

MAH News & Notes

Michiana Anabaptist Historians (established 1992)

Fall 2012

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What Attracted Settlers To LaGrange County, Indiana?

(Part 2 of 2)

What Attracted the Anabaptist Folks to Settle There?

This is the second in a two part set of meetings about Anabaptists settling in LaGrange County. The Spring meeting had focused on the Emma area. This meeting will have more to do with the southern part of LaGrange County, specifically the town of Topeka.

Bob Coon will share the history of Topeka Mennonite Church during the first hour of the pro-

gram.

Following a break for refreshments Harold Gingerich, who has served as President of the Topeka Historical Society, will share stories about Topeka. He has lots of stories to tell!

This meeting, sponsored by the Michiana Anabaptist Historians, is open to the public. It will be at Topeka Mennonite Church at 9 a.m. on October 20, 2012.

Fall 2012

Public Meeting

Saturday,
October 20, 2012

Registration & coffee 8:30 a.m

Program 9:00 - 11:30 a.m

Topeka

Mennonite Church

Topeka, Indiana

*Sponsored by Michiana
Anabaptist Historians*

Directions: From US Highway 20 head south to Topeka on SR 5, and turn left at the Quik Stop station, which is County Rd 700S. It is two miles to the intersection and traffic light. Head on east one more block to the church. It is on the southeast corner, almost across from the Post Office on the north side of the street. Parking is behind the building.

Report on Annual Spring Meeting

Saturday, March 24, 2012 • 9 a.m.-12 noon • Emma Mennonite Church, LaGrange County, Indiana

by Wanda Hoffman, Secretary

President, Ruby Bontrager gave opening remarks.

Loren Johns offered the prayer.

Minutes of the Fall 2011 Members meeting were read by Wanda Hoffman, Sec.

A Treasurer's report was given by Ezra Miller.

Consistent with the tradition of the Emma Church, the attendees were asked to shake hands and greet someone that they had not yet shook hands with. Then the chorister from the Emma Church led the group of 65 attendees in two hymns.

Ruby introduced the speakers for the day. Al Yoder, an avid historian from the Emma Church shared historical events of the LaGrange County area in general and the town and church of Emma specifically. Amish minister, Floyd Miller, talked about the Amish experience settling in the area.

Fruit, breads and beverages were made available by the Emma women's group.

The Fall meeting will feature the Topeka area in LaGrange County.

Michiana Anabaptist Historians:

Ruby's Musings Losses & Gains. by MAH president Ruby Bontrager

What? Evelyn died? What are you saying? What happened? She provided such excellent leadership for the Hospice grieving groups. Our friendship began when our husbands were students at Goshen College. We were both married with children. Our husbands were busy studying, working part-time and managing financially was a challenge. Our friendship was special, and remained so for all the years following. No matter how much time between visits or phone calls we would pick up where we left off last time.

What a loss! I still miss her. Whenever I pour myself a bowl of cereal I can hear her say, "Pour the milk on first so the sugar stays on the cereal, not sink to the bottom of the bowl."

After the fourth grade I was sent kicking and screaming to Clinton Christian Day School. I threw the best fit a ten year old can manage to express my extreme displeasure of being taken from my dearly beloved public school. It seemed like a very dark time in my young life. The public school was just around the corner from our house. I could run there in a matter of minutes. I loved it; I lived for school. It was a huge loss at the time to change schools; especially since it had not been discussed at our house before that very morning.

However, the teacher who met me at the door of the classroom was Galen Johns. He had only a card table for his desk, and the carpenters were still hammering and sawing to complete the building of the school.

"Brother Galen" as we were in-

structed to call him was a godsend for me as well as many others. He exemplified a person who "walked the talk" and that communicated with a ten year old. He was able to make learning fun; and was able to explain biblical truths so we could understand what he meant. He gave us confidence by treating us like we knew something. Often he would ask us to get out paper and write or explain something such as justification, grace or what we plan to be when we grow up and many other things.

"What did we really know?" I wonder, but he built lots of confidence in us by treating us like intelligent children. Especially dear to me was the Reading Wheel he made for us with various types of literature listed around the circle.

