

"TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND MY NEIGHBOR'S GOOD"

A Study of the Historical Development of a Community Identity: Marilla

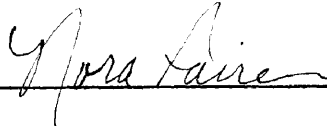
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First Reader



Second Reader

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INTRODUCTION

The sign out front reads, "The Marilla Church of the Brethren - 'To the glory of God and my neighbor's good.'" The small white "Church on the Hill" very seriously has lived and continues to live its church life with its "neighbor's good" an integral part of its practicing religion. This relationship between the Marilla Church of the Brethren and Marilla Township is one so tightly woven into the character of this community that the "doing" for each other has become a "given".

Marilla history is one of a pioneering community integrated into the northern Michigan booming lumber industry; Michigan led the nation in lumber production from 1870 to 1900. The Church of the Brethren history is a part of that pietistic upheaval of 17th century Europe, which played so large a part in the resultant plethora of Protestant denominations who emigrated to the United States.

These two, the township and the church, are so closely tied in so many ways that the history of each would be virtually impossible to understand without the history of the other. Thus, the historical development of the resulting community identity is a blend of both histories. Their unique, close relationship, though it began with the inception of the church, requires not only an understanding of the social and theological beginnings of this very community-minded church. It is equally important to understand

the social, political and economic forces that brought together those who pioneered this northwestern Michigan community. How these forces combined with geographic factors to continue to significantly affect the development of a Marilla identity with such an astonishingly close community tie with the Marilla Church of the Brethren is a curious and amazing story in many ways. On a surface level, it does not seem logical that such a close relationship could occur without an insistence on religious inclusion. Yet, this was not the case, nor is there any evidence of any strong attempts to make Marilla primarily a Brethren religious community. Understanding this closely tied relationship requires a more thorough knowledge of the historical and social development of those forces both within the church and the community as they acted on the major Marilla personages. How a religious group with a strong religious communal background could transfer these community ideas to include a secular social community without insisting on conversion, or losing their own peculiar Brethren identity, needs the understanding of the religious struggles within the Brethren church and how these struggles profoundly affected the leaders who settled in Marilla. Nor can these factors alone account for the rich growth that such a strong identity required. One needs, also, a thorough knowledge of how geographic location, soil content, the lumber industry and other social and cultural factors could provide the environment that this "rich growth" required.

This paper will attempt to illuminate and clarify the significance of Marilla Township history, the Church of the Brethren creation and the resultant blend of the Marilla identity that has existed and is, today.

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF MARILLA TOWNSHIP

Marilla, itself, is located in the northeast corner of Manistee County, a northwestern Michigan, Lake Michigan coastal county which lies south of Grand Traverse and Benzie. Its history, like most of the history of this area of our country, is short and new, even in a country whose whole history is relatively young.

An early (1866) description of the area that became Marilla Township noted dense forests of maple, beech, hemlock and pine, filled with "birds and beasts." C. Churchill from the Empire State arrived there in June and found, also, rich soil and numerous springs and streams and "dense solitude." The Churchills built a log cabin in this dense forest and were soon joined by other northern pioneers. Two bachelors, the Leaver brothers, Sylvanus Evens and Jacob Rinard and families settled within a mile or so from the Churchills. These early dwellers of Marilla had to be persevering and energetic. Cows had to be content with twigs and moss in their mangers at night and there were "dark days of disease and misfortune." Cattle died or had to be sold for survival needs. Most provisions had to be walked in from logging camps from the nearby forest. As time passed, more land was cleared and fields cultivated and more prosperous times came.¹ Those who sought

settlement in Marilla might have noted if they knew their trees that, unlike land further west in the county, the hardwood growing here along with the pine usually indicated a richer soil.

As in most frontier situations, there was little to enforce social order. A story originally included in an early History of Manistee, Mason and Oceana Counties, by S. W. Fowler, on November 4, 1879, but omitted in publication, told of a man named George Leaver who made the mistake of going hunting in a coat of bear skin. Leaver brought down a deer. While bending over his prize, he was mistaken for a bear by another hunter (whose identity could not be documented) and was himself shot. Mr. Fowler expressed doubt that this was entirely an accident, but no corroborating account could be located.² The tombstone in Marilla Township Cemetery simply reads, "George Leaver, Shot Nov. 4, 1879, 33 Years Old."

Growth was rapid during the beginning of this frenzied deforestation period of Michigan's lumbering orgy (1870 to 1900) and, in 1870, Marilla petitioned for township organization. Originally it was a part of Brown Township; this petition, presented by James Winters, asked that "Town 23 North of Range 13 West ... be detached and organized into a new township to be called Marilla."³ This petition was presented by James Winters, but it was Leander Hall who initiated the organization of the township in order to organize a school. When he asked a county official to draw up the township organizational papers, the county official agreed to do this on the condition that the township be named after his daughter, Marilla. The petition was

accepted by the Manistee County Board of Supervisors on January 4, 1870. The first election was to follow on April 4. This first meeting was held in, "the house of John Wilson on the SW $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 9 on the hill east of the marsh about 15 rods from the road." An election of officers was held and the results were recorded as follows by Oren Lackey, though not until 1886 for some unexplained reason. James D. Boyd, Supervisor; James H. Winters, Township Clerk; George Seaver, Treasurer; Owen A. Lackey, School Inspector, 2 years, and William W. Pope, 1 year; Percapher Hower, Benjamin Yates, Wilson Farnsworth, Justices of the Peace; George Seaver (1 yr.), Owen Lackey (2 yrs.), Solomon Crawford (3 yrs), Highway Commissioners; Abraham Evens, Frank D. Bremmer, Alexander L. Lemmon, and Jacob C. Rinard, Constables. Twenty-five voters attended the meeting. Those not elected, but voting, were John Brimmer, Henry D. Farnsworth, Amassa Clark, John Wilson, William W. Tulledge, Leander F. Hall, Alexander Terman, William B. Crapo, James E. Crapo, and James Hopwood.⁴ By the next decade, two of these original twenty-five had become the most prosperous farmers of Marilla: Abraham Evens, 100 acres, and Jacob Rinard, 80 acres.⁵

These early Marilla citizens tended to be more isolated than those of the rest of the townships in the county, partly because of their location, inland from the more populated locations and busy commerce of Lake Michigan. They bordered on the thick inland forests and among rolling hills. Leander Hall, on first coming to Marilla, had paid a teamster \$25.00 to move his family's possessions from Manistee to their new home in Marilla. Roads were so bad at the Howes Farm (located near where the Marilla stores and post

office were) that, according to Mrs. Twiss, a daughter of Leander Hall, in an account of a Marilla Founders Day celebration found in the Manistee County Pioneer Press of August 4, 1939, the teamster turned back and ox teams had to bring them to their destination. A nearby neighbor, Mr. T. P. Winters, invited them to share his home until theirs was built. This hospitality was almost a necessity on the part of the neighbor who had a family of five and a cow; they had no other provisions for the rest of the winter except one third of a barrel of cornmeal and buds of trees. He was more than glad to share house room for a portion of Mr. Hall's provisions. The township was not easily accessible overland, in spite of the new 13 Mile Road built just previous to 1884 by the state of Michigan. According to a Pleasanton Township resident who attended a Marilla wedding at the Abraham Evens farm on August 23 and 24, 1884, " ... the 'new State Road' was not a good model road, in our opinion. Long patches of rough corduroy, wholly free from sand, would settle the dinner of a dyspeptic in a summary manner." Once over Bear Creek, she noted that, " ... we found no more signs of civilization for a goodly number of miles, until our eyes became weary of peering through the wilderness of leaves."⁶ Besides their more remote location, these farmers had less reason to travel to the coastal towns and cities. There were two lumber camps within five miles of their farms and any supplies needed or cash crops to be sold were mostly obtained from or sold to these camps. This proved to be a significant economic advantage for these Marilla farmers because their transportation costs for their cash crops were practically nothing, while the other townships further away from the forest, e.g., Bear Lake or Arcadia Township, spent as much as one third of the price of their crop in transportation to Manistee city.⁷

Of course, lumbering was, at this time, the significant factor in Manistee County, and Marilla was no exception. It dominated the economy here as it did the whole economy of Michigan, hitting its apex a little later in the northwestern part of the state. Before 1840, eighty of eighty three Michigan counties had been heavily wooded, but by 1900 most had been largely exploited. Between 1870 and 1890, Michigan led the nation in the lumbering industry. Mills formed at the mouths of major rivers, and the Manistee River was a major river on the west coast. Marilla Township was part of its path. Thus, two lumber camps formed within reach of Marilla's borders, so that the white pine sorted out of the hardwoods (there was little demand then for maple or beech) could be brought to the river's edge during the winter and cheaply transported to the mill in Manistee, come break up time in the spring. This river saw some of the richest drives in western Michigan.⁸

A typical lumber camp might have up to 70 men, 20 teams of horses, perhaps a few yoke of oxen. Staples of their huge quantity diets were beans, potatoes and pork. Each week, these lumbermen might consume 5 barrels of pork or 15 to 20 bushels of potatoes. The teams were treated well and they, too, would require large quantities of food, especially grains.⁹ Thus, the nearby Marilla farmers had a ready crop market as well as an opportunity to earn additional money during the winter. Though lumberjacks were often immigrants from the Scandinavian countries or Canada and southern Michigan farmers, some also came from nearby townships, such as Marilla. Thus, the camps were also a source of whole or part-time employment for Marilla inhabitants. In 1878, Edward Williams, who married into the Amassa Clark

family (one of the original founding families of Marilla), worked for the Buckley and Douglas Logging Camp. In the 1870's, Williams wages ranged from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per week.¹⁰

In an article in the Manistee County Pioneer Press dated August 4, 1939, entitled, "Early Settlers of Marilla Tell of Pioneer Experiences, at Community Founders Celebration Sun'y," a "Mr. Bigge" described the winter of 1881. There had been a heavy snowfall throughout the winter and sleighs had to be used from the first heavy snowfall on November 12 until April 12. On March 17, a particularly heavy snowfall of 20 inches helped cause snow measuring nine feet in depth even up until May 10. At the lumber camp in the nearby Manistee forest, the river was icebound so late that it was not until June that 80 men working in two shifts could launch the log jam that had accumulated, into the Manistee River to float to market.

Mrs. Twiss told how the "rush of the released jam (a million board feet of lumber)" threw her father almost across the river. She said that he landed in knee deep water and his first words were, "Where's my hat?"

A state study in 1870 showed Marilla with only 9 farmers, 15 laborers, 2 carpenters, and one sailor. The wealthiest of these farmers was a Scotsman, Henry Danville, with \$3,000 of real estate worth and \$1,020 in personal worth. He also soon owned a pharmacy in Manistee city, though he kept his residence in Marilla and was very active in local and county

politics. Amassa Clark and Jacob Rinard showed \$2,000 each in real estate and the rest of the residents had \$1,000 or less. These first-township citizens ranged in age from 19 to 65, with the majority in their 30's and 40's.¹¹ Sylvanus Evens was listed then as a laborer, but by 1874, he was one of Marilla's leading farmers.

Three years previous to this, the summer of 1871, it was a hot, dry season. The conflagration which almost completely destroyed Chicago was thought to have been driven by gale winds as sparks moved northward along Michigan's west coast. This fire seriously damaged Manistee city and presumably some of the forest around it. However, nothing was mentioned in any of the records produced in or about Marilla.¹² One Manistee County historian remarked, "Marilla has forever been too far away."¹³

But, for those living and struggling to build a life, this must have seemed a community of real possibilities. By 1873, a post office had been established with George Brimmer as postmaster, a position he held almost continuously until it closed in 1935. (He was away from the community for "a few years.") This was considered some kind of record in the state, if not the nation.¹⁴ Two school districts were established, each with its own schoolhouse, and \$502.22 was collected for school taxes in 1870. There were "50 scholars." The township received \$410 in state primary money. The first school was taught by a Miss Jennie Pope. This school, known as the Evens School, was described by the son of one of the original settlers, Abraham Evens who arrived in 1865, according to an article clipped out of the

August 4, 1939, edition of the Manistee County Pioneer Press. The occasion was a Marilla community founders celebration. Mr. Evens said the school had a hewn basswood slab floor and desks. The desks faced the wall and pupils' backs were toward the teacher. Boys often tunneled under the schoolhouse in order to recover slate pencils which had fallen through the cracks between the slabs of the floor. By 1871, the second district had formed.¹⁵

There were two highway districts in the township with \$184.22 of tax money to spend for improvement. Each district was assessed a number of days labor, according to their needs. They also raised \$31.21 for state taxes and \$505.13 for county taxes. The township tax was \$117.95.¹⁶ Evidently, according to township records, these monies collected were deposited with the county treasurer and paid from there back to the township as per drafts drawn. By 1873, the township clerk was earning \$50.00 per year and school enrollment had grown to sixty-seven. Twenty-six volumes had been bought and a library begun. Three new roads had been built, and in 1874, \$15.00 was raised for a township burying ground.¹⁷ Eventually, there were four Marilla school districts: No. 1 - Evens District, No. 2 - Marilla District, No. 3 - Clark District, and No. 4 - Gilson District, which was formed a few years after then, but before 1899. In 1899, Evens District No. 1 was granted \$481, Marilla District No. 2 - \$843.70, Clark District No. 3 - \$455.04, and Gilson District No. 4 - \$430.75. Evaluation of property values in each of the school districts shows a steady increase in District 2 when compared to 1 and 3. On May 2, 1882, the evaluations were as follows: District 1 - \$20,000, District 2 - \$45,468, and District 3 - \$22,729. Eventually, District 2

becomes the Marilla Consolidated School.¹⁸

Records for this period in the township meeting minutes are limited; at times, a more complete record is kept, depending on who is elected to the governing board. An order is given in 1873 for all accounts to be itemized, but, by 1874, this still had not been accomplished and another order is given. A special meeting is called on August 6, 1874, because of an alleged misappropriation of funds. Mr. Boyd has resigned as supervisor by 1871 and Henry Danville has replaced him. Mr. Cheesbro is now the township treasurer and has evidently used school funds to augment the highway funds, or at least this is the accusation. It is agreed to draw whatever is needed in Manistee County orders for School District No. 2. They find no fault with the township treasurer "in regard to misapplying the funds in his hands," but do recommend that hereafter the Treasurer pay out school funds only for school purposes. Cheesbro remains in office as treasurer and in 1875 is also Justice of Peace.¹⁹ In February of 1874, Marilla votes for a representative to the State Legislature for Manistee and Mason counties (5 votes are cast for Leasandro Hopkins)²⁰ and, on November 8, they participate for the first time in the general elections. Governor - John J. Bagley - 15 votes, Chamberlain - 6; new constitution - 2 yes, 19 no; women's suffrage - 6 yes, 18 no.²¹ As is true of most of the farming areas of Michigan, particularly of northern Michigan, Marilla is primarily a Republican stronghold, as was the pattern in this election. This election showed an overwhelming male sentiment (6-18) opposing women's suffrage. Whether this was a conviction shared by the Brethren community thirty years before arriving in Marilla, is

not indicated specifically. However, historical accounts of Brethren social and cultural practices would indicate that the Brethren policies would be in agreement, at least with this vote against women's suffrage. According to Durnbaugh in Meet the Brethren, it wasn't until 1910 that women's roles began to change officially in the Church of the Brethren structure. However, gifted women had served as preachers for several previous decades. Further discussion concerning women's changing roles will appear in this paper's section on Church of the Brethren history.

At this time, April 1875, James Winters, who had been serving as Township Clerk, appeared to have something in his life which causes concern; this first affects his clerical efforts [up to this time, his writing is very clear, almost artistic in its execution, and now suddenly his writing is haphazard and the minutes seem incomplete in succeeding entries]. He resigns on March 7, 1876. No explanation is given and Henry Farnsworth is appointed in his place.²² Winters' name appears in minutes several years later. There is no mention of anything happening in any of the county newspaper accounts, but this is not unusual, as little of what is happening in Marilla appears in newspaper accounts until after the turn of the century.

By the end of the 1870s, new people seem to have become prominent in local power positions. Henry Danville is Supervisor and Emerson Snyder, Clerk; Leander Hall, Treasurer, and School Inspector is John Brimmer. Danville, Brimmer, Evans and Winters remain active in township politics for several decades. Snyder makes an effort in 1878, after crossing out his

first, mixed, haphazard effort, to straighten out the bookkeeping. A standard "in - out" balance sheet appears, but soon the books have gone back to just a general listing.²³ In 1880, June 7, there is another transfer of school funds to highway funds - \$327.44. This transfer is made after apportionment is made to each of the districts. No discussion or objection is recorded.²⁴

1880 and 1881 seemed to be years of highway controversy, according to Marilla Township records. On November 2, 1881, Soloman Crawford wanted \$20.25 for highway work. He was allowed only \$10.25. Then, on April 4, 1881, a motion is made by Robert Knowles, supported by Crawford, to increase highway taxes by 1%. This motion was defeated; but in the next township officers election of this same meeting, Henry Danville, Supervisor since 1877, is defeated by Robert Knowles, 33 - 8. In November 1882, Henry Danville causes a special meeting to be called to take into consideration his claim "for damages on account of a defect in the highways of said township." This damage was to a buggy and harness and the Board at this time agreed to pay the repair cost.²⁵

There is also discussion in 1883 as to where the next meeting was to be held - in the District 1 schoolhouse or in the wealthier District 2. District 1 had the voting power so their motion carried.²⁶ Whether these were signs of a power struggle or not could not be fully determined. There is recorded on March 28, 1882, an unsuccessful attempt to collect a \$4.16 delinquent property tax on Rob Danville's property (Henry Danville's son) by

H. D. Farnsworth, Clerk. Curiously, the Board at this time, "allowed the same sum to the Treasurer."²⁷ A motion by the highway commissioner to levy a half-day's labor on each \$100 worth of property evaluation lost. A motion then carried to raise the amount of the contingency fund by \$300.²⁸ Other problems included stray ewes and "estrays ox and bull" coming into neighboring enclosures. It was requested at this meeting that the owners "come and prove property and pay charges and take him away."²⁹ By 1883, the total township taxes are \$2,176.49.³⁰

In June of 1885, an investigation of the Treasurer's books was conducted by L. T. Hall, Supervisor, and Ed Dougherty, Justice of the Peace. They found the books to be erroneous and the "last Treasurer is now owing \$374.89." This last treasurer was George W. Patterson and he had "settled" in the annual settlement of these books on March 31 of that same year. Supervisor Hall was then asked to request of Mr. Patterson the same amount and give him a receipt for the same, "but, if he refuses to pay, that Mr. Hall and Mr. Farnsworth (present Township Clerk) be instructed to advise with the prosecuting attorney and report to the Board as soon as possible."³¹ On June 30, the Marilla Township Board met and approved a motion made by James H. Winters and seconded by Edward Dougherty that the Marilla Township Board "accept the note for \$374.89 from the former Treasurer, George W. Patterson, endorsed by Robert W. Knowles, in settlement of his indebtedness to the Township of Marilla." A later entry notes that on March 27, 1888, a resolution was passed "that the Town Treasurer be and is hereby instructed to collect the balance due on George Patterson's note."³² No mention was made

in previous township minutes of previous payment, though this entry indicates there was. Income was not enumerated in this set of books; perhaps this was done in the treasurer's records, which are no longer available. At any rate, no further mention of Mr. Patterson's note indicates that it was paid.

