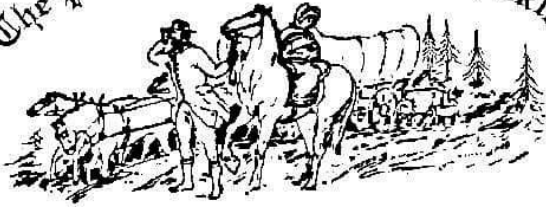


The Pennsylvania German Folklore



Society of Ontario

# PGFSO Newsletter

EDITOR: LORNE R. SMITH  
NUMBER 49 SPRING, 2020

## Message from the President

David Reesor Burkholder

Spring greetings to Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario (PGFSO) members and friends.



As I write this message we find ourselves in extremely uncertain times globally, nationally and within our respective communities and families.

The world is being ravaged by the Covid-19 virus and the fallout is unprecedented.

The growing numbers of confirmed Covid-19 cases and related deaths worldwide are frightening.

The global shutdown of a large segment of our social and economic systems around the globe is affecting almost every aspect of our daily lives.

Strategies and directives from our world and national leaders regarding social and physical distancing, cancellations and postponements of public gatherings, events and functions are all necessary steps in attempting to flatten the curve in the growth of the spread of Covid-19 virus.

I encourage everyone to adhere to and engage in these preventative measures.

According to the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario AGM meeting will be postponed until further notice from your executive.

It's difficult to even speculate when we may be able to meet in groups to do our official business and future event planning. We will keep you posted.

I trust that as we cope with this pandemic and the resulting uncertainty we can remain positive and build on the resilience and faith of our pioneer ancestors to come out the other side of this immense

## POSTPONED

### THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY OF ONTARIO

Notice of 68th Annual Meeting  
Thursday, April 30, 2020

Bethesda Lutheran Church  
20 Union Street, Unionville, ON  
7:30 p.m.

#### Business Meeting under Chairmanship of President David Burkholder

- Hear reports
- Elect Directors

Program: Show and Tell

Bring along items of  
historical significance to share  
Pie and Refreshments

Directions: West on Euclid Street  
(first street south of railway tracks  
off Main Street, Unionville)  
One block to corner of Union Street,  
entrance to parking lot off  
Union Street

Enter through door next to parking lot

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PGFSO Newsletter

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Articles for the PGFSO Newsletter are welcome

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challenge.

Some positives that are happening despite this pandemic:

- the quantity and quality of the maple syrup crop has been outstanding.

- my first tomato, pepper and eggplant indoor seedlings have just germinated.

- crocus and rhubarb are emerging in our gardens.

Friends, stay well, observe social and physical distancing practices, stay connected by phone, email and waving from a safe distance.

This too shall pass.

*Dave Burkholder, PGFSO President*

## Reesor Reunion

### Greetings Reesor Cousins

This is to notify everyone that the Reesor Reunion planned for June 27, 2020, is **postponed until June 2021** because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Disappointing as this is, we want all of our

Reesor cousins to remain safe and healthy, and it is now clear that a postponement is required. We shall look forward to reuniting next year!

Please pass this announcement on to your family members and Reesor cousins.

*Stay tuned for further updates on the family*  
[www.reesor.ca](http://www.reesor.ca)

## Maple Syrup Making as a Spiritual Journey

Lorne Smith

Each year the Lenten season coincides with my Maple Syrup season. In late February I begin my journey in our 300 acre forest sugar camp in the "Land Between" in the Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario. The camp is located down a deadend road far from the nearest hydro hookup.

Sap from the sugar maple tree is very much like the manna that God provided for the Israelites in their journey in the wilderness. With the warming of the springtime sun the sap rises in the trunk of the sugar maple tree to be collected and boiled down to produce a food of incredible taste and aroma.

My original ancestor arrived in Canada from Germany and assumed responsibility for our land from the Mississaugas of the New Credit in 1794.

The Native peoples undoubtedly taught him the opportunity that resides within the sugar maple tree. These thoughts help me to recognize the amazing journey that humans have had on our land.

My springtime journey involves tapping the trees, gathering the sap, running the bubbling evaporator and managing the finishing and bottling of the maple syrup.

