

Mennonite Historian



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A New Manitoba Society

An organizational meeting for a new Manitoba Mennonite historical society will be held on Saturday, October 27, 9:30-12:00 a.m. at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

This move follows a decision to rename the original society along the lines of its main project. That organization is now Mennonite Village Museum (Canada) Inc. with headquarters at Steinbach, Manitoba.

The October meeting is open to all persons interested in the study and preservation of Mennonite heritage, including such areas of work as researching and writing local history, family studies, gathering historical documents, newspaper reporting, heritage photography, film-making and painting, etc.

Agenda of the meeting will include sharing of information on past and present activities related to Manitoba Mennonite heritage studies, discussion of possible goals for a new society, and proposals for organization and development of program.



Photo: Rudy Regehr

The display area of the Heritage Centre forms an important avenue for communicating concerns of faith and life in our Mennonite community. The space provided includes a large lighted area on the main floor, and a section in the mezzanine, a gallery, as well.

Visitors to the Centre may view an extensive new assembly of black and white photos, and metal sculpture on heritage themes which are now displayed on these premises.

The work has been done by two artists of southern Manitoba, Gerald and Ken Loewen. They expect to add some materials to complete the set in the near future.

The hours for visitors are 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m. Admission is free.



Elizabeth ("Liz") Quapp has been serving as secretary receptionist at the Centre since July 3 this summer. She replaced Lois Schmidt who is continuing her studies.

EMMC News

Our Fiftieth Year

The Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference in Manitoba will be marking the fiftieth anniversary of the church in 1986. Naturally there will be some looking back to see where we came from and what has happened in these fifty years. Studies will be done of our churches and the conference. In order to do so effectively it would be of great value to have a good collection of source materials. As a conference, we are using the facilities of the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg. There we will store materials which are of historic value. They will then be available to students and historians for study.

We still have some of the Protokolle, i.e. the original minutes of meetings held by the ministers. This is a good example of the kind of material we would like to collect. Other materials could include pictures of early days, writings in newspapers, personal diaries or notes, early issues of the Leitstern and minutes and records of local churches.

Let us preserve these before they are lost forever. If you know of articles of this nature please let me know.

Frank Zacharias

The Leitstern - Recorder

Church papers have played an important role in sharing information within conferences and among congregations involved. **Der Leitstern** has been such a paper. It began publication in the Rudnerweide Mennoniten Church in 1943, and included among its editors the Aeltesters W. H. Falk, J. H. Friesen, as well as Frank Zacharias. It ceased publication in the late sixties leaving its work to its English-language companion, the **EMMC Recorder** which had already been under way since 1964.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre collection contains almost the entire set of **Recorder**, and some years of the **Leitstern**. The following issues are needed to complete the sets:

1. All of 1964 for the **Recorder**
2. For the **Leitstern**: 1943 (Vol. 1) to 1957 (Vol. 14). May, 1965 (Vol. 21) to the end of its run.

Anyone able to help us fill the gaps, please send copies to EMMC Archives, Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Conference Founded

The October, 1959 issue of **Der Leitstern** brought the following from the Aeltester John H. Friesen (excerpts translated):

"The Rudnerweide Mennonite churches of Manitoba and Saskatchewan met this summer to organize a conference to be known as "Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference", abbreviated as EMMC.

We have been registered as a conference and as ministers with the respective provincial governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan so that all such official actions as the solemnizing of weddings, etc. must be carried out under the new name.

All the work of the conference has been organized under five boards: The Board of the Lehrdienst (Ministerial), the Board of Missions, the Board of Education and Publication, the Board of Christian Service and the Board of Finance. It is hoped that a short report from each board will appear in the **Leitstern** each month.

The purpose of this is to inform all the Conference congregations of what is being done, so that everyone may pray for, and participate in the work of the church.

The Ministerial Board has had only one meeting since the founding of the Conference this summer. This took place on September 7 when all the boards and the executive met together . . .

As the Board of the Ministerial we ask for your prayers, and greet you with 1 Cor. 15:58."

Note: Rev. Friesen was ordained as minister in 1937, and as Aeltester in 1953. He passed away in 1975 at the age of 76.



Frank Zacharias

EMMC Archives

The Mennonite Heritage Centre was built with a mandate to serve all Mennonite as well as other church groups in Canada. This means that those bodies not having an archives may consider using these facilities.

The first to choose this option is the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference. It has twenty-seven congregations, with its main membership of about twenty-four hundred in the Canadian provinces of Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and with a congregation also in Belize.

With this move, the Education and Publication Board of this Conference is able to encourage its member congregations to gather valuable historical material related to the group as a whole, and to deposit them in the archives of the Centre in Winnipeg. It is hoped that this will aid the writing of a history of the Conference, a project under consideration by the Board.

