

LUDLOW FALLS CAMP MEETING

100th Anniversary: 1899-1999

CAMP MEETING NUMBER

The Home Missionary

Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church

Volume IV.

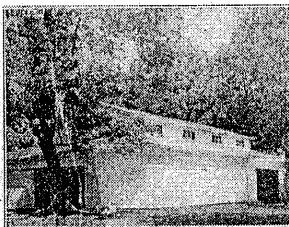
Pandora, Ohio, July and August, 1931

Number 7

Annual Camp Meeting August 6-16, 1931



Rev. R. P. DITMER, P. E.



Camp Meeting Auditorium



Rev. JACOB HYGEMA, Bible Teacher and Young People's Worker

SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Readers:

At this time we come to you in this the Camp Meeting issue. Again we approach the time of meeting, out in the quiet of nature, for the purpose of rest from the cares of life in blessed communion of the soul with God.

Many of us date the time of an epoch in our lives to a camp meeting when the soul came into a new relation with our Lord. Hence we support the camp with an increased zeal and soul passion.

Shall we not remind ourselves that successful camps are the inevitable result of faithful praying and whole-hearted co-operation of all. Of the achievement of the reconstructed walls of Jerusalem it is said, "they all had a mind to work." Great events, both secular and spiritual, are made possible not by the initiative and industry of one but by many who stand together in a common interest. Our God is able. Though there be giants in the land He is able. Let us pray expectantly that the woods may again

ring with the shouts of victory.

We are pleased to report that the Lord has been blessing the Home Mission work. The reports with little exception are encouraging and the work is making progress. Since last writing a tent meeting has been held at Melrose, Springfield, and an abandoned church has been re-opened for services. The co-operation of the ministry and laity throughout the meeting was splendid and the Lord's blessing was on the effort.

Shall we not all rally to the work and prayerfully take heed that in these times of pressure and trouble we shall not suffer a loss of vision but rather an increase.

In conclusion, let us pray and support in every way possible, the work and workers. Pray for this our great mission, also visiting it when we can. Yours in His service,

R. P. DITMER.

Shoulders for crosses; heads for crowns. If we wear a crown in glory we must win it in this life. Seeking now to fit our shoulders to bear the cross we shall find at the judgment our head fitted to wear the crown. For every soul we cheer along will be there and help to crown us as we sing redemption's song.

Happiness grows at our own feed-sides and is not to be picked in strangers' gardens.—Douglas Jerrold.

HINTS FOR CAMP MEETING GOERS

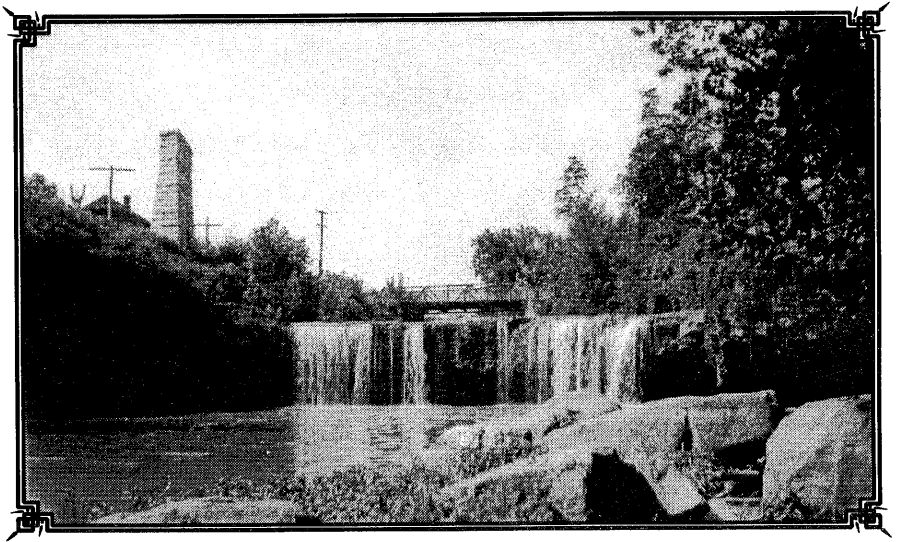
E. B. Shelhammer

The writer does not pretend to know all that is to be known, but after attending camp meetings for more than forty years, he has learned a few things that may be helpful to others who attend.

