Sacred Simplicity

Worship Spaces Among the Brethren
In the Atlantic Northeast

Second Edition

George Douglas Gehr

Cover: The Pricetown meetinghouse, built in 1777, is the second oldest surviving meetinghouse among the Brethren, and the oldest unaltered meetinghouse.
Zug, page 477

Sacred Simplicity

Worship Spaces Among

The Brethren

Of the Atlantic Northeast District

George Douglas Gehr

Table of Contents

5

NOTE: To quickly reference individual congregations or meetinghouses see indexes in Appendix C and F.

PREFACE

Our lives are intertwined and delicately woven together. History is full of examples that reveal this truth. As a family, as a church, as a nation, as a world we are constantly learning ways in which we are connected – for better or for worse. Some connections run deep. Others may be so shallow that they go unnoticed. Yet, through it all, I am made aware of one simple fact: we have not fully arrived! I harbor a genuine appreciation for the early pioneers who ventured to forge a life for themselves and their families in Colonial America. What courage and determination must have been required to leave everything behind and set sail for an unknown future. For members of the Anabaptist tradition, which includes the Church of the Brethren, the decision to emigrate was certainly influenced by the promise of freedom. Having been the object of severe persecution in Europe, the reputation of religious tolerance in America, specifically in Pennsylvania, must have been most attractive.

One characteristic of the Brethren is the way they maintain a bond with their fellow brothers and sisters regardless of geography. Theirs is a close-knit fellowship – what the Germans would refer to as "Gemeinschaft". As with any group of people, the Brethren had their moments of tension and disagreements from within and without. Yet as a rule they earnestly sought to work through such differences in honorable and just ways. Therefore, the tensions with the Ephrata community in the mid eighteenth century, for example, became such a troubling experience for them. It fractured the fellowship and resulted in much pain.

This sense of fellowship, together with a penchant for humility, simplicity and devotion to God has been reflected in how and where they worshiped. As we shall see, for the first one hundred years of our Church life, the Brethren resisted the construction of buildings dedicated for worship. Seeking to model their experience after the New Testament Church, the Brethren typically chose to worship in the homes of their members. When they finally came to accept separate

houses of worship, they intentionally held to a very simplistic design. The result was a style known as the meetinghouse.

Meetinghouses were not unique to the Brethren. Their Quaker and Mennonite neighbors used a similar model, though in most cases these other two groups were a bit quicker to move in that direction. There were exceptions among the Brethren, but widespread acceptance of the meetinghouse evolved slowly.

This project is an effort to identify as many Brethren house churches and meetinghouses as possible. Why was there resistance to building houses of worship? How did we transition from the house church model to the meetinghouse? What characteristics do they have in common? How did this group of believers multiply and increase in number and in ministry? These are a few of the questions I have in mind. My intent is not to examine the many great leaders and significant personalities that helped shape the Brethren over the years. There have been many volumes of research already documented on that. Neither do I plan to focus on the work and ministry of each congregation. I do not want to merely repeat what has already been done. Rather, I am interested in looking at the progression from house churches to meetinghouses built specifically for worship, and how this enabled growth. This is an attempt to bring data from many scattered sources into one, more organized location, to provide the reader with a quick overview.

I make no attempt to give the impression that I am a historian. I am not. I am a retired pastor with over forty years of experiences. History is a hobby of mine. I have tried to research the facts to the best of my ability while recognizing that new details and clearer information constantly enlightens us in our quest for truth. Thus, what follows is humbly presented as a contribution towards understanding, and by no means the end of the journey. I am deeply indebted to the wonderful assistance of several friends who have pointed me in the right direction for discovering resources, and who have freely shared their thoughts and understandings. This includes, in alphabetical order, Jeff Bach, Beatrice Bailey, David Fuchs, Marilyn Lerch, Michael Showalter, Kay Weaver and Don Zeigler.

This is an ongoing project. I am sure additional facts will be uncovered in the future. As the reader reviews this information and notices something that is incorrect, I would appreciate any and all suggestions, corrections and additions presented to improve the final product.

This began as an attempt to identify the work of the Brethren in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. As my research developed it became difficult to separate Lancaster County from its neighbors. The Brethren were a tight-knit group that sought to be identified as one unit apart from geographic boundaries. Still, in an attempt to be as thorough as possible, I felt compelled to confine this project by creating certain limitations. Therefore, I decided to focus on what is now the Atlantic Northeast District of the Church of the Brethren. This includes those areas in Pennsylvania east of the Susquehanna River, all of New Jersey, New York, and New England, plus Wilmington, Delaware.

I have further decided to organize this in chronological order according to the date each congregation or fellowship was organized. Under each congregation one can find the House Churches (if any) and Meetinghouses used by that congregation.

It should be noted that the Brethren arrived in America in 1719, with the first congregation being organized in 1723. It was not until 1867 that the Eastern District of Pennsylvania was created. Originally, it included all territories in Pennsylvania east of the Susquehanna River. As the district grew and expanded beyond Pennsylvania, it was divided into two distinct districts, namely the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and the Southeastern District of Pennsylvania. This second District was renamed the North Atlantic District in 1954. In 1970 the two districts were reunited to form the Atlantic Northeast District. This project covers all the territory now called Atlantic Northeast, regardless of how it was identified previously. The release of this book coincides with the 300th anniversary of the Germantown congregation.

It should be noted that many meetinghouses are said to have a stated capacity. The figures are taken from The History of the Church of the Brethren 1708-1915. Some of these seem unrealistically inflated. However, I have chosen not to change them.

Finally, to quickly locate any meetinghouse or congregation within this book please refer to the indexes at the end. Appendix D lists each congregation and its page location. Appendix G does the same for each meetinghouse.

Part I

Laying the Foundation

"Christ Jesus says count well the cost when you lay a foundation."
A hymn by Alexander Mack

Who Are The Brethren?

The year was 1708. A man named Alexander Mack led a small group of eight souls intent on being faithful to God in every aspect of their lives. They were Radical Pietists who felt they could no longer be a part of the established churches, namely the Roman Catholic, The Lutheran, and the Reformed. Thus, they separated themselves in search of spiritual fulfillment. They were acquainted with and influenced by the Anabaptist community, especially the Mennonites. Under Mack's skillful leadership this small group brought these two theological trends – Pietism and Anabaptism – together into a new interpretation.

To make a long story short, this new group grew rather rapidly but also was met with persecution, to the point of being driven out of their native Germany. They made their way to the land of Pennsylvania, where they were promised the chance to worship as they chose.

In the early years they were identified by others as the *Neue Taufers* (New Baptists), the *Tunkers*, the *Dunkers*, the *German Baptists*, and no doubt a few other names. They, however, simply called themselves brothers and sisters – The *Brethren*. By the middle of the 19th century, they accepted the name German Baptist Brethren. Not until 1908 did they settle on the name Church of the Brethren.

The first group to arrive in the New World came to Philadelphia in 1719. They settled in and around Philadelphia, centering on Germantown. They began studying and praying together in homes shortly after arriving, but it was not until Christmas Day 1723 that they held their first baptism and organized as a Church. The small band of believers walked to the Wissahickon Creek, where the baptisms were performed, then walked back to one of their homes for a Love Feast. Peter Becker was the first Brethren minister in America.

About ten months after the first baptism, two additional congregations were established. The Germantown Elder, Peter Becker,

led an evangelistic tour that took him first to Coventry Township, in Chester County, where Martin Urner would become the minister. Two persons were baptized there: Peter Heffly; Owen Longacre. These, along with seven others who were baptized in Germantown, became the core of the congregation (*Edwards p.* 73). Becker then went into parts of Berks County before heading to the far edges of Chester County and a rugged region known as the Conestoga. This area would become Lancaster County in 1729. Here, Becker baptized nine people in three days, resulting in the third congregation being established.

The Brethren adhere to the doctrine of simple living. This is manifest in a number of ways and was largely inspired by the life of Jesus and the New Testament Church. It influenced their desire to worship in the homes of their members rather than constructing houses of worship. When they did begin building houses of worship, they held to a simple design that placed a heavy emphasis on practicality above all else.

Simplicity also affected their understanding of the clergy. The early Brethren had three degrees of ministry, all of which were non-professional. Ministers were called by the congregation, rather than by personal choice, based on character, knowledge of the scripture, and one's standing within the church. Education was not a factor. Early Brethren ministers received no formal education or academic degrees. Wanting to foster a dependence and trust in God alone, the early Brethren ministers were just common people, members of the congregation with an equal level of training and respect as any other church member.   A person was first called to ministry by the congregation to become a deacon. After having proven themselves, the congregation may choose to call them to become a minister. The third and highest rank was elder.   Elders typically oversaw several congregations. As stated earlier, the Brethren did not adopt a formal name until 1871. At the Annual Meeting of that year, it was formally decided to adopt the name German Baptist Brethren. In 1908, this was changed to Church of the Brethren.

The Conestoga

It appears the original baptism in the Conestoga region took place in the Pequea Creek, on a farm owned by Heinrich Höhn, just south of Lampeter *(Edwards, p. 76)*. Seven persons were baptized that day. They are identified by Durnbaugh as follows.

- Heinrich Höhn and wife – Heinrich became quite critical of Beissel, but his wife Christina joined Ephrata after Heinrich died in 1744.
- John Mayer and wife
- Joseph Shäfer
- Veronica Frederick
- Conrad Beissel *(Durnbaugh p. 66)*.

A second service was held two days later which resulted in the baptism of Sigmund Landert and his wife. As the Germantown members prepared to return home, they felt the need to choose a local person as leader of this new group because of the distance from Germantown. Conrad Beissel was chosen to be the shepherd of the new flock. They began holding meetings somewhere along the Mill Creek, though it is not clear where.

Conrad Beissel was only a member of the Brethren for four years. Yet his impact had far-reaching consequences. To understand the Brethren in Colonial America it is absolutely necessary to understand the complex effect Beissel had upon his contemporaries.

Conrad Beissel was a dynamic and inspirational leader. His life is an interesting one which I will not delve into fully at this time, as much has already been written about him. For now, we will simply state that he was influenced by Sabbatarian teachings and promoted celibacy. He was also an independent spirit who did not like to conform to any authority beyond himself. These traits brought him into conflict with the Brethren. By 1728 he decided to break with the Germantown group and lead the Conestoga congregation independently. This was sealed in an act of rebaptism in which he and his followers claimed to "give back" their baptism by Becker. Beissel was assisted in performing these baptisms by John Miley (*Bach, page 19*).

This began a time of struggle and conflict among the Brethren. Peter Becker wanted to maintain a unified church but was unable to get anywhere with Beissel. In the fall of 1729 Alexander Mack arrived in Germantown. Mack was the reformer who served as the first minister

of the Brethren in Schwarzenau, Germany, in the year 1708. He was loved and respected by all who identified as Brethren. Peter Becker quickly acknowledged Mack as the leader of the movement.

It became the central focus of Mack's agenda to meet with Beissel and seek some form of common ground. Beissel, however, would have no part in it. Rather, he went out of his way to avoid a meeting. Though they did have one unplanned encounter by happenstance, Beissel never did reconcile.

Meanwhile, Beissel was an energetic evangelist. He regularly went on preaching missions throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland and New Jersey, gaining converts along the way. In 1732 Beissel surprised everyone by resigning as pastor and withdrawing deeper into the wilderness, settling on the banks of the Cocalico Creek.

Beissel moved into a cabin where Emanuel Eckerlin, one of his converts, was living on the bank of the Cocalico Creek. This was an undeveloped area about ten miles or so northwest of Nägele's farm. With Eckerlin's connection to the Conestoga congregation it is of little surprise that other members of the group chose to follow Beissel and settle nearby. At this point the area of the Cocalico was a wilderness within Lancaster County. The small group began clearing the land, building cottages and planting crops. By no later than 1736 they called their new community Ephrata, a Hebrew name meaning "Fruitful". It was also the name of the region where Bethlehem was located, thus identifying with the birth of Christ.

Ephrata was a complex community. Because of Beissel's strong teachings against marriage, two celibate orders soon developed: the Zionitic Brotherhood and the Order of Spiritual Virgins. However, Ephrata was not strictly a monastic community. It soon became obvious that many married persons were attracted to the teachings of Conrad Beissel yet did not want to give up their families. In 1743 the Community built a large, 3-story dormitory-style building named Hebron. Married couples were invited to move here and live as celibates, with men on one side and women on the other. A wall through the middle separated the two halves. This proved unsuccessful, however. Within eighteen months every couple – save for one - left Hebron and moved back to their farms and families. They still wanted to be part of the community and the Church. They only rejected celibacy. Hebron was then given to the sisters, who reorganized as the Roses of Saron and renamed their new home Saron. By 1746 a similar structure was constructed for the brothers and named Bethania. The

Zionitic Brotherhood likewise went through a reorganization and became known as the Brotherhood of Bethania.

Ephrata had to decide at this point. Would this be a community of celibates only? Or is marriage permitted in some form? Possibly out of recognizing their potential contributions, Beissel allowed for married couples to join the movement as well. These families, sometimes referred to as Householders, became essential contributors to the success of the community. A few of the Householders donated land to the celibate members. Some provided much-needed labor in the community-owned mills, the fields or with construction. Others merely worshiped with them on Saturdays. By the middle of the 18th century the population of Ephrata swelled to about 300 people, of which about 80 were celibates.

It is most intriguing to realize how many members of the Brethren were attracted to the teachings and personality of Conrad Beissel. Several had joined the Conestoga congregation but went with Beissel when he renounced the Brethren. A few were outspoken critics of Beissel before later joining him. Some returned to the Brethren later.

Of those who were once members at Germantown we find John Mayle, John Hilldebrand and wife, Elizabeth Nice, Christian Eckstein, John Reisman, and Stephen Koch. Reisman and Koch held a more moderate view concerning matters of faith and even cautioned Ezekiel Sangmeister, for example, to carefully consider the teachings of Beissel. Hildebrand moved from Germantown to the Conestoga in 1726 to join the Brethren congregation there under Beissel's leadership. The Chronicon Ephratense, which tends to paint Beissel in a very positive light while being excessively critical of the Germantown Brethren, comments that Hildebrand was frustrated with the lack of spiritual power in Germantown. Such comments from the Chronicon need to be cautiously considered. Nevertheless, John Hildebrand certainly was enamored with Beissel for a while, but later became a rather harsh critic. Elizabeth Nice later returned to Germantown and married Alexander Mack, Jr. Stephen Koch became a celibate and took the spiritual name Agabus, as did John Reisman (Brother Philemon). Beissel typically gave a celibate member a spiritual name upon joining.

Jeff Bach says a total of 17 persons left Germantown in favor of Ephrata, though not all are named (*Brethren Life and Thought, Vol 58, No. 1, page 9)* As would be expected, the Conestoga congregation was the primary source of the initial Brethren influx. There is no way of knowing just how many Conestoga members chose to leave in favor of the Ephrata Sabbatarians, but it is safe to say it was a sizable group.

Records of the congregation did not attempt to distinguish between those who aligned with Beissel and those who did not in the early days. Perhaps most of the Church members were undecided. There is no evidence that I am aware of to suggest that another leader other than Beissel was selected between 1728 and 1734 to guide a splinter group that would remain faithful to the Germantown Brethren. Therefore, I am of the impression it remained one group, with some members testing the waters before making a final decision.

That decision came to a head in 1734, when Michael Frantz called a meeting to determine once and for all who was committed to Beissel and who was committed to the Germantown Brethren. The list of those who clearly supported Beissel would include (but not be limited to) the following.

- Christina Höhn, wife of Heinrich Höhn, who hosted the first baptism in the county. Heinrich became rather critical of Beissel, but after his death Christina joined the Ephrata Community. It was not uncommon for widows to come to Ephrata, as it offered a place of refuge, security, lodging and food. Ephrata was especially attractive for widows with young children. In addition to the other benefits, the Brothers offered a school for the children, thus providing an education.

- Sigmund Landert and children; Landert, a widower, was a skilled builder and would later supervise most of the construction projects at Ephrata. He was known as Brother Sealthiel.

- Henry Kalkgläser – one of the Brethren from Europe who became a trusted and respected minister at Germantown. He lived his last days at Ephrata. (*Durnbaugh, p. 70).* It is not clear how involved he was there.

- Jacob Gaas, Sr. (Bro. Jethro)

- Jacob Gaas, Jr., who took the name Lamech, and whose diary became the basis for the *Chronicon Ephratense*, or Chronicles of Ephrata. His wife was also a convert. The Gass family arrived in Pennsylvania in 1727. It is not clear when they joined the Conestoga Brethren, but it appears to have been about the time Beissel renounced his affiliation with the Germantown Brethren.

- Rudolf and Elizabeth Nägele. Rudolph was previously a Mennonite pastor before he was baptized by Beissel. In 1725 Beissel moved to Nägele's farm, followed by several other Conestoga members. While still officially part of the

16

Germantown Brethren, the seeds for what would become Ephrata seemingly were being planted here.

- Anna Good Landis, the wife of John Landis, Jr., of Earl Township.

Perhaps Beissel's most surprising source of converts came from the family of Alexander Mack. The very man rejected by Conrad Beissel, and the one he refused to meet with, was the originator of the Brethren movement. Yet, two of Mack's sons left the Germantown congregation to join with Ephrata. Johann Valentin Mack (1701-1755) and his wife, Margaret (died 1755), both became Householder members. Their daughter, Elizabeth (1732-1782) would join the Roses of Saron. Another daughter, Christena (1734-1804), married Jacob Gorgas (1728-1798) and became Householders at Ephrata.

Alexander Mack, Jr., more commonly referred to as Sander Mack (1712-1803) was deeply affected by his father's death in 1735. He and Stephen Koch moved to a remote area outside Germantown to live in spiritual seclusion in 1738. A year later he moved again, along with Koch, to Ephrata, where he joined the Zionitic Brotherhood and assumed the name Timotheus. Sander Mack had an odd relationship with Conrad Beissel. At times he was faithful, but over time he also found himself opposed to him. He left briefly for about a year before returning. Then, in 1745 Sander left again. He and the Eckerlin brothers fell out of favor with Beissel and set out for a new life in Virginia. In 1748 Sander decided the time was right to return to Germantown. In time Alexander Mack, Jr. was called to the ministry and became the leading figure for the Brethren until his death in 1803. He was a prolific writer and poet with a deep theological insight.

Figure 1 Some of the surviving buildings of the Ephrata Cloister. Left to right: Saron (the Sister's House); Saal (the meetinghouse); Beissel's house. Author's photo.

Part II

THE HOUSE CHURCH MODEL

"Where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them."
(Matthew 18:20 NIV)

When the Brethren first organized in Schwarzenau, Germany, in 1708, they were a small group of eight people. Though they grew steadily in number, they never built any European houses of worship. This, no doubt, was largely due to the constant fear of persecution that followed them wherever they went. But it also reflected their understanding of what it meant to follow Christ unreservedly. Their desire to give their all to the kingdom of God would only be compromised by building and maintaining a separate structure exclusively for worship.

Eleven years after their founding, the first group of Brethren departed Europe in the hopes of finding a better, safer place to call home in William Penn's Holy Experiment known as Pennsylvania. Ten years later, the Brethren presence in Europe was essentially a thing of the past.

Like their previous existence in Europe, the Colonial Brethren of North America were small in number and challenged in many ways. Consequently, they did not build church structures in which to worship. This was also influenced by their desire to recreate the Apostolic Church of the New Testament, which worshiped in homes. Strongly rooted in Radical Pietism, and seeking a life of simplicity, the American Brethren relied exclusively on house churches for the first forty-seven years of its existence, and even then, houses of worship were extremely rare for the first one hundred years of the Brethren presence in North America. Instead, various members of the church opened their homes to serve as host for worship. As time went by, they organized a rotation between several families. These became known as House Churches.

House Church hosts and hostesses played a valuable role in the life and growth of the Church. The Brethren had a unique theology that

combined the heartfelt, spirit-led experiential faith of Pietism, with the community based, organized fellowship of Anabaptism. Both were Christ-centered, disciplined approaches to the Faith. This was enhanced in the intimate, personal atmosphere of the House Church. Most congregations had multiple hosts and hostesses who welcomed the opportunity to provide a safe, inviting space for worship. By rotating among their members, the burden was shared. This also allowed the various members to not only know where each other lived, but how they lived. It contributed to a growing knowledge and appreciation for one's brothers and sisters in Christ.

The House Church model provided numerous advantages. It helped keep the focus on faith, apart from the trappings of ornamentation and pride. It was a practical, visible way of demonstrating their commitment to simplicity. It also encouraged growth. As more people joined the movement and began to outgrow the home where they met, it was a natural step to open an additional House Church. Serving as host to a church gathering contributed to the sense of belonging and participating in the ownership of the church. But perhaps the greatest advantage proved to be the building of relationships. Sisters and brothers developed a bond in the intimacy of a home that is difficult to replicate in a Church building. This commitment to fellowship and "agape" love speaks to the very heart of the Brethren understanding of New Testament faith.

We have no way of knowing how many House Churches were used at any given time. Such details were not deemed significant to record, it seems. Still, we have a few hints. A careful reading of documents occasionally reveals a name or two where believers met. In most cases, only the man was identified, even though the wife likely did most of the preparation. We are also kept in the dark to know where, exactly, the house was located. Typically, we are told which congregation the House Church served, and, if we are lucky, perhaps the name of the homeowner. This information does prove helpful. By searching land records, maps and atlases from specific years we have been fortunate to identify several of the 18th and 19th century House Churches. Further comparison of the male head of house with cemetery records and various references has allowed us to gain knowledge of some of the women who served as well.

Part III

PEOPLE OVER PLACES:

THE BRETHREN MEETINGHOUSE MODEL

[4] As you come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—[5] you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-5 (NIV)

The Brethren had no delusions about who they were. They were a comparatively small group without a lot of history. They were, on the one hand, Radical Pietists, and on the other, committed Anabaptists. In many ways they maintained a simple faith. They refused to develop a creed, believing to do so would extinguish the flame of growth and inspiration from the Holy Spirit. Among their doctrines was non-conformity, non-resistance/non-violence, simple living, and the refusal to swear an oath. They observed four ordinances: Baptism by Trine Immersion; the Love Feast; Anointing with oil; and the Laying on of Hands.

Like many Anabaptists, the Brethren held an uncompromising commitment to placing people over places and things. Faith must be relational. It needs to be expressed within a fellowship of supportive believers. It needs to be preserved over the pettiness of human doctrine. One of the more striking ways in which this manifested itself was in the design of the Brethren meetinghouse.

The transition from the House Church model to the Meetinghouse model was a slow process that met with some opposition along the way. A story from the annals of the White Oak Church is revealing. The congregation had several house churches in the early 19th Century. One home they used for services was that of Brother Jacob Stehman. Somewhere around 1840 he built a structure on his property that he intended to be used exclusively for worship when it was his turn to be the host. As recorded in <u>History of the Church of the Brethren, Eastern District 1708-1915</u> this was seen by some as a step toward a

conventional Church structure and was met with strong opposition at first (*page 401*). But it seemed to be the one step that changed the course of history for the Brethren in the area. Within 10 years, at the most, the Brethren had joined the Mennonites to share the original Petersburg house which was located nearby. This was a small log structure that is believed to have been built before the Revolutionary War.

The Brethren gained exclusive rights to the log house in 1867. This was replaced in 1873 by a brick building, 45 x 60 feet. Again, there was much opposition. Nine years later this became one of the meetinghouses of the newly formed Mountville congregation.

The first Brethren meetinghouse was built in Germantown in 1770. It was followed by Coventry in 1772 and Pricetown in 1777. Located in Berks County, Pricetown remains the oldest non-altered meetinghouse of the Brethren. It seems additional meetinghouses in Eastern Pennsylvania were not to come along until the early to mid-19th Century. Even then, their buildings were intentionally humble and simple. They were usually of a rectangular shape and constructed as either a log or stone house. As time passed brick became increasing popular. At times, a small kitchen would be added at one end for the purpose of preparing the Love Feast, though often Love Feast was held in a barn because of space and the availability of a kitchen in the farmhouse. Otherwise, the meetinghouse was merely one large room. Furnishings were extremely simple, using plain benches. A small table served the same purpose as a pulpit.   Stained glass and decorative accessories were not to be found.   One might say their buildings reflected the humble, faithful lifestyle they strove to live.

For those congregations who held love feast in their meetinghouse the benches were specially constructed so the back could be flipped horizontally to make a table. Every other row of benches would be converted into a table this way, using the intervening bench for sitting at the table. For some, every third bench was converted into a table. In this case the bench in front would flip the back 180 degrees to face the opposite direction, thus allowing seating on both sides. As a result of this flexibility the meetinghouse could be thought of as the forerunner to a multi-purpose room! (see photos in Appendix H).

Another feature common to the meetinghouse was two separate entrances along the same side of the building. Because men and women sat on opposite sides for worship, they each had their own entrance. Rather than using one of the ends of the room for locating the speaker, as was the pattern for most churches, the Brethren meetinghouse

typically had the speaker's table located along the center of one of the long walls of the rectangular building. The doors for entering the building would be found on the opposite wall, so a worshipper would enter from the rear, facing the speaker's table. It was a very practical design that likely allowed people to hear the speaker better, no matter where they were seated.

Finally, because members were scattered a good distance from the meetinghouse, and transportation was limited to either foot traffic or perhaps horse and carriage, most meetinghouses were designed so the attic could be used as a place of lodging. Again, men and women were separated – this time by a curtain or a wall This was typically used when the love feast was being observed, as that was a longer service that might cause problems for traveling plans.

It is not entirely clear how the use of the meetinghouse became widely accepted. Obviously, there was considerable resistance to the idea, as can be seen from the story above. At the same time, it seems like the Annual Meeting, which was the official governing body, never took a stance forbidding the use of meetinghouses. Henry Kurtz claims that the question of meetinghouses came before the Annual Meeting twice, in 1828 and 1855. Both times permission was granted, with stipulations.

Interestingly, no evidence could be found to suggest that the Brethren Meetinghouse had to meet a common, standard design other than the suggestion to avoid "unnecessary ornaments". Such issues as where entrance doors were to be placed or whether a raised speaker's platform was allowed were not seemingly addressed by Annual Meeting. To some degree there appears to have been a general understanding, but no apparent demands.
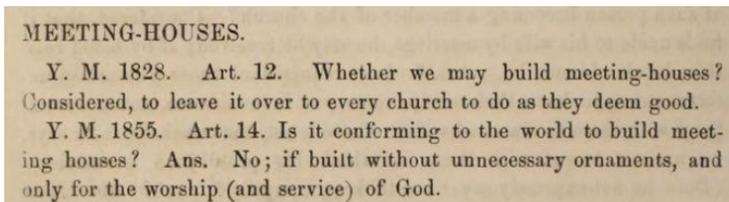
MEETING-HOUSES.

Y. M. 1828. Art. 12. Whether we may build meeting-houses? Considered, to leave it over to every church to do as they deem good.

Y. M. 1855. Art. 14. Is it conforming to the world to build meeting houses? Ans. No; if built without unnecessary ornaments, and only for the worship (and service) of God.

Annual Meeting in 1828 and 1855 addressed the question of constructing and using a meetinghouse for worship. As seen in these minutes, Annual Meeting was reluctant to ban their use but did place some conditions.

The Brethren frowned upon calling their houses of worship "churches", for the Church was the body of believers, the people. It could never be an inanimate object such as a building. It was their

strong desire to avoid calling attention to themselves or giving any appearance that they were building an idol. They likely saw far too much of that with the impressive, elaborate cathedrals of Europe that drained the resources of the people to promote the arrogance of their leaders. They wanted no part in that.

Originally, the interior was distinguished by the lack of a platform or chancel area. This design was to reflect the understanding that all members were equal. No one was to be raised above another, whether literally or figuratively. It also promoted the concept of the priesthood of all believers. Gradually, this gave way to a more pragmatic approach of allowing the speaker to stand on a small platform to be better seen and heard.

To be clear, the Brethren allowed for some diversity among their meetinghouses. Some of the smaller ones had all the benches facing the same way.   Larger buildings may have benches along the sides positioned perpendicular to the others. These side benches typically were also elevated to improve visibility. See the floor plan drawing of the Kreider meetinghouse below.

The simplicity of the Brethren also influenced their understanding of ministry. Ministers were to be chosen by the group, rather than a person volunteering to become a minister. This was an office that one was to be called to. By doing so, the choice is confirmed by the body and by God, as opposed to one person deciding for themselves to do this. Such an individual approach could lead to pride. Also, ministers did not wear special garments. Again, they were not to be exalted nor separated from the body of believers, for all are equal before God.

The Brethren had three levels of ministry. The introductory level provided opportunities to preach or even conduct an entire worship service if no higher ranking minister was present. The second degree of ministry allowed for planning worship services and officiating at the ordinances. The third degree of ministry was referred to as Elder. The Elder held a supervisory position over the other ministers and the entire congregation.   There could be more than one elder in a congregation, but each congregation chose their presiding Elder. It was common for an elder to be in charge of more than one congregation at a time. Occasionally the presiding Elder was referred to as a Bishop, though this was more likely used by outsiders looking in. No ministers were salaried. They were only fulfilling the divine call to use their spiritual gifts in this capacity.

The last characteristic of ministry involved education – or the lack of it. Most ministers among the Brethren possessed an 8th grade

education at best. Higher education such as college or seminary, was generally frowned upon. There was a general consensus that a minister should be recognized by moral standards, their reputation among their neighbors and their church family, and a solid grasp on the Bible and biblical values.

This ministry model served the church well for the first 150 years. Following the American Civil War, the idea of a salaried, professional ministry began to take hold. This began in the larger metropolitan areas, especially Philadelphia. Donald Fitzkee offers a chart on page 66 of his book, Moving Toward the Mainstream, that indicates there were no professional/paid ministers among the 40 congregations in what was then the Eastern District of Pennsylvania for 1925. Within five years there were four. Another five years saw that number jump to thirteen, though only four were full-time. At the same time, the North Atlantic District, which centered primarily on the Philadelphia region, had sixteen congregations in 1925, with no paid pastors. But by 1930 there were eighteen congregations and a total of sixteen paid pastors.

As time went on and congregations grew, multiple meetinghouses were often built to serve one congregation, in order to minimize time on the road and to best accommodate the large number of people they drew. Gradually, the one-room meetinghouse began to see some additional features added. These might include a basement, vestibules inside each entrance, and at times a separate small room where a mother might take her infant to be changed or comforted. Gradually variations were to be found in the design. Doors were placed on the end of the building, providing a more traditional look inside and out. The overall simplicity, however, was retained. Steeples were not to be found on a Brethren meetinghouse. Apparently, that was too ornate.

Congregations frequently wrestled with preparations for love feast. Generally, congregations with multiple meetinghouses designated one – or possibly two depending on the size of the congregation – to be a love feast house. This required the inclusion of a kitchen and, generally, a larger facility.

The multiple meetinghouses under the umbrella of one congregation led to the creation of new congregations. As membership increased it was considered practical to divide the sprawling congregation into two, and at times three, separate congregations. These divisions usually centered around the location of the meetinghouse.

It should be mentioned here that the Brethren held strict geographic boundaries for their congregations in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries. People were expected to attend the meetinghouse located in their region. This was intended to protect the integrity of each meetinghouse. For example, my mother's parents were members of the Springville Church near Ephrata. They worshiped at the Mohler meetinghouse because of where they lived. They later moved into the Borough of Ephrata, within the boundaries of the Ephrata congregation. Thus, they had to change their affiliation and begin worshiping at Ephrata rather than at the Mohler meetinghouse of Springville. At first, they preferred staying with the Mohler house. But they did as expected, and soon learned to feel comfortable at Ephrata.

To an extent one might say that such a system not only preserved the integrity of each meetinghouse and/or congregation, but it also placed the importance of the Church over the preference of the individual. The Brethren sought to minimize personalities and opinions in favor of maintaining a strong church devoted to serving Christ. Even to this day we tend to pay lip service to this concept, but seemingly allow our personal opinion to override our motivation. Consequently, we change churches freely, seeking one that feels right to us. Often our decision is based on the personality of the pastor or the style of music. Such things are important, to be sure, but I must remind myself that I am not going to church because of the pastor. Neither am I attending worship to be entertained. Hopefully, I am attending because of an overwhelming desire to honor God and learn from God.

Clearly, the transition from the house church model to the use of meetinghouses was a slow and evolving process that varied from one congregation to the next. This can be seen by looking at a copy of The Brethren's Family Almanac of 1875. This was an annual publication that included some interesting details about congregations and individuals within the Church. On the last page of this edition, it shows what appears to be the preaching schedule for ten congregations in Eastern Pennsylvania District. Five of these are the existing congregations in Lancaster County in 1875. The list shows where services were scheduled to be held for each congregation. Under Ephrata, it shows ten locations, only five of which are meetinghouses. The other five are homes of various members within the congregation. This reveals that the meetinghouse and the house church model overlapped quite a bit.

As part of this transition, it appears that some Brethren were more comfortable sharing a meetinghouse with another denomination rather than owning it themselves. This arrangement became known as a "Union" church. It became a common model in the nineteenth century.

In most cases, the building was constructed by another denomination, but shared by multiple groups on a rotating basis. Occasionally, such Union houses were constructed cooperatively by all the denominations that would use it. Seemingly, the Brethren found this as a way of gradually becoming comfortable with the concept of a building intended for the exclusive purpose of worship.