Patterson was granted payment of bills tendered to the township several times during the 80's and early 90's; these probably would not have been approved if he still owed money. This was the most serious visible financial problem caused by an officer of Marilla's Township Board.

Three hundred seventy four dollars was no small amount of money then, and it's hard to conceive of this being a matter of an error in records, no matter what the individual's education or abilities. It must have caused a great deal of consternation no matter what the cause, even if no individual profited in a selfish manner. Nor was this to be their only treasurer problem. Perhaps Mr. Patterson had not been properly bonded. At any rate, in 1896, they removed their elected treasurer (no record of who this was) and, because of lack of bonding, replaced him with Milton D. Kindig. This same thing happened in 1898 and 1900.³³

In 1899, June 27, an afternoon meeting was called. (In a farm community, this would generally indicate a serious situation.) Its purpose was to take action against John W. Danville, ex-treasurer (1891-1892), and his "Sureties" for money "collected by him as treasurer and returned as unpaid." A resolution composed by Montreville S. Howes that the Board give full support to executive officers "in his efforts or expenses...incurring in

the fulfilling of his duties (in this case the Supervisor, Montreville S. Howes) to effect a settlement of the liabilities for the shortage of John W. Danville."³⁴ No further mention appears in the minutes concerning this incident. There had appeared several incidents of taxpayers complaining of being billed for something already paid during the interim. These were small amounts, less than \$10.00; perhaps there was a connection between these and John Danville's troubles.

There were numerous complaints of farmers against the inaction or actions of their highway commissioner's trying to carry out the area's busy highway program. The constant complaints of damages and lack of road or good roads, of road building damage to farm fields and fences, plus the frequent complaints against owners of livestock-damaging dog packs and loose animal problems made the life of the township's political leaders a hectic one. the year with \$2,261.44, collected \$6,232.54, spent \$5,063.03 and retained a balance of \$3,430.95 at the end of the year.³⁵ Besides the regular county, township and school taxes, Marilla citizens paid separate dog, library, and highway taxes. With the additional wealth of many of its farmers, there appeared also the recording of local poverty. In December of 1905, the Marilla clerk is instructed to notify Charles I. Tomlin of Manistee, an officer appointed by the state, in charge of poor children, "with regard to H. Woolhouse's family."³⁶

According to the real estate listings of G. A. Hart of Manistee, as early as 1882, there were 62 farms in Marilla. This figure, if accurate,

indicates a rapid growth for this small community, from the nine farmers listed in the 1870 state study. This rapid increase in farmer population would mean increased travel and wear on local roads and demands for better means of getting goods to market. This would explain the previously noted complaints and problems with roads. Hart's listing of these farms is preceded by a real estate salesman's description of Marilla as follows: "The population is comprised wholly of English speaking people. Marilla has three good frame school houses that cost \$2,400, a prosperous Grange, literary and other societies which make the town a very desirable one to reside in. A great many are preparing to erect frame dwellings to replace the unfashionable, but comfortable, log house. Messrs. Pope and Danville have taken the initiative, the latter having erected the past year quite an elegant, substantial dwelling. A small portable saw mill, able to cut 2,500 feet per day, is located in the southeast quarter, section 7. All timber it can cut is taken at good prices to supply the local demand."³⁷ This saw mill, too, would cause added wear and tear on roads and, again, demands for better ones. More of G. A. Hart later, as he figures prominently in the coming "Indiana invasion" of the Church of the Brethren.

On August 23, 1884, a description of Sylvanus Evens' one hundred sixty acre farm in northwest Marilla comes from the impressions of a Pleasanton Township wedding guest who is attending the union of Robert Danville, Henry's son, and the daughter of Sylvanus Evans. Evans, one of the original settlers in 1867, has been in Marilla for seventeen years. "We found the new house of our host, Mr. S. Evans located in the midst of an exceedingly fertile garden

and overshadowed by fruit trees, bearing heavy burdens. He expects to gather about two hundred bushels of apples from his orchard this season; and he has already sold \$60 worth of truck from his vegetable garden this summer; and from appearances he will have as much more to take to market, besides supplying his own table. A barn, 40 x 60 feet, had been erected since our last visit. And when we saw the large field where the grain had been harvested, and other crops yet ungathered, and the herd of sleek cattle, we did not doubt the barn would be filled."³⁸ This must have seemed quite a contrast to Sylvanus as he recalled those early days of dense forest and "dark days of disease and misfortune." And even these 1884 days of a mandatory day's ride over corduroy roads to the coastal city and villages would soon be gone, as the Manistee and Northeastern Railroad would soon be providing railroad passenger service to Manistee from Marilla.

Marilla had not only grown in population and, though more remote and considerably less populated than the coastal townships, it was becoming strong agriculturally. Some of its neighboring townships' land had opened what were known as "slashings," the land left after the lumber barons had cut through, as a cheap way to become a farmer here. Some of these slashings were under the control of some very aggressive real estate interests who were not concerned that much of this "slashings" land was not suitable for sustained farming, being too sandy to hold water long enough to withstand dry spells. Marilla, as its hardwood trees foretold, had proved to have some fairly heavy loam soil and some generally good farm land. According to the Michigan census dated June 1, 1904, Marilla farmers were becoming significant

producers in several areas of the county's crops. Their 228 acres of potatoes had produced 22,072 bushels and their yield per acre was surpassed by only one other township in the county; they were still comparatively small in total acreage, not only in potatoes, but in total acres under cultivation. Hogs (355), hay (154 tons) and livestock (453 with a value of over \$5,000) were steadily increasing in total yields and value. There were now 76 farmers in Marilla, according to their listings, with an average size farm of 112 acres, larger than those in all but one other township in Manistee County. The average county size was 92. There were a total of 8,499 acres in the township and 3,743 were "improved." Sixty-five of these 76 farmers were owners, five were cash tenants and six were share croppers.³⁹ According to S. W. Fowler, a local historian of that time, Marilla had a "well-filled public library," which spoke well of the "enterprise and intelligence" of Marilla's citizens. He noted a "handsome cemetery," located near the central part of the township, "well-fenced and handsomely decorated with trees." Land is generally rolling, and much of it "heavily timbered." Loam and sand, he said, made up some of the best farms in Manistee County.⁴⁰

At this time (1903), there was no state or national forest land in Marilla. A plat map of that year (see p.1 of Appendix) shows much of that land owned by companies and land speculators: New York National Land Assn. (George Hart's company), Buckley & Douglas and Woodman, Buckley & Douglas, Louis Sands, State Lumber Company, and Babcock Lumber Company.

By 1900, the heyday of the lumbering industry had passed and, though the

industry continued, it was declining. The immediate effect on the railroads, built almost entirely to accommodate the lumber barons, was a serious cutback in freight and passengers. By 1901, local land speculators and railroads, to increase both freight and passengers, sought to lure farmers to the slashings left behind by the lumberjacks. The fact that much of the soil was poor farming land and could not support long-term farming was of little significance to them.⁴¹

One such local land speculator was Manistee's George A. Hart, who was a master of the art of this type of real estate selling. According to Steve Harold, Manistee Historical Museum Director, Hart traveled all over the country conducting his business. During a trip to New York, in an attempt to attract recently arrived North European immigrants, he lured a whole group of Finnish people, complete with the printer of the largest Finnish language newspaper in the country, who moved his operation to one of these slashings in Manistee County, south and west of Marilla. The Finnish community of Kaleva was born. Because these Finnish farmers knew, from their old world experience, how to manage a living from this type of soil, the village of Kaleva exists yet today. A few of these Finnish settlers elected to seek better land elsewhere, some of them north in Marilla, but most stayed with their own language and culture and Kaleva continues today to cultivate their Finnish heritage, though very few do any farming now.

Another group targeted by Hart and the railroaders was the Church of the Brethren communities in northern Indiana. These Hoosiers, semi-communal

farmers, were told that all the timber slashings took to make them productive was the know-how of good farmers and that the reason those who were there already were not prosperous was because they were descendants of lumbermen and knew nothing about good farming methods and management. Land was cheap and many of these diligent farmers chose to succumb to the real estate salesman's pitch, packed themselves and their belongings on trains and came north. These people were of particular interest to both Hart and the Pere Marquette Railroad because they tended to form communities wherever they went, according to their religious beliefs. This meant that if a few leaders could be convinced, it could mean whole communities might come. One method these enthusiastic real estate salesmen used proved quite effective. They named the end of a spur of the Pere Marquette Railroad where flat cars unloaded logs, "Brethren." They then promoted the idea of this Brethren community in the vicinity. This was, they were told, at least as good as Indiana new ground, only it was located in the cooler air of the northern perimeter of the Manistee Forest. Whether the facts presented were true or not seemed unimportant to the real estate agents selling railroad land, as Hart was. Certainly the veracity of two of these particular selling points (the existing Brethren community and the richness of soil) was questionable, as the reader will note in the information which follows. These salesmen knew their customers well, appealing to two major enthusiasms, farming and Brethren community living.

In 1901, Brethren farmers began to respond and journeyed north to this Brethren mecca. Loading themselves and their household goods and farm

implements on railroad cars and boxcars, they found themselves at the end of their journey at Brethren, "a flagstop in the woods." There was not even one building in this "Brethren." The railroad unloaded them and they were left there to fend for themselves. Their temporary shacks soon sprang up here and there in the lumber industry slashings which surrounded Brethren. These first Brethren people named these devastated forest areas, "the choppins," because they contained thick undergrowth where trees had been chopped down and it required more "choppins" to make a clearing or trail. By 1903, a building which was to be a store with quarters above for newcomers was begun in the middle of what is now the village of Brethren, and a Church of the Brethren had been organized and services were held in a little log schoolhouse several miles east of the store construction.⁴²

Soon some of these temporary shacks were replaced by more permanent buildings, but surviving here was no easy real estate salesman's task. The "choppins" second growth timber was so dense that tales were told by Brethren of getting lost only a few rods from their own clearings. No such thing as roads existed, only trails. Any knowing Brethren would not have considered starting out on any journey on these trails without a chain, cant hook, axe, and saw. If a tree had fallen across their trail, the traveler must either cut through and remove the log or hack a new trail around it. Stumps often cluttered the trails and coming through with horse or horse and vehicle one must be alert and quick to spot and dodge. By spring of 1903, cleared patches could be seen and gardens and farm crops growing. By this time, two Brethren personages, important to Marilla's history, were among those trying to survive the Manistee Forest slashings.⁴³

The first of these two, J. Edson Ulery, arrived in 1903. A minister, Edson with his wife, Sylva, immediately became active members of the newly formed church. In 1903, one of the Brethren began to build a store building near the railroad spur. (This is the area which eventually became the village of Brethren.) This store building was to serve two purposes besides that of a store: living quarters for the store proprietor and his family and accommodations for newcomers until they were able to provide shelter for themselves. Though Brethren services which the Ulerys attended were held in a small log schoolhouse several miles east of the store, the love feast that Fall in 1903 was held in the unfinished store building. Tragedy struck in January of 1904 when the store burned to the ground, taking the lives of two of the store builder's children. A new church house was built in the Spring of that year and Ulery preached the dedicatory sermon.⁴⁴

J. Edson Ulery was swarthy, long and lanky, "a quick impulsive person ... (who) seemed at home wherever he hung his hat ... everybody was like kith and kin to him."⁴⁵ He had graduated from the newly purchased Church of the Brethren College in Manchester, Indiana, after a three year Bible course in 1898. He brought a "sunny disposition," two and one half years of experience in the Open Door Mission in Brooklyn. This mission was sometimes known as the "Italian Mission," since it served mostly people of that nationality. The added experience of working with the concentration of conflicting immigrant cultures that made up New York City during this period of Southern European immigration, perhaps influenced Ulery's outlook and ability to work with and accept those outside the Brethren community. This

might help explain, at least in part, the determined path of the Marilla Church of the Brethren to become an integral part of the Marilla community. After two and a half years of strenuous work, Ulery received orders from a doctor to "get out of the city and into the open country if he wanted to live." He was suffering from "serious lung trouble." Thus, the Ulerys sought both his health and his ministry in Brethren.⁴⁶

Hezekiah Grossnickle had been a successful farmer in a Church of the Brethren community near North Manchester, Indiana. Pictures of his former home there displayed a two story brick home. His wife, Rachel, had, like Edson Ulery, lung problems, probably asthma, and was also advised to seek less humid, clear, northern air.⁴⁷ By 1902, Hezekiah had decided that he must leave Brethren. As many others had discovered, not just in Brethren, but all over northern Michigan, "know-how" and diligence was not enough for profitable farming in "white pine sand."⁴⁸ Almost every section of northern Michigan had at least three or four farms, abandoned and completely overgrown.⁴⁹ Brethren had more than its share. Besides this, Hezekiah had the additional problem that the fairly sizable capital gains fund from his former Indiana farm was disappearing at what he found was an alarming rate. Living at the jump-off point for arriving Brethren, he was one of those who was obliged to shelter and feed the new arrivals. Considering himself a good Brethren, but also of a very practical nature, he decided to seek his farming fortune elsewhere. In 1902, he and a few other Brethren folks sought what they considered better farming prospects about fourteen or fifteen miles away in Marilla Township. The farm he eventually owned, 240 acres in the north

half of section 27, belonged then to three concerns, State Lumber Company, L. S. White, and Buckley and Douglass.⁵⁰ He chose well. The Grossnickle farm was rich soil, flat land and one of the larger farms. In fact, it was to become one of the best farms in Marilla Township. At the time he bought this farm, however, it was not as it was to become. There was still a good deal of clearing before farming could begin; its location was a perimeter farm, presently backing up against what was then, and is now, the Manistee National Forest. Grace, his oldest daughter, often recalled the early days on Hezekiah's farm to children and grandchildren; she was, at that time, eighteen years old and she and her mother Rachel did the milking as part of their daily work. They were so lonesome for their old life and friends that they "would go out behind the barn and cry." Rachel in the midst of this said, "I don't know whatever possessed Hezi to come to this God-forsaken country!"⁵¹ But "come" they did and, again, these Brethren immediately organized themselves into a Brethren religious community.

J. Edson Ulery, since there were several preachers now in the church at Brethren, began making regular trips to Marilla in the interest of establishing a church there, in the meantime conducting services in Brethren homes in the Marilla community. These "trips" required (since there was no road from Brethren to Marilla) that he follow a ravine forged by a narrow gauge railroad which had operated in logging days; when this ceased, he blazed his own trail through the woods with the implements he always carried with him. Others followed this trail and, in 1930, it became a road, thanks to the Depression and President Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps workmen.⁵²

At this time, Ulery and Grossnickle were able to lease the only church there, a Baptist church which had been erected in 1897; Marilla's postmaster and always active politician, George Brimmer, "received much of the credit for completing this Baptist Church in 1899." Five years later, in 1904, it was leased to the Brethren for five years.⁵³ Ulery preached regularly here until 1906 when he left Brethren in payment, he said, for Dr. Harry Sadler's forty mile round trip in February for a professional call from Edson who was "sick abed" again. Dr. Sadler, who lived in Onekama and was also Brethren, said, "The only way you can repay the bill is by coming to Onekama to preach."⁵⁴ Onekama was a Manistee County, Lake Michigan coastal village.

Ulery continued a sometimes active, occasional speaker, always friend and advisor to the Marilla congregation. In an issue of The Manistee County Pioneer Press shortly after Ulery died on January 8, 1959, at the age of 85, Editor Luke Keddie wrote that he " ... would not attempt to tell the influence of J. Edson Ulery's life in our county as measured in spiritual, inspirational and friendship values ... Yet in plain dollars and cents, history reveals a fact so noteworthy we wish to mention it here" Mr. Keddie noted that in the first decade of this century, the "Hoosier Invasion," hundreds of Indiana families attracted to Manistee County by the low price of "cut over" lands to establish farms and homes, was, "by and large an abject failure." These "invaders were poorly prepared to withstand the rigors of northwestern Michigan ... Hundreds returned after only a season or two. Even promoters who dallied too long at the venture went direfully bust. But in those settlements where Reverend Ulery labored and preached and

taught ... the invasion caught hold, took root, grew, blossomed, bore fruit and multiplied. Today, thriving communities have grown up. Dunn & Bradstreet probably never heard of Edson Ulery, but each of these township's assessor who takes paper and pencil and adds up facts knows that this humble minister was a multi-millionaire -- for his fellow citizens."⁵⁵

By this time, the Brethren had established themselves in Marilla and were a social force that was there to stay. The answer to how and why this came to be true lies not only with Edson Ulery or Hezekiah Grossnickle, but, also, to a great extent in the nature and history of the religious development of what has come to be known as, The Church of the Brethren. Without some brief historical explanation of how and why the beliefs and organization of this very important social group in Marilla's history came about, it would be difficult to clearly understand why these two, township and church, could interact so closely for so many years.

