

***BENJAMIN GERIG AND LYDIA SCHROCK:
THEIR LIVES AND TIMES***

By Roy E. Wenger



(Only sections relating to the Gerig Family included)

PREFACE

During the 1975 Christmas Holidays, I visited Orie Ben Gerig and his wife Pearl in their retirement home in Venice, Florida. Orie Ben brought out an intriguing box full of Gerig family documents and talked about them. His many years of living in Switzerland in the service of the League of Nations and of the United Nations enabled him to visit places in the Cantons of Bern and Basel and in adjacent Alsace, France, from which our ancestors had migrated to America. He had the linguistic ability to read and translate the old records.

Whatever Orie Ben found he sent to his parents, Jacob and Mary Ann Gerig of Smithville and to his scholarly uncle, Daniel S. Gerig at whose home he had lived while attending Goshen College. He also shared much detailed information with Jacob C. Meyer, Professor of History at Western Reserve University, a second cousin and a college roommate. All of these materials had come together in Orie Ben's collection. I copied some 40 pages in the Venice Public Library on whose board Orie Ben had served in retirement.

Shortly after I returned to Ohio the news came of Orie Ben's illness and death at age 85. The box of materials was brought to Ohio by his sister, Katherine Hostetler and I borrowed it again with supplements from her own collection.

Encouraged by Katherine, by Dan Gerig and by my sister, I brought together some of the fact which most of us grandchildren have heard from time to time only in bits and pieces. With this beginning, more can be added. Mary Jean Troyer, Benjamin Gerig's great-granddaughter, is systematically bringing together the information for a definitive Gerig genealogy.

During this writing, I have enjoyed the dividend of visits with relatives. I can assure you that they are still a congenial people.

Roy E. Wenger,

421 Crain, Kent, OH 44240,

August 1976

Benjamin Gerig Family and a few friends



EMMA SETH CAROLINE KATE JOHN




JAKE



DAN EMMA

"The Common School is the Hope of our Country."

Oak Grove School No. 4,
Milton Twp., Wayne County, O.

❧ ❧	 <p>CHRIST</p> <p>C. S. GERIG, Teacher</p>	❧ ❧
<p>Winter Term</p> <p>of</p> <p>1902-03</p>		<p>Samuel Slemmons</p> <p>Joseph Graber</p> <p>Peter Weigley</p> <p>Directors</p>
❧ ❧		❧ ❧



EMMA FANNY LYDIA KATE

BENJAMIN GERIG : A FAMILY TREE.

Christian Gerig b. Ste. Marie aux Mines d. Pfastatt	Eliz. Goldsmith b. Ste. Marie aux Mines d. Pfastatt	John Zimmerman 1759-1828 Niederem- entingen, Strasbourg. Elizabeth Zimmerman 1796-1848 Strasbourg Pfastatt	Barbara Stucky 1765-1828 Ostheim Strasbourg Peter Schrock 1791-1862 To USA with father 1817 smithville	Benedict Schrock (Schrag) Bern. To USA 1817 Lucas Co., OH	1st. Maria Zurfluh 2nd. unknown 3rd. To USA 1817	Christian Burkholder 1770-1814 Langnau Catherine Burkholder 1803-1880 Langnau To USA 1826 Smithville	Anna Schrock - 182
Benjamin Gerig 1842-1913 b. Pfastatt. To USA 1860				Lydia Schrock 1840-1911 Always lived on home farm.			

CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

1. Caroline 1864-1897.
 m. Peter Conrad
 Nettie
2. Jacob S. 1866-1965.
 m. Mary Ann Smucker
 Melvin
 Orie Ben
 Katherine
3. Seth S. 1867-1952.
 m. Lydia Plank
 Stella Leland
 Glen Carl
 Ray Mabel
 Ernest Orrin
4. Emma E. 1869-1959.
 m. Joseph M. Wenger
 Icie
 Roy
5. John B. 1871-1944.
 m. Verna Rich
 Ina
 Evelyn
 Clair
 Bernice
 Edithe
6. Kathrine 1873-1968.
 m. Noah Smucker
 Grace
 Benjamin
 Earl
7. Daniel S. 1875-1955
 m. Bessie Landis
 Daniel
 Alice
 m. Ruth Landis
8. Christian S. 1878-1954
 m. Erma Miller
 Esther
 Robert
 Corwin
 Lois
9. Lydia 1882-
10. Fanny 1885-
 m. Levi Wenger
 Herbert
 Florence
 Anne
 Mildred
 Esther

BENJAMIN GERIG (1842-1913): HIS LIFE AND TIMES

Roy E Wenger

Benjamin Gerig was an influential person in the shaping of the Oak Grove Mennonite congregation at Smithville for half a century from 1860 to 1913 when he died at the age of 71. He arrived in Wayne County in 1860 an immigrant from Alsace, France. The Amish of Wayne County were meeting in their homes for church services as they had been since 186, and it was still two years before the first Oak Grove meeting house was to be erected. That was done in 1862, and Benjamin had become the bishop of the group before the planning and building of a larger and more adequate structure became necessary in 1905. During this entire period, the Oak Grove group was slowly making the transition from Amish to Amish Mennonite to Mennonite.