To put this in perspective, the five meetinghouses for Ephrata in 1875, and their year of construction were Brick, also known as Steinmetz 1847; Reinholdsville (also known as Blainsport) 1866; Schoeneck (also known as Mellinger's - year built is unknown, this was a union house); Flickinger's (another union house, year built unknown); and Mohler (1872). Services were also held routinely in the homes of M & G Keller; Heffly; Burkholder; L. Mohler; S. Mohler. The confusing aspect of this list is the omission of Springville meetinghouse. However, the inclusion of M & G Keller may be another way of identifying Springville, for George Keller lived behind the Springville meetinghouse, which was on his property, and Michael Keller lived just around the corner from there. If this is, in fact, Springville, then we have six meetinghouses and four house churches.

It is also curious that the schedule lists "L. Mohler" and "S. Mohler", and both are shown along with "Mohler". The Mohler meetinghouse was built just 3 years before this schedule was printed, yet the congregation appears to be worshiping there and at the two households named Mohler. All three locations were within less than half a mile of each other. Again, as with Springville, the appearance of the name "L. Mohler" and "S. Mohler" may be synonymous with the Mohler meetinghouse and simply designating which family member was to be in charge for that day.

Ephrata was not unique in this sense. There appears to be ten Lancaster County house churches represented on this schedule. Also, I notice at least two widows who served as hosts for a house church. Both are with Little Swatara and are identified as Widow Kurtz and Widow Wolf. I find it wonderful that the congregation agreed to worship in the homes of these women. Not knowing the details, I wonder if perhaps the congregation accommodated these women out of a concern for their ability to travel to the other worship locations. This is only a hypothesis, at best.

Other items of interest from the Brethren's Almanac include these observations.

1. Tulpehocken had a Sunday evening worship at Richland about once every three weeks. No other evening service is reported.

2. Tulpehocken also held two Sunday morning services on the same day at different locations. It would be interesting to know more about how this worked. Were they held at the same time? How was the leadership provided? Was this because the two meetinghouses used that week were too small to accommodate the entire congregation? Or were they located on opposite ends of the congregation's territory?

3. For some congregations there is a blank line for certain weeks. Were no services held on these Sundays? If so, why? Or was it not yet decided where services would be held that week at the time of the printing of this list?

4. There are a few meetinghouses listed here that do not seemingly appear on the standard list of meetinghouses, such as found in *The History of the Church of the Brethren Eastern District 1708-1915.* Is that because these were Union Houses owned by another denomination but shared with the German Baptist Brethren? Or were these buildings only used for a short time until another arrangement could be established? Some of the names that appear only on this list are Eden; Chestnut Hill; Voganville. Eden and Voganville were union houses. I suspect Chestnut Hill was, also. Eden was a worship point for West Conestoga. Voganville was part of Conestoga, and later, Spring Grove.

Conestoga.
1 Kemper's.
2 Eby's.
3 Earlville.
4 —
5 Voganville.
6 Bareville.
7 Kemper's.
8 Eby's.
9 Earlville.
10 Roland's.
11 Voganville.
12 Bareville.
13 Kemper's.
14 Eby's.
15 Earlville.
16 —
17 Voganville.
18 Bareville.
19 Kemper's.
20 Eby's.
21 Earlville.
22 Roland's.
23 Voganville.
24 Bareville.

West Conestoga.
1 Millport.
2 Neffsville.
3 Eden.
4 Manheim.
5 Lexington.
6 Middlecreek.
7 Millport.
8 Neffsville.
9 Eden.
10 Manheim.
11 Lexington.
12 Middlecreek.
13 Millport.
14 Neffsville.
15 Eden.
16 Manheim.
17 Lexington.
18 Middlecreek.
19 Millport.
20 Neffsville.
21 Eden.
22 Manheim.
23 Lexington.
24 Middlecreek.

Ephrata.
1 Reinholdsville.
2 Mohler's.
3 M & G Keller's.
4 Heffy's.
5 Brick.
6 Mellinger's.
7 Reinholdsville.
8 L. Mohler's.
9 Burgholder's.
10 Miller's.
11 Brick.
12 —
13 Reinholdsville.
14 8 Mohler's.
15 G Keller's.
16 Schoeneck.
17 Brick.
18 —
19 Reinholdsville.
20 Mohler's.
21 Flickinger's.

Maidencreek.
1 —
2 Mohrsville.
3 —
4 Mohrsville.
5 Pricetown.
6 Mohrsville.
7 —
8 Mohrsville.
9 —
10 Mohrsville.
11 Pricetown.
12 Mohrsville.
13 —
14 Mohrsville.
15 —
16 Mohrsville.
17 Pricetown.
18 Mohrsville.
19 —
20 Mohrsville.
21 —
22 Miller's.
23 Brick.
24 —

Tulpehocken.
1 Cornwall.
2 { Heidelberg, a. m. / Richland, p. m.
3 { Hoke, a. m. / Millbach, a. m.
4 Tulpehocken.
5 { Cornwall, a. m. / Richland, a. m.
6 Heidelberg.
7 A Moyer.
8 { Tulpehocken, a. m. / Richland, p. m.
9 Cornwall.
10 Heildelberg.
11 { Hoke, a. m. / Millbach, p. m. / Richland, p. m.
12 Tulpehocken.
13 Cornwall.
14 { Heidelberg, a. m. / Richland, p. m.
15 —
16 Tulpehocken.
17 { Cornwall, a. m. / Richland, a. m.
18 Heidelberg.
19 { Hoke, a. m. / Millbach, a. m.
20 { Tulpehocken, a. m / Richland, p. m.
21 Cornwall.
22 Heidelberg.
23 Richland.
24 Tulpehocken.

Little Swatara.
1 Zigler's.
2 J. E. Merky.
3 Widow Kurtz
4 Meyer's
5 Merky's
6 Frantz'
7 Zigler's
8 Union House
9 George Gibel's
10 Meyer's
11 Merkey's
12 Wm. Kintzel's
13 Zigler's
14 J. W. Meyer's
15 Widow Kurta
16 Meyer's
17 Merky's
18 Frantz'
19 Zigler's
20 Widow Wolf's
21 John Crouse's
22 Myer's
23 Merky's
24 —

Big Swatara.
1 Foxes'
2 Paxton.
3 { East Hanover / Baumgardner
4 West Hanover
5 Moonshine
6 Paxton
7 East Hanover

8 West Hanover
9 E. Zigler's
10 Paxton
11 East Hanover
12 West Hanover
13 Foxes'
14 Paxton
15 { East Hanover / Baker's
16 West Hanover
17 Moonshine
18 Paxton
19 East Hanover
20 West Hanover
21 —
22 Paxton
23 East Hanover
24 West Hanover

Spring Creek.
1 Spring Creek
2 Annville
3 Conewago
4 —
5 { Spring Creek / Annville
6 { Swatara Mt.
7 Conewago

8 —
9 Spring Creek
10 Annville
11 Conewago
12 Ober's
13 Spring Creek
14 Annville
15 Conewago
16 —
17 Spring Creek
18 { Annville / Swatara Mt.
19 Conewago
20 —
21 Spring Creek
22 Annville
23 Conewago
24 Ober's

Chiques.
1 Elizabethtown
2 Greentown
3 —
4 Chiques
5 Elizabethtown
6 Green Tree
7 —
8 Chiques
9 Elizabethtown
10 Green Tree
11 —
12 Chiques
13 Elizabethtown
14 Green Tree
15 —
16 Chiques
17 Elizabethtown
18 Green Tree
19 —
20 Chiques
21 Elizabethtown
22 Green Tree
23 —
24 Chiques

White Oak.
1 Kreider's
2 Graybill's
3 Longenecker's
4 Mountville
5 { Lexington / Chestnut Hill
6 Petersburg
7 Kreider's
8 Graybill's
9 Longenecker's
10 Mountville
11 { Lexington / Chestnut Hill
12 Petersburg
13 Kreider's
14 Graybill's
15 Longenecker's
16 Mountville
17 { Lexington / Chestnut Hill
18 Petersburg
19 Kreider's
20 Graybill's
21 Longenecker's
22 Mountville
23 { Lexington / Chestnut Hill
24 Petersburg

Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen, Herr Zebaoth! Ps. 84, 2.
Verlasset unsere Versammlung nicht, wie etliche pflegen. Ebr. 10, 25.

January 7, 1872, begins with No. 13.
January 5, 1873, " " " 17.
January 4, 1874, " " " 21.
January 3, 1875, " " " 1.

This worship schedule appeared in the 1875 Brethren's Family Almanac. It represents a four year schedule, using a 24 week cycle. Curiously, it only lists 10 of the congregations of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Simultaneous with the question of meetinghouses was the issue of language. For a long time, the Brethren conducted their services in German. As time went by, and as the surrounding culture was increasingly English, the exclusive use of the German language was called into question. This was brought before the Annual Meeting on at least two occasions. It first appears in 1841 and again in 1845. In both cases the decision was made to speak in whatever language necessary to spread the Gospel. In 1841 the caution was given that not too much time should be spent on delivering the message in English. By 1845, a clearer instruction was given based on Matthew 28:19 and II Corinthians 5:14.

Y. M. 1841. Art. 4. Whether it is proper for teachers to speak both German and English in meetings, when there are only a few English members, the majority of the church being German? Considered, that it is right and our duty to preach the gospel to every nation as far as we are able, yet so that in such a case not too much time ought to be taken up in English.

Y. M. 1845. (Indiana.) Art. 5. How is it viewed, when there are persons and members in a meeting, some not understanding the English, and others not the German (language), and there are some members still opposing the use of both languages? Considered, that the commission of our Saviour, Matt. 28 : 19, commands us, and the love of Christ constrains us, 2 Cor. 5 : 14, to preach the gospel to *all* nations, and in every tongue as far as we are able. See also Y. M. 1841, Art. 4.

Annual Meeting minutes of 1841 and 1845 address the issue of allowing the use of the English language in worship. In the short period of five years, it becomes obvious the Brethren are becoming more accepting of English.

The shift to using the English language for worship occurred more quickly outside of Eastern Pennsylvania. In Lancaster County, German continued to be used into the 20th century, though not in all congregations. Some congregations were sure to offer both languages. When the Church officially changed its name from the German Baptist Brethren to the Church of the Brethren in 1908, it seemed to give encouragement to anglicizing worship. By the time World War I broke out the use of the German language became almost an embarrassment, especially considering the Brethren opposition to war. Thus, services held in German became the exception to the rule. *(Brethren Encyclopedia, page 724-5)*

As one can see, there are many questions raised with incomplete answers. One observation that is curious involves a comparison of the German Baptist Brethren worship arrangement with that of Conrad Beissel and the Ephrata Cloister. Since both started out together as one group before Beissel left the Brethren and took many members with him, I find it fascinating to know that the Ephrata community was quick to build houses of worship. In fact, they had at least three operating simultaneously on the grounds of the Cloister by 1746. The Brothers and the Sisters each had their own separate meetinghouses for midnight watchnight services. Then, there was a larger meetinghouse to allow all members of the community to worship together as one on

Saturdays. Did Ephrata do this because house churches were not practical with celibates? Or was it a way to provide Beissel with greater control over what was preached? In many ways the Cloister used the same simple, unadorned meetinghouse design that the Brethren would later adopt. However, Ephrata made their meetinghouses multi-level with workrooms and even a few sleeping chambers on the upper floors. The Brethren chose instead to make their earliest meetinghouses as a single level structure.

Figure 2 Interior of the Saal (meetinghouse) at the Ephrata Cloister. Author's photo.

Figure 3   Interior view of the Cornwall meetinghouse, with the speaker's table in the foreground. Cornwall was built 130 years after the Saal, and yet it is strikingly similar in its simplicity. In fact, the Saal is in some ways more elaborate, if you consider the presence of balconies and the fact that the Saal is 4 ½ stories tall, while Cornwall, like most Brethren meetinghouses of its era, was only one floor. Author's photo.

Like so many aspects of the Brethren faith, their houses of worship intentionally emphasized people over places or things. It was considered important to maintain a sense of intimacy, simplicity, and humility. Their desire was to focus on the Presence of God, not through symbolism, architecture, or the fine arts, but through the Pietistic understanding of the Spirit of God within.

Kreider Meetinghouse floor plan
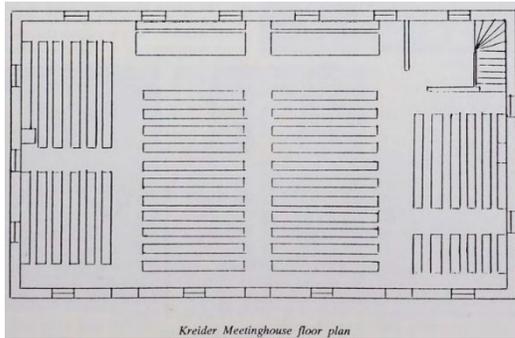
Figure 4   The Kreider meetinghouse, built in 1859 as part of the White Oak congregation, has a floor plan that is typical of many Brethren meetinghouses. The two entrance doors are not indicated but would be at the bottom of the drawing and the rear of the two side aisles. The stairway led to an attic for storage. (The Meetinghouse Connection, page 69.)

As is the case in so many things, the Brethren meetinghouse changed considerably over the years. The earlier versions tend to be small, rectangular one-room buildings with separate entrances for men and women. Both entrances were on one of the longer, side walls, though even this was not consistent. Benches were positioned parallel to the long side, with a speakers' table opposite the entrance. Some of the larger meetinghouses, like Kreider's, were flanked with benches on the ends, parallel to the gabled walls, and facing each other. The subtle suggestion in this design is to focus one's attention on the congregation as a whole, rather than upon the speaker.   Another peculiarity commonly seen is that while the speaker generally was not elevated on a platform, these side benches were frequently placed on risers. While this provided a better sight line for worshippers, it also suggests an elevation of the congregation even over that of the preacher.

Gradually, this design yielded to a complete reversal, so that the entrances were placed on one of the shorter, gabled ends, and the benches were parallel to the short wall. Still later, the double entrance was reduced to one common entrance. This became the norm by the end of the 19th century. There were always some exceptions to this. Also, union houses that were not built by the Brethren were more likely to be constructed like the later Brethren version. Union houses were also quicker to add a steeple, which was not the norm for Brethren meetinghouses until much later.

Even the name "meetinghouse" slowly gave way to "church" over time. This was especially true once the meetinghouse design was abandoned for a more complex, multi-functional building largely necessitated by using one building for worship, Sunday School, and love feast.

It is interesting to note that even after the Brethren began accepting the use of a Sunday School, it was generally not held in the early meetinghouses. Rather, it was more typical to hold Sunday School in homes. The same was true for Love Feast. Some meetinghouses were designed to accommodate Love Feast, with the presence of a kitchen and benches that the back could be flipped to a horizontal position and serve as a table. Most, however, were not designed for love feast. When a love feast meetinghouse was absent, a barn was commonly used because of the larger space it provided. This, too, changed toward the latter part of the 19th century.

In the following section we will be looking at the individual congregations. Each will include both the known House Churches used by that congregation, as well as the meetinghouses. It is hoped the details are accurate. Again, any corrections would be welcome.

It is not known exactly when the Brethren began to use a raised platform for preaching. Like most change this was gradual and sporadic. The raised platform slowly grew to become a more traditional chancel area. Though the Brethren were once opposed to stained glass windows, this likewise became tolerated, especially among the more urban congregations.

Changes continued to emerge that resulted in considerable diversity. Musical instruments – once considered worldly – became commonplace in time. Annual Meeting of 1894 ruled that musical instruments were not encouraged in private homes, but neither were they disallowed, if used properly. "Properly" was not officially defined! Yet, as late as 1920, musical instruments were not allowed in worship. (Revised Minutes, page160) Nevertheless, some congregations installed an organ or piano before Annual Meeting gave its blessing. Special music for worship was allowed in 1910 with the exception that it be performed reverently and not direct attention to the singers. Don Fitzkee does an excellent job of detailing such shifts in the thinking of the Brethren in his book Moving Toward the Mainstream.

Certainly, one of the more debated issues was the use of indoor baptismal pools. For the first 194 years of our existence, the Brethren officially held that baptism should be performed outdoor in a stream of running water. Symbolically, this was to demonstrate that one's sins

were "washed away". Still, in some cases where this proved impractical, a few congregations accepted any outdoor water source, such as a pond. In 1902 Annual Conference ruled that indoor baptisms were allowed, saying *"when absolutely necessary we consider that a baptistry may be placed in a meetinghouse, though we always prefer that baptism be performed in a running stream."* (Revised Minutes, page 138). In this case, Annual Meeting was only catching up to the rank and file, as a few congregations were already installing baptistries indoors.

Once again, Philadelphia First took the lead in challenging the old ways. When the Annual Meeting of 1902 declared a preference for the presence of running water, Philadelphia First, which already had an indoor baptistry pool, is said to have kept the faucet running while doing baptism, thus complying with Annual Meeting's stated goal!

Note also in the preceding minutes of Annual Meeting, church buildings were still referred to as "meetinghouses". Yet by 1902, when this ruling was made, there already existed a few buildings that were not of a typical meetinghouse design, such as Philadelphia First. Annual Meeting remained unusually quiet concerning instructions on how to build a meetinghouse. There appears to be only three questions addressed directly to the use of a meetinghouse, but nothing to the design. In 1891 a question was raised concerning renting a Brethren meetinghouse to a non-Brethren religious group. The ruling stated *"We cannot rent our meetinghouses to any who do not bring the doctrine of the Gospel as understood by our Brotherhood. 2 John 10:11"*. (Revised Minutes, page 164)

In 1903 a petition was presented requesting permission to allow "secret organizations" to conduct funeral services in a meetinghouse, "*only when they dispense of their secret-order regalia and ceremonies.*" This permission was granted. (Revised Minutes, page 164) This is striking considering the Brethren opposed membership in Secret Societies.

In various ways Annual Meeting addressed multiple issues by urging simplicity and modesty. The intent was to preserve and promote a sense of fellowship and humility. So long as these were respected, individual expression would be tolerated. By implication, this was to apply to the design of the meetinghouse, as well. As the Church increased in membership and spread further across the continent, this call for community and identity became increasingly tested. Clearly, the Brethren saw themselves as a "peculiar" people who rejected worldliness and attention. Their houses of worship were expected to demonstrate this. The use of the term "church" in reference to the

building was not in keeping with the vision of the New Testament, which understood the Church to be the body of believers. This understanding builds ownership of the mission of the Gospel. It is an attempt to keep the focus of ministry on Christ. Material objects, such as a building, were only a means of enabling corporate worship and faith. Such thinking was largely a result of the influence of Pietism upon the Brethren, for Pietism placed a strong focus upon the inner faith of the individual, apart from outward symbolism.

Part IV

THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN IN THE ATLANTIC NORTHEAST

This section examines each congregation of the Church of the Brethren in the territory now known as the Atlantic Northeast District. Congregations are listed here in chronological order according to when they were organized as a congregation, and not according to when they first began to hold services. Under each congregation can be found a list of known house churches, if any, and meetinghouses. See the Appendixes at the end for more detailed information on specific topics, such as alphabetized house churches and meetinghouses.

1. Germantown   *1723*

Germantown is the Mother congregation for all North American Brethren. The first Brethren arrived here in 1719 under the leadership of Elder Peter Becker. They remained largely unorganized for the first four years, meeting occasionally in homes for Bible study and prayer, but with no formal worship services. This may be due in part to the struggle to secure their life and careers in the new country, together with the fact that they were somewhat widespread, spanning an area of some sixty miles from Germantown to Oley.

Figure 5 Marker along the Wissahickon Creek honoring the first Brethren baptism in North America. The marker was built in 1955 and restored in 1980. Author's photo.

In the fall of 1722 Peter Becker and about four others visited the Brethren who were scattered throughout eastern Pennsylvania to encourage them and reestablish their commitment to one another. (*Zug, page 17*). Finally, on Christmas Day 1723 Becker organized a gathering of Colonial Brethren who met in Germantown for worship, baptism, and love feast. This marked the beginning of the Brethren Church in America.

The Germantown Brethren met for worship in the homes of several members, though it is not entirely clear which ones. Here is what we do know.

   A. HOUSE CHURCHES *(per M. G. Brumbaugh, page 165)*
      1) John Gumre

Gumre hosted the love feast on December 25, 1723, and continued making his home available for services. The first baptism was held on his property.

      2) Peter and Anna Becker

As the first Brethren minister in America, it was fitting that Becker's home also served as one of the locations for worship.

      3) George Gantz
      4) John Traut
      5) John Kalkglöser
      6) Christopher Sauer, Sr.

As the congregation grew it became increasingly difficult to worship in many of the homes. Though he never joined the Church, Christopher Sauer, Sr., was a close friend to the Brethren. He built a house 60 x 60 in which the second floor had movable partitions to allow for increased space.   Here he welcomed the Brethren to meet for worship. Brumbaugh says they did so from 1732 until 1760. By then, Christopher Sauer, Jr.'s family was becoming too large, and he needed the second floor for his family. This house was located on the lot where no. 5263 Germantown Ave. now stands.

On August 12, 1760, Peter Schilbert donated to the Church a house with eighty rods of ground. The house was used for worship, and the ground became a cemetery. The Brethren remodeled the house by taking some walls out to create a larger meeting area.

   B. MEETINGHOUSE

In keeping with their status as the first Brethren congregation in America, the Germantown believers also built the first Brethren meetinghouse. This was done in 1770 and was built to the rear of the Schilbert house and in front of the cemetery. The structure was of simple design and made of stone. It was about 32 feet square with an attic in which the congregation stored the items needed for love feast.

About 1880 the building was remodeled, In 1897 a substantial addition was completed as a gift from Jacob Z. Davis.

Brumbaugh (page 169-170) tells an interesting story of how the original meetinghouse was saved during the Revolutionary War.

During the Revolutionary War, when all of Elder Sower's property was confiscated this meetinghouse narrowly escaped. Sower was one of the trustees in whose name the property was held. For this reason it was seized. But Brethren Fox and Leibert, trustees with Sower, explained that the building and ground were not Sower's, but the congregation's. That he was simply one of the trustees in whose name the title temporarily rested. Finally the representations of the members availed and the building was spared, although the yard about it was occupied by the cavalry in the Germantown battle.

History of the German Baptist Brethren. Pages 169-170.

BRETHREN CHURCH AND PARSONAGE, GERMANTOWN.

Figure 6 A drawing of the original Germantown meetinghouse and parsonage, taken from Falkenstein' s History of the German Baptist Brethren.

2. *Coventry*   *1724*

As the weather became warmer the excitement of the newly formed church led them to want to visit their fellow believers who lived some thirty miles upstream along the Schuylkill River. The Germantown congregation sent Peter Becker and several others on the first evangelistic tour. They visited the area of Skippack, Oley, and Coventry, in northern Chester County. Several who were baptized in Germantown on December 25 of the previous year were there, along with a few others.

At Coventry two persons were baptized. Martin Urner, who had been baptized the previous year at Germantown, was named the preacher of the new group. Coventry became the second congregation in America, meeting in homes from 1724-1772. These house churches included the following known residences.

    A. HOUSE CHURCHES

1) Martin and Catherine Urner.

As noted, Martin Urner was called to serve as their first minister.

2) John Price.

3) There were at least three other house churches at Coventry, but their identity remains unknown.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) 1772 The first meetinghouse was constructed of log and located on Martin Urner's property. This was only two years after the Germantown house was built and is often overlooked. Martin Urner, Jr., donated the land. A pencil sketch believed to be of this first meetinghouse was found inside the back cover of a Bible owned by Peter Hollowbush, a preacher at Coventry from 1842-1872 (see Figure 8). A handwritten note says the sketch is from 1782, when the meetinghouse was ten years old. The current meetinghouse is built on the same land.

2) 1817   The log house needed serious work, so in its place the congregation built a new meetinghouse made of stone. Zug reports that the logs from the meetinghouse were used to build a residence. They continued to use benches with no backs until 1870, at which time they switched to benches with foldable backs that could serve as a table for love feast (*Zug, p. 222*).

3)   August 4, 1888

The decision was made to build a new meetinghouse, but there remained enough opposition that it was delayed two years.

4)   March 8, 1890

A new meetinghouse was dedicated. A noted change involved the entrance, which was placed on the end, rather than the side. A baptistry was added in 1903. It has been updated several times since.

Figure 8 The original Coventry log meetinghouse of 1772. From the History of the Coventry Church, page 32.
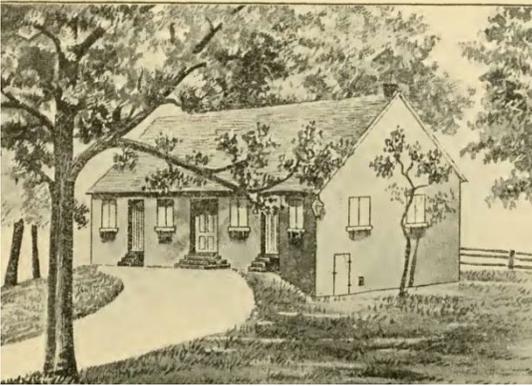
Figure 10 The Coventry meetinghouse today. District file photo.

3. *Conestoga*   *1724; Reorganized 1734*

After the Peter Becker party left Coventry in 1724 the group traveled southwest to an area known as the Conestoga. At the time this was still part of Chester County. In 1729 this would become Lancaster County. The Conestoga was an especially rich farm land that drew a lot of German immigrants. The Mennonites were already in the area.

Becker held services and two baptisms, resulting in 9 converts. These formed the third congregation, known as Conestoga. Conrad Beissel was named their minister, but by 1728 he created a huge division and led most of the congregation to separate from the Brethren. Tensions became quite severe for the next eight years. In 1732 Beissel relocated a few miles west to begin the Ephrata community. Tensions

40

came to a head with the local Brethren in 1734, when Michael Frantz took charge and made a formal break with Beissel and Ephrata.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES.

1) Heinrich and Christina Höhn.

We begin with the Höhn family because it was on their farm that Peter Becker officiated at the first Brethren baptism in Lancaster County. On November 12, 1724, Becker preached an evangelistic message resulting in seven persons being baptized. This occurred in the Pequea Creek. The farm was located in West Lampeter Township, along Pequea Lane. Because the Höhns hosted this first service and became significant members of the Church, it is conceivable that they hosted services at other times, as well, However, there is no documentation to confirm this.

2) Sigmund Landert.

According to Morgan Edwards, Landert hosted a service the following Sunday after the baptism at Höhn's farm.

3) John and Anna (Good) Landis.

John Landis, Sr. and Jr. both lived on a farm in Earl Township, Lancaster County. John, Jr., was married to Anna Good. The farm consisted of 200 acres along what is today Peace Road in West Earl Township, about 2 ½ -3 miles north of Mill Creek. It was on this farm that Conrad Beissel officiated at his first baptismal service in 1725. When this took place, Beissel was the Pastor of the Conestoga congregation which had not yet left the Brethren. We do not know how many services the Landis family hosted. It may have only been this one, as the group soon settled to meet in the home of the Nägele family.

4) Rudolph and Elizabeth Nägele.

The Nägele family had a farm in West Earl Township, located along South Farmersville Road, between Groffdale Church Road and Butter Road. The Nägele's provided lodging to Peter Becker and his evangelistic touring group in 1724. They were baptized into the Conestoga Brethren by Conrad Beissel in 1725. Rudolph was a Mennonite minister before joining the Brethren. Beissel moved into a cabin on Nägele's farm and the congregation began worshiping in the Nägele house shortly after that. When Beissel left the Brethren in 1728, Rudolph and Elizabeth left as well. By the time Beissel established the Ephrata Community in 1732, the Nägele family became Householder members there.

5) John and Margaret Naas Landis.

Sometimes referred to as "Ephrata" John Landis to distinguish him from several others sharing the same name. John and Margaret were

prominent members of the early church. It is not clear when they joined, but it was likely around 1734 (*Bittinger, page 28*). They were described as part of the original members of the Conestoga congregation, but this probably refers to the renewed congregation following the complete separation from Beissel.

The Landis farm was located in Ephrata Township (then known as Cocalico township). The Cocalico Creek surrounds a good portion of the farm creating what looks like a peninsula. The property also straddles Rothsville Road. It was here, on this farm, that a meeting was held on September 29, 1734, led by Michael Frantz. It was held in Landis' barn, which was located just off Rothsville Road on Middle Creek Road. According to legend, Frantz laid a fence rail either on the barn floor or on the ramp leading into the barn (depending on which story is followed). He then announced that whoever wanted to follow Conrad Beissel should stand on one side of the rail, and those wishing to follow the Brethren of Germantown stand on the other side. The barn has since become known as the Barn of Division. The barn was torn down around 2010, but the foundation is still intact. A new, smaller barn has been built on part of the foundation.

In this way the Conestoga Brethren formally separated from the Ephrata Sabbatarians. This solitary act provided Conestoga with the reboot it needed to become a viable congregation once again. John and Margaret Landis remained with the Brethren and John became a deacon in the Church.

Figure 11 The Barn of Division   Zug, page 326

They opened their home as one of the sights for the Conestoga congregation to worship. They are both buried in the Kemper-Landis cemetery in Akron, which was on part of the John Landis farm.

  6) Joseph and Catharine Royer

42

The Royers had a farm not far from John Landis. It is not clear if they hosted a house church for Conestoga, but we do know that they hosted the Annual Meeting in 1820 on their farm. With this knowledge it is likely they also hosted worship services. Joseph was born Dec. 13, 1779. He died Aug. 7, 1849. Catharine's maiden name was Pfautz. She was born June 15, 1777, and died Nov. 11, 1844. Findagrave.com has a note attached to Joseph's file that claims he and Catharine donated the land for the Middle Creek meetinghouse. Zug says this meetinghouse was not built until 1874, which seems to contradict this claim (*Zug, page 335*). However, Rineer says there was a small meeting house built in 1824, which would confirm it. If so, this would be one of the first Brethren meetinghouses in Lancaster County.

7) Jacob S. and Elizabeth Gibbel Minnich

Jacob Minnich was a deacon in the Conestoga congregation. As the congregation grew to between 400-500 members, they held a meeting at Minnich's house in 1864. It was here they decided to divide into three congregations: Conestoga, West Conestoga, and Ephrata. Minnich lived within the boundaries of the new West Conestoga congregation, very near Akron.

Jacob was born August 28, 1826, and died Feb. 8, 1911. He was a farmer. His first wife was Elizabeth Gibbel, who was born in 1827 and died in 1904. After her death Jacob married Annie Graybill. Jacob served many years as treasurer for the Church, but it is not clear if this was with the Conestoga congregation or the West Conestoga Congregation.

We have at least two lists of Conestoga house churches preserved for us. The one claims to be *"before the division of the Lancaster and Lebanon circuits and before the day of meeting houses".* It appears in Zug, page 396. The division of the Lancaster and Lebanon circuits is likely referring to the year 1772, when Swatara became a separate congregation apart from Conestoga and White Oak. That appears to be in keeping with the names found on this list. This is also referred to as *"a meeting list of the White Oak circuit in Lancaster and in Lebanon County"* in J. G. Francis' book The Church of the Brethren (Dunkers) in Lebanon County, dated 1916. This second list is identical to the first, but with a different caption. It is difficult to say where these people lived. The list appears here, followed by a transcription by David Fuchs.

Meeting List of the White Oak Circuit of about 100 years ago, partly in Lancaster and partly in Lebanon county. The list covers a year, second two columns being practically a repetition of first two, some dates being left open. By such lists Brethren kept track of meetings when held in private homes. The places in marks of parenthesis were outside of White Oak territory, and were "for visits".

Figure 12 From the book The Church of the Brethren (Dunkers) in Lebanon County, *by Francis. A worship schedule for the Colonial White Oak congregation.*

It should be noted that the name of John Zug appears on this list as a host. Zug was baptized into the White Oak fellowship on May 15, 1769 (Durnbaugh, page 180). Therefore, it is likely this list dates to circa 1770, which is how I will refer to it.

A Transcription of the Meeting List of the White Oak Circuit, by David Fuchs

Left column
Ober Schulhaus (above the school house, or a person named "Ober"'s school house)
(Abraham Royer)
Daniel Widder

Undi Herrner (I believe this is someone's name; Undi is not a German word)
Isaac Eschelman (Isaac Eshelman, Eshleman)
Henrich Reyer (Henry Royer, Reyer)
Offen. (open, blank)

44

Monnt Plesent (Mount Pleasant)
Philip Rigler
    Obers (referring to more than one with surname "Ober?")
Jacob Bucher
John Leman (Layman, Lehman)
Samuel Gibbel (Gibble)
Offen
Georg Gibbel (Gibble)
Heinrich Gibbel (Henry Gibbel, Gibble)
John Kinsi (John Kinsey, Kintzey)
2nd column from left
Widrowe Herschisin (Woodrow Herschisin; could be Hutchison misspelled)
Henrich Herr (Henry Herr)
Alt Sem Grebiel (Old Sam Graybill or Graybeal)
Daniel Grebiel (Daniel Graybill or Graybeal)
Mount Plesent (Mount Pleasant)
John Zug
Christian Kauffman
Jacob Geib
Widowe Hershisn (Woodrow Herschisin)
Jung Sem Grebiel (Young Sam(uel) Graybill or Graybill)
Jacob Steman (Jacob Stehman or Stayman)
Mount Plesent (Mount Pleasant?)
Abraham Minnig (Abraham Minnich)

Sem Schumacher (Sam Shoemaker)
C. Longenecker
Third Column from left
Obers Schul=haus (Ober's? School house)
Abraham Mayer (Abraham Mayer or Meyer)
Daniel Widder
Undi Herrner
John Jung (John Young)
Heinrich Reyer (Henry Reyer or Royer)
Offen (open)
Mount Plesent (Mont (short for Montgomery?   Pleasant)
John Groff
Obers (referring to more than one with surname "Ober?")
Jacob Bucher
Jacob Reyder (Jacob Rider)
John Leman (John Lehman, Layman, or Leman)
Samuel Gibbel (or Gibble)
Abraham Groff
Offen (open)
Georg Gibbel] (George Gibbel, Gibble)
Daniel Gibbel (Gibble)
Abraham Gibbel (Gibble)
Far right column
Heinrich Herr (Henry Herr0
Alt Sem Grabiel (Old Sam Graybill, Graybeal)
Daniel Grabiel (Graybill, Graybeal)
Mount Plesent (short for "Montgomery"?)
John Zug
Christian Kauffman

Jacob Geib
Bidroe Hershersin (Woodrow Hershersin/ Henderson/Hutchinson???)
Jung Sem Grebiel (Young Sam Graybill, Graybeal)
Jacob Steman (Stayman, Stehman)

Mount Plesent (short for Montgomery??)
Abraham Minnig (Minnich)
Sem Schumacher (Sam Shoemaker)
C. Longeneker

Another helpful list is found in <u>History of the Church of the Brethren Eastern Pennsylvania District 1915-1965</u>, *page 23.* It is identified as the Conestoga circuit, dated "prior to 1835", which places it well before the second division of the congregation in 1864, which resulted in the creation of West Conestoga and Ephrata.