CHAPTER II

A HISTORY OF THE BRETHREN

The Church of the Brethren had its beginnings in the pietistic movement in the late 17th century in Europe. This movement, which was a movement of revival, took as its purpose making man's relationship to God a personal experience, one that was "morally meaningful" and "socially relevant." It stressed feelings of the heart and revival of the laity and opposed intellectualism, church formalism, and ethical passivity of state churches or accepted religions. The pietist wanted a "return to the Bible" and the community and simplicity of the earliest Christian church. Originally known as Dunkards, the Church of the Brethren became one of the many fundamentalist Protestant religions that grew out of this pietistic movement. The Dunkards' founder, Alexander Mack, withdrew from the German Reformed Church of Palatenate. He sought refuge in the German village of Schwarsenau. Seven others joined him and formed their own church of Christian believers. They practiced footwashing, the holy kiss after Communion, the love feast, and the trine, or "thrice repeated immersion, face forward, in a flowing stream. "They originally advocated celibacy and community of goods and "rebaptism." This rebaptism was the term that these first Brethren applied to the performance of one of the original basic Brethren reform beliefs: these original German Brethren believed that the sacrament of baptism should not be

performed in infancy, but, instead, when the individual reached adulthood or the age of logic or reason. Thus the decision to become a Christian should be a conscious one. Later, this adulthood baptism theology was known as Anabaptism. Thus, these original eight Brethren were rebaptised by their first minister and leader, Alexander Mack, Sr., at Schwarzenau, Germany; they had all received Lutheran baptism at birth. These original eight did not want their new religious community named after any individual. They called themselves simply, the "brethren." This rebaptism was considered illegal within the Holy Roman Empire and the "brethren" were able to practice this belief at this time only because Wittgenstien's sovereign, Count Henrich Albrecht, of pietist leanings, defended these recent settlers in his realm. By the time the imperial authorities got around to completing their inquiry in 1720, the "brethren" had left the area. Their group grew rapidly, but intolerance forced them to split into two groups. One went to Crefeld. It was here that they were influenced by William Penn. In 1719, Peter Becker led the first Brethren group to America, to Germantown, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. Alexander Mack followed with the other group two years later.⁵⁶ They grew slowly and, by the time of the Revolutionary War fifty odd years later, they numbered only about 1,000 members. This slow growth was partly due to the hardships of the frontier which they continued to follow as it moved west, and partly because of continued intolerance of their German speech, adult baptism, opposition to war and their insistence that inner Christian life was more important than church organization. They suffered even more severely during the Revolutionary War period because of their continued pacifistic beliefs. Thus, morally they opposed the

Revolution. Many Brethren of the Revolutionary War period remained loyal to England in hopes that the war could be avoided. They suffered further persecution as loyalists and some left with the loyalist migration to Canada. The Brethren also opposed slavery. Their pattern of settlement here in America tended to avoid those areas in which slavery was prevalent.

One of the most famous Dunkards in American history was the elder, Christopher Sauer, farmer, doctor, and printer. In 1743, he published at Germantown the first Bible in a Western language (German) printed in America. He established a paper mill, an ink factory, and a type foundry (also, the first in America) and helped found a high school. His words have become an important tenet woven into the basic theological beliefs of the Brethren, "To the glory of God and my neighbor's good."⁵⁷

If Sauer helped build and unite the Brethren, Conrad Beissel and his Ephrata Community tended to disrupt and divide. In 1728, Beissel, who had been baptized by Becker at Germantown, became, as Brethren literature states, confident in "the divine inspiration of his own ideas and innovations." This led to the first schism from the main Brethren movement. Beissel "gave back" his baptism to the Brethren and moved west as a hermit. When others followed, the famous Ephrata site was formed with Beissel as its superintendent; it was to become the first Protestant monastic institution in America.⁵⁸ This Ephrata Community's negative effect on the Brethren community was twofold. 1) It seriously drained members away from the main body - this colorful, Pied Piper was a very magnetic and charismatic leader

and original converts included both Becker's and Sauer's wives and Alexander Mack's son (each of whom later returned to the Brethren fold) and talented reform minister, Peter Miller. 2) The Ephrata movement's beliefs, so astray from mainstream society's culture, were associated with all Brethren by those outside the Brethren Community and caused suspicion by others that was unwarranted. These beliefs included a seventh day Sabbath, celibacy and sexes separated with a communal semi-monastic economy, and the prohibition of the eating of pork. This community at first thrived, but, after 1768 when Miller took over as leader, it "fell on evil days" and after his death, it was disbanded. On the positive side, it was a cultural center of sorts for all the Pennsylvania Germans.⁵⁹ Ephrata's Chronicon Ephratense (1786), noted for its many cultural achievements in art, manuscript illumination, choral music and printing, contained valuable information about the early Brethren, thus providing a recorded history, which is a vital part of any religious group's existence.⁶⁰

No further schisms occurred for another 100 years or more. In 1848, a dissatisfied group broke away (unhappy with Brethren baptism, Lord's Supper, and general nonconformity) into the muddied waters of some 200 independent Church of God denominations. In 1882, the sharpest schism occurred; it began when the Progressive Dunkards objected to what they considered outmoded practices, especially in education and dress, and formed what came to be known as the Brethren Church.⁶¹ This Brethren Church divided further in 1939 into the Grace Group and Ashland Group. This controversy spread to the other end of the spectrum and, in 1883, the Old Order Dunkards became unhappy with

what they thought were too many changes from old order and tradition; they objected to Sunday schools, salaried ministers, missions, higher education, and church societies.⁶² The schisms were occurring during the growing period of the two founders of the Marilla Church of the Brethren, Hezekiah Grossnickle, 1856-1939, and J. Edson Ulery, 1873-1958. These two, who chose to remain within the main Church of the Brethren group, appeared to show reactions to both the conservative Old Order Dunkards and the breakaway, progressive Brethren Church. Their very conscious decisions to establish strong social ties to the community of Marilla, and yet maintain basic Brethren religious beliefs, seemed a rejection of both the conservative and progressive struggles within the Brethren community. This was not only a Brethren struggle, but was an integral part of 19th century Protestantism. All of Protestantism struggled to deal with the social gospel and the liberal theology outgrowth of Darwinian theory which were discussed by Sydney Allstrom in chapters 46 and 47 of A Religious History of the American People. Those of the more conservative wing of the Brethren community rejected the Social Gospel movement which as Allstrom pointed out, " ... sought to convert self-oriented Christian consciousness into one that was neighbor-oriented." These Marilla Brethren were to embrace this part of the Social Gospel wholeheartedly. At the same time, though strongly supporting higher education, they were not ready to accept the scientific application of Darwin's theory to a liberal theology which led to the studied intellectual approach to religion of groups like the Unitarians. Nor could they accept the reactionary Fundamentalist movement toward concern for proving biblical inerrancy and emotional expectation of the imminent Second Coming of Christ

with their attendant emotional evangelism. The Brethren who were to settle in Marilla retained their reliance on the Bible as the center of their religious lives; but continued a distaste as Brethren historically had for the extreme emotionalism of many revival movements. They clung to their Brethren identifying baptism and communion, but mixed with it a strong basic belief in a neighbor-oriented Christianity.

All of this resulted in the original Church of the Brethren remaining as it is, still the largest body of "brethren", by far. This early history and the effect of the schisms which followed may point out that any attacks, both within and without a religious body, tend to strengthen beliefs and can often have a profound and startling effect on the manner, social and cultural, in which a group reacts to the rest of society. This was certainly true in many ways of this Brethren group who settled in Marilla in 1904.

Brethren doctrine asserted that religion meant loving and willing obedience to Christ rather than to creeds and cults; that is, Christian living rather than set religious rituals and hierarchial forms were stressed. Organizational apparatus was kept at a minimum. At the bottom was a moderator, a lay or clerical person in charge of local congregations, and thus these local communities enjoyed a great deal of autonomy and generally developed very democratic practices. Pastors were chosen by ballot of the local congregation. Above the local group was a District organization which held meetings and then the Annual Conference Meeting which is a sort of legislative national body composed of delegates from each community. An

"upper house" of this body is the Standing Committee composed of 25 members chosen from the delegates. The conference is meant to serve as an overall, unifying body. This general board is elected by the conference to supervise the general church program.⁶³ Then, too, they believed themselves to be a Christian community first, rather than a religious sect, and therefore needed neither a pastor nor a church to practice their religion.⁶⁴ They were followers of Christ's teachings first and, therefore, not followers of any particular person or any organization's interpretation of those teachings. Thus, no matter how small the group or how primitive the surroundings, a Brethren community is established. The emphasis on religious community first and de-emphasis of hierarchy or bureaucracy allowed the possibility of much more local and democratic control of religious and social relations and adaptations to any environment in which the religious group found themselves. This has certain strong advantages from both a doctrinal and supportive point of view where one deals with a pioneer or a quasi-pioneer situation such as Marilla was.

CHAPTER III

A HISTORY OF THE MARILLA CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

The Marilla Church of the Brethren is located on top of a hill at the corner of Hulls Road and Marilla Road. From its very beginnings, this "Church on the Hill," as it came to be known, was a community affair, even before the Brethren arrived. George Brimmer, who later became part of the Brethren congregation, has previously been mentioned. Rueben Nichols in 1943 recalled how that original Baptist Church came into being in the spring of 1896. "I started out with a subscription for to build a church with my name at the top for \$10.00. J. P. Winters signed up for \$10.00 his mother for \$5.00 in a few days it had grown to over \$100. Then, George Patterson deaded (deeded) the lot." Nichols, H. W. Studley and Irving Clark composed the building committee; "Mr. Studley refusing to act Mr. Clark said go a head its all rite with me from that time on I had full charge and with the advice and help of George Brimmer it was built that winter." Logs were cut and delivered to the mill for rough lumber and "the Ladys Aid gave the windows and around \$100 besides." Rev. George Crook, Baptist of Bear Lake, solicited businessmen in Manistee and brought back \$100. Dedication pledges were \$150, "making it free and clear. Rev. Josiah Cook, Free Methodist. was a wonderful help and needs Honorable mention in his work."⁶⁵

Hezekiah Grossnickle continued to promote this ecumenical spirit when he and Edson Ulery leased the building from the Baptists for their "church house." As Mrs. Dollie Sturdevant recalled (also in 1943), "We moved to another county, but moved back in 1903 and many of the old members (Baptist) were gone and the Brethren people were in the majority, but held a Union Sunday School. My girls attended there for several years."⁶⁶ Thus, from the beginning, Ulery and Grossnickle were cognizant of not only the glory of God, but "my neighbor's good." The Union Sunday School established immediately that these particular Brethren were interested not just in a Brethren community, but in the Marilla community. The Union Sunday School must have seemed quite an event in the remoteness of a place like Marilla and, from the Church's inception, the lines between church and community seem quite blurred. This Union Sunday School grew into an enormous success and continued to increase a Marilla community church concept as it became the activity center of a very active young people's group several decades later.

Some ideas inherent in Brethren doctrine itself promoted closer ties between the community and the church that might not have existed otherwise. First of all, the fact that Brethren believe totally in adult Baptism and that the individual must come to his own religious convictions in a mature mind meant that, even among their own families, there would be many attending church who were not baptized members. Anyone in the community could and did attend. Not only were they allowed to attend, but they were made to feel comfortably welcome.

The fact that there were sometimes unbaptised adult members in Brethren families in Marilla was due to two reasons. The first was the belief that one must reach the age of reason and consciously choose to believe the tenets of this religious sacrament. The second was due to the noticeable reluctance of Brethren, and particularly those in the Marilla church, to use aggressive persuasion or "sell" conversion to their religion. Because there were members of families of pillars of the church, young and sometimes older, who were not baptized members, those unbaptized attenders from the community at large were never set apart. If they attended very long, they often lost the feeling of being even welcome guests and became "regulars." Even their communion or "love feast" as it is known to the Brethren has been open to the community since 1923, and special open invitations to be extended were mentioned in the earlier Marilla Church Council minutes.⁶⁷

The practice of communion among the Brethren is a practice of what they conceive to be as much like Jesus Christ's Last Supper as they can make it and is a distinctly Brethren institution. It consists of a footwashing service, a full meal, and the Eucharist. The footwashing service is taken from Christ's example (John 13:4,5,14), "He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that, he poureth water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" Then Christ said, "If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another's feet." Trying to replicate this as nearly as possible, the Brethren "gird" themselves with a towel and wash their brothers' or sisters'

feet. (Generally, the sexes are separated to avoid embarrassment, especially among women who might have to manage hose or, now, panty hose.) Water and towels are provided and basins are placed at each table, and this service and performance progresses to all the rows of communicants, each receiving the feetwashing rite and in turn performing the same for the next person until all have engaged in it. As the towel is exchanged, it is the general practice of most of the Brethren to exchange the holy kiss, though this is optional at Marilla and elsewhere.⁶⁸ This symbol of simple humble service toward one another is followed by participating in the "holy meal" together; at Marilla, this included roast beef which in those early days was roasted in a big, iron open kettle outside.⁶⁹

After the Lord's Supper, sacraments of homemade unleavened bread (this was and remains a favorite of the young people's group who serve the adult communicants) and unfemented wine are administered to each one to commemorate the broken body and spilt blood of Christ on the Cross.⁷⁰

Ruth Howes Bowling and Reta Howes Russell, daughters of Grace Grossnickle Howes, recently reminisced about how communion was conducted some sixty or seventy years ago. Ruth remembered when Grandpa Grossnickle (Hezekiah) cooked the meat for communion in a big iron kettle outside over an open bonfire. Tables inside the church would be covered with white tablecloths, set for communion dinner, and second tablecloths covering all of this until it was time for the "love feast" to begin.

Men and women sat at separate tables, the women with their white prayer hats on. These hats were plain bonnets of a thin white material. (See Appendices for pictures of dress of both men and women.) Tubs of water were placed at the end of each table along with towels and washbasins. The person at the end of the table wrapped a long towel around his waist and washed the feet of the next person to him. They then shook hands and kissed and this ritual continued around the table in this manner. Then, a basin was passed around and each would wash their hands. When this was finished, they would have unfermented wine and unleavened bread, baked by women members of the church. This was accomplished as each "broke bread" with another person and the "wine" cup was passed from person to person. During both this bread breaking time and the foot washing, "scriptures were read from St. John and songs were sung." Everyone was very serious about these observances, though the children sometimes found something to giggle about; they usually quit when some one of the adults would look at them. The top tablecloth was then removed and they "partook of the Lord's supper." This consisted of beef and "sop", which was bread soaked in broth. "Scriptures from the New Testament used were John 13 and Luke 22." Both of these chapters are descriptions of Christ's last supper during the Jewish Passover and both contain direct quotes of Jesus. It is from these two chapters that the Brethren derive their practice of how communion should be presented. They consider their communion a literal translation of, as they phrase it, "the Bible as it reads."

Though today the feet washing and supper are conducted in much the same

way, there are some minor changes. The food is prepared by the deacons in their homes and there is no longer just one communion cup; each individual has their own small plastic glass. The tablecloths are paper or plastic and usually fruit is added to the menu. "But the observance is still taken very seriously and reverently."⁷¹

The fact that the Brethren communion was so different from the mainstream Christian practice of this sacrament, and indeed popular culture itself, and further that they did not close their communion would naturally draw the curious on some occasions, sometimes ruffians and busybodies. However, so far there is no known record or memory of these kinds of problems at Marilla.

A Brethren rite known as the laying on of hands was, "an act of the invocation of special blessing and spiritual strength" for those in time of crisis or great need, such as sickness, preparation for death, emotional self-searching times when an individual might need confession and forgiveness. It was used in Marilla mainly at dedications and commemorative occasions, such as baptism and ordination.⁷²

All of these practices and rites were what the Brethren community believed to be a literal understanding of what the Old and New Testaments taught. Many of the old Dunkards had a suspicious attitude toward any intellectual attempts to interpret the Bible and, indeed, during the last century even discouraged education beyond learning to read and write. Thus,

Bible colleges or universities came late in the cultural development of the Brethren and even Sunday Schools were subjects of heated debate in the 1880's when the Old Dunkards or Old Order Dunkards withdrew from the main body.⁷³ These objections seem very much "at odds" with the early, strong tradition of printing, which began with Christopher Sauer and through the years became an established institution. The Brethren own their own publishing house, where their Church of the Brethren General Offices are, in Elgin, Illinois. They are prolific publishers, and publishers must have authors and a reading public.

