

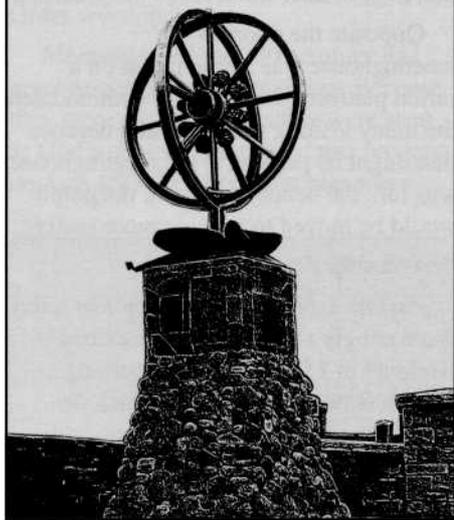
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Church and Community Life of Waterloo Mennonites in the 19th Century

by Barbara Draper

The church and community life of Old Order Mennonites today is very similar to that experienced by Mennonites in the 19th century. Their patterns of worship, their attitude toward membership, their family structures and many other aspects of life are a continuation of those of previous generations. The Old Order community of today gives many insights into the Mennonite world of 150 years ago.

I was raised in the Markham-Waterloo Mennonite conference which has been very beneficial in helping me understand how Old Order Mennonites view life. It's quite different from the modern, individualistic, scientific approach of today's society. I am also fortunate that my elderly parents have good memories and are interested in history. They have been an important resource.

Another crucial resource is an English translation of a book compiled by Benjamin Eby called *A Concise Ecclesiastical History and Doctrinal Theology of the Mennonites*. This book has been so important to the Mennonites of this area that it has been reprinted many times and is still used regularly in traditional Mennonite denominations. (More recent issues have the title *Origin and Doctrine of the Mennonites*.) In 1841, Bishop Benjamin Eby wrote down how baptisms, communion, ordinations, excommunication and weddings should be conducted. This part of the book became a kind of ministers' manual and gives us a glimpse of how these people worshiped.

Another important source of 19th century Mennonite life is a letter written in 1841 by Jacob Krehbiel. Sometime around 1830, Krehbiel, a Mennonite from Germany, moved to the United States and settled in the Buffalo, New York area where he later became a bishop. In 1841 he wrote a long letter to his relatives back in Germany. Because he was a church leader, he did a good deal of travelling to different areas such as Pennsylvania and Ontario. We can learn a great deal about the Mennonites of the Waterloo area from his detailed descriptions.

The Mennonites who arrived in the Waterloo region in the early 19th century were primarily descendants of Swiss Mennonites. By the late 1600s, due to renewed persecution, they were moving into the Palatinate, a region in Germany along the Rhine River. Many lived in this area for the next 100 years. It is here that they picked up the local dialect which we call Pennsylvania German or Pennsylvania Dutch. This German dialect became the primary spoken language for Mennonites in Waterloo County in the 19th century.

By the early 1700s, many of these Mennonites moved to eastern Pennsylvania where they had religious freedom. Without special religious taxes and restrictions on land ownership, they began to prosper. When land in Pennsylvania became too expensive to afford a large farm for each son, they began to look elsewhere for good land. A large, prosperous, Mennonite settlement was established in Waterloo County by the mid-1800s.

The Mennonite pioneers in the Waterloo area did not come as rugged individualists. They tended to travel in groups of families in a caravan of Conestoga wagons. This was not the Ingalls family from *Little House on the Prairie*. For example, in the spring of 1807, Benjamin Eby and his new bride, Mary Brubacher travelled to the Waterloo area. With them came Benjamin's sister, Barbara, and her husband, Joseph Schneider. (These were the original Schneiders of the Schneider Haus museum.) Travelling with these two families were a few other Eby families, relatives of Benjamin and Barbara.

When they got here, there was extended family to welcome them. John and Sam Bricker had arrived five years earlier and they were uncles to Barbara



Barbara Draper

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and Benjamin. John Erb, the founder of Preston, who had settled there two years previously, was an uncle to Benjamin's wife, Mary. Joseph Schneider was joining two of his brothers, Christian and Jacob, who had travelled to Canada one year earlier. Most of the families who made up the Waterloo community were inter-related in this way. In fact, it was not at all uncommon to have two or three siblings marrying members of the same family.

