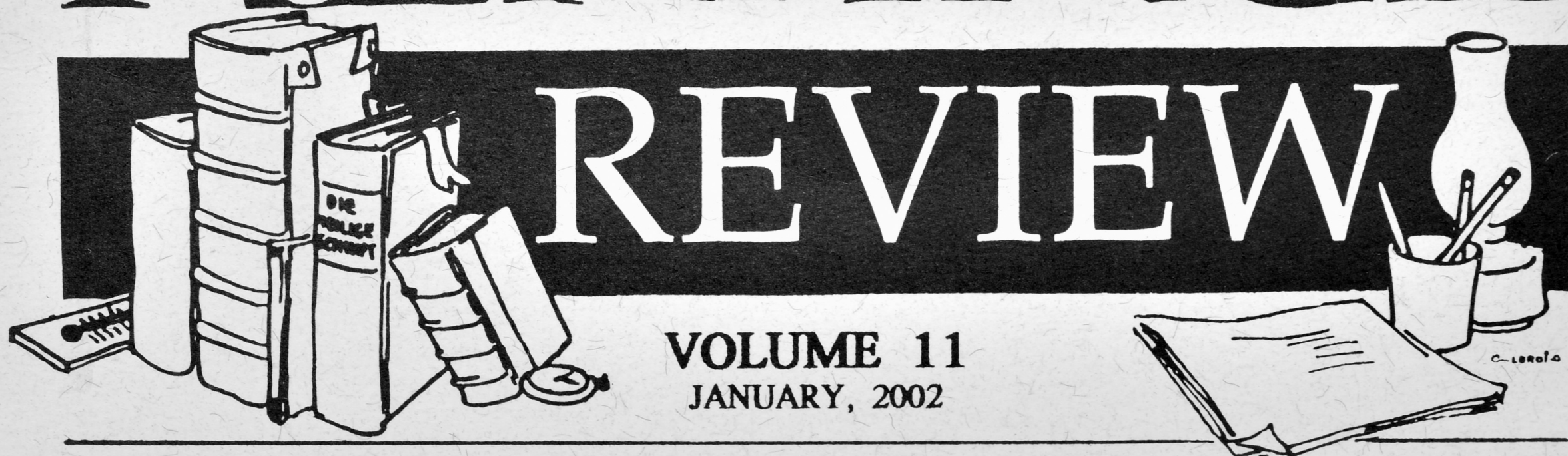


# HERITAGE



VOLUME 11  
JANUARY, 2002

## IN THIS ISSUE

	Page
An Inspiring Song Book The Ausbund.....	1
Peter Riedemann's Parting Hymn.....	3
Three Kinds of Baptism in the New Testament Clearly Outlined.....	4
God is Not Mocked.....	5
Amish Minister's Meetings of 1865 and 1917.....	6
The John K. Fisher Mystery.....	10
The Peter Schrock Letters Fourth Installment.....	13
Letters of Warning - A Critique.....	18

The Heritage Review is an annual publication of the Ohio Amish Library, 4292 SR 39 Millersburg, Ohio 44654. It is intended to provide information, past and present, about the Amish and Mennonites, especially in Ohio. We invite articles and information. Memberships to the Ohio Amish Library are \$20 annually. Single copies of The Heritage Review are available.

## AN INSPIRING SONG BOOK -THE AUSBUND

-by James Lowry

Do you know the author of any song? Or do you know anyone personally about whom a song is written? If you don't, let's suppose you do. Let's suppose it was written during a time of religious persecution about a good friend of yours. Would you value such a song?

Let's suppose the song said that your friend was a staunch Christian and that he was captured and imprisoned for this faith. He was tortured, but still didn't reveal your name or hiding place. He was finally burned alive for his faith. You probably have never sung such a song, so closely connected with your own personal experience.

But many an Anabaptist did have the experience of singing such a song about a close friend, a brother or sister in the Lord.

What effect would such a song have on you? No doubt a very moving, powerful effect. I have never sung any songs so connected with my own personal life, but I have had the experience of singing songs about Anabaptist brothers and sisters who lived 400 years ago. Such songs inspire me.

Such songs are collected in the Ausbund,<sup>1</sup> the Anabaptist hymnal which first appeared in print

1. Pronounced OUS bunt (not AHZZ bund as some English-speaking people say it.) The Aus is pronounced as the ous in the noun "house." The u in the second syllable of Ausbund is pronounced as the u in "put."



## An Inspiring Song Book- the Ausbund

in 1564. The songs may not be better poetry than others. They may be a little hard to understand in places (even for someone who reads German) because of the archaic language in which they are written. But those songs inspire.

Those songs are different from others because of the courageous Christian life that had to be lived in order to write them. Those songs are washed in blood. First, they are washed in the blood of Christ, so to speak, as every act of faith must be. And second, they were often washed in the blood of the writer or subject of the song, who died for his faith.

These songs inspire because of what they did for the church. Without the martyrdom that those songs describe there would not be any Mennonite, or Amish, or Hutterite Church.

The church, of course, wasn't carried on by people who were executed. The brothers and sisters who didn't get caught maintained the church. But if those in prison hadn't been willing to die for what they believed, the church outside the prison could have become disillusioned and discouraged. It could have fallen apart. Tertullian said, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church." He could have also said that the blood of martyrs supplies inspiration, courage, and strength to the church.

The songs written about or by these Anabaptist martyrs are found, as we have said, in the Ausbund, sometimes called 's dick Buch ("the thick book") in the Amish Church.

What does the word Ausbund mean? As used in the title of the song book, the word means "pattern, model, good example, paragon." Among many examples, Grimm's Deutsches Wörterbuch<sup>2</sup> gives the following from Luther, dating from the same century as the Ausbund:

Christi und der Apostel Jünger, ein Ausbund der Christen. ("Christ's and the apostle's disciples, a model for the Christians.")

Other examples from other writings given in the Wörterbuch are:

---

<sup>2</sup> Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, Deutsches Wörterbuch, I (Leipzig: Verlag Hirzel, (1854), 839-840. This dictionary also defines Ausbund with these three Latin words: decus ("ornament"), praestantia ("excellence"), and specimen ("ideal")

Ruth war ein Moabitin, aber sonst ein recht Ausbund eines frommen Weibs. ("Ruth was a Moabite but otherwise a pattern of a pious woman.")

Werthes Bibelbuch, du Ausbund aller Schriften ("Worthy Bible-book, thou ornament (glory) of all writings")

The two parts from which the word Ausbund comes, aus and binden, mean "out" and "to tie" or "to bind." How would a word meaning "bound out" refer to a pattern or good example? In one sixteenth century meaning, Ausbund refers to an end of a bolt of cloth that the shopkeeper has folded out so as to show the pattern.<sup>3</sup> The word Ausbund, then, refers to the pattern or outstanding example of the faith of the martyrs, which the songs set forth.

The word Ausbund could also mean "selection." We could think of the book as a selection of outstanding songs from among the many written. The Ausbund does not contain all the songs written by the Anabaptists. In fact, it is not the only hymn book they produced in the sixteenth century (1500's). Other hymn books were published in German and Dutch. In the sixteenth century the Anabaptists produced broadsides, or single sheets, and little leaflets of songs in abundance. They collected these individual songs into books.

Two Anabaptist song books are available in print today, the Ausbund and Die Lieder der Hutterischen Brüder ("The Songs of the Hutterian Brethren"). This last book, however, was never printed in the sixteenth century. It existed only in cherished, handwritten copies among the Hutterites for many years. Finally, it was printed for the first time in 1914.

At one time the persecutors of the Anabaptists brought this charge against them: "You sing songs different from ours." And this was true. There are only a couple of non-Anabaptist songs in the Ausbund. The Anabaptists did not consciously use songs from the Catholics, Lutherans, or others. Why?

Were the Anabaptists so separated from the world that they did not know about the other songs? No, this was not the case, for the Ausbund refers to the tunes of other churches

---

<sup>3</sup> Alfred Götze, Frühneuhochdeutsches Glossar, 7. Auflage (Berlin: Verlag Walter de Gruyter und Co., 1967), P. 17.



as well as to the tunes of folk songs which could be used for singing their songs. But the Anabaptists did not use the words of those tunes. They made their own words.

The Anabaptists could easily produce their own hymn books because they produced an abundance of songs. Their commitment to Christ and the church was very deep, and their hearts overflowed. Christ said of His followers, "Out of their inmost being shall flow rivers of living water." Later, song writing dropped off. The descendants of the Anabaptists began borrowing songs from other sources. Rudolf Wolkan an Austrian scholar who closely studied the subject, says the Mennonites started introducing Lutheran and Reformed songs into their books in 1658. The last dated song in the Hutterite hymn book is from 1762.

