



# Schweitzer Salt

Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association

www.swissmennonite.org

March 2023

## Becoming a SMCHA Member

- ◆ DNA makes you a member
- ◆ A supporting member requires a \$25 minimum donation (donations may be sent to the address on back of the newsletter)
- ◆ If you don't have Schweitzer DNA, you are still welcome to become a supporting member.

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## You are Invited to our Annual Meeting

It's been three years since SMCHA has been able to safely hold an annual meeting. Our last meeting, March 8, 2020, was held at Bethel College Mennonite Church and it turned out to be just one week before everything: churches, schools, businesses, etc. closed and we all joined forces to fight this ominous unknown virus that was highly contagious, causing serious illness and killing so many of us. While the Covid virus still lingers, its danger is less acute and it appears likely to be a fixture in our lives going forward.

The Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association will hold their annual meeting Sunday, March 12, 2023 at 2:30 PM. Our hosts will be First Mennonite Church of Christian, Moundridge, KS. Our stated purpose is electing board members, looking at the financial records and adopting a budget for the next year. We will also be bringing attendees up-to-date on some of the more recent projects that our organization is pursuing as well as plans for the future.

We are pleased that Dr. Lois Thieszen Preheim will be speaking at our meeting about the "Children's Blizzard," one of the most chilling and heart-rending stories to come out of the early years occurring in South Dakota on January 12, 1888.

We invite you to be a part of this event. There will be refreshments served and of course plenty of time to catch up with people you have not seen in a while.

-LaVern Stucky



## Dr. Lois Thieszen Preheim

Lois Preheim, author of Trailing the Children's Blizzard, was born on a farm near Henderson, Nebraska. She graduated from Freeman Junior College, Freeman, South Dakota (AA) and from the University of Nebras-

ka (BA) followed with a Specialist degree in administration and a Ph. D. in education, curriculum, and instruction from UNL. She received a Master of Divinity from Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana.

Lois is a retired kindergarten-twelve principal having taught preschool, elementary, middle school, and college students. Currently she resides with her husband, Ron, in Newton, Kansas.

## Johann Schrag-The Last Swiss Volhynian Amish Bishop

Growing up in the Freeman, South Dakota community, I was only vaguely aware of the Amish heritage of the Swiss Volhynian people. Studying the history of our community, I learned that at least one of the early leaders at Freeman was an active Amish bishop—Johann Schrag. It is true that while living in Volhynia, our forebears related to and even lived with both Dutch Low German Mennonites and Moravian Hutterites. Our people cooperated with these other Anabaptist groups in emigration plans. These associations certainly influenced the “Amish” character of these Swiss Volhynians, but it would be an exaggeration to think that the Swiss Volhynians no longer thought of themselves as Amish when they came to America in 1874. Four groups of Swiss Volhynians came to America the summer of 1874, the first three settling in Dakota Territory and the fourth from Kotosufka settling in Kansas. The third and largest group to come to Dakota Territory on the SS City of Chester was from the villages of Waldheim and Horodisch, and these two village identities persisted in the Freeman Swiss Volhynian community. Swiss Volhynians moved to Waldheim in Volhynia in the late 1830s, a village being vacated by Low German Mennonites moving to

the Motschna Colony in southern Ukraine. The Waldheim Swiss Volhynians had chosen Johann Schrag as their elder, and his leadership continued in America. Here in America, his group established the Zion Church in 1881, while the Horodisch group established the Salem Church in 1880 after choosing Christian Mueller and Christian Kaufman as their new leaders in 1878. When some from the Zion church left the area to settle in Oregon in the 1890s, the Zion church merged with the Salem Church to form the Salem-Zion Mennonite Church in 1894, with services held in both churches until a storm destroyed the Zion Church (called the Schpitzige Kirche, for its steeple) in 1902. The Salem church under the leadership of Mueller and Kaufman had by then led their group into the Mennonite fold, joining the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1881. Still, it’s interesting to learn that Johann Schrag attended Amish bishops’ meetings in Illinois and Ohio in 1875, 1876, and 1878, even being called on to serve on committees in that circle to resolve particular issues, according to Steven Nolt’s *History of the Amish*. (Note 55,290) And within the Freeman community Schrag was called on at least twice to ordain pastors in the low-German Mennonite community. Yet when the Salem Church wanted to ordain their new leaders in 1878 and 1879, they called on the Kansas bishop,

Jacob Stucky, to come and do the ordinations! Did Johann’s “Amish” loyalties make him unworthy of ordaining his own brethren of the cloth? The Low German Mennonites of the community seemed to value Schrag’s spiritual authority more than his own kindred! Johann Schrag was born on April 9, 1813, in Michelsdorf, Poland. His family moved to Edwardsdorf, Volhynia, in 1815, and in 1836, the family moved to Waldheim, where they stayed until coming to America. When Johann was just 27 years old, in 1840, the congregation at Waldheim chose him to be their leader. Johann married Anna Graber in 1836, and they had eight children. Anna died on January 21, 1865, leaving Johann to come to America alone as a widower with his family. Here in America, he settled about two miles east of the Salem-Zion church. He died on February 21, 1898, at the age of 84. He is buried in the Salem-Zion Cemetery. Johann kept his conservative Amish principles to the end of his life. When his youngest daughter, Katharine, married my great-grandfather Jacob P. Kauffman on June 21, 1879, she sewed a ruffle on the bottom of her black wedding dress, which Johann made her remove before her wedding because it was too worldly!

