

Brethren Historical Library & Archives: News and Notes

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Where Was I Born on March 21, 1930? A Story of Bethany Hospital

by

Mary Bowman Baucher April 25, 2019

I've wondered, but assumed it was in the new Bethany Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. Just recently, however, I came across two booklets by and for the students of the Bethany Hospital School of Nursing. They contained information about the birth and growth of the vision for the need for a Christian hospital where there would be a Christian atmosphere for the training of nurses and the care of the sick. It was in these two books that I learned that the original hospital was opened in a rehabilitated apartment building in December 1920. It was here that my father (Curtis B. Bowman) interned, starting about 1922 as a student at Northwestern Medical School. The new hospital building was "kitty corner" from the old one which I knew as the Van Dyke building. Apparently, it became housing for the nurses after the new hospital opened. That new hospital opened for patients May 3, 1930. Therein lies my question. Where was I born?

AH HA! In my quest to answer the question, I went to find my birth certificate and was fortunate to find the original from Cook County. It had the address as Bethany Hospital, 3415 W. Van Buren. Not being sure what the address of the new Bethany Hospital was, I looked up some monthly bulletins from the new hospital and discovered the address was 3420 W. Van Buren. So, at last, I am pleased to know that I was born in the old Bethany Hospital that began to fulfill the goal of the Church of the Brethren in 1920. I'm proud of the dream of the early Brethren and the many people who have worked so diligently to serve those in need of medical services, my father and mother included. I have many, many memories of those people whom I got to know as I was

growing up. I had the opportunity to work one summer in the laundry, kitchen, and surgical departments.

As I grew older, I learned to know many of the very influential people in the hospital, the school of nursing, and the Brethren denomination who were co-workers and good friends of my parents. The names of these people still draw memories to me: Wieand, Maphis, Strohms (Fred and Ethel were both in attendance at my birth), Keller, Sargent, Weybright, Trostel, Beck, Berger (attended at my birth), Belding, Horning, Chauvet, Pinc, Olga Benson and on and on. I remember some of the nursing students, too: Edna Bowman (my aunt), Wovetta Blickenstaff (my cousin), Jeannie Landes, Ruby Hoke, Martha Stern, Grayce Brumbaugh, Mary Dadisman, Laura Wine to name a few. A funny thing is that I was the senior class mascot in 1933. I have vague memories of wearing a little white nurses uniform made by my Mother and carrying a Florence Nightingale lamp at the beginning of their commencement event. I found a picture of me in the Bethanian class booklet.

I also have memories of the Bethany Hospital Auxiliary as my mother was active in it raising money for items the club could obtain for the hospital. I remember them getting baby bassinets and helping making binders, a routine for helping new mothers feel better. Many members of the staff, doctor's wives, and Church of the Brethren members like Cleta Mae Butterbaugh, Mary Christy, Mrs. Keller, Eva Trostle; Mrs Maphis, Mrs. Bollinger, Miss Hoke, Miss Beck.

This pursuit to find the location of my birth has been a walk down memory lane, and a pleasant one at that. I'm so thankful for all the people who have given so much service to others through Bethany Hospital even as it turned into a ghetto area of great need. There are many, many amazing stories about the influence of the Hospital on individuals and the community.

The Dunker Meeting House and the Irony of Brethren History

September Mourn. The Dunker Church of Antietam Battlefield by Alann Schmidt and Terry Barkley (El Dorato Hills, Ca.: Savas Beatie, 2018) 156 pp., notes, appendix, bibliography, index, hardcover, \$19.95.

Many Brethren are probably aware that one of the most decisive battles of the Civil War took place in Maryland, near the small village of Sharpsburg. In early September 1862, after a significant Confederate victory at Manassas, Virginia ("Second Manassas"), General Lee directed his army north across the Potomac River into Union territory. It was a bold move that Lee hoped might cut off Washington, D.C. and bring an early end to the war. The Union Army of the Potomac, led by General McCellan, learned of Lee's plans and quickly dispatched advance troops to counter the invasion. After skirmishes at nearby South Mountain, the fierce Battle of

Antietam took place Sept. 15-17, 1862 and involved approximately 70,000 troops. The result was a Union victory that forced Lee's retreat back into Virginia, and it gave President Lincoln the political resolve to issue the Emancipation Proclamation that freed the slaves in the Confederacy. Militarily, the fighting on September 17th was a blood bath. It was the single most bloody day in any of America's wars with some 23,000 casualties—killed, wounded, captured, or missing.

