

Mennonite Historian

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



Music professor Dietrich Bartel brings Canadian Mennonite University students to the Mennonite Heritage Centre archives to view a medieval chant book in 2002. See story starting on page 2. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

Contents

Archives in Undergraduate History	Two Oral Traditions Engage6	Book Reviews:
Courses2	PhD Student Saves History from the	<i>War and Peace: Mennonite</i>
Family History Workshop3	Shredder7	<i>Conscientious Objectors</i> 11
Mennonite Heritage Archives Opens5	My Baptism in 19607	<i>Beyond Expectation: Life & Ministry</i>
Mennonite History Goes Viral6	Book Notes8	<i>of James and Elfrieda Nikkel</i> 12

Archives in Undergraduate History Courses

by Brian Froese, Canadian Mennonite University

Reflecting on my education as an undergraduate history major takes me back to my own experience in grade eight world history, love of *Hardy Boy* books, and browsing through my parents' *World Book Encyclopedia*. From all this a love for the study of history was born.

Grade eight history, like my first year as an undergraduate, was vital as my world expanded exponentially. As a thirteen-year-old, I found it fascinating; and in my early twenties my world further widened every Wednesday afternoon in Dr. Robert J. Young's class. What I gleaned from youthful detective fiction was thrilling stories of collecting facts and solving puzzles.

Upon entering the University of Winnipeg, the first book I was assigned to read was Josephine Tey's *Daughter of Time* in Young's introductory history class. Intrigued by historical debate over her thesis regarding King Richard III and the death of his nephews—I was hooked. As it turned out, Young's purpose in reading the 1950s British detective novel was to get us thinking about how historians do their work, finding and interpreting sources,

questioning authors, deconstructing rumors, and learning how we make judgements of the past.

The prosaic and elegant pedagogy of Young motivated me to major in History; and soon I took courses by Dr. David Burley and Dr. Nolan Reilly. They introduced me to the rigors of primary source research. Burly lent me volumes from his collection of House of Commons *Sessional Papers* for a research paper I did in a second-year Canadian history course; and, Reilly was my professor for the honours seminar, "Historical Methods" and "Canadian Social History," which had at its core a major archivally based research project. It was Reilly who introduced me to archival research.

Moving to California for graduate studies in 1994 and arriving in Fresno, I soon had student employment as an archival assistant at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, at Fresno Pacific University. The hands-on experience and many conversations with archivist Kevin Enns-Rempel were invigorating. Engaged with the raw materials of historical interpretation and writing, it was exciting to be reading journals, diaries, reports, and meeting minute books from generations past.

In an afternoon of processing files, the tedium of changing old staples with archival quality ones was cured by "seeing" the lives of people unfold over years in a few hours. I learned, too, that archives serve many purposes beyond graduate student curiosity. For example, I saw seminary students—recently hired as pastors—go through the archival record of their new ministry settings to get a sense of where they were headed. When I read a letter from an extraordinarily upset missionary in the field to his mission board in the United States, followed within days by a more peaceful articulation of his complaint, a life lesson was learned: never write a letter while hot under the collar; and if you do submit a complaint, know that it will be kept for someone else to read decades later.

That year-and-a-half planted the seed that eventually became my first book, *California Mennonites* (Johns Hopkins, 2015), and led to a lifelong love for archives and archival research. I have encountered a wide variety of archives over the years, each possessing its own character and each generating a unique experience: from

sitting alone in a small room in a church basement filled with filing cabinets and a metal table and chair, to the grandeur of the Bancroft Library at the University of California in Berkeley. From being given a key to enter some archives on my own on weekends with no one around, to having my papers weighed and passport surrendered at others. While the size, scope, and nature varies in the two dozen I've explored, they all have at least one thing in common: the thrill of discovery.

Archival discovery has a significant place in the undergraduate classroom. It made an indelible impression on me and now, as a history professor, I have made attempts to bring the archives into the classroom. There are a few ways to do this. In my history courses, I try to include materials for students to examine for themselves and relate, in my lectures, research stories that not only enliven but enlighten the topic at hand. In courses on North American Mennonites and North American Evangelicalism, my presentations include excerpts from letters and related archival materials from, for example, Billy Graham's visit to Winnipeg in 1967.

In two of my courses, "Mennonites in Canada and the United States" and "Theory and Methods," I organize field trips to the Mennonite Heritage Archives on the CMU campus. The archive visit is always a highlight of the semester. At first, I reserved it for the senior students, but have begun to expand it to earlier courses; and the response was more favorable than I expected. Having spent so much time in archives over the past, nearly, twenty-five years, I forgot how an undergraduate student can be unaware that such rich resources exist.

The archive visit is hosted by the archivist Conrad Stoesz who explains first the various places we go for information, paying attention to libraries, museums, and archives. As students come to appreciate the differences between these three, the major difference they notice is how the reading room has very little to read. The visit usually then leads to a tour of the vault where students see boxes and boxes of paper records, as well as sundry other artifacts, including maps, audiovisual recordings, paintings, dolls, phonograph records, and rare books. The question then comes quickly, how does one know where

(cont'd on p. 4)

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.

Editors: Jon Isaak (CMBS)
Conrad Stoesz (MHC)

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

1310 Taylor Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3M 3Z6
204.669.6575

jon.isaak@mbchurches.ca
or

600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4
204.888.6781

cstoesz@mennonitechurch.ca
www.mennonitehistorian.ca

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

Family History Workshop

by Edith Wiebe, Winnipeg

On Saturday May 6, 2017, approximately 70 people gathered at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies for a Mennonite family history workshop sponsored by TourMagination travel agency of Waterloo, Ontario.

Archivist Conrad Stoesz began the workshop by providing an excellent overview of the methods and sources available for genealogical research. While many records—like published obituaries, church baptism and membership files, and family history books—are available at local Mennonite archives, these can be supplemented by consulting the websites of Mennonite historical societies, other Mennonite archives, and government agencies, such as the provincial offices of Vital Statistics.

Commercial databases and genealogical websites, too, may prove helpful for family history research. However, workshop attendees were reminded that care needs to be taken when referencing these popular online sources. As with most things online, the information still needs verification, and websites can vanish along with the information contained for a host of reasons.

Staying organized and maintaining a paper record of the information found, in addition to any online records that are created, is the most reliable way to ensure the information can be verified and available for future generations.

More details on the material presented can be found in Conrad's recent article published in the March 2017 issue of the *Mennonite Historian*, entitled "Explore your Genealogical History."

After a break for networking with friends and enjoying *fleisch perishky* and *fruit platz*, thanks to TourMagination, we were treated by genealogist Glenn Penner to an update on the Mennonite DNA Project. Glenn explained why the genetic genealogy project focuses on the Y-chromosome unique to males. This is because the Y-chromosome is passed directly from father to son, just like traditional surnames, making it useful for genealogical studies. By looking at the repeating patterns in the Y chromosome, and by noting how close the patterns are

to a match, the probability that the two are related increases with the closeness of the match.

