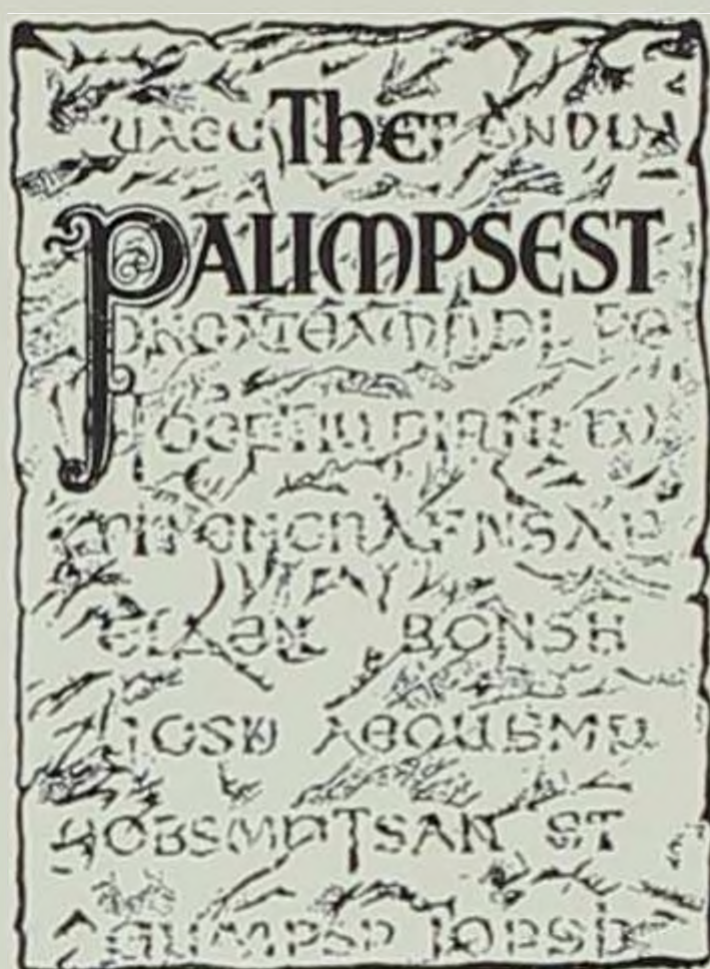


The **PALIMPSEST**



MY AMISH BOYHOOD
Sanford C. Yoder and Grandchildren

Published Monthly by
The State Historical Society of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
MARCH, 1958



The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

Contents

MY AMISH BOYHOOD

SANFORD C. YODER

My Amish Boyhood 109-144

Sanford Calvin Yoder (Inside back cover)

MELVIN GINGERICH

Illustrations

All illustrations were furnished by the author, Sanford C. Yoder. The reproduction of Sharon Township during the boyhood days of Sanford Yoder is from an 1889 platbook in the possession of the State Historical Society of Iowa. The front cover is courtesy *The Mennonite Community* magazine.

Authors

For a brief biography of Sanford C. Yoder see the sketch on the inside back cover by Dr. Melvin Gingerich. Dr. Gingerich is a Life Member of the State Historical Society of Iowa, a professor at Goshen College and Director of Research of the Mennonite Research Foundation at Goshen, Indiana.

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER JULY 28 1920 AT THE POST OFFICE AT
IOWA CITY IOWA UNDER THE ACT OF AUGUST 24 1912

PRICE — 25 cents per copy; \$2.50 per year; free to Members

MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual Dues \$3.00

ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, Iowa City, Iowa

THE PALIMPSEST

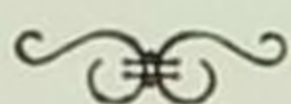
EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XXXIX

ISSUED IN MARCH 1958

No. 3

Copyright 1958 by The State Historical Society of Iowa



My Amish Boyhood

I was born a twin, the first born in the family. I still feel that children who are deprived of that privilege have missed something. During our childhood and early youth my brother Sam (Samuel) and I had practically everything in common. We always got our hair cut at the same time and in the same way, except when we cut each other's — then it was not always uniform. We did not have our clothes in common, but they usually wore out at about the same time, and we were always dressed alike. We always shared our joys and were a very present help to each other in time of trouble.

The home into which we were born was one of the ordinary ones, in which the parents were honest, common people who had to work for their living and ordered their lives by such regulations as they knew, and provided for their family such things as their circumstances made possible. The home was governed by principles which father and mother had learned from the Scripture which

they were taught in their own homes in their childhood and which they accepted as a suitable code for bringing up children, as well as rules by which to regulate their own conduct. When we were children we romped and played as all youngsters do. We depended largely upon our own resources for our entertainment and things to play with, but we were as happy with those improvised things as children are now with their costly toys.

When we were ill we were treated first of all by our mother, who, as all good mothers of her day, had developed considerable skill in diagnosing our ailments. When medications were needed, the bottle of castor oil, mustard plasters, boneset tea and other home remedies worked marvels in restoring us to health. I am not sure now whether it was the ingredients of the medicines or the evil taste and bitterness that wrought its wonders but they brought about results so that in spite of ailments and treatment, both home and professional, all of us grew to maturity, except one boy who was still-born.

We luckily grew up before the modern theories of child rearing had come into vogue. When any of us eleven children became petty or quarrelsome, or had fits of temper, or misbehaved, mother did not find it necessary to take us to a psychiatrist to find out what it was that made us act that way or what caused the tensions, frustrations, psychoses, or neuroses and other high class ailments

which are so common today as to be almost fashionable. She knew what was wrong and, more than that, she knew what to do and had a very *impressive* way of treating our unorthodox conduct. As a result, those "spells" became very unpopular at our house and we fell, with some measure, into a pattern of decent behavior.

My father and mother, Christian S. and Anna Swartzendruber Yoder, at the time of my birth, December 5, 1879, lived a mile south of a little country store known as Sharon Center, about nine miles southwest of Iowa City, Iowa. They were a part of the large community of Amish people who had migrated from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, and Indiana during the middle and latter part of the nineteenth century. These early pioneers settled near the springs on the tree covered hillsides and along the streams of the valleys and turned the virgin forest lands into one of the most productive and prosperous farming sections in the middle west — in fact, among the best in the whole country.

