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The Relationship of the Frisian Mennonites to the Public Schools of Elkhart County, Indiana, 1853-1885

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE FRISIAN MENNONITES
TO THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ELKHART COUNTY, INDIANA
1853-1885

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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BY
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In 1853 a group of nineteen Mennonites from the village of Balk in Friesland Province in the Netherlands settled in Jackson Township, Elkhart County, Indiana, near New Paris, Indiana. Later they were joined by two other groups from Balk. The stated reason for the emigration was their disappointment in the Mennonite church for not upholding the principle of nonresistance, refusing to bear arms. By the mid nineteenth century, many Mennonites in the Netherlands were participating in war.

This study explores the relationship of these people to education during the period of 1853 to 1885. In order to understand the relationship of these people to education, the history of the Mennonites starting with the Reformation is examined.

Sources used include diaries, newspapers, local histories and school reports. Two diaries of Grietje Jakobs Symensma, one from 1850-1870 and a second from 1881-1895, were major sources of information about the life of the Frisian Mennonites in Elkhart County. Local newspapers from Goshen, Indiana and a national Mennonite newspaper published in Elkhart County were also used as sources.

The Frisian Mennonites never conducted a private school. They participated in the public schools available in the area. As a group, they were
more literate than other Mennonites of the area as shown in the 1860 census: all Frisian adults were literate; in another Mennonite group, the men were literate but the women were not. The group did not, however, maintain an identity as Frisians. Their identity was as Mennonites and this was the identity they chose to maintain. In Jackson Township they related to five groups of people: their own Frisian Mennonite group, other Mennonites, other Anabaptists, other Frisians (who were not Mennonite), and to a much smaller degree the “English” people in town. Since the Frisian community lived in close proximity, the schools could reflect their values. Sunday schools were an important educational structure for transmitting Mennonite cultural values. The group did not isolate themselves from the public school system, but did in fact participate by sending their children and providing some individuals who taught.
PREFACE

As a young girl I made many trips with my mother to cemeteries in the New Paris, Indiana, area as she sought to piece together the relationships of people she knew and the ancestors about whom she had heard stories. The surnames on the tombstones--such as Symensma, Huitema, Postma, Swart, and Fisher--were familiar to me as they were the names of people in the community and names of my classmates when I started to school. The given names I found intriguing: Hiltje, Grietje, Klaas, Gerritt, Piebe, Yelle, and Ruurd. I knew these names were "Dutch" and that there were a few people in the community who spoke that language. Jane Fisher, an elderly spinster who lived in a small house near the center of town would walk to the drug store to use the public phone, call her brother and carry on long conversations in a strange language. This, my mother, informed me was Dutch, and Jane used it, according to my mother, so no one in the store would know her business. I was also aware of Mennonites in the community. Some I observed to be quite different from myself as they dressed in plain clothing, wore prayer coverings and drove black cars with the chrome bumpers painted black. Others I observed, such as my best friend at school, dressed as I did, attended the same social activities as I, and even had a family who purchased one of the first television sets in town. I did not make any connection between the Mennonites and the strange names on the tombstones in the cemetery. I was not Mennonite; I did not know any
relatives who were Mennonite, and my mother never spoke of any Mennonite background.

When my mother spoke of her family, she often talked of her father’s job as township trustee, of her year of college and of two years teaching prior to her marriage. Her value for education and teaching was evident. It seemed natural that I, too, would become a teacher.

As I pursued my career in education, I also maintained an interest in the Dutch names and family history. I was amazed when I found that these people were Mennonites and had left the Netherlands because they believed so strongly in the principle of nonresistance, refusing to bear arms against another person. How had these people related to education? Why were they no longer identified as Mennonites? Were there others besides my mother and grandfather who were involved in the schools in Elkhart County? These questions led me to pursue the topic of this dissertation.

Several sources exist which provide information about the life of the Balk Mennonite people as they became a part of the early settlers near New Paris. The Archives of the Mennonite Church located at Goshen College in Indiana contain four boxes of material from the Balk settlers. The majority of these materials are written in the Dutch language. Among the materials are diaries by Grietje Jakobs Symensma. She was the wife of one of the preachers, Ruurd J. Smit, and sister to the second preacher, Ruurd J. Symensma; both were leaders of the group. Her name was later Anglicized to Margaret J. Smith. According to Dennis Stoesz, archivist for the Mennonite Church, one of these diaries was translated by Jo Tan, an Indonesian woman who had immigrated to the Goshen area. Although there is no date or name on the typewritten translation, it was probably completed in the 1950s. The Tan translation covers the
time period from 28 April 1850 to 25 December 1870. For the purposes of this research, a second diary was translated in 1991 by Katharine Tinnenmans, a citizen of the Netherlands living in Elgin, Illinois. This diary covered the period from 12 February 1881 to 18 August 1895.

Marie Yoder used some of the materials from the archives for an article published in the January 1956 Mennonite Quarterly Review entitled "The Balk Dutch Settlement Near Goshen, Indiana, 1853-1889." In 1947-1948 Yoder had compiled a "History of the Salem Mennonite Church near New Paris, Indiana." This is an unpublished booklet mimeographed for the Salem Church. Much of the same material is presented in both the article and the booklet. The journal article is obviously a more formal presentation. A copy of the booklet can be found in the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College. The Salem Mennonite Church was built in 1889, and Smith preached there until his death in 1893.

I found that a number of other people from the Elkhart County area were interested in the Frisian Mennonites and Frisian settlers. They shared information with me and led me to other sources. Janet McFarland-Idema had talked with my mother in the late 1960s when she was compiling her genealogy. It was through Janet that I first became aware of the diaries at Goshen College. Several genealogists who are descendants of Netherlanders have provided information regarding these families. Miriam Krull Glanders has maintained an interest in this group and provided information from her family. She has worked with Frank J. Swart of Nijverdal, Netherlands to translate some of the materials. A letter in the archives written by R. J. Symensma to his friends in Balk while he was in Liverpool has been translated by Swart. A current project of these two individuals is translating a diary by Ruurd J. Smit. Ruth Darkwood has
compiled genealogies of the Symensma, Fisher (Visser), Hygema and Darkwood families. Dorothy Swart Rule provided information on the Swart family.

Census records from 1860, 1870, and 1880 provide information about the Balk settlers. The records contain the birthplace of each person, their age, whether they were literate, and whether they had attended school the previous term if they were children. The census listings indicate family groupings so it is possible to see which persons were living together as it was common for young people to live with other families who needed their assistance in the house or fields. The 1890 census records are not available for any area of the United States.

John J. Funk, a Mennonite printer, published a newspaper for the Mennonites beginning in 1864. Both German and English versions of the paper were available. Since the Herald of Truth, as the paper was called, recorded information about church activities of the times, information about some of the members of the Balk, particularly preacher R.J. Smit, can be found in this source. A complete set of volumes of the paper are available in the Mennonite Historical Library at Goshen College. John Roth and his assistant, Janet Shoemaker, at the Historical Library were most helpful in making these materials available and in suggesting other sources to explore.

Dr. Joan Smith of Loyola University served as director for this dissertation. Her support and encouragement enabled this project to be completed and her professional guidance was invaluable. Dr. Gerald Gutek of Loyola University and Dr. L. Glenn Smith of Northern Illinois University were also members of this committee. Their specific areas of expertise were particularly helpful in writing this dissertation.
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CHAPTER 1
MENNONITE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1853 a small group of Frisian Mennonites immigrated to the United States and settled near New Paris, Indiana, a small farming community located in Elkhart Count. In April of the same year an election was held to select township trustees throughout Indiana. These trustees, according to the School Law of 1852, were to be the officers in charge of educational affairs in the townships.¹ The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the relationship between this small group of conservative Mennonites and the developing school system in Jackson township, Elkhart County where they settled.

To understand this group and their reasons for leaving the Netherlands, one must look back to the Protestant Reformation and the development of the Anabaptist group later known as Mennonites. Anabaptist groups developed in two areas of Europe during the reformation. In the Northern part of Europe, the Dutch Anabaptist developed in the Low Countries, which constitute the present countries of the Netherlands and Belgium; Northern Germany, in the area known as East Friesland, Schleswig-Holstein, and Mecklenburg; and as far east as the city in Poland now known as Gdansk, then called Danzig. Near Zurich, the Swiss Anabaptists developed. According to Mennonite historian, C. Henry Smith, the Anabaptists trace their origins to Ulrich Zwingli of Zurich, the founder

of the Reformed Church rather than to Luther. | In the early sixteenth century in the area of Zurich, several leaders struggled with reform in the church. Among them were Wilhelm Rublen, the first priest of Switzerland to marry; Conrad Grebel, a protege of Zwingli; Balthasar Hubmaier, whose teachings were later a part of the Baptist Church; Felix Manz, who became the first Anabaptist martyr; and Simon Stumpf who questioned the submission of religious questions to any authority other than the Bible.

Grebel broke with Zwingli in 1523 concerning the issue of baptism. Grebel became convinced, by reading the New Testament, that the act of baptism should occur when a person was an adult and able to make a confession of faith. The act of baptizing children did not seem to Grebel to be baptism in the New Testament sense. Grebel baptized Manz and a number of others. This act separated the group from Zwingli and established one of the major principles of the Anabaptists: believer's baptism. The Anabaptists continued to develop in the south, but the reform movement in that area followed more closely the ideas of Luther or Zwingli. The religion in the area was usually officially established by the ruling noble. The Anabaptists generally did not become state churches since rulers were not members of these churches. They existed outside the state churches and were frequently located in the rural areas.

**Development of Anabaptists in Northern Europe**

The history of the Anabaptists in the north has been researched and recorded by Cornelius Krahn. He traces their development in Dutch.

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3 Ibid., 4-8.
Anabaptism: Origin, Spread, Life and Thought (1450-1600). Krahn states that scholars generally agree that the Protestant denominations in the Low Countries had their origins in their own countries rather than from the work of Luther or Zwingli. Not only did the religious culture of the area develop from the countries themselves, but during the middle ages, the culture of the Low Countries developed somewhat independently from the rest of Europe. In Flanders a textile industry developed, near Amsterdam, fishing and shipping industries developed, while the northern cities belonged to the Hanseatic League, a league of merchants of free Germanic towns trading abroad and with each other. The Flemish school of art is well known and produced such familiar names as Jan van Eyck, Pieter Brughel, and Roger van der Weyden. While the Netherlands did not develop the lyrical poets as did Germany, it did produce some satirical literature. Rhetoric was highly developed with writings and plays of a religious nature. Architecture developed first along Romanesque and Gothic lines, then evolved, through the use of bricks as the main building material, into the distinctive Dutch Gothic style. Music in the Netherlands was expressed through a strong folk song tradition and through professional choirs in the churches. Two composers of note were Jan Okeghem (1430-1495) and Jacob Obercht (1450-1505) who, according to Krahn, influenced western European music. A university flourished in Louvain while various chapter schools prepared young men for the priesthood. The chapter school at Deventer was well known and its graduates usually were priests in the cities.

The invention of the printing press in 1438 by Gutenberg opened the door for the spread of knowledge throughout the Netherlands. Education was

4Cornelius Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism Origin, Spread, Life and Thought (1450-1600), (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968), 8. Krahn is the leading authority of Dutch Anabaptists. The material on Dutch Anabaptism in this chapter is from this source.

5Ibid., 5-8.
available in the Netherlands. Most villages had a writing school for children ages seven to nine and a secondary school for those ages nine to fifteen. A student could then choose a fine arts course at a university.

The political climate encouraged this culture to develop in the fourteenth century at the close of the middle ages. While France and England were combatants in the Hundred Years War, the Low Countries were free to develop trade and culture. The geographical location of these countries provided an ideal setting in which to do so. Located on the sea, trade had been established with England. Antwerp had imported wool from England and processed it, returning textiles for the English market. Trade had also developed with other countries on the North Sea. While feudal lords in Germany were protecting their estates, a strong merchant class was emerging in the Netherlands. Citizens were no longer concerned with the basic necessities of food, shelter, and security. They were free to turn their energies to higher level concerns on Maslow's hierarchy of needs such as belonging, love, self-esteem, and self-actualization. They developed into an urban rather than a rural culture, thus establishing the culture described previously.

Religion and the Roman Catholic Church were pervasive influences on Renaissance culture. The Low Countries were no exception. Christianity was introduced to this area in the seventh century by the missionaries Willibord and Boniface. The church was established and spread throughout the Low Countries. The Reformation in the Low Countries made a change in the development of religion in this area. Krahn suggests that while Protestant scholars have often painted the reformation as the result of the corruptness of the Roman Catholic Church, others point out that the religious life of the fifteenth century was of higher quality than at previous times. It was the devotion to
religious study and questions that produced the Reformation. One must remember that it was not the original intent of Luther or many of the reformers to establish a new church, but to improve the existing church.\(^6\)

In many ways the questioning of the Catholic Church was a forerunner of the Anabaptist movement in the Low Countries. The Brethren of the Common Life was an example of this. This group lived in communal houses and traced their beginnings to Jan van Ruysbroeck and Geert Groote. These men were part of Dutch mysticism which Krahn described as follows:

A practical and devout piety, however, was found side by side with the corrupt practices of the church. This inner piety, which was known as Christian mysticism, and which was the background of various reformation movements of the late Middle Ages, was God and Christ-centered. It shared with the later Pietism the emphasis on the personal element in the experience of salvation and in the devotion to Christ.\(^7\)

Several names are associated with the mysticism of this time. Jan van Ruysbroeck in the middle of the 14th century began the emphasis on the experiential religion. Geert Groote put these ideals into practice by establishing the Brethren of the Common Life. Thomas á Kempis wrote “The Imitation of Christ” advocating a spiritual life with Christ as the model.

The Brethren of the Common Life had several characteristics which were common with the Anabaptists of later date. They practiced a simple life style so that more resources and energy could be devoted to inner contemplation. They shared their goods so that all might have what was needed. It was however their emphasis on the examination of the self in an attempt to live as Christ had lived that set them apart from other religious groups of the times. The goal was to live as Christ had lived, practicing self examination and striving for the

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\(^6\) Ibid., 8-9.
\(^7\) Ibid., 21.
perfection of Christ. The priests' role as an intermediary between the individual and Christ was not necessary. The individual had access to Christ. The Anabaptists believed that each person could read and interpret the scriptures and commune directly with Christ.

The Christian humanists in the Netherlands, while still a part of the Catholic Church, created an environment of thoughtful questioning that prepared the Netherlands for the Anabaptist development. Among the humanists in the Netherlands were Wessel Gansfort, Rudolf Agricola and Desiderius Erasmus, all of whom were highly educated, thoughtful men. Wessel Gansfort and Erasmus were trained by the Brethren of the Common Life. They encouraged the reading of the scriptures to seek the will of God, but in order to do this, a person must be educated. Today, Erasmus is well known for the contributions he made to education. He was a prolific writer and his works were widely distributed throughout the Netherlands. He advocated not only study of the Bible, but an understanding of the classics. The humanistic schools in the Netherlands were centered in Amsterdam and Alkmaar. A group of friends who were priests, educators and associates of Erasmus corresponded and worked together. Although these men generally worked for reform within the Roman Catholic Church, they had not yet reached the point where they were willing to separate themselves from the church.

Erasmus advocated another practice which would later become a distinctive feature of the Anabaptists and Mennonite people. He was a pacifist. Although the Anabaptists were to have various branches some of which were pacifistic and some of which were militant, the Mennonite church came to be known as a peace church. In 1853 members of the Mennonite church in Balk

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8 Ibid., 27.
believed in this principle so strongly that they left their homeland to come to the United States and settle near New Paris, Indiana.

As people taught by the humanists began to read the scriptures, some basic questions arose regarding religious practices. One of these questions was the nature of the Eucharist. According to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, the bread and wine became Christ's body in the act of the consecration of the host. Erasmus tended to spiritualize the meaning of the Eucharist, but did not go so far as to disagree with the teachings of the church. A group known as the Sacramentarians interpreted the Eucharist as a symbolic act. According to their reading of the scripture, it was to be a symbol of the body of Christ. Also of importance to the Sacramentarians was the fellowship nature of the common meal or communion. Rather than a rite performed in the setting of the religious service, the communion service was supposed to be a part of a common meal much as Christ and the disciples had observed at the last supper.

The Eucharist was not the only sacrament questioned by the Sacramentarian. All seven sacraments were examined by this group. All except baptism and the Eucharist were discarded; however, the meaning of the Eucharist was redefined, and the practice of infant baptism questioned. Examination of the scriptures convinced the group that baptism should occur when the individual was an adult who could make a conscious choice and commitment for Christ. In 1523 Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt and his co-workers in the Netherlands began to discontinue the baptism of infants. This practice prepared the way for one of the distinctive practices which the Anabaptists would ultimately embrace: believer's baptism. Here we can see

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10 Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, 47.
the parallel between the development of the Anabaptists in the north and those in the south. In 1525 Conrad Grebel in Zurich administered believer's baptism to adults upon their confession of faith.\textsuperscript{11} The believer's baptism became an identifying characteristic of the Anabaptists, and even the name which they were given derived from this practice.

These movements, mysticism, humanism and sacramentarianism, along with the writings of the Luther, Erasmus and others, set the stage for several leaders who would travel throughout the Netherlands and unite groups of reformers into a group with common beliefs. Among these leaders were Melchior Hofmann, Menno Simons, brothers Obbe and Dirk Phillips, and Leenaert Bouwens. One of the first was Hoffman.

**Melchior Hoffman**

Hoffman was born in the south of Germany at Schwabisch Hall in 1493.\textsuperscript{12} His trade was that of a furrier; he had little formal education. He did, however, study the Bible and began to travel, preaching the views of the Reformation. By 1523 he was preaching the teachings of Luther. In 1526 he became a Lutheran minister in Stockholm. From Stockholm he went to Lübeck, then he spent time in East Friesland. By this time he had incorporated an interpretation of Revelations into his teachings and believed that Christ would return to earth soon. The year of 1533 was established as the time and Strassburg as the place. Hoffman began to print his views. During some time spent in Strassburg in 1529, Hoffman joined the Anabaptists.\textsuperscript{13} Then he left Strassburg the next year and returned to East Friesland where he introduced the form of adult

\textsuperscript{11} C. Henry Smith, *Story of the Mennonites*, 7.
\textsuperscript{13} C. Henry Smith, *Story of the Mennonites*, 42.
baptism that he had received in Strassburg. The area was ready to receive adult baptism, because, as was noted earlier, the Sacramentarians were delaying infant baptism. Some questioned any need for baptism.

Hoffman was a convincing and gifted speaker. He first recorded his views in Ordonnantie and then traveled throughout East Friesland initiating the practice of adult baptism. At Emden, according to Krahn, he baptized three hundred people. His message or theology as stated in the Ordonnantie, considered communion to be symbolic, and states that if a member does not live up to his promise, he should be removed, and that “a faith that does not bring forth fruit does not justify the sinner.” Hoffman returned to Strassburg but remained in contact through correspondence with Anabaptist groups in the Netherlands.

Strassburg was a center of religious discussion where Zwinglism and Lutheranism were both discussed. It was not surprising that Hoffman believed the kingdom of Christ would be established there. Hoffman was not there long, however, until he was imprisoned for writing and publishing “improprieties.” He welcomed the imprisonment mainly because the year was 1533 and he believed that Christ would soon return to establish his kingdom in Strassburg. He thought this gave him additional opportunity to preach his views. Hoffman remained in prison until his death in 1543. The people who followed Hofman’s teachings were called Melchiorites. Hoffman preached the Sacramentarian view of the Eucharist, the practice of believer’s baptism and pacifism along with his eschatological view.

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14 Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, 96.
15 Ibid., 95.
The Münster Incident

At about the same time, Jan van Leiden and Jan van Matthijsz were also promoting the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. They, however, believed this would be accomplished through the use of force. They began to recruit people to go to Münster in Westphalia. Münster had been under an unpopular Catholic bishop, but after the recruitment it became Lutheran. Social democracy was also changing the structure of the city. It was a city open to the establishment of a new order.

The issue of infant baptism was debated in Münster on 7 and 8 August 1533. It was decided that all children should be baptized. Bernhard Rothmann, who had been responsible for the city’s becoming Lutheran, published an Anabaptist treatise advocating adult baptism and the Sacramentarian view of the Eucharist. It was into this struggle for religious control of Münster which Jan van Matthijsz and Jan van Leiden came to establish the kingdom of God.