The Board has appointed its member, Frank Zacharias, a teacher at Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, Manitoba, to be the contact person for archives matters of the Conference in the coming year.

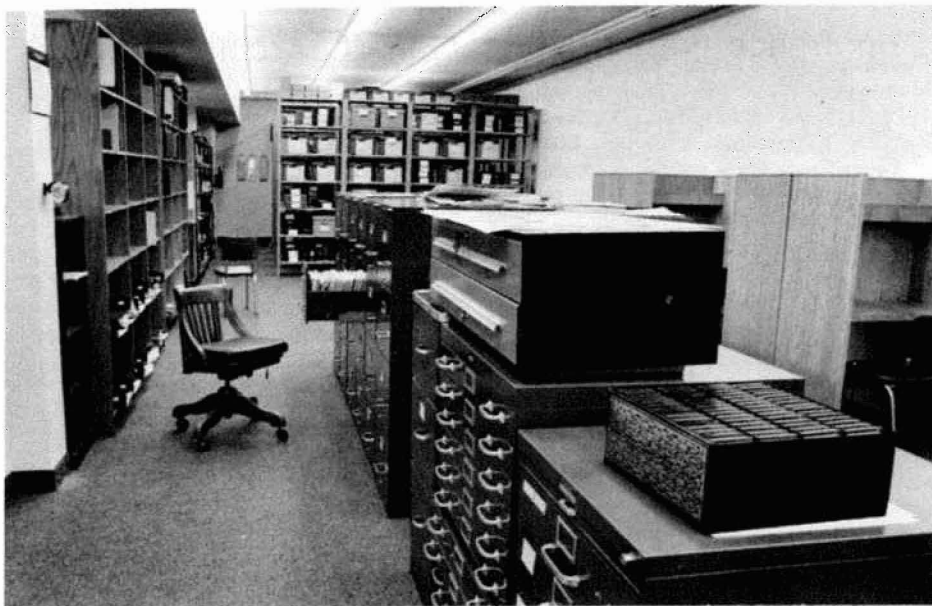
The Neuhorst Records

The first collection of EMMC congregations to be deposited at the Mennonite Heritage Centre arrived at the archives recently. The material includes the papers of the late A. M. Neudorf, minister at the Rudnerweide church at Neuhorst, Saskatchewan. They were forwarded through the courtesy of Leonard Doell, Warman, Saskatchewan, and Ruth Neudorf Buhler, of Osler, Saskatchewan.

Among the items are minutes of the first conference sessions in 1960, ministerial meeting minutes, records of radio work, **Weihnachtswuensche** and miscellaneous items.

It is of special importance that the files of ministers in our congregations be preserved and filed in the archives. If necessary they can be marked "confidential" so that no one may use them without proper permission. The records will be clearly indexed and boxed so that they can be consulted easily if ever necessary.

Ex-students of Elim Bible Institute will be interested in a new book, *Elim. 50th Anniversary, 1929-1979*, to be available at the Elim celebration in Altona, Man. on October 14.



An interior view of the new archives facility of the Centre for MB Studies at Mennonite Brethren Bible College, 77 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

MB Archives Moved

In 1969 the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches in Canada recommended the establishment of an archives as a place to deposit its records. The first archives of the conference was located in a small office on the campus of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College with Herbert Giesbrecht, MBBC librarian, appointed as archivist on a part-time basis.

Since that time much has changed. The archives soon outgrew the office and was moved into a classroom. This room eventually became overcrowded necessitating a larger location. When the college began planning for expansion of its library and music building it was considered imperative that more space be provided the archives. With the completion of the college expansion this past spring, the archives has been moved into a new location in the basement of the new addition.

This new facility has approximately 1,500 square feet of usable space. Included is an office for the archivist, a microfilm room and a room to house the J. A. Toews rare book collection.

The holdings comprise records of the Mennonite Brethren Conference in Russia and Canada, board and committee minutes, church records, maps and photographs. Of special interest is the latest acquisition of microfilmed church minutes and records of most of the M.B. Churches in Canada.

Presently the archives has two employees. Herb Giesbrecht is head archivist, on a part-time basis, and Ken Reddig is associate archivist, as well as, director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Canada. Visitors are always welcome to visit the new facilities. *Ken Reddig*

The material on this page
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Recent Canadian Publications

Enns, F. F. **Elder Enns**. Translated by Susan Enns. Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1979. Paperback, 106 pp. An English translation of the German edition of **Ohm Franz** (1977). A biography of the late Aeltester F. Enns of the Whitewater Mennoniten Gemeinde, Boissevain, Manitoba, \$4.00.

