

# Book Captures Life And Times Of Pennsylvania German Family

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff  
ADAMSTOWN (Berks Co.) — Seldom does a book successfully combine two cultures written in two languages. But "Water Boy Gedichde — The Life and Poetry of Edwin Gehman Weber," captures both American and Pennsylvania German culture and language in a 284-page hard-cover book.

This year, on February 14, Ed died at 90 years of age. He was well known in Pennsylvania German circles for his poetry and for his participation on WBYO radio's Pennsylvania German program.

His poems tell stories of a bygone era. Most are written in Pennsylvania German of which some expressions cannot be translated into English and mean the same thing.

At the urging of C. Richard Beam, German professor emeritus of Millersville University, Ed's daughter Ruth Ann Hollinger, published the poems and interspersed accounts of the Weber family's life with the poems, written in Pennsylvania German with the English translation alongside.

Ruth Ann said, "In the translation, some meaning is lost but those who speak Pennsylvania German fluently will enjoy the humor and those who are wunnerfitchich (curious) should find a good 'Deitscher' to explain what it really means."

The title "Water Boy Gedichde" is derived from Ed's poem that tells how, as a 9-year-old boy, he brought water to the laborers as they built Gehman's Mennonite Church in Adamstown. He wrote, "This building was then completed, but my work had just begun. God's plan for me is a Water Boy . . . serving in whatever capacity needed such as chorister, superintendent, trustee, Sunday school teacher, carrying water for my Friend."

Ed left a legacy of 80 poems that offer a glimpse of life into the early 1900s.

Like many newly married couples during that era, Ed and his wife married at age 19, but did not live together until the following year.

When Ed attempted to open his first bank account, the banker did not believe Ed's real name was



In recent years, Ed Weber was known in Pennsylvania German circles as 'der Alt Weisskopp von Wisse Doal' — the old whitehead from Meadow Valley.

Eddie and changed it to Edwin, the name he assumed from that time on, although his birth certificate states Eddie.

Tales of Ed's acquiring his first Model T Ford and the idiosyncrasies that accompanied it allows the reader to visualize the young couple touring the country dirt roads. Because it had only one door on the passenger side, whenever the Ford choked off, Ed's wife and baby had to get out so Ed could climb out and crank up the car again.

After the Weber's third child was born, Fannie was diagnosed with tuberculosis and needed complete bedrest. During this time the children were not allowed to even see their mother. She died the following year, leaving Ed with three small children.

Two years later Ed married Susie Good Youndt, a widow with seven children. Together, they had five more children, making a total of 15.

Raising so many children during the Depression Era was not without difficulties. In his poems, Ed sometimes refers to feeling depressed and discouraged and chastises himself for "flying off the handle and hurting those he loved in an unguarded moment."

The staunch fortitude of the era is reflected with tidbits telling of limited space that required three children to sleep in a bed, of a rag-



Grass Mower

man who bought old rubber boots and such, of taking carpet rags to the jail for prisoners to do carpet weaving for a few cents, and of high-tailing it across the road to the outhouse.

He writes of the days before having television, radio, phone or newspaper in the house. When people had time to talk, at church, the store and in the mill, one could learn all the news and "what you don't find out doesn't matter."

Devastation struck again when Ed's second wife Susie had a stroke at 50 years of age and died three days later. Three months later, the barn burned to the ground taking with it his Model A Ford.

"Never since I started farming, had I been so poor. It seemed



Dump Rake

everything was against me . . ."

Ed wrote. Through the generosity of friends, neighbors, and relatives, the barn was rebuilt, and life began to look better again. About two years later, Ed found a new wife Elizabeth Nolt, who loved to work and bake for the large family. Four years later, another daughter was born.



Ruth Ann Weber Hollinger holds a copy of the book she edited, which includes her father's poetry and the Weber family's unique history that spans almost a century of life.

The poems reflect Ed's love for truck farming and how he began to build a small dairy herd.

The kitchen table served as the center of activities where the children did their homework, played games, and read stories aloud. Instructions for some of these old-time games are included in the book.

