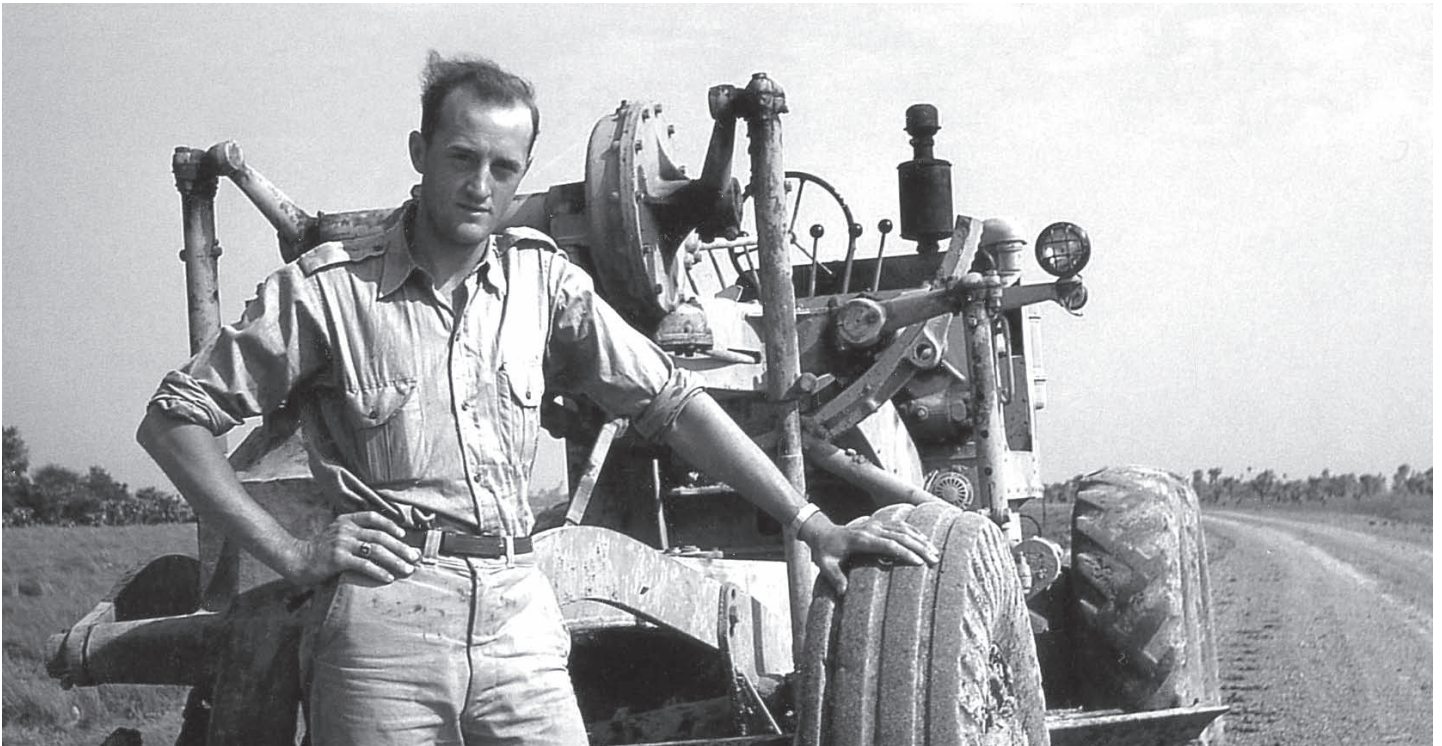


Mennonite Historian

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



PAX worker Toni Braun (1936–1964) pictured with his US surplus army road-building tractor, working on the Trans-Chaco highway in Paraguay. The Trans-Chaco highway was designed to improve connections between the agricultural regions and the city markets. The 398 kilometers of highway took about 50 PAX workers and 40 pieces of heavy equipment five years to build. The last section was completed in 1961. Thanks to the Trans-Chaco highway, a road trip from the Chaco (the source of 50% of Paraguay's dairy products) to the capital city Asunción now takes about four hours instead of ten days! See story on page 8. Photo credit: Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg.

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Documenting Sexual Abuse: Archival Collections and the Complex Legacy of John Howard Yoder

by Rachel Waltner Goossen

Two years ago, Sara Wenger Shenk, president of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS), published an essay titled “Bleak Mid-Winter Lament.” She acknowledged having recently read “several dark chapters in our church’s history—files that have been off limits because they tell a story we would rather not have to remember.” She continued:

There is much about our history, whether personal, familial, congregational, institutional or denominational, that any one of us wishes would be different. Reading through dark chapters of things we regret about our story is anguishing work, but I did it as a labour of hope. I long for us as a people to learn to be more honestly transparent with each other, to name our fears, confess our failures, and awaken to the gift of grace freely given.¹

As a Mennonite historian based in Kansas, I had more than a passing interest in Shenk’s perspective. She was referring

to a collection of AMBS files in Elkhart, Indiana, that documented nearly two decades of sexual harassment and sexual abuse of women by former Goshen Biblical Seminary president and faculty member John Howard Yoder, who had died in 1997 at age seventy. These files, originating in the office of Marlin Miller (president of the Elkhart-based seminary from 1975 until his death in 1994), had long been held at a local attorney’s office for “safekeeping.” President Shenk had recently learned of the Miller files’ existence, and she was in the initial stages of shepherding a truth-telling process about Yoder’s harmful actions at the seminary and beyond. Consulting with the seminary’s attorney, she determined that there were no legal stipulations regarding the files that limited her power, as seminary president, to make them available for historical research.²

That is my point of entry into this story. At the time that I was reading Shenk’s essay about the “dark chapters” illuminated by Miller’s files, I had just agreed to embark on a historical investigation focused on institutional responses to Yoder’s decades-long patterns of sexual abuse. Already during the previous year, Shenk, at the urging of women seeking a full accounting of the seminary’s role in concealing Yoder’s misconduct, had begun to learn about failures of accountability in the 1970s and 1980s, during Yoder’s tenure there. Faculty, alumni, and board members, both current and retired, seemed willing to share information about secrets long held surrounding Yoder’s behaviour, as well as his forced resignation from the seminary in 1984 with a negotiated severance arrangement.

The scope of Yoder’s targeting of women remained unknown. But Shenk, together with Mennonite Church USA executive director Ervin Stutzman, in 2013 took steps to establish a denominational “Discernment Group” aimed at unraveling past secrecy and addressing institutional failures in responding to sexual abuse. Further, the new Discernment Group sought to address concerns of victims and to re-examine policies aimed at sexual abuse prevention and accountability across MC USA constituencies and programs.

Shedding new light on Yoder’s history of sexual abuse—given his eminence as an influential pacifist, New Testament theologian, and Christian ethicist—was clearly sensitive territory. In the mid-



Rachel Waltner Goossen, Professor of History at Washburn University (Topeka, Kansas), researched the institutional responses to Yoder’s decades-long patterns of sexual abuse.

1970s, when Yoder’s patterns of abuse emerged, he held dual posts as a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame and as a faculty member at Goshen Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana.³ He was also an ordained Mennonite leader. But seminary president Miller, as well as other Mennonite leaders knowledgeable about Yoder’s behaviours and rationalizations, had been largely ineffective in challenging him, and many individuals had been harmed. Where responsibility lay, in addition to Yoder himself, remained an open question.