The list includes 24 locations and is written in German script. David Fuchs provided the following transcription of the names. My personal notes appear in blue italics and are not part of the original.

Conestoga meeting list prior to 1835
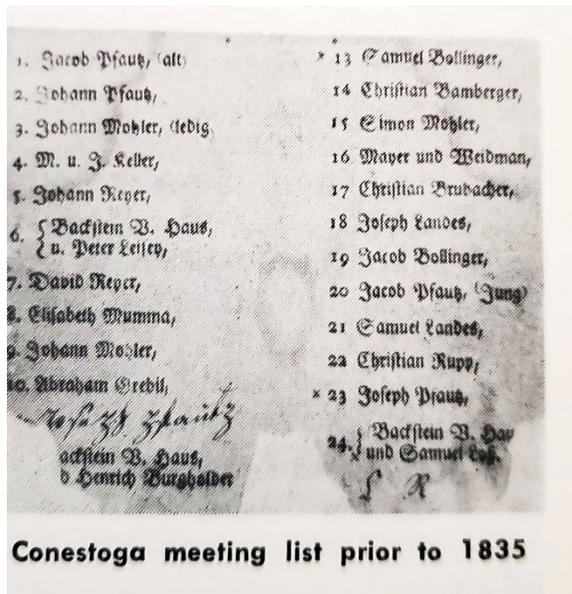
Figure 13 Conestoga meeting list prior to 1835 (History of the Church of the Brethren Eastern PA 1708-1915).

(Left side)

1. Jacob Pfautz (old) – *an elder who is buried in the Middle Creek cemetery*

2. Johann Pfautz - *Jacob and Johan may be related to Catherine Pfautz Royer, the wife of Joseph Royer, listed above as number 5.*

3. Johann Mohler (unmarried) – *(1786-1865) He would become the father of LEVI MOHLER, who hosted worship for the Ephrata congregation below.*

4. M and J Keller – *This is likely Michael and John Keller of Springville, Ephrata Township. They were brothers whose parents were John & Elizabeth Keller. They both also appear as house church hosts for the first Ephrata congregation below.*

5. Johann Reyer (Royer) – *Most likely the same John Royer who lived in Ephrata Township and hosted the Annual Meeting of 1846. He was a member of the Conestoga congregation, and later the First Ephrata congregation following its formation in 1864.*

6. Backstein B Haus (not sure what that means) and Peter Leisey

7. David Reyer (Royer was spelled that way back then) – *a deacon in Conestoga*

8. Elizabeth Mumma

9. Johan Mohler – *may be the same as #3 above; or may be the father to # 3 (1757- 1821)*

10. Abraham Grebil (Graybill) – *a deacon in Conestoga*

11. *(uncertain)*

12. Backstein B Haus und Henrich Burgholder (Burkholder)

(Right Side)

13. Samuel Bollinger

14. Christian Bamberger

15. Simon Mohler – *(1817-1893) buried in Mohler Brethren cemetery, Ephrata.*

16. Mayer and Weidman (interesting, two surnames, no given name)

17. Christian Brubacher (Brubaker)

18. Joseph Landes (Landis)

19. Jacob Bollinger

20. Jacob Pfautz (young, i.e., junior)

21. Samuel Landes (Landis)

22. Christian Rupp

23. Joseph Pfautz

24. Backstein B Haus and Samuel Loss

A few notes about the above list:
- Johann Mohler's name appears twice.
- Backstein B Haus appears three times
- Given these duplicates, we are left with 21 locations

B. MEETINGHOUSES

Figure 14   Carpenter's meetinghouse as it is today. Author's photo.

1) Carpenter   1824

The Carpenter meetinghouse was located in Earlville, also known as Talmage. This was a union house. The original size was 40 x 50.

Rineer dates this building from 1824. While that seems early, it is likely correct. The Lancaster County Historical Society has a document *"The Ancestors of the Zimmerman-Carpenter Families of Lancaster County"*, written by Albert K. Hostetter.   In it, he states that a descendent of Emmanuel Carpenter built the Carpenter's Church in Earlville in 1824. Rineer says the Brethren were among those using it since 1824. It is not clear which Church owned it originally, but the Brethren did become owners at some point. Conestoga stopped using it in 1915, when they consolidated services at Bareville and sold Carpenter's to the Mennonites, who are still using it today.

2) Roland   1842

In 1842 the Reformed Church built a structure in Earl Township as part of the Cocalico Reformed Church. This was known as Roland, or Rowland, Church before taking the name Zeltenreich. For a few years, at least, the Conestoga Brethren shared this building. It appears on the

worship schedule for 1872-75. In 1908 Zeltenreich built their current building and tore this one down.

3) Voganville Union   1848

Located on the east side of Wissler Road in Voganville, Earl Township, this union house was built in 1848 by John Vogan, for use by any interested church group. Those who are known to use it are the Lutheran Church, the Reformed, The United Zion, and the German Baptist Brethren (Conestoga congregation).

The only schedule I could find for Conestoga's use at Voganville was 1872-1875, when they had scheduled services 8 times a year. Voganville later became a part of Spring Grove, following the third division of Conestoga (*Rineer, p. 103*). It is not clear when the Brethren stopped using Voganville, but it had to be into the early 20th Century. As a union house it is noteworthy that the design is not that of a typical Brethren meetinghouse for this era. The doors are placed on the end of the building, although this picture suggests there were two entrances, possibly for men and women separately.   I do not know if the steeple/bell tower was original, but it would not have been found on a Brethren meetinghouse.

Figure 15   Voganville Union meetinghouse.   Photo: lancasterhistory.org

Figure 16   Eby meetinghouse, Monterey. Zug, page 333

4) Eby   1860

Located in the village of Monterey, the Eby house was built by the Conestoga congregation in 1860 and measured 40 x 50. The brick building was sold to the Ohio Conference Mennonites in 1946.

Notice the a-typical entrances on the gable end, testifying to the diversity among Brethren architectural Styles.

5) Bird In Hand 1888

In the village of Bird In Hand we find another Brethren meetinghouse. Built in 1888, the brick structure measured 50 x 80. Conestoga sold it to the Amish Mennonites in 1928.

Figure 17 Bird in Hand, Zug page 332

6) Intercourse   1892
The Brethren in Intercourse first met in the Harristown schoolhouse in 1891. They bought the Intercourse meetinghouse from the Methodists in 1892. It measured 36 x 55 and was constructed of brick. The church sold the building to Samuel Martin in 1915.

7) Bareville   1894
The original Bareville meetinghouse was a union church, 30 x 50, along PA 23 east of Leola. It was built in 1894.

In 1914 the union house was closed, at which time the Conestoga congregation replaced it with a new brick building in 1915. Conestoga consolidated all their locations into this one building at that time. This building has been remodeled a number of times since. It continues to house the Conestoga congregation.

Figure 18 Top: Bareville meetinghouse, 1951. Joe Long photo. Bottom: The current Conestoga Church of the Brethren facility, utilizing the original Bareville meetinghouse. District file photo.

4) Oley   1732

Oley began as a mission work primarily through the efforts of those in Coventry, around 1732. Indian Creek and Germantown also played a part in its development.

Oley became a destination for a few of the original Brethren who immigrated in 1719. The seeds for the Oley congregation in Berks County were planted by Peter Becker during his 1724 evangelistic tour that resulted in the establishment of Coventry. The Brethren presence became significant by the 1730's, leading to regular services. By 1732 Coventry planted a mission preaching point in Oley. They met exclusively in homes until 1777, but we do not have a record of which homes they met in. Many began moving out of the area so that by 1770 only twenty members were recorded in Oley.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES
  1) locations unknown.
B. MEETINGHOUSES.
  1) Pricetown   1777

In 1775 Martin Gaube built a log house on land he bought from Conrad Price. In 1777 he built a meetinghouse that was a 30x35 stone building, with a 16x16 kitchen on the one end for preparing love feast. It became known as the Pricetown meetinghouse and was the third one ever built by the Brethren, only seven years after the Germantown house and five years after Coventry. After the Coventry log house was torn down in 1817, the Pricetown meetinghouse became the second oldest remaining house for the Brethren. This became a preaching point for the Oley Brethren. In 1866 it was transferred to the Maiden Creek congregation. It is still used for special ceremonial events and remains the oldest, unaltered Brethren worship facility.

Figure 19 The quaint 1777 fieldstone Pricetown Brethren meetinghouse. Zug, page 477.

It should be noted here that in the book *History of Berks County In Pennsylvania,* Morton L. Montgomery says that the Brethren built a meetinghouse at Pricetown and at Bethel before 1752. He also states that a meetinghouse was built at Northkill in 1748. All of these would have been before Germantown. I seriously doubt the validity of these claims, as I cannot find any source to substantiate it, and it clearly is contradicted by any Brethren-authored source I am aware of. It may be Montgomery was unfamiliar with the Brethren and is referring to the fact that services were held in these areas by the dates he quotes, but

the author may not be aware that such services were held in homes at that time rather than meeting houses.

Having said this, it needs to be noted that Zug makes a vague reference to a possible meetinghouse at Northkill. For more information on this see the discussion of Northkill under Number 7 below.
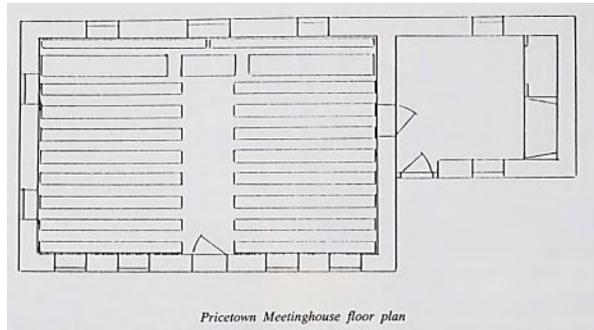
Figure 20 Pricetown meetinghouse floor plan. The kitchen on the right was original to the building. Source: PA Folklife magazine.

5. Amwell   *1733*

The Amwell congregation began with a small group of farm families who moved to Hunterdon County, New Jersey in 1733. They began meeting under the leadership of Elder John Naas, an early leader from the days in Germany. Naas lived on the Neshanic Creek and preached in the homes of the members of the church.

Land was donated to the church by Israel Poulson, Sr., and the first meetinghouse was built in 1811. Israel Poulson, Sr., began holding services at a mission point near Flemington, in addition to Amwell. Again, they met in homes until a small building was erected in 1849, known as Bethel. It was replaced by a newer building in 1878. Meanwhile, Amwell outgrew their meetinghouse and replaced it with a new one in 1856.

Edmund Dalrymple became elder in 1835, but when he died in 1847, Israel Poulson, Jr., was selected to replace him ahead of the older John Moore. This led to a split in the congregation as some chose Poulson and others chose Moore. Those who wanted Moore left and formed the Sand Brook congregation (see below). Sand Brook later merged with Bethel in 1896 to form the United Church of New Jersey.

In 1912 this group reunited with Amwell in terms of administration but continued to meet in separate facilities.

The meeting houses of Amwell are as follows.

a) . 1811; replaced in 1856; damaged by fire in 1950 but restored and expanded. *Amwell*

b) Bethel. 1849; replaced in 1878; withdrew in 1896; reunited 1912; closed in 1939

c) Sand Brook. See history below.
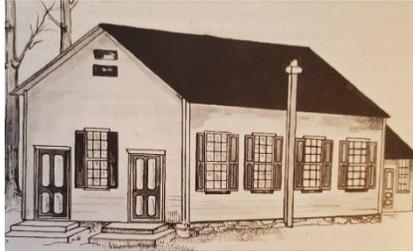
Figure 21 An early sketch of the Amwell meetinghouse.

Figure 22   The current Amwell meetinghouse. District file photo.

6. Great Swamp   *1735*

The Great Swamp congregation began when Elder John Naas visited the area in 1733 and led services and baptized six persons. The group did not organize as a congregation until 1735. Martin Urner, from Coventry, and Elder Peter Becker, Germantown, also preached here.

In 1738 Abraham Duboy moved here and became the preacher. Duboy was one of the leaders from Europe. He died in 1748 and was succeeded by John Frick, in whose house they worshiped.

The Great Swamp congregation underwent great difficulties during the American Revolution, as much fighting took place in the general region. It is not entirely clear when the congregation disbanded, but it was likely about this time. Part of the area known as the Great Swamp later became Quakertown. The Springfield Church of the Brethren, which was organized in 1864, inherited much of the area that once was the Great Swamp congregation.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

1) Abraham Duboy.

Duboy was the first resident preacher, and he hosted services in his home.

2) Peter Zuck

3) Isaac Rothrock

4) Jacob Kram.

Kram did not host services that we know of. However, in his will, we bequeathed land to the church for the purpose of building a school and a meetinghouse for both the Mennonites and the German Baptists (Brethren). His children honored this request. Their names were John Kram, Peter Kram, Henry Kram, Catrina Rigel, and Susanna Kram.

B. MEETING HOUSE

The meetinghouse/school envisioned by Jacob Kram did come to fruition. It was destroyed by fire but rebuilt. It did outlive the Great Swamp congregation, but later fell into serious disrepair.

7. Northkill   1748

Elder Michael Pfautz conducted a love feast in the area of Northkill, in Berks County, in 1748. In 1750 George Klein moved here from Amwell, New Jersey. He provided leadership to the few Brethren living in the area. The Northkill church saw many members moving to other areas through the mid-eighteenth century. As a result, it struggled to establish itself. By 1770 there were eleven members .

Northkill draws its name from the Northkill Creek that runs primarily through Bern Township, just west of Reading, PA. George Klein was instrumental in bringing the Brethren witness to Lebanon County and creating the Swatara Church. Northkill did not survive as a separate congregation but became part of the Maiden Creek church. There are no known meeting houses. However, Zug makes a reference

to what might be understood as a meetinghouse. On page 510 in his book, he speaks of the "Old Northkill Church" near which Elder George Klein bought land in 1747. Is this a reference to the location of a future meetinghouse? Or might Zug be referring to a structure built by the Amish or the Mennonites, who were in this area before the Brethren. Zug mentions this again on the next page when referring to the grave of Klein.

> George Klein visited the struggling Brethren churches as a missionary minister along the route from Amwell, New Jersey, to Bernville, Pa., where he purchased lands in 1747. He owned considerable lands near the Old Northkill Church. His trade was no doubt carpentry and turning,

Zug, page 510

> The descendants of Elder George Klein have built a fine wall around the graveyard, and propose to erect a suitable monument to his memory. The present resting place is on a gently sloping hill near the Northkill Church, about one and a half miles northwest of Bernville, Pa., where Elder George Klein served so faithfully. After a long and useful career in the ministry, he was gathered home into the garner of the Lord. Now the graveyard is being properly put in shape by some of his offspring.

Zug, page 511

It is also possible that the reference to the Northkill Church may be in connection with the Friedens Lutheran Church, which was at times referred to as the Old Northkill Church. This was located in Bern Township (today it is within the Borough of Bernville). A log church was built here in 1743 on land donated by Samuel Filbert. In 1834-1897 this was a Union Church.

8. White Oak   *1772*

The White Oak congregation was the result of the first division of Conestoga in 1772. Brethren began moving into the western portion of Lancaster County in the 1730's. By 1736 the first love feast was held in this region. The congregation met in house churches until 1859, a period of some 120 years. The White Oak congregation became very widespread, covering a large area. It gave birth to multiple congregations.

More recently all their preaching points were consolidated into one location, in the new facility replacing the White Oak meetinghouse. The worship schedule for 1872-1875 lists Chestnut Hill as one of their preaching points. It is not clear where this was or for how long the Brethren used it. Chestnut Hill is a small community in West Hempfield Township. Because of a lack of details, it is only mentioned here for the purpose of this project.

White Oak withdrew from the Church of the Brethren in 2022.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

See also the lists of house churches identified as the White Oak circuit but still under management of the Conestoga congregation because it predates the creation of White Oak as a separate congregation. That list is found above under the Conestoga congregation. Six of the names below appear on that list as well. The only names that do not appear on that list are Jacob Graybill and Jacob Stehman, both of which came much later.

1) Henrich and Barbara Eby Gibble.

There were several persons named Henry Gibble (variations include Geibel, Gibbel, and a few others.), and it is not entirely clear which this is. I believe it refers to the one mentioned by Durnbaugh (page 181), whose wife was Barbara Eby. He was baptized in 1748 by Michael Pfautz. He was later made a deacon at White Oak. His name appears on the pre-1772 list of service locations (see page 30), making the Gibbles among the earliest house churches in the Manheim area.

2) Elder Christian and Margaret Langanacre.

Born November 11, 1732, in Rapho Township, Lancaster County, Langanacre was ordained May 15, 1769 at White Oak (Durnbaugh, page 180) and took over for Michael Pfautz, who died that same year. His name also appears on the pre-1772 list of service locations. The name Langanacre is an early variant of Longenecker.

3) Abraham & Barbara Wenger Gibbel

Born circa 1790, Abraham Gibbel was elected to the ministry in 1822. He was described as a fluent and entertaining preacher with a strong following. He and Barbara hosted services for White Oak near Mastersonville. Abraham was not without some controversy, as he lost membership in the Church "for mistakes" three times but was restored each time. No details are known as to why he lost membership. Abraham died in 1864. Barbara died in 1869. (Zug, 370, 383, 388-391)

4) Jacob and Margaret Stehman.

By 1840 the church's witness was spreading across the County. The White Oak congregation was the result of the first division of

Conestoga in 1772. They began holding services in numerous homes reaching as far south as Mountville. One of the homes included in the regular rotation was that of Jacob Stehman, north of Petersburg. Jacob Stehman was a deacon in the White Oak congregation. He was born October 11, 1798. His family also spelled their name Steman. Jacob married Margaret Moore (1804-1862), who served as hostess for the house church.

Around 1840 he built a separate house over his spring which he intended to use only for worship when it was their turn to host. This was one of the first time in Lancaster County that the Brethren would have a building designated only for worship, and it was not well received by everyone. Zug informs us that some members saw this as a step towards construction of Church buildings like the more liturgical churches used. Middle Creek likely had a meetinghouse by this time, and Conestoga was meeting sporadically at Carpenter Union, but generally, the Lancaster County Brethren maintained a stubborn resistance to the meetinghouse concept.

Indeed, Stehman's spring house proved to be a step towards the use of meetinghouses. Within twenty years the Brethren of Lancaster County were using at least seven meetinghouses, five of which they had built themselves. The other two were union houses. Of the five Brethren-built meetinghouses, three were within the White Oak congregation. They were Chiques (1856), Kreider (1859) and Longenecker (1859). As for Stehman, it appears his fellow church members tolerated his bold move. By 1850 some of the White Oak members began worshiping in an old log block house abandoned by a Lutheran congregation. This block house is believed to have been built before the Revolutionary War. Zug reports that they stopped worshiping in Stehman's spring house when they began using the block house. After Margaret Stehman died in 1862, Jacob married Magdalena Zug (1812-1883). Jacob died December 29, 1876. He and both of his wives are buried in the Steman family cemetery, near East Petersburg.

Figure 23 Grave of Elder Abraham Gibbel

Figure 24 Gravestone for Jacob Steman (Stehman)

5) John Groff

A love feast was hosted by John Groff in 1846. This suggests other services may have been held here as well. No other details are known. (*Zug, 390*)

6) Jacob H. and Sarah Brubaker Graybill.

A few miles south of Stehman, near the village of Petersburg, lived a man named Jacob Graybill. Also, a part of the Mountville branch of White Oak, Brother Graybill routinely offered his barn for Love Feast. He and Sarah likely also served as a House Church. Jacob (1822-1900) was a well-respected member of the community. He and his wife are buried in the Hempfield Church of the Brethren Cemetery

7) Henry Herr, Sr.

Though White Oak, as a rule, did not keep very good records, the members living in the Mountville section of the congregation apparently did better. Henry Herr, Sr. is the third house church we have on record for this group. He lived in Manor Township.

Henry's family were devout Mennonites, but by 1830 Henry and his wife joined the Brethren. They began hosting worship in their home around 1835. White Oak continued using house churches in this area until 1876, when they built the Manor meetinghouse on land purchased from Henry Herr, Jr., for $1.

8) Sem Grebiel – likely Sam Graybill

The name Old Sem Grebiel and Young Sem Grebiel appear separately on the undated worship list in Zug. There was a Sam Graybill

who was elected minister at White Oak in 1855 and who died in 1868. There is no way of knowing which Sam Graybill this is, but the list in Zug appears to be pre-1772, suggesting this may be ancestors of the White Oak minister.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) Kreider 1859

Kreider and Longenecker were the first meetinghouses built for White Oak, 87 years after the congregation was organized. Kreider was in Penn Township, on Sun Hill Road, just south of Manheim. It was a brick building constructed in 1859.

Figure 25   Kreider meetinghouse. Joe Long photo. 1951

2) Longenecker 1859

Located one mile west of Lititz on PA 772, at the intersection with Longenecker Road, this was built in 1859 as one of two meetinghouses for the White Oak congregation.

Shown here is the newer, larger structure built in 1912. It was remodeled in 1955. You will note again the door entering the building is located on the end. Also, there is only one door, rather than the two used for women and men, as in earlier designs.

Figure 26   Longenecker meetinghouse. Joe Long photo. 1951

3) White Oak

Built in 1872, 100 years after the congregation was organized, it was originally known as Gibble's meetinghouse and was located on the north side of Newport Rd, east of Elstonville, on land deed to the Church by the Gibble family.

White Oak stopped using the Gibble building in 1915 after building a new meetinghouse further east on Newport Rd. This new house became known as White Oak. According to Rineer the congregation

Figure 27 White Oak meetinghouse. Joe Long photo. 1951.

stopped using this building in 1967. The property was sold to the Mennonites. Finally, in 1981 a new, larger facility was built on the east side of Penryn Road in Penn Township. All of White Oak's houses consolidated into one location at this time, using the new White Oak building.

4) Graybill 1881

The Graybill meetinghouse was built in 1881, along Newport Road, near Elm. It was remodeled in 1948 and closed in 1981 as part of White Oak's consolidation into one facility.

5) Manheim   1893

This is a frame meetinghouse located on East High Street, near Linden St., Manheim. It was built in 1893, making it the last of the White Oak meetinghouses.

The Manheim house was atypical of Brethren meetinghouses in that the entrance was on one of the short ends, rather than a long side. This may be due to its later date of construction, signaling that the Brethren are beginning to move a bit towards the mainstream in their construction design. This house had two side aisles but no center aisle. A partition ran lengthwise through the center to separate the men's side from the women's side. This was similar to Bucher's in Lebanon County.

See also the story of the old Manheim Union house, found in the appendix. That one predates this meetinghouse by 130 years.

9. Swatara   *1772*

The Swatara group of churches began as one very large territory under the name of Swatara. It included what today is part of northwest Berks County, all of Lebanon County, and into Dauphin County. It was a mission point of the Conestoga congregation and, to some extent, Coventry and Northkill. They met exclusively in homes throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century. Meetings were sporadic and mostly consisted of prayer meetings until about 1752. At that point they began holding regular worship services at multiple locations with ministers supplied mostly from Conestoga. In 1772 the Conestoga congregation could no longer manage its growing territory and divided into three congregations: Conestoga in eastern Lancaster County, White Oak in western Lancaster County, and Swatara in Lebanon County.

Swatara was divided in 1798-1800 into Big Swatara, to the west, and Little Swatara to the east. See details of each of them below.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

See the "circa 1770 schedule" under Conestoga/White Oak. (page 44)

B. MEETINGHOUSES

Swatara did not have any meetinghouses in its twenty-six year history.

10. Indian Creek   *1785*

The Brethren began settling in the Indian Creek area very early. Jacob Price was a member of the Brethren in Europe and arrived in

Pennsylvania with the first migration in 1719. He moved to Indian Creek, near Harleysville, in 1720. He later became a minister and an Elder in the Church.

The area was visited by Peter Becker and others from Germantown as part of the great visitation of 1724 that resulted in the establishment of the Coventry congregation. A good number of Brethren lived in the area for many years. After his wife died in 1746 Peter Becker moved here and helped to support the group. Still, they did not organize as a full congregation until 1785.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

It is not clear where they met at first, other than to say it was in homes.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) Reiff's, also known as Fry's/Frey's or Towamencin. 1814-1880

Towamencin was a frame meetinghouse built 1811 and was 25 x 33. The seating capacity was 150. A small addition was made to the northwest corner, about 10 ft. sq. Towamencin was first built for Funkites by John Reiff, Sr. who through his wife had joined that body. At his death, the house with the farm passed into the hands of the son John, Jr., who joined the Brethren. This was located in Towamencin Township and has an interesting story, as told by Zug and is presented here.

Towamincin, also called *Towamencing,* in many old records. This meeting-house is also known as "Frey's," and "Reiff's," and has a very interesting history, and its locality. John Reiff was a minister among the "*Funkites,*" a branch of Mennonites, and had a meeting-house built on his own land near the Skippack in Towamencin in 1814. Upon the death of John Reiff, in 1826, the farm and the meeting-house passed into the hands of John Reiff, Jr. "By his will, dated August 14, 1830, he devised his farm and his mills to his only son, Henry P. Reiff, and the meeting-

house with half an acre of ground, on the Forty-foot road, to the use of the Dunkard church (Brethren) forever."[1]

He was known as John Reiff, the miller, and he has been spoken of by old people who knew him, as a very fine man and a zealous Christian. He was married to Catherine Price, and was a faithful member of the Church of the Brethren. I quote the following from Bro. Abraham H. Cassel's notes, of this old place of worship: *"Protracted Meetings at Reiff's Meeting House on Christmas 1841."* "*Friday Evening*, William Price 1 Mose 49:10 (5 lines quoted in German). James Quinter *Saturday Morning* James Quinter Isaiah 9:6-8 (text quoted in English, and some outline of the sermon). William Price also Isaiah 1:16.

"*Saturday Evening* John Umstad I. Kings 4:21 'Why halt ye, etc.' James Quinter II. Cor. 4:13 'We believe and therefore speak we so earnestly '—both with extraordinary power and ability. 1st. night with Mrs. Reiff and daughter the rest with Bro. M. F. was greatly refreshed and well rewarded for coming. May the Lord grant me his grace and enable me to live up to the resolution I then formed—*John Umstad* sang the Beautiful Hymn ' Hail the blest morn when the great mediator down from the regions of glory descended '—with an effect the like of which I never heard nor seen before, after having made some remarks over it." Without any attempt to change, I have copied these personal notes of a remarkable series of meetings held seventy three years ago. Such a trio of able and godly men could perhaps not have been duplicated anywhere in the Brotherhood. Because these men of spiritual power lived, our inheritance is richer, and our opportunities and responsibilities greater. This meeting-house having served the community so well for several generations, was torn down in 1880, and the new house built almost on the same foundation.

Zug, History of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania 1708-1915, pp. 304-305

Figure 29 Fry's meetinghouse. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

2) Klein's   1843

The Klein Meetinghouse was built in 1843 and was used into the 1930's, though on a limited schedule. It was a wood frame structure. Klein's was also known as Franconia.
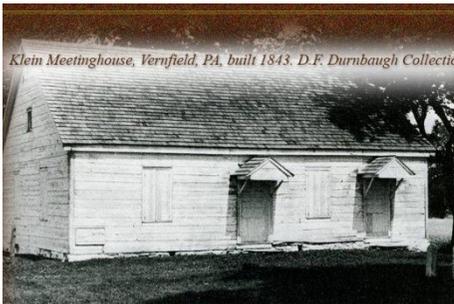
Figure 30 Klein's meetinghouse (Left) built in 1843. Interior of Klein's on Right. Source: www.cob-net,org

3) Indian Creek

We do not know when the first Indian Creek meeting house was built, but it appears to have been early. It was a frame structure, small, and painted red like a schoolhouse. It was replaced by another frame building, slightly larger. Around 1850 a much larger meetinghouse was

built on the same site. This third one was made of stone. By 1906 the decision was made to tear down this stone house and replace it with another, larger building. This fourth house was made of brick, with a full basement and a slate roof and was 50x70.

Figure 31 Indian Creek ,'s fourth meetinghouse . Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA.

Figure 32 Indian Creek meetinghouse as it is today. District file photo.

11. Little Swatara   1798

The area which later became Little Swatara began as early as 1745-1752 when Elder George Klein moved to the Northkill area in western Berks County and began preaching and ministering to people. Gradually he began working further west into the region of Little Swatara. A number of persons were baptized, and the group continued to grow and spread into Lebanon County. By 1770 there were forty-five members. Sadly, a great number of records appear to be missing for nearly eighty years, from 1780-1858, according to Zug.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

1) Jacob and Lydia Wenger.

Early meetings for Little Swatara were held in the home of the Wengers. This is the only house church we know of by name.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

Because of the large territory covered by Little Swatara there were seven meetinghouses.

1) Merkey 1848

The first meetinghouse was Merkey, built in 1848. Made of stone, it was near Bethel, north of Millersburg, on PA501.

2) Zeigler unknown date

Zeigler was one mile northwest of Rehrersburg. The date of the original meetinghouse is not known. Made of brick, it had a capacity of 300. It was rebuilt in 1875, 50x70, with a capacity of 900.

3) Moyer 1868

Moyer was located near Hamlin. It was brick with a capacity of 500. It was rebuilt in 1888, again with brick, 50x72, capacity 900. This was a love feast house.

4) Frystown 1875

Frystown was a frame house with a capacity of 500. It was built in 1875 and damaged by fire in 1945. It was restored and continued in use until it was closed in 1963.

5) Light's 1877

Built just two years after Frystown, Light's was five miles outside of Lebanon, near Fredericksburg. It was framed with a capacity of 700. This was torn down and replaced in 1920. The original lumber was used in the construction of Rankstown meetinghouse.

6) Fredericksburg 1910

The Fredericksburg house was built thirty-three years after Light's. It was a brick house with a capacity of 600.

7) Rankstown. Original house date unknown.

Originally this was a converted home. It was replaced in 1920 with a new meetinghouse made with timber from Light's, when that one was replaced. This was a love feast house. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania bought the Rankstown meetinghouse in 1931 for the establishment of the Indiantown Gap Military base.

The Brethren also shared some meetinghouses for a period of time with other denominations. These include Moonshine (1836); Union House (1859); Shubert (1923); and Kurtztown.

After 1919 the congregation consolidated into two separate congregations. One met at Fredericksburg and took that name. This group also worshiped in the Union house, Meyer/Moyer, Light, Rankstown and Moonshine. The other kept the name Little Swatara and rotated between four houses: Merkey's, Zeigler's, Frystown, and Shubert. Frystown was closed in 1963 and sold to another denomination. Little Swatara eventually consolidated into one new facility.

Figure 33 Ziegler's meetinghouse, rebuilt 1875. *Joe Long photo. 1951*

Figure 34 Merkey's meetinghouse, built 1848. Joe Long photo. 1951

Figure 35 Frystown meetinghouse built 1875.

Figure 36 Moyer's meetinghouse, built in 1868 and rebuilt 1888

Figures 35 and 36 are both by Joe Long, 1951

Figure 37 Shubert meetinghouse. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

For Fredericksburg meetinghouse, please see Mount Zion Road below.

Figure 38 The current Little Swatara facility. District file photo.

The following congregations organized individually from various parts of Little Swatara. These will be addressed later.

1866   Maiden Creek

1898   Reading organized as a separate congregation from Maiden Creek.

1877   Schuylkill

1897   Shamokin organized as a mission of the Eastern District but was formed in part from territory that was previously part of Schuylkill.

1919   Fredericksburg

1929   Jennersville

12. *Big Swatara*   *1798*

Also known throughout the years as Great Swatara or East Conewago, this congregation had its earliest beginnings in the middle of the eighteenth century, under the umbrella of Swatara. Somewhere between 1745-1752 a number of members from the White Oak portion of the Conestoga congregation in Lancaster County had moved into the general area of western Lebanon County and began meeting in homes.