Glenn reported that the Y-chromosome DNA project now has results for about 850 men with 165 distinct surnames. The sample is now large enough for him to draw some tentative conclusions regarding the family origin of a person based on the Y-chromosome match—something useful for a male being tested or for a female, if she has a close male relative tested. The point is that Y-chromosome testing can make connections where the documentary genealogical evidence is unavailable or nonexistent.

For example, data collected to date demonstrates that surnames such as Wiebe, Friesen or Dyck each originated from a single common ancestor. Other surnames such as Janzen or Peters, however, can have several progenitors and, in other instances, names which were thought to be closely related such as Kroeker and Kroeger have no DNA match.

Glenn provided a list of rare Mennonite surnames for which he is still hoping to receive a DNA sample. In addition,

to complete the DNA collection, the Mennonite DNA Project is offering to pay the DNA test cost (approx. \$120–\$170 USD) for the first male to come forward for testing from each of the rare surname groups. Contact Glenn at <gpenner@uoguelph.ca> for more information or to inquire if Glenn needs your DNA for the project.

Glenn, who is a recently retired chemistry professor from the University of Guelph, has moved to Winnipeg and will be making himself available beginning in June for genealogical consultation at the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg. If you are interested in a conversation with him about your genealogy, contact him at the email above to set up an appointment.

The afternoon concluded with a presentation by Audrey Voth Petkau on tours available from TourMagination. They have been providing tours since 1970 that emphasize learning and faith. Touring Mennonite heritage sites in the Ukraine, Germany, Holland, South America and other places can be a natural outgrowth of an interest in Mennonite genealogy and history. She provided a handout listing all tours scheduled for 2018 to 2020. For a full list of the itineraries, see www.tourmagination.com or call 1-800-565-0451.



Glenn Penner explains how Y-chromosome genetic DNA research can be useful for genealogists. Photo credit: Conrad Stoesz.

Archives in History Courses

(cont'd from p. 2)

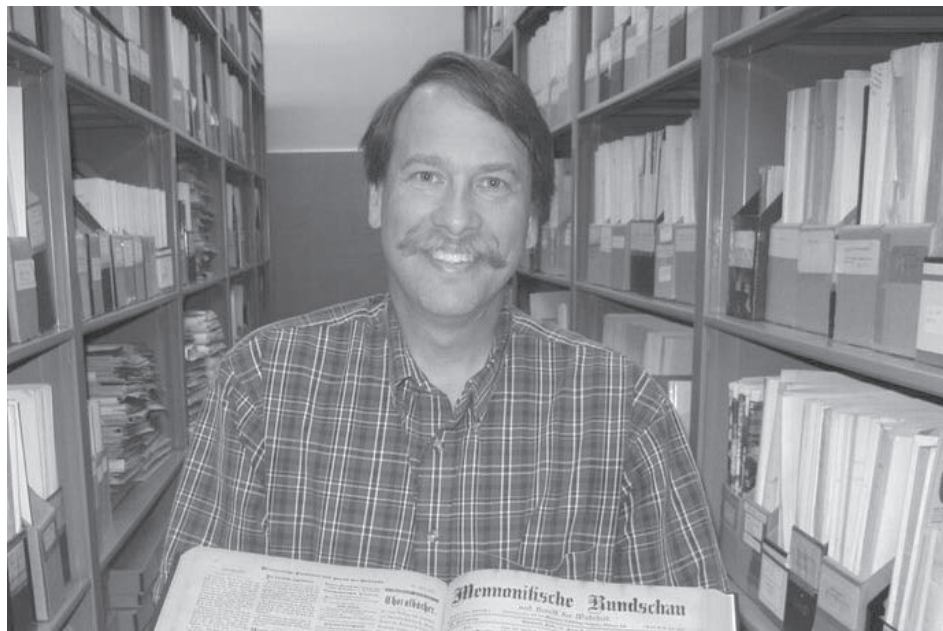
to look?

Then the class learns about finding aids, how to search for materials; and then, depending on time and size of class, students choose material to be brought out from the vault or in cases where time does not permit, boxes are pre-selected. Students then dive in and begin looking through diaries, congregational meeting minute books, and correspondence files. The realization comes quickly: this will take a long time!

Following the archive trip, we discuss the nature, rewards, and challenges of archival research, and research questions in general. There are questions of the practical kind, concerning travel and cost, as well as investigative questions, regarding the relationship between primary and secondary sources, how sources faithfully (or not) represent people, places, and events, and the tension of writing both descriptively and analytically.

In my senior research seminar, students have worked on numerous Mennonite archivally based projects, including congregational histories, an analysis of worship scripture readings over decades that ultimately distilled a “cannon” within a congregation, Mennonite soldiers in World War II, Mennonite Brethren and worship music transitions and tensions, Hutterite colony history, and others.

Beyond Mennonite topics, students have visited other archives in Winnipeg—notably the City of Winnipeg Archives and Manitoba Archives—to explore the history of the land parcel and neighborhood where CMU is situated, the Winnipeg rock-and-roll scene in the late-1960s, the early-1970s and the influence of liquor laws on local music scene, the 1960s Winnipeg counterculture newsletters, the Winnipeg Arena and cultural identity, the early nineteenth-century Welsh immigration to Red River Colony, the numbered Treaties, Lower Fort Garry, If Day (when Winnipeg held a mock Nazi occupation in a war bonds drive in the 1940s), and the short-lived Winnipeg amusement park Happyland (1906–1909). The course has had many students over the ten years I have taught it; and I have seen many interesting topics evolve from classroom discussion to archive research projects designed, researched, executed, and presented by



Archivist Conrad Stoesz in the vault, holding a bound set of the Mennonite newspaper called *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*. Photo credit: Taylor Brown.

undergraduate students.

The course is a mix of workshoping research and interpretation issues, weekly “check-ins” to insure no project falls too far off schedule, and concludes with a formal presentation, critique from a fellow classmate, and a question-and-answer period. The research project experience that began with a vague idea in January culminates with a stimulating “conference” experience by the beginning of April. Related to the successful completion of a project of this scale is also the appreciation of how much material there is to be examined, how much will not be included, and how suddenly a 20- to 25-page paper is not nearly long enough, even for the most narrowly defined topics.

Regardless of students’ experiences, archival research enlivens the classroom through offering examples of materials and information not necessarily available in books and journal articles. An example of this occurs during my courses on the history of evangelicalism and western Canada when I bring up samples of correspondence from the Billy Graham collection in Wheaton College to discuss his 1967 visit to Winnipeg shortly after his visit to Vietnam at Christmas 1966 and how some Mennonites found it controversial. I also explore some Albertan history, sketching out the friendships between Premier Ernest Manning, oilman J. Howard Pew, and Billy Graham, as they discussed faith, economics, oil, and freedom through

documents found at the Hagley Museum and Archives in Wilmington, Delaware.