Seeking a historian to investigate Mennonite institutional responses to his misconduct, the Discernment Group invited me, a scholar of women’s history and peace history, and a relative “outsider” to the subject. I had never met Yoder personally, and was unaware of any acquaintance with persons harassed or abused by him.

Before agreeing to undertake this historical research, I asked Discernment Group members what they planned to do with the Miller files and other documentation that had previously been withheld from public scrutiny. All documents to which I would be given access, I asserted, needed to be deposited in archives so that other researchers—indeed, anyone with a stake in the Yoder

(cont’d on p. 4)

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Genealogy and Family History

Duplicate Records Prove Beneficial

by Glenn H. Penner, chemistry professor at the University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario (gpenner@uoguelph.ca)

There are several cases where duplicate record keeping on the part of governments or church officials has saved records of genealogical importance to Mennonites. Below are four examples.

1) Prussia-to-Russia immigration records. When Mennonites applied to the Prussian government for exit visas to immigrate to Russia, government officials in the West Prussian district offices (Tiegenhof, Marienburg, Marienwerder, etc.) recorded information on these families. These records were then copied and the copies (without the original signatures) were sent to Berlin. The original records have disappeared but the Berlin copies have survived and are now in the Berlin archives.¹

2) Birth, death, and marriage records for the Mennonite congregation of Deutsch Kazun in central Poland. Whenever Napoleonic France took over a region of Europe, one of the new innovations they introduced was a detailed system of civil registration. The resulting records have been a genealogical goldmine. In 1808, the French introduced these registrations to the Duchy of Warsaw. It happened that the Mennonite communities of Deutsch Kazun and Deutsch Wymyschle were in this territory. The Mennonite churches kept these records starting in 1812 and duplicate copies were sent to Warsaw.

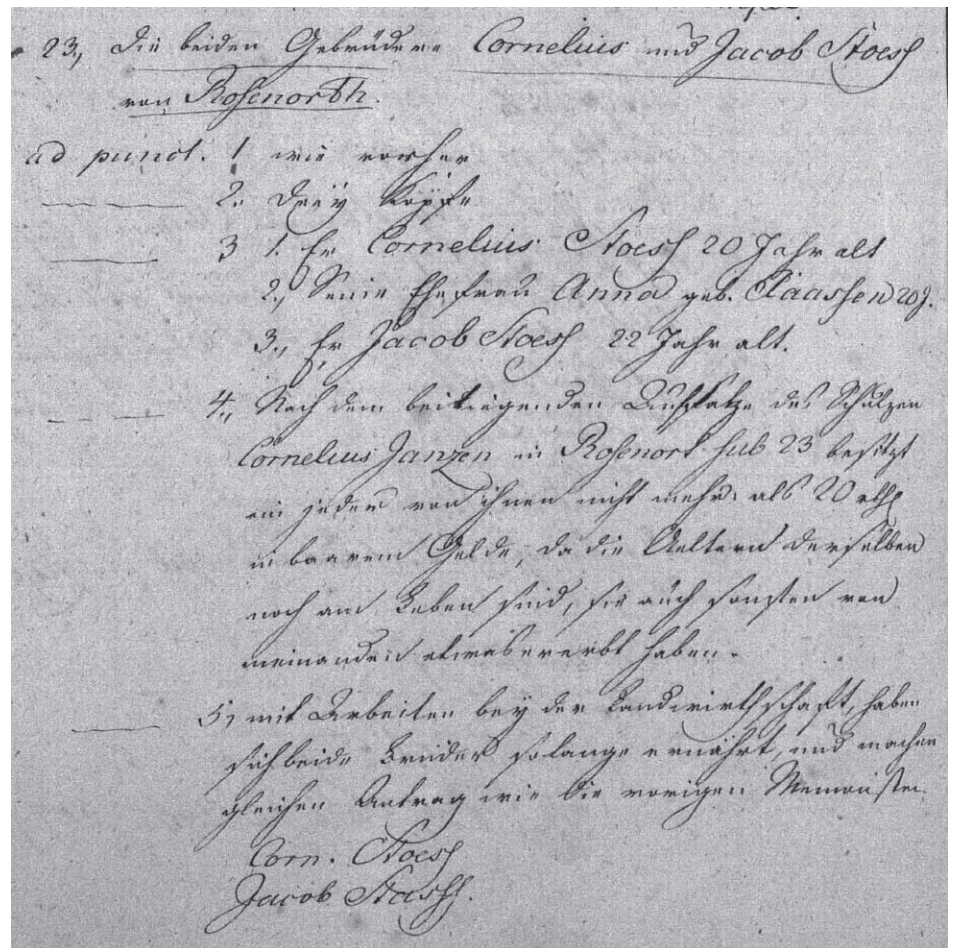
The following incident from 1864 is recorded by Ältester Leonhard Ewert² and points to the significance of the duplicate records. "It happened one day in summer that many Gypsies were camped in Dt. Czastkow on the sand near the cemetery. It was harvest time, after the noon hour, the whole family of Heinrich Nickel [a minister in the Dt. Kazun church] went again to the wheat harvest on the highland behind the fortress highway. No sooner had they left the yard when several Gypsies came and wanted to tell fortunes and carry out other skills and naturally be rewarded for it. The impatient farmer Nickel told them he didn't have the time to

go back to the house and they should come in the evening, and left for work with his family. The Gypsies were disgruntled and muttered among themselves something that could be interpreted as follows: "we get nothing, you also should get nothing." No sooner had the cutting, binding, and gathering in the wheat field resumed, when a thick black cloud of smoke arose from their house. They all ran home; however, nearly everything was lost in the fire, including all church books from 1812 to 1864." Fortunately, the Warsaw archives still has the duplicate registers from 1832 on and these are available on microfilm and online.³

3) The baptismal register of the Deutsch Kazun Mennonite Church. Mennonite baptisms were not included in

the civil registers, but kept separately by the church. The Dt. Kazun church had a baptismal register which was started in 1834. This register was copied by either the Ältester or one of the ministers in 1902. In 1939, a bomb destroyed nearly all of the Dt. Kazun records, including the original baptismal register. Fortunately, the 1902 copy has survived the war and was brought to Canada by Ältester Leonhard Ewert.⁴

4) The baptism and marriage records of the Elbing-Ellerwald Mennonite Church in West Prussia. Elbing-Ellerwald was a large and very important congregation in West Prussia. The church appears to have kept records going back at least to the early 1700s. Shortly after he was ordained as Ältester in 1778, Gerhard Wiebe started a diary in which he also recorded the baptisms he performed every year as well as most of the marriages which took place within the congregation. This continued until 1795, the year before he died. Later



The emigration application for two brothers, Jacob and Cornelius Stoesz, of Rosenort (in the Gross Werder), West Prussia, dated 31 October 1803. Jacob did not immigrate to Russia until 1817 and Cornelius never did. The original record would have also had their signatures (Berlin Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz I HA Rep7B file 4176 page 00533). Photo credit: Glenn Penner.