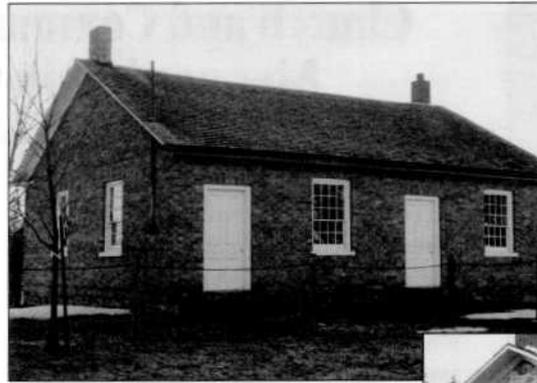
Although Mennonites from Pennsylvania bought most of Waterloo and Woolwich townships as large blocks, there is no indication that this land was intended to be exclusively for Mennonites. From the beginning, parcels were resold to non-Mennonites. As they did in Pennsylvania, the Mennonites of Waterloo lived beside neighbours from a variety of denominations.

Congregations

Within a few years, the Mennonites had well-organized church services. They never had difficulty in finding ministers because they simply chose someone from among themselves. Benjamin Eby became a minister two years after he arrived in Canada, when he was 24 years old. Three years later, he became the first bishop, or overseer, of the area. His leadership was crucial in developing a strong Mennonite community.

The term "congregation" does not fit easily into the Mennonite situation. In many ways, the cluster of churches under one bishop was a congregation. On another level, families had a special connection to their local meetinghouse group. When services were held in the local meetinghouse, that's where you attended, but most places of worship had services only every two weeks or once every four weeks. In outlying areas it was once every eight weeks. If there was no service in your local area, you had the opportunity to worship at another location, a practice which provided much interaction and visiting within the larger community. The church leaders met together at least twice a year and saw themselves as a leadership team.

Those living in the immediate geographical vicinity of a meetinghouse had important ties to each other. This was the primary group of neighbours who



*The Altona meetinghouse near Stouffville, Ontario.
Photo credit: Barbara Draper*

were responsible to help each other in time of need. If financial help was needed, it was organized through the local deacon. It was expected that neighbours would help each other in the event of illness, a funeral, barn-raising or whenever assistance was needed. When communion was celebrated, it was usually held in each meetinghouse for the members of that primary group.

In the early part of the century, travel was predominantly by foot or on horseback. It was only later in the century that farmers could afford lightweight wagons and extra horses for travel. In those days of limited communication, you never knew when company would show up at the door. Visitors to your local meetinghouse might show up some time on Saturday.

Meetinghouse Architecture

Early meetinghouses often functioned as both schools and places of worship. The early ones were built with logs, and their use was fairly flexible, but by the 1830s and 40s, the meetinghouses were more permanent. In 1834 a new framed, clapboard building, used exclusively for worship, was built on the site where First Mennonite Church in Kitchener is now located. Soon other meetinghouses were built; some were framed and other made of brick or stone. The furnishings were also more permanent, with benches fixed to the floor.

The Altona church, near Stouffville, Ontario, appears much like it did when it was built in 1852. This was the typical style of the day with two entrances facing the road. The door on the left was for women and enters into a cloakroom. The door at the right is for men and enters directly into the worship area. All meetinghouses were built in this style. Later, the larger ones also had doors at

each end.

The Detweiler meetinghouse near Roseville, Ontario, built in 1855, has been restored to its original appearance. The Old Order meetinghouses of today have the same appearance except that they are larger. On the men's side of the meetinghouse there were pegs suspended from the ceiling where the men could hang their hats. An alms box hung beside the men's door when a special collection was announced.

In the early years the open-backed pews or benches in the meetinghouses were not much different from other churches of the time. The Mennonites had tiered benches so that people sitting in the back row would have a good view. This idea may have been borrowed from the Quakers as other denominations were more apt to raise the level of the preacher.

Opposite the doors of the meetinghouse was a long pulpit on a raised platform. Its length accommodated the many visiting preachers and deacons that might be present. If the meetinghouse was full, the bench in front of the pulpit would be moved to provide more seating.

Worship Services

An Old Order worship service of today is amazingly similar to that described by Krehbiel in 1841. A Sunday morning service is two hours long and includes two sermons, two or three hymns, and two prayers. Krehbiel doesn't mention



*The Detweiler meetinghouse near Roseville, Ontario, built in 1855.
Photo credit: Barbara Draper*

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toward the end of the century indicate that was the common practice. Even today, Old Order Mennonites stand, turn around and kneel at the benches for the two prayers during the service.

