

100
years



of the

**Welsh
Mountain
Experience**

*One Hundred Years of the
Welsh Mountain
Experience*

100th Anniversary Committee

Robert A. Martin
Mark Leaman
John R. Buckwalter
Harold Yoder
Henry C. Benner

One Hundred Years of the
Welsh Mountain Experience

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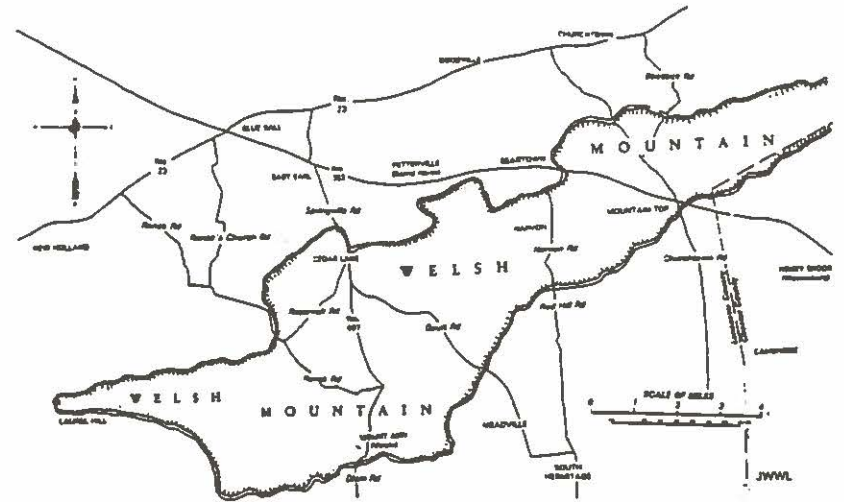
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The Welsh Mountain Home located in the Welsh Mountains of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

The Welsh Mountains

by Henry G. Benner

The Welsh Mountains are a twenty-mile-long wooded ridge, with its western end located south of New Holland and its eastern end near Churchtown. On the north side lies the rich farming valley of the Conestoga, and on the south side, the farms of the Pequea Valley. The mountains get their name from the Welsh settlers who came to work in the iron mines near Churchtown. When the mines closed, the Welsh continued to live in the area, which reminded them of their homeland in Wales.

Black people lived near the area where the Welsh Mountain Home is today (on Route 897). Lancaster County had almost 200 slaves in 1775. When they were freed, some of them



Margaret Smith, a fine Christian lady from the Welsh Mountains.

settled on the mountain. In 1900, about 125 blacks lived on the mountain, and in 1963, the total multi-ethnic population was 300. Today, many young people have moved from the area.

While well-to-do Mennonites owned most of the farms on either side of the mountain, this wooded area became a place where poor families could live. Eastern Lancaster County became a sharp contrast in cultures. The two cultures hardly knew each other. When people from the valleys drove their buggies over the dirt roads of the mountain, they observed many people living in rural poverty. Other mountain people kept their small homes neat and orderly.

Life for these people was hard. They tried to scrape out a living on their small plots of land. Finding work was difficult. Many came down from the mountain in their wagons and found day work on the farms. In the summer, they helped with the wheat harvest. In September, they worked by cutting tobacco, helping pick potatoes, and in late fall, husking corn.

Others from the mountain went from farm to farm asking for handouts. Farmers in the valley gave them food, bags of hay

for their horses, canned goods, and other necessities of life. Some just picked up things they found around the farms.

From 1880 to 1925, eastern Pennsylvania knew the Welsh Mountains as the hideout for Abe Buzzard and his five brothers. This family was as famous locally as Jesse James was in the West. Isaac Buzzard said, "I did it just for the adventure." Two of the brothers were converted at the Red Well Mission and led respectable lives on the mountain.

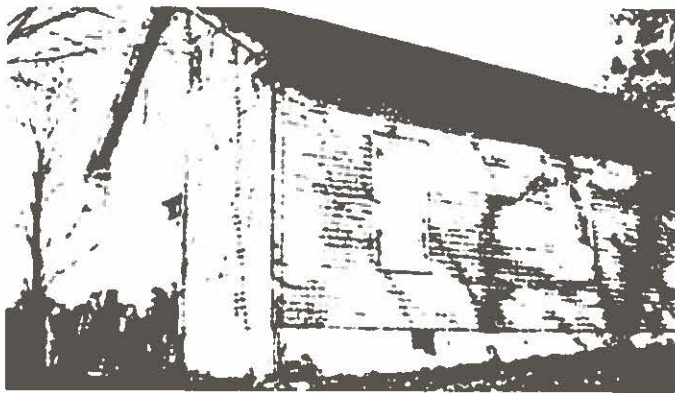
In the last twenty years, the Welsh Mountain community has changed dramatically. Many young people moved from the area to find jobs elsewhere. Other people discovered the beauty of the area and began building large homes in the wooded area overlooking the beautiful farmland in the valleys. The way of life that existed for 200 years has almost disappeared.

Mennonite Missions Begin on the Mountain

In the 1890s, the Lancaster Mennonite Church experienced a spiritual awakening, and mission interest began to stir. In 1894, John H. Mellinger held a meeting in his farmhouse near Paradise and the twelve men present formed the Home Mission Advocates. The Bishop Board objected, so they simply changed the name to Sunday School Mission and the mission movement in Lancaster Conference began.

From their fields in the Pequea Valley, Mennonite farmers could see Mine Ridge running from Gap to Strasburg. When they looked north, they saw the Welsh Mountains. On both wooded areas were neglected people in need of the gospel and the necessities of life. In 1895, the first mission Sunday School opened at the Monument Church near Nickel Mines. Three years later, Mt. Pleasant Sunday School opened two miles to the west.

"But what are we doing for the neglected people of the Welsh Mountain?" John R. Buckwalter asked at the quarterly mission meeting. The answer was obviously, "Not much." A three-



Red Well Mennonite Mission, 1899-1929.

man committee was appointed, and they drove through the mountain looking for a place to start a mission Sunday School.

In the summer of 1896, an afternoon Sunday School was started in the Red Well schoolhouse. Red Well is located at the foot of the hill on a western spar of the Welsh Mountain. The school was so well attended, with a number of people responding to the gospel, that a new church was built in the summer of 1899.

David R. Benner attended Red Well from 1911 to 1920 and remembers today:

After Sunday dinner we hitched two mules to our carriage and drove to the two o'clock service. As a boy, I tied up the horses of Sam Musselman and Noah Mack as they arrived. The church was made from fresh boards, and the windowsills were painted red. Small benches seated 200 people. After Sunday School there was a preaching service, and I enjoyed hearing preachers from Weaverland Valley preaching one Sunday and preachers from the Paradise-Hershey district the next.

A small cemetery adjoined the church, and when graves were dug, they filled with water from the nearby springs. In 1903, a half-acre plot was purchased a quarter-mile up the hill on Red Well Drive. Today, about nineteen gravestones survive.

As the older population died off, attendance dwindled, and in 1929 the Red Well and Welsh Mountain missions joined together. A contractor tore down the Red Well Church and the materials were used to construct the 1929 south addition to the Welsh Mountain Home.

Tent meetings and cottage meetings continued in the Red Well area into the 1960s.

