



THE MENNONITES

AS

"QUEER PEOPLE"

The following article appeared in the January 1952 issue of the Ladies Home Journal. It was listed as a Special Feature Article and was written by Dorothy Thompson.

She was booked to speak at Bethel College at North Newton, Kansas, a Mennonite Institution.

Prior to her arrival at this community she knew nothing about the Mennonites. The hospitality she received while in the environment that is characteristic of these people, made such an impression upon her that she was inspired to write the article.

The article is entirely unsolicited and is also self explanatory.

"QUEER PEOPLE"

BY

DOROTHY THOMPSON

Recently I was booked to speak at a small college in Kansas, and en route mentioned its name to a fellow passenger on the train, who had opened a conversation regarding the various stops on my tour. "I believe that Bethel College is a Mennonite Institution," I said, "and that interests me very much, because I really know nothing about the Mennonites."

"Queer people," remarked my companion. "All the men wear beards, and the women some sort of gray clothes, don't they?"

A man across the aisle joined in. "Aren't those the folks who wear no clothes at all? I thought they lived in Canada."

"Those are the Dukhobors," I said from my limited knowledge, "and I don't think they wear no clothes except occasionally, but anyhow they aren't Mennonites."

"They have a College? Didn't know they believed in higher education," said the first speaker. "They don't believe in war, like the Quakers. And don't they believe in the Second Coming of Christ?"

"They're wonderful farmers," remarked the second speaker. "Don't know why?"

"Anyhow," concluded my companion, therewith dismissing the subject, "they are Queer people---very Queer."

And the conversation turned to whether President Truman was certain to run again, whether General Eisenhower would be a candidate, and what were the chances of Taft.

In the next two days, however, I learned more about the people we had discussed, and what I learned has occupied my thoughts ever since.

My Hosts and Sponsors in Newton, Kansas, did not wear beards, and their wives and daughters dressed like any other modest American women, with the emphasis on cleanliness and simplicity. They lived in charming homes with (I thought) exceptionally natural, well-mannered children. They are not proselyters, nor did they seek to ram their religious concepts down my throat. But I was quickly caught up in a unique atmosphere, difficult to describe. It was not an atmosphere of "piety" in the usual connotations of that word, nor of sectarianism, which so easily becomes wrangling, nor of the self-righteousness that so quickly puts one on the defensive. It was an atmosphere, no less powerful because entirely unobtrusive, of serenity and peace, and far from being "Queer."

These "Queer" people, I learned, are practically creedless. The sum of their faith is to be found in the New Testament, and especially in the Lords Prayer and the Sermon on the Mount. They believe that in his teachings Christ revealed to man the laws of God, laws that are basic in the structure of the universe and that, unlike man-made laws, operate without the slightest possibility of failure. These laws recognised and observed, are the path to abundant life and they are all summed up in the injunction to "Love the Lord thy God with all thy Strength and with all thy spirit, and thy neighbor as thyself."

The "Queer" people believe that the Christian life is a life to be lived, every day, in every thought and deed-nor do they divide thought and act. Thought, in its highest, most concentrated form, is directed, as prayer, for the fuller understanding and revelation of God's law of Love; such thought, they believe, is an actual force in the universe, as "real" as electricity, as the actions which follow

and conform with it are its incorporation in external reality. To think and act according to God's revealed laws is therefore to live naturally, according to inherent, natural law, and to reap inevitably a more abundant life.

Into everything, therefore, that the "Queer" people do, enters this fourth-dimensional element of love and service to God's Laws. Therefore one's work must be lovingly done well, joyfully but without strain, with gratitude for its material rewards, but without concentration on them, since all one's doings are a service to God and to His children-humanity.

I saw a very simple illustration of this when I visited a center for the collection of food and clothing for the victims of war and hatred living in refugee camps abroad. Although the "Queer" people settled in the various communities number altogether only 100,000 people in America, they have sent thousands of tons of food and clothing abroad. The manager of the collection center in Newton, Kansas, is a woman, who receives for her services, "because she needs the little extra money," \$40.00 per month. Housed in a huge Quonset hut were bales and bales of clothing and food. I remarked on the neatness of the second hand clothing; everything was immaculately clean; neatly mended, where mending was necessary; never a button missing; shoes cobbled and shined. In each garment was a small label, only two inches square, bearing the words "In the name of Christ." The director said smilingly (but with even a shade of tartness), "One can't send a suffering people useless old cast-offs in the name of Christ. What we send has to be decent and worthy of that label."

Then I understood why the "Queer" people are famous the world over as farmers. To them the earth is the Lord's to be worked in harmony with His laws, as these can be discerned. An ill-kept field, soil

mined without the regard to the generations to come, woods devastated for immediate profit, land eroded from neglect and indifference are affronts to the original and ultimate owner.

Perhaps one of the "Queerest" things about the "Queer" people is that though they have lived in many countries, and been persecuted in most, they have always come to new lands on invitation.

Their communities came into existence with the dawn of the Protestant Revolution. When Luther, Calvin and Zwingli were carving their mighty sects out of the heart of Europe, a little group of leaders, with beliefs more liberal and simple than those of these great religious sects, gathered together in private homes in Zurich, Switzerland, to formulate the simple faith they hold to this day.

They recognized the necessity of the State and taught cheerful payment of taxes, but they rejected war as a deadly sin. They were furiously persecuted—and by all the other religions.

But the industry, frugality and honesty of their lives impressed even great rulers, who recognized them as an asset to any Nation. Frederick the Great of Prussia invited them to Germany, to be an example to the native farmers; Catherine the Great of Russia offered them great inducements to settle in the Ukraine for the same reason. And there they lived in peace and honor until later rulers of both countries sought to draft them into armies, and popular passions for conformity resented even their nonaggressive existence.