So that everyone could sing from the same book, Benjamin Eby organized the collection and publication of a new hymnal for the Waterloo Mennonites in 1836. *Die Geminschaftliche Liedersammlung* was a collection of about 200 German hymns. Only a very few were the old martyr hymns from the *Ausbund*. Like other hymnals of the time, it had words only. Most of the songs had many verses, but they didn't necessarily sing them all.

It was the responsibility of the song leader to know the tune for each song and to lead the singing. The song leader, always male, sat in the middle of the congregation. There was no accompaniment and the song leader had nothing but his voice to establish the pitch and tempo. Later in the century the song leaders had access to the *Philharmonia* a songbook with tunes. Later editions of the *Liedersammlung* had codes to tell the song leader which tunes fit the rhythm for the various hymns.

Mennonites in the 19th century sang in unison and fairly slowly compared to the tempo we are accustomed to today. In the later part of the century singing schools were popular in Canadian society, but traditional Mennonites discouraged this new idea for a while. It wasn't until the early 20th century that Mennonites sang in four parts on Sunday mornings. In the 20th century the Old Orders learned to sing in four parts using English songs, but singing in harmony is not used for Old Order worship.

Mennonites of the 19th century had great respect for their ministers. Because they were chosen by lot, they were seen as God's choice. They based this process on Acts 1:23-26 where Matthias was

chosen by lot as one of the twelve to replace Judas. The congregation was involved in nominating good candidates, but the final choice was done by putting a slip of paper into one of several identical books. The candidate who chose the book with the slip of paper was regarded as God's choice.

Sometimes only one person was nominated and that was seen as appropriate, but it was not considered appropriate to decline a nomination. One of the promises made at the time of baptism was that if God called you to the ministry you would accept. The women promised to accept the role of minister's wife if that was an assignment given by God.

Baptism

For 19th century Mennonites, baptism was central to their understanding of "church" because the church includes only those who have made a conscious decision to be a disciple of Jesus. Membership came through baptism and members were expected to participate in communion regularly, to follow Christ's teachings and to maintain good relationships within the church the covenant community.

When a person felt ready for baptism, he or she would speak to one of the ministers. Although Eby doesn't specify that baptisms be done once a year, that became the tradition with catechism or instruction happening on Sunday afternoons in the early summer. For six weeks, the ministers would instruct the candidates basing their comments on the *Eighteen Articles of Faith of the Dordrecht Confession*. The entire class was baptized by the bishop on a Sunday morning. Water was poured from a pitcher while the candidates were kneeling.

The age of baptism seems to have varied; the average age if my ancestors seems to have been about 17 to 22 generally the girls were a year or two younger than the boys. During the 1860s

and 70s there was a concern that bishops were marrying non-members because the young people were not baptized by the time they were married. This suggests some baptismal candidates were in their 20s.

If a young person chose not to join the Mennonite church, that was viewed with dismay and sorrow, but it was regarded as a legitimate choice. While non-members were welcome to attend services, they would not be offered communion. Through the 19th century, many who grew up in Mennonite families joined Evangelical, United Brethren or other churches. On the other hand, sometimes people who grew up in other denominations joined the Mennonites.

Communion

Mennonites held communion twice a year, each spring and fall. Only baptized members who were in good standing could participate and all were expected to participate when the bishop came to the meetinghouse in the neighbourhood. The bread was cut into long strips and the bishop would break off pieces and distribute them one at a time to the members of the congregation first to the men, then to the women. During the distribution of the bread, the bishop would quote scripture passages. The wine was distributed in the same way, using an ordinary tin cup. Each time the cup was passed back to the bishop before being passed on to the next person.

Participation in communion was very important and you were expected to attend unless you were very ill. If you missed more than once or twice in succession, your membership was called into question.

At the conclusion of the service, non-members were dismissed while members stayed for a foot-washing service. Basins were set up in the main auditorium for the men and in the cloakroom for the women.

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After shoes and stockings were removed, one person sat on the bench before the basin while the other knelt down and washed and dried first one foot and then the other. The two then exchanged places. When they were finished, they took each other's right hands and kissed each other on the cheek with the kiss of peace.