But in the sixteenth century the gift of song flowed richly through the church. Peter Riedeman is an example of one gifted in song writing. He has two songs in the Ausbund (numbers 2 and 20) and forty-five in the Hutterite book. Die Lieder der Hutterischen Brüder says this about

Riedemann:

He also wrote many gracious, Christian, spiritual, and Biblical hymns and songs during the times of his imprisonment and when he was at home with the church. For he was rich in all divine mysteries, and the gift of the divine Word flowed forth from him like a spring of water that overflows. All souls who heard him rejoiced. He lived to be 50 years old. On his death bed he wrote yet another song, Quitt, ledig, los hat uns gemacht/ Christus von Tot des Teufels Macht. ("Quit, free, released from death, the devil's power, has Christ made us.") ...Afterwards the brethren and people were very sad and troubled about his sickness and approaching death, and so he sent them this saying from the prophet (III Esdras 9): "Go forth and eat the new and drink the sweet and give gifts to those who have nothing; for this day is holy to our God. Therefore do not be troubled, for joy in the Lord is your strength." 4

---

4 Die Lieder der Hutterischen Brüder, 5th ed. (Cayley, Alberta: Macmillan Colony, 1983), pp. 450-451

---

### PETER RIEDEMANN'S PARTING HYMN

Following is a translation of Peter Riedemann's last hymn, mentioned in the above article, which he wrote on his deathbed, just prior to his departure from this world.

Die Lieder der Hutterischen Brüder gives it as Riedemann's 35th hymn (p.515), and says it was written at Protzka, which is located in what is now the Czech Republic. It is introduced as: "An admonition and extolling of the salvation which is brought to us through Christ." In it one senses Riedemann's hope for a victorious end, based on obedience to Christ's salvation. He longs for the glories of heaven which he hopes for "after this battle."

1.

Quit, free, Christ has delivered us,  
From death, the devil's power,  
From the jaws of hell, and all disgrace,  
The enemy's hatred, and the bottomless pit,  
That we might inherit life,  
And not be ruined eternally.

2.

Follow after this without ceasing,  
See what manner of yoke Christ the Lord  
Himself bore, to this end,  
That without any scorn, for your sakes,  
He took up and carried,  
And was nailed to the cross.

3.

For such a salvation you should now  
Praise the Son and with haste,  
Turn away from the world, and seek to  
Commit yourself to Him, that He can  
Give and increase His blessing to you,  
That you may live with Him.

4.

Disregard not the time of grace,  
But consider well that it is now prepared.  
On our path indeed resounds  
The sound of the Word without deception.  
The Gospels do proclaim this,  
Upon my pledge, venture it.



5.

These are the tidings from Heaven's throne,  
Which I show forth; the Father's son  
Became man, who is the most noble,  
Who delivers you from all deceit,  
If only you believe Him,  
And trust in His name.

6.

In upright faith, this sums it up,  
And true love, which makes you godly,  
That you please Him well  
In your actions, as a true servant,  
Who endure His working in you,  
And also embrace obedience.

7.

He who considers this well, diligently guards,  
Gives heed, and waits on his treasure,  
He will be kept from every fall,

And place of woe on this journey,  
That he may press forward,  
And with Christ gain the field.

8.

And after this battle come unto life,  
And stand with Christ forever,  
To be like Him without any pretense,  
With glory being in the Father's kingdom.  
To sit upon His chair,  
And judge the twelve tribes of Israel.

9.

To such great honor and joy,  
The Lord leads us after his will,  
That we together with united voice  
May sing praises to Him in His kingdom,  
Together with all the godly,  
With joy saying Amen. Amen.

---

### THREE KINDS OF BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CLEARLY OUTLINED

Leonard Schiemer (1527)<sup>1</sup>

In the entire holy Scripture of the New Testament I find no other seal of faith than baptism. John said that there are three which bear witness: the Spirit, Water, and Blood, and these three are a unity. One should not be confused with the others, and there is a particular order for them, just as God has created order in all things.

The first baptism is when one becomes obedient to the Father, just as Christ was obedient to the Father even to death on the cross. For as John said, "He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit." Christ also was so baptized, for John saw the Holy Spirit come upon him like a dove. Here one yields body and life to God. Such yielding cannot happen without the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is a sure and strong witness that one has received the Holy Spirit when he yields himself wholly to God.

The second baptism is the baptism of water, for as the eunuch said to Philip, "There is water; why should I not now be baptized?" Furthermore Peter said, "Can anyone object that these now be baptized with water, since they have received the Holy Spirit?" And thus was Christ also baptized in the Jordan River, just as others. Paul said, "If one believes in his heart he will be

saved, and as he confesses with his mouth, he will be blessed." This baptism is not for Jews, Turks, or the heathen. It is only for those who are elect of Christ, called into the office of the Gospel. That is, it is for Christians.

The third baptism is the baptism of blood. Of this baptism the Lord said, "I must yet be baptized with another baptism. And how distressed I will be until it has taken place!" This is also the baptism he foretold to the two sons of Zebedee when he asked, "Can you drink the cup I must drink and be baptized with the baptism with which I must be baptized?" For this is the true test of a Christian. An untested Christian is like untested or unhardened metal. If there were someone who could spare me this baptism, that would indeed be a beloved person to me! Christ received this baptism from Judas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate, the high priests and the religious scholars. And in our time there are plenty children of Judas and Pilate and hypocrites to spill this baptismal water.

To sum up, the baptism of water is a seal of faith and of the indwelling covenant with God. It is as when one writes a letter. When it is finished it is sealed. But no one will give his seal to a letter without knowing what it says. When you baptize a child, you are sealing an empty envelope. Who would baptize first and teach later is like one who scrubs the barrel first and only then asks what the purpose of it is. <sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Leonard Schiemer was a monk for 6 years before becoming an Anabaptist. He was a leader of the Austrian Anabaptists, and was beheaded in January of 1528.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from: Daniel Liechty, Early Anabaptist Spirituality (Paulist Press, New York, 1994) 95,96



## GOD IS NOT MOCKED

by Ben L. Raber (deceased)

In the early 1940's the Sharp Run Church district (Holmes Co. Ohio) extended from near Becks Mills to State Route 62. Sam J. Miller (Sam Jake's Sam) was Bishop then. As a young boy, I remember that sometimes Sam would make mention in his sermon about a boy who said he will do as he pleases until he is 40 years old, then he will become a Christian and join church. As I remember, Sam used to say that when he was 39 years old, he got sick and died.

I heard no mention made of this for a long time, until in 1984. I was in the place of business of Atlee J. Keim in Mt. Hope, along with several other men my age or younger. Atlee, being an interesting conversationalist, asked how many of us present remember the preachers in times past tell about a boy who said he will not become a Christian until he is 40 years old, but died at 39?

I was the only one in the group who remembered anything of such an account being told. Then Atlee said that his grandfather, Joe Keim, helped bury that boy and the cemetery where he is buried is just east of Limpytown on the old Benj. Miller farm. It is now owned by the Sugar-creek Land Co. The cemetery has been moved and the land stripped for coal. Atlee did not remember the boy's name or any more details.

In 1986 I was in Monroe Y. Miller's church district at Henry S. Millers and made mention in my sermon of having heard this preached about in my youth. After the service, Monroe Y, an able historian, related what he remembered of the said incident. He said that the boy's name was David Miller and he remembers that as a boy, sometimes on the way home from church, his Father would say: "They preached about my uncle again!" Monroe said David did not dress in the traditional Amish garb. He sometimes attended church, but showed little interest in the preaching, and liked to clown around with the scholars. He was a school teacher by vocation. Monroe was also of the opinion that he died before he was 40 years old and said that on his deathbed, David desired to be baptized. It was suggested that the Walnut Creek Mennonite church baptize him (probably because he did not dress Amish), but he declined. He desired that the Amish baptize him, which Monroe was of the opinion they did.

Bishop Menno N. Schlabach was still living in 1986, and I had wanted to go and visit him and

find out what he knew about this case. Before I got away to do so, I met his son-in-law Andy A. Raber at the Mt. Hope Auction. I made mention to him of my intentions to visit his father-in-law to see if I could find out more about this. Andy said he would ask him about it. Several weeks later I met Andy again at the auction and he had spoken to Menno, who readily remembered the case, having known the man, David Miller, personally. Menno was born in 1890 and David had died in Dec. of 1900. At the time, Menno was nearly 11 years old. Menno said David was a heavy smoker and that this was thought to have been the cause of his early death

In cemetery No. O-42<sup>1</sup> the family of Mose J. and Susanna Miller is listed as buried there, including David. Many had died single. Everything seems to fit according to the legend except that David, who was to have died before he was 40 years old, is listed as having died on Dec. 12, 1900 at the age of 46 years, 11 mo., and 16 days! Why it was always said, even in sermons, that he died before he was 40, is a bit hard to understand.

