



Menno-gespräch

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Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario

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Words of welcome



Alice Koch

From the Society...

To succeed in doing something new or to reach an anticipated goal is cause for celebration for an organization as well as for an individual. So the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario is celebrating arrival at the goal of printing our own bulletin.

For some time we have realized that a bulletin or newsletter would be an asset to our society. It will be a vehicle for providing information for our members of plans of future activities, for reporting what has been done and for recording items of historical interest to the Mennonites of Ontario. The newly formed genealogy committee will also share family histories with those who are interested in that area of historical research.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Society, I would like to thank members of the Newsletter Committee—Sam Steiner, Eben Cressman and Helen Freeman—for their interest in this project and for their willingness to give their time and abilities to it. I look forward to future issues of *Menno-gespräch*, hoping that you too will find it enjoyable and profitable.—Alice Koch, President, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario.

From the editor...

As editor I also extend a welcome to readers of *Menno-gespräch* (Menno-conversation).

This bulletin has several objectives; only time and the help of our constituency will declare whether they are fulfilled.

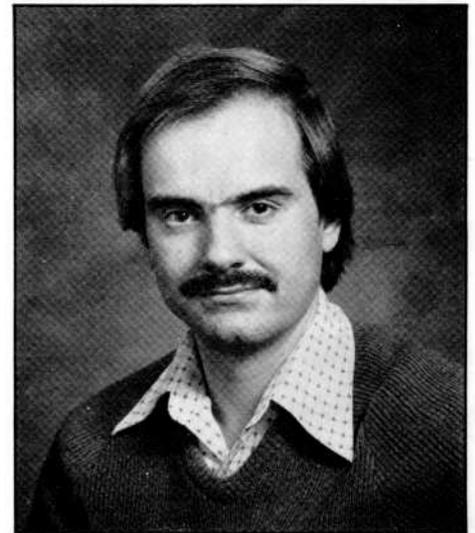
(1) The focus is Mennonites in Ontario. We hope to find a balance between Mennonites of Dutch and Swiss descent, and deliberately selected a title that would not give either group pre-eminence. This will not always be easy—most of our society's present membership is of Swiss background, and the articles in our initial issue reflect this. We solicit items that will help balance this.

(2) We hope to publish materials and review publications not found in other Mennonite periodicals. The item reviewed in this issue published by Isaac Horst of Mt. Forest, Ontario, is an excellent example of this intent. We ask our readers to bring similar publication ventures to our attention.

(3) We wish to give serious attention to those with genealogical interests in Ontario Mennonite families. Cemetery records gathered by the newly formed Genealogy Committee of the Historical Society will be one type of publication in this section. We are especially pleased that Lorraine Roth has consented to write a continuing column based on her vast experience in genealogical research.

We solicit your suggestions and criticisms on our initial issue; we plan the next to be published in the fall, and if all goes well will proceed on a quarterly basis in 1984.

Numerous articles in this issue highlight divisions within the (Old) Mennonite Church in Ontario during the last century. What happened in Ontario was also seen throughout the Mennonite Church—we hope you find it interesting.—Sam Steiner, Editor.



Sam Steiner

From the Genealogy Committee...

The Genealogy Committee and this newsletter both have the distinction of having just been "born." The goals of the committee are to provide inspiration for persons interested in genealogy, give opportunity to share information and to help each other in the task of researching and compiling our family histories. Our first public meeting certainly was inspirational as you will gather from Frank Epp's address reprinted in this issue. In subsequent meetings we hope to combine both inspiration and method.

We consider ourselves very fortunate to have space in this publication to share our interests and information. We invite readers to discuss their genealogical projects with us. We hope that the printing of family records, lists, documents, etc. and the sharing of ideas on how and where to collect information, will prove beneficial to all of us.—Lorraine Roth, Chairperson of the Genealogical Committee.

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The Mennonite Community at Port Elgin

by Lorna L. Bergey

The 1982 field trip of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario affords us a bird's eye view of the Swiss Mennonite mosaic found in Ontario. The mosaic was created by a few unfortunate divisions which have occurred within the Mennonite family since 1874. Considering the potential numerical growth of this Mennonite Church in Ontario of 1840, our membership is only a remnant of what it might have become in the absence of divisions and splinters.

