

A HISTORY
OF
THE MENNONITES
IN CROGHAN AND LOWVILLE
(LEWIS COUNTY)

NEW YORK

STORIES AND SKETCHES
AS TOLD BY OTHERS

GENEALOGIES
of
DEACONS, MINISTERS, AND BISHOPS

from
BEGINNING OF CHURCH

until
PRESENT DAY

INTRODUCING THE MENNONITES

CREDITS OF FAITH

I

Will you arm ourselves with those gone before;
And rely upon their strong characters as signals of faith;
May we place ourselves in their sorrows and trials;
And know that God leads face to face.

II

Will your spirits be strong, be firm, be true;
An example left by those who have said good-bye;
May we swiftly tread our paths and labor;
Till we reach our loving Saviour's side.

ARLETHA BENDER, B. R. E.

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PREFACE

Psalm 24:1 — "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

Eccl. 1:4 — "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever."

A short history is here given including the beginning of our Lewis County Mennonite Church and a sketch of the continuation of its growth to the present day. It was during my years at Eastern Mennonite College that I began working at the history of my home church. Encouragement and help, a collection of material, also a teaching that gave me a concern for our Mennonite heritage, were given to me by my parents, Andrew and Mollie Roggie Zehr. The church and Christian teachers also helped to create an interest in studying the lives of our Lewis County church founders.

Covering a century and thirty years that have come and gone, we cannot appreciate the efforts of our grandparents and great-grandparents who were so faithful and daring to come to this land for religious freedom. God surely had some purpose in bringing these people to our country, America.

It is now our responsibility to help fulfill this purpose by carrying on the labors they have left unfinished. Footprints have been left in the sands of time that we cannot remove, and their lives have inspired many. A beneficial life is lived by one who helps pave and smooth the road for those who come behind.

Nothing can be found concerning the history of many of our early settlers. The memory of our aged, many of whom are now deceased, aided to make the written material and details, and many thanks to our present-day aged, who related interesting stories and figured dates to their origination. Extreme study has been made to get the dates correct or as near as possible.

This short history is to improve our appreciation and concern for our churches and give us a greater desire to serve and labor to the best of our ability.

ARLETHA ZEHR BENDER, B.R.E.

FROM EUROPE TO AMERICA

In the latter 18th and 19th Centuries difficult circumstances brought great concern to the Mennonites, also known as the Anti-Baptist people, in Alsace and Lorraine, France. These two small territories of Alsace and Lorraine were exchanged many times between the German and French governments.

However, under rule of a Republican government the "Mennonites requested exemption from the requirement to swear the usual oath in court,"¹ (page. 49) and were granted it. "The other issue which caused the Mennonites of Alsace great concern was the demand of the state that they perform military service, an obligation which they felt was impossible for them because of New Testament teaching."² The Mennonites asked for exemption from this and were granted it in 1790, with the loss of certain rights of citizenship.

After Napoleon became Emperor of France, the military exemption was not granted. On "June 19, 1808, the Alsatian Mennonites met in Conference at Bildhauserhof near Schlettstadt to consider the military problem."³ (p. 50) Twenty-two ministers representing nine congregations were present at the meeting. They decided to send two French-speaking brethren to Paris, and also set aside January 29, 1809, as a day of prayer and fasting for the success of the mission. Nothing was accomplished in Paris and the situation remained unchanged.

Two additional conferences were held in 1811, but the Mennonites were confronted with the words, "No one may refuse military service because of his faith." (p. 50)

It was now realized that they could no longer practice nonresistance in their homeland. Difficulties saddened their hearts but confronting them grew the realization of immigration. Therefore, many chose to emigrate. Those who remained behind were forced into military service regardless of any Biblical teachings or beliefs they may have had.

The years 1815-1861 are marked as the period when a second wave of immigrants left their European homes to come to a new home in America. The first general wave had begun in 1710 and continued until the French and Indian War of 1756-63. The second wave began after the time of Napoleon and continued until the outbreak of the U. S. Civil War. In these years about three thousand people, chiefly Alsatian Amish, but including Swiss and South German Mennonites came to America. These immigrants settled chiefly in Western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa.

It was during this period when Mennonite and Amish Mennonite settlers came to French Settlement, now known as Croghan, located in Lewis County, in Northeastern New York.

During the latter part of the Eighteenth Century Lewis County had become of interest to the pioneering. As late as 1776 a map shows areas of Northern New York not susceptible to tillage, and it was thought this marshy land was full of otters and beavers. The first census, of 1790, showed no people living in Lewis County. Before 1820, the east side of Black River was total wilderness, never yet settled by white man.

European immigrants learned of French Settlement from John Keiffer, a native of Alsace, France, who knew about this land through Comte Le Ray De Chaumont. De Chaumont purchased cheaply a great plot of land through the failure of a French company. This land extended east through Lewis and Jefferson Counties and into the foothills of the Adirondack Mountains.

John Keiffer became a representative acting as an agent of De Chaumont. Traveling many times between Europe and America, De Chaumont with his agents found interested French settlers to colonize the many acres of forest land bordering the Beaver River. John Keiffer's first voyage to America was in 1830. In 1833, he influenced interested Mennonite and Amish Mennonite families of Alsace and Lorraine to leave their European homes for the new homes in America.

There were several reasons why these German and French speaking people had shown interest in the stories and proposals of John Keiffer who is also thought to have been a Mennonite. They were principally because of the law which required compulsory military service and because of the poor financial circumstances in the home land. Other religious scruples and oppressions by the landholders were determining factors in their immigration.

Leaving these difficult economic situations following the Napoleonic Wars, these people made the three thousand mile voyage across the Atlantic in a sailboat with zeal and courage. They visualized a freedom in the New World which they could claim forever. This sense of freedom brought deep satisfaction and a longing to keep the teaching of love and nonresistance, which was denied them in Europe.

According to the few records available in June, 1833, Michael Zehr, a Mennonite minister and his wife, Anna Jantzi, and family made the lengthy voyage across the Atlantic and landed in New York City. It is supposed they came up the Hudson River by boat to Albany, then to Utica by canal. On arriving at Utica, they were in need of food and money. Work was sought and the two oldest boys remained in this vicinity several weeks to earn money while the parents and remaining children traveled through the North woods possibly to Lowville, then east to the present Illingsworth bridge which crosses Black River. Many of our early pioneers crossed this river by boat and walked the remaining eight miles to French settlement, now known as Croghan.

Arriving at French settlement, they faced the darkened depth of the thick forest with countless maple, hemlock, and birch trees with their dense foliage veiling the sunlight from sending its rays on the well-moistened ground beneath. It was here they realized their need to purchase land on which to establish home life. The land was cheap, selling

anywhere from \$1.50 to \$3.00 per acre. Mr. Keiffer, representing De Chaumont, pointed out the land for sale, and Michael Zehr purchased near Beaver River, according to his means.

The country along the Beaver River was called in the Indian tongue, Couch-Sach-ra-ge, meaning "Beaver Hunting Country." 1 (p. 19) Beaver lodges dotted the shores all along the river. The many nearby Indians did not disturb their little homes.

Michael Zehr began the work of building a new home on what is now known as the Ira Zehr farm located in the northern end of the village of Croghan. His little log cabin was built about one-fourth mile behind the present frame house, a more centered spot in his purchased plot.

On May 8, 1834, the next to the last child of Michael Zehr was born, the first baby in Lewis County with Mennonite heritage. During the spring of the same year, the second and third Mennonite families made their voyage of forty-two days in a small sailboat and landed in New York. They traveled by boat and foot to French settlement where they joined the Michael Zehr family. These too, were ordained ministers, namely, Rudolph Virkler, and Joseph Farney.

The Joseph Farney family purchased land where the farm of Gilbert Lehman presently stands. The Rudolph Virkler family built their log cabin on the farm now occupied by Howard Virkler, all near Croghan.

Until the log cabins were built, the early settlers were forced of necessity to sometimes sleep under the trees among the wild animals and the friendly Indians. A mere shack, close to the banks of Beaver River belonging to the Indians and wherein they were living, welcomed some of the night lodgers and gave a place of shelter for them. Some mothers with their babies and small children stayed in this Indian hut until a home of their own was built. When cold weather prevailed, a nearby inn served as a lodging center. However, shortly after the arrival of the Farney and Virkler families, a snowstorm greatly discouraged them, but nevertheless, they continued on in building from the forest a new home.

Many large and small trees felled by storm or dead by age lay numberless on the ground so trails had to be cut before the invaders could proceed with their tasks. On all sides was the forest with its shadows broken only by the wild animals and Indians close by. The panthers made the night hideous with their blood-curdling screams or else the growl of the bear was heard, and some wolves inhabited the woods.

The first Mennonite homes built in and near French Settlement were simple one story log cabins with a kitchen, living room, and bedroom. "Overhead was a loft or attic which was used as sleeping quarters. There was no foundation under the cabins, the logs being laid directly on the ground. The chinks between the logs were well plastered to keep out the cold"2 (p. 20) In the fall dirt was banked around the cabins to make it warmer throughout the winter months.

A large fireplace was used to supply heat and used for cooking purposes. It had an iron bar inside where iron kettles hung on chains, and

small brass pots on high legs were set in the fireplace to prepare foods. The nearby Indians often made themselves at home among the new neighbors by lying on the floor rolled in a coat or blanket in front of the fireplace.

Fish and wild game were used by the settlers in abundance. Deer were so tame that they often browsed with the oxen in the field.

Some of our Mennonite pioneers settling in this forest area had only an ax with which to cut trees unless a saw was borrowed from the neighbors. Many trees were cut and cleared away with the stumps remaining so planting crops could be started as soon as possible. Working hours did not cease until darkness prevailed. Some settlers were known to have toiled into the night when the work could be done in the moonlight.

Land was cleared in an effort to plant rye, wheat, corn, and potatoes. Flax was raised, and the early women settlers used it for weaving cloth and making clothing and other household necessities.

By 1837 a small colony had started. The Zehr, Farney, and Virkler families and more new settlers from France had already surrounded themselves with many comforts. Clearings had begun to widen in area, gardens had become enlarged, and the green color of growing crops was more visible among the trees. Little log cabins dotted the woody forest with trails leading to each doorstep. Up to this time no frame house had been built. A forest-bordered trail led from French Settlement to Lowville, which the early settlers frequently traversed with packs on their backs filled with supplies from their own little farm to exchange for the purchases needed. Traveling the twenty miles by foot required a two-day journey, one for each way.

Coming from the fruitful farming lands of France to the northern woods of New York, they labored faithfully to start a new home in the New World. These Mennonites, known for their thriftiness and as good ground tillers in the Old World, and recognized as such by the government, were known as the same in America.

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THE CHURCH BEGINNING

In 1838, this infant colony was considerably enlarged by more newcomers from the old home in Europe. In less than ten years, twenty Mennonite and Amish Mennonite families came over, from which were found French and German speaking people. Some came from the small territory of Alsace and some from the neighboring territory, Lorraine. The various names found among these people were Zehr, Virkler, Farney, Kennel, Moser, Jantzi, Martin, Noftsier, Roggie, Steria, Shantz, Hirschey, Widrick, and others.

Among them were Mrs. Chris Martin, Louise Yancey, who was born on the sailboat coming to America, and Joe Noftsier, great grandfather of writer, who was born in Utica on the way inland.

Financial conditions in Europe had made a difficult economic situation for the prospective Lewis County pioneers. Some who lacked material needs were given a paid fare ticket with the understanding of paying back to the benefactors their service after arriving in the New World. This caused family separations as not enough money was given for an entire family fare. After arriving in their new settlement, they would labor hard to earn enough money to send for the rest of their families.

All settled in or near French Settlement, or Croghan, as it became known later, named after Major Croghan. This was an important logging town since it was the center of a big lumber industry. Many people came here in search for work. Sometimes nearly a thousand people were employed in the woods at one time having a radius of twenty miles from this small town.

Although the pioneers were busy building homes and getting a start in their new world, church obligations were not forgotten. Various branches of religious people settled in French Settlement and in 1833 the Catholic Church was organized.

The year 1836 marks the beginning of an organized Amish Mennonite Church in Lewis County. Joseph Farney already ordained as a Mennonite bishop in France, and Michael Zehr and Rudolph Virkler, who had been previously ordained ministers, took their responsibility to minister to the spiritual needs of the people.

Church services were conducted every other Sunday forenoon in the different Amish Mennonite homes. Each family in turn opened his doors to these religious gatherings. Although they were able to speak the French and German languages, they retained the German longest and used it for the church services. A little English could be spoken by some.

To suit the needs of a rural people who walked or rode in a cart drawn by oxen, no exact time was set for starting or closing the service.

It began with singing led by anyone of the brethren who desired to do so. The singing consisted of the German one part, chant hymns from the hymn book called the "Ausbund". This sometimes lasted as long as one hour.

During the singing period, the ministers usually retired to a separate room for discussion and prayer. After their return, expository reading from the Bible which took on the nature of a sermon was given by one of the ministers or the deacon. This was followed by silent prayer, then closing with the Lord's Prayer. The service continued with a lengthy sermon given by a second minister after which brethren from the congregation were called upon for testimony. The meeting was concluded by audible prayer and a hymn.

It was customary for men and boys to sit in one room while the women and girls sat in another. Benches without backs were used for seats. The minister speaking stood in the doorway between rooms. The earliest preaching may have been done sitting down, because Michael Zehr is known as having done so.

These lengthy services of possibly three hours caused children to become hungry, and their needs were not forgotten. A plate of cookies for them was quietly passed from hand to hand sometime around the middle of the service. This was provided by the host and hostess of the home where they were assembled. After the dismissal of the service, a simple lunch of bread, butter, coffee and cookies or doughnuts was served to everyone. This provided time for fellowship and more singing.

These immigrants from Europe were already distinguished as a respectable, quiet, and peace-loving folk. They were known as an honest people and also as good farmers. Their simple form of homemade clothing distinguished them from others and also revealed an inner expression of humility and purity. Many of them were well educated in Europe. After they came to America, their talent was used in various types of service. Some had a singing talent, some had leadership talent, and some accepted a public office in connection with the business world. A public office was not acceptable to the church, if it in any way conflicted with doctrinal teachings or practices they may have had.

In the year 1850 an invited elder, Benedict Weyeneth from Switzerland, came to French Settlement. Some have said that two men came at this time, both from Switzerland, who were of a sect popularly known as "die Frohlich". A little different teaching unfamiliar to the Amish Mennonite people was introduced by them. A writer indicated that one change pertained to the New Birth experience by placing emphasis on feeling, impulse, or emotion. They also subscribed to the doctrine of baptism by immersion rather than pouring water on the applicant's head for this outward expression of an inner cleansing from sin.

Attending the regular Sunday morning worship service, Benedict Weyeneth was granted permission from Rudolph Virkler to read a song from a book. The song being read after the conclusion of the regular meeting indicated the teaching of immersion, it is thought. He presented to the congregation the importance of these doctrines and visited

their homes reviewing to them the changes necessary for them to adopt.

His views were favored by Rudolph Virkler, who became willing to leave his church to associate and affiliate with him. Soon his family and many relatives left the Amish Mennonite church and started a new church of their own. They taught that it was necessary for everyone to accept this teaching and those who joined the new faith, so it was called, were rebaptized by being immersed. The first minister ordained for this new group was Joseph Virkler, son of Rudolph Virkler. In 1852, their church was organized, the first of its kind in America.

