

the Mirror

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HUNDREDS OF YEARS OF HERITAGE

Family Bibles at Mennonite Life

Do you have a Bible that is important to your family heritage? A Bible is a significant family heirloom passed down through generations. In families with Mennonite or Amish ancestry, some family Bibles go as far back as the first voyage from Switzerland or Germany to the New World.

Due to its importance and prominence in the home, the family Bible was also often used for recordkeeping, and some family Bibles may contain written records. There are two types of records common in family Bibles: family records and ownership records. If your ancestors are from Switzerland or Germany, these records may be written in German.

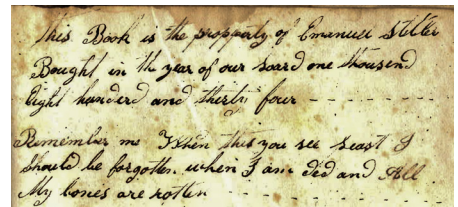
A family record shows the family's lineage, most commonly through birth and death dates. It is common for parents, for instance, to record the birthdates of their children. Sometimes this information is accompanied by the child's zodiac sign. Some Bibles may contain more detailed genealogies that record both births and deaths.

An ownership record shows the Bible's owner through the years. It begins with the first owner inscribing a name and a year. This practice encourages subsequent owners to add their own inscription. The consistent last name shows a record of inheritance through the generations. In this way, the ownership record can also demonstrate family lineage.

Some of the Bibles at Mennonite Life were already two hundred years old when they made the voyage to the New World and were still owned by the family into the twentieth century. They are valuable not just because they have survived, but because they contain detailed family records that can help connect our researchers with their ancestors. You can view our family bible collection online at bit.ly/MLifeFamBibles.

If your family's Bible is archived at Mennonite Life and has a German family record, Archivist/Librarian Julia Wiker may be able to translate it for you. Contact Julia at archivist@mennonitelife.org for more information.

The Charles family Bible (above), published in 1536, is one of the earliest Bibles owned by Mennonite Life. Shown here is its family record titled "Record of the Ages of My Sons."



A Message from the Past

You never know what you will find in the Mennonite Life library and archives—you just may connect with a long-lost ancestor. Several years ago, in a casual conversation with our librarian, I mentioned that my genealogical research seemed to hit a wall with my fourth great-grandfather.

A few months later, the librarian received a donated book called the Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield. After paging through the 1834 edition, he noticed that it had once belonged to my sought-after ancestor. I confirmed that it was my great grandfather and was thrilled to find that he had kept detailed family birth and death records within the pages. Some of my ancestors, I learned, had not survived early childhood. A fact I was not aware of before finding this record. I was moved when I saw that he had attempted to write about his wife's death and faltered after recording the first three letters of her name.

On further inspection, I found that he had written lines of verse that stated, "Remember me when this you see, lest I should be forgotten."

It felt like he was talking directly to me across the centuries. I wonder if he could have imagined that his direct descendant would someday come across his book and read his handwritten notes about our collective history?

—Jason Stetler, Storyteller: Digital & Communications

FEATURED ARTIST



“Fancy Painter” Jim King

Jim King is an artist from Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He leads popular decorative and painted-box workshops and exhibits his work at traditional craft shows.

Fascinated by the decorative painting on antiques he collected, Jim began studying grain painting in the 1980s. He purchased antique blanket chests at auctions and flea markets, restored them, and applied painted glaze surfaces. He researched and experimented with color and technique. Jim enjoys the exuberance of the craft and connecting with his cultural past.

Old Order Mennonite cabinetmakers replicate his antiques in smaller sizes, so he can use traditional techniques, such as decorative motifs and grain painting, to paint them.

Jim received his art degree from Goshen College in Indiana. In the 1990s, he lived in Bangladesh, working for Mennonite Central Committee as a product designer. Now retired, he was the director of visual presentation and store design for Ten Thousand Villages, based in Ephrata, PA.

Protecting Paper

We all have pieces of paper that are important or precious to us, whether documents or artwork. At Mennonite Life, we take special care of our paper collections so they will be accessible to our visitors for as long as possible, but we can't undo damage that happens before objects arrive. There are a few things that you can do to keep your special paper safe for longer.

The first thing is simple: clean hands! Wash your hands to remove oils and dirt that can transfer to the paper. Over time, the absorbed oil will cause the paper to discolor and weaken. Freshly washed and dried hands minimize this risk.

Encapsulate it. At Mennonite Life, we create custom Mylar sleeves for fragile works or documents, which allows us to look at the objects without touching them directly. Make sure that whatever you use is acid-free and that you can easily remove your object from it.

Clean and dry storage. We all know that water and paper don't mix, but don't forget about humidity! Either too



much or too little humidity can be bad for paper, causing it to become soggy or brittle. Insects like silverfish and booklice love high humidity and can eat holes in paper. The recommended humidity range for paper is between 40% and 50% (the average home is around 40%).

Keep out of the light! Light damage is cumulative and irreversible, causing bleaching and brittleness over time. If your object is framed and hanging on the wall, consider UV-filtering glass to keep out as much light as possible and move it out of direct sunlight. Unframed objects should be stored in a dark space and only pulled out when you use them.

