



Schürch descendants gathered at a recent extended family reunion.

Helping people of faith explore, experience, and expand their world

DISCOVERY

Spring 2019

Maintaining Extended Family Ties: The Schürch Family

“One’s heritage cannot be taken away from you, but it can be lost by failing to save it for future generations,” said Tom Sherk, one of the founders of the Schürch Family Association of North America (SFANA).

Tom believed that the family is “one of the oldest and most important social units” and that it is “the crucible where basic values are instilled.” Tom and a few other Schürch descendants formed SFANA in 1982 to explore and preserve their heritage. “The study of one’s family history and culture... reveals our connections to the past, and it informs us who we are as a people,” said Tom.

The association organizes reunions every other year, publishes a newsletter twice per year, maintains a website and Facebook page, provides online resources to help with family research, and offers participation in a Y-DNA study. The association is 3,400 members strong, and is open to anyone who is a Schürch descendant whether the spelling is Sherk, Shirk, Schirch, Sherick, etc. The association has organized four



Distant cousins Kurt Schürch from Switzerland (left) and Dean Sherick from Virginia discovered a family resemblance on a heritage tour.

previous heritage tours to Switzerland.

TourMagination recently worked with Sue Shirk to plan a 12-day custom family heritage tour for fall 2019. Sue is the past president of SFANA and will be managing tour logistics. The group of 40 signed up for the tour will see six homesteads or birthplaces of Schürch ancestors who immigrated to North America about 300 years ago. “It will be special to go to the homesteads, including one dating back to 1425 that

belonged to the Schürchs,” says Sue. Another highlight will be connecting with long lost Schürch cousins living in Switzerland. They will also tour Trachselwald Castle where ancestors were imprisoned and see other sites significant to the wider Anabaptist story with local Mennonite historian Ayold Fanoy. “It has been wonderful working with TourMagination. Everything has worked out well,” says Sue.

Biennial reunions are held on a summer weekend, and reunion locations alternate between America and Canada. Sue has helped organize the family’s three past American reunions. She says the reunions are attended by an average of 140 people and include workshops on a historical topic and presentations about what present-day Schürch descendants are doing. In 2018, someone showed their Bernese Mountain dogs and someone else displayed their woodworking. There is also a half-day bus tour to historical family sites and an optional Sunday worship. The reunion closes with a banquet of delicious home style food and a fun-filled auction fundraiser.

See www.Schurchfamilyassociation.net to get inspired about maintaining connections with your own family history. TM

DOWNLOAD A FREE CUSTOM TOUR PLANNER to help you plan a personalized tour for your family, church, friends, historical society, or other group. www.tourmagination.com/tourplanner



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Keeping the family stories alive

I believe in maintaining family ties. One small way in which I do this is sending a personalized email or text to immediate and extended family members on their birthdays. It's not a long message, but it lets them know I'm thinking about them and that I care.

Family gatherings are another terrific way to keep in touch. Over the holidays, I went to see both my sons, their wives, and my adorable grandchildren! It's always a joy to retell favourite family stories and to create new memories together.

I also believe in maintaining ties to my family's past. In my father's branch of the Voth family, I'm one of the history keepers. My aunt Herta Voth pioneered mission work in Colombia and Panama through the Mennonite Brethren Mission Board. When she passed away, I went through her letters, journals, and photos and donated many of them to the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies archives in Winnipeg.

Through TourMagination, I am committed to provide a platform for Anabaptist and Mennonite "history keepers" to retell their family stories during heritage tours. Stewards of our collective family history include John Sharp, Leonard Friesen, and Ayold Fanoy.

This year, we are pleased to partner with Rodney J Hofer on a Hutterite tour. Rod spent time exploring the sojourn of Hutterites in Romania and wrote a short, but thorough, book about his discoveries. Those with Hutterite ancestry, or an interest in Anabaptist history, will enjoy this tour.

In this issue of Discovery, you will also read about a history keeper named Sue Shirk who belongs to the Schürch Family Association of North America, which helps descendants of Hans Schürch of Switzerland connect with their roots through reunions and other activities. Sue is the logistics coordinator for a Schürch family custom tour that was organized with help from TourMagination.

If you want to learn more about your family history or the broader Anabaptist story, consider travelling on one of our 2019 or 2020 heritage tours or ask us for help planning a custom tour tailored to your family.

—Audrey Voth Petkau, President, TourMagination

Upcoming Events

Travel Inspiration Night



**Wed. March 13
7-8:30 pm**

Caboto Centre,
1055 Wilkes Ave.
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Enjoy refreshments
as you hear about
upcoming tours to
Newfoundland and

Australia/New Zealand. Meet other travellers and talk to Audrey from TourMagination and Mike from Bonaventure Travel about your next trip. RSVP on Eventbrite at http://bit.ly/travel_dreams or by calling 1 800 565-0451.