Working in the forest provides a wonderful time for self reflection of what is really important in life. To sit with a wheelbarrow of wood feeding the roaring fire and listening to the "Hrrrrrrr....." of the escaping steam from the evaporator pan is so incredibly relaxing and provides a time to reflect on your life and to think about the opportunities that await you in the coming year.

To step out of the camp door on a starlit night with no light pollution to limit your view of the amazing solar system: just you, the quiet darkness

and the stars, one gains the confidence that God has the world under his control. It is a glory to experience the first hint of daylight in the eastern sky that you know will lead to the golden rays of the rising sun soon painting the tree tops with a gold crown that gradually reaches down the tree trunk to warm the earth.

It is also a time to enjoy the members of the family who gather to help their aging father with the many syrup making activities. It is a joy to know that my granddaughters are prepared to spend the night firing the evaporator so we can keep up with the sap flowing from the trees.

While living and working in our remote site I avoid the "fire hose" of bad news that comes daily from the radio, TV and newspapers. I have time to commune more fully with the natural surroundings and recognize ones role in God's natural world.

As the syrup journey continues, spring creeps forward. The birds return to the forest, the Canada geese fly overhead, the sounds of the woodpeckers become more evident and the pair of goshawks return to build their stick nest close by. Soon the trees begin to release their leaves, the leeks push their heads through the leaf litter and the trilliums begin to flower. My Lenten journey ends with the return of the barn swallows on Easter Sunday.

I miss attending many of the Lenten services at our church but I end the syrup season knowing that I have had the stamina to complete my 'Lenten' journey, that I have a loving family, that God has a definite place for me in his wonderful world, and that I have a responsibility to thank him continuously for the many blessings he provides in my life.

### *Report from Pingle/Smith Farm*

January was a mild month in 2020. It was so mild that I live trapped 3 racoons, 1 opossum and 1 skunk that had awakened from their winter sleep. Also in the last week of February we had 2 robins, one red winged black birds, two pair of Canada geese and a pair of duck in the back yard. Wow, winters are getting milder.

## *Paul Herbert Burkholder (1926-2014)*

Lorne Smith

In the Spring 2019, Volume 47 edition of the PGFSO Newsletter Laureen Harder Gissing wrote about the contribution of Lewis J. Burkholder in documenting the history of the Mennonites in Ontario. It was his early research and records that formed the basis of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario at Conrad Grebel University College at the University of Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario. Many of us are aware of his son Paul Burkholder who has made his contribution to recording the history of the Pennsylvania Germans in Canada through his art. Paul is the father of our President, David Burkholder.

Paul lived in the family home where he grew up on Highway 7, just east of the 9th Line. Paul was very active in the PGFSO since its founding as well as making great contributions to the Markham Historical Society. Paul was the "go to guy" for background information on any historical issue related to the Pennsylvania German community, particularly in the Markham area. His sketches and illustrations appear in many of our publications and plates.

Paul is credited with creating the PGFSO logo that depicts the early migrations of our ancestors from Pennsylvania to Upper Canada in the late 1700's and early 1800's. The Pennsylvania German woman and her child, on a horse, led by her husband, with the Conestoga wagon and a cow and calf bringing up the rear, is typical of the mode of travel over 800 kilometers through forests, swamps, mountains and rivers. The Logo was approved at the Society's Annual Meeting in 1970.

At the 56th Annual General Meeting of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario on October 27, 2007 in Vineland, Ontario the Society formally approved the creation of the Dr. G. Elmore Reaman Award with the following criteria: Recipients of the award must have worked diligently on behalf of the Society to further the aims and mandate of the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario and, given meritorious service to the Society for more than twenty-five



