

MINUTES of the ANNUAL MEETING

MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF CANADA

9:00 AM, Saturday, 19 January 2008

**Mennonite Heritage Centre
CMU Campus (south)
600 Shaftesbury Blvd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0M4
Ph: 204-888-6781**

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
John Konrad, Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia
Peter Penner, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Ted Regehr, Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta
Jake Buehler, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan
Victor G. Wiebe, Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan
Bert Friesen, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society
Janis Thiessen, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society
Barb Draper, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario
Marlene Epp, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario
Richard Loughheed, La Société Mennonite Historique du Québec
Alf Redekopp, Mennonite Church Canada
Robert Goertzen, Evangelical Mennonite Church
John Lapp Mennonite World Conference
Esther Epp -Thiessen Mennonite Central Committee Canada
Ken Sensenig Mennonite Central Committee Akron
Linda Huebert Hecht GAMEO

1, Welcome & Introductions
Introductions around the table

2. Devotional
Ken passed on regrets sent by Rich Preheim from the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, then read the devotional that Mr. Preheim had prepared for us. Based on the story of Josiah's reform, we were reminded that history can keep us anchored even while we are being buffeted by winds of change. By harking back to the Books of Hebrew Law, Josiah brought his people back to their faith. In a similar way our historians, notably Harold Bender, have brought us as Mennonites back to Scripture and our faith history.

3. Minutes of the 20 January 2007 Annual Meeting

Lucille presented them and moved their acceptance. **M/S/C Lucille/Victor**

4. Business arising from the minutes

Ken will write the letter of thank you to Abe Dueck

5. Approval of the agenda

6. Reports from the Provincial Societies

6.1 Alberta

Peter Penner gave the report authored by Judith Rempel. She noted that 2007 has been a humbling year with an unmet budget and the genealogy group ceasing to meet. On the positive side, Irene Klassen published her book *Their Mark: Their Legacy*. It's been quite successful. The report also outlines a number of other positive movements in the province. Ted noted the how the current freedom of information legislation affects current archival practices.

6.2 British Columbia

John Konrad presented the report written by David Giesbrecht. Highlights included the twelve-page newsletter, from four to five annual events which each draw about 150 members, a stable financial situation, ongoing computerization. He also noted the society's attempt to keep the focus on history rather than theology.

6.3 Ontario

Barb Draper presented President Maurice Martin's report in his absence. Key events included the society's presentation of the MHSC Award of Excellence to Lorna Bergey, and the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Ontario. The society was also one of the co-sponsors of the DVCM Family and Sexuality Conference held at Conrad Grebel University College in October. On another front, Marlene Epp is in process of updating her book on Mennonites in Ontario There is uncertainty about the future of the Brubacher House, with the University of Waterloo's interest in taking it over.

6.4 Quebec

Lucille reported on the society's celebration of 51 years of Mennonite presence in Quebec and emphasized the close collaboration with MCC Quebec, with its shared goal of building a sense of Mennonite identity in Quebec.

BREAK

MHSC members had the opportunity to meet Gerhardt Enns during a special ceremony where our president presented him with the society's Award of Excellence. Archivist Conrad Stoetsz provided the gathering with the opportunity to listen to a snippet from one of Rev. Enns's 1400 taped broadcasts housed in the Mennonite Heritage Centre. He received the award with humility and gratitude.

6.5 Saskatchewan

Jake Buhler noted that 2008 marks that society's 35th anniversary. He also pointed out that although they don't have fancy letterhead, they do have the Grey Cup. The society is grateful to Ruth Friesen for getting them on-line this year. Jake invited Victor Wiebe, in his capacity as archivist, to comment on confidentiality. Victor noted that the Saskatchewan historical community takes it seriously, although generally the province is much less restrictive than is Alberta. In Victor's opinion, an offence occurs when someone is offended, and we need to be watchful for how folks respond.

Jake also highlighted genealogist Ed Schmidt's two-day workshop and noted that the family DNA project also continues to grow. In addition, the society launched Arthur Kroeger's *Hard Passage* and wishes to give significant tribute to the contribution that *Der Bote* has made to the German speaking Mennonites over its long history.

Finally, the MHSS invites MHSC to conduct its AGM at Bethany Manor in Jan. 2011.

6.6 Manitoba

Bert Friesen reported that this society continues to invest heavily in the GAMEO project. Another significant project is the ongoing quest to discover unmarked graves. Significant milestones in 2007 included the 50th Anniversary of the arrival of Mennonites to Fort Dufferin and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Mennonite Historical Society of Manitoba.