I visited bishop Levi R. Troyer in his latter years, and asked him if he remembered anything about this account being told. He said he could not recall anything. Then I concluded by saying: "I suppose it doesn't matter so much to us how everything was, since it happened so long ago and nothing can be changed." To this Levi replied, "But it did matter much to that man!" How true! unless he repented on his deathbed and found grace with God. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Galatians 6:7

*Editor's Note: Even today, many people still remember hearing this story. How it lost its accuracy in the mists of oft-repeated folklore, is hard to tell. In the Memorial History of Peter Bitsche, David's birthdate is listed as Dec. 26, 1853, which would make his age at death almost 47 years, as the tombstone shows. David's sister Magdalena was married to Monroe Y. Miller's grandfather, John Y. Miller. This would verify that Monroe's father, Yost, could say that David was his uncle. Regardless of how everything was, this story made a sobering point in many a sermon, and thus secured a place in the annals of Amish folklore. We welcome any information any readers might be able to add to this account.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Leroy Beachy, Cemetery Directory of the Amish Community in Eastern Holmes, (1975) p.162



## AMISH MINISTERS' MEETINGS OF 1865 AND 1917

by Roy M. Weaver

Several years after the Amish-Mennonite Ministers' Meetings of 1862-1878 began, the conservatives among the Amish saw a need for a paper setting forth their position. They met in Holmes County on June 1, 1865 and drew up the conclusions below. This was then presented at the national Ministers' Meeting held several days later, on June 5, 6, and 7 in Wayne County. While the paper was read at the meetings, there does not seem to have been much discussion of its contents, and it did not avert the pending division.

Records of the June 1st meeting have been printed in a number of sources, several of which are the writings of John Y. Schlabach<sup>1</sup> and the Proceedings of the Amish Ministers' Meetings.<sup>2</sup> The following translation is based on a handwritten, fragile copy found at Ohio Amish Library, which appears to have been a personal copy of an unnamed participant. We print it here because it was referred to in the 1917 meetings.

### Letter from Ministers' Meeting, June 1, 1865 Holmes County, Ohio

*As my beloved brethren and sisters in the Lord, we desire that the loving God direct us through his Holy and Good Spirit that we may continue faithfully in the accepted Truth unto a blessed end, that we may leave behind what is harmful to our salvation and contrary to God's Word and help to root out all the plants which our Heavenly Father has not planted. But at the present time a spirit comes to light which allows that this or that is of no significance, and may be considered as serving neither the good nor the evil. Now we should consider whether this is a spirit from God or a spirit of deception. Therefore we, the below named ministers of the Word, have assembled in the name of the Lord and have agreed on the following: First, some things are appearing which we think serve to express pomp and pride and lead away from God. These are harmful to the church and should be justly rooted out and not tolerated, namely to attend worldly conventions and fairs or yearly*

1. John Y. Schlabach, Begebenheiten in der Amische Gemeinde von 1850 bis 1898 n.d., 69-71

2. Paton Yoder and Steven R. Estes, Proceedings of the Amish Ministers' Meetings (Menn. Hist. Society, 1999) p. 258

*fairs and to take part in them, and to take out insurance policies on our earthly property, or to put lightning rods on our buildings.*

*Likewise [the use of ] speckled, striped, or flowered clothing made according to the style of the world. Likewise hair styles after the style of the world on both women and men. Also not to trim the beard according to the style of the world.*

*Likewise to carry hidden photographs made after the likeness of men or to hang them on the walls of the house to be seen.*

*Likewise the overcoat of oilcloth or rubber or other overcoats made according to the style of the world.*

*Likewise false shirt bosoms and the like.*

*Likewise merchandising according to the ways of the world, for the Savior cast such out of the temple. Also fancy carriages according to worldly pomp and pride.*

*Also it is considered entirely improper to hold council sessions with the church (Rath halten) with open doors and permit non-members to sit in the council, but rather to counsel only with members of the congregation.*

*Also it is considered proper that the ministers go into the pre-service council [Abrath], as our forefathers did, and we are not agreed to forsake this custom. The Apostle says: Consider your ministers [Lehrer] who have proclaimed to you the Word of God, etc.*

*Also we declare that spiritual songs and spiritual tunes should be used in worship services, and not with notes or fast tunes [Springweisen] which belong to the world.*

*Also we declare it to improper for one who professes to be a Christian to mix God's creatures, such as a horse and a donkey, through which comes the mule, since God did not create such in the beginning.*

*Likewise we declare that members of the congregation should not serve in worldly offices, especially those which use force and also the military or penal offices.*

*Also we consider it unseemly to decorate the houses with all kinds of unnecessary, fancy household furnishings, such as speckled wallpaper and window paper, large mirrors and pictures and the like. The above named [recommendations] we declare to be right and good, and in agreement and one with the Word of God and our Articles of Faith, and thus we have been taught and instructed by our forefathers, and intend to stay with the same, as we have accepted them and promised in our baptismal vows. And all those who affirm such with us and demonstrate it with works and deeds, we are willing and prepared to recognize as brethren and sisters and accept*



such with hand[shake] and kiss, and to minister together with them in the Word and doctrine, and to hold the spiritual unity [communion] with them, for the Savior says: "Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, sister, and mother." And the gate is portrayed for us as strait and the way narrow, but it is never closed, but stands open for all repentant souls, as the Savior says in Luke 14:3: "Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple."

Thus concluded and undersigned by us as follows:

Holmes County: Levi Miller, Noah Miller, Moses

Bitsche, Elias J. Miller, Christian Schlabach

Doughty Creek: David A. Troyer, Daniel D.

Miller, Sem Miller, Jeremias Miller

Middletown [Mt. Hope]: Mose J. Miller, Mose

H. Miller, Christian Yoder, Solomon Miller

Sugarcreek: Mose Wenger, Peter Bitsche, David

D. Troyer, Jacob J. Miller

Peru, In.: Johannes Schmucker, Mose Hershberger

Marshall County, In.: David H. Hochstetler,

Johannes C. Schlabach

Somerset County, Pa.: Joel Bitsche, Daniel

Hershberger

Elkhart County, In.: Johannes L. Miller, Joseph

P. Hochstetler

Lagrange County, In.: Joseph Miller, Tobias

Yoder, David D. Miller

Canada: Johannes Jansi, Johannes Gasho,

Johannes Bender

Glades, Penn.: Abner Yoder

Wayne Co. Ohio: Emmanuel Hochstetler

Martins Creek, Ohio: Jacob Yoder

Several Amish ministers' meetings took place in Holmes County in 1917. The first took place on March 2, 1917 at the home of Noah Coblentz and was probably attended by only Holmes County ministers, although there is no record of attendees. Information of this meeting is taken from Bishop Abe S. Yoder's<sup>3</sup> personal records.

#### Amish Ministers' Meeting, March 2, 1917

We have agreed as follows:

It is not allowed to cut the hair too short over the ears.

Also not taking part in the corn inventions. (Apparently the use of hybrid corn)

3. Abe S. Yoder (7-4-1859 to 4-24-1934) was born in Grantsville, Md. to Samuel J. Yoder (YR26174) and moved to Holmes Co. in 1871. Ordained bishop in 1914, he lived where his grandson Eli D. Yoder now lives.

Also not [have the] peculiar (fremd) cut on the suit coat (mutza) or any other clothing.

The overchecks are not allowed. (This pertains to overcheck reins on horses' bridles.)

Overcoats without capes are not allowed.

The white window curtains or roll paper (blinds) are not allowed.

Also the women are to have their blouses (Yack) cut out and the cape is to be carried in the blouse (Yack).

Another ministers' meeting was held on October 24-26, attended by ministers from other states. It is not known where this meeting was held. At this meeting it was "agreed to abide by the "Ordnungs Letter" of June 1, 1865 and thirteen more articles which had been put forth March 9, 1917." These thirteen articles are recorded in the booklet Ein Ordnungsbrief.<sup>4</sup> It is not known where this meeting was held or who attended. Following is a translation of those thirteen articles.

#### Amish Ministers' Meeting, March 9, 1917

We are gathered together here in the name of the Lord, March 9, 1917 and intend to write an Ordnungs Letter. What has been named in the old letter [of 1865], we will not mention.

1. The ministers are to keep their sermons, dealings, and walk of life in accord with the Gospel and the teachings of Christ. Therewith they may be a light for others to follow, by their life and walk. And though there would be much to name in connection with rules and ordnung, we want to make the matter brief.

2. It is concluded that the teaching of Christ is often transgressed with slandering and false accusations by ministers and lay members, which is to be discontinued.

3. It is concluded that the parents are to bring up their children according to the "ordnung" of the church, and not to buy or make anything [for them] that they should not have.

4. It is concluded that negligence in not attending church without a reason should not be tolerated, but to admonish such to come and faithfully fulfill their calling.

4. Ein Ordnungsbrief, Raber's Book Store, Baltic, Ohio n.d.



5. It is concluded that the unnecessary going out of the worship service and staying out too long is not to be, but everyone is to come in a timely manner and listen to the preaching.

6. It is concluded that pomp and highmindedness wants to come into the (so-called) old Amish Churches, of which much could be named. So we want to say that that which serves pomp and highmindedness, and is against the "ordnung" of the church, and which causes disunity, is not to be tolerated, be it named whatsoever it may.

