

*Wm. Martin*

# HISTORY OF THE GEHMAN'S MENNONITE CHURCH. AND MINISTRY WITH A REVERE

Prior to October 25, 1942. all of our members at Gehman's, Alleghany and Red Run commened at Bowmansville. The communion divisions were made under the supervision of Bishop J. Paul Graybill. The congregations to work with same bench council which meets monthly at Bowmansville.

WE ARE INTERESTED IN A HISTORY OF GEHMAN'S CHURCH ONLY TONIGHT.

Now we must go to Switzerland. Here we find the potential Gehman's Mennonite church eight generations back in 1754. It is a trip from Emmet Thal to Gehman's Thal.

Switzerland is a small European Republic. Comprising only 15,970 square miles. On the west are the Jura mountains near by are the Alps. Bounded on the west by France, on the north by Germany, on the east Austria-Hungary and on the south is Italy. In this flat valley, having the Jura mountains on the west as a boundary between France, lived colony of persecuted Ana-baptists called Mennonites. They were poor farmers. The small farms they lived on were owned by the nobility of Switzerland. It is believed they were driven here from the canton of Bern that large ana-baptist church where severe persecution prevailed for 350 years.

They lived in peace on their rented little farms until 1734 when an edict was issued by the rulers that all Mennonites must be driven out of the Bishopric. However, the owners of these little farms and the noblemen came forward and pleaded for the Mennonites. They said: "the natives are no farmers, these Mennonites are good farmers: we want them to farm our land". Therefore the edict was never carried out.

Our ancestors in Switzerland were poor but very industerous. They prospered materially and numerically. Their estate was soon to small. Emigration was the only answer. Emigrate they did for conscience sake. Early in the year 1754 a group of these Mennonites embarked for Pennsylvania in America. Among this group was the nucleus of Gehman's Mennonite church.

This particular ship, named Phenix, landed at Philadelphia on October 1, 1754. The ship record shows that there were 25 Mennonites on the Phenix. That means that there were 25 men over 16 years of age on board. It is estimated that the whole group of Mennonites on the ship was one hundred or more.

What we are interested here this evening evening are few that found their way to "Gehman's Thal".

Among the group were : Christian Gehman, John Gehman, Niklous Shantz, Hans Shantz, Joseph Wenger, (the first deacon for the Gehman's Community) , Just S hoenaur, Hans Burchalter, Hans Moser. IN THESE EIGHT MEN LIES THE POTENTIAL GEHMAN'S MENNONITE CHURCH. Rough hewd from the fires and blood of religious persecution.

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The emigrant Christian Gehman begat four sons: Christian, Daniel, Benedict, Abraham .

- 1) Of Christian we know practically nothing. Likely he was born in Switzerland because the ship record gives his name.
- (2) Daniel was born in Switzerland. Came to America with his parents. Died 1809.
- (3) Benedict the third son was born in Switzerland, in 1744. Lived first in Brecknock township, Lanc. Co. Pa. Later in East Earl

township, Lanc. Co., Pa. By March 1791 he was an active deacon in the Mennonite church in Weaverland and served for 56 years. (4) Abraham, the youngest lived on his father's farm in Berks Co., Pa.

SO, THAT GIVES US A LITTLE GLIMPSE INTO OUR ANCESTORIAL FAMILY -- THE GERM OF GEHMAN'S MENNONITE CHURCH ON THE HUMAN SIDE. THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS AND IS THE REAL BUILDER.

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The first Mennonites came to the "Gehman's Valley" in 1754-1758. Comprising the eight pioneers mentioned above. The congregation was probably organized in 1760. That would mean that our forefathers worshiped in private homes for some 86 years. The house where Bro. "Eddie" Hursts live was used as a place of public worship by the brothers and sisters. In the room facing Gehman's church they met. Christian Bowman was the first minister. Joseph Wenger was the first deacon. In 1846 the first meeting house was built.

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### THE MINISTRY

The ministry was plural. The system was circulating. Therefore every minister affiliated with the circuit, even though he was not specially ordained for Gehman's was nevertheless a contributor to Gehman's church. The congregations are still dovetailed into each other and it will be for the good of the cause if they remain that way. Woe to the Mennonite church when once we get so worldly that we adopt a one man ministry. Preachers notes were taboo. Programs and special meetings were considered "popular and therefore dangerous."

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NAMES OF THE FIRST MINISTER, CHRISTIAN BOWMAN WHO DIED IN 1790 TO OUR LAST ORDAINED, AMOS HOSTETTER, FEB. 11, 1959 ARE 24.

