

The Pennsylvania Dutchman

Devoted to Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Culture

Vol. III, No. 11 — 3,500

Lancaster, Pennsylvania, November 1, 1951

8 Pages — 15c a copy

<https://dspace.fandm.edu/bitstream/handle/11016/24089/Vol3No11.pdf?sequence=1>

Brother Hantsch Visits the Mennonites-- A Moravian Missionary Diary of 1748

Translated and Edited by Don Yoder

From a missionary standpoint, the most active Pennsylvania Dutch religious group before the Revolution was the Moravians. In the 1740's, from that throbbing heart of the Moravian missionary impulse, Bethlehem on the Lehigh, they sent out preachers who bore the good tidings of salvation through their "Beloved Lamb" to all the "sleeping" Germans in Eastern Pennsylvania.

Although their desire was solely to "awaken" slumbering souls in the established churches, and although they did accomplish much in reviving a more spiritual type of Christianity among many of those with whom they worked, the religious leaders of the other churches soon became suspicious of this magnanimous move on the part of the Moravian Brethren. When Zinzendorf's attempt at uniting all Christian forces in eastern Pennsylvania (1742-1748) failed, and they were hemmed in by suspicious and jealous leaders of other denominations, they withdrew into their German shell in the 1750's and devoted their missionary talents henceforth to the American Indians.

From 1748, when the Moravian missionary campaign among the German-speaking population of eastern Pennsylvania was still in flower, comes the following *Journal of George Hantsch of His Missionary Labors among the Mennonites*. The late Rev. Dr. William J. Hinke discovered the original German copy on his visit to Bethlehem in 1914. For translation purposes I used Dr. Hinke's own longhand German copy, now on file in the Historical Society of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, at Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa.

On my research visit to the Bethlehem Archives in 1948, Dr. Schwarze the archivist was unable to locate for me the German original, but I was enabled to copy several letters of

Hantsch, Spangenberg and others on Moravian missions among the Mennonites. These, with additional materials which I trust readers will send me about the Mennonites mentioned in Brother Hantsch's account, I expect to use in my definitive edition of the *Journal*, which is destined for publication in the *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

From the standpoint of its pictures of the Mennonite communities of Lancaster County, Pa., two centuries ago, this document is of unparalleled historical importance. Will readers of Mennonite background kindly send the editor materials on any of the persons mentioned in the *Journal*, so that accurate identification can be made in the final edition? And don't let Brother Hantsch's spellings fool you—*Mäuer* is "Myer," *Kräuter* the common Mennonite family-name Kreider, *Jünrich* is "Gingrich," *Pachtman* is "Bachman."

Farewell, Bethlehem!

On the 15th of June (O.S.), 1748, I, George Hantsch, Senior, left our beloved Bethlehem, on the visit which the Dear Savior and the dear Brethren had destined for me among the Mennonites. The thoughts of this visit lay very heavily upon me. I felt depressed and shamed in regard to my spiritual state, and how I, miserable Hantsch, should come to sufficient grace. I left with dear Brother Schnel and Brother and Sister Nixdorf.

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The Dutchland — Past and Present

Edited by
DON YODER

Brother Hantsch Visits the Mennonites-- A Moravian Missionary Diary of 1748

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On Friday, June 17, we arrived in Warwick [Werbig] at dear Brother and Sister Reimer's. We all had a genuine time of rejoicing, for they had now for a long time been hoping for a visit from the Brethren. On Saturday the 18th, I remained at their home and took a good rest. Brother Schnel went with the Nixdorfs to Lancaster.

Songs in the Schoolhouse

On Sunday, June 19th, Brother Nieberg delivered his farewell-sermon in Warwick. Also, in connection with the service, he baptized a child, to the parents' salvation. There was a very large crowd present, some even from town. In the afternoon Brother Schnel held a song-service [Singstunde] in the schoolhouse, with many blessings. There were many people present at that occasion too.