7. It is not considered upbuilding for church members to take their membership from one congregation to another, or for youth going to another district to marry, unless counsel has been taken with both congregations, so that it promotes peace.

8. It is concluded that when youth do not abide with the "ordnung" and because of this have not partook of communion, and want to marry; then the marriage is not to be performed unless they have made restitution beforehand with the church. Then they are to be married by the bishop of the home church or a relative or when there is a scriptural reason, another bishop may marry them.

9. It is not considered upbuilding for younger or older people to go into saloons or drink houses and drink strong drink, or to buy it and drink it while driving around. Nor to take it home and to come together to drink. If such comes to pass with the members, they are not to remain unpunished and the parents are to apply all possible diligence to avoid such happenings.

10. It is considered by the Old Amish churches as not upbuilding to own a telephone, or to have one in the house, or in a little building by the road. But where they have them in higher churches, and it serves to peace, it is allowed to use them for scriptural needs, or in reasonable moderation, and then to pay whatever is asked.

11. It is recommended to keep house by the counsel of the church, with the Word of God, according to the circumstances. If anything comes up that is considered worthy of the bann by the ministry and the church, then the bann and shunning shall be practiced by the ministry and lay members until evangelical repentance is shown and evangelical reinstatement has been accomplished. If such a one thinks he was used unjustly, his complaining and accusations are not to be listened to, but he should be admonished

to repent and to better his life.

12. Further, it is recommended that when youth go to a neighboring church, they are to go in the "ordnung" of their home congregation, not in a disorderly way, as is sometimes the case.

13. Furthermore, it is considered by the senior ministers that if youth come to a neighboring church in a disorderly manner, then the ministers of that congregation shall admonish them. With this we are in complete agreement.

The following note was added to a copy of these articles after the Oct. 24-26, 1917 Ministers' Meeting. It was then signed by 55 ministers from Holmes, Geauga, and Madison Counties, Ohio and Lancaster and Mifflin Counties, Pennsylvania; Indiana, and Illinois.

*These preceding articles were read and agreed to by counsel in the Ministers' Meeting which was held in Holmes Co., Oh. Oct. 24, 25, 26, 1917*

The Minister's Meetings held in 1917 were mainly called as an effort to resolve the differences with Sam Yoder and his church (now known as the "Swartzentrubers"). During the years from 1910 to 1920 a number of Amish families moved from the middle and south districts to Sam Yoder's districts, located on the north side of the community. Sam was in favor of a stricter application of shunning (*streng Meidung*) and was also more conservative in other matters. It seems that by latter part of this time Sam and some of his followers favored separating from the main group of Amish. Some members of his congregation as well as the main body of Amish did not want this. One example is Ben J. Yoder, who was ordained minister in Sam's district in 1909. He moved to the Orrville area in March of 1918. His family relates that the move was made because he did agree with Sam to separate from the main group.

The ministers of the main group of Holmes County Amish Churches tried to appease and accommodate Sam. An example of this is the case of Menno Gingerich (1880-1954) who was a member in Sam Yoder's district. He was asked to shun his brother Eli, but did not feel it right to do so. This caused trouble, so he asked Abe S. Yoder if he and his family could transfer to his district. This took place around late 1917, according to his family. Abe did not consent to this, probably wanting to abide with the seven articles of agreement made with Sam Yoder at



the Ministers' Meeting on October 26, 1917. This agreement is recorded in bishop Abe S. Yoder's writings, and also as a separate, printed "Gemeinderat." It also records that the two Sam Yoder districts agreed to the "Gemeinderat." Following is an English translation of the "Gemeinderat."

### **Gemeinderat**

*The agreement with Sam E. Yoder and his church, agreed upon at the minister's meeting on October 26, 1917.*

- 1. That he will fellowship with all the Old Amish congregation represented at this meeting, and will use good judgment with the Holmes County ministers, but will greet them all with the kiss.*
- 2. That he will not keep the unity of the spirit [communion] with the Holmes County churches until they have shown support, with works and deeds, of the "Ordnungs Brief" which was under-signed at this meeting.*
- 3. That he will not pay attention to any church lines between his church and those churches which have not shown this support.*
- 4. That the established lines are to be followed between his church and the churches which have not shown support for the "Ordnungs Brief." That is, unless they will not take along to communion anyone who has not shown this support and will not share communion with those churches which have not shown support or are working on it.*
- 5. When it is so far accomplished that he and such congregations can work with each other again, then it shall be no hindrance in his congregations to do so, and if his congregations so agree in council, that they will again keep the unity of the spirit [communion] together again.*
- 6. That he is agreed with all the churches out of the area which are united, which do not cause a hindrance in the Holmes County churches in their supporting the above, or to come together again according to the "Ordnungs Brief."*
- 7. That we agree to practice patience in the mentioned circumstances; as long as ministers and the church work to unite the people and congregations with those congregations which*

*are following this [Ordnungs Brief] instead of seeking to unite with those which have not shown support.*

*Concerning this, Sam Yoder's North district agreed in a united church council on October 28, 1917.*

*It was also agreed to in a united church council in the South district on November 4, 1917.*

*It was signed by the following:*

#### North District

*Samuel E. Yoder  
Benjamin J. Yoder  
Daniel Yoder  
David L. Garver  
John Schmucker*

#### South District

*Samuel E. Yoder  
Daniel M. Wengerd  
Emanuel J. Schrock  
Moses M. Shetler  
John J. Hershberger*

Obviously an attempt to prevent a division in the Old Order Amish Church, the above "Gemeinderat" did not accomplish its purpose as it was not followed. On November 29, 30, and December 1, 1922 another Ministers' Meeting was held to discuss this division. Fifty- three bishops and ministers from five states attended. By this time Sam Yoders congregations had largely withdrawn from the larger group. No solution was found to bring the two groups together again.



## THE JOHN K. FISHER MYSTERY

by Henry L. Erb

Some time ago while looking through old wills in the Holmes County Probate Court, I noticed the will of a Henry Hershberger (HB 445 Gingerich/Kreider.) Henry was a son of Abraham and Catherine (Gnagey) Hershberger of Walnut Creek Twp. He was single throughout his life and died on May 28, 1877.

As I quickly glanced over it, my eye caught the name John K. Fisher, so I made a photocopy of it. Later, when I had time to study it, I discovered that it contained some important information on the Holmes County resident John K. Fisher. This in turn sent me to the Holmes County Records' Office to check on real estate transfers.

John K. Fisher was born September 14, 1854 and was the son of Johann Adam Fischer and Anna Barbara Sandoff, natives of Switzerland. John was born on the high seas as the family was immigrating to America. Information handed down through the family says that Anna Fisher died at childbirth and is buried at sea. Other sources say that her death took place the day they arrived in Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>1</sup> After arriving in Cleveland, Ohio, Johann Fischer found himself a poor widower with six children and could not afford to hire someone to help care for his children. It is said that he owned nothing but the clothes the family was wearing.

In the spring of 1855 Johann Fischer took his children and traveled to Mt. Hope, Ohio. He asked around if there was anyone who would be willing to take his children into their home. It is not known where the other children were placed, but the baby, 7 month-old John, was given a home by Simon and Sarah Keck, a childless Amish couple. They lived just south of Mt. Hope, Ohio on a 67½ acre farm which they had bought from Isaac and Polly Miller for \$1600 in 1853. An indenture was signed between Johann Fischer and Simon Keck on April 14, 1855. Young John was to stay with the Kecks until he was 18 years old. He was to receive a certain amount of schooling and upon reaching 18 years of age, Keck was to provide him with two suits of clothing.

Several years later, in approximately 1857, the Simon Kecks again became foster parents to another motherless child, 2½ year-old Nancy (Anna) D. Yoder. She was the daughter of David J. Yoder (YR 235473-Gingerich/Kreider) and Mary (Polly) Maust. Mary Maust had died in May of 1857.

John K. Fisher, upon reaching age 18 on September 14, 1872 freely entered into a second indenture with Simon Keck, this time for three years, or until his 21st birthday in 1875. The Kecks' foster daughter Nancy (Anna) D. Yoder was witness. John was to receive \$300 in cash plus some furniture and clothing when the indenture was due.

However, on December 31, 1874 John K. Fisher married Polly D. Yoder, a daughter of David J. Yoder (YR 235473) and Mary (Polly) Maust. Polly was a younger sister to the Kecks' foster daughter Nancy. Supposedly John and Polly set up housekeeping on the Keck farm, as John was still under the indenture to Keck.

On November 18, 1875 the Kecks' foster daughter Nancy was married to Peter M. Miller (ML 223114, Gingerich/Kreider and DBH 12449). At about this time the mystery begins.

John K. Fisher and Simon Keck did not get their indenture settled until March 24, 1876, six months after the due date. Does this give us as indication that there was a problem somewhere? One wonders whether John K. and Simon Keck had a disagreement. Where did the Kecks' recently-married foster daughter Nancy and Peter Miller live? Did they live on the Keck farm? Was there a problem concerning who would live on the Keck farm, the John K. Fishers or the Peter Millers? History does not tell us, so we will probably never know for sure.

