

Volume 43B

Heritage Tour 2025



Biannual Newsletter

Schurch Heritage Tour:

Reflections at the Täuferhöhle Anabaptist



In this peaceful and tranquil setting let's quietly reflect upon the positivity and devotion of our Schürch ancestors. Can you imagine being chased and hiding in these woods?

Can you imagine having so much faith that you would risk your life to defend and live your humble beliefs?

Can you imagine the challenges, the persecution, the bullying, the hostilities and ill-treatment our forefathers endured with dignity and humility?

The cave, this cave, was a solace, a place of comfort during their time of persecution. This cave was a meeting place for all to feel safe and secure, a place of reassurance.

Can you imagine the strength they gathered from the walls of this cave?

And, how did we get to this location, this moment in our lives? We walked in sturdy shoes from an air conditioned bus on a well trodden path.

How did our ancestors get to this location, this moment in their lives? What trials did they overcome to meet together? What motivated them to gather in hidden caves? We can only imagine their thoughts, feelings and actions.

Perhaps they took comfort as in the words of an old hymn.

*In the rifted Rock I'm resting, safely sheltered
I abide.*

*There no fires nor storms assail me, while
within the cleft I hide..*

*Now I'm resting, sweetly resting, in the cleft
once made for me.*

Jesus, blessed Rock of ages,

I will hide myself in thee.

As we reflect on the past, let's stop to appreciate and admire and be awe struck by the devotion of our Schürch family members.

We talk the talk but do we walk the walk of their faithfulness, their commitment and loyalty to humble beliefs; to living in harmony with man and nature?

We come from trailblazing stock of devoted men and women.

We cherish the stories that have given us roots and family.

We follow our lineage with interest. We have been blessed with history and cultural heritage.

*Let us be motivated by their actions to continue
their legacy of spiritual goodness.*



Bienenberg to Schürchtanne

Lisa Shirk Carriere – Ramsey Minnesota, N3684111

On Sunday, September 14 after an early dinner at the Bienenberg hotel near Liestal, Switzerland, we gathered for a presentation by Anabaptist researcher Hanspeter Jecker. His comprehensive material covered the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement and persecution under the Reformation, Anabaptist beliefs that got them in political trouble, the geographical spread of Anabaptists, and other available research documents. Our Schürch historians were excited to learn about additional documents to explore at public archives to further attempt to unravel the mystery of Code E Ulrich Schürch between 1712-1728. There were good discussions and thoughtful questions, such as wondering how the Anabaptists who came to North America felt about taking Native American lands after having experienced the confiscation of their own lands and property by government authorities in Europe.

I appreciated our tour guide, Ayold, beginning each day on the bus sharing a brief devotional and reviewing the day's schedule. On Monday, September 15, Swiss cousin Kurt Schürch provided information about today's Switzerland with its 9 million inhabitants, and Solothurn, a town of about 7,000 inhabitants, and the seat of the Bishop of Basel. Solothurn was the 11th city to join the formation of Switzerland and 11 is held as a special number. Arriving in Solothurn, Kurt led us on a guided walking tour that included two ornate Cathedrals, many of the 11 historic and artistic fountains, the city clock tower, remnants of the fortress walls surrounding the original smaller town, his school, past many shop windows and to the apartment building where he lived his first two years of life. As this was my first time in a Swiss city, I particularly noticed the narrow cobblestone streets with tall buildings on both sides and at times steep grades. With a bit of free time, my daughter Sarah and I circled back to a chocolate shop to purchase some goodies to take home.

Back on the bus, Schürch historian Justin shared background information on the Schürch homestead, Schürchtanne, and some Code E Ulrich Schürch history to provide context for our afternoon. Ayold told us about the Emmental region as we drove up in elevation through quaint small towns on the way to the town of Sumiswald, stopping first at the Reformed church, probably enhanced with funds confiscated from Anabaptists (boo hiss!). Outside, Justin told us about the former Anabaptist cemetery that is now covered in grass and landscaping rocks. A plaque on a garden wall listed names of martyrs from when the church was Anabaptist in the 1500's. This church was old enough that it was probably Catholic originally.

Lunch was at the Affoltern Cheese Factory, where we were served rösti, a traditional Swiss dish like hash brown potatoes, often covered in toppings of ham, cheese, and egg. We sat in a solarium with a beautiful view of Sumiswald, surrounding rolling hills and nearby grazing cows. After lunch we stopped at the nearby church where Code E Ulrich Schürch married Barbara Grundbacher. We explored the cemetery where we found three more recent Schürch gravestones. The gravesites each resembled a miniature flower garden, with planted flowers by gravestones instead of potted flowers, as is more common in North America. At this site, many of us felt our first specific, tangible connection to our ancestors. Our next adventure was dividing into three horse-drawn wagons for a 45-minute ride through the hills, open fields, and dense woods outside Wasen to visit Obere (Upper) Schürchtanne and Untere (Lower) Schürchtanne, the land of the oldest known Schürch homestead from which all Sumiswald Schürch lineages proceeded including codes C, E, H, N and Y. We imagined this could have been a typical route and transportation mode for our ancestors. We were impressed by the horses' abilities to pull us so far in steep uphill terrain. As we arrived at

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Obere Schürchtanne, the cows practically ran to the fence line to greet us! This homestead dates from the early 1400's, but it is not the original building. Fire seems a usual reason for buildings needing to be replaced. The house and adjoining space for livestock is currently being renovated. It was new to me to see living space for people and livestock under the same roof, just separated by walls. We were greeted by the current owners who are not Schürchs but their extended family has welcomed Schürch descendants on every Heritage tour. We enjoyed beverages and snacks outdoors, then walked a steep downhill path to lower Schürchtanne where tour members purchased tea from their grown herbs. The barn was destroyed by a fire in 2021 but the house was saved. Of course then we had to walk up the steep path back to the bus! The bus was parked behind the house where we noticed the emblem of Sumiswald Schürchs featuring a fir tree, or Tanne, providing the homestead name.

Next, to our hotel in Eggiwil where we stayed for three nights. At dinner, Tom Shirk asked everyone their choice between going to jail for their faith or worse, declaring themselves to be a Reformed Catholic (i.e. Protestant). This was a choice many of our Anabaptist ancestors had to make. It struck me that back then there was no separation of church and state so the government or its representative dictated what religions would be practiced regardless of the individual's beliefs. Your mandated religion could change on the whim of the leader in power, or whenever leadership changed.

Today was about personally meaningful connections: walking the streets of Solothurn where Kurt grew up; locations where our ancestors lived in the 1400's; and reunions with Swiss who host North American Schürchs, providing hospitality so we could experience these connections for ourselves 500-600 years later.

**Visit Sherkston
Facebook page**

**[https://
www.facebook.com/
groups/2257170260](https://www.facebook.com/groups/2257170260)**

Fairview 1855 - Historic Homestead of Daniel Sherk Code E1423 in Sherkston, Ontario, Welcomes Guests

The historic homestead of Daniel Sherk Code E1423 (1811-1891), recommended for heritage designation, is now a Victorian wedding, event space, retreat centre, and family vacation rental in Sherkston, in the Niagara region of Ontario.

This summer, several Sherk cousins were honoured to receive a personal tour of *Fairview 1855* by its owner, Paige Cora. We enjoyed the ambiance of the beautifully restored homestead while learning about Paige's recent creative decorations and design work to make it a peaceful, welcoming place. The furnishings are 90% repurposed and each bedroom has an animal theme with a colour palette and décor inspired by an animal's beauty and their habitat.

Along with the indoor nature themes, guests will delight in the gardens, pond, and winding forest walking path on the 35 - acre property. A bridal cut-flower garden, fire pit by the pond, BBQ, and special outdoor pizza oven for a private pizza party, add to the enjoyment.

As a Victorian wedding venue, Fairview 1855 offers 3-day wedding packages with accommodations for ten including a bridal suite. It welcomes milestone events, weekend getaways, family retreats, girl's weekends, historical, private, nature or other group events. The house sleeps ten people and the outdoor accommodates events for 8-100 people. A karaoke room and grand piano in the library are offered for use, along with a fully equipped kitchen.

Paige, a music composer and CEO of Harmonic Egg Canada, offers energy therapy and relaxation sessions with the Harmonic Egg, a sound, light, and healing energy device. Other wellness vendors can provide yoga and wellness retreats.