On Monday the 20th, we officially began our visit among the Mennonites, praying the Beloved Lamb to be with us Himself. First we visited J. Ulrich Huber, who had been with us at church on Sunday. We met him as he was mowing out in his meadow. He had no objection to our visit—he was friendly toward us, yet the conversation did not go according to our wish.

Secondly, we visited N. Bauman—he too was friendly to us, and seemed receptive when we spoke to him of the Beloved Lamb. Nor did he object to our visit. We visited also on this day some of Brother Schnel's people.

Among the Lehns of Warwick

On the following day, Tuesday, June 21, 1748, we first paid a visit to Heinrich Lehn. We were quite welcome there, yet because he had urgent business, we could not remain long with him.

Secondly we visited Johannes Lang, a preacher [Prediger]. Our visit was quite unexpected to him, yet he was quite friendly and we were able to talk with him most reasonably. He even urged us to visit him again, when we had opportunity.

Our third stop was at Peter Lehn's, to whom also our visit was quite pre-

posed I would find anyone at home, I got ready and went to Warwick to the home of our dear Brethren Römers and Schnel. I stayed over night with them, and it was pleasant to be together. Brother Schnel and Römer came home at once from visiting some of their people.

My next stop was Johannes Hegy's. But I did not stay long there—my visit seemed to do him little good, as I noticed from his manner. Went on from there to Philip Römer's, to whom my visit was precious. I stayed over night there. This visit went especially well for me—I felt genuine joy in speaking with him of the Beloved Lamb and His Love.

The Duncers Want to Argue
Thursday, June 23, 1748: Römer said if I would just visit his neighbor, he knew he would appreciate the visit. His neighbor was Heinrich Küfer, a Dunker [Täufer], by occupation a tailor. But he was not at home, yet my having come there meant a great deal to his wife. She so wished her husband had been at home, for my visit would have been precious to him. This woman had even been to our Synod in Quittobehille.

Because I had heard he was a Saxon and therefore a countryman of mine, I went next to visit Heinrich Rietsch. But because he was a very zealous Dunker, he would have liked at once to begin a disputation on Infant Baptism. But I said that it was not my business to become involved in that dispute, so that I did not remain long with him.

Next visited Little Hannes Lehman, also his son-in-law, Jacob Fritz. They proved quite friendly. I was able to talk a little with them, of what that Beloved Lamb had done for us.

"We Are Used to Slander by Now"
Jacob Rohrer, whom I next visited, would like to have argued with me. He told me he had indeed heard evil reports of us. I said, "People will not injure us with such things. We will remain what we are, let them say whatever they will. We are used to that by now."

Lastly I came today to Peter Acker's, where I stayed over night. He had many questions in regard to our outward ordinances, otherwise I could discover nothing in him which longed for what I had to tell him.

Friday, June 24, 1748: First I visited a widow, Mrs. Michael Kräuter, who valued my visit. This visit at her house went especially well for me, for I was able to speak to her with joyousness. She said I should visit her again.

At Heinrich Reiff's, my visit went well for me. Although in the beginning he seemed not to know how to take my visit, I soon saw signs that it would not prove worthless.

Too Busy with the Harvest
Herman Lange, the next person I visited, showed himself friendly, but I did not stay long at his place, as he had little time on account of the harvest. So I went on to a widow's, Mrs. Michael Miller's, where however I could see not even a trace of spiritual life, so I left shortly.

To Heinrich Hartman my visit was very precious. He had been awakened [erweckt] by Nieberg. My visit went well for me at his place, although he was not of the Mennonites.

Toward evening I came to our dear Brother and Sister Nixdorff's, in Lancaster [Langäster]. I found them quite well, and we enjoyed our visit together—it was so good to be with them. I stayed over night there.

Saturday, June 25, 1748: The people in this neighborhood were all in the harvest fields. Although I did not sup-

pose I would find anyone at home, I got ready and went to Warwick to the home of our dear Brethren Römers and Schnel. I stayed over night with them, and it was pleasant to be together. Brother Schnel and Römer came home at once from visiting some of their people.