Today they are locally known as the Virkler or Evangelical Baptist Church, or Apostolic Christian Church.

After many of the Virkler family left the Amish Mennonite Church, other members gradually left and took the same step. Joseph Farney, our first bishop, was also influenced by the doctrine. He left two years after Rudolph Virkler and united with their group, which was then called the New Amish Church.

Michael Zehr was the only minister who did not follow the new form of worship. He also gave much consideration to their teaching and to unite with the rest of the ministering brethren. A story relates that he called and asked the other ministers to come into his home and prove to him from the scriptures that their doctrine was the one to follow. Meanwhile he agreed to search the Scripture to see if he could come to a satisfactory conclusion himself. Picking up his German Bible, he opened to one of the Psalms and his eyes gazed upon the words which meant, "Be firm." This settled his turmoil. A message was sent to the other ministers which said that they need not come for he would remain true and steadfast to his church. His decision was, "If I am the only one left, I'll remain true to my convictions," which he believed was necessary for him to do.

Members of the church continued to leave over a period of twenty-five years. Three out of every four were evangelized and left the old church to unite with the new group.

During this period the now small Amish Mennonite Church looked to Canada for help. A Bishop Esch came, and also another minister by the name of Stoltzfus. These brethren ordained two men to the ministry whose names were Gerber and Hirschy. They remained only a short time, then also left and joined the other group.

A second time help came from Canada. Bishop Esch and Bishop Roth seem to be the two who responded. This time Michael Zehr was ordained bishop, Jacob Roggie was minister, and Christian Zehr, son of Michael, was ordained deacon. These men stayed within their church, except Christian Zehr who left after fulfilling twenty-six years of service.

It is thought that at another time a Litwiller and Yancey minister came from Canada to help build the church. Andrew Zehr was ordained minister, but in a short time he left likewise to join the new Amish Church. Joseph Zehr was also ordained but left and moved to Canada.

It may be that other men were ordained in the ministry in the Amish Mennonite Church, leaving later to unite with the other group.

The hardest years of trial for the church took place during the 1850's. Michael Zehr and Jacob Roggie were the two home ministers who made a special effort standing firm to lead the church through this period of illusion.

About 1860, another minister, John Moser, was ordained. During these years of 1860 still more people left their former church to unite with the new faith. Many continued to leave until there were only six or seven families left. In 1868, Peter Lehman was ordained minister, and about 1880 Jacob Zehr was ordained to the same office but refused to accept this service because of other connections. Just prior to this there were seventeen young people in the church.

Ministers were ordained by choosing the man who had the largest number of votes until 1874, when the lot method was first used. The first man chosen by this practice was Joseph Yousey. The man having the highest number of votes was accepted in the lot, and each man in turn was asked to choose one Bible from the number of Bibles or one song book from the number of song books, which the minister had placed before them. The man who chose the Bible or song book with an inserted written message on paper was ordained minister. The message reads, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." "Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, show whether of these thou hast chosen." The inserted message always bears the same meaning but is sometimes worded differently.

The following appeared in print in 1860, regarding these churches in Croghan Township.

"A number of Anabaptist reside in this and the adjoining town, and of these there are two classes, one being termed the new or Reformed Anabaptist. These people have no church edifice, worshipping after the manner of primitive Christians in private houses, and in all their dealings and social intercourse, are as much possible restricted to their own circle." Franklin B. Hough, History of Lewis County.

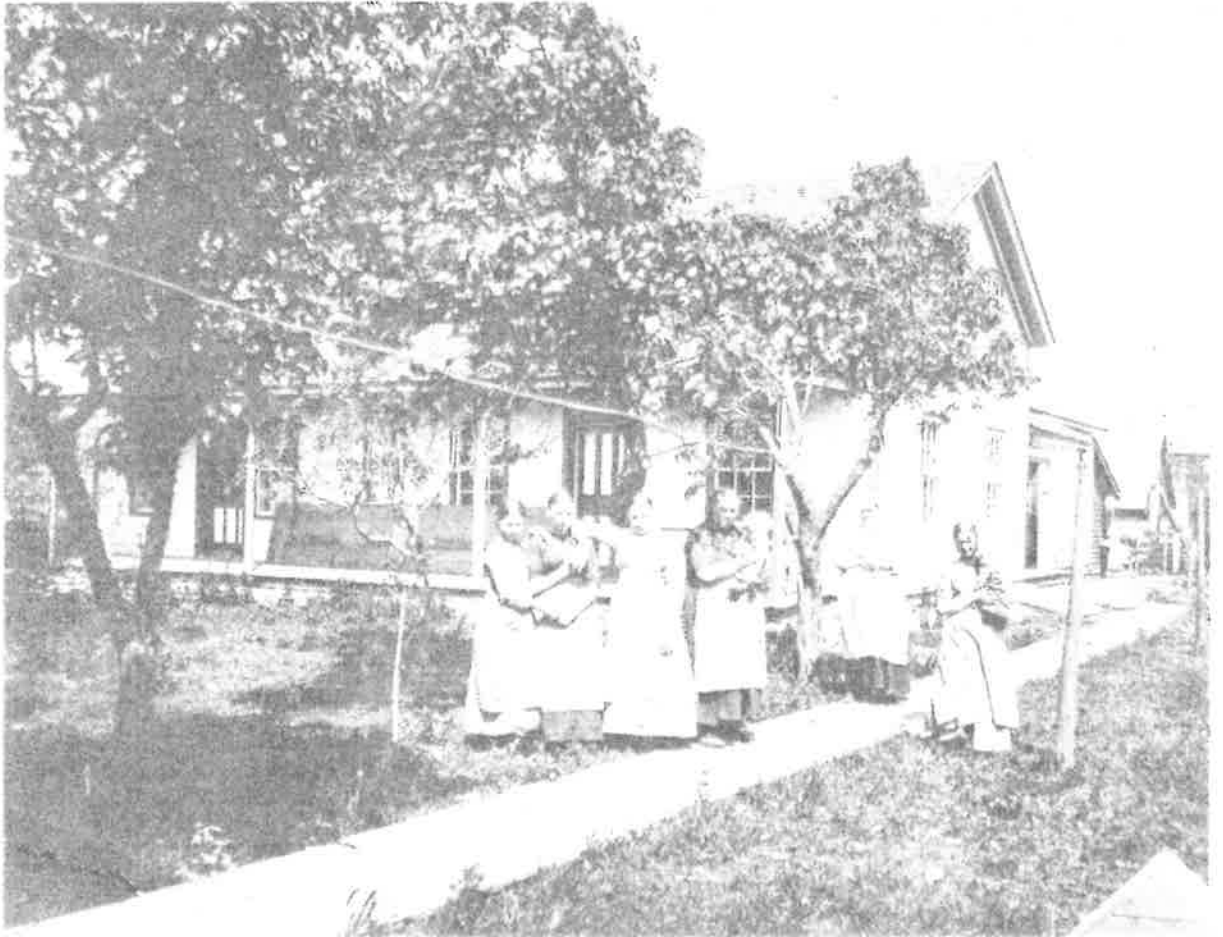
Another writing appeared in print in 1892-3 pp. 81 by Hamilton Child, Gazetter of Lewis County, New York.

"Croghan, (better known as the French Settlement), is located on Beaver River, about the center of the south border, and contains five hotels, six stores, two tanneries, two saw mills, one planing mill, three or four blacksmith and carriage shops, two stores, two churches and about 100 dwelling houses. It is about ten miles northeast of Lowville, with which it is connected by daily stage."

PIONEERING IN A NEW WORLD

By 1855, farming areas had extended ten miles beyond Croghan into the northern and eastern forest. Families were settling toward Long Pond and in the Kirschnerville territory. Farming lands were cleared by small portions at a time and the hard-working pioneers continued to cut trees and prepare the ground for tillage.

Sometime between 1855 and 1860 the John Widrick house was built between Kirschnerville and Belfort. Just a small part of the present home of Mrs. Daniel Widrick was first built. As the years continued to come and go, additions were added, until it was the largest house in this Mennonite community and provided ample space for church gatherings. Many of our early pioneers who did not build log cabins built one or two room dwellings and added to them as financial aid assisted.



The above picture was taken perhaps in 1886 prior to a wedding. The two babies are twin boys, John and Joseph Moshier (now deceased). The location is the present home of Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Widrick. Notice the board walk.

As the children of the generally large families grew, it became necessary for many of them to supplement the family income by working

for wages elsewhere. The parents' honesty, thriftiness, and quiet manner of life was absorbed by the children and was expressed as they labored for others. They were strictly taught never to talk back and always to do as they were told. They were to work faithfully and hard and never, never leave their place of work. These "German boys" were always in demand. Although they worked hard with the task often seemingly impossible, many of them never complained a word.

In one particular instance, a youth was working for another farmer who at times was away from home and left the young boy with too many duties to accomplish before his return. The youth later stated that he thought he could never complete the required work, but by forcing himself, he managed to do the task as commanded. Later he stated that his parents had taught him to do whatever he was asked to do and never say a word.

In some cases the father worked away from home a few weeks at a time. This extra income was needed so food and necessary items could be bought for his wife and family, who managed the farm during his absence. When the wages were received in money they sometimes amounted to \$11.00 a month. Coming home from his outside labor, and many times walking fifteen miles with a pack basket on his back filled with purchases, the returning father brought much joy to the awaiting family.



Mr. and Mrs. Dave Widrick
(First Wife)

Dress style of the time is shown.

Joseph Martin, native of Waltenburg, France, upon the death of his wife decided to migrate with his four children, the youngest an infant. His aged mother-in-law chose to accompany him. The voyage was long

mother died on voyage and were buried in the ocean. Arriving in New York City, he had three small children to care for and a limited amount of money. Upon his arrival at French Settlement he settled on a small farm near Belfort, about three and one-half miles from Croghan. He was fortunate in securing a housekeeper. During the haying season he walked to Lowville, fourteen miles away, in an effort to find a job. His job, mowing grass by hand, began at sunrise and ended at sunset, and at the end of the week he again walked the long distance to his awaiting family with his pay included. His wages amounted to salt pork and flour. (1.)

The Mennonite young people, were strongly encouraged to stay among their own group for social and all manner of life. They often combined work with pleasure. There were times when the men gathered for wood bees while the ladies gathered for quilting bees. When land was cleared enough to raise corn, the young people gathered for corn husking bees. They were always held on the barn floor above the cow stable. With hay mows nearby and forks stuck in the hay, the fork handles provided for lantern holders. The corn in bundles was placed on the floor and everyone pulled ears from the shocks and husked until midnight. After midnight, some games were played before the young people returned home.

It is thought that during the early years of American life there were no social gatherings for the benefit of the young people. The first singing was held about 1885.

Weddings were continually taking place from the first years of colonizing. For this event, there was a religious ceremony followed by a social fellowship for everyone within the church circle. Neighbors and friends were also welcomed. A few days before the wedding, several friends came to the home of the bride-to-be helping with cleaning, sewing, cooking, or baking in preparation for the occasion. Throughout the evening hours, women gathered around the table to sew wedding clothes for the bride and groom. A lighting system was placed in the center of the table so the hand sewing, using the backward stitch, one stitch forward and a half stitch backward, could be accomplished. The wedding reception was composed of a dinner and a supper. The main dish was soup. The supper was especially for the young people. Several women remained a day or two after the wedding to again give their service by helping wherever necessary. After the marriage of a young couple the groom was expected to grow a beard. It was not to be trimmed. This practice continued until the early twentieth century.

The first lighting system was provided by a wick-like cloth placed in a nearly filled saucer of grease. This was used until 1880. Some of our grandmothers today remember their grandmothers using this method of light. Tallow candles made by the women were later used for lighting purposes. The tallow was melted and poured into molds and wicking was inserted. When the tallow was cold the candles were removed from the molds and used. After the candle days came the kerosene lamps, and in many farms these were used until the early 1930's.

Land for the first cemetery was donated by Michael Lehm at the north end of French Settlement close to his log cabin. He was later buried in the northeast corner of the lot. The cemetery was then enclosed by a stone fence with wooden markers placed on the graves. The stone fence was later taken away without a replacement which permitted cattle to graze there, and markers were destroyed in acts of vandalism. This regrettable state existed until the late 1940's when Deacon Jacob Roggie, son of Bishop Jacob Roggie, purchased a fence and a semblance of order was again restored. There is no longer a road leading to the cemetery, which was used until the year 1870. The last person buried here was Jacob Noftsier, who died in the fall of 1860. Land for a new cemetery was purchased by minister Peter Lehman. He bought the land from minister John Moser on the Belfort-Kirscherville Road. In 1870, the first person buried here was Mrs. Joseph Noftsier, Barbara Hirschey, who died the following spring, after her husband's death in the fall. This young couple left five orphan children to face the realities of life in tender years. Family ties were broken as these little children were placed into different Mennonite homes. Hard work and discouragement often confronted them. Their grandmother, being unable to care for them physically, often found time to pray for their needs. She prayed so long and earnestly that callouses grew on her knees. This intimate love and concern caused a prodigal granddaughter to again come to her for advice and kept her within the circle and in the Christian faith.



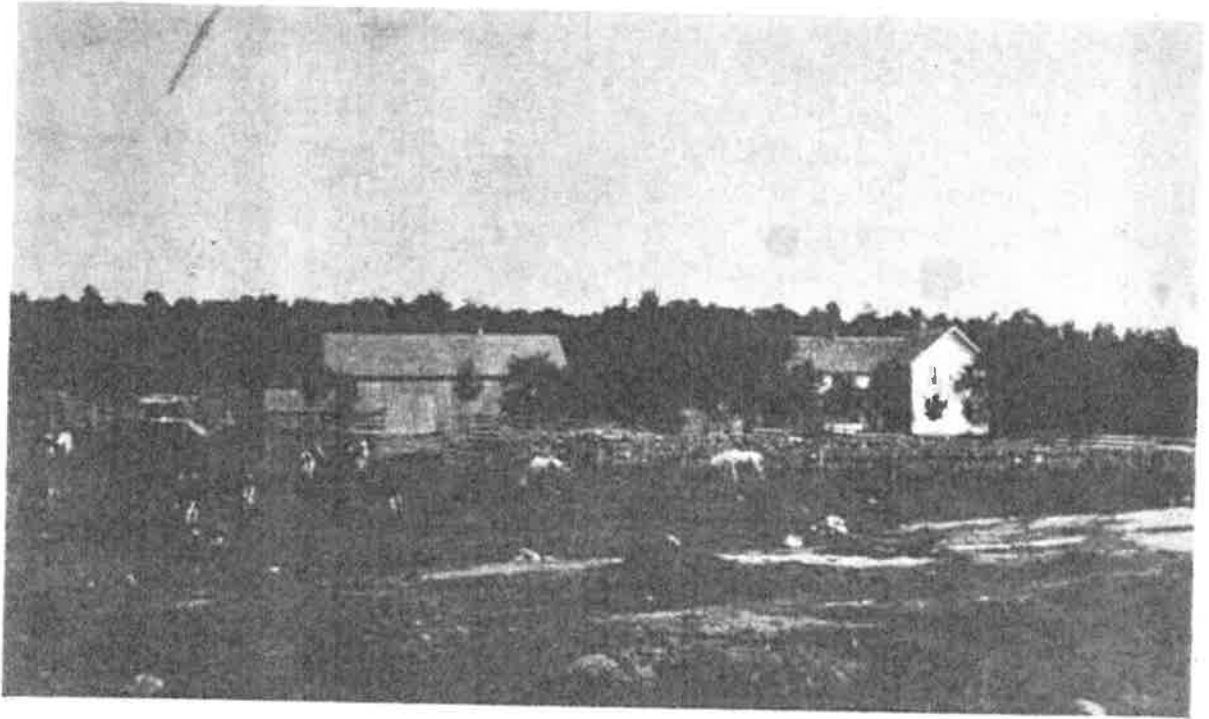
The above picture is the Sugar Bush of Joseph B. Yousey, minister, located near Soft Maple.

