

"A Story of Some Humble Cutlery"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

More than fifty years ago, Rev. William E. Roop, A. M. of Meadow Branch Church of the Brethren wrote about some old cutlery which had been used in the church for nearly a century. To him the old steel knives and forks provided a link with the several generations of church members.

OLD CUTLERY, USED FOR ABOUT 100 YEARS  
IN THE MEADOW BRANCH CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN,  
NEAR WESTMINSTER, MARYLAND.

Things are as a rule better, not worse than we picture them to be. Between the extremes of pure laudation, and sheer worthlessness, lies the estimate of true worth.

Honesty, concerning the thing itself, is as important as honesty to fellow men, and honesty to the towering Deity over and above all.

Therefore with dignified sincerity, built upon the Rock foundation, for spiritual strength, we narrate the demonstrable truth, of the symmetrical individualism, of historical families noteworthy, along with many others of note, of their day, in a century's use of table ware, used at Meadow Branch church, for lovefeast, and other occasions annually.

It is not the history of these time aged steel hammered knives and forks, still in fine preservation, and usefulness, but in a honest way to set down the dreamlike vision and the innumerable associations entwined about the successive generations of the families still extant as members of Meadow Branch Church and still responsible for the Maintenance of unfeigned courtesy of this growing and highly respected Congregation of Meadow Branch. Without working all over, with unity of design as well written novel, a family, loyal to this church, comes seething from my thought, as of paramount importance, the well known and highly respected Royer family. Four generations have sacred memories of those living as well as those gone before, making use, especially at lovefeast, of these old knives and forks. Namely, Peter Royer, the father of John Royer, whose daughter Ruth married E. M. Bish, father of Fannie Bish Royer, mother of Charles Royer, deceased. Co-ordinating in importance as to the permanence and prosperity of the Meadow Branch Congregation, which has used these rare knives and forks, there are five generations of Roops. David Roop, the father of John D. and David J. Roop. William E. Roop is a son of John D. and also father of John D. Roop, Jr. who is the father of Louise, Elizabeth, Royer, and Carroll Roop.

There are four generations of the noble and loyal Geiman family. David Geiman was a deacon and the father of William H. Geiman, a very active deacon also, and the father of May, Rose, Eugenia, Harry, Charles, Lottie, Madaline and Edna who married Bucher John, who is the mother of Madeline and Jean John.

The Petrys have five successive loyal generations too. Michael Petry was the father of Jacob Petry, known as a conscientious deacon in all his church activities, who was the father of David M. Petry, father of Herbert, who is the father of Herbert Petry, Jr., David and Mary Catherine Hoff.

The Bixlers are a notable family of our generations. Uriah Bixler was elder in charge of this congregation for nearly three decades. He was the father of Mollie Bixler Englar, mother of Marie Beard, mother of Hazel Beard.

Youngs also come in for four generations. John Young was the father of David M., father of Hattie who married Samuel Bare, who are the parents of Margaret Bare Garner, and a number of brothers and sisters.

The Myers family began membership here about the time of the founding of this congregation. Samuel Myers was the father of Annie Myers Bixler, mother of Ruth Bixler Wantz, mother of Harold Wantz.

These progenitors of the above named generations struck out a path for themselves and others, with full faith and confidence, in the results of success and permanency. To them the Church was the treasure house, from which would come lively stones of gold, silver and precious stones to build the spiritual empire, arising from obedience to "Go into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things etc.".

This reverie is written to honor and inspire those who have founded and those who still continuously maintain the Meadow Branch Congregation, hereby distributing among those who prize rare things and all who will obtain such as these very old, and much used rare knives and forks for safe keeping, as a memorial of a very notable church.

Written with the hope that the readers charity may screen the writer from cruel judgment, for errors or omissions.

Remaining with sincere good wishes to all,  
Rev. William E. Roop, A.M.  
Meadow Branch, Maryland  
October 27, 1941

The Historical Society was recently given a set of knives and two-tined forks that had been used at Meadow Branch Church and written about by Rev. Roop in 1941. The donor, Mrs. Carol R. Bare, received the cutlery from her mother-in-law, Mrs. S. Luther Bare sometime after the church disposed of the old items. The knives and forks have steel blades and tines and bone handles. All were made in England in the early nineteenth century and are typical of the period. The sets did not include spoons as these utensils were made by silversmiths or pewter makers; the latter, and far less expensive, metal was the most common choice of local residents of German descent.

Photo Caption: Part of the set of bone handled cutlery once used for Love Feasts at the Meadow Branch Church of the Brethren near Westminster. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Carol R. Bare, 1996.