Sunday, June 26, 1748: Brother Schnel preached in Warwick, with grace and many blessings. There were people here from the town, including Brother Nixdorff. In the afternoon he conducted a blessed song-service in the schoolhouse. After that he and I went with Brother Nixdorff into town, where at seven o'clock Brother Schnel held a blessed song-service. There were very many people present. We remained over night there.

No Special Call for Hans Hershey
Monday, June 27, 1748: Brother Schnel and I again set out on our visiting. First we went to see Hans Hirsch, a preacher. He was out cutting grain. His wife fetched him in, and he showed himself friendly toward us. He asked us what was the purpose of our visit. Did we have a special call for him? If so, we should just be free and tell it to him. We told him that we had nothing special, that we had simply come to visit him out of love, and to become acquainted with him. We stayed a few hours at his place, where we discussed many things hither and yon in all love.

We took our departure, he accompanying us and putting us on the road to Hannes Mäuer's, who was also a preacher, but quite a poor man indeed, had he just known it. Yet he too was friendly toward us, but we could not say very much to him that was edifying. We soon again made our departure, and went to Christian Marti's, in Manor Land [Männer Land], a preacher too, where we were genuinely welcome. We remained over night with them. He is a dear man and quite emotional and concerned for his soul. We pointed him to the Sinner's Friend, His wife and children also were quite anxious to hear, so that our visit went well for us at their place.

Tuesday, June 28, 1748: We went on further and came firstly to Heinrich Brenner's. He was friendly toward us, yet we could not speak with him as much as we would have liked. We then went on farther to Johannes Pachtman's, where, however, we could say nothing further than to ask the way to Donegal [Donicau], where our pilgrimage stopped, because Brother Schnel had appointed a sermon on the following day.

Lancaster County Hospitality

He directed us to a man, also a Mennonite, named N. Nehf. They were very friendly to us, and asked us right away to eat dinner, and, being hungry, we accepted the invitation. But after we saw that it was not needful to stay long at this place, we soon resumed our journey and came again to a house, to Peter Bauer's, where again we could say nothing except to ask directions.

List of Lancaster County Mennonites-1748

Appended to the Report of his Missionary Journey among the Mennonites of Lancaster County in 1748, George Hantsch gave the following complete list of names of persons visited. The original is in the Moravian Archives in Bethlechem.—D.Y.

- The Mennonites Whom We, Brothers Schnel and Hantsch, Visited in Warwick**
1. Johann Ulrich Huber
 2. V. Bauman
 3. Heinrich Lehn
 4. Peter Lehn
 5. Old Mother Lehn
 6. Cornelius Lehn
 7. Johannes Lang, a preacher
- In White Oak [Weiss Eichen Land]**
1. Ulrich Jünrich
 2. Jacob Leidert
 3. Johannes Reiff
 4. Johannes Lehmann, preacher
 5. Hannes Hegy
 6. Philip Römer
 7. Heinrich Kyfer, a Dunker
 8. Heinrich Rietsch, a Saxon, but a Dunker
 9. Johannes Lehman, Junior
 10. Jacob Friezt
- In Conestoga [Conestoci] and Around Lancaster**
1. Jacob Rohrer
 2. Peter Acker
 3. Mrs. Michael Kräuter, widow
 4. Heinrich Reiff
 5. Mrs. Michel Miller, widow
 6. Herman Lange
 7. Heinrich Hartman
 8. Pens Hirsch, preacher
 9. Hannes Mäuer, preacher
 10. Jacob Hochstätter
 11. Jacob Heinig, not a Mennonite
- Those Visited in Earltown**
1. Christian Schneider
 2. Mrs. Jacob Weber, widow
 3. David Marti
 4. Christel Marti
 5. Heinrich Marti
 6. Mrs. Heinrich Weber, widow
 7. George Webern
 8. Jacob Sensenich
 9. Mrs. Johannes Wittwer
 10. Michael Wittauer
 11. Christian Sensenich
 12. Martin Graff
 13. Jacob Summy
 14. Christian Wegner, a preacher
- Those Visited in Manor Land [Männer Land] by Brothers Schnel and Hantsch**
1. Christian Marty, a preacher
 2. Heinrich Brenner
 3. Johannes Bachtman
 4. Jacob Nehf
 5. Peter Bauer
 6. Heinrich Wohlgemuth, in Donegal