The SFANA has little record of Daniel Sherk's family story. Daniel Code E1423, with his twin Samuel, born February 4, 1811, were sons of Peter Sherk, E142, who at age 9, came from Pennsylvania to the Niagara region of Ontario with his father Micheal E14 in 1789. Peter had 11 sons and 4 daughters with his 3 wives. Daniel and his brother Samuel both had farms adjoining the old homestead in a large Sherk settlement that became known as Sherkston. It is said that Daniel Sherk's house and barn are from 1855. More information about Daniel and his family is welcomed by the SFANA historians. Contact vanessa.warner@rogers.com

For an unforgettable experience with family and friends, consider a stay at *Fairview 1855*, a historic Sherk homestead.

Adam Sherk (Codes N13683611 and E1523326611)

Awarded King Charles III Coronation



Congratulations to Adam Sherk of Victoria, B.C., originally from Sherkston, ON (Codes N13683611 and E1523326611) on being awarded a King Charles III Coronation Medal in Ottawa on June 9, 2025. He is a scientist and adjunct associate professor of public health and social policy at the University of Victoria as well as Senior Scientist and Special Policy Advisor at the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and addiction (CCSA). According to their Facebook page, “Adam has worked in the field of alcohol and substance use for over a decade and played a lead role in developing Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health, released in 2023. His work continues to shape national conversations on alcohol policy, cancer prevention, and substance use harms in Canada. This prestigious medal honours his significant contributions to public health policy and research – and we couldn’t be prouder.”

Adam’s areas of expertise include alcohol policy and substance use costs. His current projects and interests include the Canadian Substance Use Costs and Harms project, the alcohol–cancer link, and the potential of alcohol policy to decrease cancer incidence and mortality rates across Canadian communities. He is also working on a project to characterize the scope and scale of the alcohol supply and related use across Canada. He is interested in understanding more about the illicit drug supply and the spread of gambling in Canada.

Health from the University of Victoria, an MA in Economics from the University of Western Ontario, and a BSc in Applied Mathematics from the University of Guelph. He’s the author of 40 academic articles and has participated in more than 100 media interviews and stories regarding these topic areas.

Originally from Sherkston, Ontario, Adam is the son of Gary and Ada (Edginton) Sherk; and elder brother of Thomas. Adam, his partner and their two sons live on and operate a small-plot farm named Mulhaven Farm, in Saanich, B.C. He enjoys playing soccer and basketball with his kids, backcountry hiking, reading and running.

Adam’s Sherk cousins from Ontario and the Schürch Family Association of North America are proud of Adam’s achievements and wish him success in his future endeavours.

Sources:

https://www.facebook.com/ccsa.ccdus/photos/were-thrilled-to-share-that-adam-sherk-pictured-here-with-his-colleague-senior-s/1101561148671593/?_rdr

<https://www.ccsa.ca/en/adam-sherk-phd>

<https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/about/scientists/profiles/sherk-adam.php>



Descendants of J. Hubert Sherk (H461133) Escape to the Country for a Milestone Reunion

By Esther Barnes H46113381

Members of the Sherk family have been travelling to Waterloo County in Ontario, Canada, since 1799, when pioneer Joseph Sherk came from Pennsylvania in a covered wagon and established a farm near what would become the city of Kitchener.

Two centuries later, the offspring of his descendant J. Hubert Sherk (1878-1962, *aka* “Grandpa Sherk”) gathers for family reunions every two or three years—at his farmhouse on the outskirts of Kitchener, where seven of his nine children were raised (two died in infancy) at a log cabin in the rural woodland where his cattle had grazed in the summer; and eventually at the Holiday Inn built where the farmhouse used to be.

Then Covid 19 struck. When life returned to “normal”, the only family gatherings were “celebrations of life” (*aka* funerals), mainly for our cousins, and the occasional wedding. Grandpa Sherk’s grandchildren had become grandparents and great-aunts and great-uncles. We need a real reunion while the cousins among us could still recognize each other.

On June 14, just before Father’s Day 2025, we braved the traffic on Ontario’s congested motorways, and escaped onto a straight, empty road and into the tranquil countryside southwest of Kitchener. There, we celebrated our historic kinship on a Waterloo Country farm where lush green hayfields soothed our eyes and the only background noise was the mooing of distant beef cattle.

But it wasn’t just the landscape that made this the perfect setting for a milestone reunion. It was the impressive 130-year-old home of our hosts, Doug and Sheila Dedman (a grand-daughter of Grandpa Sherk’s son Floyd), with its stone walls that might have been laid by artists. It was surrounded by parklike lawns where children could play and seniors, in lawn chairs, could share memories, joys, and sorrows.

Just over fifty people attended, ranging in age from four-month-old Ari Kunder (the great-great-granddaughter of Grandpa Sherk’s son Eldon) to 93-year-old Anne Sherk, widow of Grandpa Sherk’s

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grandson Arthur. Bookstore owner Kathy Stouffer and her nonagenarian husband John deserve a prize for driving the longest distance—four hours from their home in Haliburton.

Sherk reunions have traditionally been held on or near Father's Day, but this year's entertainment sent us on a slight detour to Mother's Day. Cousin-in-law David Helsdon read Canadian humourist Stephen Leacock's tale about a family who made elaborate plans to show their mother how much they appreciated her, with the result that she was exhausted by all the work they made her do on her special day. As our Erb/Sherk cousin Elizabeth recalled, this story had been recited by our British uncle, Eric Bolton, at a Sherk Christmas dinner many years ago, and our cousin Margaret Sherk suggested it was time to hear it again.

Lunch was potluck, served in the spacious garage and enjoyed on the lawn. Rather like the "groaning table" set before our ancestors in the late 1800s, our 2025 table was spread with an abundance of foods, from traditional cheeses and sausages and salads and fresh rhubarb pies to a warm bean casserole that had travelled 130 km in a crockpot. But before we loaded our plates, we bowed our heads and sang a hymn as it has been sung by generations of Sherks--unaccompanied, in four-part harmony, to the Old Hundredth tune. It expressed our continuing trust in the God who had guided our ancestors from Europe to Pennsylvania to Waterloo County, and who still beckons us to our eternal home:



Be. present at our table, Lord;

*Be here and everywhere
adored;*

*These mercies bless, and grant
that we*

*May feast in paradise with
Thee.*

By Esther Barnes (oldest daughter of J. H. Sherk's youngest daughter, Isabel Frey, and widow of the Rev. Graham Barnes), with gratitude for her late mother's binder full of family records, and for helpful information provided for this story by her Sherk cousins Betty, Margaret, Elaine, and Vernon. She edited *The Link & Visitor* (a Baptist women's magazine) for 21 years, wrote two books of Baptist women's history, and found joy as a short-term volunteer teacher of English in the Czech Republic (2011-2025).

Visiting Ontario?

Stay at

Fairview 1855

5069 Sherkston Road,
Fort Erie, ON, Canada L0S 1N0
289-990-8400

info@fairview1855.com

www.fairview1855.com

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/545185411383413>



Video Tour

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DOR9MJsjkRa/>

Schürch Heritage Tour:

September 16 and 17, 2025

By Sara Sherk Hatfield, N16A6431

For me, Tuesday and Wednesday, September 16 & 17 were two of the most interesting days of the Schürch Heritage Tour. On Tuesday, we visited Hinter Hütten, an Anabaptist hiding place in the community of Trub; the Schürch homestead Oberer Steg outside the town of Sumiswald; and Trachselwald Castle where Anabaptists were imprisoned. In the evening, we enjoyed an alphorn performance and a presentation by retired pastor Ueli Schürch of Eggiwil.

Hinter Hütten



This house in Trub near Sumiswald is mentioned for the first time in official documents in 1531 as "that property at the rear of Schwarzentrub, the little house by the huts." In excavations, the remains of this building were discovered. In 1608, a completely new structure replaced the first one. The "Hinter Hütten" house as it stands today is one of the oldest farmhouses in the community of Trub. Christian Fankhauser, born 1661, was a dairy farmer at Hinter Hütten, lived in the period of Anabaptist persecution of 1528-1743. He was an Anabaptist and tried to protect himself, his family, and his neighbors by building a hideout in his house. He built a separating wall in the meat storage room in the lower level of his home, creating a windowless room accessible only from the barn floor: the Anabaptist hideout or "Täuferversteck."