Notice the wooden buckets and wooden barrels.

The early settlers did not have the privilege of any schooling. However, a little later they attended school as they chose. Their self-education taught them how to make much of their own furniture and farm tools.

their own clothing, and supplied many of their own needs.

They were strongly a rural people and mostly farmers by trade. Of necessity, many or all of them started on small portions. A story is told about a young couple who married and by the time the first baby arrived they had succeeded financially enough to buy a cow and later when their second child was born, they had progressed enough so that they could purchase the second cow. The first little barns were made of logs.



Above is the farm of Joseph B. Yousey, minister.

It is located beyond Kirschnerville.

Today no buildings remain. The farming area is now grown over with trees. Notice the long rows of wood surrounding the buildings.

Their transportation was mostly by foot and sometimes by oxen. These animals were used for field work and on a few occasions for hauling. In the fall of the year, a farmer occasionally took time to go to Carthage with his oxen and cart. When night came he pulled these slow traveling animals to the side of the road and slept. Arriving at Carthage he purchased food and necessary items so the family needs would be supplied for the winter months. He also brought extra supplies back to his neighbors and friends. Carts drawn by oxen, and later wagons drawn by horses, had a difficult time following narrow trails which led over huge rocks, through woods and swampy lowlands. Bishop Michael Zehr is known to have owned the first pair of horses. Oxen were used by some farmers until the closing years of the 1890's.

Most of the material, large and small, was carried on backs of the people. Enough lumber to build a large frame house was carried on backs of men who settled in the Kirschnerville area. It was carried from the Croghan sawmill through the woods over a narrow trail to the

building site near Kirschnerville. This task was even enjoyed as each team of men tried to carry the largest load and get to their destination without dropping any. However boards were dropped and the men agreed not to pick them up until evening. By this time a continuous line of them left a design along the trail.

Wild animals of the forest were still disturbing the settlers (or pioneers) after twenty-five years of colonizing. The panthers often came to the farmer's herds of sheep and young cattle, killing and devouring many. A party of interested men was organized to hunt into the woods to exterminate the beasts, but they only succeeding in driving them back several miles into the denser forest. Another time a group of men made a second attempt to kill these animals. This time they came home with eleven fine panther skins, the longest of them being ten feet from tip to tip. No more damage was done by these animals.

Tapping the hard maple trees was soon learned from the nearby Indians. The handmade wooden spouts were forced into a small hole in the tree. A nail was driven into the tree under the spout from which the handmade wooden bucket was hung to catch the sap. This was collected in pails suspended from a wooden yoke on the shoulder of the man who gathered it. The sap was then taken to a central spot in the woods where a large iron kettle sat above the fire on an arch of stones. The sap was poured into the kettle and boiled until it reached a stage of syrup. It was then poured into another pan to continue boiling until it was crystallized into sugar. Most of the sap was made into sugar and used for household cooking or sold in pound cakes.

1 History of the First Mennonite Church—Kathleen Zehr

LABORING AMONG TRIALS

By 1860, a small colony of people had settled in and around the Belfort area, four miles northeast of Croghan. The sawmill located here close to Beaver river was patronized by many of the Amish Mennonite folks who were establishing homes close by, and the grist mill was used by many farmers who brought their grain to be ground into flour.

The settlers were still pushing back the thick forest to start dairy farming and building homes. The farm of John Yousey, three miles northeast of Belfort and close to Long Pond, was the most distant Mennonite settlement in this direction. Today a farm no longer exists here, but a home still remains. Going in the opposite direction, four miles south of Croghan toward New Bremen, the farm of Simon Lehman was the farthest point. This home was awfully far, "too far to be visited," was the decision of some of the early colonists. Today it still remains in the family, now belonging to Simon Lehman. In the Beaver Falls area toward Carthage, about six miles west of Croghan, the farm of Chris Lehman was the last Mennonite home. It was located on the second road. Again turning directly opposite six miles east of Croghan, the Joe B. Yousey family settled beyond the present Croghan reservoir. Some Mosers and Noftsiers also chose this area to build farms and establish family living. Today no buildings any longer exist here.

Starting homes seven and eight miles north and east of Croghan, some of the people built large stable houses and barns to remain only a short period of time. Working for years clearing land and tilling the ground, they discovered that the soil was very light and sandy. Much rain and heavy fertilizer was necessary to produce sufficient crops. On many of the well-kept farms only three or four generations remained and a better soil was sought to establish family living. Today we find a new growth of forest again controlling the beautiful farm spots of sixty and eighty years ago. Much of the present-day forest on these vacant farms has been reforested by man.

Around the years of 1890 some of the large fourteen to twenty room houses were built for \$900.00. At this time, the head carpenter received \$1.00 for a long day's work—perhaps from sunrise to sunset. Some of the workers were known to have labored for this length of time.

Transportation problems increased as the people continued to spread. By 1886, some of the people had buggies to use for traveling purposes, and they very generously used them for servicing others.

It was very common for many of the younger folks to walk ten or twelve miles when necessary to attend church services. Due to poor economic conditions, some of the people walked barefoot and when arriving at the service, they put on their stockings, and some were too poor to have any shoes. Three young girls in one family had only one

dress among them suitable for church. These girls took their turn going to the service, one at a time, each in turn wearing the same dress when attending a gathering.

In 1888 Peter Lehman was ordained bishop. Someone has said that only seven families remained in the church. The church gripped hard to hold its people and its doctrine. From this point on, it began growing and by 1895, more than twenty Amish Mennonite homes entertained church services.

Church meeting records indicating the names of the families were given to every home and as the names appeared on the paper, it told where the next Sunday service would meet.

The following is a copy of a record that was preserved by the daughter of Mrs. John Yousey, Mrs. Sarah Martin. It dates back to the later 1800's.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Peter Lehman | 14. Christian Sauer |
| 2. Simon Lehman | 15. Jacob Zehr |
| 3. Joseph Steria (deacon) | 16. Andrew Martin |
| 4. Peter Yousey | 17. Joseph Lyndaker |
| 5. John Yousey | 18. John Moser |
| 6. Joseph Martin | 19. Peter Bellar |
| 7. John Noftsier | 20. John Widrick |
| 8. John Zehr | 21. Joseph Moser |
| 9. Peter Zehr | 22. Christian Zehr |
| 10. Michael Zehr (bishop) | 23. Peter Widrick |
| 11. Jacob Roggie (minister) | 24. John Martin |
| 12. Michael Zehr | 25. Peter Yancey |
| 13. Christian Bellar | |

The family whose turn it was to have the gathering was busy all day making provision for the coming folks and preparing food. A mid-morning snack was served to the children, and after the service, a table style lunch was set for everyone. This food consisted of coffee, milk, sugar bread, butter, cookies, and prune and dried applie pie, which is now a little more than was served during the very early years. Folks did not leave the home where the service was conducted until 3:30 or 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon. Even the farm cows recognized this church day once every two weeks. They were chased from the stable to provide room for the horses that gave transportation to the coming church people. An elderly grandmother says, "I can still see the cows huddling together to keep warm during the cold winter months and waiting at the barn door so they could again return to their stalls."

By 1880, some machinery was coming into the settlement. A few farmers were known to have purchased a mowing machine and at the same time some of the women were able to buy a sewing machine. Binders for cutting grain were being purchased also. Mrs. Simon Lehman, mother of Mrs. Jacob Gingerich, had the first sewing machine. Neighbor women often came to her home to sew the long seams on the

garments they were making. Joseph P. Moshier, father of Aaron Moshier, had the first grain reaper.

In the year 1883 Chris M. Nafziger from Germany, when twenty-two years old, came to this community and worshipped with the Amish Mennonites here. Being a faithful steward in God's vineyard, he was ordained minister in 1894, and two years later was ordained bishop.

In times of sickness, doctors were very seldom called. Contributing to this was the slow method of traveling, and usually a doctor could not arrive at the necessary time. Diseases and ailments and sometimes childbirth took the lives of many individuals. In most cases, the mother of the new mother-to-be delivered the baby and tended to the necessary tasks in the home.

About 1882, the serious disease of diptheria took the lives of many. In the home of Deacon John Noftsier, death claimed four lives. The illness caused three of the family to die in two weeks' time, Lydia eight years, Susan sixteen years, and Mary twenty-four years. Elias, six years, died a little later. People were asked not to enter these homes where diptheria had settled, and during the Naftsier's bereavement, no one visited them unless Bishop Jacob Roggie and Joe Martin had. Jacob Roggie was seen going through the fields over the snow with his horses toward their home to offer assistance wherever possible. He later went to Croghan to purchase the caskets for the deceased and paid \$18.00 for the two older girls' caskets, which seemed to them a great sum of money. He made preparation for the burial and took the bodies to the grave.

On one occasion while Mrs. Andrew (Springer) Zehr was gathering sticks in the thick woody area beside her home between Belfort and Long Pond, she became lost. The sticks were needed for heat and cooking purposes. Realizing her lost position, she called for help. The family nearby heard her shout but did not give it attention. Since she has not returned by bedtime, the husband began searching for her. The search continued for nearly three days with neighbors and friends helping to locate her. They discovered her barefoot tracks in the freshly fallen snow and saw where she brushed snow from some wild berries and ate them. She was found sitting in the crotch of a tree about one mile or a little more from her house. The seekers brought her home and her friends tried to be very kind to her and overfed her empty stomach, and she died.

In the very late 1800's, Christopher Naftiser, wife and nine children moved to the Tug Hill area beyond Lowville. During the four years of this primitive life many of the family members died and were buried there. This dated to 1898.

Joseph Noftsier, a son of Christopher, came back to the Croghan area and resettled, and others in the family went to nearby communities to again start a home life.

An older brother in the church, now deceased, once combed his hair with a part when he was a boy. For this his father punished him and made him recomb it straight down. When an old man he admitted to another elder, "I was a little proud."

PART V

THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

During the summer of 1900, the first fire within this Mennonite circle destroyed a farm barn belonging to Chris Zehr, located near Long Pond. The church people from the nearby area came with horses and wagons to clear rubbish and remove ashes while others went into the woods to cut trees and haul them to the sawmill to have them made into lumber. Folks continued to donate time in the preparation and building of a new barn. For the barn raising day, nearly every man within the Mennonite circle and male neighbors and friends arrived with hammers and saws to help on the barn project wherever possible. Women came with dishes of food and offered their assistance in the home in preparing a noon meal for everyone.

In 1905, the congregation with the approval of Bishop Chris M. Nafziger attempted to start a Sunday School movement within the church program. Some of the men had already visited other churches where it had been successfully started. The Sunday meetings were held from home to home as their names appeared on the record sheet and the first Sunday School was conducted at Andrew B. Zehr's home, father of Bishop Joseph J. Zehr. It was held after the regular Sunday afternoon lunch. Many of the people were already leaving for their respective homes, and there were some in the congregation who thought it was not a necessary movement for them to adopt. Because of this, and lack of organization, the Sunday School was discontinued after a period of approximately six months of service.

The new generation, growing up among English speaking people and receiving little public schooling, was learning the English language. Parents sought efforts to claim the German dialect. It was always spoken in their home life and among themselves when gathering in groups and in neighborly chats. Many of the younger children were unaccustomed to any language but German and were unable to understand the teacher who spoke to them in English. The reply she received from them was, "Ich weiss nicht was du gesagt hast." (I don't know what you are saying.) The teacher likewise could not understand them.

During the winter of 1906, a German school was held for everyone, especially for the benefit of the early youth age. It was conducted every weekday evening and those who attended, twenty or more in number walked through the snow and cold to a tannery house about one-half mile east of Belfort on the Kirschnerville road. This building no longer remains. Jacob Schrag served as teacher and Chris M. Nafziger gave assistance whenever present.

As the church continued to grow, some realized that the challenge of spreading beyond their present surroundings confronted them, thus giving a Christian witness in other communities. They wished to preserve faithfully essential Bible teachings in a changing culture. To

prevent the breaking down of their sociological ties, which formerly served as effectual aids in the keeping of their faith and way of life, was the responsibility they faced.

Bishop Nafziger was the first to sell his farm near Kirschnerville in the fall of 1909 and leave the Croghan area to move west of Black River, three miles north of Lowville. He located on the West Road and rented a farm for one year, then moved south of Lowville and purchased the farm now owned by Vernon Nafziger. John H. Widrick, who moved Bishop Nafziger to his new location, also became interested in the land beyond Lowville. He with his family moved in the same direction in January of 1910. In May of the same year, Andrew B. Zehr chose to follow suit. This created a small stir among those who thought it best to remain together as they were accustomed. However, a little later more families moved and a small Amish Mennonite settlement developed from it.

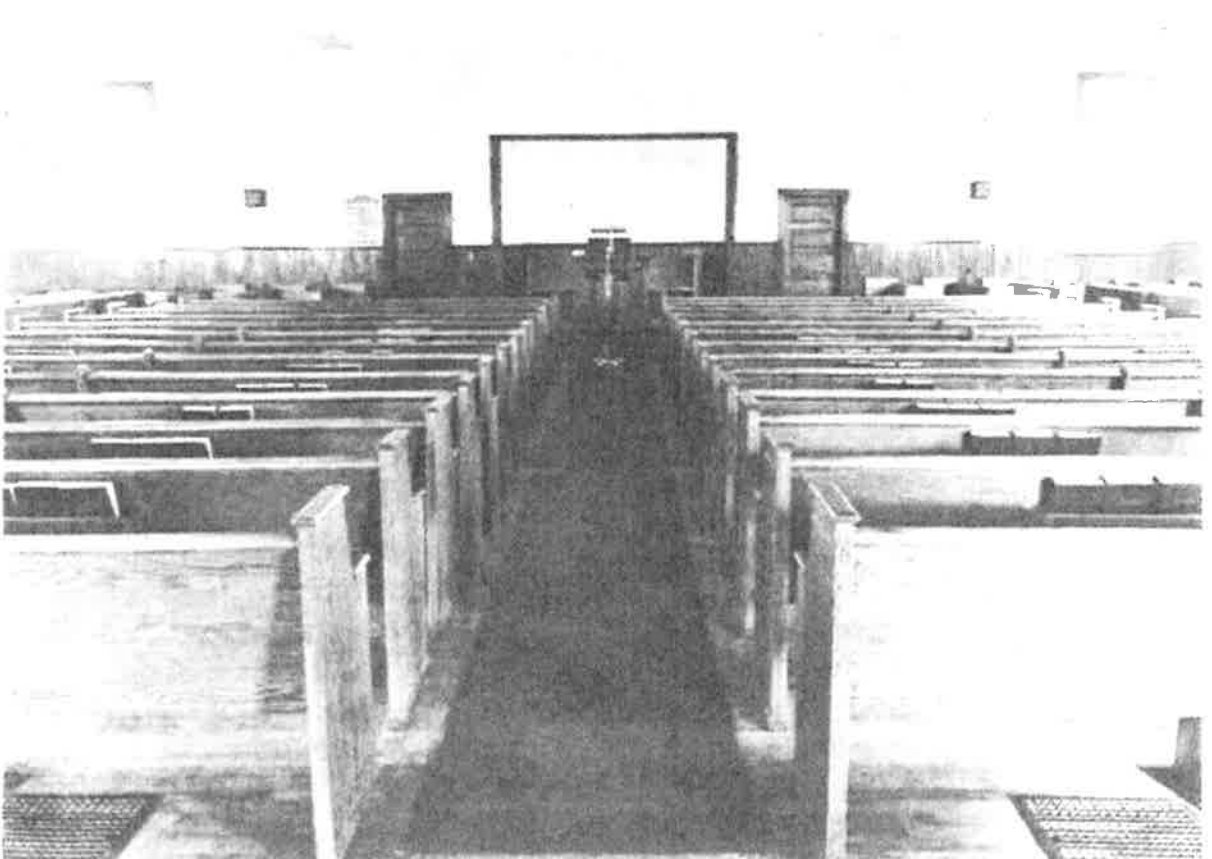
The Sunday morning service continued as before in the various homes in the Lowville and Croghan areas. An old grandmother who was one of the first to move in the Lowville area as a little girl said how much she enjoyed the long ride by horse and buggy to attend the meetings at Croghan. She said they started for church at 7:30, or never later than 8:00 in the morning, and returned by chore time in late afternoon.