The tactile aspect of archival research too is emphasized. While I assign primary source materials in my introductory course, such as in the first semester where students compare Herodotus and Sima Qian, these are usually excerpts in a course reader. In that same class, I bring a coin I purchased at the Currency Museum in Ottawa, Ontario. It is a fourth-century Roman coin with the image of Constantine on it. Considering the significance of Emperor Constantine to the history of Western Civilization and to the history of Christianity and to the extent concepts such as “constantinianism” arise in Mennonite contexts—it is exciting to pass it around the class for students to see and wonder what all may have been purchased with it and who may have handled it. There is something special in holding something 1700 years old that even the best quality of an image cannot convey.

At the Hagley Museum and Archives, I came across correspondence between President Richard Nixon and J. Howard Pew, Pennsylvania oilman, where one could read the back-and-forth between two friends. It was difficult not to have a little laugh seeing a dinner invitation to the White House by Nixon to the Pews, to which the reply was to decline as they already had plans that evening. It serves as a personal and human flourish on a relationship that in a monograph or lecture

may be presented as simply business and political, whereas here we see a letter on White House stationery and a response to one of the more mundane of human activities—having a friend over for dinner.

Archives have the potential for such intrusions of the ordinary. Those breakthroughs of human routine existence can be seen in the doodles on meeting agendas and minutes, in marked-up correspondence documents, or—in the case of research I have done on the Albertan Premiers William Aberhart and Ernest Manning who attempted to be simultaneously premiers and radio preachers—in the confusion or exasperation that caused among some of their co-religionists and listeners. Such a sampling lends itself naturally to discussions of how church and state co-exist in the early twenty-first century, as well as the struggle between the personal and public in the lives of political leaders.

Beyond archives, newspapers provide interesting classroom discussions. I describe how when working on my dissertation, I noticed that obituaries in the *Gospel Herald* seemed to suddenly shift from lengthy—even elegant—accounts of a person’s life to rather brief accountings of basic facts. Curious, I sought out when the change came and found a statement informing readers that due to the dramatic increase in submissions because the Spanish flu, the sudden scarcity of obituary space required these changes. Something as concrete as this editorial decision in a newspaper of a small Christian denomination in the United States demonstrates the global impact of the 1918 epidemic.

From my early exposure and work in archives in Winnipeg and Fresno to teaching history, I see the importance of incorporating archives in undergraduate education. Here I only gave a brief set of examples; there are many other ways to use archives and for disciplines other than history, too. Ultimately, I strive to provide students with an opportunity for their own discoveries and to see in tangible ways the human and personal in their research material. Furthermore, I hope that students also come to appreciate that among the inevitable tedium of archival research may come the virtue of not only patience, but also of humility in the presence of the vastness of the past.

Mennonite Heritage Archives Opens June 2017

Earlier this year it was announced that a new three-way partnership involving Canadian Mennonite University (CMU), Mennonite Church Canada, and the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies (CTMS) would assume ownership of the Mennonite Heritage Centre archives while the gallery would continue as part of CMU. The new partnership takes over the reimagined Mennonite Heritage Archives (MHA) on June 1st. In keeping with the transition to the new model, the Mennonite Heritage Archives is pleased to announce that effective June 1st both Connie and Conrad will be joining CMU staff. Conrad Stoesz will become the new full-time archivist and Connie Wiebe has been asked to continue in her role as administrative assistant with the archives and gallery.

“It was a simple decision to invite these two experienced professionals to continue,” says Gord Zerbe, Vice President Academic at CMU. Connie Wiebe has been with the archives and gallery for 25 years and Conrad for 18. While the gallery and archives will be separated programmatically, they will continue to share the space and Connie’s attention.

Stoesz will leave his half-time appointment with the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies on May 30, 2017, which he has held since 1999. “I feel privileged to have been part of two denominational offices and learn their unique cultures. I will miss the people and my work at CMBS, but look forward to the new challenges at the MHA,” says Stoesz.

Jon Isaak, director at the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies says, “We will miss Conrad a great deal at CMBS, but do celebrate with him the career advance that his appointment at CMU represents. His love for Mennonite history, people, and the church are especially remarkable; plus, his incredible memory for details, augmented by his storytelling gifts and good humour, make him very valuable as a historian and archivist. I look forward to continuing to collaborate with him on joint projects; and it is good to know he will be working only a few kilometers west of us.”

The reimagining of the archives was initiated due to the significant restructuring of Mennonite Church Canada. With two additional partners committed to the future of the Heritage Centre, its sizable collection

of documents, photos, and recordings will be secured.

CMU and CTMS recognized the importance of the archives and created a three-way partnership with Mennonite Church Canada. “Our research and teaching centres around historic documents, so it only made sense that CTMS would become involved in supporting the archives,” says University of Winnipeg professor Hans Werner. CTMS is a new venture based at the University of Winnipeg that combines the Chair in Mennonite Studies and the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation, which Werner directs.

The new partnership provides a broader base of support for the archives and its programming. While the collection mandate for the archives is broad, covering the wide Mennonite experiences in Europe, Russia, Canada, South and Latin America, it was a single denomination providing the funding, says MC Canada’s executive minister Karen Martens-Zimmerly. The archives already is the official repository for Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Evangelical Mennonite Conference, and the Evangelical Mennonite Missionary Conference; and it is open to other partnerships.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre began collecting historical documents in 1933, as a program of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. The archival collection became housed with Canadian Mennonite Bible College when it began as a Conference initiative in 1947. The archives enjoyed a close relationship with the Bible College ever since. The archival program received a big boost in 1974, with the hiring of a staff person in Lawrence Klippenstein. In 1978, P.W. Enns spearheaded a fundraising drive to build the Mennonite Heritage Centre to house the archives. The Heritage Centre remained with the Church Conference when CMU was formed in 1999.

Starting in June, the MHA will return to its usual Monday-Friday office hours, but visitors are encouraged to make appointments.

A CMU, MC Canada, and CTMS news release.





Mennonite
Heritage
Centre

600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

Mennonite History Goes Viral

A forgotten piece of Mennonite immigration history has gone viral on social media.

“Banning travel or immigration into a country is not new,” begins the post by Conrad Stoesz, archivist, on the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives Facebook page.

The post is accompanied by two photos (see adjacent images). One shows Mennonite newcomers to Canada at a train station in 1933. The group is pictured under a sign that boldly reads, “Danger.” The other is a newspaper headline from the June 9, 1922, edition of *The Daily Record* newspaper in Kitchener-Waterloo that reads “Mennonites Now Free to Come into Canada.”