One of the most iconic photographic images from the entire Civil War was taken two days after the Battle of Antietam by noted photographer Alexander Gardner. In the upper left of the picture, with a line of trees in the background, is a small, plain, whitewashed brick house of worship that has been significantly damaged by cannon and rifle fire. In the foreground are fallen Confederate dead waiting for burial; they were from an artillery company stationed for a short time at that location. That small, church building is of course the Mumma meetinghouse of the German Baptist Brethren, who were then commonly known as Dunkers (or Dunkards).

September Mourn is the first book-length history of that Brethren meetinghouse, known locally as the "Dunker Church," and its role in the Battle of Antietam. The co-authors are well qualified for this task. Alann Schmidt was a park ranger at the Antietam National Battlefield for 15 years. He researched the history of the meetinghouse and has given numerous public presentations about it. Terry Barkey, an independent scholar, has served as archivist at both Bridgewater College and the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. His professional access to denominational sources enabled him to bring a Church of the Brethren perspective to their study. Ted Alexander, a retired historian at the National battlefield, further strengthened the story of the Dunker Church by writing a Forward that sets the context and an Appendix that provides a detailed military overview of the fighting around the meetinghouse.

The story the authors tell may be roughly divided into four parts. The first three chapters introduce the Brethren and described their settlement and life in the Antietam Valley. Chapters 5 through 7 cover the battle and its aftermath. Chapters 8 through 12 focus on rebuilding of the meetinghouse and its rededication. Chapter 13 summarizes battlefield anniversaries and the Epilogue pays tribute to the continuing silent witness of the meetinghouse to battlefield park visitors.

The importance of Mumma's meetinghouse for the battle cannot be understated, but it can also be quickly summarized. As Alexander points out, the building was of little tactical value. It was simply situated at the wrong place at the wrong time. However, because of its position on high ground along the Hagerstown Pike, the church served as a strategic focal point for several Union attacks on Confederate positions. On September 17th, approximately 15,000 men were engaged in fighting around the meetinghouse, many thousands of whom were wounded or killed. During the engagement the little church first served briefly as staff "headquarters" for Confederate generals "Stonewall" Jackson and John Bell Hood. It was occupied by both sides, became a triage center for the wounded, operating room (for

amputations), as well as morgue. Some of those who died there were also temporarily buried in the church yard.

There is also a strong local tradition that soon after the battle, both Clara Barton, the pioneering nurse who later founded the American Red Cross, and President Lincoln visited wounded soldiers at the church, thus giving it further prominence. While such visits may have been likely, neither can be documented with certainty.

For Brethren readers, the history of the building is equally fascinating. Built in 1852 on land donated by John and Elizabeth (Miller) Mumma, it was one of four preaching points of the Manor congregation. Manor was organized about 1800; its first meetinghouse, built in 1830, was located near Tilghmanton, Md., about six miles south of Hagerstown and four miles north of the Mumma house. The Manor house has been remodeled several times but is still in use today. In addition to Mumma's, other preaching points of the Manor congregation were located at March (built in 1849, close to Hagerstown and later sold), and Potomac (built in 1859, near Downsville, four miles west of Manor and organized as a separate congregation in 1967). Preaching services for area families near the Mumma house were held monthly; baptisms were performed in nearby Antietam Creek. Larger gatherings for the entire congregation, such as for love feast, would have been held at Manor.

The Mumma meetinghouse was badly damaged during the battle and could not be used for worship for several months. Precisely how long after the battle it was used as hospital and morgue is unclear. It was not long, however, before Maryland Brethren began to assist the Manor congregation with funds to repair the structure. Regular services were resumed in early 1864. Then decades later tragedy struck again—a severe windstorm completely destroyed the building in May 1921. By that time, however, Mumma's again needed additional repairs was used only sporadically. Sharpsburg area Brethren were then regularly worshipping in town in a much larger building dedicated in 1900 (Sharpsburg became a congregation independent of Manor in 1953). Title to the property was eventually returned to the Mumma family and it was sold (along with the any remaining ruins) at auction to a private party in 1926 for \$800.

Three chapters (10-12) are given to efforts toward rebuilding an exact replica of the Mumma meetinghouse as a historic site on the National Antietam Battlefield. This was a long and complicated process with several false starts. A major hurdle was the lack of adequate funding, which was needed to both purchase the site and to ensure architectural and historical integrity during reconstruction. Rebuilding on the original foundation, the project was finally completed in 1961. This was accomplished primarily through the efforts of the National Park Service with the assistance of the Washington County Historical Society. A Brethren sponsored worship service has been held each September in the new meetinghouse since 1970.