By S. Roy Kaufman; Freeman, SD

### South Dakota News: Schmeckfest Returns

By Marnette Hofer



After a three-year hiatus (thank you Covid-19), Schmeckfest 2023 returns March 24 and 25. This community festival is a fundraiser for Freeman Academy, and we are

grateful that they are willing to share the activities at HHM&A with their guests. We have a variety of programming planned. In addition to visiting the museum and archives, or perusing our mercantile that features the works of “local and locally-grown” artisans and authors, guests can enjoy demonstrations such as basket-weaving and rope-making, or

watch our model train. The ever-popular “Heritage Pickers” will be back, sharing 10-minute talks about a variety of topics related to our museum collection. In the Bethel Church, we have several presentations planned, including a presentation by Hutterite historian and area native, Rodney Hofer of Lawrence, Kan. Check our facebook page for more info.

# New Editor of Schweitzer Salt

By LaVern Stucky, SMCHA board president

Schweitzer Salt is announcing the appointment of Kathy Kaufman Preheim as its editor! Upon the death this past summer of Salt editor, Deanne Duerksen, an intense search for a new editor began. Kathy emerged as the choice for the job. She is a Moundridge native and a graduate of Bethel College. Kathy, a teacher and curriculum director in the Peabody-Burns School district, is recently retired and looking for a new challenge. Kathy lives on a farm in rural Peabody with

her husband, Randy. She is very talented and qualified to take on this new role and move the Schweitzer Salt to a new level.

Schweitzer Salt is an outreach of the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association with the purpose of keeping our constituency informed of upcoming and current cultural events as well as historical happenings. Over the years SMCHA has been so fortunate to have had excellent people assume leadership of this publishing arm. No doubt the

Salt will reflect Kathy's style and interests as it has editors in the past. We are excited to welcome Kathy to this new role!



## SMCHA Offering Educational Grants

The Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association is again offering educational grants to individuals preparing for full-time Christian service, Mennonite ministry, Mennonite voluntary service, or other related careers. The maximum grant available is \$1,000 for full-time ministerial students with lesser amounts for part-time ministerial students, Mennonite voluntary service participants, and college students. The grants are for the 2023-2024 school year. The application deadline is May 30, 2023.

**Criteria for Applying:** (1) Applicants must have membership in one of the six Swiss-Volhynian churches in Kansas or two in South Dakota, or be of Swiss-Volhynian descent.

(2) Applicants must be enrolled in or accepted at a Mennonite semi-

nary, or in a Mennonite voluntary service program, or in a career-related program at a Mennonite college. Those attending a Mennonite seminary will be given preference.

Applicants may submit a letter of application to:

Swiss Mennonite Selection Committee,  
c/o Roger Juhnke  
328 Lakeshore Dr.  
Newton, KS 67114, or to  
Kerwin Graber  
44065 278th St.  
Freeman, SD 57029

A letter of recommendation from their pastor or congregation should be included.

For further information contact Roger Juhnke at [rjuhnke@gmail.com](mailto:rjuhnke@gmail.com), (316-283-0452) or Kerwin Graber at 605-660-3382 [krgraber@goldenwest.net](mailto:krgraber@goldenwest.net), or consult our website: [swissmennonite.org](http://swissmennonite.org)

Help us get the word out about our organization. Kindly send email addresses of your Schweitzer family members and Schweitzer friends to: Kathy Goering: [kjgo@mtelco.net](mailto:kjgo@mtelco.net) The Schweitzer Salt and information about the 150th Celebration will be emailed to them.

If **you** would prefer to be emailed the Salt, rather than receive a paper copy, email Kathy G. to inform her.

## Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association

P.O. Box 93

Moundridge, KS 67107

Are you interested in submitting articles to the Schweitzer Salt?

Send them in an email to:  
Kathy Preheim  
Email: [kathypreheim@gmail.com](mailto:kathypreheim@gmail.com)

“Everyone has a story to tell, and we will do our best to incorporate as many of the stories that we receive as possible.” Brian Adams and Casey Adams are seeking anecdotes from our SMCHA heritage to create a “book” of stories. Think of stories that have been handed down through your family about the Schweitzers in America or before coming to America. Writing these stories down preserves them for future generations. Stories may be submitted in word format to:  
Brian Adams: [smots123@yahoo.com](mailto:smots123@yahoo.com);  
Casey Adams: [cpadams992@gmail.com](mailto:cpadams992@gmail.com)

### SMCHA Mission:

- ◆ Collect and disseminate information concerning the spiritual and cultural history of Anabaptists of Swiss Volhynian origin
- ◆ Offer financial assistance to qualifying students
- ◆ Relate in a meaningful way the faith of our Mennonite forebears to present and future generations
- ◆ Maintain the Hopefield Cemetery and Swiss Mennonite 1943 Marker and Centennial Monument

## Save the Date: 150 Year Celebration News

The Schweitzers and Friends celebration is well into planning stages. The event marking the 150 years since the coming of our ancestors in 1874 will occur on **August 23-25, 2024**.

Activities including historical presentations, drama, music and ethnic food, will be held at **Eden Mennonite Church, rural Moundridge, Kansas**. Displays using today's technology can help you find your ancestors and discover some cousins. The agricultural committee has plans for Turkey Red wheat planting

this year by horse power and threshing at the event. Mark your calendars, invite your distant relatives and consider how you might want to become involved in planning or as a volunteer at the event.

Danielle Goering  
[wgdg@cox.net](mailto:wgdg@cox.net)

John Voth demonstrates his flail instrument used for threshing grain by hand. My father had us boys thresh some of our seed wheat with the flail. Our flail had a baseball hat size piece of hedgewood as the end.



Photo from 1974 Centennial Celebration

Schweitzers  
& FRIENDS  
1874-2024