In June 1919, the Canadian government bowed to public pressure and banned Mennonites, Hutterites, and Doukhobors from entering Canada. Prior Mennonite immigrants had been invited by the government for their farming skills to help develop agricultural lands. In exchange, they had negotiated for their own schools and exemption from military service.

But during the First World War, fear of German-speaking immigrants grew rampant. Newspapers reported that the newcomers had plans to “hog the best available lands” in order to “force Canadian settlers out.” Mennonites were called “dirty shirkers ... without doubt no asset to any country.” Mennonites in Russia were by now themselves victims of terrorism and of political, economic, and religious oppression.

However, in June 1922, a friendly relationship between the newly-elected Liberal Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, and the Mennonites of the Kitchener-Waterloo area of Ontario and elsewhere, paved the way to lift the ban.

Within hours of posting this story at 11:00 am, February 21, 2017, it had been viewed 5,000 times. Stoesz was shocked at the uptake. “I was hoping to better the



previous record for a post, which was just under 10,000 views for an item about Mennonite New Year’s cookies,” he says.

In the first four days, he watched the immigration story views grow in increments of 25,000 per day. By February 27 it was approaching 125,000.

In perspective, Mennonite World Conference puts the total number of baptized Mennonites in Canada at 138,900. Mennonite Church Canada has about 32,000 members.

Stoesz says the purpose of the MHC Archives Facebook page is to bring awareness to Mennonite history and the role the archives plays in helping our communities remember. “Society in general lacks awareness of the role of archives.”

But more importantly, he says, the story benefited from timing, as the United States government’s ban on incoming travellers from seven countries was still a growing media fireball. Drawing a parallel, Stoesz observes that during the First World War, some Mennonite families fled anti-pacifist sentiments in the USA. In 1918, some of these families crossed the border at Emerson, Manitoba, where they acquired harvest worker tickets as a basis for entry.

“I wanted to raise awareness that Mennonites have suffered prejudice in Canada because of the language they spoke and for some of the values they held dear. Hopefully people will then think about this past and ask themselves how that informs their views on current situations in our world ... I think we sometimes feel smug about how backwards another view is



from ours. The mirror of our past can help humble our views.”

The story has been shared over 1,000 times and generated rigorous discussion, with about 60 comments among readers. Most comments favour support for refugee asylum seekers currently entering Canada under cover of night, citing the welcome Mennonites received after the 1919–1922 ban. A few expressed fear that some newcomers could bring with them the most extreme expressions of Islam.

Adapted from a Mennonite Church Canada news release written by Dan Dyck and posted on March 2, 2017.

Two Oral Traditions Engage

by Conrad Stoesz

Decades ago I remember my grandmother telling me a fascinating story about the aboriginal peoples that travelled through the area around Altona, Manitoba. I never knew what to make of the story until I compared her story with the oral traditions of the Indigenous neighbours that I’ve learned recently.

My grandmother Cornelia Stoesz (nee Friesen) was born in 1923 and grew up in the Rosenheim area west of Rosenfeld, north of Altona. One day at her home in Winkler, Manitoba, she told me the fascinating story about the origins of *De Fastinj* or “The Fortress,” as she knew it.

Travelling west out of Altona on highway 201, the flat landscape slopes gently towards Buffalo Creek. Westward across the creek, the land takes a noticeable

(cont’d on p. 8)

PhD Student Saves History from the Shredder

by Conrad Stoesz

When Jeremy Wiebe heard that the remaining inventory of *Mennonites in Canada* (volumes 1–3) were in danger of being shredded to save warehouse storage fees, he took action. Using his computer programming skills, and the offer of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies to take care of transportation to Winnipeg, storage, and shipping, PhD student Wiebe established a webstore at www.mennonitesincanada.ca with e-commerce capabilities that went live on April 12, 2017.

Wiebe's idea was pitched at the January 2017 meeting in Winnipeg of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. The Society had been looking for a way to sell its remaining copies of *Mennonites in Canada* volumes. A liquidation price of \$5 per book, or \$15 for the set of three meant that MHSC would get at least some return for these valuable books; and CMBS agreed to handle the shipping to anywhere in Canada for \$20.

Sales have been brisk, according to Jon Isaak of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies. "We are down to only a few copies of volume 1, with more of volumes 2 and 3 remaining." Isaak noted



Historian and computer coder Jeremy Wiebe pictured with a stack of the three-volume set of *Mennonites in Canada* that he's helped put in the hands of a new generation. Photo credit: Jeremy Wiebe.

that some people are buying 15 books at a time to give as gifts.

The three volumes—1,500 pages in total—are widely recognized as the definitive history of the Mennonite experience in Canada from 1786 to 1970. The first two volumes, published in 1974 and 1982, were authored by Frank H. Epp; and the third volume was written by Ted Regehr and published in 1996.

Wiebe, a Mennonite history student in graduate studies at the University of Waterloo, is not surprised by the response. "An entire generation has come of book-buying age since the last volume was published," Wiebe noted. "It would be a shame to see the books destroyed when there are people who would be thrilled to own this history of the Mennonite experience," he continued.

The subtitles of the books show a progression: from "A history of a separate people," then to "A People's Struggle for survival," and onward to "A People transformed." Today Mennonites can be found in virtually all corners of Canada, some seeking to remain a separate people, others embracing the diversity of what the world offers, and still others finding their identity at some point on the separation-assimilation spectrum.

To order your copies, visit www.mennonitesincanada.ca; for orders outside of Canada, email cmbs@mbchurches.ca for a quote on shipping costs.

My Baptism in 1960

by Lois Wiebe Wedel

In 1959, my parents Joe and Marie Wiebe accepted a call to give pastoral leadership at the Lindal Mission Church. This small church, nestled in the beautiful Pembina Valley near Morden, Manitoba, began as an outreach initiative led by some students from the Winkler Bible School in nearby Winkler, Manitoba. Eventually, a mission church was organized in affiliation with the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba; and in 1939 a small church building was constructed.

When our family arrived in 1959, the congregation was a multi-ethnic mix of peoples. It was not uncommon to hear prayers spoken during the worship service in Czech, German, Polish or English. The church may have been Mennonite Brethren, but you would never have guessed it!

My brother and I were baptized in the nearby Pembina River in July 1960. The river meanders through the Pembina Hills

Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies



Left to right: Elmo Baloun, Lois Wiebe, and Joe Wiebe at Lois's 1960 baptism in the Pembina River south of Morden, Manitoba. Photo credit: Eunice Wiebe, Lois's sister.

and over the American-Canadian border into North Dakota. However, this little river had a surprisingly strong current. Elmo, one of the stronger men of our congregation, had to grasp my arm firmly, as we waded out to where my father was standing.

After I gave my confession of trust in Jesus for salvation, my dad tilted my head and upper body backward until the water flowed right over me. Then I was helped back to the bank of that fast-flowing river.

