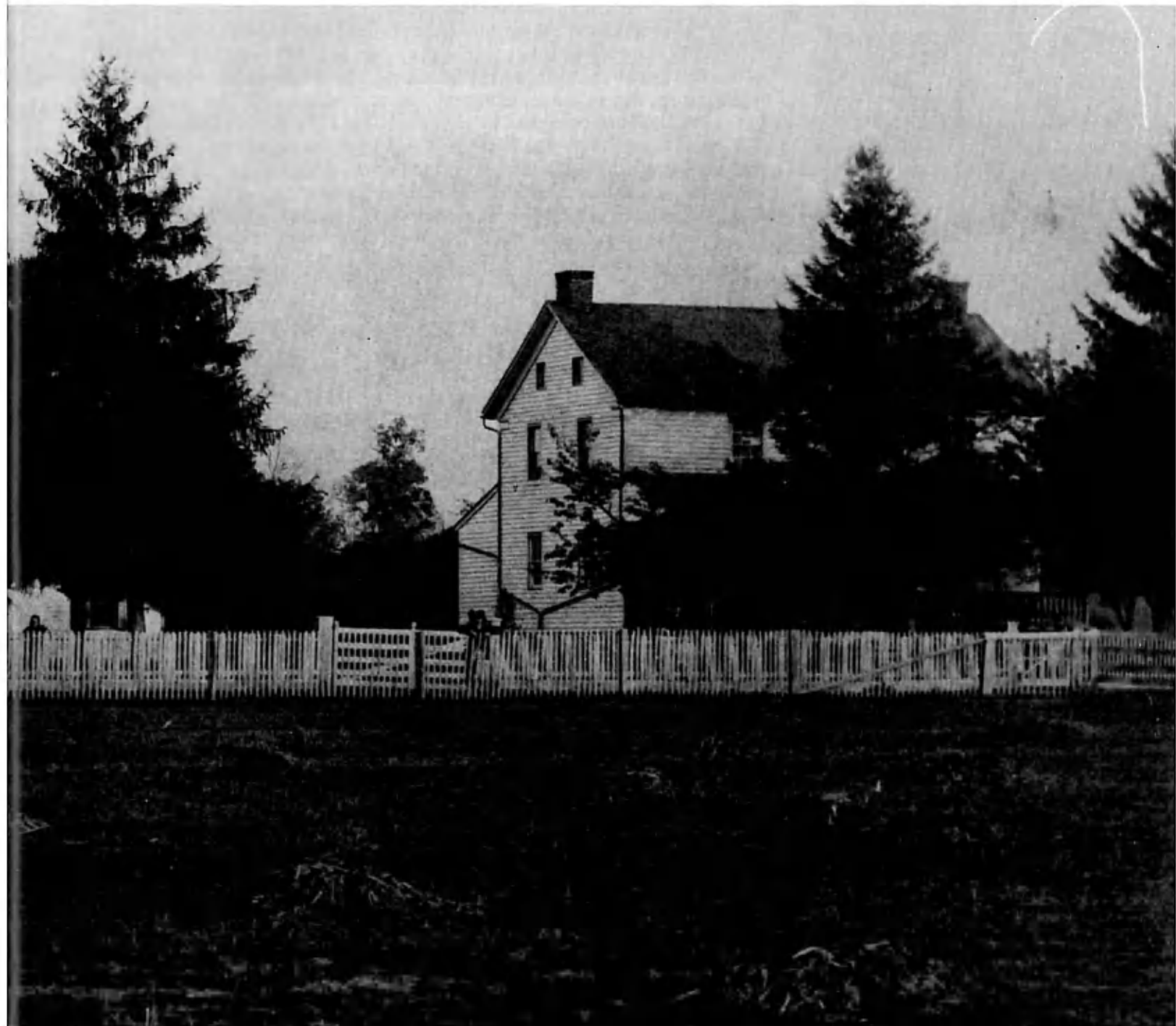


MENNONITE LIFE

DECEMBER 1988



In this Issue

This issue seeks to recover the life of the Swiss Mennonite community of Bluffton-Pandora, Ohio, during the first decade of this century. This special enlarged issue was prompted by the discovery in the attic of the Kenneth Winkler home near Bluffton of a remarkable collection of more than 450 glass negatives of photographs of this Swiss Settlement at the turn of the century. Sam Amstutz, a farmer-photographer, delighted in taking pictures of his extended family and neighbors who lived in the vicinity. It is a story told primarily with photographs.

Dr. Delbert Gratz, recently retired as librarian of Bluffton College, writes of the history of the Swiss settlement established in Allen and Putnam Counties in 1833. Dr. Gratz, a native son of the community, is the author of *The Bernese Anabaptists and their American Descendants*. Collaborating with him in this article are Dr. Howard Raid, Herman Hilty, both of Bluffton, and Robert Kreider.

Herman Hilty, also a lifetime resident of the Bluffton area, presents the story of John Ulrich Amstutz, entrepreneur, museum collector and servant of the community. On his small farm he provided a varied range of community services which created a busy hub of activity for the settlement.

The photo essay—featuring principally the photographic work of Sam Amstutz, son of the entrepreneur—is the centerpiece of this issue.

A committee composed of Herman Hilty, Carol Diller, Darvin Luginbuhl, Keith Sommer and Robert Kreider guided the editing of this issue, including selection and identification of the photographs. Darvin Luginbuhl, with assistance from Leland Gerber, printed most of the photographs. An expanded issue has been made possible through support of the Swiss Community Historical Society and the Ohio Arts Council.

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Cover

Residence of John Geiger Jr., built in 1854, the year he was married to Anna Steiner. The farm in Section 22 of Riley Township was settled in 1835 by John Geiger Sr. and his wife Barbara Welty Geiger. Those in the picture are thought to be the son of John Jr., Noah, his wife and mother Anna, photo ca. 1900. Keith Sommer, great-great grandson of John Geiger Jr., and his family are the current residents.

Photo Credits

All photos come from the collections of the Mennonite Historical Library of Bluffton College and the Swiss Community Historical Society, Bluffton, Ohio.

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and Darvin Luginbuhl*

The Swiss Settlement of Bluffton-Pandora, Ohio

by Delbert Gratz with Howard Raid, Herman Hilty and Robert Kreider

“Turn of the century” denotes a time of uncertainty. When we look back on the first decade of this century, we see those times as inviting in their simplicity and straightforwardness. However, to the person of that day, it was a time of uncertainty. Everywhere changes were taking place, in health care, technology, culture, religion, transportation and the way people looked at the world.

Changes were slow in coming to the Swiss Settlement located within the rural quadrangle of Bluffton, Columbus

Grove, Pandora and Beaverdam. To understand the nature and dynamics of this community, one must know something of its European beginnings.

This Swiss Settlement was really a double community consisting of Aargau Reformed to the south and Bernese Mennonites to the north. Although no real boundary ever existed, most Swiss in the southern part of Richland Township in Allen County (until 1848 a part of Putnam County) were Reformed from the village of Tegerfelden, located

in the northern part of Canton Aargau, Switzerland. Until 1816 Canton Aargau had been a part of Canton Zürich. Nearly all persons in the parish belonged to the official state church of the area, the Swiss Reformed Church.

Woodsmen cutting ship timber in the virgin hardwood forest near Bluffton, 1889.



Among these Reformed settlers in the 1830s and the following two decades were the families of Jacob Schifferly, John Schifferly, John Jakob Deppeler, Jacob Deppeler, Jacob Laube, John Hauenstein and Jacob Hauenstein. Most of these families had made their first home in America in the community of their fellow Aargau friends and relatives in the Swiss Reformed community around Mt. Eaton, just south of the Bernese Mennonite community of Sonnenberg in Wayne County, Ohio. At first one congregation, the Reformed people established not only the original country church at Gratz Crossing, Emmanuel, but later St. Johns in Bluffton.

The first Bernese Mennonite to settle in what was then Putnam County, Ohio, was Michael Neuenschwander. Born on a farm on the Montague de Moutier (Münsterberg) near Les Ecorcheresses in the Bernese Jura, Switzerland, he married in Alsace and leased a farm near Rechesy, just across the Swiss border. In 1823 he and his family were one of the first Bernese Anabaptist families to leave that community in France to found the Chippewa Settlement in northern Wayne County, Ohio.

The need for land for his sons caused Neuenschwander to look to the newly opened lands in Northwest Ohio. In the spring of 1833 he found a suitable place along Deer Creek (later called Riley Creek) in Riley Township in Putnam County (now a part of Richland Township, Allen County). Perhaps no more than half a dozen English and German families then lived within a six-mile radius of the Neuenschwander clearing in the forest.

The diary kept by Michael Neuenschwander mentions many persons (mostly Swiss from Wayne County) who came looking for inexpensive land and lodged in the Neuenschwander home during the time of their search. Some of these persons stayed and established new homes immediately. Others returned home and stayed, but most came back a short time later and purchased land on which they settled.

At the same time that the Chippewa Settlement was being formed in Wayne County by Bernese Anabaptist settlers from the Florimont (Blumbergerwald) community in Alsace, several Bösiger (later Basinger), Steiner, and Geiger families, also from Florimont, settled in Wilmot Township near Kitchener, Ontario ("Upper Canada").