On June 1, 1877, two days after the death of Henry Hershberger, his will was probated in Holmes County with John H. Schrock as Executor. Following is a copy the will:

### Copy of Will

*In the name of the Benevolent Father of all, I, Henry Hershberger, of Walnut Creek Twp., Holmes County, Ohio do make and publish this, my last will and testament.*

*Item 1. I give and devise the use of my farm with all the farming utensils and such household furniture as bureau, clock, cupboard, stove, thereon situated in Walnut Creek Twp.*

<sup>1</sup> David Luthy, The Amish in America, Settlements that Failed, 1840-1960. (Pathway Publishers, 1986) p.21



*in said County, 186 acres of land, more or less, for the term of 5 years after my death, to John K. Fisher, now residing on my said farm, free of rent, to use and improve said farm in a good husband-like manner, he however, Fisher, is to pay all the taxes on said farm and improvements (Except taxes due at present shall be paid with my money.) and keep said farm, fences, and buildings in good order. And at the termination of said 5 years to quietly yield their possession to my Executor, herein-after named. After the termination of said five years to said Fisher, I give said farm and property to my legal heirs.*

*Item 2. I give and devise all my livestock to said John K. Fisher forever, and also grain, my share in the ground. The said John K. Fisher shall take wheat out of the grainary for his own use as much as he needs till harvest and the balance he shall sell to pay off my debts. A new house roof is to be put on my house and shall be paid with my money. Also (\$100) one Hundred dollars of my money shall be put into the treasury of my church for the use of the poor. I do hereby nominate and appoint John H. Schrock, Executor of this, my last will and testament.*

*Henry Hershberger*

*Witnesses: Daniel B. Miller  
Solomon B. Miller*

By this will it can be seen that Henry Hershberger gave J.K. Fisher a 5-year rent-free lease to his farm. Since we have proof that John K. Fisher lived on the Hershberger farm between Walnut Creek and Trail in 1877, who lived on the Keck farm? Most likely it was the Kecks' foster daughter, the Peter M. Millers. It was while living on this farm that the Fishers' oldest son, Jacob, died on November 28, 1879 and was buried in Cemetery L-5.<sup>2</sup> This cemetery is located closeby to where they lived and it is now known why the Fishers have a son buried between Walnut Creek and Trail. Before the discovery of this will, it had been a mystery why the Fishers' son was buried in Cemetery L-5, when it was thought that they were living south of Mt. Hope, about five or six miles away.

At the end of the 5-year agreement, the Fishers apparently moved away since by August of 1882, nieces and nephews of Henry Hershberger were signing Quit Claim Deeds<sup>3</sup> for

2. Leroy Beachy, Cemetery Directory of the Amish Community in Eastern Holmes Co., (1975)

3. The author has copies of these Quit Claim Deeds.

the sum of \$940 each, to sell the farm (180 acres) to a Henry Hochstetler.

Where did the Fisher family move to? It Apparently was not onto the Keck farm. In January of 1883, another of J.K. Fisher's children, 10-month old Simon died and is buried in Cemetery F-3,<sup>2</sup> located 3/4 mile east of Mt. Hope. The author believes that they lived close by, most likely as renters.

In February of 1894, John K. Fisher's wife Polly died at age 37 and was buried in Cemetery F-14.<sup>2</sup> This cemetery is located in the neighborhood of the Keck farm. So one could ask whether the Fishers moved again, from east of Mt. Hope back to the Keck farm or to that neighborhood? In 1896 a daughter of J.K. Fisher, Lovina, died and is also buried in Cemetery F-14. In 1895 Mrs. Keck died and in August of 1896 Simon Keck died. They are both buried in Cemetery F-14. In October of 1894 J.K. Fisher remarried, to Anna Miller, daughter of Jacob Miller (DBH-10153) and Catherine Yoder.

By September 5, 1896, Peter and Nancy Miller (Nancy being the Keck's foster daughter) signed a Quit Claim Deed for \$2150 to sell the Keck farm to John K. and Anna Fisher. On the same day John K. and Anna Fisher sold to Nancy Miller a tract of 48 acres of land for \$2150. This land was located on part of N.E. Quarter Section 5, T14, R11, about 3½ miles east of Mt. Hope. I did not find a deed showing when the Fishers had bought this tract, but there has to be one somewhere. So at this time it is not known when the Fishers bought it. It appears that after the death of Simon Keck the farm was inherited jointly by John K. Fisher and Nancy Miller. By signing a Quit Claim Deed, Nancy Miller gave up her right to the Keck farm, and now John K. could get a clear deed.

The \$2150 apparently was roughly half the value of the Keck farm, because four years later, on February 10, 1900, John K. sold the Keck farm to Moses P. Miller for \$5250. He then moved to Geauga County. In 1911 John, who suffered from rheumatism, moved to the Amish settlement of Bay Minette, Alabama for a warmer climate. He lived there until 1925,<sup>4</sup> after which he moved to Norfolk, Virginia to one of his daughters for a while. From there he moved to Holmes County again and in about 1927 he moved back to Geauga County where he died on May 25, 1930.

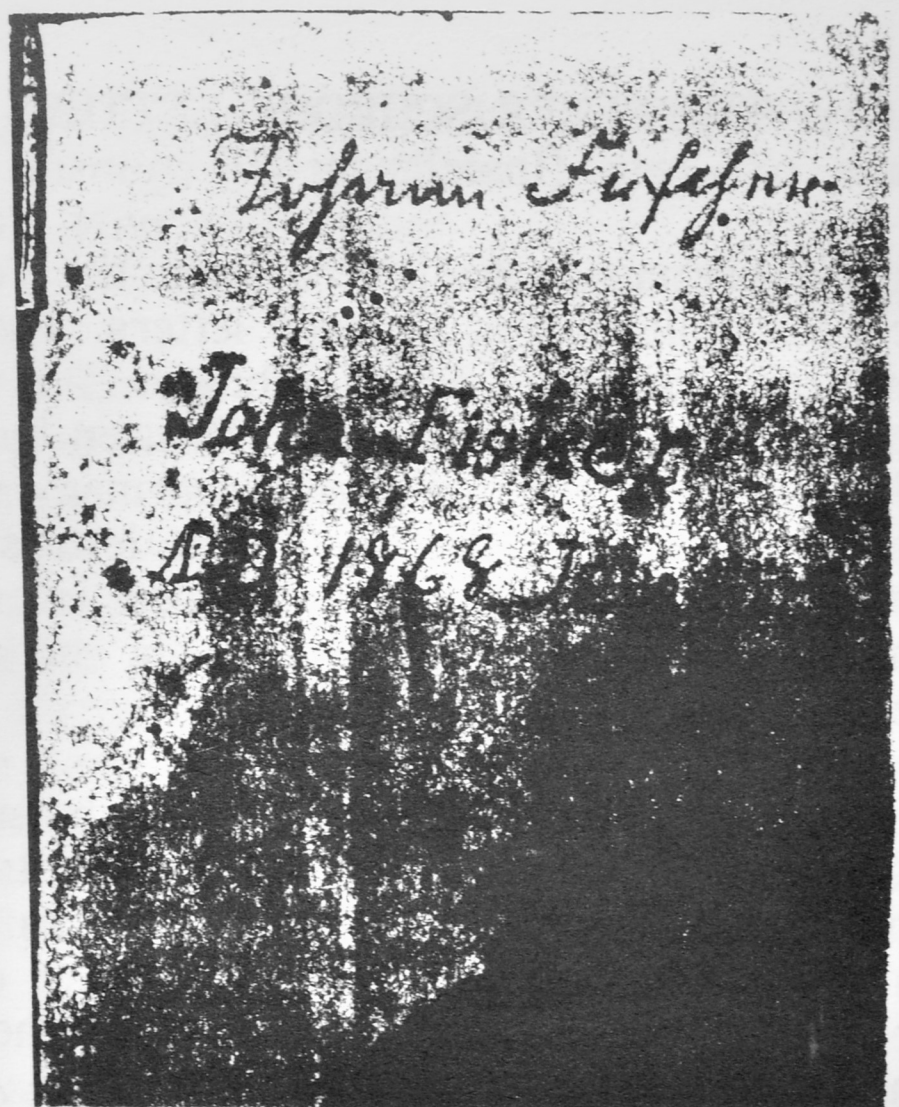
4 Same as footnote #1



A small German New Testament with the inscription: "John Fisher AD 1868 Jan 6th" on the flyleaf is in the archives at Ohio Amish Library, and can be seen there. The flyleaf also has the name "Johann Fischer", which appears to be in the handwriting of John K. Fisher, when one compares it to his other handwriting. A photocopy of the flyleaf is shown at the right:

Some of the information in this article is taken from the recently published book Reflections of a Family's History- Descendants of John K. Fisher 1854-2001. Copies can be obtained from the author: Sarah Mae Miller

13763 SR4  
Goshen, IN 46528



## WALNUT CREEK

Scale 2 1/4 inches to the Mile



This 1875 map of Walnut Creek Twp. shows where Henry Hershberger's farm was located.