Brumbaugh says the congregation officially organized in 1752. However, Zug says in the History of the Eastern District that the congregation was organized in 1798-1800. It seems like regular services began being held in or around 1752 under the leadership of the Conestoga congregation. Twenty years later, in 1772, the Conestoga congregation experienced its first division, which resulted in the creation of the Conestoga, White Oak, and Swatara congregations. Swatara was later separated into Big and Little Swatara in 1798-1800.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

We do not have a list of house churches for the first thirty years of the Big Swatara Church. However, we do have an undated schedule of services. It is a fascinating list that appears to include both house churches and at least two meetinghouses. The house churches include the following names.
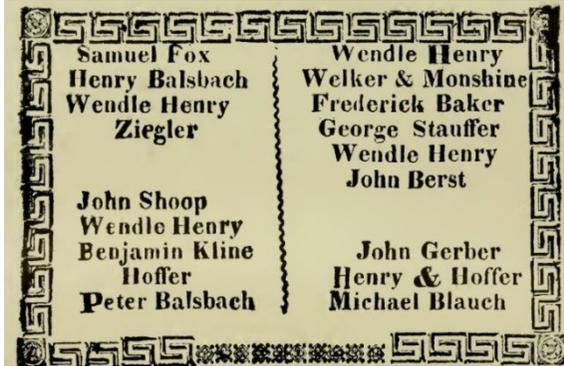
- Samuel Fox
- Henry Balsbach
- Wendle Henry
- John Shoop
- Benjamin Kline
- Peter Balsbach
- Frederick Baker
- George Stauffer
- John Berst
- John Gerber
- Michael Blauch

Big Swatara Meeting List, ca. 1836-1848, per Zug page 437

The Brethren Encyclopedia also lists the family names of Etter and Balsbaugh (possibly a variant spelling of Balsbach in the above list) as hosting house churches. Their homes were built specifically with movable partitions to create a larger area in which to worship. In addition to these names there appears to be some meetinghouses, including Ziegler, Monshine (probably Moonshine), and Hoffer. The identity of Hoffer is almost certainly the Conewago meetinghouse. Built in 1854 on land donated by Joshua Hoffer's family, it was at times referred to as Hoffer's meetinghouse. This is also in the region covered by Big Swatara. If this is the house referred to on this list, the list needs to be dated a few years later than Zug suggests.

The Moonshine meeting house was built in 1836, which means this list must be later than that. The Ziegler meeting house was built by Little Swatara, though the date is not known. Why that appears on this

list for Big Swatara is not clear, unless both congregations used Ziegler. Spring Creek was built in 1848 but does not appear on this list. Therefore, the list probably dates somewhere between 1836 and 1848. It should be noted, however, that the name Wendell Henry does appear on the list. Henry is the person who donated land to build Spring Creek.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

The meeting houses for Big Swatara are listed here.

1) Moonshine (Union house)   1836

The Moonshine meeting house was named for Henry Moonshine (1760-1836), who donated the land in his Will. The original meetinghouse was log and was built in 1836, the same year Henry Moonshine died. It was a union church built by the Lutheran, German Reformed, and German Baptist Brethren. Brethren repairs were made in 1936. The log house burned down on February 2, 1961, and was replaced with the current frame structure in 1962. The Brethren stopped using the house after the fire. Moonshine is now owned by the United Zion. The land is incorporated into Fort Indiantown Gap.

2) Spring Creek, in Hershey   1848

Wendell Henry donated land to Big Swatara in 1848. The congregation built the Spring Creek house out of stone on this land. It measured 38 x 42 and was named after the nearby creek.

3) Conewago   1854

Built in Conewago Township in 1854, this brick building took the same name as its location. As noted, it was also called Hoffer's.

4) Hanoverdale   1860

The next house came along in 1860. Hanoverdale was larger than the others as this was designed to be a love feast house. Just six years later this same meetinghouse suffered considerable damage by a hurricane, but it was rebuilt.

5) Paxton   1865

Paxton was built in 1865 in Paxton Township, east of Harrisburg.

6) East Hanover   1869

7) Hoernerstown 1878

Figure 39 Hoernerstown
meetinghouse in 1951.
Joe Long photo 1951.

Fishing Creek Valley house

Figure 40 Fishing Creek Valley
meetinghouse. Built 1881.
History of the Church of the
Brethren Eastern PA 1915-1965

8) *Valley Church, in Fishing Creek Valley 1881*

The houses at Hoernerstown and at Fishing Creek have since been torn down.

The following is a list of congregations that organized separately after having been a part of Big Swatara. Photographs of the meetinghouses appear under each separate congregation.

1868	Hershey, Spring Creek
1896	Harrisburg First
1912	Conewago
1962	Ridgeway Community
2007	Hanoverdale
2007	Paxton

Figure 41 Moonshine meetinghouse.
Joee Long photo 1951.

.   *Figure 42 Moonshine meetinghouse today;*
now a United Zion Church. Author's photo.

"Named after Henry Moonshine (1760-1836) who donated the land, an old log church was built on the site next to an acre of land. Henry Moonshine had designated the acre as a free burial land as a memorial to his son, who died at the tender age of 14. The original log church on the site burned down in the 1960s and was completely replaced by the one that stands on the camp today."

From the web site www.weirdus.com

13. Philadelphia First *1813*

By the early 19th century, a number of members from Germantown moved into the city of Philadelphia. In 1813 they began worshiping under the leadership of Elder Peter Keyser, Jr., one of the ministers at Germantown.   Initially they met in a small school located on the northwest corner of Fourth and Vine Streets (Gleim, p. 165).

They built their first meetinghouse in 1817, though it appears they remained a mission point of Germantown, sharing ministers, services and love feasts. Located on Crown Street, this brick structure served them until 1872. From 1872-1873 they met in a hall at 6ᵗʰ & Girard. A new meetinghouse was built at 980 Marshall Street in 1874. On April 13, 1890 they held their last service here and temporarily moved into Columbia Hall at 2215 Columbia Ave.

Philadelphia First relocated again in 1891 after building their third house of worship on Carlisle and Dauphin Streets. Some sources say Broad and Dauphin. In 1956 the current building was established on West Cheltenham Avenue. This is just north of the boundary of the city of Philadelphia, in Montgomery County. The congregation became the mother church for the Geiger Memorial, Bethany, and Calvary congregations.

Meetinghouses
1) Crown Street (1817)
2) 980 Marshall Street (1874)
3) Carlisle and Dauphin (1891)
4) 8707 West Cheltenham Ave. (1956)

Figure 43 The current Philadelphia First facility on West Cheltenham Avenue, Wyndmoor, PA. District file photo.

14. Upper Dublin/Ambler 1840

In 1840 Brother John Reiff donated land for a new meetinghouse and preaching point. The house was built of stone and measured 27x36.

It was a mission point for the Germantown congregation. Green Tree and Indian Creek were also involved in this church establishment.

In 1922 the congregation broke ground for a new building on the corner of Rosemont and Butler Avenues in the town of Ambler. The 48x70 structure had a capacity for 225 people. The congregation changed its name to the Ambler Church of the Brethren. The first meetinghouse was torn down and the land became part of the cemetery.

MEETINGHOUSES

1840-1920	Upper Dublin;
	27 x 36, made of stone
1920	Ambler
	48 x 70 originally, made of stone; Expanded later.

Figure 44 Upper Dublin meetinghouse. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown PA
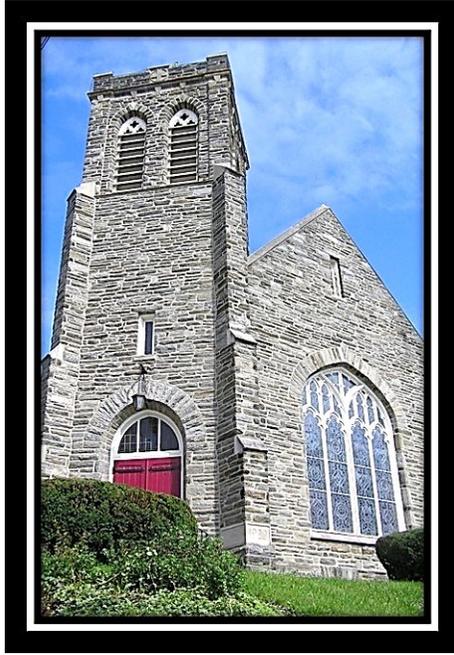
Figure 45 The current Ambler Church of the Brethren.
District file photo.

15. *Tulpehocken*   *1841*

In April of 1813 Abraham Zug moved from Warwick Township, Lancaster County, to Jackson Township, Lebanon County. Three other families from Conestoga were already living there. Two years later Zug became a minister and started leading services here. By 1823 he was ordained. At the time of his death in 1841 there were about fifty members, all part of three congregations: Conestoga, Little Swatara and White Oak.   That same year the Tulpehocken congregation was organized as a separate congregation. Those holding membership in White Oak did not join until 1844.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

In the early days services were held in several homes, but the only one identified so far is that of Michael Zug, 128 Cumberland Street in Lebanon.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1840   Royer's, renamed Tulpehocken, was built one year before the congregation was organized. It was made of stone, 30x40. About 1865 a brick annex 24x30 was added.

1850   Millbach was made of brick, 36x46, with a capacity of 350. This was located near Kleinfeltersville and built largely through the efforts of Seth Royer and Isaac Gibble. It was damaged in a storm in 1876 and repaired.

1867   Heidelberg; Made of stone and measured 50x70. In 1900 a 12 foot annex was added to bring capacity to 900. This was also known as Reistville.

1870   Richland Hall was converted to a place of worship and shared by the German Baptist Brethren (Brethren), the German Reformed, and the Lutherans. In 1896 the Lutherans pulled out. In 1901 the Reformed did the same, leaving the house in the hands of the Brethren. It had a capacity of 300. In 1913 the   Brethren   sold   the building, bought land on Race Street, and built a new meetinghouse of brick measuring 50x80.

1871   Cornwall, also known as Bucher's, was a frame structure.

1876   Myerstown; Brick with a capacity of 500.

1895   Midway.

In addition to these the Brethren held services at times in the Hoke Meeting House, South of Lebanon. The Hoke meeting house was built in 1758 of stone. For most of its history it was a union house available to any church that wanted to hold services in it. The Tulpehocken congregation did so for a while from 1872-1875 and possibly longer, according to the Brethren's Almanac of 1875. However, it was only used about six times a year. Legend has it that there was a tavern on this site before the meetinghouse was built. One night a man stopped at the tavern and had too much to drink. He left the tavern but passed out on his way home. Because it was a very cold night the man died. The owner of the tavern became so distraught over this occurrence that he closed the tavern and built the meetinghouse in its place. In later years Hoke was used regularly by a non-denominational congregation.   The meeting house still stands but is no longer in use.

In 1919 the members of Tulpehocken decided to create three separate congregations, thus ending Tulpehocken.   The three new organizations were Heidelberg, Myerstown, and Richland.

The Royer/Tulpehocken, Millbach, Cornwall, and Hoke houses are pictured below. The others are pictured under their own congregation's name.

Figure 46
Tulpehocken meetinghouse, originally called Royer's. Built 1840. Joe Long photo. 1951

Figure 47 Millbach, built 1850. Hess Archives and Special   Collections. Elizabethtown College,   Elizabethtown, PA
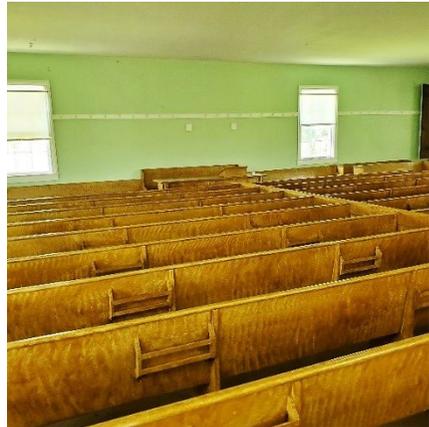
Figure 48 Cornwall meetinghouse, aka Bucher's. Author's photo.

Figure 49   Hoke meetinghouse, built 1758, as it appears in 2023. Author's photo.

16. Green Tree   *1845*

In the early nineteenth century Elder George Price of Coventry began preaching at the Methachton Meetinghouse, and also outside in a meadow by the home of a Mennonite family named Brower. His son, John, at times accompanied him. Elder Price preached in German and John preached in English. This was the beginnings of the Green Tree congregation.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES
 1) *John Umstad*
 2) *Abel Fitzwater*

By the early 1820's Coventry began holding services in Lumberville, just north of Phoenixville. Today it is known as Port Providence, on the banks of the Schuylkill River. They held worship services in schoolhouses and prayer meetings in the homes of John Umstad and Abel Fitzwater. In 1832 the Brethren joined with the Methodists to build a small, two-story building at Lumberville. The first floor was for worship services. The second floor was for a school.

Years later, John Umstad donated land for a meetinghouse, which was built in 1845. It was a stone structure beside an evergreen tree. The tree was the inspiration for the name of the new congregation. It

80

was located on the opposite side of the road from the present building. That same year Green Tree organized as a congregation. The building was remodeled and expanded around 1890. In 1975 the current building was constructed.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) *Lumberville Union 1832*

2) *Green Tree   1845*, remodeled 1890. Replaced with a new building 1995.

Figure 50 Lumberville meetinghouse. Author's photo.

GREEN TREE CHURCH.

*Figure 51 The first Green Tree meetinghouse,
as expanded. Zug photo*
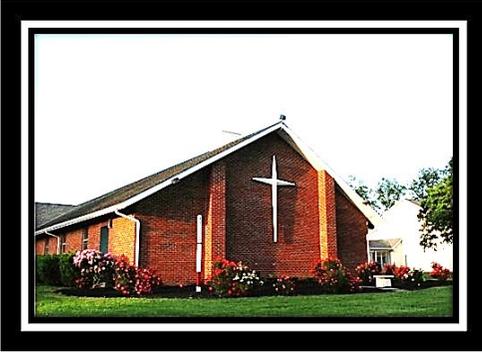
17. Sand Brook

(Organize: 1849), Joined German Baptist Brethren 1880
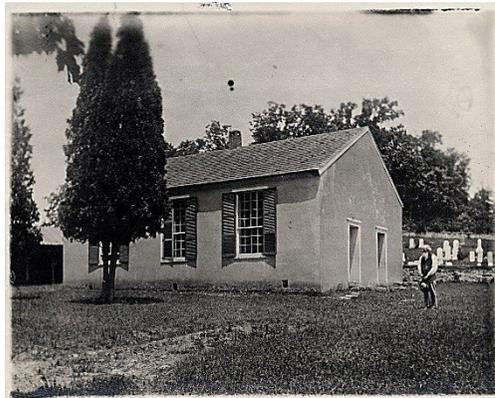
Figure 53 The Sand Brook meetinghouse, New Jersey. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA.

Sand Brook was formed in 1849 as a result of a split with Amwell over leadership. In 1848, John Moore felt he should be elected Elder, but Israel Poulson, Jr., was chosen instead. Moore had created such a disturbance within the Amwell congregation that he was expelled. The following year eighteen more members, in support of Moore, were expelled. These formed a new congregation apart from the Brethren. They built their own meetinghouse and took the name Sand Brook United Christians, or Sand Brook Second German Baptists. In 1880 they reunited with the German Baptist Brethren. However, in 1896 they merged with the Bethel congregation to form the United Church of New

Jersey, leaving the Brethren again. Finally, in 1912 they reunited with Amwell once more. Though the congregation would be known as Amwell, they continued to meet in three houses for a number of years.

18. West Conestoga   *1864*

The West Conestoga congregation was organized in1864 as part of the second division of Conestoga. At that time Conestoga was becoming too large and wide spread, with between 400-500 members across all of Northern and Eastern Lancaster County. The decision to divide was made at a meeting in the home of Jacob S. Minnich, near Akron. Elder Christian Bomberger was the Elder in Charge of the new West Conestoga congregation. Ministers were Jacob Reinhold and Christian Brubaker. Prayer meetings were held weekly in homes.

As the West Conestoga church grew, it gave birth to four congregations: Middle Creek (formerly West Conestoga); Lancaster (1891); Lititz (1913); and Akron (1913).

A. HOUSE CHURCHES
1) Jacob and Elizabeth Minnich – this is the only known location
B. MEETINGHOUSES

The congregation had four meetinghouses. Services were held every two weeks at Middle Creek and every six weeks at Lehn's, Millport, and Lexington. Lehn's and Millport were closed in the first quarter of the 20th century. After consolidating all activities into one house, the congregation voted to change its name from West Conestoga to Middle Creek.

1) Middle Creek 1824

Located in Ephrata Township, Rineer says the original meetinghouse was a log house, 26 x 46, built in 1824. It was originally known as Royer's, named after Emick Royer who donated the land. It stood on what is now the cemetery. It was replaced in 1874 with a frame structure measuring 50 x 80 and known as Middle Creek. This meetinghouse was remodeled and enlarge in 1939 and several more times. It eventually gave way to a much larger and more modern structure in 1961. At that time the previous building was razed. (*Brethren Encyclopedia p.*825)

Figure 24

The Middle Creek meetinghouse ca. 1951. Joe Long photo.

2) Millport 1846

Located on Log Cabin Road in Warwick Township, in the little village of Disston. The Millport meetinghouse was built in 1846 as a union house. It was not built by the Brethren. Others using the building include the Methodists, United Brethren, and the United Zion. The Brethren began using this around 1876 and were the sole owners when they stopped in 1933. They since sold it to the Mennonites, who enlarged it and continue using it today.

Figure 55 The Millport Union house (left), and as it appears today (right).

3) Eden   1848

Located in Manheim Township, on the west side of PA 23 between Butter Road and Eden, this building began in 1848 as a school. It doubled as a Union House of worship beginning in 1875. The Brethren began sharing this at some point but it is not clear when. After the

Lancaster congregation was formed, they began using this and West Conestoga stopped. They continued using it sparingly until 1900 (*Rineer, p. 270-271*).

    4) *Lehn   Pre-1860, exact date unknown.*

    Located: Manheim Township on the west side of Kissel Hill Road. The property borders the east side of the Lancaster Airport. The Lehn cemetery is on the opposite side of Kissel Hill Road. The property was deeded to the German Baptist Church by Daniel Royer in 1860. The meetinghouse was already built by then and was used until 1938 (*Rineer, p.5, 268*) The Mennonites had a meetinghouse called Lehn's that they built circa 1824 and discontinued using in 1847. It, too, was located on Kissel Hill Road. Could this be the same building? In 1915 the Brethren building was destroyed by a storm, but it was immediately rebuilt. In 1939 the Brethren sold the property to a private owner. This was also referred to at times as Lane's. Lehn's was 40 x 50.

Figure 56 Lehn's meetinghouse. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA.

    5) *Lexington   1869*

    Located in the small village of Lexington, north of Lititz, in Warwick Township, this meetinghouse of the same name was built in 1869 (*Rineer, p. 5*). It was 44 x 50 and was a frame building. This house was closed in 1939, when all services were consolidated at Middle Creek. Of the four houses that were discontinued, Lexington was the last.

19. (First) Ephrata   1864

    In 1864 the Conestoga congregation realized it had become much too large and widespread to be effective. At the meeting in the home of Jacob and Elizabeth Minnich (see details under West Conestoga, above), the group created three congregations: Conestoga, West Conestoga, and Ephrata. Ephrata later was referred to as "First Ephrata" to distinguish

it from the reorganization that would come in 1899. In spite of its name, however, this congregation did not have a meetinghouse within the town of Ephrata until 1889.

First Ephrata was given nearly all Northern Lancaster County. It became a very large and effective congregation that would later create the Springville congregation and the Ephrata congregation, stretching basically from the Hammer Creek to the Conestoga Creek, and from Akron northward to Berks County. It is interesting that this region experienced tremendous growth beginning in 1863. That is the year the Reading and Columbia Railroad began operating. It ran directly through the heart of the town of Ephrata, bringing goods and resources from Lancaster, Reading, Philadelphia, and Harrisburg. Conversely, the railroad provided new markets for locally grown farm products and other merchandise. Passenger service also provided opportunities for people to travel much further than previously thought possible. This economic and social growth no doubt contributed greatly to the success of the churches in this area.

First Ephrata continued using both house churches and nine meetinghouses for at least 40 years. This included five meetinghouses that were solely owned by the congregation, plus four union houses they participated in.

By 1899 the congregation had swelled to 335 members in an area that measured 11miles x 12 miles. We will here consider the life of the Ephrata congregation from 1864 to 1899. The separate Ephrata and the Springville congregations will be studied later.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

1.) George and Mary Ann Keller

George (1823-1887) and Mary Ann (1825-1903) lived just behind the Springville Meetinghouse in a stone farmhouse he inherited from his father, and which was originally built by Michael Miller in 1742. Miller and his wife were householder members of the Ephrata Cloister. Miller was a window maker and a repair man.

George Keller was an influential member of the Conestoga congregation and, after the second division of Conestoga in 1864, the Ephrata/Springville congregation. The Brethren's Family Almanac of 1875 lists George Keller as hosting worship services. This is curious since the Springville meetinghouse was built in 1854 and located on property owned by the Kellers.

Figure 57 George and Mary Ann Keller home.   Author's photo

2) Michael and Elizabeth Keller

Michael (1819-1911) and Elizabeth (1822-1919) lived just around the corner from George and Elizabeth. They were cousins who shared the same paternal grandfather. Michael's obituary appears here from the Lititz Record-Express dated September 14, 1911.

"Death of Michael Keller, The venerable Michael Keller, of Ephrata, died on Thursday, September 7, after an illness of about two weeks, aged ninety-one years, eight months and eleven days. The deceased was born near Springville and was the son of John Keller. He conducted a farm near Springville, Ephrata township, for many years. A number of years ago he retired from all active pursuits, and moved to Lancaster, where he resided until eight years ago, when he and his wife took up their residence with their daughter, Mrs. Reuben R. Fahenstock (sic), at Ephrata, where he had since, resided. Some time ago he and his wife celebrated their seventieth wedding anniversary. He was a devoted member of the Baptist Brethren Church for over sixty years. He is survived by his wife, aged eighty-nine years, and the following children: Frank B., Akron; Mrs. Reuben R. Fahnestock, Ephrata; Jeremiah, David City, Neb.; Mrs. Lydia Hertzog, near Ephrata; Mrs. John Hibshman, Ephrata; Benjamin, Octavia, Neb.; Mrs. Peter Burkholder, same place; Mrs. Wilson Bard, Oregon; Nathan, late home. Services in Church of the Brethren meetinghouse, Ephrata, and burial at Springville."

3) Simon and Mary Mohler

Simon lived from 1817-1893. Mary lived from 1821-1884. Both are buried in the Mohler Brethren cemetery, which is located on their farm.

*Figure 58 Michael and Elizabeth Keller
photo: lancasterhistory.org*

*Figure 59   Home of Simon & Mary Mohler. The house
was built in 1764. Known as the Mohler homestead, this
beautiful sandstone Germanic house was one of the earliest in
the area. It was built by Heinrich Mohler Jr., the Great
Grandfather of Simon. It remains in excellent condition today.
www.lancasterhistory.org*

LAST WILL & TESTAMENT OF HENRY MOHLER, JR. (1728-1774)

In the name of God, Amen, Henry Mohler of Cogallico (sic) Township being weak in body but sound in memory and senses therefore remembering that by the will of God I shall soon be discharged of my corporality. I hereby make this my last will and Testament in the following manner Viz:

      I order that my wife and children shall carry on all business in my family and my plantation in like manner as if I was alive from the date here of for the Term of four years next following and at the profit and income both of mine real and personal Estate within that term shall be the property of my said wife provided she pays within that term all Debts, which I have contracted and also gives all my children within that term sufficient maintenance and education. But if said debts should not be discharged within that term, then my two eldest sons shall be bound to pay them besides the valuation money for my lands and that in equal shares. After the expiration of said

terms my children under fourteen years shall be under the tuition of my wife until only is fourteen years. Each shall have from her proper education and a years schooling all Expenses for said Education to be paid to my wife by my two eldest sons in equal shares, besides their consideration money for the lands so much as my Executors or my surviving shall think proper.

To my beloved wife I give the Sum of One hundred pounds Pennsylvania currency, to be paid to her by my two sons in equal share from the first money arising from said lands the first year. Forty pounds the second year the same sum and the third year Twenty pounds which sum shall be deducted from the money which they shall pay for my lands. Item: I give and bequeath to my wife all my kitchen furniture, tools and implements to be in possession thereof by her when said four years are expired. Item: I give to her all flax, hemp, linen, beds, and beddings found in my family when said four years are expired, except that she at the expiration of said term shall give to each of my eldest sons a feather bed. I give to her full power to dispose of all said Articles by a last will. Item: I give to her further the following articles and privileges in my Estate, but only during the term of her remaining a widow and not further viz; my two oldest sons shall supply her at the expiration of said four years every year with eight bushels of wheat, three bushels of rye, five bushels of Book wheat, and they shall for her use keep the best cow of more cows in good Summer or Winter fodder and they shall supply her with sufficient fire wood, fittned (sic) for her use and brought before her door and also every year shall they supply her with half a hog weighing with the grease no less than eighty pounds with seventy five pounds of good beef and she shall share the free use of a dwelling room in the second story of my house and my executor shall take care that a proper room be made for her dwelling in my house in the second story provided will with all things needed and the other room opposite so that shall also be for her use. She also shall have the free use of the washing house and of my cellar which she likes best and one third part of my garden, one half an acre of land, three wagon loads of dung every year and also three barrels of cyder every year and so many apples brought by my sons in her cellar as she thinks but also shall she have the free use of the bake oven and of a riding horse, as necessity requires it and further every year fifteen pounds of hetcheled (sic) hemp or flax together with eight pounds of tallow every year. To my two eldest sons I give all my personal Estate not allready (sic) herein bequeathed to be divided among them, when said four years are expired Shares alike, under condition, that they shall pay to all my heirs (themselves included) for said personal estate to the sum of One hundred and seventy pounds in Term as shall be mentioned and my eldest son shall have for every year he stays in my family above his Age the sum of twelve pounds, to be paid from my estate as other debts.

Further after four years are expired all my Real Estate shall be divided by my Executor in two equal shares according to the quantity of acres and appropriated the same to my two eldest sons. My eldest son Shall have that part, where my dwelling house stands. Said my two sons shall pay for said lands the sum of fifteen Hundred Pounds money. Aforesaid to be distributed among all my heirs themselves included share alike in manner following (together with the hundred and twenty Pounds arising from the personal estate as aforesaid. Viz:

first my eldest son shall have a legacy of ten pounds, provided he (qitttes?) his double share, further shall each of said my two sons pay every immediately following year after the Expiration of said four years, The sum of twenty pounds money aforesaid until the whole debt is discharged and after my wife is paid, my two married daughters shall have their share of which my eldest daughter Mary hath upon account of her portion received the sum of sixty four pounds and my other daughter Elizabeth the same sum which must be deducted and they shall pay the eldest of my children their share first and said my two sons shall have shares the last. Item. Said my two sons shall supply my wife every year as a fore said with four pounds of wool and with one third part of all the eggs in my premises. Further I order and invest my executors, in order to keep the balance between said my two sons to value. Lands of each and according to that valuation to make them equal in their shares by obliging him which hath the best part to pay so much to the other until they are equal and herewith my said sons shall be satisfied and further I hereby impower my Executor or any of them then surviving when said my two sons shall have paid for their lands or given sufficient security to my Executors to give to them good lawful Deeds for said Lands, to have to hold said Lands to them their Heirs and Assigns for Ever, which hereby acknowledge as lawful as if done by myself.

Finally I constitute Executors of this my Last Will and Testament and my two friends Daniel Bowman and Jacob Keller junior. In witness whereof I have hereunto set my name and seal this Nineteenth day of April Anno Domini One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy- Four. Witnesses Jacob Gensemer and John Landes

Jacob Sensenman and John Landes the two Witnesses affirmed and Daniel Bowman and Jacob Keller the Executors affirmed the Seventh Day of May A D 1774

Recorded in Will Book C, Vol 1, pg. 228   Lancaster Co., PA

[NOTE: Henry Mohler, Jr. built the house pictured above. He was the father of Henry Mohler III (1754-1833) and the grandfather of Henry Mohler IV (1786-1845). Henry III was a brother to Johannes Mohler (1757-1821), the person referred to in the Conestoga meeting list shown above that predates 1823 (See Conestoga congregation). Johannes was the uncle to Simon Mohler (1817-1893) and Levi Mohler, both of whom are listed here as hosting worship services for First Ephrata.

Additionally, Jacob Senseman (1722-1778) was a householder member at the Ephrata Cloister, and served as a witness to this Will. The other witness was John Landes, who was a member of the Conestoga congregation and who hosted the meeting in his barn that led to the re-start of the Conestoga congregation in 1734. Also, Jacob Keller is named as one of the Executors. He was another householder member of the Cloister.]

4. Levi and Magdalena Mohler

Levi Mohler was a prominent figure not only in the German Baptist Church, but also in the community. He was said to be a quiet man with a reputation as an excellent farmer. *The Biographical Annals of Lancaster County, PA* states Levi Mohler "owned two of the finest farms in Lancaster County." He and Magdalena, together with his neighbor, Simon and Mary Mohler, both opened their homes to host a house church as late as 1875 (*Brethren's Almanac 1875*). The current Mohler Church may have been built on land that was part of Levi's farm.

Figure 60 Home of Levi and Magdalena KellerAuthor's photo

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) Steinmetz   1847

When Ephrata was organized it inherited three meetinghouses from Conestoga. The oldest of these was the Steinmetz House, built in 1847. Located in Ephrata Township just south of the town of Ephrata, at the intersection of Parkview Heights Road and Steinmetz Road, this brick building was 36 x 60. Though it was built by Conestoga, it was offered to the community as a Union house. This was one of the earliest meetinghouses built by the Brethren in Lancaster County.

After the second division of Conestoga in 1864, the Steinmetz house went to the First Ephrata congregation. When that congregation divided in 1899, Steinmetz went to the Springville congregation. When Springville divided in 1913, Steinmetz went to the new Akron congregation. It was closed in 1931 and razed in 1939 to expand the cemetery.

Figure 61

Steinmetz   meetinghouse and cemetery. The cemetery was renamed Wolf's.

Zug p. 355

Steinmetz was also referred to at times as the Brick meetinghouse, perhaps because it was built near Steinmetz brickyard. In addition to being a meetinghouse, it doubled as a schoolhouse for much of its history. The building received cosmetic improvements over the years. Shutters were added in 1853, and new stone steps and spouting in 1856.

In 1890 the congregation did some remodeling by moving the doors from the side toward the road to the opposite side (*Zug, pages 356-357*).

It has been suggested that Steinmetz *was "perhaps the pioneer brick meetinghouse in eastern Pennsylvania – logs and stone had previously been used."* (Zug, page 357, quoting Brother J. G. Francis)

2) Springville1854

The Springville house was also in Ephrata Township, but northwest of the town. It was on the property of George Keller, on Springville Road. Built in 1854, Springville was a brick building 36 x 60. It was on the banks of a small stream named Indian Run, also known at times as Trout Run. There were many natural springs in the area, giving name to the small village. On the opposite side of Indian Run, an outdoor baptismal pool was built using field stone to create an area roughly 18 feet square to trap the spring water. A gate at the one end could be removed to allow the water to flow into the stream. When the property was sold the deed included a clause that any Brethren minister or congregation had to be permitted to return to use this pool for baptisms. This author had the privilege of baptizing a total of seven persons on two occasions in this pool. The meetinghouse closed in 1923 when it was sold to the Mennonites.

The Mennonites later built a larger meetinghouse next door at the corner of Springville Road and Schoeneck Road. The old meetinghouse was then converted into two apartments.

Figure 62   Top: the former Springville meetinghouse as it looks today. Bottom: baptismal pool in the foreground, with Indian Run further in the background. Author's photos.

3. Schoeneck   1861

Figure 63

*Schoeneck (aka Mellinger's meetinghouse.
Author's photo.*

In the little village of Schoeneck, on the top of a scenic hill, sits a simple stucco meetinghouse that was built in 1861 to be a Union house.

The Schoeneck meetinghouse was also known as Mellinger's, as it sat at the far end of Mellinger's cemetery.

Schoeneck was used by the Lutheran, the Reformed, the Mennonite and the Brethren churches. The Brethren used it until 1924. Today it is used by the Slavic Baptist Church. Mellinger's Lutheran Church, at the opposite end of the cemetery, tells me that an old map shows a log meetinghouse across the street from this 1861 meetinghouse, but nothing is known about its identity.

4. *Flickinger 1865*

Along PA 897 near Cocalico, there is a beautiful sandstone church that dates to 1865. This was known as Flickinger, a union house that was used for a while by the Ephrata/ Springville congregation from 1865 - 1909. It appears in the worship schedule of 1875 as being part of the12 week rotation. The building was also used by the Reformed Church and the Mennonites (*Rineer p. 427*). It is a beautiful small sandstone structure that is still being used by the Independent Christian Church to this day. This is located in the general area where Springville later built the Cocalico meetinghouse. For this reason, it is a bit odd it does not appear in some of the other lists of Brethren meetinghouses. There is a small cemetery behind the church.

Figure 64 Flickinger Union meetinghouse. Author's photo.

Figure 65   Miller's at Mt. Airy
Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

The Mt. Airy Union meetinghouse went by various names over the years, including Heinecke, Miller's, and Clay meetinghouse. Built in 1861, the church was made of sandstone and controlled by the United Brethren but available to anyone. (*Rineer, p.60*). The Brethren shared it from the early 1870's until 1923. It appears on the worship schedule of 1875, when they met here 4 times a year. The Brethren withdrew from using Miller's in 1923, the same year they sold the Springville House, as part of the consolidation of the Springville Congregation.

6. Blainsport, aka Reinholdsville.   1866

The land for this property was deeded by Reuben Bucher. The meetinghouse was a frame structure built in 1866. The services were discontinued here in 1940 as part of the consolidation of the Springville congregation. The building was sold in 1945 and has since been torn down. Note: This is not to be confused with the Blainsport Union meetinghouse.

7. Mohler 1872

Figure 66 Mohler meetinghouse as it appears today. The meetinghouse of 1898 remains attached to the rear.

Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

Located North of Ephrata on Mohler Church Road, this meetinghouse was built in 1872. It was a frame building measuring 50 x 80.

It was destroyed by fire on April 9, 1898, and rebuilt the same year. It was later remodeled and expanded. After the consolidation of Springville was complete, Mohler was the only meetinghouse remaining. The congregation later changed its name to the Mohler Church of the Brethren in 1965.