Epp, Frank H. **Stories with Meaning**. Winnipeg: Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, 1979. Paperback, 32 pp. Directives on writing congregational histories, \$2.00.

Cooper, Charlotte Sloan. **The Mennonite People**. Saskatoon: Western Extension College Educational Publishers, 1979. Paperback, 66 pp. For children.

Harder, Johannes. **No Strangers in Exile**. Translated by Al Reimer, Winnipeg: Hyperion Press. Paperback, 123 pp. An expanded and edited translation of **In Wologdas Weissen Waeltern** (1934).

Janzen, William. **Walk Humbly with your God. A Collection of meditations**. Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1979. Paperback, 111 pp., \$5.00.

Klippenstein, Lawrence, ed. **That There be Peace. Mennonites in Canada and World War II**. Winnipeg, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Manitoba, 1979. Paperback, 104 pp. A pictorial album about Canadian Mennonite conscientious objectors in World War II forest camps, hospitals, medical corps, etc.

Rempel, Olga. **Einer von Vielen**, CMBC Publications, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3P 0M4. Paperback, 201 pp., \$10.00. The story of Rev. Aron Toews, a Mennonite minister who died in Siberian exile during the Stalin period. Includes a diary of the times.

Smucker, Barbara Claassen. **Days of Terror** (Scottdale: Herald Press, and Clarke, Irwin and Co. Ltd., 1979). Hardcover, \$7.95. Novel based on the Russian Mennonite emigration of the 1920's.

Tilitzky, Jake, ed. **Churches in Profile, Conference of Mennonites in British Columbia**, 1978, Clearbrook, B.C., 1979, Paperback, 118 pp.

B.C. Heritage News

Many of the "Golden Agers" of the Golden Age Society, Clearbrook, helped to sell tickets for the Low German presentation **De Bildung**. Susan Harms, producer, writes "Enough tickets were sold to present a cheque for \$200.00 to the Ladies Auxiliary and another \$250.00 to the Pacific Mennonite Children's Choir directed by Nancy Dyck." (*Menno's Memo*, May 1979, p. 2) The play was presented three times in February last winter. Another of J. H. Janzen's plays, **Bildung fuehrt zur Erziehung**, is being prepared for staging in November.

Janzen's Mennonite dramas seem to be enjoying a new surge of interest lately. Who else is doing Low German drama in the Canadian Mennonite community?

The Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. has been promoting its work by setting up a booth at the annual MCC sale in the Fraser Valley. Mr. Herman Janzen, of Clearbrook, has been a part of that project. That provincial society now may have the highest membership (around 100) of any Mennonite historical society in the country.

Now Available!

That There Be Peace

Mennonites in Canada and W.W. II

A pictorial album and reflections on the work of Mennonite conscientious objectors in Canada during World War II. 106 pp.

Paperback - \$6.00

Hardcover - \$9.00

(Postage included)

Order from:

**David J. Braun, Box 112
Steinbach, Manitoba
R0A 2A0**

Please enclose payment
with order.

Book Reviews

Charlotte Sloan Cooper. **The Mennonite People**. College of Education, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, 1978. Pp. 67, paperback \$4.75. Reviewed by John Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

This booklet by Charlotte Sloan Cooper is the second in a series **People of our Land** which deals with different minority groups in Canada. The first volume presented the Hutterite community.

The Mennonite People is written in a popular, non-technical style. There is, however, no indication for what grade level it is written. The language and the art work suggest that it is aimed at grades two and three. The content and concepts, however, are on the level of grade five or six.

The author communicates the history of the Mennonite people by using the experiences of two children on a farm in Saskatchewan. A trip to their grandfather who gives them a buggy ride, provides the occasion to discuss Menno Simons and his escape from the authorities. A visit to an aunt in Steinbach, Manitoba, allows the family to visit the Mennonite Village Museum, and become acquainted with early Canadian Mennonite experiences.

Although the format is interesting, the booklet has some major weaknesses. A few of the historical references are erroneous. For example, the author gives the impression that Mennonites moved to Prussia because Frederick the Great "promised they would not have to go to war." (p. 22). In fact, Mennonites moved into Prussia more than two hundred years before Frederick the Great ruled Prussia.

A serious problem is that the author does not indicate that she is only including one stream of Mennonites. Nowhere does she make reference to Swiss Mennonites of non-European background.

Considering that this is a booklet geared to children, it might have been strengthened with visual aids. It would seem imperative for children to have some large maps of the areas included in the story.

The book concludes with a somewhat too brief bibliography. Gerhard Lohrenz's popular **The Mennonites in Western Canada**, (1974) would seem to be ideally suited for background reading. One could add C. Henry Smith's **The Story of the Mennonites** though it is out of print, and is now being revised. Some of the more recent, numerous, well-written, Mennonite novels, and biographies would make useful additions to this section.

