

A Pump with a Bright Tin Cup: Kathleen Aiken's Memories of Englewood, Ohio and the Fairview Brethren in Christ Church

Edited and compiled by Dwight W. Thomas*

Introduction

During the late 1980s, Kathleen Aiken wrote a series of reminiscences about growing up in a rural Brethren in Christ church. Her memories are scattered nuggets and insights into Brethren in Christ life during the first quarter of the twentieth century that were written for the Fairview (Ohio) Brethren in Christ monthly newsletter. She called her column "Reminiscence Corner." In 1996, she sent copies to E. Morris Sider, who was then the archivist at Messiah College, with the disclaimer that her vignettes were "not a history."¹ Kathleen's memories include detailed reflections of life in a rural Brethren in Christ church during the early twentieth century. They provide insightful perspectives on church life in other congregations within the denomination.

Kathleen's vignettes were among Fairview church papers in the Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives and reflect her lifelong love for artistic things.² They fall roughly into the following categories: a) people, b) activities, and c) places and happenings. I

* Dwight W. Thomas taught music at Messiah University for many years, having graduated from the University of Michigan with a PhD in ethnomusicology. Since 2001, he and his wife have also spent 3-4 months each year in Zambia assisting the Zambian Brethren in Christ Church, researching, and helping to establish Zambian Christian University. He also collected and donated to the Thomas Music Collection in the Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives. He is the author of *Blest Be The Tie That Binds: Global Studies in Brethren in Christ Faith and Culture*, published by the Historical Society in 2017.

¹ Kathleen Aiken, letter to E. Morris Sider, 1996.

² Luann Haines Robinson to author, September 13, 2025. Although exact dates are unknown, Luann Haines Robinson believes "Reminiscence Corner" appeared during the late 1980s.

edited none of her writing other than occasional typographical and grammatical/spelling errors. I precede each of her recollections with short notes from my research.

Background

Born October 2, 1909 to Montfer and Maud Free, Kathleen was the second of five children.³ As a child, she and her family attended Fairview Brethren in Christ in Englewood, Ohio.⁴ Kathleen lived the majority of her life in Englewood and remained a lifelong member of the Fairview congregation.

Kathleen's father, Montfer Free, was also a lifelong member of the Brethren in Christ and a respected member of the community. He was born in Donnelsville, a small village west of Springfield, Ohio, where his father, Joseph, was a recognized minister in the Maple Grove Brethren in Christ Church.⁵ The family owned a farm just north of Donnelsville, and "Free Road" still marks the location today.⁶ Later, they moved to Englewood, where Montfer served as a local postal delivery man for many years.⁷ In the course of his postal career, he was chosen by his peers for various roles, including their advocacy for better wages for postal workers.⁸

It appears that Free was an independent thinker and a keen and knowledgeable debater. Englewood historian Earl Heck wrote about him:

There was another gentleman who lived south of Englewood who left his mark on the community. This was Mont Free,

³ Kathleen Aiken obituary: *Dayton Daily News*, September 27, 2000, 16; 1910, 1920 and 1930 United States census, Clark County, Ohio. Hereafter, census citations will be abbreviated using the year and US census.

⁴ Fairview Brethren in Christ Church Sunday school record books, Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives, Mechanicsburg, PA Hereafter, citations will be abbreviated as Fairview Church Sunday school records. Citations to the Archives will be abbreviated as BIC Archives.

⁵ 1880 US census; "A Trip to Ohio," *Evangelical Visitor*, January 15, 1893, 27.

⁶ D. J. Lake, B. N. Griffing, J. E. Sherman, and J. W. Drew, *Atlas of Clarke [sic] County, Ohio: from actual surveys* [Map] (C.O. Titus., 1870), 17.

⁷ Montfer was a rural postman for at least 15 years. "Postal Affairs," *Dayton Daily News*, 1916, 8-9.

⁸ "Postal Clerks Hit Low Pay: Talk Back to Congressmen Who Doubt Claims," *The Cincinnati Post*, September 23, 1919, 1.

one of the most vigorous minds and skillful debaters I have ever met. He had an astonishing memory for historical events and had at his command a wealth of details that it was hard to catch him up on any point relating to politics, economics, and government.⁹

Free's activities in the 1910s reflected these interests. In 1916, Montfer and his father, Rev. Joseph Free, attended a William Jennings Bryan appearance at a nearby Chautauqua meeting with several prominent Englewood Democrats (Samuel Berger, John F. Eidelmiller, etc.). Bryan was a prominent Democrat at the time.¹⁰ Whether the two Free men shared Bryan's distinctive mix of political ideas or not is unknown, but it is noteworthy that two plain-dressed members of the Fairview Brethren in Christ would attend such a politically-laden event. Reportedly, the event attracted an audience of eight thousand people.¹¹

Free's activist inclinations emerged in his postal advocacy and through his participation in local Democratic party politics.¹² In 1909, he ran as the Democratic candidate for Randolph Township treasurer and is known to have attended Democratic political events such as the 1912 Bigelow political debate in Dayton.¹³

Sometime before 1920, Free began beekeeping, an endeavor that took him out of the postal service. He sold his honey under the name "Pot 'O Gold Honey."¹⁴ Although she does not mention it in her recollections, Kathleen would likely have helped with the family honey business in some way. Free's apiary efforts were well established by 1920, eventually growing to five hundred hives scattered on farms near Englewood.¹⁵

⁹ Earl L. W. Heck, *The History of Englewood and Randolph Township, Montgomery County* (Englewood, OH, 1969), 64.

¹⁰ "Englewood" *Miami Union*, August 3, 1916, 9.

¹¹ *Miami Union*, August 3, 1916, 9.

¹² "Randolph Township," *The Dayton Herald*, September 27, 1909, 9.

¹³ "Baker, Bigelow and Cox to Speak at Memorial Hall," *Dayton Daily News*, August 27, 1912, 1.

¹⁴ "W. C. Free, Covington Pike," *Dayton Daily News*, May 2, 1942, 3; "A Real Bee Man," *Dayton Daily News*, May 12, 1934, 3.

¹⁵ "County Board Asked to Name Bee Inspector," *The Dayton Herald*, August 18, 1930, 22.

About a decade before Kathleen was born, Joseph and Anna Free and their two youngest children, Montfer and Myrtle, moved from Donnelsville to Englewood.¹⁶ Fairview Sunday school records show that the Frees were involved by 1901. Both Myrtle and Montfer married Randolph County people. Montfer married Maud Miller in 1906, presumably having met her after his family moved to Englewood.¹⁷

Kathleen's mother, Maud Justina Miller Free, grew up not far from Englewood. But we know less about her than we do about Montfer. Her family was apparently German Baptist (i.e., Dunkard or Church of the Brethren), and her father was a farmer. Both Maud and her younger sister, Carrie, attended and graduated from Randolph High School, Maud in 1902 and Carrie a few years later. Maud's name later appears as one of the organizers of the Randolph High School 1904 alumni gathering.¹⁸ Maud and Carrie both became members of the Fairview congregation, but it is unclear how early their association began.¹⁹ Maud's father, Benjamin A. Miller, owned a farm near Salem, and, tragically, died by suicide in September of 1928. Kathleen would have been nineteen and attending Messiah Bible College at the time. News reports say "despondency" was the reason for the suicide.²⁰

Judging from Sunday school records, it seems that Maud was less involved than Montfer at the Fairview church during Kathleen's early childhood. This might have been due to her child-rearing responsibilities; once her children had grown, we increasingly see her name listed as a Sunday school teacher.²¹ During the 1920s, she also participated in local cooking competitions sponsored by the Dayton Herald, receiving honorable mention with at least one submitted recipe—"Transparent Apples."²² Kathleen would have been thirteen

¹⁶ 1910 US census.

¹⁷ "Marriage Licenses," *The Dayton Herald*, August 30, 1905, 6.

¹⁸ "Our Graduates Banquet," *The West Milton Record*, August 8, 1904, 1.

¹⁹ "Free, Mrs. Maud (nee Miller)," *Dayton Daily News*, October 29, 1971, 28.

²⁰ "Farmer Hangs Self at Salem Pike Home: Despondency is Believed Reason for Suicide of Ben Miller," *The Dayton Herald*, September 7, 1928, 19.

²¹ Fairview Church Sunday school records.

²² "Transparent Apples," *The Dayton Herald*, March 30, 1922, 11.

at the time and likely helped her mother prepare and test her recipes.

All the evidence suggests that Kathleen grew up in an enterprising, creative, and intellectually-curious family, and that she inherited some of these gifts.

Childhood and youth

Kathleen's childhood and early teen years were largely provincial but they were also influenced by regional and national events. Her hometown of Englewood had less than three hundred inhabitants, and the local economy was predominantly rural. However, airplanes had just been invented, motorcar ownership was on the rise, electricity was expanding, telephone service was well established, and radios proliferated by her late teens.²³ Additionally, regional, national, and global political and social events filled the newspapers. In 1913, when she was only age four, a flood wreaked havoc on the Dayton area leaving a lasting impression on everyone.²⁴ In 1914, World War I drew the United States into global armed conflict. The "roaring twenties" and 1929 crash occurred just as she was graduating from high school and attending Messiah Bible College. Kathleen grew up during very eventful decades.

