



## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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## Our New Look!

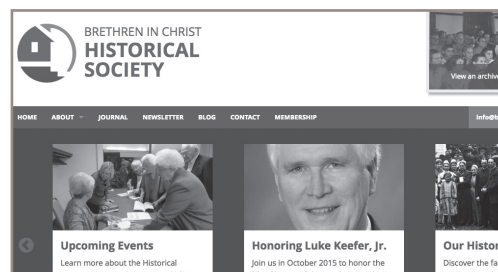
Welcome to "History Matters"

Welcome to the first issue of "History Matters," our renamed and completely redesigned newsletter! We hope you like this dynamic new look.

Of course, "History Matters" is only one element in our rebranding of the Historical Society and our redesign of its publications. You were introduced to the Society's new logo last summer. This year, the April edition of *Brethren in Christ History and Life* will introduce the redesigned journal. In addition, we have launched a brand new and much more comprehensive and functional website.

The logo, redesign of our publications, new website, and social media outlets are all part of the Historical Society's larger effort to create a strong visual identity for the Society—one that we hope will appeal to long-time members as well as a new generation of historically minded people.

We encourage you to check out our new website at [bic-history.org](http://bic-history.org). Historical Society members will have access to the entire journal online as well as in print. Non-members have access to one featured article from each journal, along with the editorial and the table of contents. New members will be able to join online, and members will be able to renew their



A sneak peek at the look of our new website!

memberships. A gallery of historical photos is also featured. Devin Manzullo-Thomas' successful blog, "The Search for Piety and Obedience," is now part of our website. Visitors to the site can comment on journal and newsletter articles, respond to the blog (and perhaps even write guest posts), as well as help us identify people and places in photographs. We hope that the website will encourage a more interactive and dynamic conversation about the history and life of the Brethren in Christ Church. Just one note: while most features of the website have been completed, it is a work in progress, and some features are still being refined.

## CONTACT

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🌐 [www.bic-history.org](http://www.bic-history.org)

## Upcoming Historical Society Events

### Annual Ringgold Heritage Service

Sunday, June 7, 2015 - 3:00 p.m.

Ringgold Meetinghouse, Ringgold, Maryland

This year's annual Heritage Service will feature speaker Devin Manzullo-Thomas, director of the Sider Institute for Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan Studies at Messiah College and assistant editor of *Brethren in Christ History and Life*. He will speak on the theme, "A Great Cloud of Witnesses: Family Histories as Church History."

### Pennsylvania 2015: "Walking with God"

July 21-26, 2015

Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex and Convention Center, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Don't miss this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to gather with thousands of other Anabaptist Christians from all over the world. To find out more about the assembly, related activities like tour and

volunteer opportunities, or to register, visit the Mennonite World Conference website at [mwc-cmm.org/pennsylvania-2015](http://mwc-cmm.org/pennsylvania-2015).

### Ringgold Hymn Sing

Sunday, August 30, 2015 - 5:00 p.m.

Ringgold Meetinghouse, Ringgold, Maryland

### Historical Society Annual Meeting

October 2-3, 2015

Ashland Theological Seminary, Ashland, Ohio

This year we will hold our annual meeting in Ashland, Ohio, in conjunction with a larger event, "Honoring the Life and Legacy of Dr. Luke Keefer, Jr.," which will celebrate the publication of a *festschrift* in Luke's honor edited by two of his Ashland Seminary colleagues. See [tinyurl.com/lukekeefer](http://tinyurl.com/lukekeefer) for more information. Specific details about the annual meeting and larger event will be in the summer edition of this newsletter.

## Finding Rhoda Lee

*Discovering the full story of a Brethren in Christ hero*

by Wilma I. Musser

In 1978, a play about the history of the Brethren in Christ Church was presented at the General Conference, held in Grantham, Pennsylvania. It was called "Pilgrimage," and was written and produced by Norman A. Bert. Several times during this play, the question was asked, "Who is Rhoda Lee?" Yes, she was the lady who got up at conference in 1895 and made a plea for foreign missions. But who was she?

Where had I heard this name before? Ah, yes, I remembered. She was mentioned in one of my great-aunt Hettie Fernbaugh's letters from Africa to her sister, my grandmother Josie Haynes in Abilene, Kansas. Hettie had come from her home in Indiana to be near her sister and she joined her sister's church, the Brethren in Christ. She had felt a call to foreign mission work but the Brethren in Christ had not yet sent missionaries overseas, so she went under the World's Gospel Union to Morocco in 1894.