As the practice of Anabaptism grew within the city of Münster, the unpopular bishop returned to take the city by force. Jan van Matthijsz lost his life early in the struggle, leaving Jan van Leiden to control the city. People were forced to be baptized and adult baptism became a political statement rather than an act of faith. The bishop’s army continued to surround the city. Those who attempted to leave did not survive past the surrounding forces. It was apparent to some of the Anabaptists in Münster that this was not the Anabaptist practice with which they chose to be associated. They could not,

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16 Ibid., 123.
17 Ibid., 140.
however, leave and return to their former homes because of the surrounding forces. As with any city under siege, supplies began to run short, disease became rampant and the people were weakened. The city fell in the spring of 1535. Most of the Anabaptists who had survived up to this time were put to death.

The Münster incident is considered a very unfortunate one in Anabaptist history. Jan van Leiden is seen as taking Anabaptist ideas and perverting them. Some sources say that the Münsterites practiced polygamy, and did not generally live the disciplined simple life of the Melchiorites. The teachings of Jan van Leiden do not continue on in later Anabaptist teaching.

Menno Simons

The Münster incident was known by a young priest in Pinjum in the province of Friesland. This priest was Menno Simons. Like many priests of his day, he had accepted the practices of the church without question, and had little knowledge of the Bible. However, he began to question the nature of the Eucharist and to search the scriptures for an answer. He became convinced that the Eucharist should be viewed as a symbol of the body of Christ, not as the actual body of Christ. By 1535 the Sacramentarian views would have been widely known in Friesland. Thus Menno may have been influenced by these views. In 1535 another group of Anabaptists in the Netherlands had attempted to use force to take over a monastery. They were successful, but the monastery was later retaken. Many lives were lost, including the life of Menno Simons's brother. This led Menno to speak out against the practices of Münster and the excesses of Jan van Leiden. By 1536, he had left the Church. His questioning

18 Ibid., 158-159.
19 C. Henry Smith, Story of the Mennonites, 57.
of various practices had come to the point where he could no longer participate as a priest. In 1537 he was baptized by Obbe Philips. By joining Obbe and Dirk Philips, Menno Simons became a wanted man. While the Netherlands provided a climate for questioning church doctrine, the questioners were not always safe. As early as 1530 an Anabaptist by the name of Sicke Freerks Snijder was put to death. In spite of the danger to his life, Simons became a leader of the Anabaptist group which was forming in Northern Europe. At first he studied and wrote. Krahn lists the following publications from this time: The Spiritual Resurrection (c. 1536), The New Birth (c. 1537), Meditation on the Twenty-Fifth Psalm (c. 1537), and Foundation of the Christian Doctrine (1538).

Menno then began to travel and preach. He was known to have been in East Friesland, Groningen and as far east as Schleswig-Holstein. During this time debates or disputations were frequently held between religious groups holding differing views. Simons often participated in these and some of his writings resulted from these disputations.

Simons, along with Dirk Philips and Lenaert Bouwens, provided the leadership that the Anabaptists needed at this time to become a cohesive group. Without these men, the Anabaptists in the Netherlands might have faded into obscurity. Although Obbe Philips later renounced the Anabaptists under threat of persecution, according to J. C. Wenger, he was nevertheless the first Anabaptist to use the ban when he insisted that the Münsterites should be avoided or shunned.

This means of discipline was used to provide strong ties within the group. There were differences of opinion regarding the application of the ban

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20 Krahn, Dutch Anabaptism, 173.
especially as it was applied to married persons. Some thought that if one member of a married couple was banned, this person should be shunned by the spouse also. Others thought that the ban should not be practiced by married persons living together. There was also disagreement about the need for a warning before a member was banned. Some felt that a member should be warned and allowed to correct his or her error; others felt that the ban should be applied immediately. This debate raged during 1555 and 1556. Simons took a more liberal stance suggesting that several warnings be given to an erring member before banning and that married couples should remain married even though one of them was banned. Bouwens favored a stronger application of the ban. Philips sided with Bouwens. Simons was finally persuaded to allow Bouwens’ views to rule.

Simons was by this time in poor health. He often referred to himself as “Your brother and servant, who is crippled.” He could not travel to the various congregations talking with them and working out their disagreements as he once had. He was an articulate and skilled peace maker who, when he was younger, was known for entering the priest’s quarters and engaging in debate with them, sometimes convincing them of his beliefs. This was done at a time when Anabaptists were persecuted. Even though he had been baptized by Obbe Philips, Simons does not mention Philips in his writing. Apparently once Obbe Philips had rejected the Anabaptists under persecution, Simons treated him as though he had never existed.

Dirk Philips, a brother to Obbe, preached Anabaptist views and baptized throughout Friesland, East Friesland, Schleswig-Holstein and Danzig. He died in Emden, East Friesland in 1567. Leenaert Bouwens traveled throughout Friesland baptizing. He did not convert all of the people he baptized, but would
enter a village or area that was a strong Anabaptist center and baptize the people who were willing to confess faith. He meticulously recorded the names of the people he baptized and totaled 10,252 names. 22 Among these people baptized by Bouwens were listed forty-one persons in Balk, Friesland province, "32 between 1551 and 1554, 9 between 1557 and 1561. The membership probably never reached 100." 23 This congregation in Balk was the same one which divided in 1853 when nineteen of its members and their families left for the United States and settled near New Paris, Indiana.

Simons, Philips, and Bouwens traveled widely and were often dependent upon the hospitality of sympathetic people for a place to stay. They divided the area with Anabaptists among the three of them. Dirk Philips was in the area of Danzig in Prussia, Menno Simons was in Northern Germany near Lübeck, and Leenaert Bouwens was in the Netherlands and East Friesland. Simons died in January of 1561 at his home in Wüstenfelde. He was buried in his garden. Dirk Philips died in 1568 at Emden having left Danzig in 1567. With the deaths of Simons and Philips, the leadership of the Anabaptists passed to Bouwens who died at Hoorn in the Netherlands in 1582. 24

In 1530, Sicke Freerks Snijder, became the first Anabaptist to be executed. This persecution lasted until 1574 during which time between 1500 and 2500 Anabaptists were killed. According to C. Henry Smith, 30 percent of these were women while in other groups executed during the same time, only 6

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24 C. Henry Smith, Story of the Mennonites, 65.
percent were women. This period of persecution identified the development of the Anabaptists in the Netherlands.

At the death of Bouwens, the Anabaptists were a distinct group. They were yet to undergo many separations and disputes over various issues of doctrine and practice. They did not have a common name, although the name of Anabaptist was in use. Most of the Anabaptist groups were named and identified by the name of their leader; thus the followers of Melchior Hoffman were known as Melchiorites, of Obbe Philips as Obbenites, of Dirk Philips as Dirkites, and of Menno Simons as Mennists. Last names in the Netherlands at this time were not in general use. The last name indicated the father’s name. Thus Menno was the son of Simon; brothers, Obbe and Dirk, were sons of Philips. Doopsgezinde meaning baptism minded was a term many of the Anabaptists preferred because it distinguished them from the militant Münster Anabaptists known as Wederdoopers. As the sect developed, groups would prefer names which they believed more closely represented their views. The church at Balk, Friesland which sent part of its membership to New Paris, Indiana preferred to be called “Mennists” rather than Doopsgezinde, the term which eventually was used in the Netherlands to identify the Mennonites, because this name identified them with the teachings of Menno Simons.

**Development of the Anabaptists from 1650 - 1850**

During the middle of the sixteenth century, the Anabaptists in Flanders were persecuted more severely than in the north. As a result the Flemish Anabaptist began to travel to the north. This immigration set the stage for conflicts which would separate and divide the Anabaptists in the Netherlands

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25 Ibid., 105.  
26 Ibid., 73.
over three hundred years. Although the Flemish were a cultured, liberal group who brought much to their northern neighbors, disagreements over relatively insignificant issues developed, but expanded to include issues of doctrine.

Cornelius J. Dyck describes some of these issues:

Thus, ... the Flemish from Belgium were rather quick-tempered and emotional in expression; they enjoyed fine clothing and good food. The northern Frisians, into whose territory they came, were reserved and did not easily show their feelings; they were not as open in their anger, but when aroused did not easily forget it. They were less concerned about how they dressed, but had fine household goods and linens. These differences rubbed the wrong way despite the common Anabaptist faith which these people shared.  

Smith describes some of the differences between the Flemish and the Frisians in their practice of religion. The Flemish were less rigorous in their practice of the ban and were more democratic in their church structure. The Frisians were more autocratic with the elders selecting ministers and controlling the right to baptize. Before long the labels “Flemish” and “Frisian” did not refer to cultural distinctions but to political differences within the church. Each group persistently maintained their separate identity so that a small town might have both Frisian and Flemish congregations. These two groups split even further so that “Old Flemish” became “Groninger” Flemish and “Danzig” Flemish. Frisian became “Hard” and “Loose” or “Young” Frisian. There were also Waterlanders, a liberal group who tried to unite the various factions, Pieter-Jeltjesvolk, and Jan Jacobs-gezinden.

When members of fellowships emigrated to another country or area, they frequently took the group designation with them. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, these names had, for the most part, disappeared in the

27 Dyck, Mennonite History, 126.
28 C. Henry Smith, Story of the Mennonites, 110.
Netherlands, but could still be found in the country to which these people had immigrated. This practice did not hold true for the Balk congregation which immigrated to New Paris, Indiana. There was never any name attached to them other than Mennonites when they lived in Indiana.

The congregation at Balk was known as the “oulde Frisian” or hard Frisian. They tried to stay close to the teachings of Menno Simons. Like Simons, they advocated shunning and banning. The bearing of arms was not tolerated in this group, and there was discouragement of the practice of buying a substitute for military service. Carl F. Brusewitz in an article in the Mennonite Quarterly Review, describes a pamphlet written by Obe Smit, a member and leader of the Balk congregation, in 1838 in which Smit addresses this issue. According to Smit, it would be acceptable to give money to the government to hire a soldier, but it was unacceptable to directly hire a substitute. The former practice was similar to paying taxes and could be justified as allowing the government to do what it should do.

In the 1830s the Netherlands were at war because of the Belgian revolt. Men were required to join the war effort; however, the option of hiring a substitute existed at this time. The Balk congregation struggled with this issue.

The churches of the Netherlands were also struggling with the issue of a state church. In 1843, the Reformed Church was declared the state church. Many rebelled against the edict of the state, and left the country for the United States. The people who left at this time in order to practice the religion of their choice were known as “seceders.”

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29 Ibid., 112.
The Balk congregation apparently was in communication with
Netherlanders who had immigrated. Klass Swart, though not a Mennonite, had
traveled to the United States in 1850. He lived in the area of Balk and upon his
return, he communicated with the group regarding the United States. In 1853,
nineteen members of the small Balk congregation decided to emigrate from
Friesland to the United States. Although many factors must have influenced this
decision, their stated reason was to practice the principle of non-resistance.

Brusewitz described this congregation as having a strong value for
education, unlike the practice of the times. Each child at age six was given a
notebook and expected to record the text for the sermon and the name of the
preacher. The children spoke the Frisian language, but listened to sermons in
Dutch and were able to record texts in that language. This practice continued
into adulthood for some of these children. The Mennonite Historical Archives in
Goshen, Indiana contains several dairies of the Balk congregation. Some were
started in Balk, some were written in the United States. One of the most faithful
writers was Grietje Jacobs Symensma (Margaret J. Smith). Born 21 December
1820, in Friesland, her Diaries from 1850 to 1870 and from 1881 to 1895 are in
the Archives at Goshen College. In these diaries she meticulously recorded the
speaker and text for each church service. She also recorded events from the
daily life of the members of her family and church fellowship.31 Her diaries
provide a record of the Balk Mennonites after they settled near New Paris,
Indiana.

31 Diary of Margaret J. (Symensma) Smit, trans. Jo Tan, R.J. Smit family file, Mennonite
Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana; and Diary of Margaret J. (Symensma) Smit 1881-1895, trans.
Katharine Tinnenmans, author's personal collection.
CHAPTER 2

MEMBERS OF THE BALK CONGREGATION COME TO THE UNITED STATES

Four families from the Balk congregation left their homeland to settle in the United States 9 April 1853. The prescript to the Balk Mennonite Church register lists the four families: Bauke Wiebes Rystra, his wife Grietje Johannes Smit and three children; Ruurd Jacobs Symensma, his wife Lysbeth Geerts Ykema and six children; Ruurd Johannes Smit, his wife Grietje Jacobs Symensma and two children; and Bourke Hinnes Haitjema and his wife Jetske Baukes Rystra. Ruurd Jacobs Symensma and Ruurd Johannes Smit were ministers of this small congregation whose members did not marry outside the church. It is easy to discover the relationships among the group because it was the practice in Friesland at this time for the child to take the father’s first name as a middle name and the father’s surname. Women retained their maiden names. Thus we can see that Jetske Baukes Rystra emigrated with her father Bauke Wiebes Rystra. Jetske’s mother was a sister to Ruurd Johannes Smit and Ruurd Johannes Smit’s wife Grietje Jacobs Symensma was a sister to the other minister in the group, Ruurd Jacobs Symensma. Genealogies for these families at the Mennonite Historical Society at Goshen College Indiana confirm these relationships (see table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother's Name</th>
<th>Father's Name</th>
<th>Children's Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grietje Johannes Smit</td>
<td>Bauke Wiebes Rystra</td>
<td>Afke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Johs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Simkjen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lysbeth Geerts Ykema</td>
<td>Ruurd Jacobs Symensma</td>
<td>Girard</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacobjen (Joanna)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Martha</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacob</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hiltje</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grietje Jacobs Symensma</td>
<td>Ruurd Johannes Smit</td>
<td>Johannes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Died in Friesland, 1846)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Johannes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Martje</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Born in U.S.A.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jitske (Jessie)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jacob</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Obed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hannah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jitske Baukes Rystra</td>
<td>Bourke Hinnes Haitjima</td>
<td>Margaret (born on voyage)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Born in U.S.A.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maggy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Henry</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Effie</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>David</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Martha</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Catherine</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
In 1853, 9 April was a Saturday so the next day the group attended church in Spaarndam in the Netherlands. They continued their travel through the Netherlands and departed from Rotterdam by ship for Goole on the northeast coast of England. Because of heavy winds, the crossing lasted almost thirty-six hours rather than the anticipated twenty four. Most of the party were seasick. When they arrived in Goole, they quickly left the ship thinking they could return to pack their belongings. However, once on land they found they were not able to return to the ship. R.J. Smit was wearing socks and slippers, another member of the party was wearing wooden shoes. They found they must make the best of the situation and boarded the train for Liverpool. This must have been the first train ride they had experienced. Symensma described this trip as follows:

Sitting in a train wagon in a strange territory and seeing the pictures of the Lord's earth flying past; once between, then below the mountains, then passing the flat fields with different country views, then the incomprehensible flying past of other trains, this all raised sensations in me that I am unable to express on paper.

In Liverpool they had to spend five days before departing for America. They spent the time visiting the city, and were amazed at the noise and bustle they found. Symensma's wife visited the kitchen of the boarding house and found taps with cold and warm or boiling water. Finally their luggage arrived (some were still wearing slippers and wooden shoes). From Liverpool the Balk group boarded the Glasgow for the journey to America. Henry S. Lucas in

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2 Some of their experiences were recorded in the letters and diaries which these people left. A letter from R. J. Symensma describes their journey from Balk to Liverpool, England where they departed by ship to the United States.

3 R. J. Symensma to Friends, LS, 17 April 1853, Frank J. Swart, trans., Pre-Accession #110, Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana.
Netherlanders in America describes the trip of the Balk group across the United States.

From Philadelphia they journeyed to Pittsburgh where they learned there were Mennonites living at Zoar in Ohio. Once in Ohio, they stopped at Zoar, Dover, and Waynesburg, all towns in Tuscarawas County. According to Lucas, the Netherlanders had difficulty communicating with the minister at Dover but made their Mennonite convictions known by pointing to the Mennonite part of their confession. The minister at Dover recommended that they go to Waynesburg. (Lucas does not tell us how the group understood the advice to go to Waynesburg.) The people at Waynesburg then advised them to go to Goshen, Indiana where land was less expensive than in Ohio. From Tuscarawas County the group traveled by canal to Cleveland, by boat to Toledo then by train to Goshen. Van Hinte recorded that some of the group found work in Ohio and remained there.

Once in Goshen, the immigrant group made contact with Jacob Christophel, a Mennonite minister with whom they stayed until 8 June 1853. At that time they were able to secure a log house in which, according to Grietje Jacobs Symensma, the three families lived. The families were Bauke Wybes,

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4 Two authors have documented emigration from the Netherlands to the United States. The first of these was Dr. Jacob van Hinte, a citizen of the Netherlands who spent six weeks in the United States traveling and researching the material for Netherlanders in America: A Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States of America. First published in the Netherlands in 1928, it was translated into English in 1985. Henry S. Lucas was aware of van Hinte's work, but saw a need to extend the work beyond 1928. Besides extending the work, he thought it was important that the research necessary for such a volume involve more than six weeks. As an American citizen with ancestors from the Netherlands, he was able to spend the necessary time researching the immigrants. Both of these authors included the Smit-Symensma group in their books.


Ruurd Johannes, and Ruurd Jacobs.\textsuperscript{7} This would indicate that the family who remained in Ohio was that of Bourke Hinnes Haitjema and Jetske Baukes Rystra.

The Mennonites from Balk originally settled in Jackson Township because they had made contact with Jacob Christophel, but they then purchased land from Noah Stump. According to Maria Yoder, Stump was a River Brethren.\textsuperscript{8} The Brethren, also known as Dunkards for their practice of baptism by immersion, were another Anabaptist group. This branch of the Brethren has officially been known as Brethren in Christ since 1862. Another prominent Brethren family in the neighborhood was the Whiteheads. Although they were also Brethren, they belonged to a different branch and attended a different church than the Stumps. It was the Whitehead school in Jackson Township which the Frisian children attended and the Whitehead cemetery in which they buried their dead.\textsuperscript{9} This was the same school in which the Frisians later held services in the Dutch language.

Grietje Jacobs Symensma\textsuperscript{10} recalled the trip in the way:

On April 9 we left Gaasterland and after many wanderings and disappointments we came on June 4 to an old Doopsgezind Preacher (teacher), Jacob Christoffel, who has done very much for us, and in whose house we stayed till the 8th of June. Then we hired a log-house, in which we three families lived: Bauke Wybes, Ruurd Johannes and Ruurd Jacobs and their families, so that the

\textsuperscript{7} Diary of Margaret (Grietje) J. (Symensma) Smith (Smit), TMs trans. Jo Tan, R. J. Smith (Smit) family file, Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana, 16.


\textsuperscript{9} Although R.J. Symensma and his mother Martje Jans Oor were buried at Christophels, the bodies were reinterred at Whitehead Cemetery October 22, 1867.

\textsuperscript{10} Grietje Jacobs Symensma was a succinct writer. Her purpose in keeping a diary was to record the scriptures and speakers for the church services each week. She did, however, record some information about her daily life. Although her diary begins April 1850, she wrote no information about plans for the trip to America except to mention on 3 April 1853 that R. J. Symensma preached his farewell sermon.
12th of June, on Sunday, we had the opportunity to read the Word of the Lord, . . .

After a long and arduous journey, when a safe place was finally reached, one of the tasks on a Sunday was to read the scriptures and survey previous writing by members of the group.

Life in the Balk Settlement in Jackson Township

The first Mennonites to settle in Elkhart County had arrived in the 1840s, about ten years prior to the Frisians. Originally Swiss Anabaptists (see Chapter 1) they came from families who first settled in Pennsylvania, moved to Kitchener, Ontario, then to Ohio, and finally to Elkhart County where they started a church known as Yellowcreek. By 1849 they had constructed a log meetinghouse. This congregation was located about five miles from the place where the Frisians settled. One of these early settlers was Jacob Christophel, because he purchased land several miles from the Yellowcreek Church, a log church was built on his property in 1850. The people who attended Christophel's church considered themselves part of the Yellow Creek congregation and met with them for church services frequently.

