

Mennonite Historian



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Why a Heritage Centre

The opening of the Mennonite Heritage Centre is an important event in the history of our Canadian brotherhood. A centre devoted to the preservation of our records of the past and a study of them has been called into being. This has been made possible because generous members of our brotherhood gladly gave of their means. Such an act is in accordance with Christian principles and in keeping with our Anabaptist and Mennonite tradition. May the Lord bless the givers and may this deed serve as an example to many in our midst.

This centre is not only to be a place where old records are to be studied. Here also the trends and the needs of our brotherhood of today are to be scrutinized. We Mennonites in Canada suffer from a feeling of inferiority and we are overly anxious to imitate the dominant society, to be recognized and identified with it. But we need not be that way. We must have more self confidence because we have a very worthwhile contribution to make to the society we have become part

of, and we can do this best when we remain loyal to the best in our heritage. Regretably too many in our midst are unfamiliar with this legacy. The Centre will strive to remedy this situation as far as it can, for we believe that a knowledge of our past enables us to understand the present and to see the future more clearly.

This centre will have another function. We Mennonites here in Canada are split into many little groups, each going its own way, and often unaware of the fact that we all have much more in common than what divides us. As far as possible, this centre will strive to be a unifying factor and remind all our groups that we belong together and together can be more effective and helpful than individually.

Whether we like it or not we have been forced out of our former isolation and this process will continue. We live, as it were, quite close to the highway of life. We play and will play an increasingly greater role in the economic, cultural and political life

of our society. Can we do this and remain loyal to our heritage? This is not a simple problem and to help us we need an ongoing interpretation of our position and function in this new setting. We expect MHC to help do just that.

We expect this Centre to be one of the fountains from which new and invigorating life will flow into our congregations. We trust that the men and women working here will always keep in mind that our heritage is "to be in the world" and in all phases of our life to seek first the kingdom of God. This our heritage we want to guard and cherish like a precious jewel.

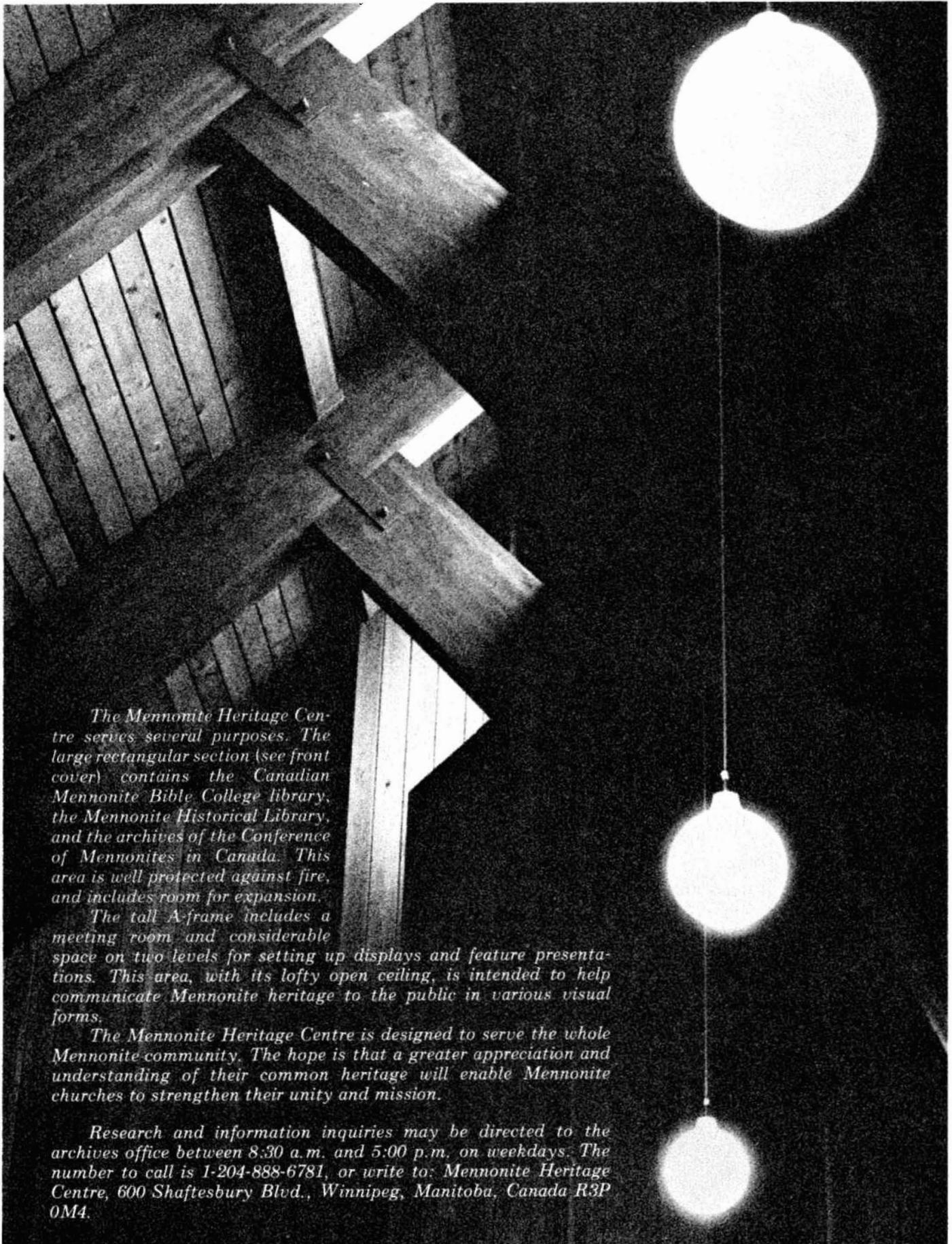
Let us now bow our heads for the benediction:

