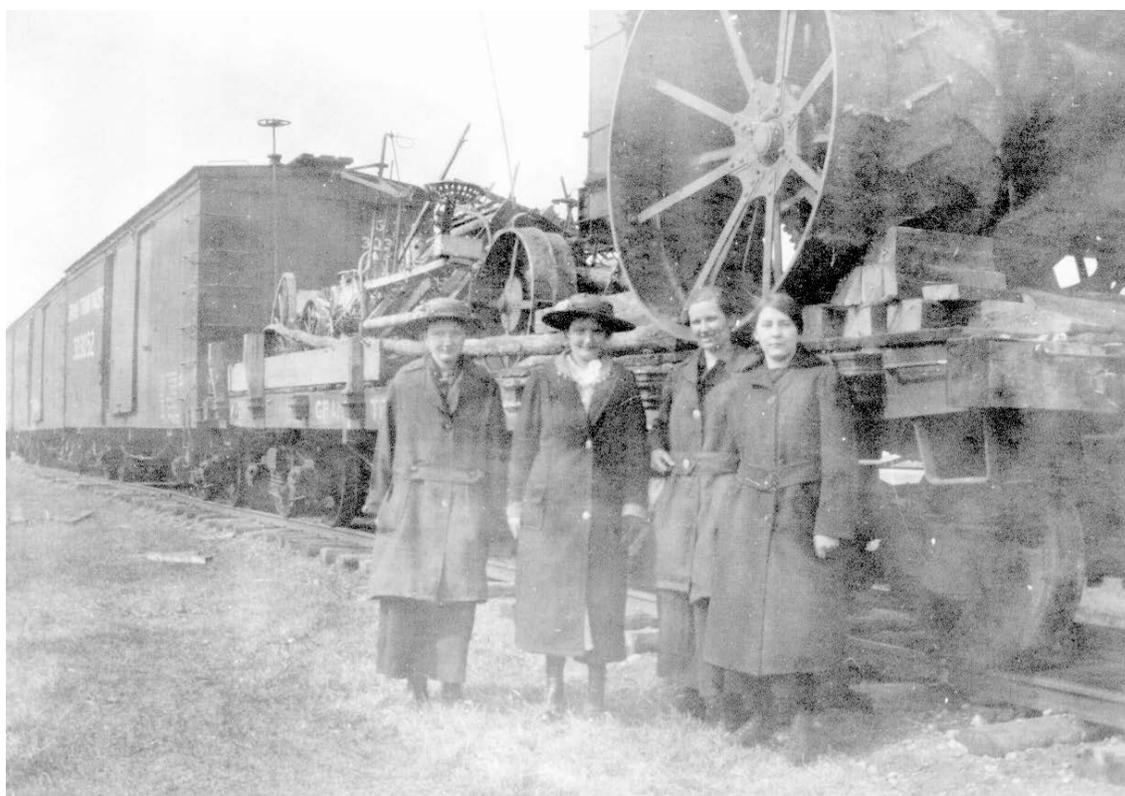


Mennonite Historian

A PUBLICATION OF THE MENNONITE HERITAGE CENTRE and THE CENTRE FOR MB STUDIES IN CANADA



Johann and Susanna Suderman sold their farming operation in Neuhoffnung, a village near Gretna, Manitoba, and moved in 1918 with several other Mennonite families to homestead near Vanderhoof, B.C. They had their tractor loaded on a freight car of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway for the trip west. The *Vanderhoof Herald* announced that the Sudermans' tractor was the first of its kind in B.C. Standing (L to R): Catherine Suderman, Margaret Suderman (later, missionary in India), Susan Suderman, and an unidentified friend. Photo: Courtesy of Harold Suderman. See story on p. 2.

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Tragedy in Vanderhoof

by Howard Dyck, conductor and
broadcaster living in Waterloo, Ontario

From my earliest childhood in Winkler, Manitoba, I recall my father, John Dyck (1917–1992), talking about Vanderhoof, British Columbia, 80 kilometres west of Prince George. That's where a tragedy occurred years ago that deeply affected the Suderman clan—my father's mother was Helen "Lena" Suderman (1894–1958).

The tragedy involved three young men originally from Winkler—Peter Dyck, Abram Dyck, and John Suderman. Two of the three, brothers Peter and Abram Dyck, arrived in Vanderhoof late in October to celebrate a family wedding with the pioneers who had ventured west earlier that year in April 1918. The brothers, along with John Suderman, contracted "Spanish flu" and died within days of each other at the end of October and beginning of November 1918.

The three men were buried in the Braeside cemetery near Vanderhoof. The Braeside School was initially built as a church meeting place in 1919 by the Mennonites that settled there in the Nechako River valley. In spring 1920, when the Suderman family moved back to Manitoba, the caskets were exhumed and transferred to Manitoba for reburial in the Bloomfield-Rosewell Cemetery, a few kilometres north of Plum Coulee.

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Editors: Jon Isaak (CMBS)
Conrad Stoesz (CMBS/MHC)
Associate Editor: Korey Dyck (MHC)
Layout: Alf Redekopp

All correspondence and manuscripts should be sent to the editorial offices at:

1310 Taylor Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3M 3Z6
P: 204-669-6575

jon.isaak@mbchurches.ca
or

600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4
204-888-6781

cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca
www.mennonitehistorian.ca

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The headstone marking the graves of the three men that died within days of each other in Vanderhoof, B.C., after contracting the "Spanish Flu" in 1918. The caskets were disinterred and transferred to Manitoba in 1920 for reburial in the Bloomfield-Rosewell Cemetery, a few kilometers north of Plum Coulee. Photo: Courtesy of Howard Dyck.

My father was responsible for the placing of the headstone marking the final resting place of the three young men. On that headstone appears the following inscription:

John Suderman Peter Dyck Abram Dyck
1893–1918 1888–1918 1894–1918
*These men died during the influenza
epidemic in the Suderman farm home near
Vanderhoof, B.C. Peter was survived by his
wife Helen and two sons George & John.
Rest in Peace.*

In the spring of 2008, shortly before my mother's death (Mary Annie Wiebe [1919–2008]), my two brothers and I were going through her belongings at her house in Winkler, when I came across two handwritten German letters. I immediately recognized my dad's handwriting, although he couldn't possibly have been the original author, as the letters were dated from 1918 and my father was born in 1917. The letters were addressed to Gerhard (1853–1937) and Anna Wiebe (1856–1936) Dyck, the parents of the two deceased young brothers.

The only reason I can think of to explain why my dad copied these letters is that they were likely originally written in German Gothic script. Dad, fearing that later generations might be unable to read that script (which was outlawed in Germany in the 1930s by Adolf Hitler), transcribed the letters into the more familiar German that used Latin script.

For some time, I had wondered why the Suderman family had moved to Vanderhoof at all. It was explained to me recently when I had a long conversation with Dr. Harold Suderman, a retired professor of biochemistry at the University of Guelph. Harold's father Jacob was a brother of the above-mentioned John Suderman, as well as a brother to Helen Suderman, making Harold my father's first cousin. Harold's explanation helped me piece together the tragedy in Vanderhoof.

