

Donald F. Durnbaugh: In Memoriam

We were very saddened to learn in the fall of 2005 that our colleague and friend of many years, Don Durnbaugh, had died on August 27 in a Newark, New Jersey, hospital following a sudden illness while returning with his wife Hedda from a trip to Europe. Don had been an active member of the Society for German-American Studies for over two decades and had served conscientiously and diligently as a member of the Editorial Board for the *Yearbook of German-American Studies* since 1996. Over the years, Don had himself contributed several scholarly essays to the *Yearbook*—in our last issue (volume 39 [2004]) his article on the Brethren relief effort after World War II known as “Heifer International” was published posthumously. His wisdom, sage advice and good humor will be sorely missed by all who knew him and worked with him.

Don was born in Detroit, Michigan, in 1927. His education included a B.A. degree at Manchester College in North Manchester, Indiana (1949), an M.A. in history at the University of Michigan (1952) and a Ph.D. in history at the University of Pennsylvania (1960). He also studied at the Philipps-Universität in Marburg, Germany. After teaching history for four years at Juniata College in Pennsylvania, Don was named professor of church history at Bethany Theological Seminary in 1962, teaching there until 1988. In that year he returned to Juniata as the J. Omar Good Distinguished Visiting Professor and a year later was named the Carl W. Ziegler Professor of History and Religion at Elizabethtown College (Pennsylvania). He retired there in 1993.

He was a noted historian of Anabaptist and Pietist religions. His publication record includes some 200 articles and reviews on the history of the Brethren Church and other Anabaptist religious movements. The sixteen monographs and edited volumes by Don Durnbaugh include such titles as *Fruit of the Vine: A History of the Brethren, 1708-1995* (1997); *The Believer's Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (1968); and *The Brethren in Colonial America: A Source Book on the Transplantation and Development of the Church of the Brethren in the Eighteenth Century* (1967). Don was also the primary editor of *The Brethren Encyclopedia* (covering the years from 1708 until 1980) whose first three volumes were published in 1983-84. At the time of his death he was co-editing volume four of that encyclopedia which documents the history of the Brethren from 1980 to 1995 (published in 2006).

Over the years, Don received numerous honors and awards for his scholarship. He received honorary doctorates from both Manchester College (1980) as well as Juniata College (2003). He was awarded the Colonial History Award by the Colonial Society of Pennsylvania in 1957 and named a Distinguished Scholar by the

Communal Studies Association in 2002. He held a unique position in the Church of the Brethren as “dean of the Brethren historians” (Dale W. Brown, Bethany Theological Seminary) and was considered a leading authority on the historic peace churches and the American communitarian movements. In a 1997 *Festschrift* celebrating Don Durnbaugh’s scholarly contributions, Donald E. Miller wrote: “Don is internationally known and widely considered to be the leading twentieth century historian of the Church of the Brethren and other Brethren groups that originated in Schwarzenau, Germany, in the early eighteenth century” (*From Age to Age: Historians and the Modern Church*). We are proud to have been counted among his colleagues.

William D. Keel, Editor
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