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be the glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever . . . Amen. (Jude 24, 25)



At the MHC dedication service Gerhard Griebel, a long-time promoter of heritage studies, shared the thoughts noted above.

HERITAGE
CENTRE



The Mennonite Heritage Centre serves several purposes. The large rectangular section (see front cover) contains the Canadian Mennonite Bible College library, the Mennonite Historical Library, and the archives of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. This area is well protected against fire, and includes room for expansion.

The tall A-frame includes a meeting room and considerable space on two levels for setting up displays and feature presentations. This area, with its lofty open ceiling, is intended to help communicate Mennonite heritage to the public in various visual forms.

The Mennonite Heritage Centre is designed to serve the whole Mennonite community. The hope is that a greater appreciation and understanding of their common heritage will enable Mennonite churches to strengthen their unity and mission.

Research and information inquiries may be directed to the archives office between 8:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. The number to call is 1-204-888-6781, or write to: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada R3P 0M4.

A Litany of Commitment

Leader: We are assembled here tonight to give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name and to worship in the beauty of his holiness.

Assembly: We humbly dedicate ourselves to God.

Leader: We are grateful that our forebearers were led to move forward as men and women of true faith to point the way to biblical discipleship.

Assembly: To that end we also dedicate this centre.

Leader: We acknowledge this day the pilgrimage of tears and heartaches, joys and sorrows, victories and defeats that have been recorded and preserved, knowing also that many have gone unnoticed.

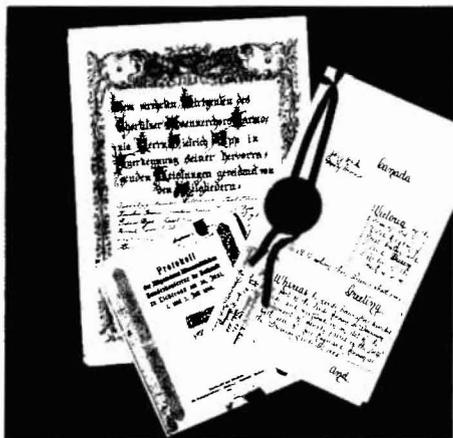
Assembly: We dedicate this building and its staff to the faithful preservation and further sharing of these experiences.

Leader: It is our prayerful concern that the **Mennonite Heritage Centre** will be an inspiration and resource to researchers of the various Mennonite theological, cultural, and linguistic traditions. We desire that researchers and students of many backgrounds will broaden their understanding and appreciation of the Anabaptist movement.

Dedication Service

January 26, 1979
6.30 p.m.