The Frisians began meeting with the Christophel and the Yellowcreek Mennonites almost immediately. On June 23 Grietje Jacobs records:

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11 Margaret J. Smith Diary, 16.

12 Apparently Grietje Jacobs Symensma was not the only member of the group to keep a diary. Bauke Wiebes and Grietje Johannes Smit also kept them. Whether these diaries have survived to the present time is not known. If they have, they must be a part of someone's private collection. The archives at Goshen College contain diaries of Ruurd J. Smit, and the Mennonite Historical Library has a diary by R. J. Symensma on loan from Charles Vanderveer. Of the six adults who formed the settlement, there is evidence that all but Lysbeth Geerts Ykema kept a diary.

13 J. C. Wenger, The Yellow Creek Mennonites: The Original Mennonite Congregation of Western Elkhart County, (Nappanee, In.: Evangel Press, 1985) 100.

14 The terms "Frisians," "Balk Mennonites," and "Holland Mennonites" refer to the group of people who immigrated from the Netherlands and settled in Elkhart County, Indiana.

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On Thursday I have been with Grietje Johannes, Ruurd Johannes and Ruurd Jakobs in their meeting, where they received us as brothers and sisters, and a traveling English and German Preacher preached to us the Word of the Lord, yet even though because of lack of language and spelling I cannot express so much the words of their text, I have been so much edified that I could say with David: "What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me?"  

Throughout the summer of 1853 the Frisians continued to meet for church services. On 10 July the Frisian group was at home together and spent the time singing and reading. There is no record of any one preaching. On 25 July they met at the Christophel church, for “Jakob Christoffel” is given as the preacher with a text from Matthew. Ruurd Johannes (Smit) said his first foreword. It appeared that the Frisian group was becoming a part of the larger Mennonite community. This means that the Balk people were not isolating themselves as they had done in Friesland. Again on 21 August Grietje Jacobs records that Ruurd Jacobs (Symensma) said his first forward. The preacher was given as “B. Herschie” (Benjamin Hershey).

Grietje wrote on 20 September that she moved into Ruurd Jacob’s house and finally on 3 November 1853 into her own home. It must have been a relief to her to be in her own home. Ruurd Jacobs’ house with his wife and six children would have been crowded when Ruurd Johannes and Grietje Jacobs...

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15 Margaret Smith Diary, 23 June 1853, 16-17. At first this entry reads as though the meeting were one with the Frisian people. However the antecedent for “their” is unclear. Since there is a reference to speakers of German and English, it seems that Grietje Jacobs is referring to “their Meeting” as a meeting of outsiders. If she had been referring to a Frisian meeting, she could have used the term “our meeting.” One would have to know the Dutch language to be certain of the meaning. Those reading English must rely on the translated copy. It is certain that Grietje did not understand enough German or English to record the text of the sermon. The important issue to her was to be able to hear a message, even though she could not understand the words, and to worship with a community.

16 The forward was preliminary to the sermon, but contained a short message as Grietje gave a summary of the content.
and their two children were sharing the house. There would have been a total of twelve people together in a log cabin. The home into which the Smit’s moved still stands. It has been moved from its original location and is now part of Amish Acres at Nappanee, Indiana.

In the diary of Grietje Jacobs Symensma, an entry records that on 11 November 1853, Foeke and Jeltje and four children “have come to us from Ohio.” The names of Foeke and Jeltje and children were not mentioned in the prescript in the Balk registrar. They apparently traveled with the group but had not joined the church in the Netherlands. Although Grietje mentions only one family arriving from Ohio, according to van Hinte, Bourke Hinnes Haitjema and his wife Jetske Baukes Rystra, who had had a child born on the voyage to America, remained in Ohio. Bouke’s name was Anglicized to Romke Hygema. There is no record of when the Hygema family arrived in Indiana. Grietje Jacobs’ diary indicated that only the R. J. Smit family, the R. J. Symensma family, and Bauke Wiebes Rystra family arrived in Indiana in June and that Foeke and Jeltje arrived in November. In the genealogy materials in the Mennonite Archives at Goshen college, F. F. Postma and wife Jeltje (no other name given) are listed with four children Hannah, Robert, Wiebe, and Adeline. The 1860 census lists Fekke Postma and wife Antje Ruurd Visser with children Wieber, Thetske, Afke, and John. Antje was the second wife of F. F. Postma, Afke and John were children of Antje. It appears that the Postmas

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17 Diary of Margaret J. Smith, 17.
18 The prescript to the Balk registrar may not have listed his family because they had not yet joined the church, or Smit and Symensma may have found fellow countrymen in Ohio. The latter seems unlikely, if there had been a previous emigration, the Balk contingent of 1853 would have joined them rather than travel through Pennsylvania and Ohio looking for like-minded people and affordable land.
20 The 1860 census indicated that he and his wife had a daughter seven years old, listed as born in Friesland. This could have been the child born at sea.
were the family which joined the group from Ohio. The son Robert would later teach school in Elkhart County. It is not surprising that Grietje Jacobs had no entries in her diary during the winter months. Her primary purpose in keeping a diary was to record the texts of sermons from Sunday meetings. The Mennonite churches in Elkhart County did not meet during the winter at that time. The pioneer families which these churches served were scattered about on farms. Travel was difficult during the winters. The energy of all was focused on survival during the winter months.

The 1854 Immigration

During 1854 more people from Friesland joined the settlement. In April of that year two groups left from Friesland to come to join their countrymen in Elkhart County Indiana. The Prescript to the Balk Mennonite Church Register lists three families departing from the little village of Balk in the Netherlands 7 April 1854: Ruurd Klasses Visser, his wife Aafke Johannes Smit, and five children; Herre Aukes Visser with his wife Tetje Baukes Rystra; and Obe Meines Smit and his wife Grietje Romkes. Again on 26 April 1854 three more families left: Klaas Haitje Visser and his wife Hantje Jacobs Symensma and four children; Jan Jacobs Symensma, his wife Wiebrig Hennes Haitjema and four children; and Martje Jan Oor (see table 2).

Klass Swart, who had traveled to the United States earlier returned in 1854 with his family and Jadie DeFrees, Haitje Fisher, John and Harry Symensma, and William Duker. He traveled with the group departing 26 April 1854. As mentioned in Chapter 1, R. J. Smit and R. J. Symensma had

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21 Henry S. K. Bartholomew, Stories and Sketches of Elkhart County, (Nappanee, Indiana: E.V. Publishing House, 1936) includes a section on "Holland People in Elkhart County."

22 Sylvia Huitema, “One Hundred Years After.”

27
consulted with Swart before emigrating in 1853. Naturalization papers for Jelle Klases Swart, son of Klass Swart, state that he left Liverpool, England May 1854 on the Arctic and arrived in New York in the same month.

According to the prescript, this emigration totaled nineteen members and fifty-two people who had left the Balk church in the Netherlands to come to the United States in 1853 and 1854. The total of those listed is forty-three not fifty-two. The six children in the Obe Meines Smit family were not listed nor were two children of Herre Aukes and Tetje Baukes. It seems likely that they would have traveled with their parents. There are still two people who need to be identified to make a total of fifty-two who emigrated from the Netherlands.

In examining this list of emigrating families, it is again apparent that most of the group were related. Martje Jan Oor was the widow of Jacob Ruurds Siemensma (Symensma) and the mother of Ruurd Jacobs Symensma, Grietje Jacobs Symensma, Hantje Jacobs Symensma, and Jan Jacobs Symensma. Henry (Herre Jacobs) Symensma whom Bartholomew mentioned as traveling with Swart was also a son of Martjen Jan Oor. Aafke Johannes Smit was a sister to Ruurd Johannes Smit and Grietje Johannes Smit. Obe Meines Smit was their cousin. Tetje Baukes Rystra was a sister to Jetske Baukes Rystra and a daughter of Bauke Wiebes Rystra and Grietje Johannes Smit. Klass Swart was not a Mennonite, and the religious affiliation of Jadie DeFrees and William Duker are not known, although these individuals settled near the Mennonites, and some of their children later married children of the Mennonites.

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23 According to Bartholomew, *Stories and Sketches of Elkhart Country*, (326) Swart originally traveled with Ruurd Smit and Ruurd Symensma in 1853. This contradicts information found in Lucas' *Netherlands in America* (247) where he states that Swart made the trip in 1850. Lucas is the better documented volume and appears to support other information available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother's Name</th>
<th>Father's Name</th>
<th>Children's Names</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aafke Johannes Smit</td>
<td>Ruurd Klases Visser</td>
<td>Antje</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Johannes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gretskke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Klaas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tettje Baukes Rystra</td>
<td>Herre Aukes Visser</td>
<td>Auke (Born in U.S.A.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Peter</td>
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Grietje Jacobs' diary contains only eight entries for 1854. Four of these entries mention only speakers and texts for church services. It is interesting that she does not mention that other countrymen have joined them in the settlement. She must have been very busy that summer as the family continued to clear land and plant crops. When she noted on 11 November 1853 that they had moved into their own home, she mentioned that it was barely livable. As other families arrived from the Netherlands, it is quite likely that they would have stayed with the established families.

On 24 September 1854 Grietje records that R. Johannes was sick. On 22 October she mentions that "R. Jacobs [was] very sick and R. Johannes still weak." On 1 November she notes that R. Jacobs passed away. She does not give the cause of death. The story passed down in the Symensma family was that while working in the woods with a broad axe, his axe became entangled in a vine. As he pulled to free the axe, it came down on his head. He did not recover from the injury. The community was now left with Ruurd Johannes Smit as the only preacher.

The Balk Settlement in Jackson Township: 1855-1865

Religious Practices

The Balk families--two Smit families, three Symensma families, three Visser families, the Rystras, and the Hygemas--came to be known as the Holland Mennonites and they continued to meet with the Mennonites at Yellow Creek and at Christophel's log church. Ruurd Johannes also continued to preach. Grietje did not always give us enough information to determine the

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25 Margaret J. Smith Diary, 22 October 1854, 18.
27 For the time period of 1855-1865, the main sources of information about the group are the diary of Grietje Jacobs Symensma (Margaret J. Smith) and the 1860 census.
location of each service mentioned but wrote of breadbreaking (communion) at Yellow Creek on 10 June 1855. On 22 August 1855 Grietje's mother, Martje Jans Oor, died; the woman was buried near the Christophel meeting house and next to her son Ruurd Jacobs.\textsuperscript{28} The dates of the following religious days were noted: Easter, Ascension day, Pentecost, and Christmas. Breadbreaking, was usually held at Yellow Creek in May or June.

As was noted earlier, the group met at Yellow Creek with other Mennonites, at Christophels, and then conducted services in their own language first at Christophels on Sundays when the Christophel group did not meet and then in Bauke Wiebes Rystra's barn. As adult baptism was practiced, the first baptism of Frisian people did not occur until 11 October 1862 when eleven Dutch people were baptized at Yellow Creek. These were Johannes Bauke Rystra and his wife Martje Ruurd Symensma, Herre Jakobs Symensma and his wife Zibbeltje, de Vries and his wife Jakobjen, Johannes Obe Smit, Simkjen Baukes Rystra, and Antje Ruurds Visser, wife of Fekke Postma.\textsuperscript{29}

This list of new members indicates that others from the Balk area had joined the group in America. These names are not listed in the prescript to the Balk registrar because they had not joined the church in the Netherlands. The names of several of these people are from the families who came from the Balk church, i.e. Symensma, Rystra, Visser, and Smit. These people were not converts to the Mennonite faith, but adult children of members who now decided to join the church as adults.

\textsuperscript{28} Margaret J. Smith Diary, 12 August 1855, 19.
\textsuperscript{29} Margaret J. Smith Diary, 11 October 1862, 44-45.
Educational Practices

We can see from the amount of writing which they did that reading and writing were important and several of the adults spent much time keeping diaries. From the existing diaries and notebooks, we can see that children were also encouraged to write. One entry in the 1850-1870 diary of Grietje Jacobs Symensma indicated this mother’s concern that her children learn to read and write. On 3 January 1858 she records: “With the beginning of the New Year our Johannes [age eleven] was ready for writing, and our Martha [age eight] also learned the A.B.C.’s.” From this entry, we can not discern whether Johannes was writing in English or Dutch nor do we know whether he was learning to form letters or compose sentences. At eleven years of age, it would seem that he would be ready to write sentences and paragraphs rather than ready to learn handwriting. By 1859, both Johannes and Martha Smith were in school. Since there was no private school in that area, they would have attended the Whitehead school in Jackson Township.

Of the original four families who immigrated in 1853--the R.J. Smit family, Bauke Rystra family, the R. J. Symensma family, and the Romke Haitjema (Hygema) family-- two had children in school in 1859. Besides Johannes and Martha Smit, Margaret and Maggy Hygema ages seven and five, were in school. The youngest child of Bauke Rystra, Simkjen, was nineteen and did not attend school. There is no record of the whereabouts of the widow of Ruurd Jacobs Symensma nor her children in 1859 or 1860, although it was quite likely that they resided in the area. Ruurd Symensma purchased land in 1853 when he arrived in Jackson Township. The 1874 Atlas for Elkhart County lists land

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30 Ibid., 3 January 1858, 28.
31 United States Census of 1860, Jackson Township, Elkhart County.
belonging to R.J. Symensma. With three sons, even though the oldest was only ten years of age at the time of his father's death, the farm may have been her best source of a livelihood. In 1860 the sons would have been sixteen, ten, and eight. Her daughters would have been ten, twelve and fourteen. Some of these six children may have been in school, but there are no records indicating this.

Two children of Foeke Postma, Wieber age twelve and Thetske age nine, were in school in Union Township. Fekke and his wife Jeltje had joined the group in November of 1853 from Ohio. By 1860, Jeltje had apparently died and Foeke had married Antje Ruurd Visser. Antje Ruurd Visser was baptized at Yellow Creek October 11, 1862. She immigrated with her parents in 1854.

Of the five families who had joined the Holland Mennonites in 1854, twelve children were listed as attending school in either Jackson or Union Township. Four children of the Obe Meines Smit family--Abigail fourteen, Jacob twelve, Helen twelve, and John nine, two children from the Herre Aukes Visser family--Duttie fifteen and Auke six; two children from Jan Jacobs Symensma family--Margaret eleven, and Martha eight; and four children from Klass Haitje Visser family--Josephine seventeen, Isaac fifteen, Jacob eleven, and John seven comprised this list. Three other children from Friesland were attending school in Jackson Township. They were Benjamin (age nine) and Hannah (age six), children of William Duker and a girl listed as Hannah Parsamaugh, age sixteen living with the John Neff family (non Mennonite).\footnote{The name and age of this girl match that of the oldest child of Foeke Postma and his first wife. Parsamaugh quite likely was the census taker's spelling of Postma. Other Frisian names ending in "ma" were spelled "maugh" Symensma was spelled "Simmonsmaugh" by this individual.} In Jackson Township there were sixteen children attending school who were from the Frisian community. In neighboring Union Township there were five.
The Frisians who had so determinedly stayed separate from other Mennonite churches and communities in Friesland, were mixing with other Mennonites once they arrived in the United States. They found that the Anabaptist communities here had a similar stance on non-resistance. The Amish whom they had met in Pennsylvania and Ohio and the Mennonites of Elkhart County both practiced a simple life style and avoided such worldly practices as ostentatious dress, joining of fraternal organizations, and frivolous leisure activities. According to van Hinte, the group intentionally did not start their own congregation because it would hinder their assimilation.33

Yellow Creek and Frisian Mennonites in Elkhart County

Of twenty Yellow Creek Mennonite settlers who were identified as early settlers, thirteen are recorded in the 1850 census. The information on these families offers a basis for comparison with the nine Frisian families listed in the prescript to the Balk Mennonite Church registrar as emigrating to the United States.

Bender observed that about half of the Yellow Creek settlers had relatives among the group. The Frisians were also related with every family being related to at least one other family. The Frisians differed from the Yellow Creek settlers in that the Frisians immigrated directly from Europe while the Yellow Creek settlers came from Pennsylvania, Ohio and Ontario. The Yellow Creek group was highly mobile sometimes living in three different states during their lifetime. The Frisian settlers in contrast, came from Balk in Friesland and stayed in Jackson or Union Township for most of their life. Of the nine families,

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33 He gives his source for this statement as letters from Smit and Symensma to the Balk congregation. These letters are not available in an English translation. Jacob van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America*, 172.
all of the adults except Grietje Romkes Smit, wife of Obe Meines Smit, are now buried in the Whitehead Cemetery in Jackson Township. Ruurd Jacobs Symensma and his mother, Martje Jan Oor, were originally interred near the Christophel meeting house and later reinterred in Whitehead Cemetery.

Of the nine families, seven can be identified in the 1860 census. Ruurd Jacobs Symensma was no longer living and his wife and children were not listed in the census, although there is no record of their leaving the area, and the children later married within the community and are buried in the Whitehead Cemetery. The family of Ruurd Klases Visser and Aafke Johannes Smit is likewise unidentifiable in this census although he is listed in the 1870 census as living with his son, Nicholas Fisher (Klass Ruurd Visser) and his daughter-in-law, Johanna Fisher (Jacobjen Ruurd Symensma).

In the thirteen Yellow Creek families, the men were recorded as being literate while five of their wives were illiterate. The 1860 census recorded no illiterate adults in the Frisian community over twenty years of age. The diaries which were left by the Frisians indicate that the community was highly involved with reading and writing. However, the census taker did not record the language in which these people were literate. The Frisian community valued literacy for women more than did the Yellow Creek community or the surrounding non Mennonite families.

All of the Frisian children in school totaled twenty-one. In the nine original Frisian families, there were nineteen children listed. Of these, sixteen between the ages of five and seventeen were attending school the year prior to the 1860 census. Three children of ages sixteen, eighteen, and nineteen were not attending school. The Yellow Creek children showed a similar pattern of school attendance. However, all children of Yellow Creek families between the
ages of eight and fifteen were in school. The age of school attendance started earlier in the Frisian families. Looking beyond the nine original Frisian families listed in the prescript to the Balk registrar to all of the Frisian families in Jackson and Union Townships, all of the children in these families between five and fifteen years of age were in school. The earlier age of attendance may indicate a desire for the children to learn English and to communicate with the community beyond the Dutch settlement.

In comparing the Frisian families and the Yellow Creek Mennonites, some similarities and differences can be observed. The Yellow Creek Mennonites were more mobile than the Frisians, having lived in several locations during their lifetime while the Frisians remained in the Jackson Union Township area. The women of the Frisian group were all literate in contrast to the Yellow Creek group where only some were illiterate. Children of both groups attended school; however, the Frisian children in 1860 started school at an earlier age.

The step from the isolated Balk church to the community of like minded Mennonites was not a large one for the Frisians. They had left their country because they were disappointed in their Mennonite church in the Netherlands for not upholding the principles of Menno Simon. In this country they found others who were equally as conservative as they. The primary concern for the group had been to preserve their religious principles, not to maintain an ethnic identity.

It may have been a little more difficult for the settlers to send their children to the community school. However, even here, they would still have been in a community of like minded individuals. There are no records of discussions of the
Holland Mennonites regarding the education of their children. To learn of their relationship to the educational system of Elkhart County, we must look at a variety of records to see when children were in school and whether members of the community taught in the public schools. Each October Mennonites from across the country gathered at Yellow Creek to discuss issues concerning them and to seek the council of other preachers in the resolution of these questions. Although education was not often discussed directly, some questions of participation in civil government included directives regarding participation in schools. A record of some of these early meetings appeared in the *Herald of Truth*. The Holland Mennonites attended Yellow Creek and R. J. Smit, as well as other members of the congregation, attended these yearly meetings.
As mentioned in Chapter One, a basic tenet of the Anabaptist practice was to be "set apart" from the surrounding culture. The Anabaptist lived a simple life devoted to reading the Bible, the writings of Menno Simons and Martyr's Mirror, a record of Anabaptists martyred beginning in 1535. Reading was important so that these volumes could be read and understood by the faithful. The dilemma of relating to the dominant culture while maintaining the integrity of their faith was a constant struggle for both the Swiss and Dutch Anabaptists. This struggle drove the Swiss Anabaptists to flee from urban areas to the rural mountainous regions of the Rhine valley and the Dutch Anabaptist to meet in secret and endure persecution. When William Penn recruited colonists for his land in North America, the Anabaptists willingly left Europe to start afresh in a new and free country.