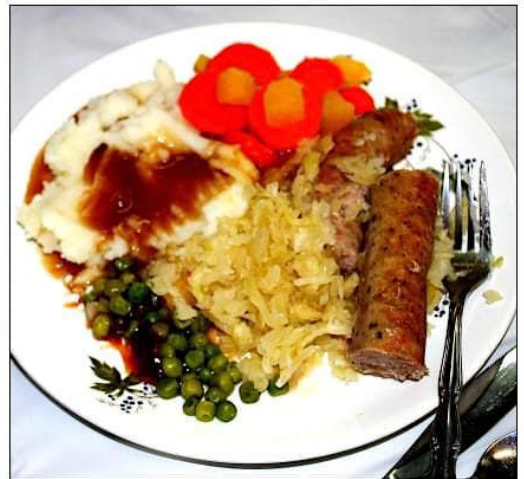
*Eva, Paul, Nancy, Mary, Laura Burkholder*



*Dave Burkholder presents Janet Reid with an early PGFSO cup and saucer/plate*



*The Cooking Crew*



*A Sausage & Sauerkraut Dinner Plate*



*PHB Markham Museum Saw Mill:  
created for the Markham Historical Society*



*Coloured PGFSO plates auctioned  
at the Supper*



PHB Four Season Plate



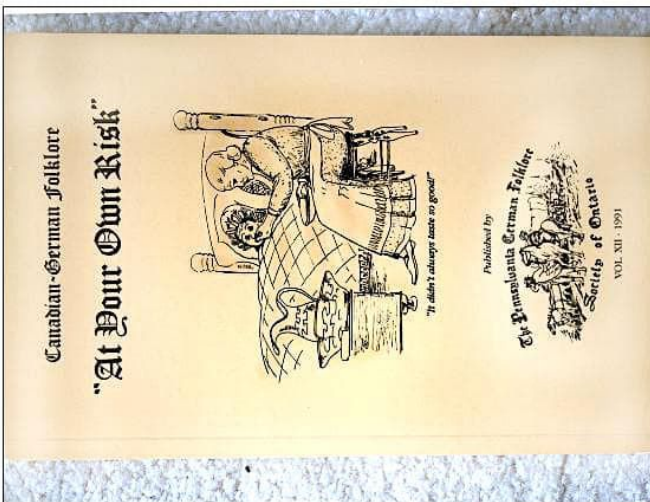
PHB 1970 Reesor Family Plate



PHB 1980 Reesor Family Plate



PHB 1990 Reesor Family Plate



Volume XII Cover: "At Your Own Risk"



"Those Enterprising Pennsylvania Germans"

years. Paul Burkholder and Lorna Bergey received this prestigious award at this meeting. A number of Paul's sketches now reside in Markham Museum.

Here is a sample of the work depicting early life in our community that Paul has left with us.

## *The Clockmaker*

Jake Smith

I was born on a farm in March 1912 on Concession 5, Markham Township, near the hamlet of Almira, in a family of ten children. All turned out to be farmers but this lone son. I give great credit to my mother on the success of my adventure from the farm to the clockmaker's bench.

While a very young boy as far back as my memory allows me to go, I was fascinated by clocks. One spring day while sprouting potatoes with my sister, we talked as young people do about our life's vocation, I told her I wanted to be a clockmaker and have a shop of my own. The jolt she gave me was stunning. She said that "I did not have enough brains for that!". To this day she does not remember saying it, but I do.

I always loved wheels, and at the age of thirteen I made my first crude clock and it worked. My tools were handmade in some type of fashion. Here is where my mother played her part. I had no place to work only on my mother's kitchen table. In spite of my brother and sister's laughing at me for doing something I could never accomplish. I was always backed up by my mother. She let me work on the kitchen table. Thank God for good mothers.

I finally did gather enough back bone to approach my parents about my desire for a life's occupation as a watch and clockmaker. To my surprise they agreed. This was a terrific lift in my life.

So we began to make plans. I suggested I go and see the late Jerry Smith of Richmond Hill, Ontario. He was a first cousin to my father, Jacob. My father agreed and offered to go with me for which I was very grateful. This was another great milestone in my life, as it meant so much to me to have father along. God bless good fathers.

It was 1934 when we went to Jerry's shop to enquire about me working as an apprentice. He

agreed to take me and everything seemed to fall in line. He had been a telegraph operator on the railroad before becoming a clock/watch maker. He had set up a business in Richmond Hill, and was widely renowned as an excellent craftsman.

