

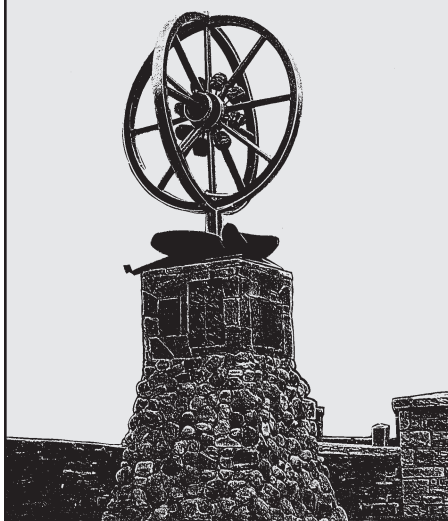
Ontario Mennonite History

THE
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Old Order daughter communities not sustainable before 1960s

By Barb Draper

At the fall meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, held at Floradale Mennonite Church on Oct. 24, 2015, Clare Frey talked about the history of the Mennonite community in the late 1800s and early 1900s, explaining why there was so little growth in the Old Order community before the 1960s. Clare is a minister and historian in the Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference and enjoys collecting information about other conservative groups. In talking about the Old Order communities in Ontario, he includes the Old Order Mennonites, the David Martins, the Orthodox Mennonites, who are all horse-and-buggy groups, as well as the Markham-Waterloo Conference.

There has been a lot of growth among Old Order Mennonites since the 1960s. This is not unique to Ontario. In Pennsylvania, 60 years ago, the horse-and-buggy Mennonites of Lancaster County were all within that county. By 2012 they had spread so much that only about a third remained in Lancaster County.

By the 1880s, Mennonites had spread throughout southern Ontario. People were moving in search of land to new communities and the church tried

to help those who moved by establishing congregations, but in the smaller, distant communities, services were infrequent and some families began attending other denominations.

The Great Awakening with its emotional religion had significant impact on Mennonite churches in Ontario, especially in the outlying areas. Clare pointed to the example of the community in Wallace Township in northern Perth County. In 1869 his great-great-grandfather was ordained as a deacon in that remote community, only to find the community dividing between traditionalists and progressives a few years later. The meetinghouse went with the progressive group so the traditionalists built a new building in Kurtzville. The traditionalist community did not prosper and Clare's ancestor moved back to the Waterloo area in 1884.

A church division is something like a tug-of-war, said Clare. When the rope breaks, both ends go flying. In the church after a split, both groups tend to move in the direction that they had been pulling for. When the Old Order Mennonite Church was created after the split in 1889, they moved in an ultra-conservative direction.



South Peel (built in 1901 west of Wallenstein), was the only new Old Order Mennonite congregation between 1889 and the 1950s. The meetinghouse was rebuilt in 1997.

~ Continued on page 2 ~

At the beginning of the Old Order church in 1889, they had 15 places of worship. There were four in the north-Waterloo area, four in the Markham area, two in the Vineland area, two in the Zurich area, two in Cayuga and one just across the border in New York State. Except for the four in the Waterloo area, they have all gone extinct. Some of these places of worship didn't even make it to 1900.

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of moving toward the core, toward the centre, rather than moving out into new communities. This happened in Pennsylvania and other communities as well as in Ontario. A mentality developed that it was dangerous to move too far away. Faithfulness meant staying close to home.

In the 1880s a group of traditionalists from Ontario moved to May City, Iowa. They had become impatient with the traditionalist-progressive struggle in the Mennonite church and were zealous about being plain. They moved to a completely new community, hoping to build a pure church. But in the end the settlement only lasted a short time and it was extinct by the early 1900s. Those who had been influenced by this Iowa migration were very negative about the idea of new settlements and that reinforced the idea that you should stay

in a viable community and not strike out to build new settlements.

Many people left the Old Order Mennonites between 1915 and 1940. The David Martin people left in 1917 due to their concern that the Old Orders were not strict enough. In the 1920s and 30s many left to attend Ontario Conference churches or the new Bible Chapel in Hawkesville. In 1930, the Old Order groups in Markham and Rainham/Cayuga stopped affiliating with the Old Order group in Waterloo and then in 1939 the Old Order church in the Waterloo area divided with the formation of the Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference.

By the 1960s the first Old Order families took a new step and moved to the Mount Forest area. Many people were skeptical, but today that community has five meetinghouses. As the Old Order church has grown, it has had to change. As a district grows too large for one bishop to handle, then it needs to be divided into more than one bishop district.