The other distinctly unique old Brethren practice that remains in Marilla almost as it was originally with Alexander Mack and the first Brethren was the practice of trine baptism. It was this form of baptism that first set the Brethren apart as a "separate people." The early Brethren insisted that this must be accomplished in running water of an open stream, with three separate immersions, face forward (symbolic of progressive acts of cleansing), "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19)." The community at Marilla continued this practice, using the nearby Manistee River as their open moving stream. Although they can now, if they choose, use an inside sacristy, the "Church on the Hill" community have never brought their baptism inside, though their sister church at Lakeview Church of the Brethren has. This may be another instance of the maintaining of the distinctive Brethren identity; or it may be a financial consideration, or perhaps it's both. Whether or not this distinct method of performing the baptismal rite might have caused alarm in

the Marilla of the early 1900's or harassment of the Brethren community is not recalled or recorded, but their mentor and, at that time, pastor, Elder Edson Ulery, recalled his first winter in Onekama. The five first applicants for Brethren baptism were all women and this rite was to be performed in Portage Lake where the ice was one foot thick. Ulery and his father-in-law cut an eight foot square in the ice, tied stones to the legs of a step ladder, to hold it down in place when they let it down in the water, and performed the ceremony. However, this was not accomplished without several townspeople who came to watch, they said, as a protest. If anyone struggled, they said, they would duck the preacher under the ice. The baptism went smoothly without hesitation, much less struggle. There was no request or at least no record of a request for winter baptism in Marilla.⁷⁴

Most of the Brethren who came to Marilla soon after the turn of the century came from communities that, though discussing and struggling with early precepts of "plain dress," still adhered to some of the original Brethren dress customs. Thus, while they rejected the Old Dunkard insistence that wearing the old German mode of dress be enforced as a requirement of members, most continued to wear the traditional clothing in the early decades of the Marilla church. This was not because it was religiously necessary, but because at this time it seemed appropriate for them. Grace Grossnickle Howes remembered that not wearing at least two petticoats under one's long plain dress or skirt was considered immodest.⁷⁵ Principles of simplicity still are evident in the Brethren preferences as to the exterior and interior of their church house. The church in Marilla had a plain interior with a

small plain table with Bible and plain candles, unelevated. The original seats were plain movable benches. They were careful that nothing in their house of worship was "for show." They chose also to maintain a religious community that continued a meeting house atmosphere of a non-paid pastor and often several preacher speakers within the congregation. They retained a suspicion of centralized authority which might result in a set service ritual and centralized machinery which might become the focal center of worship. They wanted to retain the pietistic Christian principles upon which their Brethren religion was founded. They believed in a doctrine of simple life of total abstinence from all alcohol and, in those very early days, Ruth Howes Bowling (born 1910), a Grossnickle granddaughter, remembers not being allowed to play cards on Sunday. A "practical, wholesome" way of personal and family life was stressed and they sought concerned stewardship, and frowned on, and at one time forbade, civil suits. Differences were to be solved individually or with the help and arbitration of other Brethren. Expelling members, as had sometimes been the practice, was no longer allowed; no one was denied the services of their church. Even in the Old Order Brethren, their beliefs bound them to help those expelled members if they were in material or spiritual need. They believed in a doctrine of brotherhood and "all class distinctions were considered un-Christian."⁷⁶ Above all, they rejected the closed community ethic so necessary to the religion of the conservative Old Order Brethren.

CHAPTER IV

HOW A CHURCH AND A COMMUNITY FOUND A MUTUAL IDENTITY

Hezekiah Grossnickle must have strongly disagreed with the Old Order Dunkards, especially in regard to their views on education. Perhaps those '80's controversies strengthened and clarified the importance of religious education of the young in the minds of both Grossnickle and Elder Ulery. Ulery had attended Tri-State Normal College in Angola, Indiana, for several terms and graduated in 1898 after three years at Manchester College, a Church of the Brethren college in Manchester, Indiana. [Edson Ulery as Elder was present at the early council meetings and his approval and advice was sought on any major decisions.] The Union Sunday School, established in Marilla in 1904 for not only the Brethren, but the community at large, became a flourishing institution. It was not only a strong social force in the community, but often an enterprising financial success with many of its projects, which often benefited the church in its ever constant need for repairs or building projects. The Sunday School was conducted by members of both the Baptist and the Brethren organizations. In this, as in so many other areas, the lines between Sunday School and church are blurred. The Sunday School was not only set up as a separate entity, but did not officially become part of the Church of the Brethren itself nor appear on their books until the 1970's.⁷⁷ Rev. Ulery, Elder, present at so many of

those first council meetings, and Lemon Eby, who from the beginning was an active member of the Church Council and continued to be for several decades, must also have supported this endeavor or it could not have become the success that it was. Mr. Eby, especially, was present at every council meeting as Clerk until the mid-twenties and served on many committees both before and after this.⁷⁸

H. Grossnickle's interest was not only in religious education, but also in public education. He was an active member of the Marilla School Board almost before he and his family were settled in Marilla. On September 5, 1904, he was elected Director of the School Board of Marilla School District No. 2. George Brimmer, active in the original Baptist Church and active in the joint venture between the Baptists and the Brethren, was also active on the School Board between 1904-1906. This would give Hezekiah an immediate opportunity to "rub elbows" with other leaders in the Marilla community at large, including Montreville Howes, Louis Bigge, George Patterson, and John Sturdavant. In 1904, he received a salary of a share of \$23, which was set as an unexplained total for three elected officers and, in 1906, it was raised to \$15 for Director and \$10 each for Moderator and Treasurer.⁷⁹ In 1903, District No. 2 had a total of 37 students ranging in age from 5 to 19. Hezekiah had enrolled Grace - age 18, Ray - 11, and Pearl - 9. The following year, Iva - 10, and Ray - 6, were enrolled and the enrollment had jumped to 54. No other Brethren Charter member names (which were recorded in 1919) appeared on the school census list except Calvin and Roy Joseph, sons of John Joseph who may have had family connections with Della and Wreatha, listed as

Brethren Charter members.⁸⁰ At any rate, the Indiana exodus of the Brethren community meant almost instant integration into the Marilla community.

A teacher's salary at Marilla School District No. 2 was \$35/month in 1901. His or her duties included janitorial duties and this was written right into the formal contract. This practice of requiring teachers to also serve as janitors continued to show up in contracts into the nineteen twenties. By 1922, two rooms of grades 1 - 7 and grades 8, 9, and 10 were being taught by Myrtle Sterley (1 - 7) and Amanda Stark (8, 9, 10).⁸¹ This two-room schoolhouse had been the topic of a good deal of controversy throughout the previous decade. It was first proposed in 1910; included in this proposal also was a furnace. The author of this motion was Carl Howes, son of Montreville Howes, and by now the son-in-law of H. Grossnickle. This was not the only time Carl proposed, and was supported by L. Bigge, this new building, but he was not able to muster enough votes for passage until 1921. This time, O. D. Stark made the motion and Carl supported it. The district floated bonds for \$8,000 and the building was constructed.⁸² Length of the school year had jumped from the original 7 months to 8 and then 9 months. This was always a difficult step to take in a farm area where the additional help of children was vital during spring planting and fall harvest.

On February 21, 1916, a very serious school board met at the home of M. S. Howes for the purpose of making written charges against Samuel J. Clark, teacher at the Marilla school the previous year. These charges included "immorality, gross neglect of duty, lack of government, and failure

to abide by rules adopted and presented by said board." Nothing, of course, was spelled out, so one has no way of knowing exactly what "immorality" consisted of in the minds of these Marilla citizens. These charges were to be presented to the County Commissioner and Board of Examiners with the ultimate goal - "to annul his certificate." No further note was made of this matter, so it is unknown whether the County acted as requested or not.⁸³ Samuel Clark was not dismissed from his teaching duties until mid-March, or at least he was paid until then. This would lead one to wonder, if he was allowed to teach this extra month, what sort of immorality this was that still seemed safe enough to allow his continued charge of the community's children.⁸⁴

There were no regular pastors at Marilla in those early years, nor indeed for several periods in later years; the pulpit was filled regularly with resident ministers, including Revs. Ulery and Hawboker of the Lakeview Church at Brethren. These early members of the Brethren community retained their membership in two other Manistee County Brethren churches, Lakeview at Brethren and the church at Harlan in Cleon Township. Then, in 1919, February 7, the church house was purchased from the Baptist organization. It was then, and continued to be in the decades that followed, a church building "open at all times for any religious activity regardless of faith or creed." Funerals for a large majority of those being buried in the Marilla Township cemetery were conducted in the Marilla church.⁸⁵

Ministers were paid by the day or sermon and, even after 1920, some of

the entries in the council minutes seem to indicate that the amount paid might not be all that much even after hacking one's way through the "choppins," as Edson Ulery did. Evidently, Marilla and Harlan shared Roy Miller as their Sunday speaker. Other part-time ministers then were Loren Moss, Forrest Weller and George Funderberg. The treasury reported a balance of 72¢ in June, 1919. Though it went up to \$1.61 on September 27, 1919, it was back down to 66¢ in September 4, 1920. Evidently, up until this time, a planned budget had not been in existence and the 55¢ treasury balance brought a gentle reprimand from Elder J. E. Joseph, who urged the Budget Committee to "do their work." Entries for this period also show concern for obtaining speakers for a series of meetings in the summer of 1919, mission offering (\$25.00), obtaining communion dinner utensils and service for the "love feast" (Up to this time, utensils were borrowed from Harlan.) and choosing delegates for the District Meeting. Officers elected in May, 1920, were Clerk - Lemon Eby, Treasurer - Charles Funderberg, Church Correspondent - Phebe Eby, Trustee (3 years) - H. Grossnickle, Elder - Brother J. E. Joseph, and Chorister - Edith Funderberg. Another concern was contact with the Brethren headquarters in Indiana where news of themselves and others in the Brethren community was printed in periodicals. Evidently, the Church Correspondent was responsible for sending news and subscription fees for these. Women were elected as delegates to the district meeting; Annie Williams was elected on June 28, 1919.⁸⁶

By this time, the "town" of Marilla was reaching the height of its growth. In 1919, there were three general stores on either side of Marilla

Road in the area where Jack's OshKosh store now stands. One store was owned by George Brimmer (where Jack's store now stands), another opposite him, owned by O. D. Stark, and the third one (on the same side as Brimmer's store) was owned by Henry Danville. These were general stores, selling food, clothing and some hardware. The Marilla Post Office (which previously had been located further north where Bigge Road meets Marilla Road, just beyond the District No. 2 schoolhouse, according to a 1903 Marilla Township platte map) was in the store run by George Brimmer. Only the Brimmer store remained after 1930. At one time, there was also a blacksmith's shop next to Stark's owned by Neil McNeil. The River Branch of the Manistee & Northeastern Railroad ran through Marilla from east to west, toward the lumber camps and between the Brimmer store and Danville's. West of the stores and east of the tracks stood three buildings, the M&NE freight depot, a Cleon-Marilla marketing association building (with George Brimmer as manager), and the Glassar-Crandall pickle station.⁸⁷ Of course, the railroad made Marilla more accessible to the outside and the outside more accessible to Marilla folk. Pauline Howes, wife of Roy Howes, who is a Grossnickle grandson, recalls Marilla girls meeting the train and selling bouquets of flowers to any passengers who were willing to buy. Ruth Bowling Howes recalls riding the train up to one of the lumber camps to visit her uncle, Glen Grossnickle, who was one of the cooks. And, of course, it was possible to go to Manistee city. When the lumbering industry collapsed, the railroad left, too. With the loss of these two, the railroad and lumbering, Marilla lost not only an important means of making a living or supplementing farm income, but also lost a public transportation link to the world outside its borders. This

coupled with the advent of the automobile meant, not only the decline, but the obliteration of the "town" center of their community. All that finally remained was one store.

Besides the Sunday School activities, other social events were dances held above the Danville store. These were attended by community young folk, including members of the Brethren families. There is some disparity as to how this was viewed from the Brethren perspective. Esther Grossnickle, Sharon's wife and Hezekiah's daughter-in-law, remembers this as something frowned upon by Brethren parents, while Ruth Howes, her niece, doesn't remember parental disapproval and thought of them more as dances to which the Danville family invited the community. Perhaps this disparity was caused by generational differences in point of view.⁸⁸

A popular Marilla social activity was the Marilla Literary Society. This society, whose records were available from June 1905 to July 27, 1917, seemed to be a successful endeavor to promote "the arts" in Marilla, if numbers of participants were an accurate indication. It is uncertain exactly when it began, as the book available through Reta Russell, Carl Howes' daughter, begins with the "3rd meeting in the 3rd term." This continues throughout 1905 with meetings on a weekly basis in the evenings. The year 1906 has only two recorded meetings with no mention of discontinuing. In fact, there were 46 present at the last recorded meeting and 22 listed as absent, which would seem to be an excellent attendance in a community the size of Marilla.⁸⁹ There are no further meetings recorded in this record

book until November 4, 1914, which is an organizational meeting in which they voted to use the same constitution and bylaws as the "former Literary Society."⁹⁰ It is not clear whether there were other record books or whether there really was a gap of eight years. However long it met, it appears that the society was a well-attended, active event. Each meeting consisted of a business meeting in which various people were elected or chosen to prepare the next meeting's program and discuss any financial matters, which included a general collection, a special "Bachelor Tax" and several Ice Cream and Shadow Box Socials. The programs included group singing, individual performances, a debate, several readings, "recitations," and occasionally a play, once by the eighth grade.

Debates between the years 1905 and 1917 included topics such as, "The U.S. has more to be ashamed of than proud of," (Judges decided in favor of the affirmative.), "Only taxpayers have the right to vote," (No winner was recorded.), and "Resolved that man is architect of his own fortune," (House voted in favor of the negative.). Songs and singing seemed a popular part of the program, as they were always included several times throughout the evening. Selections indicated some religious titles, "Jesus Loves Me", "The Holy City," as well as popular songs, "Daisies Won't Tell" and "Flow Gently Sweet Afton." Occasionally, songs were performed by "the little folks" as well as solos, duets and quartets. Recitals tended to reflect social problems, "The Lips That Touch Liquor Shall Never Touch Mine" or "A Voice From the Poor House," as well as poems, "The Charge of the Light Brigade" or "Solitude."⁹¹ At each meeting, a critic or critics were appointed to

critique the program for the next meeting; this critique was printed by an editor, also elected or appointed, and then the critique was read and discussed at the next meeting. The first few meetings noted that the critics were reluctant to criticize; on June 3, 1905, with Carl Howes, President, and Rosa Ream, Secretary, the minutes read, "Minnie Reitz was appointed critic, but she handed in no report. Some of the members refuse to act as critic, perhaps if they knew what was expected of them they would not refuse to act when appointed. I [it's not clear if this is the President or Secretary speaking] will read a definition for critic. A critic is one who examines or judges, who finds fault where fault is to be found, gives praise where they think praises are due."⁹² Subsequent entries report an active critic role, though more is positive than negative.

Many of the names prominent in the Literary Society were also prominent in the church activities (Grossnickle, Hawboker, Barnhart, Reitz, Bahr, Howes, Beers and Joseph, to mention a few). In fact, at least one Literary meeting is canceled because there is a conflicting church activity scheduled for the same evening.⁹³ Other prominent names from township and school district government included Orla Stark, Danville (Walter), Studley and Brimmer. The attendance throughout ranged from a low of 17 in August of 1916 to a high of 85 present on December 18, 1915. During the years 1915 and 1916, 93 people were listed as members of the Marilla Literary Society.⁹⁴ Another cultural community activity was an art class conducted by Edith Howes Phillips; several oil paintings by Grace Grossnickle Howes and Edith, her sister-in-law, remain in the possession of Howes family members.

Perhaps no organized activity in Marilla quite so vividly illustrates the blurred lines between church and community as does the Marilla Ladies Aid. According to the minutes of this organization, it met first on December 30, 1931, at which meeting a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and superintendent of sewing were elected. Meetings were held monthly and sometimes semi-monthly. Their first meeting began an activity that has continued into the present; the making and sewing together of rags to make rag rugs as a money-making project. Other money-making projects included making quilts, aprons, baby clothes, having bazaars, preparing lunches and meals for various organizations, such as the Republican Party, or serving lunches at farm auctions and sales; one dinner they have donated among themselves and served free is a meal for family and friends after a funeral. Membership in the Ladies Aid included ladies from all over Marilla Township; many were church-affiliated and many were not. Their purposes seemed partly social, but mostly they cared for members of their community and those in need elsewhere. Each meeting began with a prayer and scripture reading, sometimes a song, poem or some other reading. A collection was taken each time (In those hard Depression days, the collection rarely totaled more than 70 cents.), and the hostess served a meal to all. Hostesses took turns, alphabetically. Attendance was usually between fifteen and twenty, plus some children of members (5 to 10) and three or four men. According to the minutes, in September of 1947, Grace Howes fed chicken and homemade noodles to fifty-one people, only twenty-two of whom were members. Fifteen men, eleven children and three visitors also attended that day. All three of these groups were common at almost all of the recorded meetings. Men drove

the women there, and then just stayed for dinner! The only work recorded for the men was one entry which stated that they chopped wood for the church. The fruits of these ladies' labors were put to many and varied uses. Cards were sent to community members on birthdays, during sicknesses, or the loss of a loved one, etc. Often, fruit and flowers were sent. Items made and money collected were distributed to those in the township in need. A quilt was given to Pastor Hartsough's wife as a gift. Often, Pastor and wife attended. Once, they canned beets for a local relief project. When they needed space to quilt, they met in the church basement. On December 3, 1953, they paid the remainder of the church coal bill and, in August, 1955, they finished paying for the church vestibule addition. They bought war bonds and used this money later to buy new church doors.

The Marilla Ladies Aid might also have begun to react to a general Brethren movement that recognized an ever growing need to be actively involved in relief efforts worldwide and help alleviate suffering no matter who the victims were. Outside the community, they sent donations to the Spanish Relief in the 30's, Greek Relief (30 baby quilts), and the Red Cross during World War II, and German and Hungarian Relief, both clothing and quilts, after the war. Periodically, they sent donations to the Salvation Army, March of Dimes, Cancer Fund, and the state mental hospital in Traverse City. They also helped to sponsor students who needed financial aid for their school junior/senior Washington trip. Nothing seemed too big or too small for them to tackle.⁹⁵

On March 27, 1938, a dedicatory service was held at the Marilla Church of the Brethren; the Dedicatory Service listed its sponsors in the following fashion on the front of their program bulletins:

Marilla

Church of the Brethren, Rev. Max Hartsough, Pastor

Community Sunday School, Rev. Wm. Beers, Supt.