Migration to Port Elgin

By the middle of the last century the land in Waterloo County was practically all occupied, and developed land was becoming expensive. Since farming was considered the way of life for Mennonites at that time, and because many Mennonite families were very large, many families migrated from the Waterloo settlement and purchased unbroken tracts on land located north and northwest of the county.

In 1854 a group of Mennonites moved to Saugeen Township in Bruce County, and located near Port Elgin. Martin Eby, a



Lorna Bergey prepared the paper for the 1982 annual meeting of the society.

nephew to Bishop Benjamin Eby, joined this group with his family of ten children.

Establishing a Congregation

Within four years of locating in this new settlement, a Mennonite congregation was organized—on August 8, 1858. At this time Martin Eby was ordained as deacon and his 24 year old son, Solomon, was ordained to the ministry. Solomon Eby had joined the Mennonite Church before leaving Waterloo County as a young man 19 years of age.

As a preacher Eby took his duties seriously and held services every week, though this was not the usual custom of the time.¹ In the Waterloo settlement services were held at most meetinghouses once every two or three weeks. On intervening Sundays it was the custom to attend services of a



Port Elgin church

neighboring Mennonite congregation. Probably the distance of the Port Elgin congregation from other Mennonite meetinghouses was a determining factor in Eby's decision to hold services every week. The work at Port Elgin prospered under Eby's leadership, and a meetinghouse was erected around 1861.

About this time the young minister began to experience doubts about his personal spiritual condition. He even considered giving up the ministry, but was persuaded to continue.² For the next eight years Eby felt himself unsaved, and was sure he would be lost in case of death.³ Members of his congregation began attending revival meetings held by the local Evangelical Church and became convinced the Mennonite Church fell far short of the Biblical standards. In their frustration they came to their minister for help only to find that he was equally dissatisfied with his spiritual condition.

New Ways

Near the close of 1869, after serving as a minister in the Mennonite church for eleven years, Solomon Eby declared that the Lord had led him through a conversion experience. Following this experience Eby started holding weekly prayer and testimony meetings, and regular evangelistic meetings which were a complete departure from the customs of the Mennonite Church. Within six months the congregation experienced a great revival. All the church members, with two exceptions, claimed a conversion experience.

When news of these unusual events spread to Waterloo County, "the report went around that the Mennonite Church in Port Elgin had all gone Methodist."⁴ Upon receiving this disturbing news, the Mennonite conference leaders in Waterloo County were obliged to send a delegation of three ministers to visit the frontier congregation at Port Elgin.

Two of the delegates were John Bear and David Wismer. Bear, who was named leader of the delegation, had built the Wanner Mennonite meetinghouse near Hespeler in

1829, and for thirty years had served that congregation as a minister. He was known to be a diligent student who read extensively.⁵

After a thorough investigation of the Port Elgin congregation's revival experience the three visiting ministers were impressed with the new movement and returned to Waterloo County with a favorable report.

Reactions in Waterloo

Waterloo County Mennonites received the report with mixed reactions. There were as many opposed to the new movement as were ready to endorse it, while a third segment took a neutral stance and attempted to achieve reconciliation. Church leadership seemed generally to be against the new movement.⁶ It is of interest to note that the Port Elgin converts received instruction on Mennonite doctrine and discipline from Solomon Eby, and were baptized by Bishop Joseph Hagey of Waterloo County. According to the Elias Eby diary, Solomon Eby continued to occupy the pulpit at Eby's meetinghouse in Berlin as a visiting minister.

The Mennonite church in Waterloo County especially experienced difficulty in accepting the more youthful members of Eby's baptismal class. To them it smacked of infant baptism—a very non-Mennonite practice. Likewise, the ringing testimonies of the converts on their complete assurance of salvation sounded like boastfulness. The Mennonites felt strongly that only God could know the spiritual condition of man, and know for sure whether a man was saved. For the Mennonites, man while in the flesh could

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only hope and work out his salvation with fear and trembling.