The Free family lived on the Dayton Covington Road, with one of the region's main trolley lines at their doorstep. Kathleen's father advertised his honey as "Stop 15." Although the family was engaged in agricultural things, Kathleen grew up as a town girl. She attended the three-room Englewood Village School as a child and knew the town, its families, and its businesses thoroughly.

Like her parents and siblings, Kathleen exhibited creative and intellectual talents. She was valedictorian of the 1927 Randolph High School graduating class.²⁵ Throughout her adult life, Kathleen had a

²³ For a contemporary description of the times, see: J. C. Hover and J. D. Barnes, *Memoirs of the Miami Valley* (Robert O. Law Company, 1919).

²⁴ Numerous accounts of the 1913 flood exist.

²⁵ "Dayton Speaker Addresses Randolph Township High School at Englewood," *Dayton Daily News*, May 10, 1927, 31.

keen interest in art and writing, and remained active into her final years. She loved to do oil paintings, and although I have no evidence, I suspect that her artistic interests began as a child and were already apparent during her high school years. She is remembered by all as a creative, intelligent, and gracious woman.

Attending Messiah Bible College (MBC)

Kathleen graduated from high school in Spring of 1927, headed to Messiah Bible College during Fall of 1927, and studied at Messiah for two years.²⁶ The Free family loved music and was seemingly rather accomplished. Kathleen's father was often listed as Fairview's chorister, was chosen as a member of the 1935 denominational hymnal committee, and is said to have taught music in Englewood. So, it is not surprising that Kathleen



Kathleen at Messiah Bible College, 1929.

was active musically at MBC. She sang in ladies chorus, mixed chorus, and was chosen for the select Ladies Quartet. Her vocal abilities were impressive enough to be chosen to sing a duet with "Prof Miller" (Earl Miller) at Sam Lady's wedding.²⁷

While at MBC, Kathleen also pursued her interests in writing, painting, and drawing. She served as associate editor for the 1928 *Clarion* (the yearbook) and art editor for the 1929 *Clarion*. That she was gifted artistically is also evident by the fact that MBC had her teach drawing and penmanship to academy students.²⁸ One photo

²⁶ See Messiah Bible College, 1928 and 1929 *Clarion* (yearbook). Hereafter cited as MBC *Clarion*.

²⁷ "Lady-Wolgemuth," *Lancaster New Era*, May 21, 1928, 9.

²⁹ MBC *Clarion*, 1929.



Kathleen in painting class at Messiah Bible College. Photo courtesy of 1929 Clarion, Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives.

in the 1929 *Clarion* shows her as a member in an oil painting class, a lifelong passion.²⁹ Her oil paintings hang on the walls of various friends and family members, and the new Fairview church features some of her art.³⁰

Also attending MBC were her younger brother, Joseph Free, and her future husband, Joseph Aiken.³¹ Kathleen's brother, Joseph, also had artistic sensibilities and pursued them after MBC, receiving an MA and PhD in speech and drama from University of Iowa and landing a professorship at University of California, Santa Barbara.³² Tragically, Joe Free died at age 35, soon after starting to teach at Santa Barbara.³³ After Messiah Bible College, Kathleen attended Wittenberg University in Springfield to obtain teaching credentials. She subsequently taught primary school in Vandalia from 1930-1933.³⁴

³⁰ MBC *Clarion*, 1929.

³¹ Luann Haines Robinson to author, Sep 13, 2025.

³² Haines Robinson, September 13, 2025; MBC *Clarion*, 1928, 1929.

³³ "New Instructor to Direct College Cast in Comedy," *Santa Barbara News Press*, October 27, 1946, 21.

³⁴ "Dr. Joseph M. Free, Teacher, Dies at Santa Barbara, Cal.," *Dayton Daily News*, December 24, 1946, 20.

³⁵ Kathleen F. Aiken obituary: *Dayton Daily News*, September 27, 2000, 16.

Marriage

Kathleen married Joe Aiken on June 22, 1933 at the Free home in Englewood.³⁵ Joe's parents both died when he was an infant, and he and two siblings were raised in the Brethren in Christ Mount Carmel Orphanage at Morrison, Illinois.³⁶ Sometime after 1920, he came to live at Englewood with Harvey and Elizabeth Hoke, who had been at Mt. Carmel and undoubtedly knew Joe well from those years.

Like Kathleen, Joe had strong musical interests. At MBC, he was chosen by Earl Miller as the bass for the locally-acclaimed 1928 male



Kathleen Free and Joseph Aiken ice skating at Messiah Bible College. Photo courtesy of Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives.

quartet, and the *Clarion* highlighted his mellow bass voice.³⁷ Joe finished his business degree at Wheaton College and eventually landed a job in Dayton as an accountant.³⁸ Joe's business and financial skills were evident during his years at MBC, and eventually led him to serve the church in a variety of roles, both locally and nationally. He was a Messiah College trustee and a member of the Brethren in Christ Publication Board and Pension Committee.³⁹

In addition to church and his job, Joe actively participated in the Dayton YMCA events, notably in the Men's Glee Club.⁴⁰ He was an enthusiastic singer and choral organizer. Both Joe and Kathleen sang in local choirs and ensembles, despite a degree of Brethren in Christ

³⁵ "Newlyweds at Englewood," *Dayton Daily News*, July 15, 1933, 14.

³⁶ 1910, 1920, 1930 US Census.

³⁷ MBC *Clarion*, 1928.

³⁸ MBC *Clarion*, 1928; "Newlyweds at Englewood," *Dayton Daily News*, July 15, 1933, 14.

³⁹ Joseph R. Aiken obituary: *The Journal Herald*, December 27, 1971, 34.



Newspaper clipping of Joe and Kathleen's wedding.

aversion to such performances.⁴¹ The couple continued as active members of the Fairview church in Englewood from the mid-1930s onward. Joe died in 1971 at age 66, but Kathleen remained in Englewood for nearly thirty more years.⁴²

Following are excerpts from Kathleen's reminiscences, with my brief introductory notes (*italics*).

Grandfather

*Kathleen's religious heritage straddles two of the historic peace churches: Brethren in Christ and Church of the Brethren. Her father and his ancestors were all Brethren in Christ, while her mother and her ancestors were mostly Church of the Brethren (either German Baptist or Dunkard Brethren). She grew up knowing both communities and understanding the unique characteristics of sectarian plain churches and the distinctive realities of ministers.*⁴³

⁴⁰ "Y.M.C.A. Glee Club to Sing Carols," *Dayton Daily News*, December 20, 1936, 20.

⁴¹ "Englewood Choir to Give Program," *Dayton Daily News*, December 14, 1939, 40: "Community Choir of Englewood Under the Direction of B. M. Hess to Give Third Annual Christmas Concert," *The West Milton Record*, December 4, 1940, 1.

⁴² Joe Aiken obituary: *Dayton Daily News*, December 27, 1972, 38. Kathleen Aiken obituary: *Dayton Daily News*, September 27, 2000, 16.

⁴³ See: Carlton O. Wittlinger, *Quest for Piety and Obedience: The Story of the Brethren in Christ* (Evangel Press, 1978); Donald F. Durbaugh, ed., *The Church of the Brethren: Past and Present* (Brethren Press, 1971). *Dayton Daily News*, September 27, 2000, 16.

*Joseph and Anna Free, Kathleen's grandparents, moved to Englewood about 1900. Anna died in 1919, so Kathleen would have known both of them; however, her vignette is about Joseph, her grandfather.*⁴⁴

My most definite memories begin with my own grandfather, Joseph Free. Sometimes he and I came to church together. The buggy had been cleaned. Grandpa had brushed his black high-topped shoes until they shone and now he was dipping his little metal comb in water and trying to flatten out his curly white hair. Then up the hill to the church. I remember sitting on the preachers' bench swinging my legs which didn't reach the floor, and not long afterward wishing it was time to go home to dinner.

After reading the Scripture, Grandpa would address us in a firm voice, "My dear people" and so began his sermon. Typical of the old brethren, he spoke with great seriousness, for to tell a joke while "standing behind the sacred desk" bordered on the sacrilegious, although he laughed with us children at home and sometimes told funny little anecdotes. One rather unusual conviction that he emphasized at least to our family was the duty of visiting and becoming friends with our neighbors. He himself carried out this injunction faithfully until his health failed in his eighties. He sometimes took me with him and we were always warmly received.

In common with many plain people, Grandpa looked upon photo taking as a needless, prideful idea and he refused to pose. For years his family urged him in vain. Finally when younger family members begged him for a picture to hand down to their children, he agreed to sit for a photo with the very strictest orders that it never be put out for display. The photo came out beautifully. One day, however, a family member was walking down Main Street in Dayton and passing the photographer's shop when what should he see but Grandpa's photo propped up in all its splendor for all to see! I don't think anyone ever told him!

⁴⁴ Anna F. Free obituary: "Called by Death," *Miami Union*, October 23, 1919.

Older folk and gospel songs

Kathleen was born three years after the release of the “green hymnal,” the first Brethren in Christ hymnal to use notation and the first to include “gospel songs.” It appears from this memory that Fairview folk were proponents of the new hymnal, and “gospel songs” more generally, which was not true everywhere. That Iva Herr taught some of the new songs is also noteworthy. Her husband, Levi, died in 1911, leaving her with the children and the farm. It would seem that music was an important part of the Herr family’s life. Kathleen’s mention of Ira D. Sankey, Homer Rodeheaver, and Billy Sunday also suggests that a progressive evangelistic spirit prevailed among young Fairview folk. Conrad Aiken, Kathleen and Joe’s son, also recalls hearing that his grandfather, Montfer, taught music for a period of time. Clearly, Kathleen’s love for music had family roots.