In 1835 the remaining families of the

Florimont community, including Elder Christian Steiner, planned to leave Alsace and join their relatives in Wilmot Township. Two weeks before their departure, Steiner received a letter from his cousin Michael Neuenschwander, telling of the good, inexpensive land in Putnam County, Ohio. As a result, the entire group was diverted from Canada and they settled in Ohio instead.

A few years later Christian Bösiger, deacon of the Florimont congregation which had settled in 1824 in Wilmot Township, joined Christian Steiner and the "Swiss Mennonite Congregation" in Putnam County.

The congregation provided for its members the basic social and religious network of relationships outside of the family. With few exceptions, all persons in the newly formed Mennonite community were closely related; thus the community was also an extended family. The church was to be looked to for direction in a person's life and work. Any activity that was not traditional needed to be discussed and decided by the ministry and the church members.

As the congregation of Bernese Mennonites reestablished itself in Putnam

County, Ohio, it continued to function for several decades much as it had in Florimont, France. Outside influences had little effect on these people. When Richland Township and a part of Riley Township became a part of Allen County, it merely meant that they needed to go to Lima instead of Kalida to pay real estate taxes, get a marriage license, or settle an estate.

Most of the men in these families were literate, much more so than their French neighbors. All knew several languages when they arrived in America—their native *Bärndtitsch*, written German, French and the French Patios of the Jura or the Sundgovie (Sundgau) region. Soon after their arrival, most gained a working knowledge of English as spoken by their neighbors in the surrounding villages of Shannon (later Bluffton) and Pendleton (later Pandora). A few persons became proficient enough to write letters and even to settle estates through the local probate courts. Those most called on to do this

Log house built by John W. Luginbuhl for his family, 1857. Note son in tree. Photo by Herman Kindle.



were John Amstutz, Friederich Grätz, Peter Schumacher and Christian Suter. The ministry of the Swiss Mennonite Congregation called on Friederich Grätz to write an appeal to the Ohio state military commission for exemption from military service for their male members when the military draft was instituted during the Civil War. The appeal was written in beautiful script, with proper spelling and grammar.

The settlers erected a simple church only ten years after their arrival. For them this was a unique experience; as a people in Switzerland and France, civic restrictions prevented them from having a church building. Bernese Mennonites in Europe were not permitted by authorities to build their own meetinghouses until the 1880s, forty years after the Ohio Bernese Mennonites had built their meetinghouse.

Although for a time school classes were conducted in the home of Elder Christian Steiner, the church building soon became the schoolhouse as well. During the 1860s several frame and even one stone building were erected for school purposes. A few decades later, red brick buildings were constructed to provide for school and neighborhood social needs, each

building serving a four-section area.

By 1837, less than four years after Michael Neuenschwander's arrival on the banks of Riley Creek, most of the land had been purchased from the government; the last piece of land was acquired in 1845. Within a few years, some families were moving westward in search of more land. Michael's son, John, moved west in 1849 because he feared that there would not be enough land for his sons when they were grown. John and his family went to Polk County, Iowa, to help start a new Bernese Anabaptist community. At the same time, John B. Amstutz purchased the John B. Neuenschwander farm and moved his family from the Sonnenberg community in Wayne County because he felt the land opportunities were greater in the Putnam County area than in Wayne County.

A few families came to the Settlement in the 1860s and 1870s. These included John M. Amstutz, a minister, and John W. Luginbühl, called "Sixteen" because the farm that he purchased was located in Section 16 of Richland Township. At about the same time, Jacob Amstutz, known as "Schwyzer Stutz" and Solomon Bögli arrived directly from Switzerland.

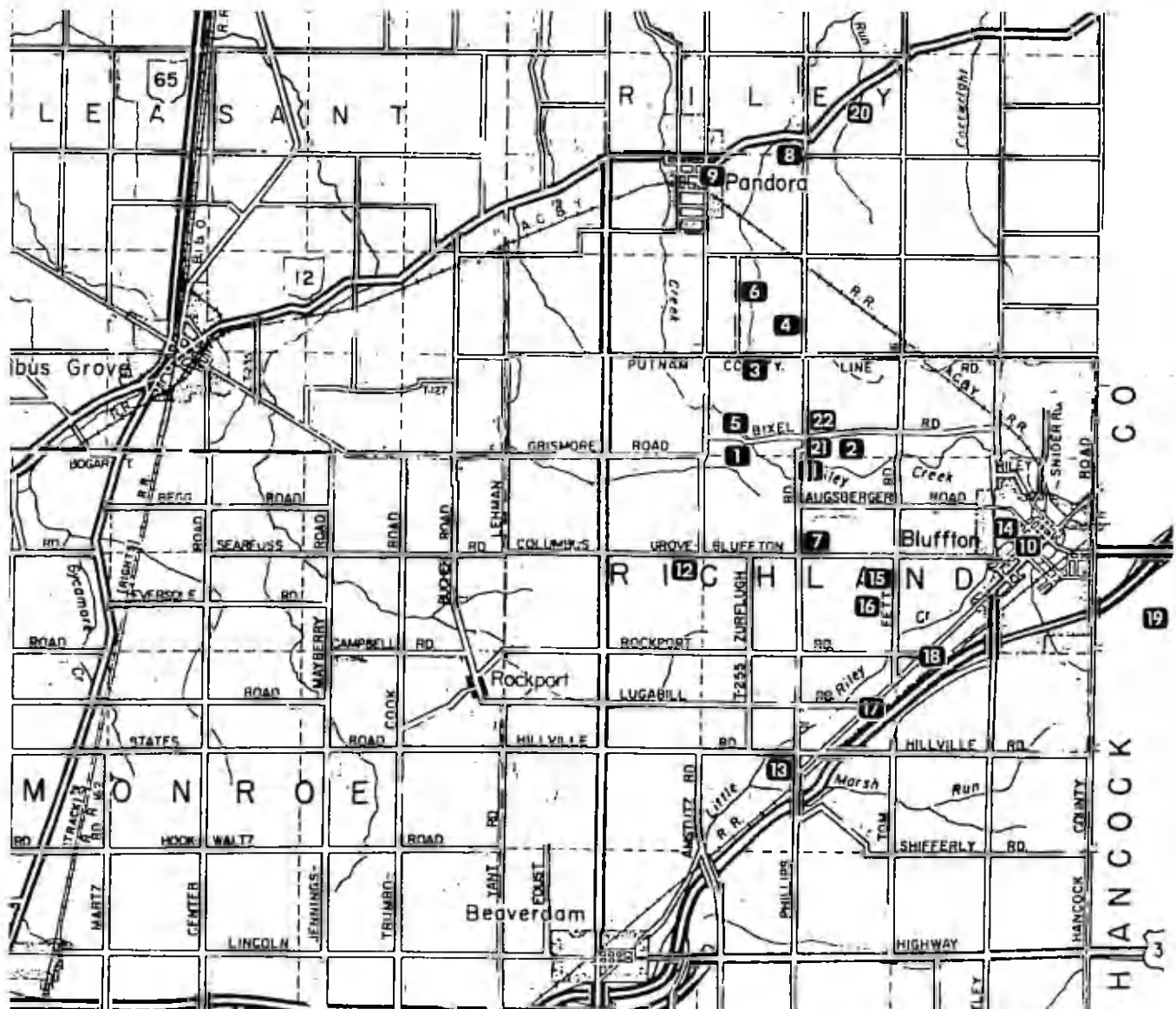
In the years following, a number of single men, members of the state Reformed Church in Canton Bern, found their way to the community through various contacts. Here they met and married young Mennonite women and joined the Swiss Mennonite Congregation. In this way the names Reichenbach, Tschiegg, Garmatter, Althaus, Lory and Follett were added to the congregation.

Arrival in the Ohio Wilderness

The Swiss Mennonite immigrants were compelled to make a radical adjustment in their agricultural practices when they arrived at the flat, forested, swampy wilderness of the upper Maumee valley. They were used to farming the high, rocky, infertile uplands of Switzerland and Alsace. Government decree forced them to farm the land

Log cabin of Amos Lugibill, later used as a playhouse by children. 1905 photo by Herman Kindle.





1. Christian Schumacher farm, 1835. Site of Swiss Community Historical Society. 2. Michael Neuenschwander, first Swiss settler, 1833. 3. J. U. Amstutz farmstead, enterprises and museum. 4. Swiss Mennonite Congregation, first church built 1840. 5. Schumacher quarry. 6. Dutch Run. 7. Ebenezer Mennonite Church. 8. St. John Mennonite Church. 9. Grace Mennonite Church. 10. First Mennonite Church. 11. Egli Mennonite Church. 12. Zion Mennonite Church. 13. Emmanuel Reformed Church. 14. St. John Reformed Church. 15. Winkler sawmill and cane mill. 16. P. B. Amstutz sawmill and fork factory. 17. Lake Erie and Western Railroad. 18. Interurban line. 19. First oil well. 20. Ridge Road. 21. Old Swiss cemetery. 22. Reformed Mennonite Church.

above 1,000 meters in elevation. They were familiar with the alpine pines, but here were dense virgin hardwood forests of beech, white oak, hickory, sugar maple, walnut, ash, butternut and dozens more. As a mountain people they were skilled with axe, saw and logging chain. Many trees were four to six feet wide. No grassy clearing could be found in the dense forest. Water did not rush down mountain sides; it stagnated in swampy, malarial pools.