Johann Suderman migrated to the Mennonite East Reserve in southern Manitoba from the Bergthal Colony (Russia), arriving in Canada on July 27, 1874 at Quebec City on the S.S. Nova Scotian. In the 1880s, his family was part of a move to the West Reserve in search of better land, helping to establish the village of Neuhoffnung. Here they became part of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church. In 1911, my grandmother, Helen "Lena" Suderman, joined the Mennonite Brethren Church, with numerous other family members following her lead five years later.¹

The first Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada had been established in Manitoba in 1888 by *Aeltester* Heinrich H. Voth, an MB itinerant preacher from Bingham Lake, Minnesota. Indeed, Gerhard Dyck—the father of the two deceased

(cont'd on p.3)

Genealogy and Family History

Rudnerweider Gemeinde Buch

by Conrad Stoesz

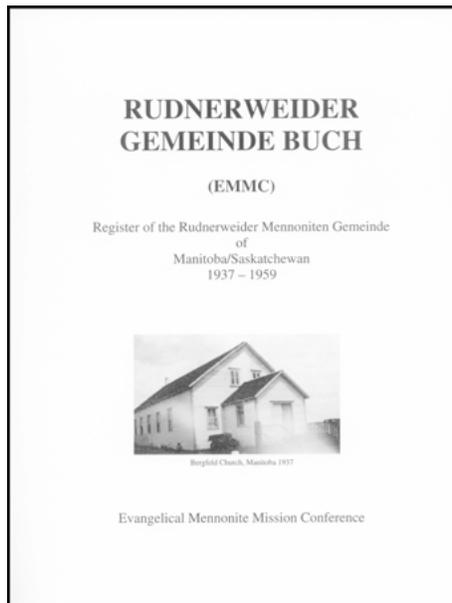
Family and community historians, genealogists, and church historians are grateful for people like Martha Martens, people who dedicate time, energy, and financial resources for the production of tools useful for “remembering” past communities.

Martens’ book, *Rudnerweider Gemeinde Buch (EMMC): Register of the Rudnerweider Mennoniten Gemeinde of Manitoba/Saskatchewan 1937–1959*, is one such tool. It is the latest in a series of church registers to be transcribed, translated, and annotated. This book joins other similar projects that provide access to primary source documents related to the first wave of Mennonite pioneers in Manitoba, such as the *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch* (1993), *Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch* (1994), and *Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch* (2004).

The church register was used by church officials to record the members of the church, including vital statistics such as birth, baptism, marriage, and death dates, as well as names of children and parents. Martens took her knowledge gleaned from the production of the *Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch* and applied it to her own solo project.

Many of the useful features of the *Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch* are also in this new work, including an adult male and female index, annotations and additional information merged with the primary material, and cross references to other church registers. Martens also includes a listing of the ministers of the church from 1937 to 1959 with photographs. True to the values of the Rudnerweide, Martens also includes pictures of the church’s missionaries of this time period.

The Rudnerweider denomination began in 1937, as a church split from the Sommerfeld Mennonite church in Manitoba. Four of the 12 ministers and 1,100¹ or 21% of the membership left the Sommerfeld Mennonite church to form the Rudnerweider Mennoniten Gemeinde, where William H. Falk became bishop.



In the foreword by Jerry Hildebrand, the role of evangelist Isaac P. Friesen is portrayed as the reason for the church split. “Friesen’s messages served as an affront to the nominalism, deficiency and dearth in the lives of church members and truly awakened a search for renewal” (p. 4).

Sommerfeld historian Peter Bergen acknowledges the key role of Rev. Friesen but notes that already in the late 1920s, evangelical evening meetings were being held in the area, preparing the way for Friesen and his message. Bergen also hints that the split was not only about spiritual renewal, but that generational conflict also played a role. The average age of the ministers that stayed with the original Sommerfeld Gemeinde was 64, while in the break-off group the average age was 43 years old.

This book also represents another generational issue, that of legacy. Martens represents a demographic of “baby boomers” that grew up and were shaped by the rural, close-knit, agrarian-oriented ethos of the prairies, where faith and family looked very different from today. Between 1945 and 1970, half of Canada’s rural population migrated to the larger towns and cities, at times hours away. While Mennonites remained in their rural communities longer, they too were part of the urbanization trend.

Many in Martens’ cohort have become keenly aware of the unique place in which they find themselves, as brokers between diverse worlds. They are a bridge between a very different past that can be easily forgotten and the emerging world evolving at an exponential rate in a digital environment. Many in the older demographic can still remember grandparents born in the last century where the horse was king and electricity was only part of the heavenly realm. They may legitimately fear that they and their values will be forgotten, like the ability to read German and Gothic script. This is one of the factors driving transcription and translation projects like these, ones that bring no financial reward and may, in fact, only be produced at financial cost to the authors.

Thanks to Martha Martens, and others like her, bridge projects like these are being undertaken, linking the German-speaking world of Mennonite village life of the twentieth century to the English-speaking world of the largely urbanized Mennonite experience of the twenty-first century.

Endnotes

1. Sommerfeld historian Peter Bergen says the number of those leaving the Sommerfeld church was 915 (Peter Bergen, *History of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church* [Altona: Sommerfeld Mennonite Church, 2001], 108).

Recent Books:

If you have recently published a genealogy or family history book, please send us a complimentary copy and it will get noted.

Queries:

Send queries to Conrad Stoesz, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4 or email: cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca

Tragedy in Vanderhoof

(cont’d from p. 2)

brothers Peter and Abram—was a charter member of that first MB congregation just outside of Winkler.

An interesting sidebar is that Gerhard’s wife Anna did not join the MBs, suggesting that the Mennonite rivalries existing already in Ukraine were transported across the Atlantic. It is well known that the Mennonite revivalist movement that began the MB church in 1860—influenced as they were by Lutheran pietism and German Baptist

evangelistic preaching—caused considerable consternation in the established Mennonite church.

It is not clear what influence MB church leader and preacher H.H. Voth had on the Sudermans' spiritual formation, but the Voth family was very influential later in the Sudermans' move to Vanderhoof in 1918, as I will explain.

Peter Dyck and Helen "Lena" Suderman (my grandparents) were married on July 14, 1914, just about 3 weeks before the beginning of World War I. Heinrich S. Voth, son of the above-mentioned H.H. Voth, was also a minister and officiated at their wedding. H.S. Voth would later serve as the pastor of the Winkler MB Church from 1931 to 1951. Peter and Helen's son George was born June 16, 1915 and John (my father) was born April 26, 1917. By the way, H.S. Voth also officiated at the wedding of my father and mother, John Dyck and Mary Wiebe on June 8, 1940.

I mention the context of the war because it was the Mennonites' long tradition of pacifism and specifically war resistance—one that played a central role in their migration from the Netherlands to Poland in the 16th century, then to Ukraine in the late 18th century, and then to the Americas in the 1870s—that also motivated the Sudermans, the Voths, and several other Mennonite families to move to Vanderhoof.

With World War I raging in Europe, there was again a gnawing fear among some Mennonites that young men, while safely out of reach of the Russian authorities, might still be drafted into the Canadian army. Canada, as a member of the British Commonwealth, had automatically become involved in the war when Britain declared hostilities against Germany on August 4, 1914. However, military conscription, i.e., compulsory military service, did not come into effect until August 29, 1917, with the passing of the Military Service Act.

The United States, meanwhile, did not enter the war until the spring of 1917, at which point some Mennonites there became nervous as well. The result was that in the spring of 1918, a small group of ten American and Canadian Mennonite families seeking to avoid any probing government officials, decided to relocate in the remote farming community of Vanderhoof, deep in the heart of the interior of B.C.