Not only was that transition made, in the main, with democratic congregational consensus, but with an increasing acceptance of participation in secondary and higher education, in mission work and in building of organizations for world wide relief and rehabilitation activities. In fact, some of these inventions grew out of suggestions by Oak Grove people.

ALSACE

Benjamin Gerig was born November 11, 1842, at Pfastatt, Alsace, France. The question of whether he was mainly French or German in culture, language, political inclination and religious mode is an intriguing one. Many books have been written purporting to link Alsatians as a group with one or the other of the two occupying powers over the last three hundred years, but usually by writers having predetermined political motives. Alsace has its own discrete geographical situation, an Alsatian dialect differing from both the standard German or French, and its own centuries-long traditions.

In the case of Benjamin, one must add that the world view of the Anabaptist community of which his family was a part, their disinclination to nationalistic expressions and the friendly inter-visitations with Anabaptist groups in nearby Switzerland and Germany tend to dilute further any nationalistic allegiance. One concludes that Benjamin was neither typically French nor German but Alsatian, and that is as near as one can get. In Wayne County, the community he joined was German speaking, and so the Germanness of Benjamin's background seemed dominant.

There were Oak Grove families who preferred speaking French and Benjamin was able to converse with them. My mother told me that while her father was most comfortable when speaking German, he preferred adding up his accounts at the cheese factory in French!

Accounts of the history of Alsace go back more than 2000 years. This includes 500 years of Roman domination after Caesar's conquest of Gaul, occupation by the Franks under Clovis, and loose union with Germanic territories under the Holy Roman Empire for 800 years which brings us to Reformation times. Each city and area within Alsace has its own distinctive history. For example, Strasbourg was an imperial free city for 400 years from 1262 to 1681, and various other ecclesiastical areas, Secular lordships and free municipalities existed for shorter or longer periods of time.

The Reformation, the Wars of Religion and the Thirty Years War permitted France to gain a firmer hold on Alsace by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. However, the attempts to integrate the territory into France did not succeed to blot out the Alsatian heritage, and in language, religion and culture, the area remained "mixed". France was the major political influence on Alsace for more than 200 years from 1648 to 1870

Benjamin's years in Alsace until he was 17 were toward the end of the 200 year period under the French during times when German threats were becoming more ominous and the French government was being mismanaged in a continuing series of foreign wars. For the first six years of Benjamin's life Louis Philippe was King of France, but in 1848 the Second Republic was established under Louis Napoleon, a nephew of Napoleon I, who was elected to the presidency. In 1851 Louis successfully managed a coup d'état proclaiming himself Emperor Napoleon III, the position he held until 1870 and his defeat by the German Prussian army. When Benjamin became a legalized American citizen at Wooster in 1867, it was especially his allegiance to the Emperor of France, Napoleon III, which he renounced.

The institution of conscription was begun in France in 1795 to raise the vast armies of Napoleon I. Conscription continued through Napoleon III's time to raise men for the Crimean War of 1854-56 and the Italian War of 1858. Because at 18, Benjamin would be called and because he was conscientiously opposed to all war, he emigrated at age 17 in 1860.

The German states, uniting under Bismark's leadership, challenged the French in 1870 resulting in a decisive defeat for France and the loss of Alsace and Lorraine which for the next fifty years were subjected to Germanization. At the end of World War I, the Treaty of Versailles returned the areas to France.

Benjamin was born in Pfastatt, a western suburb of Mulhouse, on Nov. 11, 1842. His father, Jacob, had been born in 1794 in central Alsace at Sainte Marie-aux-Mines, a village in the Vosges mountains located near a well-known pass or "Col" of Ste. Marie. Earlier generations of Gerigs had come here from Switzerland along with other Anabaptists who settled in this area. The town received its name from silver mines that were worked there until the 17th century

and evidences of which may still be seen by tourists. The town is also known by the German name of Mariakirch or Markirch.

