



The House Of Yoder Newsletter Summer 2022

Berry Picking

Story written by Bennie C. Yoder

“I can recall very well when I was a small boy of about 8 years of age, of an incident that really convinced me of a real God!

At that time in the early summer when the cherries were ripe down in the West Virginia Mountains, lots of people went to pick cherries on “Cherry Day.” Some people still go, but I don’t think near as many go now a day as did then. Anyway, there was an older man, Benj Summy, who always had a lot of cherry orders to fill and he always went. We left early in the morning around 4 o’clock or so and drove for about 1 1/2 hours then waited in line till 7 or 8 o’clock until the orchard opened. Sometimes the cars were in line well over a mile long waiting to get in.

On this particular trip Benj had a lot of orders to pick and he wanted someone to go along to watch his cherries when he went to check for other trees. So he asked my dad and Mother if I could go along. My mother did not like the idea! But I desperately want-

ed to go. So I was “Big and Brave!” Mother then told stories of how some people kidnap children and this is far from home. But my brave heart was sure nothing would happen to me! Dad had said I could go if I wanted to go, so I decided I wanted to go.

I slept at the neighbors house who were going too. Early the next morning we got up, with all the pails ready, we left for the cherry orchards of Pinto, WV. We waited all the while till we got in. Finally we were picking cherries, and oh, such a crop! They were big and juicy! The trees were big and everything was on a steep hillside. The orchard was huge! I don’t know how big it is today, but in my child’s mind, I imagined it to be around 100 acres!

At around noon, my neighbor decided it’s time to go home. Oh, by then, the sun was so warm. I had eaten cherries to last a long while, and I was READY to go too, but.....my

job was just starting! So he left and Benj and I were left behind for another 1/2 day of picking! Another driver was to pick us up a 6:00 p.m. The afternoon did go fairly fast until..... Benj decided the grass is greener somewhere else! So he left me with the cherries and went scouting for better picking on other trees. He told me to stay right there and fill another bucket. This I did and no Benj returned. He left me alone around 3:00 in the afternoon. Finally about 1 1/2 hours later, I ran down the lane where he had gone to find him. Well, a little ways down there were several forks in the road, and I had no idea which one he took ! So I went back to the cherries. I waited and waited. I watched a farmer bale hay in the valley below. Finally it was about 6 o'clock, and Oldman Benj was still not back!! Then I was really worried to say the least. Mother's stories started rolling through my mind. I was horror struck as I knew by then that I was lost on the mountain side.

I heard other people talking and I heard a voice that sounded just like Joel Yoder's (my Dad's cousin) so I called his name different times but I got no answer. I didn't know what to do, so I sat down and cried for a while. MY big brave heart had melted and I felt like what I was, a lost, lonely child, wishing to be home with my family.

So after some thought, it came to me, maybe God could help! So I got on my knees and prayed the only prayer I know; "The Lord's Prayer" and I trusted that God would hear me before I started. That was the first time I can remember of having really prayed! I had just

said "Amen" and was still on my knees, when a loud booming voice said: "Here he is!!" Oh, I was found!! How grateful I was and I knew then God really did hear my prayer. Ever since then, my trust in God started to grow and grow, but Satan still tries my faith at times!

Well, I got home to see my Mother was very worried and I'm sure she was praying for her lost boy too. It was some past 9 o'clock when I came home, I was several hours late. Benj then admitted that he was lost and somehow got to the scale shanty but had no idea where to find me. So the orchard personnel were out looking for me too. I never wanted that job again, but now looking back, I'm so thankful that God allowed me to have that experience as then God was very REAL and He still is. Therefore, I say, Remember now thy Creator in the days of they youth... Ecc. 12:1."

