acres to his son, John M Gerber that is now owned by Jim and Ruby Neuenschwander and Elvin Neuenschwander; and his nephew Jacob Gerber having the 160 acres now belonging to David and Leora Gerber. Later 80 acres was sold to a great niece, Anna and Peter Sommer; Ralph and Susan Hofstetter now own that land. These families first built log houses while living in Conestoga wagons, so they really can't say their houses are exactly 200 years old like the Millers, whose house was dated by College of Wooster students.

KCHS Annual Meeting

The Kidron Community Historical Society's annual meeting was held in conjunction with the members banquet on May 3. Reports by board officers were heard, Gloria Kaufmann and Steve Gerber's board terms were extended for an additional three years, and Joan Nussbaum was affirmed as treasurer, replacing Richard Nussbaum who will be retiring after serving in that capacity since 2006.

UPCOMING EVENTS SONNENBERG VILLAGE

July 20, 7:00 pm | Wayne County Community Band

Aug 12, 7:00 pm | Honeytown concert

Aug 13, 10:00 - 4:00 | Homecoming

Oct 15, 9:00 - 2:00 | Beet Festival

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Nonprofit Organization Postage Paid Wooster, Ohio 44691 Permit No. 228

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SUMMER 2022



Kidron-Sonnenberg Heritage Center

13153 Emerson Road • Kidron, Ohio

OPEN APRIL through OCTOBER • SATURDAYS • 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

CLOSED NOVEMBER, DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY, and MARCH

The Heritage Center is closed November through April, but welcomes appointments to visit the museum and 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	<i>Bit o' Vit</i> 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