Today, the house is owned by descendants of Christian Fankhauser who make their living as organic farmers. Regula Fankhauser told us the

riveting story of the persecution of Anabaptists in the community and how this house was used as a shelter. She also gave a moving testimony of her own coming to faith, prompted by her research and reflection on the steadfast faith of her Anabaptist ancestor

Oberer Steg



This home is a lovely, large Emmental-style farmhouse built in 1806 by Hans Schürch (1781-1860) and his wife, Maria Ryser. With the help of his brother Samuel Schürch (1797-1874), Hans grew tobacco here. The present owners are Fritz and Esther Egli, who share the home with Rudolf and Yvonne Bürki and family. They welcomed our group warmly and let us explore inside and out.

Trachselwald Castle

Our visit to Trachselwald Castle, towering high above the village below, was very moving. During the time of the persecution, Anabaptists, including Ulrich Schürch (Code E), were imprisoned for their faith in this castle tower. The conditions were awful, and prisoners died there.

However, despite the immense suffering the Swiss Täufer endured, God mercifully

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preserved many. Their legacy is seen today in communities that arose after they fled (or were expelled) from Switzerland and relocated to North America. This was driven home to me by the hundreds of family names carved into the woodwork of the prison cells by Swiss Anabaptist descendants who had visited Trachselwald—names very common in my area of Pennsylvania.



Trachselwald Castle Prison Tower

Alphorns

In the evening, we were treated to music by a trio of alphorns. Their instruments were handcrafted by the man on the far right in the picture below. It took him 70 hours to build each. They played a mix of folk and sacred music and enthusiastically fielded our questions.

The next day, Wednesday, was even more meaningful. We visited two ancestral homesites near Wasen: Stegmatt, the home where Ulrich Schürch (Code N, immigrant of 1752) grew up, and Gsang, the home of Ulrich's father and grandparents. It was stirring to be present at the very place where they lived and imagine their lives there. We had lunch at the Tannenbad Restaurant and spent the afternoon in Bern where our knowledgeable tour guide gave us a walking tour of the city.

Stegmatt

This homestead is located in the village of Wasen, where Jacob Schürch (1660-1748), my 6th great-grandfather, was already living in 1689 when he married Barbara Brand. Here they raised a family of six boys and two girls, including Ulrich (Code N,

1703-1766), my immigrant ancestor of 1752. This homestead is currently owned by Doris Röthlisberger, who showed delightful hospitality by serving us "Znüni," the typical Swiss 9 o'clock snack of coffee and bread. In recent times, Stegmatt has undergone considerable work to tastefully restore and modernize this historic old structure.



Stegmatt



Gsang

The Schürch home Gsang, short for "Vogelsang" or "Bird Song," is located in the Kurzenei Valley, east of the village of Wasen. It was the home of Caspar Schürch, who was born at Upper Schürchtanne about the year 1585. Caspar married Margaret Trüssel about the year 1610. Caspar and Margaret moved to the quiet Kurzenei valley where they raised a family of eight children: seven boys and one girl. The Kurzenei Valley was a place where many Anabaptists lived and worshipped in relative seclusion. Upon the death of Caspar, the farmhouse passed to his son Peter (born

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1621). Peter and his wife, Vreni Eggiman, were parents of Ulrich, Code E (1663-1739), Jacob (1660-1748), and Joseph (born to Peter's first wife, Anna Reinhard, in 1652). Jacob (the father of Ulrich Schürch, Code N, immigrant of 1752) lived in this home before moving to Stegmatt. Across the valley, we could see Hambühl, the homestead of the Grundbacher family into which both Ulrich Code E and Ulrich Code N married. My ancestors' lives became more real to me as I saw their homes up close and walked where they walked.

Restaurant Tannenbad

We enjoyed lunch at this restaurant where Peter Schürch (1729-1775) and his second wife, Verenav Flückiger lived shortly after 1764.

We spent our afternoon in Bern, visiting the iconic bear pit, clock tower, Einstein's house, Bundesplatz (Federal Place where government branches are housed), Bern Cathedral, City Hall, and town square. We also visited delightful cafes, shops, and parks during our free time.

Berner Münster (Bern Cathedral) The Berner Münster in the later Gothic style began in 1421 as a Catholic church but became Reformed in the 16th century.

Rathaus (City Hall)

Bern was infamous for persecution of Anabaptists. The first Anabaptist martyrs in Bern were executed in 1529, a result of the systematic persecution of Anabaptists

that began in Bern in January 1528, following the start of the Reformation. Prisoners were sentenced at the Rathaus.

Hans Haslibacher, a prominent early Anabaptist leader in the Emmental, had been exiled from Switzerland. Upon his later return, he was captured again and put in the Trachselwald prison in Sumiswald before being sent to Bern where he was sentenced at the Rathaus.

Town Square

The intersection of Kramgasse and Gerechtigkeitsgasse in Bern was a common execution spot for condemned prisoners and likely the site of Hans Haslibacher's execution.

Aare River

Anabaptists expelled from Switzerland boarded ships on the Aare River. After having spent time in the Bern jail, Ulrich Schürch, Code E was deported from Bern to Amsterdam in 1711 when he was about 47 years old. He sojourned in the Netherlands before immigrating to Pennsylvania in 1728.

My time on the Schürch Heritage Tour gave me knowledge, relationships, memories, and lessons that I've carried home with me. More than just sightseeing, it was a meaningful experience that enriched my life. I recommend this tour to any Schürch descendants interested in learning more about their family heritage.

- Fankhauser, Regula. *The Anabaptist Hideout and its History. Täuferversteck Hinter Hütten, Trub, Canton Bern, Switzerland, 2007.*

- Sherk, Thomas A. *"A Brief History of Schürch Homesteads in Sumiswald, Switzerland," 2013. Editor by Justin Houser and Sue Shirk, 2025*

John S Shirk Award Criteria

This award has been established in honour and memory of the late John S. Shirk, 1916 - 2008, who made multifaceted contributions to the Schürch Family Association. The purpose of the award is to recognize outstanding contributions on the part of any Schürch descendant that contributes to, encourages, or advances our understanding of our Schürch heritage; and to encourage participation in the Schürch Family Association, particularly among younger people.

Schürch Heritage Tour: **Family Trip to Holland, Tracing the Anabaptist Movement**

by Tom Shirk E43550121

On September 9, 2025, 34 intrepid Schürch souls arrived in Holland to begin the long-awaited European investigation of the Schürch migration from Switzerland to North America. This year is the 500th anniversary of the Anabaptist split from the Reformed Church that resulted in much suffering and even death for the Anabaptists. Dutch Mennonites were persecuted by the Government in the early 1500's but by 1580 they were tolerated.

The first day, we saw the home of Anne Frank who lived with her family in Amsterdam in a secret home space between the walls for over two years in 1942 to avoid detection by the Nazis. They were finally discovered and sent into concentration camps where she died. It was a very moving experience to see that hiding place and her writings became the diary of Anne Frank. This is another story of persecution because of religious beliefs. It was an emotional tour; no one spoke during the tour.

We had a walking tour of Amsterdam where our ace guide, Ayold, pointed out many Mennonite buildings and locations. We learned there are two million bicycles in Amsterdam, a city of 800,000

inhabitants. Afterward we took a casual leisurely serene canal boat tour through the city. There are monumental amounts of water present because the country is 60% below sea level. We enjoyed a Dutch Indonesian style dinner at Ayold's home Mennonite church, Heemstede. Lydia Penner, Mennonite researcher living in The Hague, joined us here for the next two days.

The following day we first visited the Aalsmeer Flower Auction, one of the most incredible sites in the world with the equivalent of 250 football fields of flowers under one roof. A flower market, where flowers are flown in each day from foreign sources, sold to dealers, then moved to the dealer's spot, in the market, and finally flown out all over the world to the final market. Flowers from Colombia today could be in your Kroger store tomorrow.

At the Zaanse Schans we saw working windmills of the Dutch type which are used to grind grain. Then across the IJsselmuiden dike into Friesland Province on to Witmarsum, home of Menno Simons church where he began his religious experience as a Catholic Priest but exited the corrupt Catholic Church at that time and began his ministry there. Finally, into Harlingen in the footsteps of Code E Ulrich Schürch where Ayold gave us a city walking tour.