Discipline

For Mennonites in the 19th century, the boundaries of the church were determined by who participated in communion. A person who was considered to have sinned without expressing repentance and asking for forgiveness was denied communion.

Before each communion service, an inquiry service was held in each meetinghouse. At the conclusion of the regular Sunday service, the bishop and minister would go the counsel room (which was also used as a women's cloakroom). Members of the congregation could go to meet with the ministers to say whether or not they were at peace with the brotherhood. If there was a concern or a complaint, that was the time to express it.

If it was a serious complaint, it would be carried to the meeting of the ministers and deacons before communion was held. If an individual was seen as having transgressed, the church leaders would decide that they should not be offered communion. Like other attempts to keep the church pure, this process of inquiry before communion tended to push any dissenters out of the church. Depending on the enthusiasm with which inquiry was conducted, it also discouraged the adoption of new ideas. Eby's guidelines stress the need for humility and the acknowledgment of a need for grace, but the practice of inquiry could also nit-pick.

The inquiry process kept the community closely bound together and was a source of control of who was "in" and who was "out." The decision was made collectively by all the church leaders. Throughout the 19th century there was a struggle between those who wanted stricter rules and those who wanted a looser "fence." If a transgressor refused to repent and confess, he or she would be excommunicated and no longer considered a member in good standing. The Mennonites in the 19th century did not use strict shunning and did not socially avoid

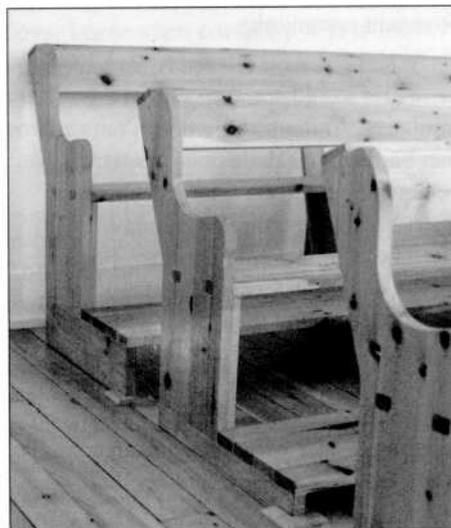
those who were excommunicated.

Church Splits

Until the 1870s, the Mennonite church in the Waterloo area was fairly homogeneous. The ministers and deacons regularly met together with church leaders in the Niagara and Markham areas.

The Daniel Hoch division had limited consequences in the Waterloo area, but by the 1870s there was growing tension as some Mennonites were attracted to the revivalist message of the Methodists and Evangelicals. The Mennonite leaders refused to encourage revival meetings and emotional conversions. They continued to teach that self-denial and submission to the community were more important than an individualistic, emotional conversion experience.

Tension grew as some ministers began to preach the revivalist message. In 1874 a conference was held in Berlin (Kitchener) where a splinter group was organized in southern Ontario for what came to be called the "New Mennonites." These "New" Mennonites quickly adopted all the revivalist ideas that had been denied them in the "Old" church.



Tiered open-backed pews or benches in the meetinghouses. Photo credit: Barbara Draper

They used prayer meetings and open-air meetings where there were reports of many conversions. Their numbers grew quickly and new churches sprang up throughout southern Ontario. These "New" Mennonites eventually dropped the name Mennonite and evolved into the present-day Missionary church.

Within ten years, things were again extremely tense in the "Old" Mennonite church. The split in 1889, which started

the Old Order church, had interesting dimensions. First of all, it was a geographical split, with most of the people north of Waterloo forming the Old Order Church and those to the south forming the Mennonite Conference of Ontario which today is part of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Community Life

Exclusivity

Until the 1830s, the Mennonites were a clear majority of the population of Waterloo region. By 1850, they were well in the minority, especially in the towns and villages. The Mennonites were rural people - town was seen as a place of temptation, while farmers were closer to God. The Mennonites never tried to establish an exclusive community geographically. When schools were established, the Mennonites worked together with non-Mennonite neighbours on school boards. They didn't hesitate to work with non-Mennonite neighbours for haying, harvesting and barn raisings.

Although there was frequent interaction at school, on road gangs, at bees and funerals, Mennonites were discouraged from becoming too involved in society. They were instructed not to join social groups outside the Mennonite church and too much involvement in politics was frowned upon. While it was very appropriate to attend a neighbour's funeral at the church of another denomination, attending morning or evening services at other denominations was discouraged. Marriage to someone outside the Mennonite church was forbidden unless the new spouse joined the Mennonites.