Before the settlers could farm they had to cut clearings in the heavy growth of trees. They did this by felling the trees of an area toward each other,

allowing them to dry and then burning the mass. Wagonloads of ash were hauled to the asheries to make soap. For many years the settlers plowed around stumps and grubbed out roots. A family with two sons could clear about four acres of land a year. By 1900 approximately twenty-five percent of the land was still in forest. At the same time water had to be drained away by digging ditches and making plank tiling. Landowners were assessed for the costs of digging the large ditches.

During the ice age this land had been covered by glacier. Some thirty to forty miles to the south, the last glacier left

what is called the Ft. Wayne Terminal Moraine, which blocked drainage south into the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. On the northern edge of the settlement had been a large lake, Lake Whittsley. The ancient sandy shore can clearly be seen to this day as the Ridge Road from Pandora to Findlay. Settlers coming into the area called this former lake bottom "The Great Black Swamp."

When the first Mennonites arrived in this wilderness, they found bear, beaver, wolves, fox and deer. The last Indians had been moved from the area in 1832 by the U. S. Army. A few straggler Ottawa Indians visited the set-

tlement in the first decade of its existence.

The clay loam topsoil was approximately six inches deep. The streams flowed on a limestone base, only ten to twenty feet beneath the forest floor. Shallow dug wells provided fresh water during the early years.

Land holdings purchased from the Wapakoneta land office were forty to 120 acres, with the average being eighty. The settlers split rails to fence their fields. Within a generation the original log cabins were replaced by two-story frame houses. The average farmstead of three acres included a barn, garden and orchard and out-buildings, which usually included a summer kitchen, shop, bake oven, privy, corn crib, granary, chicken house, hog barn, milk house or spring house and a smoke house. Crops were diversified. Wheat, oats, corn, timothy and clover hay were grown, and in early years, flax.

The farmers of the settlement had a limited access to markets when the Miami-Erie canal opened in 1845, twenty miles to the west. Marketing opportunities improved in 1852 when the Pennsylvania Railroad came to Lima, sixteen miles away. They improved still further when in 1872 the Lake Erie and Western (later the Nickel Plate) built a line through Bluffton, followed in 1883 by the Northern Ohio (later the Akron, Canton and Youngstown). By the 1880s the community had achieved a solid economic base.

The Towns

By the 1870s a few Mennonite families had moved to the town of Bluffton. Peter Althaus and Peter Oberly started a much-needed planing mill, which soon replaced the mill two miles west of Bluffton which had been started earlier by the Klay brothers. In 1895 the ministry of the Swiss Mennonite Congregation began to hold afternoon church services on some Sundays in the Lutheran Church in Bluffton because of the growing number of Swiss Mennonites living in the town or in close proximity.

A village never formed in the Swiss

Upper, Rural mail delivery, Charles Steingraver—carrier, Weldon Luginbuhl, child, 1907. Middle, looking east on Main Street, Bluffton. Lower, looking west on Main Street, Bluffton.

Settlement. Rileyville, platted in the early county plans, had died by the time the first Swiss arrived. Gratz Crossing was only a few buildings, a school, Reformed church and parsonage and Ben Kiener's small store and shop. The most ambitious collection of services and enterprises centered on the farm of John U. Amstutz, but it lacked the typical village cluster of residences.

A trip to town to do trading was a special event. Farms were essentially self-sufficient economic units. Eggs and butter were kept cool in a "spring house" until the trip to town or, in later

years, when a "butter and eggs man" came in his horse-drawn spring wagon to pick up these products. *Studli* meant Bluffton to many, but for others, the trading town was Pandora, Columbus Grove, Beaverdam or Cranberry Post Office (Rockport). Before the coming of Rural Free Delivery at the beginning of the twentieth century, people went to town to pick up their letters from relatives in Wayne County or copies of *Der Bundesbote* from Berne, Indiana.

Until the establishment of district schools, most social life in the Settlement centered around the family and



church. Prior to 1900 few from the Settlement attended social events in Bluffton such as operas, plays, Fourth of July celebrations or band concerts.

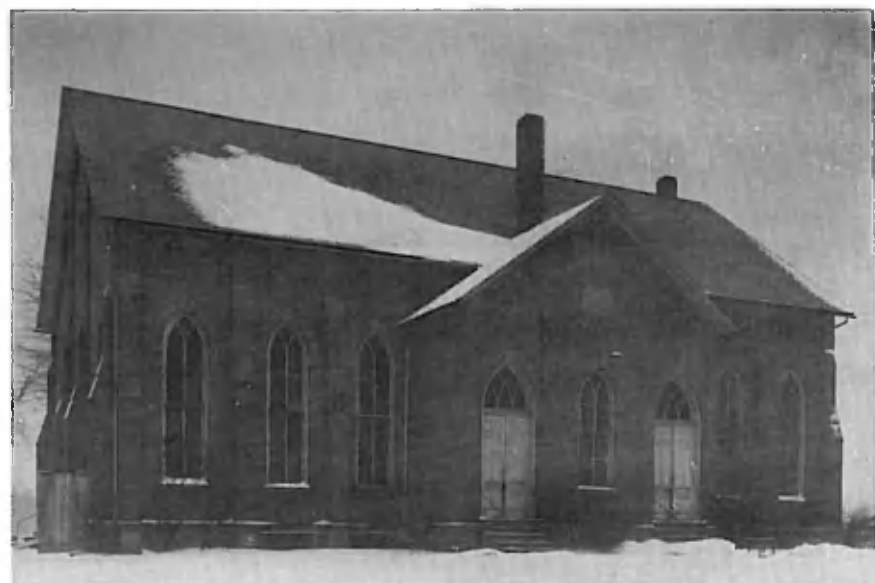
The Churches

At the turn of the century, great changes were taking place in the Swiss Mennonite congregation. The last ministers chosen by lot retired and were replaced by ministers employed by the congregation. John B. Baer, travelling pastor for the General Conference Mennonites, was invited to come from Summerfield, Illinois, to share the ministry with locally chosen pastors. The Swiss Mennonite congregation joined the General Conference in 1893, some decades after its sister congregation at Berne, Indiana. One of the ministers, Christian Zimmerly, saw a threat in this affiliation and gathered a small group to establish a separate congregation. Eventually most of the members joined the St. John's Mennonite Church near Pandora.

Central Mennonite College, established by the Middle District of the General Conference, opened its doors in Bluffton in November 1900. A sad drama began to unfold involving the college and the Swiss congregation. It included a misunderstanding by a person and committee who collected funds for the first college building, a court case which followed, dismissal of members from fellowship for using the courts, the presumed disappointment of one of the ministers for not being selected president of the new college, strain as to the role of the congregation in controlling the college, and displeasure with the organization of a new congregation on the campus.

By 1900 many were leaving the Settlement to seek employment and to establish businesses in Bluffton or Pandora. Some young people were leaving to attend college and prepare for professional careers. The Swiss Congregation remained as one congregation with two church buildings, Ebenezer, two miles west of Bluffton, and St. John's, one mile east of Pandora. The aged Elder John Moser in 1903 asked to be relieved of responsibilities.

Upper, Ebenezer Church, built in 1869. Middle, Ebenezer horse barn, 1890-ca. 1935 dismantled and rebuilt at Hancock County fairgrounds. Lower, St. John Church, built in 1889.



Relationships were strained in the effort of those worshipping in Bluffton to secure their own church building and congregation. In 1905 the Swiss Congregation granted permission for the erection of a church structure in Bluffton to be known as the First Mennonite Church, which was completed and dedicated on April 1, 1906. Not until 1918 did it become a self-governed congregation.