In prayer meetings we sang from small paper-back hymnals carried in a basket to the various homes.⁴⁷ In the back were old hymns we enjoyed like “Sing of His Mighty Love,” “O Happy Day,” and many more. I doubt that any song[s] w[ere] sung more often, however, than “Trust and Obey,” “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” and “Sweet Hour of Prayer.” Interspersed among the testimonies, individuals would lead out in some favorite stanza and all would join in.

Iva Herr and son Ralph would sometimes sing duets and teach us new hymns that way. One fascinating, chant-like “Our Father Which Art in Heaven” was one such hymn we learned. I’ve never seen this particular rendition in print but have often wished this could have been taught to following generations.

At most churches gospel songs were in the ascendancy in my youth. People seemed to love to sing “experience” hymns as preaching about witnessing and outreach increased. Typical of these I remember

⁴⁵ Brethren in Christ Church Hymnal Committee, *Spiritual Hymns of Brethren in Christ*: S. R. Smith and L.M. Hoffman, (1909).

⁴⁶ Conrad Aiken, telephone conversation with author, September 29, 2025.

⁴⁷ This probably refers to the 1916 edition of selected songs which had a soft cover: *Spiritual Hymns of Brethren in Christ* (Evangel Publishing House, 1916).

were “Since Jesus Came into My Heart,” “When I Saw the Cleansing Fountain” and “Beulah Land.” It seems to me that Homer Rodeheaver with the Billy Sunday campaigns lent impetus to gospel singing with his singing and book publishing.⁴⁸ One night we heard Billy Sunday preach in a sawdust trail tent along the river where the Dayton YMCA now stands. Rodeheaver led the great singing and he and Mrs. Asher sang “Take Up Thy Cross and Follow Me.”⁴⁹

But the great old hymns of the ages weren’t forgotten. Fairview fairly frequently sang “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” “Rock of Ages,” “Am I a Soldier of the Cross” and other such time-honored hymns. Looking back, it seems we sang more hymns about heaven than we do now: “In the Sweet By and By,” “When We All Get to Heaven,” “How Beautiful Heaven Must Be” and others.

Today at Fairview and in many other groups of elderly people, the women are likely to outnumber the men. But about fifty years ago, as I recall, there was a bench on the south side of our church (the men’s side) occupied by several men in their eighties or more. Some of these were forebearers of Fairview families today.

Ben Cassel in his nineties came from his home in Riverdale (in Dayton). He was a genial, dignified man, the great uncle of Eunice Cassel and the great, great uncle of Marjorie Niesley.

Dave Kneisley and his neat, black-eyed wife, lived along National Road by the church where Samuel Herr had lived and later Albert Hoke. He was the grandfather of Howard Hoke, Doris Martin, and Paul Brumbaugh.

Grandfather Rellinger was also very aged. He had come from his home in Indiana to live with his daughter and family, the Samuel

⁴⁸ Kathleen’s assessment was correct. The Thomas Music Collection in the BIC Archives contains numerous Ira D. Sankey and Homer Rodeheaver songbooks that were owned by BIC musicians and used at Messiah Bible College and Beulah College, which attests to the musical tastes of this generation.

⁴⁹ Billy Sunday had an enthusiastic following in Montgomery County. Promotional articles for his rallies were common in Dayton papers during his heyday. “Billy Sunday is Ready for ‘Play Ball’ Order in War on Devil in Big Dayton Tabernacle,” *Dayton Daily News*, October 29, 1922, 13.

Cassels. A patient and friendly man, he soon became a part of Fairview's family.

Grandfather Hoover lived a mile or so west on National Road. A small bearded man who was faithful in giving his testimony, he was the father of our bishop, John Hoover, at the time I united with the church.

Perhaps my earliest memory of elderly church people goes back close to seventy years when Grandfather Samuel Herr in his nineties sat in the rocking chair placed for him in the center aisle at church. I remember him as a thin white-haired man. When testimony time came he would rise rather shakily to his feet, but before he finished he would become so enthusiastic praising his Lord that he was jumping up and down. He was an example of the lesson that a Christian need not be a depressed sour-puss in his later years. There are others I recall vaguely, such as Levi Hoke, who was Howard's and Doris's grandfather, Harvey Miller, and Grandfather Moist, the grandfather of Pauline Brumbaugh, and Ruth Wenger.

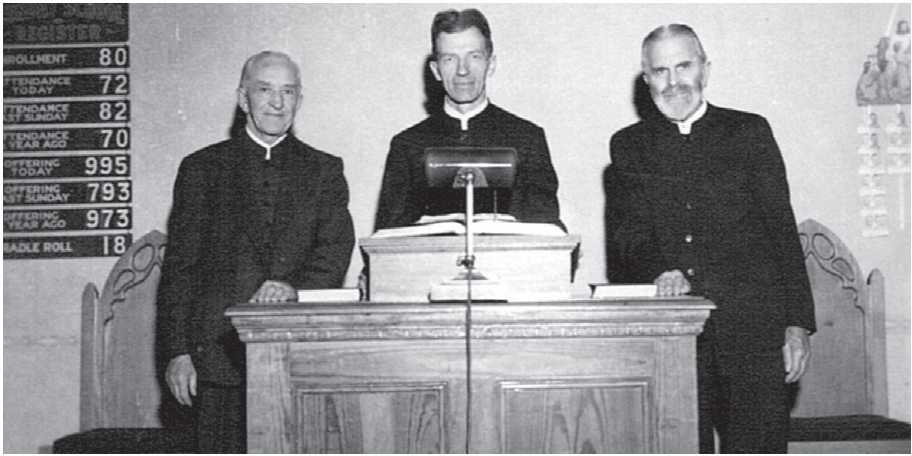
Isaac Cassel Engle (1871-1956)

Isaac Cassel Engle's roots reach back to the early River Brethren of East Donegal, Pennsylvania. It appears that his father and grandfather moved to Ohio soon after the Civil War and bought farms along the Stillwater north of Little York.⁵⁰ Isaac was certainly born on Abram's farm and probably attended the nearby one-room school for "common education." But it is unclear whether he attended Randolph High School like some younger Brethren in Christ from the area. He married Eliza Hesson in 1896. Their three children, Albert (b. 1897), David (b. 1899), and Harriet (b. 1902) were slightly older than Kathleen, but they would have known each other well from church.

I remember Isaac Engle as a Fairview minister for many years. In his prime he was a sturdy, black-haired, black-bearded man with white

⁵⁰ *The History of Montgomery County, Ohio, Containing a History of the County* (W. H. Beers, 1882).

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Three ministers at Fairview: Jesse Wenger, Ohmer Herr, and Isaac Engle. Photo courtesy of Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives.

teeth in a sun-tanned face. He farmed for a living but his foremost interest was in the work of the Lord. He and Eliza with their children Albert, Harriet, and David, lived on a farm on Union Road near where the I-70 overpass is now located. Eliza, though a retiring person, was hospitable, helpful and dependable. They raised children who were to be greatly used in the church. I wonder how many of us remember as children running down their big barn hill after prayer meetings there, or the day when quite a group of us worked in that barn filling straw ticks for General Conference in our area.

One of Brother Engle's most memorable traits was his zeal for missions. Serving on the Foreign Mission Board, the family often entertained missionaries on furlough who spoke at Fairview. He carried a very special burden for Jewish people and often referred to them. At times he was apologetic concerning his preaching, saying he was inarticulate, not a ready speaker. But his love for the Lord and his cause made an impression on old and young.

He was a man of prayer and of the Word, tolerant and cooperative with others. After Eliza's death he married Mary Sollenberger. Mary and I became brides on the same day and consequently we felt a bond

although many years separated us in age. I always felt that Bro. Engle had much concern for our family and often had an encouraging word for me. It was sad when he and Mary left to make their home at Messiah Home where he later passed away.

Jesse Wenger (1876-1969)

Wenger family roots reach back to Swiss Anabaptist immigrants. Jesse W. Wenger's great grandfather is said to have moved to Ohio from Pennsylvania sometime before 1830.⁵¹ The family has a complicated history, with denominational connections to the Brethren in Christ and the Church of the Brethren, and to a splinter group called the Wengerites.⁵² Jesse and his wife, Docia Hoover Wenger, served briefly in Africa while Kathleen was still an infant, and also spent time in home mission work at San Francisco and Philadelphia. But like all Brethren in Christ ministers of the time, Jesse was self-supporting, working as a carpenter and painter until retiring.⁵³

Another Fairview minister, Jesse Wenger, I especially remember as the one who baptized me at the age of 11. He was the older brother of Sam, Byron's father. I believe he was born and reared in the old brick homestead on the farm ground now occupied by the Englewood Plaza. Jesse and his wife Docia had answered a call to Rhodesia and served there for a time but had to return home for health reasons. I can recall just a bit about their mission. As a schoolgirl I was intrigued by Docia's little hand-run table sewing-machine. There was no electricity on the mission station and a heavy treadle machine was out of the question, so the little portable one was just right. (I thought how great for doll clothes!)

⁵¹ Heck, *The History of Englewood*, 81.