The Welsh Mountain Industrial Mission

Two years after Red Well Sunday School opened, a most fascinating mission effort began two miles to the east on top of the mountain. The crossroads at the top of the mountain was called the Hand Boards, named after the "hand" road signs pointing to different towns.

About 125 persons of African-American descent lived in the area. Ministering to these people was a black seminary-trained Presbyterian minister named Melford H. Hagler. Rev. Hagler moved to a small acreage several hundred yards north of the present Welsh Mountain Home. Meeting John Buckwalter and Sam Musselman, he enthusiastically shared his vision of having Mennonites open an industrial mission on the hill to give his people work and to make them self-sufficient. His firm insistence on self-sufficiency influenced everything the Mennonites did on the mountain.

Hagler's conviction that the mountain people should learn useful trades meshed with the work ethic of the valley people. He insisted his people not be given handouts but be encouraged to work at the industrial mission.

In July 1897, Hagler walked to Paradise and gave a passionate speech at the quarterly mission meeting. In January 1898, a twelve-man board chaired by Samuel Musselman was formed to open an industrial mission. Musselman was a short, energetic farmer and businessman from Blue Ball. He had the



The Samuel H. Musselman family about 1908. Front row: Mother Anna, Father Samuel, and Mabel. Back row: Katie, Ivan, and Samuel Jr.

gift of persuasion, and more than any one man was the driving force of the mission. He chaired the board until his death in 1929.

When Hagler told his people the Mennonites were coming to the mountain, they were apprehensive. He called a meeting, and Sam Musselman, in his humorous, salesman-like style, calmed their fears by explaining how they could work at the industrial school, receive credit for their labor, and use it to buy things from neighborhood stores. The people left the meeting much relieved.

On March 18, 1898, twenty-two mountain men and boys met Musselman on the recently-purchased ten acres located

on the plateau where the home and church are located today. They began clearing the sprout land of trees in preparation for farming vegetables to sell.

Jacob Mellinger watched them working and wrote:

The men work in gangs. One lot with grubbing hoes clears away smaller stumps and stones. Another lot operates the stump machine. The rest were picking and hauling off rubbish. The stump puller is a powerful machine, lifting twenty tons to a man. The men are good workmen and seem to enjoy their work.

That first year, forty-three men were employed—nearly the entire male population of the mountain. On the cleared land, broom corn, potatoes, strawberries, and cabbage were planted. The farm products were sold at the mission and in the Lancaster market and were peddled through New Holland and the surrounding farms. The mission workers also helped people at their homes by plowing their gardens and giving them seeds to plant.



Mountain children in front of the shirt factory in 1912, now the Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church.

The first summer, fourteen pigs were purchased. Later, several homes were purchased for community folks.

A few months later, seven more acres on which stood an old log house were purchased across the road. A year later, the log house, still standing across the road from the Welsh Mountain Home, became the home for the superintendent. An outbuilding was used as the store. During the next ten years, fifty-six acres were purchased. Today, thirty acres remain the property of the Welsh Mountain Home and church.

Sam Musselman served as superintendent for the first year from his farm in Blue Ball. He saw a definite need for a resident superintendent and persuaded schoolteacher Noah Mack of Farmersville to move into the log house. His wife did not want to go to the mountain alone and asked neighbor Lydia Stauffer to go along.

A year earlier, Lydia sensed a call to serve the Lord in missions. She immediately resolved to obey God's command. When asked by Elizabeth Mack to go, she was nervous but knew God had called her. On April 4, 1899, Lydia climbed into Sam Musselman's buggy and started up the mountain. Years later she remembered that spring morning.

I believe it was as much an adventure to go there as it is to go to Africa today. The morning we left home, the Lord spoke very definitely to my heart and gave me the message, "Fear thou not; for I am with thee." I can still hear Brother S. H. Musselman say over and over as we climbed the mountain with horse and carriage, "I will go before you into Galilee."

Lydia and the Macks moved into the old log house, with Noah supervising the workers on the land and Lydia operating the store stocked with food, clothing, and household items.

The second summer, a twenty-four-foot by forty-foot building was built to serve as a sewing factory and broom-



The mission grounds in 1940. To the right is the log house. The shirt factory is on the left with the superintendent's big house behind it. The field in the foreground was planted in strawberries.

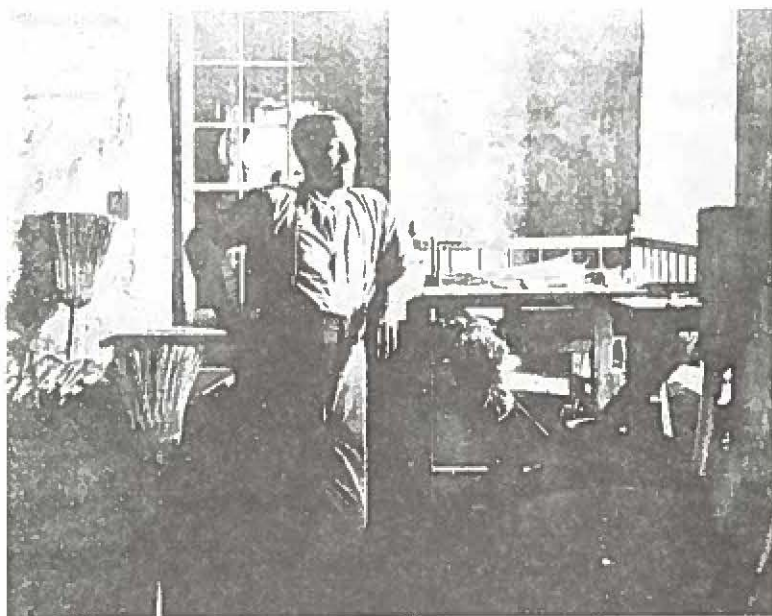
making operation. That building is the present Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church. On the top floor were sewing machines bought by individuals and "loaned" to the mission. The machines were powered by a five-horsepower gasoline motor in the basement.

Lizzie Wenger, who came to work at the mission in 1900, reported:

I had two to thirteen women working in the clothing factory. These colored women are very dear and some are willing to work. They can sew very nicely and it made me rejoice to hear them, while they were sewing, sing such songs as "More About Jesus," "The Haven of Rest," and "O Beulah Land."

The women sewed sleeves from cotton cloth, which were sold to a factory. The sewing factory was one of the least successful mission projects and lasted only six years.

In the basement of the building, several men made brooms from the broom corn raised on the grounds. Brooms were sold at the mission or were peddled in the valley. Broom

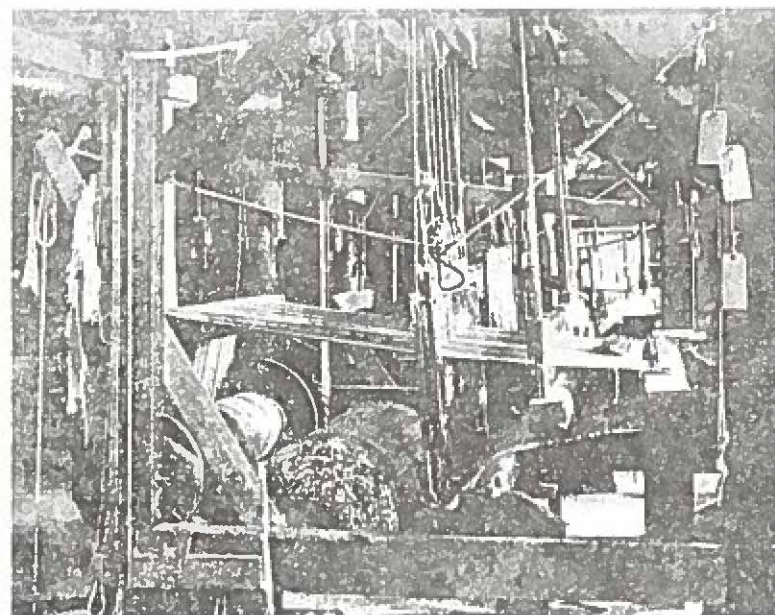


Elmer Boots, first baptized member, making brooms in 1912.

making continued until 1929, five years after the industrial part of the mission had closed.