The previous story was written by Bennie C. Yoder (YR261195943), son of Clarence A. Yoder and Mary Idella Yoder. Bennie grew up and lives on PA State Route 669 between Springs, PA and Salisbury, PA. Bennie was born November 12, 1951. He married Mary Kinsinger. Mary passed away October 15, 1998. Bennie then married Arie Stolpzfus. Arie was born May 8, 1947. Bennie and his family operated a green house for many years. Bennie is now retired from the greenhouse, but is a consultant to many Amish families and businesses. Bennie is an Associate Board Member of The House of Yoder. Thank You Bennie for sharing your story

The following is an update on Christian Yoder (YR2611a) who was robbed and tortured by the McClellandtown gang on April 13, 1889. Christian's story appears in the June 2014 House of Yoder Newsletter and also on the Yoder Newsletter website. In The Somerset Herald (Somerset, PA) December 1, 1897 Christian's son Eli, took his father to lunacy court, where he sought to make it appear that his father is mentally disqualified from taking care of his estate, witnessed here last week. Christian was found sane and able to manage his affairs by a jury of six men.

The newspaper article stated that it is very unusual for two Mennonite (Amish) brethren to take each other to court. This statement must have raised the ire of Christian J. Yoder, (Yankee Crist) YR261184. "Yankee Crist" responded with his own letter to the newsletter, rationalizing that it was ok for Eli to sue his father, Christian for lunacy, since he was not in good standing with the local Amish church.

THE ROBBERY OF CHRISTIAN YODER

By the McClellandtown Gang

April 13, 1889.

"NOT A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH"

**Mennonites Were Not at Law in the
Christian Yoder Case**

The (Meyersdale, PA) Commercial reproduced the article written for The (Somerset, PA) Herald two weeks ago relating to the court in lunacy appointed to inquire into the mental responsibility of Christian Yoder, of Elk Lick Township, Somerset County, PA. The facts set forth in regard to the elder Yoder's church relationship were given substantially as told by that gentleman.

Now comes Mr. C. J. Yoder, Jr., of Elk Lick Township, who writes as follows in The Commercial:

The good old gentleman, Christian Yoder, Sr., positively is no member of the Mennonite church or a branch thereof. He was dismissed in 1893, for misconduct: (I will not name here what it was,) but he still wears the uniform and is thereby intruding on the branch of the Mennonite church, (called Amish) he formerly belonged to, by still wearing the uniform and thereby misleading the opinions of many, who take it for granted that he still upholds his former faith by his outward appearances.

The cases are rare, if any, in the history of our country, that two brethren belonging to the Mennonite church, or a branch thereof, would go to court to settle any disputes in any way, shape or form. The way they settle disputes and the only way is by an arbitration of three men (members in good standing) or in the congregation, such as the case may be. But after a member is dismissed for a time, and makes no effort to repent, lead a better life and unite again with the church, he is no more a member of the Mennonite church or a branch thereof, than Charley Lewis or any one of similar character.

Therefore, Eli Yoder had a right to go to court with his father under the circumstances, but still it would have been more brotherly-like could they have settled it outside the court.

I was born and reared with one-half mile of Mr. Yoder's and know him for many years and know just what I am talking about, and am ready to substantiate every word to the letter I write on this topic"

This was written six months before he, Christian J. Yoder (Yankee Crist) married Amanda Miller

Mrs. Fannie Klingaman a Domestic Worker at Time of Christian Yoder Robbery

The Republic (Meyersdale, PA) Printed Thursday, July 20, 1961

“The report of the robbery of Christian Yoder (YR2611a) near Summit Mills (PA) in 1889 which appeared in a recent issue of The Meyersdale Republican was of particular interest to Mrs. Fannie Klingaman of 209 Lincoln Ave. Meyersdale, PA

Mrs. Klingaman, although this fact did not appear in the historical account of the incident, was there at the time and was one of the principals in the bizarre story.

87 Years of Age

Although she is now 87 years of age, Mrs. Klingaman recalls the robbery of Christian Yoder as clearly as if the incident had occurred yesterday.

Before her marriage, Mrs. Klingaman was a Wilhelm and her home was located over the Berkley Mill flat of Meyersdale—the residence is now occupied by Miss Edith Wilhelm, a retired local school teacher.

When Mrs. Klingaman was young, she did housework for various people in the area and had accepted a position in the Christian Yoder home.

There was plenty of farm work to be done in those days as much had to be done by hand. For this reason, Mrs. Klingaman was hired to aid the Yoder housekeeper, Ellen Baker, who was middle-aged.

Mrs. Klingaman was able to fill in some of the

detail which did not appear in the original story.