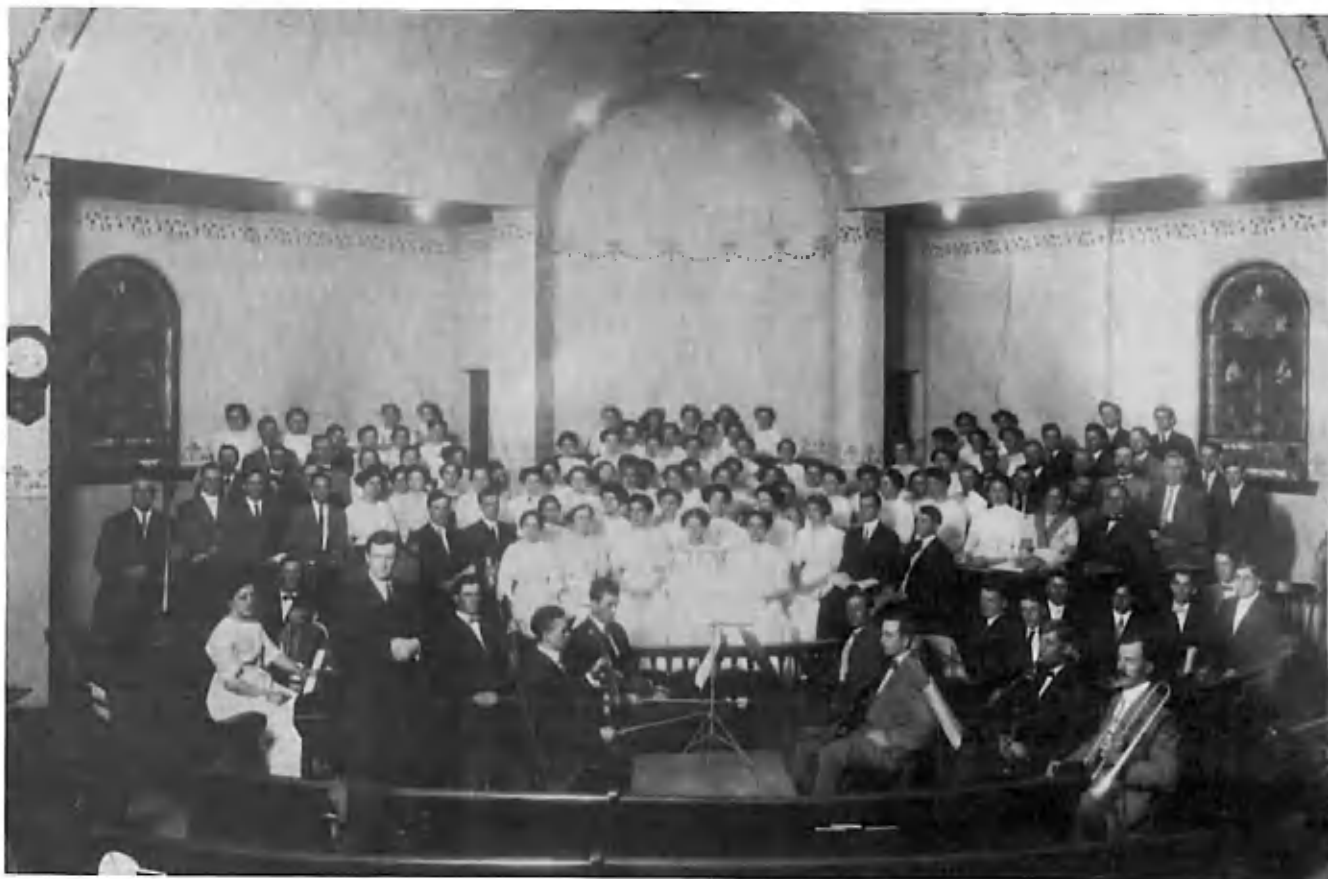
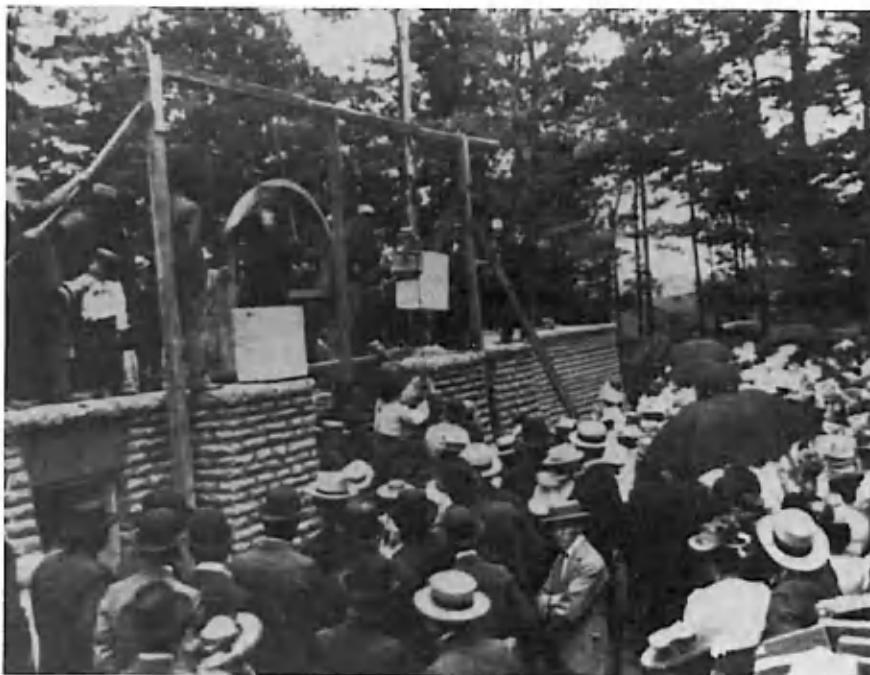
The establishment of an independent congregation in Pandora was achieved with much conflict and pain. The story of the withdrawal of a group to form Grace Mennonite Church in Pandora involved a petition, excommunication of members from the Swiss congregation, and a court case over property. When the building was completed in 1905, Rev. S. F. Sprunger of Berne, Indiana, came to preach the dedicatory sermon and to bless the project. Relationships had been ruptured in a once unified congregation, but in time the four General Conference congregations cooperated

Above, cornerstone laying of College Hall, Bluffton College, 1899. Below, Community Oratorio Society rehearsing the Messiah at First Mennonite Church, Bluffton, ca. 1910.

in a variety of mutual programs.

Congregations of four other Mennonite groups emerged in the community, the American (Old) Mennonite Church, the Egli or Defenseless Mennonite, the Reformed Mennonite, and the Missionary Church Association.

In 1846 John Thut arrived from Holmes County, Ohio, where he had been an elder in the Old Mennonite Church. He was invited to preach in the Swiss Congregation. When his wish to introduce foot washing was resisted by the other ministers, he organized a



In addition to the large Thut family, several Geiger and Steiner families were among the membership. This congregation became officially known as the Zion Mennonite Church and erected a meetinghouse three miles west of Bluffton. From this congregation came Menno S. Steiner, an influential leader in the American (Old) Mennonite Church.

About 1844 several families, under the influence of Christian Rupp, became followers of John Herr, a Reformed Mennonite leader. The church was and still is conservative in dress, church discipline and conduct. In 1868 the Reformed Mennonite congregation was organized and in 1876 their present meetinghouse was built.

Henry Egli, an Old Order Amish preacher from Berne, Indiana, left the Amish in 1866 and organized what came to be known as the Defenseless Mennonites (today the Evangelical

Right, John Moser, 1828-1908, man with white beard, minister of the Swiss congregation, 1853-1908, and elder, 1864-1903. Others, left to right, Minister J. B. Baer, Deacon P. P. Steiner, Prof. P. D. Amstutz, and Missionary R. M. Petter. Below, women's all day sewing at Ebenezer Mennonite Church.

Mennonite Church). In 1884, at the invitation of Rev. Abraham Steiner, then a minister of the Zion Church, Egli visited members of the Zion congregation and held meetings in schoolhouses of the Settlement. Steiner and other members of the Zion Church joined in organizing the Defenseless or Egli congregation. In 1886 the church building,

one mile north of the Ebenezer Church and near the Reformed Mennonite meetinghouse, was built. Among the family names in the new group were Rupp, Rediger, Steiner, Diller, Sumney, Fett, Zimmerman, Kinsinger, Bertsche, Oyer and Reichenbach.

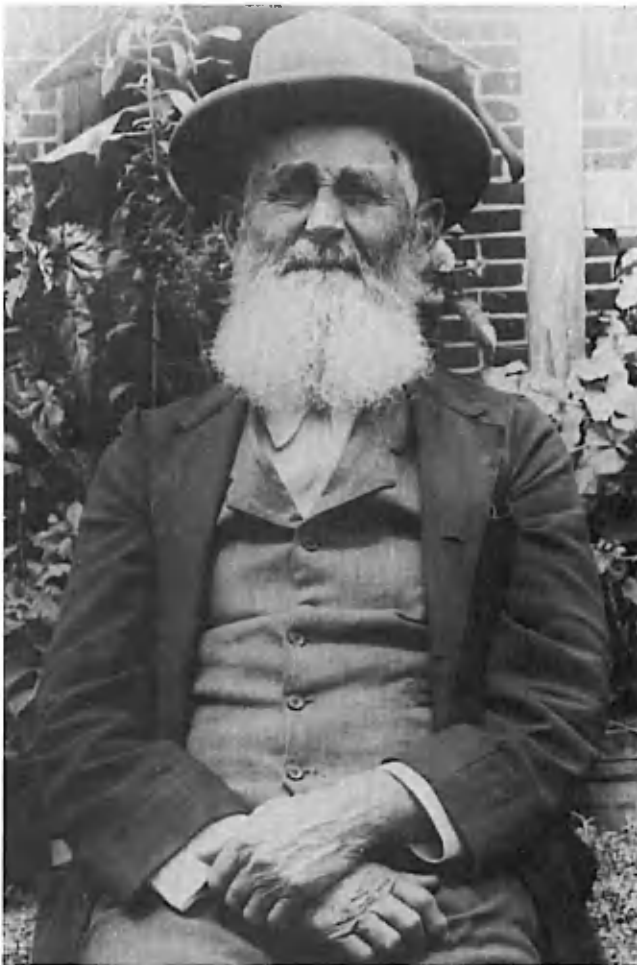
In 1890 a division developed among Defenseless congregations in Ohio and



Indiana over such issues as baptism by immersion and divine healing. Some members of the local Defenseless congregation were drawn to the new doctrines. A congregation known as the Missionary Church began to meet in a school building in Pandora and later purchased a church building. The family names of Basinger, Schumacher, Steiner and Diller were associated with the Missionary Church.