The staff at Mennonite Life are here as a resource to our community and are happy to answer questions about how to preserve paper. Sara Berkovec, collections curator, and Julia Wiker, archivist/librarian, will teach an encapsulation workshop on June 4. ■

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Life Story Lab Launches

Many peoples' life stories go largely unexpressed, unexplored, and undocumented. By launching our Life Story Lab, we give you an opportunity to help change that. Life Story Lab is an interview space and an interviewing service to help you share your life story, or encourage someone you know to share theirs.

Each person, and each life story, is unique. Even so, shared humanity means we relate to the stories of others. We learn from them. We feel a range of emotions when we hear others' stories. We may be inspired or get that sense deep in our bones that someone else may understand what we've been through. A life story tells us something of the broader world and its currents even as it gives us a glimpse into an individual person.

For my master's degree thesis, I chose to focus on practices of what was then called nonconformity in Lancaster Mennonite Conference congregations during the mid-20th century. The concept draws from Romans 12 where the author exhorts the letter's hearers not to be shaped by a misguided world ("do not be conformed") but rather to welcome a re-made mind that is able to see God's best and choose that path. A historian's gold standard is the ability to engage with primary sources, and it seemed to me that talking to people who lived during the time period I was studying would be both a great learning experience and a contribution to overall scholarship.

With the guidance and support of my thesis advisor, Dr. Walter Sawatzky at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary, I set up and conducted 30 oral history interviews. Yes, I learned a lot. And interviewees consented to their interviews being placed in Mennonite Life's archives to be made available to future learners, so the effort benefitted ongoing scholarship. What I didn't anticipate was the beauty that happens in a setting where a person is listened to deeply, with respect, care, and inquisitiveness. A life story interview honors one's life and invites their perspective on the world. And the rest of us learn so much.

A mistake people often make is thinking that a life needs to look like wow from an outsider's perspective to be "worth" recording a life story. You can let that thought fall away, because a strong Anabaptist value that threads through everything we do is that every person's life matters, and every person has something to contribute to the world, no matter how seemingly ordinary. In terms of history, it's exactly those ordinary things that generations in the future will find so interesting.

You can find out more by visiting our [website](https://www.mennonitelife.org) or calling 717.393.9745. This is one way we are living into the Mennonite Life vision of learning our own and each others' stories, across boundaries.

—Jean Kilheffer Hess,
Executive Director



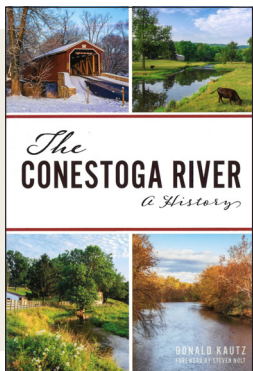
Historic Preservation at the 1719 Museum

At the 1719 Museum, maintaining the buildings and grounds is crucial to ensure the property lasts for future generations. We are currently preparing to install a new roof on the Herr House.

The current roof is about 20 years old, and it shows signs of weathering and deterioration. Following the guidance of Tom and Chris Lainhoff, local architectural historians, who have shared their expertise with the museum over the years, we have found an expert in 18th-century construction to make the shingles. Returning to red oak is the better choice, not only for historical accuracy, but with proper installation and maintenance, the new roof should last at least 30 years.

In 2002, our members, and the surrounding community, graciously supported the funding of the new roof. We humbly ask for your support again as we prepare for this significant and necessary undertaking. The 1719 Museum hopes to initiate a possible adopt a shingle drive, similar to the campaign from 2002. Stay tuned! We'll need approximately 6,400 hand-riven shingles for the project. As longtime supporters know, the list of maintenance projects requiring attention is never-ending. The roof, however, is likely the most critical project we'll be undertaking for the next few years.

We hope to install the new roof in 2023. Please consider supporting our efforts to properly care for the oldest house in Lancaster County and the ancestral home of over 200,000 Herr descendants.



History of the Conestoga River

Author Donald Kautz

Presents the book, *The Conestoga River*

Thursday, July 21, 2022, at 7 pm.

Complimentary

Book available for purchase at the event.

Author will sign books after the presentation.

SAVE THE DATE!

Annual Storytelling Night

Monday, August 8, 2022 at 7 pm.

Landisville Mennonite Church

Mennonite Life (USPS 882-020)

2215 Millstream Road

Lancaster, PA 17602-1499

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Inside:

- Family Bibles at Mennonite Life
- Protecting Paper
- Life Story Lab Launches

Mennonite Life Now Hiring!

Retail Specialist — Administratively manages retail offerings across our campuses, with in-store tasks complemented by other team members.

Program Assistant, 1719 Museum — Supports operations by effectively managing program details and other administrative details

Used Books Manager — Manage our used book sales business lines: Bookworm Frolic, Used & Rare Book Auctions, online used book sales, and in-store sales.

Click here to review the full [job descriptions](#). Send a letter of intent and a resume to director@mennonitelife.org.

Mennonite Life thanks these generous business sponsors:



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