⁵² "Our History," Butler Township, accessed September 9, 2019, <https://butlertownship.com/community/our-history/>; C. Nelson Hostetter, E. Morris Sider, and Samuel J. Steiner, "Brethren in Christ Church," last updated January 24, 2023, https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Brethren_in_Christ_Church.

⁵³ Jesse Wenger obituary: "Services to be Held for Rev. Jesse Wenger, 92," *The West Milton Record*, May 21, 1969, 4. Docia Wenger obituary: "Rites Friday for Mrs. Jesse Wenger," *The West Milton Record*, October 8, 1952, 1.

When welcomed back to Fairview, they took residence on N. Walnut St. in Englewood, and Jesse took turns in the pulpit with Isaac Engle and later Ohmer Herr, as I recall. They were used and appreciated in various ways. They had no children of their own but Docia was the faithful teacher of the Sunbeam class, which I thought appropriate since she was so small herself. She was usually smiling and good with the children. They were also friends to some girls in their home, Josephine Will being one.

Being young at the time I don't recall much about the sermons. I do remember that the congregation generally sang a hymn on the theme of his sermon just before he started to preach. He would then preach a while on the words of the hymn before announcing his text. So I thought we always received a double dose of his message. He lived a long and useful life. I believe he was in his nineties when he passed on to his reward.

Fairview Ministers: Ohmer Herr

The Herrs settled in Randolph Township early in the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ The obituary of Ohmer's grandfather, Samuel L. Herr, states that he came to Ohio in 1832, so Ohmer's ties to the community ran deep.⁵⁵ He exhibited educational interest early, attending one of the region's first Normal Schools and teaching eighth grade at Randolph High School for several years.⁵⁶ Ohmer's impact on the Fairview congregation led Kathleen to write an extended memory about him and Rozella, his wife.

My earliest recollection of Ohmer Herr was that of a young Sunday school superintendent, leader of youth, and later, the third minister, along with Jesse Wenger and Isaac Engle. These were all self-supporting preachers who took turns in the ministry at Fairview.

⁵⁴ Heck, *The History of Englewood*, 76-77. See also: *The History of Montgomery County, Ohio* (W. H. Beers & Co., 1882) 297-298.

⁵⁵ Samuel Herr obituary: *Dayton Daily News*, December 19, 1922, 17.

⁵⁶ "Normal Notes," *The West Milton Record*, June 2, 1915, 4; "Grade Teachers for Schools," *The Piqua Daily Call*, September 4, 1915, 4.

Ohmer was the son of a former minister, Levi Herr, and his wife, Iva Ulery Herr. So it almost seems that he was born with a spiritual concern for the congregation. I believe he was trained for school teaching but had no seminary education. However, he was an extremely thorough Bible student and believed in strict and fairly literal interpretation and obedience to all Scripture. To stimulate interest in young people's meetings he used original and resourceful ideas, object lessons, quizzes, family participation, musical and Bible studies. I still remember the object lesson on faith when we found a yellow rose in an unexpected place.

Genial and friendly by nature, Ohmer was, however, a very serious-minded person. The long terminal illness of his father, leaving him in his youth with heavy responsibilities, gave him scant time for a carefree childhood or boyish recreation. It stamped him with the stern philosophy that "Life is real, life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal; dust thou art, to dust returneth, was not spoke of the SOUL." He took very seriously the responsibility of preaching and warning his people.

In later years, after the shock of Joe's unexpected death, many came to me with tender reassuring words. Ohmer was sympathetic but what I remembered was the solemn warning not to let a root of bitterness spring up in me. At the time I thought he was rather severe but I have thought of this many times since and realized that such a warning was needed. I'm sure Ohmer, from his own experiences, saw the likelihood of such temptations, and like a true pastor, gave me the truth.

Through the years, Ohmer Herr preached from a great variety of texts. Typically, I think of the ones from Ephesians, Acts, and Christ's Sermon on the Mount. But he brought many lessons from both the Old and New Testaments. He was a strong exponent of holiness and holy living, non-resistance, obedience, the Second Coming and evangelism. There was strong emphasis on home and foreign missions. That influence is much in evidence in the lives of his children who have served the cause of missions in many parts of the world.

Iva and Ralph, Ohmer's brother, as well as Ohmer, were musically inclined. Although opposed to using instruments in church worship, they were deeply interested in congregational singing and hymnody. Iva and Ralph would sing duets in prayer meeting and we would learn some beautiful new songs from this, among them the haunting melody, with the half-chanted chorus of the Lord's Prayer. One of Ohmer's favorites was "There's a Rose That Is Blooming for You, Friend." I've felt his aesthetic sense was influenced by the fact that he was a nurseryman.

Our pastor's wife, Rozella, was the daughter of William and Susie Boyer who founded the Dayton Mission and worked there many years. After Ohmer and she were married, they built the house on National Road near the church. The little neon sign over the porch "Jesus Saves" is still there today. While the house was fairly new, Joe and I were married and rented three large rooms upstairs for the first three years of our married life. I'm happy to say our landlords exhibited the Fruit of the Spirit toward us. I had been a student and teacher for several years and my housekeeping skills left much to be desired. It was in the days of icebox refrigeration and melting ice was collected in a pan beneath. One of my first fiascos as a bride was to forget to empty the pan. Down below in Herr's nice ceiling a neat round spreading wet spot appeared. Another time on a hot carefree summer day I left the house for a couple of hours with the big twin windows open in the living room. A big thunderstorm came up and gusts of wind came through, scattering loose things all about and blowing rain through the room. When I arrived home, Rozella and her dear mother who was visiting then, had realized the emergency and had gone in with a mop and put things to right as far as possible. I have many memories of Rozella's kindness during those days, especially when Joe had appendicitis surgery.

After Ohmer retired from Fairview, not wishing to go into full time salaried ministry, they spent strenuous years at the Dayton Mission. They will long be remembered here for thirty years of self-supporting, self-giving, and Christ-centered living and serving.

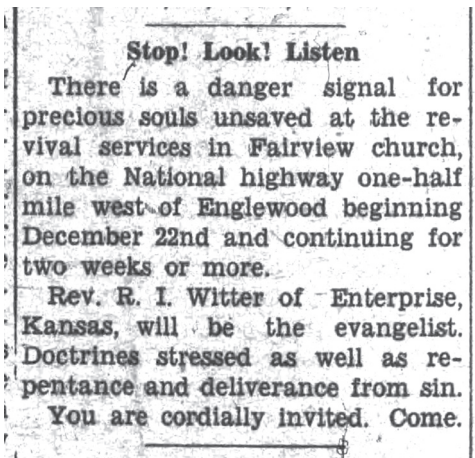
Visiting evangelists

Visiting evangelists came regularly to Fairview and other Brethren in Christ churches during the first half of the twentieth century. Each had his own style, favorite topical emphases, and personal charisma. Several caught Kathleen's attention.

Evangelists came from a distance. Ohio ministers and those closer, such as Carl and Vernon Stump from Indiana, were more often used for shorter services like love feasts. As a child I was fascinated by Canadian evangelists who wore horse-hair overcoats and spoke slightly differently.

The godly Lafayette Shoalts seemed to me like another Elisha or John the Baptist. His bald head was surrounded by longish hair and his eyes seemed strange. An aura of other-worldliness caused me to fear him a little. I remember his pulpit solo about the "well-worn traveler" who sang triumphantly "Then palms of victory, crowns of glory, I shall wear."

Tall Bert Sherk with his curly gray hair parted in the middle had a unique talent for making Old Testament stories come alive. Later evangelists that I especially admired and remember were Earl Sider and the beloved E. J. Swalm.



Newspaper advertisement for evangelistic services with Ray Witter.

From Michigan came their bishop, earnest Henry Schneider (he had a very glossy horse-hair coat I liked) and elderly Bro. Vandever who may've been a Free Methodist but he fit in with everyone. He was so folksy and friendly. He even put me at ease when as a bride preparing supper for him, I had to ask him to open a canning jar for me. (Joe hadn't yet gotten home from the office.) His sermons

were filled with one anecdote after another out of his long evangelistic career.

Then there was the young Kansas evangelist, Ray Witter, with good reason. He came one December to hold services and on the very first night I made my first decision for Christ as he prayed for me. He encouraged me by saying he had a baby daughter at home who he hoped would come to Christ at an early age also. Harry Crider, also of Kansas, was one I'll long remember too for his humorous stories.

Though people find God under many conditions and circumstances, the old-fashioned revival meetings were certainly a time of soul-searching and taking time to think seriously of one's relationship to the Lord for time and eternity.

Miriam Cassel—my pal

Official histories usually dwell on the adult world and adult relationships, but most of us had formative childhood relationships that began to shape our understandings. Kathleen undoubtedly had friends in her neighborhood and at school, but for Brethren in Christ children, church friends often occupied a special place, and Miriam Cassel was Kathleen's special friend. The Cassels were stalwarts in the Fairview church. Emma Cassel taught Sunday school at Fairview, and she and her husband, Harvey, were actively involved in the Upland Brethren in Christ after moving there in 1925.⁵⁷ So, week after week, Miriam and Kathleen spent mornings together in Sunday school class or worship and undoubtedly at various other church activities.