- Welcome Rev. H.J. Gerbrandt
General Secretary, Conference of Mennonites in Canada
- Meditation Dr. George K. Epp
President, Canadian Mennonite Bible College
- Music CMBC Chamber Choir
George Wiebe, conductor
- Building Report Mr. Rudy A. Regehr
Building Committee Chairperson
Mr. Siegfried Toews
Architect
Mr. Peter Martens
M.B.S. Construction (1977) Ltd.
- Unveiling of Plaque Mr. P.W. Enns
P.W. Enns Family Foundation Inc.
Mr. Lawrence Klippenstein
CMC Historian Archivist
- Response Mr. P.W. Enns
- Dedication Rev. David P. Neufeld
Moderator, Conference of Mennonites in Canada
- Responses Dr. John Friesen
Chairperson, History-Archives Committee
Dr. Paul F. Peters
Chairperson, Canadian Mennonite Bible College Board
- Benediction Dr. Gerhard Lohrenz



Lois Schmidt works at the archives as receptionist-secretary, and assists with research.

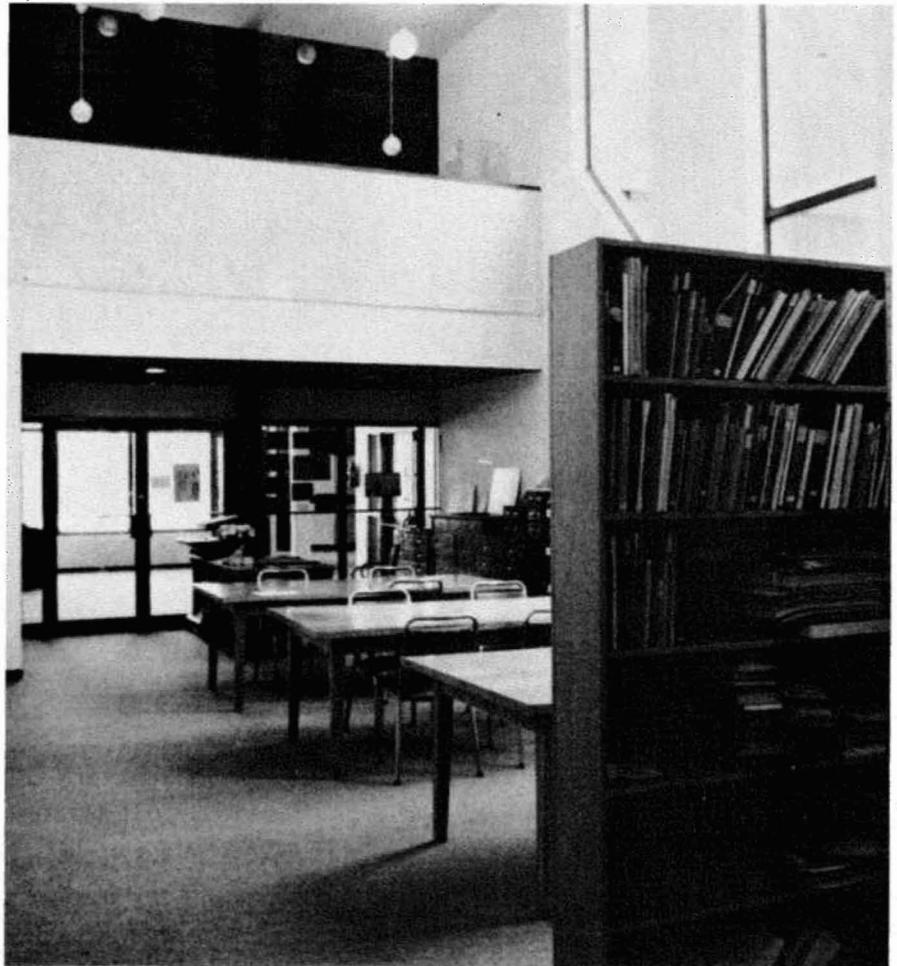
Documents like these belong in an archives for preservation and study use.





P.W. Enns (left) and Lawrence Klippenstein (right) unveiled the plaque.

The archives reading room also holds the Mennonite Genealogy collection, the bound periodicals, and the vertical files.