Both testimony meetings, which tended to be of a lively nature, and the participation of women were considered disorderly. Since the testimony meetings became an integral part of the prayer meetings, the prayer meeting itself became suspect, even though a conference resolution passed as early as 1847 permitted a minister to conduct prayer meetings. The permission was granted with the admonition "that those members who favour prayer meetings and those who did not were to exercise love and forbearance toward each other."⁷

In the course of serious attempts by conference leaders to effect a reconciliation between Solomon Eby and the rest of the ministers in Waterloo County, Eby expressed a defiant attitude when he declared that he would follow his convictions regardless of the Mennonite Church and her officials.⁸

Separation take place

Finally, at the annual conference of the Mennonite Church in 1874 it was decided that Eby and his followers were no longer members of the Mennonite Church in Canada West.

Within two months after the separation the members of the Port Elgin congregation and about half of the Wallace congregation met with quite a few members of the Bloomingdale Mennonite congregation, and under the leadership of Solomon Eby organized as the Reformed Mennonites. They were affiliated with the Reformed Mennonites in Indiana under the leadership of Daniel Brenneman.

There were leaders in the Mennonite churches in Canada and Indiana who stood midway between the aggressive and conservative camps in their respective conferences, and who sympathized to a degree with the dissatisfaction expressed by the aggressive groups about the conservative nature of the Mennonite Church. These leaders were not convinced, however, that 1874 was the time for the Mennonite Church to accept the introduction of the use of the English language, the Sunday school, revival meetings, or prayer and testimony meetings in which women fully participated.

In March, 1875 the Reformed Mennonites in Ontario and Indiana entered into union with the New Mennonite movement which was composed of members from various Mennonite congregations in York and Waterloo Counties, and were in sympathy with the positions of the Reformed Mennonites. This merger resulted in the United Mennonites, and the group adopted the Dortrecht Confession of Faith drawn up in Holland in 1632. The primary distinction between the new body and the main Mennonite body at the time was in their fervent evangelical character.

Four years later in 1879, at a special conference held at Blair, Ontario, the United Mennonites of Ontario and Indiana merged with the Evangelical Mennonites of Pennsylvania, and took the name, Evangelical

Conference affiliations of the Port Elgin Congregation

1858 - 1874 The Mennonite Church in Canada West
 1874 - 1875 Reformed Mennonite Society
 1875 - 1879 United Mennonites of the United States and Canada
 1879 - 1883 Evangelical United Mennonite Church
 1883 - 1947 Mennonite Brethren in Christ
 1947 - 1969 United Missionary Church
 1969 - Missionary Church

United Mennonite Church.

It is apparent that at this time there were quite a few Mennonite splinter groups throughout Ontario and the United States in search of other groups with mutual concerns—within another four years the Evangelical United Mennonite Church united with the Brethren in Christ Conference of Ohio and assumed the name Mennonite Brethren in Christ.

Deleting the name Mennonite

From the beginning of this last merger, serious consideration was given to dropping the Mennonite name, since it was agreed the new group's emphasis on genuine conversion differed from the Mennonite Church as a whole, as did the practice of baptism by immersion. However, in 1883 the doctrine of nonresistance was still upheld by the Evangelical United Mennonites in Ontario, and the Canadian delegates explained to the other conferences that in Canada certain exemptions from military service had been granted to all Mennonites, and they feared if the Mennonite name was not retained they would lose this exemption for their young men.⁹

Between 1883 and 1947, Mennonite Brethren in Christ leaders engaged in

opening new mission stations complained the Mennonite designation hampered their evangelical endeavors, so when they merged with the Missionary Church, another American denomination with Mennonite roots, they took the name, United Missionary Church. Since 1969 they have been known as the Missionary Church.

This recitation of events tells us about the Port Elgin congregation from the perspective of their Mennonite heritage. The building presently used by the Missionary Church there was built shortly after the formation of the United Mennonite Conference in 1875.

Notes

¹ Everek Storms, *History of the United Missionary Church* (Elkhart: Bethel Publishing Co., 1958), p. 35.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ L.J. Burkholder, *A brief history of the Mennonites in Ontario* (s.l.: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935), p. 188.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁹ Storms, p. 68.

The Wallace Township Mennonite settlement

by Melvin Buehler, Gorrie, Ontario

About 1860 Mennonite families from Waterloo County began to move into Wallace Township in Perth County, where land was available at lower cost than in the well-settled areas of Waterloo which had already been occupied for two generations.

The Wallace Township was also known as the "Queen's Bush," as there was very little clear land at that time.