Three looms were purchased to make rag carpets. Rags were collected from homes in the valley and made into carpet runners. Carpets could be custom ordered or bought at the store. The main problem with this operation was securing enough quality rags.

People from the valley were curious and wanted to see this new mission project. In the summer of 1900, over 800 people visited the mission. It was a nice one-day vacation from their farms to pack a picnic lunch and drive their buggies up to the mountain. Some came to help work or to give donations to the store. Sam Musselman told the readers of the *Herald of Truth* to take the train to the station east of New Holland, where he would meet them in his buggy and drive them two and one-half miles to the mission to see the work first hand. Work on the mountain was off to an enthusiastic start.



Three looms where twenty-five patterns of rag carpet were woven.

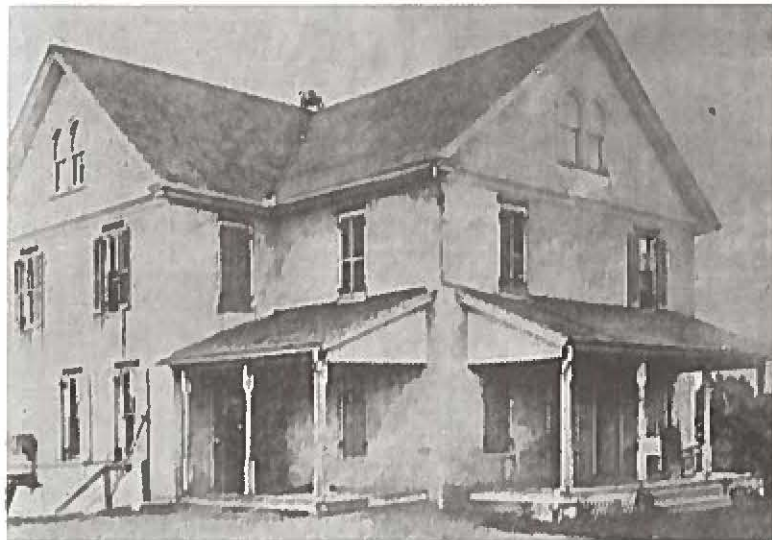
During the winter of 1900, a large stone house was built to serve as the superintendent's home. The annex on the north side became the new store. Today, "the big house," as the local folks called it, is the Welsh Mountain Home. The store room is the present kitchen. A pipe was dug from the spring near the top of the hill to provide water.

Noah Mack moved into the big house in 1900 and served as superintendent for eleven years. Later that year, he was ordained at Groffdale and became a popular evangelist and speaker at all-day meetings. Since no pictures exist of this man who served the Mennonite Church faithfully for forty-eight years, a verbal description is as follows: He was a six-foot tall, large-boned man, with a rather sober and homely face. His strength came from his intelligence and deep devotional life. Each morning he read his Bible and prayed in German to keep his "Dutch" fluent. People always said, "Noah has a good heart."

His small wife, Elizabeth, had a sense of her own independence.

Since the Macks were often away on church work, an assistant superintendent was appointed. Jacob H. Mellinger moved into the log house and served three years, from 1902 to 1905. When Mellinger was called to supervise the newly-opened Oreville Mennonite Home, widowed Levi Sauder became assistant superintendent. Levi fell in love with Lydia Stauffer, and six months later they were married. This loving couple served until 1911, when they became "Pop and Mom" at the new Millersville Children's Home.

From its beginning in 1898, the goal of the industrial mission was to provide educational opportunities, present Christ, and offer employment to the people on the hill. In the beginning, Melford Hagler led the spiritual ministry in his Mt. Hope A.M.E. Church. Sam Musselman, in an article in the *Gospel Herald*, characterized their services as follows:



Superintendent's house in 1912. The store was entered through the door on the left.

The Negro is a very cheerful being and intensely religious. They do not feel they had a good meeting unless there has been shouting, weeping, dancing for joy, and a "joyful noise" in general. No one sleeps. Everybody is interested. Being very musical, they produce singers almost unsurpassed.

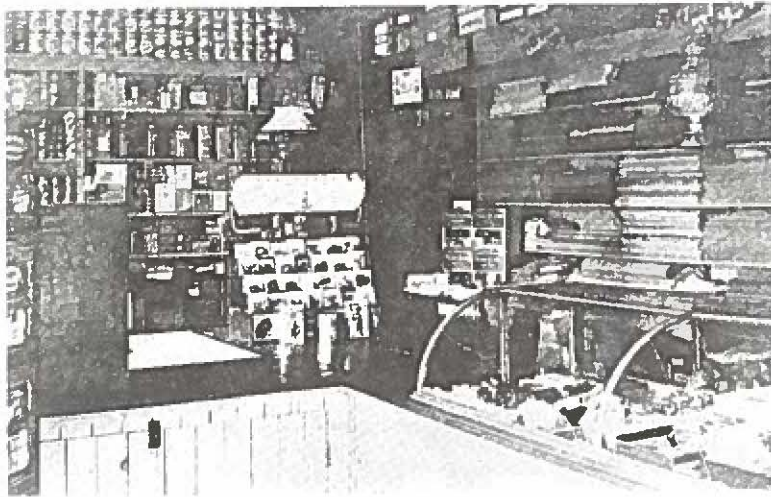
This was not quite what the mission workers were used to at Groffdale and Hershey Mennonite Churches.

The first year, mission workers went to their home churches on Sunday. Noah Mack, however, thought religious services should be opened at the mission. Tuesday evening Bible Readings were started in the big house, and as many as thirty adults and children attended. Later, preaching services were held in the sewing factory. From the beginning, Lydia Stauffer and Magdelina Hershey were appointed as home visitors, and they walked the dirt roads over the hill, handing out Sunday School materials. These dedicated workers were concerned about the needs of the whole man.

In 1917, Elmer Boots was the first man baptized there. Over the years, more than thirty community folks joined the Mennonite Church at the Welsh Mountain.

When the superintendent's stone home was nearly completed in January 1901, a large feast was held for the mountain people in the basement of the home. Jacob Mellinger reported in the *Herald of Truth*:

One of the most pleasant events experienced here was the dinner given for the colored people on January 29th. About eighty-five colored folks and a number of whites attended. Just before dinner, an interesting and impressive meeting was held in the shirt factory, in which three colored couples were united in matrimony; two married by Brother Mack and one by M.H. Hagler. They received a number of beautiful and useful gifts. After dinner a spirited song service was held in the shirt factory. The meeting dispersed in the best of



The store in 1912 where laborers exchanged work credit for goods.

humor, and the best of order. It was a most enjoyable day.

