

Mennonite Historian

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

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This is a 1920s photo of Helena (Penner) Hiebert (1874–1970). She was the first Mennonite to be born in Winnipeg, the first Mennonite woman to graduate from a Manitoba university, and the first Mennonite of either gender to teach in a Manitoba university. She married Gerhard Hiebert (1868–1934) in 1902. The couple had three daughters: Elfriede, Gerda, and Catherine. For her biography, see John Dyck's article in *Preservings* (June 1997): 7–10.

The image is remarkable for several reasons, according to Andrea Dyck, curator at the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba, who used the photo as the main image for the museum's 2016 exhibit, *Beyond Tradition: The Lives of Mennonite Women*. "The expression on her face, the half smile and the slightly-tilted head, is full of moxie, and her pose reflects confidence and self-possession. Her story is equally remarkable and so, in one image, we found the perfect photo to represent our exhibit about the unconventional roles of Mennonite women." See story on page 8. Photo credit: Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg (517-101.C).



On Judging the Past

by Karl Koop

As a minister of the Mennonite Church in Danzig, Hermann Gottlieb Mannhardt (1855–1927) knew how to challenge and encourage his congregants in matters of faith and moral conduct.¹ But it appears that he also had the capacity to move public audiences in the interest of politics and nationalism.

At a Danzig hotel in 1915, Mannhardt gave a rousing address to his fellow citizens in support of Germany's war effort, prompting his listeners to remember earlier struggles for liberty and nationhood, beginning with an account of how Germanic tribes had defeated Roman armies in the Teutoburg Forest in A.D. 9. Drawing on the literary sources of poets and songwriters associated with the nineteenth-century German wars of liberation, Mannhardt also waxed eloquent about how Germany was the heart of the world. Then, with a battle cry to sacrifice all for the sake of his nation's future, he concluded with these words:

"To you German men and German women, and to you, O German youth, belongs the future. Is the struggle of this charge, to bleed and die for it, to bring sacrifices for it, worth it? God grant us

*now, and in the days to come, in war and in peace, what is required for it: Heroic Deeds and Heroes!"*²

These sentiments may come as a surprise to readers who are used to thinking of Mennonites as pacifists. Indeed, together with other religious communities such as the Church of the Brethren and the Quakers, Mennonites have typically been associated with the historic peace churches. Throughout history, most Mennonite confessional statements have affirmed some form of nonresistant or peace position. And yet, it is evident that Mennonites have not always been nonresistant in their actions.

According to one Lutheran observer, by the middle of the eighteenth century, a number of Dutch Mennonites were beginning to view the practice of bearing arms as religiously acceptable.³ A few decades later, inspired by the American Revolution and ideals that would fuel the French Revolution, a number of Mennonites joined the Dutch Patriot movement (1780–1787). Among the educated, including ministers and seminary students, a significant number were involved in the Free Corps (*Vrijcorpsen*), a citizen's militia. When radical Patriots in Friesland attempted to overthrow the state in 1787, "several wealthy Mennonites in the countryside directly funded their armament."⁴ The revolution failed but by 1795, Dutch Patriots succeeded in overthrowing the ruling establishment, and with the help of Napoleon, inaugurated the so-called Batavian Republic.⁵

To the east, in Provincial Prussia, Mennonite attitudes were also shifting in favour of military participation. In the revolutionary wars of the early nineteenth century, some Mennonites living in the Vistula environs fought for the Prussian State against Napoleon. One of these Mennonites was a young David von Riesen, who was banned by the Elbing-Ellerwald congregation for his military involvements. In response, Von Riesen filed a legal complaint against his congregation and its leadership. The case eventually went as far as the High Court in Berlin, which ruled against the complainant because it concluded that Mennonite leaders were within their rights to discipline members who opposed the church's convictions.⁶

As the nineteenth century wore on, traditional Mennonite perspectives continued to erode. Influenced by



Hermann G. Mannhardt (1855–1927).
Source: H.G. Mannhardt, *The Danzig Mennonite Church: Its Origin and History from 1569–1919*, trans. Victor G. Doerksen, eds. Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiessen (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2007).

nationalism and notions of modern civic responsibility, prominent persons came out in favour of some form of military service, such as the young educated Carl Harder (1820–1896), who was pastor at the Mennonite congregation at Königsberg. Probably the most outspoken advocate was the politically motivated Hermann van Beckerath, a member of the Mennonite church in Krefeld. As an elected minister of finance for the future German government, Beckerath argued at the Frankfurt National Assembly of 1848 that if Mennonites wished for equal rights, they should also be prepared to act as responsible citizens and take up military duties.⁷

Another proponent of military involvement was Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831–1880), who from 1868 to 1870 wrote a seven-part essay in support of military service. As the first German Mennonite to receive a doctorate, and as someone who would become famous for his contributions in the field of German folklore and mythology, Mannhardt's writings may have had considerable

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Mennonite Historian is published by the Mennonite Heritage Centre of Mennonite Church Canada and the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies of the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

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Subscription rates: \$17.00 per year, \$32.00 for two years, and \$46.00 for three years. Individual subscriptions may be ordered from these addresses.
ISSN: 07008066

Genealogy and Family History

Using Saskatchewan Probate Records

by Steve Fast, Hillsboro, Kansas
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Probate records are a valuable resource for genealogists because they give information about family relationships and socioeconomic status. When a person dies, the ownership of that person's assets must be transferred to the heirs (if any) by probate. Under the supervision of a surrogate or probate court, the executor (or administrator) manages the disposition of the assets and payment of debts. Probate records are valuable because they list the heirs and the assets of the deceased.

Mennonites have traditionally had strong views about inheritance. They insisted that because women shared equally in eternal life, they should also share equally in material possessions, basing this belief on Scripture (I Peter 3:7). The tradition dictated that the surviving spouse, if any, would receive half the estate and that the biological children of the deceased spouse would divide the balance evenly. This first system of inheritance was established in Prussia and was known as the *Waisenamt*.

When Mennonites moved to Russia in the late 1700s, they negotiated an exemption from Russian inheritance laws so that they could again establish the *Waisenamt*, or "Orphans Office," to oversee inheritance matters. When Mennonites immigrated to Western Canada, beginning in 1874, each denomination established a *Waisenamt*; there were ten such organizations. The *Waisenamt* system was again transplanted as Mennonites moved to Latin and South America.

In Manitoba, some *Waisenamts* ran into problems in the 1930s and were dissolved, while others continued into the 1980s. It appears that a person could choose to have their affairs taken care of by the *Waisenamt* or by the government probate system. As Mennonites became increasingly comfortable with Canadian institutions and practices, they began to rely more on the probate system and also to create their own wills. Because Mennonites had the *Waisenamt* system, they did not usually make wills until well into the 20th century.