Our third day began with a visit to an open-air museum near Nijbeets. It was a display of peat mining in the area around 1900. It was a form of slavery where the workers lived in tiny houses with their families and

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Links and E-resources

by Justin Houser

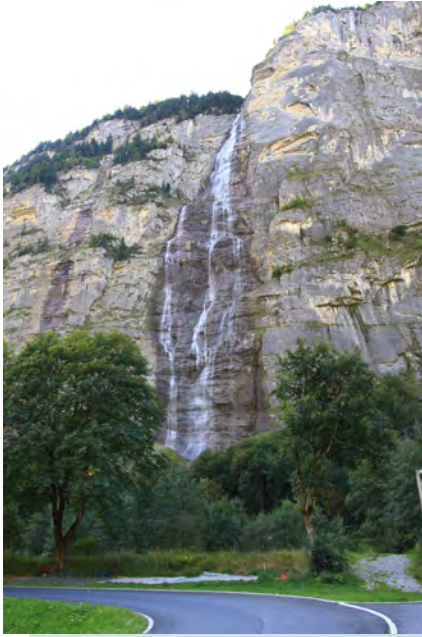
Following up on our very successful Schürch Heritage Tour, I want to share some links/resources.

1. Mennonite Research Center at Weierhof, Germany

E-mail address: mennoforsch@t-online.de

- a. Books for sale - <https://www.mennonitischer-geschichtsverein.de/geschichte/forschungsstelle/lieferbare-bucher/>
 - b. List of congregational records in their collection – chromeextension://efaidnbmnribpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.mennonitischer-geschichtsverein.de/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Kirchenbuecher_in_der_MFSt_Bestand_Juni_2010.pdf
 - c. Library catalogue online - <https://bibl.mennonitischer-geschichtsverein.de/>
2. Municipality of Sumiswald - they have a municipal archive with old documents including a register of Anabaptist properties. I am in communication with Hanspeter Jecker to try to obtain a copy and also to learn what else may be in this archive. No listing of the archive contents appears to be online.
<https://www.sumiswald.ch/de/verwaltung/abteilungen/detail/detail.php?i=2>
 3. Canton of Bern State Archive - <https://www.staatsarchiv.sta.be.ch/en/start.html>
They have a good catalogue online and images of the Reformed parish registers.

Schürch Center Fold



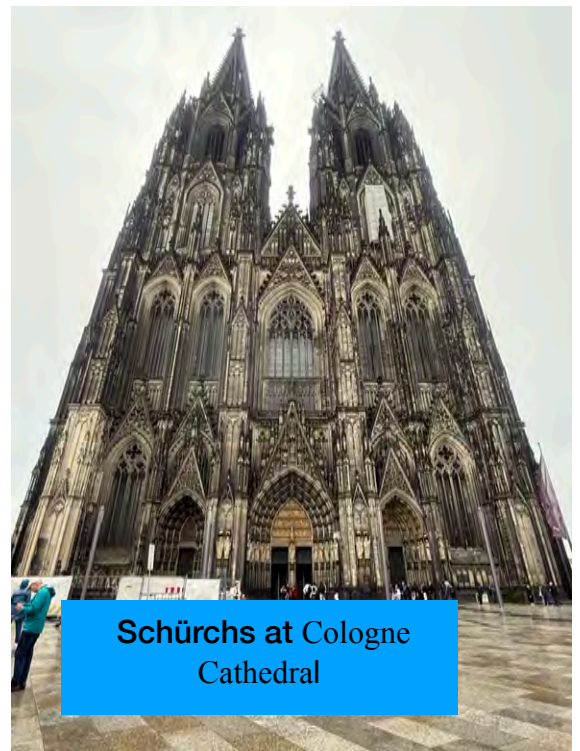
Schürchs at the
Anabapist Cave



The Anabapist Cave



Renewable Dutch Energy



Schürchs at Cologne
Cathedral



Weierhof
community
home



Worms Cathedral

Schurch “Q” and “A”

By Vanessa Warner, Historical Chair, N13E261

First and foremost, I am pleased to announce that **H47136422 Todd Bielefeld** has joined the Historical Committee! Welcome, Todd. Our Association Historians, Website and Flickr Committees have again been very busy responding to queries since our May 2025 report. We have also had the help from other family cousins who have provided us with newer information to help us update our database. Our summary reports from each of those submitting queries (as underlined) are as follows.

Carolyn Strecker (carolyn.strecker@gmail.com) – Carolyn is always busy, working with various Schürchs that surface, looking for assistance...I will leave her to report on her activity.

Heather & Graeme Ott (gottmg59@gmail.com) – Graeme has been in touch and is preparing to update records on E145 line. Graeme and Heather are both **Code E142**.

Margaret Sherk (margaretsherk1@outlook.com) – Margaret was in touch with me regarding Donna Love's upcoming presentation on Johannes Schürch, 1884 Immigrant. I am happy to report that I was able to direct her to photographs on Flickr and answer some questions regarding the research I did on that family a year ago for Seth Stachlowski (Robinson)

Sue Shirk (suesbug@msn.com) – In preparation for the Swiss trip, Sue was in touch asking for assistance with coding Ken Sherk (erlisherktwo@gmail.com). Below, there had been some work done on the E15233 Abraham Geady line and lo and behold, besides being **Code N13D462**, we were able to inform Ken that he was also **Code E152332362**.

Vanessa Warner (vanessa.warner@rogers.com) – Update on the **E152** David Sherk Cemetery, Port Colborne, ON – Bill Young of Ontario Ancestors (OGS) has reported significant work accomplished over the summer months. All brush has been cleared and regular maintenance over the summer and fall has kept it under control. You will remember there was some dispute over who the owner of the cemetery was. The property owner, Pam Rosario, is now the licensed cemetery owner under the BAO (Bereavement Authority of Ontario) for this cemetery. The work will stop over the winter months and resume in the spring.

Last report I mentioned **E1524 Feronica Sherk** update in progress, but this lead to an update on **E15233 Abraham Geady**. This research yielded 74

photos. The Geady research also yielded a Wintemute connection, which caused a further update to existing files to double code for descendants in both the **N13D4 Gordon Sherk** and the **N13683 Bertie Ray Sherk** families as both men married Wintemute sisters who are **E1523323** and **E1523326**.

The death of **Lois (Wright) Sherk** on June 16, 2025, widow **N104944/E1544944/E14422944/N1635154/N13C154 Calvry Sherk** resulted in the construction of a tree for her. The result was more work for Carolyn and a Code for Lois of **N1682323**. **Isobel Fishley** (gormlea.farms@sasktel.net) sent in lovely old photos of her parents and grandparents. Her line is **H442521**. Those photos can be found in the Code H Album.

Gary Martin (gardmar@gmail.com) contacted us regarding his ancestor **E4101 Leah Shirk**, wife of Martin Schaeffer. He has been working with Carolyn on his line and shared his tree on Ancestry with both of us. Gary's tree contains several photos

We received a query from **Tracey Holloway** (tlynn4926@gmail.com) who descends from **Code V Sebastien Schürch**. Carolyn was able to find her line in the database and I sent her the link to Flickr Album Code V for her view.

For the past year, in my spare time, I have been working on researching **Code B Vigt David Scherkes/Schergeres/Yerkes/Archey**. I have had to split this family because the file was getting too difficult to manage. Part One, consisting of Code B, B1 and B2 – B21, is now nearing 400 pages and Part Two, consisting of B22 and B3 are sitting at 65 pages, with much left to do. This research has yielded 460 photos so far, which have been added to Flickr. When David emigrated from Germany to Quakertown, he brought with him two of his two younger sons. One of his older children, a daughter, had emigrated with her husband the previous year. The age gap between Nöleken born 1647 and Anthonji and Johannes born 1663, means there were likely more children that remained in Europe. David's wife died in Germany, never coming out to America; David died in Quakertown PA. Justin, Stephen and I have come to the conclusion that we need Y-DNA from this family in order to see where and if they fit into our bigger puzzle. I will be soliciting various contributors on Ancestry to see if someone would be willing to do their Y-DNA.

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As for the Schürch Photo Gallery, we are at 2,053 photos and growing. The link is <https://www.flickr.com/photos/113857348@N06/albums/>.

Again, I want to thank Stephen Freeman for his help with editing some of the photos that are in rough condition. He is truly a miracle worker. See the example below. Above is B21145354 George Harry Yerkes, who gave



the ultimate sacrifice at the age of 28 in Somme, France, in 1918 (WWI). It is likely the only photo in existence of him. The upper of the two photos is a photocopy of a damaged photo posted in Ancestry. Stephen's care with this photo means we will honour him in the best way possible

Our Association Historical Committee is always looking for new Historians and those interested in working on our Database, DNA and other genealogical research Committees. If interested please contact our Historical Chair.