By 1912, the number within the church circle had grown, to nearly two hundred individuals, including children. Another grandmother said, "I remember the last time we had church at our home. I made twenty-five pies and cut each pie in six pieces, and there wasn't enough to go around."

Need was arising for a separate building in which to worship, although some of the people did not like the idea of building a meeting house. They felt that the closeness in their fellowship would be lost, and the after-service lunches would be discontinued. In 1912, the first Amish Mennonite church in Lewis County was built near Croghan on the road leading toward Kirschnerville where the present building stands. The cost of the new building amounted to \$4300.00; the size was thirty-six feet by sixty feet; it had a seating capacity of three hundred. Much of the labor was donated by the people and all the debt was paid by donations from the church group. The dedication service was held in December of the same year.

A furnished church building located at Rectors Corner, belonging to the Baptist people and wherein they had worshipped, was purchased by the Amish Mennonite people. It was moved two miles east of Lowville near Dadville on the road leading toward Croghan. The building was re-established in 1913, and the dedication service was held in January, 1914. It seated around one hundred people. The cost of purchasing and rebuilding is unknown. Many of the Amish folks living near New Bremen came to this meeting house to worship since it was nearest to them. Having two places of worship, Church was held every Sunday, winter and summer, and alternated between the two locations.

CROGHAN CONSERVATIVE MENNONITE CHURCH



This interior picture does not show much of the seating arrangement in the connecting wings.

Sunday School was again started in 1915. At this time Jacob Roggie was elected superintendent and Joe M. Zehr was elected assistant superintendent. It was carried on with success although some again would not attend the service. While studying the Bible, the children were taught to read in the German language and the adult classes were studying books of the Bible in chapter study method.

The first Sunday preaching services were held at Croghan and Sunday School at Lowville. The second Sunday was alternated with preaching services at Lowville and Sunday School at Croghan. The third Sunday there was no service at Lowville and everyone gathered at the Croghan church for preaching service and no Sunday School. The two congregations worked together with one bishop overseer of both districts. When a minister or deacon was ordained he fulfilled his duty in both churches. This remains the same to our present day. The dividing line between the two churches was New Bremen, although everyone was permitted to worship where they chose. The usual trend was that the people east of the river worshipped at Croghan and those west of the river worshipped at Lowville. Both churches were heated with a chunk wood stove. Someone made himself responsible to keep the fire burning and provide as much heat as possible.

In 1914, the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference was invited to hold its annual meeting at the Croghan meeting house. Bishop Christian Nafziger with the support of the ministerial brethren thought it would benefit the church in many ways, also give aid and teaching on Biblical doctrines. At this time some of the church members were bringing worldliness into the church, and the conference with the approval of the congregation sought scriptural teachings and patterns to follow. Bishop Nafziger also gave his reason for holding a church conference. It was because of the examples of the Apostles at the council in Jerusalem as recorded in Acts 15: 6-12. The Croghan and Lowville churches decided to join the conference. The first annual meeting was held in 1910. Prior to this Lewis County church was an independent congregation and was not affiliated with any group of outside organization. The settlement was two hundred fifty miles from any Mennonite colony and was somewhat isolated from those of their own faith.

The invention of cars created a problem to the church leaders. "Shall we allow cars?" or "Shall we forbid them?" was the question they faced. There were some who felt that cars were necessary for their service while others thought differently. The ministerial body came to the decision that cars would be permitted, and at the same time tops for buggies were permitted. The people buying cars were strictly encouraged to buy a plain one and the less expensive models. It was stressed that the cars be used for a good cause. Someone has said that in 1916, John Lehman was the first to purchase a car for use in his lumber business and wherever necessary.

With the coming of World War I in 1914-1918, the English language began replacing the German. Parents were becoming aware of the importance of teaching their children the language of the people about

them. This was not to do away with the German dialect but to add to it the learning of English.

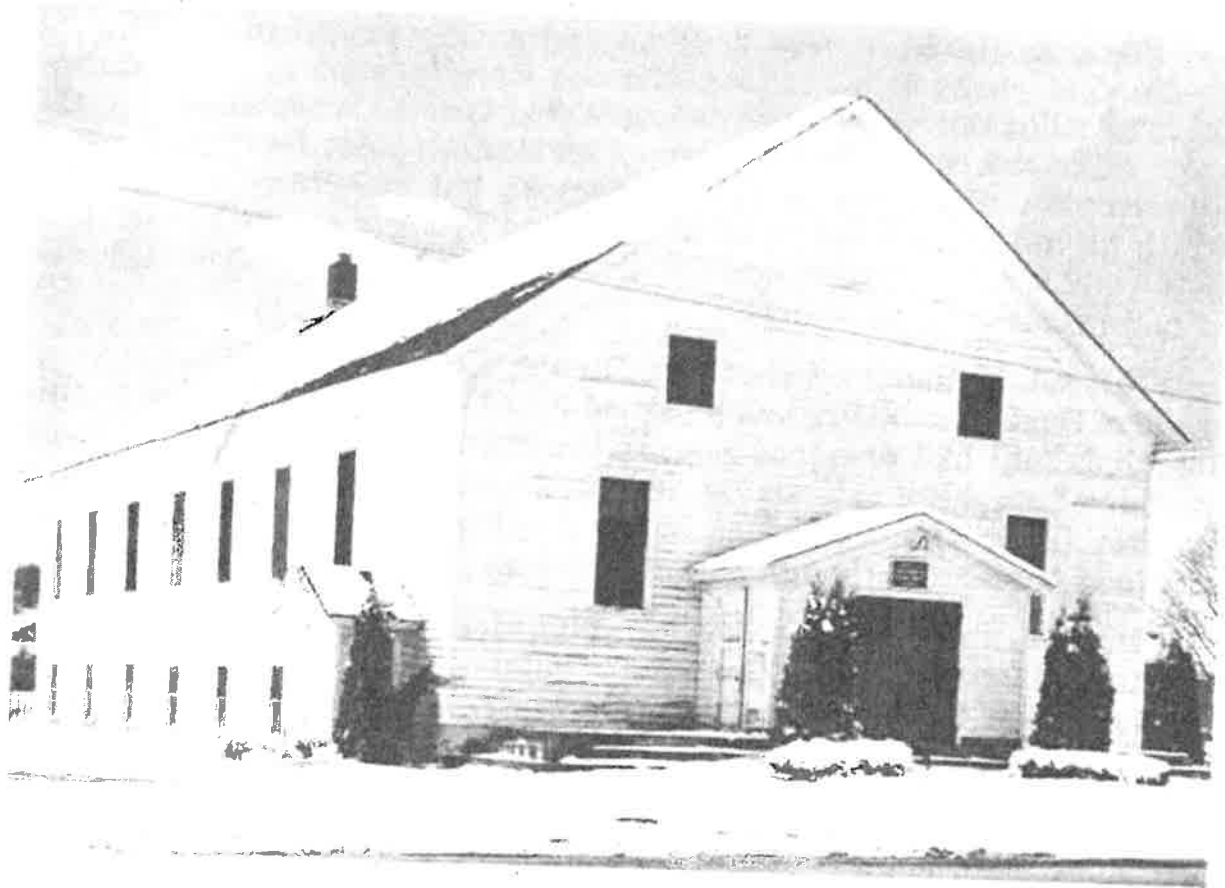
Entering the army was very unusual among any of the Mennonite people. The young men in this settlement were farmers by trade and no one was called into the service during World War I. When anyone of the same faith was called into the armed service, he went forward because no exemption was made by the government, but he refused any part in which he caused another to be killed. This brought severe persecution to the one who was called into the armed service. The Biblical doctrine of non-resistance was upheld.

In 1921, at the funeral of Mrs. Menno Yousey, Lena Moser, one of the first English sermons was preached by Joseph Lehman. Prior to this Joseph J. Zehr had preached some in the English language. Being more capable of speaking this dialect he was the first to preach it, and someone has said that he preached in the English language before he was ordained minister, although he was a deacon in the church.

In 1924, John Lehman bought a plot of ground from William Zehr. It extended next to the Croghan church and was given to the church for the purpose of using it as a cemetery. In 1925, he was the first member buried there. The people agreed to purchase uniform grave stones, thus showing that everyone is equal and no one above another.

CONFERENCES IN LEWIS COUNTY

- 1914 in Croghan church
- 1920 in Croghan church
- 1926 in Croghan church
- 1933 beside Croghan church in tent
- 1941 beside Lowville church in tent
- 1952 beside Croghan church in tent
- 1962 beside Lowville church in tent



The total enrollment of membership in the Lowville and Croghan Churches amounts to 613. (1963)

PART VI

A NEW ERA BEGINS

Hardships connected with the colonizing of a new world no longer confronted the people, although trails and sorrows in other avenues of life brought sadness to many. Bishop Nafziger remarked in a sermon that he knew of no one who endured as many sorrows as Mrs. Christian Zehr.

Christian and his wife Mary Yousey purchased a farm near Long Pond and toiled hard tilling the sandy soil to produce crops and food for themselves and their small number of cattle. Their oldest child, a little boy, died at the age of four months. Disappointment faced the parents. Grandmother Zehr remarked that she thought the Lord would not permit them to have any grown children. Four girls and seven more boys were added to this home.

In 1906, shortly after the birth of the last child, God called again. Menno, a seventeen year old youth, accidentally shot himself and painfully his life ended six hours later. In 1911, death took the life of Christian, the father of the remaining ten children.

Grandmother Zehr struggled hard with her family in efforts to keep enough food and wood supplied to make themselves as comfortable as possible. Many times scant meals were served and a barefoot family desired more to eat and more to wear. Yet Grandmother pressed forward and remarked, "I must work for the sake of my children. I cannot give up." Realizing the sting of death, she used her energy to keep the remaining family circle close to her.

Eight years passed when word was received that her second son, John, who had been married three years and had two small girls, was accidentally drowned. Two years later, Rosella, a healthy teenage girl, died after a very brief illness. Seven years passed when Joseph, a young married man and oldest son, met his death instantly while working in the woods. Prior to Joseph's death, a son-in-law, husband of Anna, and young father of three children, was seriously injured and left a wheelchair invalid for 6½ years and then died. One year later, a daughter Lena, mother of four small children, suffered greatly from an incurable disease and was taken from among them.

The heavy sorrows wearied the footsteps of Grandmother Zehr, and in less than another six months, at the age of sixty-nine years, she too left this physical body for a happy meeting with the loved ones gone before. The remaining family still experienced God's call. Six months later Alma, who suffered from an incurable disease and was the mother of four small children, was taken to her eternal home. Twenty years passed before another in the family circle was called home. Eli, a husband and father of twelve children, died suddenly because of a heart attack. Many families had similar sorrow and everyone realized in full that hardships come in various ways.

drawn mostly by horses to a nearby cheese factory and made into cheese or to a station from which it was shipped to a city. By 1921, cheese sold for nineteen cents a pound.

Trucks were beginning to appear and were used for hauling purposes. Clearing land was still being done in an effort to have more tillable ground. The work was done by horses. Tractors were being purchased by some farmers and used for pulling and operating threshing machines and corn cutters. The early tractor did not do the labor of a team of horses in the field. Farmers also connected the iron horse, as it was called, to a large round flat saw called a buzz saw. This was used to cut the logs and limbs into firewood lengths. The crosscut saw pulled by two men, one on each end, was still used for cutting the trees.

Sap from the maple trees was now gathered by pails, poured into large gathering tubs drawn by horse and taken to the boiling shed. Rather than being made into sugar, it was boiled in evaporators to a more easily produced product, maple syrup.

The people were becoming acquainted with the electric light system and from 1926 to 1930 families were having it installed in their homes. Some of the people were unable to obtain this electrical current. They had to purchase the poles located on their property and share in the expense of the wire, and many were too poor to buy it. As late as 1936, kerosene lamps were still being used by some farm families and as late as 1948, an old grandmother is known to have installed this electrical current to her home.

In 1931, a discussion arose about the need of a better Bible teaching program. It was then decided to have Sunday School every other Sunday and use the same procedure as before, only omitting the third Sunday of union service together. Services began in both churches each Sunday. While Sunday School was in process at the Dadville church, preaching service was being conducted at the Croghan church. Each Sunday these services were alternated in each church.

In September, 1933, the young people's Bible meetings began. They were held each Sunday evening during the warmer months, also alternating in each church. Because of winter storms and cold weather, the meetings discontinued in December and started again in April. Since 1942, they have been held every Sunday evening, winter and summer, unless called off because of the weather.

As the congregation continued to grow, the church at Dadville was much too small for the entire group to people to meet jointly. In 1934, the church was torn down and a new one erected forty feet by eighty feet in size. Much of the labor was donated by the people and the entire debt of approximately \$3600.00 was paid by donations. A good electric light system and a central heating unit were installed in the new church. It seats five hundred people, including extra chairs that can be set up. During the same year, alterations were made at the Croghan church increasing the seating by providing more room and improving the lighting and heating systems, and also changing the pulpit.

In February, 1934, the first church sewing circle was held. These meetings gathered twice a year, once in the church and once in the home. Since 1952, the sewing circle women have been organized into two districts, Lowville and Croghan, and each district has its monthly meeting. It is usually held in the church building, but often during the cold months it is held in the homes of its members.

Many of the Christians within the church felt the need for uniformity in dress. This practice has been handed down to them throughout the generations and was slowly being pushed aside. As the dress styles continued to change in the world, the pattern of uniformity meant much to the people. In 1934, J. B. Smith, a Mennonite scholar and minister from Ohio, held meetings in the congregation. He stressed the importance of nonconformity in attire with Biblical teachings on the subject and taught that Christians should claim this doctrinal teaching. Following these meetings, the church held a special meeting to adopt standards on the matter. At this time a suit coat with a straight line neck was adopted for the men and a dress that covered the body well and also having a cape was accepted for the women. This practice continued until 1956. However, nonconformity in attire still holds its importance, but no one is asked to adapt himself (or herself) to a set pattern. The uniformity in the head covering or veiling adopted by the Mennonite church has left an impact on many. The long hair and veiling as applied to Christians is taught in I Corinthians, the eleventh chapter.