When the Mennonite ministers in Waterloo County held conference in Berlin on September 9, 1864, they expressed concern about a family in Wallace where there was no church leadership. They then decided to send a preacher from Waterloo to Wallace Township every eight weeks to visit and to preach. Services were held in private homes in the community, where by 1868 there were at least eight Mennonite families scattered in Wallace and Howick Townships, near the Perth-Huron County line.

In 1869 Montezuma Brothers donated

land situated on Concession 7 of Wallace Township, near the county line where the corners of Howick Township in Huron County and Minto Township in Wellington County meet. Brothers hired his son-in-law, a building contractor by the name of Jim Hargrove, to erect the church building. He then presented it to the Mennonites with a statement that this building should be held in perpetuity for the Mennonites to hold their worship services. This place is known as Brotherston in honour of Montezuma Brothers, who was the postmaster of the little hamlet which also consisted of a store, several houses, and a sawmill constructed and operated by Menno Shoemaker. The sawmill which was water-powered from the spring creek was located on a corner of the farm presently owned by Lorne Behrnes.

Isaac Weber was ordained as minister for the group in 1869, and served faithfully until his death in 1892. Levi Martin was ordained

as deacon in the same year on October 1869. He had married Elizabeth Schaefer early that year on January 24, and the newly-weds had moved to Wallace from St. Jacobs in the spring. On December 22, 1869 Levi's daughter, Elizabeth, was born, and three days later his wife, Elizabeth, died. She was one of the first burials in Brotherston. Around 1960 her descendants exhumed her remains and buried her at the Conestogo Meetinghouse at Three Bridges near St. Jacobs. After Elizabeth's death, Levi married Barbara Gingrich. He moved his family back to Woolwich Township in Waterloo County about 1884, and resided on his father's farm near St. Jacobs while serving as deacon for Conestogo.

During these years the Reformed Men-



Brotherston church

nonite, later Mennonite Brethren in Christ, movement began to flourish. It was led in the Wallace area by Solomon Eby of the Port Elgin Mennonite Church. Their differences from the (Old) Mennonite Church included the desire to have prayer meetings and Sunday school, preaching in English and evening services. This divided the Brotherston church about half and half, at a time when the total membership was only about fifty. For a time the two groups used the existing building on alternate Sundays, but this was not satisfactory for long. The new group came into possession of the church building, and the other group again held meetings in their residences.

A parcel of ground was purchased in 1882 at Kurtzville on Concession 5 of Wallace Township from David Shuh, and another church building was erected. It is a stone building, according to *History of Perth County, 1825-1902*, but is no longer standing.

This occurred as the work was becoming more and more difficult, and several families joined other congregations in the community who were stronger, like the German background Evangelical Church. Still others chose to move back to Waterloo County. It was hoped the new church at Kurtzville would save the situation. At the same time, the 1882 conference at Berlin gave authority to ordain another minister at Wallace. Isaac Hallman (1840-1901) was ordained; his wife was Nancy Bean. The same conference ordered the two Wallace ministers to serve also in Maryboro Township on Sunday

afternoons. Meetings were held in homes in this settlement about sixteen miles northwest of Elmira, but the work was discontinued about 1903. By this time both ministers had died, Isaac Weber in 1892 and Isaac Hallman in 1901.

By 1902 the site and building in Kurtzville was sold to the Evangelical Association, with the proceeds given to the Berlin church for building purposes. In 1906 this building was replaced with a red brick structure which still stands. The grounds and cemetery are well kept, and local residents refer to the old part of the cemetery as the Mennonite section. It appears to contain about 15 graves, including those of the two ministers and their wives. Other names are Bowman, Kurtz, Snyder, Shuh and Martin.

The last Mennonite burial seems to have been Nancy (Bean), wife of Isaac Hallman; she died in 1909.

Meanwhile the first church building located in Brotherston was held by the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, now Missionary Church, and they held services there for approximately 100 years. In 1972 the church was closed, with the remaining members joining the Mission Church at Palmerston. The Brotherston church was sold to Bishop Abram Smith, formerly of Markham, who then commenced to hold services for the Markham-Waterloo Conference Mennonites who were moving into the area from Waterloo County and Markham Township in York County. Today they are a thriving congregation, and services are held regularly. They have improved the cemetery considerably, and a number of Mennonite burials have taken place in recent years, including Bishop Smith in 1980. At present John Drudge is the minister and Ibra Martin is deacon.