We changed out of our wet clothes in tents—one for me and one for my brother. Along with all the excitement of that day, I still remember the spiders; they seemed to be crawling everywhere. However, even spiders could not take away from the joy of my baptism!

Lois volunteers at CMBS twice a month and is currently working on a photo scanning project for the Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID). On a recent day of photo scanning, she remembered that she had a photo of that momentous baptism day in 1960. See image above.



Diorama of a buffalo pound at the Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton. Photo credit: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_pound.

Oral Traditions Engage

(cont'd from p. 6)

rise. Grandma said that the rise was created by Indigenous women carrying dirt in their aprons. Her belly rolled as she chuckled and wondered if the woman actually used aprons; but that was how the story went. Grandma said that at the top of the rise there was once a big battle and a lot of blood had been spilled. To this day plants grow poorly there. She mentioned that farmers in the area have reported finding many arrowheads.

I carried this story with me for years, never quite knowing what to make of it. On a chance meeting with an Indigenous elder and historian, I took a risk. With a bit of embarrassment, I told grandma's story to David Daniels from the Ojibwa community that settled near Portage la Prairie, Manitoba. With a twinkle in his eye, he said, "Of course, your grandma was right." That area was a bison kill location. Bison was a staple in the Indigenous peoples' diet.

On many parts of the prairies, buffalo jumps—cliffs over which bison were traditionally driven during big hunts—are non-existent due to the largely flat landscape. A different hunting technique was employed for bison kills on the prairies. At the lip of a ridge with a coulee or valley below, a bison pound was built by hollowing out an area 30 meters in diameter or more and surrounding it with a sturdy fence made of branches from the coulee. Then piles of branches or rocks were placed one to two meters apart and

half-a-meter high, creating drivelines several hundred meters in length to funnel the bison herd into the pound.

Hunters on foot would carefully, slowly at first, move a herd of bison toward the mouth of the funnel and then drive them into the pound. The drivelines would act as blinds for hunters to stand behind, keeping the bison contained within the funnel. As the bison charged forward, the piles of branches on the ground appeared to be a solid wall to the animals.

Once inside the pound, the entire herd of bison was killed with bows and arrows. The hunters feared that if a bison escaped, knowledge of this hunting technique would be passed along to other bison herds, threatening the success of the bison kill and their food supply. After the kill, the whole community came out to process the carcasses, using the water from the creek as needed. This hunting technique was used until the mid-1700s, after which hunters began to hunt bison on horseback.

As it turns out, the big battle that grandma talked about referred to something other than a human battlefield. It was the location where hunters battled bison. The blood in the soil came from the many bison kills and, together with the turned up soil and clay that formed the pound, helps explain the poor soil conditions and the concentration of arrowheads at the fortress.

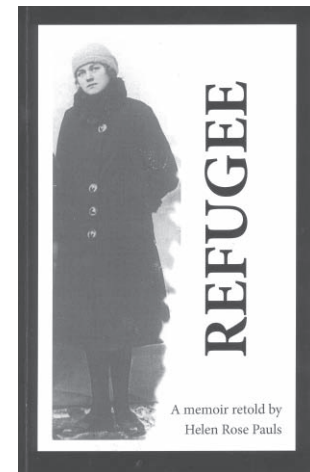
Recently the stories of the Altona bison pounds were reinforced when I spoke with Lawrence Klippenstein, the former director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, who grew up in Altberghal, near Altona. He remembers as a boy swimming

in Buffalo Creek and noticing a circular area that was significantly deeper than the rest of the creek. His friend Bernie Wiebe maintained that this circular part of the creek was known as *De kleije Fastinj*. In view of the stories told by my grandma and David Daniel, I now wonder if this circular area was another "little fortress," the corral portion of another bison pound.

But how did my grandma know the story of the big battle? Mennonites were not in Manitoba when the bison pound was used. Somewhere there must have been a sharing of stories among Indigenous and Mennonite peoples in order for my grandma to have heard this story. Clearly, the echoes of the past have survived in oral traditions; but in this case, one tradition was needed to help interpret another.

Book Notes

by Jon Isaak



Helen Rose Pauls, *Refugee: A Memoir* (2016), 96 pp.

Long-time writer Helen Rose Pauls retells the life story of her mother-in-law, Agnes (Natasha) Sawatsky Pauls (1909–2013) in this moving, first-hand account of one refugee. It is the story of Agnes's survival of many horrific events during the Russian revolution and civil war, Stalin's collectivization program, and imprisonment in the labour camps of the Siberian gulag. At the close of the Second World War, she and her husband Jacob manage to flee Ukraine with the retreating German troops and eventually emigrate to Canada, setting up a small mixed farm near Chilliwack, BC. Strongly written, with excellent photographs, this memoir preserves the story of a woman who refused to let tragedy steal her faith, hope, and love of life.

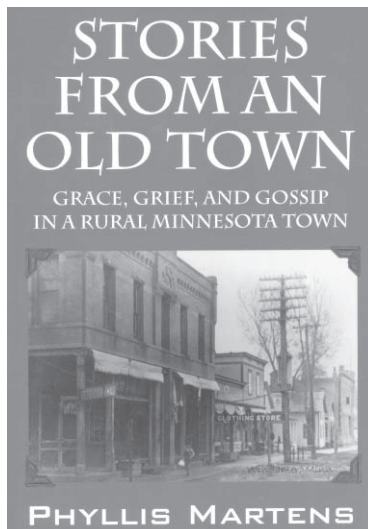


Hildegard Enns Schroeder, *A Life of Joy* (2015), 121 pp.

In this family story, Hilda (b. 1928) tells the journey of her life in two parts. First, she describes growing up on a pioneer farm in the boreal forest at Speedwell, northern Saskatchewan, the fifth child of Russian Mennonite immigrants Jacob Enns (1896–1976) and Gertrude Fransen (1899–1976). Second, she narrates her own family's experiences with teacher husband William (Bill) Schroeder (1927–2012) and their five children on teaching assignments in Manitoba, Paraguay, and back to Manitoba. Written with calm and gentle prose, and attractively augmented with many photographs, Hilda tells her family's story of perseverance, faith, love, gratitude, and joy—of finding strength in each other, their church, and their tightly-knit community.

Phyllis Martens, *Stories from an Old Town: Grace, Grief, and Gossip in a Rural Minnesota Town* (Denver, CO: Outskirts Press, 2013), 234 pp.