The Voth family from Bingham Lake, Minnesota, led by H.H. Voth, had already moved to Winkler, Manitoba, during the previous year to avoid the military draft.² They joined the Vanderhoof-bound group that included the large Suderman family from Winkler, headed by my great-grandfather Johann Suderman (1868–1950). Among them were two of H.H. and Sara (Kornelson) Voth's sons who were

of military age, as well as three of Johann and Susanna (Giesbrecht) Suderman's sons who were also of military age. H.H. Voth's son, H.S. Voth, did not join the pioneering expedition to Vanderhoof, having already married and established himself in Winkler.

Besides the effort to shield their sons from conscription, the ten families were also likely motivated by the lure of cheap land available at 160 acres for \$10; this spelled opportunity for the large Suderman family, with five sons and seven daughters.³

So, the Sudermans loaded their tractor and thresher, as well as horses and cattle and feed for the journey, onto a couple of railroad cars; the family itself took over an entire railway coach and left for Vanderhoof in April 1918.

Life in Vanderhoof was hard and not quite as economically productive as they had hoped. For a time, the new settlers lived in tents while they were clearing land and building homes and a log church. But still there were occasions for celebration. Tina, one of the Suderman daughters, had, before leaving for the west with her family, become engaged to Abram Dyck, son of George and Anna Dyck, and brother of Peter, my grandfather. Plans were made for the wedding to take place in Vanderhoof.

And so it was that Peter, his wife Helen, and his brother Abram, the groom-to-be, took the train from Manitoba to B.C. in October 1918, a scant 6 months after the Sudermans, the Voths, and the other families had arrived in their new surroundings. The weather was cold and rainy. Upon arriving, Peter and Abram, feeling the effects of having to push cars through mud in the B.C. backcountry, fell victim to the so-called Spanish Flu, an influenza of the H1N1 strain.

The virus, first detected in San Sebastian, Spain—hence "Spanish" Flu—in early 1918, spread rapidly through the trenches of World War I. As the war was drawing to a close, soldiers returning to their countries of origin brought the virus with them. It may well be that Peter and Abram contracted the deadly disease from soldiers on the train.

Ironically, the virus was most lethal for young and vigorous men and pregnant women. Death could result within hours, with the victim usually succumbing to pneumonia, literally drowning in his or her own secretions. The results worldwide were catastrophic, estimates of fatalities ranging from 50 million to 100 million.



Clearing land in the Nechako Valley near the Vanderhoof settlement. Brothers Abe Suderman and Jake Suderman stand on a long-pole lever and use their combined weight to loosen a stump. Photo: Courtesy of Harold Suderman.

When Peter, his wife Helen, and Abram arrived in Vanderhoof, the two brothers were already feeling ill. The disease ran its customary rapid course, and on October 29, first Abram (age 24) and then, two days later, his brother Peter (age 29) succumbed. The funeral took place on November 3, the very date that had previously been set for Abram and Tina's wedding.

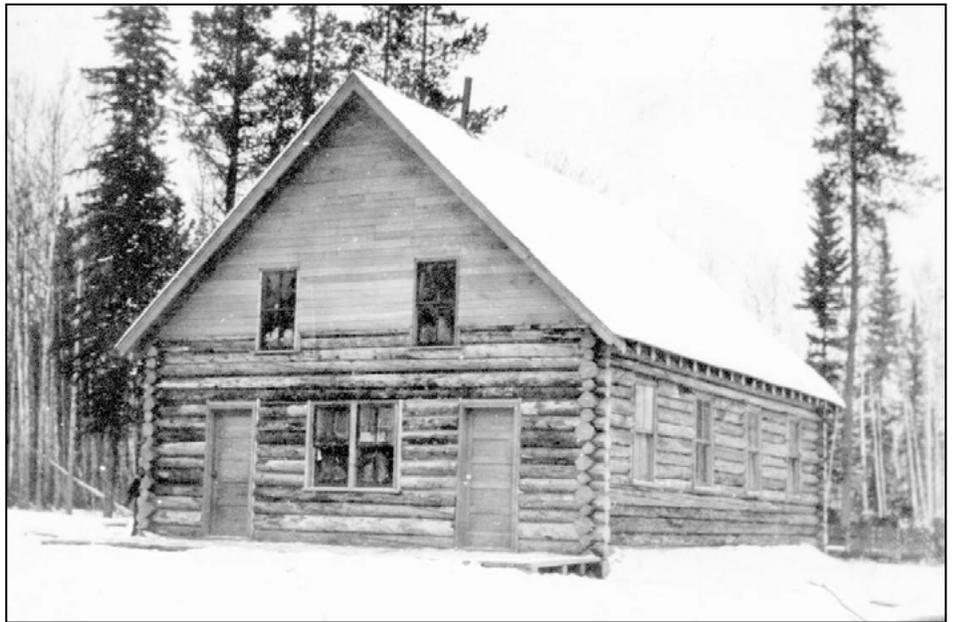
The previous evening, November 2, John Suderman, the eldest and most vigorous of the Suderman sons, also died. And so the funeral was for him too. Since a third casket could not be built on such short notice, his body was placed on the lid of one of the two caskets and buried later. Except for Tina (the bride-to-be) and her sister Anna, the entire Suderman family was ill and unable to attend the funeral. Helen, newly widowed and also stricken by the flu, managed only to come outdoors for a short time.

So, to put it in context, Tina, the bride-to-be, lost her fiancé, her brother, and her brother-in-law-to-be. My grandmother (Helen Dyck) lost her husband (Peter Dyck), her brother (John Suderman), and her future brother-in-law (Abram Dyck). It was a tragedy so overwhelming that within two years, after combined economic and personal disappointments, the ten families who braved the Vanderhoof initiative disbanded after WWI and moved back to Manitoba and Minnesota.⁴ The Suderman family returned to Manitoba, settling in Morden, where the parents (Johann and Susanna) would remain until their deaths on March 30, 1948 (Susanna) and May 14, 1950 (Johann).

The more I think about it, the more fascinated I am by this remarkable human saga, a mix of great hopes and great disappointments. And what prompted my investigation were those two German letters that I found among my parents' papers. What follows is my English translation of them.

The first letter, dated November 2, 1918, was written by Peter and Helena Neufeld. Peter had been a school teacher from Winkler, and his wife Helena was a daughter of the Vanderhoof settlement's spiritual leader, H.H. Voth. Their son Peter Neufeld, incidentally, died in Vanderhoof of tuberculosis on December 31, 1918, one month after H.H. Voth's own death in Vanderhoof on November 26, 1918.⁵

The second letter, dated November 4,



The Mennonite church was constructed in 1919 about 6 kilometers north of the Nechako River near Vanderhoof, using lumber cut by the sawmill located on the Voth homestead. Notice the two separate entrances, one for women and one for men. Photo: Courtesy of Allan Labun.

1918, was written by Diedrich J. Dick and his wife Maria.

*Vanderhoof, B.C.
November 2, 1918*

Dear brother and sister in the Lord,

As a greeting we wish you God's comfort! With deep sorrow I must give you the news that your two sons have gone home. I would gladly tell you a great deal, yet one can scarcely find the words for it.

First something of how the illness began. They had already not felt well on the train and so too when they arrived in Vanderhoof. On Tuesday they had come to the Sudermans, but they could not speak very much anymore. Abram spoke briefly with Tina. Suddenly he bent forward, clutching his chest. He then lay down, and never got up again. He was desperately ill and almost always unconscious. Tuesday evening he went home at 11pm.