Sources:

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Horst, Isaac. *Up the Conestogo* (Mt. Forest : Isaac Horst, 1979).

Perth County Archives, Stratford, Ontario.

Interviews with Della Trietz (granddaughter of Isaac Hallman) and Wilfrid O. Shoemaker (great grandson of Montezuma Brothers).

Book Review

Elias Eby Diary, 1872-78, translated with notes by Isaac Horst, (Mt. Forest, Ont. : Isaac Horst, 1982), 59 pp. \$3.00.

by Eben C. Cressman

The original diary was handwritten in three neat columns, using German—daily weather observations, visitors' register and miscellaneous. To avoid using unnecessary and uninteresting repetition Horst has entered the first month, March 1872, in its entirety and for the remaining months has used only the entries he deems significant.

The diary was written after Elias Eby, second son of Bishop Benjamin Eby, had retired from the milling business in Bridgeport, where he continued to live. It is important to remember that the diary was a personal record not intended for publication.

Three main themes can be traced throughout. One of these dealt with the church. Elias attended the Benjamin Eby Church (now First Mennonite), but also visited other Mennonite churches since a rotation system was then in vogue. The use of both German and English did not seem to bother him, but the question of disunity in the brotherhood was most unsettling. During this period the "New Mennonites" were preaching "conversion" in what Elias considered a rather flamboyant fashion, not adhering to their sacred baptismal vows to observe the rules and regulations of the Mennonite church.

But a theme Elias felt good about was the help given to Russian Mennonite immigrants on their way to the Canadian West. Groups of several hundred at a time detained at Toronto. The Waterloo County Mennonites took them into their houses temporarily (in one instance for the winter) and sent them on their way again loading them with provisions for the last lap of the journey.

Since there were no modern means of communication or home entertainment the number of visits with neighbours, church families and relatives was multiplied. Some of the guests stayed for several days and then continued on a tour of other visits before returning home. The railway or "cars" were used for trips to Markham, Michigan or Pennsylvania. What were the topics of conversation with your guests? The church, for one and deaths and funerals for another. Since medical science had not been developed well there were many younger people who died of "consumption" (tuberculosis), typhoid fever or infections. There were tragedies too—accidents in the woods, on the farms, by gun or drowning. The funerals were all well attended and might have a sermon in German and another in English.

For those interested in family histories and relationships there is some interest in reading this diary and its explanatory notes by Horst. I feel the general reader, geared to modern thinking, might find it boring to read page after page of meetings and visitations a hundred years ago.

The importance of genealogies

by Frank H. Epp

(Based on a talk given at the first public meeting of the Genealogical Committee of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 18 November 1982.)

Should people spend time and energy preparing genealogies? Should the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario apply some of its human and monetary resources to genealogical work? My own answers to these questions arose largely as a result of coming to terms with my own family tree.

It began, some twenty years ago, with the search for, and correspondence with, close relatives—uncles, aunts, cousins—in the Soviet Union, people whom I had never seen until a representative family group of eleven from Karaganda met us in Alma Ata, the capital of the Kazakh Republic, in the summer of 1976.

Then it became personally necessary for me to fit together all the parts of a vast family now scattered not only in Europe and Asiatic Russia but also in the Middle East, Africa, and mostly, of course, in the Americas, both North and South.

Actually, my sister, Anna Epp Ens, was already far along in this task, and at a large Epp family reunion at Leamington in 1980 she presented us all with *The House of Heinrich*, a 333-page well-illustrated hard-cover book, telling the story of my great grandfather, Heinrich Epp (1811-1863) of Rosenort, Molotschna, and of over 3,000 other persons now linked directly, or through marriage indirectly, to his ancestry. These personal experiences have led me to reflect, not only on my family history but on genealogies in general.

In the first place, genealogies have theological meaning. This is true, of course, not just because genealogies are in the Bible but because there is a good reason for their being there.

What may that reason be? I find a probable explanation in the doctrine of incarnation, broadly understood. Again and again the Bible reminds us of the manifestations of the divine spirit in space, in time, and also in the flesh. The created world, the son of God, the people of God, the kingdom of God on earth are all incarnations of the divine will.