Ellis and Evans say that a log building was constructed on the site of the current Mohler meetinghouse in 1838 or 1839 (*page 342*). This was used both for a school and for worship by the Brethren. It was destroyed by fire in the winter of 1859-60 . They go on to say that in 1874 the Brethren built their meetinghouse on this same spot. Most

records indicate the Brethren built their meetinghouse in 1872, not 1874.

8. Bucher Union 1877

The history of the German Baptist Brethren in Denver is a bit confusing. It appears like we began by building a union house in cooperation with the Lutherans and the Reformed Churches in 1877. It was located on the corner of 6th and Locust Streets. The other two denominations dropped out when they built their own houses of worship in 1890. The Brethren also built a new meetinghouse about that time (see number 9 below), bringing this building to an end. It was razed to widen the roads.

Denver was originally known as Bucher Thal (Bucher Valley) until 1881. This probably explains the name of this meetinghouse.

9. Denver. (circa 1890)

Located: On the Corner of Monroe St. and Adamstown Rd. (now Denver Road).

The Denver meetinghouse served the Springville congregation. It is not clear when this meeting house was built. Zeigler says it was 1877 and it was frame. That is more likely a reference to Bucher's (No. 8 above). This one is brick and built shortly after 1890. It remained open until 1938, when it was closed as part of the consolidating of the Springville congregation. The building was sold to the Mennonites at that time.

Figure 67
Denver meetinghouse at Monroe St. and Denver Rd. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

10) Ephrata.   1889

The Ephrata meetinghouse was built in 1889 on the corner of Church Avenue and Locust Street in Ephrata. This was just ten years before Ephrata and Springville became two separate congregations. At the time of the separation, this meetinghouse went to the Second Ephrata congregation. It was remodeled and added onto several times.

96

More details on Ephrata as a separate congregation will be presented below.
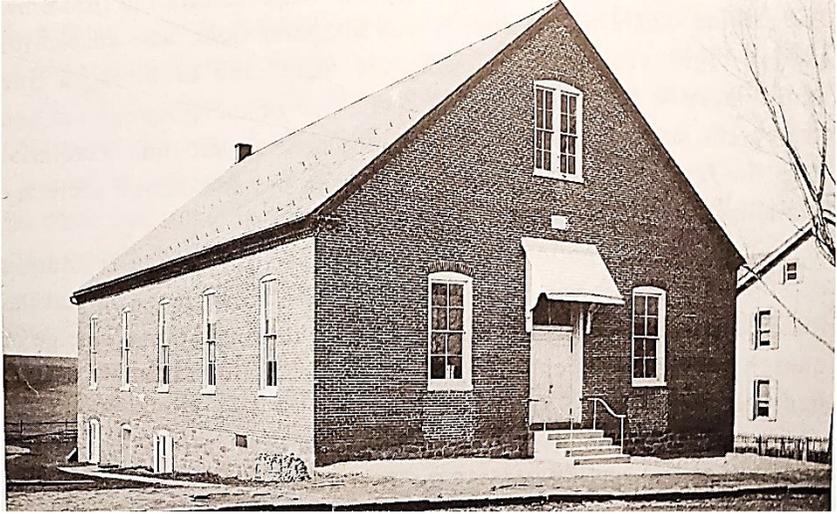
Figure 68 Ephrata meetinghouse, built 1889.   Bieber, page 26.

*Figure 69
Cocalico meetinghouse
Ca. 2020. Author's photo.
.*

11. Cocalico   At the far north end of the county, on Cocalico Road in West Cocalico Township, is the Cocalico meetinghouse. Built in 1909 by Springville, it was a brick house 36 x 50. Cocalico became a separate congregation in 1959. It closed in 2020.

20. Hatfield   *1864*

Original services were held in homes, but which ones are not known. At some time before 1840 the community built the eight-square schoolhouse with the help of the Brethren in the area. This served not only for school but also as the first meetinghouse for Hatfield. The next meetinghouse was built circa 1851. It was made of brick and was 30x40.

The group organized as a congregation in 1864 and built a new meetinghouse in 1867. An addition was added in 1906. The preacher spoke from a platform, which was not the usual practice of the Brethren. In 1928 they built a new meetinghouse, which was remodeled in 1953 with added classrooms.

Figure 70 Hatfield meetinghouse of 1851.
Hess Archives and Special Collections,
Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

Figure 71   The Hatfield meetinghouse today. District file photo.

21. *Springfield*   *1864*

The year 1864 was a popular year for the Brethren of Eastern Pennsylvania. They organized four congregations that year. The original members of Springfield were those remaining from the closure of Great Swamp. They began meeting in 1864, first using the homes of the following persons.

Moses Shuler
Harrison Traumbauer
Samuel Kauffman
David Yoder
Adam Stauffer
Peter Kauffman
Henry Moyer
Benjamin Price

A stone meetinghouse was built in1866 that was 36x40 with a slate roof and was known as Springfield. The land for this had been donated by Abraham and Hannah Hottel on April 2, 1866.

A frame meetinghouse 30x36 was built in the town of Bethlehem in the early twentieth century. This mission was closed in 1921.

In 1908 Springfield bought the former Beulah Chapel in Quakertown to begin a preaching point there. At a church council meeting in 1920 it was decided to separate into two congregations: Springfield and Quakertown. However, they could not agree on the new territory lines, so the separation was postponed. In 1932 it was decided

to have each house working under separate ministers, while remaining one congregation for organizational purposes. In 1936, the two groups agreed to divide into two separate congregations.

Figure 72 Springfield meetinghouse.
Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College,
Elizabethtown, PA

There were services held in Allentown, also, but they only met in the homes of some members. The work there was discontinued before a meetinghouse was ever built. In the early part of the twentieth century several members moved to the area of Quakertown. Springfield began supply ministers here as an additional preaching point. A small building was purchased, remodeled and enlarged to become a 36x52 meetinghouse equipped to serve love feast. By 1936 this group organized to become the Quakertown Church of the Brethren.

Figure 73
The Springfield meetinghouse today.
District file photo.

22. *Maiden Creek/Mohrsville* 1866

Originally part of Little Swatara, Maiden Creek became a congregation in its own right in 1866. At that time, it was given possession of the Pricetown meeting house (see # 4. Oley, above). The following year it built a second meeting house at Mohrsville. This was remodeled in 1899 to accommodate love feast. Additional remodeling and expansion took place in 1932 and 1959-60. The congregation is now known as Mohrsville.

Figure 74 Mohrsville meetinghouse. Gleim photo.

Figure 75 The current Mohrsville meetinghouse. District file photo.

23. *Chiques*   1868

The White Oak congregation was becoming too large to manage, leading the way for a division in 1868. At the time, the portion assigned to Chiques had about 200 members. Philip Ziegler, Jacob Rider, and Samuel R. Zug were the first ministers. Chiques, in turn, divided into four separate congregations around 1902.

In 1882 the church was struck with tragedy while they were remodeling and expanding the Chiques house. When they tried to raise the framework for the new building. Part of it collapsed and killed two men and a boy. Several others were injured. This brought the rebuilding project to a temporary standstill for several years (*Zug. P. 396*).

Services were still conducted in German into the 20th century. In 1904 a request came before Council to begin using English.   Slowly, both languages were alternated before going exclusively to English.

Minutes from the Chiques Council meetings reveal so much about how the Brethren resisted change but eventually came to accept it. Some examples are found in the following quotes from History of the Church of the Brethren 1915-1965.

a) "In 1901, a request for carpet or matting in the aisle was answered in the negative; in 1903, the answer was still negative. In 1912 the answer was affirmative."

b) Recreation was also a thorn in the flesh. Between 1915 and 1926 the following prohibitions were authorized: no parades, no school entertainments, no spelling bees, no baseball, no bicycling, no quoits, no fox hunts, no worldly amusements, no checkers, no swimming, no roller skating, no automobile club picnic, no false faces or masks."

c) "In 1919 council was asked to sanction curtains to divide the Sunday School classes in the Chiques house; the answer was negative. In 1941 it was still negative, but constant queries, of this and similar types, finally led to the building program in 1954."

d) "In 1915 the pulpit in the Chiques house was put on a raised platform."

Not all congregations were as slow as Chiques to accept changes. Still, these examples were not entirely unique. In 2022 Chiques withdrew from the Church of the Brethren.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

There were no known house churches under the organization of Chiques, likely because they already had a meetinghouse.

B. MEETINGHOUSES.

1856 Chiques

The meetinghouse was built by White Oak in 1856. In 1868 it was remodeled. It was rebuilt in 1882 and remodeled in 1956. It was located five miles northeast of Elizabethtown.

Figure 76   Chiques meetinghouse. Joe Long photo 1951.
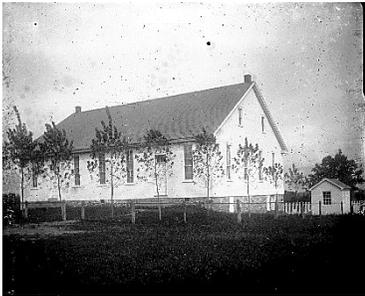
*Figure 77
Mt. Hope meetinghouse.*
Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

1910 Mount Hope

The Mount Hope meetinghouse was built in 1910 as a second preaching point for Chiques. It was located on the south side of Cider Press Road, near Shumaker Road, in Rapho Township. Services were discontinued here in 1966. The property was sold to the Dunkard Brethren Church. (*Rineer, p.372*)

1894 (East) Fairview

Built in 1894 Chiques kept using this until East Fairview organized separately in 1902.

Chiques eventually gave birth to the following congregations, which are discussed later.

- Elizabethtown 1902
- East Fairview 1902
- West Green Tree 1902

24. Hershey, Spring Creek   1868

Originally a part of Big Swatara, Hershey, Spring Creek organized separately in 1868. It received the full territory from Union Deposit to Elizabethtown and from Hummelstown to Lebanon. Their meeting houses are listed here.

1848 The original house, built by Big Swatara, was the *Spring Creek* house in Hershey. It was limestone and measured 38x42.

1854 Conewago

1869 South Annville

South Annville was the first house built after the division with Big Swatara. South Annville began providing Sunday School in 1891.

1886 Spring Creek (new)

A new Spring Creek house was built, 50x80 with a basement and equipped for love feast. The previous meeting house was retained and converted into a residence. In 1889 this meeting house also hosted the first Sunday School for the congregation.

1892 Palmyra, 40x50.

1906 Annville, 48x78.

Like Spring Creek, this was also a love feast house.

1911 Bachmanville.

Built 40x55, this was now the third love feast house in the congregation.

The following is a list of congregations that organized separately after having been a part of Hershey, Spring Creek. They will be addressed later.

- East Fairview   1902
- Annville 1912
- Conewago   1912
- Palmyra 1921

Figure 78 Spring Creek meetinghouse, built in 1886. Joe Long Photo 1951.

An interesting story is told by Jack Breidenstein that is worth sharing here. After Spring Creek was formed as its own congregation in 1868, it wanted to build a love feast house. But the congregation could not decide where to build it. Some wanted it to replace the Spring Creek house, which was the first one built within this district. Others wanted to build at Conewago. Spring Creek won, and Breidenstein records for us the details decided upon at Council on August 15, 1885.

Creek Church. At a special council on August 15, 1885, the following resolutions for the building of this house were adopted: "1) Building Committee-Michael Henry, Benjamin Longenecker. 2) Size - 50 x 80 feet and 14 feet high. 3) Ceiling hung with braces and no posts in the audience room. 4) Two stairs up and two down. 5) A step or platform for ministers seven or eight inches high and sixteen feet long. 6) Seats at both ends raised. 7) Lower or basement to be walled with limestone, with a middle wall through. 8) Upper story to be frame. 9) The roof to be made of sawed shingles. 10) Lower joist of oak or chestnut to be given free. 11) Brother Joshua Hoffer was appointed carpenter. 12) Old meetinghouse to be left as it is at present, and in future to be made a dwelling house." Construction of the new Spring Creek lovefeast house was completed by the Fall of 1886 and services were begun there at that time.

This became the Spring Creek meetinghouse of 1886. The original 1848 meetinghouse did become a residence. In 1911 the Spring Creek

congregation did build a love feast house at Bachmanville, which went to the Conewago Congregation after its organizing the following year, 1912. See Conewago below for details.

25. Mingo *1869*

Though Mingo was birthed by the Indian Creek congregation, it gained congregational status in 1869, before the mother church. Mingo covered a large area of about 20 miles by 10 miles, with close to one hundred members. Early services were held in homes, none of which are identified. Their meetinghouses included the following.

1857 Skippack, built of logs; remodeled 1937.

(1869) Mingo   Probably built before 1869, though it is unclear; Remodeled 1926 and replaced with a brick house in 1952.

1869 Norristown organized separately 1903;   disorganized 1973.

1893 Royersford   met in homes at first beginning in 1886; Then started meeting   in Winter's Hall; built a meetinghouse in 1893 before organizing separately in 1902. For more about Royersford, see below.

1893 Graterford   built 1893; closed 1910

Each meetinghouse became a separate congregation later, with the exception of Graterford.
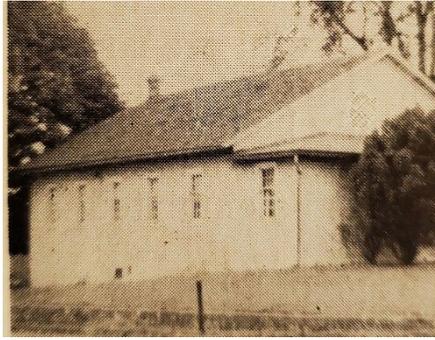
Figure 80 Mingo meetinghouse, circa 1869.
rebuilt 1952. Hess Archives and Special Collections,
Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

A 1961   MINGO

Figure 81 Mingo meetinghouse, 1961,
Hess Archives and Special Collections,
Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

Figure 82 An early photograph of the Skippack meetinghouse, date unknown. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA
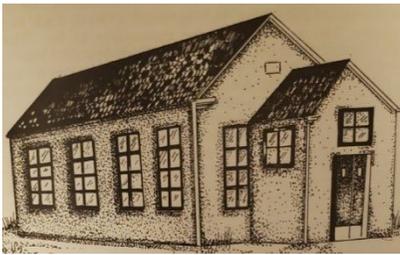
Figure 83 Left: Sketch of the Norristown meetinghouse on Barbadoes St. (Gleim photo), and a photograph of the Graterford meetinghouse, ca. 1910, (right). Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA.

In 1993 the Mingo and Royersford congregations reunited to form the Providence Church of the Brethren, They sold the Royersford house and used the Mingo house. Later they completely remodeled this to turn it into a modern facility.

26 Bethel, New Jersey *1876*

Bethel was a mission plant of the Amwell church in 1848. They met in homes before building a meetinghouse in 1849. In 1876 Bethel organized as a congregation. Two years later they built a new, larger meetinghouse. In 1896 this congregation merged with Sand Brook to form the United Church of New Jersey.   At that point they left the Brethren.   In 1912 this group reunited with Amwell in terms of administration but continued to meet in separate facilities. The Bethel house was closed in 1939 as Amwell consolidated.

MEETINGHOUSES
1849 – Original meetinghouse
1878 – a new meetinghouse built to replace the previous one.
1939 - closed

27. Schuylkill *1877*

Formerly part of Little Swatara, the Schuylkill congregation was organized in 1877. Its meeting houses include the following.
1865   Strouphour
The original Strouphour house was built in 1865 and was 24x30. The group worshipped here and in schoolhouses for a number of years. It was replaced by a new structure in 1888. The new one was 34x36.

1911   Swope's Valley.

This meeting house was framed and was 32x38.   Neither Strouphour nor Swope Valley were equipped for love feast.   Instead, Schuylkill held love feasts in barns until 1917.

1917   Big Dam

Local farmers provided stone for the foundation of Big Dam. The building was made of brick and was dedicated on December 1 and 2.

Figure   85 (Left): Strouphour meetinghouse, built 1865. (Right): Swope's meetinghouse, built 1911. Both photos by Joe Long 1951.

Figure 86 Big Dam meetinghouse circa 1951. Joe Long, photo 1951.
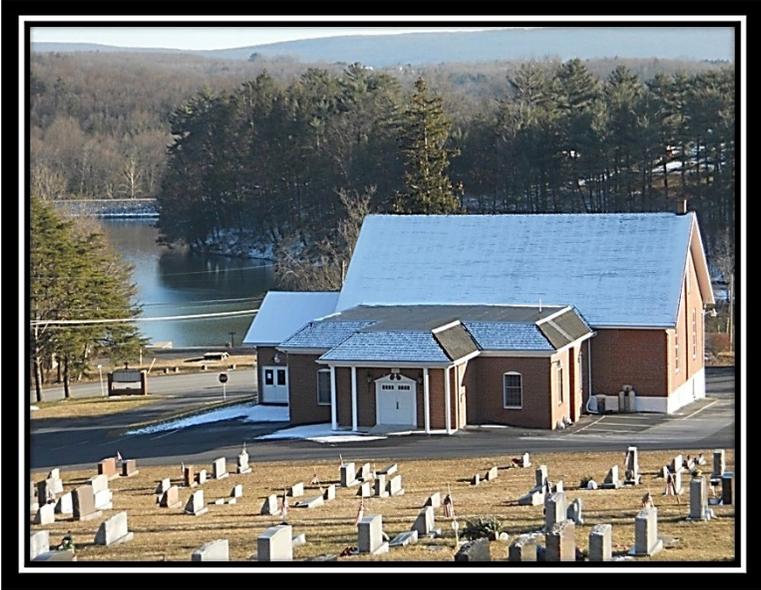
Figure 87   The present Schuylkill church at Big Dam.   District file photo.

28. Peach Blossom   *1881*

This group was organized on October 16, 1881 by the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. They continued as part of the District until April 19, 1944, when the new Mardela District was organized. Peach Blossom then joined Mardela.

29. Mountville   *1882*

Mountville was formed as a division from White Oak in 1882.
A. HOUSE CHURCHES
1) Henry Herr, beginning in 1840
2) John Herr, beginning in 1876
3) See also the house churches under No. 8 White Oak, especially the story of *Jacob Stehman.*
B. MEETINGHOUSES
By the time Mountville was organized as a congregation they already had four meetinghouses. A fifth one was built only five years later.

1) Petersburg   1873

The site of the Petersburg meetinghouse was first used to build a log meetinghouse for and by the Mennonites. It was agreed that whenever they were not using it any other Christian church was permitted to do so. The building was believed to predate the Revolutionary War. The Brethren were worshiping in this area under the guidance of   White Oak at least by 1840.

The White Oak Brethren began sharing the house by 1850. In September of 1867 the Mennonites sold the house to the Brethren. In 1873 White Oak and West Conestoga came together to build the Petersburg house, a brick building 45 x 60. This was also the first Love Feast house in the White Oak congregation (*Zug, p. 401*).

Figure 88 The East Petersburg meetinghouse. Joe Long photo.1951

Figure 89   The Neffsville meetinghouse. Joe Long photo.1951

2) Neffsville   1870

Located in Manheim Township, along Buch Avenue, the Neffsville house was built in 1870 and was 40 x 50. When the Mountville congregation was organized from White Oak, the Neffsville house was included as part of Mountville.   In 1917 it became part of the newly formed East Petersburg congregation.   In 1951 services were discontinued here and consolidated with the Petersburg house. The Neffsville house was sold to the Mennonites in 1952. Today, this small meetinghouse is still hosting worship services for the Christadelphian Chapel.

3) Manor 1876

Located on the West side of Sheep Lane Church Road, in Manor

Township, Manor was built in 1876 and made of brick. It was 36 x 40. When the Mountville congregation was organized in 1882 it inherited five meetinghouses, including Manor.

Figure 90
Manor meetinghouse.
Joe Long photo 1951.

Figure 91   Mountville meetinghouse.
Zug page 398.

4) Mountville   1881

The namesake meetinghouse for the congregation was located on College Ave, at Clay Street. This meetinghouse was built in 1881, measuring 40 x 70. Built by the White Oak congregation, this became part of Mountville the next year when it was organized in 1882. In 1962 a new building was constructed, replacing this one.

Figure 92 The present Mountville meetinghouse. District file photo.

5) Salunga   1887

Before there was a meetinghouse here, services were first held in the home of John Herr. Salunga was built in 1887, in East Hempfield Township, bordered by PA 283, Spooky Nook Road, and Chiques Road. Its size was 40 x 50. This meetinghouse was built when David Hostetter offered to give $500 to the Mountville congregation if they would build a meetinghouse on this location and maintain the family cemetery. He also donated some land, too. The meetinghouse was built in 1887. In 1918 Mountville divided to form the East Petersburg congregation, which included the Salunga meetinghouse, the Neffsville meetinghouse, and the Petersburg meetinghouse. The new congregation had 257 members.

In 1948 a growing movement resulted in the decision to divide East Petersburg by making Salunga a separate congregation. East Petersburg retained the East Petersburg House (formerly Petersburg) and Neffsville.

What goes around, comes around, and in 1974 Salunga and East Petersburg reunited to form the new Hempfield Church of the Brethren. Both buildings were sold in favor of a new facility on a new plot of land.

30. Ridgely   *1884*

The Ridgely church began by meeting in homes. Their locations are not known. The first meetinghouse was built in 1887 and known as Boonesboro. It was 40 x 40 with a 14 foot ceiling. That was followed by the Bethel meetinghouse in 1889, which measured 36 X 40. Boonesboro was replaced with the new Ridgely meetinghouse in 1908. In 1909 Ridgely divided into two congregations to form the Denton church, which used the Bethel meetinghouse. Ridgely remained a part of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania until it joined the newly created Mardela District in 1944.

MEETINGHOUSES
1) *Boonesboro   1885; closed 1908*
2) *Bethel 1889*
3) *Ridgely 1908*

31. North Philadelphia   *1888*

The Philadelphia First congregation planted a new group known as North Philadelphia. The exact date of their beginning is unclear, but they appear in the minutes of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania by 1888. They began by meeting in Dover Hall. They soon had difficulties, due mostly to the dismissal of their minister. The District took charge of the congregation in 1892, but by 1896 the decision was made to disband.

32. Shamokin   *1889*

What eventually became known as the Shamokin Church of the Brethren began as a mission project in 1886, with several ministers providing early leadership. They went by the name of Tower City Mission. In 1889 this group was organized as a congregation. In 1911 it took the name of Shamokin.

They began meeting in Schleif's Hall. At one point they purchased land on Market Street with the intention of building a house of worship, but the congregation decided this was not the best location. They sold the Market Street property and, in 1911, bought a lot on Owl and Pine Streets from Harvey Mauery. Here they built a brick meeting house. In 1926 they added a baptistry, and in 1927 they built a brick parsonage next door. At one point Shamokin had close to 200 members until a split occurred when the Pastor, Donald Martin, chose to leave the Church of the Brethren and took a number of members with him to form a new church. The congregation closed in 1967.

Figure 94 Shamokin meetinghouse. Joe Long photo 1951.

33. Lancaster   *1891*

The Lancaster congregation began as a mission point for the West Conestoga church.   On August 19, 1872 the West Conestoga congregation bought the former Evangelical Association church property on the corner of Mulberry and Grant Streets, Lancaster, allowing the work to begin. At first, services were held bi-monthly. Later, they began meeting once every six weeks.

116

Lancaster organized as a congregation on October 29, 1891. For the next year services were held bi-weekly. In 1893 the congregation accepted an offer to exchange properties with Valentine Workheiser, who owned the former Western Methodist Episcopal Church on Charlotte Street. This lot was 64 x 70. In about four years they outgrew this building, so they purchased the lot behind it, which increased their land size to 64 x 270. In 1897 the congregation built a new meetinghouse , 50 x 80, on this property.

Again, they found themselves needing more space both for worship and for parking, so in 1949 they purchased a three acre vacant lot on Fordney Road. Before they built on it, they sold the lot in 1956 and then bought a five acre lot at Rutledge and Sunset. Here they built a new, modern facility in 1959. The first service here was held on November 22, 1959.

A summary of the Lancaster Church of the Brethren meetinghouses is presented here.

1. 1872-1893 Mulberry & Grant Streets

2. 1893- 1897 lot 64x70 Charlotte Street

3. 1897- 1959 Added lot behind present, new lot 64x270; new house 50x80

4. 1959 – Present: Rutledge & Sunset

Figure 95 The first Lancaster meetinghouse, located on Mulberry and Grant. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

Figure 96 The second Lancaster meetinghouse, at Charlotte. Joe Long photo, 1951.

Figure 97   The current Lancaster meetinghouse at Sunset and Rutledge. District file photo.

34. Parkerford   *1896*

By 1808 Coventry began holding services at two locations near Parkerford. The first was the old school house in Parkerford, and the other was Davis' Schoolhouse on the opposite side of the Schuylkill River. Services were held once every four weeks and would alternate between the two locations.

By 1843 an acre of land was purchased from David Custer, and a meetinghouse built. This group remained a part of Coventry until they organized separately in 1896.

Figure 98   Parkerford meetinghouse.   Zug, p. 251

Figure 99 The current Parkerford meetinghouse.
District file photo.

35. Harrisburg First   *1896*

The Harrisburg congregation was formed from a part of Big Swatara in 1896.   Their history of meeting houses is presented here.

1896   Met in a hall on the third floor of a building at 13th and Market Streets

1897   Leased the second floor of Studebaker Hall on 3rd Street.

1899   Purchased an old, one-story frame house on Hummel Street.   After doing some remodeling this was turned into a meetinghouse.   This served the church until they could raise

119

enough money to build a new facility on the same site. The new brick meeting house was completed in 1904. It has been remodeled several times since then.

In 1905 the Big Swatara congregation agreed to transfer more of its territory to Harrisburg, including the area of Steelton, Highspire and Middletown. From 1907 to 1917 monthly services were held in the old Lutheran Church in Middletown In 1908 this was combined with a mission at Royalton that was under the supervision of the Elizabethtown congregation. The two congregations took turns leading services monthly until the mission was closed in 1917.

In 1959 Harrisburg First considered moving out of the inner city. They bought property at 34th and Elmerton Streets. They postponed their decision, and by 1961 they decided to stay on Hummel Street and expand their present building by adding a large education wing. The addition was dedicated in October 1962.

Figure 100   The current Harrisburg First. District file photo.

The property at 34th and Elmerton was used instead to plant the Ridgeway Community Church. For details on Ridgeway, see below.

36. Mechanic Grove   *1897*

The Brethren presence in the Southern end of Lancaster County was comparatively late in developing. It began when the Conestoga Church invited George Bucher to lead evangelistic services at the

Intercourse house. Bucher became committed to spreading the Gospel further south in the County. Things began with the house church model.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

1. Elder George Bucher and wife, Fianna (1845-1923)

George Bucher was born near Cornwall, PA. His first wife Anna died in 1861. He was chosen a minister in the Tulpehocken congregation in1865 and ordained an Elder in Mechanic Grove in 1897. He married his second wife, Fianna Pfautz Phillippy, in 1882.

George Bucher was invited by the Conestoga Congregation to lead revival services in the Intercourse meeting house in the winter of 1895-96. That is when he learned that the southern portion of Lancaster County had no Brethren congregations and hardly any members. In 1896 he and his wife Fianna bought a farm just east of Mechanic Grove, a small community south of Quarryville. They began holding prayer meetings there. Soon they were holding worship services. They began with 16 members. By 1897 they had 34 members baptized and were growing. That year they organized as a separate congregation apart from Conestoga.

In 1907 Elder George Bucher was accused of using the civil law against a brother in violation of church teaching. He left the Church of the Brethren at that time to join the Old German Baptist Brethren. His son, Rufus, went on to be a highly respected Elder in the Church of the Brethren. (Zug, p. 246-7; Brethren Encyclopedia p. 225)

2. Cyrus and Susan Royer

Death of Cyrus Royer.

Cyrus Royer, a prominent resident of lower Lancaster county, died this morning, at his home, at Refton, from kidney trouble, in his seventy-third year. He had been ailing quite a long time, but was confined to bed for only a week. Mr. Royer was born in Manheim township, and learned the trade of a woolen manufacturer in Paradise township. He removed to Smithville in 1853, and ever since has carried on a woolen manufactory there, though for several years past he had resided at Refton. He was a leading member of the Dunkard Church. His wife, Susan, and five children survive, Rev. John H., of Aston Mills, Ohio; Martin, of Smithville; Maris, foreman of a machine shop at Dayton, Ohio; Lizzie, wife of Rev. Benjamin Miller, of Philadelphia, and Mary, wife of Wm. Shrader, of Washington, D. C.

Figure 101 Obituary for Cyrus Royer. (Lancaster New Era)

Cyrus (1829-1901) and Susan's home was one of the places where Brethren met for worship before the Mechanic Grove congregation was organized. From his obituary we learn that he was considered a "prominent member of the Dunkard Church". He was a successful woolen manufacturer. Cyrus was married three times. In 1853 he married Mary Hess (1831-1855). In 1855 he married Elizabeth Hess (1825-1879). And in 1894 he married Susan Neff (1852-1908). He is buried at the Byerland Mennonite Cemetery South of Willow Street, PA.

121

3. Tobias and Catherine Herr

There are several prominent individuals in Brethren circles named Tobias Herr. This one is Tobias R. Herr (1826-1902). He married Catherine Book (1827-1895) and they lived in Strasburg Township, which includes the village of Refton. This Tobias is buried in the New Providence Mennonite Cemetery, which is east and south of Refton. His obituary, presented here, is brief.

Obituary: Lancaster New Era, Friday, August 1, 1902, p. 2 "Death of a Well-Known Farmer"

Tobias Herr, a well-known farmer of Strasburg township, died at his home near Bell School House, on Thursday, aged seventy-five years. Death was due to paralysis. Two sons, Edward, at home, and Christian B., the well-known stock dealer of Camargo, survive.

4. Brother Eckman

Not much is known about Bro. Eckman. Zug (page 346) says he was one of four households hosting services for local Brethren who later formed the Mechanic Grove congregation in 1897. This was part of the third division of Conestoga. Services transitioned to two meetinghouses at Refton and Mechanic Grove in 1898.

5. John L. and Barbara Minnich

Minnich moved from Lititz to the Mechanic Grove area in 1898. They began hosting worship services in their home at the same time. John was later elected a deacon and served as treasurer for the Mechanic Grove congregation.

Figure 102 John and Barbara Minnich.

Findagrave.com

In addition to these households who can be confirmed and whose locations are well documented, we have an extensive list of seventeen additional house churches whose locations are only known as Lancaster County. Their use as house churches is documented, even if we are unsure where or when they served. They are included in the complete list found in the Appendix.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) Refton ca. 1880; purchased 1898

This meetinghouse began as a community union house ca. 1880. By 1898 it was purchased by the Brethren and used exclusively for Mechanic Grove. In 1925 services were discontinued here and consolidated with Mechanic Grove. This building was then sold to the Brethren In Christ, who continued using it until they built a new building in 1972. The old union house is still used today by Grace Memorial Church.

Located: North side of Refton, along Main Street

2) Mechanic Grove 1898

Figure 103 Mechanic Grove meetinghouse. Joe Long photo. 1951.

The frame Mechanic Grove meetinghouse, 50 x 50, was built in 1898 on the west side of U.S. 222, East Drumore Township.

The Mechanic Grove congregation had applied for a $400 grant from the Home Mission Board to assist in building this meetinghouse. That request was turned down, but the congregation pushed ahead, anyway. This building was made to accommodate Love Feast.

After they purchased the Refton house, worship services rotated between the two houses, with each hosting a service once every four weeks. The congregation continued meeting on the farm of George Bucher once a month for several years, before finally consolidating everything weekly at Mechanic Grove. (*Zug, p. 347-8; Rineer p.124. 402-3)*

Figure 104   The current Mechanic Grove meetinghouse. District file photo.

37. *Spring Grove/ renamed Blue Ball*   1897

In 1897 Conestoga divided for the third time, creating Mechanic Grove and Spring Grove. Mechanic Grove took the southern section of the Conestoga congregation, Spring Grove took the northern part, and Conestoga kept the central section.

Spring Grove had 80 members at the time. Its territory included the area north of the Conestoga congregation, basically all of Earl Township, East Earl Township, and parts of Ephrata and West Earl Townships. They had three meetinghouses. After consolidating all worship points into the Blue Ball house, the congregation voted to change its name to Blue Ball.

1) *Kemper*   1864

Kemper's was located in Ephrata Township, on Hahnstown Rd, between Murrell and Hahnstown. The original meetinghouse was built in 1864 of sandstone.   For being as early as it was it is surprising that the door entering the building was on the shorter gabled end, and it was only one door. By 1947 it had become too small for the growing congregation. That year it was decided to replace both Blue Ball and Kemper with two new buildings. The new Kemper meetinghouse was 46 x 70 and made of brick. It was dedicated April 23, 1961. In 1980 Kemper's was closed and services were consolidated at Blue Ball. The

building is now owned by the Ephrata Grace Church, though considerable remodeling has been done.
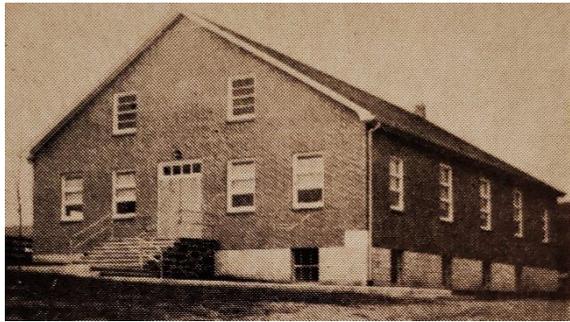
Figure 105 Top: The first Kemper meetinghouse. Joe Long photo,1951.
Bottom: The second Kemper meetinghouse, built in 1947. Zug, p. 349

2) Blue Ball

Figure 106 The second Blue Ball meetinghouse built in 1951. Joe Long photo 1951.

