

**MODEST APPAREL**  
**MENNONITE CLOTHING IN LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA**  
**1800-1900**

by  
Victoria Anne Pyle

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in American Material Culture

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper will examine Mennonite dress and ideas of plainness throughout the nineteenth century in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. These ideas include religious plainness as expressed by the Quakers as well as secular expressions of plain and simple lifestyles in reaction to the consumerist focus of the nineteenth century. Mennonites conflated “fashion” with vanity and pridefulness – worldliness. The adoption of plain dress shows the wearer’s abandonment of those worldly values in favor of a simpler, more Christ-like, way of life. These sentiments took shape in the last part of the nineteenth century alongside several secular movements reacting against the mainstream Victorian material culture and supporting the return to a minimalist lifestyle.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION: THE MENNONITES

About 1900, three sisters sat for a formal photographic portrait. They were all daughters of Wayne and Mary Landis Bare of eastern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Their grandfather's thirty-four acre tract of land was part of Bareville, where Bareville neighbors and Bare relatives probably lived in close proximity. In their forties at the time of the photograph, the sisters had not been neighbors, however, for about twenty-five years. The middle sister, Sarah Bare Kurtz, left Lancaster County after her marriage to settle near Topeka, Kansas. The photograph probably marked a reunion.<sup>1</sup>

The sisters' expressions are serious but calm as they face the photographer. Sarah Kurtz, the middle sister, sits in an appropriate spot between her younger sister, Ida Bare Rohrer, on the left and her older sister, Emma Bare Rohrer, on the right. Sarah Kurtz wears nothing covering her hair, pulled back into a knot on the crown of her head. She wears a long sleeved shirtwaist of a shiny dark fabric, with some tucked and ruched decoration at the center front, a white jabot, and banded collar. Her belt has a decorative buckle. Her gored skirt is long and dark. Her dress shows little wear and limited decoration. It is fashionable, but unostentatious. Her dress marks her as a modest, prosperous woman.

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<sup>1</sup> Joanne Hess Siegrist, *Mennonite Women of Lancaster County: A Story in Photographs from 1855-1935* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1996), 189.

The dress of her sisters gives a very different impression. Both wear plain dress. Their hair, tightly pulled back from a center part, is covered by what is probably a cap made of fine white fabric, tied under the chin. A fabric cape, neatly pinned, covers their shoulders, coming to a point just below the waist. Their bodices are long-sleeved and plain. Their long, dark skirts are covered by gathered aprons of what seems to be the same fabric. These women, too, appear as modest and prosperous. Their plain dress, however, marks them in another way. They are each members of a Mennonite church in Lancaster County. They have embraced a style of dress very different from the dominant, fashionable style of the day. Their dress identifies them as Mennonite.

Today, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, it is possible to see women dressed in ways similar to the two Bare sisters. They wear long, dark skirts, simple blouses, and head coverings. Men, too, were unadorned clothing. Why does their clothing look the way it does? How did the twentieth and twenty-first century plain costume develop? What has caused it to persist? What caused this group of people to adopt a distinctive manner of dressing? What made many congregations keep that manner of dressing as part of their collective and individual identity through decades and centuries? In what ways did that dress code change? What kinds of negotiations did individuals and congregations make with popular fashion and their idea of Christian modesty and plainness? How did that idea of Christian modesty change from the eighteenth century to the twentieth? These questions inform this thesis.

This paper will examine Mennonite dress and ideas of plainness throughout the nineteenth century. What did dress look like through the century? When did a

woman's or man's dress begin to look different from all their neighbors, in the community at large and in the lives of individuals? This will be a story about the ways in which identity is closely tied to clothing and, more specifically, how members of Mennonite congregations in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, crafted their identities with the clothes that they chose to wear.

While the Mennonite church today is similar in many ways to the Mennonite church of the early modern era, change is evident. An obvious change relates to the clothing worn by members of various congregations. There is no uniform 'Mennonite' dress. Some Mennonite church members dress in a plain manner; others wear clothing that looks like anyone on the street. There are many variations on the continuum from plain dress to fashionable dress. The concept of self-identification through clothing, however, requires a knowledge of the Mennonite church and the concepts that are important to its members. An exploration of Mennonite identity is necessary before connecting it to clothing.

### **Who are the Mennonites?**

Mennonites have their roots in the Protestant Reformation. They belong to a larger group of Protestant Christians known as Anabaptists. Richard K. MacMaster defines Mennonites not as a denomination, but as "religiously and socially [...] a people."<sup>2</sup> According to MacMaster, Mennonites are "a people" because they exhibit a

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<sup>2</sup> Richard K. MacMaster, *Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Communities in America 1683-1790*, vol. 1 of *The Mennonite Experience in America* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1985), 12.

cohesiveness that extends beyond religious beliefs and practices. Essentially, Mennonites belong not only to a religious denomination but also to a culture.

The beliefs shared by members of the Mennonite faith create a cultural identity for members that defines everyday behavior more than any one ethnic identity. This idea is complicated by the fact that many of the first Mennonite settlers to what is now the United States shared a common geographic and ethnic origin in Europe. Even today, many of the members of Mennonite congregations in Lancaster County trace their lineage to German-speaking peoples. Specifically, many Lancaster County Mennonites descend from people who migrated from German-speaking areas of Switzerland in the 1710s. These immigrants identified, religiously, as Anabaptists, a name given to Protestants who were opposed to baptism of infants.<sup>3</sup>

In Swiss Anabaptist spirituality, the Bible was the ultimate authority. The church, despite its role as Christ's earthly body, was fallible. Sometimes baptized members of the church committed sins against the Church and were banned, or removed from membership.<sup>4</sup> Scholar John Ruth identifies the ban as particularly important as a differentiating factor between members of the Mennonite fellowship and non-members.<sup>5</sup> Even church leaders could be subject to admonition and removal

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<sup>3</sup> MacMaster, 50-78.

<sup>4</sup> MacMaster, 97.

<sup>5</sup> Ruth, John L. *The Earth Is the Lord's: A Narrative History of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 98.

from the church.<sup>6</sup> These regulations were an effort to form life to the teachings of the Bible, rather than interpret the Bible to life. Because of this, author J.C. Wenger called the Mennonites “biblical literalists,” meaning that they try to obey literally all the teachings in the New Testament.<sup>7</sup>

Facing persecution in Europe, many Mennonites fled to the North American colonies, where they found a place to settle. They acquired inexpensive land, and were tolerated by their neighbors.<sup>8</sup> Many Swiss and German Mennonites settled in Pennsylvania, in and around Philadelphia. Outside of the city of Philadelphia, the areas that saw significant, sustained Mennonite settlement in the eighteenth century consists of what are now Montgomery, Bucks, and Lancaster Counties. The Mennonites in this area formed two major groups, the Franconia and the Willow Street congregations.<sup>9</sup> These congregations grew into conferences, organizations of congregations overseen by delegates of ordained men from each congregation. Franconia Conference in the east included Montgomery and Bucks Counties; Lancaster Conference in the west included Lancaster County. The Lancaster Conference grew faster than its eastern counterpart and expanded geographically into

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<sup>6</sup> Article V, "Schleitheim Confession (Anabaptist, 1527)." *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*. 1527; <http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/S345.html>; [Cited 27 February 2013.]

<sup>7</sup> J.C. Wenger, *The Mennonite Church in America sometimes called Old Mennonites* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1966), 259

<sup>8</sup> Wenger, 20- 22.

<sup>9</sup> Wenger, 69.

much of Pennsylvania and elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> Until the Southwestern Pennsylvania Mennonite Conference formed in 1876, the Lancaster Conference included much of the state of Pennsylvania.<sup>11</sup> This is important to remember for the purposes of investigating regulations about clothing that were stated by church leaders. Until the new conference was created, regulations asserted by the Lancaster Conference applied to Mennonite congregations in much of western Pennsylvania, too. While this study includes only Lancaster County, as the boundaries exist today, the implications of the material from the early part of the nineteenth century may extend well beyond Lancaster County.

### **Historiography**

This thesis is primarily a study of clothing. While religious doctrine certainly played a lead role in guiding choices of church members about many aspects of life, it is not the focus of this project. This thesis fits into a growing body of costume and clothing scholarship; it is not a study of doctrine.

A few secondary sources have shaped the methodology in this thesis. Sharon Ann Burnston's *Fitting and Proper* and Ellen Gehret's *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing* informed the examination of objects.<sup>12</sup> Each piece of clothing was examined and

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<sup>10</sup> Wenger, 84.

<sup>11</sup> Wenger, 24, 69, 83, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Sharon Ann Burnston, *Fitting & Proper: 18th Century Clothing from the Collection of the Chester County History Society* (Texarkana, TX: Scurlock Publishing Co., 1998). Ellen J. Gehret, *Rural Pennsylvania Clothing: being a study of the wearing apparel of the German and English inhabitants both men and women, who resided in*

recorded in such a way that it could be recreated if desired. While recreation was never the goal of this study, the framework for examining objects provided a way to record minute details. Those same works created some of the questions raised in this study. While they provide excellent records of extant garments, they do not address the reason for clothing looking the way it does; they do not ask why. Erin Eisenbarth's master's thesis, "Plain and Peculiar: A Case study of Nineteenth Century Quaker Clothing," provided an example and a model.<sup>13</sup> This thesis asks similar questions of the Mennonite material that Eisenbarth asked of her Quaker-related objects. Eisenbarth's work guided the manner with which this project approached sources, including detailed descriptions of clothing. Melvin Gingerich wrote *Mennonite Attire Through Four Centuries*, in which he examined the clothing worn by Mennonites over a span of four hundred years.<sup>14</sup> Such a large scope warrants a study of more specific groups through the lens of new theoretical frameworks. This thesis begins that process. This thesis delves into "why?"

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*southeastern Pennsylvania in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: also including sewing instructions and patterns which are profusely illustrated!* (York, PA: Liberty Cap Books, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> Erin Eisenbarth, "Plain and Peculiar: A Case Study of Nineteenth-Century Quaker Clothing" (Master's thesis, University of Delaware, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Melvin Gingerich, *Mennonite Attire through Four Centuries* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania German Society, 1970).

This thesis argues that the Mennonites in Lancaster County experienced a revival in their practice of a “plain” living, seen clearly through the adoption of increasingly codified and uniform requirements for dress. This newly reinvigorated dedication to a nonconformist lifestyle coincided with trends in United States intellectual life. A few sources have helped to place the emergence of Mennonite plain dress into the historic context of the nineteenth-century United States. The Mennonites were not alone in embracing what they conceived as a simple or plain way of living. They were not alone in their rejection of what they conceived as modern, fashionable, or worldly practices.

Several recent studies of ideas and attitudes in the United States in the nineteenth century can shed light on the Mennonites’ response to their place and time. They include T.J. Jackson Lears’ *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920*<sup>15</sup>, two works by David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture*<sup>16</sup> and *In Search of*

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<sup>15</sup> T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

<sup>16</sup> David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

*the Simple Life: American Voices Past and Present*,<sup>17</sup> and finally Daniel Walker Howe's *What Hath God Wrought, Transformation in America, 1815-1848*.<sup>18</sup>

In his studies of the turn toward simplicity in the religious and intellectual life of the Anglo-American colonies and United States, David E. Shi analyzes how several religious, social and political groups seemed to value the concept of simplicity and live in a simple way. To Shi, simplicity meant many things. He wrote, "The simple life is almost as difficult to define as to live."<sup>19</sup> It has included ideas from religious asceticism to organic gardening, although Shi limits the idea to 'an approach to living that self-consciously subordinates the material to the ideal.'<sup>20</sup> That fluid nature of "The Simple Life" formed the basis of his writings. He found traces of simplicity in the ideas of religious groups like the Puritans and Quaker, in political rhetoric during the early republic, and even among some elites during the late nineteenth century.