On a Saturday evening, just two weeks before the robbery occurred, two men came to the Yoder farm home and asked for something to eat. Mr. Yoder would never turn anyone away from his door and told the two men they could eat with them if they wanted to eat what they had.

Made Inquiries

The two men came into the house and ate supper. While they were eating, they constantly kept inquiring about area farmers, asking, among other things, who was the wealthiest. Mr. Yoder was tight-lipped and failed to divulge any information.

Just two weeks later, also on a Saturday night, as the Baker woman and Mrs. Klingaman were cleaning up after supper, two men came into the house from the rear door and both had their faces covered with cloth, through which slits had been cut for their eyes.

Samuel Stevanus, the hired hand who was at the Yoder home, along with Mr. and Mrs. Yoder, at the time, later identified the two men as the same ones who had come to get something to eat two weeks before.

At the time the two men came in, Ellen Baker was washing dishes and Mrs. Klingaman was

removing mush from a cook pot. The family had eaten mush and milk that night.

Ran with Her Mush

Mrs. Klingaman recalls that she grabbed her pan of mush and ran into another room. Ellen Baker went into this room with her. Mrs. Klingaman placed the pan of mush on a chair and later one of the robbers almost sat in the mush.

Scared practically stiff, Mrs. Klingaman recalls that the robbers went through the house, ransacking everything in the paths. Beds were upset, with covers and mattresses thrown to the floor. Everything was a shambles when they got through.

Mr. Yoder was taken to the barn twice by the robbers in an effort to convince him to tell where he had hidden his money. He was taken to the barn feed room, where a rope was placed around his neck and he hung from a beam. He was jerked up several times against an overhead beam. Afterwards, hair from his head was found imbedded in the beam.

There Was No fire

Mrs. Klingaman said that no fire was set on the barn floor as reported. She thought that Mr. Yoder apparently had thought that this was the case because of the lights or stars he saw when his head was bumped against the beam.

She recalled vividly that many pleas made by Mrs. Yoder that her husband not be taken to the barn and harmed.

Samuel Stevanus, the hired man, who lived

not far from the Yoder home, would walk home when his work was over. He was subject to spells of illness and when he was late returning to his home on this particular night his wife was sure that something had happened to him.

The Stevanus boys had gone to a party that night and when they returned home to find their father not home yet, they immediately went for several other boys and four of them started for the Yoder home to look for him.

Heard by Robbers

On the way, they were yelling for him or laughing and singing and their voices were heard by the robbers who had Mr. Yoder in the barn at that time.

Upon hearing the boys approaching, the robbers hastily returned Mr. Yoder to the house and threatened to return again for the money

The robbers then made a hasty retreat, but before they did so, they tied the hands of Ellen Baker and Mrs. Klingaman. Before this, the robbers had tied up Mrs. Yoder and Stevanus.

When the boys arrived, they first wanted to cut the four loose, but instead they were instructed to run for help. They ran first to the farm—that of Louis Klotz—who came on the double and cut the ropes that bound the four.

It seemed but moments until the house was filled with neighbors and friends, more and more coming as the word spread. On Sunday,

the next day-the yard was filled with buggies of scores who had come to help.

The biggest jolt for Mr. Yoder came when he discovered that his fine horses had been taken by the robbers. Later, they were recovered, much to his relief.

Locket Was Taken

Mrs. Klingaman recalls that \$60 was taken from Ellen Baker and Mrs. Klingaman was robbed of \$2 and a locket that had been given by her mother. Neither the money nor the locket was recovered.

Most of Mr. Yoder's money was in a safe at the Weller store in Summit Mills (PA).

Mrs. Klingaman recalls the subsequent trial and his interest in it. She also stated that the trial of the Nicely brothers was held at the same term of court and the two trials attracted hundreds from all over the county.

Because of her experience, Mrs. Klingaman did not remain with the Yoder's but took work elsewhere. Mrs. Klingaman resides with her son-in-law and daughter Mr. and Mrs. Paul Beynon.

Leckemby Last Survivor

James E. Leckemby, who was a prominent young citizen of the Meyersdale (PA) community at the time of the McClellandtown gang was captured, continues to reside on Sherman Street he will soon be 92 years of age.