Community Ladies Aid Society, Grace Howes, Pres.

This program was dedicated in thanksgiving to those who helped make possible the improvements inside and outside to this church, they said, which "has been open at all times for any religious activity regardless of faith or creed." These improvements included a new roof, paint outside and the entire inside refinished, costing \$400 with all labor donated. All the members of the Ladies' Aid Society were listed, followed by this quote, "The Community Ladies' Aid Society majored in making possible the splendid improvements we consecrate to God today."⁹⁶

Of the Community Sunday School, the program stated that, "The Young People's Social Service, composed of classes Nos. 3, 4 and 5, under the leadership of their teachers, Glen Grossnickle, Ida Eby, and Iva Bahr, rendered real service, and yet have projects toward which they are still working. All the above workers were supported by a loyal, cooperative Church, Sunday School and Community."⁹⁷ Church Council minutes also note that, in 1949, the Ladies' Aid also made a gift of new doors to the church. In 1955, they painted the church basement walls and, in 1957, they purchased locks for the basement doors.⁹⁸

In terms of activity and service, the Marilla Ladies Aid today continues to meet many needs both in and out of the Marilla community; one change has occurred, however. Today, the Marilla Ladies Aid Society meetings are attended mostly by women in their 60's and beyond. They still sew rags together for rugs they sell as a moneymaking project. The meeting this author attended was held in a home in the nearby community of Cleon Township, that of Florence Lintala, who as Florence Evans had lived in Marilla until her first husband died. Florence had originally been a member of the Winters family, one of the pioneering Marilla families.

Their meeting of April 18, 1990, began with a religious reading from the pamphlet, "Portals of Prayer", followed by a Bible verse chosen and read by each member. Grace Fisk was president, Reta Russell was secretary, and Ilah Bahr was treasurer. These and others of those attending were members or inlaws of long-time Marilla families (e.g., Grossnickle, Howes, Bahr, Winters).

Their business consisted of discussions of plans for crafts for the Fall Harvest Sale held at the Marilla Community Center (formerly, the District No. 2 school building), lawn care for the church, \$141 donation for youngsters to attend the nearby Brethren Church Camp, and sending flowers and cards to the sick. Other community projects and services they performed or were supporters of included funeral dinners for anyone in the community and some for those no longer community members (with no charge, though donations were accepted), buying a microwave for the Church, donating to the Cancer Fund and

educational scholarships for community or church members, money for clothing for two boys in need, and other local and community charities.

When asked if the average age of present members meant their organization might one day cease to be, one of the members, Reta Russell, said she thought that future retiring members of their Marilla community would keep the society alive, just as they had done when they retired.

The actual charter membership of the Marilla Church of the Brethren in 1913 numbered 40; throughout the 20's, the church membership dropped to an all-time low in 1929 of 26 members. During this decade, the Council minutes were filled with organizational matters and efforts to hold the church together as an organized unit. The Sunday School was evidently continuing as a community Sunday school, and there was a proposal for it to become a more formal Union Sunday School (H. Grossnickle and L. Eby were the committee), but there is no record of this being accomplished or a formal vote taken. There were regular annual elections of officers for church and Sunday school and representatives to the annual Conference, as well as various committees and the Ministerial Board. Obtaining a minister to speak regularly was an ongoing chore. Trustees and Deacons and Deaconesses were also elected, the first as the actual holders of the deed of the church and the latter as administrators of the business affairs connected with the actual service or material interests of the church.⁹⁹ Finances were a constant struggle; on October 21, 1921, the books showed that payment for support of their preacher, Brother Weller, was \$25.24 in arrears in terms of pledges made and

pledges kept and the Treasurer's report showed \$5.40 indebtedness; a May 7, 1922, report showed \$75 owed to Bro. Weller. Solicitations for pledged funds as well as additional funds were evident through this period. Special offerings were also taken for missions. Besides Weller, other ministers were Br. Sterns, George Funderberg, and Charles Forrer; in 1928, they requested the State Mission Board to supply \$75 toward pastoral support in their church, as they still owed \$45 on the last year's pastoral work. Physical needs included seating and paint for the outside of the church house.¹⁰⁰

The 30's proved to be a decade of considerable growth in membership and one of a very active congregation. By 1940, there were fifty listed members and, by 1949, there were 72. The impetus for this growth probably had several sources. Social conditions engendered by the severe economic conditions of the Great Depression of the 30's tended to draw people both together and toward powers beyond those of man. Man's efforts and powers seemed largely impotent. To look toward the institution whose purpose was to cultivate man's awareness of spiritual powers beyond his own, would seem natural and, in this community, the Marilla Church of the Brethren was the only church. The crystalizing of this social community movement focused on the personal warmth and charisma of a Marilla man, William Beers, who was not a Marilla Church of the Brethren member. By the beginning of the 30's, children and grandchildren of the original families as well as newcomers had taken over the responsibilities, activities and management of the church. To the old Grossnickle, Bahr, Howes, Barnhart, Casselman, Clark, Eby, Joseph, Funderberg, Gilcrest, Good, Nelson, Reitz, Shiedler, Studley, Wagoner and

Williams names, were added the new names of Castleman, Bowling, Danville, Shirley, Brimmer, Nisewander, Richards, Mickoff and Barkdoll (Galen Barkdoll was chosen pastor in 1939). By this time, Reverend William Beers had been elected Superintendent of the Sunday School; Beers played a prominent role, especially in the flourishing young people's group. The white hair and slender, erect figure of what Carl Howes called "The Gentleman Beers" was a popular, familiar sight at most church functions, and he remained with the Marilla Sunday School for eighteen years. A December 24, 1933, Council minutes entry "granted the union of other church members in its Communion services. Moved and supported that (we give) Bro. Beers unanimous support in looking after the interests of the church carried."¹⁰¹ Not only were the Young People's group involved in religious and social activities, but they were an important source for various moneymaking or labor projects of the church. One such project involved a major building effort; a basement was to be built, the church moved to this basement, and new entrances built, front and basement. The Young People of the congregation were instrumental in providing labor that helped construct cement blocks for the basement; in fact, they constructed enough to sell and provide additional money to help pay additional construction expenses.¹⁰²

In 1931, a committee is formed of Mrs. Eby, Mrs. Beers and Sharon Grossnickle "to care for the needy." There are several references throughout the 30's in the Council minutes of special projects to help those in need during the Depression. One Marilla resident, Ruth Howes Bowling, recalled the wandering, homeless men coming to the Howes door who worked at

chores like chopping wood and received their food for the day.

Several big social events at the end of the 30's and beginning in the 40's perhaps illustrated the vitality and strength of the church-community Sunday School in Marilla. One event was told of in a newspaper account of a gathering of some 400 Union Sunday School picnickers at the newly opened Red Bridge Park. Red Bridge spans the Manistee River on Coates Highway, which crosses the county west to east, south of Marilla. These 400 Manistee County young people included the Marilla group and six of their number with their leader, Glen Grossnickle, "sang the beautiful song, 'Open Mine Eyes That I Might See'."¹⁰³ In 1939, the County Sunday School Council held "one of their most enjoyable meetings" one Tuesday evening on the lawn of Beers' farm home in Marilla. Some 60 people "sat down at the long supper table and many more came for the program after." The supper was "potluck" and it was "one long to be remembered ... 'Do you suppose,' asked J. Edson Ulrey, 'that any other County Council in the state has such good fellowship as ours?'"¹⁰⁴ Rev. Beers presided over a program presented by the new Church of the Brethren pastor, Rev. G. L. Barkdoll, and the Marilla "young folks," who "presented a wonderfully well-portrayed drama, "The Challenge of the Cross."¹⁰⁵

Both a 1938 and a 1939 Semi-Annual Sunday School Convention of the Northern District Church of the Brethren were held in Marilla at their little "Church on the Hill." Dinner, at least in 1938, was at the Marilla School-house and probably was in 1939, too, as the church basement with kitchen and table facilities was not completed until 1941. Beers played an active role

in both conventions as did Edson Ulrey. An open discussion at the 1938 convention concerned, "The Relation of Sunday School to the Temperance Issue."¹⁰⁶

Reverend William Beers, who played such an important role in the life of both the Sunday school and church, as well as the community at Marilla, served as the superintendent of the Union Sunday School there, from 1925 through 1943, consecutively. He brought with him not only experienced pastoral knowledge, but a "zeal for the temperance cause" and great skill and energy as an organizer. "His concern about civic affairs has been county and statewide" and his was an immeasurable influence for increasing and binding the church/community ties. He had been a pastor of the United Brethren Church, one closer in structure and belief to the Methodist than the Brethren. His vital work in, and close relationship with, the Church of the Brethren points out emphatically the effective workings of this community-minded organization.¹⁰⁷

The decision to make, what was for this small church, a major commitment to enlarge and improve their church was decided at a Council meeting on June 1, 1936; Pastor Forrer had previously given a "talk on the future of things concerning the church." In October of 1935, Wm. Beers had "talked over the Church plans for the future" and a special committee had been formed consisting of Lemon Eby, Clark Williams and Sharon Grossnickle. This committee under Beers' direction was given permission at the 1936 meeting to proceed with their plans.

The first part of the plans reached fruition in 1938 and was celebrated with a dedicatory service to "The Church on the Hill." What had been completed by the joint efforts of the Church, the Community Sunday School and the Community Ladies Aid Society, was a new roof, paint outside and the inside completely refinished; this had amounted to a \$400 cash project with all labor donated. As was the wont of the Marilla Brethren belief, this was a very conscious effort to include the community, which was evident in the topics chosen at the program commemoration. Rev. Ulery (elected Elder again that year) spoke on "The Relation of the Church to the Community" and Rev. Beers (Chairman of the Program) spoke on "The Relation of the Community to the Church."¹⁰⁸

In 1940, work began on the basement. In 1941, the church was moved (fee \$45) onto its new foundation (cost \$238). A new vestibule was planned and a chimney was added and improvements were made on the grounds. This was all completed in time for Marilla to host, for the first time, the meeting of the District Conference for the Church of the Brethren. This was a huge project for this tiny congregation, as they were expected to house and feed everyone sent from all the Brethren churches in their District. One of the foods prepared for the meeting was apple butter, a typical Brethren bread spread which consisted of apples, sugar and spices boiled for hours in a huge, open copper kettle on an open fire outside.

In the meantime, the Church property had increased. In 1938, the Brethren at Marilla benefited greatly when Sister Cora Rau announced that she

wished to provide a parsonage which would include a 120-acre farm just south and west of the church, across the road. This property was transferred to the District Mission Board on the condition that it be used as a farm for the Marilla pastor. This again involved the church and its community organizations, as the use of this as a parsonage involved making improvements to all the buildings and remodeling the house. The project took two years to complete and over 70 people worked in and out-of-doors the day the new barn was completed.¹⁰⁹ This then became the new Pastor Barkdoll's home.

In 1942, a Civilian Public Service Camp was established on the Joseph farm in southern Marilla. This camp housed those who refused, because of religious reasons, to serve in the armed services but were willing to serve their time doing public service. The Marilla community was supportive, though there were members and church attendees who served in World War II; some stores in Manistee refused to sell food and supplies to service the camp. To make up for this, some of these food supplies, especially potatoes, came from the community of Marilla. There were, of course, differences of opinion among the Brethren themselves during both World Wars I and II. Glen Grossnickle, Hezekiah's son, who was an enthusiastic supporter of conscientious objection, helped with the cooking and feeding of camp members.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, at least one of the Grossnickle grandsons, Russell Howes, and one grandson-in-law, Jim Russell (he was also Lemon Eby's grandson), served in the army during World War II. Reta Russell, Russell Howes' sister and later Jim's wife, offered the opinion that only about one-third of the conscientious objectors at this camp in Marilla were sincere. They sometimes

came to the Brethren youth group activities where they complained about, "being stuck way up north where nothing was going on and the only thing to dance with was the trees!" Reta said that Marilla youth resented these remarks and murmured among themselves that perhaps the truth was these conscientious objectors were, "hiding behind those trees while others did their fighting for them."¹¹¹

Yet another example of "the community good will unique in the Marilla field" was the gradual growth of the annual fall community sale which began in 1940. This sale involved a canvassing of the homes in the neighborhood. On November 17, 1944, the result was a sale in what is now a Township Hall and Community House, but what had been Marilla District #2 Schoolhouse. Now it was filled with poultry, home canned goods, grain, vegetables, beans, flowers, etc., from surrounding farms. The Ladies' Aid furnished needlework, rugs, and comforters and quilts as well as meals in the basement. The supper proceeds went to the Ladies Aid and the general sale profits went to the church. The Junior Sunday School classes sold \$40 worth of their work with which they paid for the church chimney.¹¹²

During 1976, Rev. Barkdoll resigned and Rev. Roy McRoberts was called and he accepted; he was to be paid \$5.00/Sunday. He, as all ministers before him, was expected to earn his living elsewhere. Many of the previous ministers earned their living on farms either within or without the community. Roy McRoberts drove a truck. This expectation was common practice among the Brethren communities; nor was it uncommon to have several

ministers, lay or ordained, within one congregation, with one being the pastor. Since the congregation is organized on a very democratic basis, pastors were elected like all the other positions of church administration; this, plus the preacher's being paid weekly, makes it clear that pastors could change quickly in a mechanical sense. Emotionally, this must have been quite a different story with such a small, tightly knit community. If the minister is not qualified as an Elder or there is a gap in regular ministry, as had happened quite often at Marilla, one was elected, as it was required that each community have one present at council meetings and to administer important church rites. Between Barkdoll and McRoberts, Rev. Ulery was once again elected, as he had been so many times in the past.¹¹³

It was during 1945 and '46 that the planned vestibule was finally built and an oil furnace was purchased and installed. At the parsonage, a new roof went on and an indoor bathroom was installed, but not until 1950, when a \$500 loan was negotiated. The church was repainted on the inside at a cost of \$137 and a telephone was installed in the parsonage. The Ladies' Aid again stepped in with \$100 to help out. A walk and steps were installed at the church and a new ceiling and roof repair were required at the parsonage. Despite the fact that giving doubled in 1956, there was constant need for more money in this active congregation. An ongoing Farm Board which determined each year what was to be done at the church farm, a Heifer project (heifers raised for the church on individual farms was a project that was part of the larger Church of the Brethren organization), District Mission Board Payments, Youth Socials in the church basement, new oak flooring and

the provision of transportation and help to bring a German refugee family to the community (James Russell, Sr., went to New York City to bring the German family to Marilla). All this kept members busy as a congregation. The Brethren community was disappointed that the family only stayed a short time "in the nice home we fixed up for them." Hay was made and sold and trees planted on the church farm in 1959.¹¹⁴

By 1961, church membership, according to a graph constructed by Marie Willoughby recently, stood between 93 and 96, non-resident members numbered 11 and worship attendance averaged 64/Sunday. This average was an all-time high in the years between 1938 - 1988. The male members of the church cut bolts from the church farm to pay for installing the furnace in the parsonage. Evidently, pay by the week had been replaced with a small salary. Brother McRoberts' contract was renewed for three years and his salary was raised from \$810 to \$1,000/year.¹¹⁵ Serving in the pattern of those who went before him, Rev. McRoberts was a popular, community religious leader. He once baptized three people who wanted baptism, but did not want church membership.¹¹⁶

In 1963, 5,000 trees were planted on the Rau Farm. This stewardship of this "Church Farm," as it was called, was unique to the Marilla Church of the Brethren. But, the emphasis on the care and conservation of God's soil was both a cultural and theological natural for Brethren communities. Not only were they often farm or rural congregations, the Church of the Brethren pointedly taught conservation and care as part of their class lessons from Sunday school on up; conservation of environment is

a core concept at Church of the Brethren summer camps. Soil Stewardship Week is celebrated every year and, though it sometimes has different names, soil conservation is the emphasis. The church is vitally interested and supportive in non-denominational international efforts that deal with building agriculture in small communities worldwide. The Brethren theology behind this is a theology of creation; God intends that man should care for God's creation and creatures to feed as many people as possible. "Salvation is not just a personal relationship with God, but a relationship of God's created world and beings. These are all hooked together. More radical Brethren proponents see God in all he has created, that they are thus all holy." At any rate, the environment is to be used and appreciated as God's gift to us. "We are stewards of God's creation to be used as God intends," stated Rev. Willoughby, who is the present Marilla pastor.¹¹⁷

In 1966, the church doors were locked when not in use because of vandalism. Ray Grossnickle, another of Hezekiah's sons, donated \$500 for landscaping so a new driveway was added to the north, the lawn was leveled and seeded, and shrubbery and trees were planted. The Grossnickle family donated the funds to purchase a cross in front of the church in memory of Grace Howes. Seventy hours of labor installing the furnace were donated by Sharon Grossnickle, Hezekiah's son, and Darwin Johnson and three Grossnickle grandsons, Levon Grossnickle, Roy Howes, and Charles Bahr. Other major changes included a well in '58 and south classrooms and restrooms in the basement wing in '59 and '60. As to the outside community service, money

was donated for a Bible for a Seniors project in a county community (Mesick) and the proceeds from a public dinner were donated to help the nearby Kaleva Lutheran Church which had burned to the ground. Membership by 1972 was between 90 and 95, according to Marie Willoughby's graph, but attendance had dropped to a 48 per week average, down from 64 in the early 60's. It was in 1972 that the Willoughby family came to Marilla as the next pastor family and the current history of the church began.¹¹⁸