We soon came to the direct road to Donegal and toward evening came to Johannes Kap's, in Donegal. We were quite welcome at their place, and stayed over night there.

Wednesday, June 29, 1748: We went to Peter Schneider's, visiting N. German on the way. He was not at home, but his wife was quite favorable to our visit. The Widow Farom lives there too. She has permission to bring her little daughter to Germantown. Her desire was simply that she might soon have opportunity to take her thither. Then we came to Peter Schneider's, where too we were quite welcome.

At ten o'clock we went to the church, where Brother Schnel preached with many blessings. He also baptized a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frantz Albert's with especial blessing. There were many people present, though it was in the busy harvest time.

After the sermon we again went to Peter Schneider's and said farewell, then went to a Mennonite's by the name of Wohlgemuth, to visit him. Our visit seemed quite unexpected to him, yet we entered into conversation, so that we have hopes that the Dear Savior will not let it go unblest.

A Whole Family in the Harvest Field
We also wanted to visit Peter Reys, a preacher. He was not at home, but with his whole family was out binding grain, because a heavy rain appeared

to be on the way. So we proceeded on our way to Warwick. On the way we stopped in at a widow's called "Long Mrs. Peter" [die lange Petersin], because it began to rain very hard. She has five sons and a daughter, all with agreeable personalities. She was quite friendly toward us. At ten o'clock in the evening we got home to dear Brother and Sister Römer's, where we had a happy reunion one with another.

Thursday, June 30, 1748: Because we expected to find almost no one at home on account of urgency of the harvest, I remained with the dear Brethren in Warwick a few days. But very often the Mennonites came to my mind. I thought of them constantly these days. If only they might bear in mind the things that pertain to their soul's salvation!

Sunday, July 3, 1748: Brother Schnel preached again in Warwick with many blessings on the words: "Wie hat der Herr die Leute so lieb." There were again some here from town. After the sermon Brother Schnel went to Lancaster, and in the afternoon held a Song Service. Toward evening I too came into town, after Brother Schnel, because we still wanted to visit some people around this neighborhood.

Monday, July 4, 1748: We first visited Jacob Hochstätter. Although at first our visit seemed to take him quite unawares, nevertheless they soon proved

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vious. The Lehns proved themselves quite friendly toward us, and we were able to visit them again.

Fourthly, we visited Old Mother Lehn, a widow, where we were especially welcome. She was quite anxious to hear something of the Beloved Lamb. Our visit with her went quite well with us. Indeed she wished that still more of the hungry souls would espouse the cause.

Fifthly, we went to Cornelius Lehn's, where we did not stay long—we were not made to feel at home there.

Sixthly, we wanted to visit Jacob Lein, but he was not at home.

Seventhly, we visited Old Kiesel and his son. This visit with them went well for us—we could speak to them somewhat of our Beloved Lamb.

Venturing Out Alone

On Wednesday, June 22, Brother Schnel wanted to go to Lancaster, so that I had to proceed on my visiting alone. I was a bit sorry to go alone, yet I girded up my courage and prayed my Lamb to stand by me. I first came to George Klein's, who put me on the road to Ulrich Jünrich's, who was quite friendly toward me and at least tolerated my message.

Secondly I went to Jacob Leidert's, who had no time—he was building a new house. Then to Hannes Reiff's, where also I could say nothing. Then