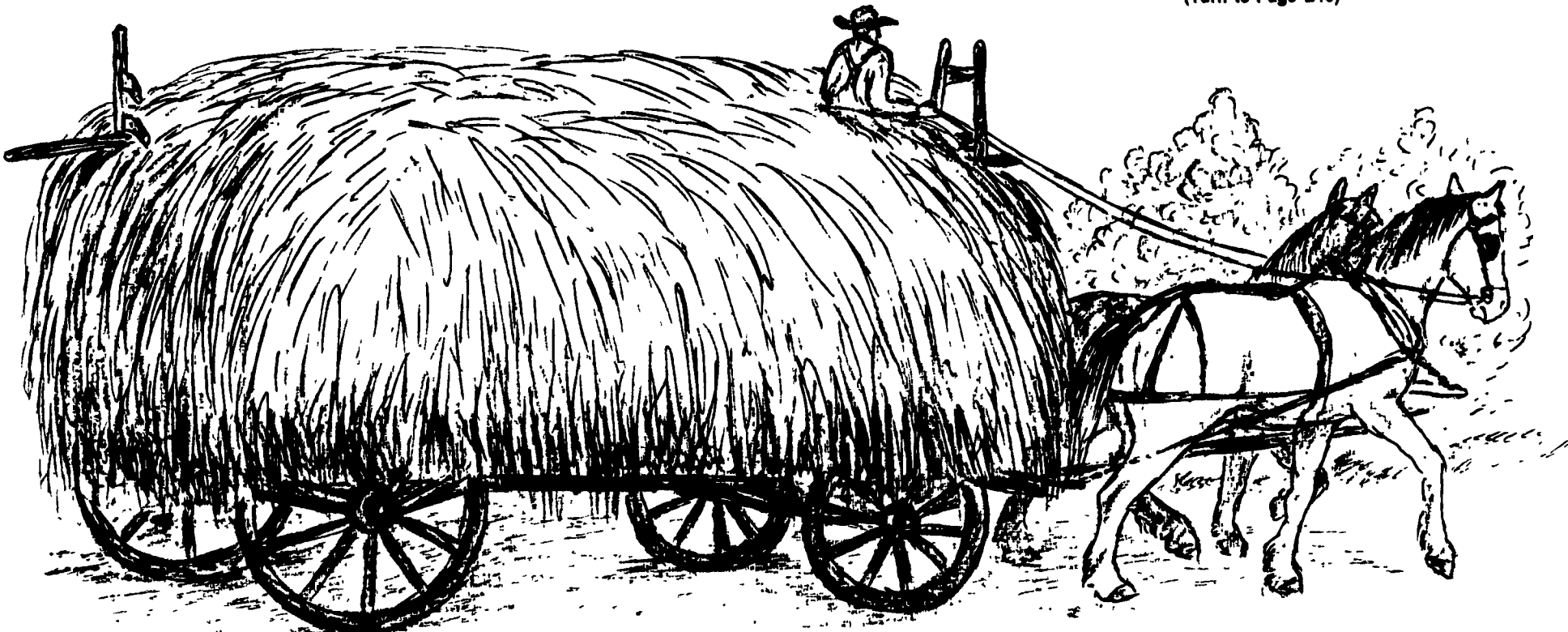
In 1986, the Webers sold their Adamstown home and moved to cottage at Landis Homes Retirement Community. Ed enjoyed participating in Pennsylvania Dutch programs and was a regular caller to the Pennsylvania Dutch prog-

ram heard on WBYN (previously WBYO) radio station. He also had some of his poems published in a weekly newspaper.

On Feb. 14, 1995, Ed went home to be with the Lord he loved. At the time of his death, he had nine children, seven stepchildren, 73 grandchildren, 143 great grandchildren and 13 great-great-great grandchildren.

The book is available in local bookstores or may be ordered from Olde Springfield Shoppe, Route 1, Box 20, Morgantown, PA 19543. The book costs \$14.95 plus \$3 for postage and handling.

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Ed's nephew Weaver W. Martin sketched this hay wagon. His nephew Carl W. Martin sketched the old-time implements. Sketches and photographs illustrate the story of the Weber family.