1. Get ready. Begin days or even weeks beforehand to lay aside just such things as you will need—subbers, umbrellas, heavy coat, fan, soap, wash-cloths, hand mirror, writing paper, pens, pencils, your Bible, and various utensils for camping, should you do your own cooking.
2. Prepare for the best and for the worst. As soon as you arrive, dig a ditch around your tent and put your suitcases, trunks, or bed on sticks or stones so as to keep them dry underneath in case of a sudden rain. Lay plenty of sunshine and fresh air in, so that nothing molds or mildews. Stretch a rope or wire high up from pole to pole in your tent where you can hang clothing.
3. Plan to "Stay Through." Do not let the cares or cattle of home get

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LUDLOW FALLS CAMP MEETING



100th Anniversary
1899-1999

Ludlow Falls Camp Meeting 100th Anniversary: 1899-1999

Introduction

1999 marks the 100th anniversary of the first camp meeting held at Ludlow Falls, Ohio by the Missionary Church. On July 27, 1899 the opening service occurred in a grove sponsored by the Ohio District of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. An article in the June 27, 1899 Gospel Banner announced this camp meeting complete with directions to the “beautiful park adjoining Ludlow village.”¹

The American Camp Meeting

Camp meeting was a powerful force in 19th century America. It originated on the frontier among the Presbyterians. One of the most spectacular ever held took place at Cane Ridge, Kentucky in August of 1801. The actual factors that precipitated camp meetings were two-fold: protracted meetings in the church which became so overcrowded that they had to be held outdoors; and folks traveling a distance who were compelled to stay overnight. Hence, the camp meeting grew out of the revivals of the “Second Great Awakening” as a means of reaching a rapidly increasing population on the western frontier.² Cane Ridge became a symbol of nineteenth century revivalism.

As a frontier religious force, the Methodists were undoubtedly the most effective. Fueled by John Wesley's claim that "the world is my parish" and challenged by an unrelenting passion demonstrated by Francis Asbury, Methodists grabbed hold of the camp meeting model when regular Presbyterians abandoned it. Although the Methodists never formally recognized the camp meeting as an official tool of the church, it came to symbolize American frontier religion.³ On the eve of the Civil War, revivalists Charles Finney and Phoebe Palmer brought the camp meeting to the urban center further establishing its place of prominence in the nineteenth century revival movement.⁴

The Missionary Church Camp Meetings

Camp meeting in the Missionary Church began in 1880 at Fetter's Grove near Elkhart, Indiana. Church co-founder, Daniel Brennemen, led the ten day encampment at which an estimated 3,000 people attended. The theme at the first camp, and others to follow, was holiness . . . "many entered into the higher life or blessed state of sanctification."⁵ Initially, there was some opposition to camp meetings among early church leaders. To some it seemed ridiculous to go into the woods to hear the gospel when there were so many churches around. Others objected to the time and money spent carrying on these protracted meetings. A few were convinced that holding camp meeting services on Sunday was sure

to bring about a great deal of confusion.⁶ Ultimately the overwhelming success of Fetter's Grove at instilling spiritual fervor in believers and drawing the lost to Christ overcame these objections. The northern Indiana experience served to spawn other camp meetings in the Missionary Church, not the least of which was a camp in the Ohio District.⁷

Camp Meetings in the Ohio District

Five years later in 1885 Ohio's first camp meeting was scheduled at Englewood. Two years earlier Englewood had been the site of the merging conference of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ denomination, a forerunner of the Missionary Church. A vibrant local church had been established prior to the 1883 merger. It seemed appropriate to hold the first Ohio District Camp at the same location where church leaders had gathered from Ontario, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Ohio to consummate a union that produced a young, visionary denomination. Thus in August of 1885 the "pilgrims" gathered in a grove where "souls were saved . . . others reclaimed . . . and many sanctified."⁸ Two Mennonite Brethren in Christ church founders, Solomon Eby from Ontario and Daniel Brenneman from Indiana, traveled a significant distance to attend this event. A group of 25 accompanied Eby and Brenneman and certainly added to the excitement of this first Ohio camp. In his report to the Gospel Banner, Eby proclaimed the Ohio

camp meeting a “grand success.”⁹ Brenneman noted in the September 1, 1885 Gospel Banner that this initial encampment resulted in a “complete victory for God.”¹⁰