In new America, William Penn invited them to Pennsylvania; and the builders of the Santa Fe Railroad, looking for settlers to come to the wilderness of Kansas, having heard of the Ukrainian settlements, invited them there. These settlers brought with them from Russia, the first "hard" or winter wheat ever seen in this country, which over the many years has transformed the wheat culture of Midwestern America.

Not all of their communities are identical. They have their "fundamentalists" whose men wear beards and who affect a peculiar dress, while others adopt in these particulars the habits of the general American community. But spiritually they are one.

The College at which I spoke is a fully accredited liberal-arts College, they have on their faculty excellent teachers, many with Ph.D. and Masters' degrees from the greatest American Universities. Yet the "Queer" people do believe that cultivation of the intellect alone, divorced from the cultivation of the soul, is productive of evil, not of good.

"A brilliant spiritual moron armed with all of the instruments that education and training can give is more dangerous to society than an ignorant moron," a member of the college administration remarked to me.

At any rate, where ever they have settled, the land has boomed and comely settlements have sprung up. Always they have created substantial, stable and modest prosperity. They have paid their taxes to sustain the laws of the State, but the taxes have not had to be expended upon the "Queer" people among whom crime, divorce and poverty are practically unknown. The prisons that have housed them have been prisons only for those who have refused to register for military service. For the conviction that war is sin, and that by the immutable laws of God which are synonymous with the laws of nature, war breeds war, hatred hatred, and destruction destruction, they have suffered to greater or lesser degree everywhere, but calmly, and without rancor.

When a czar of Russia quizzically inquired of a delegation, "Where would nations get their soldiers if all men were like you?" they did not reply; the answer of course, being implicit. Yet even the czars did not imprison them, but set them, in war time, at the hardest, and most menial tasks. It remained for Stalin to scatter and disperse the remnants of their

members to forced-labor camps-in the name of a creed promising the end of all human exploitation and the universal peace.

It is perfectly true--- observable in every day life-- that whatever is done for love is well performed, and that the element of love makes the performance voluntary, pleasurable and free.

It is also true that love of others--an extension and sublimation of self love--is somehow tied to the instinctive knowledge of love as the source of life; i.e., as a force of Creation, or God. It is also observably true that war has never created a just peace; that those who truly love (without possessiveness) are loved in return; that justice without mercy (which is also love) always turns out to be injustice; and that punishment never reformed any body. Love both disciplines and liberates. Crime is the expression of hatred of society, and hatred, nine times out of ten, is frustrated love.

Science in our lifetime has discovered the composition of the universe, and has revealed that it is composed not of "Matter" but of energy; and too; science has demonstrated how to disintegrate it. The truths scientists discovered were here all the time for those who could deduce them. But mankind has not, as a whole, discerned the integrating element in the universe-- though they have given it a name--- God.

And the more I have thought about it the more I have wondered whether the "Queer" people are not just a little more "scientifically advanced" than are the rest of us in the most fundamental of all the sciences, the one that should reveal how we can continue to live together on this planet, in this universe.

They think the secret has been here all the time, ever since Christ lived and died and lived again as a spirit as close as one's own breathing, as real and discernable as the trust in the eyes of a child.

The End



## OUR MENNONITE HERITAGE

In the present day and age most people take their religion for granted. Such a condition is brought on by environment. Young men and young women, offspring of parents who attend church faithfully, spend their courtship days together, get married and have children, who in turn are taught to follow in their footsteps. Since this is a regular and natural procedure to follow, religion is taken as matter-of-fact just like learning the alphabet and getting an elementary school education. It is taught to their children because it is good for them and their parents before them did likewise.

Put the following question to a number of people. Why are you a Mennonite? Or a Methodist or any other religion they profess to belong to. Your answer from the average person will be: because my father and my mother are. That may be the correct answer if you do not understand the lessons that you were taught.

If you understood the teachings and principles of the Mennonite Church, your answer should be: I am a Mennonite because their teachings and principles are closest to the laws governing the church established by Jesus Christ, our Lord. They are found in the New Testament of the Holy Bible.

This group is almost creedless. The sum of their faith is taken out of the New Testament, especially from the Lord's prayer and the Sermon on the Mount.

One of their main tenets that put them in a place all by themselves during the reformation period, is their stand on the issue of Separation of Church and State. The basis for this, no doubt, was taken from scripture, Saint Luke, Chapter 20, verse 25.

Their stand on baptism on confession of faith and rejection of infant baptism is another. There is no evidence in the Bible to support infant baptism but you will find references to baptism on confession of faith and belief in Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

The books that are listed below cover the subject of the Mennonite Religion and it's History very well and reading one or more of them will give you a much better understanding of the teachings and principles and will convince you not to take your religion too lightly.

Mennonite Handbook of Information,

By L. J. Heatwole, Scottdale, Penna., 1925.

An Outline of Mennonite History,

By J. John Friesen, Newton, Kansas, 1944.

Mennonite History,

By Daniel Kauffman, Scottdale, Penna., 1927.

Tales from Ancient and Recent Mennonite History,

By Jacob H. Janzen, Waterloo, Ontario, 1948.

Smith's Story of the Mennonites,

By C. Henry Smith, Third edition, Revised and enlarged by Cornelius Krahn, Newton, Kansas, 1950.

Geschichte und Glaubenslehre der Taufgesinntenn, oder Mennonitten,

By Rev. Carl H. A. Van der Smissen, Summerfield, Illinois, 1895.

Smith's Story of the Mennonites contains a large bibliography from which you can select literature on Anabaptist and Mennonite History.

As you read some of these books on Anabaptist and Mennonite History you will become enlightened on the matter of the corruption that was carried on at the time when religion and the State were together.

The Constitution of our Country guards against an entanglement of this sort and is based on Separation of Church and State on the concepts of Religion.

As this is being written, some groups are making an effort to break down this barrier and if they can succeed in doing so, it will result in an unjust and unequal application of funds supplied by those of use who are not in accord with the plan.

