SOUVENIR PROGRAM

OF THE

74th ANNIVERSARY and HOMECOMING

OF THE

Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church

ZIONSVILLE. PENNA.

SEPTEMBER 10, 1933

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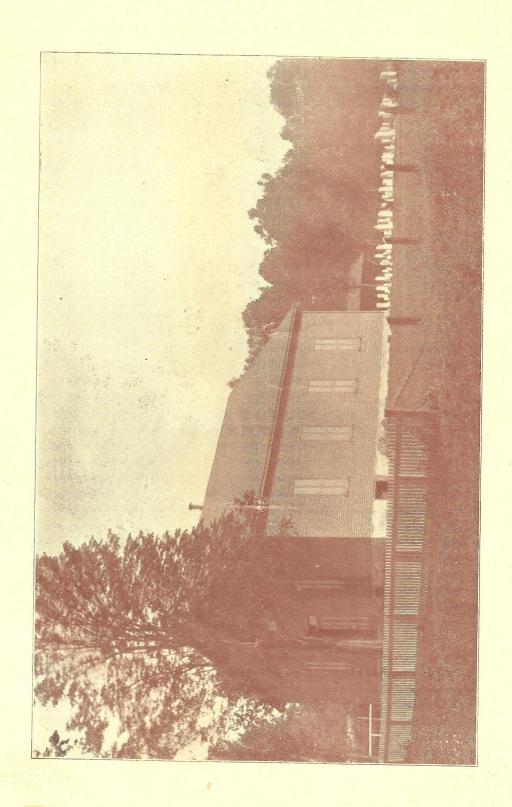
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REV. H. B. MUSSELMAN

Presiding Elder of the Allentown

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and Chairman of the Pennsylvania Conference

HISTORY

The first and oldest church of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ was built in 1859 at the southeastern edge of a small grove of giant oak trees about a mile south of Vera Cruz, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania.

It was then called the Upper Milford Church because situated in the county by that name and in distinction from another preaching appointment in a hall over the store and post office at Hosensack in Lower Milford Township about three miles south of the church. This store was owned and conducted by David Gehman, grandfather of the writer and first deacon of the church and secretary of the Conferences.

Some years later this grove was cut down, the present maple rrees planted and the house adjoining the church yard was built and occupied by the janitor, John Roeder.

This plain brick church, thirty-six by fifty feet, is still used for regular services and Sunday School every Sunday and prayer meetings every Tuesday evening. The church and the yard surrounding it afford ample parking place. The cemetery adjoining is kept in excellent condition under the care of the congregation and their pastor, Rev. G. F. Yost of Emaus, Pa.

The original plot of ground comprising the church yard and a large part of the cemetery was donated by Abraham Kauffman, then the oldest member of the congregation. The eastern part of the cemetery was purchased many years later. This Abraham Kauffman was the first pterson buried here in 1860 at the age of 83 years. The oldest person buried here, David Musselman, was buried in 1903 at the age of 96 years, 7 months and 12 days.

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Years ago quite a large congregation worshipped here regularly. During the annual revival services held in the late fall the church was usually filled and often packed to capacity, people walking for miles from every direction to witness the power and blessing of God.

Since then many moved away to the towns and cities near by, some even to far distant states. Many have fallen asleep in Jesus whose bodies are resting in the quiet churchyard here and at other places, awaiting the sounding of the voice of the Archangel and the Trumper of God.

Our godly fathers and praying mothers who, when they were few in number, launched out and amid much misunderstanding and some persecution established a church here, which shook the community and erected many family altars. This church started out, established and sent forth many faithful laborers whose power and influence has reached to the ends of the earth.

Some of your older brothers and sisters who originally came from this "Upper Milford" church would be surprised if you would sit down and write down the names of all the many preachers and preachers' wives, presiding elders and missionaries who are descendants of the original families. A structure that stands the test of time with its "change and decay" for 74 years must have had a good, sound foundations.

Those of us, old and young, whose forefathers worshipped, sang, prayed, wept, rejoiced and sacrificed here in this church can, we trust, sing from the heart.

"Faith of our fathers, living still."

REV. C. H. BRUNNER.

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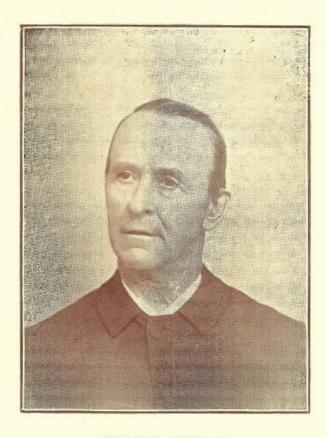
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REV. WM. GEHMAN

Rev. William Gehman was born in Hereford, Berks County, Pennsylvania, on January 22, 1827, and died at his home near Vera Cruz on April 12, 1918, aged 91 years, 2 months and 20 days.