One very significant hole must be filled in now if the historical picture is to be complete; no picture of Marilla can be whole without Jack's Store. Though the rest of the "town" of Marilla had disappeared and the school's students were soon to be bussed into either Kaleva or Mesick (the early 40's), in 1936, Jack and Adeline McDonald moved to Marilla and bought the store business that was then George Brimmer's. In 1937, Roy Howes bought a large farm parcel that included Jack's store; it was at this time that Jack purchased the building from Howes. These, of course, were still depression years. "Bills we had you couldn't believe; some customers gave us their whole paycheck just to pay their last month's bill. They were always behind," said Adeline of those first years. Many brought in cream and eggs to barter and Jack would measure the butter fat and take surplus eggs and the cream into the creamery or peddle it in Manistee.¹¹⁹ The store itself was a reincarnation of a "little ole country store" caricature. Small, as country stores usually are, its insides were more than filled from bottom to top, and including the ceiling, with every sort of merchandise - food, hardware,

clothing, tools, etc., and, outside, plants for gardening in the spring, and the gas pump. The store itself with its false front second story was white with red trim and a big "Osh Kosh B'gosh/Wm. J. McDonald, Marilla" sign prominently displayed. In front, on either side, was a row of whitewashed tractor and car tires standing erect and parallel to the building. Merchandise hung on every square inch, even from the rafters, and Adeline said they were never really sure of their inventory.¹²⁰

Jack, himself, was, as one lady wrote after his death, "Mr. Marilla, himself." Jack, who recently passed away at the age of 79, is remembered by Marilla people as a life-long storyteller of hunting and fishing stories, a storekeeper-good neighbor, unique because in him these qualities were so thoroughly mixed, they had become one. Roy Howes, who was his neighbor for almost fifty years, said of Jack, "He was a good neighbor. I always liked to go in to talk to him." Many others did, also, particularly about hunting and fishing, which his son, Kevin, said was Jack's after-work activity, exclusively.¹²¹ The store building itself was not just a place of work, but the living quarters in the back of the store was home for Jack and his wife, Adeline, for some fifty years until it burned down in the mid '80's. This is where they raised their six children, which Adeline said was sometimes "like raising children in a fishbowl." Reprimanding was harder in this public situation and Adeline recalled that she, "who was never known for my patience," had one day reached a measure of volume that resulted in Jack exclaiming, "For heaven's sake, they can hear you clear down to

Grossnickles!" (about one-half mile south of the store).¹²² Children of Marilla would especially remember Jack and his candy counter. "He made you feel like you were the most delightful person at the age of five or six," recalled Mary Esther Grossnickle-Brooks, Hezekiah's granddaughter, who went to the store often as a child. She and many others remember his "stock greeting - 'Hello there, young lady,' or 'Hello there, young man,' no matter the age of the customer."¹²³ His constant whistling, enthusiastic conversation, individual attention to each customer, and ability to serve everyone's needs, made him a Marilla institution. "He liked that store, and when you went in, anything you wanted he could find for you. His life was the store," said Roy Howes.¹²⁴

Since the fire and Jack's subsequent death, Adeline has built a small store of her own on the same site as Jack's store. It's now an Osh Kosh clothing store which also sells some bulk cheeses. It is developing its own notoriety as one of the most complete Osh Kosh clothing stores to be found, as it sells only Osh Kosh clothing. Even more importantly, Adeline underprices even the cut-rate stores "like Meijers' Thrifty Acres" and a sale at her Marilla store usually means "at cost." Though her customers include Marilla folks, "about 85% of our business comes from Traverse City," Adeline stated. She has warm memories of Marilla both past and recent. When the fire took the old store and home, there was no insurance as no insurance company had been willing to insure it. People of Marilla gave food and clothing and cards and checks came from all around the country. "The kids

asked if I was sure I wanted to stay here, instead of moving closer to a town where there'd be more business," she said. "I told them, "Build it right here. The Marilla hills is where I belong."¹²⁵ For Adeline, "It's been a wonderful community." Though she and her family are practicing Catholics, she said the Marilla Church and everyone "was so kind and good," and she liked the ministers. The people of Marilla were "dear people," and she particularly remembered Grace Howes, who brought flowers for her and her baby when her babies were born. "Everybody was related," she said.¹²⁶

An examination of the Marilla Church of the Brethren membership list of recent years reveals not only blood relationships, but continuing insistence on keeping that relationship with a Marilla Church identity no matter where they live.

Forty-eight of the one hundred sixteen listed members of the Marilla Church of the Brethren in 1988 were either descendants of the original Grossnickle family or had married someone in it. This membership figure, which is an all time membership high, is somewhat deceiving, though, because only fifty-five are Marilla resident members, and average attendance for 1988 was only thirty-six.¹²⁷ Some of the non-residents live within the county and attend frequently and are active members, others attend infrequently and some not at all. There are a number, also, who live far away and rarely, if ever, are in Marilla but still retain their membership in their original home church.

Reverend Roy McRoberts retired as the popular pastor of the Marilla Church after twenty-five years of active service. This was the longest that any one pastor had served Marilla. He had served Marilla well and was remembered by both church and community as one who never set himself apart from his congregation or neighbors. He went about his role, whether pastor or worker with even-tempered enthusiasm and a general goodwill and acceptance of all who came in contact with him. He continued to live in Marilla until his death in 1980.¹²⁸

CHAPTER V

MARILLA, THE LAST TWO DECADES

When Don Willoughby became Marilla's pastor in 1972, he and his family, with the help of many volunteers, began to build a home on a portion of the church farm. This home was completed in 1978 and is owned by the Willoughbys, independent of the church and its property. In 1972, also, two acres and the old parsonage buildings were sold to Bob and Janice Thomas, who have again rebuilt, remodeled and added on. Janice is a Grossnickle great granddaughter and she and her family are active in the Marilla church at present.

Reverend Willoughby continued the tradition in Marilla of the pastor making most of his living wage outside the church by seeking employment at a nearby small furniture factory called Mak-Craft, which is located in the village of Kaleva. Then, in September, 1974, Marilla became a "yoked" parish with the Lakeview Church in the village of Brethren. Thus, now, each church pays a portion of his salary.¹²⁹

The Marilla Brethren community continued to widen its interests to include a more active role in the greater world community. The Leckrone family decided to "donate their field of wheat for hunger" in 1975 and a

vesper service with communion (this is bread and wine only, not the love feast) was conducted there in the field. The church also helped to sponsor Theresa Howes as a Swedish exchange student in 1976 and sponsored eight refugees in 1979 (one Rumanian, five Vietnamese, and two Ethiopians). Later, in 1981, they again sponsored three Ethiopian women. Several of the Marilla congregation were involved in the CROP walk for hunger and the church was designated a "Nuclear Free Zone" in 1984. The younger generation were included in the church's world concern as they began a yearly donation from their Sunday School birthday money to a leper hospital in 1981, and the Bible School children made a quilt for some children in Russia in 1987.¹³⁰

Close contact with the Marilla community is maintained and increased as the church sends birthday cards to each member in the community, with the help of the Ladies Aid and their birthday calendar. Food is collected for the Salvation Army Food Pantry; and, in 1985, the Marilla Hills Co-op began using the church once a month.¹³¹ The January 2, 1960, church council minutes show a positive vote for the church to loan some of its property (chairs, coffee urns, etc.) to people in the community.¹³² Emergency disaster or ill health, even including help with travel expenses to relatives stricken far away from Marilla relatives, was a financial help concern of the church to be met with direct check or special collections. In a small community such as Marilla, people are more apt to feel close enough to each other to communicate needs and accept help. Fellowship dinners were held for widows and widowers, and the Men's Fellowship group planned regular morning

"coffees" at a nearby Kaleva restaurant to which would be offered special invitations to older, retired males, particularly those living alone. The annual Fall Sale and Hunter's Dinner continues to be a joint community-church effort, as are the many projects of the Ladies Aid. One of these has been the dinner served free to the family and friends after the funeral of Marilla residents.

Today, the Ladies Aid projects are the same as, or similar to, past projects. Rug making has been made much simpler and faster by the organization's purchase of a rag-cutting machine, which automatically cuts the donated rags into appropriate strips; most of these are now sewn together with machines. They still send cards and make quilts, which they sell or give away, they sell birthday calendars, and they serve lunch to the Kaleva Lions Club periodically. They also donate clothing, quilts, and money for local fire victims. Various other charities included the United Way, Salvation Army, the Hersey, Michigan, Home for Boys, etc. They no longer elect a superintendent of sewing, but one person stands out in people's minds as a long-term, tireless, elected officer; Millie Repo served as the treasurer for thirty years! The treasurer's report for the year 1987 gives some idea of the importance of this small group of ladies to the community of Marilla. Total receipts - \$3,684, balance carried forward - \$757, total disbursements - \$3,870. To the many affected by both the giving and the receiving, both smaller and larger gifts, the acts of the Ladies Aid have had, and continue to have, a significant role in the generous caring spirit of this church - community partnership.¹³³

The strong contributions of Brethren women to church and community like these in Marilla's Ladies Aid and the Marilla Church of the Brethren have brought about an official recognition of the changing status and increasing importance of women in the life of the church. According to Donald Durnbaugh in Meet the Brethren, this official recognition had its beginning in 1910 when women were allowed to "break bread" at the love feast themselves instead of receiving it at the hand of a male elder. In 1922, they were formally eligible for licensing, though ordination was not permitted until 1958. After the feminist movement in the 60's and 70's, Brethren women organized to form a Women's Caucus group in 1973. One of the accomplishments of this group was its success in establishing a staff position for creating "person awareness" and making the church sensitive to using inclusive language in Brethren publications.¹³⁴

Marie Willoughby was licensed as a lay minister in 1982. She became an associate pastor with Don and was ordained in 1988. The ordination ceremony on May 22, included the "Laying on of Hands" ceremony with the District Minister/Executive Jim Kinsey, Pastor Don Willoughby, Lakeview Christian Education Representative Janet Stroup, and Marilla Christian Education Representative Monte Ruble, all participating.¹³⁵ The church budget for 1989 was \$32,928; of this, \$19,759 was for their pastoral program (salary base: Don \$7,700 and Marie \$3,550), \$3,100 was for church structure expenses and maintenance, \$4,425 for education, conference expenses, pulpit and other needs and supplies; \$5,644 for outreach, local and beyond.¹³⁶ Recently,

several of the physical needs of the church have been supplied by special gifts, especially family memorials. In 1977, new front doors were presented by Sharon and Esther Grossnickle in memory of Hezekiah and Rachel Grossnickle, in 1980, the communion table and plant stands in memory of Rev. McRoberts were acquired, and, then, a Canon copier in memory of Russell Howes in 1984, a Norway maple tree for Sherrel Fisk Randall (Grossnickle great-granddaughter) was presented in 1985, and two ceiling fans came from the Leckrone family in 1986.¹³⁷

There is, of course, concern among the Marilla Brethren members about their present low attendance numbers; of special concern are the low numbers in regular attendance of the younger people in teens, twenties, and thirties. But the ways of the Brethren beliefs aren't pressure proselytizing; a gentler persuasion is closer to the norm in Marilla. Special Cluster Groups, "to better serve the church in the areas of Nurture, Witness, Worship and Stewardship," have been formed. At a recent service during which the congregation reviewed the past fifty years of events in their Marilla church, the historical comments ended with the following: "Now it is 1988 and our work for Christ goes on, in the building and in the lives of His people wherever they are. 'Old buildings are like friends. They reassure us in times of change.' May this church building be your old friend. Come see her often."¹³⁸

Mindful of this "reassurance," members of the community, including Grace

Fisk, Betty Buda and Reta Russell, formed the Marilla Historical Society. Housed in the basement of the old Marilla schoolhouse, now the Community House, the Museum has gradually collected a roomful of Marilla's historical documents, clothing, furniture, tools and other objects, all as another form of "reassurance" for Marilla's citizens. Their collection also includes a hand cultivator that has a more rare left to right "sway mechanism", several different types of wagon wheels, an old cutter sleigh and a potato sprouter. Kenneth Shideler, son of one of the members of the church and a present senior citizen of Marilla, has constructed a scale model of Marilla as it was around the turn of the century. (See photograph in Appendices.) The most recent plans of a Marilla historical committee are to build a building to house the farm machinery they have accumulated. So far, they have raised \$4,000 toward that end.¹³⁹

Problems facing Marilla Township, according to Janice Thomas, member of the Planning Commission, center around two major issues: garbage and refuse disposal and preservation of the character and integrity of land use. As to the former, township officials are exploring the possibilities of a door-to-door recycling program with color coded bags. Garbage would be sorted into its designated colored bag. Since customers would be limited in the number of bags issued and would have to buy additional ones needed, their hope and expectation is that garbage will be more condensed as well as sorted for recycling. Another possibility involves a collection center on wheels with a compartment for each type of refuse. The whole thing would be pulled

to a recycling collection center when full. So far, the first proposal for a government grant written up by the waste disposal company involved was not accepted and another has not yet been submitted. The problem of land use is a continuing struggle. The Township Board wants to keep Marilla a rural farm area and hopes to preserve, not only the farming industry, but also their forest areas. They have passed a zoning law that forbids tracts of land in certain areas to be divided into smaller plots than forty acres. This controversial act was the outcome of the actions of a developer named John Glen, who bought a larger tract of land and began to sell long, narrow ten-acre strips. These strips were sold so cheaply that they attracted people who built poor or impermanent housing on their small plots. A court case pending with a possible suit involves an illegally built structure on one of the set aside areas.¹⁴⁰

The population of Marilla, which reached a high of 379 in 1940, dipped to 213 in 1970 and back up to 266 in 1980. In a report prepared by the Manistee County Planning Commission from the 1990 census, Marilla remains one of only five townships out of twenty in the county which did not experience a decline in population. The eastern one-half of the county of which it is a part represents only 21.2% of Manistee County's total population. It remains as it has always been, sparsely populated. Some figures compiled on housing might highlight some of the concerns of the Marilla Planning Commission and observations of Roy Howes. Total vacant housing units rose from 69 in 1980 to 96 in 1990; 43 of these 96 were seasonal vacancies. There were 200 total

housing units, 104 households, and 82 families. Seventy-one of these families included a married couple. Four households were male only households and 7 were female. There were 22 non-family households and 20 of these were people living alone; 13 of these household owners were 65+ years old. The median assessed value of owner-occupied units was \$36,900 and only 5 units were in the \$50,000-\$99,999 range. None were above \$100,000. Median rental was \$238 per month, with only 3 rentals listed. The average population per household was 2.5769. The demographics list 135 males and 133 females, a fairly even split. Fifteen were 5 and under years old and 51 were in the 5-17 age group, 8 in the 18-20, 65 in the 25-44, 33 in the 45-54, 11 in the 55-59, 23 in the 60-64, 37 in the 65-74, 12 in the 75-84, and 6 in the 85+ groups.¹⁴¹ Note the sharp drop in the 18-20 age group; jobs for the young are few in Marilla. It has become a place to live while one works somewhere else.

Roy Howes, a Marilla Township supervisor from 1950 to 1968, a county commissioner from 1968 to present (except 1973 and 1974), and a lifelong active member of the Marilla Church of the Brethren, is a Marilla landowner, but no longer a resident. Familiar with both the church and township activities, his knowledge of the Marilla scene is both historic and current. Roy had believed that the population of Marilla would continue to rise in the 1990 census by about 15% and was surprised when it rose by less than 1%. Those moving in are often retired people, some moving back to Marilla, some new retiree residents; a few are new, young people. Most of these make their

living outside of farming. Others in the community also work away from the farming scene while others farm themselves or work for the larger farmers that almost completely dominate farming in Marilla now. Small farmers are vanishing here as they are elsewhere in America. One of the larger farmers in Marilla now is Lucille Howes, (widow of one of Hezekiah's grandsons, Vernon) who, with her sons, farms 450 acres of pickles and beans and runs a pickle station as well. Dennis Howes farms 300 acres of his own and rents 450 acres more in Marilla and neighboring townships where he grows pickles, asparagus and beans. Dean Grossnickle raises beans and pickles on what was the old Hezekiah Grossnickle farm. Mike Cilman runs a dairy farm of 400 acres where he is in the process of building his herd. Once Marilla was predominantly dairy farming country, with over 2,000 head of cattle in 1950. Now, there are only around 150 head. Other prominent farmers in north Marilla would include Bill Brown and Lee Ashcraft.¹⁴² Though this handful of active farmers seems like a drastic cut from the 65 owner-farmers of 1904, Marilla has probably fared better than many neighboring communities like Kaleva, where practically no farming is done at all. Part of this was due to the richer loam soil of Marilla and perhaps some of it was due to the Brethren farmer tradition of stewardship of the soil and careful care of "God's gift", though this would be hard to measure. Whether or not the Marilla Township government can be successful in its efforts to preserve the community as a rural farm area remains to be seen. Farming there is facing most of the complicated problems that face the farming industry nationally. Dixie Howes, Township Treasurer, commented that the growing of

strawberries, which was once one of the bigger agricultural industries in Manistee County, is now greatly reduced and, "... may soon be gone altogether." Costs of housing and insurances for workers, as required by law (which may soon include a proposed health insurance), would make the growing of this crop prohibitive. Competition from foreign countries where labor is so cheap makes it difficult to compete, even with the enormous transportation costs of such a perishable crop.¹⁴³ Both community and church are facing some difficult problems.