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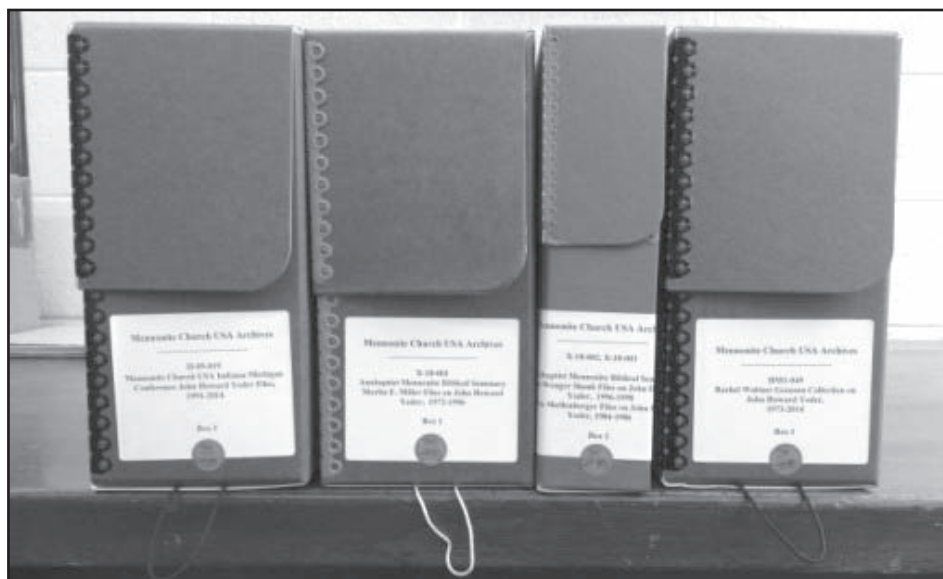
Documenting Sexual Abuse

(cont'd from p. 2)

sexual abuse narrative—could evaluate the sources' validity, as well as the conclusions reached. AMBS complied by readying the documents for transfer to the Archives of Mennonite Church USA (in Goshen, Indiana), recognizing that transparency in documenting past decision-making was key to addressing—and reversing—the secrecy that for decades had surrounded Yoder's behaviour. During the coming months, a variety of institutions and individuals followed AMBS's lead by also transferring *their* records and donating privately-held materials about Yoder's sexual abuse to the denominational archives. Eventually, I too would turn over to the archives the files amassed during my year of research—including correspondence, printed material, and digital audio interviews.⁴

In 2014, I travelled to northern Indiana to study AMBS's files, as well as other records documenting Mennonite institutional responses to Yoder's behaviour. The additional records came chiefly from the Prairie Street Mennonite Church of Elkhart (the local congregation where Yoder held membership); from Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference; and from a "task force" of Mennonite Church leaders who, in February 1992, had heard directly from eight women—former colleagues, students, and acquaintances of Yoder's—about their experiences. The task force had deemed their testimony credible, and in the spring of 1992 had responded by confronting Yoder with 13 charges of sexual abuse.⁵

Years of documentation generated by the denominational task force, as well as Prairie Street Mennonite Church (where the task force had originated), helped to clarify the narrative of Yoder's behaviour and engagement with Mennonite challengers. Even more voluminous were the files of the Indiana-Michigan Conference's Executive board, the conference's Church Life Commission, and an Accountability and Support Group, all of which were players in the conference's lengthy disciplinary process with Yoder, which lasted from 1992 to 1996. (The conference, which held Yoder's ordination credential, had suspended his ordination in 1992, and thereafter sought to bring Yoder to accountability through a multifaceted process that included dozens of meetings



Files documenting the Indiana-Michigan Conference's suspension of John Howard Yoder's ministerial credentials because of sexual misconduct and the ensuing disciplinary process, 1992–1997. ID: II/05/019. Mennonite Church USA Archives (Goshen, Indiana). Researchers will find twelve folders of materials authored by conference administrators, the Indiana-Michigan Conference Church Life Commission, John Howard Yoder's accountability and support group, and John Howard Yoder himself. Documents include correspondence, reports, meeting minutes, and follow-up documentation provided by the conference in 2013 and 2014.

with Yoder and extensive correspondence over a four-year period). Together, the documents from all these sources provided a detailed picture of Yoder's engagement with Mennonite interlocutors for nearly a decade and a half following his 1984 departure from the seminary.

The access I received to thousands of pages of documents, combined with 29 oral history interviews conducted in northern Indiana and elsewhere, led to publication of my article "'Defanging the Beast': Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse" in *The Mennonite Quarterly Review*. I found that an estimated 100 or more women had experienced unwanted sexual violations by Yoder, ranging from sexual harassment in public places to, more rarely, sexual penetration.

Surviving documents revealed not only the persistent stance of Yoder—who never apologized publicly for his actions—but also the power that seminary president Marlin Miller had used to enforce women's silence while seeking to save Yoder's career and marriage.⁶ Here were new details and analysis of the depth and scope of Yoder's abuse, as well as its implications for individuals, families, academic and church institutions. Given this evidence of violence against women, the ramifications for anyone seeking to

read Yoder as a credible pacifist theologian and Christian ethicist would be ongoing.⁷

Following the Paper Trail

How significant were documents, collected both within and outside of established archives, to the telling of this story? They were essential. Although Yoder and his seminary supervisor Miller, hoping to avoid potential for scandal or blackmail, had destroyed an unknown number of letters in 1980s, and other pertinent documents had been shredded by Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference officials in the 1990s, it was also apparent that the immense paper trail associated with Yoder's abuse had been uncontainable. More than two dozen Mennonite women and men, I discovered, kept, either in institutional files or in home storage, the written records generated by their efforts. By the 1990s, documents in the form of memoranda, handwritten notes, meeting minutes, and mental health records had piled up.⁸

By 1996, Yoder himself was so concerned about the implications of sexual abuse charges on his theological legacy that he consulted a lawyer about preventing the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference from retaining and archiving hundreds of pertinent documents. Although neither Yoder, nor the Indiana-

Michigan Mennonite Conference, nor any of his other Mennonite institutional challengers ever sued in a court of law for control over records, the fate of boxes of materials relevant to Yoder's sexual abuse and subsequent disciplinary processes remained in dispute for the rest of his life.

At the time of his death in 1997, the most protracted wrangling centred on Yoder's mental health records, generated during the four-year disciplinary process initiated by Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference. In the mid-1990s, Yoder had agreed to undergo psychological evaluation by a University of Notre Dame-affiliated psychologist. When Indiana-Michigan officials deemed that evaluation insufficient for Yoder's rehabilitation, they arranged for a Chicago-based psychiatrist to assess Yoder's history, with the assistance of a psychologist specializing in sexual abuse in workplace settings. Upon reading the new assessment, a 23-page document, Indiana-Michigan conference officials determined that they would not reinstate Yoder's ordination credential. For his part, Yoder had revoked the Indiana-Michigan conference officials' right to access the medical record, although the church agency had initially obtained Yoder's permission to receive it, and was assessed \$2,200 for the psychiatrist's services.