Located on the west side of PA 23, in the village of Blue Ball. The frame building was 30 x 40. The Conestoga congregation built this meetinghouse and transferred it to Spring Grove when that congregation was organized in 1898. In 1951 the present building was constructed to replace the original. In 1980 Spring Grove consolidated all services to this location.

3) Spring Grove 1892

In 1892 Conestoga built the Spring Grove meetinghouse on the South Side of Union Grove Road, in East Earl Township. It was transferred to the Spring Grove congregation when that was organized in 1898. However, by 1916 Spring Grove closed this house and sold the property to a private owner. The building has since been torn down.

Figure 107 Original Spring Grove meetinghouse, now a residence.

Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA.

38. Reading/Wyomissing *1898*

The Reading congregation began as part of Maiden Creek. They started to hold regular services in the old Quaker meeting house on 6th Street. After a number of years, they rented the old Baptist church on Chestnut Street. By 1897 they bought property on Church Street and built their own meeting house. The building, made of brick and had a capacity of about 400. On January 1, 1898, the congregation was organized.

The Reading church eventually moved to Wyomissing and took on that name.

*Figure 108   Top: The Reading meetinghouse on Church St. Joe Long photo, 1951.
Bottom: the current Wyomissing house. District file photo.*

39. Montreal   1899

Montreal holds the distinction of being the only international group that was part of the territory within the boundaries of the Atlantic Northeast District. It was launched as a foreign mission project of the Eastern District of Pennsylvania. They began by meeting in the home of A. B. Maldeis.   In 1902 the work was transferred to The Brethren Church. The congregation closed in 1916.

40. *Brooklyn First*   *1899*

In 1896 the Brethren began holding Sunday School and worship in the home of Alice J. Boone. Former missionary to Denmark, Christian Hope, did the preaching. In 1899 the group began meeting in a store on the corner of Third Ave. and Sixtieth Street. That year they organized as a congregation. The work prospered and grew into a multi-ethinc congregation of 80 or so persons. In 1900 they moved to 1393 Third Avenue. Again, they needed more space, so in January of 1905 they bought a plot of land at 352-358 Sixtieth Street on which they built a Church building. The building was dedicated in 1908, debt free, thanks to a successful capital funds campaign in advance.

Figure 109 Brooklyn First. District file photo.

41. *Ephrata*   *1899*

In 1864 Conestoga divided into three separate congregations: Conestoga, West Conestoga, and Ephrata, sometimes referred to as First Ephrata. In 1899, First Ephrata was divided into two congregations, including Springville and Ephrata.   This covers the Ephrata congregation from the time of the division with Springville (1899) to the present.

Ephrata had only one meetinghouse at the time of this division. This was the brick structure on the corner of Church and Locust Streets in the Borough of Ephrata. It is pictured under No. 19 "First Ephrata". The brick building served the congregation well and underwent

numerous additions through the years. The congregation experienced tremendous growth, reaching a membership of well over 700 by the 1960's. For several years a debate developed concerning the future of the congregation.   The meetinghouse was becoming increasingly outdated and parking in town was a problem. Three options were considered.   They could do a major remodeling of the current meetinghouse. Or they could tear down the meetinghouse and build a new one on the same site. The third option was to buy a new plot of land and relocate. As this discussion took place, the congregation was met with a near tragedy. On the night of February 25, 1971, the old meetinghouse caught on fire due to an electrical shortage.   The congregation first met in the Highland Elementary School two blocks away before making arrangements to share the building of the First United Methodist Church across Locust Street from the Brethren meetinghouse. This they did until the old meetinghouse was restored. The fire seemingly motivated the congregation to reach an agreement that they needed a new facility.   Because of the crowded parking conditions, it was decided to purchase 13 acres on the corner of Blossom and Marie Avenues, on the western edge of town, for the purpose of building a new meetinghouse.   The new facility was dedicated in 1974. At that time the old meetinghouse was sold to an independent Baptist congregation. It has since become apartments.

MEETINGHOUSES.

1) Ephrata 1889, at Church and Locust; this was a brick building. (See Figure 68 on page 91)

2) Ephrata 1974, at Marie and Blossom; another brick building.

Figure 110 Top: The Fire at the Ephrata Church on Feb. 25, 1971. Lancaster
Intelligencer Journal, February 26, 1971.
Bottom: The current Ephrata Church of the Brethren. District file photo.

42. *Springville*   *1899*

Springville was the other half of the division that created
Ephrata in 1899. It was a large and sprawling territory that included
ten meetinghouses (see number 19 on page 80). Over time they
consolidated until they were down to one meetinghouse, Mohler, by
1959. They continued to be known as the Springville congregation until
they changed the name to Mohler in 1965. The history of the individual
meetinghouses of Springville can be found under Ephrata on page 85ff.

43. *Royersford*   *1901*

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, a number of Brethren
were moving into the Royersford area. They began holding prayer

130

meetings in their homes. The first prayer meeting was held in the home of Mrs. Jacob Price on Adams Street in 1886, under the leadership of the Mingo congregation. By 1891 they organized a Sunday School that met on Sunday afternoons in Winters' Hall, owned by the Episcopalians.

The meetinghouse was built in 1893. It was made of brick trimmed with blue Wyoming stone and included a baptistry. The dedication was held on September 24 of that year.

On January 7, 1901, this group officially organized as a separate congregation.   Interestingly, in 1993 the Royersford congregation and the Mingo congregation reunited to form the Providence congregation. The new fellowship decided to sell the Royersford meetinghouse and use the Mingo house. See more under Mingo above.

Figure 111 Royersford meetinghouse. Zug, page 256

44.   *West Green Tree* - organized 1902, from the Chiques congregation

1) West Green Tree
Chiques built the original meetinghouse in 1869. When West Green Tree was organized in 1902, it was given this meetinghouse as one of three preaching points. This building was remodeled in 1952-53. It is

located on Green Tree Road. All services have been consolidated here since 1963.

Rineer suggests that another meetinghouse once existed on Hereford Road in Mount Joy Township. It appears on a map for 1875, but not in 1864. No other sources can verify this.

Figure 112 West Green Tree meetinghouse. Joe Long photo, 1951.

Figure 113 The current West Green Tree meetinghouse. District file photo.

2) Rheems
In 1903 West Green Tree built a meetinghouse at Broad and Heisey Streets in Rheems. Sixty years later this location was closed.

3) Florin
West Green Tree bought the meetinghouse in Florin from the Methodists in 1912 as their third preaching point. It was on the north side of West Main Street in Mount Joy. In 1954 Florin was organized as a separate congregation apart from West Green Tree. They built a new building on Bruce Avenue, east of Plum St., in 1956.   The old meetinghouse was sold to a private owner.

45. *Midway*   *1902*

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

The Midway congregation organized apart from Tulpehocken on March 24, 1902.   While part of Tulpehocken, and before they had meeting houses, the Midway Brethren met in homes or barns. Some of these locations included the following.

Meeting year round, once a month in each:
Isaac Brubaker
Jacob Bucher
Abraham Geib

Meeting only in the summertime:
Samuel Brubaker
Jonas Geib
Henry Horst, Sr.
Peter Heisey
Cyrus Brubaker

Love Feasts were held just before hay making, while the barns were still empty, at these locations: Samuel Brubaker
Jacob Bucher
Abraham Geib
Cyrus Brubaker

B. MEETING HOUSES

The Tulpehocken congregation built two meeting houses that later became Midway.

1871   Cornwall, also known as Bucher's – 40x60, frame. This house has remained basically the same over the years with only minor exceptions.

1895   Midway

80x50, frame; This was a love feast house and has undergone several updates and expansions over the years.

In 1908 Midway bought a building formerly owned by the "Followers of the Living God" church in the city of Lebanon. It was a frame structure, 28x40 that was built in 1903. Midway began using this as a mission point. This was later expanded. However, by 1933 it proved to be too small. At that time Midway decided to divide into two congregations: Lebanon, and Midway. For more on Lebanon see below.

Midway left the Church of the Brethren in 2020.

Figure 114 Midway meetinghouse on the left was built in 1895. To the right is the Cornwall house, also known as Bucher's meetinghouse, built in 1871. Both photos by Joe Long, 1951.

46. East Fairview   *1902*

At the time when this congregation was formed, they had 131 members. It was one of four divisions of Chiques. They began by meeting for worship at two locations: East Fairview (built 1894 by Chiques); Strickler's Union Church (built 1851 by the United Brethren). Around 1910 they also began using the Sporting Hill Union Church, which was built in 1896. This continued until 1920, when the East Fairview congregation pulled out of Strickler's and Sporting Hill to consolidate at East Fairview. The East Fairview house was located at Fairview and Colebrook Roads in Rapho Township. This building was greatly enlarged in 1950.

MEETING HOUSES
1) *Strickler's Union, built 1851*; used 1896 - 1920
2) *East Fairview, built 1894*
3) *Sporting Hill Union, built 1896*; used ca. 1910 – 1920

Figure 115   The East Fairview Church of the Brethren, after extensive updating. Joe Long photo, 1951.

134

47. *Elizabethtown*   *1902*

Elizabethtown began as a preaching point for the Chiques congregation. They first held worship services around 1870 by meeting in the United Brethren Church building.

A. MEETINGHOUSES

1) Elizabethtown

In 1875 they bought the former schoolhouse on Mechanic Street. As they outgrew this location, Brother Joseph Rider donated land on Washington St, and the congregation built a new meetinghouse here in 1888. The brick structure was 50 x 80 and had a basement. The previous building was then sold.

When the congregation was organized in 1902 it had 160 members. They held services alternately on Sunday mornings and evenings with morning services preached in both German and English. In 1904 they began offering worship services in the college chapel on alternating weeks. The congregation has enjoyed strong leadership and an effective ministry. By 1956 they needed to expand, so they bought property on Mt Joy St., where they built a new, modern structure. This building has undergone additional renovations in 2023.

Figure 116   Elizabethtown meetinghouse on Washington St. 1888-1956. Joe Long photo 1951.

*Figure 117 The current
Elizabethtown meetinghouse.
District file photo.*

2) Swatara Hill 1859

A union Sunday School began in Middletown in 1849. Worship here began in 1859 when the United Brethren built a union meetinghouse. The Spring Creek German Baptist Brethren soon began holding services here every four weeks until the Elizabethtown congregation agreed to take over. Elizabethtown added a Sunday School in 1927, after the union Sunday School was discontinued. The meetinghouse was enlarged twice: in 1945 and in 1950. By 1958 only the Elizabethtown Brethren were still holding services here. Swatara Hill organized as a separate congregation on May 23, 1960.

See Swatara Hill congregation (1960) for more details.

3) Stevens Hill   1904;   See below for details

48. Norristown *1903*

A small meetinghouse was built on Barbadoes Street in Norristown by the Mingo Brethren in 1869. John Umstad is believed to have been the first preacher. Norristown organized as a separate

congregation in 1903 (some sources say 1901). When Brother T. F. Imler was called to serve as Pastor the congregation was faced with some controversy. Imler was accused of being more liberal than some in the congregation desired. Among the points of contention was accepting persons who did not adhere to the Brethren dress code, including men who were clean-shaven or had only a moustache.

In 1907 Pastor Imler was dismissed. Though the congregation experienced steady growth both during Imler's time and after it, things began changing by the middle of the 20th century. Membership was on the decline, and by 1972 the church reported a membership of 25 and an average attendance of 12. The church held its final service on April 26, 1973.

Figure 118 Norristown meetinghouse. See Figure 83 for the original Norristown Meetinghouse. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA.

49. *Geiger Memorial*   1908

Philadelphia First felt the need to begin a mission plant in the city. This began on November 29, 1896, with a Sunday School held in a residence at 2610 West Lehigh Ave. forty-five persons attended. They outgrew this within a year, so they moved to a storeroom at the southeast corner of 26th & Lehigh on October 24, 1897. As growth continued, they decided to build a stone chapel across the street, on the northeast corner of 26th & Lehigh.

The fellowship became a congregation on November 27, 1908. By the end of the second decade of the 20th century Geiger's Sunday School was averaging 230 people, and love feast averaging 130.

In the mid-1920's, Geiger began experiencing decline. Another decline was seen during World War II. Since then, things have fluctuated considerably. In 2021 the congregation reported a membership of 40.
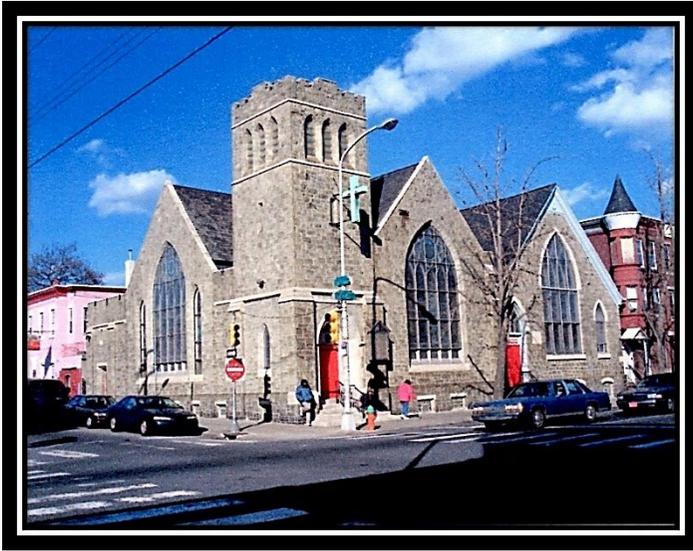
Figure 119 Geiger Memorial, Philadelphia, PA.
Photo: District file

50. Denton   *1909*

The Ridgely congregation divided to create the Denton Church in Caroline County, Maryland in 1909. Denton kept the Bethel meetinghouse until a new building was dedicated on the corner of 7th and Randolph Streets in 1910. Denton was transferred to the Eastern District of Maryland in 1911. It later joined the Mardela District when that was formed in 1944.

51. Bethany, Philadelphia   *1910*

In 1899 Samuel and Julia Croft began a Sunday School mission in a rented building, three stories tall, in the Kensington district of Philadelphia. Kensington was a busy industrial community with a

shipping industry based on its location along the Delaware River. In 1906 they began having preaching services. On February 20, 1908, the group dedicated a newly built facility.

The congregation officially organized in 1910. The work at Bethany was highly successful for many years. The meetinghouse was remodeled several times, including in 1925, during the 1940's and again in the 1950's. However, the church fell upon hard times after that, with a decline in membership and attendance. By the 1980's only a handful of people were still attending.

52. Conewago   *1912*

In 1912 the Spring Creek church agreed to divide into three congregations: Spring Creek, Annville, and Conewago. Conewago had two meeting houses.   Conewago (also known as Hoffer's) was about three miles north of Elizabethtown.   It was built in 1854 on land donated by the Joshua Hoffer family.

The Bachmanville house, in the village of Bachmanville, was built in 1911 and dedicated on June 16, 1912. This was a love feast house. A decision was made in 1956 to enlarge the Bachmanville house, rather than the Conewago house. Work began in 1957, and dedication services were held in 1958.   The congregation later consolidated into the Bachmanville house.

The history tab of the Conewago Township web site suggests that a very early meetinghouse preceded the Conewago/Hoffer's house. We can find no other resource to confirm this. Most likely the Brethren did worship in the area prior to 1854, but they met in homes until the Conewago House was built in 1854.

Figure 120 Left: Conewago meetinghouse, aka Hoffer's. Right: Bachmanville meeting house. Both photos by Joe Long, 1951.

Figure 121 The Conewago facility today. District file photo.

53. Annville   *1912*

On March 25, 1912, the Annville congregation was organized from Spring Creek. The first meeting house was built by Spring Creek in 1906 at Maple and Zeigler Streets. This was damaged by fire on February 22, 1947. The congregation then decided to replace the building with a new one at the same location. The new facility was dedicated in 1949.

Annville also had the South Annville meetinghouse, located at 739 Church Road, Lebanon, PA. There is also a cemetery at this location. The South Annville meetinghouse no longer exists but in its place the Annville church has built a pavilion.

The Annville congregation gave birth to the Mt. Wilson congregation in 1981.
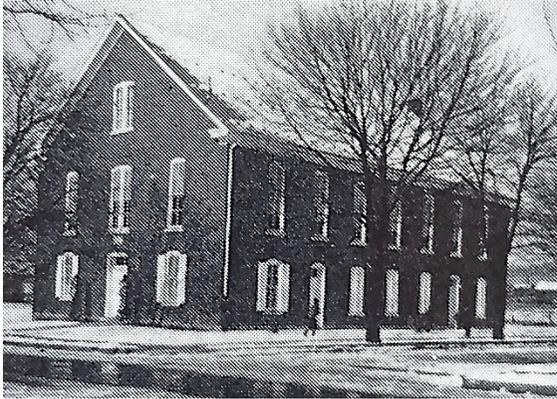
Figure 122 The Annville Meeting House.
Top: the original house built in 1906 (photo: Zug).
Bottom: the second house built in 1949. Photo by Joe Long, 1951.

54. *Harmonyville*   *1913*

Organized on January 25, 1913, Harmonyville was planted by the Coventry church in 1845, when David Keim, a minister from Coventry, moved into the area and began sharing the Gospel. The fellowship began meeting in the local schoolhouse. It grew enough by 1880 that a meetinghouse was built.

Figure 123   The current Harmonyville meetinghouse, originally built in 1888, but expanded considerably. Author's photo.

55. *Akron* **1913**

Akron was formed in 1913 by bringing members of Springville's Steinmetz house together with some members of West Conestoga. The congregation began with 77 members meeting in two locations. The first was the Steinmetz house on the north end of Akron, built in 1847 (see photo under *19 First Ephrata*). The second was the Akron house, built in 1898 as part of West Conestoga. In 1931 Steinmetz was sold and services consolidated at Akron.   A new church facility was constructed on a new plot of land on Main Street in 1974. The church was served by the free ministry until 1971, when Brother D. Paul Green was hired as a Part Time Pastor. His status changed to Full Time in 1976.

Like Middle Creek, the Akron congregation chose to leave the Church of the Brethren in 2023.

Figure 124 Top: The original Akron meetinghouse was built by West Conestoga in 1898. (Joe Long photo 1951) Bottom: The current Akron meetinghouse was built in 1974 (photo: www.akronpacob.org)

56. Lititz *1914*

The Brethren began moving to the Moravian community of Lititz around 1855. In 1888 prayer meetings were authorized by the West Conestoga congregation, to be held in Lititz under the leadership of John B. Gibbel. Jacob Minnich then sought permission to hold Sunday School classes. Though this request was turned down, Minnich went ahead with his plans anyway. He cited a ruling by Annual Meeting that permitted the use of Sunday Schools. This lasted for two years before

West Conestoga closed it down. Later, it was again initiated, this time with permission granted, so long as a minister oversaw it.

In 1907 a petition was presented to West Conestoga seeking congregational status on their own. It was denied. In 1913 the issue was brought up again. After some discussion approval was granted in January 1914. The new Lititz congregation had 120 members, 20 of which came from the White Oak church. They began by meeting in a frame house that was 40 x 50 and built in 1887.

By 1926 the congregation had outgrown their meetinghouse, so a new one was built on Center Street. Continued growth led to the need for another, larger meetinghouse. This was done in 1962 when a new, modern facility was constructed on Orange Street. This was enlarged in 1969.

Figure 125 The original Lititz meetinghouse, built in 1887
Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

*Figure 126 The second Lititz meetinghouse
on Cedar Street. Joe Long photo,1951*

*Figure 127 The current Lititz meetinghouse on Orange Street, built in 1962.
District file photo.*

57. Lake Ridge *1915*

The Eastern Pennsylvania District planted a new fellowship in King Ferry, New York, in 1915. Known as the Lake Ridge congregation, this group initially grew to reach a total of about 200 members before many started to move away. At one point an attempt was made to form a yoked parish with the United Church of Genoa. That effort was soon abandoned, and the District closed the congregation in 1977.

Figure 128 Lake Ridge mission. Zug page 601

58. *Wilmington* *1916*

A growing presence of Brethren families in Wilmington, Delaware, led to the formation of an informal fellowship in 1916. They began by meeting in homes for Sunday School and worship. This became a mission project of the Southeastern District of Pennsylvania. Support was provided by the Philadelphia congregations of the newly formed North Atlantic District (later to become part of Atlantic Northeast).

A meetinghouse was built in 1926. The group achieved congregational status on April 2 of that year. An educational wing was added in 1950-52.

    A. HOUSE CHURCHES.
      1) William Best family
      2) John Jordin family
      3) There were likely others, but their identity is not known.
    B. MEETINGHOUSE
    Only one, built in 1926 on Belmont Avenue, Wilmington.

Figure 129   The Wilmington meetinghouse.
Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College,
Elizabethtown, PA.

Figure 130 The current Wilmington meetinghouse.
District file photo.

59. East Petersburg   *1918*

East Petersburg began as a part of the Mountville congregation. There was a log block house that is believed to pre-date the revolution, in which some churches were worshipping. This was known as the Petersburg meetinghouse. The Brethren began worshiping in the area by meeting in homes, but by ca. 1850 they began using the log block

147

house. In 1873 the Brethren built a brick meetinghouse measuring 45 x 60.

In 1917 the Mountville congregation had grown sufficiently to warrant dividing into two groups. This gave birth to the East Petersburg congregation on December 17, 1917. The new congregation met in three meetinghouses: Petersburg, Neffsville, and Salunga. These three had a total of 257 members. In 1948 a growing movement resulted in the decision to divide East Petersburg by making Salunga a separate congregation. East Petersburg retained the East Petersburg House (formerly Petersburg) and Neffsville.

What goes around, comes around, and in 1974 Salunga and East Petersburg reunited to form the new Hempfield Church of the Brethren. The previous buildings were sold in favor of a new facility on a new plot of land, strategically located between the two.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES (see details for these households under No. 8 White Oak)

1) Jacob and Margaret Stehman.

2) Jacob H. and Sarah Brubaker Graybill.

3) John and Elizabeth Herr.

B. MEETINGHOUSES.

1) The log block house near East Petersburg. Likely built pre-Revolution by the Mennonites and used as a union house. The Brethren started sharing it around 1850 and they bought it from the Mennonites in September 1867.

2) Petersburg.

This was a brick building 45 x 60 built in 1873. This replaced the log house and was also the first Love Feast house in the White Oak congregation (*Zug, p. 401*).

3) Neffsville

Located in Manheim Township, along Buch Avenue, this was built in 1870 and measured 40 x 50.   In 1951 services were discontinued here and consolidated with the Petersburg house. The Neffsville house was then sold to the Mennonites in 1952. Today, this small meetinghouse is still hosting worship services for the Christadelphian Chapel.

Figure 131 Petersburg meetinghouse. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

Figure 132 The Neffsville meetinghouse. Author's photo.

60. Pottstown First   *1918*

With the Coventry congregation just across the Schuylkill River, the Brethren began looking at planting a church in the Borough of Pottstown in 1888 and again in 1898. Pottstown was a booming industrial center located along the mainline for the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. Neither effort was successful.

In 1916 another attempt was made by holding services in the home of S. K. Kulp. The North Atlantic District purchased the Fifth Street Methodist Church meetinghouse in August of 1916. On May 21, 1918, the congregation was organized.   Two neighboring homes were purchased between 1952-1967. In 1967-68 both were torn down in favor of a new Education building that stood as a detached structure apart from the meetinghouse. This was part of a two phase plan that was completed in 1988-89, with the addition of a new sanctuary. The old meetinghouse was then torn down and replaced with a parking lot.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES
   1) S. K. Kulp
B. MEETINGHOUSES
   1) The former Fifth Street Methodist brick building.
   2) 1989 Built a brick building next door.

Figure 133 Pottstown First, 1989. District file photo.

61. *Heidelberg*   *1919*

The Heidelberg congregation was organized in 1919 as part of the division and termination of Tulpehocken.
A. HOUSE CHURCHES
   See No. 15 Tulpehocken.
B. MEETINGHOUSES
The Heidelberg meetinghouse was constructed by Tulpehocken in 1867. It was enlarged in 1900. Heidelberg was a love feast house that also served Myerstown for love feast until their house was enlarged. The original Heidelberg meeting house, also known as Reistville, was made of limestone in 1867. It was 50 x 70. In 1900 Tulpehocken added a 12 foot addition. This became the sole meeting house for the new Heidelberg congregation in 1919. A much larger addition was added in 1940.

Figure 134 Heidelberg. (Top) Joe Long photo, 1951. (Bottom): District file photo, 2020

62. Myerstown *1919*

Myerstown was formed from the Tulpehocken congregation as part of the three-way division of 1919. This resulted in Myerstown receiving two houses. The first was Tulpehocken, also known as Royer's, which was built in 1840. The second was Myerstown. The congregation was organized August 16, 1919, with 150 members.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES.

As a congregation, Myerstown always had meetinghouses and therefore did not use house churches.

B. MEETINGHOUSES.

1) Royer's, also known as Tulpehocken. (1840)

The Royer meetinghouse was built in 1840, making it one of the older meetinghouses in Lebanon County.   It was a stone building, 30 x 40. A school was held in the basement. Students had to pay 3 cents per day to attend, prior to the creation of the public school system. It was expanded circa 1865 with a brick addition measuring 24 x 30. Regular services ceased ca. 1925.

2) The first Myerstown meetinghouse.

Built in 1876, the Myerstown house was brick and had a capacity of 500. It was located on the corner of Railroad and Stover Streets. It was remodeled in 1921 to become a love feast house. In 1969 the congregation decided to build a new, modern facility. This was dedicated in 1971. A shoe company expressed a desire to purchase the old Myerstown meeting house, but the congregation wanted to see it continued to be used as a house of worship. A Mennonite group then bought the meeting house in 1972.

3) The second and current Myerstown house, built in 1971.

Figure 135   Left: Tulpehocken meetinghouse, aka Royer's. Joe Long Photo 1951. Right: The original Myerstown meetinghouse. Joe Long photo 1951.

Figure 136   Top: The Myerstown meetinghouse in 1961 following renovations. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA. Bottom: The Myerstown meetinghouse today. District File photo.

63. *Richland*   *1919*

The Richland congregation was the third fellowship created by the dissolution of Tulpehocken in 1919.   It inherited two meetinghouses, including Millbach and Richland.   Sermons were delivered in both German and English until 1923, when the German was dropped. Services were consolidated into the Richland house in 1934.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

None, as they already had two meetinghouses when the congregation was organized.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) Richland Hall

The Brethren of Richland first worshipped in Richland Hall, which was converted into a Union meetinghouse. It was shared by the German Baptist Brethren (Brethren), the German Reformed, and the Lutherans. In 1896 the Lutherans pulled out. In 1901 the Reformed did the same, leaving the house in the hands of the Brethren. It had a capacity of 300., according to Rineer. In 1913 the Brethren sold the building, bought land on Race Street, and built a new meetinghouse of brick measuring 50 x 80.

Figure 137 Richland. Left: (Joe Long photo 1951.) Right: circa 1970 (District file photo).

2) Millbach

The Millbach house was built in 1850. The brick building was 36 x 46 with a capacity of 350. This was located at the corner of South Millbach Road and Chapel Road, one mile north of Kleinfeltersville. It was built largely through the efforts of Seth Royer and Isaac Gibble. It was damaged in a storm in 1876 and repaired. From 1929 – 1934 the Richland congregation decided not to worship at Millbach during the winter months. In 1934 they closed Millbach and worshiped exclusively at Richland. In 1943 they rented Millbach to the Mennonites. In 1948 it was rented to the Bethel Dunkard Brethren until 1994.   The Conservative Brethren now use the building and maintain the cemetery next to it.

Figure 138 Millbach meetinghouse, now Conservative Brethren Church. J. G. Francis, page 30.

64. Fredericksburg/Mount Zion Road   *1919*

Fredericksburg organized in 1919 from the Little Swatara congregation. Eventually it met in seven meeting houses, including the following.

1.   The Union house, 3 miles southeast of Fredericksburg, built in 1859.

2.   Meyer, also known as Moyer, made of brick in 1868. It was remodeled in 1888 to become 50 x 72. Meyer was a love feast house. Further renovations were made in 1950, 1961, and 1982. It eventually became the last meeting house for Fredericksburg.

3.   Light – A frame house with a capacity of 500. Closed in 1920

4.   Rankstown – originally a converted home; replaced in 1920 with a new meetinghouse made with timber from Light. This was a love feast house.   The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania bought the Rankstown meetinghouse in 1931 for the establishment of the Indiantown Gap Military base.

5.   Fredericksburg, built in 1910 of brick with a capacity of 600. It was enlarged in 1955 and sold in 1970

6.   Moonshine – a union house. See pages 66-70 for more detail.

7.   Mount Nebo – a community-owned union house rented to the Brethren. It is located in Ono, a small village south of Indiantown Gap. It was closed in 1933.

155

In 1976 the Fredericksburg congregation, now worshiping in one house, decided to change its name to Mount Zion Road Church of the Brethren. The congregation decided to leave the Church of the Brethren in 2019.

Figure 139 Left: Meyer/Moyer meetinghouse.   Right: Fredericksburg meetinghouse. Both photos by Joe Long 1951.

65. *Palmyra*   *1921*

The Palmyra congregation was created from a division of the Spring Creek church in 1921. At that time, they had 248 members. In their formative years before organizing, the Palmyra Brethren met in the home of Kate Mark. The first meeting house was built on the corner of Arch and Chestnut Streets in 1892. It was a frame structure, 40x50, and very simple in design.

Because of the growth of the congregation, major renovations were made to the building in the late 1950's. These included a large educational wing consisting of three floors, a completely redesigned sanctuary, plus a separate chapel. The new facility was dedicated in 1959.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES
1) Kate Mark is the only one identified.
B. MEETINGHOUSES
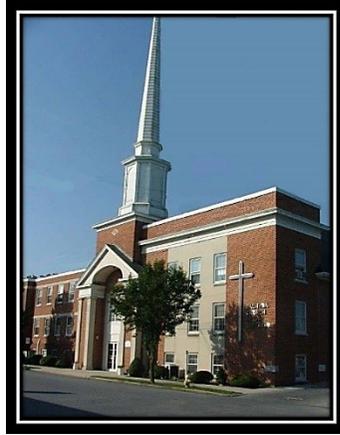 1) Again there is only one, at Arch and Chestnut Streets

Figure 140
Left: Palmyra meetinghouse, 1951 (Joe Long photo).
Right: The current meetinghouse. District file photo.

66. Freeville *c. 1922*

Freeville was in Tompkins County, New York, and was closed in 1926.

67. Calvary, Philadelphia *1923*

Calvary began at the initiative of several members from Philadelphia Bethany who lived in the northwest section of the city. A Sunday School was begun late in 1919 using rented space in a storeroom. Three lots were purchased in 1020 and a building was constructed for worship. The first service was held in June of that year. The congregation was organized on July 4, 1923, with ninety-seven members. Calvary voted to withdraw from the Church of the Brethren in 1967-68, but negotiations with the district postponed this until 1972, at which time Calvary bought the property from the district and became an independent congregation.

Figure 141 Calvary, Philadelphia. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

68. Calvary, Brooklyn   *1926*

The Brethren had a mission established in Brooklyn in 1892. Brooklyn was a multi-ethnic community. In 1900 John Caruso was baptized and began encouraging his fellow Italian immigrants to come to the Brethren mission. By 1915 thirty persons had been baptized, leading the Brethren to consider building a house of worship. This was accomplished on a lot on 20th Street in 1926. At first it was known as the Brooklyn Second Church of the Brethren, but in 1948 this Italian congregation changed its name to Calvary. Work continued for 20 years until Calvary merged with Brooklyn First in 1968.

Figure 142 Brooklyn Calvary Church, 1960. Gospel Messenger, September 3, 1960, page 4.

69. Jennersville   1929

The Jennersville congregation was the result of a division of Mechanic Grove and is located in western Chester County, Pennsylvania. It organized on April 6, 1929 with twenty-five members who bought a church building from the Presbyterians. Beginning in 1948, plans were made to build a new house of worship using funds from the Eastern District, the sale of the old building, and donations. This was accomplished in 1951.

Figure 143   Top: Jennersville meetinghouse, ca. 1960. The High Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA. Bottom: the Current meetinghouse. District file photo.

70. *Long Run*   *1932*

Long Run began as a district mission project with services in homes in 1928. This is located two miles west of Weissport, and a few miles north of Lehighton, Pennsylvania. The congregation was organized September 11, 1932. The Zimmerman meetinghouse was purchased and used until 1946, when the building was sold. The District Mission Board purchased the Long Run meetinghouse from the Evangelical Church in 1939. This was enlarged in 1954.
  A. HOUSE CHURCHES
  Several were used, but none are known at this time.
  B. MEETINGHOUSES
  1) Zimmerman's. Bought ca. 1932; closed and sold in 1946.
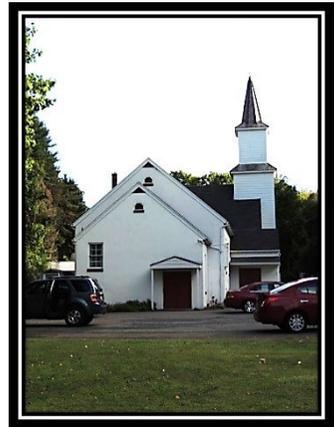 *2) Long Run*   Bought in 1939; remodeled in 1954.

Figure 144   Long Run Church of the Brethren. Left: Zimmerman meetinghouse, circa 1935. (Saylor, p. 93).
Right: Long Run after remodeling in 1964. (District file photo.)