Hettie wrote every few weeks from Morocco to her sister, my grandmother. My mother inherited these letters and, in time, I did, too. In one of her letters, Hettie asked her sister, "How is Rhoda Lee? We have heard she is very ill and will not live if the Lord does not heal her."

Rhoda's short obituary in the *Evangelical Visitor* said she was interred in the Abilene cemetery, so my search began there. I had now been living in Pennsylvania for some time, and each year when I went home to Kansas to visit my parents (David and Ethel Wenger), I would go to the cemetery in Abilene to see my grandparents' graves. I always looked for a stone with Rhoda's name, but found none. On one visit, I was surprised to find a stone with the names of James and Rhoda Lee. I went immediately to the little office in the cemetery and asked the caretaker if he knew who placed the headstones there. He said he did not have that information but asked which stone I was interested in. When I told him, he said, "Well, I do know about that one," and proceeded to tell me that the stone had originally been rejected because the name of the deceased had been misspelled. It was bought recently by Rhoda's granddaughter, and after being inscribed on the opposite side with the names of Rhoda and her husband James, was placed face down in the earth.

The caretaker gave me the name of the granddaughter, Dorothy Carr, and her address in Chapman, Kansas, where she lived with her husband. I called her, and then my mother and I drove to their home to visit her. Dorothy was the daughter of Harry Lee, Rhoda's youngest child, who was only eleven years old when his mother



*Brethren in Christ missions hero Rhoda E. Lee*

died. Harry had been shifted around a lot after his mother died and Dorothy knew very little about her grandmother. I gave her more information than she gave me, but she did give me the only known picture of Rhoda. It was probably taken near the time she and her birth family moved from Iowa to Kansas.

Helen Johns has written a carefully researched book, *Searching for Rhoda Lee* (Evangel Publishing House, 1998; still available on amazon.com), but I thought that this information about why and how this search came about would be of interest to Historical Society members.

*Wilma Musser lives at Messiah Lifeways, Mechanicsburg, Pa., and attends the Messiah Village Chapel Brethren in Christ Church.*

## News and Notes

*From the Brethren in Christ Historical Library & Archives*

*"I would like to learn more about my great aunt Elizabeth Kniesley, who died in 1928. Was her obituary published in the Evangelical Visitor?"*

*"I heard that the Brethren in Christ used to have a city mission in Detroit. Where can I learn more about that mission and other city missions?"*

*"What was it like to be a pioneer missionary like Frances Davidson, who went to Africa in 1897 as a young single woman?"*

Until recently, researchers would have had to come to the Archives in Grantham, Pennsylvania, to find answers to these and other questions. But now, thanks to an ongoing digitization project begun in 2012, a variety of Brethren in Christ historical materials are available via the Archives' online collection.

The initial portion of this digitization project was funded partially with federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, administered by Pennsylvania's Office of Com-

monwealth Libraries. As part of this push, Archives staff digitized the entire collection of the *Evangelical Visitor* (published from 1887-2004), the *Handbook of Missions* (1918-1978), and the transcripts of H. Frances Davidson's diaries (1881-1931).

The Archives plans to create soon an online "Virtual Exhibit," which will introduce website visitors to the various items that can be found in digital format. But until then, you can search our online collection for the *Visitor*, the *Handbook of Missions*, and the transcripts of Frances Davidson's diaries by using the step-by-step instructions on the next page.

## News and Notes

From the Brethren in Christ Historical Library & Archives

### How to find a digitized document

1. Go to the Archives website at [messiah.edu/archives](http://messiah.edu/archives).
2. Click on "Digital Collection" under the "Collections" tab in the sidebar.
3. On the Digital Collection page, click on the Online Catalog link, which appears in the short second paragraph (Illustration 1). This takes you to the PastPerfect Online online catalog, where you have several search options listed on the sidebar (see Illustration 2).
4. Enter an appropriate keyword or Object ID number in the search box. For example, in Illustration 2, we've typed in a "wild card" Object ID for all issues of the 1941 *Visitor*. You could also search using a keyword like "diary" or "India."
5. The Results Page gives a list of records in which the search term is found (Illustration 3).
6. Click on the record you'd like to view. The record will be shown on the screen, with selected information (also known as metadata) about the record in the right-hand panel (see Illustration 4). For most documents, there will be no preview or thumbnail image. For photographs, a low-resolution image will appear.
7. Scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on the "Click Here" link to download a PDF document that can be printed and is searchable (if it is not a hand-written document).