According to his oldest sister Elizabeth, Benjamin's grandparents, Christian Gerig and Elizabeth Goldsmith had become wealthy landowners and farmers in that area. But Jacob, after he was married and on his own, made some unfortunate investments. He lost all that he had. In addition to the financial loss, he became discouraged and indifferent and his health failed. The family has moved to Pfastatt, and here at age 63 Jacob died.

Katherine Meyer Yoder writes: "Little Jacob G. Meyer, although he was less than five years old, said he always remembered his grandfather Gerig's burial because it was springtime and the ground was very soft and muddy, making it difficult for him to walk with his mother from the hard road to the cemetery. So his father, who was one of the bearers, picked him up and set him on the bier, making such an impression on the boy that he never forgot it".

MY OWN INQUIRIES

At different times, both Orie Ben Gerig and I have copied death records of Jacob and Elizabeth Gerig found in the archives of the Mulhouse suburbs. Jacob's is found in Illzach on the east side and is recorded in Register No. 34 of 1851. It says that on Sept. 1, 1851, at nine in the morning, Jacques Gerig, "journalier" died at age 63 at Bourtwiller, commune d'Illzach. He was the son of Cretien (Christian) Gerig and of Elizabeth Goldsmith Gerig. The French word "journalier" can be translated as laborer or journeyman. We know that earlier he had been a farmer.

The death record of Elizabeth Zimmerman Gerig is found at the Pfastatt city hall in Register 8/1848, and says that on Feb. 14, 1848, at 10:30 p.m. Elizabeth Gerig, nee Zimmerman, died at Pfastatt aged 51. She was born in 1797 at Robertsau, a suburb north of Strasbourg, the daughter of Jean (John) Zimmerman and Barbe Stoecky (Barbarar Stucky). It is remarkable that these towns, crossed by front line destructiveness in the Franco-Prussian War, World War I and World War II continue to have these records of vital statistics in good order.

In August of 1964, I was ready to return from educational seminar in Europe and had time to explore Alsace and "Gerig country" at leisure. After investigation Strasbourg, both ancient and modern, I discovered a bus tour which went south from Strasbourg to Mulhouse via the "Route du Vin" (vineyard route). The distance, if one were travelling on the Alsation plain via the autobahn, is a mere 65 miles, but this local tour route headed west 15 miles to the Vosges mountains and then generally south on rugged winding roads through Ste. Odile, Haut Koenigsbourg, and Trois Epis to Colmar where we spent a night. The second day we proceeded through Soultzmatt, Guebwiller and Cernay to Mulhouse, stopping many times at Alsatian farms and vineyards. I recommend this trip as a good way to become acquainted with some of the

small old picturesque towns of Alsace that were not all destroyed in the wars, and as a good opportunity for trying out one's Alsatian and French. At Mulhouse, the folk arts museum has many items relating to the times around 1860.

The Amish Mennonite population of 1860 was a small group indeed although I do not know how small. In 1871, the Alsace-Lorraine population included:

1,200,00 Catholics (especially in Lorraine)

250,000 Reformed and Lutheran (esp. in Alsace)

40,000 Jews

3,000 Methodist, Baptists and Mennonites

(Silverman Reluctant Union. P. 223)

The Mennonite Weekly Review of July 8, 1976, states that currently there are 25 Mennonite Congregations in France, grouped about equally in two conferences -- one French speaking and one German Speaking. Total baptizeid membership is about 2,400.

BENJAMIN'S YOUTH

When Benjamin was six, his mother died, and when he was eight his father passed away. Benjamin was the youngest of eight children who lived to adulthood (five died in infancy). The second youngest, Sebastian, was four years older, and these two orphaned boys were taken in by their oldest sister, Elizabeth Gerig Meyer, who was 24 years older than Benjamin and married to John Jacob Meyer. She had a son of her own, Jacob G., who was only four years younger than Benjamin. Elizabeth was a very good mother to this group.

John Jacob Meyer was a member of the German Reformed Stephanus Church, Place de la Reunion, and so Elizabeth and her children attended that church. She continued, however, to have Benjamin and Sebastian attend the Mennonite meetings and both were baptized and attended church at Pulversheim since there was no Mennonite meeting at Pfastatt.

We assume that Benjamin attended kindergarten and primary school for eight years as did his nephew Jacob G. However, since the family was poor and it was common for children to begin their work in factories at age 13 or 14, we assume that Benjamin began working at around that age. He worked at the Andre Koechlin Co. machine shop which employed around 3000 persons and manufactured several kinds of machinery in addition to steam engines and locomotives. His brother-in-law, John Jacob Meyer, was a stationary engineer in that shop.