## THE PETER SCHROCK LETTERS (Installment IV)

We present more letters from the Peter D. Schrock collection of German letters. These letters came to Ohio Amish Library in a wooden box labeled "Pure Castor Oil." Written by people who otherwise often did not keep many records nor record much history, such letters are a source of historical and geneological information and provide an insight into life in another century.

Peter D. Schrock (Schrack) was born in the Somerset Co., Pa. settlement in 1829 to David and Mary Schrock, and died in Holmes County in 1902. After marrying Susanna Miller of Brother's Valley Twp. in Somerset Co., they lived there until 1860 when they moved to Aurora, Preston Co., Virginia. (After the Civil War this area became West Virginia.) Peter was ordained minister in the Amish Church there. In 1868 the Schrocks moved to Holmes County. Here they purchased a farm in Walnut Creek Twp. behind Chestnut Ridge School which has remained in the Schrock family. Many of Peter's descendants live in Holmes and Geauga Counties, Ohio. (See the *Heritage Review*, vol. 8, 1999; vol. 9, 2000; and vol. 10, 2001 for more information on Peter Schrock and his family.)

The following letters are of general interest. One observation is that many of the letters were written in the winter, when the farmers had time on their hands. Usually they relate events that took place over quite a period of time, indicating that the letters were not too frequent.

Two important topics were the health of family and friends and the crops and farming conditions. Writing about one's health was important to them because sickness was often more serious and widespread, and often fatal. They write of health problems and epidemics which are of little worry to us today because of advanced health care. Markets for farm produce were not developed as they are today, so they had to process and store their crops in ways that are not commonly used today. In these letters they write of the making of wine as a means to preserve their grape crops, as well as making cider from apples. Milk was made into butter which could be kept and sold later. Nuts were gathered in the woods and used as part of their diet.

Another curious practice is mentioned several times in these letters. That is, of not naming

babies until they were six to twelve months old. Before this they were referred to as "die Bub", or " 's Bubli."

The first letter is from Peter's brother Benjamin, who was also a minister. He had moved to Johnson Co., Iowa in 1857. He mentions an abundant grape crop, resulting in 80 gallons of wine, surely more than one family needed!

Johnson Co., Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

Nov. 6, 1878

*First, a heartfelt greeting of love and peace to you, dear brother and fellow worker in the vineyard of the Lord. Hereby I wish you everything good to body and soul in this time and eternity. Further, I let you know that we are quite healthy, as long as the dear God wills. I hope these few lines will also find you healthy.*

*Further, the people are fairly healthy. But Abner hurt himself. The horses ran away and hurt his leg so that he can not walk well. It is not broken. The rest of the relatives are well as far as I know. The sore throat is around some. Five children died of it.*

*Yesterday we were at the wedding at John F. Millers of Crist F. Miller from Holmes County, Ohio and Mary M. Bender. Communion services are to be at Abners tomorrow. On Sunday at Deer Creek and on next Sunday at our place if the Lord gives us good health.*

*Solomon Miller was at our place. He says you have so many apples in Ohio, and not many grapes. We have more grapes than apples. I made 80 gallons of wine again. So we made use of many [grapes].*

*I think I have written you the last letter. If you were here we'd spend several days together. I do not think that I can go walking much any more. I am "going down the mountain" fast. I have lost much of my strength in several years' time. I think my time is short. I am in bad condition in my head. It sings (rings) continually and rattles so that often I do not hear well. By evening I feel sick all over from it.*

*Until now we have had nice weather. Concerning the markets, there is not much to say. Today someone was here and offered \$2.40 per hundred live weight [for steers]. There are 50 here being fattened. Abner has 70 [bushels] of good wheat, 60 of rye, 30 of oats, 20 of potatoes, 25 lbs. of butter.*

*Remember us in your prayers. We also have in mind to do so for you. So much from your brother.*

Benjamin Schrock



The following letter is from Peter Schrock's good friend, Christian Petersheim, from Aurora, W. Va. He writes of drying grain indoors before threshing it and of making wine.

Aurora Post  
Preston Co. W. Va.

Dec. 28, 1888

*First, a heartfelt greeting to you Peter Schrock and your children, and also to all our good friends and acquaintances who ask about us. [We wish you] everything good to body and soul in this time and in eternity. Further, I let you know that we received your letter and I saw that you were fairly healthy, God be thanked. We are also fairly healthy. My wife was sick the whole summer, but now is fairly well again.*

*We also had much rainy weather. It was wet the whole summer. Several times we had good sledding roads, but it was soon over with. The snow was not deep yet and the people are already busy hauling lime with oxen and horses.*

*I guess you know that Eli Yoder has your old place and Benj. Schrock has the Megroman place and Jeremias Millers live where Joseph Kemps lived. This summer they built a new house and had only lived in it about 6 weeks when it burned down, and everything in it burned. They were all away in church services.*

*The wheat harvest here was not very good. The oats were good and the corn was also fair. The barley was not much when it was sowed early. But the boys sowed quite late in July. They got a good crop, I believe, 76 bushels from about 3 acres, but it was not dried properly for threshing. They worked it into the attic and have turned it so that it will not spoil.*

*There were not a lot of apples, but we had peaches and pears. I made about 6 gallons of grape wine from one plant. We used elsewhere, and still some froze which were not fully ripe. If you would come in, then I would like to give you some to drink. I believe it is better than that was which we tasted that time at old Isaac Hostetlers. I put in a pound of sugar and almost a quart of alcohol.*

*I believe I must quit writing. I have a head ache and it is getting worse.*

*Now it is Monday, the 31st. I will write a little yet, but have nothing new to write about, except that yesterday 8 days ago Manas Bitschi's Rueben married Moni Hershberger's Lydia. They had Lena Bitschi down from Virginia as a witness. Yesterday church was at D. Bitschis. Today it is raining again.*

*I will close now. Finally, remember us in prayer to God the heavenly Father, that he will forgive us our past sins. And I will try to do*

*so for you in my great weakness. Now everyone watch, through Jesus Christ, Amen. So much from me, your well-wisher.*

*Christian Petersheim*

The following letter was written to Peter which he still lived in Aurora, W. Va. It is from his brother Christian, who still lived in the Glades area where Peter was born and raised. Five years later Christian moved to Johnson Co. Iowa where another brother, Benjamin, already lived. Christian remarks, almost casually, that his wife named their youngest son when he was 10 months old. He also writes of making vast amounts of butter, cider, and applebutter, obviously selling some of these products.

March 1, 1861

*Grace, peace, and mercy from God our beloved heavenly Father and the pure love of Jesus Christ be with us and with you all. Here-with I, Christian Schrack, your fellow minister, greet you heartily, brother Peter, wife and children, and also Daniels, with wishes for everything good to body and soul in this time and eternity.*

*Further, I let you know that we are healthy at this time. But quite a few people died in this community since you moved away, and still quite a few are sick. Some complain of one thing and others of another. Def Schrack has kept to the living room and his bed since December 27, now for about 10 weeks. His leg hurts.*

*Further, Samuel Stutzman and Abner's two daughters joined church last fall. In the church things are going about like usual.*

*My youngest son was 10 months old on the first of March. He walks about the house if he can hold onto something. His mother says his name is David Schrack.*

*Concerning things to eat, there is nothing to complain. I believe God helps us every day. We have nice weather. There is much snow. The last part of February the people began to cook sugar. They have quite a bit of sugar [maple syrup] already.*

*Last summer we made 14 barrels of butter and had a lot of apples. We had 26 barrels of cider, and cooked 15 of them into applebutter, 5 crocks full.*

*March 15th. Further, I let you know that I wanted to visit grandpa but the road was terribly muddy and now so snowy that we almost cannot go. But I will go now as soon as I am able to get away. Then I want to see that country too.*

*I got your letter only this winter. Then I should have written you soon, but it didn't*



happen. Have patience with me, for I had quite a bit of trouble this winter. I had a letter from Benjamin and one from Mose Miller. They are healthy and Lydia got married, a Shetler. They say I should come out some time, and see their country.

So much from your brother and well-wisher,  
Christian Schrack and wife  
Benjamin says the snow was 2 feet deep in Iowa

The next letter was written several months after the above letter. It was from Peter's father-in-law John P. Miller, who also lived in the Glades. He writes that the "butter business" was not very good. This letter was written in English and we print only part of it here.

Peter Schrock Oct. 8, 1861  
German Settlement, Preston Co. Va.

It is a hard matter for me to answer your request about the butter business. I have now 66 kegs on hand to go to Johnstown tomorrow. Prices are running from 12 to 13 cents in the Citty for choice lots, common lots are no sale of any account. If no change in this there will be lots of butter left unsold this winter. I cannot give you any further advice at this time. Business is as dark as midnite in all respects but cattle are good prices and horses are good prices.