Peter also was very ill, and almost never conscious. On one occasion brother Diedrich Dick asked him if he was prepared to meet Jesus. To which Peter replied, "Yes, you too?" He then threw himself backwards and never again regained consciousness. I asked him whether he recognized me. He looked at me for a moment but that was all. He died Thursday, October 31, at 5am.

They are lying in the tent at the Sudermans. They have finished the battle. Heinrich our son helped to carry Peter out, and he mentioned that Abram had a very friendly look on his face. We have dug two graves. We wanted to have two caskets brought here, but none are available because there are so many deaths; we can leave the bodies above ground only so long. Yet we will do what we can.

At the Sudermans' almost everyone is ill. They are unable to look after themselves. We

would have wanted someone to come here to help, but travelling now is so arduous.

So, what is there left to tell you? To comfort you I don't know how. God's ways are wondrous; often we don't understand them. In these days we have often asked ourselves, "Why this way, Lord?" Yet the riddle cannot be solved. One day you will see what He meant. The two brothers—your sons—have finished the battle. They are home, away from this sad world. Soon we too must go and then we will meet all our loved ones. Soon, yes soon. The Psalmist says, "The lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." And then, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

I will soon write more and will ask Brother Dick to write you as well. A greeting to all.

Last night John Suderman also was very ill.

Your brother and sister in the Lord,

Peter and Helena Neufeld

P.S. The caskets must be shipped here; we hardly know what to do.

*Vanderhoof, B.C.
November 4, 1918*

Dear brother and sister in Christ Jesus,

As a comfort in deep sorrow, I refer you to Psalm 37:5 and I Peter 5:7. Because I am a servant of the Word and because it was my assignment to close the eyes in death of your beloved Peter and Abram, I thought that though we are strangers—yet in spirit we are all children of one Father—I would relate a few lines of that which I heard and saw at the sickbeds of your sons. Perhaps through them, the Great Physician, our dear Saviour, will provide you with comfort. We mortals are at best inadequate comforters. Real comfort in such heart-rending sorrow can be given only by Him who suffered and died for us on the

(cont'd on p. 8)



**Mennonite
Heritage
Centre**

600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

Call for CO interviews and personal material

by *Korey Dyck*

Good news is always welcome at the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC)! This week we were informed by the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages that Mennonite Church Canada would be receiving a federal government grant from the Celebration and Commemoration Program. The grant in the amount of \$36,800 will be used for the MHC archives project entitled, *Alternative Service in Canada during the Second World War*

Conrad Stoesz, our archivist and author of the grant application, estimates that the grant application process took roughly

two years to complete, measuring from the start of the application process to the awarding of funds on August 18, 2015. With additions, corrections, and new questions that emerged along the way, the process was longer than expected. However, we believe the wait was worth it!

Together with grant partner Andrew Wall, documentary film maker from *Refuge31 Films* who created the award-winning Steve Bell documentary, the MHC plans to create a video documentary of the experiences of conscientious objectors (COs) using yet-to-be-filmed oral interviews. Some archival photos, videos, and personal papers have already been collected at the MHC archives.

With this column, we are now calling for surviving COs to contact the MHC in order to be considered for video interviews regarding their experiences. In addition, we are also looking to acquire by donation material associated with alternative service work during the Second World War. These items may include clothing, coins, photos, videos, music, diaries, letters to or from wives

and girlfriends—items that can help tell a story of following Christ's peaceful example to future generations. There is already a growing excitement about this documentary film project.

Since we were informed of the grant, other organizations have expressed potential interest in the project. Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba Telecom Services (MTS) video on demand, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, and an artist/photograph restorer have all shown interest in helping to create a project that honours COs, their experience, and their choice to serve Canada non-violently.

Please contact either Conrad or me with names of COs and we will arrange for interviews. Let us also know if you would be willing to donate CO material to the archives. We are excited about producing this story for a wider audience, a production that is long overdue. We look forward to hearing from you.

Contact Korey Dyck, Director (kdyck@mennonitechurch.ca) or Conrad Stoesz, Archivist (cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca).



COs on truck coming home after work. Photo: Courtesy of Mennonite Heritage Centre (Alternative Service in Canada photograph collection. CA MHC 273-11.0).

Women's Voices and the Anabaptist Peace Witness

by Elizabeth Wittrig

“You aren't going to find anything here,” she laughed. I nodded. For five weeks, I had told individuals the title of my project. I watched as some raised their eyebrows at me. Others sighed.

I spent this summer travelling to each of the Mennonite Brethren archives in the United States and Canada to research a project I had chosen: *Mennonite Brethren Women's Voices and the Anabaptist Peace Witness*. Eager as I was to hear female voices speak for peace, I quickly doubted my choice.

As I journeyed through North America, some individuals seemed to pity my project. A few simply shook their heads, sympathetically confiding that I would not find any women speaking for peace in Mennonite Brethren history. Women, they told me, were never conscientious objectors.

I carefully nodded along with their comments, but as they spoke, I felt revitalized. Their perspectives reinforced the heart of my research. In church history, researching the diverse experiences of those on the margins of institutional bodies requires broadening and deepening theological terms beyond the definitions that those in power used.

Throughout the twentieth century, male church leaders often constructed the parameters around the Mennonite Brethren peace witness. Historian Abe Dueck compares Mennonite Brethren peace theology with other Anabaptist denominations. He argues that Mennonite Brethren interpreted the Anabaptist peace witness as “historic nonresistance,” meaning that church leaders usually defined peace theology as conscientious objection to military participation. Through WWI and WWII, most Mennonite Brethren in the U.S. and Canada declared conscientious objector status and participated in alternative service programs. In the second half of the twentieth century, however, there was a growing desire to abandon the peace position altogether in order to increase opportunities for mission with non-Anabaptist groups.

Dueck explains that in the Mennonite and General Conference Mennonite Church, mid-century theologians who felt called to write about peace functioned as “ideological brokers.” These prominent

church leaders and scholars reframed the historic nonresistance position to fit their North American context. Their writings allowed for the Mennonite church to broaden their peace witness beyond conscientious objection and include the terms “peace and justice.”

Dueck argues that the Mennonite Brethren never experienced this ideological shift generated by “ideological brokers.”¹ Within most Mennonite Brethren churches at mid-century, the Anabaptist peace witness continued to refer to conscientious objection. Dueck's argument explained why some of the individuals I encountered raised their eyebrows at my topic. If women never declared conscientious objector status, perhaps women never spoke about peace.

In an article she wrote for *The Christian Leader*, Katie Funk Wiebe described attending a peace conference in 1972. She initially felt hesitant to attend, feeling that she was “trespassing onto traditional male territory.” By the end of the conference, she concluded, “As long as the concept of peace, as it relates to discipleship, remains with the male sector of the church and is concerned only with war, it will remain a gimmick. If it is allowed to permeate the life of all believers in all areas of life it becomes a way of life.”² An “ideological broker” for women, Wiebe argued that twentieth-century Mennonite Brethren women spoke for peace, but as an everyday ethic rather than a form of historic nonresistance.

Wiebe's words helped me to realize that Mennonite Brethren women who spoke for peace would be silent in official church records. Instead, women's voices would be scattered throughout archival documents. There, they would be quietly supporting conscientious objectors, aiding war refugees, and pleading for an end to violence against women. As I travelled through the Mennonite Brethren archives in North America, I began to search for these women who daily practiced peace to help their neighbors.