One author he would not give us credit for were the Grace Livingston Hill books. I understand these books were perhaps typically what we today think of as romance novels. A poor girl marries a rich guy who was the prince coming on the proverbial white horse to rescue the poor girl, and they live happily ever after. I realize as an adult that he probably tried to inspire us to read a better type of literature by doing that. It did influence me and I have never read any of her books.

He talked about living a Christian life and challenged us academically as well. Everyone deserves to have a teacher at least one year like "Brother Galen." I enjoyed seeing him through the years at times and always appreciated that I had the privilege of experiencing that fifth grade school year as a student in his classroom.

The impact of that one year as a student of Galen was life-long for me. He recently passed on to his eternal reward. The memorial service was a wonderful example of celebrating a life well-lived. Thank you, Galen for your wonderful example. This experience of changing school as a fifth grader which was such a loss became a great gain for me. What a loss it would have been for me had I not attended that year when the teacher had only a card table for a desk!

Another huge and deep loss for me was when my father was killed in a car accident. He had just returned from a world tour with one of his sons and his brother Lloyd and two of his sons. We didn't often say the words we should have said to each other. I did see him after his return from the trip and he gave me a souvenir, a small plate from China.

He said they explain the symbols around the edge as meaning "longevity of life." Two days later he died in a car accident. Some of my siblings had last seen him six weeks earlier before he left for the trip. The next time he was in the casket.

That was a very dark and terrible time of loss for our whole family. However, as we walk through the valley of sorrows and come out on the other side, I can say how thankful I am to have a Christian heritage and that I was taught values that have served me well.

Losses, gains. Gains, losses.

Sometimes losses bring huge gains which cannot be seen at the

— Continued on next page

Yellow Creek Cemetery

by Jim Hermsen

It was during a tour of the Old Yellow Creek Cemetery (on the east side of County Road 11 just south of County Road 38) conducted by J. C. Wenger that I realized I not only had ancestors buried there, but that the lives of many of those interred there were interestingly interrelated—both from the point of local history and church history. It was not, however, until 2006 that I decided to preserve this history in a documented format.

The Yellow Creek Cemeteries of Harrison Township, Elkhart County, Indiana, is a “Cemetery Who’s Who” directory identifying the relationships, accomplishments, struggles, and faith of those who created the Yellow Creek Community. This project owes much to David L. Miller, who first recorded the cemetery, and Thelma Hoover Martin, the Yellow Creek Church historian who has provided much background information and verification of that information.

The Old Yellow Creek Cemetery is rapidly falling victim to environmental erosions and natural damage from storms and fallen tree limbs. It was important to save this cemetery before it became too late. Meticulous efforts to restore the cemetery have been implored through the township trustee Richard Yaw and the work of Blake Riley.

The Yellow Creek project photographically documents all the tombstones in their present condition. With the picture of the tombstone there is biographical information including, when known, the place and date of birth and death, the parents of the deceased, the marriage date(s), spouse(s), all known children, and, if those children are deceased, where they are buried. What follows is any historical information that may have been obtained from local histories, newspapers, and other publications.

The Yellow Creek Frame Cemetery (on the west side of CR 11)

was recorded in similar fashion, complete with all photographs, biographies, etc., and, when applicable, what known genealogical volumes in which these individuals can be found. Current efforts are underway to complete the Yellow Creek Brick Cemetery of which the sections south of Yellow Creek Mennonite Church have been recorded.

The Old Yellow Creek and the Yellow Creek Frame (Wisler and Old Order) Cemetery have been published in both paper and digital (CD) formats. Copies have been made available to the Historical Library at Goshen College, Eastern Mennonite Historical Library, Muddy Creek Library (Lancaster, PA), as well as Wakarusa Public Library, Elkhart Genealogical Association Library at Bristol, and Fort Wayne Public Library. Copies have also been given to the sextons of the cemeteries. Print and CDs are available.

Ruby’s Musings — *Continued from previous page*

time. Other times what seems like a huge gain, ends up being a loss which we cannot see at the time. We can think of many situations which we may have experienced, or know about when these truths have been born out, some sadly and others become a stepping stone to truths not learned otherwise.

May God continue to give us all wisdom and grace to move forward in our Christian lives.

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Membership: \$10 per calendar year. Renew at Spring meeting, or send payment to:

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Mark Your Calendar!!

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