Screenings of John Ruth's Documentary

Is There a Lesson?: 45 Years on the Anabaptist Story Trail in Europe

February 17, 6:00 pm

First Mennonite Church of Morton, Illinois
*To benefit local Mennonite Central
Committee Relief Sale*

April 12, 7:00 pm

Lauvers Mennonite Church
34585 Rt. 35 Richfield, PA 17086

To benefit Juniata Mennonite History Center
RSVP by calling 717-694-3211 or email
historycenter@embarqmail.com

May 3, 7:00 pm

Mountainview Mennonite Chapel
104 Shelly Dr., Reedsville, PA

*To benefit Amish/Mennonite Heritage
Center of Mifflin County*

Host a Screening of John Ruth's Film

Please contact us about hosting *Is There a Lesson* in your community. A screening can be used as a fundraiser for a historical society or project with half the proceeds going to John Ruth for film costs.

**Contact office@tourmagination.com or
1 800-465-0451 for details.**

Where Will You Go Next?

Relax on a Cruise

Northern Holland Tulip Cruise, with Audrey Voth Petkau

April 19-26, 2019
From USD \$2,716; CAD \$3,531

Can be paired with Heritage Highlights in the Netherlands & Belgium

Bike and Boat Tour from Berlin/Spandau to Malchin, with Mark Evans

July 27-August 3, 2019
From USD \$2,420; CAD \$3,148

Alaskan Adventure Cruise, with Bernice Kuepfer

August 11-24, 2019
From USD \$2,644

France River Cruise: Colours of Provence, with Audrey Voth Petkau & Terry Petkau

August 22-29, 2018
From USD 4,727; CAD \$5,692

Optional extensions to Paris and Barcelona

Danube River Cruise: Balkan Discovery From Budapest to Bucharest, with Marlin & Barb Hershey

October 17-23, 2019
From USD \$3,163; CAD \$3,953

Optional extension to Romania



See the Usedom lighthouse on the Bike & Boat tour.

Iconic Christmas Markets Cruise, with Audrey Voth Petkau & Terry Petkau

November 29-December 6, 2019
From USD \$4,092; CAD \$4,864

Optional extensions to Budapest and Prague

New Zealand Cruise, with Audrey Voth Petkau

February 11-24, 2020
From USD \$1,846; CAD \$2,386

Can be paired with Australian Adventure

Spectacular Greenland & Nunavut Arctic Cruise, with Terry Petkau

August 11-22, 2020, From USD \$11,759

Danube River Cruise in Austria, Germany & Hungary

September 3-12, 2020, Price TBA

Can be paired with Oberammergau Passion Play

Explore Your Roots on an Anabaptist Heritage Tour

Heritage Highlights in the Netherlands & Belgium, with Ayold Fanoy & Audrey Voth Petkau

April 15-19, 2019
From USD \$1,973; CAD \$2,565

Can be paired with Northern Holland Tulip Cruise

Discover Prague & the Mennonite Sojourn in Poland, with John Sharp

May 27-June 6, 2019
From USD \$2,885; CAD \$3,750

The Mennonite Story & Highlights of Ukraine, with Leonard & Mary Friesen

June 1-10, 2019
From USD \$2,987; CAD \$3,884

Can be paired with Treasures of Russia: Moscow & St. Petersburg

European Anabaptist Heritage Tour, with John Sharp & Michele Miller Sharp

June 10-24, 2019
From USD \$4,499; CAD \$5,624

Central Asia: Crossroads of Faith & Culture, with John Sharp

September 22-October 3, 2019
From USD \$2,754; CAD \$3,580

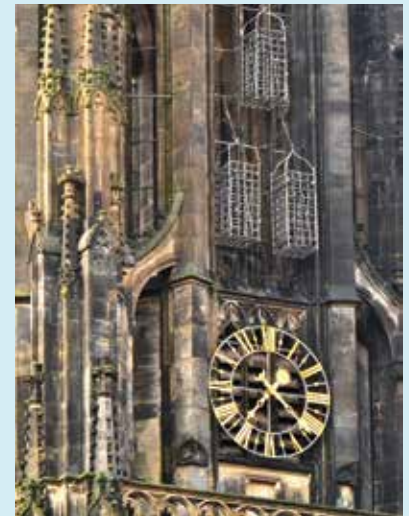
Romania Hutterite & Cultural Tour, with Rod Hofer

October 5-16, 2019
From USD \$3,141; CAD \$3,989

European Anabaptist Heritage Tour, with John Sharp & Audrey Voth Petkau

August 12-25, 2020, Price TBA

Can be paired with Oberammergau Passion Play



On the European Anabaptist Heritage Tour, see the clock tower of Saint Lambert's Church in Münster, Germany with three cages that once held Anabaptist leaders.