The price of your Liberty is eternal vigilance.

July 10, 1959.

By Albert J. Ruth.





THE REUNION OF THE RUTH FAMILY AT HALSTEAD

THE

CHILDREN OF DAVID RUTH AND KATHERINE STROHM

RESIDENTS OF HARVEY COUNTY, KANSAS.

This family reunion was held at Halstead, Kansas on Wednesday April 12, 1912. The family tree is made up of five brothers and three sisters. Their names are: John W. Ruth, Susanna Ruth Krehbiel, Katherine Ruth Krehbiel, Barbara Ruth Lehmann, David C. Ruth, Henry G. Ruth, Jacob Ernst Ruth and Gerhard B. Ruth.

They all lived in Harvey County, Kansas with the exception of Jacob E., who was living in Kingfisher, Oklahoma for the past twelve years.

David and Katherine Ruth immigrated to the United States from Upper Bavaria in the year of 1852. Their children, who are now living, were all born in Upper Bavaria with the exception of Gerhard, who was born at Franklin, Lee County, Iowa, where the family made their first home. In the spring of the year of 1865, the family moved to Summerfield, Illinois.

In the year of 1875 several members of the family moved to the naked prairie in Harvey County, Kansas. Before the close of the 70's. the mother, and nearly all of the children had moved to Harvey County. The father, David Ruth, passed away on March the third, 1867 at Summerfield, Illinois.

All of these children made extensive purchases of land from the Sante Fe Railroad Company, the cost of which varied from two to six dollars an acre. All of the children were in rather poor circumstances when they settled here with other pioneers.

Their families, are all large, well preserved and well proportioned men and women of excellent mentality. As a group, their average age is sixty six and one half years. The youngest one is fifty nine years old and the oldest is almost seventy three. In terms of weight, they range from 112 to 195 pounds and the average weight is 160 1/2. Their average height is five feet and ten inches.

As a group, they have been parents of 85 children and grandparents of 60 children. The oldest one is Susanna, widow of the late Rev. Christian Krehbiel. She had sixteen children, twelve of them are living. Although she has had many a hardship to bear in her pioneer life, she is now the picture of health. Her happiness and appearance at the allotted age of three score years and ten, is more like the woman of fifty than of seventy eight. In 1908 they celebrated their golden wedding anniversary. Barbara Lehmann is only two years younger, and although she shows her age a bit more, she would today outwork six of the society Butterflies when it comes to doing the actual work. She gave birth to fifteen children and all but one are living. She has nineteen grandchildren. In 1911, she and her husband celebrated their golden wedding anniversary.

Katherine Ruth Krehbiel lost her husband early in life. He went west with a group on a scouting trip, to find a place to settle. He died of Typhoid Fever in Iowa. This left her with three children, Adolph, Ernest and Ruth. Ernest died at Summerfield shortly after his father's death. Adolph and Ruth, were with her. Adolph died in Halstead as a young man in 1893. John W. Ruth is the eldest brother and is the father of six living children. The others, according to age from the oldest to the youngest are: David C., Henry G., Jacob E. and Gerhard B..

This family reunion was held at the home of Aunt Katie Krehbiel of Halstead, Kansas.

The End.



A STORY OF THE

"RUTH"

SELF FEEDER AND BAND CUTTER

Introduction

A story of the origination and manufacture of the "Ruth" self feeder and band cutter for the threshing machine could be told in a few words but it would be rather hard to visualize how it functioned.

To make the purpose of the feeder and the work it performed more readily understood, we have taken the main cereal grain with which its work is connected and have broadened the scope of the story to include its origin and its harvesting and threshing from its earliest form down to the present day methods.

Origin of the Grain

Wheat, a grain from which we obtain flour to make bread, sometimes referred to as the "Staff of Life" is as old as the Creation itself.

Genesis 2 verses 4-5: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground."

Early Methods of Harvesting

The first method used to harvest wheat is unknown to us. The earliest method of which we have proof is by the use of the hand sickle. A picture found on an Egyptian Tomb, dating back to the year of 1500 B.C., shows grain being cut with a hand sickle. To harvest wheat by this method, it is cut down with the hand sickle, a small area at a time, then gathered up so the heads of the grain are all at the same end, laid on the ground in small bundles or sheaves and tied by using some of the stalks of grain for a band. The band was made up in the following manner; The loose bundle was placed in front of you with the heads of grain to your left. With your right hand you take a handful of stalks, grasping them at a point about an inch from the heads of grain, taking enough so that in closing your hand the tips of the thumb and index finger almost touch. Now as you continue to hold the stalks in your right hand, bring it in front of you so the heads of the grain are up. Now bring the left hand under the right and divide the stalks in half. You are now holding all of the stalks in your right hand and half of them in your left. The index finger of the left hand is left extended and used much like a needle. You now make a few deft movements with the hands and wrists, wrap the stalks in your left hand once around those that hang from your right, then up past the inside of your hand and around the heads of grain so the heads come between the stalks and your thumb, open the fingers of the right hand enough to allow the stalks in your left hand to come between the heads of grain and your fingers, then close the fingers to hold the knot in place. You now release your left hand. You are now holding the band at its center with your right hand, with stalks extending outward much as if you were holding a bow tie at its center. Now as you raise the bundle from the ground with your left hand, you pass the band under it with your right hand and release your hold as you lay the

bundle upon it to keep it in place. Now take one end of the band in each hand and bring it tightly around the bundle, crossing the band at the center and then twisting it tight, now double over the remaining end and push it underneath the band. Your bundle is now neatly and securely tied. The writer has tied many a bundle in this manner, during wheat harvest in cases where the binder missed tying or the twine broke.

Next came the scythe: It is an instrument used to mow grass or grain by hand, composed of a long curving blade, with a sharp edge, made fast at one end to a long bent handle called a snath. The scythe is also used as an emblem to represent time. You, have no doubt, seen it portrayed in the hands of an aged man to represent "Father Time."