The Swiss Mennonite Settlement began in the 1830s with only one congregation. The community entered the twentieth century with the original congregation on the verge of dividing into four General Conference churches, together with four other congregations of Swiss Mennonite derivation. The winds of change and pluralism were beginning to blow through the community.

Right, Abraham Zurfluh, 1833-1921, emigrant from Switzerland in 1852, leading teacher and keeper of church records in the community. Below left, Mr. Davidson, 1906. Below right, Sam Hochstettler and wife with grandchildren, a photo by Herman Kindle.



John Ulrich Amstutz: Museum Curator and Servant of the Swiss Community

by Herman Hilty

The first Mennonite museum in North America, perhaps anywhere, dates back to 1855, when twenty-three-year-old John Ulrich Amstutz (1832-1919) purchased his parents' forty-acre farm in the heart of the Swiss Settlement, midway between Bluffton and Pandora, Ohio.

John Ulrich Amstutz developed a wide range of services on his farmstead, which for more than half a century was a community center. The farmstead consisted of an undertaking establishment, sawmill, sorghum mill, cider press, general store and shops for casket-making, blacksmithing and watch repair. To add delight to all these services was the museum located in the combination store and watch repair shop.

J. U. Amstutz, a man of wide-ranging curiosity, was an avid collector of historical and natural science artifacts from the community and beyond. As collector and curator of his museum, he welcomed everyone to come and see the collections while they lingered in the clock and watch shop or waited the completion of tasks in nearby enterprises. Rev. Myron Hilty, whose parents, Amos and Helena Hilty, lived



Upper, John U. Amstutz and second wife, Elizabeth Moser Lugibihl Amstutz, 1897, man in background unknown. Lower, entrance to the J. Amstutz store and shop, coffin shop on second floor.



on the next farm east, tells how J. U. enjoyed taking people to see his collections and relating to them a full history of each item.

At the center of his collection was a small historical library of leather-bound books brought from Switzerland: a 1582 Bible, a *Martyr's Mirror*, hymn books and several dozen other books. Added to this were a spinning wheel, flax breaker, rope machine, clocks, ostrich egg, many arrowheads and other items. Anyone could come and see; no admission fee was charged. In the window facing the nearby road was a large clock that permitted passersby to see the time of day without dismounting their wagons.

After Ulrich Amstutz and his second wife, Barbara Klay Amstutz, moved to the Swiss Settlement area from Canton Bern, Switzerland, they bought forty

acres of land from the U. S. land office at Wapakoneta on October 7, 1835. They probably built a log cabin first, but in 1848 they built the house, still standing, which is now the residence of the Paul Miller family. The farmstead, now in Allen County, lies on the south side of the Allen-Putnam County-line

road, across from the Morning Star cider press. Ulrich had good help in building that house in 1848 as his older son, Christian U., was nineteen and the younger son, John Ulrich, was sixteen. After Christian had married and purchased his own farm, John U. bought the forty acres from his parents in



Clockwise from right: view of J. U. Amstutz house from shop, 1904; Ed Miller and Wilbert Wenger husking corn with J. U. Amstutz house in background, 1907; upstairs in Amstutz museum, 1900; a Mr. Moser in J. U. Amstutz clock shop, 1901; collection of rare books in Amstutz museum.



January 13, 1855. His father, Ulrich, died that same year.

In 1925 P. B. Amstutz wrote a history of this Swiss Settlement. Originally written in German, it was published in English in 1978 by the Swiss Community Historical Society with the title, *Historical Events of the Mennonite Set-*

tlement in Allen and Putnam Counties, Ohio. He wrote about John U. Amstutz as follows:

John U. Amstutz saw the light of day in 1832 in Canton Bern, Switzerland, and came to America with his parents as a two-year-old boy. With the passing of time, as he believed it was not good that man should live alone, he entered the

state of matrimony with the author's sister, Katharina Amstutz, in 1856, and to them were born two sons, Noah and Samuel, and three daughters, Anna, Marion and Barbara.

John U. had several skills aside from his main business of farming. On his farm he had a variety of buildings where he and his family followed the crafts of working with clocks, blacksmithing, lathe and other work with wood. In addition to this they also operated a cider press and sorghum cane mill and press.

His special interest lay in the collection of artifacts. These items were collected from the four corners of the earth and exhibited in a room built for that



Left, view east on county road with J. U. Amstutz cider press and sawmill on right; below, J. U. Amstutz cane mill; upper right, J. U. Amstutz cider press with mound of apple pomace, D. C. Bixel photo; lower right, Amstutz cane mill. Bundles of sorghum were kept separate for each customer. The sorghum juice, extracted by two rollers, was filtered through clean wheat straw before being steam cooked to molasses. Ten gallons of juice yielded one gallon of molasses.



purpose.

He began an unusual profession as undertaker when he was still a young man in 1853. He carried on this occupation for forty-two years and within this time conducted 399 funerals. He made the coffins himself until the very last years when he finally bought them . . . His hearse was an ordinary spring wagon which was prepared especially to carry the coffin. The coffin was covered with a blanket made for that purpose.

For these 399 coffins approximately 1,000 to 2,000 dollars were paid out, which sum would hardly buy three or four modern coffins today. In the years 1864-67 and 72 only one person a year was buried, whereas in the year 1853 [the year of a severe typhoid epidemic] twenty-seven persons went to their eternal rest. (pp. 10, 11)

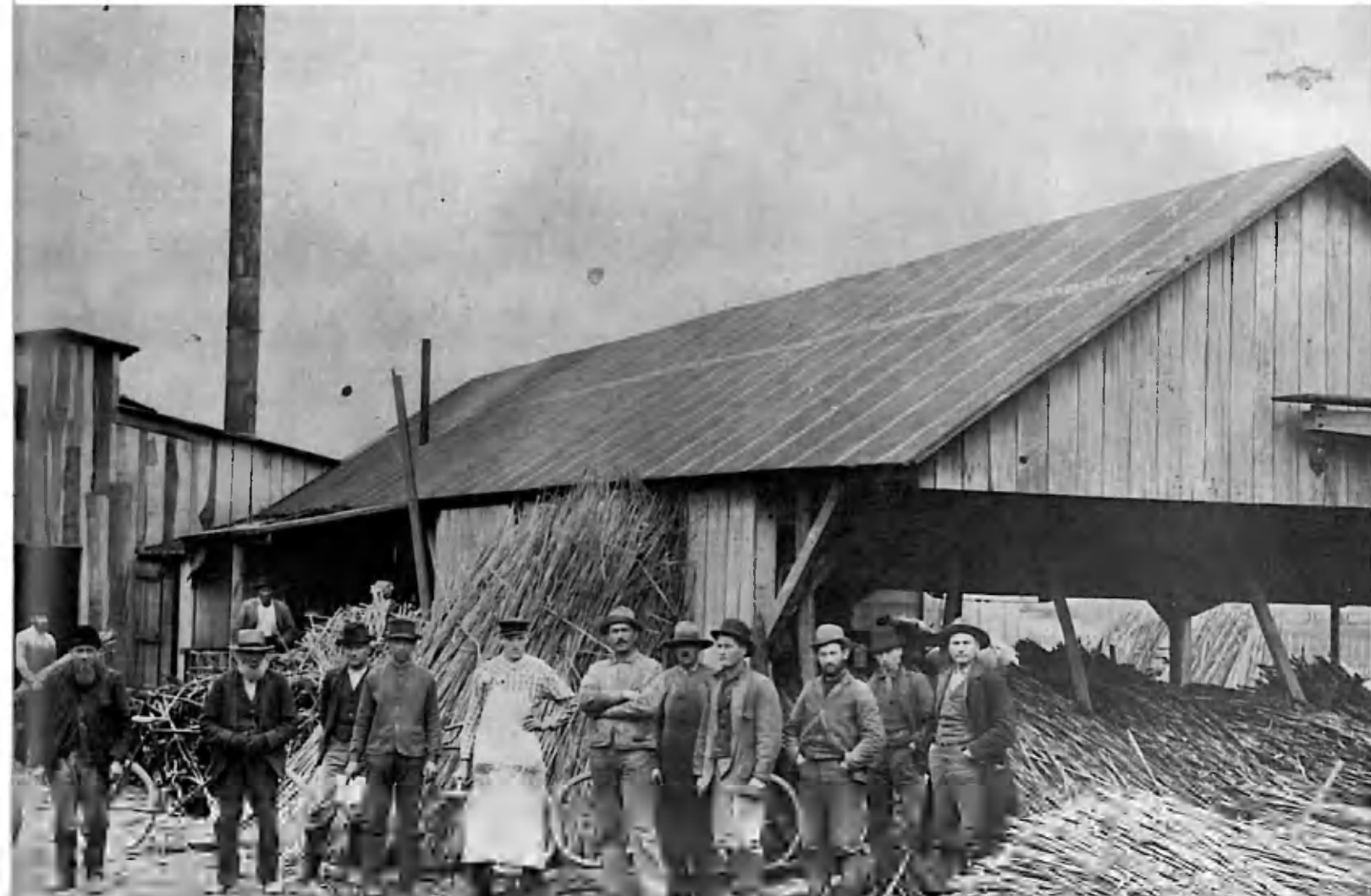
Such an amazing variety of activities prompts the question of what stimulated this flowering of enterprises. The original farm had only forty acres; J. U. had to find other income to support his large family. The making of coffins led naturally to his supplementary wood-working business. This led to the addition of a steam-powered sawmill. J. U. was service-minded in the best Mennonite tradition. He provided services that people could not readily do for themselves. All this he did at

minimal cost to those served. As a versatile entrepreneur, J. U. could have become a very wealthy man. Instead he remained the humble servant of the community, a man of modest means.

