

# Annual Meeting Planned

## To be Held in Conjunction with Celebration at Trissels

The annual meeting of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians will be held on Saturday, October 25, 1997 at Trissels Mennonite Church. This will coincide with the Trissels congregation's celebration of their 175th anniversary.

The annual business meeting will be held Saturday at 4:00 pm and will include the election of officers for the coming year, an update on progress toward a heritage center, and other information which will be of interest to the membership.

A Nominating Committee chaired by Laban Peachey has prepared a slate for the election of officers at the annual meeting. Other members of the Nominating committee are Gerald Brunk and Virginia Grove Weaver. Officers who are completing their two-year terms are Nate Yoder, president; Randy Shank, newsletter editor; and Lois Bowman, sixth member. Officers whose terms continue are Cal Redekop, vice-president; Michael Shenk, secretary; and Elroy Kauffman, treasurer.

Following the meeting, members are encouraged to eat together in the fellowship hall of

the church before a 7 o'clock presentation of the pageant "Generation to Generation", a drama written by Grace Showalter for the congregation's sesquicentennial.

The meal will be prepared and served by the youth group of Trissels. Cost of the sit-down meal will be \$6.50. Reservations are required. To reserve your meal please call 433-0128 or send reservation slip from next page. This will allow youth to estimate size of the group to be served.

Other events of the weekend include a time of storytelling on Friday evening at 7 o'clock. This program will be led by former pastor Michael Shenk and will include stories from past

history and a time for audience participation.

For those who come to the church in the afternoon of October 25, there will be informal tours of the church and cemetery. There will also be a showing of a video made from the slide show "The Trissels Story", originally put together by Linden Wenger, and revisited in 1992 by Randy Shank.

On Sunday the celebration continues. Former pastor A. Don Augsburg will bring the morning message at 10:30 am. Following the worship service, everyone is invited to stay for a carry-in fellowship meal at the church.

Trissels Mennonite Church is the oldest Mennonite congregation in Virginia. The first of three meeting houses was constructed in 1822.

## Weekend Events At Trissels

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|------------|----------|-----------------|
| October 24 | 7:00 PM  | Storytelling    |
| October 25 | 4:00 PM  | Annual Meeting  |
|            | 5:30 PM  | Meal            |
|            | 7:00 PM  | Pageant         |
| October 26 | 10:30 AM | Worship Service |
|            | 12:00 PM | Fellowship Meal |

# Heritage Center Update

---by Angela Showalter

It began about two and a half years ago with an idea for a Mennonite history museum. The original idea was to provide a place for storing and presenting artifacts and other materials illuminating the history of Mennonites in this region. Since then, many people have observed the need for providing a center for Mennonites to learn more about our own history, and for non-Mennonites to gain an introduction to our faith and culture.

As the vision for such a center was discussed by various people in the community, it took hold and began to grow. Today, plans for the center involve a multimedia museum, a conference center, and an information center.

In addition, the current vision for the center includes cooperation with commercial development. Among some of the possibilities being considered are a restaurant serving "Mennonite-

style" food, a quilt shop, and international gift shop (such as MCC self-help), a gift shop featuring crafts made by local artisans, and a book store.

While the project draws inspiration from such centers as Mennohof in Shipshewana, Indiana; The Meetingplace in St. Jacobs, Ontario; or The Kauffman Museum in Newton, Kansas, the intention of the planners is for this center not to imitate others, but to draw from the unique history of Mennonites in the Shenandoah Valley.

On January 25th and 28th of this year, the Executive Committee of the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians held planning meetings to discuss ideas for the center's program, site, and finances. In March, the Committee held a working day at Lindale Mennonite Meetinghouse to sort through the issues involved in moving forward. In May, the

Executive Committee appointed a site selection committee to begin working on choosing land for the center and the associated commercial ventures, and to secure an option for purchase. This sub-committee has been meeting regularly, and is making significant progress towards its purpose.

Some of the issues this sub-committee has faced include deciding which region of the city or county to target, weighing the value of proximity to I-81 with concern for future development, and considering any available assistance from city, county, federal or corporate or foundation resources in regards to the site.

The Executive Committee of SVMH continues to invite input and ideas from the larger Mennonite community. A full report of the progress of various committees and sub-committees will be made to the membership at the annual meeting on October 25.

## Saturday Evening Meal At Trissels Reservation

Please reserve a space and a meal for \_\_\_\_\_ persons. Cost of the meal will be \$6.50, to be collected at the time of the meal. Please send this form to Randall Shank at P.O. Box 220, Broadway, VA 22815, or call 433-0128.