My parents were descendants of a long line of pious and hardy souls who left their European homes to find the peace which the new world then offered. Christian Yoder, my father's ancestor, was born in Switzerland in 1726 and migrated to what was then known as Penn's Woods in 1742 when that area was still a part of the British Empire. On the mother's side my grandfather was

Frederick Swartzendruber, who was born in Mengerlinghausen, Germany, in 1825 and came to the United States with his father, Jacob Swartzendruber, who was born in 1800. He, Jacob Swartzendruber, was married to Barbara Oesch Guengerich, and ordained to the ministry in Germany about 1830. He migrated to America in 1833. Later, in 1851, this family moved to Iowa where he became the first bishop of the Amish church in that section of the country. At the same time my grandfather, Frederick Swartzendruber, and his wife, Sarah Yoder, also settled on a farm two miles south of Sharon Center, where they lived during his lifetime. He was ordained a deacon and later bishop in the Amish church. In the early 1870's Stephen D. Yoder, my grandfather on father's side, moved with his family from Holmes County, Ohio, to Johnson County, Iowa, where the greater number of his descendants still remain. Most of them are farmers, but some of them are engaged in other trades and occupations and a few have found their way into the learned professions. My uncle John S. Yoder was a highly skilled carpenter and for many years followed that trade. Many of the large barns and beautiful, substantial houses built in Iowa City, Kalona, Wellman and the surrounding communities are the work of his gang of carpenters.

During the first year of my life we lived in the same yard with grandfather Yoders. A year later

we moved into a new house which grandfather built in a little clearing near the Lutheran church at a place that was then known as "Kesselring Junction," where Gottlieb Kesselring maintained a blacksmith shop. As a child I could never understand how he got his first name. His mother, like all mothers no doubt, saw something hopeful and beautiful in little Gottlieb, so she gave him a significant name. His blacksmith shop holds a revered place in my memory. How we boys enjoyed watching him hammer the glowing iron into shape while the sparks "flew upward!"

It was while we lived at this place that I saw the first traction engine. Marion Sample of the Wellman community had bought a new eight horse Peerless and word spread throughout the neighborhood that on a certain day he would be taking it through Kesselring Junction. When the time came a large crowd of people gathered to get a view of this self propelled machine. Since we lived close by, we went also. Long before the hour arrived, the woods were filled with horses which were removed far enough so they would not become frightened by this puffing, noisy monster. As a child I looked upon the men who could "run" an engine with about the same wonder as people today would look upon men from Mars. When they brought the engine to a stop they dismounted from the platform and were friendly. They spoke to father who helped them carry water

to fill the side-tanks on the engine. The high point in our experience was reached a year or so later when they threshed our grain with a traction outfit. It happened that George Steinbrenner and his brother John moved their outfit to our place one Saturday evening, and left it at our place for us boys to admire all day Sunday.

It was while we lived at this place that the presidential election of 1884 took place. James G. Blaine and Grover Cleveland were the candidates of the Republican and Democratic parties. I do not recall the "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion" speech which created such a stir among the people as to bring about the defeat of the Republican candidate. But I do remember the very graphic anti-saloon literature that was handed out by the Republicans, and also the torch light processions at the Boone schoolhouse and at Sharon Center, and the wild campaign song:

We'll hang Grover Cleveland on a sour apple tree,
His truth goes marching on.

This campaign, when I was but four years old, was very deeply impressed on my mind, and my interest was so stirred that I never forgot it. Presidential elections always furnish me with topics of interest and excitement which send my blood pressure, which is normally low, soaring by a few points.

In 1885 father purchased a forty-acre farm a quarter of a mile east of the Evergreen School-

house, in Sharon Township, Johnson County. The house in which we lived was old as were all the other buildings on the place. It consisted of four rooms — two downstairs and two upstairs. The latter had not been finished. They had been lathed but were not plastered. In order to make them habitable, mother, with her innate ingenuity, conceived the idea of tacking cloth mosquito netting on the lath and covering the walls with paper — newspapers — which were pasted to the cloth. People will be surprised to learn what an interesting room that was. Most of the paper was taken from the *Iowa Homestead* and the *Chicago Weekly Herald*. Here was a library of modern information which furnished me the means of furthering my education long before I knew what an education was. For want of anything more inspiring to read, I read and reread about the McKinley Tariff Bill, the Interstate Commerce Act, the Sherman Anti-Trust and the Civil Service Laws. I read about the Haymarket Square Riots in Chicago, and the boycotts, strikes and lockouts fomented by the Knights of Labor and the Single Tax Law agitation led by Henry George. I also became familiar with such names as that of Speaker (Czar) Reed of the House of Representatives who had the courage to face the displeasure of politicians and abolish many of the regulations by which they had bound the procedures of Congress and blocked legislation. This

was heavy reading and surely much of it made little sense to me but I no doubt received as much or more benefit from it as do the youngsters now from what they see and hear on radio and TV.

But this library pasted to the wall contained another body of information that was more understandable. The advertisements in the *Iowa Homestead* covered pages and pages. At that time the horse business was at its height. Importers of Percherons, Normans, Clydesdales, English Shires, Suffolk-Punch, Belgians, Hackneys, Morgans and dozens of other lines and breeds were listed, and illustrated catalogues were offered free to interested parties. These pictures and descriptions gave me a wide knowledge of the Horse Empire. Then, too, there were the engine and threshing machine companies that were listed with cuts of their machinery and descriptive and beautifully illustrated catalogues which were offered to prospective buyers. My brother Sam and I, operating under the lofty and business-like title of Messrs. S. and S. C. Yoder, sent for these catalogues until we had practically a complete file of this horse and threshing machinery literature which contained not only good descriptive matter but many actual photos. We studied this material diligently in order that we might know what line of machinery and what kind of horses to buy when we "got big." I am sorry now that I did not preserve this valuable collection.

