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Manitoba
Mennonite
Historical
Society



NUMBER 17

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 1993

Annual Meeting

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society annual meeting was held on April 3, 1993 at Canadian Mennonite Bible College. The major item on the agenda was the revision of the society's constitution. The positions of chairman and second vice-president have been dropped from the executive committee and replaced by a member-at-large. Also, the society now has three standing committees: research, scholarship and publications; membership and publicity; and genealogy. All three are subject to review every five years. All other committees will be special committees, subject to review every three years. There is some discussion about the publication of the Echo Verlag translations. The problem revolves around the funding of the project. It was agreed to negotiate with the publishers, CMBC Publications, on how best to proceed. This negotiation will take into account the factors of sale levels and potential future markets for these works.

The guest speaker for the evening was George K. Epp. He gave a short presentation on the archives in the former Soviet Union which may contain materials of interest to Mennonite historians. Epp focused on the Odessa Archives, which contains material mostly originating in the Molotschna colony, including the Peter J. Braun archival collection. The Braun collection has been microfilmed and indexed, and the complete set of microfilms will be available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre by the end of July, 1993.

Board Meeting

The Board of Directors of the Society met for their spring meeting in the Steinbach Village Museum. Before the meeting we were privileged with a tour of their current displays. They were very impressive.

The Board reorganized itself under the new constitution with an executive

committee of five: President - Bert Friesen; Vice-President - John Dyck; Treasurer - Alf Redekopp; Secretary - Katherine Martens; Fifth member at large - Peter Rempel. There will be three standing committees: genealogy has Martha Martens as chairperson; Membership and publicity has Richard Thiessen as chairperson; and Research, scholarship, and publication needs to have a chairperson confirmed yet. There are two special committees functioning at this time: Local History with John Dyck as chairperson and Arts with Henry Ens as chairperson.

The major item on the agenda was the continuation of the publication of the translations of the Echo Verlag series. It was decided to continue with this project subject to negotiation with the publishers concerning the question of funding.

Membership Report

As of June 24, 1993, the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society has 146 names on its membership list. The list contains 6 members for life, 4 honorary members, 3 educational institutions, 3 businesses and 130 individuals. Thank you for sending in your annual membership fee of \$15.00, and an additional thank you to those who also sent in a donation with their membership renewal.

For those who would still like to pay their membership fee for 1993, please make cheques payable to Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, c/o 169 Riverton Ave., Winnipeg, MB, R2L 2E5.

Genealogy Committee

The genealogy committee will be hosting a Genealogy Workshop on Saturday, November 13 at Concord College in Winnipeg. The workshop will be entitled "Mennonite Links Between Prussia and Russia," and the guest speaker will be Henry Schapansky from New Westminster, B.C. Schapansky has carried out extensive

research on the Prussian Mennonite church registers, and has attempted to document the origins of the original Mennonite settlers in Russia, particularly of those who settled in Chortitza (the Old Colony). He has published his findings in a number of important articles in *Mennonite Family History*.

Schapansky will give presentations on the Prussian Mennonite church registers, the migration of Prussian Mennonites to Chortitza and Molotschna in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and the early decades of settlement in the two mother colonies. He will also talk about the Schönhorst Church Register, and describe how this register made its way to Canada after World War II. Time will be made available for questions.

Details regarding time and registration costs will be announced in the September, 1993 issue of the *Mennonite Historian*.

Local History Committee

The Reinland Community Centre, the oldest Mennonite Church in western Canada, was the site for a meeting on April 24 of people interested in hearing about Manitoba Mennonite pioneer history.

Rev. Peter D. Zacharias, pastor of the Blumenort Mennonite Church, presented a paper on the life and ministry of Aeltester Johann Wiebe. Aeltester Wiebe was the first Aeltester of the Reinländer Mennonite Church and was responsible for the construction of this church. Pioneer settlers had the church ready for dedication by the fall of 1876, just over a year after the first settlers had arrived in the area. Aeltester Wiebe sought to unite the members of the Reinlander Church who came from a variety of backgrounds in Russia.

Felix Kuehn of Winnipeg has had many years of active involvement in studying and promoting the North West Mounted Police trail and the Post Road. He is thoroughly familiar with the pioneer area and its

people. His address included stories of the experiences of members of his non-Mennonite family in the Mennonite community. Dressed in a period costume, he told many interesting stories of pioneer life.

After a hearty Mennonite lunch the entire audience was given a tour of locations in the village with historic significance. The tour included a look at remnants of a bridge that served as part of the old Post Road and a look inside an old house barn which is still heated by the original brick oven.

The meeting was the third semi-annual public meeting sponsored by the Local History Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. In addition to the many residents from the surrounding communities and towns, participants included people from Winnipeg and Steinbach. The next meeting is being planned for October.

Research, Scholarship and Publications Committee

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society partially sponsored a symposium entitled "Canadian Mennonites and the Challenge of Nationalism" held at Concord College May 6-8. Most of the one hundred participants who registered agreed that the symposium was a very timely event and that the presentations stimulated thought and action on the issues. The planning committee subsequently decided to publish most of the papers in a single volume. Abe Dueck was asked to assume major editorial responsibilities. Several papers may also be published in the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.

Humour in Official Record!

The following is an excerpt from the Canadian MB Conference Board of Publication minutes of a meeting held in 1969:

"A one D. Durksen did summon all true knights to assemble for ye discussionne relating to Board of Publications concerns; and there did come fifth to Winnipeg many goodly men on July 4, 5 (1969) for to joust with one another (that's j-o-u-s-t, not jest).

"And there did come one D. Durksen who did preside as marshal (chairman), and one G. Epp from the shores of Lake Cultus; others, too, came with joy: J. Schmidt, W. Kehler (he of smooth

delivery), C.A. DeFehr, V. Ratzlaff, A. Konrad, P. Derksen, L. Stobbe, G. Geddert, E. Ratzlaff (MR editor) (he of Teutonic tribes), H. Jantz (MBH editor) (he to whom was of late given a daughter), D. Kornelsen (office manager).

"But when A. Block and J. Isaac came not, there was a falling of faces, for the assembled company were loath to meet without full representation."

One did not need to look long for the one responsible for such creative writing, for the very first point of business indicated, "V. Ratzlaff is appointed secretary."

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Our ancestors surely must have been tempted by Dr. August König's products, shown in these two advertisements taken from an 1884 issue of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. Hamburger Brustthee promised to heal ailments of the chest, lungs and throat, while Hamburger Tropfen would serve as a remedy for blood disease, liver problems and stomach disorders. Perhaps even some of you have used these concoctions!