# Henry Rhodes (1748-1827)

Henry Rhodes was born in Lancaster County PA on November 2, 1748. He was the son of Anthony and Magdalene Rhodes. Henry had eight brothers and sisters. Henry Rhodes married Elizabeth Brenneman the daughter of Melchior Brenneman Jr. and Ann Good.

Around 1784 they moved to Virginia with their family. Since his father, Anthony, had died by this time, Henry's mother Magdalene came to Virginia with them. Two brothers and two sisters also came to Rockingham County at this time.

It is not clear if Henry was ordained before or after his move to Virginia. Both Henry and his brother Frederick were ordained ministers. Henry was also ordained as one of the first Bishops of Virginia Conference. The other bishop at this time was Bishop Henry Shank.

Henry's brother Frederick married Magdalene Brenneman and they had six children. The other brother Anthony Jr. remained single. Sister Magdalene moved on to Mahoning County, Ohio with her family, but the youngest sister Elizabeth stayed in Rockingham County and married John Showalter. John and Elizabeth had 14 children.

Bishop Henry Rhodes and Elizabeth had seven children that grew to adulthood.

**Christian**, married Mary Showalter, daughter of Ulrich S' Showalter. They had two daughters.

**Ann**, (1780-1853) married

Joseph Showalter, son of Daniel Showalter. They had 12 children. She is buried at Trissels Mennonite Church.

**Henry**, (1781-1855) married Elizabeth Good, daughter of Jacob Good. They had 8 children. He is buried in the Old Shank Cemetery and she is buried at Weavers Mennonite Church.

**Elizabeth**, (1784-1814) married Joseph Funk, son of Henry Funk. Joseph translated Peter Burkholder's The Confession of Faith and was author of Genuine Church Music, later to be known as the Harmonia Sacra. They had five children.

**Anthony**, (1789-1877) married Anna Good, daughter of Peter Good. They had ten children.

**Jacob**, died in 1862 at the age of 60 years. He was insane.

**Samuel I**, (1797-1832) married Catherine Bowman, they had 5 children.

Bishop Henry Rhodes served the Mennonite Church well in both Rockingham and Augusta Counties. About the year 1825 the two brothers, Bishop Henry and Frederick, became embroiled in a church controversy. Trissels, the first church in Virginia had been built in 1822 and there was a group represented by Bishop Henry Shank and his son Hans John Shank, that felt meeting-houses were unnecessary. They also felt that Frederick was associating with the Brethren Church too much and was now preaching like a Brethren. For several years the two groups acted separately, ordaining their own ministers and

meeting apart.

About five years later, after Bishop Henry Rhodes' death, Bishop Peter Eby and several ministers came from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to mediate the division. After hearing both sides, they sided with the Rhodes group that wanted to meet in churches. Bishop Henry Shank and his group graciously accepted this admonition, and church life soon returned to normal. The ministers who had been ordained by both groups were recognized throughout the Virginia Mennonite Church.

Bishop Henry Rhodes died in 1827 and Elizabeth in 1835. They are both buried in the Rhodes Cemetery situated on private land near Broadway. Close to them in the plot are buried several young people who might have also been their children: Maria (1787-1808), Johannes (1792-1814) and Joseph (1799-1819).

There are many descendants of the Henry Rhodes family still living in the Shenandoah Valley. Also well represented are the families of his brother and sister, Frederick Rhodes and Elizabeth Rhodes Showalter.

## Sources Used:

The Brenneman History by Albert H. Gerberich  
History of Mennonites in Virginia(1727-1900) by Harry Anthony Brunk  
"The Virginia Mennonite Rhodes Families" by Grace I. Showalter, Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage, April 1980.

--- Janet Shank

# Notes & Queries

To become a member of Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians and to receive future copies of this newsletter, send name and address and 1997 dues (\$10 per couple, \$6 for single) to:

Michael Shenk, 1345 Hillcrest Drive, Harrisonburg, VA. 22801.

The "Notes & Queries" section of this newsletter is meant to be a forum whereby the reader can obtain information about Shenandoah Mennonite families and happenings. If you have a need for such information, send us a letter with your inquiry. We also will consider short notes which may be of interest to others.. Be sure to send your name and address so that others can reply to you. We will attempt to print as many queries as space on this page allows. Send to Randall Shank, P.O. Box 220, Broadway, Va. 22815

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