71. *Lebanon*   *1933*

The Lebanon congregation began as a mission point for Midway. Originally, they began to meet on April 2, 1899, for Sunday School. They met in the home of Michael Zug , at 128 Cumberland Street in Lebanon. They later used the former Union House of Prayer on 7th Street. A Mr. Shomo, who had attended worship at the Cornwall (Bucher's) meetinghouse, was responsible for getting regular worship services

started at the House of Prayer. Shomo was well acquainted with Mr. Fauber, who owned the building. The congregation was organized in 1933. In 1938 they decided to buy property at Fourth and Locust to construct a new house of worship. The new house was dedicated in 1940.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES
  1) *Michael Zug*, 128 Cumberland Street, Lebanon
A group of believers began meeting here for Sunday School
B. MEETINGHOUSES
  1) *Union House of Prayer*
This was rented for regular worship beginning in 1933.
  2) *Lebanon Church of the Brethren*
Located at Fourth and Locust, this was dedicated in 1940.

Figure 145   The Lebanon Church of the Brethren. District file photo.

72. *Quakertown First*   *1936*

Quakertown has its roots in the old Great Swamp congregation from Colonial times. Renowned preacher John Naas was largely

responsible for establishing that group. When Great Swamp closed, Springfield eventually developed. Springfield, in turn, planted the seeds for the current Quakertown Church of the Brethren.

On December 22, 1908, the Springfield congregation bought Beulah Chapel, located at 424 Juniper Street in Quakertown. The two groups worshiped together for many years. Eventually each called their own ministers, though they remained under the organizational structure of Springfield.

On March 31, 1936 the Quakertown fellowship organized as its own congregation. The new congregation experienced steady growth with a strong commitment to evangelism and to the denomination. A decision was made in 1956 to explore the need for a new meetinghouse. On August 14, 1960 the new facility was dedicated. It is located just outside the town on Trumbauerville Road.

A, HOUSE CHURCHES

See no. 21 Springfield.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) *Beulah Chapel*, 424 Juniper Street, Quakertown, PA

2) *Quakertown Church of the Brethren,* 455 Trumbauerville Road, Quakertown, PA

Figure 146 Quakertown, on Trumbauer Road. District file photo.

73. Allentown   *1938*

The Brethren witness in Allentown began in August of 1937, when the Richland congregation led services under a tent on the corner of Fifteenth and Liberty Streets. Worship was Saturday evening, followed by Sunday School the next morning. By October the District Mission Board arranged to use the former Evangelical Church building

at Ninth and Turner Streets, which they bought September 3, 1938, just five months after the Allentown congregation was organized.

The Eastern District of Pennsylvania bought eight acres of land about ten miles west of the city for future relocation. However, this was never realized, as the congregation closed in 1964.

    A. HOUSE CHURCHES – none

    B. MEETINGHOUSES

    On the corner of Ninth and Turner Streets, Allentown, PA.

Figure   147 Allentown.   Joe Long photo 1951.

74. *Salunga*   *1948*

The area of Salunga was initially introduced to the Brethren as early as 1870, when John and Elizabeth Herr moved here. The Herr's were members of White Oak but worshiping at the Mountville meetinghouse. Through their influence Salunga became a preaching point for Mountville. When Mountville organized as a congregation in 1882 Salunga was within their boundaries. On December 17, 1917, Mountville divided into two congregations: Mountville and East Petersburg. Salunga remained a part of the East Petersburg congregation until both decided to separate in1948. However, in 1974 the two congregations of East Petersburg and Salunga decided to reunite to form the new Hempfield congregation. At that time both parties agreed to close their present meetinghouse and build a new one where they could be one congregation.

    A. HOUSE CHURCHES

    1) John H. and Elizabeth Herr, beginning in 1870. There may have been others but only the Herrs are identified.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

John Herr bought an acre of land on April 1, 1887. He immediately turned it over to the Mountville congregation, who then built a meetinghouse. The Salunga house was a frame structure 40 x 50 and located on Holland Street. It was dedicated on December 12, 1887. It was expanded in 1948. In 1958 the congregation bought the John Herr house across the street from the meetinghouse with plans to use it for an educational building. The meetinghouse underwent further renovations in 1959.

Figure 148

Salunga meetinghouse, built 1887. Joe Long photo 1951.

This was the only house Salunga had as a separate congregation.

75. *Drexel Hill*   *1953*

Drexel Hill began as a vision of Galen Young who petitioned the District to begin a church here. It took the North Atlantic District 5 years, but in 1950 it began by meeting in The Youngs' home at Bullens Lane and Providence Road, Chester. The fellowship grew from eight to thirty-five after about a year. In 1952 they adopted the name Delaware County Church of the Brethren. In 1953 they purchased the Drexel Hill Baptist church building and organized as the Drexel Hill congregation. For the next year they shared the building with the Baptists before taking sole possession of it. An educational wing was added in 1963, and a nursery school begun in 1981.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

1) Dr. and Mrs. Galen Young, Bullen's Lane and Providence Road, Chester PA.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

1) The former Drexel Hill Baptist Church, of the American Baptist Convention, at 3601 Garret Road, Drexel Hill, PA.

Figure 149 Drexel Hill. District file photo.

76. Florin   *1954*

In 1912 the West Green Tree congregation bought the former Methodist meetinghouse in Mount Joy as a new preaching point. Renamed the Florin meetinghouse, this continued as one of three meetinghouses within West Green Tree. On August 3, 1954, Florin organized as a separate congregation.   In 1956 the congregation decided to build a new facility. This was accomplished and the new meetinghouse, on Bruce Avenue, was dedicated on June 28, 1959

Figure 150 Left: The first Florin meetinghouse. Joe Long photo 1951.
Right: the current facility. District file photo.

77. Skippack   *1957*

Skippack has a long, rich history in the story of the Brethren in eastern Pennsylvania. A few of the original Brethren believers who immigrated to Philadelphia in 1719 settled in the general area of Skippack. As early as 1724 the evangelistic trip from Germantown, led by Peter Becker, visited the area. Several sources, including the Ephrata Chronicon and Julius Sachse, say this group spent the night around Skippack enroute to Indian Creek, Falkner's Swamp, Oley, and Coventry.

Regular services, however, did not begin here until 1815, when John Detwiler opened his home for this purpose.   Preaching was provided for by the Indian Creek congregation. The first meetinghouse was built in 1860. In 1869 Mingo organized as a congregation apart from Indian Creek. At that time Skippack fell under Mingo. Finally, in 1957, Mingo decided to divide, thus creating Skippack as a separate congregation.

A. HOUSE CHURCHES

1) John Detwiler - - originally, in his wagon shed. If there were any others who hosted services, we do not know their names.

B. MEETINGHOUSES

There was only one meetinghouse, and it was built about 1860, according to the Brethren Encyclopedia. Saylor suggests it may have been built in 1854-1858. It was built on a portion of the farm owned by Jesse Cassel. It was remodeled in 1937 and expanded in 1960.

166

Figure 151 Top: An early photo of the Skippack meetinghouse. Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA.   Lower: Today's meetinghouse. District file photo.

78. Cocalico   1959

By the start of the 20th century the Springville congregation had organized apart from Ephrata.   Springville was a very rural congregation spread across all of northern Lancaster County. They had four meetinghouses, five union houses, and a total of 203 members. The numbers continued to increase, and the membership spread to the far reaches of the County. To accommodate the membership and to avoid excess traveling, a fifth meetinghouse was constructed in the far northwest section of Lancaster County. It was called Cocalico, because it was near the headwaters for the Cocalico Creek and was located in West Cocalico Township.

On July 2, 1959, Cocalico organized as its own congregation. By the 21st century, however, Cocalico was experiencing decline. The congregation decided to disorganize in 2020. See also page 93.

    A. HOUSE CHURCHES – none.

    B. MEETINGHOUSES

There was only one meetinghouse for this congregation, located on South Cocalico Church Road, near PA 897. This house was built in 1909. It was originally 30 x 50 and made of brick. In 1962 the meetinghouse was renovated and enlarged. The sanctuary was reversed, and a large 28 x 48 addition was built on for Sunday School classes. The new meetinghouse was dedicated on April 28, 1963.

See No. 19 First Ephrata for more details on Cocalico.

79. Swatara Hill   1960

Swatara Hill has a long, rich history even though it was only organized as a congregation in 1960. The work here began with a Sunday School in 1849, just over one hundred years earlier. They met in the Gainsburg School. Land was donated by a family named Booser, about seven miles north of Elizabethtown, on which a union meetinghouse was built. Three churches took turns worshiping here: The United Brethren, to whom the property was deeded, the United Zion (then known as the United Zion Children), and the German Baptist Brethren, under the Spring Creek congregation.

At the request of the Spring Creek Church, Elizabethtown took responsibility for Swatara Hill in 1903. In 1921 the Union Sunday School ceased, and the United Brethren stopped worshiping here. The United Zion pulled out in 1958, leaving the Elizabethtown congregation as the sole owners. On May 23, 1960, the Swatara Hill Church of the Brethren was organized.

    A. HOUSE CHURCHES – none

    B. MEETINGHOUSES

There was only one meetinghouse, located along PA 230. It was built on the Booser land in 1859. An annex was added in 1945. In 1955 a basement was created along with another annex.
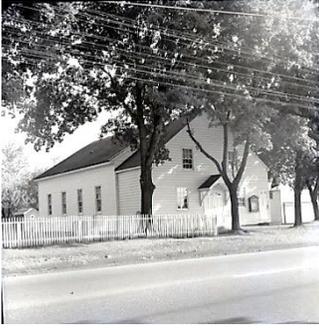
Figure 152   The Swatara Hill meetinghouse. Left: Joe Long photo 1951.
Right, current District file photo.

80. Ridgeway Community *1962*

The land now owned by the Ridgeway Congregation originally was bought by Harrisburg First as they considered moving to a new area that was more suburban. However, Harrisburg First decided to remain where they were and commit themselves to the work of an urban congregation. So, on November 5, 1959, the District Board approved plans to buy this lot from Harrisburg First.

The District, in turn, planted the Ridgeway Community Church on this plot at Thirty-fourth Street and Elmerton Avenue. Many congregations are birthed by other, established congregations. Ridgeway was a District mission project.

Much time was spent the first two years planning the construction of a meetinghouse and surveying the neighborhood. The church negotiated with the school district to use the local high school building for their first worship service on September 10, 1961. Preparations continued throughout the next year before the group was recognized as a congregation by District Conference in November 1962.

Construction of the building continued through the first half of 1963, with the first service held in June of that year. In 1977 they added a fellowship hall and gymnasium.

Figure 153   Ridgeway Community Church. District file photo.

81. Paoli, Immanuel *1963*

The North Atlantic District and the Eastern District of Pennsylvania entered into a joint effort in 1957 to plant a church in Paoli, Pennsylvania, on the Main Line east of Philadelphia. Land was bought and monthly services held the following year. They used the United Presbyterian Church on Sunday evenings, led by Donald Leiter, Pastor of the Germantown congregation. At this point Germantown was struggling, which made this arrangement practical. Beginning in April of 1962 the group worshiped in the parsonage. In September of that year, the building was completed and became their new home. The congregation was organized in 1963.

Paoli Immanuel was disorganized in 1983, twenty years after organizing.

82. Stevens Hill *1965*

Stevens Hill began as a union Sunday School in 1871. Elizabethtown, about four miles away, began using it as a preaching point in 1904. In 1911 they built a meetinghouse for worship. On July 18, 1965, Stevens Hill organized as a separate congregation. In 1990 Stevens Hill changed from a congregation to a fellowship in a desire to rebuild, adopting the name Stevens Hill Community Fellowship.

Figure 154 The Stevens Hill meetinghouse. Top: Joe Long photo circa 1951. Bottom: the current building. District file photo.

83. Hempfield   *1974*

Hempfield was the result of reuniting the East Petersburg and Salunga congregations in 1974. At that time both congregations agreed to close their current meetinghouses and build a new facility located between their former locations. For more details please see No. 51 East Petersburg and No. 64 Salunga.

Figure 155   Hempfield Church of the Brethren.   District file photo.

84. *Mount Wilson* 1981

Mount Wilson was a mission of the Annville congregation, which began busing people in the area to Annville for services in 1943. In 1953 a tent meeting was held in Mount Wilson. The next year a Vacation Bible School was held. In 1955 they built a small meeting house on Sylvan Lane and began holding services in June. In 1957 a new building was constructed across the street from the original one. The congregation continues to use this second building, though it has been expanded in 1988 to include a gymnasium. In 2008 a Sunday School hall was added, so the current building includes a sanctuary, gym/fellowship hall, full kitchen, twelve classrooms and a nursery. The property includes a playground and a ball field.

The original 1955 meetinghouse still exists and has been converted into a residential dwelling.

Figure 156   Mount Wilson meetinghouse. District file photo.

85. Lewiston (ME)   *1982*

Lewiston was a Fellowship planted by the Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF) in 1982. It closed in 2022.

86. Pequea Valley (Gap)   *1984*

In 1984 the Lampeter congregation planted a new Fellowship in Gap. Known as the Pequea Valley Fellowship, they met in the Gap Fire Hall. Pequea Valley lasted about six years before closing in 1990.

87. Alpha and Omega   *1986*

Alpha and Omega has been a ministry primarily to the Hispanic community in Lancaster, PA. The Family Life Center offers a wholistic ministry to the larger community.

Figure 157 The Alpha and Omega Church facility. District file photo.

88. ACTS Covenant   *1987*

ACTS Covenant was dually affiliated with the Mennonite Church and the Church of the Brethren. They met at the First Reformed UCC Church on Orange Street in Lancaster. In 2003, they joined the Hopewell Network of Churches and asked to be unaffiliated with the Brethren, which was done on October 11, 2003.

89. Brunswick (ME)   *1987*

The Brunswick Fellowship was the second of three church plants in Maine and established by the Brethren Revival Fellowship. It began in 1987 and closed in 2019.

90. East Cocalico   *1991*

The Ephrata congregation decided to plant a new congregation in the Reamstown-Denver area. This resulted in the birth of the East Cocalico Church of the Brethren in 1991. Ephrata, in cooperation with the Atlantic Northeast District, had done extensive research of the demographics in the area, and chose East Cocalico Township as the best location due to its projected population growth.

Figure 158   East Cocalico Church of the Brethren.
District file photo.

174

A vacant church building that once was home to the Faith Temple, in the village of Reamstown, was purchased. Brother Jim Wren accepted the call to serve as the initial pastor of the new group. The District and the Ephrata congregation used a new system of church planting that incorporated a telephone campaign designed to reach every household in the proposed area. The program, known as *The Call is For You,* was focused to attract people who did not have a church home, rather than attract members from other churches. Approximately 9,300 phone calls were made by over 100 volunteers, resulting in over 600 households that agreed to be placed on a mailing list. Their first service was held on Easter morning, 1991, with 127 people in attendance. After the initial hype, the congregation settled in with an average worship attendance of around 90 per week. (*Lancaster New Era, March 29, 1991*)

91. *Puerta del Cielo* 1991

Puerto del Cielo meets in Reading, PA. From the beginning it has been a congregation.

Figure 159 Puerta del Cielo meets at 1250 Schuylkill Avenue, Reading, PA 19601.

92. *Open Door – Sunlin* 1991 (NYC)

Open Door began as a fellowship in 1991. Pastor David Shim left in 1993 and they began working with a pastor from the Christian Missionary Alliance denomination. During this time they ceased connections with the Brethren. They were removed as a fellowship on October 14, 1995.

93. *Templo El Aposento* 1992

Located in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, this group closed in 1993, about one year after they started.

175

94. Haitian First, New York   *1992*

When the Haitian First Fellowship of Brooklyn began, they met in the Brooklyn First building. Through support from the District they began to worship in a former warehouse. The fellowship was closed in 2019

95. Liberty Tabernacle   *1992*
Philadelphia County

96. Cornerstone   *1995*

Cornerstone was a church plant of the Midway congregation in 1995. They meet in an old movie theater in downtown Lebanon.

Figure 160   The Cornerstone congregation meets in a former movie theater in Lebanon, PA. District File photo.

97. Grace Christian   *1995*

Grace Christian began worshiping in 1995, using space in the Hatfield Church of the Brethren. They have since relocated but continue meeting.

98. *Nuevo Amanecer*   *2000*

This was a church plant from the Harrisburg First congregation, with help from the Lititz congregation. Located in Bethlehem, Nuevo Amanecer began as a Fellowship in 2000, but has since become a congregation.

Figure 161 The home of Nuevo Amanecer, Bethlehem PA. District file photo.

99. *New Beginnings*   *2004*

The Chiques congregation planted New Beginnings in Brickerville in 2004. They met in the Brickerville fire hall until the fall of 2018, at which time they moved to Teen Center, Manheim. New Beginnings left the Church of the Brethren in 2022.

100. *Lirio de los Valles/Iglesia Berith, Oasis Esperanza*
2004
In 2004 Lirio de los Valles began meeting in the Lebanon Church of the Brethren building. They continue today as a fellowship, though they have changed their name to Iglesia Berith, Oasis Esperanza

101. *Paxton*   *2007*

The Brethren had been worshiping at Paxton for 142 years before they organized as a congregation. They began as a preaching point for the Big Swatara church, when the Paxton meetinghouse was constructed in 1865. Big Swatara continued as the congregational

structure for Paxton until 2007, when the two remaining houses for Big Swatara, Paxton and Hanoverdale, organized as separate congregations.

Figure 162 The Paxton meetinghouse. District file photo.

102. Hanoverdale   *2007*

The second congregation that formed from the remains of Big Swatara was Hanoverdale. Like Paxton, it was organized in 2007. The Hanoverdale meetinghouse was constructed in 1860 and has undergone several updates and expansions since.

Figure 163 Left: The Hanoverdale house, originally built in 1860. Joe Long photo 1951. Right: The current Hanoverdale house. District file photo.

103.   Light of the Gospel (NY)   *2009*

Light of the Gospel first began meeting as a Project in the Brooklyn First building in 2010. Around 2016 they moved to Staten Island, where they purchased a building and continue to meet as a fellowship. Light of the Gospel is an Arabic fellowship.

104. Un Nuevo Renacer   *2009*

Beginning as a Project in 2009, this group worshiped in the Conestoga Church of the Brethren in Leola under the name Renacer. By 2017 Renacer was struggling, but the membership was determined to be successful. They relocated to meet in the Mountville Church of the Brethren that year and were reborn as Un Nuevo Renacer fellowship. They experienced considerable growth since then and organized as a congregation in 2022.

105. Sanford (Maine)   *2011*

Sanford was one of three church plants in Maine under the leadership of the Brethren Revival Fellowship. Sanford closed in 2022.

106. Source of Grace   *2012*

Source of Grace was a Haitian Project meeting in Hyde Park, New York. They closed in 2022.

107. Potter's House   *2012*

In 2012 a new church plant named Potter's House was launched in Long Island, New York. It disassociated with the Brethren shortly afterwards.

108. Iglesia los Cielos Abiertos *2015*

The city of Reading has long been a center of cultural diversity. This group was planted in 2015 but was closed in 2020.

109. Veritas   *2019*

Ryan Braught was on the Pastoral staff at the Hempfield Church of the Brethren when he had a vision of a congregation that was intentional in following Christ. With the support of the Atlantic Northeast District, a new Project named Veritas was planted, with Braught as the Pastor. The first service was held in the English Presbyterian Church in Marietta, PA, on September 13, 2009. They gained Fellowship status in 2016 and congregational status in 2019.

Figure 164 Eastern Mennonite Missions, 450 North Prince St., Lancaster, PA, where Veritas rents space to meet. District file photo.

Places where Veritas has met
English Presbyterian Church- 2009-2010
Braughts' home- 2010-2011
Community Room on Prince- 2011-2013
Community Room on King- 2013-2021
Eastern Mennonite Missions- 2021-Present

110. Ebenezer

Ebenezer began in July 2019 as a Project, meeting in the Lampeter congregation's house. They gained fellowship status in 2022.

111. *Light of the Gospel, New Jersey*   *2020*

Planted by Light of the Gospel of New York, this New Jersey Project began in 2020 in Paramus, New Jersey, less than 20 miles from Midtown Manhattan, New York. They soon moved to nearby Cresskill, New Jersey, where they rent space in the Evangelical Free Church. Like their mother congregation in Staten Island, this is an Arabic Project.

Part V.

The Brethren Witness Today

Farming is often taken for granted. Unless you have worked on a farm it is difficult to grasp the responsibility and the risk involved. When is the best time to plant? Which crop will provide the best results? Will the weather enhance the crop or destroy it? Agriculture is a gamble, at best. So is life.

Perhaps this is why Jesus so frequently used agricultural images to portray spiritual truths. For example, our Lord used the image of a seed and the process of planting on more than one occasion. The parable of the sower. Faith is like a mustard seed. The parable of the wheat and the weeds.

When we think of planting seeds, we become aware of the miraculous way in which the seed transforms into a large and productive plant. On the day when Jesus rode into Jerusalem to begin that final, fateful week which we call "Holy", he clearly had a plan in mind. He needed to clarify with his disciples the magnitude of the task before them. When some Greeks approached the disciples and requested a chance to see Jesus, our Lord said,

23 "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. (John 12:23-24) NIV

We read over that but seldom stop to think about it. A seed needs to die before the plant can grow. The seed must, of its own accord, crack open – or be broken – before any growth can happen. If the seed is not broken, growth will never be realized.

The believers called Brethren learned this the hard way. As soon as they planted a few seeds in their native Germany they were met with persecution. On several occasions they were forced to relocate to another municipality in search of a place where they could worship without fear. Eleven years after the first Brethren baptism, Peter Becker led a contingent of believers to the area of Pennsylvania. Encouraged by William Penn's vision of religious tolerance, they had hoped to find a place that was void of external threats. While this proved to be largely true. A new threat developed from within. The

controversy created by one of their ministers, Conrad Beissel, tore the young colonial church apart. But it was not a clean break. For six years they struggled with what they believed in and how they would live. At times it can feel like a planted seed will never sprout. But there is a lot going on under the surface. Like the seed, this band of faithful souls forced their way through the barrier of soil to begin taking the form of a church.

The growth was truly remarkable. Sometimes it takes controversy and hardship to force us to discover what we truly believe. This appears to have been the case for the early Brethren. They were, in many ways, tested by fire, yet this fire proved to make them stronger and enabled them to clarify who they were and what they believed. Without the modern benefits of advertising, transportation, media hype, and public relations, this group began to develop into a strong, tight-knit fellowship of believers. For example, after struggling for ten years in the shadow of Beissel, the Conestoga congregation only had 20 members in 1734 when they formally separated from the Ephrata Community. Just 14 years later, by 1748, Conestoga had 200 members (*Brumbaugh, page* 302). This was in large part due to the excellent leadership of Elder Michael Frantz. But it also was strengthened by a very tight bond of fellowship bolstered by faith.

For the first one hundred years they continued to multiply at a steady pace. Milton Hershey, the famous chocolatier, is said to have resisted commercial advertising, insisting instead that word of mouth is the best form of advertisement. This rang true for the Brethren 160 years before the Hershey Chocolate Company began. We do not know how many house churches met regularly for worship here in eastern Pennsylvania during those first one hundred and fifty years, but we have identified over a hundred and twenty. It led to impressive growth figures that not only saw an increase in believers, but also nurtured an unusually close affinity with one another. Every indication suggests that this was largely through the use of house churches. Such a model enhanced the sense of fellowship and belonging. The house church model promoted sincere love and appreciation for one another. It also maintained unity and identity with the larger Church through the ministry of Elders who traveled much in their role as overseer of numerous house churches.

The success of these early Brethren can be summed up in a few key observations.

1. They had a deep commitment to what they believed. Their faith was of the 24/7 variety and not just one day a week.

2. The focus was on personal growth, nurturing fellowship, and corporate worship. By using the house church model for as long as they did, they managed to keep a sharp focus on their goal of spreading the Gospel rather than exalting themselves. Even after they began to show an openness to building houses of worship, they intentionally kept them at a manageable level. By adopting the meetinghouse model that was devoid of any glamor or show, they managed to keep their faith authentic. Whether in the home or in the meetinghouse, their place of worship became a place of Sacred Simplicity.

3. They tried to keep each fellowship at a personal level of engagement. When a congregation began to grow to the point that the intimacy of Christian fellowship was threatened, they mutually agreed to divide into multiple groups, as opposed to remaining one large body. This personal appeal was integral to achieving their purpose. It follows, then, that they truly did grow by division. While the mega-church model is considered by some today to be the ideal approach to doing church, most Brethren would disagree. For this group of believers, it is vitally important to know one another in order to serve one another. The concept of a 2,000-member church is not fathomable. The *Gemeinschaft* so valued by Brethren cannot exist in such an environment. This is not to say that one model is better than another. God can be worshiped and glorified in both settings. For Brethren, however, it is important to remember that our highest form of worship is expressed in the agape love experienced in deep fellowship with fellow believers. This is a call for holy intimacy.

4. Even as the Brethren grew and expanded their number of congregations and members, they managed to continue sharing a common identity.   This was intentional. Congregations had multiple preaching locations, whether in homes or in meetinghouses or both. This resulted in a localized bond and a sense of continuity. As these became increasingly viable, some organized as congregations. Congregations within a region shared the leadership of an elder, which helped to sustain consistency and familiarity.

5. The Elders also provided a sense of accountability. Elders took their role seriously.

6. Annual Meeting also provided an opportunity to preserve unity across a wider geographic base. Annual Meeting

not only acted as a familial reunion, it insured a standard doctrine and theological foundation. Rather than individual congregations developing their own identity, the Brethren chose to yield to the wisdom of the larger body of faith.

      7. The unique genius of Alexander Mack's vision to bring together the personal, spirit-filled inspiration of Pietism with the community emphasis and hands-on faith of Anabaptism provided the Brethren with an unusual but successful approach to Church life.

      There clearly is a growing call for independence today. We see it in the political realm, but it seems especially strong in the religious realm. American Christianity seems to be heading in a more independent, separatist direction. The number of independent, non-affiliated congregations is increasing. Many of these are becoming mega-churches. Even among the Brethren this trend can be seen. In the past four years the Church of the Brethren has lost many congregations who have felt the need to withdraw from the denomination. Many have created a new denomination called the Covenant Brethren Church. This has been quite popular in the Southeastern United States. However, most of the congregations that have left the Church of the Brethren In the Atlantic Northeast have chosen to remain independent.

      This is not a criticism of those who choose to separate. Our sisters and brothers who feel the need to follow a different path are equally committed to the Faith. Make no mistake about it, Alexander Mack and the Schwarzenau Brethren were separatists, to a degree. They broke away from the churches in which they were raised and formed a new church. But having done that, they were committed to remaining a tight-knit group even as they grew and spread across the land. Mack had a high regard for Hochman Von Hochenau, yet he rejected Hochman's isolationism. Mack felt strongly that we need one another to grow and become ever nearer to Christ. One person, no matter how devoted and gifted they may be, cannot comprehend the vastness of God. By coming together, by humbling ourselves before one another and accepting spiritual insight and personal accountability from each other, we grow individually and corporately.

      The house church and meetinghouse models served to enhance this conviction that we are stronger in faith and practice when we are united with our brothers and sisters in a tight, spiritual bond. As this is true for individuals, it holds great value also for congregations. At every level of spirituality – whether personal or as a group – we need the

accountability and the mutual commitment of the larger body of Christ. Fundamental to our Pietist roots is the understanding that one candle of Truth can shine brighter when it is joined with another candle of Truth. In other words, as we study the Word of God in the privacy of our homes, then come together with our fellow believers and share the pieces of Truth we have each discovered, there is a greater, more complete unveiling that all can experience.

Faith need not be complicated. It only needs to be real. Like the Apostle Paul, we have not truly attained it, but we keep pressing toward it. Perhaps we would be wise to stop taking on the responsibility of making "church" happen through our planning and our agendas, and instead, allow the Holy Spirit of God to anoint us with his Sacred Simplicity.

This model continues to be relevant today. Congregations such as Veritas prove its validity. East Cocalico is an example of a larger congregation, in this case, Ephrata, deciding to plant a new congregation a few miles away using their own members living in that area as a seed group. Yes, there is the seed motif once again! This is exactly the same as the Brethren did throughout the 18 and 19th centuries.

This raises a question for the Brethren to consider today. Is it better for a congregation to build a larger facility when they outgrow their current one? Or should they consider planting a new congregation within a few miles, thus creating two viable congregations instead of one larger, potentially less personal one? Advantages to growth by division include less property maintenance, more practical use of resources, more intimate fellowship, a more personal ministry, and the possibility for expanded evangelism covering a larger area than what one congregation might be able to do. But there are disadvantages, too. One obvious problem would be leadership. In an age when the Church of the Brethren is experiencing a serious shortage of pastors, is it advisable to create more openings by planting more churches? We are already challenged to fill our current pulpits. Here again, there may be value in looking at our roots to consider a shared ministry between two or more congregations, not unlike the former method of elders overseeing multiple preaching points. Furthermore, though the tendency these days is to consolidate and establish congregations that function somewhat autonomously, would we find value in pooling resources together among nearby congregations, along the lines of the 18th and 19th century practice of one congregation having administrative and financial responsibility for multiple meetinghouses? Surely such structures need not be exact duplicates of

past practices. Nevertheless, there may be some characteristics worth considering.

Struggling with such questions can make us stronger. May we never be so confident, so arrogant to believe ours is the only way to do "church". Rather, let us always cling to the image of the Church as the Body of Christ, a living, learning, changing entity that is always in process. Striking a delicate balance between a tightknit fellowship and mutual accountability, with the freedom to express faith in ways that are meaningful and personal, is never easy. But one wonders if this is not the ideal result of a Pietist-Anabaptist Church.

The presence of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought a new challenge to churches everywhere. The Brethren, like other groups, learned to adapt once again by making use of modern technology. Even before the pandemic a few congregations were offering online worship as an option. This became critical when we were forced to stop meeting for an extended period of time. Here again, the challenge of a potential crisis gave birth to a viable alternative. "Cyber-church", or whatever name we choose to give it, provided a way to remain connected. Even after we began meeting in person most congregations continue to have both in-person and online worship together.

Some congregations have become very creative. The Ambler Church of the Brethren, for example, offers the option of online worshipers to be seen on a large screen, making them feel more a part of the gathering. The Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren encourages an online sign-in to enable congregational leaders to know who is worshiping with them. They also provide a means for real-time online prayer requests to be submitted.

For some, the online experience may seem impersonal and not authentic. Like so many other activities, it is what the individual makes it to be. Real time online worship enables a person to be involved in the congregation of their choice even if they cannot be there in person due to illness, travel, lack of transportation, or any number of reasons. Some congregations have become international by regularly welcoming persons from other countries into their weekly fellowship. Shut-ins who cannot worship with the church they have long been a part of due to their physical limitations can now rejoin their beloved brothers and sisters. College students living out of the area can also remain closely tied to their home congregation. The possibilities are endless. In fact, the Church of the Brethren even has one congregation, Living Stream, that is entirely virtual.

Clearly, the Brethren have experienced a great deal of change in the three hundred years since that first baptism in the Wissahickon Creek on December 25, 1723. We have transitioned from a strictly German sect to a multi-cultural body. Such a transition has been slow, but it is increasing. In the past twenty-two years, that is, in the twenty-first century, the Atlantic Northeast District has created thirteen Projects, Fellowships or Congregations. Of these, four are primarily Latino, two are Haitian, two are Arabic. The remaining five are Caucasian. However, two of those were conservative Brethren Revival Fellowship plants that have since left the denomination. We are clearly undergoing some ethnic diversity.

Our transformation can also be seen in our houses of worship. We have moved from the house church model to the meetinghouse model as a means for gathering. The meetinghouse design experienced considerable change through the years, too. Today, a few congregations continue to meet in their original meetinghouse, with some necessary updates and alterations. Others have constructed modernized facilities with conveniences and technologies that the old elders would not recognize. Is this any less Brethren? Not if we remember that our faith is personal and interpersonal, rather than material. Like many aspects of our Brethren identity, architecture must be seen as a tool for ministry. Having said that, architecture has and continues to hold significant value to assist us as we seek to interpret our core values and doctrines to an unbelieving world. In other words, what do our places of worship say about us and what we believe?

Congregations are becoming increasingly sensitive to making their places of worship accessible to persons with disabilities. More needs to be done in this regard. For example, how many of our congregations have a chancel area that is accessible for a person in a wheel chair, or who may need a hand rail to ascend a few steps? Many persons with autism may be sensitive to sound levels, or other tactile issues. Are these provided with alternatives that allow them to be comfortable and included?

Certainly, one statement that can be made from our places of worship is this: we are a diverse people! Some of our groups meet in very modern structures, while others meet in very old and traditional ones. Some meet in space that they rent. Former movie theaters, office buildings, community centers and buildings that once housed more formal denominations all provide the Brethren with space where we can worship God and meet the needs of our brothers and sisters. Any

188

one of these can became an expression of "Sacred Simplicity" as together we continue this pilgrimage of faith.

APPENDIX A

The Manheim Union Meetinghouse

What was the very first meetinghouse ever used by the Brethren? Most of us will answer without hesitation by saying "Germantown". Don't be too sure about that!

There is a curious story related in <u>History of the Church of the Brethren Eastern District of Pennsylvania 1708-1915.</u> On pages 392-393, there is an account told second hand of a union house in Manheim. It was a log house, 30 x 40, built by and for the joint use of the Lutheran Church, Reformed Church, the Mennonites and the Brethren. Rineer says it was located just South of 22 North Charlotte Street, Manheim. Henry Giebel was the trustee for the Brethren. Zug calculates that it likely was built between 1762-1770. Rineer (p. 362), with more accurate records, agrees that it was built in 1762 and used by the four differing groups. There is some debate as to which of the four churches withdrew first. The Lutherans and the Reformed appear to have stopped using this log meetinghouse about the same time. The Reformed Church built their own place of worship in 1769 and later became known as St. Paul United Church of Christ. Their location is 50 North Main Street, Manheim. The Lutherans seemingly withdrew that same year, only they did so at the invitation of Henry Stiegel (often referred to as Baron Stiegel), who welcomed them to meet in his home in 1769. In 1772 this group built a log house of worship which later became known as Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church.