There was no set of codified rules, and not all church leaders had the same understanding of how church rules should be applied. The 19th century had less homogeneity than can be found in the Old Order church of the 20th century.

Family

Like other pioneer families, Mennonites expected children to pitch in and help with the work. It was customary for a young mother to have a hired girl living with the family to help with the unending household tasks and often a hired man was included if extra hands were needed on the farm. The hired girl and hired man were often teenage relatives.

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Usually hired help was Mennonite, but not always. For example, my great-great-grandmother was raised either Lutheran or Roman Catholic, but as an orphaned teenager she lived in a Mennonite home and eventually joined the church and married a Mennonite. In the later part of the century, as industry developed, sometimes young people would work in town. The church leaders tended to see employment in town as risky and tried to discourage it. People who lived in town were more apt to be drawn away from the church.

Wages were usually considered the property of the father, who in turn had the responsibility to help establish his sons on farms of their own. In many families you worked for your father until age 21. Usually men did not marry until they had a few years to make some of their own money usually they were about in their mid 20s.

The importance of family can also be seen in names. A common practice was for the first children to be named after their grandparents. Subsequent children were often named after uncles and aunts. In this way, the same name was repeated over and over again and it was common to have several people with the same name in the community. According to historian Isaac Horst, there were eight men with the name Abraham Clemens in the Waterloo area in 1860. The accepted practice was to use the mother's maiden name as a middle initial. Nicknames such as "Indian" Sam Weber, "Wagner" Dave Brubacher, "Cooper" John Brubacher or "Cheese" Jake Snyder were also common. Of course these nicknames were in the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect.

Education

Basic literacy was very important to Mennonites and they established schools very early. Within two years of their arrival, Joseph Schneider and the Eby families had established a school for their daughters as well as their sons. The Mennonites valued the ability to read and write and calculate. Many of them learned to read and write in English as well as German. But education beyond elementary school was not encouraged.

One of the delights of my research was finding a diary written by my great-great-grandfather. He was a hired man in 1866 and he wrote down what he did every day.



The Brubacher House in Waterloo. Photo credit: Mennonite Archives of Ontario

His daily activities aren't that interesting, but it is fascinating that he wrote in beautiful copperplate English with no spelling mistakes. His father's correspondence was almost entirely in German, but Levi P. Martin, educated in the 1850s, obviously found it easier to write in English than German. After the 1840s, the predominant language of education was English, but many local schools also taught German.

Conforming to the World

Mennonites believed in humility and simple living. It was considered improper to use the latest fashions in dress and in architecture. In 1876 the church leaders resolved that during home visitations they would advise against "conformity to the world in house construction, vehicles, and fashions." In the first half of the 19th century, Mennonites built their houses in the "Mennonite Georgian" or Pennsylvania style found in the Brubacher House in Waterloo or the Joseph Schneider Haus. These houses are a full two-storey with a symmetrical façade.

When some Mennonites began building their houses in the fashion of the day, using the Gothic style with fancy scrollwork and intricate designs on the bargeboard, the church leaders became concerned. They couldn't make a blanket rule that no one may live in a house with a fancy front gable because they didn't expect someone who purchased that kind of a house to tear it down.

There was also concern about vehicles that conformed to the world probably

these were lightweight buggies or a surrey with a fringe on top. By the second half of the century, Mennonite leaders also began challenging the clothes some Mennonites were choosing to wear.

Clothing

Although Mennonites were continually cautioned against following the latest dictates of fashion, in the early years they tended to wear a simplified version of what was worn in the rest of society. Through the 19th century this changed and by the 1880s, sometimes children and young people who were not yet members of the church dressed in the latest fashions and adopted "plain" dress when they were baptized.

Mennonite historians agree that Swiss Anabaptists in the 16th and 17th centuries did not dress differently from their peasant neighbours. The constant refrain through the centuries was to avoid finery and vanity. Dress became a bigger issue through the 19th century as a broader range of materials at affordable prices were available.

When the first pioneers settled in the Waterloo area, they had to make their own clothes out of wool, linen or leather. Colour was not an issue because natural dyes tended to fade to a dull brownish-grey after a few washings. There is no record that Mennonites were reluctant to use cotton fabrics when they became available. The use of synthetic dyes with a broad range of bright colours brought

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more concerns, but the convenience of better-quality dyes soon made them acceptable. The refrain from the church leaders was to avoid "all show and finery of the world." The Mennonites did not follow the Amish in forbidding all printed cloth, but they did become concerned with floral designs.