The first permanent Mennonite settlement in the United States was in Philadelphia in 1683 by a group of Mennonites from Crefeld, Germany. Prior to this in 1662 a Dutch Mennonite by the name of Cornelius Plockhoy brought a colony of twenty-five Dutch Mennonites to Horekill in the Delaware Bay area. The colony was broken up by the English, and the fate of most of the colonists is not recorded. However, in 1694, Cornelius Plockhoy and his wife came to the Mennonites in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. They had been wandering in the wilderness for thirty years. The Germantown Mennonites with
the Friends built a meeting house in 1686. A letter written to Amsterdam 3 September 1708 requested Testaments and catechisms for the children.

Even in the freer new country, the Anabaptists were faced with the familiar dilemma of relating to the surrounding culture and governmental institutions. With the need for a literate congregation, this dilemma included the provision of schooling for their children. The contrast between the Anabaptists and the surrounding culture was clearer in Europe. State and church were often one and the same. In North America there was a separation of church and state and the freedom to practice religion as one choose.

The Mennonites' view of society and education was shaped by individuals and institutions. The first Mennonite educational institution in North America was started by Francis Daniel Pastorius in Germantown in 1702. The religious affiliation of Pastorius is uncertain. He had been affiliated with the Lutherans in Germany prior to emigrating to the North America. Records indicate that he attended Friends' meetings at the Germantown meeting house used jointly by the Friends and Mennonites, and he was known to associate with the Mennonites of the area. The first statement by any religious group in this country against the practice of slavery was written in Pastorius' handwriting and signed by him as well as many Mennonites and Friends.

The writings of Menno Simons helped Mennonites apply the teachings of the Bible in their everyday lives. The *Herald of Truth* printed in the latter part of the nineteenth century tells us how the Mennonites of the time practiced Menno's teachings. The first issue of this paper was published in January of 1864 in Chicago, Illinois by John J. Funk. The *Herald of Truth* served as a community newspaper for the Mennonite congregations dispersed across the United States and Canada. Thus it was an important instrument of
communication for these people. Published in German and English, this paper also served as a means of educating and socializing Mennonites.

Because many people in the 1860s were leaving Eastern communities and moving to the Midwest where there was cheap, fertile land available, many Mennonites found themselves isolated from a community or fellowship of like minded individuals. The Herald of Truth served to keep these families in touch with the church and encouraged preachers from established communities to visit these new communities. The preachers responded to this request and rode the trains to wherever a fellowship of a few souls could gather. These trips were reported by letter to the paper.

Community Living

Since the Anabaptists believed in an extended community, it was important that each member be trained to work and contribute to the welfare of the community. The Mennonites who came to the United States did not have a professional clergy. This was true of the Swiss Mennonites as well as the Balk group. Preachers were chosen from within the group. Usually several men were put forward for the position, and then a lot was cast among them to determine who would be chosen. The preacher for the group did not receive compensation from the congregation for his services, but was expected to work at an occupation the same as any member of the congregation.

While Mennonites did not share a common dwelling as did some utopian communities of the nineteenth century, they shared their worldly goods and resources with each other. If a member of the congregation was not able to care for themselves or their family, the congregation would assume the responsibility for their care. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
when the Swiss Anabaptists were escaping persecution by fleeing up the Rhine Valley to the Netherlands and then to the United States or to England, they frequently were aided by the Anabaptists in the Netherlands. In a community such as this, it was in the best interests of all of the members for each person to be a contributing member of the society.

The *Herald of Truth* contained articles discussing the interpretation of various scriptures, news of members such as deaths and marriages, and frequent warnings about dangers to members. These warnings of danger were varied, some warned of itinerants posing as members from other communities in need of assistance who were in fact swindlers preying on the community. Others warned of danger to children who were allowed to operate farm machinery such as that used for cutting and chopping crops. One article warned of the dangers of arsenic in wallpaper colored green and cloth of the same color. Articles sometimes addressed the responsibility of parents to train and educate their children. The paper, which was intended for the whole family, often had letters from the editorial staff written specifically to children. After a few years a section from "Brother Henry" appeared written for the children.

In 1867 the publishing offices of John J. Funk were moved from Chicago to Elkhart, Indiana. Because the Yellow Creek congregation was the largest and oldest Mennonite congregation in the county, Funk was highly involved with the group. Although he soon started the Prairie Street Church in Elkhart, he continued to preach at the Yellow Creek Church. Because this was such an active community, whenever Mennonite preachers traveled to visit the new communities, they often stopped in Elkhart to visit John Funk and worshiped with the Yellow Creek congregation. Each October the preachers from around the country would gather at Yellow Creek to discuss issues concerning them.
Similar conferences were held in Ohio and Pennsylvania. Thus the Mennonites who ascribed to a congregational structure in their church maintained consistency throughout the country.

While the Frisian Mennonites had been isolated in the Netherlands, they chose to involve themselves with the larger denomination in the United States. Funk was acquainted with the Frisians. In a Funk publication, the Family Almanac for 1876, there is a short article describing the “Dutch Mennonites” of Elkhart County.¹ In 1867 when a group of Amish Mennonites were considering re-establishing ties with the larger Mennonite church, R. J. Smit was among those who made the trip to Hawpatch (now known as Topeka and located in LaGrange County) in Noble County to discuss the issue.²

The first report of issues discussed at the Yellow Creek conference appeared in the November 1864 issue. Members of the Frisian Community attended this conference and considered themselves a part of the decisions made at this conference. They would have followed the lead of the conference on these issues.

John Funk made the journey by train from Chicago to Elkhart to attend the conference. He listed eight points discussed which indicate the concerns of the Mennonites at this time. First of all, as people who practiced non-resistance, they were concerned with whether members should participate in a government which was involved in a war by holding an elected office. This concern was probably heightened by the fact that the Civil War was in progress. The advice of the council was to avoid involvement in civil affairs and not to put themselves

under obligations which might be inconsistent with their profession of faith by voting. While they did not actively oppose governmental organization, they did not participate in the democratic process.

Another issue related to participation and co-operation with the government was the swearing of oaths. Anabaptists traditionally considered the swearing of oaths as blasphemy. Members were urged to avoid the swearing of oaths.

Issues relating to the individual and the community were also discussed. The concern for a simple life style was addressed in relation to dress and adornment. Members were admonished to “avoid needless ornaments, hoops, laces, jewelry, artificial flowers . . .” Young girls were a particular target for admonition against frivolous dress, and young men were to avoid long mustaches.

Other points included shunning and trespassing. When being shunned, a person was to be avoided; however, if contact could not be avoided, they could eat at the same table. A question of a brother trespassing against another brother was answered with reference to Matthew 18: 15, 17 which advises a person with a grievance to go directly to the offending person and talk with him alone. If the person listened and a mutual understanding could be reached, the matter was reconciled; if a mutual understanding could not be attained, the matter was to be brought to the church. If the church were unsuccessful in resolving the issue, the sinner was to be considered as a Gentile and tax collector. Thus, those with differences were encouraged to meet and discuss these differences.

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The final item resulting from the conference was that preachers were encouraged to visit brethren in areas where there were no churches and to welcome Amish who desired to join their fellowship. While this conference did not discuss any issues directly related to education, a survey of the concerns of the conference gives us a picture of the Mennonites of the 1860s. They were a group with a strong sense of community. Issues of difference were to be confronted and reconciled. If there were no reconciliation, the offending member was ostracized.

**Educational Views**

**Menno Simons' Writings**

Menno Simons' writings include an essay on the education of children addressed to their parents. He believed children should be trained to be industrious and obedient. Children, according to Simons, were born with "the evil and sinful flesh of Adam. . . . [And] from youth are always inclined to the worst, as Moses writes." Anabaptist parents should value their children. Parents had a responsibility to God to train their children so that when they were adults they would choose to join the church. The responsibility of the parent to train the child extended beyond simple religious training, the child needed to be a productive member of the group. Simons summarized his advice to parents as follows:

> Have them [the children] instructed in reading and writing, bring them up to habits of industry, and let them learn such trades as are suitable, expedient and adapted to their age and constitution. If you do this, you shall live to see much honor and joy of your children. But if you do it not, heaviness of heart shall consume you at last. For a child left to himself, without reproof, is not only

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the shame of his fathers, but he bringeth his mother to shame. (Prov. 29)\textsuperscript{5}

He saw the responsibility for educating the children as belonging to the parents. It was of course in the best interest of the church to have the children educated, but the parents were the ones who needed to see that this occurred. The wording “have them instructed” indicates that someone other than the parents could do the teaching of the children, but the parents had the ultimate responsibility for education. Parents were encouraged to admonish children with restraint and discretion, without anger or bitterness, and to avoid discouraging the children. This advice Simons gave based on Colossians 3:21. However, he also encouraged the use of the rod if reason and necessity required it.

The Herald of Truth

John F. Funk promoted the ideas of Menno Simons in the Herald of Truth. One of Funk’s goals in publishing the Herald of Truth was to educate his readers in the foundations of their faith. To this end, he would publish extracts from Mennonite writings such as those of Menno Simons, the Dortrecht Confession of Faith, or excerpts from the Martyrs’ Mirror. Funk’s concern for the education of Mennonite children was evidenced by his choice of an extract from Simons’ “Education of Children” for the June 1865 issue.

Funk’s concern for education surfaces again in the January 1867 issue as he was encouraging readers to subscribe to the paper. One of the reasons which he gave was that it would be beneficial to the children in the family. He stated that to allow a child to grow up uninstructed in religion is like letting the children of a farmer grow up without instruction in raking, hoeing, plowing, and

mowing or girls without instruction in milking, sewing, washing and cooking. Funk concluded that many parents approached the instruction in religion with their children in a negligent manner which they would not use in teaching them farming or domestic responsibilities. By subscribing to the Herald of Truth, families would have a resource to help them in the religious instruction of their children.

The encouragement of reading was in evidence in the page devoted to children. Frisian children read the children's page as they wrote three letters to Brother Henry. He encouraged children to read the New Testament every day with the goal of completing the book in a year. Margaret and Catharine Hygema, daughters of Romke Hygema followed this practice. In the June 1869 issue a letter which they wrote to Brother Henry indicated they had been doing this as well as attending Sabbath School in the summer. A letter from Anna Symensma in January of 1871 indicated that she had read the Testament and was starting to read the Bible (the old Testament).

Sabbath Schools

The issue of Sabbath Schools became a divisive one in the Mennonite church during the late 1860s and early 1870s. Funk, as can be seen from his writings in the Herald, was strongly in favor of the schools. One of the bishops of the Yellow Creek conference, Jacob Wisler, however, was against such innovations.

Wisler never changed his views, and after many struggles and attempts at reconciliation between Wisler and Funk, Wisler withdrew from the Mennonite Conference 6 January 1872. He formed the Wisler Mennonite Church. The

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7 Herald of Truth, 8 (January 1871): 11.
Frisians apparently did not follow the conservative Jacob Wisler when he left the Yellow Creek congregation and later the Mennonite Conference.

The *Herald of Truth* supported the establishment of these schools but cautioned that such schools should not teach erroneous doctrine or corrupt practices. Funk reminded readers that the responsibility for the teaching and training of children still remained with the parents.\(^8\) The concern regarding Sunday schools was wide spread enough to be considered at another Yellow Creek Conference in November of 1868. The conference of preachers decided that such schools, if properly conducted, could be beneficial. It also noted, as had Funk, that the parents had a great responsibility to train their children in religious matters.\(^9\)

Although discussion and controversy regarding the implementation of Sabbath Schools occurred across the denomination, Funk was a strong supporter of the idea. In the April issue of 1870, he included a lengthy article on establishing such schools. His name did not appear at the end of the article, but it is certain that he was the author. The ideas contained in the article are consistent with those expressed by the editor; the second paragraph begins “I believe that most of our conferences have given their consent to holding Sabbath-schools, on condition that they are held in accordance with the rules of our church; ...”\(^10\) This view of what was happening in conferences across the country was again consistent with Funk's position as editor of the national paper for the denomination.

The article gives detailed instructions on setting up a Sabbath School. The purpose is clearly stated: “the Sabbath-school, is not so much to teach

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\(^10\) *Herald of Truth*, 7 (April 1870): 57.
children to read, as to teach them the lessons of truth contained in the Bible.\textsuperscript{11} Having the support of the whole church was important to the endeavor. If the whole church were not supportive, Funk gave suggestions that the church should consider the matter with an open mind. He believed that if they examined the matter carefully and in accordance with the gospel and the teachings of the apostles, they would embrace the idea. Classes were to be composed of six to eight scholars per teacher. (This was a very small class size when compared to the rural schools of the time which averaged around 50 students per teacher). Materials for both English and German classes were given. For the German schools, Funk recommended a little German primer, published by the American Tract Society, the \textit{German Spelling Book} by Benjamin Eby, published by Funk, and the Testament from the Bible Society. For the English schools, the \textit{Tract Primer}, the Testament, and the \textit{Child's Scripture Question Book} published by the American Sunday School Union were recommended. While the emphasis was on religious training in the Sabbath School, the materials used indicate that there was some concern on teaching basis skills. The use of the \textit{German Spelling Book} spoke to the need to teach spelling in the German language.\textsuperscript{12}

Children were encouraged to learn to sing the same hymns which were used in the congregation and to learn them in the language used in the congregation (German or English). Singing in parts was another issue generating controversy at the time. Conservative churches preferred singing in unison while more progressive churches enjoyed singing in harmony. This issue was not addressed in teaching children to sing. Memorization as a method was strongly encouraged, but the use of extrinsic rewards such as

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 57.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 58.
books, cards, or tickets was discouraged. It was preferred that the children learn verses out of a sense of duty or love.

How did the Frisian Mennonites relate to the Sabbath Schools? The letter of Margaret and Catharine Hygema indicated that they were attending Sabbath School.13 Grietje Symensma Smit wrote in her diary on 21 March 1869 that she attended German meeting and that this was the first time after the separation of Wisler.14 This was about three years prior to Wisler's withdrawal from the Mennonite Conference, however, it coincides with the date for establishing Sabbath Schools at the Yellow Creek Church.15 The Frisians apparently did not follow the conservative Jacob Wisler when he left the Yellow Creek congregation and later the Mennonite Conference.

As has been described in the previous chapter, the Frisians attended meetings at Yellow Creek and Christophel's log church in addition to holding their own meetings in their native language. R. J. Smit served as the leader for the community. In describing Smit as a leader, Wenger made reference to a statement of John F. Funk regarding Smit as a "‘man of parts’--that is, a man of many gifts, a talented man. He was a good leader. And he was more open to change than some of the Swiss Mennonites of Elkhart County."16 As such, he would have encouraged the children of the community to attend Sabbath Schools.

13 The Hygema family moved to Marshall County at some time in the 1860s and the records do not show where they attended Sabbath School. The diary of Grietje Symensma Smit indicated continued contact with the Hygemas. An entry for May 13, 1866 states that she did not attend German services because she, her husband, and four youngest children were visiting Romke and Jitske.

14 Margaret J. Smith Diary, 21 March 1869, 66.

15 According to Wenger, Sabbath Schools were first started in the Yellow Creek congregation in 1869. John Christian Wenger, The Mennonites in Indiana and Michigan, (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1961) 64-65.

Funk's concern for the education of children did not end with his concern for Sabbath or Sunday Schools. In the February 1873 issue, a reprint of an article on "School for our Children" appeared. The source of the article was not credited. The article stressed the importance of a teacher who would be of sound doctrine and would not lead children stray. The teacher was not expected to teach religious matters, but the common truths: "that God is the Creator of all things and that he [sic] alone is worthy of our worship and adoration; we also believe in Jesus Christ. . ." Religion was so much a part of the culture that the author considered such teachings religion to be identified as "common truths." The teaching of religion would have been defined as teaching the practice of a particular denomination. Funk commented that "These are thoughts which our people will do well to consider."\(^7\)

In the same issue Funk reported on a trip which he took to Minnesota and Dakota. At the time he was involved in an extensive project of relocating Russian Mennonites who were leaving Russia. On this trip he was looking for a suitable location for the immigrants to settle, one that would have cheap land and be near the railway system. Schools were again mentioned in his appraisal of the land.

At nearly all the stations and towns of any importance, churches, and in at least some of them, also schools have been established. The government itself has provided for a free school system by reserving in each township two sections of land for school purposes, so that with this provision it will be an easy matter to establish good schools at an early day.\(^8\)

Funk did not oppose the governmental system of free schooling; he saw it as an enhancement to an area where Mennonites might relocate.

\(^7\) *Herald of Truth*, 10 (February 1873): 23.

\(^8\) Ibid., 21.
From the writings of Simons and the information in the Herald of Truth, the Mennonite view of education during the last half of the nineteenth century in the United States, placed the parents as the responsible party in the education of children. The primary reason for education was to learn to read and write and to teach habits of industriousness. Learning a trade was important, although in Elkhart County the trade would have been the practice of agriculture and the skills would have been learned at home. The Mennonites started Sabbath Schools to teach their children the Bible and to instruct them in religion. An added attraction to the Sabbath Schools was that the children could be taught the German language. Since the public schools were taught in the English language, the German speaking Mennonites used the Sabbath Schools to teach children to read and write German. Both Simons' article 'The Nurture of Children' and the articles printed in the Herald of Truth present a tolerant attitude towards children. Parents were encouraged to be patient in instructing children, to address them in a pleasant voice, and to set an example in their daily living which the children could emulate. The use of corporal punishment was to be avoided.

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This tolerant attitude towards children was more lenient than that of the general population of the time.
The Practice of Education

American Mennonites Involved in Schooling

As mentioned previously, Pastorious started the first Mennonite school in Germantown (1702). Pastorious was described as atypical of the colonial school master of the times. He was better educated, having received a Ph. D. in Germany and he was fluent in German, Latin, and English. Both boys and girls attended this school which was supported by contributions and tuition, the cost of tuition being two to four shillings per week. Pastorius wrote A New Primer--Or Methodical Directions to Attain the true Spelling, Reading and Writing of English, Etc. for use in teaching.

Another well known early Mennonite school master was Christopher Dock. Dock taught in Skippack Pennsylvania from 1714 to 1735. He farmed for three years, and in 1738 returned to the practice of teaching which he continued until his death in 1771. Dock was the author of the first book printed in this country on school management. He was such a successful teacher that Christopher Sauer, an Anabaptist printer asked him to write his rules for teaching. Being a modest man, Dock declined, Sauer persisted, and finally Dock agreed to answer a series of questions about teaching provided that they not be published until after his death. The proposition resulted in

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20 John Ellsworth Hartzler, president of Witmarsum, a Mennonite theological seminary of the time, published a study of Mennonite education. This small volume contains three parts: a brief historical and ethical study of Mennonites, a survey of elementary and religious education in the United States from 1683 to 1925, and a description of Mennonite collegiate education. This description of the practice of the larger group of Mennonites in North America in relation to education provides a basis for comparing the practices of the Frisian Mennonites of Elkhart County to the practices of the larger Mennonite group. John Ellsworth Hartzler, Education Among the Mennonites of America, (Danvers, Ill.: Central Mennonite Publishing Board, 1925). The material in this section relating to American Mennonite education is taken from this source.

Sauer also published in *Geistliches Magazine* numbers forty and forty-one, two hundred rules of conduct for children by Dock.

Hartzler described Dock as being in agreement with Comenius and Erasmus in that learning, morality, religion and good manners should be developed together. Consistent with the Mennonite belief that education must begin at home, these men agreed that education should begin at home with the mother when the child was an infant.

Dock used a system of rewards to encourage his students. If a student had learned the lesson well, he or she might receive a drawing of a flower or a bird, and when a child had learned the ABCs Dock encouraged the parents to reward the child by giving him a penny or frying him two eggs. The rewards were simple, but designed to encourage the child and increase his or her sense of confidence. Dock taught both boys and girls in his classroom, but found that it was expedient for them to sit on separate benches.

The main source of teaching material for Dock was the Bible. While his teaching did not have the Calvinist bent of some of the New England school teachers, he did use the Bible to teach such principles as justice, humility, faithfulness, and chastity. Dock’s teaching priorities were piety, morality, and manners first, reading second, and third writing. Arithmetic was taught only to help a child find a hymn or Bible verse.  