Photo credit: ptwo

HUTTERITE TOUR WEBINAR Thursday, February 21, 12 noon EST. Join Rod Hofer for a 20-min. webinar about the Romania Hutterite & Cultural Tour. See www.anymeeting.com/TMwebinars

Expand Your Mind on a Cultural Learning Tour

Italy: Bella Terra, with Leonard & Mary Friesen

April 4-14, 2019
From USD \$3,432; CAD \$4,462

Optional extension to Cinque Terre.

Treasures of Russia: Moscow & St. Petersburg, with Leonard & Mary Friesen

June 10-17, 2019
From USD \$3,240; CAD \$4,211

Can be paired with The Mennonite Story & Highlights of Ukraine

Embodying Truth: Church & Theatre in London Tour, with Allan & Marilyn Rudy-Froese

July 13-22, 2019
From USD \$3,840; CAD \$4,992

Monasteries & Mountains: Hong King, China, Tibet, & Nepal, with Bert & Martha Lobe

September, 2019, DETAILS TBA

Discover Japan, with Laura Heller

November 6-17, 2019, Price TBA

Sights, Sounds & Sacred Spaces of Ireland, with Bob & Margaret Nally

May 27-June 7, 2020, Price TBA

Can be paired with Oberammergau Passion Play



Travel on the Italy: Bella Terra Tour to see sculptures in Vatican City, Rome.

Photo Credit: Norbert Staudt

Oberammergau Passion Play

June 8-10, 2020
From \$690 USD; \$860 CAD

Can be paired with Ireland Tour or Jordan, Palestine, Israel Tour

Oberammergau Passion Play

August 10-12, 2020
From \$740 USD; \$930 CAD

Can be paired with European Anabaptist Heritage Tour

Oberammergau Passion Play

September 14-16, 2020
From \$690 USD; \$860 CAD

Can be paired with Danube River Cruise, Germany & Switzerland: An Alpine Adventure, Cultural & Natural Landscape of Germany

Cultural & Natural Landscape of Germany, with Rod Zook

September 16-24, 2020, Price TBA

Reflect on a Holy Land Tour

Jordan, Palestine, Israel: A Journey of Hope, with Nelson Kraybill and Audrey Voth Petkau

September 12-23, 2019
From USD \$3,929; CAD \$4,990

The Holy Land from a Woman's Perspective, with Kathy Bergen & Shirley Redekop

September 24-October 4, 2019
From USD \$3,471; CAD \$4,443

Optional extension to Ramallah

The World of Paul in Turkey & Greece, with Tom Yoder Neufeld

May 21-June 5, 2020
From USD \$4,334; CAD \$5,495

Optional extension to Italy

Jordan, Palestine, Israel: A Journey of Hope, with Nelson Kraybill

June 10-21, 2020
From USD \$3,325; CAD \$4,323

Can be paired with Oberammergau Passion Play

Enjoy a Natural Wonders Tour

Natural & Cultural Encounters in the Amazon, with Jerrell Ross Richer

February 24-March 6, 2019
From USD \$2,207; CAD \$2,803

Iceland: Fun in the Midnight Sun Tour, with Allen & Gwenanne Jorgenson

June 15-23, 2019
From USD \$4,280; CAD \$5,435

Tanzania Intergenerational Safari & Culture Tour, with Marlin & Barb Hershey

June 29-July 9, 2019
From USD \$4,553; CAD \$6,065

Natural Wonders of Newfoundland, with Michael Kroeker

August 4-13, 2019
From USD \$3,225; CAD \$4,175

Belize Natural & Cultural History Tour, with Mark McReynolds

January 10-19, 2020
From USD \$2,569; CAD \$3,212

Australian Adventure, with Audrey Voth Petkau

January 31-February 11, 2020
From USD \$4,915; CAD \$6,354

Can be paired with New Zealand Cruise

South Africa Tour, with Leonard & Mary Friesen

February 14-24, 2020
From USD \$5,275; CAD \$6,819

Germany & Switzerland: An Alpine Adventure, with Leonard & Mary Friesen

September 5-14, 2020, Price TBA
Can be paired with Oberammergau Passion Play

Tours Under Development

Cuba Tour, with Jack & Irene Suderman, January 2020

Ukraine Tour, 2020

India Tour, Fall 2020

Amish Heritage Tour with Oberammergau Passion Play, 2020

Tours to Indonesia with Mennonite World Conference Assembly Gathered, July 2021



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