Thus, genealogies are a reminder of the fundamental human fact that the children of God are not only spiritual souls but persons in the flesh. And I find it rather interesting that Matthew begins his gospel with the declaration that his book is "the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" and that Joseph "the husband of Mary of whom Jesus is born" is an indispensable link in that genealogical chain. In other words, for Matthew it was essential that Jesus "who is called Christ" be inseparably linked to the human race through genealogical



Frank Epp

continuity.

There is an ongoing debate among us Mennonites concerning the merits or demerits of ethnicity in our spiritual pilgrimage and churchly identity. In this regard, I would suggest that the biblical genealogies and genealogies in general represent some food for thought.

Secondly, genealogies have historical meaning. To the extent that we love history we must also be interested in genealogy.

Genealogies, like chronologies, can, of course, be very shallow histories. Mere dates and facts are at best the skeletal framework of history, and no historian can be satisfied with bones and frames. To these must be added the stuff of historical life, namely flesh and blood, heart and brain, soul and personality.

The words of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Carlyle come to mind. Said the former, "There is properly no history, only biography." And the latter: "The history of the world is but the biography of great men."

A more contemporary version of Carlyle would leave out "great men" because we no longer accept that proper history can be written only in terms of the leaders—monarchs, presidents, prime ministers, generals—but that it must be written also in terms of all the people.

Thus, genealogies, and the biographies

related thereto, are essential elements of the larger historical task.

Genealogical work can also have broad sociological meaning. The information that is uncovered in family-related research can be quite fascinating and instructive.

Consider for instance the great variety of names, including non-traditional surnames, which appear in genealogical research and which speak not of a static but of a dynamic ethnicity. The index of *The House of Heinrich*, for instance, reveals a whole new set of beautiful names, which are not a part of the Epp family, names like: Aitchison, Babcock, Bloomquist, Borodawka, Carlson, Coleman, DeVries, Elliot, Foster, Gingerich, Hawkins, Iwanowna, Javonski, Krasnoba, MacInnis, Miedermeise, Orsulak, Rychliwski, Salzman, Szozda, Swanson, Usov, Van de Ham, Wachitewa, Xaxthopaulos, Ysseldyk and Zimmerman. There are many more like that.

Religious affiliations produce another wide spectrum: among the *Freundschaft* are not only all kinds of Mennonites, denominationally speaking, but also all kinds of Christians, as well as persons related to other faiths.

The vocational distribution includes virtually all the possibilities ranging from the traditional occupation of farming to freelance artistry with all conceivable professions and business occupations in between.

Genealogical work has psychological meaning. It can contribute to a stronger sense of identity, in a number of ways.

In a recent issue of *Newsweek*, Lorraine Dushy, a mother who had been reunited with a child she had previously given up for adoption, writes about this problem. According to her, child psychiatrists have established that children who know their genetic roots have much better prospects in life.

People who don't know where they come from don't easily know who they are and where they are going. Thus, the strongest case against test-tube babies, sperm banks, and surrogate motherhood lies in a child's need and right to know the genetic connection.



Rosenort, Molotschna, and of over 3,000
Seven of the ten sons of Heinrich Epp, great grandfather of Frank Epp.

Contributing to identity is also family unity. I agree with Angela Files of Brantford, one of Ontario's outstanding genealogists, that "genealogy is a form of bringing family members together." Other psychological values of genealogical work could be cited, but space does not permit.

Genealogical work also has soteriological value. This means that it can be part of the work of salvation and redemption.

Helmut Epp did what we all must keep on doing, being actively and compassionately curious about our human relatives. Helmut had a crippled Uncle Cornelius, who had 'lost' himself in Chicago, because when he was ready to marry, "the mother of his beloved was not happy to have a cripple for a son-in-law."

The story continues that he was deeply hurt and became estranged from his family, having never been close to anyone. For years Cornelius felt that he was unwanted, the black sheep of his family. Helmut didn't feel that way, and he made a deliberate effort to be his uncle's friend. He was the only one and the last one to visit Cornelius in his one-room Chicago apartment before he died in loneliness, with funeral arrangements by the City of Chicago.

Genealogical work can thus connect us to the people who are nameless, faceless, and also friendless.

Genealogical work also has something to do with eschatology. It is related to the future, namely to human destiny. In other words, one's progenitors are related to one's posterity.