There were no permanent structures at this first camp. Tents were the order of the day, for sleeping, eating and services. The speakers were mostly local with the exception of Eby and Brenneman. At one evening service, sixteen preachers spoke five minutes each. Brenneman reported that prejudices towards camp meetings were overcome by the Englewood Camp and that three new converts were baptized in the final service.¹¹ There would be no lingering doubts about future camp meetings in the Ohio District. They were to become a permanent fixture. However, a camp meeting site would not be permanent for another 35 years. In 1886 the Ohio District Camp was held in a grove near Potsdam. For over a decade the site alternated between Englewood and Potsdam. In 1897 the district camp was held in Harshman’s Grove east of Dayton.¹² The proximity of a local railroad station weighed heavily in determining the site of these meetings. Most folks traveled by horse and buggy, but church dignitaries from a distance and guest speakers often came via Pullman cars.¹³

Ludlow Falls

In 1899 the Ohio District held its camp meeting at Ludlow Falls for the first time. An announcement in the Gospel Banner a month earlier invited the “pilgrims in Ohio” to rent a sleeping tent for \$1.75 and bring appropriate bedding.¹⁴ Guests from other conferences were also invited. A month later Indiana-Ohio Conference Presiding Elder, Daniel Brenneman, reported in the Gospel Banner that camp meeting services were in progress and “thousands” from all directions were in attendance.¹⁵ H.S. Hallman, an Ontario elder and Gospel Banner editor, reported that the Ludlow Falls site impressed him “with the beauty and convenience of the grounds, it being in a park across the river from the station.” He was equally impressed by the ministering Ohio brethren who seemed to demonstrate “good courage.” After listening to the reports of the ministering sisters at Ludlow Falls Camp, Hallman declared “the city mission work in Ohio is promising.”¹⁶

Apparently the attractiveness of Ludlow Falls was a drawing point for the Ohio district. Brenneman estimated that the attendance at the final service on August 6, 1899 was 10,000 and required the use of four different locations on the grounds simultaneously to preach the gospel.¹⁷ It seems difficult to imagine a crowd that large at Ludlow Falls. In fact, church historian, Everek Storms, states that such an estimate was too high.¹⁸ However, even if the attendance was half this estimated size, it

still reached phenomenal proportions considering the available resources and facilities. It is no wonder that when a heavy rainstorm hit the Ludlow Falls area and tore down the tabernacle tent burying hundreds of campers, no one felt particularly discouraged. Instead they praised God for His protecting care over His people. Daniel Brenneman reported that many souls were saved, others sanctified and those of broken fellowship were publicly reconciled.¹⁹

One of the driving forces behind the early camp meetings in the Ohio District was Andrew Good. Formerly with the Wengerite faction of the Brethren in Christ, he joined the Missionary Church (MBC) in 1885. Good promoted camp meetings whenever and wherever he could. A frequent speaker during the early years of the Ohio Camp, he traveled over 200,000 miles for the sake of proclaiming the gospel. He served as the Presiding Elder of the Ohio District for three years (1887-1890) but spent the better part of his ministry devoted to evangelistic work.²⁰

Harold Steele's 1981 account of district camp meetings around the turn of the century give a detailed portrayal of life at Ludlow Falls. Family camp meant folks of all ages attended services. Most church families were farmers and camp meeting was the closest thing to a vacation many of them ever experienced. Each family brought (or rented) a tent (12' X 14') from home along with bedstead, water buckets and basins. Mattresses were ticks filled with fresh straw. Eventually families began

placing wooden floors under their tents. Rainstorms during camp were always a challenge for tent dwellers. Initially, the tabernacle was a large tent, similar to what the traveling circus used. At night it was lit with kerosene lamps. Stakes were driven into the ground and planks were nailed across them to serve as backless pews. Another tent was erected to serve as a mess hall. Meals were frequently similar to picnics. Camp meeting usually lasted ten days and ended on Sunday night.²¹

Purchasing a Camp Meeting Site

Even with the great success of the 1899 camp meeting at Ludlow Falls, a permanent site still had not been secured. From 1900 until 1919 Ohio District camp meetings were held at Phillipsburg, Greenville, Salem, Tecumseh, Englewood, Gettysburg, Potsdam and New Carlisle. All of these were locations of productive and well-attended camp meeting services. Nevertheless, district leaders were determined to acquire their own property.