Significantly, neither of the mental health reports on Yoder, by either the University of Notre Dame-affiliated psychologist (Sheridan McCabe), or the Illinois psychiatrist (John Gottlieb), have been made accessible for historical research. Presently, the McCabe document remains "restricted" in the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference collection at the Archives of MC USA. And in 2001, the archived Gottlieb report was destroyed, following a request by Yoder family members and Indiana-Michigan Mennonite board action.⁹

Archival Policies and Sensitive Materials

During my oral history interviewing of individuals knowledgeable about Yoder's past, a number of interviewees brought along files or boxes containing documents that they asked me to pass on to the Archives when I had concluded my research. Although initially surprised by people's willingness to share information around the subject of sexual abuse, I came to understand why many individuals who had

earlier clung to secretiveness surrounding Yoder's action now wanted to move toward openness. During our interviews, some of Yoder's former colleagues acknowledged how long they had silently carried burdens of guilt and shame.

In preparing my manuscript for publication, and turning over source materials to the Archives of Mennonite Church USA, names of informants required special care. Two women—who had long sought accountability from Mennonite institutions regarding responsiveness to reports of Yoder's abuse—requested that their names become part of the public record. On the other hand, other women who provided documentation for this narrative wished to shield personal privacy. In writing about Yoder's targeting of women, I used several pseudonyms. Names of victims were redacted from letters, emails, handwritten notes, and reports that were deposited in the archives. Throughout this process, *all* informants, some of whom had participated in oral history interviews and others who had provided written documents, retained control over whether or not their materials would be deposited. A "deed of gift" form allowed each individual to donate (or not) his or her materials for archival retention,

cataloguing, and preservation.

Of the oral history interviews that I had conducted, ten were deposited as auditory records at the archives, and the remainder were not archived (at the request of those who had granted interviews). Significantly, donors of records may reconsider and alter their decisions concerning access at any time, as the Indiana-Michigan Conference did, in 2014, opting to provide fuller access of its Yoder-related materials for the sake of historical research. As Colleen McFarland, the denominational archivist responsible for advising Mennonite officials who were deciding how to handle sensitive Yoder-related records, noted: "A records donor can decide to make something more open or more restricted down the road. It doesn't have to be a forever-and-always thing."¹⁰

For written and auditory materials deposited at the Archives as part of the "Rachel Waltner Goossen Collection on John Howard Yoder, 1973–2014," the finding aid, including access restrictions, is here: <http://mac.libraryhost.com/?p=collections/controlcard&id=1651>

Since these materials have been made available, several researchers have consulted them, including an investigative journalist for *The National Catholic Reporter*, who examined the response of University of Notre Dame officials to reports of Yoder's sexual abuse during the 1980s, and a Mennonite author commissioned to write the history of Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference.¹¹ In coming years, other researchers are likely to consult these records and other relevant collections. At present, significant additional relevant collections include:

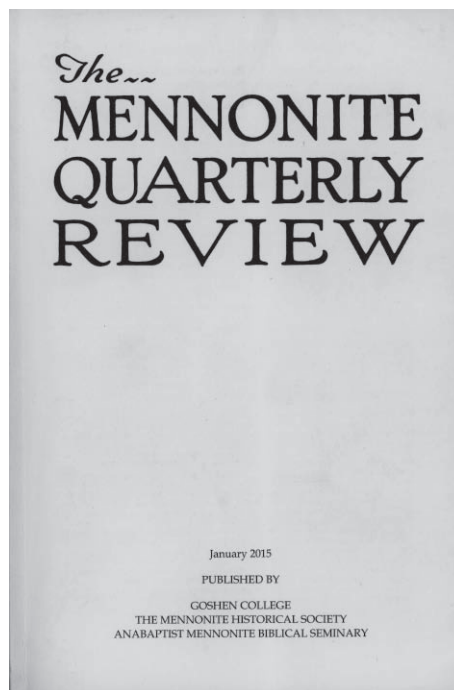
The Marlin E. Miller Files on John Howard Yoder, X-18-001 (finding aid here): <http://mac.libraryhost.com/?p=collections/findingaid&id=1643&q=>

The AMBS Evelyn Shellenberger Files on John Howard Yoder, X-1-003 (finding aid here): <http://mac.libraryhost.com/?p=collections/findingaid&id=1645&q=>

The Mennonite Church USA Indiana-Michigan Conference John Howard Yoder Files, II-05-019 (finding aid here): <http://mac.libraryhost.com/index.php?p=collections/findingaid&id=1601&q=&rootcontentid=75729>)

The John Howard Yoder Papers at the Archives of the Mennonite Church USA

(cont'd on p. 8)



The January 2015 issue of *MQR* where Goossen's 73-page research article was published, "Defanging the Beast': Mennonite Responses to John Howard Yoder's Sexual Abuse."

History Matters: New Directions for MHC

by Korey Dyck

In many ways, working at the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) Archives and Gallery can be routine. We arrive in the morning, typically check our email, and start to respond to queries from people around the world. Answering a wide variety of questions demonstrates that the archives program provides a valuable service and has a unique mission within the ministry structure of Mennonite Church Canada. When people are stuck, trying to locate missing and vital information, people reach out to the archives for answers. It's a service that the MHC staff enjoy providing, sharing new leads, adding missing links of information, and above all providing a faith context for the historical documents to make sense. For some researchers, we provide their first exposure to who Mennonites are.

In other contexts and with different people, I am regularly responding to the question about what MHC can do better. Bypassing a longer list of ongoing improvements, my most common response is this: While the Heritage Centre does a good job of collecting other people's stories, we need to do better at telling our own story.

That is, in days gone by, the Heritage Centre focussed on quietly performing a service for the larger church and community by collecting and preserving items reflecting Mennonite faith and church history. However, we are becoming more and more convinced that the service we provide and the work we continue to do is often "below people's radar." Is the Heritage Centre—its staff, its expertise, and its work—taken for granted?

I prefer to put the question another way: How can we be better at letting people know who we are, what we do, and why our work is important for various Mennonite organizations and conferences.

Given this guiding question, the Heritage Centre is changing its "routine." We are actively beginning to promote our ministry by providing increased electronic resources while operating on a modest budget. We are rising to the challenge to be more well-known, not only collecting and organizing items, but producing materials from our vault's significant international and national collections.

In the spirit of making stories more accessible beyond our physical location, we have for example partnered with *Theatre of the Beat*, a Waterloo-based theatre troupe, to help them research content for a play based on the lives of WWII Conscientious Objectors. This year, 2016, marks the 75th anniversary of Conscientious Objectors serving their country through Alternative Service. We have secured funding for a one-hour CO film documentary. The documentary will include newly recorded oral interviews with COs and pictures from the MHC archive's vault.

The MAID (Mennonite Archival Image Database) website at <http://archives.mhsc.ca/>, jointly created with seven Canadian Mennonite archives and historical societies, now has over 16,000 photos available online after just one year of operation. Over 4,000 photos from the MHC's collection of 28,000+ photos can now be viewed from your computer, easily accessible to anyone interested in Mennonite history. MHC volunteers scan and upload a minimum of 200+ photos per week to this new website. Because of this new initiative, the Mennonite Library and Archive of Fresno Pacific University has already joined this project and two other institutions have also expressed interest in joining; MAID is now an international collaboration.