Dock contributed to the organization of schools with his suggestions for managing schools. His sincere love of teaching and the kindness with which he treated children, enhanced the image of the colonial school teacher. It should be added that although Dock disciplined his students by encouraging them to

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22 Ibid., 32.
be good, he did use the rod when he felt it was necessary.

Hartzler found little information about Mennonite education from 1775 to 1850. He saw this period as "one of religious formalism and rigid and unwise discipline through which large groups of people were lost to the denomination." During this time period, Mennonites continued to educate their children and instruct them in religious matters in primary schools established in the homes and churches of their communities. These schools were supported by contributions from the parents of the students.

Starting around 1850, states began to establish free public schools. Hartzler did not discuss in detail the involvement of Mennonites in these schools. He mentioned that a decided change came with the introduction of free public schooling in Pennsylvania with the Mennonites gradually changing to the free public system. The Sunday School movement began soon after the advent of free public schooling thus providing a means for religious instruction and instruction in the German language.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Russian Mennonites who immigrated to Kansas and other Western states, established a parochial school system in order to maintain their German language and religious identity. In the 1870s a large group of Russian Mennonites left Russia because of intolerable conditions there. Originally from Prussia, this group had maintained their German language and identity in Russia by establishing their own schools there. John Funk, the editor of the Herald of Truth was instrumental in helping these people settle in the United States. Upon their arrival in the United States, they continued their practice, begun in Russia, of establishing and maintaining a parochial school system in the German

\[Hartzler, \textit{Mennonite Education}, 70-71.\]
language. As these schools became established in Kansas, they were sometimes held in the same buildings as the English public schools. In some cases where the taxpayers were supporters of the German school, the English public school teachers would teach the German schools after the English school closed.

With the exception of the German schools in Kansas, Mennonite children attended the public schools and received religious instruction in Sunday School. In some cases the children may have been schooled at home as mandatory attendance laws were not yet in existence. Since the Mennonites valued education mainly for learning basic skills in order to read the Bible and manage their farms, they did not see much need for a high school or college education. Hartzler does, however, list sixteen Mennonite schools and colleges in existence in 1924, eight of which had German names.²⁴

Jackson and Union Township Schoolteachers

A survey of the occupations of Jackson Township residents in 1860 indicated only two who listed their occupation as school teacher, Edmund Blanchard age twenty-eight and Jacob Baer age twenty-seven. Neither of these men were Frisians. The first Frisian name to appear among licensed teachers in Elkhart County was that of Robert Postma. Robert was the son of Fekke Postma and his first wife Jeltje. This couple apparently traveled with the original Frisian group who left Balk in 1853. They are not listed in the prescript to the Balk registrar because they had not been baptized and joined the church prior to leaving the Netherlands. Grietje Jacobs Symensma records this couple’s joining the Jackson Township settlement from Ohio 11 November 1853.²⁵

Robert is not listed as living with his father in the 1860 census. His name first

²⁴ Hartzler, Mennonite Education, 174.
²⁵ Margaret J. Smit Diary, 11 November 1853, 27.
appears on the licensing list in 1866. There is no record of where he taught. In the years from 1866 to 1872, his name appears four times on the licensing list, then does not appear again until 1888.

A second Frisian who taught in Elkhart County was Piebe Swart whose name first appears on the list of teachers licensed in Elkhart County in 1874. Swart was not a Mennonite but had immigrated with his parents and several Frisian Mennonite families in 1854. Starting as a teacher in the district schools of Elkhart County, he served for several years as County Superintendent of Schools. His career is discussed further in Chapter Four.

A third Frisian who taught in the schools of Elkhart County was Klass R. Pelsma. In 1887 he was licensed for six months, then in 1888 for twelve months. The Indiana State Archives reports from Elkhart County did not contain any lists of teachers licensed for the years 1881 through 1886. In 1989, the Union Township Reunion committee printed "A Collection of Memories" recording the history of each of the nine district schools in Union Township. Klass Pelsma taught at the Brown School in 1885 and at the Swoveland School in 1886-87. The Pelsma's were not part of the Frisian Mennonite settlers, but

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26 "School Examiner's Reports," D Elkhart County to State Superintendent of Schools, Unpublished Documents, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis.

rather belonged to that part of the community which was Frisian but not Mennonite.\textsuperscript{28}

Throughout the 1880s several Frisian names can be found among the lists of teachers licensed in Elkhart County. In addition to those already mentioned were John N. Swart, son of Piebe Swart, Rich Vanderveer, Edith Vanderveer, and Obed Smith son of R.J. Smit and Grietje Jacobs Symensma. A Marion Fisher was also listed, but he does not appear to be one of the Frisian Fishers (Vissers). Of these Frisian names listed in the 1880s, Obed Smith was the only Frisian Mennonite, however, Robert Postma, mentioned earlier, was also Mennonite.

Mennonites were part of the American educational setting as early as 1702. Both the Mennonite and non-Mennonite Frisians participated in the school system in Jackson and Union Townships in the years from the time of their arrival in 1853. Some of the Frisians can be found listed among the teachers of the county. Robert Postma may have completed his education in the Netherlands before emigration, however, his age at the time of emigration is not known. Others probably followed the pattern at the time of completing the available readers at the district school, then attending the normal school institute in the county, taking the county examination and beginning to teach in

\textsuperscript{28} There is little information about the Pelsmas available. Klass R. Pelsma does not appear in any of the censuses for Jackson or Union Townships in Elkhart county. In the 1880 census, there is a Rhiner and Derky Pelsma listed with four children the oldest named Lydia age twelve and born in Indiana. Both parents were born in Friesland. \textit{Cemeteries of Elkhart County} lists a Reinder and Dora Pelsma buried in the Whitehead Cemetery whose ages coincide with those of Rhiner and Derky Pelsma as given in the 1880 census. These are likely the same people, however, their relationship to Klass R. is uncertain. The middle initial of R. indicated that Klass could be the son of Reinder and Dora, however, if he were old enough to be living away from the family in 1880, his age would not be in sequence with the other children of the family. There is no Pelsma genealogy at the Mennonite Historical Library or at the Elkhart County Historical Society. \textit{Cemeteries of Elkhart County, Indiana}, vol.1, compiled by the Elkhart County Genealogical Society, Goshen Public Library, Indiana Collection, 1990, 395.
the district school. Teachers seldom taught for more than one year in a school and in some cases only taught for a few years.

The Mennonites in Elkhart County brought their values and informal educational practices to the county just as a new state constitution was establishing the free common schools in Jackson and Union Townships. Since the Mennonites did not seek publicity and avoided the English speaking population, the history of the schools in Elkhart County seldom mentioned Mennonites. Yet these people were subject to the laws governing the schools in the last half of the nineteenth century.
CHAPTER 4

INDIANA LAW AND ITS IMPACT ON EDUCATION IN JACKSON TOWNSHIP

Jackson Township in Elkhart County Indiana during the years from 1840 to the 1880s grew from a pioneer territory with a few settlers to a settled agricultural community connected to the rest of the country by railroads. The schools during this time developed from crude log structures with little supervision of teachers or students to brick buildings taught by young teachers who were licensed and supervised by a county officer.

Jackson Township was settled in 1829 by Colonel John Jackson. Colonel Jackson had been in Indiana previously with militia charged with clearing American Indians from the territory. He was impressed with this land. In the eastern part of what is now Jackson township, the Elkhart River wound its way around hardwood forest; a prairie began just beyond the forest and river. Indians had inhabited this rich, bountiful area for years, fishing the river and hunting the forest. The river and forest provided not only food, but also transportation. In addition to the river, Indian trails ran through the woods to Fort Wayne. This was the place Colonel Jackson had chosen for his home.

However, when he returned with his family in January of 1829, he found two families named Riggs and Simpson occupying his site. He offered them fifty dollars for the rights to the land. The men accepted his offer and Jackson established his home on the edge of the Elkhart prairie in Jackson Township.¹

According to Henry S. K. Bartholomew, a school was established on Jackson’s farm in 1830. He describes the school building as follows:

This building had a large open fireplace over which was a stick chimney. The cracks between the sticks were filled with mud. The windows were of greased paper, so the school room was not very well lighted. The floor was made of puncheons, that is, logs were split in two, the flat side hewed to make it smooth. At the very best the floor was somewhat rough and uneven, because it was almost impossible to get the puncheons of exactly the same thickness or to lay them evenly and perfectly level. The benches were also made of split logs and holes were bored into the round side in which legs were inserted. Some of them were eight, some ten and some twelve feet long and all were without backs. The legs of some of the benches were short and some long, to accommodate pupils of different ages. Holes were bored into one of the logs at the side of the building, under the window, strong pegs driven into them and one of the split logs laid on them with the smooth side up. This served for a writing desk and the pupils stood up to it to write.

There are no records of who taught in this school the first year, the names of the students, or the length of the school term. Colonel Jackson was the father of nine children so it is understandable that he would be instrumental in providing a school house. One would assume that the Riggs and Simpson children also attended the school, and that school was held during the winter months when work in clearing the land, farming, and preserving food did not occupy the settlers. The teacher was most likely a man, but his teaching qualifications are unknown. Probably literacy plus his willingness to undertake the task were his highest qualifications.

As settlers continued to arrive in Jackson township, similar log school houses were constructed across the township. In an unpublished manuscript,
Table 3.--Log School Houses in Jackson Township

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>District</th>
<th>Year built</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baintertown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brothers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Paris</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardscrabble</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1830s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitehead</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>after 1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>log school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

replaced by frame in 1850s. Date log school was built is unknown. ³

By 1840, log school houses had been built in seven of the nine districts established in Jackson township. Another description of these early log schools appears in the 1874 Elkhart County Atlas in a biographical sketch of Jacob Rohrer

Well does he remember his first school. It was held in a log hut on his father’s farm, with a large fireplace across one end. The seats consisted of slabs with holes bored into them, and four sticks driven in for legs; the desks were boards, laid upon sticks driven into the logs around the room. The cabin was but sixteen by eighteen feet in size, and frequently contained as many as thirty-five or forty pupils. David Still was his first teacher. The practice alluded to and described by Eggleston in the “Hoosier Schoolmaster,” of barring the teacher out, had not entirely passed away in his day. In the school where Mr. Rohrer attended, the pupils required their teacher to treat with whiskey and sweet-cake. Mr. Still, his venerated and worthy teacher, was a tall six-footer with a nose well proportioned to the length of his corporosity. When the holiday came, he was bantered to treat, and in order to bring him to

terms, he was fastened out of the school-hut by the larger boys. Finding a determined resistance to his entrance, he cast around him, and finding a board, with his long legs, easily mounted to the roof of the school-hut, and placing it on the top of the chimney, turned the current of smoke downward into the room, and thus smoked them out. Once out, the pupils commenced snow-balling him, and with such energy that they brought him down, and finally he brought on the whiskey and cake. This was taken in good part by both teacher and pupils.

Sometimes the teacher was subjected to the operation of ducking -- cutting a hole through the ice, and plunging him beneath the rolling flood.¹

This sketch suggests that the frontier life of hard living and questionable practical jokes extended to the school house. One must, however, remember that these atlases were printed as a profitable venture. The story is included to add reader interest, it is not printed in the interest of historical accuracy. It is at best an adult man's memory of his boyhood days in school. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Jacob Rohrer was the township trustee in 1874, an office which he held for eight years. In this office he was responsible for hiring and supervising teachers and seeing that township institutes were conducted in the schools of Jackson Township. The location of the school in this sketch is uncertain. In 1874 Jacob Rohrer's property was just south of the Baintertown school and just west of the Elkhart river. Possibly this was the early Baintertown school which was also known as the Rodibaugh school because David Rodibaugh had settled in the area in the 1830s. John Rohrer father of Jacob Rohrer also settled in the area in the 1830s.

Few records exist of the schools of Jackson Township through the 1830s and 40s. The Elkhart County Historical Society archives contains a school book of Amos Jackson, son of Colonel Jackson. The book is dated 16 October

1838. It is approximately 8" x 11 1/2" in size and 1/2" to 3/4" thick. It consisted of blank pages upon which Amos copied his arithmetic lesson. These lessons involved learning various weights and measures and practical arithmetic problems. Amos was an able student who went on to study medicine and later to practice in Jackson Township.

The archives also contain a school roll begun by a teacher in 1808. Listed are the names of all of the students taught during this teacher's career which began 12 December 1808 in Captain Brown's School House in Hamilton County Ohio. While this teacher kept meticulous notes of his students, he failed to list his own name. A note with the document indicated "The teacher never signed his name and as near as we can figure out his name was Sheets." He taught in various counties in Ohio until 17 July 1834 when he was teaching in the Elkhart Prairie school, a new log school built just north of the school near Jackson's residence. This school was not in Jackson Township but just across the township line in Elkhart Township. He taught in Kosciusko County, just south of Elkhart County, then returned to Elkhart Township schools and in 1845 taught at District Three, the New Paris school, in Jackson township. (The District Three School opened on 3 November 1845 and closed the third day of March, 1846. Forty-three students attended). Sheets' last school listed was in Kosciusko County in 1846 where his career apparently ended. In 1839 he recorded a summer term commencing 5 June 1839 at Anthony Woods in Van Buren township Kosciusko County concluding his list of students with this

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5 The note is signed by Edward Cox who seemed to have given the document to the historical society, but there is no record as to how Edward Cox reached the conclusion that Sheets was the teacher's name.
note: "Closed this School on the 14th day of August 1839 and is the last school that I ever expect to teach." He did, however, teach until 1846.

This school roll documents the length of school during the 1840s in the Elkhart -- Kosciusko County area as having two terms: one meeting in the winter for four months, and a second meeting in the summer for two months. School terms in general in the Midwest were not standardized in the mid nineteenth century. It is likely that the length of term varied depending on the needs of the teacher and the student; however, most schools followed a similar pattern provided that a teacher was available and there were enough students for a school. This arrangement of a winter and summer term allowed the students to be available for the spring planting and the fall harvest.

Laws Governing Schools

According to Anthony Deahl, the general assembly of Indiana had, in 1824, passed an act to incorporate congressional townships to provide for schools. There were to be three officials to control the schools, school lands and building of schools when necessary. When a school was to be built, each able-bodied person was to work one day a week or pay thirty-seven and one-half cents per week until the school was completed. The constitution of 1816 had provided for education, but not much progress was made. Elkhart County had few permanent settlers until the 1830s. Fur traders and soldiers had been through the area prior to that time, but expansion began in the 1830s. While education was a priority as seen by the log school houses constructed, life was

6 "Roll of Students taught in Ohio and in Elkhart and Kosciusko County Indiana 1808-1850," D Archives, Elkhart County Historical Society, Bristol, In.
hard. Land had to be cleared, houses and barns constructed, and daily necessities provided. Each article of clothing had to be manufactured at home beginning with the sheep’s fleece or the flax stalk. Grain had to be grown and milled into flour. Wild game provided some food. All of this work left little time or resources for education.

As John W. Irwin described, the funding for schools depended on the residents directly for support rather than through taxation. This funding was a mix of private and public funds with parents of the children attending school responsible for paying the teacher. In the 1850s a call for a constitutional convention received the needed support in the state legislature. A constitutional convention was duly called and representatives selected. The issue of education in the state was one of the concerns to be addressed by a new constitution. Caleb Mills was responsible for keeping this issue before the people of the state, the state legislature and the constitutional convention. Mills had been educated at Dartmouth College in the East, he was affiliated with Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, and a representative to the constitutional convention.

That education was an issue of concern for the constitutional convention can be seen in the positions of the candidates for representative to the convention from Elkhart County. The Goshen Democrat, a partisan newspaper, printed the following statement for the democratic candidate, the Honorable E. M. Chamberlain:

The constitution should provide for an efficient system of common schools. If I could live to see the day, when every child in Indiana, would be at school, acquiring in the spirit of the most perfect freedom, necessary and useful knowledge, and under those salutary moral influences; which point to the works of God, as well as his word, in order to attain to a more perfect knowledge of his character and attributes, and consequently of
our own duty, I should have hopes of posterity, that there would soon be little use for court houses and jails.

On all other subjects than this, the action of the convention should be of a comparatively negative character, simply restraining from every quarter, all encroachment upon the rights and liberties of the people. But this, the cause of Education, should be the object of solicitude. Positive provisions should be made, for its establishment and ample support. Let this, after all, be the distinguishing feature of the new constitution of Indiana. Then will its framers have erected an imperishable monument to their own fame, and the glory of their posterity.

My ambition is that Indiana should have the best, because [sic] the freest constitution in the world, thereby setting an example, worthy of the world's imitation; and giving encouragement to "the rest of mankind." 8

The statement of the opposing Whig candidate, Walter E. Brach, appeared in the same issue:

As the prosperity and happiness of the State will depend so intimately on the mental, moral, and physical education of her children, this should be the object of no common solicitude. --The common school which is alone accessible to the mass of our children, should be made perfect and efficient, and above all other considerations should be made free to all. Poverty should be no barrier to the course of instruction, and as Indiana has provided most liberally for her unfortunates, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, and the insane, may the proud consciousness be ours, that not a child in the State is debarred from that instruction and cultivation, which, with the blessing of Heaven, will make us a virtuous, a free, and a happy people. 9

Both candidates saw the well being of the state dependent upon the education of all of the children of the state. Candidate Brach specifically mentions that this education should be free to all. Candidate Chamberlain was concerned that the constitution not encroach upon the rights and liberties of the people, in the area of education, however, he would allow more constraints from the state constitution.

8 The Goshen (Indiana) Democrat, 24 July 1850.
9 Ibid.
The 7 August issue of The Goshen Democrat announced that the Whigs completely triumphed over the Democrats and that Brach was elected representative to the constitutional convention with 1041 votes to Chamberlain’s 971. As representative, Brach joined Caleb Mills and Robert Dale Owen, son of Robert Owen who founded the Utopian society at New Harmony, Indiana. By 12 February 1851, the Goshen Democrat announced that the members of the constitutional convention had completed their work. The proposed constitution appeared in the February 26th issue. Article VIII addressed education. Section I established that the General Assembly should provide by law “for a general and uniform system of common schools, wherein tuition shall be without charge, and equally open to all.” This provision would change the practice of schools charging families tuition for students to attend school.

Section two outlined the common school fund which was to consist of the Congressional Township fund and the lands belonging therein. The following funds were listed: surplus revenue fund, saline fund, bank tax fund, funds derived from the sale of county seminaries (this became known as the seminaries fund), any lands coming to the state for want of heirs, proceeds from the sale of swamp lands (later known as the swamp land fund) and taxes on property of corporations assessed by the General Assembly for common school purpose.

Sections three through eight make the following provisions. Section three stated that the common school fund could be increased but never diminished and could be used only for the support of common schools. Section four directed the General Assembly to invest any portion of the common school fund which had not been distributed to the counties. Section five provided that
if any county failed to ask for their portion of the common school fund, it would be reinvested for the benefit of that county. Section six held the counties liable for the preservation of the fund as was entrusted to them and held them accountable for the annual interest thereon. Section seven provided that funds held by the state were inviolate and could not be used for purposes other than that for which they were created. Finally, section eight provided for the election of a state superintendent of public instruction to hold office for two years, and to be elected by the voters of the state. The duties and compensation of said superintendent were to be established by law.

The Acts of the Legislature of 1852 provided that the civil township be the township for school purposes and that the township trustees be the trustees for school purposes. Likewise, the clerk and treasurer were to serve for school purposes. The township board was charged with employing teachers and visiting schools at least twice during each term. The county office of school commissioner was to be abolished with the county auditor and treasurer assuming the duties outlined in the act. This act established the township as the responsible unit for school administration. The township was responsible for school lands, distribution of school funds, hiring of teachers, and evaluation and supervision of these teachers. A school enumeration was to be conducted in each township before the twentieth day of September. The enumeration was a list of children between seven and seventeen years of age, distinguishing between those who were between seven and twelve years of age and those who were between twelve and seventeen years. (The law did not indicate whether twelve year olds were to be included in the younger or older category.)