#### About File Names

Periodicals have an "Object ID" that reflects both the name and date of the publication. Thus the *Evangelical Visitor* of Dec. 22, 1941, has the object ID "EV.1941.12.22" which you would enter in the "Search" field (Step 3). To browse through all the 1941 issues, you would enter EV.1941\* (the asterisk is critical) to return a list of the 25 issues published that year (Illustration 3). The object ID for the 1956 *Handbook of Missions* has this object ID "Mission HB.1956." The transcript of Davidson's first diary has the object ID "HFD Diary Vol 1" and the searchable PDF document that can be downloaded starts with that same ID.

#### BRETHREN IN CHRIST ARCHIVES

About

Collections

Archives of Messiah College

Archives of the Brethren in Christ Church

Archives of Upland College

> Digital Collection

Historical Library

The archives has digitized and made available online select materials from various collections: the [Archives of the Brethren in Christ Church](#), the [Archives of Messiah College](#), and the [Special Collections](#). These materials document the founding of the denomination and several of its institutions, including the Messiah Rescue and Benevolent Home (later Messiah Village), the Messiah Bible College and Missionary Training Home (later Messiah College), early foreign missionary endeavors in Southern Africa and India, and a church newspaper, the *Evangelical Visitor*.

The digital collections can be searched using our [online catalog](#).

This initial digitization project has been partially funded with federal [Library Services and Technology Act \(LSTA\)](#) funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, administered by the Office of Commonwealth Libraries.

Illustration 1

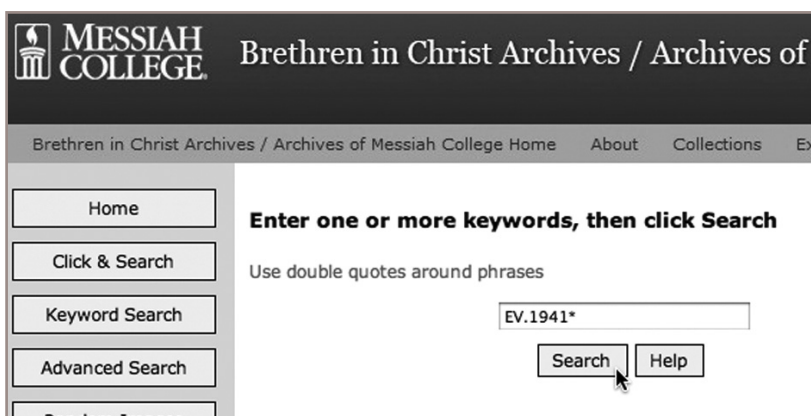


Illustration 2

#### Search terms: ev.1941\* -- 25 library records found

New Search

Page 1 2 3

Next

Print

Library Record [EV.1941.01.13](#) -- Found in Catalog Number: EV.1941.01.13

Library Record [EV.1941.01.27](#) -- Found in Catalog Number: EV.1941.01.27

Library Record [EV.1941.02.10](#) -- Found in Catalog Number: EV.1941.02.10

Library Record [EV.1941.02.24](#) -- Found in Catalog Number: EV.1941.02.24

Library Record [EV.1941.03.10](#) -- Found in Catalog Number: EV.1941.03.10

Library Record [EV.1941.03.24](#) -- Found in Catalog Number: EV.1941.03.24

Illustration 3



Illustration 4





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## Images from the Past

*From the photograph collection of the Brethren in Christ Historical Library & Archives*



While responding to a research request regarding the 1985 sale of the Farris Mines church in Allisonia, Virginia, the Archives staff recently came across this photograph. The caption on the back reads: "Summer [1954] Bible School Farris Mines Brethren in Christ Church. The 2 boys are only posing. 23 inside the wagon are on their way home."

Pastor Rupert Turman is driving the Chevrolet station wagon in this great photograph, obviously taken before the days of seat belts. The November 22, 1954 issue of the *Evangelical Visitor* carried this report: "Eight o'clock! Yes, Bible school began at 9:30, but students were coming already at eight. It's just a trait of the southern people, they usually are ahead of their appointment about an hour. Our school was considered a success with an enrollment of 75. Over the ten-day period high attendance was 60, and low 43."