Schurch Heritage Tour:

Cologne, Worms, Weierhof to Bienenberg

by Todd Bielefeld, H47147422 and Scott
Pittman, Wichita Kansas

The morning of Saturday, September 13 we spent time touring the Cathedral and exploring nearby Roman ruins. Fountains supplied Roman Cologne with water as early as the 1st century AD. The famous Roman Fountain in Cologne does not date back to Roman times but to 1915 marking the artistic engagement with Cologne's past as one of the most significant cities of the Roman Empire. Fountains ensured Cologne's water supply until the 19th century until their primary supply function transitioned to decorative structures with the first municipal waterworks established in 1872. Other Roman engineering feats can be admired as remnants of the baths or by observing parts of the sewer system. The large Roman Fountain by Franz Brantzky invites you to linger with a view of the Cathedral included.

The Cathedral houses the Shrine of the Three Kings, traditionally believed to contain the bones of the Biblical Magi, also known as the Three Kings or the Three Wise Men. This shrine is a large gilded and decorated triple sarcophagus situated above and behind the altar. Built from 1180 to 1225, it's considered the high point of Mosan art and ranks among the largest reliquary in the Western world. Adorned with intricate decorations, the shrine's surfaces narrate the stories of the three Magi, the Virgin Mary, and the life of Christ. These narratives are depicted with figures meticulously rendered gold-plated silver. The shrine has gone through periods of damage and restoration during the 16th century. Although the shrine has always been on display, it was not until the 19th century when the relics were unveiled to the public.

After enjoying free time and lunch in Cologne, we headed to Boppard for a scenic Rhine River cruise to St. Goar. We sailed past Maus Castle, above the village of Wellmich (part of the Sankt Goarshausen) in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany. It lies on the east side of the Rhine, north of the Katz Castle. The castle stands on a ledge looking downstream from the riverside at Sankt Goar. It was first built around 1371 by Count William II of Katzenelnbogen. Bombarded in 1806 by Napoleon and rebuilt in the late 19th century, it is now privately owned.

Rheinfels Castle is located above the west bank of the Rhine. It was started in 1245 and after multiple expansions, it was the largest fortress in the Middle

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Rhein Valley between Koblenz and Mainz. It was slighted by French Revolutionary Army troops in 1797. The largest castle overlooking the Rhine, it historically covered five times its current area.

After the cruise, we transferred to Worms and walked to the Worms Cathedral. The Diet of Worms of 1521 (a formal deliberative assembly of the Holy Roman Empire) was called by Emperor Charles V and conducted in the Imperial Free City of Worms. Martin Luther was summoned to the Diet to renounce or reaffirm his views in response to a Papal bull of Pope Leo X. Responding to questions, Martin Luther defended his views and refused to recant. At the conclusion, the Emperor issued the Edict of Worms, a decree which condemned Luther as “a notorious heretic” and banned citizens of the Empire from propagating his ideas. Although the Protestant Reformation is usually considered to have begun in 1517, this edict is the first overt schism association with the Reformation.

The nearby Luther monument, created by Ernst Rietschel to honor Martin Luther, was unveiled on June 25, 1868. It features an 11 foot statue of Martin Luther holding a Bible and portrayed in a professor’s cloak, surrounded by other reformers and bronze reliefs illustrating significant events of the Reformation. Together with the International Reformation Monument in Geneva (the Reformation Wall), it is the largest Reformation monument worldwide.

In the evening we enjoyed a schnitzel dinner

near the Reformation monument. On our walk to the bus, our guide, Ayold, treated us at a nearby ice cream shop where watermelon was a new flavor option!

On Sunday morning, we visited the Weierhof community, a long-standing Mennonite congregation and historical site with roots in the Anabaptist movement and over 350 years of Mennonite presence. The community focuses on faith-based living, mutual support, and engagement with sociopolitical issues, operating as a living community inviting participation from within and outside the congregation.

We first visited the German Mennonite archives, started after World War II when the Danzig area Mennonite congregations disappeared and they needed to find a place to keep all their records. Holdings now include various original Mennonite books, 15 movable stacks of documents, family history charts and six of the 23 *Martyrs Mirror* printing plates. We then climbed numerous steps into the church and experienced worship with the Weierhof community.

Afterward, we connected with congregants over coffee before continuing our journey south into Switzerland. We arrived at the Bienenberg hotel (formerly the European Mennonite theological seminary) on a hill top outside the town of Liestal for an early dinner followed by a lecture on Swiss Anabaptist history by retired professor, Hanspeter Jecker.

Schurch Heritage Tour:

Alps, Lucerne, Zurich, Anabaptist Cave – Home!

By Tim Vogt, Las Vegas Nevada

H83232112

Thursday, September 18, was our mountain-top day. Very little family history or Mennonite history today but a glorious day of appreciation for the beauty of the Alps and Switzerland.

We left the comforts of three nights in Eggiwil in the Emme River Valley (Emmental), traveled along the Aare River and Lake Thun, then up the Lütschine River arriving in Lauterbrunnen. Lauterbrunnen is located in a steep-walled, flat-bottomed valley, with higher mountains peaks seemingly all around and several wispy looking waterfalls cascading over the edge of the steep walls. With Ayold orchestrating tickets, we boarded a cable car to the town of Grütschalp above the first steep valley wall, then a train along the bench at the top of the steep wall to the resort town of Mürren. A quick walk through Mürren and a bit of free time before catching the next cable car (in two parts) to the top of Schilthorn. Buffet lunch in the revolving restaurant and then plenty of free time for marveling at the view, James Bond memories, walking out on the ridge top, or shopping. It seems as though the weather could not be better with views of Jungfrau, Eiger and Monch, and Mont Blanc. We returned to the town

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of Stechelberg via cable cars including the cable car with the steepest gradient in the world. While waiting for everyone to return we enjoyed the hang gliders and BASE jumpers landing in the nearby open area. This excursion represents the most southern point of our trip

On the bus again we headed in the direction of Lucerne, stopping at our Holiday Inn hotel in Kriens out of the city center. After checking in, nearly everyone walked the short distance to the station and boarded another train into Lucerne for a short walking tour, meals and sight-seeing. The highlight of our visit to Lucerne was the iconic Chapel bridge (Kapellbrücke). Then there was free time to capture a memorable photograph of the Chapel Bridge with good reflections at twilight, eat, shop, and relax. Several visited the Lion sculpture commemorating Swiss guards in the service of their country. Lucerne is a popular tourist destination and there were lots of tourists – particularly compared to the Emmental. We returned to the hotel by train.

On Friday, September 19, we packed up again and drove into Zurich, with many points important to the beginning of the Anabaptist movement and Zurich. Fraumünsterkirche, Wasserkirche with Zwingli Statue holding sword and Bible, Grossmünster with Charlemagne in the crypt, the street where the house was located in which Felix Manz was born and in January 1525 the first baptismal events occurred including Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and Georg Blaurock, Zwingli's parsonage, Conrad Grebel's home, the Froschauer Bible Print Shop, and locations of the disputations, sentencings, and executions. We finished our walking tour at the Felix Manz and Hans Landis Memorial plaque on the west side of the Limmat River where a marker recognizes several of the executions. We had some free time for lunch, and our best final opportunity for shopping. A bonus was a marching band and parade of new police recruits walking down to the city hall to be sworn in as new police officers.

2025 marks the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism, measured from the initial baptisms of Manz, Grebel, and Blaurock. Ayold later described the celebration held in Zurich Grossmünster on May 29, 2025 commemorating this anniversary when many bells rang across the city. More than 3,000 Anabaptists from around the world gathered along with Catholics, Lutherans and Reformed in reconciliation and celebration.

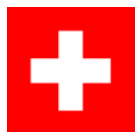
Bäretswil was our next stop to pick up local leaders as we continued to the 'Tauerhole' - the natural cave where Anabaptists worshiped when they had to meet in secret. It is close to a half mile walk, mostly uphill. When we had gathered in the alcove individuals shared prepared thoughts or shared extemporaneously. We sang: "Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah," "How Great Thou Art," and "Oh God Our Help in Ages Past." A very respectful group imagining and celebrating what life and worship might have been for the community of our ancestors.

After the walk down the hill to our waiting bus we took a slightly different return route. Some of the Pennsylvania Schürchs married folks who had come from this specific area. Our local hosts mentioned the "Goffs" and others who still live and work in the area. We went through the settlement of Maiwinkel. Our hosts pointed out a barn near which early baptisms were conducted in the creek – even in January.

Our final evening meal at Marché Kempthal included formal thanks, acknowledgements and round-robin goodbyes. Sue, Justin, Kurt, Ayold, and Marceau all deserve the thanks received for an amazing Schürch Family Heritage experience. Each of the participants contributed and gained by the common sharing of this time. Finally, we returned to our hotel near the airport to prepare for our trip home.