We do not know the exact date or the place of its origin but do know that it has been in use for many centuries and is still being used in the present day for odd jobs for which it is well suited. The scythe has been altered but very little since it was first made, the greatest change being in the shape of the handle and the method of fastening it to the blade. Considerable skill was required on the part of the operator in handling this instrument. Anyone who was able to handle it properly could cut wheat and lay it in neat windrows or swaths with the heads all in the same direction, making it an easy matter to pick it up in bundles and tie it. An unskilled operator would have it scattered in every direction which required extra labor to gather it properly for tying. When used for the purpose of cutting weeds, however, there was no need to try to have the weeds lay in a uniform position like in cutting grain, so there was no effort made to acquire the necessary skill.

Next came the cradle, an attachment to be used on the scythe. It is a set of long parallel wooden bars or fingers for catching grain or hay being mowed and laying it in swaths or windrows. This attachment is not hard to use and does not require the skill that

is necessary without it. It was used in the 1880's. At the present time, no doubt, there are very few of the present generation who have ever seen one. They may be found in some Museums or you may be lucky and find one stored in an old barn or attic belonging to a farmer living in an old rural district. The writer has had the privilege of using one and also to have witnessed an occasion during his youth on the farm, that the scythe and cradle were used for harvesting wheat due to an extremely wet and rainy season. Some of the fields were so wet that it was impossible to use a binder due to the fact that it sank so deeply into the ground, or the drive wheel would slip or in some cases a combination of both. Some farmers used one eighth barrels ( a keg holding four gallons) and mounted them on the binder, front and back, boring a hole through both ends of the keg and placing a rod through it for an axle. The large area of contact it made with the ground gave the necessary buoyancy to keep the binder from sinking into the ground. They mounted small portable gasoline engines on the frame of the binder to drive the mechanism and remove the load from the drive wheel. The wet weather continued and the wheat sprouted and started growing from the shocks. Since it was not possible for the grain to dry out in the proper manner, it had to be threshed while it was still damp. This brought about a lot of extra work rotating the grain in the granary to keep it from getting hot and spoiling. This harvest was a very meager one, much grain was lost because of its sprouting and the little that was saved in threshing did not bring a good price on the market.

#### Mechanical Reapers

Experimental work was done on reapers as early as 1790 but with very little success. A man named Henry Ogle made the first reaper in 1826, it cut the grain and laid it in swaths. Cyrus H. McCormick made his reaper in 1834 but there was very little production until in the year of 1845.

A chronology of the advancements and improvements made on the reaper and threshers is herewith given:

1831; Was the accepted date for the invention of the reaper that became a success.

1836; Combine was built in Michigan.

1837; The first thresher patent. Hand operated.

1840; Horse power threshers and horse powers.

1846-47; Reapers got into production.

1848-49; First pusher type headers.

1850; Shakers were added to the threshers.

1854; Self rake reaper produced in quantity.

1857; 19 defferent types of reapers on the market.

1858; First successful harvester.

1863; The wire binder.

1870; Self binder and reaper using wire for tie.

1872; Wire binder on the Marsh Reaper.

1875; First reaper using twine.

1878; Successful twine binder. The Appleby binder on a Marsh reaper. The first successful reaper.

1880; Combines in the Pacific area.

1900's; Gasoline tractors.

1930's and 1935's; Combines.

1938; Self propelled combines.

Combines made very little progress for the first 100 years, however, reapers, harvesters and binders were commonplace.

When you take into consideration the advancements and rapid improvements made in the present day it is hard to realize that it took so long to bring about any improvement in the harvesting of wheat until in the year of 1826 and that there were none in threshing until in the year of 1837.

The first reaper did nothing more than to cut the grain and lay it in swaths. The next improvement was that in which it was placed into untied bundles. The wire binder came next. This was not a combination as we know it under the name of "binder" but a separate machine. You first cut the grain with a reaper that cut the grain and placed it into untied bundles and

then followed up with the binder that tied it with a piece of wire. The combination machine of reaper and binder was first made in 1870. This wire tie did not prove very successful because it took too much time to remove the wire tie from the bundles before feeding the grain into the thresher and too often a wire would get into the cylinder and cause serious damage plus a lot of lost time to repair it.

The first successful twine binder was made in the year of 1878. It was the Appleby Binder placed upon a Marsh Reaper and was considered the first successful reaper. By 1880 combines were being used in the Pacific area. From 1930 to 1935, one year less than a century since the first one was built in Michigan, combines were being improved and were making inroads toward replacing the binders. The first models were horse drawn, horses later being replaced by tractors and steam engines. After this, came models that were tractor drawn with a power take-off from the tractor to drive the mechanism of the combine. By 1938 they had their own power unit and were self propelled. It is to be noted that the first combines were known as headers. Since the combines have been perfected they are rapidly taking the place of the reaper or binder and are forcing the latter into obsolesence. At this writing the binders are already but few, for most of the progressive farmers own one and others hire one along with an operator to harvest their grain.

#### The First Threshers

No doubt the earliest method of threshing grain was by the use of a flail. This instrument was used for threshing grain by hand and consisted of a long wooden handle at the end of which a stouter and much shorter stick, called a swiple or swingle, was hung in such a manner that it swung freely. The grain was placed upon what was called a threshing floor and it was then beaten with a flail. This operation removed the grain from the chaff. The grain and chaff were then separated by the process called winnowing. This

in its earliest form consisted of simply taking the grain and chaff by handfuls and tossing it into the air or wind, the grain being too heavy, fell back to the floor from whence it was recovered and put into bags or jars.