I will always remember my first day at Jerry's shop. Everything seemed so complex and I thought I would never be able to learn this trade. But day by day the light shone brighter on the workings of clocks and watches.

Tools were of great importance and to succeed they were a must. Jerry Smith wrote to the retired principal of the Canadian Horological Institute, namely a Mr. H. R. Playtner, who was living in Kitchener, Ontario. In his reply he informed us he had a complete set of tools: lathe, chucks, wheel chucks, face plates, tread wheel and the whole bit, which he would sell to us for the astounding price of \$225.00. The same thing today would cost approximately \$10,000. So I acquired these tools.

Transportation was a big barrier. It was nearly 20 miles from our farm north of Unionville to Jerry's shop in Richmond Hill. I had no money to pay rent or board in town so I came up with the hard way. In winter I drove a horse and cutter through all kinds of weather and snow storms, nothing stopped me in those days. In the summer it was a horse and cart. Mr. Luau of Richmond Hill put up my horse in his barn and I had my dinner at a friend's place, Mr. Joshua Horner. I did this for two more years. Finally Joshua Horner relieved me of my transportation problem and boarded me free of charge for two more years. He was a dear man. I tried to pay him but he always said "no".

After being in Jerry's shop for about a month he approached me one day about making a clock or watch. I asked for two weeks to make up my mind. In two weeks I approached him with my answer "a hall chime clock". I completed it in two years and it is still running beautifully to the present. This was the beginning of my clock making, drafting, designing, making gears, pallets, the whole bit, including a walnut case with lumber from my uncle's farm. While at Jerry's shop we were visited one day by a professor and his class

of six students from a watch making school in Toronto. We had a great time. These students asked how much I paid to learn this trade. I said "nothing". They were amazed, as they were paying tuition at the watch making school and did not learn any of this wheel making. Near the end of my career at Jerry's shop I went to the T. Eaton Co. in Toronto, seeking a job. The job there was okay but did not appeal to me. They wanted to put me in charge of the whole repair department overseeing twelve watchmakers.

I changed my mode of transportation. I bought an old Cleveland motorcycle, with one cylinder, but it broke down. Then I purchased a Harley 74. I had a few spills, but I survived. Then I bought a '32' Chevy with a rumble seat. I used this car during my courting days, and after I married Bernice Winger, on July 30, 1940 we travelled in it on our honeymoon. We located in Stouffville and I bought out the late Hector Pollard in the old Grubin block, which was later destroyed by fire. I can still remember my first customer, Milford Rose. I repaired his watch for \$1.00. This was the start of a new adventure that lasted nearly 40 years. Our books show that I repaired of 35,000 clocks and watches during that time.

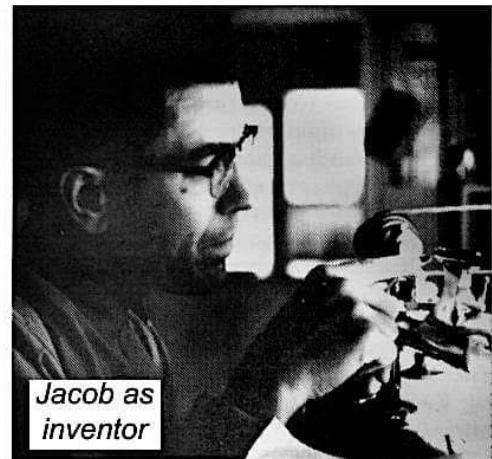
My wife Bernice, played an important role in our business. She did most of the bookkeeping, the cleaning and dusting, she chose the lines of china and silver which we carried in later years and looked after their display and pricing. She was a big help in repairing clocks as well.

My business was moved to several locations over the succeeding years. In 1942 we moved the shop into our home, and continued there for the duration of the war. In 1945 we moved back on Main Street again to the Blue Bird Inn, and stayed there for nine years. In 1952 we bought the old McCallum house, east of Lloyd St. and added a store at the front which we completed in 1954. In addition to watch/clock repairing, we sold china, silverware and jewelry until about 1969. I operated as a clock repair shop only from then until my retirement in 1977.

