

MINUTES of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

9:00 AM, Saturday, 20 January 2007

MCC/MHSA offices
32nd. Street, NE
Calgary, Alberta

Present: Ken Reddig, President (Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies)
Sam Steiner, Vice-President (Mennonite Church Eastern Canada)
Lucille Marr, Secretary (La Société Mennonite Historique du Québec)
Richard Thiessen, Treasurer (Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia)
Royden Loewen Member at Large, (Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg)
Maurice Martin, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario
Marlene Epp, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario
Henry Fast, Evangelical Mennonite Church
Alf Redekopp, Mennonite Church Canada
Victor G. Wiebe, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan
Dave Pankratz, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Vincent Friesen, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Judith Rempel, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Ralph Dahl, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Justina Penner, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
David Giesbrecht, Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia
Bert Friesen, GAMEO, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society
Peter Penner, GAMEO, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Linda Huebert Hecht, GAMEO, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario
Ted Regehr, Mennonite Books

- 1. Welcome & Introductions**
After welcoming members of the society, Ken thanked the MHSA for their generous hospitality. Brief introductions were done all around.
- 2. Devotional**
Lucille provided reflections on that great cloud of witnesses as described in Hebrews 12: 1-2.
- 3. Minutes of the 3 December 2005 Annual Meeting**
After reading the minutes, Lucille moved their acceptance.
M/S/C (Lucille/Sam)

The following correction was noted: The President of the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan is Jake Buhler.

4. **Business arising from the minutes**

Sam will set up a column on our website to post winners of the MHSC Award of Excellence.

5. **Approval of the agenda**

Approved.

6. **Reports from the Provincial Societies**

Note: Please see written reports for further details.

6.1 BC: David emphasized how indebted the society is to a strong group of volunteers. The society works hard at connecting with its community with public events such as those outlined in the BC report and a quarterly newsletter, *Roots and Branches*. They also approach congregations with the offer of helping them celebrate their anniversaries. This year the society implemented In Magic Software and saw three books published with the strong support of Ted Regehr and Peter Penner.

6.2 Alberta: Judith expressed the society's gratitude to MCC for the space allocated them in the centre and reported on the society's pleasure in receiving new multiple shelving in their vault. She also noted their delight in having Jim Bowman as a mentor in archival issues. With Alberta's relatively recent history, there is a special desire to celebrate their pioneers who came in the 1920s. The society's greatest challenge is in getting contributions. Interested takers may sign on to the society's own blog.

6.3 Quebec: The SHMQ's invitation to meet in Montreal in summer 2008 was gratefully declined, although we would like to hold to our original plans for January 2009. After some jockeying for place, Roy reminded the meeting of the pendulum policy established some years ago/

Recommendation: That we meet in Manitoba in January 2008, Quebec in 2009, Manitoba in 2010 and Saskatchewan in 2011. M/S/C (Bert/Sam)

6.4 Manitoba: The major activity of 2006 was publishing the revised *Reinländer Gemeinde Buch*. Bert reported that genealogy workshops continue to be popular. The society also publishes a newsletter, *Heritage Posting*.

6.5 Saskatchewan: Victor reported that their's is an active society and that their committees work well. The archives with its 1000 sq. ft. is bulging. The majority of Saskatchewan's members are interested in genealogy. A major accomplishment was working on the *Tragheimerweide Book*. Three musical nights were well attended.

6.6 Ontario: Maurice reported that their society's 150 members provide an important link with the MAO and Conrad Grebel University College. They are continuing with their two meetings a year and newsletter. A concern is how to attract young people. The hope is that the J. Winfield Fretz award will promote youth involvement.

7. President's Report & Report from the Board


Ken commented on the historian as pastor - the importance and need for people to tell their stories. Each society was presented with filmmaker Otto Klassen's latest on the rise of MCC. He has invited each society to hold an event with an offering to be split between MCC and the local society.

8. Project Reports

8.1 Marlene Epp project: Marlene reported that she is still waiting for a snappy title, something like *Buns, Bibles and Bonnets*. Her appreciation of the inspiration she has received from Katie Funk Wiebe underscored her detailed report of the book. A challenge is the abundance of material, for instance family histories and how to talk about the broad range of Mennonite women in one volume. Another question is the readership. Should the book be pitched to an academic audience or the women who will read it?


8.2 GAMEO: Bert updated the society on the new format with a management and an editorial group. Highlighting the recommendations outlined in the GAMEO report, he noted that the group aims to add 3 individuals to the team. The \$6000 has been increased to \$6500.00. Sam added some updated stats.