While Shi excludes Anabaptists from *A Simple Life*, since they removed themselves too far from the world for his study, he briefly mentions their spiritual heritage in another work, *In Search of the Simple Life*. In this work, Shi situated them

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<sup>17</sup> David E. Shi, *In Search of the Simple Life, American Voices Past and Present*. (Layton, Utah: Gibbs M. Smith, Inc, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: Transformation in America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Shi, *The Simple Life*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Shi, *The Simple Life*, 3-4.

in the spiritual “family” of pietists. Pietists separated themselves from much of society in order to maintain their simplified and minimalist lifestyles. Pietists in the British North American colonies and the United States included groups from German-speaking Europe such as Mennonites, Amish, Dunkers (German Baptist Brethren), Brethren in Christ, Moravians, Schwenkfelders, and Hutterites. These groups are often referred to as “plain people” for their simple and conservative lifestyles.<sup>21</sup>

Shi explored the Quaker attitude toward simplicity in *A Simple Life*. Since southeastern Pennsylvania was home to both large numbers of Quakers and of Mennonites, it is useful to examine Shi’s writings about Quakers. He eloquently described the Quakers’ reasons for simple living:

By living simply, by resolutely surrendering that which was not essential, the Friends could keep themselves free – free to speak their minds, free from the wiles of greed, free to devote themselves primarily to spiritual pursuits and social service rather than limitless material gains.<sup>22</sup>

This same mentality appeared in Mennonite ideology into the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> Like the Quakers, the Mennonites placed more import on matters of the

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<sup>21</sup> Shi, *In Search of the Simple Life*, 49.

<sup>22</sup> Shi, *The Simple Life*, 29

<sup>23</sup> *Dress: A Brief Treatise*. Prepared by a committee appointed by Mennonite General Conference. Second Edition (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House 1921), 5-6.

spirit than matters of the material world. Both groups actively discouraged participation in fashion in clothing and appearance, and in the accumulation of material wealth. The two groups differed, however, in their desired amount of separation from the world. Mennonites believed that near-absolute separation from the world was necessary, while Quakers thought it possible to avoid luxury and vanity while participating in aspects of the larger society.

At times, simplicity or plainness is considered conservative, a way to value old traditions, and a turn away from currency and change. In his book, *No Place of Grace Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture 1880-1920*, T. J. Jackson Lears states that, in the late nineteenth-century, several modes existed with which people expressed their value for the past and traditions. These means were not all plain, and they were not all religious.

For example, during the late nineteenth century, craft revivalists sought an agricultural revitalization, a return to agrarian roots and “the Simple Life” of subsistence farming and pursuit of craft. They wished to remove themselves from aspects of life in the United States that they did not understand or disapproved. These groups perceived a “family decline.” They believed this decline was the result of a cluttered, overly feminine aesthetic and obsession with material goods.<sup>24</sup> According to Lears, supporters of “the Simple Life” believed that rural life lead to morality, virtue,

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<sup>24</sup> Lears, 74.

and a strong work ethic.<sup>25</sup> Craft revivalists looked back to medieval craft guilds as models of the values of hard work and community. They stressed the “sanctity of hearth and home, the virtues of life on the land, and the ennobling power of work.”<sup>26</sup> Craft leaders wanted a domestic revival, so that the home would be a sanctuary of family life, and an agrarian revival, so that young men would learn the value of living on the land and build character. Influential thinkers and reformers supported this domestic and agrarian craft revival in theory. In practice, the craft revival became a way to enliven those who worked in factories and add perspective to the education of bourgeois children.<sup>27</sup>

These trends in the cultural life of the nineteenth-century United States, valuing a simple lifestyle, manual labor, and agrarian living, were part of the world in which the Mennonites of southeastern Pennsylvania lived. They were looking for the same kinds of support for modest, simple lifestyles in the face of what they considered an increasingly decadent and immoral world. The Mennonites found this support in their religious doctrine and practice rather than in political theory or in an historical view of agriculture or craftwork. Their religious support for a simpler lifestyle manifested outwardly in aspects of the culture, such as plain dress.

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<sup>25</sup> Lears, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Lears, 74.

<sup>27</sup> Lears, 75-76.

Daniel Walker Howe provides additional context for Mennonite belief and practice in the nineteenth century. In *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America 1815- 1848*, Howe delved into the changes in American society in the early nineteenth century. He celebrates and questions the transformations that he found in all sectors of American life – from transportation, communication, elections, to religion.<sup>28</sup> The Second Great Awakening took place during this time. The number of Christian denominations in the United States increased dramatically to include Methodists with working class roots and diverse congregations of Baptists.<sup>29</sup> The Second Great Awakening, like the simple life and craft revivalism, gave people in the United States an opportunity to improve and purify themselves and their communities in a time of massive change. Mennonites responded to this revivalism, albeit decades later, with reinvigorated elements of their religious practice like the strict rules of plain dress.

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<sup>28</sup> Howe, 4-7.

<sup>29</sup> Howe, 186-187.

## Chapter 2

### **PLAIN AND MENNONITE CLOTHING**

Is there a type of clothing that can be identified as ‘Mennonite’? If so, what are the items of clothing and what do they look like? This chapter will investigate these basic questions, before subsequent chapters examine particular items of clothing.

In order to answer these questions, it is helpful to answer one more question. How similar to and different from plain clothing of other groups –especially members of the Society of Friends or Quakers –is Mennonite clothing and Mennonite plain clothing? Several scholars have written about plain clothing in general and Quaker plain clothing specifically. These works provide a context with which to examine Mennonite plain clothing.

Melvin Gingerich wrote *Mennonite Attire through Four Centuries*, a book in which he examined not only what clothing looked like, but to some degree why it looked that way. His work covered a wide swath of the historical record, beginning in sixteenth-century Europe and ending in twentieth-century North America. He included studies on Mennonites whose heritage descends from Eastern and Western Europe.

Scholar Don Yoder wrote an essay describing various sectarian groups. These groups include Hasidic Jews, Roman Catholic nuns and monks, Quakers, Anabaptists, and Mormons. He covered much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and various regions in the United States of America. Some groups were associated with a geographic area. For example, the Hasidic Jewish population came from Williamsburg

New York, and the Anabaptists, from the Pennsylvania German region or southeastern part of that state.<sup>30</sup>

When discussing clothing, Yoder used several adjectives with varying degrees of specificity. He called clothing sectarian, plain, “frozen,” simple, and conservative. These adjectives were not interchangeable. By context, sectarian referred to the groups – Hasidic Jews, Catholic monastics, and Mormons. These groups are sectarian but not necessarily plain. Plain referred to the unadorned, conservative, sometimes old fashioned clothing that promotes and reflects modesty and humility. Frozen referred to Yoder’s belief that conservative and plain dress must be some vestige of a bygone era, rather than a form of fashion all its own. The terms simple and conservative contrast the sectarian clothing to its contemporary mainstream styles. Members of the sectarian groups described their clothing as conservative, plain, and simple, as well as being of the group to which they belonged. Each of those words describes plain dress. “Plain” also describes the person and his or her beliefs and practices as much as the clothes.

Yoder explains sectarian clothing in terms of the cut or shape of the garments and their colors. These characteristics vary by group. He also described one representative piece of clothing for each group – the hat for Hasidic Jews, the bonnet for Quakers, and the undergarment for Mormons.

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<sup>30</sup> Don Yoder, “Sectarian Costume Research in the United States,” in *Forms Upon the Frontier: Folklife and Folk Arts in the United States*, edited by Austin and Alta Fife and Henry H. Glassie, Monograph Series, volume XVI, Number 2 (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, April 1969).

Plain dress is a matter of observance – observing the rules laid out in religious texts (for the Mennonites, the Bible) – to members of the group. The mode of dress also identifies the wearer as a member of the group both to other members and to those outside of the group.<sup>31</sup> Among Quakers, activism replaced “quietism”—of which plain dress is an example -- as the mode of expression of faith. Many Quakers participated in social and political activism while de-emphasizing the need for plain dress. Yoder offers no discussion of the reasons why the practice of dressing plain gained and lost favor among the Mennonites.<sup>32</sup>

Sharon Ann Burnston analyzed clothing of people of Chester County in southeastern Pennsylvania. The wearers of the clothing were predominately Quaker, but some were apparently German. Her analysis focused on the eighteenth century.<sup>33</sup>

Burnston described much of the clothing in her study as plain. She quoted several primary sources that describe the clothing as plain and singular. To these eighteenth century writers, plain referred to the lack of ornamentation, and singular meant unusual or unique. Quakers in Chester County in the eighteenth century wanted to avoid “singularity” or uniqueness, unlike Mennonites of the nineteenth century.

To Burnston, the characteristics of plain dress encompassed much of its appearance. The colors were limited to drab, browns and greys. She referenced several contemporaries who wrote mockingly about the quality of the material used by

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<sup>31</sup> Yoder, 54-55.

<sup>32</sup> Yoder, 46.

<sup>33</sup> Burnston, 247-271.

Friends. The distinguishing feature, though, of Quaker plain dress was the lack of decoration of any kind. Embroidery, lace, ruffles, tucks, ruching, cuffs and more were all left off Quaker plain clothing.

Burnston offered little in the way of comparison and contrast to mainstream fashion at the time. She wrote that the Quaker clothes were less decorated – with cuffs and lace – and often a little old-fashioned than its mainstream contemporaries were. These rules were loose guidelines inferred from Quaker theology. According to Burnston, “It was not necessary to dress in any particular way to be a member in good standing of the Society of Friends, simplicity was one of their ideals, as was quality.”<sup>34</sup>

Burnston does not include any specific scriptural reference, but she does reference one piece of eighteenth century doctrine, the Testimonies of the Yearly Meetings of the Society of Friends. It says that members should not wear “superfluity and apparel” and to avoid “superfluous things.”<sup>35</sup>

Erin Eisenbarth, in her master’s thesis, “Plain and Peculiar: A Case Study of Nineteenth-Century Quaker Clothing,” researched Quakers in nineteenth-century Philadelphia and surrounding areas of Pennsylvania and Northern Delaware. Families through which the clothing descended were from Wilmington, Delaware.

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<sup>34</sup> Burnston, 1.

<sup>35</sup> Burnston, 1.

To describe clothing worn by Quakers, Eisenbarth quoted a nineteenth-century writer, who believed that “the peculiar dress of Philadelphia’s Quakers was a visible manifestation of their personal qualities – quiet, goodly, sincere, and Christian.”<sup>36</sup> Eisenbarth also called the clothing plain and simple. Plain seems to be more regulated than simple, but Eisenbarth argued that the regulation did not occur in the nineteenth century. In fact, she claimed, “plainness was never an absolute for Quakers.”<sup>37</sup> The author includes descriptions of clothing by the Friends who wore that clothing. For example, Jacob Smedley explained that those who dressed plain were “clothed with humility.”<sup>38</sup> To members and non-members of the Society of Friends, clothing conveyed the attitude of its wearer; these words referred to the demeanor of the wearer rather than the clothes. Plain clothing expressed the wearer’s membership in the Society of Friends and his or her commitment to the faith tradition.

Eisenbarth discussed several characteristics that differentiate plain clothing from non-plain clothing. She focused on the drab, solid color of fabric used. According to Eisenbarth, the most significant feature of Quaker plain dress was the nature of the decoration. Quaker plain dress was less decorated than mainstream fashions but not entirely devoid of trims or surface decoration. This clothing was

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<sup>36</sup> Eisenbarth, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Eisenbarth, 25.

<sup>38</sup> Eisenbarth, 22.

similar to fashionable mainstream clothing, but simplified as much as possible.<sup>39</sup> Extremes of fashion were not practical, because fashions changed rapidly, and extravagant trimmings were difficult to maintain.<sup>40</sup> Quaker dresses may have been practical as much as an expression of faith.

These characteristics of plain dress were both elements of doctrine and generally accepted practices. The doctrine surrounding plain dress varied in specificity in each meeting. Additionally, Eisenbarth argues that the enforcement of these rules depended on individual interpretation and standing.