- (1) Date of ordination of Christian Bowman is not definitely known. He was a miller by trade. Died 1790.
- (2) Ulrich Burkholder. A brother to Christian Burkholder, Bishop of the Groffdale district, is also mentioned among the first ministers before 1778. He lived a little to the east of Bowmansville. A farmer by trade. Died 1804.
- (3) Daniel Gehman of the third generation, was first ordained a deacon in 1774. A preacher in 1792. Died in 1809. He was ordained principally for Gehman's congregation. He was an outstanding man in the congregation history and tradition agree. Was often called away to the Conestoga valley on special occasions.
- (4) Joseph Bowman was ordained a preacher in 1802. In 1816 he took his family and about one third of the Alleghany church and wandered Conestoga wagon-wise to the wilds of Canada. Died among his flock in Canada in 1842.
- (5) Christian Good was ordained a preacher soon after Joseph Bowman had left for Canada in 1816. He died of a lingering illness of consumption at the age of 59 years. During this lingering stage of sickness he wrote his beautiful German hymn in the form of an acrostic.

THE MINISTRY

CHRISTIAN GEHMAN. Ordained in 1817. Lived in the vicinity of Gehman's meeting house. Preched for 39 years. He died at the age 81 years in 1856.

JOSEPH GEHMAN. Ordained a minister on June 19, 1843. After 10 years or about 1855, at his own request, he was given the office of a deacon at his own request. Died in 1894. Aged 86 years.

I well remember his earnest yea and AMEN as testified to sermon messages being 11 years old.

BISHOP JACOB MOSEMAN. Was ordained to the ministry in Baden Germany, in 1822, and Bishop in 1825. Came to Bowmansville - Gehman's district in 1852. Died in the city of Lancaster in the year of 1876. Aged 81 years.

PETER MUSSER. Ordained as an assistant to Bishop Moseman in 1860. Ministered over the entire district. The congregation flourished under his ministry. He died Feb. 23, 1874, at the age of 53 years. Buried at Pine Grove burial ground.

BENJAMIN HORNING. Ordained March 30, 1867,. As an assistant minister over the entire district. Had a special charge over the Alleghany congregation. His voice was often heard on funeral occasions of his neighbors as well as in the Conestoga valley. He was gifted with more than ordinary eloquence. His sermons bristled with Scripture quotations from beginning to the end. Died Nov. 3, 1903. Aged 80 years. Preached for 41 years.

ABRAHAM B. GEHMAN. A great-grand-son of Daniel Gehman. Was ordained to the ministry in 1874, on May 25. Died May 23, 1911. Aged 63 year

CHRISTIAN STAUFFER. A native of Germany. Ordained to the ministry in 1877. Preached for 10 years. Died Aug. 5, 1887. Was old 64 years.

HENRY G. GOOD. A grand-son of Daniel Gehman. Ordained a minister of the district, Oct. 25, 1887. Preached the word for 28 years. Died Nov. 10, 1915, at the age of 70 years.

NOAH B. BOWMAN. Ordained Nov. 27, 1901. He was among the first of the Lancaster Conferency to engage in special evangelistic efforts. Died July 5, 1926. Having labored in his appointed field for 24 years. Aged 52 years.

MOSES G. GEHMAN. A great-great-grand-son of preacher Daniel Gehman. Ordained Sept 3, 1912. Called for the district.

ISAAC W. GEIGLEY. Ordained as minister for the district, on Nov, 14, 1926. Died Feb. 1946.

GEORGE G. HORNING. Ordained for the district June 10, 1925. Died Dec. 1. 1946.

BENJAMIN F. WEAVER. Feb. 24, 1944. . . . .

HOWARD Z. GOOD. Nov, 29, 1945, -----1954. ....

PAUL Z. MARTIN. Feb. 15, 1950.. ....

~~BENJAMIN S. ZEISER~~. Aug. 18, 1954. ....

WARREN W. MARTIN. Sept 10, 1953. (Alsac Manor).

(4) Continued--

### THE MINISTRY

WARREN W. MARTIN Ordained Sept. 10, 1953.....Alsac Manor.

AMOS HOSTETTER. Ordained Feb. 11, 1959..... Red Run.

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God uses men and women to carry on His work on earth. As we think on these men of God, preachers and deacons, called of the Holy Ghost and placed by the church we stand in awe and wonder at the mysterious working of God in preserving the church. Let us read a verse from Fredrick L. Hoshmer's beautiful Hymn:

"Forward through the ages In unbroken line,  
Move the faithful spirits At the call Divine;  
Gifts in differing measure, Hearts of one accord,  
Manifest the service, One the sure reward".

This well applies to the faithful ones in Gehmans church tonight.

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### DEACONS

DANIEL GEHMAN. First deacon known to be ordained in this district. Called April 4, 1774. (Later a preacher--1792).

HANS OBERHOLTZER. Next deacon. Was active in 1792, and on to 1803 as as his entries into the german church book show.

HENRY WEBER. Records show that he served as deacon in the district on March 11, 1791 He was ordained in Weaverland. Died in 1827.

DANIEL GEHMAN. (Jr.) Ordained soon after 1800. Lived near Adamstown. Died 1859.