The law also required teachers to record the ages of their students. The teachers were not to be paid until they had filed a report with the trustee indicating the pupils who had attended school, the average attendance, the books used, and the age of the students. The age category for the teacher's report was the number between five and twelve, and twelve and twenty-one years. The discrepancy in the ages of the two reports may indicate that the state intended to plan for the education of seven to seventeen years olds but realized that in practice the age range of students would be from five to twenty-one years. There was no compulsory attendance section in the statute of 1852.

The statute of 1852 structured the common schools of Indiana with the township as the responsible school agent. The township was responsible for reporting to the county and the county to the state. Funds were to be disbursed from the state to the county and then to the township. The county could loan out the school funds, charging interest and thus increasing the fund. In loaning the funds, preference was to be given to residents of the county. The common school fund was a state fund and was distributed based on the number of scholars in each county. The law also provided for property to be taxed for the purpose of education.

The acts of the General Assembly provided that the townships be organized by an election to be held on the first Monday in April, annually. At this election, three trustees were to be elected, along with a clerk and a treasurer. Several ideas from the eastern educational establishment were incorporated into the statutes of 1852. Caleb Mills was one of the leaders in transforming these ideas into law. First the township, not the school district was

\[11\] Ibid., sec. 14
\[12\] Ibid., ch. 110, sec. 5.
the governing agent for schools. While the township may not seem like a large
governing unit today, in 1852, this system placed eight schools in Jackson
Township under the governance of the trustee. The administrator of the school
was not necessarily within a mile of the school as would be the case with a
district school governing board. When the administrator was in such close
proximity, the community could easily exercise control over the school. Next,
graded schools were permitted by the new law, but not mandatory (Section
nineteen). Students usually worked at whatever level they had not previously
mastered. Curriculum depended upon the interest of the teacher and the books
which the students brought from home. Teachers' institutes held prior to 1852
had adopted lists of recommended texts. Teachers attending the institute were
appointed for the purpose of getting the texts used in the schools. This was a
difficult task as funds for purchasing texts were limited in rural families.
Teachers were to be licensed and supervised. They were now expected to
attend institutes. Trustees were to visit schools to determine the quality of
teaching, and could dismiss teachers for incompetitence, immorality, or neglect
of duties. The state superintendent was to spend ten days in each judicial
circuit supervising teachers' institutes, conferring with trustees, and lecturing on
"topics calculated to subserve the interests of popular education." Institutes
had been held in Indiana prior to 1852, but the structuring of the state office
gave new importance to these events.

Another important provision of the statute was the fact that schools were
to be tuition free. According to the law, "All common schools shall be open to
the pupils thereof without charge". The burden of funding education would

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13 The Goshen Democrat, 27 November 1850.
15 Ibid., sec. 135.
be shared by all of the citizens, not just the parents of the students who were attending school.

Implementation of School Law of 1852

Common schools in the 1850s provided what today would be considered education through about the eighth grade level. Schools were for the most part ungraded, but the practice was for students to attend the local school until they either could learn no more there or were needed to work at home. Attendance at school was dependent upon the scholar not being needed in the home or field for labor. Students attended when they could. Male students were most likely to attend the winter term, younger students and females the summer term. Provision for high schools was addressed by the General Assembly in Chapter Forty-nine along with the incorporation of academies, colleges, universities, theological institutions and missionary boards. The General Assembly clearly saw high school education as belonging to the realm of higher education, not a part of the free common school system being established.¹⁶

The constitution of 1852 along with the Acts of the Legislature provided a structure for a school system which was responsible to the state yet maintained local control. Reports were to be written and submitted from teacher to trustee to county and then to state. The Acts of 1852 provided for three trustees for each township, along with a clerk and a treasurer. Jackson township organized itself and set about the business of providing a free common school education for the township. The school report for 1854 from

¹⁶ It was not until the court case Stuart et al. v. School District No. 1 of Kalamazoo was decided in 1874 that high schools were supported by tax dollars.
Jackson township was signed by three trustees, Jacob Clark, Abraham Blanchard, and Robert Fenton. They listed the following school expenses:

- Two lots at $30 each $60
- Ten school houses $5000
  including material and labor, exclusive of desks
- Desks for 532 scholars $200
- Ten stoves at $12 $120
- Fuel for ten school houses $100

During this year, the primitive log school houses in the township were replaced with frame structures, the log fireplaces and stick chimneys with stoves. These improved school houses apparently were much needed because the report listed the condition of the school houses as “Too bad to say.” The whole number of children attending school was 532 with an average daily attendance of 311. There were eleven teachers, one of these being female. The average wage of the male teachers was $59.16 while the female teacher’s was $45.00. The length of the school term was three months. While there were nine districts in Jackson township, ten school houses were listed in the 1854 report. The New Paris district three in the village had two school houses although they were only four blocks apart.

The frame school houses established in the 1850s were improvements over the log structures of the thirties and forties. Funds were provided from the state to finance the schools with provision for local taxation of the people for school funds. Teachers were licensed and supervised. It would seem that education was destined to move forward, growing with the community. People

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18 Garber, “One Room Schools,” 59.
throughout the state struggled with the idea incorporated into the new constitution and law of 1852 of free common schools. While there is no record of letters from Jackson Township, a letter from an examiner of teachers in Elkhart County who resided in a northern township indicated some of the resistance to taxation.

There is a strong feeling in northern Indiana against the present School law. Property holders are not yet sufficiently patriotic & philanthropic as to wish to be taxed for the purposes of universal free education, & cannot perceive the true, real economy of the measure. The most intelligent, those who see most clearly the beneficial influences of the School laws properly executed, are averse to holding the office of Trustee involving various arduous & responsible duties, for the paltry pay attending. Numerous errors are committed by those who have the education of our State in their trust (township School trustees) & the people generally are disinclined to be taxed to change the cheerless uncomfortable School Shanties of the day, . . . This township is cursed as being the residence of a large number of ignorant & selfish Germans & will not vote a tax for an improved architecture in School buildings.\textsuperscript{19}

There was enough resistance to the law that two suits were brought against it focusing on the “uniform system of common schools” language of the constitution. Cities and towns were given different rights and powers than townships and townships could levy different taxes. Therefore, the detractors argued, there was not a “uniform system of common schools” in effect throughout the state. In 1858, the court decided against the school law of 1852. According to historian William Henry Smith, the preoccupation of the state and the country with the Civil War, prevented the state from crafting a new school law until 1865 when a new law reestablished the ability of the township to tax

\textsuperscript{19}H.H. Fowler, Letter to the State Superintendent of Schools, LS 20 March 1854, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis, Indiana.
their residents to support the schools.\textsuperscript{20} There is, however, record of change in the township structure. In 1859 the \textit{Goshen Times} published the following:

Late last week the Legislature passed and the Governor signed an act completely changing the mode of doing township business. This will be learned with surprise and regret by most of the people in this part of the state.

The Statute of 1852 fixing the mode of doing Township business was endorsed by all and gave good satisfaction, particularly in this locality where long prior to the passage of the law of '52 we had a local act that was much the same.

The new law provides for only one Township Trustee who is to discharge all the duties now required of the Trustee, the Treasurer and the Clerk. The act goes into effect immediately after the spring election when the new Trustee is to be elected; whose office it is to be Inspector of Elections, have the supervision of schools, fill vacancies of Road Supervisors and receive from the County Treasurer and pay out all Township funds. His compensation is to be fixed by the county commissioner, from an itemized statement but which shall not exceed $1,50 [sic] per day.\textsuperscript{21}

Instead of five people doing township business as the 1852 law required, one person was responsible for the duties listed above. Perhaps as H.H. Fowler had suggested in his letter to the State Superintendent of Schools, it was difficult to find five men who were capable and willing to administer the office. In 1859, Samuel R. Miller as the township trustee was compiling the state reports for Jackson Township schools.

The reports sent to the state provided statistical information about the schools of Jackson township from 1854. The years 1857 and 1858 are missing. During the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, the school population was relatively stable. The lowest number of school age children was 478 listed in 1867. This number seems questionable when compared with the preceding and following years.


\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Goshen (Indiana) Times}, 20 January 1859.
years census. The 1866 census lists 535 school age children and the 1868 census lists 610. The first thought is that a trustee unfamiliar with the forms or the process of enumeration may have made an error. This is unlikely since James Dick was the trustee all three years and did in fact serve as trustee from 1864 to 1871. The Civil War was concluded in 1865, if the 1867 enumeration was lower because young men between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one were fighting in the war, it is likely that 1866 would also have been lower. The highest number of school age children was recorded in 1876 with 637 students. Teachers salaries ranged from 12 cents per day for a female to $2.47 per day for a male teacher in 1874. The first brick school houses was built in 1871, by 1879 the township listed nine brick school houses and no frame school houses.

**Teacher Training and Licensing**

A personal reminiscence of John W. Irwin printed in Bartholomew's *Pioneer History of Elkhart County* gives a short description of school financing and teacher examination in these early schools.

"Then, there was no such thing as [a] test of competency, as submitting to an examination. The teacher or his friends procured the school for him by subscribing the number of pupils he proposed to be charged with at a given rate per pupil for the term. If a number sufficient to compensate him was subscribed the school was commenced. If not the matter was abandoned and the teacher went elsewhere or found employment at something else."  

With the enactment of the Statute of 1852, teachers were required to be licensed. The responsibility for licensing teachers was given to the state superintendent of schools who was authorized to appoint one deputy in each county for this purpose. In the 1850s the standards for licensing teachers were

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left to the examiners to establish. In 1856 J. W. Irwin (the same J. W. Irwin who had attended an early log school in Jackson Township) was school examiner for Elkhart County. He included the following note with his report to the state superintendent of schools. "The Terms for which they [the teachers] were licensed indicate the degree of competence. I think upon the whole there is an improvement in competency & I have licensed more good teachers this year than last."24

The report indicated that seventy-four teachers were licensed for terms of three months, six months, one year, and two years. The examiner in 1862, L. P. Venen did not license any teachers for three months, but included a query with his report. "What is a teacher fit for who is licensed for less than six months? O, tempora! O, mores!"25 In 1872 the examiner Valois Butler continued the struggle to raise the standards of teachers. In his report he notes,

I am gradually drawing the lines closer, and hope to make a better showing for the next year. Our schools are far below the grade desirable, the qualifications of teachers far from what they should be, and many things to discourage; but I shall endeavor to surmount the difficulties and hope for, at least approximative success.26

If the quality of teachers was not improving in Elkhart County, at least the examiners over the years were expressing concern about the lack of improvement.

In 1873 the Legislature established the office of County Superintendent of Schools, and required each township to hold institutes for its teachers. The

County Superintendent served as a supervisor for the township trustees. He visited the trustees and their schools, he was frequently called upon to open township institutes, and collected the reports to be forwarded to the state. The townships held institutes once a month during the school term. These meetings consisted of the teachers from the district schools meeting together to share ideas. Usually they divided the subjects taught among themselves and taught a sample lesson. The public was welcome to attend and was encouraged to support schools by attending. Occasionally two townships would join together to conduct an institute.

Jackson Township held its first institute at the New Paris school house 20 December 1873. Professor Moury was elected president of the institute, M.L. Cline, secretary and L.W. Guiss, critic. Mr. Luke from Goshen was also present even though he was not a teacher in Jackson Township. Mr. Cripe and Miss McGuffin each presented their method of teaching spelling. Mr. Hoops discussed "How to Interest Parents in the School Work." Mr. Wolf presented methods of teaching history by topics, and various other branches of teaching were discussed. Mr. Luke from Goshen was present. Teachers were assigned topics for the next institute to be held 17 January 1874.27

These township institutes were frequently reported in the local news. They were seen not only as an opportunity for teachers to improve their teaching skills, but as an opportunity for the local people to see the teacher in action. While the township trustee was responsible for organizing and conducting the local institutes, the teachers were primarily responsible for the content.

27 The Goshen Times. 1 January 1874.
In addition to the township institutes, each summer the county conducted a normal school for several weeks. The purpose of this school was to prepare young teachers to take and pass the teaching exam. With the establishment of the office of County Superintendent of School, the licensing of teachers became more professionalized. Written exams were held on a regular basis. Teachers could prepare for these exams by attending the normal school in the county taught by the following: Professor David Moury, County Superintendent of Schools; Professor Ambrose Blunt, Superintendent of Goshen City Schools; and visiting professors from state institutions or offices. Authors of text books sometimes lectured. The goal of the normal school was to prepare students to pass the teacher's examine and receive a first grade license. State normal schools existed at Terre Haute (later to become Indiana State Teacher's College) and other sites but it was rare that a teacher from Jackson Township could afford to attend a state school. Teachers in Elkhart County had local summer normal schools and township institutes to attend. While one may wonder about the qualification of the teachers in the schools for Jackson Township and Elkhart County before the required institutes and formalized examinations, it should be noted that the reports of the school examiners from 1862 on indicated that a number of persons were examined but did not meet the standards of the examiners.

**Office of County Superintendent**

The first county superintendent was Aaron Zook, who was chosen in 1873 to fill the new office. He served only six months before he was elected to another county office. David Moury was chosen to complete the final eighteen
months of the term. He continued in the office until 1881 when he was defeated by Piebe Swart.

David Moury

Professor Moury, as he was known, took his job as leader of the schools very seriously. He worked to organize and improve the county normal schools; he worked towards graded schools, and he produced a teachers grade book. He was diligent in his reports to the state office.

A brief biographical sketch of Moury in the Illustrated Historical Atlas of Elkhart County Indiana 1874 provides information on his background. Moury was born in 1837 in Ohio. He spoke French in his home and did not learn English until he was six years old, probably when he first went to school. Until he was fourteen years old, he attended school, but at that age he left home to take care of himself. He worked in a livery stable and on a farm, attending school during the winter terms until he was eighteen years of age. At age fifteen, he suffered from the measles which affected his health. He managed to save enough money to be trained in the art of photography. With this new skill, he went to Wisconsin and opened a gallery. Through his new profession of photography he earned enough money to invest in some land in Wisconsin. Unfortunately a land grant agent took advantage of him and he lost his investment. Without any money, he returned to Ohio in 1857 and again returned to working as a farm laborer. Still desiring further education, he made arrangements to assist at a rural school while studying with the advanced classes. He finally secured a teaching license and began teaching in the schools in Ohio.

After teaching for a period of time, Moury left to study medicine, but he left this study when his health failed him. He attended a select school in
Lancaster, Ohio and returned to teaching. By teaching winter term and attending summer normal school, he was able to finish the course at the Collegiate Institute at Urbana, Ohio. His next position was that of superintendent of the Union Schools of DeGraff, Ohio. (Union schools of the 1850s and 60s were schools where several districts joined together to form a larger school. One of the stated advantages of these schools was that they could be graded.) After holding this position for six years, he moved to North Lewisburg, Ohio and held a similar position for two years.

Moury then left education to work for Phillip Phillips as an agent selling Burdett Organs. It was in this capacity that he came to Elkhart County.28 The exact date of his arrival in Elkhart County is not known, however, an item in the Goshen Times on 14 December 1871 states that “Prof. D. Moury returned to Ohio to dispose of property there. He will have a singing school over Thomas store.” At the close of 1871, he was working in Goshen, Indiana and recruiting students for private musical training.

Moury soon returned to the public schools. An item in the Times informs us that “Prof. D. Moury, of the firm of Moury & Wilson, the musical men of this city, is the Principal of the New Paris Union School, with Miss Nelia McGuffin of this city, as Assistant”.29 Moury’s name again appeared in the Times 8 January 1874 when he was elected to the Office of the County Superintendent of Schools by the township trustees.

The seriousness with which Moury approached his job is shown in the report he sent to the state superintendent of public instruction. He carefully noted that he assumed the office on 12 January 1874 and found no records of visits to schools by his predecessor. The method for administering teaching

28 Historical Atlas of Elkhart County, 1874, 36.
29 The Goshen Times, 1 January 1874.
exams was outlined in detail along with the grading standard. In explaining his plans for visiting schools, Moury noted that he planned to visit the schools of a township so that the township institute would immediately follow his visits. In that way, he would be able to address the teaching practices he observed when he addressed the institute. He noted that three of the teachers in the county attended the state normal school at Terre Haute, and that none attend the state university.

Of particular pride to Moury were the 178 persons enrolled in the county normal school held in Goshen. Recitations were conducted by the most experienced teachers, and Moury mentions that he secured several distinguished educators to lecture.30

In Moury's second report in 1875, he proudly described the grading system he had instituted in the county.

After preparing a model, I had a sufficient number of these grade books printed to supply every district in the county with one. An explanation accompanies each book by which the teacher is fully instructed in its use. The Grade Book or register is for the purpose of recording the results of the examinations which are held at the close of each school month, and the method of recording is uniform throughout the county. There are four grades, the A, B, C, and D grades and each is divided into two classes, the 1st, and 2d. The pupils' names are not to be entered until the school has been properly classified and the first monthly examination held. This system is now thoroughly established and in working order in all the schools of the county, ... 31

The grade book described in the report was promoted not only throughout the county but to other counties and teachers. As the report was

30 David Moury, "County Superintendent's Report 1874," DS Elkhart County to State Superintendent of Schools, Unpublished Documents, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis.
31 David Moury, "County Superintendent's Report 1875," DS Reports from Elkhart County to State Superintendent of Schools, Unpublished Documents, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis.
filed in October and the county institute was not to begin until the first Monday in November, there was not a detailed report of the county institute and normal school.

The township institutes received note in the 1875 report. Moury noted that the teachers were deficient in history and physiology and "organized a course of study with regular recitation at these Institutes." The township institutes were designed to be model classroom sessions. Many of the teachers were young and had only a common school education themselves. Yet, these institutes were a way of assuring that the teachers had at least mastered the material they were now charged with imparting to their students. The public was encouraged to attend and observe the township institutes, and Moury mentions that one institute had one hundred persons in attendance. He did not, however, name which township so successfully involved the community in the process.

In June of 1875 Moury corresponded with the state superintendent of public instruction regarding the possibility of his attaining a state certificate. In his letter he mentioned that he was engaged in educational work in Ohio for fourteen years, then taught for two months in one of the graded schools in Elkhart County. (This would have been in the New Paris School in Jackson Township.) He then became County Superintendent of Schools. He mentioned that he had taught one term of three months in the Elkhart County Normal and Classical School. Due to his work load, he was concerned that he would have limited time to study; therefore, he was applying for a second grade certificate. He desired to enter class at Fort Wayne. He asked if a review of Ray's Algebra Part 1 and a review of Natural Philosophy as far as Acoustics would be

\[32\) Ibid.
sufficient. He did not state whether he means sufficient for preparing him for the Fort Wayne class or for the exam. While Moury had high hopes for preparing for and passing the exam for a state certificate, later correspondence indicates that he was not able to follow through with the exam because of weak eyes and eye problems.  

Moury's report of 1876 was again a detailed report. Basically the procedures from the previous year were followed for examining teachers for licensing with the same standards. Schools were visited twice a year, the first visit being brief, the second and unannounced visit of several hours. Moury noted that since the implementation of his system of grading; the visits to the township schools did not need to be as extensive as in the past. The training of teachers in the county normal school was given as another reason for less on the job instruction of teachers.  

Although the 1875 report indicated that the county institute for 1875 would be held the first Monday in November of that year, the 1876 report stated that it was held in Elkhart in October. Among the lecturers at that institute were the state superintendent of schools, James H. Smart, Professor Bell of the Indiana School Journal, and professors from Muncie, Indiana, and Bellefontaine, Ohio. Two hundred sixty-five teachers were reported in attendance. Township institutes were conducted according to the law and were considered by Moury to be an important part of the teachers' training program of the county.  

