

In This Issue

Board President Welcome

Memorial Day Services

The Confer Families of Advent
Cemetery

Emma Confer Watson: Holts Hollow
Reporter



“Doings” of the Advent Historical Society

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The Advent Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation [EIN 84-2266811] qualified to receive tax-deductible gifts to support the work of the Society.

Donations in the form of checks should be made payable to The Advent Historical Society and mailed to:

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Credit card and PayPal donations can now also be accepted online via our website, our Facebook page, and by using the following QR code:



(Directions: Use the camera on your smart phone to scan the QR code, which will allow you to access the online donation site for Advent Historical Society.)

Board President Welcome

Dear friends of the Advent Historical Society:

The past year has been unlike any other in recent memory. Despite the need to socially distance, we came together in new ways to continue our efforts to maintain and preserve the historic Advent Church. The History Committee has submitted additional information to support the building's eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. New research has revealed the importance of Central Pennsylvania and Centre County in the 19th-century history of the Millerite movement and Evangelical Adventists. We look forward to adding new information to an expanded website. Justin Houser is continuing his research on the families of the Advent Cemetery, and we are pleased to share his history of the Confer family with a shorter version in the newsletter and a longer version on our website. Thanks to your continued support, we received more than \$6,600 as contributions in 2020, which covered our budgeted expenses of \$5,000.

Looking to the future, we are making plans to use the barn for installed exhibits and to use the church for historical interpretation and musical programming. We invite your suggestions and ideas for programs.

We especially invite you to the Memorial Day services in the Cemetery, followed this year by a Civil War historical program and instrumental music in place of the usual hymn sing. Hoping to see you soon.

—Barbara Franco, President



Advent Historical Society presents...

Gone for A Soldier: A Civil War Memorial Program

When: Monday, May 31, 2021, 10:00 am

Where: The Advent Church
1303 Moose Run Road
Bellefonte, PA 16823

Program: More than 75 Civil War veterans who served in more than 20 different regiments during the conflict are buried in the Advent Cemetery. Learn about their experiences as soldiers and the effects of the Civil War on Centre County and Boggs Township.

—Presented by Jerry Hedges, member of the History Committee

...and featuring instrumental music led by Paul and Sam Confer

The Confer Families of Advent Cemetery

—Contributed by Justin K. Houser

For Mr. Houser's complete article on the Confer family history, please visit our website: www.adventhistoricalsociety.org.

The Conver lineage traces back through Neustadt-an-der-Weinstrasse, Germany, to the Val du Ruz in Canton Neuchatel, Switzerland. The earliest known ancestor, Jehan du Ruz, was born about the year 1220 and was the first of many generations of vintners in the region. His descendant, Guillaume du Ruz, took the surname Convert during the late 14th century.

Philip Confer, the ancestor of the Confers discussed in this article, was born circa 1766 or 1767 in Berks County, PA, the son of Johann Michael Conver (1734–1813) and Maria Catharina ___ (c1740–1824). The family soon moved to the frontier region now known as Manheim Township, Schuylkill County, where his father ran a grist mill and saw mill. About 1787, Philip married Catharine Wenrich and they became the parents of eight known children. Around 1800, Philip moved his family to Centre County, settling first in Brush Valley, and then in Penns Valley. (Philip's parents and siblings also came here around that time and are the ancestors of the other Confers of Centre County.) In 1804, Philip's family moved to the "ridges," in the vicinity of Lower Polecat Road in Liberty Township. Catharine died about 1806 and Philip remarried, probably to Susanna, dying himself in about 1825 or 1826. Two of Philip and Catharine's sons, **Philip and Jonas**, are the ancestors of the main branches of Confers buried in the Advent Cemetery.

Part I: The Philip Confer Branch

Philip Confer was born February 26, 1801, in Centre County, probably in Miles Township. On October 2, 1823, he married Margaret Wants (b. May 7, 1804, in Howard Township, daughter of John and Margaret Wants.) They became the parents of fourteen children. Margaret died on December 27, 1887; Philip followed her to the grave on December 16, 1889. They were originally buried in the Sand Hill Cemetery, but when the Foster Joseph Sayers Dam was constructed in the mid-1960s, their graves were among those removed to the new Schencks Cemetery.



Charity and Ezekiel Confer
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Ezekiel Confer was one of their fourteen children. Born in Howard Township on June 30, 1839, he married Charity A. Packer on December 8, 1859. Charity was born August 18, 1840, a daughter of Jesse Phipps Packer and Sarah Linnes (Swisher) Packer. The young couple lived in Howard Township for a while but later moved to Boggs Township, purchasing a 158-acre farm on the "Canada Road." They became the parents of thirteen children. Ezekiel worked as a farmer and as a dealer in farm machinery. Charity died on Thanksgiving Day, November 26, 1914, and Ezekiel died soon after on August 15, 1915. They were members of the Church of the United Brethren in Christ and pillars of the Fairview Union Church, where both are buried. Two of their children, **Ira Packer Confer and Emma Laura Confer Watson**, are buried in the Advent Cemetery.

Ira Packer Confer was born on January 1, 1865, in Howard Township. On August 29, 1895, he married **Florence Elizabeth Yarnell** (b. February 16, 1873), daughter of Jacob and Maria (Poorman) Yarnell at the bride's home. The young couple lived in Yarnell for the rest of their lives; they had no children. Ira ran a general store at Yarnell for many years and served as Postmaster of Yarnell from 1901 to 1920. He also engaged in farming. Florence passed away on August 28, 1937, at her home in Yarnell. Ira died on November 11, 1945, at the age of 80, and was laid to rest in the Advent Cemetery.



Ezekiel Confer's children
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Emma Laura (Confer) Watson, Ira's younger sister, features prominently in the history of the Advent Church and Cemetery. She was born June 4, 1876, in Boggs Township. She married **John Thomas Watson**, son of Stanley Kay and Mary E. (Poorman) Watson. John and Emma farmed in Boggs Township and were a long-standing family in the Advent Church. John passed away at home on August 6, 1943. Emma followed him to the grave on January 12, 1945. Many of their fourteen children are also buried in the Advent Cemetery.

Emma Confer Watson: Holts Hollow Reporter

Emma Confer Watson (1876–1945) wrote a "Holts Hollow" column for the Centre Democrat from 1924 to 1945. Thanks to Twila Stauffer Newman and Kathy Stauffer Sherman, we have photo copies of the articles. Her weekly reports of local events provide a social history of rural Centre County spanning three decades. Among the events she mentions are picnics, services and festivals at the Advent Church; butcherings; hunting and fishing camps; reunions, birthdays and weddings; quilting parties; farming; canning peaches and making apple butter. She also reports on those who served during World War II.

We plan to assemble an exhibition based on her newspaper columns illustrated with family photos. **If your family has photos from the 1920s to the 1940s that we could use, call Barbara Franco (717-585-3226), write to us at our P.O. box, or email us at adventhistoricalsociety@gmail.com. Original photos will be scanned and returned.**