He learned the trade of a miller, married Anna, the daughter of Jacob Musselman, and moved on the farm near Vera Cruz where he lived to the day of his death.

When quite young he affiliated himself with the "Conference Mennonites" where he, in October, 1849, as a young man of twenty-two, was chosen to the ministry by lot. Being full of zeal and with the support of a few of the older members, prayer meetings were being held at different places in the homes. Soon a number of families were converted, causing quite a stir in the church. This led to the organization of a new society in 1853 under the name of "Evangelical Mennonites."

On September 24, 1858, the first session of Preachers' Meetings or Conferences was held in the private home of David Musselman at what is now Dillinger Station. This Conference consisted of William N. Shelly, William Gehman, David Henning and Henry Diehl, ministers, and David Gehman, Joseph Schneider and Jacob Godshall, deacons.

The second Conference was held on the first Tuesday of November, 1859, in the Evangelical Mennonite Meeting House in Haycock Township, Bucks County, Pa. After this Conferences were held semi-annually, in June and November.

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At the first four Conferences Brother Gehman presided as chairman. He held this office in seventeen semi-annual Conferences until the year 1879. This year a special Conference convened in the Zionsville Church at which Rev. Solomon Eby of Canada presided. Here a union was effected with the United Menonites of the Western states and Canada and the name was changed to "Evangelical United Menonites."

From this time the Conferences were held annually. Brother Gehman was chairman for four sessions until another special Conference convened in Harrisburg, Ohio, December 27, 1883, and this body united with the "Brethren in Christ," adopting the present name, "Mennonite Brethren in Christ."

Here again Brother Gehman was the chairman of the first session of the Peunsylvania Conference, which place he held for eight consecutive session until the year 1891, when he requested to be retired.

Father Gehman, as he was called in his later years, however continued to take an active part in all the doings of the church and attended all the Conferences and Camp Meetings to the end. At the last Camp Meeting he attended, when past ninety, he preached for almost an hour with very little evidence of fatigue of body, voice or mind. The last annual Conference that he attended was held in Allentown, Pa., about six months before his death.

If our available records are correct, Father Gehman attended a total of 106 semi-annual, annual, special and general Conferences without missing a single session

Father Gehman preached with much acceptance in the pulpits of many denominations but could not be persuaded to miss any of his appointments.

He was noted for his punctuality at all his appointments as well as at the Sunday School and church services at his home church where he was a lifelong member. He took a great interest in the young people and the young ministers especially.

At his funeral Presiding Elder H. B. Musselman had charge, and preached the sermon, assisted by Rev. W. B. Musselman of Cleveland, Ohio, founder and president of the Gospel Worker Society, Rev. A. E. Funk of New York City, a special representative of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Rev. B. F. Bohner of the Evangelical Association and others. A number of the pastors acted as pall-bearers, carrying Father Gehman to his last resting place in the quiet church yard adjoining, awaiting the resurrection at the sound of the last trumpet. He was survived by four sons and three daughters, all of whom were present at his funeral. Of these there remain today, Allen M. of Macungie, William G. of Easton, and Mary and Hannah of Vera Cruz.

REV. C. H. BRUNNER.

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HYMNS

FAITH OF OUR FATHERS

Faith of our fathers! living still In spite of dungeon, fire and sword:

O how our hearts beat high with joy, Whene'er we hear that glorious word:

Chorus

Faith of our fathers! holy faith! We will be true to thee till death. Our fathers, chained in prison dark, Were still in heart and conscience free

How sweet would be their children's face

If they, like them, could die for

Faith of our fathers, God's great pow'r Shall soon all nations win for

thee; And thro' the truth that comes from

God Mankind shall then be truly free.

Faith of our fathers, we will love Both friend and foe in all our

strife, And preach thee too, as love knows how

By kindly words and virtuous life.

WHEN THE ROLL IS CALLED UP YONDER

When the trumper of the Lord shall sound and time shall be no more, And the morning breaks eternal, bright and fair,

When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore, And the roll is called up yonder.

I'll be there.

When the roll is called up yonder, When the roll is called up yonder, When the roll is called up yonder, When the roll is called up yonder. I'll be there.

On that bright and cloudless morning, when the dead in Christ shall rise And the glory of his resurrection share;

When his chosen ones shall gather to their home beyond the skies,

And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.

Let us labor for the Master, from the dawn till setting sun;

Let us talk of all his wondrous love and care;

Then, when all of life is over and our work on earth is done, And the roll is called up yonder.

HOW FIRM A FOUNDATION

we'll be there.

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord.

Is laid for your faith in His excellen: word!

Whar more can He say rhan to you He hath said,

You who unto Jesus for refuge have fled?

"Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,

For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;

I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee ro stand,

Upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.

"When through the deep waters I call thee ro go,

The rivers of woe shall nor thee overflow;

For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless.

And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.

"When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,

My grace, all-sufficient, shall be

thy supply The flame shall not hurt thee; I only

design

Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine."



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