As far as the church was concerned, Roy Howes expressed the opinion that the Church of the Brethren in Marilla had survived for two main reasons:

- (1) "The church has always maintained very close community ties and activities have almost always included both community and church."
- (2) "Differences of opinions on religious or social issues never meant a cutoff of either membership or church welcome."¹⁴⁴

As does the Township of Marilla, the Marilla Church of the Brethren faces the common problem of keeping their youth involved. Even young adults and middle-aged members are not numerous in regular attendance. Although these younger Brethren members and attenders still consider the "Church on the Hill" their church, they are often missing on Sunday morning. The majority of the faithful attenders are in their sixties and seventies, some in their forties and fifties. Those younger may send their children, sometimes with grandparents, but often they are not there, though they are

more numerous at church special occasions as well as religious holiday services. Average attendance in 1992 was 34; membership was 58. "But," says Pastor Willoughby, ever the optimist, "on March 29 for 'Bring a Friend' Sunday, we had 105 in attendance!" (An almost full house for this small church.) Perhaps the potential is there.¹⁴⁵

CONCLUSION

Durnbaugh, who has made an extensive study of Brethren history, points out that the last one hundred years have been a period of remarkable changes for the Church of the Brethren. Obviously, it has lost the sense of tight community a closed sectarian identity brings. It has gained, though, " ... visions for world missions and later world service that had an impact far beyond what might be expected of a small denomination."¹⁴⁶

Perhaps instead of losing its closed community identity, the Marilla Church transferred those religious community impulses to include the whole of Marilla Township. At the same time, they also managed to staunchly resist changes in their distinctly Brethren baptism and communion practices. These historically rooted religious community impulses fell on the fertile grounds that the township's geographic isolation, rich soil, and quasi-pioneer conditions provided. That the leaders who founded the Marilla church had brought with them so strong an ecumenical attitude toward Sunday School and openness to all in church services and activities had to have had a strong influence on the direction that this church took as they worked toward such strong community ties and a realization of their dedication "to the glory of God and my neighbor's good."

There appears to be a strong sense of loyalty that tightly ties even the

weakest attendees to this church as a sort of symbol of the identity of the Marilla community itself. In practical terms, the financial difficulties might be lessened or even solved by combining the two congregations that the Willoughbys serve - Marilla Church of the Brethren and Lakeview Church of the Brethren in Brethren, Michigan, which, as was earlier indicated, is only a few miles away. But Don Willoughby says these two churches, " ... might as well be on either side of the Grand Canyon," as far as there being any possibility of the two congregations combining. The proposal is not a "discussible" one.¹⁴⁵

One certainty seems to emerge from any historical study of Marilla. The ties between church and township are so closely knit that the fortunes of one will surely have a great impact on the other and the survival of the close knit historical identity of the Marilla community depends almost entirely on the ties that bind those two now.

Notes

- ¹ S. W. Fowler, History of Manistee, Mason, and Oceana Counties, Michigan (Chicago; H. R. Page & Co., 1862), p. 85.
- ² Steve Harold, Director of Manistee Historical Society Museum, Interview with Author, Feb. 22, 1990, Manistee.
- ³ Township Record Book, Minutes of Marilla Township Meetings, 1870-1886, p. 1.
- ⁴ Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 1.
- ⁵ Harold, Interview with Author
- ⁶ Steve Harold, "A Pleasant Journey", Reprinted Manistee County Pioneer Press, (Sept. 1, 1984, Bear Lake), p. 1.
- ⁷ Harold, Interview with Author
- ⁸ Willis F. Dunbar, Michigan, A History of the Wolverine State, (Grand Rapids: William Beardmans Publishing Co., 1965) p. 472, 473.
- ⁹ Dunbar, p. 475.
- ¹⁰ Don Williams, Descendent of Edward Williams, Interview with Reta Russell, Williams' home in Mesick, Mi., Aug. 2, 1985.
- ¹¹ 1870 Marilla Census Material, Pamphlet at Manistee Historical Museum, (No publishing data provided).
- ¹² Dunbar, p. 481.
- ¹³ Harold, Interview with Author.
- ¹⁴ Grace Fisk, Scrapbook, Newspaper Article Clipped from Manistee County Pioneer Press, No Date, Scrapbook housed in Marilla Historical Museum, Scrapbook begun in 1933.
- ¹⁵ Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 15.
- ¹⁶ Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 7.
- ¹⁷ Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 32-39.

- 18 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 134.
- 19 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 44.
- 20 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 36.
- 21 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, pp. 46, 47.
- 22 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 53.
- 23 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, pp. 105-107.
- 24 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 126.
- 25 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, pp. 130-152.
- 26 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 164.
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- 29 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 195.
- 30 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 155.
- 31 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 205.
- 32 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 206.
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- 34 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, p. 278.
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- 37 Hart & Sibbin Real Estate & Abstract Listings for Manistee County, 1882, Housed in Manistee Historical Museum.
- 38 Harold, "A Pleasant Journey," reprint.
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- 40 Fowler, pp. 79-85.

⁴¹ Dunbar, p. 485.

⁴² Cora W. Hellman, A Heap of Living (No publishing company information available for this book, "Printed on the 50th anniversary of the Church of the Brethren in Onekama, Mi., Oct. 12, 1958," from Introduction. [Actually, it was the 49th anniversary, which the church discovered after the celebration, according to Hellman]).

⁴³ Hellman, pp. 6-18.

⁴⁴ Hellman, pp. 6-19.

⁴⁵ Hellman, pp. 6-14.

⁴⁶ Hellman, pp. 15, 16.

⁴⁷ Ruth Francis Bowling, 9325 Maidens Rd., Bear Lake, Mi. 49614,

Interview with Author, Feb. 6, 1990.

⁴⁸ Hellman, pp. 6-18.

⁴⁹ Dunbar, p. 85.

⁵⁰ Platte Maps of Manistee County, Marilla Township, Manistee County Courthouse, Manistee, Mi., 1903.

⁵¹ Reta Russell, Hezekiah Grossnickle's granddaughter, 20281 Bigge Rd., Copenish, Mi. 49625, Interview with Author, May 12, 1991.

⁵² Hellman, pp. 19, 20.

⁵³ Marilla Church of the Brethren Council Meeting Minutes, "Some Notes on the History of the Marilla Church of the Brethren," No date or author given.

⁵⁴ Hellman, p. 19.

⁵⁵ Hellman, pp. 135, 136.

- ⁵⁶ Sydney A. Alstrom, A Religious History of the American People, (New Haven: University Press, 1972), pp. 239, 240.
- ⁵⁷ Alstrom, p. 241.
- ⁵⁸ Donald F. Durnbaugh, Meet the Brethren (Elgin, Ill.: The Brethren Press for The Brethren Encyclopedia, Inc., 1984), p. 13.
- ⁵⁹ Allstrom, p. 240.
- ⁶⁰ Durnbaugh, p. 14.
- ⁶¹ Frank S. Mead, Handbook of Denominations (Nashville: Partheon Press, 1985), pp. 63, 85.
- ⁶² Mead, p. 65.
- ⁶³ Mead, p. 64.
- ⁶⁴ Durnbaugh, pp. 9, 10.
- ⁶⁵ Reuben Nichols, Flint, Mi., Letter to Rev. Galen E. Barkdoll, May 9, 1943.
- ⁶⁶ Dollie Sturdevant, Chicago, Ill., Letter to Rev. Galen Barkdoll, Oct. 28, 1943.
- ⁶⁷ Rev. Don Willoughby, Present Pastor of Marilla Church of the Brethren, 10830 Marilla Rd., Copenish, Mi. 49625, Interview with Author, Mar. 7, 1990.
- ⁶⁸ Willoughby, Don; Interview, Mar. 7, 1990.
- ⁶⁹ Ruth Bowling, Interview, Sept. 20, 1988.
- ⁷⁰ Fredrick Denton Dove, Prof. of Psychology and Social Studies, Cultural Changes in the Church of the Brethren (Elgin, Ill.: Bridgewater Publishing House, 1932), p. 150.
- ⁷¹ Reta Russell, Ruth Bowling, Interview with Author, Feb. 20, 1990.

- 72 Dove, pp. 27, 146.
- 73 Mead, p. 65.
- 74 Hellman, pp. 71, 72.
- 75 Grace Howes, deceased, as told to the author, her granddaughter.
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- 77 Marie Willoughby, Assistant Pastor, Marilla Church of the Brethren,
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- 78 Minutes of the Council of the Marilla Church of the Brethren,
1919-1945, to the 1920 Entries.
- 79 Proceedings of School District No. 2, Marilla Township, Sept. 5, 1904
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- 80 Church Council Minutes 1919-1945, pp. 5, 6.
- 81 Township Record Book, 1870-1886, pp. 256, 257, 341, 343.
- 82 Proceedings of School District No. 2, 9-5-04 to 7-27, pp. 74, 209.
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- 87 Kenneth Shideler, Scale Model of Marilla, Housed in the Marilla
Historical Museum.
- 88 Ruth Bowling, Interview, Sept. 20, 1988. Esther Grossnickle,
Interview, July 1, 1988.
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- 90 Minutes of the Marilla Literary Society, p. 94.
- 91 Minutes of the Marilla Literary Society, throughout entire recording of minutes.
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- 94 Minutes of the Marilla Literary Society, pp. 155, 197-202.
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- 102 Church Council Minutes, entries 1939, 1940, 1941.
- 103 Manistee County Pioneer Press, July 4, 1938; p. 1.
- 104 Manistee County Pioneer Press, 1939, clipping (month and day were not shown).
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- 106 Manistee County Pioneer Press, Apr. 24, 1938, and "Semi-Annual Sunday School Convention of the Northern District Church of the Brethren at Marilla Church" program pamphlet.

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- 110 Marie Willoughby, "Marilla, the Last 50 Years, Church of the Brethren," March 27, 1938 - March 27, 1988, program prepared for a commemorative service.
- 111 Reta Russell, Interview, May 12, 1990.
- 112 Young, p. 128.
- 113 Marie Willoughby, Program, "50 Years."
- 114 Marie Willoughby, Program, "50 Years," pp. 3, 4.
- 115 Marie Willoughby, Program, "50 Years," p. 4.
- 116 Don Willoughby, Interview, Mar. 7, 1990.
- 117 Don Willoughby, Interview, Mar. 7, 1990.
- 118 Marie Willoughby, Program, "50 Years," p. 5, also Attached Graphs.
- 119 Adeline McDonald, 9263 Marilla Rd., Copemish, Mi. 49625, Interview with Author, Oct. 13, 1989.
- 120 McDonald, Interview, Photo.
- 121 Mike Norton, "In Marilla, B'Gosh, It's Overalls or Nuthin," Traverse City Record Eagle; Newspaper Clipping Belonging to Adeline McDonald, No Date on Clipping.
- 122 Adeline McDonald, Interview.
- 123 "Jack Remembered Fondly," Manistee County Pioneer Press, Clipping, No Date.
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- 131 Marie Willoughby, Program, "50 Years," 1988, pp. 6-8.
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Interview, May 12, 1990.
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- 142 Roy Howes, 9175 Bear Creek Drive, Kaleva, Mi. 49645, Interview with
Author, Oct. 17, 1990.
- 143 Dixie Howes, 9251 Marilla Rd., Copemish, Mi. 49625, Interview,
Jan. 30, 1992.
- 144 Roy Howes, Interview.
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J. EDSON and SYLVA ULERY
AUGUST 1955

MISSION WORK IN BROOKLYN



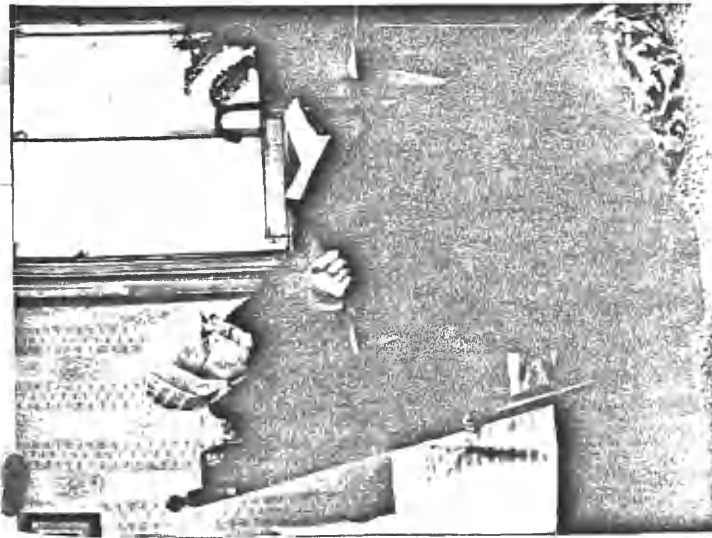
J. Edson in 1899



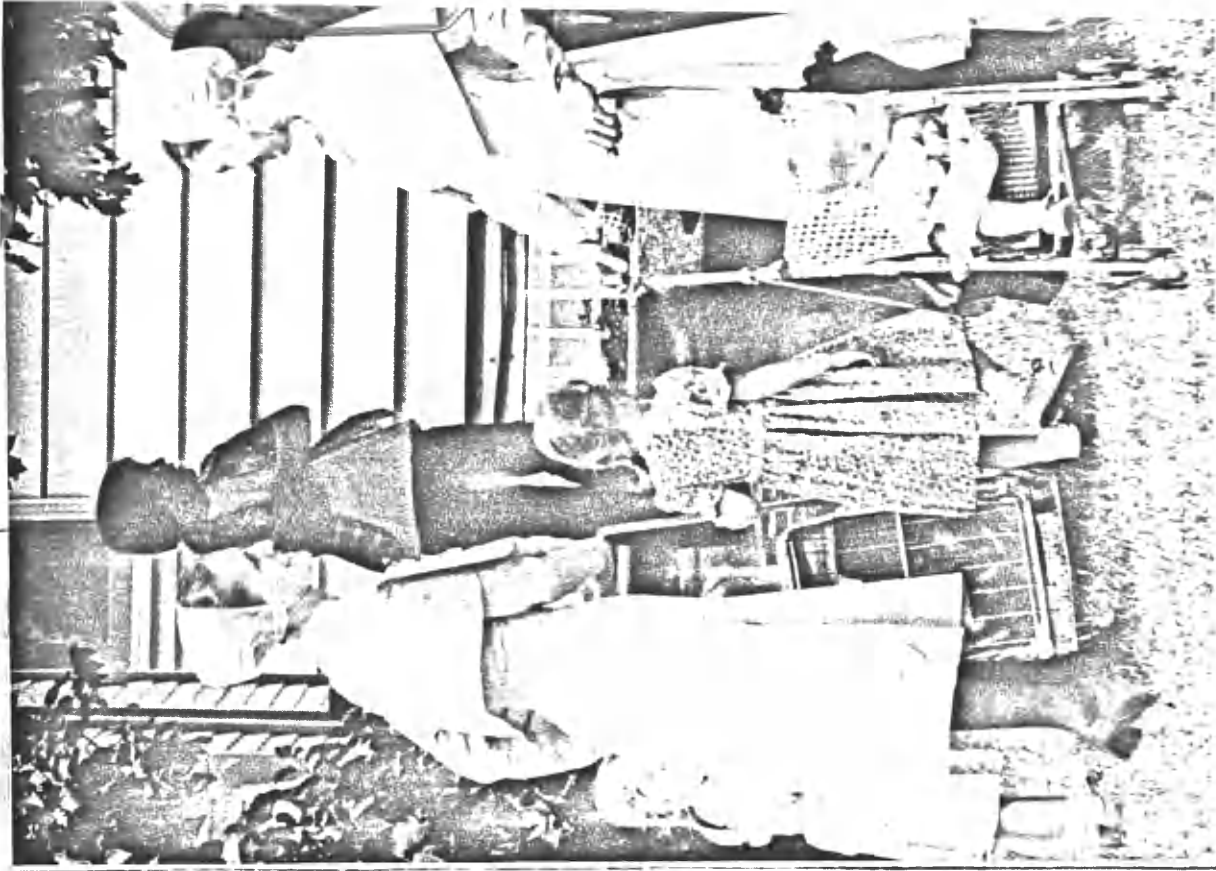
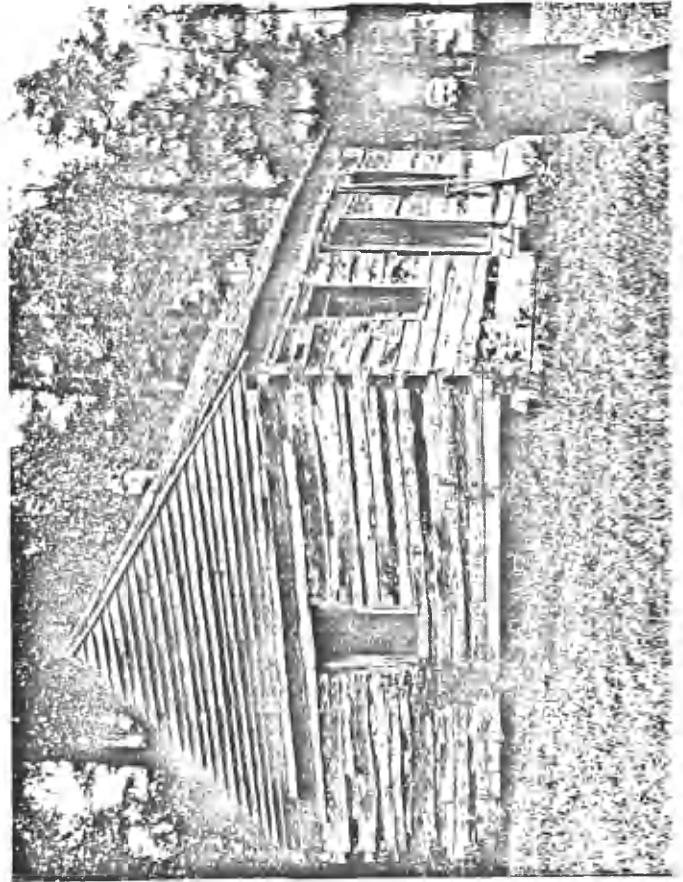
Sylva in 1899



