



# Schweitzer Salt

Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association

September 2011

## Curator of German Mennonite Historical Library to Speak at SMCHA October Banquet

Gary J. Waltner, curator of the library and archives at the Mennonite Historical Society of Germany in Weierhof, will be the speaker at the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association Banquet on Thursday, October 20, 2011, at 6:00 p.m. at the West Zion Mennonite Church in Moundridge KS. A graduate of Freeman Jr. College and Bethel College, Gary served a 3-year PAX assignment in Weierhof, Germany and later taught and was Principal at the Weierhof Elementary School there. Because of his interest in Mennonite History, he volunteered at the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle (Mennonite Research Center) which after retirement led to his current full-time position. Gary has led numerous historical tour groups through Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria in the footsteps of the Anabaptists and Mennonites. Gary's wife Gisela passed away in October, 2009 after a bout with cancer. They have three children. Gary will be speaking on a topic about which he is an authority – "E bisseli vun demm und e bissili von sellem or bits and pieces of our European history." We are privileged to hear about the history he knows best — history of the European roots of Kansas and South Dakota Schweitzers before the Russian sojourn.



Gary Waltner at the Mennonite Historical Society of Germany.

While Gary is in the U.S., he will attend "Only Schweitzer Spoken Here" in Moundridge—Friday, October 21, 2:00 at Pine Village Wellness Center. He admitted that he loves our dialect which is the basic dialect spoken in the Palatinate where he lives.

The women of West Zion Mennonite Church will serve a sausage supper including poppyseed cake. For banquet reservations (\$15/plate) call Kathy Goering (620-345-8532 email [kjgo@mtelco.net](mailto:kjgo@mtelco.net)) or West Zion Mennonite Church (620-345-6696) before Friday, October 14.

## Schweizer Mennonite Nicknames— Part Three

By Naomi Preheim

The next subdivision, mannerisms, is my favorite. These nicknames seem to be the most original and acutely accurate, for they describe the personality of the individual beautifully.

*Windy Chris*: he sure talked a lot. *Landkoenig*: owned a lot of land and bought more anytime some was for sale.

*Cotton ear*: always wore cotton in his ears.

*Flippy*: was a good horseshoe and ball pitcher.

*Kneppschuh*: always wore button shoes.

*Kraddle*: walked in a bow-legged swaying manner. *Muckefanger*: flycatcher; he would catch flies by hand, especially when he was just talking. *Smokey*: smoked a long pipe. *Springfuss*: a springyfoot; had a springing gait.

The nicknames from the memorable incident or word association classification are so interesting that they practically demand a retelling of the story from which they first sprang. First, the word associations: **Continued on page 2**

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Swiss Mennonite Historical and Cultural Association's mission is:

- Collect and disseminate information concerning the spiritual and cultural history of Anabaptists of Swiss origin.
- Engage in activities to better understand our heritage.
- Offer scholarships to qualifying college and seminary students.
- Attempt to interpret and relate in a meaningful way the faith of our Mennonite forebears to the present and future generations.
- Maintain the Cemetery and Swiss Mennonite Marker near the Hopefield Church.

Membership in SMCHA is \$15 per year or \$100 for a 10-year membership. Membership year is calendar year. Send dues to Treasurer H. Keith Goering, 1823 Arrowhead, Moundridge, KS 67107.

## Founding of Moundridge Topic at 2011 SMCHA Annual Meeting

Elections at the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 20, 2011 at Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, added Val Krehbiel as vice president, Kathy Goering continuing as secretary, and Gerry Schrag and Keith Albrecht continuing as trustee.

Mervin Schrag was introduced as sexton of the SMCHA Cemetery at Hopefield Church. Four people were buried there in 2010: Vera Lyn Goering, Marlys Kaufman Voran, Mary Stucky Beebe, and Phil Stucky. The records of plots at the SMCHA cemetery have been updated and a copy exhibited. Copies could be made available if requested. Currently costs of plots are \$250.

Rosemary Fisher, president of the Moundridge Historical Association, brought a traveling exhibit of 50 photographs of 3,500 found from early Moundridge. She spoke about early history and the pioneers who managed the challenging climate, grasshoppers, and weather. She spoke of James Edwards, first settler in 1868 and Thornton Cole from Illinois who arrived in 1871. Christian Voran, Christian Hirschler and Christian Krehbiel founded the town of Christian just one mile south of present day Moundridge. When the railroad came, Christian was moved one mile north. Thornton Cole, Christian Kreh-



SMCHA Members Browse the Photography Display at the 2011 Annual Meeting (picture courtesy of Moundridge Ledger)

hbiel, Jacob Wedel, and John Wedel became Mound Town Co. in 1886, the beginning of Mound Ridge. Date of incorporation was July 5, 1887. One hundred signatures were on the application. The first newspaper, *Moundridge Leader*, started in March 1887 before the town was incorporated, and is the source of much historical data today. Some other firsts: In November 1887, the first school opened (the teacher was paid \$35 a month), first telephone company opened for business in 1904, first electricity 1908; rural electricity was not in place until 1936.