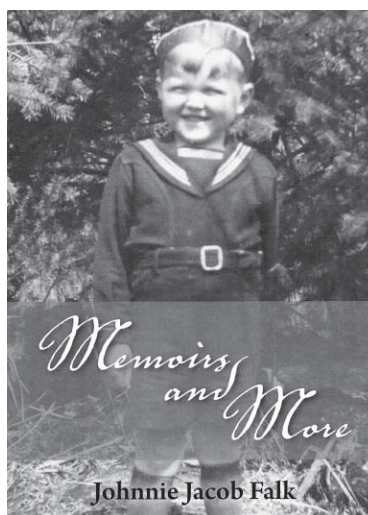
In this collection, master storyteller Phyllis Hiebert Martens (1928–2016) tells twelve stories based on those she heard while spending summer vacations with her grandparents, Johann Jungas (1870–1946) and Helena Pankratz (1874–1960), in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The stories are set in a 1930s Minnesota town called Windamer, populated largely by Low German-speaking Russian Mennonite immigrants. The stories about town life—courtship, marriage, family, death, work, church, school, and engagement with the world—explore the tension between the conservatism of church and town, and the desire of certain of its citizens to find a



more grace-filled way of living. Elegantly written with subtle humour and memorable characters, Phyllis takes the reader along on a journey of discovery. Most of the names have been changed, including the name of the town itself.

Johnnie Jacob Falk, *Memoirs and More* (2015), 331 pp.

Johnnie Falk (b. 1937) started writing his story after turning 65, thinking that anything of interest had probably already happened. It turns out he was wrong. In these later years, he admits to finding a rekindled interest in the Anabaptist-Mennonite heritage that has shaped his identity. Thirty-one years as a public-school teacher and part-time pastor in BC, Johnnie is the fifth child of Jacob B. Falk (1901–1996) and Louise Hildebrand (1903–1998). He and his wife Elvera Wedel (b. 1938) have five children. Johnnie's memoir begins with stories of his forebears in Russia and traces their lives as immigrants to Canada, settling in Black Creek on Vancouver Island. The narration



then moves forward through the various places he and Elvera served, teaching and pastoring. For Johnnie, his memoir amounts to an exercise in discovering who he was, where he came from, and how this constructed identity continues to shape the life of his family.



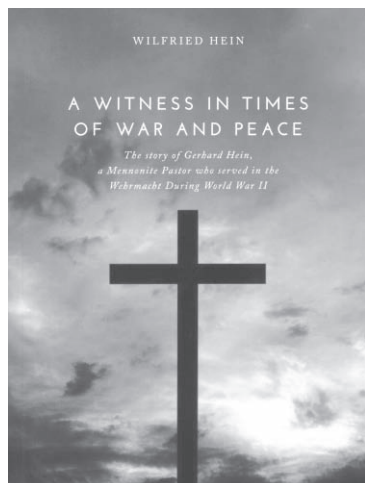
Dave Dyck, *From Russia to Canada, 1929 to 1930* (2016), 68 pp.

Dave Dyck (b. 1941) is the last child born to Peter Dyck (1897–1974) and Anna Janzen (1899–1978), who immigrated to Canada from Russia in March 1930 with their son George. Six boys were born to Peter and Anna after arriving in Manitoba: Peter, Bill, John, Ernie, Jake, and Dave. Dave's brothers love to remind him that their mother cried tears of disappointment when he was born—he had been her last chance of having a daughter! This book is Dave's attempt to preserve for his children and his nieces and nephews the memory of his parents' flight from Russia. Pictures of travel documents, family photos, interviews, and letter excerpts from relatives who were not able to leave Russia add value to this volume. Dave sketches in a brief but helpful way the oppressive policies of Joseph Stalin that drove so many to attempt emigration. The Dycks were among the fraction that succeeded.

Wilfried Hein, *A Witness in Times of War and Peace: The Story of Gerhard Hein, a Mennonite Pastor who served in the Wehrmacht During World War II* (Victoria, BC: Friesen Press, 2015), 335 pp.

Gerhard Hein (1905–1990) was born in the Mennonite settlement near Ufa in the Ural Mountains of Russia. Following the upheaval of World War I and the Russian

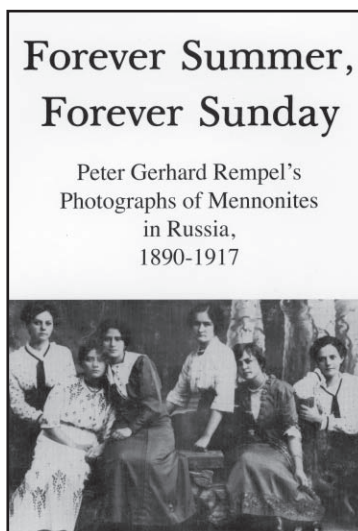
revolution and civil war, young Gerhard managed to immigrate to Germany in 1925, where he studied theology and graduated as a minister in 1931. He was ordained in 1935, serving as a pastor in several Mennonite congregations in southwest Germany and Berlin. Given his Mennonite pacifist convictions, Gerhard struggled with whether to serve in the German army. He published articles that directly opposed the anti-Christian and racist stand of Nazi leaders, something particularly dangerous as any critique of the Nazi regime was prohibited. When called up for military duty during World War II, he chose to serve as an interpreter cracking Russian secret codes (1940–1945). Following the war, Gerhard continued his pastoral ministry in Germany, becoming also an editor of several Mennonite journals (including *Mennonitisches Lexikon*). Gerhard and his wife Lydia Hege (1908–1997) had two sons. This volume is youngest son Wilfried's (b. 1940) translation of Gerhard's war-time story and biography. Wilfried added many helpful editorial comments and photographs to make this story an especially unique peace witness.



John D. Rempel and Paul Tiessen, eds., *Forever Summer, Forever Sunday: Peter Gerhard Rempel's Photographs of Mennonites in Russia, 1890–1917* (St. Jacob's, ON: Sand Hill Books, 1981, reprinted 2015), 141 pp.

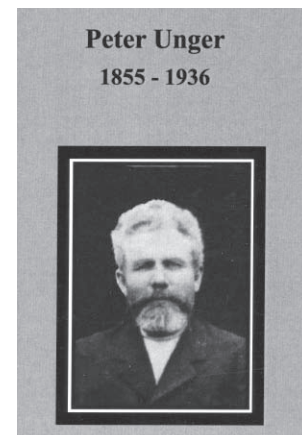
The Henderson Mennonite Heritage Museum and Park in Henderson, Nebraska, printed a republication of the book *Forever Summer, Forever Sunday*. This historical publication documents in photographs the life of Mennonites in Russia prior to the Russian Revolution. When Peter G. Rempel came to Canada in 1923, he carried with him a trunk

containing the negative glass plates from which the 93 images in this volume were selected. Those glass plates held fragments of his memories of a prosperous but vulnerable society unaware of its imminent destruction. Mennonites who emigrated from Russia in the 1870s feared the consequences of the new imperial laws that restricted the rights of religious minorities in Russia. Rempel's the black-and-white photographs depict the lifestyle and achievements of the best off of those Mennonites who chose to remain, who thought they could come to terms with the government's push to assimilate without giving up their religious convictions. In hindsight, these images carry sobering and tragic meaning.