A significant contribution to Mennonite leadership development and faith formation is the MHC Gallery's travelling exhibit *Along the Road to Freedom*, narrating the story of women-led households who brought their families to freedom in Canada. Ray Dirks, the painter of the exhibit and curator of the MHC Gallery, is also nearing completion of a coffee table book that will include high-quality reproductions of his artwork and the family members' stories of mothers, sisters, and grandmothers. A pastor to artists and a visual theologian, Ray shares the often overlooked experiences of women as they

struggled to overcome the horrors of war while keeping their families together. A clip of his art can be seen at <http://gallery.mennonitechurch.ca/AlongTheRoad>.

Finally, the MHC will be communicating more directly with our audience through offering more information online. The new MHC blog, MAID website, MHC Gallery page, and the Alternative Service websites can all be found on the Mennonite Heritage Centre main page at <http://archives.mennonitechurch.ca/>. And the MHC Facebook page can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/Mennonite-Heritage-Centre-Archives-1019046884777559/>. We are also hoping to add a used book website and video channel in the coming weeks.

For the Mennonite Heritage Centre to be more relevant, the faith stories housed at the Centre need to come alive to new generations who are more at home with multimedia presentations of history. The physical holdings, permanent displays, travelling art exhibits, and online digital collections of the Mennonite Heritage Centre all contribute to the faith development and educational objectives of Mennonite Church Canada. Come visit us in person or online. We look forward to sharing stories of faith with you.

If you have a suggestion or another idea for me, please contact me. My email address is: kdyck@mennonitechurch.ca.



Willie Stoesz speaking at the PAX Reunion, August 29, 2015. See article on page 8. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

Three Project Grants

by Jon Isaak

Anicka Fast, Harold Jantz, and Jayaker Yennamalla are the 2015 recipients of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission's MB studies project grants (see www.mbhhistory.org). The selection committee chose the three from a strong field of applicants, all working on projects of historical and theological interest to Mennonite Brethren around the world.



Anicka Fast

Anicka is a doctoral student in Mission Studies at Boston University School of Theology and comes from Montreal. She worked with Mennonite Central Committee in DR Congo for three years. Anicka's research interests include intercultural reconciliation and power balancing in the global church, Anabaptist missiology and ecclesiology, the history of the missionary encounter in DR Congo, and African political theology. Her grant in the amount of \$2,865 will be disbursed in May 2016. Anicka's project title is "Identity and power in mission: a study of cross-cultural relationships among North American and Congolese Mennonites."

Harold is from Winnipeg and served for many years as the editor (1964–1985) of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* and later as founding editor/publisher of *ChristianWeek*. His project involves translating and publishing selected letters, formal reports, news stories, lists, and commentary that appeared in the weekly German-language newspaper, *Mennonitische Rundschau*, from the beginning of 1929 to the end of 1930. These materials document the factors that



Harold Jantz

led thousands of German Russians, most of them Mennonites, to abandon their homes in the desperate hope that authorities in Moscow would issue them the passes allowing them to leave Russia. Nearly six thousand were granted the passes, perhaps twice as many had their requests denied. Harold's published translations will make the many items accessible to a new generation of English readers. His grant is for \$1,750. Harold's project title is "Flight through Moscow: a Rundschau Reader."



Jayaker Yennamalla

Jayaker is a doctoral student at the Federated Faculty for Research in Religion and Culture (Serampore College) in Kottayam, Kerala, India. He is also a Church History lecturer at the Mennonite Brethren Centenary Bible College in Shamshabad, India. Jayaker's research interests include the Mennonite Brethren missionary movement's impact on social change in India (South Telangana), the



Dalit Christian experience of sociocultural, political, and economic transformation, and the contribution of indigenous Christian workers in bringing about social change. His grant is for \$1,250. Jayaker's project title is "Mennonite Brethren Mission for social change in South Telangana (1899–1958)."

Readers Write

I just noticed the article about Gilroy in the *Mennonite Historian* 40/4 (Dec. 2014) at the Hillside Christian Fellowship Church library here in Beechy, SK. I think I can add a little more information to the article. There are no buildings, only a few trees where the village of Gilroy stood, along a curve in highway 42 about 10 km east of the present day village of Riverhurst and about 15 km east of Lake Diefenbaker. The 200 km lake was created on the South Saskatchewan River by the Gardiner Dam. It should be noted that there is a new MB church start in Riverhurst.

When the Friedensheim MB Church (later Beechy MB Church) wanted to build its first church building, 6 kms southeast of Beechy in 1942, it was given permission by the South Saskatchewan MB Conference to dismantle the former pool hall in Gilroy, which had been used as the Gilroy MB Church's meeting place, and transport the lumber to be used in its new church building. My father, Jacob Wiens, was one of those who worked at this. After a difficult trip across the ferry crossing at Riverhurst, he told us that there was very little usable lumber in the building. It really had not been much help in the construction of the new church. The Beechy MB Church experienced the same out-migration as Gilroy, so that by the end of the 1940s there were only four or five MB families left, plus a few General Conference Mennonite families in the area. Today HCFC is a congregation of about 100 persons where only about 25% can trace their roots back to the Mennonites who came to the community in the mid-1920s.

—Melvin Wiens, Beechy, SK

PAX Reunion

by Conrad Stoesz

“It takes more of a man to walk away from a fight than to engage in one.” These words of wisdom were given to Abe Suderman by his father as he set out to make a difference in the world. Motivated by examples and messaging from his father, Abe volunteered with MCC’s PAX program and served in the Congo (1960–1962). Abe was one of 15 former PAX men who came together in Winnipeg on August 29, 2015, to remember their MCC service in the PAX program.

PAX, Latin for “peace,” was the name given to a program started in 1951, designed to offer an alternative service option for American men who had been drafted, but who could not serve in the armed forces because of their religious convictions. MCC expanded the program, making it also open to Canadians, even though there was no conscription in Canada at the time.



Abe Suderman at the PAX Reunion, August 29, 2015. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

The conscientious objector experience during the Second World War persuaded many North American Mennonites of the value of greater engagement in society for the public good. Serving others, beyond the Mennonite community, became viewed as an integral part of Christ’s gospel message. The new engagement helped Mennonites move beyond their traditional pattern of isolation. There was a surge in the number of programs and opportunities to serve; PAX was one of them.

In short order, the American Selective Service approved the PAX program, giving

it greater credibility. During its time of operation (1951–1976), PAX had almost 1,200 participants serving in 40 countries. At least 110 of these men came from Canada. Men signed up for two- or three-year terms and were responsible for raising \$75 per month for their own support.

The first project was to help build housing for European refugees in West Germany. Soon PAX grew to include agricultural development projects in Greece, road construction projects in Paraguay (the Trans-Chaco highway), and community development work in rural Bolivia. The PAX program became an important program that supplied MCC projects with energetic young men to work alongside other MCC workers and Mennonite missionaries.

Willie Stoesz was a young graduate of the University of Manitoba’s agriculture department and went with PAX to serve in Crete where he was instrumental in establishing the Agricultural Development Centre. Here the “PAX boys” worked to improve dairy, hog, poultry, greenhouse, and beekeeping industries in order to provide a better economic future for the local communities.