The Evangelical movement of the Second Great Awakening changed the nature of the Society of Friends, dividing them among evangelical Orthodox Quakers, who believed more strongly in the Scriptures and the reactionary Hicksite faction who focused on Inner Light. The division was not about the look of Quaker clothing. Clothing continued to follow the same trends that it had in the eighteenth century; older members of the Society dressed more conservatively and plainly than their younger counterparts. In addition to differences based on age, plain dress became an issue of contention, however, because some Hicksite Quakers thought that it was too easy to take pride in the outward appearances of observance, like wearing plain dress, without genuinely believing.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Eisenbarth, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Eisenbarth, 41.

<sup>41</sup> Eisenbarth, 20-21.

Mary Ann Caton studied Quakers in the Anglo-American Atlantic world during the eighteenth through nineteenth century, the same time period as addressed in this thesis. She focused, like Burnston, especially on Chester County, Pennsylvania. Caton included discussion of a Quaker in England to provide breadth.<sup>42</sup>

Caton described the clothing in her study with the following words: honesty, simplicity, equality, and peace. These words describe characteristics of the clothing's wearer that is then reflected in the clothing. Wearing clothing described as above helped the wearer focus on "inward thoughts and faith."<sup>43</sup>

In Caton's work, plain often meant old-fashioned, especially in construction techniques. Eighteenth-century seam construction and fall front skirts, for example, were used well into the nineteenth century after they fell out of favor among non-Quakers. Caton ventures few generalizations about Quaker plain dress, but those few include old-fashioned cut and construction, use of shades of grey and brown, and use of high quality material. The most significant defining feature of Quaker plain dress was the absence of any kind of decoration.

The rules for Quaker plain dress were intentionally vague. They offered mostly proscriptions rather than prescriptions; rules covered what not to wear more than what

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<sup>42</sup> Mary Ann Caton, "The Aesthetics of Absence: Quaker Women's Plain Dress in the Delaware Valley, 1790-1900," in *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption*, edited by Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

<sup>43</sup> Caton, 247.

to wear, since Quaker ideology favored individualism and individual interpretation.

One piece of doctrine, the 1797 *Rules of Discipline*, instructs:

all Friends, both old and young, [to] keep out of the world's corrupt Language, Manners, vain and needless thing and fashions, in Apparel Buildings, and furniture of Houses, some of which are immodest, indecent and unbecoming... [to] avoid also such kinds of stuffs, colors and dress as are calculated more to please a vain and wanton, or proud mind, than for their real usefulness. <sup>44</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, Quaker modes of dress changed from plain to simple. Members of the Society of Friends in England abandoned plain dress in 1860. Active roles in dealing with issues like slavery, Indian rights, women's rights, and other national concerns possibly replaced plain dress as a religious practice.<sup>45</sup> During that time, plainness was associated with the elderly. <sup>46</sup>

These studies demonstrate diversity in groups who wear a form of plain dress and in the dress itself. They also highlight key similarities across groups and types of plain dress. The clothing is often simple and conservative when contrasted with mainstream fashion of the same time. It may or may not be uniform. Additionally, the reasons for wearing plain dress were similar across groups. The clothing, whatever form it took, served as a reminder of one's faith. The clothing reminds the wearer of their commitment to their faith and controls their behavior. Plain clothing also

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<sup>44</sup> Caton, 249.

<sup>45</sup> Caton, 269.

<sup>46</sup> Caton, 267.

identified the wearer as someone rejecting the mainstream. The characteristics hold true for Mennonite plain clothing, too.

During the late 1800s, people who identified themselves as Mennonite disagreed over the need for uniformity. It was only “simplicity and modesty” that were agreed upon. Some conferences had written rules of dress as early as the 1880s, but the Mennonite church as a whole did not agree on “clear-cut requirements” of dress until the year 1900. The movement toward clearly defined dress requirements culminated in 1911, according to John Ruth. Men and women wrote for *Herald of Truth*, a newspaper published in Chicago and Eckhart, Illinois, which served the Mennonite conferences of North America. Their submissions showed popular support of dress requirements.<sup>47</sup>

Conferences began to write the first rules of dress in 1881. They dealt with pride in dress in a general way but offered no specific guidelines for dressing. Later iterations of these rules increased in specificity until they prescribed a “regulation coat” for men to wear.<sup>48</sup> Bishop J.N. Brubacher required women to wear a cape to cover their breasts, an apron to cover their stomachs, and a shawl, because a coat was a man’s garment. Bishop Isaac Eby sent Deacon Landis Hershey to mothers of young women who showed up without capes to admonish the girls.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ruth, 737.

<sup>48</sup> Ruth, 738.

<sup>49</sup> Ruth, 738.

Many of these prescriptions and manifestations, particularly those of the early twentieth century, concern themselves with the maintenance of the gender dichotomy between men and women. For now, we should remember that the objects and the experiences they create are gendered in specific ways. Readers interested in issues of gender among plain people should read *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History*, a collection of essays.<sup>50</sup>

Early in the nineteenth century, people did not join the church until marriage and often after having children. Between 1896 and 1910, young people joined the church earlier in their lives and participated in less non-church socializing than had been typical before that period. At the turn of the twentieth century, a “new, austere style of clothing and head covering” appeared, possibly influenced by conservative groups in the Midwest.<sup>51</sup>

This shift indicates that young women, and possibly young men, joined the church at increasingly younger ages. By adopting plain dress, these young people literally wore their religious convictions on their undecorated sleeves. As Ruth wrote, “their spirituality, not only internal, bespeaks a mutuality definitive of their self-concept; they have made an unmistakable statement of the yielding of their wills to a reality other than generic social acceptance.”<sup>52</sup> They made the decision to be baptized

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<sup>50</sup> Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Steven D. Reschly, eds., *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Siegrist, 159

<sup>52</sup> Ruth, 807

sooner in their lives than previous generations. This changed the nature of their decision. It indicated a shift in priority. Joining the church and becoming a member of the Mennonite fellowship took precedence over other milestones in life such as marriage.

Several photographs demonstrate this trend. A photograph from 1855 shows a young married couple holding hands. The young man, Joseph Buckwalter, wears a dark suit with a tie and a shirt with a high turned-up collar. His wife, Elizabeth Weidman, wears a dress with fashionable dropped shoulders, ruching at the shoulders and waist, and a lace collar. When they married, Joseph Buckwalter was twenty-three and Elizabeth Weidman was twenty.<sup>53</sup> *Courting Couples*, photographed in 1892, shows two couples with colorful, decorative clothing. The young men wear suits of light colors with vests and jackets that have lapels. One man, Aaron Leaman Groff, wears a suit of plaid. The young women wear dresses with shoulder puffs and bows at their necks. Their hair is uncovered and styled with ornaments. Two years later, the couples had a double wedding; Lizzie Leaman Groff (on the right) and Aaron Groff (on the right, wearing plaid) were twenty and twenty-one at the time of their marriage.<sup>54</sup> These photographs, with their ornamented clothing, indicate that the young men and women were probably not yet members of the church. At the turn of the century, people of the same ages as the Groffs joined the church before they were married. In 1903, four young women, ages nineteen through twenty-two, pose for a photograph wearing the coverings and cape dresses that indicate their church

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<sup>53</sup> *Newlyweds Hand in Hand*, 1855, in Siegrist, 33.

<sup>54</sup> *Courting Couples*, 1892, in Siegrist, 50.

membership.<sup>55</sup> Unlike the young men and women pictured in earlier photographs, these girls apparently chose to accept church membership and confirm their faith, prior to marriage.

Young people committed to church membership at younger ages because of an increased sense of community. Congregations reacted in a number of ways to preserve their community, as they saw the loss of members to other denominations. Many young people joined evangelical groups after attending open-air meetings. Others attended services in non-Mennonite churches that offered Sunday schools or English-language sermons.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *Mennonites of Manor Township*, 1903, in Siegrist, 88.

<sup>56</sup> Ruth, 807; Paul Rickert Shelley, “Religious Education and Mennonite Piety Among the Mennonites of South-Eastern Pennsylvania: 1870-1943” (Ph. D. diss. Columbia University, 1950).

## Chapter 3

### MEN'S CLOTHING

Men's fashion in the last three quarters of the eighteenth century from 1730 increasingly showed off the waistcoat or vest under curved-front coats. For formal occasions, men wore an exceptionally decorated waistcoat and a coat without a collar and with an equally decorated front edge. For less formal occasions, Englishmen wore "frock coats," which were similar in shape to their formal counterparts but lacked the decoration and delicate fabrics. Inspired by country life, they were made of sturdy wools and linens. These frock coats had flat round collars that could be folded over the shoulders or pulled close to the neck for protection from elements, similar to collars on men's dress shirts and polo shirts today.<sup>57</sup>

By the last decade of the eighteenth century, fashions had changed. More emphasis was placed on close fit. The basic coat, waistcoat, and breeches emphasized sleek lines of the body. Pantaloon replaced breeches, and boots were worn instead of shoes for a narrower, more continuous line of the leg. Men also choose trousers, which were tight to the knee and fixed with stirrups under shoes. Based on riding attire, this

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<sup>57</sup> Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society, 1500-1914* (London: The National Trust, 1996), 135; Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America: The Colonial Williamsburg Collection* (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2002), 231.

costume reflected a simplicity and practicality in keeping with the interest in classical styles in the late eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup>

In the first third of the nineteenth century, men's fashions followed this taste for perfect fit, but creativity in color and pattern emerged. Waistcoats could be cut from all manner of highly patterned cloth. Cravats were seen in equally flashy colors and patterns.<sup>59</sup>

Later in the century, during England's Victorian era, men's dress was somber. Suits came in dark colors. Only rarely did one see light-colored trousers.<sup>60</sup> Men wore a daytime and evening version of their suits, as well as less formal daytime suits. The formal evening suit included a frock coat, while formal daywear consisted of a variant called a morning suit. Informal daytime attire was known as the lounge suit, akin to the twenty-first century's suit. At home, men could wear comfortable and sometimes boldly decorated dressing gowns and smoking jackets, with contrasting trims and ties. The smoking jackets in particular became indulgences in fashion.<sup>61</sup>

In the late nineteenth century, a major change in men's fashion occurred. The Prince of Wales introduced sporting wear for shooting. Made of heavy wool or tweed and cut generously, this suit provided warmth and ease of movement necessary for

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<sup>58</sup> Ashelford, *Art of Dress*, 185-186; Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 25.

<sup>59</sup> Ashelford, 189.

<sup>60</sup> Ashelford, 216.

<sup>61</sup> Ashelford, 216-218; Baumgarten, 25.

leisure activities in the country.<sup>62</sup> These fashions, emanating from England, provide a point of contrast with out-dated or plain Mennonite clothes, since these styles represented the mainstream fashion in the Anglo-American Atlantic World.

### **The Grove Coat**

This coat, worn by Abraham Grove, is a man's frock coat made of linen and lined with wool (Figure 1).<sup>63</sup> Roughly spun, plain weave linen forms the outermost layer. The linen retains its natural color. The wool is more evenly spun in twill weave and dyed a dark reddish purple, or maroon. Plain weave linen – finer than the coat itself -- lines the sleeves. The main body of the coat consists of six pieces. Two large components extend from the shoulders to the bottom hem – mid thigh length to knee length. These pieces also cover most of the body around its girth. The section begins at the front center – where the coat fastens – to nearly the center back. The side back seams curve from the back of the armscye to two and one-eighth inches from the center back at waist-height. The seams gently curve toward the center back so that the coat hangs close to the wearer's body. From the waist to the shoulder two pieces create the back section of the coat. They meet at the center back and match the curve of the front pieces. The back pieces then curve around the back of the arm to form the rest of the armscye. They finally attach to the front pieces at the shoulder. Two

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<sup>62</sup> Ashelford, 240.