But one day our project "backfired." We had written to one of the engine and threshing machine companies for a catalogue and received not only what we asked for but also a letter informing us that on a certain date their agent would call to see us and make us acquainted with the superior qualities of their machinery. That placed us in a very uneasy situation and the prospect for our immediate welfare looked very foreboding! To us boys the only dates in the calendar that were considered worth remembering were our birthday, Christmas, New Years, Easter and the day when school closed. We finally discovered the correct day of the agent's visit without letting mother know about our predicament. When the time finally arrived we hovered near the stable all day, ready to take to the hay-mow in case a strange or suspicious conveyance should come over the hill. There we felt we could successfully stow ourselves away until the danger was past. Nobody appeared and when some days went by without any unusual happenings, our load went soaring skyward and we were free again. But we continued in business, ordering catalogues, looking at pictures, and planning for the future when we would be able to invest in horses and machinery.

Our grandfather Swartzendruber was one of the early Amish settlers in Johnson County, Iowa. Our boyhood years were filled with stories of our maternal ancestors. Mother often spoke of her

home, of her childhood, of her mother's death and of their home life. In her girlhood she learned every step of the art of making cloth from the time the wool left the sheep's back until it was turned into garments, stockings and mittens, which included washing the wool, carding, spinning, weaving and knitting. All of these transactions, except that of weaving, we saw her perform in our home when we were children.

Our grandfather on mother's side was one of the most enterprising men in the community who during his lifetime had acquired considerable land. During the years before he became incapacitated with rheumatism he was very active and progressive in all his affairs. His large barn was a veritable curiosity shop to us children, and his orchard was a wonder. His blacksmith shop was a most alluring old building filled with tools and equipment that were a constant temptation to us youngsters. Finally, to our deep mortification, it became forbidden territory.

It is said that when any new machine or device came on the market, Frederick Swartzendruber was the first one to get it. He owned the first McCormick reaper in the community. The same was true of the table-rake, the Marsh Harvester, the self binder, the hayrake, the cornplanter and the checkrow. The barn and grove were filled with these cast-off machines which had been set aside when new and better ones became available. The

horsepower, treadmill, and portable steam engine, as well as the early types of threshing machinery, were also included in his equipment. But when the wind-mill came along, serious questions arose in the church as to the propriety of using them, and besides, those early ones were very colorfully and ornately decorated and painted, which was considered worldly by the elders of the church. Benj. Hostettler was one of the first Amishmen in the community to get one; as a result his standing in the church stood in jeopardy while the question was being threshed out by the leaders in council with the congregation. All this while, I fear, our good patriarch had to possess his soul with patience — maybe impatience! But one day when we drove down the lane to his house we saw a windmill raising its head above the trees and when we got there, sure enough, there astride the well stood a fifty-foot tower supporting a Star wind-mill painted a pure white.

Grandfather Swartzendruber was not only a good farmer. The name of the family will always be enshrined with the Galgangmühl ("Mill of the gallows") at Mengerlinghausen, Germany, which was operated by our forbears, and the dust of the mill on grandfather's farm in Iowa will always cling to his memory. How we enjoyed the smell of the coal smoke and were delighted to watch the engine turn the millstones that ground the good Iowa corn into golden meal which constituted a

prominent part of our diet during those early years.

But grandfather and his sons not only made use of what they learned from other people, they also had ideas of their own. One autumn word was circulated throughout the community that Uncle Shem was cooking molasses with his steam engine. We youngsters knew that he could make an engine do almost anything, but we could not see how he could make it cook molasses. This problem troubled us and was profoundly considered by my brother Sam and me. We thought that perhaps he filled the boiler with cane juice and cooked it until it "was molasses." When we finally went over to see this marvelous thing we discovered that it was really true. He had conceived the idea of constructing a vat a little deeper than the ordinary ones and laying pipe lines back and forth in the bottom of it, which he connected to the boiler and forced steam through it — sure enough, it cooked molasses!

If all the equipment and machinery which Grandfather had accumulated during his lifetime had been kept and taken care of, it would be today a valuable collection showing the progress in the development of farming equipment from an early period. In his barn was to be found the flail, sickle, scythe, cradle, and winnowing equipment for separating the grain from the chaff, the wooden fork and rake as it was used in Biblical times — per-

haps in Abraham's day. My mother recalled the time when all these implements were used to harvest and thresh their crops. She, being too young to help with the work, was left to take care of the smaller children while her mother and older sisters helped rake and pile the hay or bind the sheaves of grain which at that time was cut with a scythe or cradle and later hauled to the threshing floor of their large barn to be threshed with a flail. In this home was found also the spinning wheel, the little loom and wool-carding appliances which grandmother used to provide the cloth for the clothing of her family and the yarn for their mittens and stockings. This godly woman died when some of her children were small. She must have been a woman such as King Lemuel's mother described in Proverbs 31.

Grandfather's place had other attractions beside the machinery and mills and shops. Behind the large unpainted barn was an extensive orchard which he and his wife planted when they moved on the farm, for the fruit of which grandmother long waited but never tasted. The year when she died the first apples appeared on the trees but before they ripened she had passed on. From midsummer until the frosts came, and later, the trees were loaded with delicious fruit. In the midst of it, and sheltered by the trees, stood the cider press from which flowed the apple juice in its season.

One day, however, an event took place in the

orchard that took away from it much of its attraction and glamor. In company with our cousins, the Kreider children, we were playing near the cider press when we discovered a strange buzzing noise among some old half decayed timbers that lay partly hidden in the long grass. Curious to know what this noise was about, we innocents began to explore this pile of rotting wood and incidentally discovered a bumble-bees' nest. In less time than it took to think about it, we found our heads enveloped in a cloud of angry insects, that routed us from the premises and inoculated us thoroughly with their venom. Our shouts of distress brought our stepgrandmother and the mother of the Kreider children to the scene. They, however, stood at a safe distance and shouted such orders as they could without getting mixed up in the fracas. Finally they got us away from the embattled scene to a place of safety.