John P. Miller  
Cove, Md.

The following letter is from Peter's brother Moses, who lived in the Glades. He names his oldest 9 children and says that three have died, probably from childhood diseases. He also says that "just now they have named the baby." We could surmise he asked his wife and children to come up with a name while he wrote the letter. The baby was already 15 months old at the time.

The Glades April 3, 1876  
Accident, Md.

First a greeting to you. Herewith I let you know that we are still healthy. The people are quite healthy but the times are hard. Money is scarce.

Our winter was almost like yours. For about 10 days now it was very inclement. The snow is quite deep. Now it is raining. The snow will go fast now.

Write to me again. Now it is bed time. Come to visit us sometime. We cannot go to Iowa for the time being.

[My Children]

Manasseh Schrock	was born Sept. 29, 1855
Susannah Schrock	March 27, 1853
Jonas	October 4, 1859
Daniel	April 22, 1861
Christian	August 25, 1863
Peter	April 13, 1865
Sarah	March 27, 1867
Elizabeth	October 18, 1869
Benjamin	May 8, 1872

Three have died: Peter, Susannah, and Elizabeth. They just now named the baby Samuel. Samuel Schrock was born January 4, 1875.  
So much from me,

Mosis Schrock

How are yours named?

In this letter, Christian Petersheim from Aurora, W. Va. writes of serious sickness in their home. In their day contagious diseases would often spread, almost unchecked. He mentions that measles caused a death. He also writes that a member of their church married a Mennonite girl and was put from the church.

German Settlement Jan. 26, 1873  
Aurora, W. Va.

First a hearty greeting to you Peter Schrack and children, as also to all our good friends and acquaintances. Further, I let you know that we received your letter and saw that you are healthy.

You wrote that you hope your letter also finds us in good health, but it did not. We had our living room so full of beds that we had to take the table out. The children had the measles, the chicken pox, and the cold. We had to have the doctor, but they are all up again. There were eight all together.

Christian Bender's wife died of the measles. Old granny Wilk still lives and is healthy. I was there this winter and she was sitting by the stove. Old Dens (Daniels) still live where they did. I guess as long as Bitschi lets them live there, they will.

You wondered if he still has horses. He has two, one good little mare and one colt that will be 3 years old. I think that half of the time he does not work anything. I don't think that he has earned anything this winter. They go out for visiting and he gets a cold again and croaks around.

Further, this winter we have had very cold weather, but not much snow yet. There were several times that sledding went well. Then it began to rain and turned into ice so that it was



almost impossible to go away.

Tobias is again working at the Bredis for 12 dollars a month. He worked for three weeks, then he got the measles. Now he has worked for a week again.

Also Joel Schlabach has married again, down by the river, to a Mennonite girl. Her name was Kate Schumacher. Yesterday he was put out of the church. Church was at our house. I have been working on this letter for 8 days. Since the third of November the road was good for sledding, but today it is raining again.

I will now let off my humble writing. Remember us in your prayers. So much from me, your well-wisher,

Christian Petersheim

The following letter was sent to Peter while he was still in Aurora, and is from his father-in-law John P. Miller. He echoes the above letters by saying that the times were hard. This could be why many people were moving to Iowa from the Glades, as he mentions.

March 16, 1864

To Peter Schrack, Esq. A friendly greeting to you and your wife and all good friends in the name of our Lord. Further, I let you know that grandma is on a good way to recovery again, if things do not turn around as they already did once. Today she is carding wool to make a comfort for Anna. Anna will be well again soon and the others are still healthy as far as I know.

Today it is quite cold and it is snowing, often times heavily. Rudy is hauling manure with the sled. I am working at my occupation, which is doing nothing. We made sugar [maple syrup] this spring already like wild. We have 340 lbs. of sweet maple syrup. We will make more if we get more [sugar] water.

The grasshoppers were really bad in the lawn, and for as far as I could hear. Hay costs from 25 to 30 dollars per ton. Straw has sold for 7 and 8 dollars for a sled load. Already much livestock has starved to death. We lost a calf. The blue lice ate it up. If it stays with this, we want to call it good. For this year, we still have a lot of straw, but not much hay. The oats are barely enough. I have enough wheat for us. The grain in the ground (seed) seems very bad now, yet we must wait for a harvest in hope, and thank God for what he allows us to harvest. We would love to hear from you if possible.

On Green (!) Thursday I want to go to the Bauman's auction. They sold to William Dihwewn for 5000 dollars and will move to Indiana. On the 26th the Benj. Hochstetlers have auction. On Easter Monday the Highs in Salisbury have

auction in the store. Tuesdays after Easter Monday, the "Red" Samuel Beachys have auction. John Miller has auction the last day of March. All these want to move to Iowa. Abraham is moving to old Jacob Millers to farm on shares. Tobias Yoder has left and John Peck has also gone. Anna also wants to go along if she gets well enough.

Now I think it is time to come to a close. My best regards to you all in the name of God.

John P. Miller

This letter is from Peter's niece Judith Yoder from Iowa. She was working for a Shelter family at the time. She writes of a near fatal accident.

Johnson Co., Iowa

Sept. 15, 1866

First a heartfelt greeting of Love and Peace to you, Uncle Peter and your wife and children, wishing you everything good to soul and body in this time and much more, in eternity. I let you know that God be praised, we are healthy.

Today three weeks ago I was at home. They were all healthy, except Gideon was not quite. On Saturdays Daudy went to the city with several neighbors to fetch lumber. They want to build another house. Gideon was along. On the way home he was sitting on Daudy's wagon. They do not know how it happened, but he fell off and the rear wheel went over his shoulder and head. The first Daudy knew, he was standing behind the wagon. Those who saw it are surprised that he was not killed. Last Sunday Ananias and the girls and Barbara Schrock were here. They said he (Gideon) is quite well again.

Today they all went to church, but little Peter and I are at home. I thought I would write you a few lines. Ten [youth] are taking instruction classes this summer, 4 boys and 6 girls. Old Joseph Gasho has died in Indiana. He always wanted to come out here to Iowa, but never got that far. I like it well here at Shetlers. I have enough work, but do not have to work too hard.

About the weather, it was quite dry, but now we have enough rain. Uncle, I want to relate something. You may think I only want to brag, but I do not want to. We are on our second barrel of butter. Here the people have huge butter barrels. And the butter is just as good in Iowa as in there.

Further, I do not know much to write for this time. So much from your friend and well-wisher,

Judith Yoder

You said the postmaster said there is no post office in Iowa. There is: Amish Post Office, Johnson County, Iowa. Address your letter this way and I am sure to get it. Write again soon.



At the time of these letters things slowed down quite a bit in the winter. People had time to write letters and to relax, as the next several letters show. The following letter was from a friend in Somerset County, Benedict Hochstetler. It was written in English and we print part of it here in its original spellings.

January 2, 1864

Dear Brother-in-law Peter Schrock and your wife and children,

Now I will let you no what we intend to do till spring, go to the state of Iowa if we stay well that long. And Anne will go along with us to the state of Iowa. Now I wish you would sell your farm and go long with us to the state of Iowa.

Now I will let you no about war. They was two trafts maid here in our state of Pa. and the third trafted (draft) is near at hand, they say till the fifth of January. Mebby they will put that traft of till after. While I was so lucky yet, it didn't hit me, but the next time it might hit me to. But I hope they will let me clear.

Now I will let you no what Miss Anne is doing at this present moment, laying on the coal box and rest herself. And Elizabeth is setting on a chair and rest her hands and feet, and Jeremiah is setting behind the stove and eat chestnuts.

Benedict A. Hochstetler

Elklick Township, Somerset Co. Pa.

In this letter, Peter's brother Moses writes of a health problem he is having. He also writes what the family was doing on a snowy winter day.

German Settlement

Feb. 9, 1873

First a greeting to you, Peter, and also your children. Further, we are quite healthy except for a bad cold. The people are mostly in good health, as far as I know.

For about two months I am so that I cannot work well. It appears that something is out of joint. It came suddenly, and I could not walk anymore. It still goes out of joint.

We have a very persistent winter. It started early and snowed a lot. It snowed for eight days and the snow was quite deep. The snow was almost gone, now today it is "plucking geese" again and "chases the feathers about very wildly."

We have good hopes for a railroad. The Pennsylvania Company bought 3000 wooded acres three miles from here toward Oakland.

We have 9 horses, and old Mary we killed. Del is getting a colt again. She has her colt every year. Sally also will have a colt. She is 4

years old. The horses were almost all sick around here. Ours were too, but four of the colts did not get it, and also not the mares. Last Monday we had to drag out the best and choicest cow around here. She fell on ice.

[The following section was written in English by Moses' oldest son Manasseh.]

Further I will let you know that Anty Schrack came in here this winter and now he is working at Joel Benders. Now if you write again we would like if you would tell us whether you are acquainted with him.