By the 1870s, sombre colours, especially black, became very popular. In those days black was not an old-fashioned colour because it was almost impossible to get a good black colour in the days before synthetic dyes. The Mennonite preference for black, navy and purple came only in the late 19th century.

Men's Clothing

Like other men in the backwoods, Mennonites in the early 19th century wore knee breeches with the lower legs covered with stockings. I could find no evidence that the move to long trousers caused major discussion. By the mid century, Mennonites, like everyone else, wore long pants. Two articles of men's clothing that did become contentious were fly-front closings on trousers and lapels on jackets. Through the 19th century, a few of the most conservative men continued to wear fall-front, or broadfall trousers rather than a fly. While we have photos of many Mennonite men wearing jackets with lapels, ministers and older men were expected to wear the old-fashioned, buttoned-up "plain" jacket with a narrow standing collar.

Women's Clothing

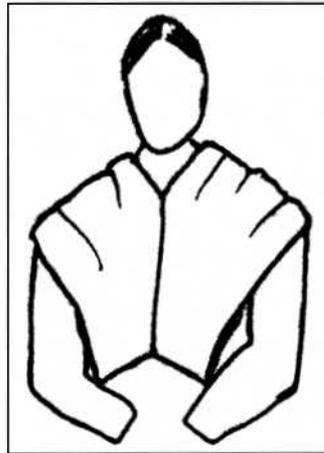
Women's clothing changed more than men's. North American working women in the 18th century wore clothes similar to the typical peasant dress from earlier centuries. Their hair was covered, they wore long aprons and covered their shoulders with a scarf that was sometimes tucked into the front of the bodice. Mennonites of the time would have worn similar dress.

Mennonite women of the 19th century kept the old cap, apron and kerchief, but they also adopted some new fashions. Probably the biggest change was the use of bonnets. There is no indication that Mennonite women wore bonnets before the early 1800s, when they became fashionable in society. They were the prevailing fashion in Europe and America until about 1840. When Mennonites did

adopt this headgear, they tended to follow the simple Quaker pattern without elaborate ribbons or floral decorations. Mennonites continued to wear bonnets long after they were no longer fashionable.

Peasant women had been wearing head coverings for centuries. Probably in the days before indoor plumbing, women washed their hair infrequently and a cap was a practical way to keep long hair as clean as possible and out of the way during working hours. By the late 18th century, indoor caps became a fashion accessory for women of the upper classes as well.

Mennonite women continued the tradition of covering their hair with a white cap, long after they were out of fashion in the rest of society. In fact, caps or coverings as they came to be called, were a contentious issue for the Mennonite church in the 20th century. The covering came to be connected with Paul's comments in I Corinthians 11.



A light-weight black shawl.



A two-pointed cape that looks almost like a collar.

Servant uniforms into the 20th century tended to keep the old peasant cap, apron and scarf. So did the Mennonites. Over the years, the neck scarf or shawl became what is today called a "cape." It is an extra covering over the upper body of women.

Some of the early photographs of Mennonite women show them wearing a light-weight black shawl - not as outdoor wear, but as part of their costume. Later photos suggest the shawl was tailored to fit the shoulders and later it was sometimes made of the same fabric as the dress. By the end of the century, some Mennonite women are wearing a two-pointed cape that looks almost like a collar.

Through the 19th century, Mennonites were constantly reminded to avoid modern fashion in clothing styles, but dress became a more contentious issue in the 20th century than it was in the 19th.

The Mennonites of the 19th century were generally old-fashioned. They tried to avoid society's concern with appearance, status and individuality. They never bought into the idea of progress, the belief that humankind has the ability to improve the world. Rather they tried to hold on to the old ways and the old ideas. They emphasized the need to submit to God and to the community.

The 20th century brought enormous change to the Mennonite Church. Most of the congregations in the Waterloo area experienced incredible change in the 20 years between 1890 and 1910. Except for the Old Order Mennonites of Woolwich township, they adopted revivalism. They dropped the German language, they began Sunday Schools, revival meetings, and mission projects in the cities. By the end of the 20th century, the Mennonites of Waterloo had moved far away from being the simple, rural people they had once been. The Old Order Mennonites of today have many more similarities to the Mennonites of the 19th century in their dress, community patterns and worship practices.