The College of Education of the University of Saskatchewan ought to be commended for attempting to provide grade school level material about the various minority groups in Canada. However, for such material to be helpful, the research in preparation of such material should really be done more carefully.

Anna Reimer Dyck. **Anna: From the Caucasus to Canada** Hillsboro, Ks.: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1979. 216 pp. illus. \$8.95. Reviewed by LaVerna Klippenstein, Winnipeg, Man.

Anna: From the Caucasus to Canada is an autobiographical account of the journey from a wealthy Russian estate through peril to a tiny pioneering community in Manitoba. Anna's story leads from hope through despair to renewed hope in a new country with crisis and challenges familiar to Canadian pioneers during the first half of the twentieth century.

Anna Reimer Dyck is an excellent story teller. Carefully chronicled events in the author's diary are brought to life as she recounts her experience during the dislocation of the Mennonite population, created by the fury of war.

Anna's father, Jacob Reimer, held large estates in the Kuban and was an influential leader in the Mennonite Brethren Church. Anna describes in delightful detail the majesty of the Caucasus mountains, the family's well-kept garden and vivid flowerbeds. She describes lavish Christmas celebrations and family activities lasting several days.

The tragic events of deprivation, persecution and death stand out starkly against this glorious background. But among the increasing number of books written by Mennonites about this period, **Anna** is unique. While her story is told with sadness and regrets, there is none of the bitterness and hostility evident in other books. Here Christian faith has helped the author cope with and conquer whatever she may have had for the oppressors. There is loneliness and pathos. But there is no self-pity.

For some the story may seem too idealistic. The author's family and friends appear flawless, the years before the revolution, cloudless. This illustrates Anna Dyck's capacity to understand and accept those with whom she lived, and her ability to appreciate and remember the beautiful. This characteristic makes hers a book of inspiration and encouragement.

Students of Soviet and Canadian history will find authentic and interesting anecdotal material from this period and persons of all ages will be fascinated by this tender tale of love and suffering, struggle and triumph.

Readers unfamiliar with the German language may find the style strange and a bit redundant in places. Frequent Germanisms (quieten the baby, as we were on our way, long from home) dot the book. Peter J. Klassen, the translator and editor may have chosen to leave these in order to preserve the writer's style.

Anna, written at the request of her husband is the author's first book. One hopes there will be others.

Correction:

Re: MH June, 1979 front photo cutline:
The Mennonite state Duma member was
Hermann, not Heinrich, Bergmann.

Mennonite Identity and Literary Art, John L. Ruth. Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1978. Pp. 72., paperback, \$1.10. Reviewed by Al Reimer, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

By any standards this is an impressive little book about the role of the creative imagination. By Mennonite standards it is unique. Never has a Mennonite writer probed so deeply the need of the collective Mennonite psyche to seek identity through the memory of the past as communicated by the literary storyteller. Ruth's booklet provides an illuminating theoretical basis for the growing body of creative writing that is being produced by Mennonite writers on this continent.

Traditionally, Ruth argues, Mennonites have not done a good job of preserving and passing on their "story" through memory. Instead, they have shown a deep-seated mistrust of "images" and of the image-making function of the literary artist. The Mennonite "sensibility" has been inhibited by fear of idolatry — "substituting the creature for the Creator" — mistrust of "worldly sophistication", shunning of individualism, renunciation of sensual pleasures and by aversion to art and artifice.

And yet, Ruth shows convincingly that it is possible for a responsible Mennonite artist to work **within** the tradition of Mennonites scruples against art. There is no need for him either to turn his back on his Mennonite experience in favor of the main culture, or to shrink back into his Mennonite community and produce art that is so "safe" and uncritical that it will satisfy even the most conservative Mennonites. All that is required is a vital, committed but fearless imagination on the part of the artist.

The true Mennonite artist will find much to criticize, but he will disdain to take the fashionable negative stance, the condescending attitude towards Mennonite life and culture taken by "socially and professionally upward-mobile Mennonites who find the peculiarities of their tradition embarrassing." What Ruth advocates is a Christian art that will be both toughminded and sensitive, committed but very much aware of the world.

An important and timely book this. My only fear is that Ruth's needlessly jargon-ridden style in places will prevent this book from being as widely read as it deserves to be. A pity that, because Ruth at his best shows a gift for the pungent phrase, the vivid image, the kind of style that can be appreciated by any type of reader.

Dr. Ruth is an American Mennonite minister and English professor who delivered the contents of this book as lectures at Bethel College, Newton, Kansas in 1976.

They were first published in the March, 1977 issue of **Mennonite Life**, after another delivery at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, Man.