We received your letter the 7th of February. I caught a catamount (wildcat) this winter. If you want to see it, go to Christian Brenneman in Ohio. He wanted it for a shop show and then Daniel Brenneman bought it and sent it to him.

Perhaps we would come out there too but I have to run the sawmill. I was working at the mill nearly all the week.

Now it is Tuesday about 9 o'clock. Manas is in the basement making shingles, so I have to write myself. Joni is lying on the woodbox. Daniel and Christian and Sarah are in their beds and Benjamin sits on mother's lap and nurses. It is now raining and is warm weather. We are sawing a little, so I don't have time to write much. I must quit. So much from us,

Mosi and Catharine Schrack.

This letter by Christian Petersheim was written soon after Peter moved to Ohio. He also wanted to move, but couldn't sell his farm. He writes of not attending church for some time. This may not have all been due to the weather, as he wishes he could be in church with Peter.

German Settlement Post

May 30, 1868

First a hearty greeting to you, Peter Schrack and to your wife and children, wishing you all good to soul and body in this time and eternity.

I got the letter you wrote the 3rd and we were happy to hear from you again. I would have written earlier but I thought I would wait until I knew whether old Cal would take that piece of land. But I still don't know.

Joels moved onto the old Bitschi place. Old Dan's Del died a long time ago. Now John Henry Stembel lent him a horse until this summer.

Today, the 31st, the church is at John Schlabachs. None of us was in church since last winter, when it was at Bitschis. Today Tobias and Lovina went. I wish I could be with you in church today. Until now we had very wet and cold weather. We did not have much warm weather. So much from me,

Christian Petersheim



## LETTERS OF WARNING -A CRITIQUE-

by Leroy Beachy

Recently a friend sent me a copy of a Warning Letter such as I often find tucked in Bibles that are brought to me for translation of German handwriting found on the flyleaves or on birth registers.

A number of variants of this letter exist, the most common one identified as having appeared in golden letters in the sky on January 29, 1721 at Magdeburg, a city in the northern part of Germany. But this variant claims the letter appeared that night at Wenkenberg, a smaller village farther south in Germany near where some of our ancestors lived at that time. Other variants may name different places as the site of it's appearance. Since the letter is an obvious forgery it seems best to believe that it never appeared in either Magdeburg, or Wenkenberg, or at any other place.

That the letter is of Catholic origin is evident from the admonition to "go to church [Kirche] early on Sunday - to confess your sins." The advice to go "early" to confess sins may have helped to lessen the number of confessors later in the day when it was considered more convenient for many. This would help to spread the task of hearing confessions more evenly for the officiating priests. Just getting people to go to the "Kirche" was becoming a problem for the Catholics at the time because during the Reformation, many, like the Anabaptists, simply met in their homes to worship. Since non-attendance deprived the "Kirche" of income from the money paid for hearing confessions, it is understandable why the wonder of a purported letter in the sky was invented to urge the superstitious to keep attending regularly.

At first it may seem strange that the forgery has held so much respect among our people that it has been passed on for 280 years. The reason for its continuance has likely been mainly because the plain people are agreed with the list of directives that are named: No vain display; no wigs; not to be proud; to share with the poor; not to live like animals; to keep Sunday holy; not to work late on Saturday; not to desire gold or silver; not to practice deceit; neither pride,

lust, or covetousness; not to speak evil of another; not to rejoice at a neighbor's misfortune; and, children are to honor their parents. While we agree that these are important to keep, and nearly all are biblically supported, we may suspect that the remembrance of these things served well to remind the populace of their sins, and to bring them in regularly for confession, thus replenishing the "Kirche" money supply.

A further probable reason for the preservice of the letter by those less acquainted with the scriptures and more given to superstition is the letter's list of punishments for disregarding it and the rewards for keeping it. As for the punishments: One is that one is to believe that the letter was actually written by God [or Jesus] and that anyone who fails to do so shall be lost and damned. Another is that if one has a copy of the letter and does not pass it on he shall be cursed by the authoritative "Kirche" and separated from the mighty hand of God. Further; war, pestilence, famine, and plague are in store for those who do not believe in the letter. And last: if you do not support it you will be confronted at the judgement and you will not be able to answer one word.

The letter promises a brighter side to those who support it: Thought your sins shall be as numerous as the sand of the sea and the grass on the land, they shall be forgiven if you believe in the letter and do as it says. And whoever will carry about a copy of the letter and show it to others will have a joyous departure from this world.

Perhaps a main reason that those of a superstitious nature have kept a copy in their home is the letter's promise that it will serve as a charm to "whoever keeps a letter in his house" in that it will provide protection from severe weather, lightning, fire, and flood. Although I have for many years kept variant copies in my file for a purpose other than for its promises, it failed to do its purported work when lightning struck our house in the early seventies and caused several hundred dollars worth of damage and again in December, 1977, when a fire destroyed the greater part of our house.

On the following page is a copy of the "Warning Letter" which we "warn against."



## Ein ganz neuer trauriger und wahrhaftiger Warnungsbericht von dem am 29. Wintermonat zu Wenkenberg in der Luft gehangenen Brief

Welchen Gott hat sehen lassen, vor und in der Stadt, also daß Niemand weiß worauf und woran er hanget, ist aber mit goldenen Buchstaben geschrieben, und von Gott durch einen Engel gesandt; wer Lust hat, ihn abzuschreiben, zu dem neiget er sich, wer aber nicht Lust hat, ihn abzuschreiben, vor dem fliehet er in die Luft.

Erstens heißt es in diesem Brief: Ich gebiete euch, daß ihr am Sonntag nicht arbeiten sollet, sondern mit Andacht fleißig in die Kirche gehet und fleißig betet, und unter dem Angesicht euch nicht schmeißet. Zum anderen sollet ihr keine fremden Haare oder Perücken tragen, noch Hoßart damit treiben. Von euren Reichthümern sollet ihr den Armen auch mittheilen, und glaubet, daß dieser Brief mit Gottes eigener Hand geschrieben, und von Jesu Christo uns ist aufgesetzt, auf daß ihr nicht tuet wie unvernünftiges Vieh. Ihr habet sechs Tage in der Woche, eure Arbeit zu verrichten, aber den Sonntag sollet ihr mir heiligen. Wollet ihr mir es aber nicht tun, so will ich Krieg und Pestilenz und Hungersnot auf Erden schicken, und mit vielen Plagen euch strafen, auf daß ihr es hart empfindet.

Zum Dritten gebiete ich euch, daß ihr am Samstag nicht zu spät arbeitet, und am Sonntag wieder früh in die Kirche geht, ein jeder, er sei jung oder alt, in wachender Andacht seine Sünden bekennen, auf daß sie euch vergeben werden.

Zum Vierten begehret nicht Gold oder Silber, treibet nicht Betrug mit feinen Sachen, noch Hoßart, noch Fleiß, noch Lust und Begierden, sondern gedenket, daß ich alles gemacht habe, und wieder zerschmeißen kann. Einer rede dem andern nichts Böses nach, und freue dich nicht, wenn dein näch-

ster arm wird, sondern habe Mitleiden mit demselbigen.

Ihr Kinder ehret euren Vater und Mutter, so wird es euch wohl gehen; wer das nicht glaubt und nicht haltet, der sei verloren und verdammt. Jesus hat das mit seiner eignen Hand geschrieben, wer es widerspricht und von mir absteht, der soll meiner Hilfe nicht zu erwarten haben; wer den Brief hat und nicht offenbart, der sei verflucht von der herrlichen Kirche Gottes, und von meiner allmächtigen Hand verlassen. Dieser Brief wird jedem gegeben abzuschreiben; und sollten eurer Sünde so viel sein als Sand am Meer und Gras auf dem Felde, so sollen sie euch doch vergeben werden, so ihr's glaubt und haltet, was dieser Brief sagt. Ich werde euch am jüngsten Tag fragen, und ihr werdet mir von euren Sünden wegen, nicht ein Wort können antworten. Wer diesen Brief zu Hause hat, den wird kein Wetter erschlagen oder Donner erschlagen, vor Feuer und Wasser wird er verwahrt und sicher sein. Welche Person den Brief hat, und bei sich trägt, und den Menschenkindern offenbart, die soll einen fröhlichen Abschied von dieser Welt nehmen und empfangen. Haltet meinen Befehl, den ich euch gegeben, durch den Diener, welchen ich gesandt habe. Ich ein Apostel noch für euch gegeben zu Wenkenburg in der Luft gehangenen Brief, den 29sten Wintermonat im Jahr 1721.

Du Mensch betrachte doch, was sich hier zugetragen,  
Gott hat es sogefügt und das ist seine Hand;  
Er wolle, daß wir nicht sein Strafen müssen tragen;  
Ach Herr behüte selbst die Stadt und unser Land:  
Ach! laß uns diese Ruh, noch lange Zeit genießen,  
Und diesen Gnadenstrom beständig auf uns fließen.