In 1939, personal contacts and worship services began at the jail regularly. This continued until 1956, when another protestant denominational group took charge.

Decisions were forever confronting the leaders as Christian service programs within the church were on an increase. Some individuals felt the urge to spread beyond Lewis County and thus expand a Biblical teaching elsewhere. In 1939, several families, Olin and Ben Zehr's moved to the neighboring county, Jefferson and settled fifty miles north beyond the present congregation. Soon Abner Zehr's family and Michael Jantzi's family moved into the same community.

This little Mennonite colony continued to expand in number, and until 1944, ten families drove to Lewis County each Sunday morning for worship. At this time a church program began the first Sunday of each month in their homes. In 1947, Andrew Gingerich was ordained at the Dadville Church to serve as minister for the Jefferson County church. Services then began each Sunday afternoon in a nearby Methodist church. One year later a school house was purchased at Woodville, remodeled and used for worship services. Being part of the Lewis County congregation, they were under the bishopric until 1952, when Andrew Gingerich was ordained bishop and another brother, Donald Jantzi, ordained minister to assist him.

MODERNISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The labors of the church program continued to expand and spread in neighborhood witnessing. Groups of individuals began Bible studies in various homes, Mennonite and Non-Mennonite. These meetings are called cottage meetings.

The administration of the church was passing through many trying experiences by seeking to do what it felt was of greatest value for the people and ever aiming to do as the Bible taught. The first concern was to have a deep spiritual life and to allow this to express itself in all manner of living.

Minds of individuals continued to change and dissatisfaction arose among some. A group of members in the church were unhappy conforming to the regulations which had been adopted as a pattern for all to follow. However, some individuals took upon themselves an attitude that the church was asking too much from its people, and some of the regulations were unnecessary especially in the matter of dress. In the fall of 1941, a group of 67 members, including one minister, counselled among themselves and decided to withdraw from their church of nearly five hundred members, to organize a new group of their own. They were granted permission to leave by Bishop Jacob Gingerich and Bishop Christian Nafziger and were given permission to use the Croghan church building until one was erected of their own. They had opportunity to worship in the church every other Sunday morning and the alternating Sunday in the afternoon. When the building program began for their new church, a liberal donation of \$1400.00 was given them from the home church. They call themselves the First Mennonite Church. The two groups work together harmoniously, and there is much similarity as both groups belong to the Mennonite faith.

In 1943, the Sunday school program in the church discontinued chapter study in book study method and accepted the International Sunday school quarterlies as a guide for Bible teaching.

In 1945, a short worship service began at the county home once a month with different people participating. This still continues today.

In 1948, the first Vacation Bible School was held at the Dadville church. Both districts, Croghan and Dadville, combined for the school. Because of the large enrollment of around five hundred pupils, in 1954 and thereafter each district had its own school. Immediately after the first Bible School in the Dadville church, another Vacation Bible School was held at the Otter Creek Methodist church, especially for the unchurched children in the area. The following summer it was held again in the same locality and in the fall of 1949, a Sunday School began each Sunday morning as a result of the school. It is held in a community church at Pine Grove, eight miles south of Lowville. Nick Gingerich accepted the responsibility in this mission field and administered the



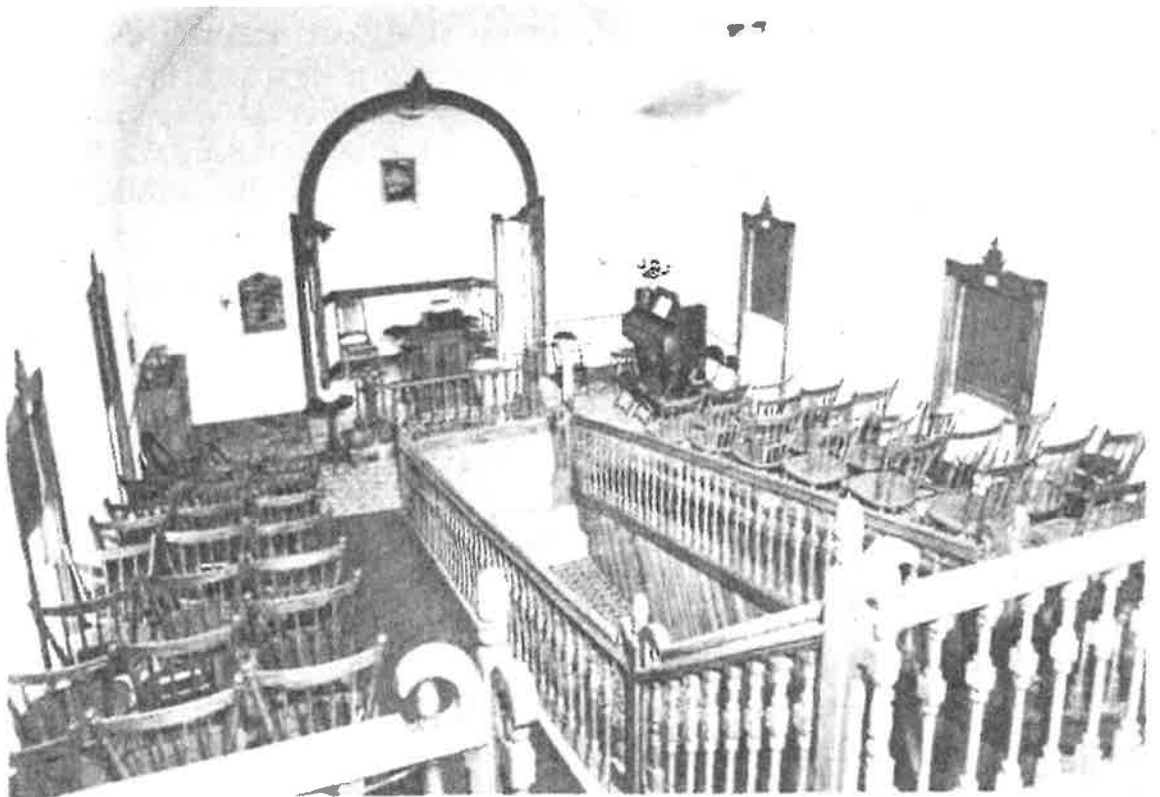
This church was first thought of in 1894 when Elder Fiske, Methodist Episcopal preacher from Beech's Bridge — Watson Church came to Pine Grove to hold meetings in the school house every Sunday afternoon.

The church was built with donations from the community and interested people. The interior was designed after a little theatre. The builder and architect was Lucian Rumble.

By February, 1898 this Pine Grove Church was in use.

The above history was taken from clippings in an old scrap book in the possession of Mrs. Harry Edick.

The Conservative Mennonite people now worship here and conduct a mission service in the community.



ministerial brethren from the home congregation. In 1958, Leon Martin was released from his ministerial duties in the home church to accept full charge at the Pine Grove Mission, although this mission still remains under the bishopric of the Lowville and Croghan church. In December 1963, Brother Leon Martin asked release from the mission to accept a church responsibility in the state of Colorado.

In 1951, the Croghan church was enlarged by adding two wings thirty feet by forty feet connecting on each side of the building. The timber and most of the rough lumber was donated by Jacob Moser and Andrew B. Zehr, who had many fallen trees due to wind storms. This was a determining factor that led to the building project. The church now comfortably seats six hundred people. During the same year two acres of land were surveyed and purchased by the same brethren and Menno Roggie and given to the church. This land extended next to the back of the church ground and is used for cemetery purposes and a parking area.

In 1953, it was decided to have Sunday School and preaching services at the Dadville and Croghan churches each Sunday morning. The Sunday School begins at 10:00 a.m. and the preaching service at 11:00; and is expected to be dismissed by 12:00.

In 1955, the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference changed its title to Conservative Mennonite.

Organizations have continually been on the increase to help care for the social and spiritual needs of the people. The young people have been organized into separate groups since 1954 to help create more interest in mission projects, such as growing crops for the boys and sewing circles for the girls. The results of the money gained is used for mission purposes. The sewing groups send their finished products to the poor people in other countries or the poor among us. Other avenues of service are distributing Christian literature, prayer meetings, gospel road signs, cottage meetings, and singings. Social entertainments bring the complete group of youth together on many occasions. Worldly pleasures and amusements are discouraged, such as the public movie, dance floors, beer parlors, smoking, and all evil endeavors.

Since 1953, a Mennonite Group Fellowship has been held monthly for the benefit of all married and older people. Various types of programs and entertainments are conducted at these meetings.

During World War II (1941 to 1945) some of the youths were drafted into the service of the country. A conscientious objector service program was accepted by the government and was recognized as equivalent to the armed services. The classification of 4E was given to the boys qualifying. They were sent to all parts of America doing work as requested by the government. Their years were spent in camps and the work began from there. No wages were received by the boys serving.

Since 1946, the young boys called into the service are given a IW classification. Their two years are spent helping needy, building projects, caring for animal life, or giving some kind of aid to others. These

drafted years are sometimes spent abroad in other countries as well as in America.

In 1957, the Sunday School began among the unchurched people in Eastern Carthage, a village twelve miles north of Croghan. The Sunday School, conducted by Earl Zehr, was started from cottage meetings held in the area.

Since the fall of 1961, Elmer Lehman, Jr. and his wife, Eileen Zehr, have accepted a mission work in Costa Rica. Although they are under the Lowville and Croghan church, their work is sponsored by the Conservative Mennonite Conference.

In July of 1962, Lloyd Boshart resigned his office of bishop in Lewis County churches and moved with his wife and family to Pennsylvania. Here he accepted another responsibility pertaining to Mennonite Aid. Andrew Gingerich had been given bishopric charge over the Lewis County churches for one year, when another bishop, Richard Zehr, was ordained.

In the fall of 1963 a vacated church in Naumburg was purchased by the Conservative Mennonite people. The total cost was \$8000.00 It has a seating capacity of nearly two hundred. The size is fifty-two feet by thirty-two feet. The building was erected in 1955 by the Church of God people and completed in a simple and modern church.

Since World War II, many farmers have increased their milk production double or more. Due to lack of help, farmers have purchased more automatic and push-button equipment. Horses are now very seldom seen as a working beast for the farm; tractors and creeping caterpillars have taken their place. Hay balers have taken the place of hayloaders. Push-button barn cleaners have saved the farmer's back. Combines have lessened the hard and dirty threshing days. Pipe lines from the cow stable to the milk tank have aided many farmers by carrying daily thousand pounds of milk, more or less. All of this adds to a changing culture. May we accept it as a greater responsibility in our life by an expression of an inner peace with God and use our time in efforts to spread Christianity to others.



Pictures show church as purchased.
Chairs have been replaced by benches, and a pulpit has been purchased.

PART VIII

GENEALOGIES OF DEACONS, MINISTERS, BISHOPS

List of Deacons Ordained

1. Christian Zehr: son of Michael and Ann Jantzi, born January 10, 1815, in Alsace-Lorraine, France. He married Anna Bellar. To them were born five boys and three girls. He was ordained about 1855. He soon left the church and united with the New Amish Church (now Apostolic Christian Church). He died February 17, 1899.
2. John Nafziger: son of Chris and Anna Jantzi, born April 10, 1828, in Alsace-Lorraine. He married Barbara Martin. To them were born three boys and seven girls. He was ordained in 1874. He gave his service to the church his entire life. He died February 16, 1917.
3. Joseph J. Zehr: son of Andrew B. and Mary Moser, born November 12, 1878 in Croghan, New York. He married Katie Moshier. To them were born two boys and three girls. He was ordained November 21, 1909. Later he was ordained minister and later bishop.
4. Jacob Roggie: son of Jacob (bishop) and Catherine Zehr, born May 19, 1863, in Croghan, New York. He married Anna Lyndaker. To them were born four boys and five girls. He was ordained November, 1915. He died February 16, 1949.
5. Joseph Nafziger: son of Christian (bishop) and Anna Moser, born July 14, 1898, in Croghan, New York. He married Rose Widrick. To them were born three girls and one boy. He was ordained June 27, 1943, to assist the elder Deacon, Jacob Roggie, and he still remains deacon today.

List of Ministers Ordained

1. Rudolph Virkler: son of John and (unknown) born December 4, 1792, in Alsace-Lorraine, France. He married Anna Breckbeil. To them were born one girl and eight boys. He was ordained in his home country, date unknown. He left the Amish Mennonite Church and united with the New Amish Church (Apostolic Christian). He died May 4, 1876.
2. Michael Zehr: son of Michael and (unknown) born about September 29, 1789, in Alsace-Lorraine, France. He married Anna Jantzi. To them were born seven boys and four girls. He was ordained in his home country, date unknown. He remained with the Amish Mennonite Church until his death, January 18, 1886.
3. and 4. (unknown) Gerber and (unknown) Hirschey, both born in Alsace-Lorraine. It is thought these two men were ordained about 1851, but remained with the Amish Mennonite Church only a short time, then united with the New Amish Church (Apostolic Church). No further information is available.
5. Jacob Roggie: son of Joseph and Veronica Thomas, born January 23, 1824, in Alsace-Lorraine. He married Catherine Zehr. To them were born five boys and seven girls. He was ordained about 1852. Later he was ordained bishop.
6. Joseph C. Zehr: son of (unknown) born September 8, 1822, in Alsace-Lorraine. He married Barbara Widrick. To them was born one daughter. His wife died, and he remarried Mrs. Katie Yoder Oakley. To them were born four girls and seven boys. He was ordained about 1855. He served the Amish Mennonite Church a few years, then moved to Canada about 1860. He died April 22, 1915.
7. Andrew Zehr: son of Michael and Anna Jantzi, born May 8, 1834, in Croghan, New York. He married Mary Martin. To them were born eight girls and six boys. He was ordained about 1855. He remained with the Amish Mennonite Church only a short time then united with the New Amish Church (Apostolic Christian). He died November 8, 1905.
8. John Moser: Son of Nicolas and Katherine Subennacht, born September 3, 1813, in Alsace-Lorraine. He married Katherine Steiner. To them were born five boys and two girls. He was ordained about 1860. He gave his service to the Amish Mennonite Church until his death January 21, 1901.
9. John Yousey: 1815-1875. Some records indicate he was ordained minister in 1854, (likely in Canada). Came to Lewis County and preached a short time. His first wife's name is not known. She is buried in Carthage. He second wife was Catherine Noftsier, who died in 1905.