No information is available as to when the sorghum cane mill was

started. Undoubtedly it was in operation in the 1890s and continued to operate until 1944.

Because there were so many John Amstutzes in the early days, J. U. had a nickname that was almost always used when talking in Swiss about him



or his amazing place. He was known as "Stutz Uhli Hans," literally, Amstutz Ulrich's John. Such distinguishing names were much used in the community. Other examples are "Waggner Stutz" for the John Amstutz who made wagons and "Gabla Stutz" for P. B. Amstutz, author of the community history. The latter had a wooden fork factory, so "Gabla" (fork) fit him well.

The secret to how *Stutz Uhli Hans* managed so many activities so well and still had time to sell and repair clocks and operate his rural store must have been that he was an expert in delegating responsibilities. Neighbor Dan Amstutz would arrive early in the morning to make sure that everything was ready at the sorghum cane mill; he was also in charge of the cooking in the early days. Dave Wenger usually operated the levers in the sawmill that moved the carriage with the log on it into the saw. The same employees doing their seasonal jobs year after year insured smooth operations. The majority of these workers also farmed, so this employment provided a welcome source of additional cash income. No complaints have been recorded as to wages paid or services rendered.

In addition to the enterprises identified in P. B. Amstutz's book, J. U. also had a building with a covered drive-on scale large enough to weigh loads of hay or grain. He owned a portable butchering outfit that was rented out at twenty-five cents per day. In the 1890s his son Sam acquired a camera and soon became the photographer for the community.

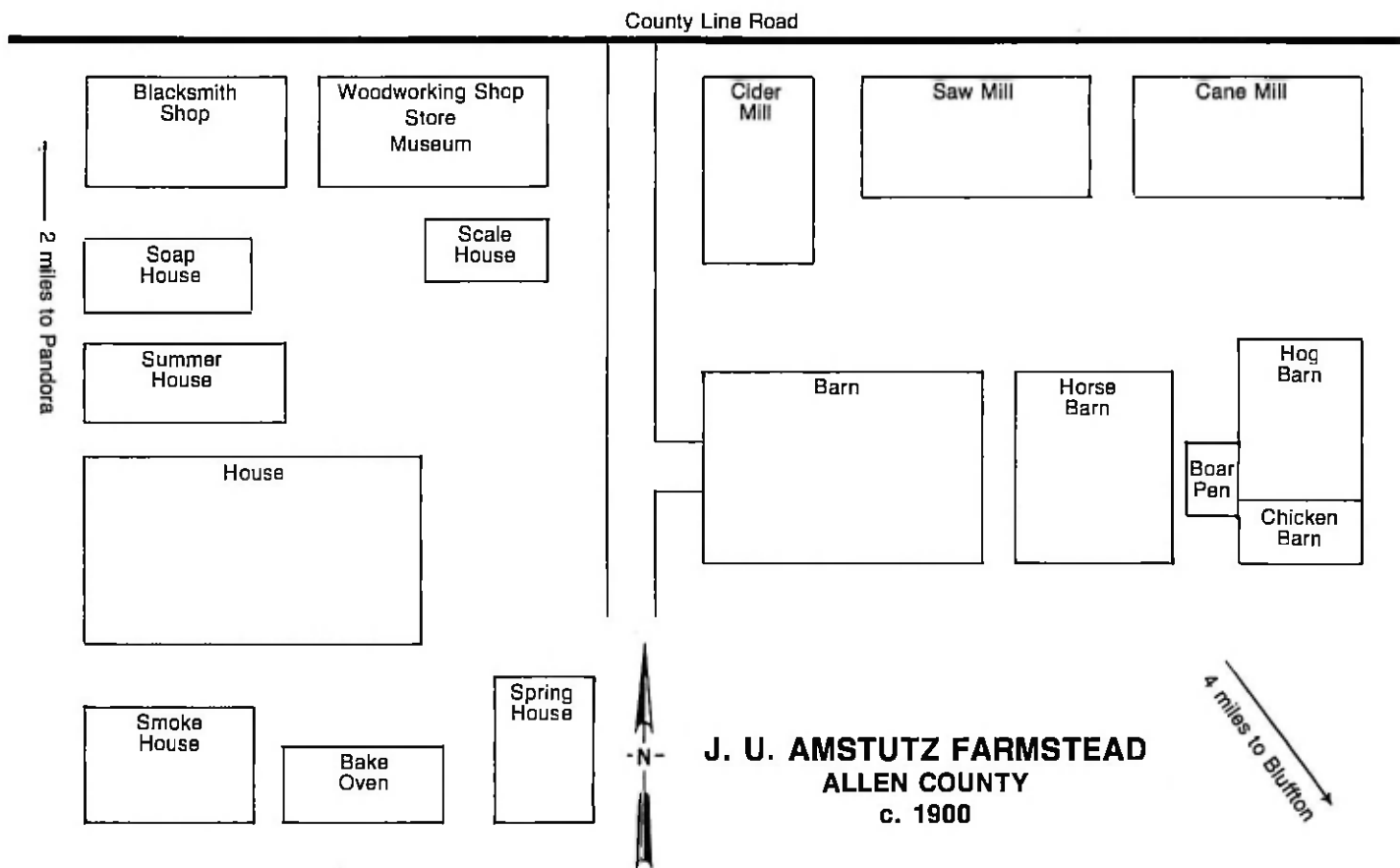
J. U. and his wife, Katharina, had five children. Noah, the oldest, was born in 1857 and died in 1893 without ever having married. Anna married John Winkler, and Marion married Carl Roethlisberger. John and Carl, the sons-in-law, established a cane mill on the Winkler farm, three miles to the southeast. Barbara married Solomon Welty. Sam, the youngest and the photographer, married Fanny Schnegg.

Katharina, J. U. Amstutz's wife, died in 1884. Several years later he married Elizabeth Moser Luginbuhl, a widow and the sister of Bishop John Moser. She was grandmother of thirteen Miller children, whose mother, Verena, had died of pneumonia and whose father could not support the family on their farm at Hoopston, Illinois. Four of the Miller sons moved to Bay City, Michi-

gan, to live with an Oviatt family; three of the daughters moved to Bay City to live with another family. The youngest three grandchildren, Ed, Rose, and the baby Willie, were welcomed into the home of J. U. and Elizabeth Amstutz.

John U. Amstutz died in 1919 at the age of eighty-seven. His son Sam, who lived on the homestead for his entire life, died in 1927. The farm was then purchased by Ed and Mary Wenger Miller. Ed was the grandson of J. U. Amstutz's second wife. The artifacts in the museum, merchandise in the store, and tools in the wood-working and blacksmith shops were sold at public auction. Ed Miller operated the cane mill until his death in 1944. Then the last of the buildings of this community service center—store, blacksmith shop, wood-working shop, sawmill, cane mill—were sold at public auction by his widow, Mary Miller, and were moved or dismantled. An era in the Swiss Community had come to an end.

Upper right, Amstutz custom sawmill, ca. 1905; below right, view of sawmill from shop, 1906.





The Swiss Settlement at the Turn of the Century: a Photographic Essay

by Robert Kreider with Carol Diller, Herman Hilty and Darvin Luginbuhl

Samuel Amstutz (1864-1927) lived his entire life on a forty-acre farm on the Allen-Putnam County line in the heart of the Swiss Settlement. With the camera he acquired in the 1890s he photographed the life and activities of his Swiss neighbors who came to his father's cluster of farm-related enterprises.

Sam, the youngest of J. U. and Katharina Amstutz's five children, married Fanny Schnegg, a sister of Chris and Jake Schnegg, and continued to live on the parental farm. A baby born to them died, followed by the death of the mother. Sam, a widower, continued to live on the Amstutz homestead until his death on January 28, 1927.

Much of Sam Amstutz's photographic work was pursued in the vicinity of the combination general store-watch repair shop-museum. In his photography he used glass negatives. Nearby in the woodworking shop he made picture frames and framed pictures for his customers.

Following Sam's death in 1927 all the merchandise, tools, artifacts, equipment, even buildings were sold at public auction. The buildings were retained for various uses; Ed Miller continued to operate the cane mill until 1944. Those today who would seek to preserve the memory of a turn-of-the-century farmstead grieve that the interest and resources of the community were not mobilized in 1927 to preserve the J. U.-Sam Amstutz enterprises as a continuing living museum. Every family and community, of course, lives with the hind-sights of what-might-have-been.

Following the 1927 public sale, Sam Amstutz's glass negatives found their

way into the hands of his sister, Anna, who had married John Winkler. From them the negatives apparently passed on to son Albert and, in turn, to his son Kenneth. Some fifty years after the public sale, the glass negatives were found in the Kenneth Winkler home, leading to the loaning of this treasure to eager historians of the community.