Bert announced Abe Dueck's resignation to allow him to do more writing and expressed GAMEO's gratitude for his excellent service. MHSC would like to recognize the latter's long-lasting support of the society.


 **Action:** The executive has been requested to write a letter of appreciation.

NB: Which executive member will that be?

Bert moved the acceptance of the 3 recommendations made by GAMEO. **M/S/C (Maurice/Henry)**

 **Action:** In the interim, the executive will approve the appointment of 3 additional members to GAMEO. It was noted that an effort should be made to keep a balance between conferences less represented and gender.

 **Action:** Richard will write a memorandum outlining 2 possible accounting principles.

 **Action:** The executive is to make the decision regarding the additional GAMEO members between meetings.

M/S/C (Sam/Alf)

Roy questioned the “editorial issue” regarding eligibility for inclusion in GAMEO as biographical subject. For instance, he suggested adding a category of people who were not Mennonites, but who influenced Mennonites.

👉 **Action:** GAMEO should circulate the policy which is still in process.

8.3 Global Mennonite History: Acknowledging the absence of a written report, Roy commended the MHSC for its generosity to the project. The December 2006 deadline has faded in favour of a new schedule where John Lapp, the editor of the series, has shifted the North American volume to spring 2008. The European volume came out in 2006; the African volume has been repackaged with a jazzy cover and it has been given to Good Books to distribute.

Regarding the writing of the North American volume, the challenge is an overwhelming body of sources and decisions regarding what to highlight. Is it for a global readership? What is a Mennonite in India wanting to know about North America? Other countries want to know about faith. What makes North American Mennonitism distinctive? Where do miracle stories fit in a North American religious mindset?

Ken reminded the assembled group that MHSC has been putting \$5,000.00/year into this project and we are committed to one last payment.

8.4 DVCM Report: The most recent conference, on Conscientious Objectors, worked well in a culture that is talking about war. Conrad Stoesz deserves the credit for pushing for this conference which turned out to be the best attended with 200 attendees all told. Selected papers will appear in the 2007 issue of *Journal of Mennonite Studies*.

DVCM’s goal continues to be to identify voices that might not make it into our historical discourse. Please see the DVCM annual report for a complete list of projects from the beginning of the program. We look forward to the conference on “Family and Sexuality” being planned for Waterloo, Ontario, in October 2007. Projected conferences include “Mennonites and Money” scheduled for October 2008, “Mennonites and Land,” for 2010, “Mennonites and Mental Health,” for 2012. Looking at some of these more difficult issues from a historical perspective can help our churches in dealing with them.

Marlene reported that the plans for the “Family and Sexuality” conference are well in gear with a local committee emerging out of the Anabaptist Institute of Mennonite Studies. Ken encouraged members to pass around the call for papers.

8.5 Mennonites in Canada – one volume: Ted Regehr reported that the project has been on hold for several years while he has been working on other projects. While they may contribute to this book, little has been done in an immediate sense. Further discussion concluded that the expected audience might include first-time readers to Mennonite history and students in Mennonite studies courses. Ted indicated that he is

using a biographical approach to set up each chapter, and that he will look at Mennonites as part of the wider society.

One issue that is holding up the project is the question of why volume III has not sold like volumes I and II? Should someone else write this one? Affirming Ted to continue, members stressed the potential significance of this single volume of Mennonite history to a wide scope of readers as well as its potential use as a teaching tool.

📁 **Action:** To help get the project rolling again, Ted requested a Reader's Committee of potential users.

8.6 Mennonites in Canada book stock: Ken reported that the MB Centre would be willing to warehouse unsold volumes for the next 10 years. Richard reported that he has surveyed libraries to see who is missing vol. III and he has budgeted for mailings related to this project.

Note: To facilitate Richard's travel arrangements, the financial statement and budget were moved ahead

10. Financial Statement: Richard presented the auditor's report. He raised the question of whether we still need to be incorporated. Ted noted that the MHSC was incorporated for limited liability when it was in the business of buying and selling books. Bert suggested that the society does need to report on accounts receivable and it needs to prepare a policy for investing as an asset. When do we want to start writing off our book holdings?

Richard moved acceptance of both the financial report and the audited financial report. **M/S/C (Richard/Roy)**

11. Budget: Richard walked members through the budget. Corrections are as follows: MHS Manitoba 2007 budget is \$500.00 which puts the sub-total of society contributions at \$6,115.00. Under Expenses, 2007 conferences should read \$0.00 for a total of \$18,750.00. This brings total expenses to \$39,650, with cash on hand at end of 2007 estimated at \$13,818.33.