After moving to Upland, Miriam enrolled in Beulah College. Her older sister, Alma Cassel, was the academic dean at Beulah, having taken the position in 1924. In that same year, the Cassel house burned to the ground, which might have led Miriam's parents to relocate.⁵⁸ But, I suspect the two women remained lifelong friends.

⁵⁷ Fairview Church Sunday school records.

⁵⁸ "Church School in Upland is Open for Year: Sixty Students Enroll for Courses at Well Known College," *Progress Bulletin*, September 10, 1924, 6.



Miriam Cassel as a child. She later married Glen D. Byer. Photo courtesy of Elaine Byer Reed.

During my childhood, my pal at church was Miriam Cassel (Byer). At her home I liked to play with her dog, Pikey, who had been rescued from the Dayton flood in 1913. She was a little black mongrel who had been painfully injured in the floating debris. Evidently her rescuers had consoled her after her traumatic experience by stroking her and saying, "Poor Fikey, poor Pikey." When I knew her, she was a healthy, well-cared-for dog, but if anyone attempted to pet her with a pitying "Poor Fikey, poor Pikey," she would lift her head, open her mouth and out would come the most doleful, ear-splitting wails imaginable. Miriam and I loved

to see this sensational reaction, much to the annoyance of Elwood and Firma, Miriam's parents.

Could it be that we Christians may also have a bit of conditioned reflex so that as we pity ourselves and bewail our sorrow, it only helps us recall our pains and problems? It can become habitual and we forget how God loves and heals us with a thousand blessings.

Events

Baptism

The Brethren in Christ practice "believer's baptism," usually for adolescents, with an examination session commonly preceding the ceremony. The conventional denominational mode of "triune immersion" took participants to farm ponds, local streams, and shallow lakes as baptismal locations. Kathleen was baptized in the Stillwater



Stillwater covered bridge, the site of Kathleen's baptism. Photo courtesy of Randolph Township Historical Society.

River just east of Englewood. The old covered bridge no longer exists, but in 1920 the nearby Stillwater River banks apparently still provided a pleasant spot for a Fairview Brethren in Christ baptism. Kathleen's mention of wearing a "middy blouse" is interesting. Middy blouses—which echoed navy uniforms—were popular at the time and it seems a somewhat progressive fashion for a young Brethren in Christ girl of that time.⁵⁹

One pleasant summer day when I was 11 years of age, I remember with special happiness and satisfaction.⁶⁰ It was baptismal day for five girls and a boy (if I recall correctly). They were all in my Sunday School Class taught by Emma Cassel. On that Sunday morning worship service Bishop Johnny Hoover preached the sermon. Following this, we were taken back to our Sunday School classroom where our teacher

⁵⁹ See: *Sears Roebuck Catalog*, 1915.

⁶⁰ If her memory is correct, 1920.

questioned us concerning our beliefs and spiritual experiences. On one question I was hesitant and our teacher brought in our minister to question me more fully. He was convinced that I was ready to be baptized (to everyone's relief, I'm sure). I believe we made our promises to be good church members at that time also, thus joining the Brethren in Christ Church.

We then drove down the hill into the center of Englewood and through the long covered bridge. There the congregation assembled under the spreading trees along the river bank. We girls were all in white. I remember my white middie blouse and skirt, which I wore for many years. This was in the days when we had no baptismal robes.

The people sang such songs as:

Where He leads me I will follow,

I'll go with Him, with Him, all the way.

He will give me grace and glory

And go with me, with me, all the way.

I believed this with all my heart and still do. I remember that I felt some trepidation although I was fairly accustomed to being in the water. Elder Jesse Wenger baptized us in the order of our ages, I think, and prayed over each of us.

It was a peaceful and blessed experience. It seemed as if the noonday sun shining upon the scene was to be a benediction over all my life.

Love feast

Love feasts continued to hold a uniquely important place in Brethren in Christ life in the early twentieth century, despite other significant denominational shifts. Evangelical Visitor announcements in spring and fall notified members of times and places, and it was common for the location to rotate among congregations within each district, giving people a semi-annual event to renew relationships with seldom-seen friends and relatives.

Although men were given the prime preaching slots, women apparently used testimony opportunities to express their religious sentiments and personal faith experiences. The importance of the "examination chapter"

highlighted the prominent value placed on interpersonal harmony and mutual forgiveness.

Fairview had a love feast in the spring and fall. It began with a Saturday afternoon service and closed after dinner Sunday noon. We had a visiting minister as speaker. Love feast started with hearty singing followed by fervent testimonies often from members visiting from the other congregations. Memories of Lizzie Gramm, Elsie Rohrer, Alice Maggert, Susie Boyer and others—such “mothers in Israel”! Preaching was always on the examination chapter, I Corinthians 11.

After supper the farmers and others went home to do the evening chores. Meeting again that night we found the front pews moved farther apart to accommodate the foot tubs for feet washing. Men sat on the left and women on the right. After John 13 was read and a homily given, the deacons came in with buckets of warm water and their wives with snowy towels. A deacon’s wife sometimes sat on a chair at the end of the pew, her full skirt a well-placed modesty shield.

Often choruses and testimonies were dispersed through the services as each participant tied on a towel, washed his neighbor’s feet, then kissed him, passing along the towel that he might serve the one beyond him. The people further back were moved up to the widened area as needed. Non-participants and children sat in the rear watching the proceedings.

After the informality of feet washing there was a quieting solemnity as scriptural instructions for communion were read. The ordinance of the holy kiss was observed. The communion bread, baked by the deacons’ wives, was then shared as each communicant asked his brother, “Dear brother, this bread which we break, is it not the communion of the broken body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?” The brother answered affirmatively and turned to the next person. The wine (grape juice) was shared in the same way, calling the wine “the broken body of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Many years back I remember we used a common cup instead of the individual ones. We often closed by singing “Blest Be the Tie that Binds.”

We children were much interested in love feast meals. The main



Love feast meal preparation at Highland (OH) Brethren in Christ Church.

meal Sunday noon featured boiled potatoes in rich beef broth and tender, sliced cold beef. And oh, those pies? Cherry, apple, pumpkin, butterscotch, shoofly—a mouth-watering variety! Dear, neat, little Docia Wenger was the keeper of the pantry, the only place in the church, I think, that was under lock and key, for I believe every child present would've liked to have had "his finger in the pie," so to speak.

We little girls looked forward to serving, in spite of secret fears of dropping a dish or spilling the fragrant coffee. And I recall a miserable time when I felt partly responsible for getting sugar into the salt shakers or salt into the sugar bowls. (Just now I mercifully forget which.) But all in all, memories of love feast are pleasant feelings, part of growing up in the fellowship.

Cottage prayer meetings

The Brethren in Christ began building church buildings during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Earl Heck claims Samuel Herr

BRETHREN IN CHRIST
HISTORY & LIFE



The women of Fairview Brethren in Christ Church.

donated land for the Fairview church in 1877.⁶¹ Earlier worship was in homes, so these early twentieth century “cottage prayer meetings” must have evoked a bit of the former house church custom for older members of the Fairview congregation. Kathleen’s creative impulses cut through her descriptions of Fairview’s winter cottage prayer meetings.

Cottage prayer meetings! Fairview had them during the cold months so it wasn’t necessary to heat the big sanctuary just for a few hours in midweek. Families volunteered their homes and on Sundays would carry away some folding chairs and the basket of paperback hymnals. A child’s-eye view remembers each home.

- Ella Whitehead had a most unusual mantel clock that depicted all sorts of sun and moons besides the time of day.
- Even more intriguing was Edna Sink’s cuckoo clock on which our eyes were most intent at the hour change, and it was disappointing if a hymn was being sung at that moment.
- At Kniesleys, we got to peek into the springhouse to see that

⁶¹ Heck, *The History of Englewood*, 76.

most famous spring of the county.

- Cassels often had a pet around, Bergers a grand piano, Engles (and later Manns) a fascinating windmill outside their kitchen door.
- Moists had two pictures on the wall that I can see yet. Windows in the scene glistened as if they were lit.
- At Brumbaugh's there was a multi-colored Tiffany light shade over the dining table.
- Best of all, Sunday school pals were to be greeted at Weimers, Hokes and Wengers.

As I grew older, memories built up of scriptures read, testimonies, experiences of many kinds. True, singing acapella tended to drag; seating, parking, and ventilation weren't perfect; children could be distracting in close quarters. But the family atmosphere and warm fellowship on cold nights played a large part in our worship in those days.

Children's barn meeting

The relationship between the Fairview congregation and the Dayton Mission was especially strong when Kathleen was a child. The William and Susie Boyer family lived on Union Road before establishing the mission, so ties were close. Rozella, Ohmer Herr's wife, was also a daughter of the Boyers. She spent her childhood years at Englewood but her teen years at the mission, a fact that further brought the two communities together. The "children's barn meetings" that Kathleen writes about here were featured in a local newspaper article in 1920 when Kathleen was 11.⁶²

Around the years of 1915-1920 Fairview children looked forward to seeing youngsters from the Dayton Mission at the annual Children's Barn Meeting. Quite a large group of North Dayton underprivileged children came out to Englewood on the excursion traction cars, which

⁶² "All Day Barn Meeting," *The West Milton Record*, July 21, 1920, 4.

was a treat in itself. From there they came to Iva Herr's nice farm across from the church, adjoining the cemetery to the south.