My brother and I left in a very hurried and unconventional manner without even expressing a word of appreciation for the assistance our relatives rendered in the time of our trouble. We walked the mile and a half to our home without a stop and when we arrived, our faces were so swollen that the family barely recognized us. We were put to bed, but our gastric apparatus was so badly out of kelter that our parents thought it wise to send for the family doctor, Dr. Egar. Upon his arrival he contributed to our misery by pre-

scribing some bitter, ill-tasting medicine and considered the whole affair as a good joke. I still think to this day he had a poor sense of humor!

The home on grandfather Yoder's side of the family was also attractive, but from a different standpoint. This good man had no aversion to the use of the new things that came on the market but was not so hasty to invest in them. He had no grove littered with out-dated and cast-off machinery and other equipment. He and his wife were quiet, thrifty people who enjoyed their home, their family and each other. Grandmother Yoder was one of those kindly, soft-spoken souls that loved flowers, and the atmosphere around the place was simply loaded with their fragrance. She never let her grandchildren leave without some token of her love, such as cookies or handkerchiefs or other little things that children cherish. Her house was always filled with the aroma of bread fresh from the outside oven and other baked or cooking things which Eva Ratzlaff liked to prepare.

Eva was one of the Russian Mennonite girls of the 1873 immigration to whom grandfathers gave a home. The floors of the house were always kept immaculately clean by this highly efficient orphan who stood rigid guard over the possessions entrusted to her and was ever ready to enforce with a heavy hand her sanitary code when careless grandchildren appeared on the horizon. Bless her

dear soul! She taught us several *painful* lessons in the matter of cleanliness which we never forgot.

Eva's mother died in Russia or on the sea while en route to America and during the winter of '73 her father brought his children to Iowa, while the rest of the immigrants were waiting at Newton, Kansas, to get on their land. A few years later the father returned to his people but his four daughters, Elsie, Mary, Eva, and Anna, remained in Iowa where they were given homes among the Amish people and united with the Amish church.

Grandfather Yoder was a Holmes County, Ohio, "fan." He filled our visits with stories of Shanesville, "Vinesbige," Bunker Hill — names that became almost hallowed in our memory.

In 1886 father bought his first steam engine from J. H. Maggard at Iowa City — a portable drawn by horses. Two years later, in 1888, he bought a traction engine — a Springfield eight horse power — for \$800. When one looks at costs today he wonders how that much steel and labor could have been put together for that amount of money. I distinctly recall the time when Father and Sam Bender left for Iowa City to get the engine. They planned to drive the thirteen or more miles to town that day and get all ready to start home early the next morning. Then we had a heavy rain and thunderstorm in the evening which put the roads in bad shape. It rained so hard that Sam and I conjectured whether it might be another

"sindflut" — a flood like they had in Noah's time. However, the next day the "world was still standing." Along about four o'clock in the afternoon we saw the smoke of the "outfit" when it was more than a mile and a half from home. Then Sam and I started off on foot to meet them. That was a great day for us!

Several years later father traded this engine on a larger one of the same make and used it for running a sawmill during the winter and summer. When I was twelve years old he and Uncle Shem used both his engine and ours to run the sawmill. Part of the time he took both of us boys along and each one had an engine to operate. This was a very acceptable promotion! To be taken out of the garden and potato patch and placed in charge of an engine was almost more than we had dared to hope for. By the time I was eleven years old, father let me help him with the engine and it was a great day when at the age of twelve he turned the throttle and steering wheel over to me and told me to go ahead, while he sat on the platform and rested when we moved from place to place.

Father was a good machinist and taught us boys many good things about handling machinery. Plenty of grease, he said, is the cheapest and best thing to use for any kind of a machine. We boys somehow got the idea, too, that plenty of grease on the overalls is the mark of a good engineer!

While father was engaged in the threshing

business, he was away from home a great deal of the time. Sometimes when the grain was too wet to thresh, he would bring some of his men to the farm to do such work as had accumulated during his absence. It was during one of those occasions that he sent John Troyer and Pete Brenneman to repair the fence that enclosed our cornfield. Such times were always a break in the monotony of our days when work piled up that was too much for us eight or nine year old boys. We enjoyed being with the men and helping them as we could and at the same time listening to their conversation with each other.

This time, however, things did not work out as well as we had hoped for. It was the custom of practically all the men of our community to chew tobacco. How well I remember those spittoons in almost every home! It was hardly considered manly among the pre-adolescent youngsters of that period not to have acquired the habit by the time they were from twelve to fifteen years old.

While building fence that day they occasionally paused to replenish their quid and finally my brother and I mustered up enough courage to ask them to give us a chew. This they rightly refused to do but it was quite a humiliation to us. We, then, decided to be independent and show them that we could chew our own tobacco. Consequently, we went to the house and made a raid on father's supply which was kept in the upper left-

AMISH TWIN BROTHERS AT ABOUT EIGHTEEN



SANFORD CALVIN YODER



SAMUEL YODER



FATHER

Four Sharon Township Amishmen photographed in Iowa City
after driving hogs to that town.

DAN SHETTLER
HARRY SCHROCK

JAKE LEHMAN
CHRISTIAN S. YODER



MOTHER

Anna Swartzendruber Yoder, age about 90, "piecing" a quilt together in her wheel chair. She did approximately 100 of these from the time her husband retired until up to her death.



THE AUTHOR AND HIS WIFE
SANFORD C. YODER EMMA STUTSMAN YODER

hand drawer of the family bureau. We sliced off a chunk with father's razor. What he said when he shaved next time was likely printable but it certainly was not what we would have wanted to hear. After we returned to the field where the men were working, Sam pulled the plug from his pocket, took a big chew and handed it to me in the most nonchalant and matter-of-fact manner possible, just like the "old timers" did. I took a chew and handed it back to him in the same way. I noticed that the men eyed us expectantly to see what would happen. Suddenly something took place on the inside of me. I looked at Sam and he was by that time very pale and took to the cornfield where he could hide his misery. A few minutes later I followed and had no more than got out of sight when my digestive machinery suddenly shifted into reverse and disgorged everything my stomach contained. I found Sam in the same distressing situation. Every minute our condition seemed to get worse until we began to fear that this might be the end of time on earth for both of us. With such strength as we had, we discussed our prospects. Neither of us could recall having heard of people dying under such circumstances — but we realized, too, that there might be exceptions to the regular rule. It is altogether likely that we said our Pater-nosters in preparation for what might happen. We usually did in emergencies!

