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Manitoba
Mennonite
Historical
Society



VOL. 1 NO. 1

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1984

Editor's Note

— Royden Loewen

This newsletter marks a new venture for the MMHS. With the Society's growth in members, committees, projects and donors in the recent years, there has also grown a need to enhance the medium of communication among members. This newsletter aims to meet that need. As awareness of the society's activities and achievements grow, so too will the strength of the organization.

This issue contains numerous reports from active MMHS groups. These include the following committees: The Genealogy and Local History Committee, The Mennonite Book Club, The Russian Mennonite Monument Committee, The Research and Scholarship Committee and the Arts and Interdisciplinary Committee. These reports tell of a recent Family History Symposium, the formation of a book club, a very successful Dankfest, a soon-to-be released edition of Arnold Dyck's work in Plautdietsch, and a Mennonite Composers' Competition. Read the reports and discover what your society is doing. For further updates and information plan to attend the Annual Membership Meeting in February.

The editor gratefully acknowledges the enthusiastic response from the contributors and the counsel of fellow members of the Publicity Committee, Dr. Rhinehart Friesen, Ruth Bock and Dennis Stoesz. Happy reading. May the joy of the first Christmas be yours this season.

President's Report

— Delbert Plett

This newsletter represents an historic milestone for the M.M.H.S. A newsletter serves as a vital bonding agent and communication link for a society such as ours and I hope that this will become an annual feature. Congratulations to editor Roy Loewen for bringing this issue to press.

Roy has also asked me to make a few comments with respect to the general affairs of the M.M.H.S. over the past two years. A brief historical review will provide a helpful background. The M.M.H.S. was formed in 1958 and the most successful project to date has been the Mennonite Village Museum in Steinbach. This project came to absorb almost the full resources of the M.M.H.S. so that relatively little was done in the area of promoting cultural, educational and

theological development in general. As a result, the M.M.H.S. was separated from the Mennonite Village Museum in 1979 and incorporated as a completely separate body with these activities as its sole function.

During the past five years our society has been struggling to fulfill its new mandate of serving as a vehicle for the historical, cultural and religious interests of all Manitoba Mennonites. Our membership has quadrupled from 37 charter members in 1979 to about 160 regular members today. It would be exciting to see another fourfold increase over the next five years. The society has also grown by expanding its areas of involvement. The directors minutes from 1980 reveal that only four committees were functional, namely, Research and Scholarship, Arts and Interdisciplinary, Historical Sites, and Membership and Publicity. This has grown to the present ten committees. Hopefully, two more, namely, Education and Resources, and Inter-Mennonite Faith, can be activated in the coming year. This growth is also reflected in our financial statements. I was surprised to realize recently that our cash turn-over for 1984 will be almost \$30,000.00.

It is helpful to note that all of the activities of the M.M.H.S. are planned and carried out through the various committees. Each director also serves on one or two committees which are active in areas of interest to him or her. Ideally each committee will also provide a number of members who are not directors thus providing an opportunity for individuals to become involved in areas of concern to them. This newsletter contains an update by each committee. If you would like to get involved in some of these activities please contact myself or any one of the committee chairpersons.

I would like to refer briefly to the three new committees which were organized at our board meeting in June 1984, namely, Nominating and Constitution, Program Committee, and Finance Committee. The Nominating Committee is in charge of finding suitable candidates for our board of directors, recommending as to committee appointments, as well as a review of our constitution. The 1984 committee consisted of

Dr. John Friesen, Ted Friesen and myself. The selection of nominees for the 1985 board is now complete and I must say that we are very pleased at the quality of the people who have agreed to serve if elected.

The Program Committee originally consisted of Henry K. Friesen, Steinbach and myself. Later we were joined by Wilmer Penner, well-known director of the Landmark Drama Club. The Program Committee also hopes to recruit several additional members in Winnipeg as well as in "Jant Sied". The committee had planned to sponsor a major drama production for the fall of this year but regrettably these endeavours did not come to fruition. This committee is also in charge of the programming for our annual membership meeting coming up in February or March.

One of the more important developments for the M.M.H.S. was the establishment of a Finance Committee. It was a matter of some concern that many of our expenditures in the past were made on a spur-of-the-moment basis. The Finance Committee hopes to remedy this through strict budgetary control. Another goal will be to insure that each committee and interest group can obtain a fair share of our strictly limited resources. The committee has also recommended that each project adopted by the society should be at least partially self-supporting, i.e. from revenues, individual sponsorships, grants, application fees, etc. In this way the general revenues of the M.M.H.S. will achieve a far greater effect.