These city children were given the chance to run about the farm, see the animals, swing on the swings put up for them, run up and down the barn hill, breathe fresh country air, and play with country kids.

Benches were set in the nice hay-smelling barn, and services were held for us in the forenoon and afternoon. I learned motion choruses for the first time. There was:

- "This Little Light of Mine" [anon]
- "Climb, Climb Up Sunshine Mountain" [anon], and
- My sins rose as high as a mountain,
He washed them down deep in the fountain
He wrote my name down, for a robe & a crown,
And now I am free, Praise His Name!⁶³

Object lessons were given by the Mission workers, Will and Susie Boyer, Eva Dick, Ethel and others. Some gave solemn, long-to-be-remembered warnings about temperance, obedience to parents, and following Jesus.

At noon a bounteous meal furnished by Fairview was spread on long tables under the trees. Here everyone could drink his fill of fresh country milk and eat all he wanted for a change.

These memories are vague to me but pleasant, and I have wondered if yet today there is some very elderly man or woman who remembers long ago being a city child out in the country for a day, and what it was like being on a farm, playing with country children and some of the lessons learned then.

Revival meetings

The Brethren in Christ were comparatively late in embracing the concept of "revival meetings" (also called "protracted meetings"),

⁶³ This song is no. 299 in William Booth, *Salvation Army Music* (Salvation Army Book Dept., 1900).

introducing them only during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. So, revivals or protracted meetings were a somewhat recent feature of Brethren in Christ life during Kathleen's childhood. They represented a denominational shift from a rather closed community to one seeking to bring others in from the outside. However, once having embraced the idea, two-week revivals became important semi-annual events and were enthusiastically promoted in local papers.

Revival meetings were important events at Fairview years ago. We were asked to put aside other things and concentrate our prayer and efforts on the services. They were held in winter or fall for a two-week period. If there was unusual interest, sometimes they were extended for a few days or even a week. There was preaching every night and at least twice on Sundays. Occasionally there was a day or so during the week when people met for prayer and confession. When Sunday afternoon meetings were held with altar service following, it turned into a truly all-day meeting.

I remember once when I was ten that I attended all three times and missed meals everywhere. When I got home that evening, I raided the ice-box and never did cold potatoes taste so good!

Invitations to come to Christ were often long and drawn out. It wasn't unusual for two hymns to be sung such as "Almost Persuaded," "Shall You? Shall I?" or "Lord, I'm Coming Home." As people gathered around to pray and encourage, they often sang choruses such as "I Can, I Will, I Do Believe," "Where He Leads Me," and "I Surrender All."⁶⁴

The songs we sang

Kathleen frequently mentions singing in her Reminiscences, an indication of its importance at the time. The 1906 hymnal debate preceded her birth by only a few years, so her parents' generation undoubtedly grew up using the older words-only hymnal which included no "gospel

⁶⁴ Music for these and other "invitation songs" can be found in hymnals and songbooks in the Thomas Music Collection in the Brethren in Christ Archives.

songs.”⁶⁵ *Kathleen and her agemates, on the other hand, grew up as the first Brethren in Christ generation to regularly sing from notated music.*

The repertoire of Kathleen’s generation was also shifting.⁶⁶ She recognized that Messiah Bible College played an increasingly prominent role in shaping Brethren in Christ musical preferences during her life, including song choices. By the late 1920s, Messiah groups were regular visitors to southern Ohio, and the enrollment of Ohio young people like Kathleen and Joe at MBC resulted in mutual support and influence. In this vignette, Kathleen notes the musical role of the Bergers, but it is clear that a love of music was shared by all the members of the Fairview church.

Singing was the only music at funerals, as there were no instruments. Usually there was a small group of people forming a sitting choir in the right corner of the old church. The family of the deceased would often give them a list of the hymns they desired sung. Frequently these were “Nearer My God to Thee,” “Jesus Lover of My Soul,” “Safe in the Arms of Jesus,” and “Going Down the Valley.” A bit later more popular requests were for “Eastern Gate,” “No Disappointment in Heaven,” “Lead Me Gently Home,” and “Does Jesus Care.” Still later, quartets or soloists sang these and other hymns.

As to our general singing, folks had their preferences and prejudices, tastes and judgments then as now. I recall one sister saying she didn’t like the song “I Shall Know Him by His Scars” because she didn’t think Christ would have scars in heaven. Another stated that she didn’t like to compare Christ with a hen or bird so she didn’t enjoy singing “Under His Wings.” “Beautiful Isle of Somewhere” was too vague. Some songs were conducive to toe-tapping rather than worship. But I don’t recall hearing that any song put anyone to sleep—which is nice.

⁶⁵ Copies of all Brethren in Christ hymnals are available in the Thomas Music Collection in the BIC Archives.

⁶⁶ Royce Saltzman discusses this in his dissertation. Royce H. Saltzman, “A Historical Study of the Function of Music among the Brethren in Christ” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1964).

Choruses didn't play an important part in our congregational singing, it seems to me. An early one was "I Love Jesus" sung by women followed by "So Do I" from the men, all joining in the chorus "I Love Jesus, He's My Saviour, Jesus smiles and He loves me, too." Another chorus was "One of them, One of them, I'm so glad that I can say I'm one of them." "Into My Heart," "Jesus, Sweetest Name I Know," and "I Love Him Because He First Loved Me" to the tune of "Old Black Joe" were other firsts for the congregation. Of course, the young people took quickly to choruses learned from those who returned from Messiah College or somewhat later from Youth for Christ rallies.

Two taught by Messiah students were "Lord, Keep Me on the Firing Line" and "If All Things Were Mine But Not the Saviour." A group of youths would sometimes meet at the home of Sam and Barbara Berger on Sunday afternoons. Ruth or Mary would play the piano, sometimes my father would instruct, and new songs were learned easily. Popular song books were those published by the white-robed Lehman family of California. They sang such unique numbers as "Telephone to Glory," "Fifty Miles of Elbow Room," "Flee Out of Sodom," "Sailing Home," and "There's a Better Day Coming." New songs weren't hard to find or learn.

With a larger congregation and piano and organ, our music, of course, has improved. It may also be, however, that we have lost some feeling of individual responsibility to join in earnestly and enthusiastically as our people sing. It is easier not to sight-read notes and easier to let the instruments, choir, or other voices carry on without our help. But worship is also an individual matter. Each Christian needs to lift his or her voice and "make a joyful noise" as we praise our God!

Youth activities

Kathleen's youth years coincided with America's so-called "roaring twenties." A lot was happening: technology was rapidly changing, new musical and artistic trends were afoot, and the post-war economy was booming.

However, Brethren in Christ teenagers mostly stood apart from their “worldly” agemates in many of these changes because of the sectarian nature of the Brethren in Christ church. Some left, of course, but those who remained in the church found pleasure in outdoor group activities, reading, and various church and community social events.

Sixty or seventy years ago what did Fairview children and young people do for social activities and entertainment? Movies, dances, fairs were not patronized! Radio and television did not exist for us. As I recall, children played more indoor and outdoor games and went skating and hiking. They read a lot of serial books, such as Elsie Dinsmore books for girls and Tom Swift for boys. Mothers seldom worked out of their homes, so both they and fathers, too, had more time with their children. I fondly remember the many times Mother took us children for long walks in the woods on Sunday afternoons. We loved Sunderland Falls and a spring within walking distance. It was fun to dam up a brook and make a wading pool.⁶⁷

As we grew older and wanted to be with our friends, we were allowed to go home from church with our Sunday school pals, have dinner there and play together until evening church service. Often church families entertained each other in their homes and the children and young people had good times together on Sundays. I remember one family who was friendly with mine and we also got together sometimes during the week. On hot days we occasionally went swimming in the Stillwater (not so polluted then) or at Fullers Pool. We girls dressed their cats in doll clothes and played in their big barn when we were small. Another of my friends invited me to a big threshing dinner—a new experience for me. That farm is now covered by the Englewood Plaza.

Of course, as we reached our teens we had our school friends as well as our church friends and there were birthday parties, holiday

⁶⁷ Sunderland Falls is located in Vandalia, Ohio.



Southern Ohio youth group.

parties, and picnics that were not church-sponsored.⁶⁸ Sunday School teachers entertained their pupils on their own. We gradually became acquainted with other “B in C” youth by attending their special meetings, sometimes staying in one another’s homes over love feast weekends, for example. Of course, while we were quite young we got a little acquainted with Dayton Mission children at the barn meetings on Iva Herr’s farm and by attendance now and then at the Mission.

Young people got to know other Christian youth at Youth for Christ rallies, camp meetings, etc. The United Missionary Church Camp at Ludlow Falls was a favorite gathering place.⁶⁹ Between sessions boys and girls roamed the woods and paths around the falls and got well enough acquainted to have their first dates by sitting together in the evening sessions!

⁶⁸ One noteworthy party was described in a local newspaper.

⁶⁹ The Ludlow Falls Church Camp played a unique role for local people from the 1900s through the 1930s. Numerous newspaper accounts attest to its popularity at the time.

Fairview youth always enjoyed getting together to sing. Some older ones who had been to Messiah brought home choruses and new songs. Berger's home was often open for "sings." And, Berger's Glen was a favorite place for informal social occasions.⁷⁰

Attending organized public sports on Sundays was considered a likely desecration of the Lord's Day. In fact, Sunday was indeed a quiet family day when commerce was shut down and very different from today. Family and friends, of course, engaged in games at home. We had a homemade tennis court on the edge of our property and Sunday afternoons were good times to play. But I remember limiting my time there for if I got tired out I felt I was violating the command to rest on the Sabbath. In those days we would have well understood the theme of "Chariots of Fire" and the young man who would not race on Sunday.