That evening we did not get home in time for supper. When we finally got there, the meal was over and to our great relief the men were gone. We informed mother that we were not feeling well and hoped she would brew us some garden tea and put us to bed. She, however, completely ignored our condition and insisted that we milk the cows, feed the pigs and do the chores as usual. We detected that she knew what was wrong. No doubt the hired men, in order to keep from becoming incriminated in the affair, had told her the story.

The first twelve years of my life were spent near the place of my birth. I was six years old when I began to attend the Evergreen School a few miles north of Kalona, Iowa. Our first teacher, a Mr. Moser, is remembered for the long "naps" he took during school hours, while the pupils amused themselves by throwing paper balls across the room and engaging in such commercial enterprises as trading slate pencils and sponges, and very rarely those with outstanding resources would even barter slates and other more valuable trinkets. "Mona" Hostetler was the leading capitalist and had a large stock of pencils and other materials, including "hidden name" cards which he accumulated in various and devious ways. He was very successful in his business but some of it was done on the "shady side," which sometimes got him into trouble with irate mothers when he

had given their youngsters a good "fleecing." During these merchandising activities the pupils were very careful not to disturb the dreams of their slumbering pedagogue who in his waking periods was inclined to deal harshly with obstreperous boys and girls. Among my early teachers whom I remember with great appreciation are Alice Dierdorff, Dora Kempf Hershberger, Sam Kempf, Pete Miller, John J. Miller and Joni Marner.

The pupils of the Evergreen School were practically all Pennsylvania Dutch and came from Amish homes. Many of them knew no English and had to be taught the language when they entered school. Some of the teachers were willing to teach German when it was desired, and a number of times courses in reading, writing and spelling were offered when parents called for it in behalf of their children.

My brother Sam and I were fond of books, a trait which manifested itself early in our lives. I wonder now how our large family Bible held together because of the usage we gave it. In addition to this illustrated volume, there was in our home an illustrated copy of DeFoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and a book entitled *The Home of God's People*, which was a history of Palestine. Before we could read we knew the stories which these volumes contained or at least the story connected with the pictures. Later we read them, as well as

everything else that fell into our hands. This was our winter's occupation, but when the spring days came with their warmth and sunshine and the ice-bound brooks began to flow and the forests bloomed, then books were laid aside and the charms and attractions of the out-of-doors called us away from the confines of school and home to nature's wonder house.

Very early in my life I acquired a deep interest in history and read everything on that subject that was available in our home. Barnes' *History of the United States* and Anderson's *History* were read so often that I had practically committed them to memory. During my boyhood years I added to my collection such books as I was able to get. Money was always scarce in our home, but whatever pennies and nickels and an occasional dime I could collect were invested in such books as were for sale on the bargain counter at the drug stores. These are some of the titles: *General Phil. Sheridan, Kilpatrick and His Cavalry*, *American Statesmen and Patriots*, *A Trooper's Adventure in the War for the Union*. These relics of my boyhood days are still on the shelves of my library. My reading, however, was not confined to historical subjects alone. One evening when my brother and I came home from school we found on the table a nicely bound copy of Foster's *Story of the Bible*. This book was read and reread, until its content became deeply embedded in my mind. This vol-

ume awakened an interest in the Bible which I never lost and influenced me more greatly than any book I have ever read.

Church life in the community where I grew up was very simple. Worship services were held every two weeks in private homes. Sometimes during the summer when the weather was hot they were held on the threshing floors of the large bank barns, of which there were many in the community, and sometimes in the shade of groves or in the shadow of hedge rows along the fence lines. The services were usually long, beginning at eight-thirty or nine in the morning and continuing until noon or past noon. The ministry was drawn from the laity. None of the men were educated beyond the common schools of their day and many did not have that much formal training. But not a few acquired through their own study a surprisingly good knowledge of the Scripture, and developed outstanding oratorical ability. The singing consisted of very unmelodious tunes known as the "Langsame Weise," — slow tunes — which were perhaps a modification of the chants of the Middle Ages or even earlier. The form of government in the Amish Church is congregational. Hence if there were disciplinary or other problems that needed consideration, the non-members of the church were dismissed and the members met in what would now be called an executive session to discuss matters at hand and come to some deci-

sions. The regulations of the church were specific, clearly defined and rigidly enforced.

Among the things that were forbidden were "hip-pockets" on men's overalls and trousers. This was a challenge to us youngsters. One day when Sam and I were eight years old we decided to "go worldly" and provide the proscribed pockets for ourselves, since mother would not cooperate. During her absence Sam found a piece of brown denim cloth and proceeded to sew a "patch-pocket" on his pants. I decided upon an inside pocket and cut a slit, much too ample and a little too low, on the right side of mine. Into this I fitted — "fitted" is hardly the right word — a pocket I salvaged from one of father's trousers. Both these projects bore deeply the marks of poor workmanship, but we hoped mother would "make them over" rather than to see us wear them as they were. In this we were disappointed. She decided it would be best to let us suffer the consequences and humiliation of our willfulness — which we did. However, in the wake of this ill-fated episode, there followed, in rapid succession, an unusual number of "accidents" while we were going through barb-wire fences and past protruding nails which helped to relieve us of our problem before we became too widely exposed. As far as I know now, this was the forerunner of the widespread "Do it yourself movement" which has now become so popular.

Our church attendance was very irregular during my childhood and boyhood. Uncomfortable as the accommodations were and tedious as the service often was, I bear indelibly the impressions of those simple meetings and the influence of those sermons. There were several things that broke their monotony for the children. Along about the middle of the forenoon the good sisters of the church brought in the "Gema Kuche," which consisted of sweet buns, a bowl full of which was passed along the benches for the benefit of the children. This was always something to look forward to. When along about eleven o'clock or eleven-thirty, the aroma of boiling coffee rose from the wash boiler on the kitchen stove, we knew that the service was approaching its end. When the meeting was over, the benches were shoved together for a table, which was then loaded with home-baked bread, apple butter, pickled cucumbers and red beets, coffee and pie. My memory of the "Amish Church" is inseparably tied up with the taste of that good bread and the smell of coffee. Sometimes I dream about it and wish I could again hear grandfather Swartzendruber or Chris Miller or Pete Kinsinger preach.