EMIGRATION

Over a period of two decades beginning in 1856, six brothers and sisters migrated to the USA. Sebastian was the first, leaving during his seventeenth year in order to escape conscription into the military service of Napoleon III. He went with several others who were going first to Canada, so Sebastian spent some time with Alsatian friends in the Amish Mennonite community around Baden, Ontario. After a few weeks he moved on to Davis County, Iowa, where a small Amish Mennonite community had been established. He worked for farmers there. During his first four years in the states he was able to save some money and send it to Benjamin who was approaching eighteen so that he might also emigrate and escape the draft.

Using the money from Sebastian, some additional money earned by himself and his sisters, and borrowing some, Benjamin emigrated in the fall of 1860. Sister Elizabeth said that at each departure of the brothers the whole family came to see them off and there was sorrowing as at a funeral.

Benjamin's travel ticket has been preserved showing that he went from Pfastatt through Paris to Le Harve. There he took the ship William Tell, sailing on October 23 for New York. His second class cabin ticket cost 210 francs or approximately \$52. The captain was Mr. Funck. A friend by the name of Schlonecker was with him. By the time Ben got to New York, he had 40 cents left, so he had to borrow, presumably from his friend. I recall my mother saying that from New York, Benjamin came to Buffalo via Albany and the Erie Canal and then by steamship to Cleveland. He made his way with Schlonecker to Butler County, and then to Stark County where he had Amish friends. He found work here and opened an account at the Harter Bank in Canton, an account which he continued to maintain throughout his life.

WAYNE COUNTY

He did not stay in Stark County long. At the very end of the year, he set out with a friend to walk to Wayne County. He knew a Joe Hilty who had come from Pfastatt and was living just north of the District No. 7 schoolhouse on the Solomon R. King farm (SW 1/4 of Sect. 13). He arrived on the last day of the year. As the school opened for the new year, 1861, Ben enrolled at No. 7 and started in with McGuffey's First Reader, at the age of 18.

Ben found some work with a Mr. Eigley living on the sixty acre tract owned by Peter Schrock (E part of NE 1/4 of Sect. 22) Soon thereafter he found a job working for Jonathan Burkholder on his farm and in his brewery just southeast of Smithville (the Betty and Loyal Hostettler farm). One of his responsibilities was to drive the beer delivery wagon. At the time, as was true in Europe, the use of beer and liquor was customary, and there were three breweries operated by Smithville area Amish people. These closed around 1870 to 1880 as the temperance movement which began in New England came through Ohio.

THE AMISH COMMUNITY

When Benjamin arrived, the Smithville Amish community was still meeting in homes for worship, just as the Old Order Amish continue to do today. There were two districts, divided into north and south by what is now Smucker Road. The community was growing and some homes were inadequate in size. Also, some people were objecting to all the work necessary to prepare a home or barn for the Sunday