With all the informal activities there was a felt need for some more organized social and religious times among the Fairview, Highland, Pleasant Hill, and Springfield youth. Sometime around 1929 or 1930, the Tri-County Association was organized.⁷¹ It was not primarily a social organization but everyone enjoyed becoming acquainted with other BIC Church groups while serving together on committees and singing special songs. Meetings were generally held in homes in an informal atmosphere. We sometimes had church or educational leaders as speakers. We also gave programs in County Homes, Children's Homes, London Prison Farm and even in a migrant workers' camp.

Gradually in recent years, Memorial Holiness Camp, Camp Lakeview, Messiah College and church-sponsored musical, social and sports events have all served to encourage our youth to enjoy each other and develop loyalty toward Christ and the Church.

⁷⁰ Bergers Glen was a cottage located on the Stillwater River owned by the Samuel Berger family. The Bergers generously hosted people at their cottage.

⁷¹ The BIC Archives has early 1908 records of a youth organization at Fairview Church. It also has minutes from the Tri-County Association mentioned here.

Places and happenings

The schools

American education experienced significant changes during Kathleen's childhood and teen years. Her mother, Maud, was one of the earliest graduates of Randolph High School, which was established in the 1880s.⁷² Earlier one-room schools were giving way to bigger regional graded facilities, and local school boards were exerting increased control. Young intellectually-curious Brethren in Christ like Ohmer Herr were eager to improve their teaching skills at normal schools and universities. Kathleen's account of her school years evokes a Norman Rockwell image of children, "traction cars," and childhood friendships. The Dayton-Covington Traction line ran right in front of the Free house on Englewood's Main Street and served as a critical transportation service during Kathleen's childhood years.

In my childhood, Fairview Sunday School children were attending various public schools even as today. Some may have been at Union, Clayton (Salem), Happy Corner, Shiloh, or Dayton. But the majority were probably in the three-room Englewood Village School which is now the remodeled Earl Heck Building. I have a 60-year-old picture of the school which helps me recall Leah Cassel; Dale and Elam Dohner; Eunice Cassel; Howard, Vesta, and Ralph Hoke; Harold Paulus; Mildred and Ethel Wiemer; Walter, Marguerite, and Gladys Payne; Samuel, Jesse and Martha Hoover; besides my own family.

I started there in the same room in which my mother had attended high school fifteen years before. In fact, some of the decoration was faintly to be seen even then—a printed motto, VIRTUE IS OUR LEADING STAR. We walked in all kinds of weather from 551 S. Main, and many children walked much farther. When the 7:15 traction car passed our house we left our home and on the same signal the neighbor children opened their doors and joined us for our morning walk.

⁷² Heck, *The History of Englewood*, 37.

Sunday school pals were sometimes united in Randolph High School which is now the Tietzman Building. The Moist girls, Byron and Evelyn Wenger, Miriam Cassel (Byer), the Paulus children from the Highland congregation are some I remember. Incidentally, the high school building survived the tornado that swept through Englewood, blowing out windows and partitions. School books were scattered over the grounds. One songbook was open to "Whichever Way the Wind Doth Blow." Strange what silly things one remembers. But memories of all kinds crowd in too numerous to mention.

Englewood newsboy

Before the spread of radio in the 1920s, newspapers provided a primary source of information, local gossip, political dialog, and advertising. Kathleen's younger brother, Joseph, delivered newspapers to Englewood residents with occasional help from Kathleen. Englewood residents would have gotten their news mainly from the two Dayton newspapers, The West Milton Record, and the Englewood Enterprise.

Englewood had a population of about 275 when I lived here as a child. My brother Joe was the only newsboy of the village and I sometimes helped him as he delivered papers from door to door. We began after school was dismissed and in winter it was practically dark by the time we had finished our rounds. We would slop with our heavy boots through rain, snow, and mud. Not all the streets had sidewalks or were hard surfaced. Sometimes frigid winds would seep through our clothing and numb our fingers and toes.

Lights would gradually come on in the homes. (Electricity had come to Englewood only recently.) We would catch glimpses of families gathering for their evening meals as delicious fragrances were wafted from warm kitchens. With hungry stomachs, doors all shut and no one paying us the slightest attention, I occasionally experienced an irrational sense of exclusion.

But then how grand it was to arrive home at last to the warm, red glow of the base-burner and Mother's cheery, "Supper is ready!" Daddy arrived from the Post Office. Evelyn had set the table. Frances

was in her high chair. What a sense of family haven and acceptance! No more biting winds, frightening dogs, teasing town bullies, heavy papers dragging on one's shoulder! Burdens were laid down. We were home!

Englewood streets, shops, trolley

Englewood, Ohio, was first named Harrisburg and laid out in 1841 by Samuel Herr and others.⁷³ In his history of Englewood, Earl Heck notes the role of Brethren in Christ who were migrating from Pennsylvania:

The Herrs were among a large group of people who were rapidly coming from central Pennsylvania from Lancaster and Dauphin Counties who were members of the Brethren in Christ Church sometimes called the River Brethren. Many of them were settling west of Englewood where their descendants still lived and were excellent and prosperous farmers. Some of them lived in the village itself where the descendants of the original Quakers also lived; but many of these had gone north in the Stillwater Valley to settle in West Milton, Ludlow Falls, Pleasant Hill and Covington.⁷⁴

The 1841 platt made provision for residences, schools, and businesses, but it was still a small close-knit community when Kathleen was a child.

Englewood, when I was a child, was a country cross-roads town of about three hundred. It was spread out at the point where the old National Road running east and west crossed the Covington Pike (now Rt. 48), running north and south. West of town on the highest land for miles around was the white frame Fairview Church. Across from it was the cemetery looking out over the town and trees of the valley. When pioneers first settled this area, Wengers and Herrs owned good-sized portions of the town and land. And not far away were farms of Hoovers, Engles, Hokes, Moists, Kneisllys, Cassels, and others whose descendents are still a part of the Fairview congregation!

⁷³ Heck, 31ff.

⁷⁴ Heck, 31.

BRETHREN IN CHRIST
HISTORY & LIFE



Englewood Main Street at the Dayton-Covington Traction Car. Photo courtesy of Randolph Township Historical Society.

As the National Road was a main artery across the nation, many travelers passed this way. Coming east, the road went downhill into town, then steeply into the valley toward the Stillwater, through the long covered bridge, heading in a straight line for Vandalia. Of course, when the dam was built, following the 1913 flood, this direct east-west line was broken by the jog to the south where engineers ascertained that the terrain was more suitable for the dam.

Besides the two main streets there were a few short side streets: Walnut, Chestnut, Herr, Overlook, and Jefferson. We lived on Main Street south of the corporation line near where Stumps Market is now located. So for many years we children made the daily trek up to the three-room village school (now the remodeled Earl Heck Building).

In those days the traction car ran on tracks in the middle of Main Street. When the 7:15 AM car whizzed past our house, this was the signal for us to open the front door and join the neighbor kids who opened their doors at the same time and walked on our way to school.

Other children walked with us, dogs followed us, and we knew who lived in most of the homes we passed. Once a mother brought out her first-grade daughter and asked if she could walk with us as she feared the dogs. I was proud that she trusted us and after that she joined us daily.

Sometimes there were interesting sights along the way. We passed Metherd's sawmill and when it was operating we would stop, put our fingers into our ears, and watch the huge logs go through the big saw blades. Of course, we weren't allowed to get very near since Willie Koogler broke his leg badly by getting near those large logs.

As we passed the home of Mr. Huddle, the butcher, we could sometimes see a big white hog carcass hanging on a side porch, always a rather startling sight. We came to the white Eaton's Hotel on the corner of town. On the north corner was the Farmers State Bank, considered a fine new brick building, replacing the old frame one that had burned down. As we passed the bank we talked about brave Della Rush who stepped on the burglar alarm and scared away the bank robbers: The bank had rewarded her with a fine diamond ring.

Across the street from the bank was Waymire's grocery owned by Chuck's great-grandfather, grandfather, and father in succession, I believe. Mother would sometimes let me stop there to buy cookies or a banana for my lunch box.

If we stopped there at the center of town and glanced up the National Road, we could see Dr. Furnas' office, Kauffman's Plumbing, Baker's Elevator, and Berger Lumber Co. of which Lucy's grandfather was a partner. There may have been a train on the track crossing the road near the elevator or lumber yard. The C. H. & D. train ran from Cincinnati, Hamilton and Delphos. It was going to or coming from Kinsey Station a mile south where, years before, my great-grandfather shipped nursery stock to other parts of Ohio.

The post office, shoe repair place, and Stout's Candy Shop were across from the school. Between the bank and school were the blacksmith shop, barbershop, and Albert's Drugstore, where we bought our school supplies and textbooks. Mr. Albert was seldom seen without his pipe so our books long held the aroma of his tobacco.