At that time it was the custom for little boys to go in with their father and sit with him during the church services. To say that the boys of that day — or ours — outgrew the necessity of sitting with their fathers would hardly be correct in the light

of what took place when they were delivered from that ordeal. But we did attain the place in our growth where it was no longer the custom to do so. During the time when I arrived at that age our church attendance was very irregular. Father was gone much of the time saw-milling, threshing, shredding corn fodder and at the week end when he was at home, he seldom went to church. Fortunately — I use this term advisedly — we did not go to church either. During that period the boys — many of them — stayed at the barn or in adjoining groves and engaged in wrestling matches, foot-racing, mouth organ concerts, story telling and sundry and divers other things of less repute — some of the stories were certainly of "less repute." No wonder that many of the older ones were in favor of abandoning the practice of holding meetings in their dwelling houses and transferring them to church houses where the services could be held in better control.

Sometimes unplanned incidents of a humorous nature, which interfered with the solemnity of the services, grew out of these settings. One warm summer day I accompanied mother to a church service held at the home of Chris Ropp, a half mile west and north of the Evergreen School, known to us boys as "das Neue Deutschland" (the New Germany) because several German immigrant families lived there. We walked the mile and a half to the place where to my delight I found

that the meeting was to be held in the shade of a hedge row at the end of the cow pasture. This same field was also the home of a herd of milk cows headed by a pugnacious sire who during the heat of the day led his harem into the shade of the very hedges where the meeting was being held. The impious creature took serious exception to this invasion of his domain and the activities and oratorical goings-on that were in progress were entirely new to him. In the midst of the service he encircled the group of worshippers and began to express his disapproval in no uncertain way. He uttered his protests with low, deep-throated bel-lowings, all the while pawing the earth and throw-ing dust into the air and gradually drawing nearer to the seat of his trouble. His demonstrations finally became so menacing that the minister paused in his discourse and urged the owner to silence this militant quadruped and remove him to quarters where he could not molest the service. The owner of the farm, armed with a pitch fork, charged upon the animal, which then retreated to the far end of the pasture from which he continued his demonstrations and hurled his insults upon the offending congregation.

But the community also had its tragedies. One day, March 2, 1886, word spread throughout the neighborhood that Noah Troyer, the "Sleeping Preacher," was accidentally killed. He had gone to shoot a chicken to provide a dinner for the gang

of carpenters who were building a house for one of his sons. For some reason the musket exploded and part of it hit him in the eye and penetrated his brain. Noah Troyer was widely known, loved and respected by his neighbors and all who knew him. His death was a shock to the entire neighborhood. I recall that my brother and I walked the three-quarter mile across the fields covered with a newly fallen spring snow to view the body that lay in the homemade coffin. His left eye was covered with a white cloth to hide the wound on his face.

His unusual ministry began in 1876 following an illness of several days. These spells were always preceded by headaches, cramps and bloatings of the stomach. One day, while in church, he became ill and spoke at some length. Following that, he occasionally spoke at his home in the evening, and finally each evening. As the news of his preaching spread, crowds of people came to listen to his messages. Medical men and others became interested. They made tests by probing his limbs with needles and found that he was insensitive to pain during these spells, and when he was informed of the experiments that had been made, he knew nothing about them except that he complained of soreness in his legs and arms.

I often pondered upon the strange experience of this man and still wonder whether perhaps there was something in his past that brought about

or contributed to his condition. Years ago I came across some information which I have connected with an unexpected meeting with Troyer's son who had been a respected businessman in Kalona, Iowa, and suddenly left his family and disappeared. While I was at Harper, Kansas, in 1915, I found him working as a hired man on the farm of Dan Nofsinger. He seemed glad to see me, both as an acquaintance and as a relative. During this time we discussed some of his problems, especially his spiritual situation. It was from him that I received the following information that stands out very clearly in my mind. Sometime after the Troyer family moved to Iowa, Noah was one of several men that had at one time received votes for the ministry in the Old Order Amish Church of which he was then a member. Owing to his dissatisfaction with some of the regulations of that body, he declined to let his name go through the lot. This was considered a very serious breach of one's consecration, and, while it may not have affected his membership, it at least greatly affected his standing. Some time later, his two sons who had joined the instruction class in preparation for baptism withdrew a few weeks before the administration of that rite was to take place. My informer said that this greatly troubled the father, not only because of the action of his sons, but also because of conditions within the church that were responsible for their decision.

Whether these incidents are in any way related to this man's ministry cannot now be determined and we will have to be content with the facts that we know; namely, that he was an honest man, helpful and lovable, who lived a devoted Christian life, and upon whom was bestowed a preaching ministry which he performed in a mysterious way.

I was eight years old when I saw the first, and what was the most impressive, communion service, I ever witnessed. It was an Amish service held in a private home. It was a cool fall day in late October when I accompanied mother to church about a mile and a half from where we lived. We walked all the way and stayed throughout the meeting, which lasted till into the night. Because of the nature of this gathering, there were no boys of my age present. Hence I spent the day with the older ones who were members of the church. In the evening, when the lamps were lighted, mother asked me to come to the house and get something to eat. She told me they would soon have the communion. I think I shall always remember that scene. The venerable old men — ministers — with flowing beards and their long hair streaked with gray, who sat in the dim lamp-light, reminded me of pictures I had seen in our family Bible. Since then I have participated in many communion services, but never was there one that surpassed in interest what I remember of the first one I saw in that Iowa farm house.