The prints from the Sam Amstutz collection, constituting most of the photo-

graphs which appear in this essay, are from the holdings of the Mennonite Historical Library of Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio. These have been supplemented by the works of other contemporary photographers in the Swiss community, including the carpenter, Herman Kindle. These additional prints come from the collections of the Mennonite Historical Library and the Swiss Community Historical Society.



Right, Sam Amstutz at Moore's studio, 1901; opposite page, upper, Sam Amstutz outside the shop-museum, 1900; lower, Fanny Schnegg Amstutz (wife of Sam), Peter and Jacob Schnegg, 1900.



The Young of Heart



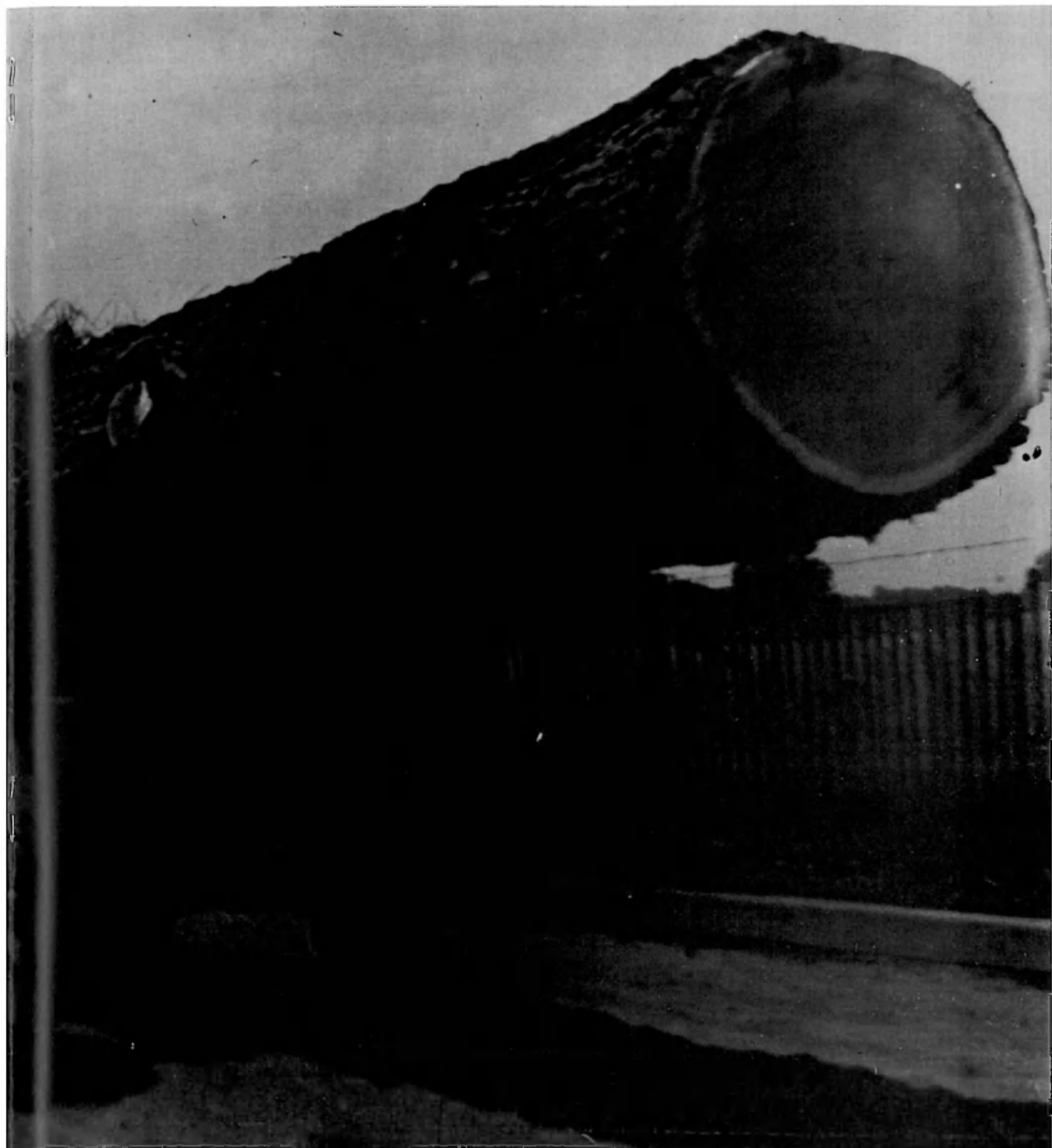
Right, Elmer Hochstettler, Jackie Hochstettler and Ed Gable in buggy, 1900-1910, a Herman Kindle photo; below, seated, Ed Miller and Sam Amstutz, and standing, Wilber Wenger and Christ Amstutz. Phonograph with cylinder records, 1907; opposite page, above, Alice Stager and Rosa Miller with friends, 1904; below, Elmer, Noah and Jake Hochstettler and Ward Sumney, a Herman Kindle photo.





Logging and Sawmills





Centerfold, pages 24-25, a fifty foot log cut by the Grafton Company to be sent to Europe for ship building. Right, logs ready for shipment, four of workers—David Shank, John, Peter and Elias Schumacher, 1903; below, John Winkler sawmill on Tom Fett Road, 1908. Opposite page, upper, John Winkler sawmill, 1908; middle, Noah Zimmerman and John Diller with children hauling logs to sawmill, 1903; lower, John Winkler sawmill, 1903. Later P. B. Amstutz purchased the sawmill and moved it to his farm one quarter mile south.





Young Women





Clockwise, below, women working in Pandora Overall Company (note turkey feather fan on line shaft); three young women using modern laundry equipment, ca. 1900; Mary Amstutz and Mary Bauman, 1906; Fannie Bucher and Rosa Liechty, photographed at the museum, 1901; Anna C. Amstutz and friend quilting, 1902; five girls after baptism, 1903.



Family Portraits





Clockwise, below, Peter B. Amstutz family reunion, P. B. Amstutz center with child, his wife left, Rev. and Mrs. Gottschall, right, 1914; fiftieth wedding anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Welty, Welty and granddaughter in center, Mrs. Welty to their left, Rev. Benjamin Diller with crutch, 1906; John Winkler family, 1902; C. W. Roethlisberger family, 1902.





Clockwise, right, Mary Ann Bixler, Emma Kiener and Benjamin Kiener with floral background; two young women with pups; Semiah Niswander, 1907; Herman Kindle, Amos Luginbuhl, Mrs. Herman Kindle, Ella and Edna Luginbuhl, child and Jake Zurfluh in front of Abraham Zurfluh home, 1900-1910; four generations of Amstutz, Liechty and Sprungers, 1914.





Town Living

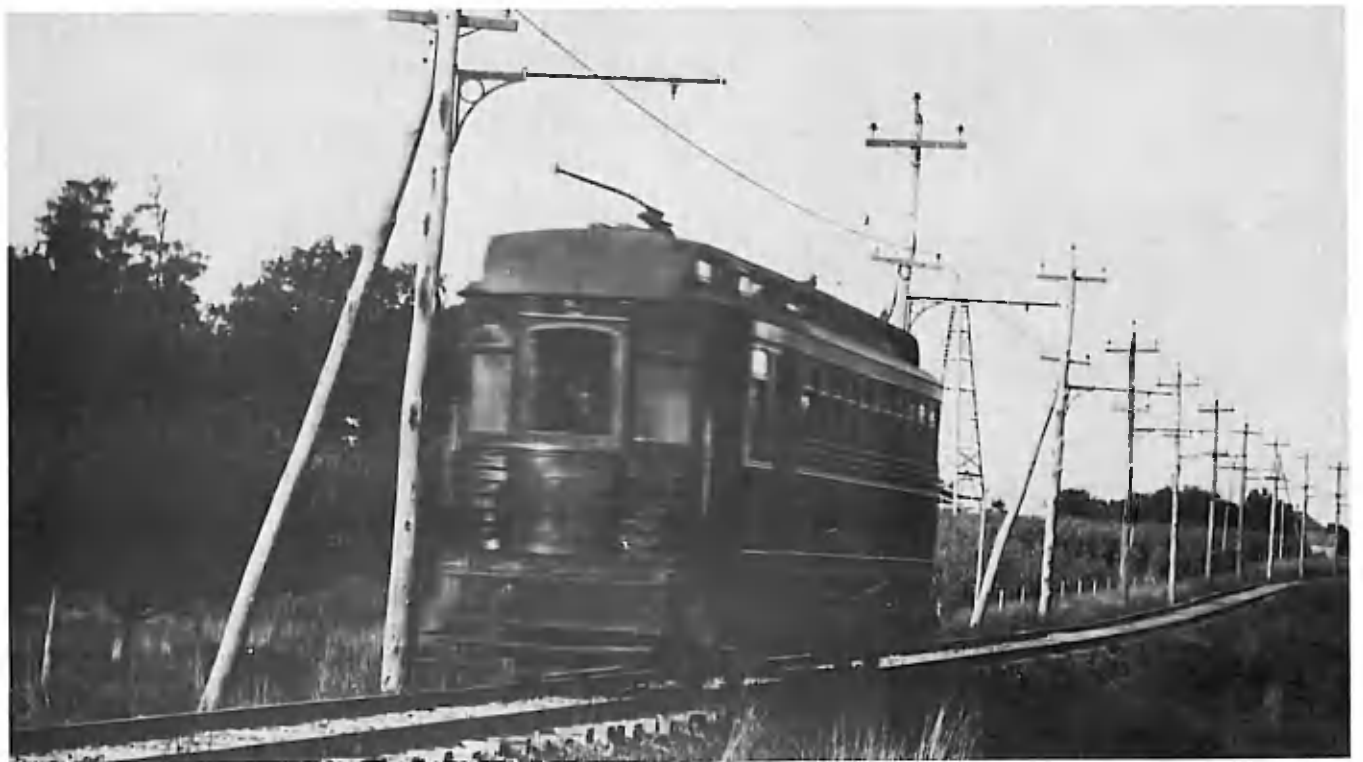
Clockwise, right, Bluffton Milling Co., standing left to right, Noah Diller, Leonard Wingate, Lee Wingate, Sam E. Bame, Elmer Diller, unknown, Frank Cook seated; L. E. and N. Railroad station, Bluffton, left to right, William Again, S. W. Stratton—agent, A. T. Worthington, O. V. Swerlin (seated), Wilson Hawk (omnibus driver), Robert Wilson, Busy Bee Grocery operated by Philip Steiner and Eli Althaus; livery barn on Church Street, Bluffton, next to First Mennonite Church, ca. 1910; Andrew Klay foundry on Grove Street, Bluffton.