I first visited the Fresno Mennonite Library and Archives where I heard silences. I began my research by reading any files in the Records of the Welfare and Public Relations Committee and other boards of the Pacific District Conference that seemed to address peace topics. All of the records that I read were filled with the voices and names of male church leaders. I found myself agreeing with Dueck and Wiebe's analysis of the Mennonite Brethren peace witness.



Elizabeth (Liz) Wittrig of Hopedale, Illinois, was chosen by the MB Historical Commission as the 2015 summer archival intern. The Goshen College graduate is pictured processing archival materials. The five-week internship comes with a stipend of \$2,000 and travel to each of the four archival centers in the U.S. and Canada (Fresno, Hillsboro, Abbotsford, and Winnipeg). See the Commission's website for the news release and details of the internship (<http://www.mbhhistory.org>). The internship will again be offered in 2016. Interested students are encouraged to apply. Photo: Courtesy of Peggy Goertzen.

In my research, I discovered women quietly voicing their peace concerns in Women's Missionary Society reports in the Pacific District records. The women who reported for the missionary societies throughout the twentieth century discussed their passion for providing material aid and spiritual support for the needy in their home communities and abroad. The missionary societies always labelled their actions as “mission” and “outreach” rather than peace efforts. Their goals emphasized witnessing Christ's love and healing presence to those outside of the church, often through supporting overseas missionaries.

(cont'd on p. 9)

Readers write

I was intrigued by the letter of Jacob Wiens to his nephew warning him of future political instability in Russia (“To Russia with Love” June 2015). This is interesting as, of course, it was not a reason uppermost in people’s minds when emigration was considered just a few years earlier. What had changed in the meantime was the emergence of Nihilists and associated revolutionary activity, including the assassination of officials and eventually Tsar Alexander II. Of equal importance is the fact that the activities of such groups had caught the attention of the foreign press, including the press in America. As Wiens indicates, this is the source of his information—information he claims was withheld from people in Russia.

In June 1878, the *Nebraska Ansiedler* (forerunner of the *Mennonitische Rundschau* and widely read by the Mennonite immigrants) carried one such report on the *Nihilisten*, as probably did the local Winnipeg press. Of particular interest, however, is an article published later in 1879 (September 16) by a reporter of the *Chicago Tribune* that was widely reproduced in other newspapers across America. Entitled “Russian Nihilism: A Member of the Organization Defines its Objects and Explains the Necessity of an Occasional Assassination,” it consisted of a lengthy interview with one Alexander W. Stiffel who the *Tribune*’s journalist encountered in the Land Office of the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad.

Stiffel claimed not only to belong to the revolutionary group, having escaped Russia because of his political views, but also to be a member of a landowning family from near Odessa. In fact, a family called Stiffel were porcelain manufacturers in the Odessa region, although by the 1870s they also probably owned estates. The details Stiffel provided on the revolutionary organization and its aims were accurate, but could have been derived from published sources.

At one point the journalist asked: “What do you think of any large Russian immigration to this country?” Stiffel replied: “There will be a great many Mennonites. They are religiously opposed to army service of any kind. They are wealthy as a class, and they will come. The Russian—for the Mennonites are largely German—would rather stay in his native land. The conscription laws,

however, have become so onerous that all who can get away will do so.”

Another contemporary report published in an Oregon newspaper reported that Stiffel had arrived in St. Paul after a trip to Winnipeg to investigate the possibility of founding a settlement there of Russian émigrés. I’m unsure whether his visit was reported in local newspapers, but I suspect it may have been. More digging would be needed, however, to establish a link between Stiffel’s visit and Wiens’ remarks. Stiffel may not have been all he claimed, however, as later newspaper articles report that he was arrested for theft and fraud.

It is important, however, to place Wiens’ comments in their historical context in order to avoid any teleological interpretation that connects his remarks with much later events, especially the Russian Revolution of 1917. I have occasionally heard it hinted by Mennonites that the 1874 immigrants “knew” that there was no future for Mennonites in Russia because its political destiny was clear to them. This would be clearly incorrect.

James Urry, New Zealand

Tragedy in Vanderhoof

(cont’d from p. 5)

cross on Golgotha, yes, who gave His blood for our salvation.

Dear father and mother, your hearts must surely bleed and scream in pain. We ourselves have experienced it seven times in our family, and we can do nothing but call out to you, “Find your refuge with the Saviour.” He will not burden you with more than you are able to carry. He says, “I am with you all the days until the end,” and “I will comfort you as one whom his mother comforts” and Psalm 50:15.

Brother and Sister Suderman called me over to their place to help because 13 members of their family lay ill. I went over immediately to help in any way I could. When I arrived, both of them lay in the same room, but were positioned so that they could not see each other. I went to Peter and spoke with him about dying. He was happy in the Lord although he very much wanted to regain his health. He was willing to go if that was the Lord’s will. He was very concerned about Abram. And he was concerned about what he would say to his mother in the event he was able to return home. And his wife Helen and the children were very close to his heart. Yet he was confident and completely at peace in God. I thanked my God for such great mercy.

Then I spoke with Abram. Although we didn’t know each other, he looked at me in such an imploring way that the tears coursed down my cheeks. I said to him, “Abram, we have a loving Saviour who has our lives in His hand.

If He wills it, He can make you well again.” Then his eyes brightened in a most friendly way. “But,” I said, “if He wants to call you home to those dwellings which He has prepared for us, where there is no pain, no want, no sickness, no death and no tears, are you prepared to go with Him?” Then he said quite clearly, “Yes, I am.”

On Tuesday, October 29 at about 8pm he became quite delirious. He wasn’t aware of anything, but had severe pain in his chest. All the while I stood by his bed and laid hot compresses on his chest and did whatever possible to alleviate his pain. He drank a lot of water because of the intense heat in his chest. At 11pm his eyes grew dim and at 5 minutes past 11 his soul fled most peacefully. His breathing became always slower until it stopped. Then he was fully released.

It was very difficult. Brother Suderman was still healthy at this time, but the two of us could do only so much, and the body needed to be carried out. The neighbours were distant and almost all sick. So, the two of us carried him out and I washed him and took care of him.

Peter became delirious at the same time as Abram. He lay just a stride away from his brother, but he was quite unaware that his dear brother, for whom and with whom he had prayed so much in these days, had died. I stayed by his bedside and helped Peter too as much as I could. He had no thirst and his pain was much more severe. From 1 in the night until 15 minutes after 5 in the morning he suffered terribly. I don’t know these dear ones, but my opinion is that Peter had a much stronger nature than Abram. There was a terrible battle before death was victorious over the young life. It was so hard to watch that the family could no longer stand being near to him. What dear Helen suffered and how she prayed and screamed to the Lord for her Peter, my hand is not able to describe. At 15 minutes after 5 in the morning, October 31, the hour of his redemption struck. We were all at the point of collapse.

By this time both Sudermans [Johann and Susanna] were also bedridden. Now John [the eldest son] was most ill. Gerhard Dick and I built the caskets while my wife looked after the ailing John. On Saturday, November 2, when we had finished with the bodies, John was already very ill, and we realized that his days too were numbered, for his illness was more like Abram’s with the exception that he remained conscious until the end on November 2 at 9:15 in the evening.

We talked about having the bodies shipped home [to Manitoba], but then the caskets would have to be built differently, completely lined with tin. Because so many people are dying there isn’t even the time to bury them immediately; there is also no material available, which is why the bodies could not be shipped.