I was twelve years old when I saw the first baptismal service. This one was conducted by Christian Warye, the bishop of what is now the East Union Mennonite Congregation near Kalona, Iowa. At that time the church building was located at the Brenneman corner, at the crossroad south of what was then known as the "Cap" Shaffer Farm. Father and Will Krieder went to see this service and took my brother and me along. When we got there, the building was filled to capacity and many people stood outside. After the preaching was concluded the people drove two miles south, and a mile west, thence into a timber for another half mile or so to the English River where the service was to be held. The procession from the church to the river was nearly a mile long. By that time the sky was overcast with clouds and peals of thunder echoed through the woods. The beach along the river was packed with people who were sheltered by the trees when the rain began to fall. After an appropriate service, Bishop Warye stepped into the stream and invited those who wished to be baptized to come. One after another some twenty-five mature men and women knelt in the river as the old Bishop dipped up the water with his hands and baptized them. Then with the trees dripping with rain and the whole congregation soaked, they stood under the cloud-covered sky while the woods rang with the songs they sang.

One Sunday after the noon meal had been served and the family was lounging in the shade of the large ash tree on the lawn, we saw a long line of horsemen and women interspersed with here and there a road cart moving along the highway a half mile or more across the field from where we lived. My parents were greatly inquisitive as to the meaning of the procession. They knew of no funeral in the community and could not account for such an array of people on the road. Sometime later the parade came up over the hill on the road that led past our home. As the long cavalcade passed by, we saw the familiar costumes of the community and now and then the wave of a friendly hand whose owner we recognized. Then father went down to the road to inquire as to the meaning of these goings-on. He was informed that there was to be a Sunday School at the Evergreen school house a quarter of a mile up the road from where we lived and attended day school during the week. My twin brother and I were then hurriedly dressed in our new denim pants and clean shirts and followed father to the first meeting of this kind that we had ever attended — 1887, when I was seven years old. I recall my misgivings of the whole affair and enroute to the school house I made up my mind that this will be the last time I'll go if I have to study arithmetic. When we arrived, the house was filled with people. The singing was beautiful

— four part singing was prohibited, but even so it was beautiful. Mike Miller was elected superintendent and read a chapter from the Bible and offered a prayer. Today, after more than seventy years, I still recall some of the sentences and phrases of that prayer which contained what I thought then were the most beautiful words and expressions I had ever heard. It was something about the teaching — Doctrine — falling upon the people; "wie der Regen auf das Gras und wie die Tropfen auf das Kraut." Deuteronomy 32:2. To my great satisfaction there was nothing said about arithmetic but we were given little German Word Books from which we were taught what was then considered the language of worship. At the close of the meeting we received small colored cards which contained Scripture verses which we were supposed to learn. I drew a red one which contained the following verse from Psalms 16:1, "Bewahre Mich Gott, denn ich Traue auf Dich." This knowledge was later supplemented by instruction under Dora Kempf Hershberger who consented to teach some German classes in the public school. Still later, in 1892, I attended a term of four weeks or so at the "Dutch College," after the public school had closed its winter term. By these means I acquired a good working knowledge of the language so that by the time I was twelve years old I could read and write both the German and English equally well.

The "Dutch College" was started by my grandfather Swartzendruber for the benefit of his grandchildren and such others of the Amish Community as wished to improve their knowledge of the spoken language of the community and such other subjects as were included in the curriculum. It was soon discovered by the older boys and girls that this was an excellent place to come to because of the social opportunities which it afforded. This latter motive, however, had soon run its course. The early type of students dropped out and were replaced by a younger group that attended largely at the behest of their elders.

The first classes were held in a vacant house on Grandfather's land at the corner where the "Stringtown" road crosses the "City" road, as it was then called, two miles south of Sharon Center. John Hershberger, a single man from Maryland, was the first teacher. After the newness of the venture was "worn off" it looked as though the undertaking might come to nought. But grandfather was not willing to give up the idea of a school, hence he built a house, especially designed for that purpose, at the end of the lane which led to his home about a quarter of a mile away. Among those who taught there were Salina Marner and "Uncle" Chris Swartzendruber, grandfather's brother whose wife had died childless and left him a lonely man of early middle age.

It was during his tutorship that my brother

Sam and I, the Will Kreider children, Dan Swartzendruber's children and several of Levi Yoder's family, together with others, attended. "Uncle" Chris was a saintly man and a good teacher but he, having had no children of his own, was far too inexperienced to cope with the assemblage of youngsters he had on his hands. I am deeply humiliated, now, when I recall all the things we did for our entertainment and amusement "behind the back" of this good old man. Part of the time the weather was cold and "Uncle" Chris sent us out in small groups to gather corn stalks for fuel to keep the house warm. This provided the opportunity of smuggling all kinds of unusual things into the house which provided materials and equipment for our amusement at times when we were allowed to pull our benches to the stove in order to keep warm. Some of it would have been valuable for disciplinary purposes if placed in proper hands but as it was used by the pupils, it was the cause of much merriment and hilarity, which our good, pious teacher could never understand nor account for. But he was a kindly soul, a good instructor and a great Christian. How often we were humbled by his goodness to us and by his expositions of the New Testament which was our textbook in reading. Among the things that he emphasized was the memorization of Scripture verses. Today, after more than three score years, I still have on the shelves of my library the New Testament

which he gave as a reward for the verses I learned. He also taught us to sing the "Langsame Weise" (slow tunes) which were and are still a part of the Amish worship. As I recall now, he paid us ten cents for each tune we learned.

During the summer of '92, a spirit of uncertainty seemed to brood over the community in which we lived. Father was talking about selling the farm and finally did sell it.

Dissatisfaction with the church situation over the maintenance of cultural forms and the matter of holding church services in private homes, etc., was mounting and several of the uncles and others were discussing the possibility of founding a new settlement for people of their faith. An exploratory trip resulted in a good report but no action was taken until the snow fell that fall, when a small group, including my father, made a trip to Clarion in the northern part of the state of Iowa, where they purchased land and planned to migrate the following spring. This was good news! We youngsters were starry-eyed with enthusiasm and expectations of train rides and adventures hitherto unknown. We looked forward with great anticipation to what lay beyond the boundaries within which we had thus far lived, to the new home in what was spoken of as a sparsely settled land. With my mind filled with high hopes of the future, an epoch of my life came to a close.