<sup>63</sup> The Grove Coat is in the collection of the Muddy Creek Farm Library, 298 Wheat Ridge Drive, Ephrata, PA 17522. The opportunity to view the coat was granted by Amos and Nora Hoover, librarians at Muddy Creek.

generously cut panels fill in the gap below the back waist. These panels are pleated and left open at the center to allow the wearer room to move – similar to present day tailcoats. The body is topped with a short stand up collar, which is one and three-quarters inches wide. Two trapezoidal pieces of linen form the collar, stitched at the center back and open at the front. The sleeves are pieced with two pieces each. They are seamed at the front and back of the arms. The sleeves end in turned back cuffs that are loosely stitched in place. Four buttons and nine decorative buttonholes decorate the front of the coat.<sup>64</sup> The buttonholes do not open to slide over a button since the fabric remains uncut; the stitches are nonfunctional.

The original maker of the coat used tiny, even running stitches on the long side seams and vertical sleeve seams of the coat. The hems, both inside and outside, are worked in small running stitches that catch only a few threads on the right side of the garment. The remainder of the coat is more complex. The center-back seam (seen from the inside with the coat open) is whipstitched. This construction technique indicates that the maker sewed separately the two halves of the coat, then lined, and stitched them together to form a whole coat. Each of the components shares this modular construction—the collar, the sleeves, front, side, and back panels.

The coat underwent many repairs throughout its life. Patches on the elbows now cover holes. The repairer folded the worn edges of the original linen toward the inside and placed a piece of similarly colored fabric inside the hole. He or she then loosely whipstitched the patch in place.<sup>65</sup> This mend appears to have been done by

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<sup>64</sup> The buttons are probably brass, based on visual identification.

<sup>65</sup> This technique is an example of reverse appliqué.

someone other than the original maker; the mending stitches do not match the small, evenly spaced stitches in the long seams. Seams at the neck and shoulders have been re-stitched with light-colored thread and large whipstitches similar to those that attach the elbow patches to the coat. The coat's collar received a new lining. The repairer used fabric similar to that on the elbows patches and made stitches of the same size and thread color as the previous listed repairs. Another repair was done with a different colored thread, perhaps at a different time. A single, large cross-stitch or "x" in dark thread was stitched on the outside of the coat, on the center-back seam, possibly to reinforce the seam and prevent further raveling of the seam.

The coat is in poor condition, with the repairs noted above. Additionally it suffers small, nearly circular losses in the lower left portion of the back, possibly damage by moths. The linen is dry, brittle and fragile.

The wearer, Abraham Grove, was a minister in Pennsylvania in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He was born in 1770. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, he received an ordination as a bishop. Shortly thereafter, in 1808, the church sent him to a community in Ontario, Canada, to serve as their first bishop. Family history claims that Abraham Grove wore the coat at his wedding, which occurred when he lived in Pennsylvania.<sup>66</sup> The coat is large enough for an adult to wear at forty-three and one half inches long and thirty-one and nine sixteenths inches at the waist. In fact, Melvin Gingerich wore the coat for a photograph in his

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<sup>66</sup> Letter from donor, Paul Hoover Grove, a descendent of Abraham Grove, to Muddy Creek Farm Library, located at Muddy Creek Farm Library.

book *Mennonite Attire through Four Centuries*.<sup>67</sup> This provenance, family history, and size date the coat to 1785 or 1790 - 1808.

### **Grove Coat Compared and Contrasted to Visual Sources**

This coat shares stylistic features typical of late-eighteenth century men's coats, although it occupied a space between formal and informal. It has a short, standing collar, a long tail, and front edges that gradually slope toward the back. These features appear on coats depicted by artists near the turn of the nineteenth century. Jacob Eichholtz, Lewis Miller, and John Lewis Krimmel painted and sketched people from southeastern Pennsylvania in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They offer insight into the ways in which people wore clothes, the kinds of clothes that people wore, the occasions for which they wore them, and the time-period in which they wore them, suggested by the date of the artwork. The probable production date of the artwork can compare and contrast to when those kinds of garments were fashionable, giving further information about the sitters.

Jacob Eichholtz grew up in a German family in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He received an English-language education because his parents sent him and his brothers to the inaugural class at Franklin & Marshall College. In 1787, the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Lancaster founded, with monetary contribution from Benjamin Franklin, a bilingual college, then called Franklin College. He then trained as a coppersmith but began painting portrait miniatures. He was successful enough as a

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<sup>67</sup>Gingerich, 43-45. Photocopies of the pages are included in the documentation available at Muddy Creek Farm Library.

miniaturist to transition to painting full portraits. Eichholtz painted many of Philadelphia and the Lancaster area's well-known residents. Eichholtz's portrait of Reverend Nathaniel W. Sample contextualizes Abraham Grove's coat in terms of the style and fashions of Lancaster in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Eichholtz's portrait of Reverend Nathaniel W. Sample shows a man with graying hair dressed in a black suit (Figure 2).<sup>68</sup> Sample's coat appeared similar to Grove's coat in several stylistic details. First, Sample's coat shared the short standing collar seen on Grove's coat. This type of collar was typical of men's coats throughout much of the eighteenth century; they fell out of fashion between the 1790s and 1800's in favor of a longer, turned-back collar.<sup>69</sup> Sample wore this standing collar coat for his portrait in 1810, when many of Eichholtz's sitters wore coats with turned back collars. For example, Eichholtz's portrait of, Samuel Patterson, painted before 1810, the same year as Sample's portrait, shows the sitter in a black coat with a turned down collar and lapels.<sup>70</sup> A man's coat in the Chester County (PA) Historical Society's collections, dated 1790 -1810, also provides an example of the newer fashion for a turned back collar and lapels, separated with a single notch.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> *Reverend Nathaniel Sample* (First Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania) in Thomas Ryan, *Jacob Eichholtz: Portrait Painter of the Early Republic*, (Lancaster County Historical Society: Lancaster Pennsylvania, 2003), 103.

<sup>69</sup> Baumgarten, 216-236.

<sup>70</sup> Ryan, 99.

<sup>71</sup> Ryan, 99; Burnston, 59. Burnston provides a scale drawing of her interpretation of the pattern pieces on page 61, which shows and explains the construction of the turned back collar. Coats in the style of Grove's had a collar made from a trapezoidal shaped

Like the collar, the front edges of Sample's coat resemble those of Grove's coat. Barely visible against his dark colored waistcoat, the front edge turns down from Sample's neck, creating a right angle where the collar terminates. The front edge drops straight down from the collar, instead of gently sloping from the neck to the chest, like the turned back collars. The other edge of Sample's coat, on proper right, illustrates this right angle well. Abraham Grove's coat shares this cut with Sample's coat. It too has a nearly right angle where the collar would close around the neck. Because Sample's coat is invisible below the waistline, it is not possible to determine if the front edge gently sweeps back below the hips like Grove's coat or if it turns more sharply at hip level like the newer coats with turned back collars.

Interestingly, both Sample and Grove received ordinations in their respective churches – Sample in the Presbyterian Church and Grove in the Mennonite church. It may be that wearing a coat with a stand collar, which would have been slightly old fashioned when Sample's portrait was painted, was associated with the position of a clergyman. Their profession may have affected Sample and Grove's choices of coats.

Like Jacob Eichholtz, Lewis Miller (1796-1882) recorded the people of southeastern Pennsylvania. Miller drew many sites and incidents that he encountered in his daily life, as a carpenter by trade, and in his travel in the eastern United States and in Europe. The sketches in his multi-volume collection, entitled *The Chronicle of York*, appear to have been drawn between 1799 and 1870.

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piece of fabric that when stitched to the coat formed a band around the neck, without folding over itself.

In Miller's sketch of *Wendel Meichel and the Cat, 1807*, a man in profile wears a coat with a standing collar, similar to both the Grove coat and the Sample coat (Figure 3).<sup>72</sup> While the full height depiction shows the entire coat, the man's arms raised in front of him obscure a portion of the front of the coat. Miller dated the incident in this sketch, and the coat depicted in it, to 1807, contemporary with Grove's coat and toward the end of the date range for it. It may be that Miller completed the actual sketch later. However, relying on his memory for dates provides a range for the Michael coat of 1805-1815. The coats provide a useful comparison, particularly for the comparison of collar, center front edge, pocket flap, and buttons.

Grove's and Michael's coats share many similarities. The collar in the Miller sketch behaves in the same way as that of Grove, with a right angle at the top and front of the wearer's chest. The front edges of the coat hang straight from the collar. Between approximately waist and hip height, the coat slants toward the back. Also at this point, a band of darker blue appears and thickens. This darker blue could be the lining of the coat showing as it folds back on itself a hint that the front edge could be straighter than it appears. Alternatively, the dark blue band could be a quick, loose depiction of trim or facing on the front edge of the coat drawn unevenly. The dark blue does not appear above the arm, suggesting that the dark blue band was facing, not

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<sup>72</sup> Donald A. Shelley, introduction to *Lewis Miller, Sketches and Chronicles : The Reflections of a Nineteenth Century Pennsylvania German Folk Artist* (York, PA; The Historical Society of York County, 1966), xiii-xxii. The reproduction of the sketch of Wendel Meichel (or Michael, as Miller identifies him in marginal notes) appears on page 58 of this volume.

trim. If this dark blue band is facing, the coat's front edge tapers toward the back between the hip and knee, like Grove's coat.

The coat in Miller's sketch shares the same pocket flap and buttons in the side back as Grove's coat. These buttons look like they attach to or near a vent or flap in the side back of the Michael's blue coat—as in Grove's coat. The coat drawn by Miller shares the stand collar, swept back front edge, pocket flaps, and rear vent with Grove's coat.

In summary, the three coats share the stand collar with sharp right angle between collar and coat front. The Grove coat and the Michael coat both have swept back front edge, pocket flaps, and rear vent. These comparisons suggest that Grove's coat was not unusual in the first decade of the nineteenth century in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Therefore, it would be incorrect to suggest that Grove's coat was a uniquely Mennonite object. Abraham Grove chose to wear a coat that was in many ways similar to those of other men of his time and place.

The suggestion that Grove's coat was not a 'Mennonite' coat is further corroborated by a Lewis Miller sketch of preacher, Henry Strickler. In marginal notes on the same page as the sketch, Miller described Strickler as a "Menonits" in one note, and a preacher in another.<sup>73</sup> In the sketch, Strickler wears a long, tan garment with a short cape over his shoulders. The garment covers reaches Strickler's calves, and the cape reaches his elbows. This garment appears to be an overcoat or a great coat, a garment worn outside of all other clothing including the coat to protect the wearer

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<sup>73</sup> *Henry Strickler*, sketch in Shelley, ed. *Lewis Miller*, 28.

from the elements.<sup>74</sup> Unlike Grove's coat, Strickler's coat is longer and has a shoulder cape. Additionally, it has no visible collar, either standing or turned back. While both Grove and Strickler were Mennonite, their coats differ too greatly to suggest that there was a typical Mennonite coat for men in the early nineteenth century.

A third artist, John Lewis Krimmel, (1786-1821), recorded life in southeastern Pennsylvania from the time he emigrated from the Germany duchy of Württemberg to Philadelphia in 1811.<sup>75</sup> Krimmel painted a wedding scene titled: *Country Wedding: Bishop White Officiating*.<sup>76</sup> Twelve people of various ages attended the ceremony held in a home. Of particular interest are the figures to the right of center in the composition, especially the white-haired man in the black coat. With a book in hand and gesturing to the couple holding hands, he officiated the wedding. The Bishop White of the painting's title wears a black coat with a standing collar like the Grove coat. White's coat also has pocket flaps and a decorative button toward the back at hip level like Grove's and Strickler's coats. The coat folds vertically from under White's outstretched arm to the button on the side back, unlike the unfastened coats of the young men on both sides of White. These folds show that White pulled the coat across his chest and attached it at his sternum, typical of men's coats in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>74</sup> Burnston, 63.

<sup>75</sup> John Lewis Krimmel, The Terra Foundation for American Art; [http://72.9.254.50/view/people/asitem/items\\$0040null:266/0](http://72.9.254.50/view/people/asitem/items$0040null:266/0); [Cited 4 December 2013.]

<sup>76</sup> John Lewis Krimmel, *Country Wedding: Bishop White Officiating* c1814 (Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts).