No discussion of the Mumma meetinghouse and the Battle of Antietam would be complete without retelling of the theft and eventual return of the Bible used by the preachers during worship services. The authors anachronistically label it the "Altar Bible" (meetinghouses had no altars or pulpits) and add a few new details to the story. In brief, the Bible was kept in the

church at the time of the battle and was stolen by a soldier, Nathan Dykeman, from Millport, N.Y. Like many others who later pilfered bricks or other items from the church, he was no doubt looking for a souvenir. The Bible was taken to his home in New York where it remained in his family for the next forty years. Dykeman's sister decided to return the Bible in 1903 and sold it to veterans from her brother's old regiment for \$10.00. Details are lacking, but they contacted John T. Lewis, an elderly African American Dunker farmer who had been baptized into the Brethren faith in Maryland, but was then living in Elmyra, N.Y. Lewis, one of only a handful of Black Brethren before the Civil War, was photographed with the Bible and put the veterans in touch with John E. Otto, the last resident preacher at Mumma's, and the Bible was safely shipped back to the congregation. Today it is on display at the battlefield park's visitor center.

There are some surprises in *September Mourn*, one of which is the debate over slavery. As noted, a direct result of the battle was Lincoln's famous Emancipation Proclamation. The Brethren Annual Meeting had consistently opposed slavery since the colonial era and the authors assert that joining the Manor congregation required a promise not to own slaves. Yet they also document that at least two Sharpsburg area Brethren families, Samuel Mumma and John D. Otto, held slaves, and there may have been others. At least one former slave, Nancy Campbell, was a member of the Manor congregation and is buried in the Manor cemetery. If members of the Manor congregation owned slaves, it raises the question of whether other Maryland Brethren did as well? Exactly how widespread was slavery among Brethren in the decades before the Civil War? In spite of Annual Meeting opposition to the practice, Schmidt and Barkley point out slavery was likely a much more complex issue for some Brethren, as indeed it was in the larger society.

The organization of *September Mourn* is well developed. The chapters are short and even though the narrative includes seemingly unrelated details of military and church history, at 139 pages (less reference material) the book is a relative quick read. This unique story has much to commend it and the book properly belongs on the shelves of both Civil War enthusiasts and any reader interested in American religious or Brethren history. More narrowly, the book will be helpful to visitors exploring the battlefield site, to park tour guides, and to genealogists for its description of prominent 19th century Antietam Valley Brethren families, including: Ecker, Long, Miller, Mumma, Niekirk, Otto, Poffenburger, and Sherrick.

Nevertheless, the book is not without faults. There is for example much repetition—the tenuous connection of both Lincoln and Barton to the Mumma's meetinghouse is mentioned more than once. Not unrelated is the inclusion of speculative information about individuals, or events, or even objects. A minor case in point: a few paragraphs are devoted to the story (provided by former Sharpsburg pastor and Bridgewater College sociology professor Emmert Bittinger) that there may have been a slave auction block in Sharpsburg. Such oral tradition cannot be confirmed or rejected. Regardless, the existence of an auction block has no direct connection to the battle or Mumma's meetinghouse. It only serves as a reminder that Maryland was a slave state.

At points the authors also seem to go off in tangents. One example is that several pages are devoted to the life story of John Lewis and his friendship with Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain). It is true that without Lewis the meetinghouse Bible may never have been returned, so his role in supplying needed information was crucial. On the other hand, he did not possess the Bible, and it is unlikely that he ever visited Mumma's or was personally acquainted with preacher John Otto. While Lewis' life is captivating, its retelling here seems excessive. Schmidt and Barkley might have more profitably explored other questions about the Bible. Was it customary in the 1860s for Brethren to keep a Bible in the meetinghouse? At a time when many older Brethren still preferred the use of German, presumably the Antietam Bible is an (Authorized) King James edition. What does this tell us about worship in the Manor congregation?

For the Brethren part of their story the authors rely heavily on the oral history of Ruth Otto, a daughter of John Otto and long-time member at Sharpsburg, and published sources including Freedman Ankrum's *Sidelights on Brethren History* (1962) and the unpublished manuscript by H. Austin Cooper, "Antietam Dunker Church." Ankrum and Cooper were Brethren pastors who cherished the rich heritage of their church, but whose sources were largely undocumented, or verified. For example, both gave credence to the idea that Lincoln was secretly affiliated, if not a member, of the Brethren (which Schmidt and Barkley duly note). Cooper pastored at Sharpsburg in the late 1940s, was personally acquainted with area Brethren sites and local lore, and he was a strong advocate for rebuilding the Mumma house. It is fortunate that a portion of his papers were eventually donated to the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. Still, his research must be used with caution. In Cooper's only published work, *Two Centuries of Brothersvalley, Church of the Brethren* (1962) he misidentifies individuals and used speculative dates that have long confused genealogists and other researchers.