At a later date, threshing was done by using oxen to tread out the grain. A post or pivot was mounted in the center of the threshing floor with one end of a long pole fit over the pivot pin so as to allow it to turn freely and the other end fastened to a yoke to which oxen were harnessed. The unthreshed grain was placed on the threshing floor and the oxen would tread out the grain while walking in a circle around the central pivot. A slightly improved method was a conical shaped drum or cylinder with a lot of wooden pegs protruding from the outer surface. The smallest end of the drum was pivoted to a stationary post and the larger end had a pole extending from it to which a yoke of oxen were harnessed. The oxen would walk in a circle, pulling the drum after them and as it revolved over the grain on the floor the wooden pegs would knock the wheat from the chaff. This was quite an improvement in comparison with the flail and must have been quite a labor saving device. Beyond this, there was no improvement nor advancement made in the threshing operation for many centuries. It was done as related in the Bible until about 1840 when horse power threshers began to appear on the market.

Some of you, no doubt, have seen pictures of this crude method of threshing. For further proof of this we again refer to scripture; In Deuteronomy, chapter 25 verse 4: "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn."

Here, for a matter of clarification, we might add that the word, "corn", is not used in the same sense that we use it today. The grain we call corn, really is maize or indian maize. Corn, collectively, meant the seed of any of the cereal grasses used for food.

The First Thresher Patent and Horse Power

The first thresher, patented in the year of 1837, was hand operated with a spike toothed cylinder on a wooden frame. This did nothing more than remove the grain from the chaff. There was no provision made to separate it from the straw and chaff.

In the year 1840 a device called a "horse power" appeared on the market. It was designed to drive the threshing machines. The first ones were made on the order of a tread mill and were made for one and two horses. Power was transmitted from the apron of the mill through a train of gears which were coupled to the thresher by a rod or rods with a universal joint mounted on each end. These rods were called tumbling rods. Newer models discarded the apron and replaced it with a large drive gear mounted horizontally over the gear train. This drive gear had special recesses to fit the long poles, to the outer end of which the horses were hitched. These models were made in sizes to be used with from one to twelve horses and proved to be more efficient than the older types that used the apron. With this new type horse power the horses would walk around in a circle, the pivot point being the center bearing of the main drive gear.

We had one of the latter types of horse powers on our old homestead to be used with from two to eight horses. It was used to operate a cider mill. During cider making time the chore of driving the horses to operate the horse power often fell to me. To make it seem less like work the writer used to sit on one of the unused poles and by using a little imagination, pictured it as a ride upon the merry-go-round.

In the year of 1847, while living in Bavaria, two Ruth families, David and Johannes, along with eight others bought a threshing machine in America and had it imported for their use. It cost them 350 guilder, not including freight charges, or about one hundred and fifty dollars. They operated it until they left Bavaria to immigrate to America in the year of 1852.

In the year of 1850 the thresher was improved by

the addition of shakers along with a fan to separate the wheat from the straw and chaff. The thresher now took the name of "separator." The shakers were built of a wooden frame-work, the top of which were fitted with serrated strips set so the apex was at the back and a riddle made up of thin strips set at an angle of forty five degrees about one quarter inch apart, the slots being at the front on the bottom edge and toward the rear at the top and fit into the back end of the shaker. The fan was mounted under the shaker so the air blast would pass up through the slots in the riddle. The shakers were usually mounted in sets of two to a machine, the front edge of the first one being directly behind and under the cylinder and the front edge of the second being under the back of the first with ends overlapping about a foot. They were mounted on pivoted arms to allow them to swing back and forth in a slight arc and were driven by an arm connected to a crankshaft. The heart of the thresher is the cylinder and concaves. The cylinder is made up of steel bars that have removable steel teeth on them and the concaves are stationary bars mounted in the machine so they are adjustable and can be set so that the space between the teeth on the concaves and cylinder are the correct width for the grain that is being threshed. The cylinder and concaves do the job known as threshing while the shakers and fan do the separating. The early model threshers had no method of removing the straw other than dropping it on the ground at the rear end of the machine. This made it necessary to have a man stationed there to pitch the straw out of the way to prevent it from choking the machine. The threshed grain came out of a chute and had to be shovelled up from the floor because there were no elevators or baggers made at this date. Even as late as the year of 1876 the horse power was more widely used than steam power for operating threshers because they had the idea that steam power could be used else where to a greater advantage.

#### Improved Models of Threshers

A good man with a flail could thresh about eight bushels of wheat in one day. This was considered to be a good days work. This covered threshing only and did not include the removal of the straw and chaff. By 1877 they built some threshers that could handle from 300 to 3000 bushels of grain per day, depending upon the size of the separator being used. The size being figured according to the width of the cylinder in inches, a machine that had a cylinder thirty six inches wide was called a thirty six inch separator.

In 1886 they came out with high elevators to run the grain directly into the wagons or that could be used as a bagger or sacker. In the late 1880's and early 1890's they used high elevators that swung in an arc on a pivot. This was a great improvement over the older models but it still fell short of solving the straw removal problem entirely. In the year 1897 the separators came out equipped with what was known as the "Farmers Friend Wind Stacker." This consisted of a power driven fan mounted in a housing to which two sheet metal tubes were attached, one tube being made slightly larger so it would telescope over the other, on the end of which was mounted an adjustable hood that could be changed to any position by means of a rope. This tube was mounted on a turret on the top and rear of the thresher with an elevator and an extension mechanism making it possible to raise the tube to any desired position from the horizontal to almost vertical and to lengthen or shorten it to any setting within its capacity. The adjustable hood was used to control the flow of the straw by raising or lowering the hood with the attached rope. This tube was also power driven so that it would automatically oscillate over any length of arc for which the trip pins were set. During the time that the thresher was being moved from one job to another or was not being used, this tube was turned directly over the top of the thresher and lowered into a nest provided for it

to prevent it from being damaged. The first blowers were driven through bevel gears and were very noisy. In 1905 the new style gearless stacker replaced this old style unit and proved to be more efficient along with being much quieter in operation.