Assembled Friends:

We are here today because God used people in the past to write and preserve the experiences of faith they had with God. Not only have we been blessed through the Holy Scriptures but also through many other ancient documents that have come to us through the centu-

ries. In a miraculous way God used the Qumran caves to preserve the Dead Sea scrolls. We are also painfully aware that through all the centuries much valuable material has been lost because people did not appreciate its value or did not have adequate storage facilities to preserve it.

Today we are gathered in this building, made available to us through the vision of

those who saw the need for it, through the donation of funds to pay for it and through the labour of many hands to erect it.

As the dedication of this centre is vain without the solemn consecration of its users let us dedicate ourselves anew to the service of our Lord.

Henry J. Gerbrandt led the dedication service.



CMBC publications

price list

Heritage Remembered. 2 Edition (1977)
By Gerhard Lohrenz

Enlarged and revised. 300 pp. Includes a number of new photos and maps, an index, as well as short essays on Mennonite life in Russia and Prussia . . . 15.00

Damit es nicht vergessen werde. Zweite Ausgabe (1977). By Gerhard Lohrenz.
A translation of Heritage Remembered 15.00

Wer Nimmt Uns Auf? (1977)
By Olga Rempel

A 29-page trilingual drama about Mennonite immigration to Canada. Suitable for amateur drama groups 2.00

Der Bote Index Volume I 1924-1947 (1976) Eds. Peter Rempel and Adolf Ens.
A 262-page bilingual index to the 1924-47 volumes of Der Bote 12.00

The Bergthal Colony (1975)
By William Schroeder
A 110-page history of the Bergthal Colony in south Russia 3.50

Das Maerchen vom Weihnachtsmann (1975) By Johannes H. Janzen
Edited by Waldemar Janzen.
Reprint of a 36-page Mennonite Fairy Tale complete with original illustrations to color 2.50

Canticles and Psalms (1979)
By Esther Wiebe
Seventeen settings of Scripture themes for church choirs 3.25

Available at:
Your local bookstore Or

CMBC Publications
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4
Ph. 888-6781

Fill My House (1975)
By Esther Wiebe

Twenty five selections for choirs or smaller groups 3.25

The Bridge (piano/vocal score) (1972)
By Esther Wiebe

A full-length folk opera originally prepared for the Mennonite Centennial. Orchestral parts can be rented from CMBC Publications 5.00

Call to Faithfulness (1972)
Eds. Henry Poettcker and Rudy Regehr
Twenty essays on Mennonite history and thought 1.00

Just When We Were. . . (1978)
Ed. By Irene Friesen Petkau
A 60-page pictorial album on the Conference of Mennonites in Canada 6.00

Walk Humbly with Your God (1979)
By William Janzen
Twelve sermons preached by the author in the Ottawa Mennonite Church . . . 5.00

All items except Heritage Remembered are paperback editions.



Book Review

Elizabeth Suderman Klassen. **Trailblazer for the Brethren**. Scottdale, Pa. and Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1978. 309 pp. \$6.95 pb.; \$8.05 cloth (US). Reviewed by LaVerna Klippenstein, Winnipeg, Man.

Trailblazer for the Brethren vividly relates the dramatic story of Johann Claassen, an outstanding leader among 19th century Mennonites in Russia. It brings to us a courageous Christian of the past, and describes the struggles, heartaches and joys he encountered in fulfilling what he saw as God's purpose in his life.

In his emergence as an enterprising farmer and community leader, Claassen had caught much of the spirit and philosophy of the widely renowned and aggressive Johann Cornies. He helped to found a school of higher education for Mennonites, and built a model farm in a new settlement which he spearheaded as well. Attractive personal qualities and technical skills quickly gave him a place of prominence in the emerging new church fellowship of that period, the Mennonite Brethren.

Though the book is not a detailed history of the MB church, even at its earliest stages, Claassen's biography does shed important light on the fortunes and misfortunes of that group's first experiences as a separate community of believers. The work is based on documented, historical information, although much of the material has been fictionalized to give it greater readability, and quite possibly authenticity as well. Footnotes have been excluded to achieve a popular style, resulting in a compelling, and lucid, biographical novel.