Mr. Leckemby was about 20 years of age when he went with local peace officers to Fayette County (PA) to apprehend the McClellandtown gang. He is the last surviving

member of the posse that finally apprehended the gang in a Fayette County farmhouse. Mr. Leckemby vividly recalls the circumstances surrounding their arrest, which may make an interesting story for the future."

Citizens National Bank Has Some

Old Yoder Money

The Republican (Meyersdale, PA)

Printed on Thursday, July 27, 1961

The story concerning the robbery of Christian Yoder near Summit Mills (PA) in 1889, which appeared several weeks ago in the Meyersdale Republican, has brought to light another interesting incident concerning this brazen theft.

S. R. Philson, president of the Citizens National Bank, revealed that some of Mr. Yoder's money which the McClellandtown Gang searched for when they ransacked the Yoder home 72 years ago, is at the local bank.

Had Money in Store

At the time of the robbery of Christian Yoder, Mr. Yoder, a respected and wealthy farmer residing near Summit Mills, had placed his money in the Summit Mills store-the building now occupied by the John Imhoff family.

The robbery and beating of Mr. Yoder was one of the big local stories prior to the year 1900 and resulted in apprehension of the McClellandtown Gang later in Fayette county.

The robbers, after ransacking the Yoder home, but getting very little money, almost beat Mr. Yoder to death before they finally left the home upon hearing the approach of several other persons.

Several days following the attempted robbery, Mr. Yoder came to Meyersdale with his money. He was of the Amish faith and either had little confidence in bank accounts or did not believe in them because of his faith.

Brought Money Here

However, after he narrowly missed having all his money stolen, Mr. Yoder apparently decided to bring the money to the Citizen National Bank here, which at that time was headed by the late Samuel B. Philson, grandfather of the present president of the bank, Samuel R. Philson.

Mr. Yoder did not wish to deposit his money; only wanted Mr. Philson to keep it for him. And so, Mr. Philson did. The money was placed in the safe or vault, whichever was in use at that time.

When Mr. Yoder wanted a few dollars, he would come to the bank and ask for it and Mr. Philson would give him what he wanted. In the years that passed, Mr. Philson exchanged money for some of the Yoder bills to keep them as a keepsake.

"Spinner" Notes

There are a number of bills in different denominations. Among the group is a \$20 "spinner" note, which was common at the time and named after the treasurer of the

United States, a man by the name of Spinner. He was well remembered for his spinner notes because of his fancy hand-writing. The name is quite plain on the bill.

The bills are large-7 1/2 inches x three inches-compared to the present six x 2 1/2 inches. The bills are bank property.

Kept in Large Safe

In the old days, large vaults were unheard of, especially in the smaller banks. The money and bank assets were kept in a large safe. Samuel B. Philson, as head of the local bank, would sleep in a bed over the room in which the large safe was located. He always had a loaded shotgun by his side.

Furthermore, a hole had been cut in the floor above the safe room and a pipe dropped to the floor below. If a burglar made his appearance, it was only necessary for Mr. Philson to don his pants, grab his shotgun and slide down through the hole.

The robbers must have known about these safeguards as no attempts were made to rob the bank.

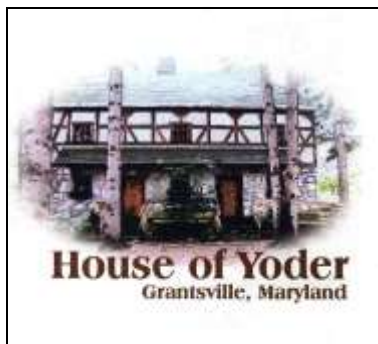
Revelation of the fact that the Yoder money is still at the Citizen's National Bank added another interesting part to the Yoder robbery story, which, after its appearance in The Republican, brought out the knowledge that Mrs. Fannie Klingaman of Meyers Ave had been a domestic worker in the Yoder home at the time of the robbery and James E. Leckemby, had been a member of the posse that captured the McClellandtown Gang

The House of Yoder Newsletter

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	1 Year	5 Years	Lifetime
Individual	\$25.00	\$100.00	\$1,000.00
Couple	\$35.00	\$150.00	\$1,500.00