M/S/C (Richard/David G.)

On behalf of the society, Ken thanked Richard for his hard work for us.

12. Appointment of an auditor: Richard moved that the society again hire John Pankratz as auditor. **M/S/C (Richard/Bert)**

13. Report of the Nominations Committee and elections: David Giesbrecht presented the slate as follows with the observation that member-at-large is not clearly defined in the constitution:

| | |
|----------------|-------------|
| President | Ken Reddig |
| Vice-President | Sam Steiner |

Secretary Lucille Marr
Treasurer Richard Thiessen
Member-at-large Royden Loewen

📁 **Action:** The board should re-think the function of the nominating committee.

14. Appointment of a Nominations Committee: Roy nominated David Giesbrecht and Maurice Martin. **M/S/C (Roy/Sam)**

Note: With Richard's early departure, the AGM returned to the earlier agenda.

9. Institutional Reports

Note: Please see written reports for further details.

9.1 Mennonite Central Committee Canada: no report provided this year.

9.2 Evangelical Mennonite Church Archives: Henry Fast reported that the Molotchna Fire Insurance records are now available on CD. He also presented the new publication, *Gruenfeld, 1874-1910*. Roy noted that the EMC will be celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2012. The MHSC thanks Henry for his faithful service.

9.3 Mennonite Archives of Ontario & Mennonite Church Eastern Canada: Sam reported that the archives has begun to scan negatives for its photo collection. There is an increasing demand for materials from various interview projects. To these the archives provides digitized photos and interviews for \$20.00. Further, sales for duplicate books are moving briskly. The list is available on the MAO website. Bert commended Sam for the archives' useful website.

9.4 Chair in Mennonite Studies: Roy reported that a new development is the Plett Foundation's re-location at the University of Winnipeg. His department has also been awarded an additional Mennonite Studies course.

In 2009, the Chair of Mennonite Studies will be sponsoring a Conference on Mennonites in Siberia to celebrate the migration of Mennonites from Russia to Siberia.

9.5 Mennonite Heritage Village: provided no report, although the MHSC is aware of some financial challenges.

9.6 Mennonite Heritage Centre of Mennonite Church Canada: Alf Redekop reported that he has stats on visitors and holdings. His report also includes lists and recent acquisitions. Challenges continue to include physical maintenance and loss of faithful volunteers. One such is John K. Wiens. Alf also noted appreciation of William Schroeder for his maps and brief histories of colonies and villages.

9.7 Centre for MB Studies & MB Historical Commission: Ken reported on the significant collection of Russian letters, dating from 1986 to 1994, that Aileen Friesen is currently processing. The centre administered the pastoral trends research project, a historical initiative that also supports the work of the conference. A good part of the work continues to be assisting students in researching who Mennonites are.

The MB Historical Commission is working on a global MB history report. Its profile series continues as does its contribution to GAMEO. The Commission provides an important link with the national churches overseas with its international materials posted on its website.

In 2010, the Mennonite Brethren Conference will celebrate its 150th anniversary. There are thoughts of celebrating in the Ukraine, the birth place of the denomination.

9.8 Mennonite Books: There was no verbal report.

15. Dreaming of Future projects

1. Mentoring: Could we bring in a student at society expense?
2. Maurice highlighted a recently published Dutch catechism with no wrong question to ask.
3. Would the society want to start creating websites that present Mennonite history?
4. Should we start putting genealogical research on our national agenda?

16. New business:

16.1 Henry Paetkau's letter regarding the Frank H. Epp Fund: Following up on earlier discussions at the Executive and Board levels, the suggestion emerged that we could ask to have our money dispensed as a historical initiative to commemorate Frank Epp's interest. The society affirmed Frank Epp as one who has made a vast contribution to history through the MHSC which he co-founded. The society would like to dialogue with Conrad Grebel University College regarding what the history component would be.

Action: The AGM supports the Executive in its decision to write a letter asking how the history part of the Frank H. Epp Fund will continue to be a part of the new "Centre for the Study of Religion and Peace."

17. Adjournment: The society extends a great big thank-you to the MHSA and MCCA Alberta. M/S/C. Roy extends a thank-you to our chair. Peter asked whether we might bring the people from the Maritimes to our meeting when we meet in Quebec?