More research is required to understand the relationship between the *Waisenamt* and the provincial legal system.¹

Probate files are public records, so they can be examined either in the files of the judicial district where the estate was probated or in the provincial archives. But the website *FamilySearch.org* has microfilmed and indexed many of the Manitoba and Saskatchewan probate files, so they can be examined online without travelling to the place where the records are stored.

In this article, I refer to the Saskatchewan probate files online, but the Manitoba records can be researched in the same way. Since *FamilySearch.org* has indexed the records and posted digital scans online for 1887–1931, I will use my great-grandfather, Gerhard T. Siemens (1834–1908), as an example of how to do an online probate records search.

To search online, go to *FamilySearch.org*, click on "Search," then "Records." In the "Find a Collection" search box, type "Saskatchewan probate" and click on "Saskatchewan Probate Estate Files." A search box will open, and you can type

your ancestor's name. If you do not find your ancestor there, you can click on "Browse through 1,903,391 images." A list of judicial districts will pop up. I was not sure which to choose, but I knew Gerhard's homestead was filed in Moose Jaw, so I picked that one. Then a list of years appears. Since he died late in 1908, I assumed they would not have opened a probate case until 1909, so I started searching in that year. Eventually, I got to case #154, and found his file.

Here are the major items I found in the probate file:

1. Death date and place of residence.
2. Letters of administration. If the deceased dies intestate (without a will), the court appoints someone as administrator. In this case, Gerhard's youngest surviving son, Cornelius, was appointed administrator. Why was this particular person appointed administrator? Gerhard's widow, Maria, was next of kin, but she declined, probably because it was considered a man's job at the time, as it involved business matters. Gerhard had five sons who survived him, but two of them lived in Manitoba, so it would have been inconvenient for them. Three sons lived on adjoining farms. One of them, my grandfather, Cornelius, according to Gerhard's obituary, farmed

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FORM 1
SCHEDULE B.

PROVINCE OF SASKATCHEWAN

In the Surrogate Court

of the JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF *Moose Jaw*

The Succession Duty Ordinance of the North-West Territories

In the matter of the estate of *Gerhard Siemens* deceased
late of the *Village* of *Herbert, in Saskatchewan*

NAME	RELATIONSHIP	ADDRESS	PROPERTY PASSING	VALUE
<i>Maria Siemens</i>	<i>widow</i>	<i>Herbert, Sask</i>	<i>1/3 Estate</i>	<i>\$954.21</i>
<i>Peter Siemens</i>	<i>son</i>	<i>Marmus, Sask</i>	<i>2/21</i>	<i>272.67</i>
<i>David H Siemens</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Steinbock, Sask</i>	<i>2/21</i>	<i>272.67</i>
<i>Abraham H Siemens</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Reuther, Sask</i>	<i>2/21</i>	<i>272.67</i>
<i>Jacob H Siemens</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Herbert, Sask</i>	<i>2/21</i>	<i>272.67</i>
<i>Cornelius H Siemens</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>2/21</i>	<i>272.67</i>
<i>Aganella H Siemens</i>	<i>daughter</i>	<i>Steinbock, Sask</i>	<i>2/21</i>	<i>272.67</i>
<i>Gerhard Karmelaars</i>	<i>grandchild</i>	<i>Kleefeld, Sask</i>	<i>2/21</i>	<i>272.67</i>
<i>Mary</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>

List of heirs in probate file of Gerhard T. Siemens (1834–1908). Source: Steve Fast

On Judging the Past

(cont'd from p. 2)

influence among Mennonites.⁸ In any case, a Royal Order from Berlin in 1868 already required some form of service, and Mennonites were by this time being swept up by nationalist fervor with some participating in combat duty in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–1871.



Wilhelm Mannhardt (1831–1880). Wilhelm was an older cousin of Hermann. From 1871–1875, Hermann lived with his uncle Jacob Mannhardt while attending Gymnasium in Danzig and shared a study with cousin Wilhelm, the prominent scholar of German folklore and Mennonite history. Hermann is said to have been “heavily influenced by his cousin,” according to Mark Jantzen (*The Danzig Mennonite Church*, p. xviii). Source: Wilhelm Mannhardt, *The Military Service Exemption of the Mennonites of Provincial Prussia*, trans. Anthony Epp, eds. Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiessen (North Newton, KS: Bethel College, 2013).

A few decades later, a significant number of Mennonites were engaged in Germany’s military efforts of the First World War. Historians estimate that in this conflict some 2,000 German Mennonites fought in the army and approximately 400 died in the battlefield.⁹ After these initial war years, Mennonite views in support of militarism weakened, but following Hitler’s ascension to power in the 1930s, the curatorium of the Union of North German Mennonite Churches met to discuss the question of military duty, and concluded that Mennonites no longer had a claim to special rights.¹⁰ Not everyone was enthusiastic about taking up arms and

some continued to grasp hold, at least in their hearts, to a traditional Mennonite view of nonresistance. Nevertheless, many Prussian Mennonites embraced Germany’s nationalistic goals, with some individuals even collaborating with the Nazis and perpetrating violence against the Jews.¹¹

These aspects of history raise questions about how Mennonites should come to terms with the dark shadows of their past.¹² Dutch Mennonite historian, Piet Visser, has noted that “the primary task of the historian is to describe and explain mentalities, processes, developments, and their outcomes without venturing normative judgements.”¹³ Yet, are not judgments in some senses unavoidable, even among professional historians, in the way they choose to frame and portray events? And are not judgments sometimes appropriate when terrible atrocities are committed?

Mennonite historiography

In recent decades, historians of Mennonite history have tried to improve their craft by endeavouring to be objective and free from confessional biases. In an earlier era, historians often held confessional interests, which then became the lens through which they interpreted the Anabaptist story and defined its essence. This set the stage for determining—or judging—who the “true” Anabaptists were, and who did not make the grade. So, for example, American Swiss Mennonites in the mid-twentieth century tended to find the essence of Anabaptism most clearly evident among the earliest pacifist Swiss Anabaptists, whereas nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Dutch Mennonites tended to view most favourably the non-dogmatic, anti-authoritarian, and free-thinking tradition of the *vrijzinnige* Doopsgenizinden, particularly the Waterlanders. In both cases, the church historians portrayed “genuine” Anabaptism in light of their own religious ideals and aspirations. At the same time, they depicted later phases of Anabaptist history, such as the eighteenth century, as a period of decline. Some suggested that Mennonites of the eighteenth century were in decline because they had succumbed to the shortcomings of pietism, or had capitulated to the diabolic influences of the Enlightenment.¹⁴

For the most part, historians of Anabaptism and Mennonitism now try to distance themselves from confessional

interests and notions of some Anabaptist ideal world. In the context of the modern university, they embrace multidisciplinary approaches with the view to better understanding Mennonite diversity as it has been expressed not only religiously, but also socially, economically, and culturally. Furthermore, there is new interest in the “long view” of history in which the developments and evolution of Anabaptism and Mennonitism over several centuries are seen to be just as interesting or important as the story of sixteenth-century origins.