10. Peter Lehman: son of (unknown), born in (unknown), Alsace-Lorraine. He married Katie Widrick. To them were born seven boys and two girls. He was ordained (unknown) 1868. Later he was ordained bishop.
11. Joseph B. Yousey: son of John and Katie Gingerich, born March 28, 1840, in Carthage, New York. He married Catherine Steria. To them were born seven boys and four girls. He was ordained about 1875. He died February 28, 1915.
12. Christian Roggie: son of Jacob (bishop) and Catherine Zehr, born October 5, 1855, in Lewis County, New York. He married Mary Noftsier. To them were born eight girls and three boys. He was ordained 1882. He died January 6, 1930.
13. Christian M. Nafziger: son of John and Catherine Bachman, born February 24, 1861, in Merzig, Saar Beken, Germany. He married Anna Moser. To them were born three boys and one girl. He was ordained to this office February 3, 1895, and later he was ordained bishop.
14. Joseph Lehman: son of Peter (bishop) and Katie Widrick, born March 17, 1875, in Croghan, New York. He married Mollier Zehr. To them were born three boys and three girls. He was ordained June 10, 1910. He remained with the church until 1940, when he united with the First Mennonite Church. He died March 12, 1942.
15. Joseph J. Zehr: son of Andrew B. and Mary Moser, born November 12, 1878, in Lewis County, New York. He married Katie Moshier. To them were born two boys and three girls. He was ordained to this office November 21, 1915. Later he was ordained bishop.
16. Jacob Gingerich: Son of Christian and Veronica Mayer, born February 28, 1874, in Baden, Ontario, Canada. He married Lydia Lehman. To them were born five boys and four girls. He was ordained November 23, 1930. Later he was ordained bishop.
17. Chris Ressler: (1879-1958) was ordained minister in Elkart County, Indiana, June 1907. He came to Lewis County in the fall of 1933 and preached occasionally. The spring of 1942 he moved to Gladys, Virginia. He was married to Anna Zimmerman.
18. Allen Gingerich, son of Jacob (bishop) and Lydia Lehman, born July 17, 1909 in Baden, Ontario, Canada. He married Marion Zehr. To them were born two boys and one girl. He was ordained November 20, 1938. His life ended suddenly in the night January 22, 1951.
19. Lloyd Boshart, son of Eli and Kate Kennel, born August 3, 1913, in Baden, Ontario, Canada. He married Naomi Moser. To them were born five girls. He was ordained November 20, 1938. Later he was ordained bishop.
20. Elias Zehr: son of Joseph (bishop) and Katie Moshier, born July 21, 1905, Croghan, New York. He married Martha Widrick. To them were born five boys and seven girls. He was ordained September 26, 1946, and continues his services today.

1928 in Croghan, New York. He married Eileen Roggie. To them were born five girls. He was ordained September 7, 1952. He still continues his service today.

22. J. Leon Martin: son of Ira and Mary Ann Eshalem, born August 30, 1922, in Hagerstown, Maryland. He married Katherine Schaefer. To them were born four boys. He was ordained September 7, 1952. His service was given at the Pine Grove Mission.
23. Vernon Zehr: son of Joseph and Lydia Roggie, born December 27, 1918, in Indian River, New York. He married Esther Swartzen-truber. To them were born four boys and three girls. He was ordained September 8, 1963, and continues his services today.
24. Elmer Moser, son of Andrew and Emma Widrick, born January 4, 1929, in Copenhagen, New York. He married Kathleen Lehman. To them were born two boys and two girls. He was ordained September 8, 1963, and continues his services today.

List of Bishops Ordained

1. Joseph Farney: son of (unknown) and (unknown) born April 26, 1795, in Alsace-Lorraine, France. He married Catherine Gerber. To them were born five boys and three girls. Later he married Mrs. Barbara Mosemann Zehr. He was ordained in his home country, year unknown. He came to America when nearly forty years old. He left the church and united with the New Amish Church (Apostolic Christian). He died April 18, 1873.
2. Michael Zehr (family sketch recorded under minister). He was ordained to bishop about 1853. He died January 18, 1886.
3. Jacob Roggie (family sketch recorded under minister). He was ordained to bishop about 1880. He died April 17, 1894.
4. Peter Lehman (family sketch recorded under minister). He was ordained to bishop January 1888. He died July 14, 1896.
5. Christian M. Nafziger (family sketch recorded under minister). He was ordained to bishop January 19, 1896. He died February 8, 1953.
6. Jacob Gingerich (family sketch recorded under minister). He was ordained to bishop November 20, 1938, to assist Bishop Nafziger. He died August 9, 1942.
7. Joseph J. Zehr (family sketch recorded under minister). He was ordained to bishop September 26, 1943 to assist Bishop Nafziger. He died December 21, 1944.
8. Lloyd Boshart (family sketch recorded under minister). He was ordained to bishop November 11, 1945, to assist Bishop Nafziger. He resigned this office July, 1962 and moved to Pennsylvania.
9. Richard Zehr (family sketch recorded under minister). He was ordained to bishop September 8, 1963.

Ordained in the Lewis County Churches

1. Andrew Gingerich: son of Jacob (bishop) and Lydia Lehman, born October 29, 1911, in Baden, Ontario, Canada. He married Esther Zimmerman. To them were born three boys and one girl. He was ordained May 25, 1947. Later he was ordained bishop in September, 1953.
2. Donald Jantzi: son of Michael and Alma Zehr, born July 27, 1918, in Pigeon, Michigan. He married Doris Schaefer. To them were born four girls and two boys. He was ordained September 7, 1952. He served until 1957 when he left to serve the Mennonite church in New Bremen.
3. Norman Lyndaker: son of Paul and Catherine Widrick, born January 26, 1930 in Croghan, New York. He married Phyllis Lehman. He was licensed in August, 1960 and ordained October 6, 1963 in the Woodville church. To them were born two girls and one boy.

STORIES ABOUT OUR EARLY SETTLERS

How the Zehr's Happened to Settle Near Croghan

The story of how members of the Zehr family came into Lewis county is of unusual interest, for it gives a picture of the hardships the immigrants suffered in getting a start in a new land. The story of their coming was told the writer by Joseph J. Zehr, minister of the Mennonite church between Croghan and Kirscherville.

"My people came here back in the days when the section was new," said Mr. Zehr, "and but little of the lands were settled. My great grandfather was Michael Zehr and his home was in the Alsace province. Of course, the reason why my people left France was because of military duty which they did not believe in. Also Mr. LeRay had agents over there and these agents pictured in glowing colors this new land and the many advantages to be had here. Some way our people got the impression that work was to be had almost anywhere in America and that money could almost be picked up in the streets. Great grandfather had two sons who came over with him. They were Christian, my grandfather, and Michael, Jr. My people were very poor when they left France and it was quite an adventure for them to start out. But they thought that if they could only reach here they would be able to get along nicely. And the land agent was quite willing to agree with them. He wanted settlers over here. At that early time there were some of the people of our faith here in Lewis County, as you will see when I tell you the history of our church.

"When my people reached New York City, after a long and hard passage, they expected to find Lewis County quite near at hand. I don't know about their start out of New York; whether they came up the Hudson by boat, or not but they were afoot in the Mohawk, for they told how they wondered how much farther they had to go and what they were going to do, for they needed something to eat and they were out of money. When they got in the vicinity of Utica they saw a man working out in the fields with a hoe and my grandfather, Christian, and brother, Michael, proposed that they stop and ask him for work so as to get some money and something to eat. I think that great grandfather thought he would push on. Of course these young men could not speak English, for they conversed in the German language, and that made it hard for them. Also they were having some of their illusions about America shattered. They were not finding work on every hand or picking up gold in the streets.

"Well they went over and asked the man in the field for work. The man could not understand them and paid little attention to them. But these boys were anxious for a good meal and a little money, so they kept on asking. After a time one of the young men made signs that they could use a hoe, too and the man in the field understood this and got two hoes and set them at work. They were delighted with their first work in America and worked hard that afternoon on the farm in the Utica

section. When it came night they made signs that they wanted supper and pay, but the fellow shook his head. It seemed that the fellow was just the hired man and figured if these fellows wanted to work, why let them. But the boys went to the house and they made the owner of the farm understand as best they could the situation. The owner was a kindly man, so he gave them their supper and I think, kept them all night and also gave them some little money.

"The boys felt better and started on foot and came along the Black River valley to get to Croghan. My great grandfather reached here about a century ago. He located on a piece on land on the road that goes out of Croghan towards Belfort. There was a shack on the place that the Indians had at some time and my folks stayed in that until they could get their house built, which was of logs. They had a hard time of it for a few years as they had to start empty handed.

"I got these stories from my father, Andrew B. Zehr, who is now in his 77th year and remembers hearing of the early events from grandfather Christian Zehr. Very soon after the Zehr's came, others came from Alsace and soon there was quite a colony here.

"I spoke about James LeRay de Chaumont having this land here and I heard it came to him by his being in some way connected with the Castorland company. I want to tell you one reason, why the Mennonite people came here. According to our doctrines, one should not be in strife or war, and the military policy of France at that early time was warlike. The youth of the land were forced into service. Mr. LeRay had discovered some of these early emigrants from his land who had our faith and it occurred to him that they would be splendid pioneers to come and settle the land. He knew them to be hard-working, thrifty, peaceful and always making the land better by their careful cultivation. So he asked James Kiefer to act as his agent over in France and do his best to send over colonists to take up this land. The Kiefers were from our locality in France. We knew them there. They were from Metz, at that time in the department of Moselle. Christian Hirschey came in 1831. Joseph Kiefer was coming and he got Christian to come with him. This would probably be among the first of the people from our section to come here."

THE LIFE STORY OF JOSEPH STERIA, KIRSCHNERVILLE

by EARNEST G. COOK

Carrying lumber on his back for three miles to help in building a house, was one of the hardships early endured by Joseph Steria, 80, who lives out of Croghan about three miles near Kirschnerville. It was a most interesting visit the writer had with Joseph Steria and it was brought about by Joseph J. Zehr, minister of the Mennonite church of Kirschnerville, who accompanied the writer to the Steria home.

At his farm home, Mr. Steria was reading his German Bible and was reading fine print without the use of glasses. He stated, when asked about his eyesight, that he had never used glasses and had never felt the need of any. His hearing is also good. We will let Mr. Steria tell his story.

"My father's name was also Joseph Steria and he left Germany probably in the 1840's to come to America. He was a young man at that time and came alone, except that some others from the Fatherland were in the party, all seeking liberty and better times in the New World. Father was 42 days in crossing the ocean. I know that he was poor and my impression is that he came by foot part of the way at least into Lewis County. They came this way as there were others of our section and faith living here. When he reached Croghan, father soon found work with a farmer by the name of Brown who had a big dairy and there was plenty of work to do.

"Working for Mr. Brown at that time was Katie Moser, also from Germany and not far from the same section that Joseph Steria had come from. Kate was a good worker and an expert cheese maker. She had worked for Mr. Brown five years before Joseph arrived and it was her business to make up the milk into cheese, for at that time each farmer with a large dairy manufactured the milk from his own herd of cattle. Joseph fell in love with Katie and the marriage took place not long after his arrival from Germany.

"My father bought a farm, about 50 acres, I think near Kirschnerville, and began farming. It was about this time that Dr. Peter Zehr came to locate in this section and that leads to the incident about bringing the lumber on men's backs to help furnish off a house here not far from where this place is located. One of the pioneers here decided to purchase a place in the wilderness here and to build a log house. But there was needed boards for the roof and the doors and floor, as well as boards for the gable ends of the house that would go from the logs up in the peak.

"At that time, you understand, there was not even a path or road between here and Croghan, three miles away. Someone had started a sawmill there and there was the lumber the pioneer needed for his house. So some of the young men of the Kirschnerville settlement proposed that they form a party and all go through the woods to Croghan and bring back the boards on their backs, or shoulders. They went to

the sawmill and my father said that every young man wanted to carry the biggest load. The other fellows would put a couple of boards on the shoulders of one and with that foundation continue to pile on more boards till the fellow said he had enough. Understand these would be boards of green lumber and heavy. But before the first mile was finished they began to dump off boards. Father said that path through the woods from Croghan to this place was just a string of boards. But they went back and picked them up on return trips. This incident just shows what some of our early pioneers were up against.

“My father became a minister in the Mennonite church and I well remember some of those early Sundays when we used to hold our meetings at the homes of different members. Father would get out the oxen and put them on the cart, or the sled, as the case might be, and we would load in and start for the meeting. Mother died when I was nearing my 23rd birthday and father later moved to Ontario, Canada.

“Fifty-seven years ago on October 17, I married Mary Widrick, and we came up here to settle and I have lived here ever since. There was not another house near us at that time. I started in house-keeping and farming almost empty handed. I did not even have a crosscut saw, but had to cut all the logs with an axe, unless I went to borrow from neighbors. I cleared much of the land on this farm and have seen many changes during my stay here. When I first came here we cut all of our grain with a cradle and the grass with a scythe. I started farming with only four cows and made up the milk at home. Later they built a cheese factory at Kirschnerville. I drew milk there as soon as I had a dairy large enough to make it pay. Some of the seasons I think I received as low as 45 cents per hundred for my milk.

“Speaking of cutting grain with a cradle, reminds me that we often used to form ‘bees’ to cut the grain, a group working together. I was said to be one of the best cradlers in the lot and I used to enjoy cradling grain. I remember once of being asked by a neighbor to come and cut his grain with the cradle and I cut 18 acres in eight days. He gave me \$1.50 per acre and I thought it was unheard of wealth.

“My wife died when we had been married 54 years.”

ZEHR TELLS OF STRUGGLES OF FAMILY TO CLEAR LAND

By EARNEST G. COOK

Mr. Joseph Zehr, minister of the Mennonite church near Croghan, had several stories to tell of pioneers of that section who were members of that faith.

The family of John Moser were among the early settlers near Belfort and others came at about the same time and located near Soft Maple.

"My people on my mother's side were Mosers and so I heard stories that were handed down in the family from the days they came here," Mr. Zehr said. "There was John and his brother, Joseph and others. They could not bring their families with them as they were poor, so they left them in Alsace until they could get enough funds to bring them over. They came here just as cheaply as possible and came a part of the distance by canal and part of the way by foot. Some of these people had to work hard to get houses built and their lands cleared. They would try to do this work late in the fall and during the winter and early spring. In the spring when the work would open up on the farms in the older settlements out Denmark way they would leave their homes and go and work for the farmers there by the month and this money they would lay away towards the fund to bring their families over. It took some of the people, working hard and saving, four or five years before they could send for their families.

"I know the Moser men were three years in getting enough to bring their families over. And they certainly worked hard. They would try to work and improve their own little farms and at the same time be working out to earn money. I used to hear them tell about one of the Mosers who would cradle grain through the day and catch a little sleep at the grain field and soon be up at work again, cradling at night if there was any moonlight.

"I used to hear them tell about the time that Joseph got mixed in his time and came very near working all day and all night. He had quite a large piece of grain to cut and went at it early in the morning and swung his cradle all day, just stopping long enough to catch a bite to eat. At night, as was often the case, he lay down to sleep a little, expecting to get up and go to work towards morning. He went sound asleep and was so tired he was afraid he would sleep too long. Suddenly he awakened and opened his eyes and knew he had overslept, just as he was fearful he would do. Grabbing his cradle, he started in to work feeling that he had wasted good harvest time by oversleeping. He cut for about an hour and began to get worried. The sun did not come up as soon as he expected. He wondered why it did not get light in the east. But he kept on at work and in about an hour he paused to get some bearing as to time. Still dark in the east. When he went in the house to get the time, he found he had only been asleep an hour and it was still

before midnight. They say he resolved to get his rest and get a better start for the next day.

"Now I have told you something about our people in their early days in this country, and you will see that such determination and thriftiness must bring about results. I want to explain a little about our church and its religion. I fear it is not well understood by the people who do not know us. You have mentioned how the Evangelical Baptists, who were a part of our faith at one time when we first started here, helped each other. That has always been our custom and we still follow it. You mentioned how the people came to help the Virklers when their barn burned by being struck by lightning. They do that and do it many times. So do we and many more times than people know as we never advertise ourselves.

"Take the time that Andrew Roggie's barn burned one night not long ago. The next morning there were men and teams in his woods shortly after daylight getting out to the logs to build a new barn. Mr. Roggie had his own wood lot so he used his own timber. (Also Jacob Roggie furnished timber.) That method took more time and labor than if he had purchased the timber all cut as was the case of the people you have mentioned. These men continued to help until the barn was ready to raise. I say these men, it would not be the same men every day, as we divide up and have a certain number every day. As a rule, we have a leader or foreman, and we need to do this so matters will run smoothly.