There seems to be a spiritual awakening among the colored folks here, and they are apparently reaching after better things. During a series of meetings at the A.M.E. church, quite a number signified a willingness to lead a better life.

Life on the mountain was improving. The county officials reported a decline in crime and money spent in the area. Three-quarters of the local people were working at the industrial school from time to time. No cash was given for work until 1911. Each day, the hours worked were recorded in the ledger book. The first year they could go to local stores and receive goods on credit, which the mission paid; liquor at hotels was not accepted. The first year, men received twelve cents per day; later, they got one dollar a day for field work.

The next summer, when Lydia Stauffer opened her little store in the log house, people bought things using credit from

their work which was recorded in the ledger book. This caused some confusion when Mary Boots bought some things on Johnnie Green's huckleberry account. No tobacco was sold at the store and loitering was discouraged. Jacob Mellinger reported that Christian literature was not selling too well.

A walk around the present Welsh Mountain Home would have been an interesting experience seventy-five years ago. In the home lived the superintendent's family and two or three single women who supervised the shirt factory, did the cooking, tended the store, and visited homes. The north side of the house was the store. Around the big house were neatly planted flowers and gardens. In the basement, men wove carpets. The root cellar at the back of the home was filled with cabbage.

Leaving the house, one could walk a few feet into the shirt factory. Eight to fifteen women could be seen sewing shirt sleeves while singing and talking. (After 1906, this room was a chapel and school; now it is the auditorium of the Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church.) In the basement could be heard the "put-put" of the engine powering the sewing machines. Several men would be making brooms from the broom corn lying around the room.

Outside was Old Charlie, the mission horse, and a cow munching grass near a pile of 1200 bushels of potatoes. Nearby was the small barn containing a wagon and cart, bushel baskets, hoes, axes, and other crude farm equipment. Hay for the animals was in the upper barn, and corn was in the attached corn crib. Near the barn was the chicken house with 125 chickens; many were running around the grounds. The pig pens made quite a smell, with twenty-nine pigs lying in the mud. In the nearby fields, at different times of the year, one could see people picking strawberries, picking worms from the cabbage, cutting broom corn, pruning the blackberry stalks, and bringing in baskets of huckleberries from the woods.



Isaac Boots picking tomatoes.

The truck farming part of the industrial mission was the most successful and gave the most enjoyment. Noah Mack reported that the main problem was over winter, when the people begged to work.

Amazingly, in 1905, 425 bushels of strawberries were picked, along with twenty bushels of wheat and 150 bushels of tomatoes. Another year, 1200 bushels of potatoes were harvested, and the huckleberries were a grand success, with the mission making two cents a quart.

Fruit trees were planted

but were not as successful. Sam Musselman said that he could get fifty workers in the field by 4:00 a.m.

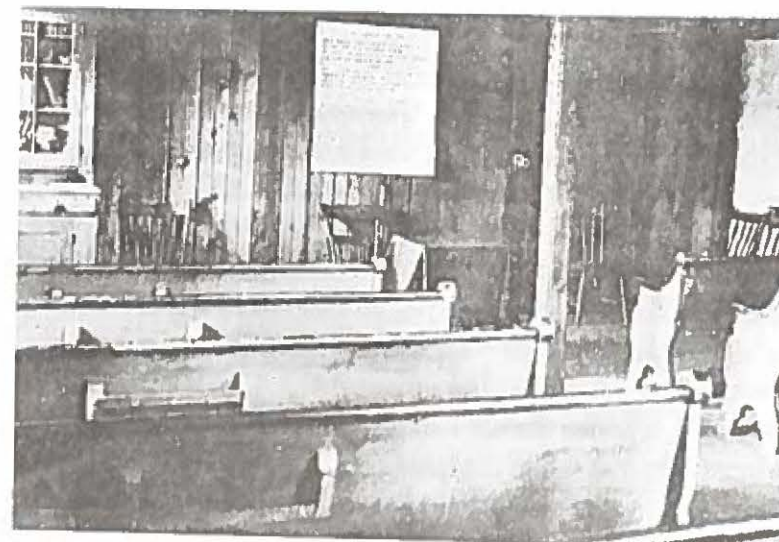
Finances were a continuing problem, particularly the debt on the land. Mission workers received no pay for the first ten years, but got room and board. Money from the sale of brooms, carpets, and crops was used to pay the laborers. The hope of a financially self-sustaining operation was never realized.

The Board did suggest some ingenious ideas, such as having some Mennonites buy sewing machines for twenty-five dollars and loan them to the mission. Money to build the stone house was to be raised by selling stock at ten

dollars a share, but Chairman Musselman raised the money himself.

One of the goals of Melford Hagler and the Mission Board was to provide educational opportunities for the people of the area. At least one-third of the adults were illiterate, and many of the children did not go to school. The Salisbury Township School Board was petitioned to start a black school on the mountain. Hagler was the teacher the first year, and when the shirt factory closed in 1906, the room was used as a school. Children were given a quart of potatoes for attending school.

Gradually, after 1915, the industrial part of the mission declined for many reasons. Some people moved away; others found jobs; some reverted to begging in the valley. As new mission and relief opportunities were started by the Mennonites, financial support for the Welsh Mountain declined. It became harder to find workers.



The chapel in the shirt factory in 1912—present auditorium of the Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church.

While the self-help part of the mission declined, the spiritual emphasis increased. Tuesday evening Bible Reading began in 1901. Preaching services once a month started in 1906. John Bressler held revival meetings in 1920, and six people responded to the gospel. Mission workers continued walking through the mountains, helping the people. Melford Hagler was getting older and his spiritual ministry was taken over by the Mennonites. Gradually, the Welsh Mountain Industrial Mission changed into a more traditional mission station. The work begun 100 years ago continues today at the Welsh Mountain Home and Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church.

The valley Mennonites had a mission zeal and, by obeying God, came to the Welsh Mountains to serve their Lord and the people.

In the twenty-five years from 1898 to 1924, Noah Mack served as superintendent for eleven years and Levi Sauder served for several years. Arthur Moyer was in charge from 1913 until his murder in 1924. Several others served as head of the mission for temporary periods.

Credit belongs to the faithful wives and single women who cooked meals, washed clothes, tended the store, and did home visitation. Some single women served several months at a time, and others, such as Anna Kauffman, several years.

Unfortunately, we have no record of testimonies from the local people of those early years. Certainly, they were given hope and help as they heard the gospel. At times, they were frustrated by the valley people's frugal ways and felt misunderstood. In 1963, the *Lancaster New Era*, in a series of articles on the Welsh Mountain, reported that the locals said the Mennonites did more than any other group to help them.

Eternity alone will reveal the fruits of the labor in this corner of the Lord's vineyard. Seventy-five years ago, as a child, Ira Buckwalter was watching Elmer Boots make brooms. Elmer said to Ira, "I'm not going to be here much longer. I'm going to heaven.

When you get to heaven, you will say to me, 'Elmer, how did you get here?' and I'll say, 'Only by the grace of God.'"

Sources

1. The Welsh Mountain archival boxes at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society contain board records from 1898 to 1955. These boxes also have copies of the *Herald of Truth*, *Gospel Herald*, newspaper articles, and other items.

2. Louise Stoltzfus, "His Wife Took Charge," *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, April 1999. This article contains valuable source records.