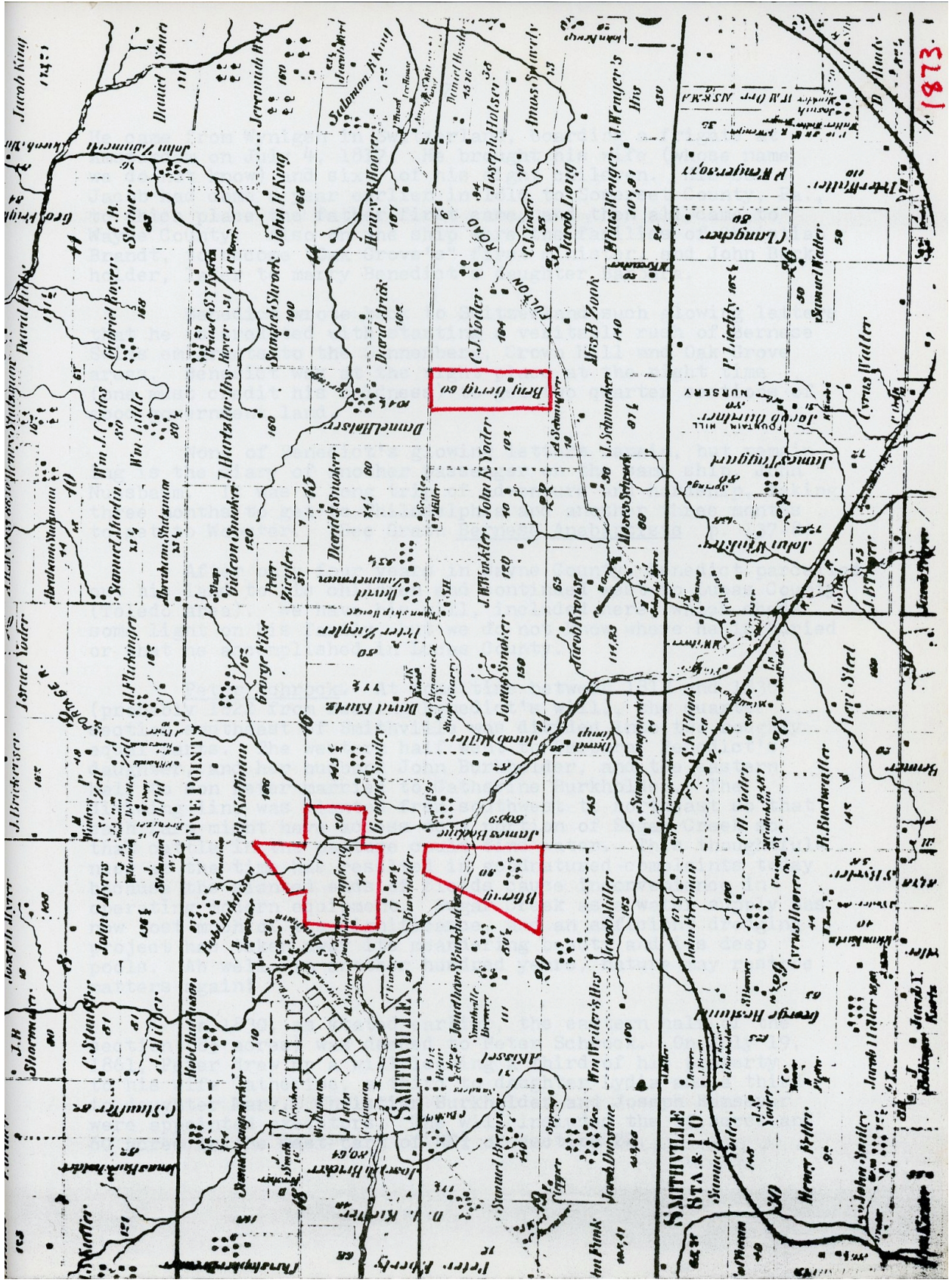
meetings. These matters were discussed informally among members until in the spring of 1862 when on March 2 a members meeting was held at Center Schoolhouse.

There it was decided to build a meeting house and to raise money through voluntary subscriptions. These subscriptions in the spring came from 108 persons, ranged from \$1.00 to \$30.00 and totaled \$990.95