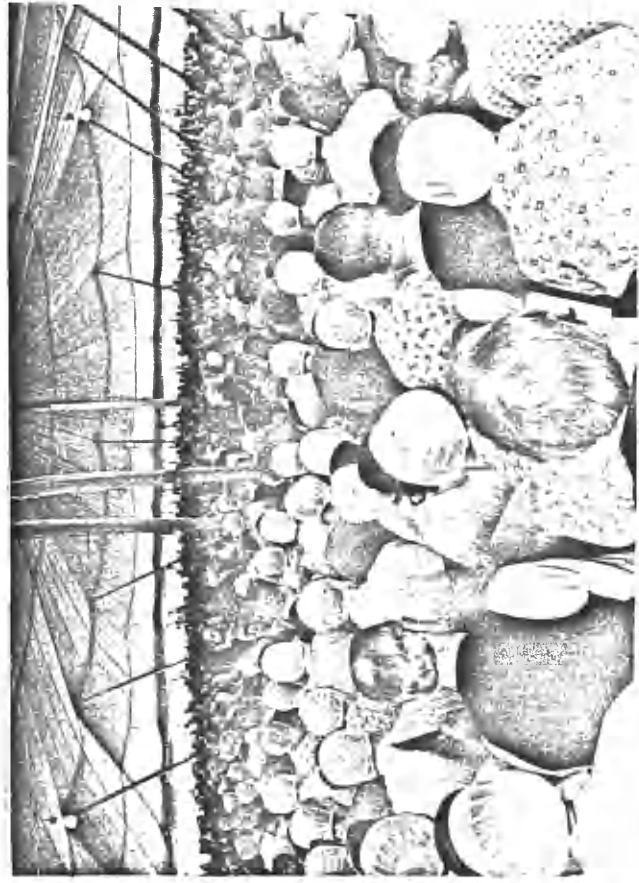
Hezekiah Grossnickle



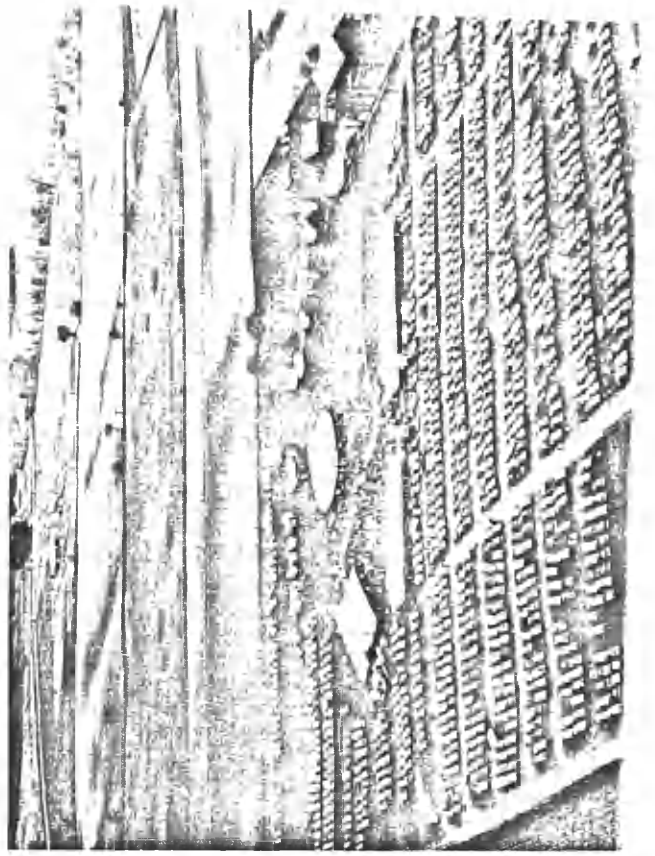
Left: Elizabeth McClanahan Royer (1836-1918) reading the Bible near Mercersburg, PA, 1917 (Kermon Thomason Collection). *Below:* Reuel B. Pritchett at the log Meadow Branch meeting-house, Granges Co., TN (Elgin P. Kintner Collection).



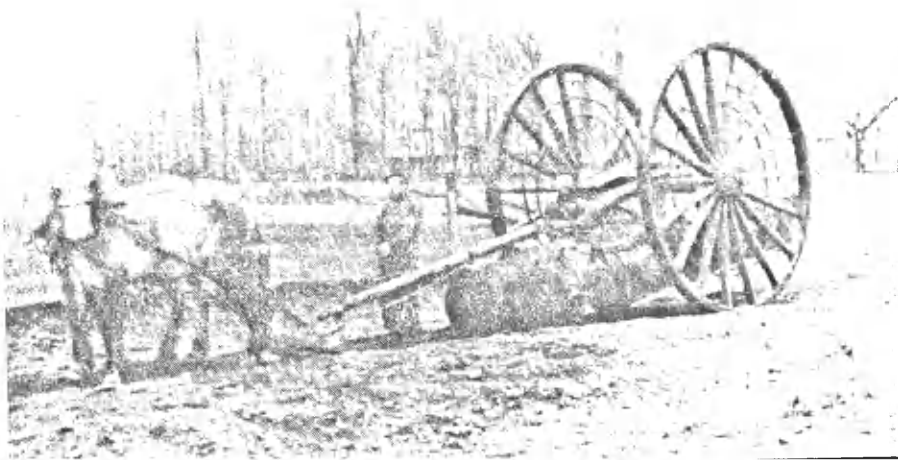
Members of the Old German Baptist Brethren at the Annual Meeting held near North Manchester, IN, in May, 1977 (Peter Michael photo).



Above: Session of the Annual Meeting of the Old German Baptist Brethren, held near North Manchester, IN, in May, 1977 (Peter Michael photo). Below: View of the Annual Meeting of the Old German Baptist Brethren, in Montgomery Co., OH, at Pentecost, 1972 (Keith Sides photo; Fred W. Benedict Collection).



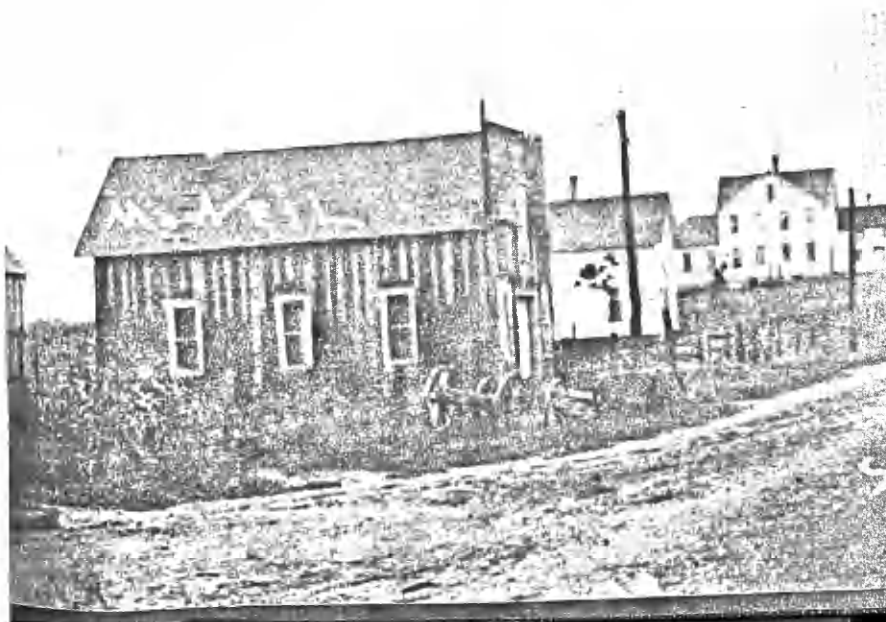
Members of the Old German Baptist Brethren at the Annual Meeting held near North Manchester, IN, in May, 1977 (Peter Michael photo).



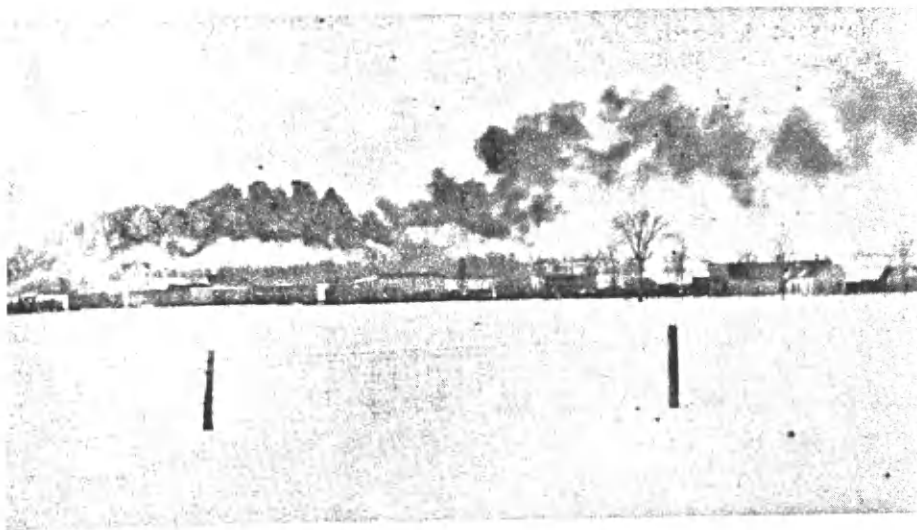
Logging wheel in use in
Marilla Road with the Gross-
mickle farm in the background.



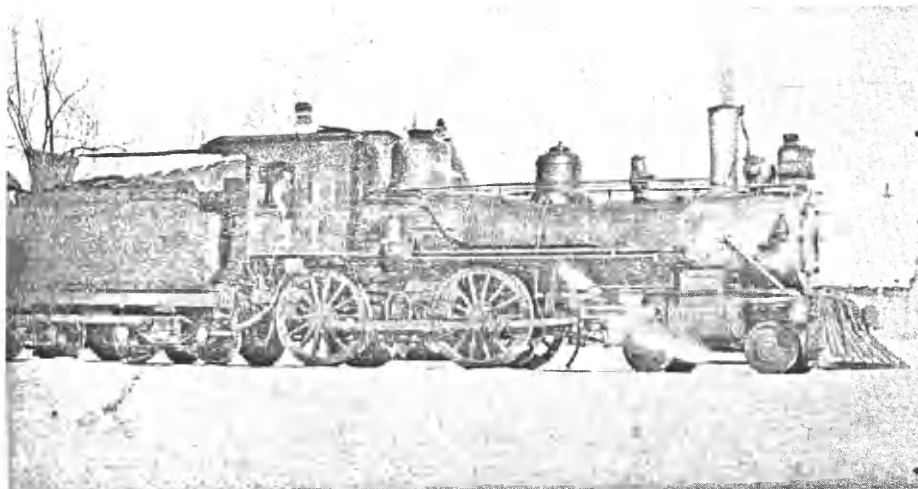
Clark School (District
No. 2) stood on the
side of Benton Rd in
section 11 of Marilla Twp.



Business district of Marilla, looking
from left to right - Stark's store,
McNiel's blacksmith's shop, Phillips
home, and Howes Home.



Manistee & North
Eastern Freight
train, passing
Marilla.



Manistee & North
Eastern engine No. 14
at Marilla Crossing



Students of Marilla Dist
No. 2, about 1907.

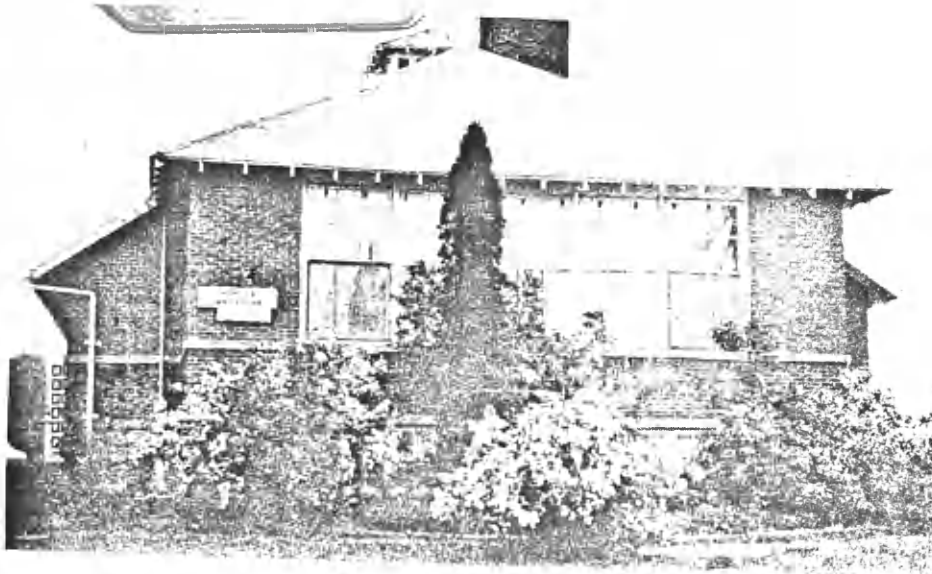


Hezekiah Grossnickle
Original Home built
when he arrived in 1903

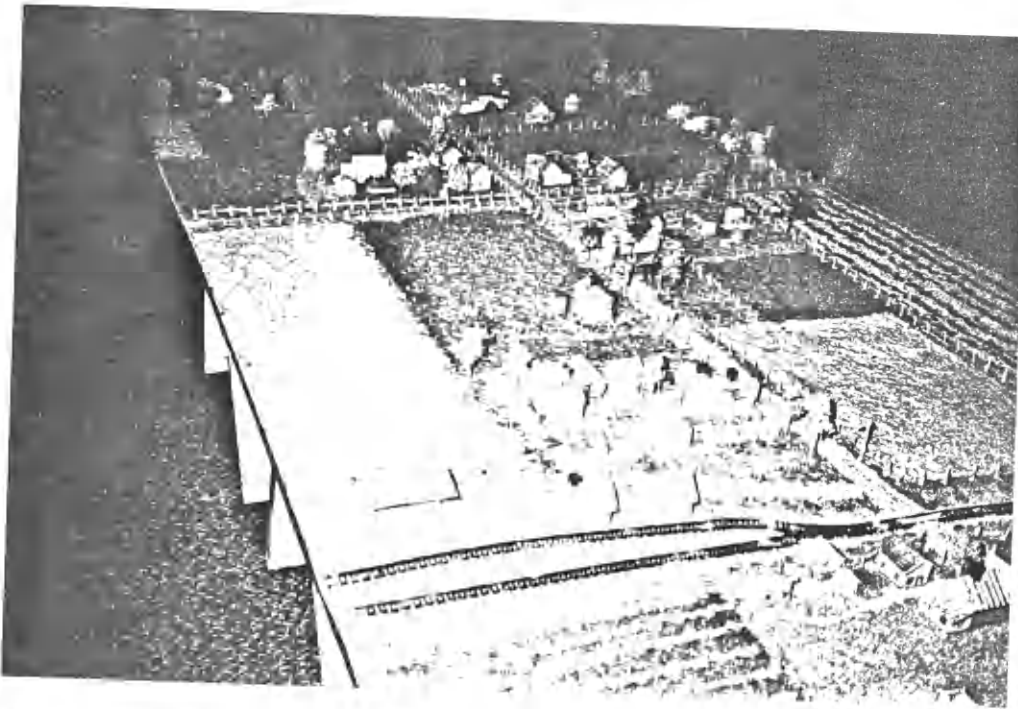
Esther Grossnickle
1958, Age 90. At her
home on the Grossnickle Farm



Logging in Marilla
Around 1914



New school of Marilla District No. 2 which was built in 1922, purchased for the Marilla Town Hall in 1957. The Marilla Historical Museum started in the basement in 1982.



The scale model of Marilla around the turn of the century set up in the Historical Museum



The Row Farm, Parish house, remodeled by present owners, Bob & Janice Thomas, originally donated to the Marilla Church to house their pastor.



*Present Pastor,
Don Willoughby*





Marilla Church,
inside view from
back



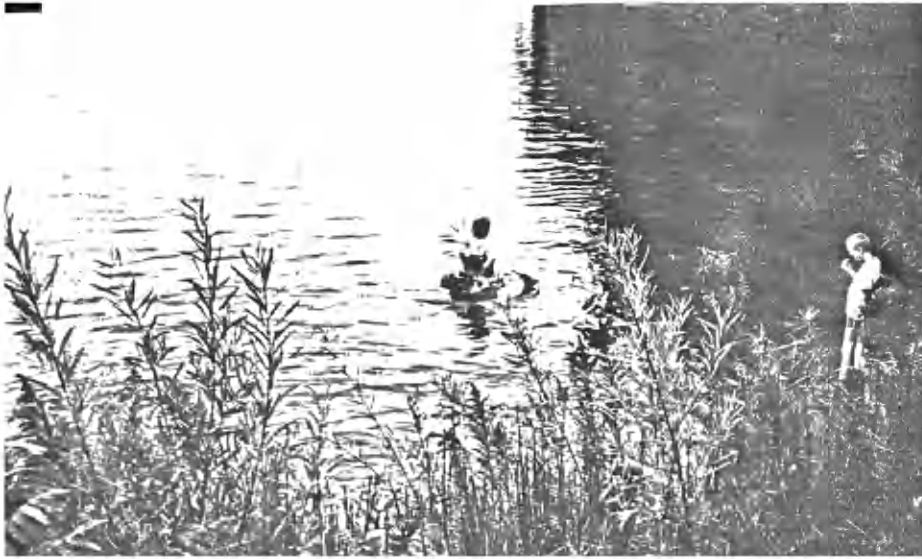
Laying on of Hands
Marie Willoughby's
Ordination



*Table set for the Love Feast in the
Marilla Church basement.*



Washing each other's feet at Love Feast



Baptism of
new members
of the Marilla
Church of the
Presbytery in the
"living waters" of
Manistee
River.