SFANA Symposium #8 - Schürch Migration from Switzerland to Northwest U.S.A.

Symposium #8 was presented by Donna Love on Saturday, November 1, 2025. She shared the story of her great-grandparents, Johannes and Magdalene Schürch, who immigrated with their family of 12 children to the United States from Wasen, Switzerland in 1884. On our recent heritage tour, Tim Vogt was able to research several hamlets mentioned in Donna's family documents and recreate a key photo. Lloyd Sherk is leading this team effort with support from Ray Sherk.



Different Flags



Switzerland

by Kurt Schurch

SGNS Sommertreff in September

August 27th, 6 o'clock in the morning - a quick look through the window: blue sky with a few white clouds. A perfect day for the SGNS Sommer gathering.

The trip with the Swiss Federal Railway was relaxing. In Thun, it was just a short walk over the station square to the waiting boats and crowds of people. Here was where some of the total of 20 registered members met up for the day's excursion. After boarding the boat (named City of Thun), there was sufficient time for a coffee and a chat before we reached our end destination, Spiez. All the moorings were decorated with attractive flowers. The climb up to the castle was short but steep.

A guide showed us through the castle mostly on the first and second floors of the tower. The oldest part of the castle was the tower which was built in 1245. The castle switched owners several times. Since 1927, a foundation maintains the castle facility with the support of heritage preservation.

After climbing up and down several stairs, in both directions, we were happy to enjoy an aperitif - a glass of white wine from the vineyards of Spiez. Once again, a quick view to the lake below before making our descent to the Restaurant where a flavourful refreshment was waiting for us. Soon it was time for the first ones to say good-bye. For train goers, it was necessary to gather all their strength to tackle the very steep path which guided them to the station. A pleasant and rewarding day had come to an end. Unfortunately, the number of attendees was rather low. Many thanks to the organizer, Susanne.

SGNS Sommertreff in Spiez, 27.8.2025

27. August 2025 morgens um 6 Uhr kurzer Blick zum Fenster hinaus: blauer Himmel ein paar kleine weisse Wolken. Also ein perfekter Tag für den SGNS-Sommertreff.

Die Fahrt nach mit der SBB war erholsam. In Thun über den Bahnhofplatz zu den bereits wartenden Schiffen mit viel Andrang. Da trifft man dann noch einige von den gesamt 20 Mitglieder die sich für den Treff angemeldet haben. Nun blieb noch Zeit für einen Kaffee und einen Schwatz bis wir in Spiez mit der Stadt Thun unterhalb des Schlosses unser Ziel erreicht haben. Der Aufstieg zum Schloss war kurz aber steil. Die Schiffsanlegestellen waren alle mit viel Blumen geschmückt.

Als erstes folgte nun die Führung von einer Dame durchs Schloss mehrheitlich im Turm im 1. Und 2. Stock. Da hörten wir viel über die Geschichte und Bewohner des Schlosses. Der älteste Teil des Schlosses ist der um 1245 entstandene Turm. Das Schloss wechselte verschiedene Male den Besitzer. Seit 1927 pflegt und unterhält die Stiftung Schloss Spiez die Schlossanlage mit Unterstützung der Kantonalen Denkmalpflege.

Nach dem Treppensteigen in beide Richtungen konnten wir uns auf den Aperio freuen. Einem Glas Weissen aus dem Spiezer Rebberg. Nochmals ein Blick von oben auf den See und der Abstieg führte uns ins Restaurant, wo die schmackhafte Stärkung auf uns wartete. Schon bald war es für die Ersten Zeit Abschied zu nehmen. Für die Zugfahrenden war nun noch ein steiler Aufstieg zum Bahnhof angesagt. Ein schöner Tag neigte sich zu Ende; Schade dass nicht mehr gekommen sind. Der Organisatorin Susanne besten Dank.

**Lois Sherk
1928-2025**



Lois peacefully went to be with her Lord on Monday June 16, 2025 at Crescent Park Lodge, Fort Erie. Lois is reunited with her beloved husband Calvry (d. 2006) of 60 years. Loving mother of Cheryl (Wayne) Mangan and Carolyn Smith. She was also the cherished Nana to Jennifer (Jeffery) Crawford, Geoffrey (Jodi Warner) Mangan, Tim "Unit" Smith, Phillip (Kendyle) Smith. She was also devoted Great Nana to Jack Mangan, Isibéal Mangan, Charlee Smith and Calvry Smith.

Lois is survived by her sister Marilyn and predeceased by her siblings Arthur, Charles, Wayne, Deardon, Glenna, Jean and Etta.

A visitation was held on Friday June 20, 2025 with a service in the Williams Chapel following. Burial was at Bertie Cemetery. Donations in Lois' memory may be made to Camp Kahquah.

Williams Funeral Services were entrusted with arrangements.

**Allan Robert Sherk
1941 - 2024
H46113334**



Allan was born in New Dundee, Waterloo County Ontario, one of five children of W. Floyd Sherk and Marjorie (Bock) Sherk.

He had a lifelong love of music starting in childhood with the family quartet winning prizes at the Kiwanis festival, playing the violin and much choral singing. He had a most eclectic CD collection.

Allan studied engineering at the University of Waterloo in one of the earliest co-op programs, working in Labrador and Montreal during his work terms. He graduated with a BAsC (Engineering Physics) in 1965 and a MSc in Mathematics in 1966.

His entire career was in information technology, with many years in the computer department of Imperial Oil in Calgary, Edmonton and Toronto offices including a two-year assignment in Hamburg Germany with Esso AG. He was an early champion of portable computers and partnered in developing the computer networking firm, Charon Systems, which grew to employ 100 staff.

Allan married Carolyn Roberts in 1966 and was a loving father to their two children, Peter and Lisa. After returning from Germany, they moved to the Apple Hills area of Mississauga where they have lived since 1972. With his love for adventure and the outdoors, Allan brought his children on memorable canoe and camping trips to Algonquin Park and later spent many summers at the cherished family cottage on Wahsouné Island in Georgian Bay. Crokinole and ping pong were among his favourite cottage activities.

In addition to entertaining friends and family, Allan and Carolyn traveled extensively throughout Europe, the Caribbean, Mexico, Peru, New Zealand/Australia and east Africa and regularly visited the adult children and grandchildren in Montreal, Manhattan, Connecticut, Geneva, Valencia and Amsterdam.

When Allan was 54, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. In the early stages, he was able to travel and participate in the Parkinson's choir, dancing and boxing. As the disease progressed, he attended a marvellous day program in Mississauga, the Seniors Life Enhancement Centre (SLEC), enjoying music, exercise and other social activities. With a twinkle in his bright blue eyes, Allan would always smile and wave and never complained despite a tough situation. He loved ice cream, popcorn and many cookies! For many years, his movement disorders neurologist, Dr. Earl Conskey, and pharmacist, John Girgis, made sure he had the correct

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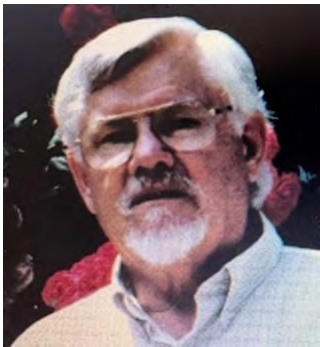
medications, helping him to manage his condition in a way that, together with his strong determination and positive spirit, allowed him to live his life to the fullest.

Allan was able to stay at home until the end with the care of Carolyn and wonderful personal support workers from Nucleus Supports for Independent Living and Able Living Recharge program. He died peacefully in our garden on a beautiful sunny day, with Carolyn holding his hand. A good life, well-lived.

He had the love and caring support of his children: Peter (Paula) Westport Connecticut and Lisa (Amitai) Amsterdam, the Netherlands and the Roberts family: especially Ruth, Ted (Kathryn), Diane, William (Eileen), Deborah, Richard (Wendy), Jessica (Adam), Joel (Fatema) and Lindsay. He leaves four wonderful grandchildren: Spencer, Chris, Tamuz and Hetty.

He was predeceased by his parents and sister Kathryn. He is survived by his siblings, Marian (Fred), Vernon (Leone), Alice and many Sherk nieces, nephews and cousins.

Lamar Frederick Fretz
Feb 27, 1933 -Feb 22, 2025
N1363115



Lamar Frederick Fretz went home to be with his heavenly Father on Saturday February 22, 2025 in his 92nd year.