An underlying assumption here is that religious ideas are not static but evolving, shaped by social, political, and economic developments. Instead of avoiding the Enlightenment era, now a growing number of scholars are paying attention to the Dutch Mennonite experience of that time.¹⁵ The study of social and art histories and attention to intellectual developments in the early and later Enlightenment have “cast new light on how Anabaptists/Mennonites and kindred spirits established a religious and social identity, how they interacted with other confessional groups, and how they interacted with the ‘outside world.’”¹⁶

Some of the work of the historians has been ground-breaking as it has significantly challenged previous assumptions about Mennonite identity. A growing number of scholars now maintain that Mennonite identity in the modern period ought to be assessed on its own terms and not in relation to how close or how far this identity may have evolved in relation to some Anabaptist ideal. The view that Mennonite identity must somehow be defined or evaluated in terms of an essential core of beliefs and practices, which have more or less been preserved since the sixteenth century, has become passé.¹⁷

The discussion about the relationship between Anabaptism and modernity is not new. Over a century ago, Ernst Troeltsch observed a positive link between Anabaptism and modernity, but assumed that by the end of the seventeenth century, due to their experience of persecution, the Anabaptists had missed the opportunity to shape modern history in any significant way.¹⁸ Building on this Troeltschian perspective, Harold Bender also drew positive associations between the early Anabaptists and modern democratic principles, but also expressed little

enthusiasm for Mennonite developments after the seventeenth century.¹⁹

What appears to be truly innovative in the current scholarship is that historians are bringing to light the various ways in which Mennonites have continued to have a dynamic relationship with the modern period from the seventeenth century onward. A number of historians have now convincingly shown that not only did the Enlightenment influence Mennonites, but that Mennonites also influenced and were shapers of enlightened ideas. Intelligentsia within Dutch Mennonite circles, together with intellectuals from other dissident churches, “were crucial for the introduction, accommodation, and acceptance of enlightened ideas and cultural and social changes.”²⁰

Recent work by Gary Waite, who teaches history at the University of New Brunswick, illustrates this new direction. In his essay that looks at Anabaptist contributions to the Dutch Republic, Waite draws attention to the way in which sixteenth-century Anabaptist leaders passively and actively promoted the importance of freedom of conscience.²¹ He shows how this concept was then vigorously taken up by a number of Mennonites in the seventeenth century, some of whom became significantly involved in dialogue with the Dutch Reformed church.

These Dutch Mennonites pushed for toleration and expressed “an impressive breadth of sympathy for others suffering persecution.”²² Some also became involved in interreligious dialogue with Muslims. The translator Jan Hendriksz Glazemaker and printer Jan Rieuwertsz, for instance, were deeply and personally invested in relationships with Muslims and were ultimately “responsible for the first Dutch language version of the Qur’an to be printed in Holland.”²³ Both Glazemaker and Rieuwertsz were also acquainted with the philosopher Benedictus Spinoza, an intellectual widely considered the first secular Jew and leading representative of “radical” Enlightenment thought. These and other sympathetic Mennonites provided Spinoza with finances and facilitated the translation and dissemination of several of his works.²⁴

Waite also traces sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Anabaptist skepticism about the devil, which leads him to conclude that Mennonites were instrumental in influencing broader attitudes concerning

sorcery and the power of the diabolic; that the Mennonites were not insignificant contributors to skeptical currents that could be found in early Enlightenment rationalism.²⁵ Evidently, in the Dutch Republic, the “quiet in the land” were not always so quiet, nor were the boundaries between church and world always so impenetrable. The boundary between the sacred and the secular could sometimes be highly porous.

Waite’s work, and others pursuing similar scholarly trajectories, has thus helped students of history reconsider what Mennonite identity looks like. The unhinging of historical writing from narrowly constructed confessional narratives has opened the door to a Mennonite world that is complex, dynamic, and even “worldly.” I am personally drawn to this research because I believe it gives us a truer and more honest view of Mennonite reality. This approach also helpfully brings to light the way in which religious ideas are always intertwined with social, political, and economic realities. Where I have my concerns is when there is a presumption that this newer approach can stay clear of all bias and the making of normative judgments. To my mind, no one is free from making some judgments—we are, after all, informed and shaped in our viewpoints by our social and economic locations, if not by religious or ideological commitments. In this respect, all historical narratives are in some senses “confessional.”

The need for historical perspective

Turning to nineteenth- and twentieth-century research on German Mennonites, contemporary scholarship has also been forthcoming in surprising and fruitful ways as historians have been laying bare some of the ways in which Mennonites at the time were caught up in German nationalism.²⁶ Hermann Gottlieb Mannhardt’s speech at the Danzig hotel is but one illustration of how many Mennonites were drawn inexorably toward the values of their age. Today, Mennonites might well ask how they should react to Mannhardt’s speech. For some, this is a sensitive question, not merely an academic one, since it is their past and to some extent their identity that is at play.

It is important for Mennonites not to idealize their history. To be sure, heroes from the past can empower a community. Remembering the positive can facilitate

healing and enable a community to envision a future. At the same time, lessons from history can best be learned if communities are willing to openly recognize mistakes that have been made. So I think it is important, for instance, that we study the relationship between Mennonites and nationalism in nineteenth-century Germany, even if we do not like everything that we see.

If we move to critique, it should be done with care. It may be easy for us to disavow Mannhardt’s strident address that he gave in 1915. We have the benefit of hindsight and can observe the lines that connect Mannhardt’s speech to the atrocities of WWI, or the hyper-nationalism of Hitler’s Third Reich. But Mannhardt did not have the benefit of this twenty-first-century perspective. He was limited by the horizons of his day and not immune to the influences and assumptions that shaped early twentieth-century German society. He grew up in a German and Mennonite environment that celebrated Germany’s military achievements. It would have been quite unusual for someone in his place to challenge this nationalistic ethos. Mannhardt’s attitude deserves our critique, but also our informed understanding of the age that was his.

Karl Koop is professor of history and theology at Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg

Endnotes

1. For insight into Mannhardt’s sermons and various speeches, see H.G. Mannhardt, *Predigten und Reden aus fünfundzwanzigjähriger Amtszeit*, second edition (Danzig: John & Rosenberg, 1913).