The writer has had the experience of having operated both types of wind stackers, having been raised on the farm where he received a wide and varied work experience that has proven an asset in later life. There was a lot more to this job of "blower tender", as it was called, than one would realize. The farmer wanted a straw stack that preserved the straw for he used it for bedding down his live stock and also for covering his potato patch. If it was not stacked the right way, too much straw was lost through spoilage from moisture. With reference to straw on the potato patch; potatoes grown under straw were called "straw potatoes." They could be stored over a longer period of time than those that were grown without it. Since the farmer always stored his potatoes in the cellar, it was to his advantage to grow them under straw and greatly reduce the amount he lost through spoilage.

Making a straw stack consisted of more work than just blowing the straw into a pile. It required some judgement of how large to start the base so that the finished stack would be properly topped so it would shed water. Since one never knew the exact amount of straw that was going to go into the stack, it had to be estimated and you had to work from that. If your base was started too large, you ended up with a flat top that did not shed water, if too small, you had a lot left that you could not put on the stack and had a choice of either blowing it over the top or adding it to either side of the stack which after the first rain, would slide to the ground where it would spoil from moisture. The final result was that if you made a poor estimate, the farmer lost a lot of straw that he could have used to a better advantage.

At the time when the writer operated the stacker,

it was his policy to ask the farmer how many acres were to be threshed at one setting and then be shown the acreage involved, then made the size of the base according to an estimate of the amount of straw that it contained, taking into consideration the density of the shocks and the length of the straw. It was an excellent experience and resulted in a very few poor estimates and many favorable comments from neighbors in the surrounding community.

In 1899 the Dakota weigher was in use. This unit was made up with a dumping hopper mounted on a scale that would automatically trip when the grain in the hopper equalled the amount of a bushel of grain. The weigher was a labor saving device and did away with the old method of measuring by hand. This required a minimum of two men, one to fill the measure and the other to hold the bag while the measure of grain was poured in. This new method eliminated one man. Later models used a double sacker that made the work still easier and gave the operator more time to change the bags. In the late 1890's the threshers were equipped with wind stacker, weigher, and single sacker and by 1904 they came out with the double sacker. In 1902 they added the re-cleaner which returned chaff which still contained grain to a point directly behind the cylinder, feeding it back over the shakers a second time. This resulted in much cleaner grain and saved a lot of it from being blown out with the straw. In 1906 the threshers came out equipped with the Peoria weigher which was quite an improvement over the old Dakota model and gave much better service.

All of the early threshers, including those made in 1892 were hand fed. The front of the thresher was equipped with a feeding board and two tables, one on each side of the feeding board, upon which the sheaf of grain was placed to cut the bands. Directly below these were three platforms upon which the feeder and band cutters stood. This type of thresher required a total of three men to feed the machine, one known as



the feeder and the two others as band cutters. The band cutters used a knife consisting of a wooden or steel handle to the one end of which they fastened a sickle blade from a mower, the other end contained a hole through which they placed a length of buckskin or rawhide tied into a loop large enough to allow it to pass freely over one's hand. This loop was always placed over the band cutter's arm as a safety factor to prevent the knife from falling into the thresher in case he accidentally lost his grip on the handle. It is easy to visualize the extent of the damage one of these knives would have caused if one had fallen into the rapidly revolving cylinder of the thresher.

These hand fed machines were operated as follows. The feeder and the two band cutters stood upon their respective platforms on the front end of the machine facing the rear, the feeder standing in the center, one band cutter at his left, the other at his right. The bundles were pitched upon the band cutter tables with the grain heads toward the machine, in case the heads were in the opposite direction the band cutter had to turn them into the proper position, move the bundle to the edge of his table that was nearest to the feeder and cut the band. The feeder would alternately reach over to the band cutter tables and take hold of a bundle, move it to the center and feed it into the machine. From this description of how these men worked it is easy to see that it was a dangerous job that required a certain rhythm and co-ordination among the three men or the feeder was liable to have a serious injury of his hands.

The writer remembers one of these hand fed units being used for the last time. It was a rig that was once the property of Jacob Dahlem, later of Beutler and Eicher and last of Arthur Seewald. This rig was set up for threshing wheat at my Uncle Henry Ruth's farm where the writer happened to be the water boy. After threshing for a short time the separator broke down and since it was such an old one they could not

buy a replacement part so after some discussion they decided to buy a new Belleville Separator. After the separator was delivered and set up and the crew were ready to begin, they found out that the old Peerless engine was too small to pull the new separator so it created another delay until they could get an engine of sufficient size to pull it. The old separator was discarded but the old Peerless engine was used for a long time after that for operating a wood saw in the surrounding community.

#### The Ruth Self Feeder and Band Cutter

David C. Ruth, a thresherman, must have fore-seen the dangers of the hand fed threshers for he worked out a mechanical device that would cut the bands and feed the thresher automatically, thereby eliminating the three most dangerous jobs. On the twenty fourth of June, 1892 he made the application that was filed under serial number 437869 and the patent for it was granted on August the eighth, 1892 under the patent number 503002 and designated "Band Cutter and Feeder for Threshing Machine." The unit was attached to the front of the thresher and consisted of a shaft upon which several knives were mounted and an elevator so mounted upon a pivot that allowed it to be raised or lowered to any desired operating position and hinged so that it could be folded back over itself when the machine was being moved or stored. The elevator was equipped with a dividing center board to prevent the bundles from entering the machine crosswise and also to distribute them more evenly over the width of the cylinder. This entire unit was driven from the main cylinder shaft. Soon thereafter he improved the unit by the addition of a governor that regulated the rate at which the bundles were fed into the cylinder and to prevent the machine from being choked. Since this unit was driven from the cylinder shaft it worked in direct relation with it, as long as the cylinder was operating at the proper speed the feeder operated at its normal speed but as soon as the cylinder dropped

below its proper speed the governor released the feed clutch and slowed down or stopped the elevator until the cylinder came up to speed again. This also makes it clear why it was impossible to choke the thresher when using a "Ruth" self feeder and band cutter. It improved the operation of a thresher by controlling the amount of straw that passed over the shakers and allowed the separator to do a better job of cleaning the grain with the final result that more grain came out of the hopper and less grain was blown out into the straw stack,

Under number 764824 Mr. Ruth was assignor of half the patent rights to Menno S. and Gustavus A. Hege. A company was formed, a building erected, equipment was placed and the manufacturing operations of the "Ruth" self feeder and band cutter were begun in the City of Halstead, Kansas. Shortly thereafter the new product, the "Ruth" self feeder and band cutter made its appearance in the threshing field and by actual tests proved itself to be a wonderful success.