3. Martin G. Weaver, *Mennonites of Lancaster Conference* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1931). J. Paul Graybill, Ira D. Landis, J. Paul Sauder, *Noah H. Mack, His Life and Times 1861-1948* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Authors, 1952).

Welsh Mountain Samaritan Home and Mission

by Robert A. Martin

As the industrial part of the mission was winding down, the question was asked, "What shall we do with the large house?" A suggestion was made that since it was in a healthy location with airy breezes, it could become a retirement home. Several people were already living at the home. In 1917, the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities became the official owner of the mission.

In 1924, the tragic murder of Superintendent Arthur Moyer occurred. Arthur had worked hard since 1913 to help people on the mountain live a worthwhile life. His passion was to evangelize the unchurched, and he had a special rapport with the black people. He was a friend, and they had a high appreciation for Arthur.



The evening of January 24, 1924, Arthur had gone out to investigate a report of people stealing corn. He saw someone standing on the fence by the

Site of Arthur Moyer's murder. The gunman was standing on the fence getting corn from the overhang of the barn.

corn crib. When Arthur flashed his light on the intruder, the man opened fire with his semi-automatic pistol. Four shots were fired, and one bullet proved fatal twenty-four hours later.

The telephone lines were faulty, and it took time for a doctor to arrive. While Arthur was waiting for help, he was talking and pleading with the people around him to accept Christ as their Savior and Lord.

Arthur's pain was becoming unbearable, but that did not keep him quiet. An operation at the hospital helped the pain. During the second night, Arthur poured out his heart in prayer and praise. After he sang the song, "Rock of Ages," he breathed his last. His wife, Anna, came just in time for his last breath, but did not hear the singing.

Arthur refused to tell police the name of the person who fired the shots, even though he knew the man. The police were confident they arrested the right man, since he owned the only semi-automatic pistol on the mountain.

Arthur's widow went to the Eastern Penitentiary and asked the accused perpetrator why he shot her husband. He replied, "I didn't shoot your husband." Later, Anna wished she would have asked him who did it.

During Arthur's funeral service, the people deeply mourned his death. The community folks attended and greatly felt the loss of one they dearly loved. Arthur had played with children, helped adults, and prayed for any need. As someone noted, "The blood of the martyr is the seed of the church."

In spite of the tragedy, Anna Moyer continued the work of the mission. In a 1924 *Missionary Messenger* article entitled "The Good Samaritan Inn," the Mission Board decided to carry on the work of the "Old People's Home." Some of the terms used to describe those living there were: unfortunate ones, semi-invalid, and those in need of special care.

In 1925, the board of the home was enlarged to five people. They were: S.H. Musselman, chairman; Sem Eby, secretary;

John B. Hershey, treasurer; S.O. Martin; and Joseph S. Graybill. The board minutes of that meeting used the term "guests" instead of "inmates" for the first time.

The Building is Improved and Enlarged

In 1927, the board raised the money and installed a new hot water heating system. In 1928, the Samaritan Home Board, because of the demand for housing, drew up plans for a new addition. On February 9, 1929, the parent EMBMC Board approved the plans, asking the local board to raise the funds. A new addition would raise guest capacity to twenty-nine.

The unused Red Well Church was donated by the Hershey district, and on April 2, 3, and 4, 1929, about thirty people carefully tore it down and hauled the boards to the Samaritan Home. The only expense was thirty-eight dollars for a large truck to haul the heavy timbers. On April 10, many volunteers began



The Home in 1937. The largest part is the original 1900 house. The block area is the 1929 addition. The overhang on the right was later torn away.



The 1940 addition on the left, the 1929 addition in the center, and the original house on the right.

excavating the basement for the thirty-foot by twenty-eight-foot addition to the south side of the home. On September 2, there was a dedication service to praise God for the completion of the work and to challenge the workers for their continuing care to the residents. The total cost for the additional space was \$5,798.12.

The official name, Welsh Mountain Samaritan Home and Mission, reflects the continuing spiritual ministry to the community. There were special annual meetings, Bible study meetings, and a weekly Sunday School carried on by the workers until the Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church was officially organized as a separate unit in 1938.

In 1940, the board decided to build an addition to meet the growing interest of people who wanted to live at the Home. This addition to the original building was built on the east side. Upon



Resident Annie Tobias on an old-style wheelchair.

completion the entire facility could care for thirty people, in addition to some staff housing.

Early in 1979, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry surveyed the property and listed changes necessary to keep operating. These changes included closing the third floor or installing sprinkler systems, enclosing the open stairway between the first and second floor, and installing fire-rated drywall in many places.

On October 30, 1979, H.W. Nauman and Sons submitted a bid of \$58,000 to satisfy the required changes. Another \$16,000 would create staff housing in the basement, and \$10,000 more was projected for the standby generator and for interior decorating. The board estimated it would cost \$15,000 per bed for a new facility and only \$2,000 a bed to renovate. The renovation was completed at a total cost of about \$85,000.

There was \$5,000 on hand before work began, and the supporting churches took one offering each year until the debt was paid.

Five years earlier, there had been a similar list of deficiencies, but the state agreed to drop the requirements if the Home would give up their license for intermediate care. The license was terminated and the program was changed to a boarding home.

Now What Do We Do?

In early 1988, a study committee was formed to assess the direction the Home should go to keep up with changing trends in the retirement home industry. The committee consisted of board and EMBMC members, including: Ira J. Buckwalter; Grace Graybill; Charles L. Groff; Dwayne Hershbarger, administrator; Luke Leaman; Earl R. Martin; Robert A. Martin; and Norman Shenk. There were five additional members.

Some of the concerns were: consistent staff supply, empty beds, people going to other retirement homes, need for additional



Twin calves cared for by Lewis Boots, Elizabeth Bard, and Lillie Stauffer Sensenig.

programs, and salary discontent. Lancaster Conference was thinking of opening a fourth retirement community in the New Holland/Weaverland area. If it did, the staff and residents of the Welsh Mountain Home could be transferred there. Plans for a new retirement community run by Lancaster Conference never materialized.

The study committee met September 16, 1988, and shared the following recommendations to the board of the Welsh Mountain Home:

1. No large amounts of contributed money should be spent on improving the facilities until there is clear direction on what will happen with the New Holland/Weaverland group.
2. Creativity should be encouraged to develop a residential program emphasizing mentally handicapped persons.
3. Rebuilding should not be an option because of the limitations of a water supply and a sewer system.
4. Current assets should be used for the residents if they would consent to be transferred to other homes.
5. If programs go beyond three years, an independent local board would consist of representatives from the six bishop districts.

With total contributions of \$38,108 received in 1988 and an increase in resident rates in 1989, the financial picture appeared brighter. Three years later, a crisis almost closed the Welsh Mountain Home.

The Home's Darkest Hour

In spring of 1992, the Welsh Mountain Samaritan Home was approached by Salisbury Township officials concerning



Residents at the fish pond about 1942; left to right: Jane Hauer, Mattie Redcay, Josephine Whiskoski, Mrs. Bently, Hettie Fox, Anna Burrow, Louisa Bender, Susan Whitaker, Annie Weaver, Mary Weaver, Maggie Bailu, Harriet Fehr, and Mary Ann Sauder.

the raw sewage that was surfacing on WMSH grounds. They recommended that corrective measures need to be taken as soon as possible. At the same time, the Home was informed by the Department of Environmental Resources that the spring could no longer be used, since there were more than twenty-five people in the building.