SANFORD C. YODER



SANFORD CALVIN YODER

Probably the first Yoder family arrived in Pennsylvania by 1714. Others soon followed, coming from ancestral Switzerland or the Palatinate. In 1923 the family historian, C. Z. Mast, estimated that there had been 100,00 descendants of these early Yoder immigrants. The first immigrants were members of the Amish faith, and perhaps one-fifth of their descendants are either Amish, Mennonite, or Dunkard.

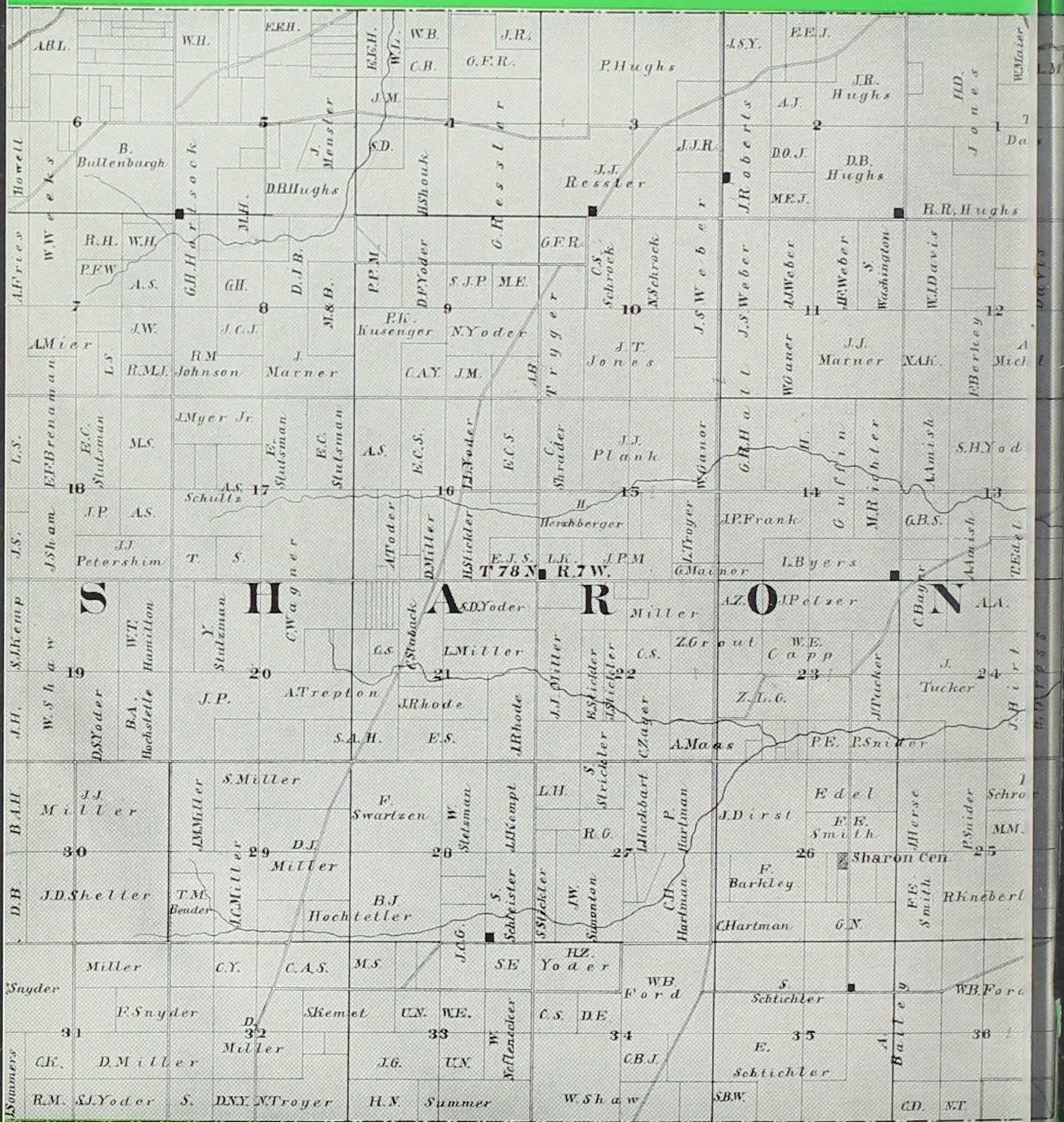
One of the outstanding representatives is Sanford Calvin Yoder, whose ancestors emigrated from Switzerland to Pennsylvania in 1742. Migrating from Holmes County, Ohio, his family settled in Johnson County, Iowa, in the early 1870's. Here, in Sharon Township, Sanford Calvin was born and spent his boyhood years in an Amish home. In 1893 the family moved to Wright County, Iowa, where they helped establish a more progressive Amish church than the one they left in Sharon Township.

Pioneering was in the blood of the family. In 1905 "S. C." with his family settled in Washington, where his experiences later enabled him to write his delightful book, *Horse Trails Along the Desert* (1954). After a sojourn in western Nebraska, he was called back to his home community in Johnson County, Iowa, to serve as a minister in the East Union Mennonite Church. During the last forty years, Sanford Yoder's interests have been centered largely in the mission and educational activities of his denomination.

For many years Mr. Yoder served as secretary of the Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. In this capacity he made two trips to South America. These experiences are recorded in *Down South America Way* (1943). His trip to India in 1949 resulted in an entertaining and instructive travelogue, *Eastward to the Sun* (1953). The account in this issue of THE PALIMPSEST is chapter one of his forthcoming autobiography.

From 1923 to 1940 Sanford Yoder served as president of Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. He and his wife, the former Emma Stutsman of Sharon Township, reside near the campus, and as president-emeritus, he daily goes to his office, where he writes and carries on his correspondence. Active in the Mennonite Historical Society, he has written *For Conscience Sake* (1940), a study of Mennonite migrations resulting from World War I. He received his B.A. from the University of Iowa, a B.D. and an honorary D.D. from the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, and his S.T.D. from Gordon Divinity School. He is listed in *Who's Who in America*.

MELVIN GINGERICH



Sharon Township in 1889