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Upcoming Events

January 14, 1985 — MMHS Board Meeting at Heritage Centre, Winnipeg.

February, 1985 — MMHS Annual Membership Meeting. Watch for further announcements.

Spring, 1985 — Volume One of the Arnold Dyck Edition to be released.

Spring, 1985 — Russian Mennonite Cenotaph Construction to be commenced.

May 15, 1985 — Mennonite Composers' Competition closes.

President's Report cont'd.

At the same time an application for operating funds was made to the Department of Tourism and Culture. At the present time we are still optimistic that some funding will be available for 1984.

The Finance Committee has also instituted a general fund-raising campaign. By now most members will have received a letter requesting additional financial support. This appeal went out to a total of 600 families and we are hoping for a good response. The Finance Committee also resolved that an endowment fund or trust fund be established. The committee has made various inquiries and decided that endowment fund should be established through the Mennonite Foundation of Canada. Donations and bequests will be solicited as soon as this is finalized by the board. The income from these trust funds would be used to cover the operating cost of the society and also for specified projects. The present members of the Finance Committee are Abe Dueck, John Dyck, Ted Friesen, Victor Doerksen and Delbert Plett.

This concludes my report. Of course there are many ways in which the operations of the M.M.H.S. could be expanded or enhanced. But in the end everything depends on you the members. A society is merely the aggregate of the individuals involved and can only accomplish as much as the members are prepared to contribute. It is certainly evident from the reports contained in this newsletter that many people have made outstanding contributions of time and expertise during the past year. This is a resource which cannot be bought. I believe that our present committee and board members have done a fantastic job with the limited means at our disposal. I trust that the M.M.H.S. will have an even better year in 1985.

Financial Report

The last report submitted by treasurer Dr. Abe Dueck at the November 30 board meeting revealed the following information. During the 11 months from January to November of 1984 the society received \$27,197.80. One third of this (\$9,175.00) came in form of donations for the Russian Mennonite Monument, \$8,000.00 came in form of a Provincial Manitoba Department of Multiculturalism grant, the remainder came in sale of memberships, banquet and concert receipts and other donations.

During these 11 months the society disbursed some \$13,000. The Arnold Dyck project received \$8,000.00 for research costs, \$1,400.00 went to pay for the society's March meeting, another \$1,400.00 was disbursed for Hillcrest Memorials. Seminars, travel and publicity costs accounted for another \$2,000.00.

The balance as of December 1, 1984 stood at \$13,846.70.

Historic Sites Committee Report

— Herman Rempel (Chairman)

At the beginning of 1983 the results of the cemetery research were lodged with the Mennonite Historical Society in an open-ended fashion so that anyone wishing to add to it could do so. This action was widely publicized in the media so that anyone wishing to review this binder was aware of its existence.

Most of the cenotaphs relating to Mennonites in southern Manitoba were looked at and it was found that the local citizens were making a good job of maintaining them so that they were in good shape.

The committee has reviewed the province's discussion paper on the New Heritage legislation and recommends to the board that this legislation is pointed in the right direction.

Historical sites in Manitoba, especially those that are important to us as Mennonites, are slowly disappearing for various reasons. I believe that the MMHS should take affirmative action by listing the sites in order of importance and giving this action a good deal of publicity. Support from the Mennonite community should be solicited so that advantage of the provincial legislation can be gained.

Some attention must be given to recognizing

the leaders of the various Mennonite congregations and conferences. Some have been remembered and others have not. Perhaps a closer look should be made in this area.

Mennonite Composers' Competition Underway

— Doreen Klassen (Chairperson)

During the past year the Arts and Interdisciplinary Committee of the M.M.H.S. has been involved in several activities: planning the spring banquet which included an evening of Low German entertainment, and secondly, organizing a Mennonite Composers' Competition. We feel that the composer's competition is one way of encouraging an emerging generation of Mennonite composers to examine and utilize their own musical roots. The competition, closing on May 15, 1985, provides composers with the opportunity of writing either an (a) instrumental piece based on traditional Mennonite tunes, or (b) choral or vocal pieces with texts based on traditional Mennonite ideals and beliefs. Thirdly, we have been asked to help Victor Davies with the publication of a two piano version of the "Mennonite Piano Concerto".