Mandated improvements were expected to cost between \$30,000 and \$50,000. For several reasons, the board made the decision to phase out the ministry at the Home. However, after experiencing a public outcry of the Home closing, the board reversed its decision and made the commitment to continue operations. At that point, the DER issued a mandate for beginning the compliance process with regulations within six months.

Cost estimates were obtained and Melvin Wenger volunteered his services to oversee and coordinate both water and sewer



Edith Kennel Graybill hanging out wash. The mission barn is on the left. The 1999 pavilion rests on the chicken house foundation on the right.

projects. Several businesses agreed to help keep costs down. B.R. Kreider and Sons hauled thirty-seven loads of free sand from the Manheim Auto Auction. Martin Limestone donated and delivered 400 tons of stone; and J.B. Zimmerman donated the grass seed. Thousands of dollars were saved by volunteer labor and supplies.

The water project was not completed until September 1994. Sensenig and Weaver Well Drilling drilled the well free of charge, saving an estimated \$5,000. Total costs of the well and new sewer treatment equipment amounted to nearly \$30,000. As they had done for nearly 100 years, the Mennonites came through and the Home was saved.

In 1995, the Home was converted into an independent corporation and renamed Welsh Mountain Home. The new owners now are the six bishop districts of Lancaster Conference

which surround the Home. Eastern Mennonite Missions, the former owner, should be commended for their patience through all of this, since they had wanted to be free from ownership for several years. New by-laws were incorporated with the advice and affirmation of the six bishop districts.

There was a renewed effort among the board members to make this institution workable. A new level of confidence emerged because of an awareness of the tremendous support from the community.

In 1997, a walkway was constructed to connect the Home with the church. This project also included the construction of two office rooms and four resident rooms in the lower level. The Welsh Mountain Church was very cooperative and invited the Home to use their sanctuary for an activity room.

Plans and fundraising got underway in 1999 to build an elevator on the back of the building. This was a dream that Harold



Plucking chickens under the barn forebay; left to right: Lizzie Gehman, Mary Hershey, Martha Weaver, Elsie Mellinger, Annie Sauder, Martin Sauder, Henry Hershey, and Charles Wentzel.

Yoder, present administrator, and the board had had for several years. Costs are estimated at \$175,000. Construction will begin when \$131,000 has been raised. The work on the mountain continues.

Excerpts From Board Minutes and Church Publications

January 1921 - "a Delco electric system was recently installed."

December 1921 - "brethren installed new water pipes from upper spring to the house."

March 1926 - "paid out \$300 for a Ford automobile, \$15 for a mule."

June 1926 - "administrator John W. Weaver's family was surprised with the courteousness and hospitality of the colored people. A colored boy picked a large bouquet of flowers and gave them to Mrs. Weaver, saying, 'I picked them just for you.'"

August 1926 - "held up by a thunderstorm; got home at 11:30 p.m. Weaver family was greeted by a colored family who refused to go to bed until they realized they were safe."

January 1929 - "at Christmas time, 23 residents were given baskets of potatoes, turnips, pumpkin, cake, nuts, an apron and motto."

October 1930 - "men helped dig in pipe to another spring. Old one dry."

November 1931 - "state has taken over the road which passes in front of the home which makes traveling easier."

March 1932 - "two and a half acres of land joining our property bought for \$360.00."

May 1932 - "a feeble person was admitted to the home—getting better because of mountain air."

November 1932 - "due to mission work, the county's expenses for arrests and lawsuits greatly reduced. Begging and stealing reduced."

November 1936 - "9 acres of burned timber land sold for \$3 an acre."

Sources

1. Board minutes at Welsh Mountain Home.
2. Robert A. Martin has a notebook containing articles from church publications, newspaper articles, and excerpts from board minutes.



Residents are proud of the new sign in front of the Home.

The Welsh Mountain Home

An Overview From 1924 To 1999

by Harold Yoder, Administrator

Seventy-five years ago, our Mennonite forefathers had the vision and received the call to begin a home for the aged people, as they were called then, in the Welsh Mountains. A local board of directors was appointed to guide the operation. At that time, the property was owned by the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, who also gave oversight to the Home

and mission. In the years since then, the Home has provided low-cost housing and health services for elderly people.

In the summer of 1929, an addition was added, bringing the combined buildings to contain twenty-five rooms, three baths, and large basement and storage rooms. Another addition was completed in 1940, and there were several renovations made since then. Sometime during the mid-seventies, licensing for intermediate care was dropped due to pressures from state regulatory agencies. In 1980, several major renovations were made to the interior of the building, and the Home was licensed as a personal care home.

In 1987, a study committee was formed for the purpose of evaluating the program and the operations of the Home to see if the ministry should continue at this site in its current form. The recommendation was made to maintain its personal care license, with no plans for future expansion of buildings or programs. Rather, there was discussion of closing the Home. In 1992, once



The Home's 1998 minibus with administrator Harold Yoder on the left and resident Sam Smoker on the right.



The Welsh Mountain Church and Home in 1999.

again the operations of the Home were threatened by the Department of Environmental Resources, but new and larger sewer sand mounds were developed and a well was drilled.

In 1996, we experienced the first major additions to the Home since the 1940s by physically connecting the Home and the church building with an enclosed walkway. At the same time, administrative offices and four additional resident rooms were added, increasing our capacity to forty-three beds.

In 1999, we are planning for the construction of an elevator, hopefully to begin this year. We also have a long-range planning committee actively working at writing our vision for the next five to ten years, and setting goals to best fulfill our vision. God has not abandoned the ministry of the Welsh Mountain Home. Rather, He has truly blessed the Home with finances, volunteer workers, and goals that best fulfill our vision.

We have provided services and housing to many poor people over the years who had no place to turn. Currently, seventy percent of our residents have a very limited source of income. Many of these people have only a suitcase or two of personal belongings. Just as our forefathers were concerned with meeting the residents' spiritual needs, so are we today. A strong emphasis is placed on meeting the whole needs of the person, and we pride ourselves in the quality of care given by all our employees.

This past year, 1998, we experienced 4,385 hours of volunteer support. Many of these hours were from active resident participation. The residents enjoy becoming involved in light duties around the Home, as well as in our activities program. With recent landscaping and addition of walks, gazebo, and waterfalls, the outdoors has become quite attractive during the summer months. Many improvements have been made to



The rear of the Home in 1999 with new landscaping.



Architectural drawing of the rear of the Home showing the projected elevator.

the interior and exterior of the building itself over the past ten years.

Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church

by John R. Buckwalter and Mark Leaman

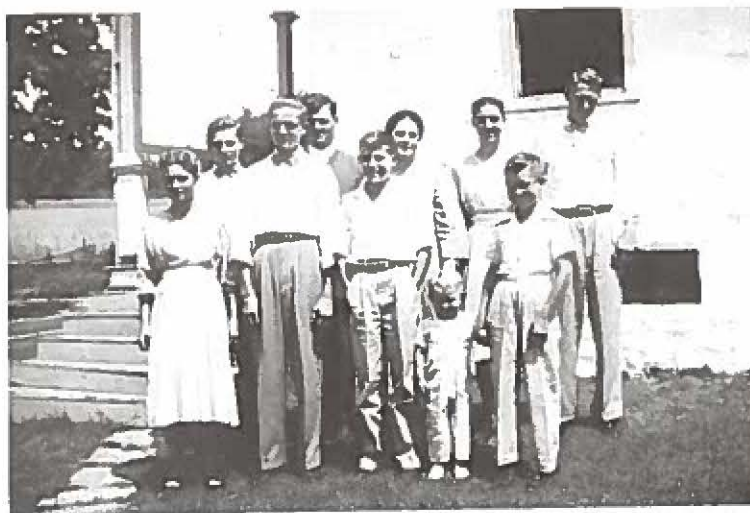
The congregation known as the Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church had its beginning in May 1938. The church building was located five miles southeast of New Holland, along Route 897. This interracial congregation was an outgrowth of what was known as the Welsh Mountain Industrial Mission. Established in 1898, this effort was in the interest of the people living in the area. It also was the earliest social service project operated by the Mennonite Church in the eastern part of the United States.

A limited program of spiritual ministries was offered at the industrial mission. This effort was originally intended to supplement the work of Presbyterian Pastor Hagler, a community resident who ministered in a small church building located on what is now Meeting House Road near the "hand boards." Hagler's Mt. Hope Church burned down and was replaced by a Union Sunday School. As Pastor Hagler became older and less active, the mission staff became more involved in the spiritual ministry activities.

The Industrial Mission was terminated in 1924, as more employment opportunities in the surrounding communities resulted in a decreased need for the work the Industrial Mission offered. The main resident building was then converted for use as a rest home for older people and became known as the Welsh Mountain Good Samaritan Home.



The Ira and Pauline Buckwalter family about 1950.



The Clayton and Esther Leaman family about 1950.



The Daniel and Marian Weaver family about 1951.

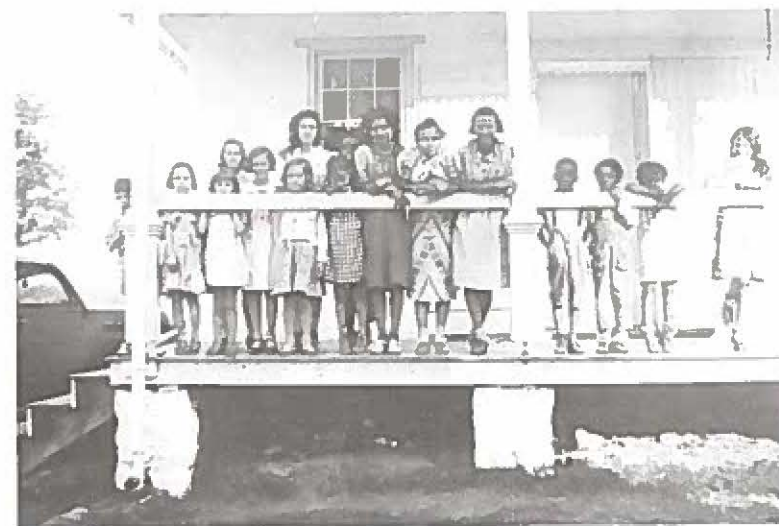
With the growth of the Samaritan Home, the parent organization, Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities, decided to create a separate organization to carry forward the spiritual ministry in behalf of the community. Several non-resident families were united in this effort. The first Sunday worship service was held on the first Sunday of May 1938, in the stone and stucco building originally built to house a shirt factory.

The non-resident families became, in fact, charter members of a congregation that began to emerge. The initial members of this group were the Ira and Pauline Buckwalter family and the Clayton and Esther Leaman family. They were soon joined by the Daniel and Marian Weaver family, and the John and Dorothy Hershey family. For a period of years, Paul and Bertha Shirk and Irvin and Mary Groff were involved at Red Well in cottage meeting work. After a period of time, the Shirks also participated in the work at Welsh Mountain. From 1949 to 1960, summer evangelistic tent meetings were held at Red Well as a joint Welsh Mountain/Red Well outreach.



Left: John and Dorothy Hershey with daughter Lorraine about 1951.

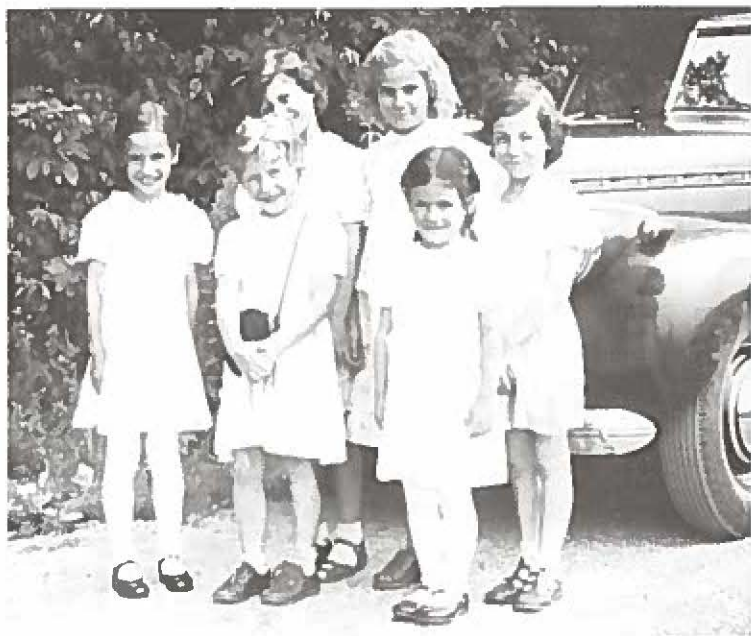
Below: Stella Watson (center) with her children in the late 1940s.



Community youth on the church porch in the 1940s.

A major effort was made in a spiritual and service ministry in the community by these lay members on a marginal time basis. Over the years, many additional persons helped with Sunday School, Bible School, and other activities. A good number of folks from the community became members of the church. Many of these remained staunch members with a testimony on their lips and a song in their hearts until the end of their earthly pilgrimage. Later, other denominational groups initiated programs ministering to this relatively small community. There remain several active members from the community and an occasional response to the gospel, which makes the continuing effort toward this community worthwhile. The congregation no longer sponsors a large-scale social service program, but it does continue to assist the community in various ways.

The present membership of the congregation is thirty. In addition to community folks, this includes a resident of the Home, several of the initial members, some of their children and grandchildren, plus a few families who have joined the fellow-



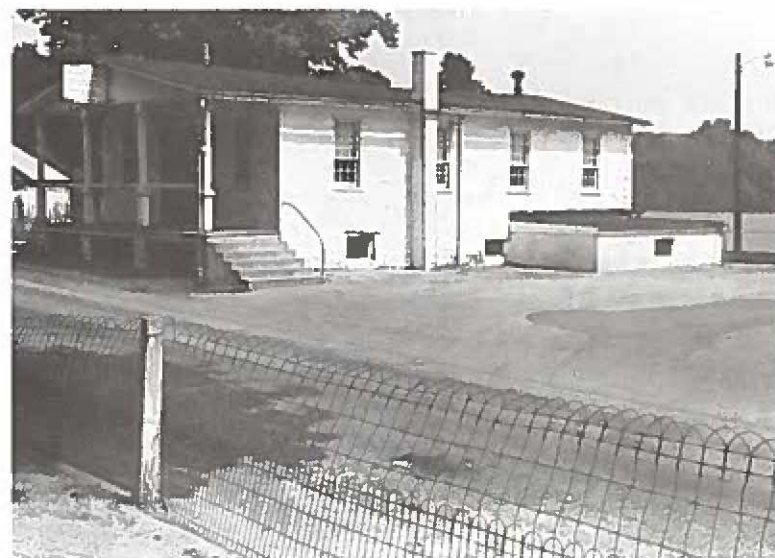
Front row, left to right: Betty Jane Howe, Shirley Buzzard, Dorothy Howe. Rear, left to right: Marian Buckwalter, Thea Means, and Elaine Buckwalter. Picture taken at Red Well in 1948.