Others no doubt, had a similar idea for in 1893 a company was organized as the Parsons Band Cutter and Self Feeder Company that began operating in the City of Newton, Iowa. They had a number of their units in the field and had agreements with several manufacturers to supply them with feeders for their product. This feeder gave them quite a bit of trouble in the field and proved out to be very unsatisfactory.

When the "Ruth" feeder made its appearance in the field and over a short period of operation had shown that it was so far superior over its competitor, the many thresher manufacturers were anxious to adapt it to their product. When the Parsons Company heard of this they sent several men into the field to make an investigation and check on the merits of this rival, as they called it. To give you a general idea of the competition this so called rival gave to the Parsons Company the writer will give the concept of Mr. Fred Maytag, one of the four original men that organized

the Parsons Company. "The crude Parsons band cutter and self feeder threshing machine attachment was the first of its kind in use anywhere. Under stress and strain it was so improved that twenty eight thresher manufacturers paid royalty for the privilege of its use in production. There was ambitious rivalry with little success until there appeared in the field the competition that demanded consideration. It was the Ruth patent in production at Halstead, Kansas. The investigation thoroughly convinced the open minded Parsons chief of the merit of the Kansas model so he proceeded with plans to remove this rival from the field of competition by the purchase of its patent, good will and machinery for the goodly sum of eighty thousand dollars. As a superior product it was there after given the preference in manufacturing as the best and most reliable band cutter and self feeder attachment on the market."

The Parsons company closed out the Kansas Company in 1905 and expanded into the production of a number of types of farm implements and in 1907 a wooden tub hand powered washing machine was marketed to compensate for the highly seasonal nature of the implement business. In December of the year 1909, the Company re-organized and from then on there was an increased emphasis on home laundry equipment. The manufacture of farm implements was not completely discontinued until around the year of 1920.

From 1920 on the threshing rigs slowly passed out of the picture to be replaced by the combines. About the only place one of these rigs may be seen is when that group of hobbyists that make it a point to keep an old custom alive gives an exhibition.

Threshing rigs have had their day and the writer has seen them pass from the old time rigs with crews consisting of engineer, oiler, water jack, measurer, feeder, band cutters and bundle pitchers, losing one or more men at every change of methods until in the present day one man does it all by himself with his

combine and tractor. Each rig had a certain number of customers known as a run. They helped one another in threshing their grain. The women folks also gave their time by helping one another with the cooking and baking. They served five meals a day, consisting of breakfast, lunch, dinner, lunch and supper in the order named. Such delicious home made pies, biscuits and cakes, home prepared victuals and fruits as they served were fit for royalty. Even as this is written it brings back nostalgic memories of those days from the time the writer was the water boy until he took his place among the regular workers.

Other changes have also taken place, the horse is all but forgotten in connection with the duties that it was called upon to perform. The filling of a silo has changed almost as greatly as the harvesting and threshing of wheat and has done so in a much shorter period of the element of time. At first the corn was cut off by hand with a corn knife, then lain on the ground from which it was picked up and loaded upon a wagon, hauled to the silo and fed into the ensilage cutter and blown into the silo where it was trampled down by four or five men. Then came a new type farm implement called a corn binder that made the work of cutting corn easier. At this writing they use a type of machine drawn by a tractor that cuts the corn and slices it into ensilage and blows it into a wagon or truck that follows along-side. It is then hauled to the silo where they have an elevator and blower that blows it into the silo. The same job is being done in less time with less men and with less equipment.

The writer also wishes to add here a few words in reference to the job of water boy. It was his job to see that the workers were supplied with fresh water when they wanted it. Supplying water to those in the field was usually done with a horse hitched to a two wheeled cart. You took several jugs, usually of from one or two gallons in capacity and filled them with fresh water from the well, loaded them into the cart

and covered them with an old woolen blanket to keep the water cool and then drove out into the field to the workers, giving each one a chance to drink, then drove back home, tied the horse to the hitching rack and taking a jug full of cool water in each hand you walked out to the threshing rig and served them. You then returned to the well, filled your jugs and did the same routine over again. The writer usually left a jug full of water close to the threshing rig and replaced it with another at every visit. Some times my father would let me use the buggy and this really was a treat because it was a lot cooler with the top on the buggy to protect you from the hot sun. It was a sure thing that the writer was always sure of two such jobs every year, the one on the home place and the other at my Uncle Henry Ruth's place. The chance to show off was never to be passed up, at times when my two cousins Edith and Frieda Ruth would go along, the writer would drive into the shocks so the wheels of the buggy would knock them over. Ordinarily such capers or nonsense would not have been condoned but since some of the bundle pitchers usually pushed the shock over before they pitched the bundles up on the wagon, we figured that we saved them a little work.

An interesting item was that we always carried an extra jug of water to which we added some vinegar to help quench the thirst and to act as a preventative against drinking too much strange water. You simply added two or three table spoonfulls of cider vinegar to a gallon of fresh water.

Such was the evolution of the subject contents of this story. It is written to familiarize some of the present generation with the manner in which the work was performed in the past. We hope we have portrayed it so that you have enjoyed reading it as much as we have enjoyed compiling it and hope that some day one of the younger generation of the family will take an interest and bring the history down to their time.