The township trustees met as a County Board of Education. One of the tasks of this group was to approve texts to be used in the schools of the county. Lossing's *United States History* was adopted as a new text. School houses in

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33 David Moury, Letter to the State Superintendent of Schools, LS, 15 June, 1875, Unpublished Documents, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis.
the county were reported to be in good condition and good repair. The city of Elkhart had constructed "an elegant new Schoolhouse" and the city of Goshen had constructed a high school at the cost of twenty thousand dollars.34

After submitting detailed reports in 1874, 1875, and 1876, Moury filled only the necessary state forms in 1877. In 1874 and 1875, the written report of the county superintendent of schools was required by section 41 of the school law. In 1876, and the following years, the written report was to be made at the option of the county superintendent. On the written report for 1877, Moury notes, "My report of last year covers all the essential points, and since no use was made of it, --I presume it would be labor in vain to write another this year."35

Moury continued as county superintendent of schools until July of 1881. He promoted his grading system with The Perfect Grade Book which he published and sold for one dollar per copy. The Goshen Times in 1878 carried the following testimonial from the County Superintendent of Schools in DeKalb (Indiana) County:

I consider Mr. Moury's Grade Book the best thing for the purpose of grading country schools, that I have yet seen. It will assist inexperienced teachers in organizing their schools and in keeping the grading perfect from one term to another. We need some form book in all of our schools. I shall be very glad to cooperate with you in order to secure its use in all of our schools. Respectfully, James A. Barns.36

The county institutes continued with the institute on 12 September 1878 embracing Moury's grading system in the following resolution:

Resolved, that we consider Moury's Perfect Grade Book, just the book to aid in carrying our system of grading into

34 David Moury, "County Superintendent's Report 1876," DS Elkhart County to State Superintendent of Schools, Unpublished documents, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis.
35 David Moury, "County Superintendent's Report 1877," DS Elkhart County to the State Superintendent of Schools, Unpublished Documents, Indiana State Archives, Indianapolis.
36 The Goshen Times, 18 July 1878.
effective operation and we would recommend it as worthy [of] the
careful consideration of all teachers and school officers.\textsuperscript{37}

The institute also resolved to support the present school law and not support
any man for the state legislature who was opposed to the Office of the County
School Superintendent or to a progressive school system. A list of text books
were recommended to the county board of education for adoption. Under
consideration that year was the physiology text, and Brown's text was supported
by a majority of 25 teachers.

The Normal School continued to meet two or three months during the
summer to offer teachers a more formalized study program than that of the
institute. Items in \textit{The Goshen Times} in October of 1877 indicated that the
school had outgrown the facilities in the county court house. The
commissioners told Moury that he could no longer use the court house for this
purpose. The \textit{Times} included an article urging the building of a school to house
the normal school. This suggestion was not acted upon. Eight persons
completed the course of study in 1878 and their graduation is recorded in \textit{The
Goshen Times} of 17 October 1878.

In spite of his diligent work with the schools, the publishing of the
grading book, a form for use in school visits, and the continued work in teacher
training, Moury was not elected by the township trustees in 1881 to continue as
superintendent of schools. He left the county first for a visit to Battle Creek
Michigan to "recruit his health" then to Nashville, Tennessee where he would be
in charge of the Normal Department of Central Tennessee College. He later
resumed the study of medicine which he had abandoned because of his health.
In a letter to the \textit{Times} dated 2 August 1883, he talked of the time taken up in his

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Ibid.}, 12 September 1878.

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studies, and an interest he had in establishing a sanitarium in Goshen. He had discussed this topic with Dr. Kellogg in a visit to Battle Creek. Apparently he decided not to pursue this idea as a sanitarium was never established in Goshen. David Moury finished his life practicing medicine in Atlanta.³⁸

**Piebe Swart**

On the first Monday of June in 1881 the trustees of Elkhart County met as the Board of Education to elect the another county superintendent of schools. After six ballots, a majority of the sixteen elected Piebe Swart over David Moury with a vote of nine to six. One ticket was blank, indicating one trustee did not mark a choice.³⁹

Piebe Swart was born in Friesland Province of Holland 5 May 1836. In 1854 he immigrated to the United States with his parents Klass Swart and Rinske Klynstra (Swart). Klass had visited the States in 1850, returning to Friesland. A group of Mennonite Frisians led by R.J. Smit and R.J. Symensma who left the town of Balk, had consulted with Klass Swart before leaving for America.⁴⁰

Piebe Swart had completed his education at Sloten College in the Netherlands before coming to the United States. According to his obituary, he began teaching in the county schools at the age of nineteen.⁴¹ Bartholomew tells of Piebe’s being licensed by James E. Winegar who would have been a township trustee in Jackson Township in the 1850’s. Winegar was working at the woolen mill in Baintertown, a settlement in Jackson Township.

Mr. Swart went to the mill in the evening and found the examiner measuring off some cloth for a lady. He made known

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³⁹ *The Goshen Times*, 9 June 1881.
the purpose of his visit and while he was still waiting on his
customer the examiner asked several questions, which Mr. Swart
answered. "Oh! H-- exclaimed Mr. Winegar, you know enough to
teach them fellers on the other side of the creek," and proceeded
to write out the document which certified to Mr. Swart's fitness to
instruct the youngsters over whom he was soon to have
authority.42

If the information in the obituary is accurate, Swart would have started
teaching in the schools of Elkhart County just one year after his arrival in the
county. He was apparently fluent in English as Winegar would not have spoken
Dutch or Frisian. It is likely that Swart knew Dutch, Frisian, English and
German. In 1871, John F. Funk, a Mennonite publisher in Elkhart, Indiana
published an English translation of the works of Menno Simons, originally
written in the Dutch language. According to J.C. Wenger, Mennonite historian,
Piebe Swart was the translator for Part II of this volume.43 His obituary also
mentioned this work but referred to it as "the Mennonite Bible."44

The schools in which Piebe Swart taught were not all recorded. In the
1870s his name is mentioned in connection with the institutes of Harrison
Township. The Goshen Times gave the following account of the closing of his
school 12 March 1874.

Mr. Piebe Swart closed his school, in District No. 6 of
Harrison Twp. on Saturday last. As an evidence of his success
and the regard in which he is held by his scholars, he was made
the recipient of a beautiful album quilt, on the closing day, with
the names of the donors stamped in indelible ink. Mr. Swart has
taught at this school for three consecutive winter terms and this
demonstration of esteem is gratifying evidence of his popularity
as a teacher. During the term just closed, the school enrolled-
males 42; females 41; total 83. Average attendance 50.74. The
average would have been greater but for the unusual amount of

42 Bartholomew, History of Elkhart County, 182.
44 The Goshen Daily News Times, 10 July 1917.
sickness in the district during the winter. There are no scholars in the district between the ages of 10 and 21 years that cannot read. The textbooks used in the school are those adopted by the County board of Education. 45

As county superintendent of schools, Swart continued to hold institutes, supervise the county schools and conduct teachers’ examinations. A letter in the file of correspondence from Elkhart County to the Superintendent of Public Instruction indicated that Swart and A. P. Kent, the superintendent of Elkhart City Schools may have had some disagreement on the date of a teachers’ exam to be held in Elkhart. Swart did not want to hold it on the week of institute, apparently Kent wanted to and appealed to the state. The file contains only letters from the county, not the reply.46

The fall of 1883 found the county board of education selecting textbooks for the county as they had done in the past. This particular year a great deal of controversy and objection accompanied their choice. The Times records a meeting held in early September where the texts were to be selected. A petition signed by a number of teachers of the county asking that the textbooks not be changed was presented. In spite of the teachers’ request, White’s Arithmetic and The Eclectic Geography were replaced with Thompson’s Arithmetic and Colton’s Geography.47

The trustees received criticism for ignoring the teachers’ request to continue the same texts. A number of petitions were sent asking them to reconsider their action. The board of education met again later in September.

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45 The Goshen Times, 12 March 1874.
47 The Goshen Times, 6 September 1883.
At this meeting they heard a legal opinion that they could rescind their previous action. They then offered the following resolutions:

That the introduction of books recently adopted by the County Board is impracticable and that it be therefore indefinitely postponed.
That the revised editions of the books now in use in the County be introduced provided they can be had free of cost.  

The textbook controversy must have been of concern in Jackson Township because the 29 November Goshen Times contains an item in the New Paris news mentioning that it is well that the heat has subsided as it was likely to create a breach between the trustee and the people.

On 6 December 1883 another article referring to the controversy appears in The Times. A lawyer in Elkhart published a four page pamphlet in which he discussed several school questions. One of these was the textbook question. His conclusion was that the “trustee has no more to do with the books the children bring to school than he has with their hats and dinner baskets.”

At this point the school book controversy must have run its course for there is little mention of it in the Goshen Times from this point on. The New Paris items in this paper on 2 April 1885 mentioned that “The school book question is about to get into the courts in an indirect way, and if so, where will the end be?” Since there was no other mention of the controversy and it was considered “an indirect way”, one might assume that this was a local correspondent’s attempt to keep an issue which had limited interest before the public.

Swart’s term as county superintendent proceeded in a routine fashion. The Times records institutes held in the various township schools which Swart attended. The board of education met 1 May 1884 and dealt with several

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48 The Goshen Times, 27 September 1883.
issues. The group was first organized with the superintendent as president and David Swinehart of Osolo township as secretary. In the morning session, Professor Moon's Practical School Register and Grade Book was considered for use in the schools, however, the decision was postponed as there seemed to be no immediate need for adopting it. Swart announced that the state had advised holding special examinations in the district schools as students completed each course and granting diplomas to those students who passed. The board adopted this plan.

One of the trustees, J. W. Kellogg from Concord township, suggested that the school terms of the county should be of uniform length, and that teachers should be hired for the year rather than the term. This was not accepted because of a concern that the uniform term could not be accomplished within the existing tax levy. The hiring of teachers by the year was thought to be unfair to the younger less experienced teachers who usually taught the summer term.

The textbook question was considered. There appeared to be no uniformity in use of textbooks as some schools were using the adopted books, some the revised and others were using both. There was no remedy adopted. The date and place for the Country Institute was set for 25-29 August in Elkhart City. The board adjourned with the next meeting to be held 1 September 1884.49

During the summer of 1884 the county continued to prepare teachers for passing the exam by holding what was referred to as the Normal School. The following local teachers and politicians taught courses: A.S. Zook, civil government; Professor Blunt, methods of teaching; H.A. Mumaw, bookkeeping;

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49*The Goshen Times*, 15 May 1884.
Superintendent Swart, methods for primary classes; and the Honorable H. D. Wilson, history. Sixty students were enrolled.

The next event under Swart's supervision was the county institute. The Times published only the resolutions from this institute. There were a total of 140 teachers enrolled with an average attendance of eighty. The resolutions included thanks to the school board of Elkhart City for the use of their buildings and staff, and to Superintendent Swart for the efficiency of the institute. One resolution suggested that the name of the instructor of each branch be published in the county papers two weeks before the institute and that a committee of three with the county superintendent secure the lecturers for the institute. The practice of a teachers' examination fee which was used to hire lecturers for the institute was to continue. Note was made that the interest has been only ordinary and that there was a noticeable decrease in the number of teachers from city and town schools attending the institute.50

On 1 September 1884 the board of education met for the fall meeting. The superintendent presented the State Teachers Reading Circle to the board which adopted the idea and enacted procedures for implementing the idea. The reading circle was a list of reading materials, prepared by the state, for the teachers to read each month, another attempt on the part of the state to prepare the teachers for the classroom. It was suggested that a portion of the time at the township institutes be set aside to discuss material read by the members of the reading circle.

The course of study for students in district schools from the state office was reviewed and adopted by the trustees. This was to be forwarded to the teachers and to be used as a guide for the graduation of students. The idea of

50 The Goshen Times, 4 September 1884.
graduation was a new. Prior to this students attended school and worked through which ever text was being used. There was no set course of study.

The issue of grade books which had been postponed at the May meeting was again discussed and Baker's grade book was adopted. Apparently Moury's grade book fell out of favor when the former superintendent left. The physiology text was considered and the board chose to continue using the current text. From the minutes printed in the paper, it appears that representatives from the book companies were present at the meeting. If the book presented did not receive the support of the majority, the current text was maintained. After the texts were reviewed, the meeting was adjourned.51

The board of education was not the only body in the county concerned with the education of the children of the county. The County Medical Society heard a paper by Dr. Latta who was concerned that the schools were too strenuous for the students and should not exceed three hours per day. He suggested that rather than have a teacher work with ninety students for six hours per day, the teachers could work with forty-five students in the morning for three hours and with the other forty-five in the afternoon. It is interesting to note the discussion at the medical society did not seem to be very supportive of education. Among the points made were the following: That education was too textbook centered and should rely more on the natural tendencies of the child, and that the state should furnish instruction only in reading, writing, spelling, orthography, arithmetic, geography, and English grammar. It appears that the County Medical Society did not have an impact of the education of the children of the county as there is no record of changes in the system to implement these suggestions.

51 Ibid., 18 September 1884.
Mr. Swart’s term of office as county superintendent ended on 1 July 1885. On June 1 the board of education met to elect the superintendent. Swart declined re-election. Reasons were not given for this move. Swart returned to the classroom and continued teaching in the schools of Elkhart county for many years. S. F. Spohn, a teacher in the county was elected to replace Swart.

Moury and Swart, in the office of county superintendent supervised the schools in Jackson Township. It is interesting to compare Piebe Swart and David Moury and their terms of office. Both were born into immigrant families. Neither were native speakers of English. Swart was educated in the Netherlands while Moury was educated in the common schools of the United States. Swart spent his adult life in Elkhart County working in education. Moury moved from the county eventually changing from education as a profession to medicine. Moury exercised a more directive style of leadership. He apparently met with textbook representatives and then recommended texts to the board of education. Swart allowed the textbook representatives to make their presentations directly to the board. This probably created the textbook controversy that developed during his term of office. Moury created publicity around himself and the office. News items frequently appeared in the paper regarding Moury, and items concerning the Normal School, or institutes appeared in greater detail during Moury’s tenure than during Swart’s. Even after Moury left town he continued to correspond with The Goshen Times. Swart carried out the office more quietly. He did not send as much information to the press as Moury. As the first superintendent to serve for any length of time, Moury had considerable impact on the office. He established the practices for visiting schools, he established the Normal School and hired the lecturers for it.
and developed the institute. He was responsible for providing a standardized testing procedure in the county for teachers’ examinations. To assist the teachers in record keeping, he devised a teacher’s grade book which was used in other counties.

Swart allowed the schools to operate with less interference from the county office. Students were allowed to use textbooks which were not in accordance with those adopted by the county board. Teachers requested the right to help select the lecturers for the institute. The teachers’ examinations continued to be monitored and standardized from the county office.

The state office of superintendent of public instruction was more stable during Maury’s lengthy tenure of seven years than during Swart’s short term of four years. In 1874 Alex C. Hopkins held the office, then James H. Smart was elected and served from 1875 to 1880. In 1881 John M. Bloss assumed office and remained in office until he was replaced by J. W. Holcomb who served for two years. Moury worked with basically one state superintendent who had a rather long tenure. Swart worked with two persons who were in office for three years or less.

Summary

The schools of Jackson township changed considerably from the 1840s to the 1880s. In the 1840s they were crude log structures built by the families who had children and who supported them. The teachers were paid by the patrons whose children attended school and frequently boarded with these families on a rotating basis. Little training was required for the teachers. By the 1880s the buildings were constructed of brick, heated with a stove, and financed by school funds and tax levy. Teachers were required to take a test
which was standardized and offered on a county wide basis. Training was offered to the teachers in the form of the Normal School before the exam was given. Continued training was provided by township institutes held once a month during the school term, and by county institutes held prior to the fall term. Township trustees were responsible to the county for enumerating students and recording their attendance. The county in turn reported to the state. The state had moved to providing a uniform course of study so that diplomas could be granted to those who completed the course. This move was just beginning in the 1880s. The schools had progressed from small poorly organized and isolated structures to a system somewhat standardized throughout the county and responsible to the state.

Although no concessions were made for students who did not speak English, the Frisian Mennonites participated in the schools of Elkhart County. The children attended and learned to speak English. The involvement of the Frisian Mennonites with the schools and community will be discussed in Chapter Five.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The story of the Frisian Mennonites from the village of Balk who emigrated to Elkhart County Indiana began in the sixteenth century as the people of Friesland struggled to practice religion in a manner which they believed to be true to the original practice and teachings of Christ as expressed in the Bible. This search led them to value reading and writing in order that each individual could study the scripture and discern the truth therein for themselves. In the journey to becoming Anabaptists, they were influenced by the teachings of humanists in their area, particularly Rudolf Agricola and Desiderius Erasmus. The geography of the Low Countries encouraged the sharing and spread of knowledge. Information about the teachings of Martin Luther and other reformers spread across the country. The economy of the Low Countries had a stronger base in trade than in agriculture, so that as goods were traded, so also was knowledge.

The Low Countries, however, were not immune to the struggles for power which occurred across Europe in the sixteenth century. During the period from 1530 to 1574, the Anabaptists were persecuted and between fifteen thousand and twenty-five thousand Anabaptists were executed. This period of execution helped to draw those who professed believer's baptism together for protection and support thus welding them together into a cohesive group. Some of these people were executed because they had studied the scriptures and were speaking out against the practices of the Roman Catholic Church of the time. The fact that 30 percent of those executed were women while 6 percent of
non Anabaptist executions for the same period were women, indicates that the Anabaptists included women in the search for truth through reading the Bible.

Menno Simons, along with Obbe and Dirk Phillips, and Leenaert Bouwens traveled throughout the low countries and Northern Europe teaching and baptizing adults, thus establishing the practices which were to mark the Anabaptists as a distinct group separate from the Roman Catholic Church. It was from these beginnings which the little church at Balk grew. From a group originally baptized by Bouwens in the sixteenth century, they worshiped in the same church, struggling with various factions which formed among the Anabaptists between 1650 and 1850. During these struggles, they frequently choose the conservative approach. They favored the use of the ban in maintaining church discipline and they chose to maintain a strict stance of nonresistance when Doopsgezinden (Mennonite) churches in the Netherlands were choosing to participate in the military.

Finally in 1853, nineteen people from the church left to go the United States where they had heard that they would not be forced to participate in the military. The practice of literacy begun in the sixteenth century was evident in this small group by the fact that adults kept diaries, wrote letters, and discussed their writing with each other. As the immigrants from Friesland came to Jackson Township in Elkhart County, Indiana, the state was just beginning to establish free common schools. School had existed in Jackson Township since shortly after the area was settled in the early 1830s. With the new School Law of 1852, the schools were to be available to all and funded from public money.

The development of schools in Elkhart County, Indiana followed the pattern described by Carl F. Kaestle in Pillars of the Republic.¹ According to

Kaestle, the schools were the pillars of the country as it emerged from the revolution of 1776 and evolved into a viable nation by the 1860s, a nation that was strong enough to withstand a civil war. The schools were the pillars of the republic because they taught and reinforced the values of commitment to a republican government, a Protestant culture and the development of capitalism. Since schools in the United States originally developed as private schools, public schools were frequently looked upon as charity schools which the upper class avoided. Several values were instrumental in securing the support of the public both in funding and sending their children to the schools. First the idea of class mobility suggested that the children of all citizens should attend the same school. Second the idea of a republican government necessitated an educated electorate, and third the value of capitalism which could be reinforced in the public schools, thereby securing the support for the schools from the growing industrial interests in the country. From 1776-1860, according to Kaestle; the schools evolved from privately supported locally controlled systems to tax supported, supervised systems responsible to the state government.

Elkhart County, being in the Midwest, was not settled by Europeans until the 1830s; therefore, there was no colonial period or early national period in the Midwestern schools. The settlers who came from the East established schools reflecting the pattern of schools in Pennsylvania and New England. Early schools were locally controlled and had little supervision from the state. Financing was achieved by rate bills or tuition payments by the parents of the children. In the 1850s a movement towards centralization occurred as the state began to exercise more control of the schools. In Indiana, the constitution of 1851 established the Office of the State Superintendent of Schools and the
School Law of 1852 provided that the township be the governing unit for these schools.

With the new school law, came an attempt to organize a system for school supervision. Teachers were to pass a test in order to receive a teaching license; the license was for a specific period such as six months, twelve months, or twenty-four months, and teachers were to be observed by township trustees. According to Kaestle, many states struggled during the 1850s in changing from a private school system to a system of common schools supported by tax monies.² This was true in Indiana where, in 1859, the court found the School Law of 1852 unlawful. Because of the War Between the States, a new school law was not enacted until 1865. From 1859 to 1865, the schools in Jackson Township continued to function in the pattern established during the late 1850s.