As I was preparing this article, the Middle East was again very much in the news and particularly the controversial Defence Minister of Israel Ariel Sharon. I could not help but go back to an evening in 1977 when both of us spent an evening together in the northern border town of Metulla. I showed him my book on *The Palestinians*, and he told me about the necessity of solving the Palestinian question not by relating Palestinians to Israelis but by separating them, preferably with the Jordan River.

I reminded him that Jews and Arabs were tribal cousins and suggested to him the following: "Why don't you trace your genealogies back to Moses and remember that he married an 'Arab', a Midianite. Trace it back to Jacob and know that Jacob had a twin brother who went with the 'Arabs'. Trace it back to Isaac and discover that he had a brother by another mother who went and married the 'Arabs'. And trace back to Abraham and you'll find that you are both of the same semitic tribes, and that, to the extent that you fight each other, you are both anti-semitic."

If the peoples of the Middle East would go into their past they might also find their future. To some extent at least it is that way with all of us.

Genealogical work, finally, is creativity, indeed a form of artistry, and it also has recreational value.

In my examination of family trees, I was struck with the number that had actually been constructed, literally, as trees, drawings of trees, complete with roots, a trunk, main branches, lesser branches, twigs, and perhaps even leaves, all representing families and the individual members thereof.

Beyond the artistry of sketches and drawing, genealogical work is by itself an art for it involves the discovering of the parts of many families, the clear identification and exact transcription of all the details pertaining thereto and, last but not least, the inter-connection of all the parts.

Careful research usually also uncovers most fascinating and extra-ordinary episodes in family history, the stuff

of drama, novels, poetry, perhaps even films.

All of the foregoing suggests that the construction of genealogies is difficult work, and it is. It must be done with great care and a sense of responsibility, because genealogy as theology, as history, as psychology, as sociology, as soteriology, as eschatology, and as artistry makes it a serious enterprise.

Genealogical work is also simple, because, as in the building of a house, one does it a brick at a time, a person at a time, a date at a time. Thus everybody can do it, beginning with one's own immediate family. Everybody can turn it into a hobby and everybody can discover that genealogies are fascinating and that they are fun.

The Amish Mennonite settlement in Howick Township, Huron County from 1957-1978: a recollection

by Melvin Buehler

In 1957 there started a migration of "plain people" to Howick Township in Huron County. They came from the United States, and most were farmers. Their transportation was horse and buggy, and they also worked their farms with horses. They had no electricity in their homes or barns. However I do remember that they allowed themselves the luxury of a telephone, located down at the crossroads where it was accessible to all who wanted to phone out.

They migrated mostly from the state of Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, and some from Missouri. At the settlement's peak they numbered 35 families. The group identified itself as Amish Mennonite, differing slightly from the Old Order Amish who do not use the term, "Mennonite."

These are a people used to pulling up stakes and moving. This soon evidenced itself again as some were soon on their way out to try other areas back in the States, while there continued to be a steady stream of new families moving into the community. In total there must have been 60 families who came and went in a twenty year period. While in Howick Township they held their worship services in private homes, and established several private schools for their children. When the Ontario Milk Marketing Board demanded that all milk needed to be cooled in bulk tanks which were powered by electricity, the exodus back to the States seemed to increase, and by 1978 the last families moved away—all but Alvin and Mary Yoder and their youngest children. Alvin and Mary had both been married before with large families. They each lost their spouse by death in 1973, when in their early forties. They were then married. Presently the Yoders attend the Brethren in Christ church in Fordwich.

In a quiet spot beside the lake adjoining the hamlet of Lakelet, the Amish Mennonites obtained a parcel of ground where they laid their departed loved ones during the duration of the settlement. It is adjoining the

old Lakelet cemetery but is divided from it by a fence and has a separate driveway. There is a hitching rail for tying up the horses.

One Amish Mennonite grave is in the old cemetery—that of 19 year old Monroe Beachy. This burial took place in 1963, which must have been before they had their own burial ground. In their cemetery one finds names like Mast, Yoder, Coblenz, Beachy and Hershberger. Simon Hershberger son of Levi and Sarah, drowned in the Maitland River on July 24, 1973 at the age of 17.

This cemetery is now in the care of a new group of horse and buggy Mennonites who have moved into the area beginning in late 1978, and who now number about 18 families. They also hold services in their homes. They come from the Linwood area in Waterloo Region, and are known as the Elam Martin group. John Sherk has been ordained as their bishop.