In 1920 the Ohio District purchased 12 acres from Mrs. Eliza Smith for \$5,500 thus procuring what was to become known as Ludlow Falls Camp, the first permanent camping site of the Ohio District. The next year the tabernacle and boarding house were built. Eventually cottages and dormitories replaced tents. By the middle of the 20th century additional property was purchased and several new buildings

constructed. Harold Steele has chronicled all of these expansion projects in his exhaustive history of the Ohio District (1981).²²

Conclusion

The camp meeting heritage of the Missionary Church has contributed largely to what the denomination is today. A strong emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer was proclaimed in the earliest camp meetings. The current emphasis in the denomination's mission statement to be "holy people" reflects this teaching. Camp meetings have always been a place where the saved are revived, the lost are converted and missions/evangelism are promoted. While our society has changed significantly over the past century, the call to be saved, to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to share the claims of Christ with a lost world remains constant. Although the delivery systems will change, the needs are the same. The challenge for the Missionary Church in the 21st century is to take that "old time" gospel message of salvation to a new generation of seekers.

Dennis D. Engbrecht, Ph.D.

Bethel College

July, 1999

Endnotes

¹Daniel Brenneman, "Ohio es Campmeeting," Gospel Banner, Vol. 22, No. 26, (June 27, 1899), p. 9.

²William Warren Sweet, Revivalism in America, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), p. 122.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 129-131.

⁴Timothy L. Smith, Revivalism & Social Reform, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), pp. 60, 67-68.

⁵ Daniel Brenneman, "The Camp-meeting," Gospel Banner, Vol. 3, No. 16, (Aug. 15, 1880), p. 4.

⁶ Everek R. Storms, History of the United Missionary Church, (Elkhart: Bethel Publishing, 1958), p. 171-72.

⁷The Ohio District was actually a part of the Indiana-Ohio District until 1901.

⁸Solomon Eby, "Harrisburg Camp Meeting," Gospel Banner, Vol. 8, No. 17, (September 1, 1885), p. 9.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰ Daniel Brenneman, "Missionary Tidings," Gospel Banner, Vol. 8, No. 19, (October 1, 1885), p. 10.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Harold E. Steele, Historical Background of the Missionary Church and a History of the Ohio District, (New Carlisle: no publisher, 1981), p. 52.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Daniel Brenneman, "Ohio Campmeeting," Gospel Banner, Vol. 22, No. 26, (June 27, 1899), p. 9.

¹⁵Daniel Brenneman, "Ohio Camp Meeting" Gospel Banner, Vol. 22, No. 32, (August 8, 1899), p. 8.

¹⁶H.S. Hallman, "Ohio Camp Meeting," Gospel Banner, Vol. 22, No. 33, (August 15, 1899), p. 8.

¹⁷Daniel Brenneman, "Ohio Camp Meeting," Gospel Banner, Vol. 22, No. 33, (August 15, 1899), p. 13.

¹⁸Storms, op. cit., p. 111.

¹⁹ Daniel Brenneman, "Ohio Camp Meeting," Gospel Banner, Vol. 22, No. 33, (August 15, 1899), p. 13.

²⁰J.A. Huffman, Mennonite Brethren in Christ, (New Carlisle: Bethel Publishing, 1920), p. 236-37.

²¹Steele, op.cit. p. 67.

²²Ibid, pp. 67-70, 87-91.

Sponsored by the United Missionary Churches of Ohio.

LUDLOW FALLS CAMP MEETING

August 11 - 11, 1963

CAMP WORKERS



GENERAL EVANGELIST:
Dr. C. L. Armstrong of Wilmore, Ky.
Speaking: Morning Bible Study 10:45 A.M.
Evangelistic Service 7:30 P.M.



SONG EVANGELISTS:
Rev. & Mrs. Howard Brenneman of Fairborn, Ohio



YOUTH EVANGELIST:
Rev. John Moran of Liberty Mills, Ind.
Speaking: Morning Youth Service 9:30 A.M.
Inspirational Hour 2:30 P.M.



CHILDREN'S WORKER:
Mrs. DeLois Crocker of Cincinnati, Ohio



CAMP CHAIRMAN:
Rev. Norman D. Zimmerman of Springfield, Ohio