HENRY WEBER. Son of the former deacon Henry Weber was ordained to succeed his father, in May 1829. Served 42 years. Died 1873.

JONAS GOOD. Ordained deacon of the district soon after the civil war. Lived near Bowmansville where Amos Zimmerman now lives. Died May 9, 1880. 67 years old.

NOAH M. BOWMAN. Uncle of preacher Noah B. Bowman, was ordained deacon of the district on May 20, 1880. Died April 3, 1928. Aged 75 years. He was "the smiling deaco". We teenagers loved to meet him.

JOSEPH HORNING. Father of preacher George G. Horning was ordained deacon of the district in 1895. Served as deacon for 36 years. Died Nov. 29, 1931. He was a conservative thinker and a loyal disciplinarian his influence is felt to this day.

ABRAHAM L. GEHMAN. Youngest son of preacher Abraham Gehman. Ordained for the district on Jan. 19, 1928.

In 1942 he was released from direct responsibility to the home congregations so he may serve the Reading Mennonite churches. His original ordination credentials remain unchanged.

HARVEY B. HORNING. Ordained a deacon for the district on June 11, 1940, later about 1942 his jurisdiction was limited to Bowmansville.

### A CONCLUDING COMMENDATION

Gehman's congregation today has a well organized Sunday School.  
A consecrated superintendency. A devoted and deeply interested  
group of faithful teachers. A mission secretary--bringing mission  
echoes from the four corners of God's great Mission Field for our  
prayer interest. A Librarian charged with a library of good books  
for the reading community. An apt hymn leadership. May we all walk  
humbly before God, so that future generations, our children and  
grand Children may rise up and call Gehman's congregation blessed,  
while our Lord tarries.

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### MY REVERE

FOR THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH BY THE RUTTED CARRIAGE ROAD.

Precious memories still abide  
Of the spot by the carriage road;  
Where stood the little church in white,  
Whereto with horse-buggy oft we rode.

Eighteen-forty-six was the year,  
When by the ruddy carriage road,  
Our sturdy fathers met sans fear,  
To undo their foreign load.

Here met Pious fathers of yore,  
Mother's laps graced with jewels sweet ;  
Lads and lassies with smiles galore,  
Young and old did each other greet.

For wayard children here they wept,  
Preachers in agony did pray;  
Oh ! erring one! you so long in sin have slept  
Awake% awake% lest grace will stay.

Here, on foot, Horse-back, buggy and chase,  
Carriages, chuck full of kin--(futures voice);  
To this little white church of former days,  
We oldsters came when little boys.

Gehmans! yes, Gehman's! thats the name,  
Golden memories linger bright;  
Oh, sacred spot, unknown to fame,  
Yet God has blessed the little light.

Here our preachers with earnest plea  
Did make the holy Word so plain;  
That we sinners had to bend the knee,  
And cry, Oh, God! wash this crimson stain.

And now from the singer's table rang,  
The word in song so bright and clear,  
As the german sacred hymns thay sang,  
Making earth a heaven right here.

The Holy Ghost is brooding here,  
Here was Holy ground for many a youth,  
Now working for God far and near  
Till Somolia heard God's truth.

(7) Continued.

REVERE

Time has wiped away the proto shrine  
Where we oft have knelt to pray;  
But the sown seed, it still does shine,  
And will through the Eternal day.

God dwells not in temples made with hands  
Nor in the little church in white:  
His grace is free to all the lands,  
And fills our hearts with joy tonight.

Here this eve in Gehman's church we met,  
Besides the noisy auto road;  
Let us never our sire's God foget,  
Whom they met besides the quiet horsy road.

Gehman's~~y~~ yes, Gehman's church ~~thats~~ the name,  
Golden memories linger bright;  
Oh holy ground, unknown to fame,  
How God is blessing the candle light!

Despite the changing scenes of time  
We still worship our forbear's God;  
May our light never cease to shine  
Never altered, nor distraught.

O Lord! our God, to Thee we prat,  
This eve, at Thy Eternal Throne;  
This house of wood, too will pass away,  
But Thou endurest, Thou alone.

O Lord! what our children's lot will be  
Thou, and Thou anone canst tell,  
We mortals but a mite can see,  
May they drink at thy Eternal well.

Eternal love casts out all fear,  
Man may raise atomic dust on high;  
Our God of love is always near  
He says: the Saint shall never die.

In Gehman's church we humbly bow,  
The sinner's fate we have at heart;  
Our need, Oh Lord! we feel just now,  
Our only source of life thou art.

Here in Gehman's church this holy eve,  
Comes the solemn thought of Mansions pure,  
Where we'll meet never more to leave  
Where our joy shall ever endure.

So, in all "humility of mind"  
Let us follow our forbears God;  
A better we'll never find  
As the way of Christ they trod.

---- By Moses G. Gehman

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