Yesterday—Sunday—we held a small burial service outdoors. Brother P.H. Neufeld spoke on 1 Peter 1:3–5, and I on Jeremiah 29:11.

You dear old parents of these sons, we have prayed much for you, that our dear God would give you strength to endure this hard test. Brother and sister, we have such a beautiful comfort in Psalm 126 and Revelation 21:1–8. Jesus says in John 13:7, “What I do, thou knowest not, but thou shalt know hereafter.” A poet has sung, “Here in this poor life we humans are often too blind because God’s wondrous ways are incomprehensible to us, but there in the life to come everything will be as clear as the sun.” All of the darkness of this world the Lord will reveal. One day we will see what He intended. It is all love from the Lord even though today we don’t understand it.

In intercession for you from your brother and sister in Christ,

D.J. and Maria Dick

Endnotes

1. Allan Labun, *The Family Story of John and Susan Suderman* (CP Printing, 2014), 63.
2. Peter Penner, “The Heinrich Voth Family: From Minnesota to Winkler to Vanderhoof,” *Mennonite Historian* 24/4 (December 1998): 1–2.
3. Labun, 67.
4. Lyn Hancock, *Vanderhoof, the Town that Wouldn’t Wait* (Nechako Valley Historical Society, 1979), 115.
5. Penner, 2. According to the youngest Voth son, Abraham H. Voth, during that first winter in Vanderhoof, H.H. Voth noted his declining health and predicted that his life would soon end. Two days before his death, the 67-year-old built his own coffin, arranged his funeral service, and gathered his family to pray for each one and the church; then he passed away after a short nap (Wes Kroeker, “Elder Heinrich Voth,” *CMBS Newsletter: Tabor College* 39/1 [Spring 2015]: 1–6). See also J.A. Froese, *Witness Extraordinary: A Biography of Elder Heinrich Voth, 1851–1918* (Board of Christian Literature of the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975).

Women’s Voices

(cont’d from p.7)

In a sermon titled “Why we have lagged in our Peace Witness,” Katie Funk Wiebe addressed the relationship of missions to peace within Mennonite Brethren churches. Wiebe argued that “missions is something any person can do.” Throughout history, Mennonite Brethren women and children supported mission efforts through material aid and prayer while peace issues belonged to men. Wiebe explained that “men owned the idea biblically, theologically, and psychologically, as well as behaviorally” therefore women “never took to the idea of peace like they did to missions.”³

Within the reports that I read, I found that the women in the Pacific District missionary societies also participated in acts of peace. The women sustained Mennonite Brethren missions by providing material aid to war-torn countries, praying for drafted men, and financially supporting missionaries who spread Christ’s love to the hopeless. I wondered: if the church had given these

passionate women the same opportunity to speak about peace as they spoke about missions, what would these women have said?

When I travelled to the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia I encountered more silences. At the archives, the female volunteers that I met explained their ongoing work to enter Mennonite Brethren obituaries into databases. They told me that most of the deceased women were only referred to by their husbands’ or brothers’ names. Without first and maiden names, these women’s identities were nearly untraceable. The volunteers cross-referenced books and genealogies to search for these nameless women. Throughout the week, as I worked on other projects, they often interrupted me with sporadic cheers: every shout meant that they had unearthed the right historical document. They had given another Mennonite Brethren woman back her name.

My first day at the British Columbia archives, the volunteers warned me that the archives lacked women’s voices for peace. Of course, my inability to read German restricted my research even further. The volunteers graciously provided me with church history books to read on Yarrow, South Abbotsford, and Greendale Mennonite Brethren churches instead. I intended to read these books as a break from my research project, but in each text I stumbled upon women’s voices.

Each Mennonite Brethren church in British Columbia included women’s sewing circles. In her book on Greendale Mennonite Brethren Church, Katherine Harder described these groups as women learning to “show love in a practical way.” From their arrival in British Columbia in the 1930s, these women distributed material aid to those in need. They responded to World War II by knitting socks for the Red Cross and sending parcels of food to Mennonite men in alternative service camps. The nameless women quietly broadened the Anabaptist peace witness in order to respond to war within their gendered church roles.

From British Columbia I travelled to Winnipeg and immediately heard women’s names again. I began by reading the travel diaries and correspondence of Susan B. Peters. Peters lived from 1899–1992, spending the majority of her adult years serving with M.C.C.⁴ A refugee



Marie Klassen Wiens (1921–2009) worked with M.C.C. in Germany, Paraguay, and on the executive board. Photo: Courtesy of Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Hillsboro.

from Russia, Peters felt called to spend her adult life helping others in the same way that M.C.C. had helped her family. Throughout her life, Peters worked in an orphanage in London, coordinated Mennonite aid to refugees in Denmark, and served in the Middle East.

As I read her diaries, I felt struck by how Peters spent every spare moment working toward material aid. In a short diary of her time in the Middle East, Peters scribbled down knitting patterns and recorded the number of rows she completed each day. She often planned where to send her handiwork: she sent a pair of mittens to cheer up a family member, a sweater for a friend in need, and hats to M.C.C. relief work. Similar to the British Columbia women who knitted for the Red Cross, Peters recognized the importance of sending supplies as a way to build peace.

While researching in Winnipeg, I also encountered *Sophia*, a magazine created by women who needed to speak in the church. Ester DeFehr and the McIvor Ave. Mennonite Brethren Church ladies first published *Sophia* in 1991. In the first issue, Ester DeFehr explained that the magazine was “for and about women. Our goal is to draw in participants of all ages, every social and economic stratum, and marital circumstance. We see this publication as an avenue where we could all get to know each other better as we listen to each other’s stories and dreams, thus uniting us with purpose of mind.” Maintaining the magazine within the McIvor church proved unsustainable. In

1993, a gathered committee of interested Winnipeg Mennonite Brethren women published *Sophia* instead. The magazine persisted through controversy about women's roles and financial difficulties until 2003 when the women edited their last issue.⁵

Within the twelve years that *Sophia* existed, the publication never gained support from the Mennonite Brethren church leadership and the Winnipeg women instead created their own church community. *Sophia* gave women a sacred space to voice their common concerns for women around the world. This meant that they spoke about the violence in their lives: discrimination, oppressive media images, and sexual harassment. They also voiced moments of peace: sisterhood, sermons delivered by women, relief sales, and hospitable neighbors. The women wrote as "ideological brokers" who re-interpreted the Anabaptist peace witness to address women's daily concerns.

In 1991, Eleanor Martens wrote a *Sophia* article titled "What's in a Name" where she discussed the danger of male-orientated church rhetoric. She argued that there are "no such things as neutral words." She felt that male-centred language hurt women's ability to belong in the church. She spoke about Sunday morning worship, "I do love the old hymns, with their richness of chord and creed. They speak to me in ways that the simple, repetitive language of today's worship music cannot. I know their sentiment and spirit include me, and did not their wording so often start bells jangling dissonantly in my head, I would ask that we sing more of them. But I can no longer sing 'Faith of our *Fathers*' (even though we change it to 'mothers' once a year, sometime in May) or 'Good Christian *Men* Rejoice' or 'Rise up, O *Men* of God' without wishing for an insurgence of hymn writers (and rewriters) in our ranks."⁶

Growing up in a Mennonite church that sang male pronouns, I often heard "bells jangling dissonantly in my head" during Sunday morning worship. I met with Katie Funk Wiebe at the end of my internship and she explained to me that she often felt compelled to write because she knew women who needed to speak about certain issues, but failed to find a voice for them. I knew that Eleanor Martens and others in *Sophia* spoke for their Anabaptist sisters and daughters. Most of their writings about women's concerns were published around the year

that I was born. They still managed to voice the hurt and joy that I encountered in the Mennonite church twenty years later.