The SMCHA Research Committee is working on locating original homesteads of those ancestors who came on the City of Richmond in August 1874 and settled in Mound, Turkey Creek, King City, and Lone Tree Townships in McPherson County and Alta and Garden in Harvey County. A map of homesteads in

Mound Township in 1884 was displayed. The Research Committee is looking at church records, family genealogies, county deed offices, and county atlases but information is hard to find. Of 144 quarter sections, 15 did not list an owner. Almost all the land had already been homesteaded in 1887; very few were deeded directly to our ancestors.

The 82 attending enjoyed fellowship and sandwiches, cherry prei and poppyseed cake served by Eden's Mary Martha organization.

## Schweitzer Nicknames Continued

*Bisky:* Couldn't pronounce "biscuits" when he was young.

*Gossner:* was a preacher who always quoted a German theologian named Gossner. After hearing him say "as Gossner says" time and again, his congregation eventually realized that Gossner was indeed saying something. This nickname now includes all his descendants, a large clan indeed! *Groh:* When he was young, he said, "I grow (groh), too!"

*Grunt:* in first grade he read a story about a "baby grunt," and from then on they called him grunt. His wife refers to herself as Marie Grunt. *Hahdy:* he liked to say "Howdy" (pronounced hahdy) to everyone when it was still a new word. *Hirschey:* when dad was a small boy in English school, he didn't know the English word for "deer," and seeing the picture named it *Hirsch* which is German for deer. His classmates then called him Hirschy and Hershey. *Kruemel:* She used it for an expression (crumb) once too often.

And now for the memorable incidents.

*Arkansas:* got in a fight in Arkansas and his earlobe was bitten

off. *Bus* or *Buster:* As a little boy, he had to wear his sister's cast off shoes. At harvest one year he acquired a new pair of Buster Browns and his sisters shortened it to the names that stuck. *Corndrescher:* was one of the few who had his corn threshed so that he could feed his stock grain. *Cornknife:* once in anger he threatened to use the cornknife.

*Pesky:* when the professor couldn't tell the twins apart, he said in feigned disgust, "those pesky Goering boys!" *Schimmel:* was kidded for selling his only possession, a white horse named *Schimmel*, in order to buy a diamond ring for the girl he loved. *Zook:* when a girl's basketball team from Zook, KS played Pretty Prairie, he cheered heartily for the Zook girls and the Pretty Prairie girls didn't let him forget it. *Check:* because she had freckles and Spot was a complementary name to her sister's names, Check and Double-Check.

*This article originally appeared in the December 1974 edition of "Mennonite Life." It is being printed as an ongoing series in "Schweitzer Salt."*

# An Interview With Former SMCHA President Arnold Wedel

2010 marked the end of Arnold Wedel's leadership (ten years as president and seven as vice president) of SMCHA. His invaluable contributions will be remembered for years to come. Arnold was born in Lawrence, KS after living in Oklahoma for many years. His family settled in North Newton, KS in 1941. Arnold is a professor emeritus of Mathematics at Bethel College. Outside of his work with SMCHA, Arnold enjoys Red Sox Baseball, managing investments and genealogy.

SALT: Do you remember when you became aware of being a Schweitzer? When?

AW: *I did not grow up in a Schweitzer community though we spent the summers at my grandparents in the Eden community. My grandfathers were Wedel cousins and my grandmothers were Schrag cousins. We moved to North Newton in 1941 when I was 13 so I became more aware of my background.*

SALT: What cultural traits are at the core of being Schweitzer?

AW: *Money historically was very important but perhaps that is true of most Mennonite or Anabaptist groups. Somebody recently told me that Wedels were lazy and I discovered that one of my grandfathers did not think money was important so perhaps that is where the word lazy came in. Perhaps it may have been that while he was reading books his wife was doing the field work?????*

SALT: As many Schweitzer churches and communities experience decline, how can SMCHA be relevant to diasporic Schweitzers?

AW: *It is urgent that Schweitzers who leave the home community keep the Anabaptist values including separation of church and state. Our two girls are interested in the Schweitzers and both belong to SMCHA while our son Edward has no interest. My wife, Dolores, comes from upstate N. Y. and is from Amish background. I reserve the name Schweitzer for those of us Amish who went East from Europe to Russia.*

SALT: What is your favorite SMCHA memory?

AW: *For the 125th celebration in 1999, I got the Pulitzer Prize*

*winning composer, Steven Stucky, born in the Pretty Prairie community to compose the music and Gladys Goering to write the words. In 2007, we had a Schweitzer banquet honoring Walter Huxman, a governor of Kansas. His mother was a Schweitzer with the name Graber.*

SALT: Will you share a favorite personal story or Schweitzer story?