Nathaniel Millisock (left) and Robert Marshall in the late 1950s.



Isaac (Peggy) Boots with great-grandsons Brian and Howard Boots about 1971.

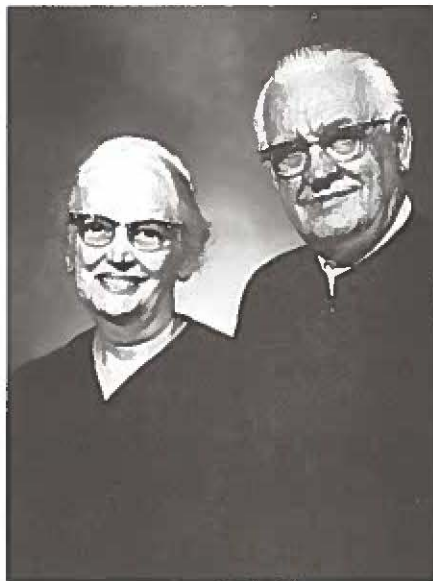


Welsh Mountain Church prior to the 1973 renovations. Building was used as a shirt and broom factory and a school prior to 1938.



Welsh Mountain Church after the 1973 renovations.

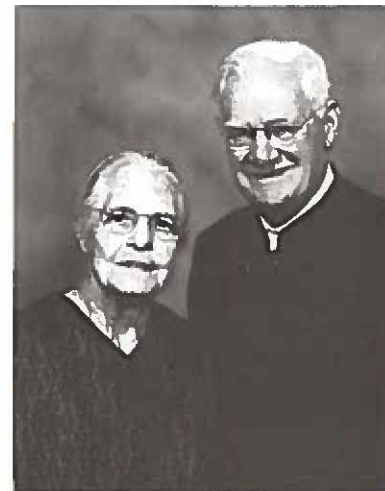
ship because of the spiritual warmth of the group. Over the years, a program of Bible clubs for children, regular mid-week services, a monthly ladies' meeting, community visitation, and a monthly service at a nursing home in Blue Ball supplement the usual Sunday School and worship services. Some of these programs continue to the present time. The worship services of the congregation have always been available to the residents of the Samaritan Home. Over the years, administrative and other staff at



Ira and Pauline Buckwalter, 1990.



Clayton Leaman (left) and Ira Buckwalter on the front porch of the church prior to the 1973 renovations.



Clayton and Esther Leaman, deacon and pastor, 1990.



Mark and Brenda Leaman, pastor and bishop, 1998.



Carmelo and Karen Rodriguez, pastor, 1995.

the Home have made meaningful contributions to congregational life.

Over the years, there were several improvement projects on the church building, and in the fall of 1973, there was a major renovation, including a new roof structure and additions to provide more Sunday School classrooms and washroom facilities. The chapel now provided seating for 100 people. A sign was erected in the front of the church building which says, "Welcome, Welsh Mountain Church, a Bible Believing Fellowship."

The congregation was originally known as the Welsh Mountain Mission. Although the name was changed in the early seventies, it was the concern of the membership that the congregation continue its program as a mission to the local community. They also felt the church should participate actively in the world-wide evangelism and service ministry sponsored by the Mennonite Church. To this, the congregation continues to liberally contribute. Beginning in 1938, this ministry was supplied by pastors of adjoining Mennonite churches.



Paul and Lillian Leaman, deacon, 1988.



Richard and Sara Buckwalter, pastor, 1990.



Present pastor Robert and Mary Etta Kauffman, 1999.

In November 1944, Ira Buckwalter, a member of the original group, was chosen by lot and ordained to serve as the first pastor. In December 1950, Clayton D. Leaman, also one of the original group, was chosen by lot and ordained to serve as deacon, and was then ordained as pastor in December 1961.

Mark Leaman, son of Clayton Leaman, was chosen to serve the congregation as pastor from the time of his ordination on January 2, 1976, until he was chosen by lot and ordained as bishop on June 6, 1982. He was chosen to serve as assistant bishop to Clair Eby, bishop of the Paradise-Hershey district of the Lancaster Conference of the Mennonite Church. Bishop Eby died in the spring of 1999.

Carmelo Rodriguez, Jr., was chosen by lot and ordained on May 29, 1983, to serve as the congregation's pastor. On November 21, 1983, Paul Leaman was chosen by lot and ordained to serve the congregation as

deacon. Ira Buckwalter and Clayton Leaman, the original leaders of the congregation, assisted the younger leaders in helpful and supportive ways until their deaths. Clayton Leaman died July 1, 1990, and Ira Buckwalter died October 31, 1992.

Under the leadership of Pastor Carmelo Rodriquez and Deacon Paul Leaman, the congregation took on a surge of growth through continued Biblical preaching and a bit more of a charismatic flair in worship. The congregation began to think seriously about building a new and larger facility on an available property across the street from the church. When the nearby two-acre summer youth camp known as Camp Hidden Hills came up for sale, the plan to build across the street was dropped. Through much prayer, discussion, and due process, the congregation bought the Camp Hidden Hills property.

The main steel structure on the property was renovated to provide a spacious and comfortable meeting place for the congregation. By the time the building was ready for occupancy, the smaller original part of the congregation, after much thought and prayer, preferred not to move to the new location, but to continue a ministry in the original location next to the Welsh Mountain Samaritan Home. This continued to provide a convenient place for residents of the home to worship. The larger part of the Welsh Mountain congregation moved to the new location formerly known as Camp Hidden Hills and became known as Harvest Celebration Center.

The Welsh Mountain Mennonite Church at this point had a kind of new beginning. Richard Buckwalter, a long-time pastor in the Old Road Mennonite Church which was a congregation in the same district, was invited to serve the Welsh Mountain congregation as an interim pastor. Richard accepted the interim position and was installed on November 18, 1990, as pastor with Paul Leaman continuing as deacon. Richard served the congregation as pastor for approximately four years.

Robert Kauffman, who, with his wife and family, now lives in the Welsh Mountain community and teaches at the West Fallowfield Christian School, was invited to become the congregation's pastor. After due process, Robert accepted the invitation and was installed as a licensed pastor on March 5, 1995, to serve the congregation as its sixth pastor. Robert Kauffman and Paul Leaman are faithfully serving the congregation at this writing.

The congregation's average Sunday morning attendance is forty-eight, with a good number of residents from the Welsh Mountain Home attending. While the congregation continues to be small, we thank God for the privilege of being a part of the pioneer effort of this interracial and cross-cultural ministry.

Source

Article written by Ira Buckwalter in 1976, now in the Welsh Mountain archival box at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society.

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