7. President's Report

Ken raised the issue of attempting to pull our grad students into our society. He stressed the importance of recognizing their work and engaging them in some way within our societies. How do we connect with the young people in our high schools that have an interest in our history, he asked. He suggested that Roy Loewen and Bruce Guenther have significant roles to play in this endeavour.

8. Project Reports

GAMEO

Bert Friesen reported that GAMEO is close to completing its goal of putting on-line volumes I through V of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*. There are now close to 10,000 articles in GAMEO. A revised biography template will soon be up on our site. He also announced that an editorial committee has been appointed.

During the discussion that followed, Roy Loewen asked how the GAMEO group envisions bringing the vision of making this a truly global encyclopedia to fruition. Acknowledging that the biggest challenges will be multi-lingual and management, Bert suggested that the first test will be to incorporate french material from Quebec, and the next, Bolivia at Mennonite World Conference 2009. Patience and time will be of the essence.

Recommendation: GAMEO's Canadian Editorial Group requests \$1750 from MHSC to cover the expenses of the Canadian editorial committee, travel costs for the Fall 2008 meeting, and the \$250 partner expense. M/S/C Bert/Victor

Recommendation: That the following appointments be made to the Canadian GAMEO editorial committee: David Giesbrecht, Richard Thiessen, Ted Regehr, Peter Penner, Victor Wiebe, Alf Redekopp, Bert Friesen, Ken Reddig, Linda Huebert Hecht, Sam Steiner, Lucille Marr and Richard Lougheed, each nominated for a one year. M/S/C Bert/Richard

Recommendation: That the MHSC executive committee prepare procedures for nominations to the Canadian Editorial Committee M/S/C Bert/Alf

8.2 Divergent Voices of Canadian Mennonites

Roy reported that this project grew up seemingly seamlessly from the *Mennonites in Canada* book project and affirmed MCC's strong support of the society. He noted that DVCM thinks of itself as bringing out voices not otherwise recognized, for example, the Family and Sexuality Conference hosted at Conrad Grebel University College in October 2007. The next conference is scheduled for October 2008 at University of Winnipeg, with the theme "Mennonites and Money: Wealth and Poverty in the Past and Present." Future conferences already scheduled are Mennonites and Land and Mennonites, Madness, and Mental Health.

Current members of DVCM are Roy Loewen, Marlene Epp, Esther Epp-Thiessen, Lucille Marr, and Janis Thiessen. Roy noted that Barb Draper and Lucille made presentations at the Family and Sexuality conference. New ideas for topics continue to emerge, for instance, aging and métis. In this current time with the political awareness of difficult issues in the history of aboriginal-white relations, the question of Aboriginal-Mennonite relations needs to be revisited, perhaps this time as a book project.

Finally, Roy encouraged society members to funnel names of grad students studying Mennonite history to him and to include them in our conferences.

8.3 Global Mennonite History

Roy also updated us on the Global Mennonite History project. Vol III, which is on South America, has been presented, but still needs to be drastically cut. Vol. IV, on Asia, is well in progress. Roy is currently on a research and writing year at University of Guelph. His appointment as Conrad Grebel University College's Sawatzky scholar has helped the process on his part of Vol. V, the North American volume. It is a tapestry, he noted. With the vast variety of themes, the challenges are to select topics that will illustrate the themes and to make selections.

Richard suggested that the unpublished research might be made accessible through GAMEO. John Lapp agreed to write a letter to publisher Arnold Snyder with such a request.

8.4 Marlene Epp Book

Marlene introduced and gave an overview of her yet untitled, but soon to be published book on Mennonite Women in Canada. She thanked the society for its support, as well as those individuals who have read the manuscript.

University of Manitoba Press has accepted her manuscript with very positive reviews. Ken then reported that the MHSC Board has accepted Marlene's offer to give up the last \$5000 of her contract with MHSC in exchange for ownership of royalties. The \$5000 will be used for the subvention for publication.

Provincial societies are encouraged to invite Marlene to visit and promote her book.

8.4 Mennonites in Canada – one volume

Ted reported that between his other major project and personal issues the project is still on hold. When he is ready to begin, he would still like a reading committee.

8.5 Mennonites in Canada book stock

Richard Thiessen reported that we still have the following in stock:

297 copies of volume I

251 copies of volume II

1, 430 copies of volume III

He plans to explore reducing the value of our inventory by writing a portion of it off.

9. Institutional Reports

Mennonite Central Committee Canada

Esther Epp-Thiessen brought greetings from Lois Coleman Neufeld and gratitude for the on-going collaboration on the DVCM project.

Evangelical Mennonite Conference Archives.

Robert Goertzen reported that the archives has just received approval from their conference to hire a one-year archivist to organize, so that data will be more easily accessible.