Letter to the Editor

November 19, 1984

Dear Editor

Looking back, I can count 13 news items about the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society which appeared in the *Mennonite Historian* since the formation of the society on March 1, 1980. Lawrence Klippenstein has quite faithfully put news into the *Historian* and he has also sat on the Board from then until March, 1984. Lawrence wrote all but 4 articles - Peter B. Paetkau wrote 2, Royden Loewen wrote 1, and Rhinehart Friesen 1.

So it is not only with some newly born calf legs that you start the "MMHS Newsletter". We do have some fatherly guidance to fall back on.

And I am enclosing our newsletter proposal. All the best in your editorial work.

Sincerely,
Dennis Stoesz
Archivist,

Mennonite Heritage Centre



MMHS Board at June, 1984 meeting

Family History Symposium

— John Dyck (Chairman)

In the spring of 1984 the Genealogy and Local History Committee of the MMHS met for the first time and established some objectives. Two goals which crystallized early in the discussion were 1) to record the information on headstones in all Mennonite cemeteries in Manitoba, and 2) to work towards establishing local chapters of a genealogy organization where people with an interest in genealogy could meet and broaden their awareness of available information through mutual exchanges. Other long term goals were also established.

The listing of data on headstones has been started in the Steinbach area by Henry Fast with the help of his SBC High School class. In other Mennonite communities contact has been made and it is expected that teachers will also begin to use this work as field assignments for students in spring.

Additional volunteers are needed. Anyone willing to offer his or her services will be provided with all the necessary information to ensure that the data will be recorded uniformly throughout the Province.

To introduce the concept of local chapter meetings, the committee organized a public genealogy meeting which was held at the MBBC auditorium in Winnipeg on Tuesday, October 24th, 1984. The theme of this well attended meeting was Researching Family History. Henry Fast and John Dyck shared some insights into sources for genealogical research which they had found helpful. Marianne Janzen gave us some valuable hints which she had learned from her experience in compiling a family history.

The keynote speaker was Bill Schroeder, who is in the process of compiling the first all-Mennonite atlas. He delighted the audience with relating some of his experiences in compiling the information that goes into an atlas.

In the coming year the committee is planning to continue to develop further our two main goals. Both will require considerable work. In addition the committee is seeking ways in which it can strengthen Mennonite Genealogical Inc. as the central Canadian clearing house for genealogical data on Mennonites in the Russian Prussian stream.

Russian Mennonite Monument Project Dankfest

— Gerhard Ens (Chairman)

The idea to erect a cenotaph in memory of the countless victims of war, anarchy, revolution and reprisals among Mennonites, particularly in Europe since 1914, was probably first voiced by Gerhard Lohrenz.

Theme: RESEARCHING FAMILY HISTORY

- . . . **By Region** - Speaker, Bill Schroeder
Winnipeg School Teacher
Author of *The Bergthal Colony*
Speaker, Popular Tour Guide to U.S.S.R.
- . . . **By Family** - Speaker, Marianne Janzen
Homemaker
Co-author of *Cornelius Heinrichs & Descendants 1782-1979*
- . . . **By Sources** - Speaker, Henry Fast
Steinbach School Teacher
E.M.C. Researcher
Speaker, John Dyck
Amateur Genealogist

When first initiatives at that time found only limited response the idea was temporarily put in abeyance. It was revived by Gerhard Ens at an annual meeting of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society a few years ago, at which time the Society agreed to authorize a projects committee and to receive donations for such a project.

In 1984 the project was begun by a committee, eventually enlarged to 16 members and chaired by Gerhard Ens. To date this committee has met half a dozen times and has approved a monument design and is currently working on the wording of the inscriptions on six bronze plates affixed to the base of the hexagonal column, commemorating six identifiable groups of victims. A larger plate facing the front of a rectangular pedestal will feature the general history of this period.

On October 21, 1984 this Committee sponsored an inter-Mennonite festival of thanksgiving by and for those who were able to escape the terrors of wars, revolutions and reprisals by emigration. Featuring Herman Lenzmann, G. K. Epp, Gerhard Ens and Elizabeth Peters as speakers and chaired by H. D. Wiebe, this festival of thanks was a very well attended function. Approximately 1,800 persons attended and contributed some \$7,500.00 to the monument project. A modest fund drive has contributed an additional \$6,000.00 to date.

Construction of the monument is to begin in the spring of 1985 pending finalization of the site. The two sites currently under consideration are the grounds (and adjoining provincial park) of the Manitoba Legislative Buildings, Winnipeg, and the Mennonite Village Museum grounds, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Mennonite Book Club Now a Reality

— Dr. Al Reimer (Chairman)

After long planning, the Mennonite Book Club is finally in existence. The ambitious operation envisaged initially under MMHS sponsorship failed to materialize because it would have required too much start-up funding.