There is supreme irony in the fact that a plain and simple house of worship, built and used by people who practiced biblical nonresistance (loving pacifism), was the focal point of America's single bloodiest day in war. It is fitting that the authors recognize this contradiction, and in their Epilogue "I speak to Those Who Listen," pay homage to the Brethren ideal of living in harmony with everyone. The title is a quote from Brethren poet and writer Mary Sue Rosenberger's "Conversation at Antietam." She concludes, "The Dunkers said it long ago and its truth continues still: all war is sin . . ."

D. B. Eller, Mt. Joy, PA

Alann Schmidt will be speaking at the Brethren Historical Committee Insight session at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference at Greensboro, NC on Friday July 5 at 8:30 pm.

BHLA Notes

Zoe Vorndran Named BHLA Intern

Zoe Zorndran has been named to the 2019-2020 internship at the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. Zoe is a graduate of Manchester University with a BA in History and English. While at Manchester she worked in the Funderburg Library as an archive's assistant. She is a member of the Lincolnshire Church of the Brethren, Fort Wayne, IN.

BHLA Books for Sale

The BHLA website contains a list of used books for sale. We would like to highlight several titles. William Beahm, *Studies in Brethren Belief*--\$16.00; Floyd Mallott, *Studies in Brethren History* \$16.00; Don Durnbaugh, ed., *The Church of the Brethren Past and Present* (1971) -- \$10.00; Otho Winger, *Studies in Brethren Doctrine*, \$10.00; Kurtz, Blough, Ellis, *Studies in Doctrine and Devotion*--\$12.00; Miller & Royer, *Some Who Led* --\$10.00; Dan West, *The Coming Brotherhood*--\$6.00. For a detailed list, see <http://www.brethren.org/bhla/documents/bhla-books-for-sale.pdf>. All books are postpaid. Please send payment to BHLA, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Historical Documents Wanted

To reclaim storage space, church leaders often discard documents, not realizing that they tell the story of the work of people of God in communities around the world. If you have items relating to the history of your congregation, district or even ministries of the national church, even bulletins from special services, please forward them to the BHLA. Our address is BHLA, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Mission Statement

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives is the official repository for Church of the Brethren publications and records. Its purpose is to keep alive the Brethren faith heritage, by:

- Collecting and preserving materials relating to the cultural, socio-economic, theological, genealogical, and institutional history of the Brethren;
- Giving historical perspective and understanding to the mission of the church through counsel and publication;
- Providing a centralized Brethren research center and;
- Serving as a clearing house for information on Brethren historical materials in other repositories.

Please let us know if your mailing address has changed by emailing us at brethrenarchives@brethren.org. Thank you!

Some Recent Additions to the Brethren Historical library and Archives

Anna Hutchison photographs as a Brethren missionary in China, 1911-1930.

Civilian Public Service School for Cooperative Living, Wellston, Michigan, correspondence, newsletters.

Camp Creek (Illinois) Church of the Brethren, minutes, membership records, Sunday school records, love feast cups and bowls

Alma Moyers Long Papers including an account of the founding of Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) and early printed BVS materials.

International Christian Youth Exchange Reunion Files, 1961-2018 including correspondence and photographs.

Gerald Neher research files on his cultural studies in Northern Nigeria, 1950s-2000s.

Paul E. Weaver, slides, photographs, an oral history interview on the reconstruction of the Karlsschule, Vienna Austria, 1953-1955.

Minutes of the Virginia Eastern District Church of the Brethren, 1953-1965.

Wayne L. and Gwen Studebaker Miller Papers including sermons, addresses, family history, writings documenting their life in ministry and education in the Church of the Brethren.

Aaron (A. G.) Breidenstine slides from a trip to Nigeria and an album documenting the 1963 Russia Orthodox visit to Church of the Brethren congregations in United States.

Important New Publication on Twentieth Century Brethren History

David A. Hollinger, Preston Hotchkis Professor of History Emeritus at the University of California, Berkeley and son of Church of the Brethren minister Albert Hollinger, Jr. has written an important and moving memoir about a remarkable Church of the Brethren family and its experiences in Pennsylvania, on the Alberta frontier and eventually La Verne, California. Entitled *When This Mask of Flesh Is Broken: The Story of an American Protestant Family*, copies are available on-line from Amazon or Barnes and Noble.

Support the BHLA with Your Financial Gifts

The Brethren Historical Library and Archives is supported through the Core Ministries fund of the Church of the Brethren. Financial gifts to the church are not only welcomed but needed. Please send your checks payable to the Church of the Brethren to BHLA 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.