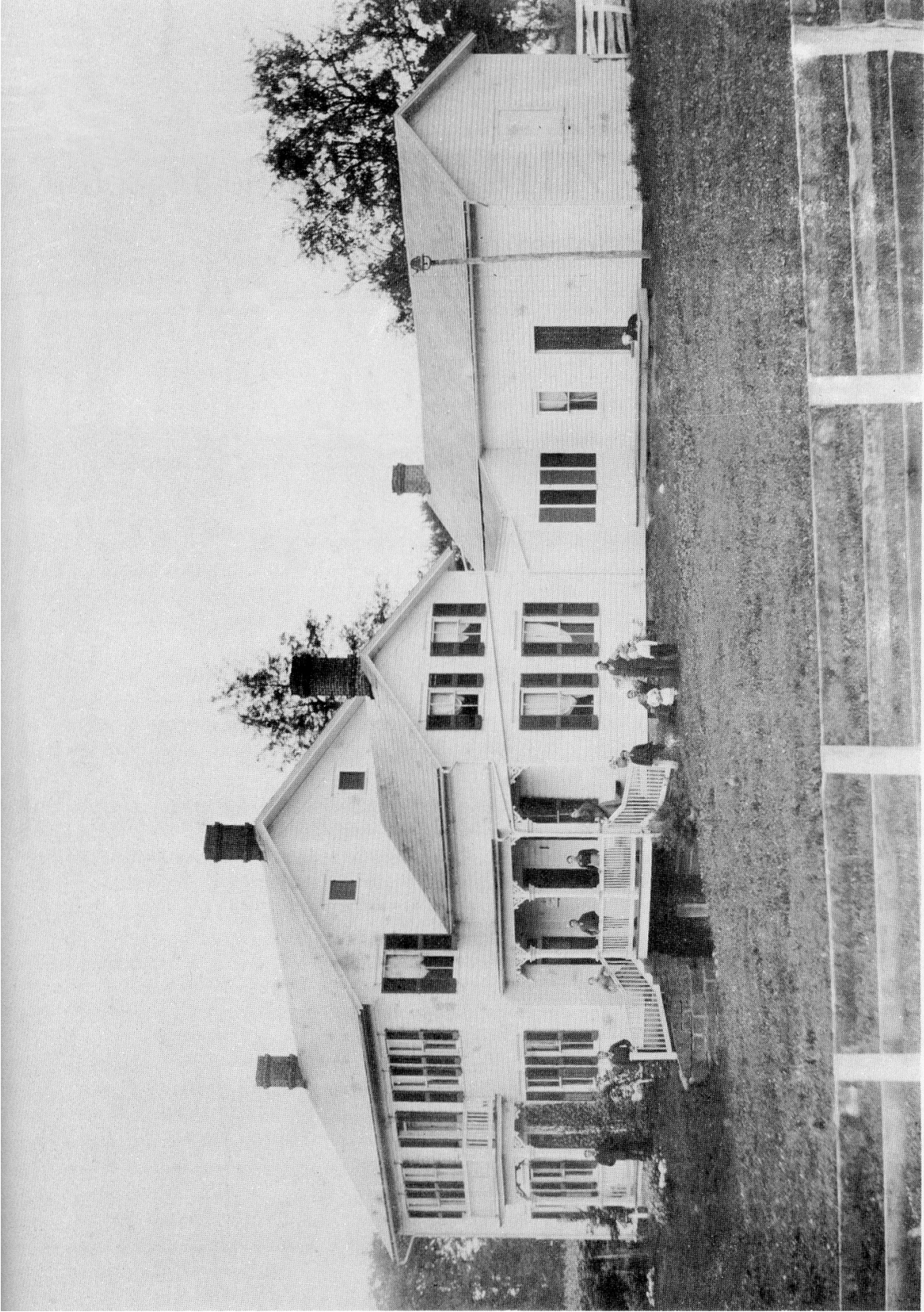
In the fall a series of assessments were suggested to those who did not yet contribute, and additional voluntary contributions came in adding 58 more names and \$330.45. All told, 168 persons gave \$1321.40 or an average of \$7.86. Benjamin was assessed \$4.16. He had now been in the community nearly two years, was 20 years old and beginning to carry his share of the responsibility. His prospective father-in-law, Peter Schrock, had been a voluntary contributor for \$10.00. The two largest contributors were Stephen Schrock, \$30 in the spring, and Frederick Wenger, \$30 assessed in the fall.

On March 2, the members meeting was held where the decision was made to build a church house, and on March 7, Peter Schrock died. He was buried in the Paradise church cemetery since the Oak Grove burial ground had not yet been established. Three months later, on June 12, 1862, Benjamin married Peter's daughter, Lydia Schrock, and he took up the responsibilities of the family and farm, next to the Burkholder farm where he had been working.

This Peter Schrock farm which we now think of as "the old Gerig place" was first owned by Lydia's grandfather, Benedict Schrock (Schrag), who bought the NE 1/4 of section 20 from the US government on August 4, 1818, as well as a second quarter just east of Smithville. A copy of the deed for the first quarter is here included. Unexplainable, the deed is to Benjamin, Benedict Schrock. Perhaps Benedict was not present at the transaction to correct it.



1873



Home of Corvin and Marie Gerig. Built in 1876 by Benjamin Gerig. Picture was taken around 1884.

BENJAMIN

When Benjamin wooed and won Lydia and with her the land, he also assumed serious family responsibilities. His widowed mother-in-law, Catherine Burkholder Schrock, was 59 and she continued with the family for 13 years before she died in 1880 at age 77. Before then there were eight children in the Benjamin Gerig family.

A still greater responsibility was Mary Schrock, Lydia's sister, who was a retarded person and required special care. Peter's will of 1861 made arrangements for her in addition to leaving her a third of the property. "I do hereby appoint and constitute my friend, Peter Ziegler, a guardian or trustee for my daughter Mary with instructions that she be decently kept and provided for since that she shall not be compelled to labor or work unless she chooses to do so." Mary Schrock died on Dec. 9, 1906, at age 68 and is buried in the Union Paradise cemetery next to her parents.

The old log house was crowded with twelve people living in it, so Benjamin made plans to build more adequately, and erected the present substantial house in 1876. Lydia was the first child born in the new house. The old house remained beside the new with Catherine and daughter Mary continuing to live in it. When Catherine died at age 77 in 1880, Mary continued living there with care and companionship provided by various member of the family until she died in 1906. Shortly after this, the old house was torn down, giving the new house a clear view across the Sugar Creek valley.