The most famous clock I repaired was one that had been owned by Napoleon, as stated by the customer. Its beautiful design resembled a

horn of plenty. It had a very fine movement and the pendulum hung from a silk cord. My shop had the old watch sign, with the time set at 8:20 a.m. This was a watchmaker's tradition. Recently at an antique show, I saw a watch sign very similar to the one that hung on my store, and it was priced at \$4,765.00. What a contrast.

Shortly after I first started business in February, 1940 I was afraid someone would break in and steal all of my watches, therefore I carried them home every night. What a chore. One night while praying before going to bed, I had a tremendous experience. I heard the voice of Jesus say, "You sleep, I'll watch". I never brought them home again. One morning, going back to the shop I noticed that someone had tried to cut a hole in my front window with a glass cutter, and another time I found my cigarette butts at my back door,



Jacob as inventor



Jacob as clock maker

but my store was secure in HIS hands.

Many years ago, while at Jerry's shop, I drew or drafted a Reifler clock, with the intention of building it, but did not undertake this job for nearly 60 years.

This is a German invention, and has a free swinging pendulum, two escape wheels, the one a lift, the other a locking wheel. This clock has no strike and is strictly a time piece, the world's best time keeper until recently with the advent of the Quartz movement. This project took me almost a year to build and is running beautifully. After a little consideration I came to the conclusion that this clock is very fine and accurately made but needs the utmost care and precise setup. Therefore to serve the future generations I altered it to a Vienna regulator which is not so complicated and more easy to set up.

Next came a model of a watch escapement. I also drafted this and made parts at Jerry's shop 60 years ago. Now in 1994 I am just putting the finishing touches to this model. It is enlarged ten times and shows how the watch operates.

The town of Stouffville built a clock tower in 1922 and the businessmen donated a Gilbert Johnson gravity escape clock made in Croydon, England. I began looking after this clock in 1940 when I moved to town. This involved climbing the 60 foot tower and winding it every ten days or two weeks. I continued this task, along with regular servicing until 1975 when my son Glen took over. He is still servicing the Stouffville clock but the hand crank has been replaced by an electric Motor. One of my projects since retirement has been to build a six foot replica of this town clock. I worked from 1989 to 1993 and used over 5,000 miniature brocks and accurately scaled the working parts.

I never went to high school or college, but the things I learned from life surpassed anything I would have learned in school. I am not sorry for the vocation I chose and I hope any young person who reads this story will be inspired by my determination. If you persevere and never give up you will surely succeed.

*Editor's Note: This story was taken from Vol. 13 of the Canadian-German Folklore Series entitled "Those Enterprising Pennsylvania Germans".*

## 2019 Sausage & Sauerkraut Dinner

The 65th Annual Sausage & Sauerkraut Dinner was held on November 23, 2019 at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church. As usual the food prepared by Dan Burkholder and his crew was outstanding.

The guest presenter was Janet Reid, Curator of the Markham Museum. Janet shared information about new findings at the Museum and the acquisition policy that has been put in place. It is a difficult task to decide what from our community is appropriate to save given a limited amount of space. Janet brought along the newly acquired Reesor bible that was highlighted in the Fall newsletter under the heading "An interesting Bible Story". The genealogy to Christian Reesor and his wife Melissa Cornell are documented in the back of this Reesor bible.

*Photo of The Cooking Crew is on page 4.*

## Cober Church Hymn Sing Postponed

Linda Earl reports that the Trustees had been planning a traditional Hymn Sing at the Cober Church on Dufferin Street, Vaughan for June. The Trustees have decided to postpone the event. They will give notice if they are able to proceed at a later date or possibly it will be postponed until 2021.

## Shirk Reunion

The Biennial Shirk Family Reunion is presently planned to be held at Fort Erie on August 6-9 to revisit the history of the Sherkston Shores/Ridgeway Sherk descendants. The reunion alternates between Canada and the USA every two years. Interested people can follow the family at [www.schurchfamilyassociation.net](http://www.schurchfamilyassociation.net)

PGFSO  
web site

We thank Vern Sherk our web master for maintaining our PGFSO website with the help of David Smith. Members are encouraged to keep up to date with events and information by checking in regularly to [www.pgfsso.com](http://www.pgfsso.com)