Inquiries

This space is reserved for inquiries about Ontario Mennonite families and their ancestry. Submissions by society members are welcome.

Detweiler Allan R., R.R #2, West Montrose, Ont. N0B 2V0. Research is being done on the descendants of Benjamin Weber (1786-1863) born near Blue Ball, Pa. and married to Veronica Martin (1784-1859). In 1817 they moved to Canada. Their descendants include the families of Bishop Elias Weber (1834-1909) m. Mary Shoemaker; Andrew Weber m. Veronica Shantz and lived at Didsbury, Alberta; Mary Weber m. Moses Devitt; Benjamin Eby m. Hannah Kraft and lived at Caledonia, Mich.; Veronica Weber m. Jacob Kinzie (1848-1922); and Barbara Weber m. Isaac Stauffer. Information on any of the above families and their descendants would be appreciated. Future publication is anticipated.

Genealogy—Where does one begin?

by Lorraine Roth

People who became involved in genealogy usually do not ask this question. They have begun because something sparked their curiosity, they plunged in right there and captured the interest of the moment. From then on they simply followed the leads and got carried away. I would like to sort out here the two main directions one goes in doing genealogy, because a few people do ask, "Where does one begin?" And, for those of us who are already in it, we may do well to take stock so we can evaluate where we are going.

I am going to suggest that a likely place to begin is with one's self. You place yourself and your spouse in the middle of a page. (See accompanying chart) To the right you list your children in a column with ample space between them. To the right of your children you list their children (your grandchildren), and your great-grandchildren in still another column. On the left of yourself you list your parents and those of your spouse. In the second column (from right to left) list your grandparents and those of your spouse, then your great-grandparents and so on. You will notice that the left side of the page will have a set number of people. That is why it is easy to manufacture ancestral charts. It is not possible to make neat pre-fabricated charts for one's descendants, because each family is unique. Your list on the right will continue to have additions, whereas the one on the left remains static. It can, of course, be extended backwards as new information becomes available, but the information once attained will not be altered (unless discovered to be incorrect, or course). If you are in the same position as I am, then the right-handed side will be blank. You might put your parents in the middle and chart their descendants on the right. Since I have only one brother, I would probably put my grandparents in the middle to make the right-hand



Lorraine Roth

side more challenging.

Some people begin with the desire to publish a family history. This point of departure has some advantages but also has many pitfalls. If one begins with the idea of publishing, he/she is more likely to gather the data in a more systematic fashion. If information is gathered and the decision to publish is made later, frequently it needs to be done over and may cause a great deal of irritation.

The main problem with deciding to publish too quickly is that people are unaware of the work and time involved. Those who agree to do the work may lack the skills, the time and perhaps even sufficient interest—and it takes a lot of all of these to bring such an undertaking to completion. If a project is expected to take a year, and it lengthens out to five or even ten, the person or persons working at it become weary, and the family expecting a book becomes critical and disillusioned. The end result is likely to be a book of very poor quality.

When I became interested in genealogy

almost 35 years ago, my starting point was usually the immigrant to Canada. Since at that time I had no access to background records, I was working entirely with the descendant aspect of the genealogy. I have since discovered that frequently the immigrant's parents (or at least one parent) and his brothers and sisters had also come, but people's memories were very hazy on how these families were connected, and the written records (what few there were) were well hidden in attics and cellars.

Since I worked on my own, I could also work at my own speed and could produce a book whenever I felt I had gathered sufficient information to warrant it. If I were publishing the book I completed 20 years ago now, it would be quite different. I would have much more background material for the immigrant. Needless to say, there would be even more of an explosion on the descendant's side. Should I have waited 20 years? Hardly! One begins *now*. Had I not done the Jacob Brenneman family 20 years ago, I would never had reached the point I am at now. However, I would like to encourage people to use every resource at hand. For example, do not be satisfied with listing the descendants only if you can also find the ancestors. What a pity to tell only half the story!

Sources of information are many, and vary a great deal depending on one's family background. One source, the one I consider the most important, and the one which we all have, is our own family. Assuming you begin with yourself, then your oldest living ancestors are your best source. If no ancestors are living, but any of their brothers and sisters are, then contact them. More distant relatives or friends of your ancestors may also be helpful.

Next issue: How to collect and record information from family and friends.