Clockwise, right, store operated in Bluffton by Peter Bixel and Jonas Amstutz; office and home of Dr. Peter D. Bixel, Pandora, who practiced from 1900 to 1939; the interurban line operating through Bluffton from Lima to Findlay and points beyond; workers in the Mullet quarry, 1906; new metal bridge replacing wooden bridge spanning Riley Creek, 1907.



Iron Bridges and Stone Quarries



Country Schools





Right, shooting the Adam Diller oil well, 1902; below, drilling an oil well on J. U. Amstutz farm, 1902. Opposite page, top, a new beech tree planted on the grounds of the Beech Tree School, 1905; below, children and schoolmaster, Bucher School, 1910.



Drilling for Water



Right, Berry Brothers steam-operated well drilling machine; below, Pete Baumgartner's drilling machine.



Tile Factories



Left, Riley Creek flooding its banks in Pandora (Riley Creek, which drains the Swiss Settlement, is a part of the Maumee River watershed.); below, Beaverdam Tile Co., one of the many local tile factories producing tile for draining the swampy land of the area.



Fields and Rail Fences



Right, a view east from the Basinger farm to the farms of Dan Amstutz, David Geiger, and David Wenger; below, the Jacob Lugibihl farm with the typical flat land, country road and rail fence of the Settlement.

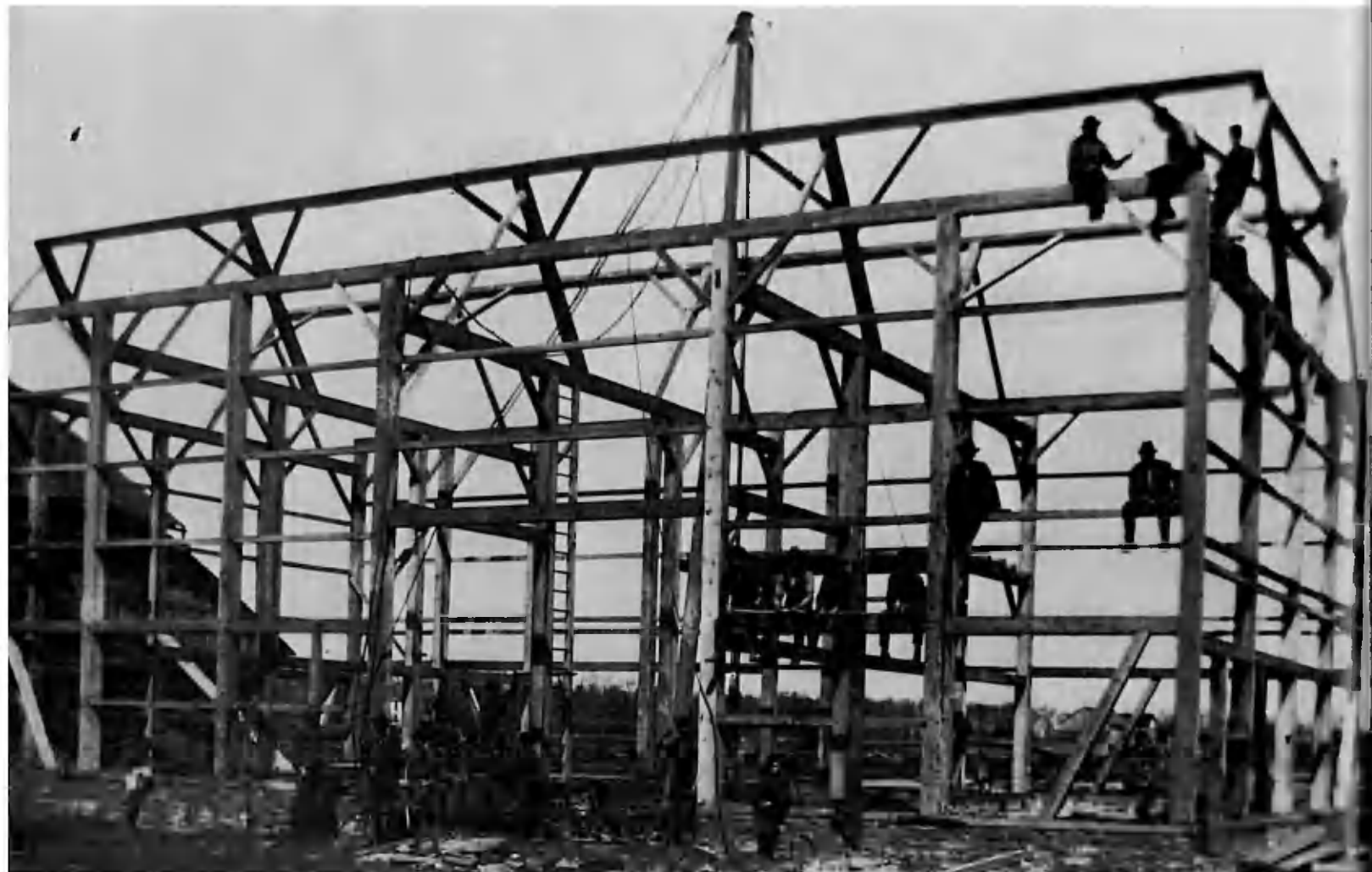


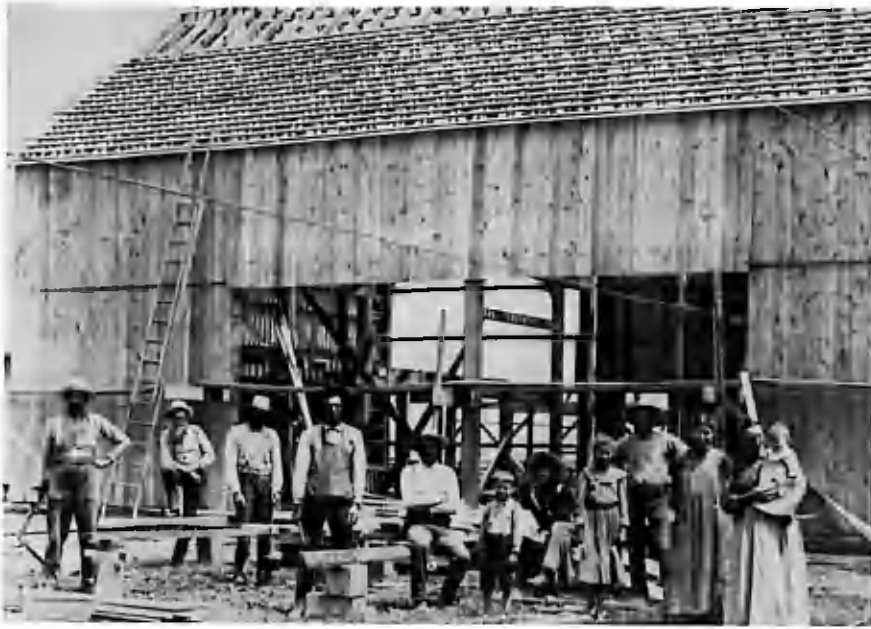
Horses and Carriages

Right, barn builders relax at Gid Bucher barn, Herman Kindle photo; middle left, J. J. Schaublin and family with horse; middle right, Ben Balmer farm; below, Jim Coon farmstead, Herman Kindle photo.



Barns





Clockwise, below, A. S. Neuenschwander family and barn; new barn nearing completion, 1904; barn raising, 1904; Duke Strahm barn and family, Herman Kindle photo; new barn near completion, 1904.



Butchering, Fork-Making and Harvesting

Right, P. B. Amstutz wooden fork factory with Gid Luginbuhl and Cal Luginbuhl; middle, harvesting wheat at the Rudolph Muller farm, 1902; below, butchering six hogs, Herman Kindle photo.

Next page, above, first frame house in the Swiss Settlement built in 1942 for Bishop Christian Steiner. Here lived the seven sons of Jacob Steiner who developed the Steiner Machine Shop in Lima, Ohio; below, interior of J. U. Amstutz cane mill where sorghum molasses was poured into containers, 1910.