Claassen's spiritual perspectives, with many of those who followed him, soon brought them all into deep conflict with some of the contemporary established Mennonite leaders of south Russia. The period of renewal transformed itself into a time of intense interpersonal and group conflict, a drama in which high goals and human egotistical desires were sometimes difficult to sort out, even in one's own heart. While the details of differences and relationships among the Russian Mennonites of the mid-nineteenth century still call for further study, the author in this portrayal has attempted honestly to discern the motivation and varying aspirations of the time.

Certainly the design of writing an appealing account for young people above all, has succeeded remarkably well. So has the effort to be historically accurate and precise in background details. At some points in fact the concern for factual accuracy (e.g. that Johann Cornies had a 355-volume library!) almost seems a bit

overwhelming. Essentially though this characteristic yields a richness and a solidarity of content that enhances the telling throughout. There are few slips really; the modernization of spellings is occasionally somewhat unconventional, but not distorting—while the diligence of the proofreaders, and competence of the press has left virtually nothing to improve in this regard as well.

Trailblazer for the Brethren definitely

Saskatchewan Heritage Project

The Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan and Alberta, a non-profit organization, has recently been awarded a Federal grant to conduct a culture and heritage resources survey of the area identified as the Saskatchewan Rivers Heritage Complex.

The survey among other things will also examine the feasibility of the development of the Rosthern Cultural Museum as an integral part of the Saskatchewan Rivers Heritage Project. It has been suggested that the museum could provide an interpretation of the agricultural settlement and ethnic cultures of the region.

Under the general direction of Dr. Ted D. Regehr in Saskatoon and Mr. Ed Roth in Rosthern, Glenda Brown, Warren Clubb, Wayne Gardner and W.A. Waiser will collect information on a variety of heritage and cultural resources over the period from January 15 to April 30.

Potential museum artifacts will be described in detail. Information on archival sources such as letters, diaries and the records of business ventures, ethnic organizations, schools and churches will be gathered. Heritage buildings in the area will be identified and described.

provides a creative model for bringing other chapters of the Mennonite story to life for our times. Present and future readers will have much to gain if Betty, or other authors, will write more books like this one so that, indeed, as the author hopes, they may "follow the footprints, not of a man, but of Christ himself." The book should be in every church library—MB and others as well!

Finally, a list of individuals suitable for participation in an oral history programme will be drawn up. It is not intended that the survey deal with exclusively Mennonite resources.

The information collected by the survey team will be used to determine whether future development of the Rosthern Cultural museum is justifiable and how this development should take shape. It may be made available to agencies concerned exclusively with the preservation of heritage resources. It will not be turned over to antique dealers, private collectors or other government agencies.

The survey, moreover, will not be placing a monetary value on the various resources nor will any of the items be expropriated. The survey is simply intended to discover what culture and heritage resources from Saskatchewan's agricultural past exist in the area.

Anyone wishing to be contacted by the survey team should please write Culture and Heritage Resources Project, Saskatchewan Rivers Heritage Complex, 2608 Cairns Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7J 1V7 or call Mr. Ed Roth in Rosthern (232-5353).

New Publications

Epp, Ruth M., ed. **Conference of Mennonites in Canada Yearbook 1978**, CMC, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Man. 132 pp. Pb. \$2.50.

Harder, Johannes. **Mennonitisches Jahrbuch 1979**, Weierhof, West Germany, 1979. 146 pp. Pb. DM 8. Order from: Christian Bookstore, 266 Hawthorne Ave., Winnipeg, Man.

Horsch, James, ed. **Mennonite Yearbook 1979**, Herald Press, Scottdale, Pa., 1979. 200 pp. Pb. \$3.95 U.S.

Kraybill, Paul N., ed. **Mennonite World Handbook**. Mennonite World Conference Tenth Assembly, MWC, 528 E. Madison St., Lombard, Ill., 1978. 390 pp. Pb. \$6.25 U.S.

Corrections

MH, Sept., 1978, p. 6. Names for left and right photos should read Charlotte Rempel and Connie Braun respectively.

MH, Dec., 1978, p. 1, col. 1. Delete "my brother" before the name Hermann Buhr. P. 4, col. 3 in the book review erroneously describes Johann Nickel as an MB minister. He belonged to the "kirchliche" group. The book on B.B. Janz sells for \$5.60 paperback, not \$6.60.

Our apologies! Please draw mistakes to our attention when they occur.

Acknowledgments

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