Lamar was born to Howard Sr. and Elva Fretz (nee Sherk). Beloved husband to Anna Mae Sider (1993) and Eileen Sherk. Loving father to Heather Ioannoni (Bruno) and Terry Fretz (Denette). Proud and loving grandfather of Carlo Ioannoni (Catharine), Sara Ioannoni, Hannah Song (Cole), Jesse Fretz, and great grandfather to Jordan (Regan), and Shannon Ioannoni.

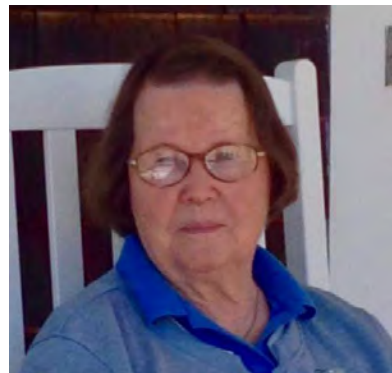
He is lovingly remembered by his siblings Kaye Steckley, Howard Fretz Jr., Hubert Fretz (Bev), Ken Fretz (Jill), brother-in-laws and sister-in-laws Mary Fretz, Ruth Schiedel (Wayne), Sharon McCombs (Roy), Lillian Byer (Nelson) Douglas Sherk and their families. Predeceased by Miriam (Paul), Alvin Steckley, Jean Fretz, Lester Fretz, Leroy Fretz, Margie Fretz and by his great granddaughter Madelyn Ioannoni.

Thanks to the community paramedics, PSW Brenda and Nurse Alison. Thank you to the medical staff in the ER and 3rd Floor at Dunnville Hospital for their wonderful care. Memorial donations to the Mennonite Central Committee (mcc.org) would be appreciated. Visitation was held at the Wainfleet Be In Christ Church, on Thursday. Funeral Service was held in the church on Friday February 28, with interment at Bertie Brethren In Christ Cemetery. Online condolences jwhartfuneralhome.com

UTube Celebration of Life:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Lamar+Frederick+Fretz+video&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#fpstate=ive>

Shirley Jane Grabner Sherk
1931-2025
E1420223m



Shirley Jane Grabner Sherk, 93, of Peterborough, New Hampshire, entered eternal rest at her residence in the RiverMead Lifecare Community on June 7, 2025. She is survived by her daughter, Deborah Smoyer, and son-in-law, Michael Smoyer, of Julian, Pennsylvania, and son Douglas Sherk, and son-in-law, Tarpon London, as well as numerous nieces and nephews. Her devoted

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husband of 57 years, Donald M. Sherk, preceded her passing in 2010.

Shirley was born on September 3, 1931, in Hartford, Connecticut and lived in Wethersfield, Connecticut before moving to Peterborough in July 1968. For 41 years, she lived in the same house on Sand Hill Road before moving to RiverMead in 2009. She taught elementary school in Connecticut and Peterborough over the span of four decades until her retirement and worked for many summers at the Greater Peterborough Chamber of Commerce.

Shirley was a member of the Peterborough Woman's Club, Monadnock Red Hats and Retired Teachers Group. In addition, she served on the Contoocook Housing Trust Board, was a Granite State Ambassador and cherished her volunteer work at Monadnock Community Hospital. She enjoyed water exercise, gardening, doing puzzles, traveling, bird watching, visiting her children and being with her many friends at RiverMead.

A Memorial Visitation was held at Jellison Funeral Home, Peterborough, on Wednesday June 11, 2025. In lieu of flowers, memorials to Shirley may be made to Monadnock Community Hospital.

Anna Mathilda Hellmich Shirk 1921-2024



Anna Mathilda (Hellmich) Shirk, 103, of Papillion, Nebraska, died peacefully on Monday, December 9, 2024. Ann was born in Marshall County, Iowa, on September 24, 1921, the third child of Wenzel and Marie (Kopsa) Hellmich. She grew up on the farm and graduated from Conrad High School in 1939. She went to one year of junior college in Marshalltown before she attended nurses' training at Evangelical Deaconess Hospital School of Nursing. Ann received her RN degree in May, 1943. She first went to Huntington Beach, CA where her sister Helen was and worked in a hospital there. In the

spring of 1945, she returned to Marshalltown and worked as a surgical nurse in Deaconess Hospital, often treating soldiers returning from the war.

Following an evening nursing shift in May, she ran into Keith Shirk (H4031733) with a group of their friends at a hotel bar. Keith had returned home on VE Day in 1945 from his service as a B-24 pilot in England for two weeks leave. In less than a week, May 19, 1945, they were married. To this union, four children were born: Thomas (Louise) Shirk of Columbia, SC, Patricia Shirk Peterson of Grand Island, NE, John (Linda) Shirk of Papillion, NE and James (Noreen) Shirk of San Diego, CA. Keith left the army and returned to his engineering studies at Iowa State College (ISU) and graduated in December 1947. After working in American Fork, UT and Omaha, NE, the family with four children moved to Des Moines. Keith worked as a structural engineer for architectural firm Tinsley, Higgins, Lighter and Lyon until his retirement.

Like many wives after WWII, Ann was a homemaker. She was a loving mother, a talented seamstress, and a wonderful cook. She had a green thumb with flowers outside and plants inside. She also had a large garden in her back yard and grew many vegetables which she incorporated into their meals. Ann was a busy mother, having four children in four and a half years. She was the mother of twins John and Jim, just as her granddaughter Elizabeth is the mother of twins Kate and Clara.

She made her first embroidered baby quilt in 1978. All of her grandchildren and then great-grandchildren received baby quilts. Her designs sometimes involved very intricate patterns and eventually she won a ribbon for a quilt at the Nebraska State Fair at the age of 93.

Ueli Schürch Susanne, Su023 1944-2025



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Ueli Schürch was born on Feb. 22, 1944, in Bern-Bümplitz, where he also grew up and attended school.

Ueli's apprenticeship as a fine mechanic was completed in a training workshop in Bern.

Afterwards, for 3 years (or 6 semesters), he was trained as an electrical engineer HTL in Burgdorf.

Upon completion of Ueli's academic studies, he began his professional career in the state of Neuchâtel at the battery company Electrona SA. In that factory, he achieved the position of General Director, responsible for 400 employees. Ueli was a member of the Mechanical Business Association, and he gave them his personnel know-how. His experience was in great demand.

In 1978 Ueli married Marie-Louise. He is survived by daughter Andrea married to Frederic with children Ethan and Jana. After gifting their house in Bevaix to Andrea and her family they then moved to Unterseen in the Bernoise region where Marie-Louise was born.

In 1997 Ueli established his own company, Systems Assembly SA in Boudry. In 2007, after 10 years, Ueli retired with wife Marie-Louise with annual three-month stays in Villajoyosa in Spain.

James Sherk Code N1313826 1936 - 2025



Jim Sherk, born May 11, 1936, a lifetime resident of Ayr, Ontario, Canada, passed away at Cambridge Memorial Hospital on Friday, May 30, 2025, at the age of 89.

He leaves behind his beloved wife Gail of 60 years and son Ken (Amber), as well as two grandsons Mathew and Nathan and their mother Dawn.

Jim is survived by his sister Margaret Makins (Bill), and brothers-in-law Dr. John Kostuik (Marilyn)

and Glen Guthrie (Jean), along with many nieces, nephews, and extended family who will miss him deeply.

Predeceased by his parents Melvin and Bessie Sherk (née Brown), an infant brother William, and siblings Douglas (Phyllis), Raymond "Tyke" (Joan), William (Joan), Liz Kostuik, and Esther Mitchell.

Jim grew up on the family farm in Blenheim Township and married the girl next door. They lived most of their lives in Ayr, first on Northumberland St. and more recently at Kirkwood Apartments.

He worked as a heavy truck mechanic with Sherk Sales and Service, Drumbo Transport, and Total Fleet Service, and later enjoyed working at the DanAyr Driving Range. Jim loved woodworking, lawn care, tinkering in his shop, and spending time with his family and friends.

Cremation has taken place. Family and friends were invited to a celebration of Jim's life at Wm. Kipp Funeral Home, Ayr Chapel, 183 Northumberland St., Ayr, on Thursday, June 5, 2025, with visitation from 2-4 and 7-9 pm. A service followed in the chapel on Friday, June 6 at 11:00 am. Family interment at Ayr Cemetery.