Changes through the years make it difficult to remember which businesses came first. I remember the blacksmith shop was still in operation during early school days and perhaps still existed after Leiber's filling station began and maybe the garage owned by Hermie

Betz, Byron's uncle. For quite a while autos and horse-drawn vehicles existed side by side. For instance, my father owned a Ford which he used to run a mail route out of Dayton and for the family, while my grandfather was using his horse and buggy. People began to use cars so the traction became less and less used.

Other changes easy to remember had profound effects on our little village. How wonderful it was to have electric lights in our homes! I recall how intrigued I was with our first table lamp. It was small but had a rose silk shade that glowed so lovely! No more chimneys to wash! And to come home from school and find Mother ironing with an electric iron!

The 1913 flood, the actual event I do not remember but the effects were earth-shaking to our neighborhood, and the subsequent building of the conservancy dams lingered through much of my childhood. The first time I was aware of the corporation line being extended was when word got round that Grandma Tate's orchard farm to the south was to be subdivided into lots along two new streets, Orchard and Tate. After that development there seemed very little until after the country recovered from the Great Depression when there was almost no building in Englewood.

The consolidation of schools in Randolph Township with school buses running through our streets was another change. In many ways our town has had a good history. Godly people were here from the start. There have been no bad fires, floods, earthquakes, or tornados, and relatively few unusual tragedies. It is a good place to live.

Dayton and the big flood

*The Dayton flood of 1913 had a huge impact on the people of the Miami Valley. Indeed, the Englewood Dam was one local consequence of the flood. Kathleen recalled an oft-repeated story about Jake Hoover and his harrowing flood experience.*⁷⁵

During the 1913 flood, the river below Englewood was rising steadily and rapidly covering the surrounding farmland. On that dark

⁷⁵ For more details see Heck, 42-44.

rainy afternoon word came that a family was marooned across the river. To aid them, two Englewood men, Jake Hoover and John West, went down with a boat and launched it in the back water. But as soon as the boat reached the main current of the stream, the raging force capsized it and the men were thrown into the water. John was swept away and as I have heard, his body was never recovered.

Jake was carried into some overhanging tree limbs, which he grabbed and held onto desperately. He was able to climb into the slippery tree and in the cold drizzle he was to spend a frightening night while the dark waters rolled beneath him. In deadly earnest he called on God to save his soul, promising to serve Him the rest of his life. God preserved him and encouraged him during that awful night, and he was rescued the next day.

For several years Jake held a prayer meeting in his home on that anniversary date and townspeople from the Englewood churches came to hear his experience and share his praises to God. I think the one I remember was the fourth or fifth one our family attended.

Reaching Messiah Bible College

The "National Road" was critical for American expansion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, providing a route to the west for many. And, it came directly through Englewood past the Fairview Church, so it held special significance for local Ohio Brethren in Christ. The preferred route from Englewood to Grantham, Pennsylvania appeared in the Evangelical Visitor in 1926 and was about 475 miles, and in Fall of 1927, the National Road provided Kathleen Aiken and others the first leg of their route to Messiah Bible College.⁷⁶ By the late 1920s, the connection between Messiah and southern Ohio ran deep—deep enough to bring Prof Miller to Englewood for the double wedding of Samuel Berger's two daughters in 1928.⁷⁷ The school was at a pivotal juncture in its history, and Kathleen and Joe Aiken's generation played

⁷⁶ The 1926 instructions for getting from Dayton to Grantham appeared in: O. B. Ulery, "An Invitation," *Evangelical Visitor*, March 15, 1926, 2.

⁷⁷ "Wedding of Former Pleasant Hill Girls," *Miami Union*, June 14, 1928, 6.

a vital role in its growth during the 1930s. Remnants of these older connections still exist today.

On a warm fall morning in 1927 the time had come to spread our wings a bit and go off to Messiah College. Mother's old trunk was now filled with clothing and I wrote "Packing for Messiah" below the line my Mother had written "Packing for Oxford" about two years before. But Oxford was near at hand compared with crossing the mountains in far-off Pennsylvania.

Albert Hoke was to drive his seven-passenger Buick and take his daughter Vesta, and Fern and Olive Schneider (brought from Michigan), Jesse Hoover and Albert Brennaman from Pleasant Hill, and me. We started out quite gaily but the day became hotter and we were too heavily loaded. We had sent trunks by rail but we still had plenty of impedimentia.

I'm not sure when we had our first blow-out. But fixing tires became the order of the day. Noon found us seventy miles from home, sitting in a garage where Albert H. bought a new tire or so, and I believe that was the last of that kind of trouble.

You newer travelers must remember that this route in 1927 from Englewood to Grantham is something like BC and AD. Now you drive a shorter, smoother, wider, leveler highway through tunnels instead of over the summits. I had made the trip prior to this in a Model A Ford, grinding at a snail's pace up the long winding roads toward the peaks, then rather suddenly rushing downhill at breakneck speeds accompanied by the odor of scorching rubber, praying that no car would be crossing in the valley below if the brakes gave way completely. I've wondered if that was easier than my great great grandfather's family's journey in the covered wagon from the Shenandoah Valley to Ohio when, to save their struggling horses, they had to throw away their precious big iron kettle near Natural Bridge, Virginia. (They also lost their little pet dog in that vicinity.)

Well, the Buick had good power, as I recall, until in the higher parts of the mountains, engine trouble began. We realized we had to get off the road. When one must, it is great to have seven passengers,



The Ohio/Michigan gang traveled the "Turkeynest Hill" curves on the National Road (east of Uniontown, PA) after dark. Vintage postcard.

especially if it is uphill. No, I can't say it was uphill, but it seemed like it! We got onto a little side road and I remember eating [lunch] something there, packed by our mothers' loving hands. Albert and the boys did a fix-up job and we moved on.

I certainly can't remember how many stops of all kinds we made. Even if I could tell you, people of these days would probably not believe me anyway. But soon we realized that there was a lot more trip than time ahead of us. Memory blurs about all the big and little hindrances that delaying our progress. The breath-taking panoramas of gorgeous fall scenery seen from the summits became less intriguing as night shades began to descend. It became harder to read the road signs. But we didn't get into trouble about that until we left the National Road. Then we evidently missed a sign and began to wander about like lost sheep in the dark.

After we had wandered about for considerable time, we found that places where we might have inquired were closed for the night. When we caught sight of a colonnaded building in a city, someone exclaimed,

“Oh, there’s the capitol! We must be in Harrisburg.” We found this statement not very accurate and had some good laughs about it even though we were getting very weary.

Poor Albert must have been exhausted by the trials of the day, but he remained good-natured and patient. Once he remarked that he felt drowsy and that we had better keep talking to help keep him awake. I thought I could be fairly good at that, so I took the seat beside him and kept a conversation going for the remainder of the trip. He probably regretted ever making his suggestion!

Anyone who used to travel to Grantham knows that the curving country roads around Messiah College are not easily found by strangers in the middle of the night. Perhaps the Israelites, having reached the Promised Land after wandering around in the wilderness for forty years, felt a little like we did when we pulled up in front of Old Main. Campus lights were on and the entrance and halls lit, but all the dormitory rooms and campus buildings were dark. As I recall, there wasn’t one lighted window.

No one was expecting us. It was a day or so before registration, and we supposed only a few out-of-state students would have arrived. Nothing was locked. We just walked down the dorm halls knocking on doors. After some of this, with no response, we heard a sleepy, “Come.”

We opened the door. We girls stepped in. Someone snapped on a light and a strange sight met our eyes. My first impression was something like—Triplet Ghosts! The sheets and nighties, being mostly white in those days, seemed to accentuate the darkness and the three girls in the double bed sat up startled and blinking at us with three of the blackest pairs of eyes I had ever seen, or so it seemed. Anyone acquainted with our Rhoda Lenhert, then from Kansas, Pearl Crider also from Kansas, and Ruth Taylor from Michigan, would know what I mean. The scene conveyed the idea that beds were in short supply. So it wasn’t surprising that they couldn’t tell us where to sleep. But they said the only staff member around was the cook, Mrs. Light. We thanked them only half realizing how hard it must have been to

awaken from a sound sleep after the exhausting trip from Kansas.

Mrs. Light kindly said we might go out to President Hess's home. Arriving there without getting lost, we were hospitably received by the president and his wife Elizabeth (Eunice's aunt), although they too, must have been awakened from a deep sleep after an extra busy day. (Albert B. and Jesse had found a place to sleep in the boys' hall.)

Indeed we must have felt that we had crossed the Jordan when we sank into the cool, soft beds to forget the ascents, descents, curves and pushes around the mountains and know at last we had reached Messiah.

The tin cup

Kathleen's short vignette titled "The Tin Cup" seems like an appropriate benediction for this collection of her memories as it encapsulates her understanding of the ultimate reason for the church.

Since the old Fairview Church was along the National Road, many weary travelers passed our doors, not only in cars and wagons, but so did hitch-hikers and those wanderers of years gone by, the tramps. Once in a while travelers might stop and attend services with us as they crossed the continent.

I remember one young hitch-hiker who stopped to worship with us, and after the service we invited him home for dinner. We had a very pleasant visit together for a while. After some time had passed we even received an unexpected "thank you" card from him upon his arrival at his destination in St. Louis.

I remember, too, on the church lawn near the front door was a pump with a bright tin cup wired to it. Many a worn passerby could quench his thirst there and wash away his dusty grime. I liked the thought that our church could be the instrument for satisfying both spiritually and physically thirsty ones who would come to the waters there.