Barbara Draper lives in Elmira, Ontario. Included in her many different roles are editorial assistant of Canadian Mennonite and secretary of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario.

This article is condensed from her 2001 Edna Staebler Research Fellowship Project.

Book Review

The Plain People: A Glimpse at Life Among the Old Order Mennonites of Ontario

by John Peters, with photographs by Carl Hiebert,

(Kitchener: Pandora Press with Herald Press, 2003) 84 pages. \$14.25 for paperback.

Reviewed by Brent Bauman

Gelassenheit, a German word meaning submission and yielding to one another. Other words that help translate and explain Gelassenheit are humility, servanthood, tolerance and patience. According to John Peters, author of *The Plain People: A Glimpse at Life Among the Old Order Mennonites of Ontario* Gelassenheit is at the heart of the old order Mennonite faith and explains how they express their faith in every day life. By embracing this belief of a strong community they reject the larger society's concepts of individualism, personal goals, pride and individual rights. This also explains why they hold a strong view of maintaining tradition and to being seen as separate from the world around them.

This does not mean that the group never changes, but that new things are adopted slowly, consciously, and with a good deal of scepticism. Things are often placed into one of three categories: the accepted, forbidden, and the strongly discouraged. New technologies are often in the strongly discouraged category until the leadership, with the guidance of the entire membership, place it in one of the other categories. Over time something can change from forbidden to accepted, telephones in homes is one example.

But not all changes are accepted by all members, and those adaptations of new technologies can sometimes create divisions within this close knit community. Because there are several groups within the old order Mennonite community he only uses capital lettering when discussing the original group which is registered as the Old Order Mennonite Church. He does a good job of identifying the various old order groups. Peters briefly describes the origins and significant differences between Old Orders and the Markham, David Martins, Orthodox and Elam Martin groups. Because all hold to the belief of Gelassenheit and differ mainly in the practice of it, Peters uses the Old Orders almost exclusively to describe old order life, pointing out major differences in practice between the groups.

As the title suggests we are only given a glimpse of old order life, but in this short book John Peters manages to cover the topics of belief, worship practices, family, education, economics, view of government, mutual aid and important life events. Peters even gives a short history of the development of the Mennonite Church with its beginnings in Europe to its move to North America to escape persecution. He then explains the creation of the Old Order Mennonite Church in 1889 over disagreements of worship practices with the larger Mennonite Conference of Ontario. Though it is not meant to be the definitive work on all things to do with old order Mennonite belief and culture, it does provide the reader with a great introduction to them. You come away with a better understanding and respect for their way of life.

John Peters is professor emeritus of Sociology at Wilfred Laurier University in Waterloo. For those

who attended the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario meeting in November of 2001 at St. Jacobs Mennonite Church you are aware of his close association with many people among the old order community. Over the past twenty some years Peters has done an indepth sociological study of Old Order Mennonites. Raised in a Russian Mennonite setting he is an outsider to the old orders, but through personal contact he has developed a respect and friendship with many people and has been allowed into their homes and lives to better understand this branch of the Mennonite Church.

Aided in the telling of his findings is the photographs of Carl Hiebert, known widely for his aerial photography in books like *Gift of Wings*. Interestingly enough he too is a man of Russian Mennonite heritage who has developed a close relationship with those in the old order community. Most of Hiebert's photographs in this volume are not taken from the air in his ultra-light airplane, but on the ground and up close with his subjects. This brings the humanity of these people to life, making them more than an oddity or curiosity.

All profits and royalties from the sale of this book will go to help in the work of Mennonite Central Committee around the world.

Brent Bauman lives near Drayton, Ontario. He is editor of the Ontario Mennonite History.

People and Projects

LISTOWEL CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

On April 27, 2003 Listowel Mennonite Church marked their 40th anniversary with a Celebration and Homecoming. The theme of the morning worship service was "God's Faithfulness Continues to all Generations." Involved in the service was the Listowel Mennonite Church Choir and former pastors Amsey Martin and Brian Laverty. A noontime potluck dinner followed the service and gave time for people to admire the quilt display. The afternoon program started at 2:00 p.m. and included entertainment from various congregational members and a "Pictorial Tour of the Decades."