Recently, the Mennonite Heritage Centre received materials from the late Toni Braun (1936–1964) of Altona, including photos of his time with the PAX program. Braun joined the PAX program as an adventure and to learn, meet, and work with new people. A life of service was his way of “testifying for Jesus Christ,” he said.

Braun was sent to Paraguay to help build the Trans-Chaco highway. The farmers of the Paraguayan Chaco region were far removed from the markets of the region’s economic centre, Asunción. A trip could take ten days or more through difficult terrain. The Trans-Chaco highway was designed to improve connections between the agricultural Chaco and markets in the city.

Surplus US army road building equipment from the Korean War was brought in as the main power for the Paraguayan project. The work was difficult in the heat and some of the PAX boys suffered intense loneliness. The 398 kilometers took about 50 PAX workers and 40 pieces of heavy equipment five years to complete. Financially, it was the biggest project MCC had undertaken, before the

relief effort following the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia. Thanks to the Trans-Chaco highway, 50% of the dairy products in Paraguay come from the Chaco—a trip that now takes about 4 hours.

At the PAX reunion in August, Abe Suderman and Bernie Thiessen told of harrowing experiences during the political unrest in Congo. The young PAX men cheated death a few times, crashing through ambush checkpoints and being held at gunpoint in an effort to guide missionaries out of the country to Angola. Along the way, they witnessed needless killing and death. Once home, these men dealt with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). Gerhard Neufeld, who served in India, said “we ourselves cannot solve the often complex problems, but we can help and stand with the people in their struggle.”

Reflecting on their PAX experiences, some men pointed to significant young church leaders, like Frank H. Epp, who challenged them to serve Jesus in this way. The men at the reunion agreed that their time of service impacted the rest of their lives. Some returned for further MCC assignments, others found jobs in nursing, counselling, agricultural research, and economic development. Abe Suderman noted that his service experience continues to impact his children and grandchildren who now also want to serve others.

In reviewing the PAX program in northern Greece, Greek Orthodox priest Father Georgis said, “I tell my people to live like Christ and the PAX boys will show them how.”

Documenting Sexual Abuse

(cont’d from p. 5)

(finding aid here: <http://mac.libraryhost.com/?p=collections/controlcard&id=1129>)

This collection, deposited earlier by Yoder’s family, includes “Sexual Harassment Charges and Conference Discipline” documents in Box 240, with restricted access until 2047, fifty years after Yoder’s death.

Significance of Archival Collections

Observers of Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary and other church-related institutions have responded positively to the efforts of president Sara Wenger Shenk and the Discernment Group to usher in an era of transparency surrounding sexual abuse, and for truth-telling about chapters

of church history that, when shrouded in secrecy, caused personal and collective pain.¹²

Archived documents attesting to the complexities of Yoder's legacy illuminated the courageous and creative responses of some—including women whose testimony brought this history to the attention of denominational officials—as well as the disheartening complicity of others in positions of authority. And a variety of previously inaccessible records, diverse in origin, format, and perspective, are finally available for potentially new interpretations and uses.

The archived collections listed above—and those in repositories elsewhere—inform the work of scholars, journalists, and church leaders and laity, broadening our perspectives on Mennonite history, theology, and transformative moments within faith communities. Perhaps most importantly, the archiving of records ensures that future generations of readers will have access to historical materials in addressing challenges yet to come.

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Endnotes

1. Shenk, "Bleak Mid-Winter Lament," 9 January 2014, <https://www.amsb.edu/publishing/2014/01/Bleak-Mid-Winter-Lament.cfm>.
2. Shenk email to Rachel Waltner Goossen, 15 June 2015, in the author's possession. Goshen Biblical Seminary was a predecessor institution of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, presently named Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary.
3. Goossen, "'Defanging the Beast,'" *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 89 (January 2015): 7–80. Abbreviated versions of this article also appeared in print and online in 2015 in *The Mennonite World Review*, *The Canadian Mennonite*, *The Mennonite*, and in German translation in *Die Bruecke und Mennoblatt*. More recently, I have addressed how Yoder's victims' responses, over time, provided a foundation for reforms rooted in justice-seeking (Goossen, "Mennonite Bodies, Sexual Ethics, Women Challenge John Howard Yoder," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 34 [forthcoming, 2016]).
4. Anna Groff, "John Howard Yoder Documents Made Public," *The Mennonite*, 10 February 2015, <https://themennonite.org/daily-news/john-howard-yoder-documents-made-public/>.
5. Within six months, the Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference, the regional body that held Yoder's ordination credential, began a disciplinary process that lasted for four years, concluding in 1996—not with the restoration of Yoder's ordination credential or with public apology—but with a press statement inviting Mennonite institutions and agencies to use the University of Notre Dame professor's gifts in writing and teaching. This development occurred a year and half before Yoder's death of heart failure

in 1997.

6. Goossen, "Defanging the Beast," 29–47. Washburn University provided funding through a Faculty Research Grant.

7. For a recent reinterpretation of Yoder's legacy, see Karen V. Guth, "Doing Justice to the Complex Legacy of John Howard Yoder: Restorative Justice Resources in Witness and Feminist Ethics," *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 35 (Fall/Winter 2015): 119–139.

8. Goossen, "Defanging the Beast," 15.

9. Goossen, "Defanging the Beast," 68–71, especially note 279.

10. McFarland quoted in Groff, "John Howard Yoder Documents Made Public," *The Mennonite*, 10 February 2015, <https://themennonite.org/daily-news/john-howard-yoder-documents-made-public/>.

11. See Soli Salgado, "Yoder Case Extends to Notre Dame," *National Catholic Reporter* (June 19–July 2, 2015): 15–17, and "Why Write This Story," *National Catholic Reporter*, (June 19–July 2, 2015): 15; Rich Preheim, *In Pursuit of Faithfulness: Conviction, Conflict, and Compromise in Indiana-Michigan Mennonite Conference* (Harrisonburg, Va. and Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, forthcoming), Chap. 9.

12. Rich Preheim, "Mennonites Apologize for Sex Abuse Following Theologian John Howard Yoder Scandal," *The Washington Post*, 7 July 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/mennonites-apologize-for-history-of-sex-abuse-following-theologian-john-howard-yoder-scandal/2015/07/07/9fdb2092-24b7-11e5-b621-b55e495e9b78_story.html.

Duplicate Records

(cont'd from p. 3)

Ältesten continued the diary records well into the late 1800s. The original church registers have disappeared. When and under what circumstances is unknown to me, but the Ältester diary records have survived and are in the Mennonitische Forschungsstelle in Germany.⁵

Endnotes

1. For more on these records, see the genealogy section of the last issue of the *Mennonite Historian*. Since that time, I have posted one batch of scans of these records. See: http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/1803_Immigration_List_Berlin_Intro.pdf
2. Copies of the memoirs of Ältester Leonhard Ewert (1898–1968) can be found in the collection of the late Arnold Schroeder (1926–2000). Schroeder's collection is at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg. See also Marie, Rehsler, "Ewert, Leonhard 'Leo' (1898–1968)," in *GAMEO* (2010).
3. I have been able to make over 3,000 scans of birth, marriage, and death records for the Dt. Kazun and Dt. Wymyschle Mennonites for the years 1809 to 1867 from various microfilms and online Polish genealogy webpages. These records were written in Polish (including ALL numbers). In addition there are 405 scanned pages of German records for Dt. Kazun for the years 1832–1841. From 1868 on the records were written in Russian.
4. The originals are now in the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia archives in Abbotsford. They can be found online at: <http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/poland/DeutschKazunBaptisms.pdf>
5. For transcriptions of some of these diary entries, see <http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/>

Mennonite Heritage Museum Opens

by Amy Dueckman

The dream of a heritage museum for B.C. Mennonites to tell their story became reality January 22 when hundreds, including British Columbia Premier Christy Clark, gathered for the grand opening of the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford.