2. Hermann Mannhardt, “Heroic Deeds and Heroes: An Address in Time of War,” trans. Walter Klaassen, in Walter Klaassen, Harry Loewen, and James Urry, “German Nationalism and the First World War: Hermann G. Mannhardt’s *Heroic Deeds and Heroes*,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 88, no. 4 (October 2014): 536. Beyond the background work that Klaassen, Loewen, and Urry have done giving helpful context to Mannhardt’s speech, pp. 517–527, see also Helmut Foth, “Mennonitischer Patriotismus im Ersten Weltkrieg und die Kriegsrede des Danziger Predigers Hermann G. Mannhardt,” *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 72 (2015): 47–74.

3. See Simeon Friderich Rues, *Aufrichtige Nachrichten von dem Gegenwärtigen Zustande der Mennoniten oder Taufgesinnten wie auch der Collegianten oder Reinsburger* (Jena, 1743), 103.

4. Yme Kuiper, “Mennonites and Politics in Late Eighteenth-Century Friesland,” in *Religious Minorities and Cultural Diversity in the Dutch Republic: Studies Presented to Piet Visser on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, eds. August den Hollander, Alex Noord, Mirjam van Veen, and Anna

cont’d on p. 10

Manitoba Day Awards

by Conrad Stoesz

Of eleven awards presented at the Association of Manitoba Archives (AMA) *Manitoba Day Awards* at the University of Winnipeg on May 19, 2016, four were given to Mennonites or Mennonite related projects.

Manitoba's new Minister of Sport, Culture, and Heritage, The Honourable Rochelle Squires, was in attendance and kicked off the ceremonies. She noted the important role that archives play in maintaining community memory around the province.

The first of these four awards went to archivist Ken Reddig for a *Lifetime Service Award*. Ken began his archival career in 1979 at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS). In 1990, he moved to the Archives of Manitoba where he was Head of Maps and Architectural Records, responsible for the Educational Program section, Chair of the Public Service committee, and guided the processing of textual private sector records. In 1997, Reddig became the Director at the Mennonite Heritage Centre (MHC) until 1999. After a brief time away from archives, he returned to CMBS as director from 2005 to 2008.



Lifetime Service Award recipient Ken Reddig (l) receives a print of a Ray Dirks painting from Andrew Morrison of the AMA (c) and Conrad Stoesz (r). Photo credit: Korey Dyck.

Reddig was a key player in the formation of the AMA, active on numerous Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren committees and projects throughout his tenure. Former colleague Alf Redekopp noted that "he was a good storyteller, creative as an administrator, a leader and team player, diplomatic, cunning, and wise." Reddig was one who understood the power of stories and was an advocate for those on the fringes or marginalized, the audience was told.

The second award was presented to Dr. Roland Sawatzky and his team from the Manitoba Museum for their project, *Nice Women Don't Want the Vote*, in recognition of the 100th anniversary of women winning

the right to vote in Manitoba in 1916. Drawing on archival materials, this project "outlined the causes, the contradictions, and the people involved in the Suffragist movement."

Ernest Braun, Glen Klassen, and Harold Dyck were recognized with the third award for their book, *Historical Atlas of the East Reserve* (see book review in *Mennonite Historian* June 2016). This was a multi-year project of the EastMenn Historical Committee that, like so many projects, was a labour of love. The atlas drew upon numerous archives and archival collections as well as extensive field work. The hardcover, full-colour book is a social history of the peoples who have inhabited the area around the rural municipality of Hanover from before written history to modern day. The atlas is elegantly designed and eye-catching. The visual emphasis paired with detailed research and interesting prose make this an attractive volume. Not surprisingly, it is already in its third printing!

Conrad Stoesz, archivist at MHC and CMBS accepted the fourth award on behalf of the Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID) project (archives.mhsc.ca). This new database is a collaboration between seven Canadian Mennonite archival institutions and a recently-added American partner. The database helps archives manage their photos and gives the public unprecedented access to a rich collection of images from around the world.



Historical Atlas of the East Reserve project team (l to r): Harold Dyck, Glen Klassen, and Ernest Braun receive award from Chris Kotecki, archivist from the Manitoba Archives. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

CMBS Update

by Jon Isaak

A student internship, a book launch, and several new funded initiatives are just a few of the exciting developments that I can report by way of an update.

1. Andrew Brown was this year's student archival intern. He spent one week at each of the four archives associated with the Mennonite Brethren Church in US and Canada (Abbotsford, Fresno, Hillsboro, and Winnipeg), helping with ongoing archival tasks and doing his own research on Mennonite refugees of conflict and war.



Andrew Brown pictured here at work in the CMBS archives. He was the 2016 summer archival intern. The Canadian Mennonite University graduate is continuing his studies to become a history teacher. The internship comes with a \$2,000 stipend and will again be offered next summer. Interested students are encouraged to apply. See mbhistory.org for details. Photo credit: Karla Braun.

"I focused my research on Mennonite migration stories from Russia, diving into old diaries and personal papers to find some incredible stories. I kept a daily blog, in which I reported on my research, wrote about some of the stories I found, and included some of my adventures throughout the internship," says Andrew.

One particular incident stood out for Andrew, here narrated in his own words: "I had just finished reading Peter and Elfrieda Dyck's *Up From The Rubble*, a book about Mennonite refugees and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) work in the years after the Second World War. One of the stories in this book was about a

group of 33 Mennonites from southern Russia who escaped with the retreating German army into Europe, avoiding death at every turn. Their group started with 614 Mennonites, but only 33 made it safely to the Netherlands, where MCC helped them immigrate to Canada and Paraguay. On my last evening in Abbotsford, I was at a panel discussion of the Mennonite Faith and Learning Society at the Heritage Museum. People were speaking on the topic of migration, including a man named Peter Redekop. As he told his story of migration, I was excited to realize that he was one of those 33 survivors from the Second World War."

To read more about Andrew's internship, see <http://www.canadianmennonite.org/stories/potluck-plate-full-mennonite-cultures>; and to view Andrew's blog and his collection of stories gathered over the internship, go to <https://mbhcarchivalinternship.wordpress.com/>

2. On June 4, 2016, Dorothy Peters and Christine Kampen's book *Daughters in the House of Jacob* was launched at the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford. About 130 people gathered on Saturday afternoon to hear the authors describe how they, a Bible professor and a pastor, trace the migration of their vocational calling across generations and gender, back to their Bible teaching-preaching grandfather Jacob and to their unforgettable great-grandmother Agatha.

The authors interviewed elder-storytellers and investigated leads through a trail of letters, pictures, and documents, while reflecting on their own journeys and solving a few mysteries along the way.



Christine Kampen (l) and Dorothy Peters (r) read selections from their new book *Daughters in the House of Jacob*, during the book's launch on June 4, 2016. Photo credit: Janice Driedger.



A review of the book appears in this issue of the *Mennonite Historian* on page 12. Copies of this Commission publication are available from Kindred Productions (kindredproductions.com).