AW: *One exciting time was when we got the famous Mennonite historian John Ruth to come to speak at the banquet. It was in June and I called Marlene Krehbiel to ask her to host John Ruth and me. I invited Cot Grabers and*

*Maynard invited Jim Preheims. The next day Maynard or his grandson took John Ruth on the combine. John will never forget that. Later John and Maynard talked about Schweitzer stories. Marlene and Maynard define what a Schweitzer is. John Ruth had been to the Bethel College region several times but never before did he know what a Schweitzer is.*

Arnold's passion for Schweitzers is evident in his incredible knowledge of genealogy. He claims those who "know everything" are James W. Krehbiel, Orpha Schrag, C.B. Goering, Herman Schrag and others. Vic Goering said that little had been done at the cemetery before Arnold came. Primary accomplishments during his terms were restoration of graves, directory building and roster of names of people buried there, marking rows of graves with alphabet stones, trees planted, *Schweitzer Salt* newsletter, "Only Schweitzer Spoken Here" events, and the SMCHA website. Arnold's latest interest was marking the graves of children buried at Catlin Cemetery during the journey to Hoffnungsfeld, information also reported by Brian Stucky at last year's banquet and a topic that deserves more attention from this organization (article about 14 children dying at Peabody written by a correspondent from Peabody and printed in Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need, pg. 201).



## SMCHA Needs Artifacts and Pictures for Display at New Museum

SMCHA has been given the opportunity to have a display in the new Moundridge Historical Association's museum. The plan is to relate the story of the coming of the Schweitzer Mennonites to the area as well as the role that SMCHA has assumed in the preservation of their history and culture. As far back as 1999, a resolution from 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary task force encouraged the establishment of a Swiss Mennonite Museum.



This early effort failed, but in 2000 the Board was encouraged to put up a display in either the Kaufman Museum or the

Moundridge Historical Association's museum whenever it is built. The museum building has been completed, and the SMCHA story can now be shown there on a 4x8 display panel. We invite anyone who has pictures, artifacts, old church records, stories, etc. to please make them available for inclusion in the display.

Your help is needed. If you have anything or think you might have, contact LaVern Stucky.



## 2011 SMCHA Education/Service Scholarships Awarded

*By Alice Suderman– SMCHA Scholarship Committee Chair*

Neah Ortman and Charles Schrag were the 2011 SMCHA Scholarship recipients. These two Christian Service Workers were each awarded \$250. Neah is beginning a one-year Mennonite Central Committee assignment in Burkina Faso under the SALT (Serving and Learning Together) program. She will be teaching English at the Mission Apostolic Church in Ouagadougou.

Charles Schrag recently finished a year long assignment with Mennonite Voluntary Service in Seattle, Washington. He spent a year working for Catholic Housing Services in low income housing for formerly homeless men over the age of 55.

Both recipients are active in Seattle Mennonite Church in Seattle and both have roots in the Schweitzer community around Freeman, South Dakota.

Online at:

[www.swissmennonite.org](http://www.swissmennonite.org)

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## Storytelling Project Update

*By Keith Albrecht*

Jason Holcomb, Associate Professor of Geography at Morehead State University in Kentucky, worked his way through high school and college by working for a Mennonite custom harvester from Central Kansas. He decided to write a book so interviewed harvesters from Texas to North Dakota. Many harvesters in Central Kansas were Mennonites. Last year Jason put on programs at Goessel Thresher Days about Mennonite custom harvesters. Since one of the SMCHA goals is to discover and record the stories of our families and their sojourns, I asked Jason if he would be willing to interview Swiss Mennonites to record stories of their parents' and grandparents' memories of the early days of the Swiss Mennonites.

This past June, Jason, along with his wife Heather, interviewed nine individuals. The interviews were all digitally recorded. Heather will transcribe the interviews word for word into print, and copies will be kept in archives. These interviews will be interesting to read for years to come. Look for some of these interviews to appear in *Schweitzer Salt*. Jason may report on these interviews when he returns to help the same harvester that he worked for years ago.



## Plowing On

Fern Goering, participated in the “plowing with horses” event at the Maynard Krehbiel farm in rural McPherson. Held in November 2010, the event attracted 15 teams of horses. Teams worked a ten-acre field, one team behind the next. Last year, 90-year old Fern got up on the seat again and drove her horses down the furrow. “This was easier than when I used to drive two or three horses with a sulky one-bottom plow when I was a 14-yr old child,” Fern said. As the youngest of nine children,

she had to help her dad farm after all her older brothers and sisters married and left the farm. Fern told Keith Albrecht that her dad was the first Swiss Mennonite born in Kansas – conceived in Russia and born in a dugout just south and west of Moundridge.