Of the four images of coats described above, three can be dated with some accuracy to the twenty-five year period between 1790 and 1815. Eichholtz painted his portrait of Sample in 1810, and Krimmel painted *Country Wedding* in 1814. Grove wore his coat between approximately 1790 and 1808 but possibly later. Miller dated the incident in his sketch 1807, but as noted above, he sketched from memory and may have misremembered the dates; therefore, the coat he depicted can be given a date range of 1805-1815.

This twenty-five year period was a time of significant change in men's coats. The collars folded down to resemble lapels making a V at the front neck. The front edges became straighter, and the waistlines, higher. The smooth sweep of the front edge from the chest to the knees became a straight, button down front ending at the natural waist in a horizontal line, and with tails in back. The four coats under discussion do not show this stylistic change. The coats of Grove, Sample, White, and Michael share the short, standing collar of the earlier style. Grove's and the coat in Miller's sketch share the side buttons. Grove's and White's coat share the tapered cutaway.

What does it mean that one object and three images depict men's coats in a slightly old-fashioned style? Were these coats 'plain' or 'Mennonite'? One historian suggests that there was, by 1800, a plain, Mennonite style. Jesse H Ziegler, Church of the Brethren historian, wrote that in approximately 1800, Brethren adopted plain dress that was associated, by that time, with Mennonites and Quakers. Men wore straight

collared coats, “buttoned to the neck” and broad brimmed hats.<sup>77</sup> As shown above, two coats, the object itself and Strickler’s coat, are associated with a Mennonite. Yet three of the four coats in images are worn by clergymen. One is associated with Presbyterian clergyman (Sample), one an Anglican clergyman (White), and one with a Mennonite (Stickler). Perhaps these men retained the older style of collar and front cut as a symbol of their modesty and devotion to things not of this world. Perhaps these portraits show that a type of plain dress was adopted in more religious communities than those of the Mennonites and Quakers, by clergymen in particular.

None of the four coats “buttoned to the neck,” another characteristic listed by Ziegler as plain. Grove’s coat has no functioning buttonholes. Sample’s coat opened to reveal his waistcoat underneath. Although his arms obscure the front of White’s coat, the diagonal folds running from beneath his arm to behind his hip indicate that the coat hangs loose, pulled front by his near shoulder reaching forward. Michael’s coat remained unbuttoned rather than worn “buttoned to the neck” as Zeigler described. Perhaps these coats were simply in an older style.

Why did four men chose a coat that was slightly old fashioned? For three of the four, their profession, member of the clergy, may suggest conservative dress. There were other reasons, however, including resources, availability, or personal preference. These men may not have concerned themselves with the latest fashions. Grove, Sample, Michael, and White may not have known or cared that their coats fell out of fashion years earlier. They may not have been able to afford new coats in the

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<sup>77</sup> Ira J. Landis, “The Plain Dutch.” *Mennonite Research Journal*, IX, no. 2 (April, 1968).

fashionable cut. Grove's coat, for instance, underwent many repairs –with patches where the elbows wore through, holes under the arms and on the bottoms of pockets, stains, holes and new lining in the back of the collar. These damages and repairs indicate the long use of this coat; the men in the portraits may have worn and repaired their coats for a long time as well. While Grove's coat is unusual if worn at the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century, it was not unique. It does not indicate a distinctive plain dress for men in the Mennonite church in the early nineteenth century.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> A German writer traveling in England wrote that Englishmen in Oxfordshire dressed “not as ours in course frocks, but with some taste, in fine good cloth.” This raises the question of a Germanic rural or semi-rural tradition of coarseness of dress. To what extent does this possibility apply to the Swiss-German Mennonites who formed most of the Lancaster Conference? Karl Philip Moritz, quoted in Jane Ashelford, 148.

## Chapter 4

### WOMEN'S CLOTHING

#### The Practice of Veiling

In the twenty-first century, women in plain and conservative groups within the Mennonite fellowship practice veiling, or the covering of their head and hair. For these women, the veil or covering identifies them, to each other and to outsiders, as Mennonites. This form of visual identification can create solidarity within the community and can alienate and control women.

Proponents of the practice say that the covering protects a woman's modesty, identifies her as a Christian woman, and reinforces the family and social structure, both within and outside of the Mennonite community.<sup>79</sup> Some of these people go so far as to call it a keystone in "structure of Christian non-conformity." In the twenty-first century, non-Mennonite people notice a woman's covering before other subtler characteristics of her non-conformist dress.<sup>80</sup> The covering visually distinguishes her from other groups of people more readily than other elements of her appearance. Within the Mennonite community, the covering reminds wearers of the "headship principle" – that men and women should relate to each other, as do God and Christ.

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<sup>79</sup> Merle Ruth, *The Significance of the Christian Woman's Veiling* (Crockett, KY: Rod and Staff Publishers, Inc., 1980).

<sup>80</sup> Merle Ruth, 9.

They are equal, cooperative, but ultimately the man has authority over the woman as God has authority over Christ, and Christ has authority over man. In the twentieth century, the veil served to reinforce traditional gender roles, although that association is weakening in favor of recognition as an ethnic or cultural marker.<sup>81</sup>

Until the late eighteenth and even early nineteenth centuries, many women wore caps, hats or other garments over their hair. Many paintings that depict women, at the age of young adulthood or older, show these garments. These examples include women from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds; they all cover their heads, showing the cap's role as a piece of everyday clothing. When did this article of dress become a symbol of non-conformity? This chapter examines the change of women's headwear in the Lancaster County Mennonite community from a piece of everyday clothing to a symbol of the wearer's membership in the Mennonite faith tradition.

### **Barbara Weaver Bare Cap I**

This lappet cap is made of white, plain-woven linen or cotton (Figure 4). The maker stitched together four pieces to make the cap. A long rectangle bent along the width forms the brim. Two small, nearly rectangular pieces attach to flared corners of the brim under the wearer's chin. A fourth nearly circular piece is stitched to the other long side of the brim. This crown piece is gathered at the top center; these gathers

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<sup>81</sup> Kraybill, 4.

create fullness at the top of the wearer's head. A drawstring forms the bottom hem of the crown. This drawstring would make the cap fit closer to the wearer's head. It measures six and five-eighths inches deep and five and one-quarter inches tall. These pieces are finished with a nearly invisible one-sixteenth-inch hem. The front brim has a much wider quarter-inch hem that may be another drawstring. An eight-inch tape attached to the small rectangles at the wearer's chin would have allowed her to tie the cap under the chin. The piece has survived in fair condition with only minor staining and the possible replacement of tapes.

This cap belonged to Mrs. Samuel (Barbara Weaver) Bare. Barbara Bare lived between August 29, 1791, and January 8, 1873.<sup>82</sup> She could have worn this cap at any time in her life. It follows the general stylistic form of caps during the first few decades of her life, and some evidence exists for the continued wearing of this style cap by Mennonite women well into the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>83</sup>

### **Barbara Weaver Bare Cap II**

Barbara Weaver Bare wore another cap, now housed in the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society collection (Figure 5). This cap has many similarities to the previous cap but is not identical. The construction of the second cap resembles that of the first. The only differences are the size and the configuration of the brim and ties. This cap is six and one-eighth inches deep and four and three-eighths inches tall.

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<sup>82</sup> Catalogue record, Barbara Weaver Bare cap I, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, Lancaster, PA.

<sup>83</sup> The dating of this object will be discussed below.

Again, a brim attaches to a crown with gathers at top and a drawstring at the nape of the neck. The brim in this cap features long tails or lappets that extend well past the wearer's chin, and could be pinned or possibly tied under the chin. This front edge is eleven and one-quarter inches from the top center to bottom of each lappet. The cap also features a pattern woven into the fabric. The pattern consists of four blocks aligned to form a one-eighth inch diaper or diamond design.

### **Bare Caps compared to Visual Sources**

In her book *Fitting and Proper*, Sharon Ann Burnston illustrated and described a cap that shares many features with Barbara Bare's caps.<sup>84</sup> The published cap, attributed to a Quaker woman Jane Pyle, dates to 1790-1810. This cap, like Barbara Bare's cap I, has a full crown with a rectangular brim. The back of the crown adjusts with a small drawstring. The cap is eight and three-quarters inches tall and nine and one-quarter inches from front to back. It is twice as tall as cap I and three inches larger from front to back. The published cap and cap I have ties attached to the bottom corners of the brim. The published cap features a small self-fabric ruffle that Barbara Bare's cap I lacks. These similarities can help date Barbara Bare's cap to 1790-1810.

The Jane Pyle cap has a Quaker provenance, while Barbara Bare's caps have a Mennonite provenance. The similarities in design of the Quaker and Mennonite caps indicate that this style of cap transcends the church affiliation of the wearers. The caps worn by the two women show similarities in style and construction. That is to say, because the caps of women of two different religious traditions share similarities,

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<sup>84</sup> Burnston, 35.

neither religious tradition enforces a form of headwear for women that is distinct from the other. Barbara Bare's caps, then, do not show a form of headwear for Mennonite women that is distinct from that for Quaker women.

More caps like those of Barbara Bare can be seen in paintings of the artists discussed above. Genre paintings and portraits depict versions of this style of cap with its long sidepieces. The painting *Portrait of the Artist and the Krimmel Family* by John Lewis Krimmel in 1820, shows both an older and a younger woman wearing caps.<sup>85</sup> This painting offers an interesting comparison with the Bare caps.

An older woman in the Krimmel painting wears a cap of opaque white fabric. It consists of a brim around the wearer's face and a full crown gathered into the brim a few inches behind the wearer's hairline. Additionally, the sitter tied the long lappets of her cap under her chin, in the way that Barbara Bare probably wore her caps, especially cap I with its attached ties. The cap in the painting, also like Barbara Bare's cap, is simple and solid colored. Only one ruffle around the woman's face decorates the cap. In this way, it is similar to Barbara Bare's caps. Barbara Bare's caps are less decorated than those of Krimmel's sitter. Cap I has no ruffles and cap II has only a tuck an inch from the front edge of the brim.

The cap of Krimmel's elderly sitter differs in construction from Barbara Bare's caps. The cap in the painting shows a line from the front edge to the join of the brim

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<sup>85</sup> John Lewis Krimmel, *Portrait of the Artist and the Krimmel Family*, 1820 (The National Gallery of Art, Washington) in Anneliese Harding, *John Lewis Krimmel: Genre Artist of the Early Republic* (Winterthur, DE: The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1994), 187, figure 309.

and the crown. This line is probably a seam; the cap in Krimmel's painting was made with a two-piece brim. This may result from a stylistic choice, but it also could indicate frugal use of fabric. The brim may not have fit on the uncut textile in one piece and so it was made in two pieces. Barbara Bare's first cap shares this pieced construction, but the brim of her cap consists of four pieces, with the lower corners of the brim attached to the single larger piece.

Of the other adults in the painting, two men and a younger woman in the back of the group, only the young woman wears a cap; her cap is sheer with ruffles and pink ribbon bows. Among sitters of Krimmel, this delicate and highly decorated cap appears more frequently than the simple, opaque version on the older sitter. However, most women depicted by Krimmel wear their hair uncovered but styled.<sup>86</sup>

Barbara Bare's cap I shares most similarities with the cap worn by the older woman in the Krimmel painting in that it can be tied with the attached tapes under the chin. Barbara Bare's cap II, though, is the more opaque of her two caps, like the Krimmel sitter's cap. Contrasted with the cap of the young woman in the same painting, the cap worn by the older woman and both of Barbara Bare's caps look simple and modest. They meekly cover the wearers' hair, part of their faces and necks, and use little if any superfluous material in decoration. By the 1820, this style cap may have looked old fashioned to young trend-following women but hardly out of place.

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<sup>86</sup> Harding, *John Lewis Krimmel*.

Jacob Eichholtz depicts more examples of this type of unadorned cap. Eichholtz painted several portraits of sitters wearing caps like Barbara Bare's two caps. First, he painted Sally Franciscus in 1811.<sup>87</sup> The woman in profile wears a simple black dress with layers of white neckerchiefs and a sheer white cap. Her cap lays flat against her head with little volume and fullness. It ties under her chin. A scalloped edge decorates the front of the brim. At the back, near the wearer's neck, the crown gathers into a tiny flounce, like the drawstring gathers of Barbara Bare's caps.