Peter M. Pauls and John Pauls, *Peter Unger, 1855–1936: A Memoir and an Ancestry Story* (2017), 32 pp.

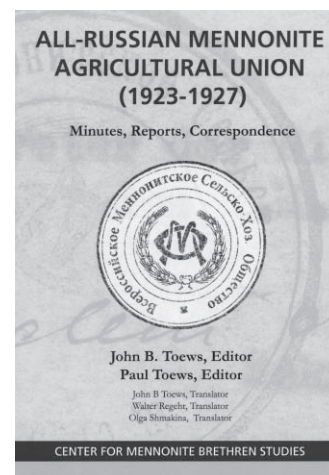
In 1929, at the invitation of his children, Peter Unger wrote in German a brief account of his life's story. In 2010, at the unveiling of the refurbished headstone of Peter Unger (1855–1936) and Helena Nikkel Unger (1857–1954) in the Hasket Manitoba Cemetery, the gathered Unger descendants agreed on a family project. Great-grandson Peter Pauls of Winnipeg agreed to translate Unger's memoir into English and Great-grandson John Pauls of Guelph agreed to research Unger's ancestry. This book is the published result of that family project and includes Unger's translated memoir, the ancestry story tracing the Ungers' migration from mid-18th-century Prussia (now Poland), to Ukraine (first Chortitzta Colony and later Ignatyev Colony), and through to Canada, including photos, maps, and



genealogical data. It was produced as a heritage reminder for the family with the encouragement of yet another great-grandson, Jake Buhler of Saskatoon.

John B. Toews and Paul Toews, eds., *All-Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union (1923–1927): Minutes, Reports, Correspondence*, translated by John B. Toews, Walter Regehr, and Olga Shmakina (Fresno, CA: Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 2017), 417 pp.

This 2017 volume of translated documents from the *Allrussischer Mennonitischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verband* (ALMV) or All-Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union in Moscow is the companion to the 2011 volume of translated documents from the *Verband der Buerger Hollaendischer Herkunft* (VBHH) OR Union of Citizens of Dutch Lineage in Ukraine. Both organizations were created by Mennonite leaders in the 1920s to help their farming communities negotiate their interests with the emerging Communist structures following the Bolshevik revolution and civil war (1917–1920). In spite of winning initial concessions, the Mennonite preference for private land ownership, commitment to



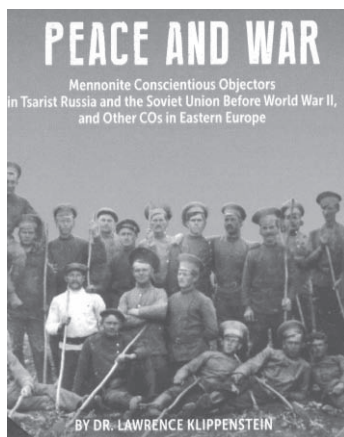
Christian faith, and embrace of German language and culture proved insurmountable obstacles to the success of the negotiations with the Bolsheviks and their radical socialism, militant atheism, and disdain of all things German. Both agriculture unions were eventually forced by the Bolsheviks to close by 1928. The collection of these translated meeting proceedings constitutes a tribute to the principled men and women who, in many cases, paid for their courage, faith, and audacity in the Soviet prison labour camps of the 1930s.

Book Reviews

Lawrence Klippenstein, *War and Peace: Mennonite Conscientious Objectors in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union before World War II, and Other COs in Eastern Europe* (2016). See www.commonword.ca for copies, \$25.

Reviewed by John Derksen, CMU

This collection of essays by peace historian and archivist Lawrence Klippenstein appears as a CD, but book publication is on the agenda. Nine of its seventeen chapters were published previously. Part I focuses on Mennonite conscientious objectors (COs) in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union, and Part II focuses mostly on other COs in Eastern Europe.



The collection opens with a history of Mennonites in Prussia from 1550 to 1787, and concludes with their agreement to accept Catherine II's invitation to settle in New Russia (Ukraine) with promise of land and military exemption "for all time." Chapter 2, on Johann Bartsch and Jakob Hoepfner's trip to New Russia to choose land for the Mennonite emigrants, highlights four letters from Bartsch to his wife and analyzes their significance.

With the broader context in view, chapter 3 offers a glimpse of the Mennonite efforts to supply food, transport, and quartering in the support of Russia's disastrous Crimean War of 1853–1856. Three eyewitness accounts add vivid immediacy. The chapter includes an analysis of war outcomes for Mennonites, but a comprehensive history begs to be written.

Chapter 4 describes the modernizing reforms of Tsar Alexander II in the wake of the Crimean War fiasco, with particular attention to the 1870 announcement of universal military conscription. Mennonite responses included negotiations, emigration, and acceptance of a new forestry service option. The author's reflection on the impact of this divisive issue in the Mennonite community is insightful. Chapter 5 analyzes the laws and arrangements for the Mennonite Forestry Service agreed to with the Russian government, and describes how the first six (of eleven) units were established from 1881 to 1883.

Chapter 6 details the Mennonites' patriotic and rather enthusiastic response to Russia's war with Germany in WWI. While insisting on non-military status, they offered medical and forestry service. Under the Provisional and Bolshevik governments in 1917, however, they faced unwelcome changes. Fewer headings would smooth the essay's flow.

Chapter 7 describes the debate over the Mennonites' engagement in the *Selbstschutz* (self-defence militia) against Nestor Makhno's forces. Chapter 8 highlights the diary of a Rudnerweide Mennonite during the years 1918–1920. Excerpts feature vivid, first-hand accounts of the rumors and violent events of the time, and the *Selbstschutz* debate. Although the author suggests that the *Selbstschutz* effort was a theological and military mistake, more reflection would be helpful. Chapters 5 to 8 all need analytical and reflective conclusions.

Part I ends with a study of the Mennonite CO status under the Soviet government. It describes internal struggles, protracted appeals, and the increasingly restrictive Soviet policy and practice up to 1936, and it concludes with a broad, thoughtful analysis.

Part II opens with an overview of the CO situation in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from 1970 onward. Unfortunately, information ends at 2003,

and the survey of the countries in the former Soviet Union's orbit since the fall of the Iron Curtain is very thin; some states are treated in only four lines. Other difficulties include: (1) unclarity over which states were Soviet and which were not, (2) unclarity over the name "Yugoslavia," (3) 1970s information in the 1990s analysis of Hungary, (4) and the impression that events of the 1980s are still current.

Chapters 11, 12, and 13 are good, solid studies of COs in Soviet Hungary up to 1985, the Soviet Union from 1970 to 1995, the German Democratic Republic from 1962 to 1985, and Soviet Poland from 1981 to 1987. Unfortunately, written in the 1980s, they present the material as if the Soviet Union has not fallen and the countries still exist as Soviet states. In the study of Roman Catholic COs in Hungary, the fate of the essay's main figure, Father Bulanyi, is unresolved, and we do not even know if Bulanyi, born in 1919, is dead or alive. All need to be rewritten as strictly historical essays or brought up to date.