"But in about two weeks' time—to be exact it was 15 days from the time that the Roggie barn burned, the new one was ready for the putting in of the crops. You speak of the case a business man Carthage way told you of one of your young men having a barn burn down twice. He was right. It was a young man having a farm there and the barn burned down in June one year, being struck by lightning. The men rallied to put him up another. In about three years' time the new barn was struck by lightning after the crops were all in and burned. He told the members they need not put up another as he would not have fodder for his cattle. But we put up the second barn and we drew him hay and grain so he would have fodder for the winter. Not long after—maybe a matter of three years—he died. But we were ready to help the widow and did, as she needed help. We are not telling this to win applause, but just because you asked us about it. It is not a new thing. If you will make study of the subject, you will find we are about the oldest Protestant church in the world. We figure we are the oldest."

A STORY OF JACOB ROGGIE

Jacob Roggie, with his wife Catherine, and one small child came to America about 1850. The long sailboat voyage across the Atlantic took about ninety days.

By the time they reached Utica, Jacob had a total of three dollars left in his pocket to complete his journey and establish a home. After arriving in French Settlement, he was soon able to purchase a plot of forest land three miles east, (toward Belfort) and there he built a little cozy log cabin. Trees were cut and the land cleared, and as soon as possible crops were planted. The first crop they planted was wheat.

He and his wife worked hard to make a living. His wife, at least on one occasion, put in the wheat crop while he worked elsewhere. He did hand mowing and took jobs which kept him away from home nights. Once a week he returned home with a pack of groceries on his back to give food to the increasing family. Money being scarce, food supplies were scanty and often caused Jacob to leave the table hungry so the children could have enough.

One time a felon appeared on his little finger, but in spite of the pain, he labored on until finally the end of it came off to the first joint. He still kept on working, though meanwhile suffering great pain because of it.

He was ordained minister and spent much time during the still night hours reading and memorizing scripture. He memorized the Gospel of Matthew completely.

As Written by EILEEN ZEHR LEHMAN

Christian M. Nafziger was born on February 24, 1861, in Merzig Saar Beken, Germany. When he was a small child, his family moved Bitburg, Germany, which is about forty-five miles north of Merzig and a few miles east of the Luxemburg border.

The family lived in a farming village. Christian with his four brothers and two sisters, all older than he, were kept busy helping their parents on the farm.

At least two years of his boyhood were spent as a shepherd with his brother Peter. One day as Christian and Peter were returning from the country to bring their sheep to the fold in the village they encountered some difficulties. Some type of festivities were going on and the streets were full of people. The boys were puzzled as to the best procedure when one of them struck upon an idea. Christian took the leadership with the sheep leader directly behind him followed by all the rest of the sheep in single file. In this way, the boys and sheep wended their way through the crowd with Peter bringing up the rear.

Home life was simple. Mother Nafziger spun flax into linen herself. With the linen she made necessary items for the home. When Christian left for America, his mother gave him a linen tablecloth as a farewell present. Bread, clothes, yarn, etc. were all made at home. One time Christian remarked that all they had to buy in his boyhood home was sugar and flour. They made cooking oil from a wild mustard plant which grew in the fields.

Every Saturday night the boys greased their one pair of work shoes to wear to church on Sunday. Church life was important to this European Mennonite family. Christian's father was a Mennonite bishop. He later saw four of his five sons ordained to the office of bishop—Peter in Luxemburg, Joseph in Lorrain, Nicolas in Bitburg and Christian in America.

It is easy to understand that Christian grew up to be a young man with strong convictions through the contributions of home and church life. He also did a great deal of reading. He had some important decisions to make as a young man for in March of 1883 he was drafted to the Germany army. He conscientiously felt he could not participate in warfare. He also took a stand against noncombatant service, which was accepted by his brothers. As the youngest brother, he stood alone, appears, in his convictions. He passed his physical examination and received his orders and his division and was to be called in November of the same year.

In June, three months after being drafted, Christian bade good-bye to his family and homeland little thinking that he would never see them again nor ever set foot again on German soil. He had barely enough money to pay his fare to America, the land of freedom.

He made the remark many years later that after he had boarded the ship and was on the way to America he was so lonesome that he wouldn't have cared if the ship had sunk then and there.

He arrived in New York on June 28, 1883 and was twenty-two years of age. Fortunately, he had with him an address of a John Nafziger in Northern New York. He arrived in this section of Lewis County where several families had settled around the year 1836. Here he intended to work for one year as a farm hand and woodcutter and then work his way to Kansas to where his sister with her husband had immigrated.

A year after his arrival in New York, Christian was moving "west". He arrived in Ohio in the summertime where he found work for a few months. While there, a great disappointment met him. He received news that his sister had passed away. His brother-in-law was discouraged so he took his three small children and sailed back to Germany. What should Christian do? He had no other relatives to go to so he decided to go back to New York where he had found friends and with whom he had felt at home during his first year in this strange new land.

He found work again and soon met a young lady, Anna Moser. On October 28, 1886, she became his bride. Bishop Jacob Roggie performed the ceremony.

The newly married couple then bought a tract of land near Croghan. Here they built a barn and house and lived for about twenty years. Two sons, Joseph and Menno, were born to them. They also adopted twin sisters, Anna and Beatrice Hersh.

They never prospered well on this farm. After twenty years (in 1909) they purchased a farm near Lowville. It is said that when they left their first farm they lost more than they had had when they began. The buildings fell into disuse and are no longer standing today. Their farming experiences near Lowville were somewhat easier. However, Christian did not wish for great economic prosperity.

His interest in the church was far-reaching. As we have noticed before, it was because of his convictions that he left home and loved ones to come to a new land where he could enjoy liberty.

On February 3, 1895, he was ordained to the ministry and less than a year later, on January 19, 1896, to the office of bishop. "During his ministry deep conviction and strength of character set him out as a leader."¹

In August of 1952, the Annual Meeting of the Conservative Mennonite Conference was held at Croghan, New York. At that time Bro. Nafziger was 91 years of age. He was asked to give a testimony after the conference sermon. This was the last public testimony given by him. Following are excerpts from his message:²

1 Statement of Sympathy to the Family and Congregation of Christian M. Nafziger", Report of the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference, 1953, Andrew Gingerich, Sec.

2 From a tape recording owned by Eliaz M. Zehr, Lowville, New York.

I thank God the creator of all things for this seed which was sown . . . When we walk according to the Holy Word and according to what God shows us then we will have a happy life and a happy dying. So dear people, let us be careful to do what Jesus says that we have to do to come up to Him. He promised His disciples that they would come to the same place where He is and this promise we have if we are true to His teachings.

'Then Jesus said unto His disciples, If any man will come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.' Deny self is the first thing we have to do. We have to give up our own self . . . He tells us a man must be born again. The nature of man must die and the Spiritual life have its beginning . . .

Let us think of the people that are lost. All eternity there is no hope for any change in the lives of the people that are damned . . .

We sometimes think all signs that Jesus gives us are fulfilled and so we can expect that He may come soon. Let us be ready when He comes . . . May God bless you all, lead and guide you all from this life to life everlasting. O dear people, when we will once be together in the heavenly mansions then there will be nothing anymore that we will hope for. When we have Jesus we will have enough. Time up there will be too short to praise worthily for all that God has done for us.

God bless you all, lead and guide you.

On February 8, 1953, a few weeks before his 92nd birthday Bro. Nafziger quietly passed away in his sleep.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE AMISH MENNONITE CHURCH IN LEWIS COUNTY, NEW YORK

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." Eccl. 3:1

"One generation passeth away and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever. Eccl. 1:4

The beginning of this settlement was sometime during the years 1835 or 36. A French company held a tract of land on the east side of Black River, which was about 30 miles long from north to south, and perhaps the same distance from east to west. Through the influence of this company a man of the Amish faith, Joseph Keifer by name, a native of the French province of Lorraine, came here; acting as an agent for the Company he sent letters to his friends in the home land, inviting them to come to his new country. And in less than 10 years 20 families came over from Europe. Among them were found the names of Virkler, Farney, Jantzi, Kennel, Zehr, Moser, Martin, Noftsier, Roggie, Schantz, Hirschi, and others.

Among them were two bishops, Joseph Farney and Rudolph Virkler.

Conditions among the people seemingly were normal and satisfactory until in the year 1849 when two men from Switzerland came here, who were of a sect popularly known as "die Frolichen". Here they were known as the "New Amish". They claim for themselves at the present time the name of "Evangelical Baptists". They were present at the usual meeting for worship and preaching services, and after the conclusion of the meeting, they asked to read a song out of a book. Some church officials would not allow such liberty, but Bishop Virkler granted them the liberty. Whether he talked the matter over with them before is not known, but it looks that way. Anyhow, he favored their views and doctrines and associated and affiliated with them without much discussion. His relatives took the same course and went with him; and others followed. Of the teachings of these people, one prominent feature was that of baptism, which they insisted must be by immersion, and all who united with them had to be baptized again, even though baptized upon confession of faith previously.

Second, no one was considered saved unless belonging to their church.

Third, their new birth had to come to pass in a particular manner, and the main emphasis was laid upon feeling, impulse, or emotion. Many went over to the new organization in the first rush, and this continued until but a small number of members were left to the original congregation. Two years later, Bishop Farney, also deserted his former church connection.

After that the church here looked to Canada for help. A bishop Esch came over accompanied by another minister. Some claim the second man's name was Stoltzfus, and that he was from Pennsylvania. Others insist that both were from Canada. They ordained two men to

the ministry, whose names were Gerber and Hirschi, but they remained faithful only a short time and then went over to the new church. However, there was a minister here ordained before the falling away, who remained steadfast to the end. His name was Michael Zehr. A second time help was called for and the same bishop Esch and another brother by the name of Roth, came from Canada. They ordained Michael Zehr as bishop and Jacob Roggie to the ministry of the gospel. This was before 1855. About 1860 another minister of the gospel, John Moser, was ordained.

After this more people went over to the new church. But the three men named above were steadfast, and fed the little flock the bread of life. In the year 1868, Peter Lehman was ordained minister of the gospel. Some time before Bro. Roggie was ordained to the bishopric, but the exact time is not known. About 1874 or 75 Joseph Yousey was ordained to the ministry of the gospel and John Noftsier as deacon. In the year 1881 Bishop Michael Zehr passed on to his reward at the age of 94 years.

In 1881 Christian Roggie was ordained to the ministry of the gospel. In January of 1888 Peter Lehman was ordained bishop. Bishop Jacob Roggie died in April 1894. By that time we had about 30 families in our church. We held our meetings in our dwelling house up to 1912, when we built our first meeting house, that near Croghan.

On February 3, 1895 Christian M. Nafziger was ordained to the ministry of the gospel near Croghan. On January 19, 1896, he was ordained as bishop. On July 14, 1896, Bishop Peter Lehman died.

January 18, 1901, Pre. John Moser died.

In June 1909, Joseph Lehman and Joseph Zehr were ordained to the ministry. February 15, 1915, Pre. Joseph Yousey died. April 11, 1917, Deacon John Nafziger also passed on to his reward. In November of 1915, Jacob Roggie was ordained deacon. On January 6, 1930 Pre. Christian Roggie passed on to his reward. November 22, 1931, Jacob Gingerich was ordained to the ministry of the gospel.

Our Sunday School was begun about 1905. In the forenoon we had preaching service, and in the afternoon Sunday School, all in German, until after the war. Now there is more preaching in English than in German.

Truly we can say with Samuel of old, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Let us trust in God. As He was with our forefathers yesterday, so He will be with us to-day with our children forever.

C. M. NAFZIGER

From the "Herald der Wahrheit"—June 1933.

HOOK AND EYE BAPTISTS

They Have Ways of Their Own and Are Prosperous and Happy

A correspondent writing from Beaver Falls, this county says:

There is a sect living in this region of the country with some quite peculiar ideas, called Hook and Eye Baptists, because hooks and eyes are used on all their garments instead of the buttons employed by the rest of the human family. Buttons are considered frivolous. In some respects, this is a wise arrangement. Buttons have such an unpleasant way of dropping off upon the least provocation. How many cases of domestic infelicity are caused every year by a button coming off and not being sewed on at just the right moment. And there is saved the labor of making button holes, without which a button with the best intentions becomes a dismal failure. There are said to be at least a hundred families of these Hook and Eye Baptists scattered over this section. They are Germans and mostly farmers, being too honest to succeed in anything else. They have good farms, well tilled and all their fences and buildings are in order. They are well-to-do, but live very simply, indulging in none of the luxuries of life. There are no carpets on the floors nor pictures on the walls; no bric-a-bric or ornaments of any kind, nor one piece of superfluous furniture. They make all their own clothing, the patterns for which do not come out of fashion books. They card and spin the wool from their sheep and weave it into the cloth from which all their garments are made and care not whether wool is on the free list or otherwise. The men wear their hair cut square in the neck and long like foot ballists, and never shave. A barber would starve to death were he to locate amongst them. The women do not indulge in bangs or frizzes. They wear nets, which was always a good old-fashioned and such an easy way to do the hair, requiring no hair dresser. Their large families are early taught to be industrious; no drones allowed in these busy homes, one of which was recently visited, and the feminine portion of the family from grandmother down to one of tender years were seen each diligently knitting; not useless fancy work, but gray woolen stockings of various lengths. And, they did not stop work on account of company. These peculiar people take no interest in the world's affairs, but live within themselves, contented and happy. They never vote and so can be of no earthly use to candidates on election day. They do not read the newspapers, considering them demoralizing. How much they are spared by this course. They do not get mixed up on the tariff. Their hearts are not wrung by contemplating the amazing ignorance and wickedness of the party now in power after so many years wherein wise and virtuous counsels prevailed. They are never perplexed by the question why one party should be infallible and all goodness, intelligence and uprightness, and the other the reverse; or which administration's foreign policy is the most to be admired.

They are spared all such vexing problems by abstaining from newspapers. It is said their lives will bear any amount of investigation and great dependence can be placed on their simple word. It seems as if ordinary people who cling to buttons and newspapers might be benefited by imitating in some respects these eccentric citizens.

Copied from the "Journal and Republican", Lowville, N.Y. February 15, 1894.

MENNONITES CONFERENCE HELD AT KIRSCHNERVILLE

Five Hundred Present At Services Last Sunday

Seventy-Five Ministers From All Parts of the United States, Many of Them Accompanied by Their Families—A Thrifty, Honorable Class of People.

The annual conference of the Mennonites of the United States and Canada was held Sunday, Monday and Tuesday at the new church erected the past year near Kirscherville, in the town of Croghan. There are quite a large number of Mennonites in the town of Croghan and other parts of Lewis County. Seventy-five ministers from nearly all parts of the United States attended the conference, many of them accompanied by their families. It is estimated that 500 were present at the Sunday services. A large number of those present came from Pennsylvania and the West. Last year the annual conference was held in Michigan.