Sally Franciscus's cap shares several other construction features with those of Barbara Bare. In addition to the gathered back, the crown is lightly gathered into the brim. The decoration on the front of the brim may be lace stitched to the brim; it could also be a tuck like on Barbara Bare's patterned cap with a needlework treatment to give a lace-like appearance. While the caps share features, they differ in important ways. Sally Franciscus's cap is sheer while Barbara Bare's caps are opaque. Perhaps Eichholtz's sitter chose the sheer cap for greater formality. Additionally the pieces that connect under the wearer's chin are thinner and attached to the brim. In contrast, on Barbara Bare's caps, the pieces that tie under the chin attach only to part of the brim.

Jacob Eichholtz painted a portrait of his mother, Catharine Mayer Eichholtz, in 1815.<sup>88</sup> Catharine Eichholtz was sixty-seven when this portrait was painted. In this half-length portrait, Catharine Eichholtz sits in a three-quarter pose with her hands in her lap. She wears a high-waisted grey dress with a white neckerchief and a dark grey

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<sup>87</sup> *Catharine Mayer Eichholtz*, 1815 (LancasterHistory.org) in Ryan, 103.

<sup>88</sup> Ryan, 151.

shawl around her arms. She also wears a white cap that connects under her chin. This cap, like Sally Franciscus's cap, is sheer and close to the head. It has a small ruffle along the seam where the brim meets the crown. It also has a ruffle on the front edge of the brim where a piece of lace is attached to frame the face. The lace edging continues around the face to attach under the chin like Barbara Bare's and Sally Franciscus's caps. Catharine Eichholtz either tied her cap with a small ribbon or string or pinned it; no large knot can be seen. This cap has minimal decoration and full coverage, including attachment under the chin. These features show a similar level of reserve toward dress as Barbara Bare's caps. The women's preference for conservatism may be based on age or lifestyle, but since Catharine Eichholtz belonged to the Lutheran church, this style cap cannot identify religious membership.<sup>89</sup>

While Jacob Eichholtz painted single portraits rather than group portraits, he painted sitters of various ages. Younger women's headwear can be compared with that of older women. Younger women painted by Eichholtz wear sheer white caps with colorful ribbons tied around the brim; these caps end below the ear, without connecting below. Older women, by contrast, wear caps that more closely resemble the two caps of Barbara Weaver Bare, with their lappets pinned or tied under the chin. Like the Grove coat, this style of unadorned cap that attaches under the chin may be an older fashion that some women continued to wear because of preference or lack of exposure to newer styles.

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<sup>89</sup> Ryan, 19.

From the evidence in the Krimmel and Eichholtz paintings, women after a certain point in their lives tended to wear older styles. They chose these styles for several reasons. They may have felt that the older styles suited them better. They may have chosen older styles for the greater modesty that they offered.<sup>90</sup> Barbara Bare, aged twenty-nine in the year 1820, was hardly an old woman between 1790-1820, when she most likely would have worn the caps. Since this style of cap is seen frequently on older women, they and Barbara Bare may have chosen this style of cap for the modesty it offered to them. Older women, or modest women, across at least three religious traditions, chose to wear these caps that tie under the chin. Because this style of cap appears in these various contexts, it can be suggested that Mennonites did not enforce a unique dress code for women's headwear in the early nineteenth century.

Small amounts of evidence, however, suggest that later in that century elements of a distinctive mode of dressing appear. A photograph of a woman and her daughter from 1862 shows the woman wearing a cap with uncanny similarity to the Bare caps (Figure 6).<sup>91</sup> It features the same small ruffle at the front edge of the brim. The brim extends into lappets with ties; the ties can fasten with a bow under the chin. The woman, Elizabeth (Mumma) Erb, was thirty-two at the time the photograph was taken. She was born after this type of cap fell out of fashion but wore it into adulthood. This photograph may provide an early example of a distinctively Mennonite style of dress. Wearers may have consciously fossilized this type of cap in rejection of mainstream fashion. They may have chosen an outdated form of headwear

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<sup>90</sup> Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal*, 176.

<sup>91</sup> *Mother and Daughter*, 1862, in Siegrist, 36.

to convey, both within and without the community, their devotion to matters not of this world. Toward the end of the century, headwear developed into a form unique to the Lancaster County Mennonite women, as discussed below. This unique form, called a veil or covering, symbolized a woman's membership in the church and her rejection of worldly things, including fashion.

### **Anna Rudy Bare cap**

This piece of headwear, worn by Anna Rudy Bare, is white with black ties (Figure 7). Made of sheer, finely woven fabric, it consists of two pieces: a trapezoidal brim that frames the face and a nearly circular crown that is pleated to fit the brim. Black ribbon ties attach to the front corner of the brim near the wearer's chin. The covering is four and three-quarters inches deep and five and one-eighth inches tall overall. The brim alone is three inches deep; the crown is large enough to cover only the back of the wearer's head. The black ribbon ties are nine inches long and unfinished at the hem. The bottom of the crown contains a small drawstring. When worn the drawstring would fall on the nape of the neck. The string is partially drawn and, in that position, measures three inches from left seam to right seam.

The cap remains in good condition. Currently the color is a pale, dull yellow. Compared against the headwear in paintings by Krimmel and Eichholtz, the cap was probably white. It has likely yellowed due to age. Otherwise it survived intact.

This piece of clothing is attributed to Mrs. Gabriel (Anna Rudy) Bare, according to donor information. Anna Bare was born on February 1, 1810, and lived until April 24, 1905. This piece of headwear probably dates from the last two to three

decades of her life. Its small size and sheer material indicate the late date. Similar headgear, called prayer coverings or prayer veils, of similar shape and material begin to appear at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>92</sup>

Photographs provide examples of coverings at the end of the nineteenth century. These photographs document the increasing uniformity of dress among members of the Mennonite church. One of those photographs, *Swing in Summertime*, dated 1898, shows a group of young people, twelve of whom wear coverings (Figure 8).<sup>93</sup> Of those twelve, four young women pose in such a way as to offer a clear view of their coverings. These four coverings closely match Anna Bare's covering. On the left side of the photograph, two girls sit on the swing and face away from the camera. Their heads are turned so that their profile faces the camera. This angle shows their coverings. The coverings of the girls on the swing are very similar to each other. Both are made of sheer material with a roughly trapezoidal brims and pleated crown pieces. Thin white ties attach to the points of the brim nearest to the wearers' faces. The shape of the brims is nearly identical to the Anna Bare cap. The form of the crowns and the small, regularly spaced pleats allow them to fit into the back of the brim in a manner similar to Anna Bare's cap. Likewise, the ties attach in the same place on the photographed coverings and the Bare covering. Although Anna Bare's cap strings are black, not white like the photographed coverings, the headgear date from the same

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<sup>92</sup> *Swing in Summertime*, 14; *Fannie Andrews*, 31; *Mother and Child*, 81; *Mennonites of Manor Township*, 88; *Pumping Water*, 101, in Siegrist.

<sup>93</sup> Siegrist, 14.

time; two girls in the same photograph, one on the far left and one on the far right, wear coverings with black ties.

Another photograph, *Mennonites of Manor Township*, portrays four girls in somber dress with coverings on their heads (Figure 9).<sup>94</sup> Three girls on the left wear coverings with black ties; their companion on the far right wears a covering with white ties. Otherwise, the four coverings are nearly identical to each other. They share a brim that covers their hair to within a few inches of the hairline and a crown pleated into the brim. The coverings share these characteristics with Anna Bare's cap.

A final photograph shows a young woman at a water pump. The photo, entitled *Pumping Water*, is dated 1900 (Figure 10).<sup>95</sup> The young woman wears a white covering with a black ribbon or tie. The covering shares the same front edge as the previous coverings. The crown rises above the profile of the head in a similar manner, suggesting similar means of construction. The single black tie attaches to the corners of the covering. Anna Bare's cap has black ribbon ties with unfinished ends. These ends may have been cut from an arrangement like that seen in the photograph.

These three photographs contain images of coverings similar in form to Anna Bare's cap. The dates assigned to these photographs range from 1898 to 1900. A similar date range can be assigned to the Bare cap because of the similarity.

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<sup>94</sup> *Mennonites of Manor Township*, in Siegrist, 88.

<sup>95</sup> *Pumping Water*, in Siegrist, 101.

This type of headwear held religious and cultural significance that other forms of headwear lacked. Women of most stations in life wore earlier types of caps, like those examined above, for most occasions.<sup>96</sup> These caps allowed the women to maintain their modesty. They also served a utilitarian purpose to protect the hair from dirt and dust. Later on in the nineteenth century, simple updos became the fashion; outdoors, women wore decorated, wide brimmed hats.<sup>97</sup> These styles stand in contrast to the austerity of plain headwear. A photograph, *Cooling Off*, offers a visual comparison (Figure 11). In it, ten young women, four young men, and a girl pose outside. Of the young women, one wears plain dress. Her dark ensemble stands out from the light colored dress of her companions. Moreover, her hair tightly pulled back and bonnet contrast to the hairstyles and hats of her friends. The remaining nine young women wear their hair loosely arranged on their heads. Four wear wide brimmed hats with ribbons or flowers.

Other contemporary photographs show young women in fashionable dress. In *Ready for a Party* and *Trading Hats*, young women wear their hair loosely styled and adorned with wide brimmed hats (Figure 12). They wear blouses and long skirts.<sup>98</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, plain dress developed a set of rules to be followed. The garments chosen by wearers of plain dress contrasted and opposed the

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<sup>96</sup> According Baumgarten, caps, along with aprons, neckerchiefs, and mitts, protected both the wearer and her clothing. 116.

<sup>97</sup> *Cooling off* in Siegrist, 67.

<sup>98</sup> *Ready for a Party*, 13, and *Trading Hats*, 38, in Siegrist.

mainstream fashions. In the *Cooling Off* photo, the plain woman's tight, close fitting headwear and hairstyle contrasts to the broad, loose hats and hairstyles of her peers in mainstream fashions. At this point in time, the generic cap became the specific veil or covering, a main signifier of a woman's membership in the Mennonite faith.

### **Bonnets**

Women during most of the nineteenth century wore bonnets. In the mid-1850s, a wide flat hat came into fashion, giving women an alternative to the bonnet for the first time in about half a century.<sup>99</sup> Two bonnets, held in the collection of the Mennonite Historical Society, are associated with members of a Mennonite congregation. They can be compared to bonnets worn by women who were not Mennonites by looking at bonnets depicted in two paintings by John Lewis Krimmel of scenes in Philadelphia.

#### **Magdalena (Landis) Herr Bonnet**

This black bonnet features a brown lining and a quilted brim (Figure 13). The bonnet is soft; quilting in the brim allows it to keep its shape. Black silk lined with brown cotton forms the garment.<sup>100</sup> Unidentified wadding is sandwiched between the two fabrics to form the quilted brim; the whole brim, inside and out, is covered in bias-cut black silk. The brim, trapezoidal in shape, is five and one-eighth inches deep. The crown, round and gathered to form a dome that encircles the back of the head, is

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<sup>99</sup> Ashelford, 221.

<sup>100</sup> Fiber was identified by catalogue records and confirmed by visual analysis.

eight and three-quarters inches tall and sixteen inches long ear to ear. It is set on the straight of the fabric grain.

A deep ruffle or flounce is attached to the bottom of the bonnet. The three and one-fourth-inch-long strip of fabric is gathered and stitched to the bottom of the crown. It is ungathered and stitched to the bottom of the brim. This piece, like the brim of the bonnet, is set on the bias. A double row of running stitches holds the turned-under edges of the flounce together. The flounce would cover the neck of the wearer.