Last of the ten children was Fanny, born in 1885. The children covered a span of 21 years, and for a brief period they were all at home and taking an active part in neighborhood, church and community activities. Fortunately, a custom of the times was to commemorate a gathering of friends or a special event by going to a photographer's studio for a group picture. Many of these are preserved and they provide a fine record, better than many of those of the later "snap shot" era of the Kodak camera.

Benjamin farmed, managed a cheese factory, and prospered as is evidenced by his adding more land to that inherited through his wife. The 1873 Atlas of Wayne County shows that in addition to the land already mentioned, Benjamin owned land on both sides of the road separating section 16 and 17. All told, Benjamin owned 244 acres in four different plots.

THE MINISTRY

In 1885, when Fanny the youngest was 10 and Caroline the oldest was 31, Benjamin was chosen by lot to become a minister at the Oak Grove church. He was 52 years old. The next year, with the elderly presiding bishop John K. Yoder wanting to be relieved of more

responsibilities, Benjamin was ordained as bishop. The selection was so nearly unanimous on the part of the church members that no lot was drawn.

There were two long wood stoves, one on each side, with flues coming to the middle where they joined in a warming drum. Fanny was afraid of these and refused to sit in the seats under them. Sometimes the pipes became red hot when the wood was permitted to blaze briskly.

While Fanny cannot recall any particular sermon preached by her father, she remembers an illustration he was prone to use. He explained to the congregation that just as a will is often read to the assembled relatives several times so that everyone has a clear hearing of what is promised, so the promised of God should be read and pondered over several times in order to recall exactly what is in store for the children of God.

As one reviews the records of Benjamin's activities in the Oak Grove congregation, they include:

	<u>Age</u>	
1862	20	Paid \$4.16 assessment for the first building.
1873	31	Elected a church trustee.
1873	31	Elected lay secretary to the Amish Gen. Conference meeting held in Wayne County.
1876	34	Reelected a church trustee.
1889	37	Elected lay sec. to an Oak Grove Comm. Of Seven who drafted 16 decisions on congregational matters, all approved by the congregation.
1889	37	Elected Ass't Supt. Of the summer Sunday School, with C. Z. Yoder as Supt.
1895	52	Chosen by lot and ordained to the ministry.
1896	53	Chosen and ordained bishop. No lot needed.
1896	53	Son Jacob, age 30, chosen by lot and ordained min.
1905	63	Second Oak Grove meeting house designed and built.
1912	70	Son Jacob, age 46, chosen by lot and ordained bishop.
1913	71	Died at his home. Buried at Oak Grove.

CONINUATION

To assist in making the Gerig record at Oak Grove more complete, one should add that Jacob lived to be 98 which gave him 68 years in the Oak Grove ministry, all but the last several in an active contributing capacity. In 1947, Virgil Gerig, Benjamin's great-grandson was ordained to the ministry at Oak Grove and served the congregation until 1960 when he was called to preach at the Grace Mennonite Church in Pandora. In 1976 he ministers to the Salem congregation in Freeman, South Dakota.

From 1895 to 1960, a Gerig was always in the pulpit at Oak Grove, a period of 65 years. When one adds together the years of service given by these three Gerigs to the Oak Grove church, they add to 99 man years. Two additional great-grandchildren are Mennonite ministers: John R. Smucker at Harleysville, Pa., and Stanley J. Smucker at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

During Benjamin's sixteen years as bishop he had many opportunities to visit other churches where he was invited to preach or to take part in conference affairs. One might suppose that he was influenced in travel outside of the state toward those places where his brother and a nephew were also Mennonite bishops.

Sebastian, four years older, was ordained to the ministry in 1869 in Henry County, Iowa. In 1879 he was ordained as bishop in the Sugar Creek Amish Mennonite Church of Wayland, Iowa. For more than 50 years he served the congregation and the church conference. Benjamin and Sebastian made many trips back and forth on conference business. Each had 10 children and much visiting took place among family members. (See Melvin Gingerich Sebastian Gerig 1838-1924. MQR Oct. 1961. 296-308)

Two of Sebastian's grandchildren are Mennonite leaders at Wayland: Bishop Vernon Gerig of the Sugar Creek Church and Bishop Willard Leichty of the Bethel Church. Another grandson, Deacon Maynard Wise serves at Archbold, Ohio, and Dr. Olive Wise is a faculty member at Goshen College.

Christian, a brother 23 years older than Benjamin, came to America in 1864 with his family including a son, Christian R. and a daughter Barbara. They settled in Wayne County for 12 years, Christian R. being baptized at Oak Grove during this time. The father died in Indiana at age 55 in 1874. Christian R. and his sister moved to Wayland, Iowa, in 1876 where he married Mary Conrad and was ordained deacon and later to the ministry by his uncle Sebastian.