The third group to discontinue using the log house was the Mennonites, though it is not known when they stopped. Zug simply says "*the Mennonites about one mile north had their own (meetinghouse)".* This is almost certainly a reference to the Hernley Mennonite meetinghouse on the west side of PA 72, at Hernley Road, in Rapho Township. There are four Mennonite meetinghouses in the general area of Manheim, but only Hernley is one mile north of town. Hernley is also the oldest of the four, being built in 1766. The other three are Erb, to the east, Erisman to the southwest, and Reist to the southeast. These three were all built at the end of the eighteenth century, making them unlikely candidates.   Hernley was built four years after the log meetinghouse in Manheim. Zug suggests the Mennonites were already worshiping in a meetinghouse when they discontinued use of the log house. Indications are that all four church groups stopped using the log

house within a few years of each other. It seems safe to conclude, therefore, that this early house of worship was used from 1762 until possibly the mid to late 1770's, roughly fifteen years at the most.

While much remains a mystery concerning this building, we do know that after the other three groups pulled out, the Brethren returned to worshiping in homes rather than building their own meetinghouse or taking sole ownership of the log house. Zug says the log house then was used as a school.

According to the story, the Manheim schools used the building until 1870, when they sold it to Benjamin Donavan. Donavan, in turn, sold it to Barbara Manley, who lived there for a while with her daughter until she later had it torn down to build a new home on the same site.

It seems odd that the Brethren would have shared this house with three other churches, each using it once every four weeks, and then abandon it when the other churches pulled out. Why did they not simply take sole possession of it? If this can be confirmed, it would be the earliest use of a meetinghouse in Brethren history. Even the Germantown meetinghouse was not built until 1770. Thus, the Manheim Union House predates Germantown by eight years. Of course, the Brethren were only co-owners of the log house in Manheim. Still, it is a remarkably early use of a house dedicated for worship, especially considering the resistance demonstrated by the Brethren.

There is at least one possible complication to this. The list of worship locations found on page 396 in Zug appears to be before 1772 (see the reasoning for this dating above). The Manheim Union house does not appear specifically on that list. However, there are two possibilities to consider. First, the name of Henry Giebel appears on the list. The spelling is different, but it clearly represents the same person. The spelling on the list is Henrich Gibble. As stated previously, he was the Trustee representing the Brethren. Second, the list of meeting locations may predate the meetinghouse. A closer examination of all the individuals mentioned on that list together with when they lived may verify this theory.

- gdg

APPENDIX   B

House Churches, Alphabetized by Host

Host	*Congregation*
Baker, Frederick	Big Swatara
Balsbach , Henry	Big Swatara
Balsbach, Peter	Big Swatara
Berst, John	Big Swatara
Blauch, Michael	Big Swatara
Bamberger, Christian (Possibly Bomberger)	Conestoga
Becker, Peter and Anna	Germantown
Berber, John	Big Swatara
Best, William family	Wilmington
Bollinger, Jacob	Conestoga
Bollinger, Samuel	Conestoga
Alice J. Boone	Brooklyn First
Brubaker, Cyrus	Midway
Brubaker, Isaac	Midway
Brubaker, Samuel	Midway
Braught, Ryan	Veritas
Bucher, George and Fianna	Mechanic Grove
Bucher, Jacob	White Oak
Bucher, Jacob	Midway
Burkholder, Henry	Conestoga

(someone named Burkholder also appears under Ephrata in 1872-75.   This may be the same person or possibly someone different. Ephrata was organized apart from Conestoga in 1864.)

Crouse, John	Little Swatara
Detwiler, John	Skippack
Duboy, Abraham	Great Swamp
Brother Eckman	Mechanic Grove
Eshelman, Isaac	White Oak
Fitzwater, Abel	Green Tree
Fox, Samuel	Big Swatara
Gantz, George	Germantown
Geib, Abraham	Midway

Geib, Jacob	White Oak
Geib, Jonas	Midway
Gibble, Abraham and Barbara	White Oak
Gibble, Daniel	White Oak
Gibble, George	White Oak
(This name is also found under Little Swatara in 1875)	
Gibble, Henry and Barbara	White Oak
Gibble, Samuel	White Oak
Graybill, Abraham	Conestoga
Graybill (Grebiel), Daniel	White Oak
Graybill, Jacob H. and Sarah	White Oak
Graybill, Jr. (Grebiel), Samuel	White Oak
Graybill, Sr. (Grebiel) Samuel	White Oak
Groff, Abraham	White Oak
Groff, John	White Oak
Gumre, John	Germantown
Henry, Wendell	Big Swatara
Herr, Henry	Mountville
Herr, John and Elizabeth	Mountville
Herr, Tobias and Catherine	Mechanic Grove
Hutchinson, Woodrow	White Oak
Höhn, Heinrich & Christina	Conestoga
Horst, Henry, Sr.	Midway
Jordan, John & family	Wilmington
Kalkglässer, Johan Heinrich	Germantown/ Conestoga
Kauffman, Christian	White Oak
Kauffman, Peter	Springfield
Kauffman, Samuel	Springfield
Keller, George and Elizabeth	Ephrata
Keller, Michael and Elizabeth	Ephrata
Kinsey, John	White Oak
Kintzel, William	Little Swatara
Kline, Benjamin	Big Swatara
Kurtz, (Widow)	Little Swatara
Kulp, S. K.	Pottstown
Landis, "Ephrata" John & Margaret	Conestoga
Landis, Joseph	Conestoga
Landis, Samuel	Conestoga
Langenecker, Christian & Margaret	White Oak
Langenecker, E.	White Oak

Langenecker, G.	White Oak
Lehman, John	Conestoga?
Leisey, Peter	Conestoga
Loss, Samuel	Conestoga
Maldeis, A. B.	Montreal
Mark, Kate	Palmyra
Mayer, Abraham	White Oak
Minnich, Abraham	White Oak
Minnich, Jacob & Elizabeth	Conestoga/West Conestoga
Minnich, John l. & Barbara	Mechanic Grove
Mohler, Johann	Conestoga
Mohler, Levi and Magdalena	Ephrata
Mohler, Simon & Mary	Ephrata
Moyer, Henry	Springfield
Mumma, Elizabeth	Conestoga
Nägele, Rudolph & Elizabeth	Conestoga
Pfautz, Jacob	Conestoga
Pfautz, Jacob, Jr.	Conestoga
Pfautz, Johann	Conestoga
Pfautz, Joseph	Conestoga
Price, Benjamin	Springfield
Price, John	Coventry
Rothrock, Isaac	Great Swamp
Reyer, Henrich (possibly Royer)	Conestoga
Reyber, Jacob	Conestoga
Rigler, Philip	Conestoga
Royer, Cyrus and Susan	Mechanic Grove
Royer, David	Conestoga
Royer, Henry	White Oak
Royer, Johan	Conestoga
Royer, Joseph and Catherine	Conestoga
Rupp, Christian	Conestoga
Sauer, Christopher, Sr.	Germantown
Shoemaker, Samuel (aka Sem Schumacher)	White Oak
Shoop, John	Big Swatara
Shuler, Moses	Springfield
Stauffer, Adam	Springfield
Stauffer, George	Big Swatara
Stehman, Jacob and Margaret	White Oak

Traut, John	Germantown
Trumbauer, Harrison	Springfield
Umstad, John	Green Tree
Urner, Martin and Catherine	Coventry
Wenger, Jacob and Lydia	Little Swatara
Wibber, Daniel (may be Webber)	Conestoga
Wolf, (Widow)	Little Swatara
Yoder, David	Springfield
Young, Galen	Drexel Hill
Young, John (also seen as Jung)	White Oak
Zigler, E.	Big Swatara
Zuck, Peter	Great Swamp
Zug, John	Conestoga/White Oak
Zug, Michael	Tulpehocken/Lebanon

"Residence at 2610 West Lehigh Ave",
  Philadelphia, PA (no family name provided)
                                        Geiger Memorial

APPENDIX C

Index of Congregations: Alphabetized

Paoli Immanuel
Parker Ford
Paxton
Peach Blossom
Pequea Valley (Gap)
Philadelphia Bethany
Philadelphia Calvary
Philadelphia First
Potters House
Pottstown
Providence
Puerta del Cielo
Quakertown
Reading/Wyomissing
Richland
Ridgely
Ridgeway Community
Royersford   131
Salunga
Sand Brook
Sanford Fellowship
Schuylkill

Shamokin
Skippack
Source of Grace
Spring Creek, Hershey
Spring Grove
Springfield
Springville
Stevens Hill
Swatara
Swatara Hill
Tulpehocken
Un Nuevo Renacer
Fellowship
Upper Dublin (Ambler)
Veritas
West Conestoga (renamed
    Middle Creek)
West Green Tree
White Oak
Wilmington
Wyomissing

APPENDIX D

Former Congregations, Fellowships and Projects

(These are listed in the order in which they were organized)

Congregation/Fellowship	Organized	Closed
Oley	1732	ca. 1770
Great Swamp	1735	ca. 1780
Northkill	1748	ca. 1775
White Oak	1772	2022
Big Swatara	ca. 1798	2007
Tulpehocken	1841	1919
Sand Brook	*Left German Baptist Brethren 1848*	
	Reunited with GBB 1880	
	Left GBB 1896	
	Merged with Amwell 1912	
West Conestoga/Middle Creek		
	1864	2022
Chiques	1868	2022
Mingo	1868	1993
	merge with Royersford to form Providence. (1993)	
Bethel, NJ	1876	1896
	merged with Sand Brook, departing GBB (1896).	
	In 1912, reunited with Amwell and the Brethren.	
	Bethel was closed as a meetinghouse in 1939.	
Peach Blossom	1881	1944 *transfer to Mardela*
Ridgely	1884	1944 *transfer to Mardela*
North Philadelphia	1888	1896
Shamokin	1889	1967
Montreal	1899	1902 *transfer to Brethren Church*
Royersford	1901	1993
	merged with Mingo to form Providence	
Midway	1902	2020
Norristown	1903	1973
Denton	1909	1911
	transfer to Eastern Maryland	
Bethany, Philadelphia	1910	?
Akron	1913	2023

Lake Ridge	1915	1977
East Petersburg	1918	1974

Merged with Salunga to form Hempfield

Fredericksburg/		
Mount Zion Road	1919	2019
Freeville ca.	1922	1926
Calvary, Philadelphia	1923	1972
Calvary, Brooklyn	1926	1968

Merged with Brooklyn First

Allentown	1938	1964
Salunga	1948	1974

Merged with East Petersburg to form Hempfield

Cocalico	1959	2020
Paoli Immanuel	1963	1983
Lewiston	1982	2022
Pequea Valley (Gap)	1984	1990
ACTS Covenant	1987	2003
Brunswick	1987	unsure
Open Door – Sunlin fellowship		
	1991	1995
Templo El Aposento	1992	1993
Haitian First, N. Y.	1992	2019
Liberty Tabernacle	1992	unsure
New Beginnings	2004	2022
Sanford	2011	2022
Source of Grace	2012	2022
Potter's House	2012 ca.	2015
Iglesia los Cielos Abiertos	2015	2020

APPENDIX E

Meetinghouses: Chronological Order

The meetinghouses of the Atlantic Northeast District and its predecessors are here listed in chronological order according to the date built or used. Where more than one date appears, separated by a hyphen, it represents meetinghouses that were replaced by another but kept the same name. Such meetinghouses are also followed by a number to identify it as one in a series of buildings by that name.

Key:
* A union house co-built and co-used by the Brethren
** A union house built by another denomination or person but used at times by the Brethren. (These are also italicized to set them apart.)
+A building not built by the Brethren but used exclusively by the Brethren at some point. These are not union houses.

Common Name of House	Date Built
*Manheim Union	1762
Germantown	1770
Coventry (1)	1772 -1817
Pricetown	1777
Amwell (1)	1811-1856
Reiff's/Towamencin/Fry	1814
Coventry (2)	1817 - 1890
Philadelphia First (1)	1817 - 1872 *(Crown St.)*
Middle Creek (1)	1824 - 1874
*Carpenter Union	ca. 1824
*Lumberville Union	1832
**Moonshine Union*	*1836*
Upper Dublin	1840
Royers/Tulpehocken	1840
*Hatfield Union	1840
**Roland*	*1842*
Parkerford (1)	1843 - 1889
Klein's	1843

Green Tree (1)	1845 - 1995
*Millport Union	1846
Petersburg (1)	ca.1847 - 1873
Steinmetz (aka Brick)	1847
Merkey	1848
Spring Creek, Hershey (1)	1848 - 1886
**Sand Brook*	*1848*
**Eden Union*	*1848*
**Voganville Union*	*1848*
Bethel, NJ (1)	1849 - 1876
Millbach	1850
**Strickler Union*	*1851*
Hatfield (1)	1851 - 1928
Indian Creek (1)	first one, date unknown - 1906
**East Petersburg (1)*	*1850*
(2)	1873 – rebuilt by the Brethren
Springville	1854
Conewago (aka Hoffer's)	1854
Skippack	1857
Chiques	1856
Amwell (2)	18 56
**Union House*	*1859*
Kreider	1859
**Swatara Hill*	*1859*
Longenecker	1859
Lehn/Lane	ca. 1860
Hanoverdale	1860
Eby	1860
Graybill (1)	1861 - 1881
**Mount Airy Union*	*1861*
**Schoeneck Union*	*1861*
Kemper (1)	1864 - 1961
Paxton	1865
**Flickinger Union*	*1865*
Strouphour	1865/1888
Springfield	1866
Blainsport/Reinholdsville	1866
Mohrsville	1867
Heidelberg	1867
Moyer	1868/1888
West Green Tree	1869

Mingo	ca. 1869
Norristown	1869
Lexington	1869 (*or* 1859)
Hanoverdale	1869
South Annville	1869
**Eden Union*	*1869-1870*
Neffsville	1870
+Elizabethtown (1)	+1870
***Richland Hall - Union*	*+converted to a meetinghouse 1870*
Cornwall (aka Bucher)	1871
Mohler	1872
Gibble/White Oak	1872
***Lancaster (1)*	*Mulberry & Grant, bought 1872*
***Lancaster (2)*	*Charlotte St. 1873*
***Miller/ Mount Airy Union*	*1873*
Petersburg (2)	1873
Philadelphia First (2)	1873 – 1890 *(980 Marshall St.)*
Middle Creek (2)	1874 – 1961
+Elizabethtown (2)	+1875
Blue Ball	1875
Frystown	1875
Zeigler (2)	1875
Manor	1876
Myerstown	1876
Bethel, NJ (2)	1876
***Bucher Union (Denver)*	*1877*
Light's	1877
Hoernerstown	1878
Harmonyville	1880
+Refton	*1880* (bought in 1898)
Mountville	1881
Graybill (2)	1881
Fishing Creek Valley	1881
Spring Creek, Hershey (2)	1886
Salunga	1887
Boonesboro	1885 – 1908
+Lititz (1)	1887 – 1926 (Willow St.)
Bird In Hand	1888
Elizabethtown (3)	1888
Bethel, MD	1889
Parkerford (2)	1889

Ephrata (1)	1889 – 1974
Denver	ca. 1890 *(replaced Bucher's)*
Coventry (3)	1890
Philadelphia First (3)	1891-1956*(Carlisle St.)*
+Intercourse (1)	1862
Spring Grove	1892
Palmyra	1892
Manheim	1893
Royersford	1893
Graterford	1893
East Fairview	1894
**Bainbridge (built 1866; Brethren bought 1894; sold 1908)*	
***Bareville Union*	*1859*
Midway	1895
***Sporting Hill Union*	*1896*
Reading	1897
Mechanic Grove	1898
Akron	1898
Rheems	1903
***Lebanon*	*unknown*
Stevens Hill schoolhouse	1904
Harrisburg	1904
Annville	1906 *(Maple & Ziegler Sts)*
Indian Creek (2)	1906
Bethany Philadelphia	1908
+Quakertown (Beulah Chapel)	unknown,
Brooklyn First	1908
Cocalico	1909
Denton (2)	1910
***Strickler Union*	*1851*
Mount Hope	1910
Fredericksburg	1910
*Rankstown Union	date unknown
Bachmanville	1911
Swope's Valley	1911
Shamokin	1911
Stevens Hill	1911
+Florin	1875
Richland	1913
Bareville	1915
White Oak (1)	1915 – 1967 *(replaced Gibble)*

Big Dam		1917
Rankstown		1920
Calvary Philadelphia		1920
Ambler		1922
Shubert Union		1923
Lititz (2)		*1926 – 1962 (Center St.)*
Wilmington		1926
Calvary Brooklyn		1926
Hatfield (2)		1928
Zimmerman's		1932
Lebanon (1)		1933
Allentown		1938
Long Run	+	1939
Lebanon (2)		*1940*
Annville (2)		*1949*
Manheim (2)		*1949*
Jennersville		1951
Blue Ball (2)		*1951*
Mingo (2)		*1952*
Drexel Hill	+	1953
Mount Wilson (1)		1955
Philadelphia First (4)		*1956 (West Cheltenham)*
Elizabethtown (4)		*1956 (Mt. Joy St.)*
Mount Wilson (2)		*1957*
Lancaster (3)		1959 *(Rutledge and Sunset)*
Quakertown (2)		1960
Kemper (2)		1961
Middle Creek (3)		*1961*
Lititz (3)		*1962 (Orange St.)*
Paoli Immanuel		1962
Ridgeway Community		1963
Myerstown (2)		*1971*
Ephrata(2)		*1974*
Akron (2)		*1974*
Hempfield		1974
White Oak (2)		*1981* (*on Penryn Road.*)
Pottstown First (2)		*1989*
East Cocalico	+	1991
Green Tree (2)		*1995*

APPENDIX F

Index of Meetinghouses: Alphabetized

Akron
Allentown
Alpha and Omega
Ambler
Amwell
Annville
Bachmanville
Bainbridge
Bareville
Bethel, MD
Bethel, NJ
Bethany, Philadelphia
Big Dam
Bird In Hand
Blainsport
Blue Ball
Boonesboro
Brooklyn First
Bucher Union, Denver
Calvary, Brooklyn
Calvary, Philadelphia
Carpenter Union
Chiques
Cocalico
Conestoga
Conewago
Cornwall (aka Bucher's)
Coventry
Denton
Denver
Drexel Hill
East Cocalico
East Fairview
East Hanover
East Petersburg

Eby
Eden Union
Elizabethtown
Ephrata
Fishing Creek Valley
Flickinger Union
Florin
Fredericksburg
Fry
Frystown
Germantown
Gibble
Graterford
Graybill
Green Tree
Harmonyville
Hanoverdale
Harrisburg
Hatfield
Heidelberg
Hempfield
Hoernerstown
Indian Creek
Intercourse
Jennersville
Kemper
Klein's
Kreider
Lake Ridge
Lancaster
Lebanon
Lehn/Lane
Lexington
Light's
Lititz

Long Run
Longenecker
Lumberville
Maiden Creek
Manheim
Manheim Union
Manor
Mechanic Grove
Merkey's
Middle Creek
Midway
Millbach
Miller's (aka Mount Airy
        Union)
Millport Union
Mingo
Mohler
Mohrsville
Moonshine Union
Mount Airy (Miller's)
Mount Hope
Mount Wilson
Mountville
Moyer
Myerstown
Neffsville
Norristown
Palmyra
Parkerford
Paxton
Petersburg
Philadelphia First
Pottstown
Pricetown
Quakertown
Rankstown
Reading/Wyomissing

Reiff's
Reinholdsville
Rheems
Richland
Ridgely
Ridgeway Community
Royer's (Tulpehocken)
Royer's/Middle Creek
Royersford
Roland
Salunga
Sand Brook
Schoeneck Union
Shamokin
Shubert Union
Skippack
South Annville
Sporting Hill Union
Spring Creek, Hershey
Spring Grove
Springfield
Springville
Steinmetz
Stevens Hill
Strickler Union
Strouphour
Swatara Hill
Swope's Valley
Towamencin
Tulpehocken
Upper Dublin
Voganville Union
West Green Tree
White Oak
Wilmington
Zeigler

APPENDIX G

Love Feast Bench/Table

As the Brethren began to accept the use of meetinghouses in the 19th century, they slowly began to include the Love Feast as an acceptable activity within a meetinghouse. Previously, the Love Feast was held on the property of a member of the church, frequently utilizing the barn out of necessity for space and a nearby kitchen for meal preparation.

In the early days of the meetinghouse era, only certain meetinghouses were designated to be equipped for a Love Feast. To conserve space, and no doubt money, a special bench was designed that could be converted into a table. This was accomplished by pivoting the back of the bench into a horizontal position parallel to the seat. The result was a table.

The bench in front of the newly created table could have the back turned 180 degrees to create a bench facing the opposite direction. In this way they could create a table between two benches without the need to relocate any benches. The result was the forerunner to the modern-day multi-purpose room!

Like many aspects of Brethren practice, this was yet another expression of Sacred Simplicity. The Love Feast service is widely considered our highest and deepest spiritual event.   It seems appropriate, therefore, to conduct such a service within the meetinghouse. These benches provide a way to do that while keeping a simple, modest building void of wasted space or expense.

The bench pictured below is presented courtesy of Amy Zimmerman, of the Elizabethtown, PA congregation. This bench is owned by her parents, who are members of the Mountville, PA, Church of the Brethren. They have affirmed that these benches came from the Manor meetinghouse, built 1876. Notice it is fourteen feet long, with an armrest/support midway.

The following photographs are of a bench that came from the Germantown, PA, meetinghouse. Unlike the Manor bench, this one is much shorter – about seven feet long, or half the size of the Manor bench. It is currently on display at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA. Note the difference in style, as the Germantown benches feature smoother lines and less decorative carvings. Still, the iron brace is identical, and can flip the back a full 180 degrees. These braces are designed so the back can also be removed completely, if desired. When necessary, the option was there to allow one row to sit facing forward, the second row converted to a table, and the third row to sit facing the rear, thus allowing people to sit on both sides of the table.

211

**Lancaster County
Brethren
House Churches
1724-1900**
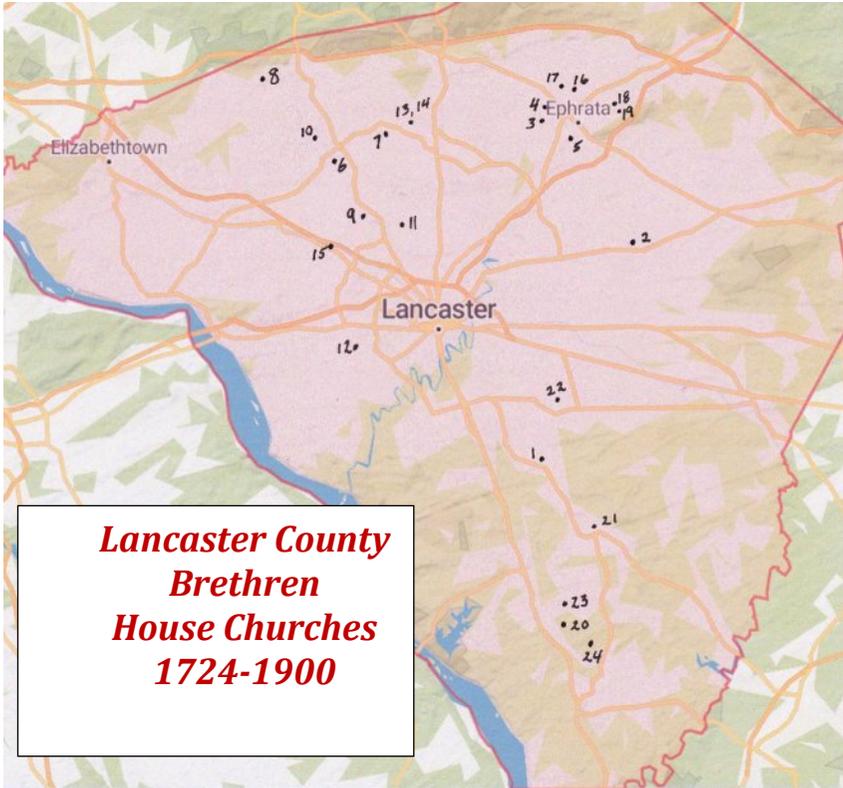
1. Heinrich & Christina Hohn
2. Rudolph & Elizabeth Nagele
3. "Ephrata" John & Margaret Landis
4. Joseph & Catherine Royer
5. Jacob & Elizabeth Minnich
6. Henrich & Barbara Minnich
7. Christian & Margaret Longenecker
8. Abraham & Barbara Gibbel
9. Jacob & Margaret Stehman
10. John Groff
11. Jacob & Sarah Graybill
12. Henry Herr, Sr.
13. Samuel & Salome Graybill, Sr.
14. Samuel & Barbara Graybill, Jr.
15. John H. & Elizabeth Herr
16. George & Elizabeth Keller
17. Michael & Elizabeth Keller
18. Simon & Mary Mohler
19. Levi & Magdalena Mohler
20. George Bucher
21. Cyrus & Susan Royer
22. Tobias & Catharine Herr
23. Jacob Eckman
24. John L. and Barbara Minnich

Lancaster County Meetinghouses
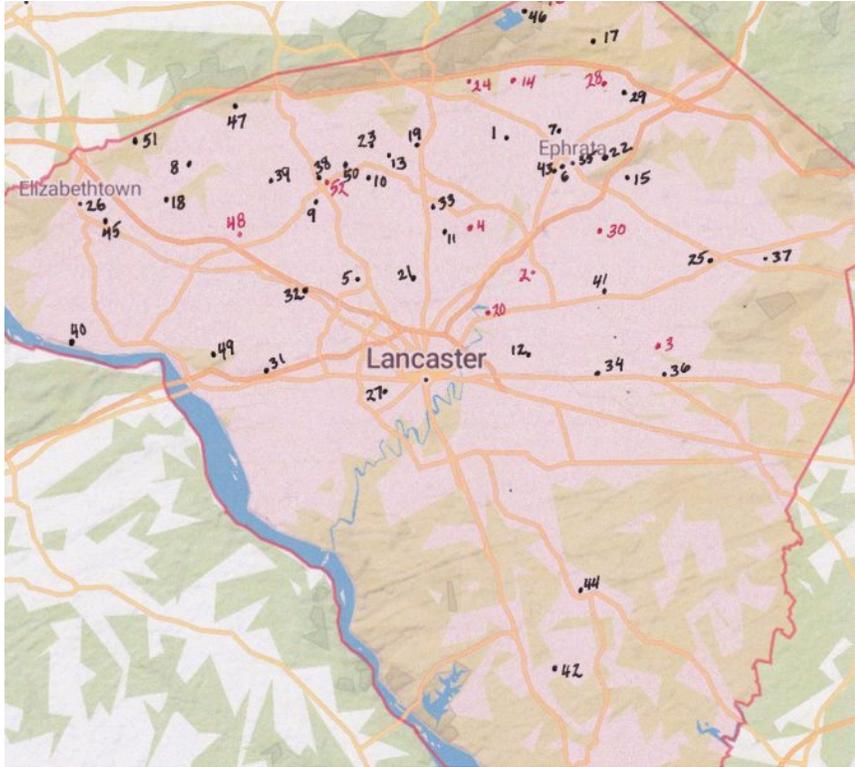
1. Middle Creek	12. Eby	23. Gibble	34. Bird In Hand	45. Rheems
2. Carpenter Union	13. Graybill	24. Miller/Mt. Airy	35. Ephrata	46. Cocalico
3. Roland Union	14. Schoeneck Union	25. Blue Ball	36. Intercourse	47. Mt. Hope
4. Millport Union	15. Kemper	26. Elizabethtown	37. Spring Grove	48. Strickler Union
5. Petersburg	16. Flickinger Union	27. Manor	38. Manheim	49. Florin
6. Steinmetz (aka Brick)	17. Blainsport	28. Bucher Union	39. Fairview	50. White Oak
7. Springville	18. West Green Tree	29. Denver	40. Bainbridge	51. Stevens Hill
8. Chiques	19. Lexington	30. Voganville	41. Bareville	52. Manheim Union
9. Kreider	20. Eden Union	31. Mountville	42. Mechanic Grove	
10. Longenecker	21. Neffsville	32. Salunga	43. Akron	
11. Lehn	22. Mohler	33. Lititz	44. Refton	

Index

Bibliography

Ault, Walter. *Chapel Has Long Varied History.* The Times Herald. Norristown, PA. May 11, 2009.

Bach, Jeff. *Voices of the Turtledoves: The Sacred World of Ephrata.* University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003.

Bieber, Charles M. *Keeping the Embers Aglow: 100 Years of the Ephrata Church of the Brethren.* Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 1999.

Bittinger, Emmert F. *Coventry Henry Landis of Schuylkill and Coventry.* Mennonite Family History. July 1993.

Bittinger, Emmert F. *Ephrata John "Hannes" Landis Of Lancaster County, PA*. Mennonite Family History. January and April 1994.

Bittinger, Emmert F. *John "Hannesli" Landis, Jr., and Wife, Anna Good, Of Earl Township, Lancaster County, PA.* Mennonite Family History. October 1993.

Brethren's Family Almanac 1875. Myersdale, PA. J. Quinter, and Huntingdon, PA. H. B. Brumbaugh & Bro. 1875

Brumbaugh, Martin G. *History of the German Baptist Brethren*. Brethren Publishing House, Mount Morris, IL. 1899.

Cramer, Peggy C. *Early Records of the Ambler Church of the Brethren.* Closson Press, Apollo PA. 1990.

Durnbaugh, Donald. *The Brethren in Colonial America.* The Brethren Press, Elgin IL. 1967.

Edwards, Morgan. *Materials Towards a History of the American Baptists.* Cruckshank & Collins, Philadelphia, PA. 1770.

Ellis and Evans. *History of Lancaster County Pennsylvania, With Biological Sketches of Many of It's Pioneers and Prominent Men.* Philadelphia, PA. Everts and Peck. 1883.

Falkenstein, George N. *History of the German Baptist Brethren*. New Era Printing, Lancaster PA. 1901. (Reprinted from Pennsylvania-German Society Annual, 1900)

Fitzkee, Donald R. *Moving Toward the Mainstream: 20th Century Change Among the Brethren of Eastern Pennsylvania.* Intercourse, PA. Good Books. 1995.

Gleim, Elmer Q. *From These Roots: A History of the North Atlantic District Church of the Brethren 1911-1970.* Forry and Hacker, Lancaster, PA. 1975.

Haunted Moonshine Church and the Blue Eyed Six. www.weirdpa.com

Hess Archives and Special Collections, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA

History of the Coventry Congregation: 250 Anniversary. Coventry Church of the Brethren 1974.

Holsinger, H. R. *History of the Tunkers*. Oakland, CA. Pacific Press Publishing. 1901.

Keyser, E. Grant, Chairman. *Green Tree Church of the Brethren in the Village of Oaks PA 1845-1945.*

Kurtz, Henry. *The Brethren's Encyclopedia*. Columbiana, Ohio. Kurtz, 1867

Lebanon Daily News. February 1, 1961; February 3, 1923.

Lamech and Agrippa *Chronicon Ephratense: A History of the Community of Seventh Day Baptists at Ephrata Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.* Lancaster PA: Zahm and Co. 1889.

Lynch, Michelle. *Revisiting Merkey Meetinghouse of Bethel Township PA.* Reading Eagle. August 19, 2021.

Montgomery, Morton L. *History of Berks County In Pennsylvania*. Philadelphia, Everts, Peck, & Richards. 1888

Orth, Richard L. T. *The Brethren Community of Pricetown*. Spring 2004 issue of the Historical Review of Berks County.

Frye, Nancy Kettering, William B, and Lockwood, Annette, *Pennsylvania Folklife Vol 41, No 1* (1992). Pennsylvania Folklife Magazine. 134

Sangmeister, Heinrich, *Life and Conduct of the late Brother Ezekiel Sangmeister*, Translated by Barbara M. Schindler, Ephrata, PA: The Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley, 1986.

Steely, Miriam K. *History of the Springfield Church of the Brethren.*

The Brethren Encyclopedia. United States, Brethren Encyclopedia, Incorporated, 1983.

Francis, J. G. *The Church of the Brethren (Dunkers) In Lebanon County* : Paper Read Before The Lebanon County Historical Society Sept. 15, 1916

Urner, Isaac N. *A History of the Coventry Brethren Church in Chester County, PA.* J. B. Lippencott Co. 1898

Winger, Otho; Longenecker, J. H.; Studebaker, George L. *Revised Minutes of the Annual Meetings of the Church of the Brethren From 1778 to 1922.* Elgin Il. Brethren Publishing House. 1922

Zeigler, Carl W., Secretary, District Historical Committee. *History of the Church of the Brethren Eastern PA 1915-1965.* Lancaster PA, Forry and Hacker. 1965.

Zug, S. R., Chair. *History of the Church of the Brethren Eastern Pennsylvania 1708-1915*. The New Era Printing Co, Lancaster PA. 1915

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

George Douglas Gehr is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. He has served five pastorates and two interim pastorates over his forty-two year career. Born and raised in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, Doug and his wife returned to his hometown in 2006.

Gehr currently serves as the Chair of the Atlantic Northeast District Church of the Brethren Historical Committee. He also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Historical Society of the Cocalico Valley, the Board of Directors of the Ephrata Cloister Associates, and is a volunteer tour guide at the Historic Ephrata Cloister .

Gehr has written eight books that are available at www.peaceabilitypress.blog.