Chapter 14 offers a note on Doukhobor-Mennonite connections in Russia and Canada, and then quotes a passage from Koozma J. Tarasoff's *Plakun Trava: The Doukhobors* (1982). Much better would be well-researched histories of the Doukhobors and of the Molokans, mentioned in chapter 10.

Chapter 15 analyzes the British Quakers' efforts to prevent and end the Crimean War. Despite audiences in the British Parliament and with the Tsar, writes the author, they probably had no impact. Written in 1968, the essay does not benefit from scholarship since then.

Chapter 16 offers the author's perspective on biblical peace and peacemaking. Seeking to grasp the vision of the Bible as a whole, he argues that throughout both the Old and New Testament, "God has always been a god of peace ... Peace is really equivalent to salvation" (315). Unfortunately, this thoughtful and heart-felt study, written in 1964, does not benefit from the rich biblical scholarship of the last fifty years.

The final chapter is a hopeful and less formally written glance at current peace initiatives on seven fronts: (1) scholarly literature, (2) the Canadian School of Peacebuilding in Winnipeg, (3) Christian Peacemaker Teams, (4) developments in Russia, (5) memorials and reunions, (6)

Mennonite Central Committee, and (7) theology.

The anthology includes tributes to the late peace historians Tatiana Pavlova and Peter Brock, a helpful glossary of foreign language terms, and a bibliography of primary and secondary sources for each Part.

Overall, Part I is stronger than Part II. The essays in Part I are thoroughly researched and documented, with footnotes often as interesting as the main text. Helpful introductions provide background and transitions between essays. In Part II, however, the failure to update the research is a major omission. The essays are smoothly written, but some acronyms need explanation, and there is some need to edit for grammar and syntax. More geographical help would be good for readers who do not know where Russian towns and places are. Mention of the author's scholarly contacts in chapters 5 and in chapter 14 could be omitted.

This anthology's value lies in the importance of its subject matter—the quest to end war and build peace. This is the first time articles on COs in Tsarist Russia, the Soviet Union, and Eastern European countries have been collected under one title. The essays bring to light the depth and breadth of the quest for inner and societal peace, and the inspiring courage of many outside our borders who risked hardship, suffering, and death to remain true to their conscience and who imagined a better world.

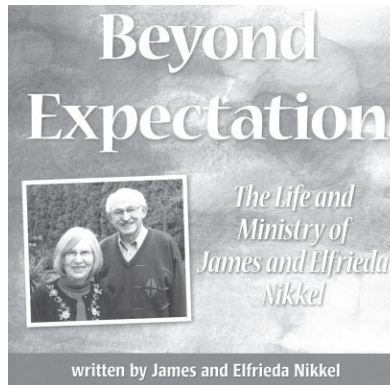
James and Elfrieda Nikkel, *Beyond Expectation: The Life and Ministry of James and Elfrieda Nikkel* (2017), 230 pp. See www.amazon.com for copies, \$18.

Reviewed by Peter Penner, Calgary

Given the testimonials on the back cover of this book, one may not say much that is less than laudatory. Thoughts about *Beyond Expectation* will vary with the reader, and I am only one of many. But I have known of James Nikkel's principled approach to church planting from writing *No Longer at Arm's Length: Mennonite Brethren Church Planting in Canada* (1987), and from the attempt to apply his approach in the Maritimes where I lived.

As the book is organized, you will learn, first, something of the early life of James and Elfrieda Nikkel, their family background, and their preparation, first for teaching, and then for church planting.

This book deserves careful study, but the organization is deceptive. It hit this reviewer that James Nikkel had reached normal retirement age of 65 before he took charge of assignments outside Canada. During the Canada-related projects up to 2002, they had three short sabbaticals and attended many stimulating conferences. But the elaboration of these "enrichment" experiences is presented first near the end of the book.



This seems odd and makes this reviewer ask: why not just give a story line to the whole range of successful service of a life-time, with biographical detail and Elfrieda's contributions woven into it? This would be more like "the way life was actually lived!" All the inspirational conferences—Minnesota 1969, Lausanne 1974, and three sabbaticals of three months each—were taken during the Canadian years. Why treat these "conference experiences" as a postscript? James said that they had inspired him for his church planting assignment in northern Manitoba.

For example, it was at Amsterdam 1986 that James experienced a "foretaste of heaven" with the Billy Graham conference. From there, the Nikkels visited Witmarsum, Friesland, for an insight into Menno Simons and Anabaptism, and took in the Curitiba Mennonite Brethren conference in 1987—all this even before taking on the presidency of Bethany Bible Institute (Hepburn, Saskatchewan) in 1991.

What would be more exciting for the reader would be an early account of their three sabbaticals: one in 1981 to complete a Doctor of Ministry degree at Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, California), the home of the Church Growth movement, a second in 1989 for a Far East discovery trip to Philippines, Korea, and Japan, and a third in 2000 at another Billy Graham conference in Amsterdam,

followed by six weeks exploring Europe.

Putting all this together is the real story. Otherwise, it is not much more than a handbook on Church Growth principles and practices. Not everyone will agree, but to return to my original point, it seems to me that the main fault in this book lies in the design. Some critical editorial advice would have helped.

As it is, the reader will learn how Church Growth principles were applied in various communities, successfully in Northern Manitoba and in Winnipeg, and less so in Quebec and the Maritimes. As written, the middle section also tells how James, following years of ministry in Canada, was made director of Disciple Making International in 2003. This brought him into another sphere, embracing the world, especially Ukraine and Crimea. His next assignment—heading up International Christian Mission Services from 2008 to 2013—brought him to India and Africa.

Reflecting on his many trips, thirteen in all to Ukraine between 2002 and 2008, his self-assessment was that he was convinced that God had given him an apostolic spirit and missionary heart, one that thrives in the presence of other cultures. In his words: "Many of the skills and aptitudes required for this new assignment opportunity were congruent with my biblical apostolic gift mix" (156). This self-evaluation is profoundly elaborated in the Appendices.

What is missing? A little honest acknowledgement that the Church Growth movement brought some criticism precisely during the years 1985 to 1991. Church Growth as a para-church product was too much preoccupied with projections for growth, expectation of results—attendance, conversions, and local support. There was too little biblical theology, said some reviewers (see *Direction* 20/2 [Fall 1991]: 72–101).

The many photos in this book will be welcomed. However, I maintain that people don't have personality without names. Though giving names is not always possible, it is grievously neglectful when the names for a group of BC church planters on page 98 are missing, while on page 164 the names of the support group from the Nikkel's own church, Bakerview Mennonite Brethren, are given.

Even then, when all is said and done, many readers will doubtless be swayed by the salutary approvals given in the testimonials on the back cover.