3. At its AGM, the Historical Commission—the group overseeing the work of CMBS—agreed to continue funding the four initiatives that it has developed in the recent years (archival internship, Katie Funk Wiebe research grant, M.B. studies project grant, and J.B. Toews college scholarships). Application criteria and submission dates for these are available on the Commission's website (mbhistory.org).

The Commission also agreed at the AGM to roll out three new funded initiatives: 1) grants to support development of Mennonite archives in countries outside of the U.S. and Canada; 2) grants in support of projects of Mennonite archives in U.S. and Canada; and 3) grants to encourage writers to submit encyclopedia articles (biographies of individuals and congregational histories) for publication in GAMEO, the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (gameo.org). Application criteria and submission dates for these are available on the Commission's website (mbhistory.org).

Beyond Tradition: The Lives of Mennonite Women

by Andrea Dyck, curator, Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Manitoba

Mennonite Heritage Village's 2016 exhibit, *Beyond Tradition: The Lives of Mennonite Women*, opened this summer. The exhibit originated with a desire to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of women receiving the provincial vote in Manitoba in the context of a museum devoted to the history of Russian-descendant Mennonites. Recognizing the inherent tension between these two settings, we still wanted to mark the occasion in a meaningful way.

Exploring this anniversary from the view of Mennonite history is difficult, as Mennonites were a people group who prided themselves on remaining separate from the "world" and neither Mennonite men nor Mennonite women would have sought the right to vote, or even participated in the practice, in great numbers in 1916. However, using the ideas of "tradition" and of women stretching social boundaries proved to be helpful in trying to bridge this divide and, at the same time, to shed light on the lives of several remarkable Mennonite women.

The galleries and outdoor village at Mennonite Heritage Village already address the roles of women in a variety of ways, but the common thread that runs through many of these narratives are the traditional roles that Mennonite women had in their communities—the roles of wives and mothers. These are wonderful histories that we enjoy sharing with the museum's visitors, but there is a gap in these narratives and it begs the question: What about the women who did not follow the traditional path that most Mennonite women did? These stories are not as well-known.

One of the guideposts that we used in the exhibit is a quote by Katie Funk Wiebe in her 1999 article "Me Tarzan, Son of Menno—You Jane, Mennonite Mama." In the article, Wiebe claims: "The ideal Mennonite woman in Russia and in the early years in America was one that most Mennonites found comfortable: silence, modesty, and submission."¹ We wondered how well this ideal reflected the experience of Russian-descendant Mennonite women. Were there exceptions?



Helene Janzen and her son, Waldemar, look at photo of husband and father, Wladimir, in 1956. Photo credit: Mennonite Archives of Ontario (XV-19.3-1992-14-870).

The *Beyond Tradition* exhibit addresses these musings about women who did not follow the traditional path. The exhibit highlights four themes, guided by key questions that, we suggest, provide a more nuanced understanding of the roles of women within Mennonite communities in Manitoba over the last century.

Uprooted: What were the roles of women in times of community and social upheaval like immigration and settlement?

Working 9 to 5: What did women do who took on paid employment outside the home, how were they viewed by their communities, and what was the impact of that work on Mennonite society?

Church work: What types of work did women immerse themselves in, in the life of the church, at a time when they could not officially be leaders?

Unhitched: What characterized the lives of the Mennonite women who, either by choice or circumstance, did not marry? Set off the well-trod path of marriage, child bearing, and rearing a family, what were the causes and passions that drove them and how were their perhaps unconventional lives received in their communities?

Each of these themes is supported by artifacts from the museum's collection and, where possible, by historical photos

from Mennonite archives across Canada, made available through the Mennonite Archival Image Database (archives.mhsc.ca). We also took the exhibit's subtitle, "The Lives of Mennonite Women" to heart and were intentional about highlighting specific women and telling the stories of as many individuals as we could through the interpretive panels, artifacts, and historical photos.

The following are the excerpts from the stories of four women, each one featured in one of the exhibit's four main themes.

Uprooted. Helene (Dueck) Janzen (1905–2001) and her family lived through the 1917 Russian Revolution and the following decades of turmoil. She and her son, Waldemar, became refugees after her husband, Wladimir, was deported to a Soviet concentration camp. Helene and her son fled through Poland and Germany before immigrating to Waterloo, Ontario, in 1948. Once in Canada, she earned a living working in a glove factory and then in hospital laboratories in Kitchener-Waterloo and Winnipeg until her retirement in 1970. Wladimir survived the concentration camp and corresponded with his family in Canada, but died in Kazakhstan in 1957.

Working 9 to 5. Anna Thiessen (1892–1977) was invited to serve a short-term



Anna Thiessen left her home in rural Saskatchewan and worked as an urban missionary at the Mary-Martha Home in Winnipeg in the early 1900s. Photo credit: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (NP045-01-08).

mission in Winnipeg in 1915. Despite wanting to serve in India, she took the position, and stayed for almost 60 years. In 1925 she founded the Mary-Martha Home, or Mädchenheim, which provided support and community for young Mennonite women working as domestic servants in Winnipeg. In an era when very few women spoke in front of men in formal church settings, she reported directly to her conference every summer. She also lobbied the Provincial government for better working conditions for domestics. She was the head of the Mary-Martha Home until it closed in 1959.

Church work. Helen L. Warkentin (1887–1975) was born in Hoffnungstal, Manitoba, and was ordained as a missionary in 1919. She served at the Mennonite Brethren boarding school in Deverakonda, India, from 1920 to 1957. During these years, Helen was the teacher, principal, and school dietitian, led Bible studies and preached in the community, and supervised day-to-day work at the mission. Her work as a missionary ended somewhat abruptly in 1957 when she was asked by the conference to return “home” to North

America. She retired in Winkler at the age of 69, where she became involved in the Winkler Bible Institute. She maintained correspondence with her friends in India.

Unhitched. Helena F. Reimer (1905–1993), from Steinbach, Manitoba, never married. She began her career as a teacher before switching to nursing. During World War Two, she began the first of her assignments overseas with the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and the World Health Organization. During her career she served in the Middle East, Taiwan, Cambodia, and Egypt, where she helped found the High Institute of Nursing at the University of Alexandria. During this time, she also earned her Bachelor of Nursing, as well as her Master of Arts in Nursing Administration. In 1974, she received the Order of Canada for her contributions to the field of nursing.

Beyond Tradition: The Lives of Mennonite Women will be on display for its second showing in the Gerhard Ens Gallery at Mennonite Heritage Village from October 24, 2016, to spring 2017.

Endnotes

1. Katie Funk Wiebe, “Me Tarzan, Son of Menno – You Jane, Mennonite Mama,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 17 (1999): 10.