After meeting *Sophia*, I traveled to the Hillsboro Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies. There, I learned about another strong Mennonite Brethren woman who echoed my own concerns for peace: Marie Klassen Wiens. Wiens lived from 1921–2009 and served M.C.C. in Germany, Paraguay, and on the executive board. Peggy Goertzen introduced her to me through a story that summarized Wiens' personality. Goertzen shared that at an M.C.C. banquet Wiens was seated on stage with all male M.C.C. leaders. After telling the men and Wiens to stand so that the executive could be recognized, the moderator concluded, "The Brethren may sit down." Wiens continued to stand.

Within her personal writings, Wiens showed the same stubborn and intelligent passion for human rights. She recorded her travels with M.C.C. to the Middle East, Africa, and South America. Wiens remained sensitive to how North American lifestyles affected the socio-economic climates that she observed in each country. In a speech she gave at her last M.C.C. executive board meeting in February 1987, Wiens shared, "We will not eliminate weapons of destruction or war, but we will be a reconciling, healing presence, bringing hope for the world—hope through changed lives through Jesus Christ." Wiens' voice showed that although the women in *Sophia*, sewing circles, and M.C.C. units rarely spoke directly about conscientious objection, they still brought a reconciling, healing presence to the world.

In the final days of my internship, with Wiens' words still running through my mind, I met with Katie Funk Wiebe. I barely stepped into her apartment before she asked me about my research. I hesitated. I slowly opened my mouth to respond and she laughed, "You picked a large topic." While I nodded, she handed me a binder. I opened it to discover that she had collected all of the sermons that she had delivered on peace throughout her life. Overcome, I awkwardly informed Wiebe that I had noticed that she had plenty to say about peace. Again, she laughed, "Well, it's an important topic!"

I spoke with Wiebe about the silences I had encountered in my research. She sympathized, shaking her head at the daunting challenge of finding our Anabaptist mothers in church history.



Susan B. Peters (1899–1992) worked with M.C.C. in an orphanage in London, coordinated Mennonite aid to refugees in Denmark, and served in the Middle East. This is a 1947 passport photo of her. Photo: Courtesy of Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Winnipeg (Susan B. Peters Fonds, Vol. 1028, File No. 6:1).

Although it often meant growing frustrated in archives, Wiebe spoke about the joy that came from giving our mothers back their names. She shared that she once combed through every single footnote in a Mennonite Brethren history book in order to prove that eighteen *households* rather than eighteen *men* founded the Mennonite Brethren church. I realized that Wiebe was arguing for the importance of becoming "ideological brokers" and expanding institutional language in order to research those on the margins of church records.

While I spoke with Wiebe about our mothers, I noticed a red, knitted hat on her end table. She shared with me that she often knitted hats and mittens to donate to a peace organization. Wiebe dove into a story about the organization's vision, but I barely heard her. Her words from 1972 ran through my mind, "As long as the concept of peace, as it relates to discipleship, remains with the male sector of the church and is concerned only with war, it will remain a gimmick. If it is allowed to permeate the life of all believers in all areas of life it becomes a way of life."

I stared at the red, knitted hat in Wiebe's hands and saw the pages of knitting patterns in Susan B. Peters' travel diary. I imagined the Greendale Mennonite Brethren Church women gathered together during World War II, sharing row counts. I heard Marie Klassen Wiens and Eleanor Martens advocating for inclusive language. I grinned. My Anabaptist mothers devoted their lives to

constructing a daily ethic for peace. After five weeks of following silences, I heard them.

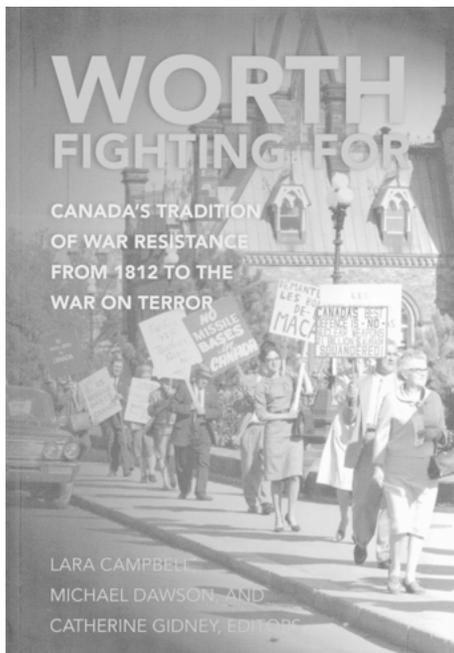
Endnotes

1. Abe Dueck, "North American Mennonite Brethren and Issues of War, Peace, and Nonresistance," in *Bridging Troubled Waters*, ed. Paul Toews (Kindred Productions, 1995), 3–17.
2. Katie Funk Wiebe, "The Conflict of Peace," *The Christian Leader* 35/13 (27 June 1972): 19.
3. Katie Funk Wiebe, "Why we have lagged in our Peace Witness," circa 1990, CMBS, Hillsboro.
4. For a description of the archival collection relating to Susie Peters, see http://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/personal_papers/peters-susan-b-1899-1992.
5. The complete collection of *Sophia* has been digitized and is accessible at: <http://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/publications/sophia>.
6. Elenore Martens, "What's In a Name?" *Sophia* 2 (1991): 6–7.

Book Reviews

Lara Cambell, Michael Dawson, and Catherine Gidney, eds., *Worth Fighting For: Canada's Tradition of War Resistance from 1812 to the War on Terror* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015), 313 pp.

Reviewed by Andrew P. Klager



The editors and contributors of *Worth Fighting For: Canada's Tradition of War Resistance from 1812 to the War on Terror* have performed an invaluable service for readers—from scholars to activists—who are deeply interested in the history of anti-war initiatives, non-participation, and acts of defiance and civil disobedience in Canada, even when such measures often meant jeopardizing one's personal welfare and social standing. When the current Conservative

government has ramped up attention to Canada's military history and translated this bellicosity into their foreign policy, the paradoxically titled *Worth Fighting For* is a breath of fresh air for those who prefer a history of Canada that is not this slanted and myopic.

The book is laid out in a convenient chronological manner with chapters long enough to be engaging and substantive, but brief enough to whisk the reader through the litany of war resistance actions—some more successful than others—during the War of 1812, the Anglo-Boer War, the First World War, the Second World War, Vietnam War, the recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and the so-called "war on terror."

The aim of the book's editors and contributors is to "help recalibrate our understanding of Canadian history by documenting Canada's long tradition of war resistance" (p. 2). And although this tradition is indeed robust and important enough to celebrate, the authors are also not afraid to underscore the many times that Canadian war resisters, conscientious objectors, and anti-war activists met with failure—either through the loss of their lives or livelihood, or through their inability to organize and mobilize in meaningful ways, as was, for example, the case in Canada during the Anglo-Boer War at the turn of the century when, according to Amy Shaw, "almost no group, religious or political, maintained a united front against the war" (p. 47). Indeed, as another helpful contrast, "Despite Canada's historical role as a sanctuary for draft dodgers and military deserters during the Vietnam War," author Luke Stewart reminds us, "both Liberal and Conservative governments have intervened" during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars so that "[n]ot one of these soldiers has received refugee status in Canada" (p. 215). Such is the diversity and idiosyncratic actions and responses to war by Canadians and their governments depending on the time and circumstances that this book succeeds in presenting in a captivating manner.