The project fulfilled the long-time aspiration of Peter Redekop, president of the Mennonite Museum Society, who as a youngster immigrated to Canada with his family from Europe following World War II. Redekop had been inspired by Mennonite heritage centres he had visited elsewhere in Canada and the United States and hoped eventually to develop a similar museum to tell the Mennonite story in the Fraser Valley. Specific focus is on the Mennonites who came to the area beginning in the 1920s via the Soviet Union and Poland/Prussia.

Plans for the museum began in 2011, with final approval given by Abbotsford City Council in spring 2014 and ground broken in September of that year.

"We have a fantastic legacy and story," said Redekop, who wanted the museum to be a collection of stories rather than a collection of objects. "As [future generations] get older, they'll realize a people brought us here with hope and sacrifice."

A permanent exhibit inside the museum tells the Anabaptist and Mennonite story over the past 500 years through display panels, audiovisuals, and interactive digital media. Temporary seasonal displays will also be featured.

Also housed in the building is the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., which preserves and collects stories and archival records relating to Mennonite history in the province and maintains a library and databases for historical and genealogical research. Convenient computer stations are available for anyone interested in researching family history. "The location of the MHSBC Archives at the Mennonite Heritage Museum enhances our ability to serve the research needs of those visiting the Museum," said Richard Thiessen, Executive Director of the Museum.

With the building sitting on



New Mennonite Heritage Museum, 1818 Clearbrook Rd., Abbotsford, BC.

Agricultural Land Reserve property, an agriculture component is a prominent part of Mennonite heritage storytelling. Raspberries and blueberries have been planted on land adjacent to the museum, and plans include the planting of heritage varieties of berries used by Mennonite farmers who prospered through agriculture in the Fraser Valley beginning in the 1930s. Plans are for the museum's coffee shop and display kitchen to feature foods coming directly from the MHM farm.

The building is located at 1818 Clearbrook Road, just south of TransCanada Highway 1. It is open from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday-Friday, with plans to expand operating hours in the spring. Admission is by donation.

Dueckman's article first appeared in the Canadian Mennonite, February 15, 2016. It is reprinted here with permission.

Hugo Friesen and Ted Regehr Receive MHSC Awards of Excellence

Meeting at the new Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, B.C., gave the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC) the opportunity to see this new facility that tells the faith story of Mennonites in the Fraser Valley. The museum is also the new home of the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. Representatives from Mennonite historical societies and organizations from across Canada met on January 13–16, 2016.

Among the many reports was a success story about the first ten months of the Mennonite Archival Imaging Database



Hugo Friesen (left) and Ted Regehr received Awards of Excellence from Lucille Marr, outgoing president of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, on January 16, 2016. Photo credit: Richard Thiessen.



At the MHM dedication on January 22, 2016 (L to R): Peter Redekop, president of the Mennonite Museum Society; Ed Fast, MP for Abbotsford; Daryl Plecas, MLA for Abbotsford South; B.C. Premier Christy Clark; and Richard Thiessen, Executive Director of the Mennonite Heritage Museum. Photo credit: Amy Dueckman.

(MAID). This collaborative project gives the public greater online access to photos held by Mennonite archives and has brought publicity and interest to these collections with 41,000 unique visitors to the MAID website and 160 images purchased in ten months. A new member of the MAID project is the Mennonite Library and Archives, Fresno.

This year the MHSC Award of Excellence was given to Hugo Friesen of Abbotsford, B.C., and Ted Regehr of Calgary, Alberta. Friesen, a teacher and principal before his retirement, was involved in the early attempts to organize a Mennonite archive in B.C. and became the first archivist for the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., serving from 1993 to

2005. He coordinated all the activities of the archives in its early years and has continued to work as a volunteer.

Ted Regehr worked at the Public Archives of Canada from 1960 to 1968 after which he taught history at the University of Saskatchewan. He has contributed much to the preservation of Mennonite history in Canada, serving as president of the MHSC in its early years, writing many books and articles including *Menno Simons: Dutch Reformer Between Luther, Erasmus, and the Holy Spirit* (Fresno, CA: Xlibris, 2015), 397 pp.

The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), which began 20 years ago in 1996, continues to grow. Sam Steiner reported that it is difficult to keep the statistics up to date, especially congregational information that needs to be done at the grassroots level.

Among the discussions about future projects was how to do more digitization of books and periodicals. Accessibility and search ability are enhanced when these things are in digital form, but it is labour intensive to put them online. The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies reported that the *Christian Leader* magazine has been digitized and is ready to be released on a USB stick.

MHSC is proposing “A People of Diversity” project and has applied for a grant to help celebrate Canada’s 150th anniversary in 2017. If the grant is approved, there are plans for an oral history project and a conference that would recognize how diverse the Mennonites in Canada have become since 1970.

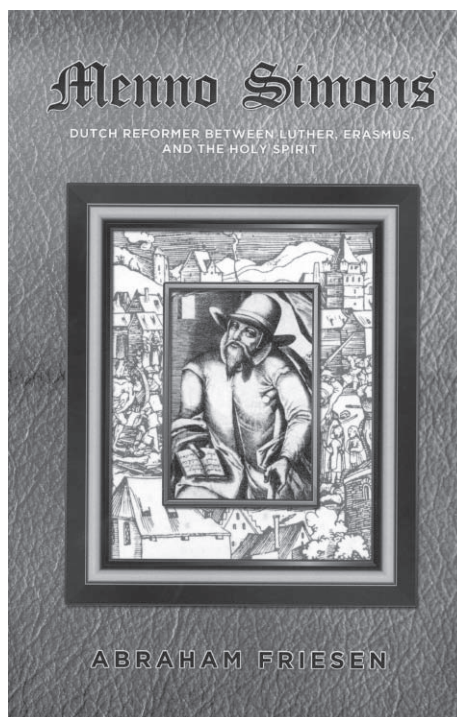
The MHSC executive for 2016 includes Richard Thiessen as president, Royden Loewen as vice president, Alf Redekopp as secretary, Conrad Stoesz as treasurer and Barb Draper as member-at-large.

MHSC news release dated January 29, 2016.

Book Review

Abraham Friesen, *Menno Simons: Dutch Reformer Between Luther, Erasmus, and the Holy Spirit* (Fresno, CA: Xlibris, 2015), 397 pp.

Reviewed by Lawrence Klippenstein



This volume is timely and to the point. What many Protestants will call the 500th “birthday” of the Reformation will occur two years from now in 2017. Among numerous other personalities of early Protestant Reformation history, Martin Luther will be celebrated and new literature, writings, and special church services and conferences will likely increase in the next few years. However, for those interested in Mennonite history in particular, 2016 is also the year we celebrate Menno Simons’ 520th birthday.