Helen L. Warkentin served at the Mission School in Devarkonda, India. Photo credit: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (NP018-02-414a).



Helena Reimer in Egypt discussing plans for the High Institute of Nursing with an official from the University of Alexandria in Egypt in 1953. Photo credit: Mennonite Heritage Village (1997.11.14).

Probate records

(cont'd from p. 3)

with his father. So, Cornelius was the most familiar with his father's affairs, and thus the most logical choice.

3. Estate inventory. The assets and their values are listed. You can see how your ancestors made their living and the tract of land that they owned. Often it shows how many of each thing the family owned. In this case, the inventory only lists dollar amounts, so it can be a little hard to interpret. For example, Gerhard owned \$50-worth of horses. Is that one good horse or five poor ones? The inventory shows that most of Gerhard's net worth was his quarter section of land (\$2,000 of the total value of \$2,862.95). With the legal description, we could search for a homestead file or land records. Since land (and not livestock) was the bulk of the estate, he was likely a grain farmer.

4. Administrator's bond. Cornelius had to pledge \$6,000 as a penalty, if he did not properly execute his responsibilities. Two others had to pledge jointly with him. In this case, his two stepbrothers, Jacob and Johann Rempel, sons of Gerhard's wife Maria and her first husband, joined him in the pledge. If there had been conflict between the stepbrothers, it's unlikely they would have agreed to such an arrangement. By paying attention to the additional bondsmen listed, we gain a clue to the congenial nature of Gerhard and Maria's "blended" family.

5. List of heirs. The list gives a complete account of the surviving children, and includes the relationship of the heirs to the deceased and their place of residence (see photo on p. 3). One of Gerhard's daughters, Gertrude, is not listed since she predeceased him in 1906; but three of her children are listed instead. If I did not know that she had died or her death date, this document would provide a "cutoff date" to narrow the search for her death record.

A couple of additional things to note: first, there were no lawyers involved in drafting these documents. In this frontier town, Cornelius prepared the documents with the help of the court clerk. There was not a notary either. Cornelius and his siblings signed in the notary block for each other. Second, following Mennonite beliefs, they affirmed and did not swear to

the truth of their documents.

Fortunately, Saskatchewan's probate records have been indexed and posted online. If they were not online, you could always go to the provincial archives and search them in person. There is a treasure trove of genealogical data in probate records; they are a resource not to be overlooked!

Endnotes

1. I am grateful to Conrad Sroesz for supplying the information on the *Waisenamt* in these last three paragraphs.

On Judging the Past

(cont'd from p. 5)

Voolstra (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 263.

5. Piet Visser, "Enlightened Dutch Mennonitism: The Case of Cornelius van Engelen," in *Grenzen des Täufertums/ Boundaries of Anabaptism: Neue Forschungen*, eds. Anselm Schubert, Astrid von Schlachta, and Michael Driedger (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2009), 375. For further background to this period, see Yme Kuiper "Mennonites and Politics in Late Eighteenth-Century Friesland," 249–267; and Michael Driedger, "Anabaptists and the Early Modern State: a Long-Term View," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700*, eds. John D. Roth and James M. Stayer (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 507–544.

6. For details of this episode, see Mark Jantzen, "Vistula Delta Mennonites Encounter German Nationalism, 1813–1820," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 78, no. 2 (April 2004): 205–211.

7. For context to events surrounding the Frankfurt National Assembly and subsequent developments, see Mark Jantzen, "Equal and Conscripted: Liberal Rights Confront Mennonite Conceptions of Freedom in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 32 (2014): 65–80.

8. For a comprehensive study on this period in Prussia, see Mark Jantzen's *Mennonite German Soldiers: Nation, Religion, and Family in the Prussian East, 1772–1880* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). For an analysis of Wilhelm Mannhardt's perspectives on military service, see Karl Koop, "A Complication for the Mennonite Peace Tradition: Wilhelm Mannhardt's Defense of Military Service," *Conrad Grebel Review* 34, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 28–48.

9. Diether Götz Lichdi, "The Story of Nazism and its Reception by German Mennonites," *Mennonite Life* 36, no. 1 (April 1981): 26.

10. James Jakob Fehr and Diether Götz Lichdi, "Mennonites in Germany," in *Testing Faith and Tradition*, eds. John A. Lapp and C. Arnold Snyder (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2006), 110.

11. Gerhard Rempel, "Mennonites and the Holocaust: from Collaboration to Perpetuation," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 84, no. 4 (October 2010): 507–549.

12. The question is not new. See, for instance, James Peter Regier's treatment of this topic in "Mennonitische Vergangenheitsbewältigung: Prussian Mennonites, The Third Reich, and Coming to Terms with a Difficult Past," *Mennonite Life* 59, no. 1 (March 2004).

13. Piet Visser, "Mennonites and Doopsgezinden in the Netherlands, 1535–1700," in *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521–1700*, 300.

14. On pietism, see Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety through the Centuries: Its Genius and Its*

Literature (Goshen, IN: Mennonite Historical Society, 1949). On Dutch-Mennonite historiography, see S. Zijlstra, *Om de ware Gemeente en de oude Gronden: Geschiedenis van de dopersen in de Nederlanden, 1531–1675* (Hilversum and Leeuwarden: Uitgeverij Verloren and Fryske Akademy, 2000), 19–21, 282–283, 315, and 501; and Nanne van der Zijpp, *Mennonite Encyclopedia* vol. 3, s.v. "Netherlands."

15. The key essay that introduced the importance of studies on Mennonites and the Enlightenment is Michael Driedger's "An Article Missing from the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*: 'The Enlightenment in the Netherlands,'" in *Commoners and Community: Essays in Honour of Werner O. Packull*, ed. C. Arnold Snyder (Kitchener, ON: Pandora Press, 2002), 101–120.

16. Den Hollander, et al., *Religious Minorities and Cultural Diversity in the Dutch Republic*, 1.

17. For a discussion on the change from an "essentialist" or "preservationist" perspective to a view of Mennonite identity with greater fluidity, see Karl Koop, "Anabaptist and Mennonite Identity: Permeable Boundaries and Expanding Definitions," *Religion Compass* 8, no. 6 (2014): 199–207.

18. Ernst Troeltsch, *Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt* (Tübingen, 1911), 28, discussed in Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Das Täufertum—ein Weg in die Moderne?" in Hans-Jürgen Goertz, *Das schwierige Erbe der Mennoniten: Aufsätze und Reden*, eds. Marion Kobelt-Groch and Christoph Wiebe (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2002), 69.

19. For a brief discussion on the connection between Bender and Troeltsch via Ernst Correll, see Albert N. Keim, *Harold Bender, 1897–1962* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1998), 319.