The publication of this book is of a high quality and is organized logically, making the narrative flow as it should, even if this reviewer would have preferred footnotes to the endnotes that the publisher opted for instead. The backgrounds of the authors are eclectic enough to assemble a variety of perspectives, but the level of expertise—whether scholarly or experience-based—is uniform enough to

lend weight to their portrayals and analyses. Aside from the chapters on war resistance in Canada in response to specific wars, fascinating topics such as war toy activism, state surveillance, the important role of women, the contributions of historic peace churches, and debates on singing the national anthem in elementary school settings make for a compelling read. It is particularly valuable to have a volume specifically on *Canada's* war resistance tradition from a publication that unabashedly eschews mainstream perspectives, thus allowing the authors to highlight and reveal what has often been overshadowed and hidden.

Readable and accessible without eroding the scholarly insights and detailed explorations into such a timely topic, *Worth Fighting For* is definitely worth paying the purchase price for.

Andrew P. Klager teaches Mennonite Studies and Christian history at the University of the Fraser Valley, Simon Fraser University, and Trinity Western University. He is also the editor of the book *From Suffering to Solidarity: The Historical Seeds of Mennonite Interreligious, Interethnic, and International Peacebuilding to be published by Wipf & Stock in the fall of 2015*.

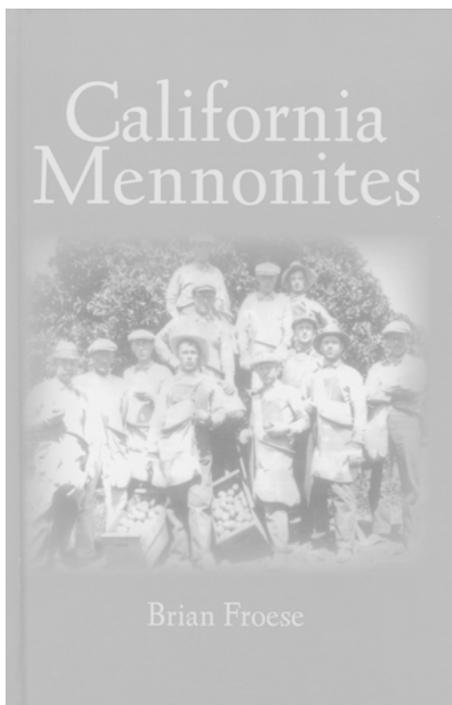
Brian Froese, *California Mennonites* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2015), 334 pp.

Reviewed by Valerie G. Rempel, history professor at Fresno Pacific University

Brian Froese's recent book, *California Mennonites*, takes the reader from the heady days of the gold rush to the intensity of the Farm Workers Movement in an effort to explore the "fluidity" of Mennonite identity in The Golden State. The book, published as part of the Young Center Books in Anabaptist & Pietist Studies, makes an important contribution to our growing understanding of the diversity of Mennonite experience in North America.

Mennonites came west for multiple reasons: in search of better health and to escape religious persecution, economic dislocation or the ravages of the American dust bowl. While frequently rooting their journey in biblical images of God's providence, they also embraced elements of the California story, moving quickly beyond their agrarian roots to embrace urbanization and professionalism.

The book's primary focus is on the middle decades of the twentieth century



which serve, Froese points out, as a kind of cultural watershed in American religious life. Froese is particularly interested in the contradictions of the Mennonite experience in California. These appear, for example, in the responses to World War II where Mennonites worked across denominational boundaries to support the development of Civilian Public Service Camps and then debated amongst themselves the question of what was appropriate American patriotism. Similarly, Mennonites responded to significant social need by developing mental health institutions, but then embraced secular psychiatric approaches while resisting distinctly religious care. The establishment of Pacific Bible Institute and the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary illustrated mixed impulses as they sought to navigate fundamentalist impulses while retaining elements of Anabaptist thought and practice. What is unique to the California story, Froese argues, is the way Mennonites negotiated competing leanings to produce a kind of “hybrid Mennonite” that both accommodated and resisted the larger culture.

Mennonites from other parts of the U.S. and Canada were bemused by these hybrid Mennonites whose political and religious practices seemed so different. This was especially evident in the conflict around the United Farm Workers movement which exposed tensions between Mennonite landowners and

migrant workers and with it, tensions between eastern and western Mennonites. In California, Froese suggests, “race, labor-intensive capitalist agriculture, and conservative evangelical religion” were all shaping the Mennonite experience in ways that seemed foreign to those outside of California, creating “fissures” in Mennonite identity that were increasingly “racial, economic and geographic,” not simply theological.

According to Froese, Mennonites in California did not simply duplicate the communities they had left behind, although they did create a network of institutions similar to those in other places. Froese makes much of this tendency toward organization, from women’s societies to relief work, but it is not always clear how this differed from the organizational tendencies at work throughout the Mennonite world. Still, this is a small quibble with what is an insightful study of the California Mennonite story.

Valerie Rempel’s book review first appeared in the California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin, no. 59 (Spring 2015). It is reprinted here with permission.

Barbara J. Tiessen, *The Schoenfeld Russlaender: A Mennonite Family History* (Windsor, 2015), 171 pp.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein

The “Russian Mennonite” story—as the Russian chapter of Mennonite history is sometimes called—is a complex story. Barbara Tiessen, however, does an admirable job in *Schoenfeld Russlaender* of providing the reader with the larger narrative that gives the context for locating her family’s story.

The family featured in this book was one that experienced much of the happiness of Mennonite life in Russia before the 1917 revolution, as well as the extreme difficulties that overtook the country and local communities of all kinds after the Revolution of 1917. The Schoenfeld communities became a special target for many who saw the Revolution as a chance to literally force the sharing of the great wealth that could be found in the Mennonite communities of south Russia.

Eventually, like thousands of others, after some years as refugees, they became part of an immigration to Canada and settled in the Windsor/Leamington area of Ontario. It was an incredible journey, not only physically, but also involving a total

change of environment brought on by a new life in a new country. Barbara’s personal experiences provide a very good sample of what such a journey entailed.

She does not fail to depict some of the inner turmoil experienced by some of the older people who never could quite accept what had happened, and tried to recreate pieces of the Russian chapter as much as possible in the new land. Younger people settled down more easily to the demands of what was for them a very strange country, Canada.

The author begins her account with a brief genealogy of the Tiessen family. She then moves to setting out the results of her reading and research in order to provide the back story of her forebears’ earlier homeland, the Mennonite village area of Schoenfeld, north of the Molotschna settlement in south Russia (later Ukraine).

Buttressed by dozens of images, photos taken along the way and preserved, and a number of well-chosen documents, this modest treatment succeeds in bringing all readers to know the Tiessen family quite well. One of the documents recorded in the appendices is an account by Margareta (Warkentin) Peters, aunt of the author’s mother.

Barbara has expressed her gratitude to friends and family for having helped her. There is a special acknowledgement of help from archivist Conrad Stoesz at the Mennonite Heritage Centre and Dr. James Urry of New Zealand, a specialist dealing with the story of the Mennonites in Russia, particularly in pre-revolutionary times.

