

CHRONICLES

AUTUMN 2003 THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE VALLEY BRETHREN-MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTER VOL I NO. 3

The heart of our heritage is people; the program at CrossRoads will tell their stories. This third issue of *Chronicles* continues to share stories of the faces in the diamond. It is based on information from *The Olive Branch* and from Emmert Bittinger, Professor Emeritus at Bridgewater College.

catherine showalter: faithful supporter

Catherine Showalter was born into a long tradition of faithful living according to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Clearly, this included the belief that war and the bearing of arms against one another is contrary to these teachings.

Catherine's ancestry reads like a family tree of Brethren pioneers:

- ◆ Benjamin Bowman, Sr. (1751-1829) married Catherine Shoemaker. He was both a founder and elder of the Greenmount Brethren Congregation.
- ◆ Their son, Benjamin Bowman, Jr., (born 1775) married Catherine Wine (born 1775). He succeeded his father as elder at Greenmount.
- ◆ Benjamin, Jr. and Catherine Wine had a daughter, Elizabeth Bowman (born 1818) who married Elder Jacob Miller, one of the ministers of Greenmount.
- ◆ Jacob Miller and Elizabeth Bowman had a daughter, Catherine Miller, who married Jackson Showalter. She is the face pictured in the diamond.

Two groups of Brethren and Mennonites left their homes in the Valley in March 1862 to go west to escape conscription into the Confederate army. Jackson Showalter, Catherine's husband, was one of these. His group, about 18 in number, was captured near Moorefield and brought to Harrisonburg by way of Woodstock and Mt. Jackson.

There were several opportunities when some in the group could have escaped their captors but did not, fearing it would make the situation more difficult for those who remained. In Woodstock, their horses, saddles and bridles were taken from them, so the remainder of the journey to Mt. Jackson and then Harrisonburg was on foot.

An account by Brother J. M. Cline of Knightly in Augusta County is quoted in *The Olive Branch*: "When we arrived at Harrisonburg, we had the honor of having our home for about two weeks in the courthouse. Here we were fed principally by friends who brought us boxes and baskets of good things to eat. After we were there a few days we all got a kind of epizootic and had it not been for Brother John Kline, it did seem that we could not have lived. It did seem that the Lord had him come there to take care of us. As a physician he took care of us in our sickness, and as a minister he preached for us several times at night and on each Sunday."

Catherine was one of the women who brought food regularly to the men incarcerated in the Rockingham County courthouse. In her faith tradition, she demonstrated her support for the efforts of the men to take a stand in opposition to participating in the Civil War.

She would probably be surprised to find her face as a part of the CrossRoads diamond. And yet, she is an example of a believer quietly living her faith, serving those in need, supporting the community, and passing a noteworthy legacy.



Catherine Showalter

Research book being published

After years of in-depth study and research by David Rodes and Norman Wenger, the book *Unionists and the Civil War Experience in the Shenandoah Valley* is about to be published. The book focuses on the work of the Southern Claims Commission.

These claims expose a rich texture of Civil War events and personal experiences deeply rooted in the political and moral context of the times. Images of war-engendered suffering, loss of life and property, miscarriages of justice, and struggles of conscience, all appear vividly within this context. These settings were homes and farms of loyalist families located in the vicinity of foraging Union troops.

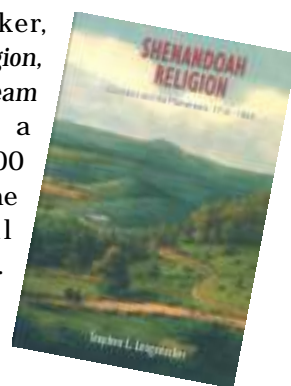
As the claimants attempt to document their losses and prove their loyalty, an intimate and poignant drama emerges from each claim. Insight is gained about how the war impacted families and communities as troops ravaged their farms and homes. Not only is the devastating economic impact disclosed, but the personal reaction to crisis sometimes can be observed as well.

Claims reviewed in this volume are for families located primarily in the Mill Creek and Port Republic communities.

VBMHC is sponsoring the publication of this book in conjunction with Valley Research Associates. It is expected to be available for purchase this fall.

Longenecker to discuss new book on Valley religion

Dr. Stephen Longenecker, author of *Shenandoah Religion, Outsiders and the Mainstream 1716-1865*, will present a review of his book at 7:00 p.m. September 25 at the Massanutten Regional Library in Harrisonburg. Dr. Longenecker is a Professor of History and chairs the Department of History and Political Science at Bridgewater College.



The Board of Directors of the Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center invites you to a **Dedication Ceremony of CrossRoads**

710 Garbers Church Road
Harrisonburg
4:30 p.m. Sunday, September 7
featuring

◆ Rev. Robert Alley,
Dedicatory speaker

◆ Singing of cherished traditional hymns

◆ Tours of the Burkholder-Myers House and the adjoining site plan

◆ Refreshments

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