In the Eastern part of the United States, some of the resistance to public funding of schools was because the common schools supported by these funds did not allow local religious groups to teach their doctrine in the school system. The schools expressed a nationalistic, patriotic spirit which did not include the concerns of some religious groups. Hartzler alluded to the concern of the Mennonites of Pennsylvania when they moved from privately supported schools to free common schools.³ In both Pennsylvania and Indiana, the Mennonites dealt with religious instruction for their children by establishing Sunday Schools or, as they were called in some places, Sabbath Schools. Since the Mennonites in Indiana had not established private schools among themselves, the issue of attending the common schools did not mean a loss of a chance to teach their values in the schools. The issue of Sunday Schools, however, caused divisions among the churches in northern Indiana with the conservative

² Ibid.,182-188.
³ Hartzler, Mennonites and Education, 71.
Jacob Wisler withdrawing and establishing the Wisler Mennonites.

The Frisian Mennonites came to Indiana just as the free common school system was being established in Jackson Township, Elkhart County. The Frisians were a literate group of people who sent their children to the local schools. Since the Mennonites did not develop a system of private education for young children in Elkhart county until the twentieth century, the children attended the district school in the area. Most of the children went to the Whitehead School in Jackson Township; however, a few would have attended Brown School in Union Township.

With their value of education, literate adults, and a conservative bent, why did not the Frisian Mennonite school their own children? There appear to be several reasons. In 1853, the farm lands of Indiana needed intense labor to provide a living. The community may have been reluctant to sacrifice the labor of an adult in the community to teach the children. Language must have been an issue for this group. In the Netherlands, they would have spoken Frisian, been able to read and write Frisian, and also have been able to read and write Dutch. In Jackson Township they would have also encountered German and English speaking people. One of the churches they attended used the German language, and by sending their children to the public schools, they would have had the opportunity to learn the other common language of the area, English.

The conservative nature of the group is a question of relativity. In the Netherlands, the Balk Mennonites were one of the most conservative Mennonite groups. They did not join with the other Mennonites or Doopsgezinden, as they were known in the Netherlands, but referred to themselves as Mennisten, thereby indicating a closer following of Menno Simons' teachings. In the United States, their leader, R. J. Smit was considered
to be more forward thinking than other Mennonites. Compared to their English speaking neighbors, they would have seemed conservative. The experience of leaving the small town of Balk and traveling by ship and train through England and to the United States was a broadening experience for the group. R.J. Symensma wrote of his awe during the train ride across England and the wonder of the modern facilities in the rooming house in Liverpool. Once in the United States, the Frisians chose not to isolate themselves as they had in the Netherlands. The Mennonites whom they encountered followed similar principles and there were other Anabaptist groups in the neighborhood. ¹

The Frisians related to four different groups of people in Elkhart County. In effect, they were members of four different communities. Their most primary and intimate group was the Frisian Mennonite people, i.e., their own group. These people all spoke the same language, had a common immigration experience, and lived in close proximity to each other. All had relatives within the group so that this was an extended family. When they first came to Jackson Township, they lived together until houses could be built for individual families. About once a month this group would worship together with preaching in their own language. R.J. Smit was usually the speaker for these meetings which were held in the house or barn of one of the community members. Bauke Wiebes Rystra’s house or barn, depending on the weather, was often used, if there were illness in Bauke Wiebes family, the meeting moved to Obe Meines Smit home.

The second community of importance to the Frisian Mennonites was the Frisian non-Mennonites some of whom immigrated with the Mennonites. This group lived in close proximity to the Frisian Mennonites and shared a common

¹ R. J. Symensma, Letter to Friends.
language. Many of them were of the Dutch Reform Church; however, there was never a church of that denomination established in the area, and the people were absorbed into the existing churches in the community. Family names from this group included Swart, Krull, Duker, Darkwood, DeFrees, Pelsma, Vanderveer, and Fervida. Children of these people married children of the Frisian Mennonites so that some of the second generation were Frisian families, who may or may not have joined the Mennonite church.

The Yellow Creek Mennonites in nearby Harrison Township composed a third group who related to the Frisian Mennonites. Included in this group would be the Christophel Church Mennonites, because Jacob Christophel was a part of the original group of Yellow Creek Mennonites who came from Pennsylvania, through Ohio to settle in Elkhart County. The Christophel Church would be considered a daughter church of the Yellow Creek congregation. The Frisian would meet with the Christophel group and then both groups would meet with the Yellow Creek congregation. Meetings were scheduled so that members could attend services at three locations without a conflict. The Frisians met Jacob Christophel before meeting with the Yellow Creek Mennonites, so it was through Christophel that they became acquainted with the original group. The Christophel and Yellow Creek meetings were both conducted in German, and it was in the Yellow Creek meetings where Frisians were baptized. The Yellow Creek congregation introduced the Frisians to the larger Mennonite network across the country. In this congregation they became acquainted with John F. Funk and later sent their children to Sunday Schools established by the congregation. Here the children received religious instruction.
The relationship to the Yellow Creek community was important to the Frisian Mennonites because it was in this congregation that the significant events of church membership occurred. Here members were baptized, the communion service was celebrated, and conference was held. These three events were often held on a week end in October. Both the diaries of Grietje Jacobs Symensma and the *Herald of Truth* record the attendance of the Frisians at the fall conference. One of R. J. Smit's sons, Jacob, married Hannah Christophel, a member of the Christophel congregation in 1884. When Jacob became sick and died a few weeks after their marriage, he was buried with Hannah's family at the Yellow Creek Cemetery. Of the genealogical records surveyed for this study, this was the only record of a marriage in this generation between a member of the Frisian Mennonite community and a member of the Yellow Creek community.

The fourth group in the area to which the Frisian related were other Anabaptists. The Frisian Mennonites settled in the midst of members of the Church of the Brethren, a denomination described by J. C. Wenger as "a twin denomination" to the Mennonites.\(^5\) This group had several branches and was known by several different names. Officially named German Baptists, they were frequently called "Dunkers" for their practice of baptism by what was called triune immersion, forward immersion three times. Two brethren settlements were within a few miles of the Frisian settlement. In the late 1830s, the Whiteheads, members of the Church of the Brethren, settled in the area. The Whitehead church, cemetery, and school were important in the lives of the Frisian settlers. Today 25 percent of the lot holders in the Whitehead cemetery are Frisians or their descendants, the same percentage belong to Whiteheads.

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and their descendants. The Frisians did not worship at the Whitehead Church (now known as the Maple Grove Church of the Brethren), however, the diaries of Grietje Jacobs Smit record that Brethren preachers sometimes officiated at marriage or funeral services for Frisian people. During the 1880s the Frisians held their services in the Whitehead schoolhouse. The second Brethren settlement was that of the Brethren in Christ, or as they were originally known, River Brethren. This group was led by Dan Stump from whom the Frisian purchased land for their settlement. One daughter of Ruurd Johannes Smit and Grietje Jacobs Symensma, Jitske (Jessie) Ruurd Smit married Daniel Stump (probably a son of the Dan Stump who sold the land).

The Brethren neighbors would have had much in common with the Frisian settlers. Wenger describes the following similarities in their views:

- The baptism of believers only;
- The necessity of church discipline;
- The doctrine of Biblical nonresistance;
- The rejection of all oaths;
- The importance of "heart religion";
- The importance of the imitation of Christ in personal discipleship;
- The sinfulness of living a life of wealth and luxury;
- The necessity for the excommunication of backsliders;
- Freedom of conscience, with no state coercion in matters of faith;
- The practice of a "free ministry," that is avoiding making the ministry a profession, supported by a salary;
- Tension between church and world, the doctrine of "nonconformity to the world";
- The washing of the saints' feet, as well as the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- The practice of the holy kiss;
- The rejection of personal adornment, together with plainness of attire.

Thus, the community in which the Frisians lived had much in common with the group. Their religious values and life styles were similar. This group of

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8 Cemeteries of Elkhart County, 387.
7 Margaret Smith Diary, 4 November, 1866, 59, and Margaret Smith Diary 1881-1895, 3 August, 1884.
8 Wenger, The Mennonites in Indiana and Michigan, 421.
people probably spoke German and English, using German in their church services and English in their business dealings in town.

In addition to the four groups mentioned, the Frisians would have conducted business in the town of New Paris where it would have been a necessity for them to speak English. In the 1860s the railroad passed through New Paris providing transportation north to Goshen and south to Warsaw. From Goshen rail connections would have been available to Elkhart and other areas. Although these connections would have been available to the Frisian Mennonites, the diaries of Grietje Jacobs Smit show little evidence of travel to Goshen or even New Paris. Mention was made of her son Obe going to Elkhart, but, most of the events recorded in her diaries chronicle family or church events. Little mention was made of contact with people for business purposes outside the realm of church and home.

The Frisian Mennonites emigrated from Friesland for idealistic reasons. They tried to remain faithful to the original teachings of Menno Simons. Included in these teachings were the practice of nonresistance and discipline of church members by use of the ban. Yet among these harsh and strict principles were teachings encouraging the nurture and training of children by example and love. Discipline was encouraged, but the rod was not to be used in anger or bitterness. These principles could also be seen in the early Mennonite teachers in Pennsylvania, Christopher Dock and Francis Pastorius.

In Jackson Township, the Frisian Mennonites found Mennonites and Anabaptists who held similar principles. They had accomplished the goal which they had come to the United States to pursue: they could adhere to the practice of nonresistance. Because they found like minded neighbors who practiced similar principles, they did not maintain the isolation they had practiced in the
Netherlands. The Frisians were assimilated into the community in two ways. First, they did not establish a separate church until 1889, when they founded Salem Mennonite Church. This was not identified as a Holland or Dutch Mennonite church but rather as a community Mennonite church. Again the identity which was important to them was that of Mennonite not of Frisian. However, the second way in which they were assimilated was by marrying non Mennonite Frisians. The non Mennonite Frisians did not have a church or community center. Some joined the Mennonites, some joined the Brethren, or Methodists. For the most part, however, the non Mennonite Frisians did not attempt to live apart from the world as the Mennonites did. Thus, neither the Mennonite or non Mennonite Frisians attempted to maintain an identity as Frisians. As they intermarried, they were unidentifiable from the surrounding community.

It is difficult to identify the Mennonite involvement in the schools of the township, because much of the information about schools is recorded in sources which the Mennonites would have considered as “worldly.” The newspapers were published in the county seat and did not concern themselves with news of the Mennonites. The Mennonites made no effort to inform the local paper of their affairs. The Mennonites chose to remain apart from the culture they considered worldly. When reading the traditional histories of the area, the Mennonites appear to be almost invisible. Yet when looking into the Mennonite sources such as the Herald of Truth, they become more visible. Since the Herald of Truth was a national paper, it did not carry items about local school involvement. The Mennonites did not subscribe to the values of patriotism, capitalism or even the prevailing Protestant ethics which were taught in the schools during 1850-1885. Yet they were numerous enough in Jackson and
Union Townships that there did not seem to be a conflict in the teaching which occurred in the schools.

Even though a large number of students in the schools of Elkhart County did not speak English when they began school, the issue of teaching English as a second language was never addressed in the record of institute topics either at the county or township institutes. Children were expected to learn to speak English when they entered school in addition to learning to read and write. Since most of the non English speaking people would have been either Mennonite or Amish and have spoken German, the parents saw this as another separation between the church and the world. The use of the German language in the home and church helped to establish an identity separate from the world. The learning of English in the schools allowed them to conduct what little business it was necessary to conduct with their worldly neighbors.

Several Frisians and Frisian Mennonites did teach in the district schools with one Frisian non Mennonite rising to the Office of County Superintendent of Schools. Since the children in many of the schools were of Mennonite or Brethren religion, the parents probably still had some influence over the local school. Most Mennonite, however, would not have voted in elections for township trustees as they did not participate in elections. Thus, the township trustee would not have been concerned about losing an election because he displeased the Mennonites.

The Frisian Mennonites participated in the schools of Jackson and Union Townships by sending their children to the local schools. A few of their members served as teachers, along with several Frisians who were not Mennonites. There seemed to be few if any conflicts in values recorded between the Frisian Mennonites and the schools in Jackson Township or Union.
Township. Most of the people in the area surrounding the schools the Frisian Mennonites attended were Anabaptists. Teachers seldom taught for more than one or two years in the same rural school so that the values of the surrounding community would influence the school more than those of the teachers. The Frisians saw the school as a place to learn to read and write, skills on which they placed a high value. Had the Frisians lived even in the small town of New Paris, they may have had to confront the more worldly values of patriotism and capitalism in the schools, but in the rural one room schools which they attended, their values did not conflict that sharply with the values taught in the schools.
EPILOGUE

The families listed as emigrating to the United States in the prescript to the Balk Mennonite Church in the Netherlands were used in this study to examine the culture and education of the Frisian Mennonites of Elkhart County. The educational values of people are evident in their choices in life. A brief summary of each of the families follows. Generally, the summary concentrates on the second generation of the settlers. Where information about later generations is known, that information has been included. Some of the descendants of original Balk families remained in Elkhart County while others moved to other parts of the United States where they made contributions to society.

Bauke Wiebes Rystra Family

In the Rystra family, Simkjen Baukes Rystra married a Frisian non Mennonite, Folkert Krull, who immigrated with his uncle Klass Swart. Krull descendants can be found in the New Paris community today, mainly in farming occupations. Miriam Krull Glanders, a resident of Arizona, has maintained an interest in the Frisians and has arranged to have some of the Frisian diaries and letters translated. Tettje Baukes Rystra was already married when the family immigrated. She and her husband, Herre Aukes Visser immigrated with the 7 April 1854 group. Thirteen children were born into this family, eleven of whom survived to adulthood. A son, Daniel Fisher, taught school in New Mexico for a
time, then returned to New Paris in the spring of 1898, purchased property in New Paris and began to sell farm implements. His business venture was such a success that he was soon joined by his brother Martin; in a few years two other brothers, Benjamin and Henry who had been in business in New Mexico, joined them. The Fisher brothers were credited with establishing New Paris as a trade center at the turn of the century using the slogan “We do business in five counties.” With a fifth brother, Adam, they established a sale barn, a hardware, lumber and coal business, and a bank in addition to the implement business.

Jitske Baukes Rystra also immigrated with her husband Romke Hinnes Haitjema (Hygema). Romke served as a preacher in the Mennonite church, returned to Netherlands for a visit in 1875, then succumbed to typhoid fever in the fall of 1875 after returning to the United States. Jitske had preceded him in death in 1874. While this family maintained contact with the New Paris community, they lived in Marshall County just west of Elkhart County. Their eight children did not reside in the New Paris community, however, three of the sons were ministers according to the obituary of one of the sons named James. James’ church affiliation was given as Free Methodist. The affiliation of the other two sons, David and Jacob, who were ministers was not given.

John Baukes Rystra married Martha Ruurd Symensma, daughter of Ruurd Symensma and Lysbeth Geerts Oor. Five of their children died in infancy with the mother Martha herself dying thirteen days after the birth of the last child. Only one child in this family, Margaret, survived to adulthood. She did not marry and died at age 32. The father, John died at age forty-four.
Ruurd Jacobs Symensma Family

In addition to Martha who was mentioned above, there were five other children in the family of Ruurd Jacobs Symensma and Lysbeth Geerts Oor. Two sons, John R. and Girard did not marry. Jacobjen (Jo Anne) married Klass Visser and had five children. Of these five children, two daughters and a son married Frisians. Albert K. Fisher married Ella Darkwood, a granddaughter of Jan Jacobs Symensma. Some descendants of this family by the surname of Lantz and Mishler still live in the New Paris area. One granddaughter of Albert, by the name of Janet McFarland-Idema, lives in Wyoming, Michigan and supplied materials for this research. Alice, daughter of Jacobjen and Klass, married John A. Vanderveer son of a non Mennonite Frisian. Elizabeth Fisher, the other married daughter of Jacobjen and Klass, married John Duker, son of another non Mennonite Frisian. Two children of Jo Anne and Klass Visser, Jane and Frank did not marry.

Jacob Ruurd Symensma married Lydia Neff. They had four children. One of his grandsons, Charles Symensma, Junior, is a retired farmer still living in the New Paris area.

Hiltje Jacobs Symensma, Jacob's twin, married Jelle Swart, son of Klass Swart a non Mennonite Frisian. There were three sons in this family. Frank taught school in Jackson Township in 1898-99, then left to study law at Stanford University in California, returned to Jackson Township in 1902 and served as the principal of the New Paris schools for several years. He then left Indiana and returned to California to pursue a career in law where he ended his career as a judge in San Mateo County. Another son, Charley, lived in the New Paris area farming and serving in politics. He was elected to the Indiana legislature for one term, and to the office of township trustee for several terms. The author
is a granddaughter of Charley Swart. The third son, Addison, farmed in the New Paris area. One of his surviving sons, Max, lives in the neighboring town of Goshen.

**Ruurd J. Smit Family**

In the Ruurd Johannes Smit family, John R. Smith died at age nineteen without marrying. Jacob R. Smith died a few weeks after marrying Hannah Christophel, leaving no children. Jitske (Jessie) married Daniel Stump and bore three sons, two of whom became lawyers. The Stumps did not remain in the area, but moved to Noble County just east of Elkhart County. One of these sons, Albert, became quite prominent as a lawyer in Indianapolis specializing in medical malpractice. Martha Smith married Jacob K. Fisher, son of Hantje Jacobs Symensma and Klaas Haitjes Visser. Of their five children, Hannah married Lewis Darkwood, a non Mennonite Frisian. Descendants of Hannah and Lewis still live in the area. One of Hannah’s grandsons, Raymond Hoover was a preacher in the Church of the Brethren.

Ruurd Johannes Smit’s and Grietje Jacobs Symensma’s daughter Hannah married John Huitema, a non Mennonite Frisian who immigrated to the United States in 1887. Some of her descendants are still living in the New Paris area. Her daughter Sylvia made a trip to the Netherlands in the 1950’s and found the prescript to the Balk registrar which she had translated.

**Obe Meines Smit Family**

The author was unable to find any information on the family of Obe Meines Smit and Grietje Romkes. The family was listed in the 1860 census, but not in the later censuses. Because the family name was Anglicized to Smith, a
common name, and the children's names in this family were also common names: John, Jacob, Abigail, Helen, and Margaret, it was difficult to distinguish these individuals from other Smith's in the area. Several John and Jacob Smiths were listed in later censuses. One son, Gerritt, had a Frisian name, but his name did not appear in the materials surveyed for this research.

Ruurd Klases Visser Family

Klases Ruurds Visser married Jo Anna Symensma. Their family is described under the Ruurd Jacobs Symensma family. Akke Ruurds Visser died at age thirty without having married. Gretske Ruurds Visser married William Diehl, a Frisian. She died leaving an eight day old son. The child was raised by a childless Yellow Creek Mennonite family by the name of Hershey. Antje Ruurds Visser was the second wife of Fekke Postma. They had three children John, Jacob, and Afke. Jacobs married Barbara Mast. Afke married a Frisian by the name of Haitje L. Fisher. No information is available about John. Johannes Ruurd Visser died in the Netherlands at the age of four years.

Jan Jacobs Symensma Family

In the Jan Jacobs Symensma family four children lived beyond childhood: Henry died at age seventeen, Anna married Paul Darkwood, Martha married Paul's brother Simon, and Margaret married Charles DeBoer. Some of their descendants also live in the New Paris area.

If one follows the interwoven relationships in the community, it is apparent that some members of the families continued to marry within the
Frisian community for several generations. The Darkwoods, Swarts, Huitemas, Dukers, Vanderveers, and DeBoers were not Mennonites and the prominent sons of Herre Aukes Visser did not remain Mennonite. A Mennonite church was finally established in the community in 1889 when the Salem Mennonite church was founded. Members of the Frisian community worshiped there, however, by 1918, they began to leave the church and by the 1950s there were no Frisians among the members of the Salem church. The Salem church is still in existence but has withdrawn from the Mennonite Conference and is an independent church.

Those Frisians remaining in the community continued to participate in the public schools. Family histories indicate that some of these people sought degrees in higher education and in some cases moved to larger communities where they practiced their chosen professions.
MAP OF FRISIAN SETTLEMENT
ELKHART COUNTY, INDIANA

county road 38

Yellow Creek Church

county road 40

county road 142

county road 46

- Christoffel Church
- Salem Church
- Whitehead Church
- Dutch Settlement
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VITA

The author, Judith Kaser Bailey was born in New Paris, Indiana where she received her elementary and secondary education.

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15 April 1992  
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