The major project for this group is thinking about how to mark the 200th anniversary of the Kleingemeinde EMConference coming up in 2012. Ken sent our regards to Dave Schellenberg and Henry Fast and asked that the EMC let the MHSC know where we can help in 200th anniversary planning.

Mennonite Archives of Ontario & Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

MAO has recently received two major genealogical collections, Eldon Weber's on the Pennsylvania Dutch and Lorraine Roth's stuff on Amish communities in Ontario.

On copyright, MAO has concerns regarding photos, especially the David Hunsberger collection, Sam specifically asked that copyright in deed be given along with the gift of the collection. As far as the Peter Etril Snyder collection is concerned, there is a clear understanding that he wants to know how these images will be used up until his death and then it no longer matters.

MAO was the lead applicant in a project called Mennonite Heritage Portrait, which is linked with the University of Waterloo Centre for Community Mapping.

Finally, Sam announced that he will be retiring in 2008, so in 2009 someone else will be reporting from the MAO.

Chair in Mennonite Studies

Roy acknowledged the passing of David Friesen and that his support of Mennonite education and institutions will be missed. The program is in good health with a strong graduate program, the Plett foundation, and the addition of Werner as half-time history instructor. Ken noted how grateful the MHSC is to Roy for his energy and leadership in University of Winnipeg's Chair of Mennonite Studies.

Mennonite Heritage Village

Executive director of Mennonite Heritage Village Bob Strong reported an encouraging turn around in finances, with its drastic staff cut from 30 to 4. The museum is supported equally by grants, admissions, private donations and sales. Among a number of new projects is a genealogy lab in the museum. Last year 40,000 people from at least 56 other countries, and 433 communities across Canada visited the Village.

Mennonite Heritage Centre of MC Canada

Alf reported lots of activity: Recent acquisitions include congregational records and Helen Martens' large body of research on Felix Mendelssohn collected in numerous European archives. The local community supports the Centre by regular use, while students and volunteers, especially Jake Wiens, provide much needed help.

Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies/MB Historical Commission

Ken Reddig reported that the Centre for MB Studies and Mennonite Heritage Centre share the *Mennonite Historian* and employ Conrad Stoesz. Susan Huebert helped get the data base straightened out. There are 15 other volunteers who help keep things running.

Among other things, Otto Klassen has asked them to distribute his films and Abe Dueck is writing a Global Mennonite Brethren history. The Profile series continues to come out 4 times a year. In addition, members are planning also a symposia and a Festschrift for Katie Funk Wiebe. Some plans are in place to mark the 150th anniversary of the MB in Canada in 2010. Finally, Ken announced his retirement, although he may well keep up with historical commission work.

9.8 Mennonite Books

The inventory at Mennonite Books has decreased. Mennonite Heritage Village Bookshop will be offering special orders and keep a good inventory of best sellers.

10. Financial Statement

Richard presented the MHSC statement of financial position and operations.

11. Budget M/S/C Richard/Alf

12. Appointment of an auditor

Richard reported on the high expense of an audit, the last one costing \$2300.00. He explained that we need to do an audit because we are incorporated through Incorporations Canada. He would like to explore with a corporate lawyer the pros and cons of dissolving corporation status to find out what sort of liability this might mean.

Recommendation: That the MHSC give the executive the power to act on this matter of financial audit. M/S/C Bob Strong/Peter Penner

The above motion was withdrawn, the general consensus being that if any decision is made, it will be made by the full board.

13. Report of the Nominations Committee and elections

The committee, which consisted of David Giesbrecht and Maurice Martin, recommended the following officers for 2008-2009:

President: Sam Steiner

Vice-President: Roy Loewen

Secretary: Lucille Marr

Treasure: Richard Thiessen

Member at Large: Alf Redekopp

M/S/C David and Maurice/Victor

Moved that nominations cease: Jake/Bob M/S/C

14. Appointment of a Nominations Committee

Ken Reddig and Maurice Martin will be invited to serve in this capacity next year.

15. Dreaming of Future projects

In 2013, Mennonite Central Committee Canada will celebrate its 50th anniversary. Ken will pursue possibilities for a writer for a history of MCCC.

16. New business.

The society thanked Ken for his hard work in chairing and planning these annual meetings.

Ken reported on new Human Rights Committee related to Manitoba Mennonite Historical Committee. **Recommendation: That the MHSC executive be empowered to investigate the feasibility of appointing a member from the MHSC to the above committee. M/S/C Bert/Roy**

17. Adjournment.

The next annual meeting will be held in Montreal, on January 23-24, 2009.