The black silk bonnet is lined with medium brown, plain-woven brown textile. The brown fabric seems to be glazed due to its shiny surface. On the inside of the brim, the black silk is loosely tacked to the body of the bonnet with whipstitches. Tiny quilting stitches serve to hold in place the layers of fabric. The stitches form dimples in the quilting—lozenge shaped depressions due to the bias of the fabric. This treatment creates a decorative and visually interesting effect. The lining of the brim is turned toward the outside to form a one and one-eighth-inch deep cuff. This cuff terminates in self-piping. The seam where the brim meets the back is also decorated with piping.

The bonnet is in good condition overall. It shows some evidence of wear on the inside of the bottom corners of the brim. The back has deteriorated; the silk has broken or abraded, exposing the lining underneath. On the bottom left of the back portion are three small pinholes.

This black bonnet was purportedly worn by Magdalena Landis at her wedding to Rudolph Herr in 1852. Herr family Bible records contained copies of their marriage

certificate, the births of their children and their deaths. Additionally, according to manuscripts of Bishop Jacob Hochstetter, it was “not permitted to marry outside of the church” and “a bishop is not permitted to perform a marriage outside of the church.”<sup>101</sup> Since Magdalena and Rudolph’s marriage is well documented in the family Bible, it is almost certain that the couple followed these recommendations and traditions of their religion.<sup>102</sup>

John Lewis Krimmel painted genre scenes in addition to portraits. In these genre scenes, he depicted people in less formal dress than in portraits, and he painted outdoor scenes. Some of these informal, outdoor paintings show women wearing black bonnets like Magdalena Landis Herr’s bonnet. Two women in *Fourth of July Celebration in Centre Square Philadelphia, 1819*, wear black bonnets.<sup>103</sup> Although it is not certain, these women probably were not Mennonite, since this painting depicts a civic celebration in the city, where Mennonites were less common than in Lancaster County. In the lower right corner of the painting, a woman sits at a table with printed material. She wears a long sleeved dress, possibly with a shawl around her shoulders. On her head are two pieces of clothing. She wears the black bonnet on the outside. This bonnet has a wide, stiff brim that extends in front of her face. The crown of the bonnet sits far back on her head, matching the construction of Magdalena Herr’s

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<sup>101</sup> Ruth, 1195.

<sup>102</sup> Herr Family papers, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society.

<sup>103</sup> *Fourth of July Celebration in Centre Square Philadelphia, 1819*, (Historical Society of Pennsylvania) in Harding, 168, figure 277.

bonnet. The bonnet on the woman in Krimmel's painting lacks the flounce at the neck and ties under the chin of the Herr bonnet.

Another woman in the same painting by Krimmel wears a similar bonnet. She sits with her back to a tent on the left side of the painting. The bonnet also has a wide stiff brim that covers the wearer's face; in fact, this woman turns three-quarters away from the viewer, and her bonnet's brim hides her face, except for a sliver of her chin. The crown of the bonnet sits toward the back of her head like the other black bonnet in the painting and the Herr bonnet. Since this woman turned away from view, she shows the back of her bonnet. The back of the crown piece folds and creases vertically. The Herr bonnet features the same pattern of vertical folds and creases. This similarity indicates that the bonnet in the painting and the bonnet worn by Magdalena Herr underwent similar use patterns. The bonnets in the 1819 painting are so similar to the bonnet worn in 1852 that the Mennonite bonnet is distinctive only in its old-fashioned style.

### **Sarah Ann Herr Bonnet**

Made of black twill-woven fabric, Sarah Ann Herr's bonnet features a deep stiff brim, circular crown, and a flounce at the neck (Figure 14). The stiffened crown is pleated and stitched to the outside of the brim. The gathered seam allowance of the crown forms a decorative ruffle around the bonnet. The flounce is pleated and stitched to the back of the crown. Otherwise, it is unadorned. An open weave, stiffened material lines the crown. The bonnet is nine and one-half inches deep, seven and one-quarter inches tall at the front and six inches tall at the back. The style of bonnet dates

from the first half of the nineteenth century, although similar styles appear on Mennonite women into the last quarter of the century.<sup>104</sup>

Sarah Ann Herr lived between 1825 and 1908. She married twice, first to a Mr. Groff, then to Amos Herr. He was a minister in the Willow Street- Strasburg district. The marriage was the second for both Sarah and Amos. Amos took a progressive stance with his congregation; he supported Sunday schools and English language services.<sup>105</sup>

Sarah Herr's bonnet shows little to no indication of her husband's progressivism. The black fabric with minimal decoration is similar to the bonnets described above. Its deep brim and conical structure resemble two bonnets depicted in a watercolor by John Lewis Krimmel, painted in 1812. The watercolor, entitled *Sunday Morning in Front of Arch Street Meeting House*, shows a group of three women, a man and a young boy walking down the sidewalk.<sup>106</sup> Each of the three women wears a bonnet, and each bonnet is different from the other two. The bonnet on

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<sup>104</sup> Headgear - Coiffure Accessories 1801-1849, Plate 025, Costume Institute Fashion Plates, The Metropolitan Museum of Art Libraries, <http://libmma.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15324coll12/id/165>. [Cited 25 August 2014.]

<sup>105</sup> Martin Weaver, *Mennonites of Lancaster Conference containing Biographical Sketches of Mennonite Leaders; Histories of Congregations, Missions, and Sunday Schools; Record of Ordinations; and other Interesting Historical Data*. (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1931) 61-62.

<sup>106</sup> *Sunday Morning in Front of Arch Street Meeting House* 1812, (Metropolitan Museum of Art) in Harding, 27, figure 30.

the viewer's left most closely resembles Sarah Herr's bonnet. It shares the black color and rigid structure of the Herr's bonnet. Both bonnets have a deep brim that could cover the wearer's face. They also share a crown that swells from the brim in pleats and gathers; the crown of the bonnet in the painting appears softer than Sarah Herr's stiffened crown. Moreover, the bonnet in the watercolor appears shiny and slick in texture by Krimmel's addition of sharp white reflections, while Sarah Herr's bonnet is matte in texture with diffuse highlights. Dressed in dark colors with her bonnet far back on her head, this woman in Krimmel's watercolor provides an example of one way that Sarah Herr may have worn her bonnet.

Another woman in the watercolor provides an alternative example of how the bonnet may have been worn. This woman, in profile and on the viewer's far right, wears light colored clothing and bonnet; despite the color difference between her bonnet and Sarah Herr's bonnet, similarities can be seen. Like Herr's bonnet and the dark bonnet in the same watercolor, this light bonnet has a deep, conical brim. The woman wears it so that her face is shielded; it is entirely hidden from view by the brim of her bonnet. Unlike the dark bonnet, this example seems to have a structured crown. The sharp edge between the highlight toward the front of the crown and the shadow on the backside indicate a defined edge or fold, unlike the darker bonnet in the image with a much softer and more rounded crown. In this way, the lighter bonnet more closely resembles Herr's bonnet in its stiffness.

While the bonnets in the watercolor share many features with Sarah Herr's bonnet, they do have some differences. Both painted bonnets lack the ruffles of Herr's bonnet. As described above, Herr's bonnet has ruffles where the pleats of the crown

join the brim. These ruffles are not only decorative; they also provide a finished edge for the join, while allowing the maker to attach the outer fabric directly onto the stiff lining, without assembling the outer fabric first. Without the ruffles, as in the painted examples, the maker would have used a different construction technique to turn under the edges of the pleated crown and attach it with a smooth seam to the brim. The choice for or against ruffles may have been based on their decorative value or a difference in preferred technique of the maker.

Nearly eighty-five years later, a photograph recorded a bonnet in this style. In 1897, a family had their photograph taken at Niagara Falls (Figure 15).<sup>107</sup> In this photograph, mother and daughter wear bonnets in the same form as Sarah Herr's bonnet. Both bonnets in the photo have a smooth stiff brim evidenced by the even curve around the face and the flat plane from the front edge of the bonnet to back edge. They also feature a pleated, circular crown that rises above the surface of the brim. The mother's bonnet shows a flounce at the back, covering her neck, like that seen on the Sarah Herr bonnet. The bonnets in the photo are different colors; the mother wears a dark colored bonnet that matches the color of the rest of her ensemble. Likewise, the daughter wears a light colored bonnet in the same color as the rest of her dress. Sarah Herr may have worn her bonnet until the end of her life in 1908.

This style of bonnet dates from as early as the 1810s; Mennonite women as late as the 1890s, however, wear similar bonnets. This means that this specific type of bonnet may have become fossilized in the codification of women's late nineteenth

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<sup>107</sup> *A Gift Trip to Niagara Falls*, in Siegrist, 25.

century plain dress. The bonnet can offer a great deal of modesty to a woman when she goes out in public. The wide brims cover much of the face, as seen in *Sunday Morning in Front of Arch Street Meeting House*. The flounces at the neck cover what little skin may show above the collar of a cape dress. Moreover, the bonnet, like the veil or covering, stands out from the mainstream, stylish dress of women outside the Mennonite church. It marks the wearer as different from the majority. Wearers of bonnets in this style, in the late nineteenth century, consciously and clearly reject the fashion of the mainstream in favor of their own distinctive form of dress.

## Chapter 5

### **THE MEANINGS OF MENNONITE PLAIN CLOTHING AS ANTI-FASHION**

Plain dress in the twentieth century can express multiple meanings. Plain dress may symbolize patriarchy, confinement, gender definitions and roles, religious expression or deference. Meanings change over time, but for those who believe in and support plain dress, the reasons for support remain largely unchanged from those given by church leaders. In addition, women created their own agency within these frameworks and constructed systems of self-regulation.<sup>108</sup>

Mennonites conflated “fashion” with vanity and pridefulness – a concept called worldliness. The adoption of plain dress shows the wearer’s abandonment of those worldly values in favor of a simpler, more Christ-like way of life. The Church claimed that by wearing plain dress instead of fashionable clothes the wearer could devote the resources that would have been spent on fashionable clothing to personal betterment or to churchly activities. These sentiments took shape in the last part of the nineteenth century. Before that, proponents infrequently spoke in favor of a specific mode of dress for their fellow church members.

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<sup>108</sup> Pederson, Jane Marie, “She May be Amish Now, but She Won’t Be Amish Long: Anabaptist Women and Antimodernism” in Schmidt, Kimberly D., Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Steven D. Reschly, eds. *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003. 339-363 This chapter discusses these and other layers of meaning of covering and cape dress.

John Funk voiced his opinions on the matter in the late eighteenth century. According to a transcript of his 1770 sermon, John Funk talks about four commands of Christ: “1. To “love one another”; 2. to deny ourselves; 3. To “watch and pray” until God gives the “inner impulse” to repent; 4. (The greatest) to love God with ones whole soul spirit and strength.” He also spoke of two forms of disobedience: “materialism and pride in dress.”<sup>109</sup> Unfortunately, Funk did not elaborate on his vision for a solution to “materialism and pride in dress,” but his direct mention of pride in dress indicates that John Funk believed in simple, modest clothing for members of the Mennonite church. Abraham Grove and Barbara Bare wore clothing that could be considered modest in contrast to fashion trends of their day and to their non-Mennonite peers.

While the coat and caps fail to meet standards of plain dress in the twenty-first century, they may have met expectations for modest clothing like those implied in John Funk’s sermon. The less-than-fashionable cut and rough, possibly homespun, textile of Grove’s coat falls into the category of modest. Coats of similar cut were depicted on men ordained in other churches. The association with this style of coat with ordained men contributes to its wearers’ disinterest in materialism and pride in dress.

The caps follow equally modest patterns. The wide coverage of the head and the small amounts of decoration show a demure interpretation of the fashionable caps. Moreover, the style was worn by older women and a Quaker woman, who were

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<sup>109</sup> John Ruth, *The Earth is the Lord’s*, Chapter 11. Anonymous Sermon, 1770, John F Funk papers, AMC “Archives of Mennonite church, Goshen.”

known for increased modesty. The minimal decorations on Barbara Bare's caps show a detachment from materialism. Without the ruffles and bows, these caps use less material and therefore cost less. They show reduced value placed on expensive material goods. While these qualities may not be enough to qualify these caps as plain by today's standards, but they may have satisfied people like Funk who called for less materialistic and prideful clothing.