In 1904, Christian R. and his family moved to Albany, Oregon, where they became members of the Fairview Church. Shortly after settling in Oregon, he was ordained to the office of bishop. At that occasion, both of his bishop uncles, Benjamin and Sebastian, were present and participated in the ordination services.

Henry Gerig, one of C. R.'s twelve children, became a minister at the Fairview congregation and is now retired. Of C. R.'s 49 grandchildren, three are Mennonite ministers: Clarence R. Gerig at Albany, Oregon; Orie Roth at Wayland, Ia., and Percy Gerig at Roanok, Illinois.



Sebastian Gerig Family

Around 1915

A FLASHBACK

Over the years, frequent help was given by the brothers or sisters who were more able financially to those who were less so at a given time. This was especially true as each was preparing for the trip to America.

Jacob G. Meyer in a most interesting autobiography describes the following incident which occurred in 1870. He was a soldier in Napoleon III's ill-faring army and stationed at Brest, while the Germans had already occupied Alsace where his mother Elizabeth remained. He writes:

"Through these war times we were prevented from corresponding with home folks as the enemy lines were cutting off the chance, so I mentioned this to give an idea how we got in mind of America. As mentioned we could not write home so I tried to correspond with Uncle Ben Gerig. We could send it over the English Channel to the USA. I mentioned in a letter some of our hardships we had during the war, and I got an answer in a few weeks from him. Must tell you the story how we were surprised.

"I was in the shop when the quartermaster who was our mail man brought me a registered letter from America in a big yellow envelope that they used at that time and he saw that it was from the USA and while it was registered he wondered what was in it. Well I said, "We will see", and as it had a big seal to shut the envelope, I broke that seal open and under the sealing wax there were four French gold pieces, five francs, wrapped in tissue paper and fastened to the letter, as uncle Christ Gerig just was over here for a little more than a year, he still had those French 5-franc pieces and he gave them to uncle Ben Gerig to send to me. We were both astonished, the sergeant and I. Inside the letter was a ten dollar gold bill, then the fellow said surely I must treat him as he brought such a letter.

"In the letter uncle Ben urged me, as soon as this war was over to make arrangements to come over here. And when I came home business was slack and our Alsace was ruled by the Prussian police and magistrates and no one has an idea what changes were made from the French to the German laws, especially in those newly acquired territories. We were not allowed to talk French any more, neither to sing French songs and they were always suspicious as lots of tricks were played on them especially by the returned soldiers and others for revenge. Therefore, we decided to come to this country in 1872.

Mother and us two, Albert and I, as father had died in 1863. We started in the new home".

When the three arrived in Wayne county, they lived on one of the Benjamin Gerig farms for a time until they located a farm of their own near Sterling. This same kind of help was repeated for numerous French and Swiss families over the years, and in turn was passed along to others in generous portions by the Meyers and succeeding families.

THE GERIGS FROM ALSACE, A SUMMARY

Of the eight children of Jacob Gerig and Elizabeth Zimmerman who reached adulthood, six sooner or later left for America. The children were:

- 1.) **Elizabeth Gerig Meyer** 1817-1905. Buried at Pleasant Hill.

Married: John Jacob Meyer 1815-1868

Children: Jacob G. Meyer and Albert Meyer. All entered USA 1872. Jacob G., Sterling, had 12 children including Jacob C.

- 2.) **Christian Gerig** 1819-1874. Died in Indiana.

Married: Barbara Reck.

Children: Christian R. and Barbara. All entered USA 1864. C. R. Lived in Wayne Co., then Wayland, then Albany, Ore. C. R. had 12 children.

- 3.) **Jacob Gerig** 1823-1855. Died in Alsace at age 32.

Married: Catherine Stucky.

- 4.) **Barbara Gerig** 1826-1863. Died ni Alsace at age 37.

- 5.) **Katherine Gerig Koebel** 1829-1907. Buried at Wayland.

Married: Jacob Koebel 1831-1925.

Children: Son Christ lived on farm near Sterling. His dau. Opal Howman.

- 6.) **Mary Gerig Roth** 1834-1894.

Married: Joseph Roth. Second husband was Gillman.

Children: Jacob, Pete, Christ, Dan, Seth, Mary. Alice Gillman.

- 7.) **Sebastian Gerig** 1838-1924. Buried at Wayland.

Married: Magdalena Goldschmidt in Iowa.

Children: Had 10 children.

8.) **Benjamin Gerig** 1842-1913. Buried at Oak Grove.

Married: Lydia Schrock

Children: had ten children. Lived near Smithville.