20. Piet Visser, "Enlightened Dutch Mennonitism: The Case of Cornelius van Engelen," in *Grenzen des Täufertums/Boundaries of Anabaptism: Neue Forschungen*, eds. Anselm Schubert, Astrid von Schlachta, and Michael Driedger (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2009), 372.

21. Gary Waite, "A Reappraisal of the Contribution of Anabaptists to the Religious Culture and Intellectual Climate of the Dutch Republic," in *Religious Minorities and Cultural Diversity in the Dutch Republic*, eds. Den Hollander, et al., 6–28.

22. *Ibid.*, 19.

23. *Ibid.*, 23.

24. For further information on the relationship between Mennonites and Spinoza, see the issue of *Conrad Grebel Review* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2007).

25. Waite, "A Reappraisal of the Contribution of Anabaptists to the Religious Culture and Intellectual Climate of the Dutch Republic," 26.

26. No comprehensive bibliography can be furnished here, but see, for example, the bibliographical references in notes 2, 8, 9, 11, and 12 above as well as the following references: Benjamin W. Goossen, "From Aryanism to Anabaptism: Nazi Race Science and the Language of Mennonite Ethnicity," *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 90, no. 2 (April 2016): 135–163; Astrid von Schlachta, "'In unbedingter Treue'... 'Keine Verfechter der Wehrlosigkeit': Volksgemeinschaft, Staatstreue und das Bild, das von den Mennoniten herrschen sollte," *Mennonitische Geschichtsblätter* 72 (2015): 117–132; Jeremy Robert Koop, "The Political Ramifications of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine in the Nazi Period: A Comparative Study of the German Christians, the Confessing Church, and the Mennonites" (Ph.D. diss., York University, Toronto, 2011), especially 261–317; John D. Thiesen, *Mennonite & Nazi: Attitudes Among Mennonite Colonists in Latin America, 1933–1945* (Kitchener, ON and Scottsdale, PA: Pandora Press—co-published with Herald Press, 1999); Hans-Jürgen Goertz, "Nationale Erhebung und religiöser Niedergang: Missglückte Aneignung des täuferischen Leitbildes im Dritten Reich," in *Das schwierige Erbe der Mennoniten*, 121–150.

Book Reviews

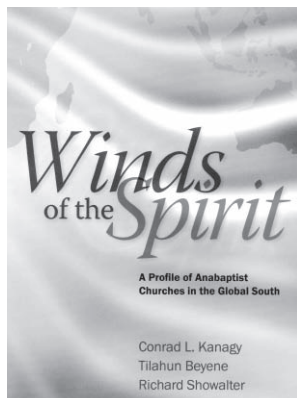
Conrad L. Kanagy, Tilahun Beyene, and Richard Showalter, *Winds of the Spirit: A Profile of Anabaptist Churches in the Global South* (Harrisonburg and Waterloo: Herald Press, 2012), 260 pp.

Reviewed by Titus Guenther

Winds of the Spirit is a timely and ambitious study of the faith and practices of Anabaptist churches in nine countries of the Global South, plus Lancaster Mennonite Conference in the US. This Multi-Nation Profile was spearheaded by the three authors, in collaboration with leaders from the participating Anabaptist church groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The study brings some surprising insights into the life of Anabaptist churches in the Global South and their remarkable numeric growth. How “Anabaptist” are these churches actually, some have wondered. The results of the extensive questionnaires show these churches to be “orthodox” and strongly committed to the original core Anabaptist convictions and practices compared to the North American and European Anabaptist churches of today—influenced as the latter are by the Enlightenment.

Furthermore, an “interesting interplay” is revealed: “If Pentecostalism owes something to early Anabaptism,



“mirror Pentecostal characteristics” more closely than others, but all share with Pentecostals and Charismatics a greater openness toward the supernatural, miracles, and the Holy Spirit, compared to a “rationalist” orientation in Northern Anabaptist churches.

Anabaptist churches in the Global South experience the same numeric growth as Pentecostals and Charismatics in the hemisphere and, like them, are committed to sound Christian faith and

strongly emphasize “right behaviour” (p. 28); they perceive a clear distinction between followers of Jesus and non-followers, a distinction that is often blurred in the Global North. The authors submit that Anabaptism of the Global South more closely mirrors original Reformation Anabaptism than does its Northern counterpart. Moreover, the authors argue that “both sixteenth-century Anabaptism and its contemporary expressions in the Global South reflect characteristics and qualities of the first three hundred years of pre-Christendom church history” (p. 29).

The authors argue that Bender’s *The Anabaptist Vision*, which has majorly oriented life in North American Anabaptist churches, may be incomplete, leaving out precisely the Spirit-emphasis that is so alive in the “Anabaptist visions” of Southern Anabaptist churches. This comprehensive survey of the Southern Anabaptist church scene offers a great framework for conversations with Southern Christians, which will deepen our understanding of biblical Anabaptism.

Robert Suderman (p. 234) advocates a paradigm shift in saying: “*An Anabaptist focus is no longer something that comes from the North.... The church in the North is learning very much, and needs to learn even more from the Southern churches. For example, in Africa and Latin America there is a new awareness that Pentecostal fervor is not contradictory to Anabaptism. Anabaptists in the South have shown and reminded us that Anabaptism is at its roots Pentecostal. We in the North have shied away from, even scoffed at certain aspects of the Pentecostal stream. It is important to find ways of understanding Anabaptism through a Pentecostal lens.*”

Some distinctive factors in forging the Anabaptist identities and visions of Global Southern churches today include: “(1) a missionary passion and a context that distinguishes Christian from non-Christian, (2) persecution and oppression, (3) a concern for discipleship and faithful living, (4) an emphasis on a holistic gospel, and (5) an embrace of the Holy Spirit” (p. 249). If these themes seem remote to Anabaptists of the Global North, they were all central to the early church and Reformation Anabaptists—and perhaps to all renewal movements throughout church history.

This wide-ranging Profile of Anabaptist Churches in the Global South, “with data

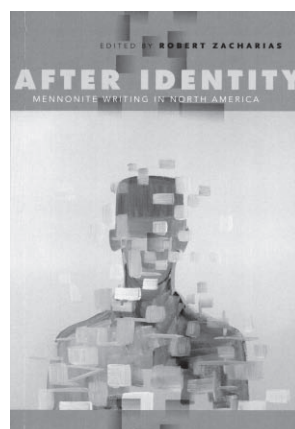
from eighteen thousand church members in ten countries,” makes the convincing claim that “the future of Anabaptism lies with churches in the Global South” (cover). For this reason, *Winds of the Spirit* should be mandatory reading in all churches, particularly in the Global North, the better to understand and become a part of the Christocentric renewal movement of the worldwide church, one in which the Holy Spirit plays its proper role.