FAIRVIEW MENNONITE HOME

Fairview Mennonite Home, in Cambridge, celebrated their 60 anniversary with a worship service at 2:00 p.m. on April 27, 2003. Situated beside the Preston Mennonite Church, it was started as a retirement home for ministers and missionaries returning from the field. Over the years it has expanded to provide seniors with a wide range of living accommodations, from independent cottages to full nursing home care. The service took place in the facilities chapel.

NEW BOOKS IN THE WORKS

Pandora Press will soon be publishing two new books from local authors on local historical themes. The first is by Mary Schiedel. A pastor in Mennonite Church Eastern Canada herself, she has documented the beginnings of women in pastoral ministry in this province.

Pioneers in Ministry: Women Pastors in Ontario Mennonite Churches, 1973-2003 should soon be available. The second is by Donald Martin. *Old Order Mennonites of Ontario: Gelassenheit, Discipleship, Brotherhood* looks at the origins and history of several Old Order Mennonite Church groups which exist in Ontario. The groups he examines include Old Order, Markham-Waterloo, David Martin and Orthodox. An essay on this

topic won him the J. Winfield Fretz award for local historians in 1999. Another possible book in the works is by Paul Tiessen, one based on the Gordon C. Eby diaries. Tiessen was the recipient of the Edna Staebler Research Fellow Award in 2002.

DETWEILER MEETINGHOUSE EVENTS

On June 8, 2003 a special event was held at Detweiler Meetinghouse. To mark the bicentennial of the first Mennonite hymnbook published in North America, the group "Foresingers" from Lancaster, Pennsylvania held a musical program in the meetinghouse last Sunday afternoon. On September 20, 2003 the Detweiler Meetinghouse will be open to the public as part of the "Open Door" program that opens up significant historical sites around Waterloo Region. This is part of the 150th anniversary celebrations of Waterloo Region.

ADDITION TO SCHNEIDER HAUS

The Joseph Schneider Haus Museum in downtown Kitchener has added a new exhibit to its historic site. In November of 2002 a new 19th century styled woodshed and springhouse was unveiled. The springhouse was used for protecting the farm's drinking-water source and providing a place to keep food like milk, cheese and butter cool in summer. This was done by placing the food in water filled trenches along the floor. Often the butter and cheese also were made here. A common outbuilding in past centuries has now virtually disappeared from modern farms. *from The Record.*

RESCHLY REUNION

The descendants of Joseph and Anna (Schweitzer) Reschley are having a reunion on July 4-6, 2003. On October 23, 1854 Joseph and Anna set sail from France with their three daughters. They arrived in St Agatha, Ontario on December 26 at the home of Amish bishop Peter Litwiller. Later they moved to Musselburg in Perth County. Descendants Mark and Glennis Yantzi and Norma Erb Rudy are involved with the planning of the event. *from the Canadian Mennonite.*

MOLOCHNA 04

The Mennonite settlement at the Molochna Colony in Ukraine will mark the bicentennial of its establishment in 2004. Events planned so far include unveiling a memorial at the site of the former colony, and a scholarly conference in Melitopol, Ukraine. Other events are still being planned and may include a thanksgiving service in Molochansk, Ukraine and Fall events around the time of the Dnieper River Mennonite cruise. *from the Canadian Mennonite.*

Book Notes

Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, author of *A Way Was Opened: A Memoir* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2003) 376 pages, tells the remarkable journey of her life as a churchwoman, family speaker and business leader. She uses journal entries to supplement her reflections on her family and her various church roles, including a nationally syndicated radio program and pastoral work. She experienced strong encouragement from family and conference as well as harsh rejections when she became the first woman ordained in the Virginia Conference in 1989. \$38.99 for paperback.

Hurbert Schwartzenruber, author of *Jesus in Back Alleys: the Story and Reflections of a Contemporary Prophet* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press U.S., 2002) 152 pages, tells of his life of ministry from rural Ontario to the inner city. Now retired in Pennsylvania he writes of his passion for justice for people on both sides of the law. \$20.95.

Leonard Neufeldt, editor of *Yarrow, British Columbia: Mennonite Promise* (Victoria: Heritage Group of Victoria, 2002) has collected essays on the mostly Mennonite cultural history of Yarrow between 1928 and 1958. It comes in two volumes. Volume One, *Before We Were the Land's* covers the settling in the area. Volume Two, *Village of Unsettled Yearnings* shows the cultural array of the community.