Additionally, a member of the Groffdale Mennonite conference expressed concern toward clothing. A slip of paper from the church's Saur Bible reads, "All sisters from now on, when they prepare anything woolen in clothing, shall make it turtledove-colored or, as is said, lead-colored, and all linen is to be white. Cotton, when they make capes (hals-tücher) or aprons, is also to be white or light blue. What they make for stockings is to be white or light blue – let this not be neglected."<sup>110</sup> The purpose of these directions is not clear from this short ephemeral statement. Were these proscriptions for women's clothing exclusively or were they also directed at men's clothing? Was the statement directed at women because they often produced the clothing for both genders? Why different colors for different types of textile? Were textiles assumed to be used for specific kinds of clothing? What of Grove's linen coat? Was it white? Its lining is not turtledove or lead colored; was it?

Kate Haulman introduces a concept of antifashion into her discussion in *The Politics of Fashion*. Antifashion, as Haulman explains it, identifies with modes of

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<sup>110</sup> Groffdale church records (Congregation), 1811-1823 papers. Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Lancaster, PA. Includes a note that it was found in 1783 German bible in safe at Groffdale. The note is signed Grace Wenger. No further information about the date of the note or the signer is available.

dressing that challenge the mainstream fashion. Antifashion can appear in many forms, and it did in early America. Wealthy men dressed with a cultivated carelessness of an academician or religious person to indicate their devotion to the mind or the spirit. Quakers made antifashion a uniform that carefully trod the fine line between plainness and excess. The Quaker definition of plain forbade trimmings like ribbon, lace and embroidery, but allowed the use of any type of fabric within a prescribed color palette. Their clothes followed closely the overall silhouette of fashion trends, but stood out for its lack of ornamentation. In this way, the Quakers created an antifashion that spoke of their devotion to spiritual matters.<sup>111</sup>

Can Mennonite clothing be considered antifashion? Does this sentiment of non-conformity apply to the clothing studied in this paper? The Mennonite clothing described above demonstrates subtle adoption of an antifashion. It began subtly, with minor differences from the trends of the day in a manner similar to the Quaker antifashion described by Haulman. Mennonites wore plainer fabrics, fewer ribbons and trim, and slightly outdated or modest versions of the clothing worn by members of other faith traditions. The Grove coat and Barbara Bare caps illustrate this subtle resistance to fashion. Later in the century, dress became more uniform and displayed stronger characteristics of antifashion. Caps persisted among Mennonite women when women outside of the Mennonite church stopped wearing them. The head coverings took on a new and unique form seen in the Barbara Bare covering. Dresses followed fashionable silhouettes but excluded trimmings. They included the cape for

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<sup>111</sup> Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 21.

increased modesty, something not worn by women besides those baptized in the Mennonite church. These later nineteenth century clothing items more clearly challenge mainstream fashion by obviously differing from it.

Mennonite clothing in the early nineteenth century consisted of simple, modest versions of fashionable dress. The clothing lacked much decoration, sometimes lagged behind major trends, and generally resembled the clothing of the middling people in Lancaster County. By the middle of the nineteenth century, some elements of that simple, unremarkable dress persisted well beyond its fall from fashionable favor. The cap and bonnet styles discussed in this paper fit this classification. The differences remain subtle at this time, but by the end of the nineteenth century, plain clothing had been codified into a distinctive form of dress. The bonnets, again, and the covering described previously fall into this later mode of dressing.

As the nineteenth century approached its end, members of the Mennonite community placed heavy emphasis on symbols of gender in clothing. Mennonite women wore simple dresses while mainstream fashions called for shirts and tailor-mades inspired by men's sportswear. They kept their heads and hair covered in accordance with Scriptures, which in turn showed their modesty and femininity.

As congregations' representatives express concern over their perceived loss of integrity of church members, visual cues of membership grow in importance. Therefore, as the nineteenth century ended, church members created and accepted a plain dress code that set them apart visually from members of other faith traditions. This created cohesiveness within the Mennonite community and separateness from the mainstream.

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## Appendix A

### OBJECT IMAGES AND VISUAL SOURCES



Figure 1 Abraham Grove coat. Collection of the Muddy Creek Farm Library. Permission to photograph courtesy of librarians Amos and Nora Hoover. Photograph by the author.



Figure 2 *Reverend Nathaniel W. Sample*, 1810, Jacob Eichholtz. From the collection of the First Presbyterian Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Permission to photograph courtesy of Roger Stemen. Photograph by the author.



Figure 3 *Wendel Meichel and the Cat, 1807*, Lewis Miller. Lewis Miller Sketchbooks, page 23, from the collection of the York County Heritage Trust, York, PA. Permission to print courtesy of Amanda Eveler. Image provided by York County Heritage Trust.



Figure 4 Barbara Weaver Bare cap I. Collection of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of curator Carolyn Wenger. Photograph by the author.



Figure 5 Barbara Weaver Bare cap II. Collection of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of curator Carolyn Wenger. Photograph by the author.



Figure 6 *Mother and Daughter*. Joanne Hess Siegrist Collection, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of librarian Steve Ness.



Figure 7 Anna Rudy Bare cap. Collection of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of curator Carolyn Wenger. Photograph by the author.



Figure 8 *Swing in Summertime.* Joanne Hess Siegrist Collection, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of librarian Steve Ness.



Figure 9 *Mennonites of Manor Township.* Joanne Hess Siegrist Collection, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of librarian Steve Ness.



Figure 10 *Pumping Water.* Joanne Hess Siegrist Collection, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of librarian Steve Ness.



Figure 11 *Cooling Off.* Joanne Hess Siegrist Collection, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of librarian Steve Ness.



Figure 12 *Ready for a Party and Trading Hats.* Joanne Hess Siegrist Collection, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of librarian Steve Ness.



Figure 13 Magdalena Landis Herr bonnet. Collection of Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of curator Carolyn Wenger. Photograph by the author.



Figure 14 Sarah Ann Herr bonnet. Collection of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of curator Carolyn Wenger. Photograph by the author.

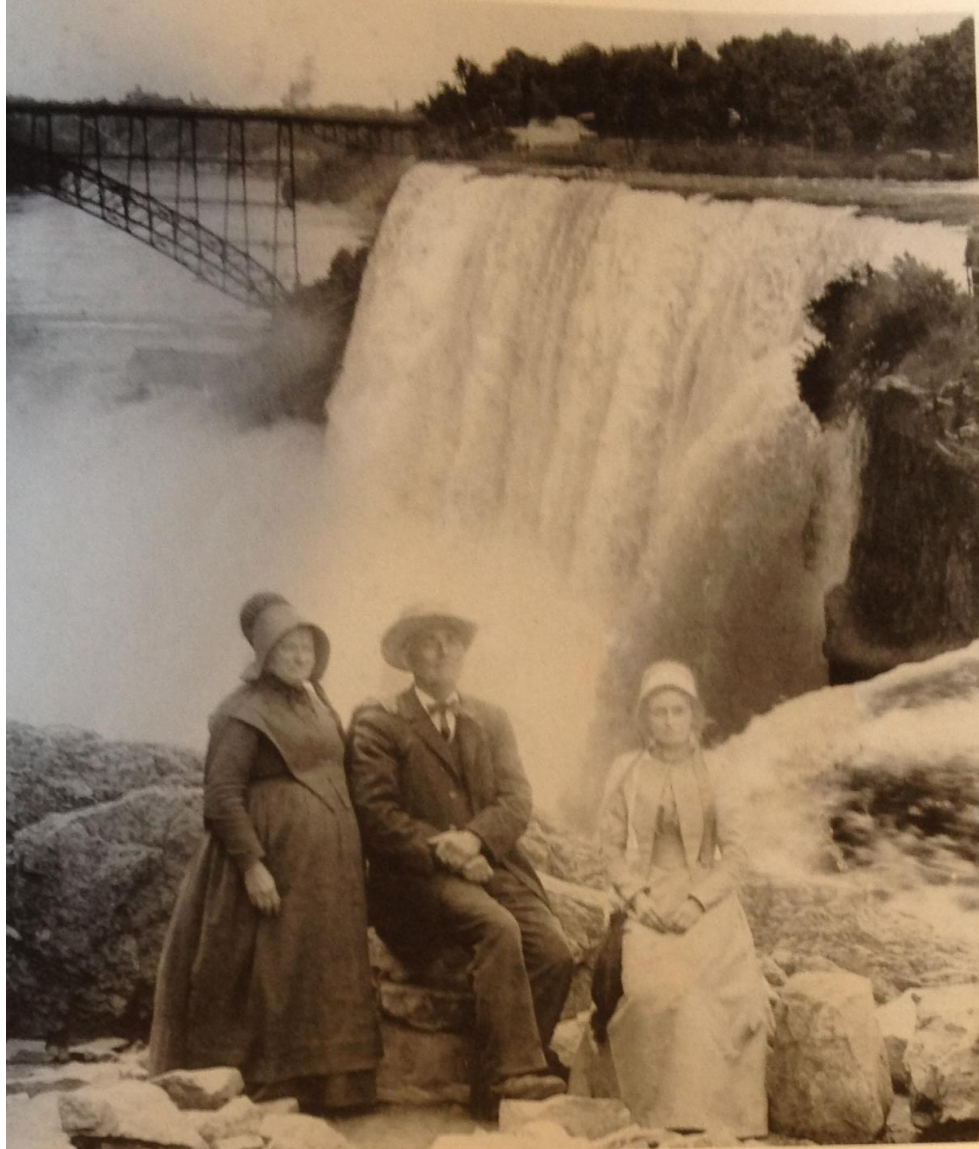


Figure 15 Niagara Falls. Joanne Hess Siegrist Collection, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society. Permission to photograph courtesy of librarian Steve Ness.

## Appendix B

### IMAGE PERMISSIONS

240 Wolgemuth Drive  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania 17602  
(717) 669-9700  
vapyle@gmail.com

Mr. and Mrs. Amos and Nora Hoover  
Muddy Creek Farm Library  
248 Cider Mill Road  
Ephrata, Pennsylvania 17522

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Hoover:

How are you both? Several summers ago, I visited Muddy Creek Farm Library with Alan Keyser to look at early Mennonite clothing in your collection. I am finally finishing that project. I would like your permission to use several of the photographs that I took of the Abraham Grove coat. I would use these images in my Master's thesis for the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture. This thesis will be housed at the University of Delaware Library in both physical and digital formats, the Winterthur Library. I would also like to send copies to the Lancaster County institutions where I researched, namely Muddy Creek Farm Library, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, and LancasterHistory.org. If this is acceptable to you, please enclose a note granting your permission for use of my photographs in this thesis.

Best regards,



Tori Pyle

PS I have photographs of other objects (the Groffe Fliegel and Buckwalter cap) that I would like to deliver with a copy of my thesis.

*yes, Victoria Anne Pyle - July 11, 2014*  
*We give you permission to publish what ever you*  
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*We not only approve, but feel gratified that our collection*  
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*Amos B. Hoover*



Victoria Pyle <vapyle@gmail.com>

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**thesis image permissions**

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Carolyn Wenger <cwenger@lmhs.org>  
To: Tori Pyle <vapyle@gmail.com>

Fri, Jul 11, 2014 at 3:59 PM

Dear Tori,

This is to grant you permission to use in your thesis the photos that you took of the head coverings of Barbara Weaver, Anna Bare, Magdalena Herr, and Sarah Ann Herr.  
Regarding the photos in Siegrist's book, you may contact our librarian, Steve Ness, [sness@lmhs.org](mailto:sness@lmhs.org), regarding getting digital images of those. Best wishes in your writing, and please save a copy of your thesis for us!



Victoria Pyle <vapyle@gmail.com>

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## Image permissions for Master's Thesis

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Steve Ness <library@lmhs.org>  
To: Tori Pyle <vapyle@gmail.com>

Tue, Jul 15, 2014 at 9:31 AM

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