Robert Zacharias, ed., *After Identity: Mennonite Writing in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 244 pp.

Reviewed by Korey Dyck

Based on papers given at a four-day symposium in May 2013, Zacharias has compiled an impressive list of authors to help explore the state of “Mennonite” writing. Writing in the shadow of a “post-identity turn,” the authors each move beyond a simple “ethnic” category for locating their literary works.

In his introduction, Zacharias sets the stage by explaining how Mennonite writing is framed in relation to ethnic, racial,



multicultural, or post-colonial literary studies in North America. Key to his framing of the literary landscape, he reviews both proponents and critics of

“Mennonite writing.” In a world where many inhabit multiple identities, is it still valuable to anchor new writing in a communal ethnic past?

The book itself is divided into two sections. The first section is labelled *Reframing Identity* and includes Zacharias’s introduction that outlines the literary discussion, as well as the book’s first six chapters. Section two comprised of another six chapters entitled *Expanding Identity* leads readers to think about how Mennonite authors can let the texts speak for themselves, rather than locate texts within a recognizable Mennonite location.

As with any collection of essays, not all

authors directly address the symposium's theme. Instead, several authors engage Mennonite writing more generally. Julia Spicher Kasdorf's lead essay helpfully explains the publishing "habit" of the "autoethnographic announcement" where audiences read an ethnic synopsis about the history of Mennonites before engaging the text. Spicher Kasdorf argues for removing this historical grounding. An author, no matter how well they locate themselves, can hardly represent or want to represent an entire ethnocultural group in their writing.

Royden Loewen, for instance, argues that since Mennonites arrived in cities much later than other ethnic groups, they were slower to engage with the themes of modernity. As a result, the works of Mennonite authors in the late 20th and early 21st centuries can be more accurately understood as working with themes of dislocation and disunity, the themes clearly felt since moving away from community-oriented rural settings. In his essay, Loewen reminds readers that these writings have been formed in a milieu where Mennonite writers are living this disconnect, on the one hand, and also where Amish, Hutterite, and other traditionalist communities are thriving in numbers, on the other hand.

Paul Tiessen in his essay, "Double Identity: Covering the *Peace Shall Destroy Many* Project" dives into the McClelland and Stewart publishing company archives to explain how Rudy Wiebe's first novel, *Peace Shall Destroy Many*, was marketed to a Canadian audience. Wiebe, for example, had little input into how the book cover was designed and marketed. In a sense, the book and the controversy surrounding its reception in Mennonite communities was a product, not just of Wiebe's prose, but rather the many hands of the publishing company itself.

Readers will also recognize a variety of Canadian and American "Mennonite" authors adding more colour and depth to the initial symposium's theme including essays by and about Di Brandt and Jeff Gundy, with Hildi Froese Tiessen receiving the "final" word.

An engaging collection of critical essays about Mennonite writing, *After Identity* ably demonstrates that the "Mennonite Thing" Zacharias describes is alive and well, with authors continuing to question the very framework that helped launch this literary sub-genre.

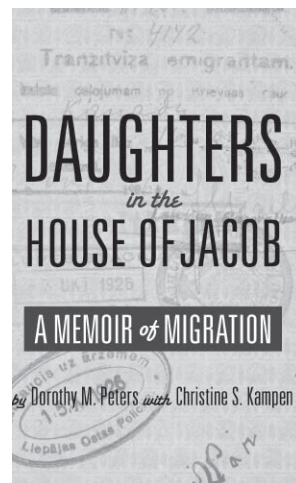
Dorothy M. Peters with Christine S. Kampen, *Daughters in the House of Jacob: A Memoir of Migration*, (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2016), 272 pp.

Reviewed by Elfrieda Neufeld Schroeder

The authors of this memoir, Peters and Kampen, are cousins. They write their book "for the children of Jacob and Anna Doerksen (the authors' grandparents) and their descendants, and for all collectors and keepers and tellers of stories." Dorothy had the idea of writing a small article "about the migration of a vocation across generations and gender in [the] family." Their guiding question was: "Who was our grandfather Jacob and how do we bear his image?" Three years later it grew into a memoir.

Peters and Kampen begin with a brief biographical survey of their shared history. They then continue with the stories of their own personal lives and those of their parents and their shared grandparents and great-grandparents. Writing with honesty and transparency about their own journeys, both Dorothy and Christine share some of the deep struggles and challenges they

deal with as they find and embrace their calling: Dorothy as a mother of four and a professor of religious studies; Christine as a single woman and a pastor in the Mennonite Brethren



denomination. They compare and contrast their Christian service to that of their parents and grandparents.

Dorothy depicts her father, Leonard Doerksen, as a gentle man who was bullied at a young age. He grew up to be a Bible School teacher and a pastor. He "decided early that he would never coerce people to be saved. Instead, he would try to invite and love people into salvation. There would be no bullying from him." This is remarkable because, at that time, "coercing" people "to be saved" was a common practice of MB pastors and leadership.

Betty, Leonard's younger sister and

Christine's mother, describes her home life as a mix of play and work. However, after their father's death at the age of 43, life became more difficult for the family. Betty and Leonard took on responsibilities beyond their years.

Following her marriage to John Kampen, Betty joined the Mennonite Church. A homemaker by choice, she became a gifted Sunday School teacher and a deacon. Betty once told her daughter, "If I would have been a man, I would have been a pastor."

Anna Kehler, the authors' grandmother, came from a well-to-do family in South Russia. During the civil war (1918–1920), she experienced horrors that no child should have to endure. She suppressed the memories and they came to haunt her in her later years, especially after her husband's premature death.

Jacob Doerksen, Anna's husband, also lived through war, famine, and death. He was 19 when the family immigrated to Canada and settled in Saskatchewan. Jacob became a pastor at the Herbert Mennonite Church in 1935, two years after he married Anna. Both he and Anna were later re-baptized by immersion (1943) and joined the MB Church after they moved to Abbotsford, British Columbia.

In their research, the authors learn that Agatha, the great-grandmother, kept a secret, a secret that came to light through a genealogical entry. There are other, less dramatic "hidden things" that appear as the authors listen to storytellers and also write about their own lives. These family secrets are treated sensitively and with compassion and understanding by the authors.

Many strands, skilfully woven together make up this family saga. When separated, each of the individual threads has the possibility to become its own story. Put together, the reader can see how each one is needed to weave a complete family history. At times, the different strands become a bit overwhelming, but the many photographs help to orientate the reader.

Peters and Kampen were awarded two years of funding for the initial research and writing of their memoir by the Mennonite Brethren Historical Commission (Katie Funk Wiebe Research Grant). In their Acknowledgments (p. 275) they thank Wiebe for being "an inspirational pioneering example as a woman and a spiritual leader in the Mennonite community of faith."