Instead, the Committee decided to operate the Club as a modest "cottage industry." Business Manager Roy Vogt hired Lora Sawatsky to set up a part-time mail order service in the *Mennonite Mirror* office. After the name "Mennonite Book Club" had been registered, Club rules were established and a membership application brochure was drawn up. The brochure has appeared in the *Mirror* and ads have been placed in the *Reporter* and *Bote*. 700 individual letters have also been mailed.

Actual operation began in November. Applications began slowly but towards year's end showed signs of picking up. To date about 50 memberships have been received and books processed. Most members so far are ordering all five of their annual books and/or cassettes immediately, so that \$1,400. has already been received. The Club received a start-up grand of \$1,000. from MMHS and so far has kept expenses to a minimum.

With 80% of memberships coming from outside Winnipeg and half of those from outside the province, there seems to be a real need for a book club mailing service to rural areas where no Mennonite book stores exist.

With patient promotion and careful management the Club should prove to be a viable operation in the coming year.

MMHS Honorary Members

In the last year and a half the MMHS has recognized three outstanding contributors to the preservation of Mennonite culture and history in Manitoba. They include:



Eugene Derksen



Gerhard Lorenz



John C. Reimer

Donations Gratefully Acknowledged

— Delbert Plett

The MMHS gratefully acknowledges all gifts and donations received since the reorganization of the society in 1979. Receipt book (Nos. 300-350) covering November 8, 1983 to February 14, 1984, is presently not available. Hopefully these donations can be acknowledged in our next newsletter. The reader is also asked to note the following clarification regarding the acknowledgement of gifts. Unless otherwise designated by the donor, the first \$10.00 of any gift to the MMHS will be regarded as a membership fee and the balance as a donation. All donations will be acknowledged in the following categories: Donors \$20 to \$49; Sustaining member, \$50 to \$99; Supporting member, \$100 to \$199; Patrons \$200 to \$499, and Benefactor (life members) \$500.

1980 Patron - D.W. Friesen & Sons.

1981 Donors - Herman Rempel, Dr. David G. Rempel. **Supporting Members** - Friesen Foundation Inc.. **Benefactor** - D.W. Friesen & Sons.

1982 Donors - John R. Lohrenz, Frank Zacharias, Ted Friesen, John L. Fehr, Henry Albrecht, Erwin Siemens, Ed J. Friesen. **Sustaining Member** - John Schellenberg. **Benefactor** - D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd.

1983 Donors - Reinhard Vogt, Art Fast, Dr. R.F. Friesen, Peter Wiebe, Philip R. Ens, William J. Pfeifer, Dr. Al Reimer, H.H. Goertzen, B.B. Fast, Abram E. Ens, Peter B. Penner, William Rempel, Helen Friesen. **Sustaining Members** - Dr. David G. Rempel, John Schellenberg. **Supporting Member** - Walter van Dyck. **Patron** - Delbert F. Plett.

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Arnold Dyck Edition Report

— Dr. Victor Derksen

Over the past months there have been a number of developments. The first volume has gone to press at Derksen Printers and is expected to be released in the spring of 1985. A subscription offer has been made to those ordering the book before its publication date.

During the summer Ericka Ens transcribed all the Low German texts for volume II and III using a word processor. These texts are presently being edited by Al Reimer, who will be responsible for the volumes in *Plautdietsch*.

Arnold Dyck, the illustrator, will be more prominent in this new edition of his works. His visual art work is being reproduced from the original which will result in a somewhat larger and very much clearer picture. The fourth volume will also contain a number of his other art work never before published, which will bring to light what was after all his first love.

The fourth volume will also contain previously unpublished works, as well as essays and letters. Work on the choice and editing of these materials is being carried out chiefly by Elisabeth Peters and George Epp.

A seminar on Arnold Dyck, carried out jointly by the German Department of the University of Manitoba and the Mennonite Chair at the University of Winnipeg was well attended by students and interested visitors. Presentations were made on various aspects of Dyck's life and work and the discussions were particularly stimulating. The editors all participated in these discussions and were able to rest some of their ideas and theories.

It is the hope of our society that this library edition of the works of Arnold Dyck will be placed in all those homes and institutions where Mennonite history and culture are taken seriously. The genius of this writer makes such a self study of our tradition both educational and enjoyable.