LaVerne "Verne" Gene Schirch 1936-2025



LaVerne "Verne" Gene Schirch died on October 1, 2025 at the age of 89. He was born on August 9, 1936, in Bloomington, Illinois to Ernest Raymond Schirch and Opal Bluette (Stahly) Schirch. Reldon Dean (1934-2022) was his only sibling.

Verne grew up in a loving, hardworking family on a 160-acre farm in Chenoa, Illinois and attended a one-room country school. He also cherished life values he credited to his paternal grandmother Mary Rich Schirch (1880-1978).

Verne attended Bluffton College (1954-58) where he planned to major in business but switched to

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chemistry. At Bluffton College he met Carol Ann Shelly, the love of his life for the next 67 years. They married in June 1958. Verne began his PhD studies in biochemistry at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, where their first child Douglas Michael was born in 1960. Then they moved to Berkeley, California for a postdoctoral position at the University of California where Michelle Dawn was born in 1963.

That fall the family moved to Bluffton, Ohio where Verne accepted a faculty position in the Chemistry Department at Bluffton College. In 1967, third child Lisa Lynn was born to complete the family.

In 1964 Verne received his first federal research grant to continue his postdoctoral research project. He authored 140 scientific publications.

In 1973 he was among 24 U.S. scientists invited to participate in the first of six cultural exchanges with the Soviet Union as part of President Nixon's US-USSR détente. Being in Europe allowed him to visit the ancestral Schürch family home in Sumiswald, Switzerland, a place he would return to many times.

In 1969 Verne and Carol moved to Rome, Italy with the three children for a year while Verne worked at the university. In 1974 Verne accepted a six-month sabbatical position at the University of Bristol, England, again bringing the whole family along.

In 1978 Verne accepted a faculty position in the Department of Biochemistry at the Medical College of Virginia. He remained there for the next 26 years until retiring in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Verne served on the Richmond Habitat for Humanity board for 15 years one of his most rewarding experiences.

In retirement his primary research energies turned to family genealogies on both the Schirch and Shelly sides, tracing ancestral roots back 500 years to small hamlets in Switzerland and France. In 2018 he finished writing a 550-page family history book.

In 2021 Verne and Carol moved to Goshen, Indiana, near all three children. He is survived by his wife Carol and three children: Douglas (Maria Sanchez), Michelle (Karl Shelly) and Lisa (William Goldberg). There are eight grandchildren: Jessica Martin (Peter); Juni Sauder (Zachary); Joshua Schirch; Jacob Shelly (Monica); Lucas Shelly (Lauryn); Benjamin Gerig Shelly (Maddie); Miranda Goldberg; and Levi Goldberg. There are currently seven great grandchildren with two more due soon.

Memorial contributions may be made to Mennonite Central Committee (<https://mcc.org/checkout>), Camp Friedenswald (<https://friedenswald.org/donate>) and Bluffton University (<https://www.bluffton.edu/blufftonalumni/support/>).

A Celebration of Life was held in Goshen. His service will be posted at <https://www.yoderculpfuneralhome.com/obits>.

A Tribute to Verne Schirch by Tom Shirk

Verne Schirch was a man of boundless curiosity and unwavering dedication to learning. With a Ph.D. in Biochemistry, he built a distinguished academic career at Bluffton College and Virginia Medical College, authoring an impressive 140 technical papers. From his roots as an Illinois farm boy, Verne rose to international prominence, traveling the globe to share his scientific expertise.

Within the Schürch Family Association, Verne was a pillar of leadership and historical insight. In 2007, he and Tom Sherk led a memorable Heritage Tour to Switzerland and France. In Alsace, Verne guided us through cemeteries where Christian Scherick and Marie Cherick—Anabaptists who fled persecution in Bern during the late 1600s—were laid to rest.

As Chairperson of the 2010 reunion committee, Verne and his wife Carol hosted the first Schürch reunion in Virginia. They introduced us to the rich historical and geological tapestry of the Shenandoah Valley, including Civil War landmarks and world-renowned caves.

In recognition of his contributions, Verne received the 2018 John S. Shirk Award from the Schürch Family Association, honoring his exceptional work in advancing our understanding of Schürch heritage.

Perhaps his crowning achievement was the publication of his book, *Origins of a Progressive Mennonite Family*. In it, Verne traced his lineage across three centuries and three countries, identifying his ancestral code as A5221728512—where “A” refers to Casper Schürch and Margaret Trussel. His genealogical research was nothing short of remarkable.

Verne descended from Joseph Schürch, the half-brother of Ulrich Schürch (Code E). Joseph, an Anabaptist, fled religious persecution in Switzerland and settled in Alsace in the 1600s. The family remained in Alsace and Basel for generations until Verne's grandfather, Peter, immigrated to Chicago in

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1892. Their story is a testament to the resilience of the Schürch family and their steadfast faith in the face of adversity.

Soft-spoken yet deeply effective, Verne was a man of profound faith and quiet leadership. His legacy as a historian, genealogist, and mentor continues to shape

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only got paid for what they produced. In the winter they were unable to work. Workers prepared and then loaded peat onto ships which went into the major cities to be burned. Lydia Penner, an editor of the Documents of Brotherly Love books, provided expert knowledge as we toured. She is completely familiar with the history of the Anabaptist movement because she helped translate the documents that still exist in Amsterdam archives from 1600 to 1700. She told us of the escape of the Anabaptists from prejudicial Switzerland including the story of Ulrich Schürch and family who were exported from Switzerland down the Rhine River to Amsterdam in 1711.

The next stop was a high point of our

trip when we walked a path in Sonnenburg near the city of Kampen, a place that Lydia Penner discovered during her research on the Schürch migration. This is a polder (land reclaimed from the sea) where Code E Ulrich and Barbara Schürch and five children lived for about a year on a farm in 1712. It was an emotional experience to see the area where Ulrich and Barbara lived and worked. After that they disappear from records. Did they stay near Kampen? Did they go to the Palatinate? Did they return to the Switzerland region? Maybe a future Lost Years project will discover the answer.

The tour through Holland country was comprehensive, entertaining and educational.

Chambersburg Shirks Code H49s

Did you know that H4 Joseph Shirk's log home is still standing and is located at 2922 Philadelphia Ave in Green Twp Franklin County Chambersburg, Pennsylvania! A 1975 pictorial history and current google earth photo are enclosed. Also enclosed is a 1986 and current picture of the Shirk Cemetery located three houses south at 2888 Philadelphia Ave Chambersburg, Pennsylvania where it is suspected Joseph and wife Barbara are buried. Tombstones of 2 other generations of Shirks H4, H49, and H493 are located at the cemetery. If interested in more



In 1805 for the sum of 1560 lbs. 19 shillings 4 pence and a half penny Joseph Shirk sold this property to his son, Abraham Shirk. This was part of a 300 acre purchase from Ebenezer and Jane Mitchell in 1775 (Mitchell operated a mill at Burgner's Station). The size of this plot was 144 acres.

Mary Alice Shirk Code E41363721, loving spouse and 6th cousin
of Tom Shirk Code E43550121

July 8, 1942 — August 6, 2025

Mary Alice Shirk (nee Moore) was born in Pittsburgh, PA on July 8, 1942, to Donald and Arlene (Weaver) Moore. She lived a life rich with passions and dedicated to others. A proud graduate of Juniata College in Education, she furthered her studies with a Master's in Education from Penn State.

For 59 joyful years, she was married to her beloved husband, Tom Shirk. Together, they raised four daughters: Jennifer Shirk, Margery (Eric) Grill, Aimee Shirk, and Eileen (Marcus) Smedley. Her greatest happiness, however, came from her thirteen cherished grandchildren: Margaret, Cooper, Josie, Fiona, Samuel, Sydney, Thomas, Harrison, Maddox, Mairi, Tilly, Cora, and Anna, who brought immense joy to her life. Mary Alice was a doting grandmother and was much beloved by her grandchildren. Her legacy will continue through their achievements for generations.

She was a true enthusiast of the culinary arts and a member of a gourmet cooking club. Her adoration for flowers was evident in her award-winning status as a Master Gardener and her active involvement with the Corey Woods Garden Club. She was an active member of Epworth Church for more than 35 years. Beyond her personal interests, she was dedicated to her community, serving on the board of directors for the Sunshine Children's Home and actively participating with the Toledo Symphony Education Outreach. She also held a special fondness for the beach, finding peace and happiness by the sea.

She was interred at Steinmetz Cemetery in Schoeneck, Lancaster County, PA, on August 16, 2025. A memorial service was held on October 4th at Epworth UMC.



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