June 15, 1957.

By Albert J. Ruth.



THE ORIGINATION AND DISBANDING  
OF THE  
MENNONITE CONGREGATION  
AT

MAXWEILER BY NEUBERG BY THE DANUBE, BAYERN.

King Max of Bayern was a very kind and benevolent ruler who loved his people and had their interests at heart. On his numerous trips throughout his lands he came in contact with and also learned to know the Mennonite families that lived in the Palatinate. He became well acquainted with one of these families in particular and thereby learned to know and love this group of people. He was so deeply impressed by their honorable way of living that he invited eight of the families to come to Bayern (The Kingdom of Bavaria) and settle on some of his idle lands.

He knew from his observation of their work in the Palatinate that these God fearing people would be an asset to him. He would have diligent and industrious farmers to build up and farm his idle farm lands and their accomplishments would encourage others to come to Bavaria and settle on other idle portions of his farm and forest lands.

In the year of 1800 King Max donated 365 acres of land located at Neuberg, Bayern, close to the Danube River to these eight families. Out of gratitude and thanks, to show their appreciation to the good King, they named the village "Maxweiler" in honor of their benefactor.

This land was covered with a dense forest and had to be cleared before they could begin to build their homes. While this work of clearing the land and the building of homes was in progress, the good King Max gave them the use of the Castle Grunau to hold their church services. Here the small Congregation had all the room they needed for their religious services.

As the work progressed and homes were completed, church services were held in the various homes. This

was the general practice until the Congregation grew so rapidly from propagation and from the addition of families moving into this area that the homes became much too small to hold services for the entire group in any one of the completed homes.

The Mennonites were not allowed to build churches of their own at this time so they asked King Max for permission to do so. He gave it gladly and willingly and also informed them that he was prepared to build them a modern church. They informed him that such an edifice would seem to worldly for them and that they only wanted a plain and simple church building where they could hold their church services. This then, he allowed to be built for them.

It was a massive masonry structure built of stone with walls two feet in thickness. It was partitioned off to make four rooms and a hall. The hall ran from the front entrance to a large room at the rear that was used for the religious services. To the left of the hall was a room that was used for a school room and to the right there were two rooms that were used for other purposes. The church was dedicated on the ninth day of December in the year of 1832.

In a short period of a few years the Congregation grew so rapidly that the agricultural and industrial facilities were not keeping pace with the increasing population with the net result that it was beginning to become quite a problem to find homes for those of their members reaching a marriageable age. Those who could not find a home could not get married and this condition was creating quite a few hardships.

In the year of 1850 the Congregation consisted of a total of twenty five families. Of these, twelve of them had homes in Maxweiler and thirteen of them had homes in the surrounding villages that were located from three to eight miles distant. This condition of being unable to find homes kept getting worse and it reached the point where the younger generation began to think seriously of migrating to America.

George Washington, president of the United States of America, with some of his german friends, started and established a Free Country. Many german families had already found and established their homes there.

The fact that the young men were given the right not to bear arms in the United States was certainly quite an enticement to the young folks in our group. After receiving the sanction of the Congregation, a large number of the young people left their homes in Maxweiler and emigrated to America. After so many of the younger people had gone, the older people became dissatisfied and also decided to emigrate to America after having lived in Maxweiler for fifty six years. The remaining members of this Congregation emigrated to America almost enmasse. The older people were all somewhat reluctant to leave their old home and their departed ones resting in the burial grounds of their old church in Maxweiler.

The earthly remains of these eight families whose souls have gone to their reward from Maxweiler, rest in peace in their graves and await the second coming of Christ while their living descendants in America made their new homes in various states of the Union.

When the rulers and the neighbors heard that the Mennonite people were selling their property for the purpose of emigrating to America, they came to pay a final visit and remarked that it was a sad occasion to see them go because they had proven to be such a blessing and help to all of the people in the area.

Now, sixty five years have passed and most of the descendants of these people are living in the United States of America and they are scattered throughout the various states of the Union. Only a few of them have remained in Europe.

Before we left Maxweiler to come to America, many catholic people came to our doors and recited their rosaries and prayed to God to preserve and maintain us and offered thanks to him for the hospitality and kindness we had shown them while living there.

Oh how vain and Oh how fleeting, is the work of man,  
Everything we make and see must fall and waste away.  
Only those who believe in God----Will stand for Aye.

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The foregoing article was found pasted on to the back of a faded old picture of the Maxweiler Church. It was the property of the Dester Family, one of the original eight that were invited by King Max. It was last in the hands of Anna Dester, a descendant.

On this date it is in the files of Lydia Krehbiel Ruth at Newton, Kansas. The story was in the german language, was copied by Ruth Rose and translated by the undersigned. The translation being as literal as possible.

It was in the year of 1818 that a group started a settlement called "Eichstock" some twenty five miles south of Maxweiler. Gerhard Ruth, with his wife and children, together with his three sisters and their families, migrated to this settlement from Harxheim in the fall of 1819. Here Gerhard Ruth bought a farm called "Eichstock" where he resided for the rest of his life. After that, the farm was shared by two of his sons, Johannes and David. David was the minister of the Eichstock Congregation for some time. Jacob, the oldest son, moved to a farm in Harreszell where he spent the rest of his life.

By the year of 1852 there were about thirty five families in this Congregation who by the end of that same year had migrated to America almost enmasse.

This Congregation was closely affiliated with the Maxweiler group and it's history, no doubt, was very much the same as that of the Maxweiler Congregation. The only references we found in connection with this group is found in "The History of the Ruth Family", by Rev. David Ruth and "Remembrances from 1807", by Barbara Strohm Ruth, both of which are found in the history section of this genealogy.

July 5, 1959.

By Albert J. Ruth.