The Mennonites, commonly called Hook and Eye Baptists, owing to the fact that neither the men or women ever employ anything but hooks and eyes on their clothing, originally came from Holland, and their first appearance in the United States was in the Dutch settlements in New York in 1664. As a class they are extremely plain in all things, strictly honest at all times, and very seldom have any troubles of their own. In fact, they live by their own laws, of doing unto others as they would that others would do unto them, and with them lawsuits and contentions are unknown. If punishment is necessary it is meted out in the church by the pastor. Simplicity in dress and simplicity in living are striking characteristics. The men and women both wear homespun garments of the plainest kind fastened with hooks and eyes, the men broad-brimmed black soft hats and the women shakers. Ribbons and jewelry of all kinds are never worn by them, and you never see one of their number without a pleasant smile on his face. The men always wear a full beard, but no mustache is allowed. The utmost simplicity characterizes the life of the Mennonites, and they will stay by one another to the very end. They are very industrious, usually engaging in farming, and most of them accumulate comfortable fortunes.

The boys and girls are taught to confine their courting and marrying to their own people and accumulated wealth is handed down from one generation to another. The pastor of the flock labors without compensation and is the patriarch of the settlement. When a death occurs the plainest kind of casket is used and no money is expended for a hearse. As the boys and girls come into manhood and womanhood they are given a helping hand and good start in life. The more wealthy

members of the group lend money to those in need without interest and should one of their number meet with loss by fire or otherwise all turn in with a helping hand. The men steer clear of politics and will never accept public office.

Another characteristic, and one that is always witnessed at the Lowville station when a group of these people arrive or depart, is that the men always kiss each other with true affection, but no such liberty is ever taken with the women. While the men and women sincerely love one another, no liberties are ever taken, and the tongue of scandal is always as silent as night. The homes of these people are always plainly but well furnished, and their mode of living, while plain, is plentiful and substantial, and good health is the general result. Nearly all the men have a liking for good horses, and they keep them slick and fat.

If all the people of these United States were Mennonites in fact, there would be no use for courts, investigations, jails, penitentiaries or alms houses, for we would be a happy, contented and prosperous people.

THE AMISH MENNONITE CONFERENCE AT CROGHAN

Elmer G. Swartzendruber, Secretary-Treasurer, Corrects
Misrepresentations Made by Correspondent and Published
Generally by the Press.

The Journal and Republican of June 17th published an article under a Kirscherville date line, concerning the Amish Mennonite Conference then in session at that place, which embodied several misrepresentations as regards statement of facts, creed, customs of people, etc. all of which is sincerely regretted, and we are very much pleased to give publicity to the following letter from Elmer G. Swartzendruber, secretary and treasurer of the conference, not only correcting these false statements, but also giving the public a broader and better understanding of the Amish Mennonite people:

Wellman, Iowa, June 29, 1926.

Dear Sirs:—Having acquired possession of clippings taken from Journal and Republican, Lowville, N.Y., Watertown Times, Watertown, N.Y., Syracuse Herald, Syracuse, N.Y., Utica Press, Utica, N.Y., "Grit," Williamsport, Pa., and the "Pathfinder," Washington, D. C., dealing in supposition with the Amish Mennonite (Conservative) conference held near Croghan, N.Y., June 14, 15, 1926, but in reality with the people, and then mainly with their individual likes and dislikes, views and peculiarities which oftentimes are far from the principles upheld by the body as a whole, and believing that you are willing, hoping at least, to publish facts rather than conjectures, I am taking the privilege to add a few lines, hoping that you may see fit to publish this in its entirety, including these words of introduction, so that other papers who have been making extracts will be able to know the reason why this is written, and hope they also will be willing to give it as much space as was given to former articles.

I am not saying that things have been printed that have not been justified by what has been received from someone somewhere in an interview, but, as is often the case, many of these expressions are sometimes so far from what the church really stands for and upholds that we feel it no more than right that more be written, though I am sorry this becomes necessary, as we are not seeking for any notoriety of honor, much more would we prefer to live such lives that are in accordance with Gospel, in true humility and meekness serving our Lord and Master who willingly shed His Blood on the Cross that man might be saved.

Mennonite history may be traced back to the Anabaptists, (though some think they can be traced back farther than that) which was a religious sect that had its beginning in Middle Europe during the early Sixteenth Century, standing for a complete separation of church and

state and an unreserved obedience to God and the Bible, their earliest confession of faith on record being that of Schleithem, 1527, this being the same year that the first of its leaders, Felix Manz, suffered martyrdom by drowning, at which time one of the authorities gave them this testimony; "I am thoroughly convinced that there are many simple, righteous people among this sect, and also their leaders try to fear God. Many of them desire such a holy, simple consecrated Christian life that they no longer desire to live according to the flesh and no longer seek the things of the earth. For this reason they say a Christian should not live for the world and not care for the world, should desire death equally with life," etc.

Here and there mention is made of Mennonites coming to America as early as 1643, but not until 1683 was the first permanent settlement effected, which was at Germantown, Pa. They came from Holland and Germany and were in the first years of their settlement closely associated with the founders of the state of Pennsylvania, the Quakers, and from there they have branched out until now they are to be found in almost every state in the Union.

The principles at present adhered to may be seen as set forth in "A Declaration of the Chief Articles of our General Christian Faith," which were written and adopted at a Peace Convention held at Dortrecht, Holland, April 21, 1632, and signed by 51 men and these principles are still considered by our denomination as in accordance with the Word of God, even though there may be certain members within the pale of the church that are not living up to them, yet that fact by no means should be taken as representative of the body in general, no more so than that our beloved nation of the United States should be judged by the evil that a few of its citizens may be found in.

This conference held near Croghan was the sixteenth annual meeting of this particular branch of the church, former ones having been held in no less than five different localities of other states and no where else have, to our knowledge, such peculiar statements appeared in print as there have in Lewis County, N.Y., and vicinity both in 1920 and 1926, which either shows a lack of knowledge of the truth of matters, or else a peculiar statement of facts by some of our people when interviewed, and I am sure that all those who have the welfare of the church at heart are sorry that such a condition exists.

The reason for the holding of the annual conference is not that new methods of preaching the gospel to the younger members of the faith may be decided upon, but that in conversing with each other we may more fully see what God's Word says and means, helping each other thereby in coping against our common enemy, the devil, not with weapons that are carnal, but mighty through God, which means work for all to do, although there has been no dissension, as has been stated in some of the papers, but such things that come and go at the dictates of Dame Fashion are certainly not tolerated.

The automobile is not under the ban, as has been stated, neither is the reading of newspapers forbidden, although in regard to the former

we do teach against the misuse thereof, and as to the latter we see and teach the need of making the Bible our newspaper, and not the newspaper our Bible.

That the homes are without any carpets, etc., or other modern improvements, is ungrounded, although the attitude taken is that the people should live within their means, which oftentimes accounts for the plainness of some of them.

We believe not in a salaried ministry, and even though they may be uneducated to some extent, yet we do strive to be such that may be said of, as was of Peter and John (Acts 4:13) and this is to be able to give answer of the hope that is in us (L Pet 3:15) and not to satisfy the idle curiosity of others, nor from a viewpoint of argumentation only; neither do we believe that publicity is sinful, although we are not anxious to be frequently discussed in the daily press.

We are sorry to say that we are not entirely clean from the use of tobacco and intoxicants, as has been published, although the using of them is not sanctioned, and likewise the matter of resorting to the law of the land for the settlement of disputes is not countenanced, even though it is sometimes done, and our teaching is that we be subject to our Government, and we are truly grateful for past and present favors that have been enjoyed in the line of religious liberty, and may we seek to uphold and live the principles of our forefathers, that of simplicity of life, honesty and a willingness to labor, working with the hands the thing which is good, that we may have to give to him that needeth (Eph 4:28).

We are indeed sorry that there have been any of our members who may have refused to give the desired information, or that any wrong ideas have been formed, and hope this may serve the purpose for which it is intended, that of giving information for the benefit of those heretofore misinformed.

ELMER G. SWARTZENDRUBER
Secretary-Treasurer

INTRODUCING THE MENNONITES

Since the days of Christ's earthly dwelling, his apostles labored faithfully to send the Christian message to regions about them. Throughout the centuries, disciples continued to spread biblical truths and practices unto all generations.

The christian church being universal was called the Roman Catholic Church. "Four centuries ago the Protestant reformers broke away from Roman Catholicism because of their desire to re-establish the Christian Church upon a biblical basis. Ultimately, four major bodies developed. The Church of England retained many of the outward forms and much of the ritual of the Roman Church while developing a biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. The Lutherans of Germany and the Scandinavian Countries went farther with their reformation program having a more clear-cut emphasis on justification by faith, and making a sharper break with Rome. The Reformed of Switzerland, France, Holland, and Scotland insisted even more radically than the Lutherans on the eradication of all Roman forms of worship and on following the Scriptures alone. But it remained for the Anabaptists to go all the way back to the Apostolic Church for their pattern, rejecting not only the body of ecclesiastical tradition entirely but the whole state church system and infant baptism as well."

A reformer named Zwingli began the Anabaptist movement in the period 1519-23. By the fall of 1523, some of his followers, Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz felt that Zwingli was looking too much to the Zurich senators for approval rather than directly following the Bible itself. Grebel made an effort to convince Zwingli to keep the teachings as taught in the book of Acts; to discard infant baptism and establish free congregations of committee disciples baptized upon their confession of faith in Christ and walking in newness of life. Grebel did not convince Zwingli so he inaugurated believers baptism, "Anabaptism" in January 1525, and establishing what is now known as the Mennonite Church. The term Mennonite comes from Menno Simons, a former Roman priest who united with a group of Dutch Anabaptists in 1536.

The Mennonite Church believes in separation of Church and State. "The function of the state is the maintenance of law and order while the task of the church is the evangelization of the world."

The Mennonites do not baptize infants. No infant is capable of conversion; he cannot repent and believe the Gospel. Baptism is intended to symbolize a deep repentance and belief in Christ.

Love is to control the entire Christian being in every phase of life. Warfare is not tolerated. Mennonites are taught and earnestly believe that according to the Holy Bible it is necessary to do only good to one's fellow men and helping those in need rather than destroying.

Jesus taught his people to use reserved and good language and never to swear an oath. The church is composed of brothers and sisters in the Lord. No distinction based on any earthly factor is to have significance.

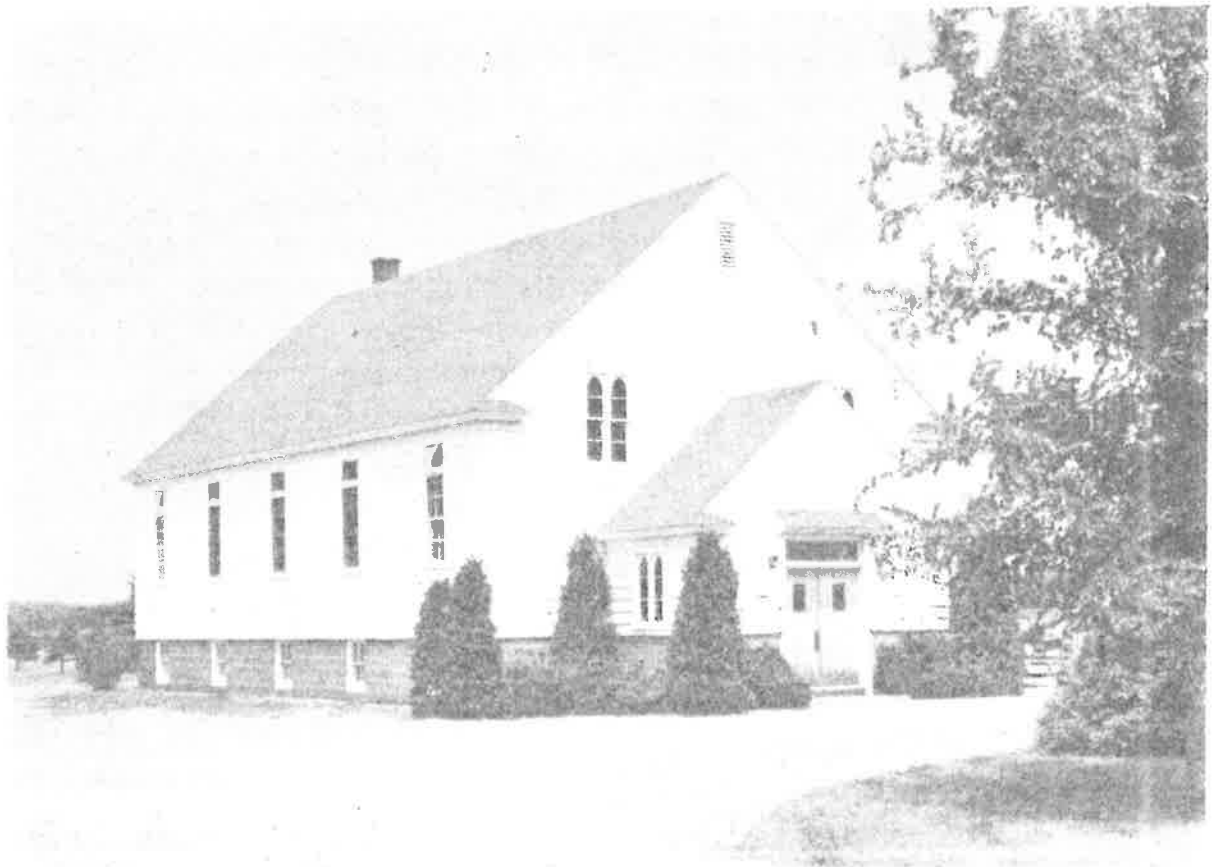
The Christian life involves a self-denial for the cause of Christ and a simple life as taught according to the Holy Scriptures. Earthly possessions belong to God and are to be used according to his honor. A sharing of what one has with others is an expression of love.

“Mennonites therefore are a body of simple believers who regard Christianity as not merely a theory of salvation, but as a life of obedience springing from grace and love. They believe that love is not a matter of words or sentiments, but that it involves an attitude of doing good to all men regardless of race or class, without qualification. They recognize that they are limited in wisdom and strength and therefore refuse to swear to anything. Baptism is not a means of supernatural grace but a pledge of discipleship. Church membership is no empty convention but an obligation to live for the welfare and the witness of the Christian Brotherhood.”

The material here used has been taken from the pamphlet “Who Are the Mennonites?” written by John C. Wenger. To receive more knowledge about the Mennonites, read Henry Smith’s book “The Story of the Mennonites.” Many more sources are available to anyone interested.

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH

Located near New Bremen in Lewis County



I THANK YOU, LORD

I thank you, Lord, for heavy blows
 Of sorrow and of pain;
 That drive me back from perilous ways,
 Into harmony once again:
 For stinging whips of cold and hunger,
 For trouble's hand to feel and see;
 Of easy slippery paths of danger,
 That draws me gloriously close to Thee.

I thank you, Lord, for the narrow road,
 All sharp with rocks and thorns;
 Though I falter 'neath the heavy load
 So tempest tossed, all dark with storms,
 That lessons bright I will ever keep;
 They give me strength and courage strong,
 And feel You very close to me.

I thank you, Lord, for mistakes made,
 Rebukes and for thy chastening rod;
 For lessons learned and so dearly paid—
 It makes you more of a father, God:
 For disillusion that cleared my sight,
 For my faults and weaknesses, give me
 Such rapture and keen delight,
 To overcome them all for Thee.

I thank you, Lord, for the devil's wiles,
 His crafty snares and slippery way,
 His clever plots and worldly smiles;
 The harder he crowds me night and day,
 The more his plots and plans and snares:
 The more he traps and plans for me,
 The more he howls and rages and rares—
 It draws me more closer, Lord, to Thee.

—MRS. SYLVIA BRUMMETT