Dr. Abraham Friesen, professor emeritus at the University of California, Santa Barbara campus, is a specialist in Renaissance and Reformation history. For this reviewer, a new book on this reformer is long overdue. Thankfully, Friesen has taken on this challenge of seeing Menno Simons with new eyes and fresh insight.

It is a challenging volume, especially if theology is not a strength. The part on Menno himself (pp. 141–388) is an easier read. At this point, we must content ourselves with discerning the broader outline of the work. I will leave the details for those interested and dedicated to the kind of loving labour that the author so obviously had to undertake to get it to press and available to the public.

Even the introduction is important. It includes a sketch of the book’s content and a more detailed composite portrait of the main “actors,” the “*dramatis personae*” of the story.

The list of main actors begins with Augustine and continues through eighteen additional brief bios that help to situate the reader in the long and sometimes tortuous journey through heated debates and theological discussion that is the main “plot” of this enterprise. The following section begins with a chapter on the social, economic, and political aspects of a European society badly in need of reform.

A longer section follows on the development and effort needed to help understand the revolutionary Muenster “kingdom,” directed by another set of persons also seriously dedicated to carrying on God’s work as called for in Scripture “alone.” As such it was Jan van Leyden and associates who directed this charge, believing they were led by the Holy Spirit to storm the city and thus become God’s servants helping to usher in God’s reign on earth.

It was a moment in time of extremes and violence which then came to a very tragic end, including the death of Menno’s brother Peter Simons. The impact of Peter’s death on Menno was life-changing and led Menno to an ever more intense study of Scripture. This devotion to Scripture irrevocably led Menno to his lifetime work for God as a man of non-violence and peace as understood through his reading of Scripture.

As he lived through these turbulent events, Menno also demonstrated where he was prepared to follow theologians of various stripes. The book also details where he finally found his “foundation”—in Scripture and through the nudging of the Holy Spirit itself, as noted in the title of Friesen’s book.

Was Menno’s theology simply derivative and also dangerously revolutionary as was believed by many critics for centuries, or did it go beyond that? It is the author’s conviction and contention that Menno learned a significant amount from others including the “masters,” Luther and above all Erasmus, and found his personal direction for life and guidance for leading the church more fundamentally in his own Spirit-led studies of the Scriptures.

In conclusion, I would say give the book a go, perhaps by reading the last section first, and reading it twice. Then decide what more you would like to learn. There is no question; *Menno Simons* is well worth the read!

Book Notes

by Conrad Stoesz and Jon Isaak

Linda M. Wiens, *The Balzer Book: Ancestors and Descendants of Henry and Sarah (Neumann) Balzer* (2015), 186 pp. Contact Linda Wiens (lindawiens@shaw.ca).

This book focuses on the life stories of Henry Balzer (1881–1951) and his wife Sarah Neumann (1884–1944), and their descendants. The first half

of the book details the background of Henry Balzer and Sarah Neumann, stretching back to the early 1700s. There is a discussion of name origins. The Balzers lived in Grosweide, Molotschna, and moved to Neu Sarama when Henry Balzer was ten years old. The Neumann family moved from the Crimea to Neu Samara where Henry and Sarah met and were married in 1907. Henry and Sarah Balzer moved to Colonsay, Saskatchewan, in 1924, and later to Yarrow, BC. The second portion of the book details the lives and families of the nine children of Henry and Sarah Balzer. The book includes many maps, reproduced travel documents, genealogical charts, and colour photographs.

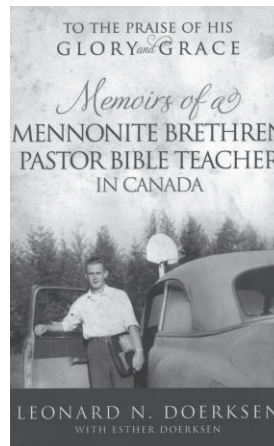
Leonard N. Doerksen with Esther Doerksen, *To The Praise of His Glory: Memoirs of a Mennonite Brethren Pastor Bible Teacher in Canada* (Mayne Island, BC: Morningstone Publishing, 2015), 472 pp. Contact Dorothy Peters (dorothy.peters@twu.ca).

In this book, Rev. Len Doerksen tells the story of his life as a minister and Bible teacher in conversation with his wife, Esther (Epp) Doerksen. Len tells of growing up in the communities of Herbert and Swift Current in Saskatchewan and on a small farm in Abbotsford, BC, beginning in 1943. There are stories from his student days at Mennonite Educational Institution

and the Mennonite Brethren Bible Institute (both in Abbotsford), and Mennonite Brethren Bible College (Winnipeg). Marriage to Esther Epp in 1957 launched their joint ministry at Winker Bible Institute (1960–1969), Columbia Bible College (1969–1979), Greendale MB Church (1982–1992), Hepburn MB Church (1993–1996), and Eagle Ridge Bible Fellowship, Port Coquitlam (1996–2004). Interspersed between, and often during, these ministry stints, Len worked as a truck driver. Delightfully written and tastefully augmented with good photos, Len's book narrates a life happily filled with hard work, mischief, family, and church.

Dorothy Yoder Nyce, *Mennonites Encounter Hinduism: An Annotated Bibliography* (2015), 200 pp. Contact Dorothy Yoder Nyce (dyodnyce@bnin.net).

Dorothy Yoder Nyce first lived in India from 1962 to 1965. She followed up that initial experience with eight more assignments that took her back to India for stints of varying durations. Needless to say, she fell in love with “learning from the other” and completed a DMin degree focusing on interreligious dialogue. The aim of this book is to highlight the writings of Mennonite missionaries and theologians who have engaged the complex world religion known as Hinduism. She provides a



comprehensive bibliography of the contributions of three Mennonite groups: Mennonite Brethren, Mennonite Church, and General Conference Mennonite. Published and unpublished works from each of these Mennonite groups are listed and annotated for their significant contribution to the ongoing dialogue that Mennonite missionaries, anthropologists, and social scientists have had and are having with Hindu thought and practice.

Bill Janzen, *The Story of Peter & Anna (Zacharias) Penner and their Descendants* (2015), 238 pp. Contact Bill Janzen, 2128-2330 Fish Creek Blvd. SW, Calgary, AB, T2Y 0L1. Available from MHC.

This family history book discusses the life and times of Peter Penner (1873–1954) and his wife Anna Zacharias (1874–1954) who lived in Olgafeld, Fuerstenland Colony, south Russia. They were married in 1896 and had five children; four survived into adulthood. Peter

Penner worked in the Jacob Niebuhr mill. The village was terrorized by bands of anarchists during the social upheaval following the revolution. In 1926, Peter and Anna Penner and their four married children immigrated to Saskatchewan where Peter and Anna became members of the Osler Mennonite Church. The majority of the book is devoted to the stories of subsequent generations of the four Penner children: Anna Penner (married Franz Dyck), Justina Penner (married Isaac Krueger), Wilhelm Penner (married Elizabeth Federau), and Helena Penner (married Bernhard Dyck). This hardcover book was produced with high quality paper and includes many colour photos.

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