As the group has become larger they have worked to maintain a balance between the congregation and the larger community. They have maintained

Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference meetinghouses in 2015

Martins	(north Waterloo)	1830s
Elmira	(Elmira)	1850s
North Woolwich	(Floradale)	1850s

Montrose	(West Montrose)	1950
Goshen	(Drayton)	1955
Brotherston	(Listowel)	1974
Fairhaven	(Millbank)	1975
Beachburg	(Ottawa Valley)	1980
Mapleview	(Alma)	1982
Minto Grove	(Harriston)	2007
North Haven	(New Liskeard)	2010
Meadowside	(Conn)	2011

the idea of having each congregation meet only every other week so that the ministers and lay people can be visitors at other meetinghouses. Since the 1990s, many congregations have been divided so that two smaller congregations use the same meetinghouse on alternate weeks. Each year, a booklet is printed that shows where services will be held on a given Sunday.

Clare commented that these new communities are not planned by the ministers or church leaders. Rather when a viable community is established with several families, then the church leaders organize a congregation with a minister and deacon.

Maintaining Community in new locations

By Amsey Martin

The map of the communities of the Old Order Mennonite Church in Ontario (see map of Old Order communities, page 3) shows that communities beyond the original one in Waterloo have all begun since 1967. The communities of Teeswater and Dunnville did not survive long-term.

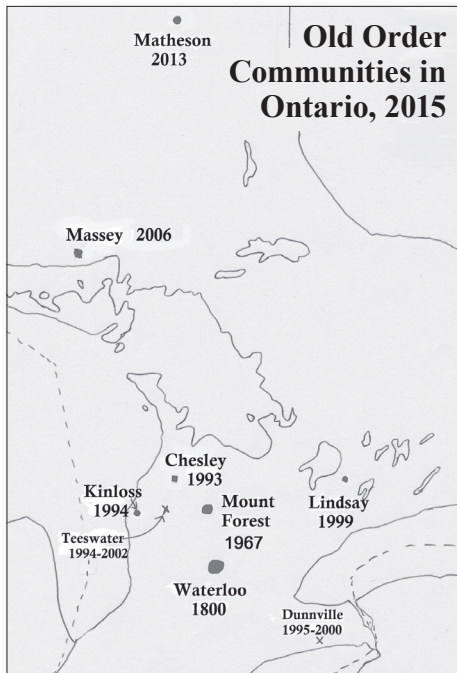
The newest community is in Matheson in northern Ontario, a new venture begun in 2013. Starting a community that far away from the rest of us is a new challenge, a test. The bears and moose are interesting, but the climate is a challenge. The move from Waterloo to Matheson, in distance, is comparable to the move 200 years ago, from Pennsylvania to Upper Canada.

The chart listing when church buildings were first built in the various settlements shows how much building has been going on in recent years. Actually, Elmadale, the last meetinghouse listed for the Waterloo settlement has not yet been built. We've run into a stone wall with the local council, but it is a complete community with ordained ministry.

The Old Order Mennonite Church was first established in 1889 when Bishop Abraham Martin led a group away from the mainstream Mennonite Church. In 1901, the South Peel church was built on what was then the western edge of the Old Order Mennonite community. Today, the Old Order community has expanded so far west geographically that South Peel is slightly on the eastern half of the Waterloo-Wellington-Perth settlement.

No new church buildings were erected from the time of South Peel in 1901 until Olivet in 1955. By 1962 Linwood was built and Winterbourne in 1965. In 1972 the first meetinghouse in the Mount Forest area was built at Spring Creek. The first meetinghouse beyond the Waterloo or Mount Forest areas was Northbend, built in 1998 in the Chesley area.

Why was there no need for more meetinghouses between 1901 and 1955? Let's explore some possible reasons. There was a split in 1917 when the David Martin people left the Old Order church and started their own. (Today they are officially



Old Order congregations/meetinghouses			
	<u>Waterloo-Wellington Perth</u>	<u>Mount Forest</u>	<u>Other</u>
1900	South Peel (1901)		
1910			
1920			
1930			
1940			
1950	Olivet (1955)		
1960	Linwood (1962) Winterbourne (1965)		
1970	Weaverland (1976)	Spring Creek (1972)	
1980		Farewell (1979) Cedarview (1981)	
1990	Klearview (1990)		
2000	Creebank (2000) Mapleton (2008)	Westdale (1997) Riverdale (2003)	Northbend (1998) Chesley Martinfield (1998) Kinloss Hillside (2005) Chesley Langside (2007) Kinloss Valleyview (2009) Lindsay White Pine (2009) Massey Lee Valley (2010) Massey Clover Valley (2011) Kinloss Taylor (2014) Matheson
2010	Martindale (2010) Elmadale (2013)		

known as the Independent Old Order Mennonites.) And then in the 1930s many people left the Old Orders and joined the Bible Chapel or Plymouth Brethren. Their meetings were held in Hawkesville.

The reason for this movement was less cultural and more theological. A new way of looking at faith and salvation was introduced and it shook the foundations of the Old Order Mennonite Church. A considerable number of people left to join the new movement, but the Old Order church survived.

In 1939 a group of people left the Old Order church and started the Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference. That was a split because some of the ministry left to form the new group. The reasons were largely cultural. The Markham-Waterloo Conference is theologically very similar to the Old Order.

Sam Steiner points out in his book *In Search of Promised Lands*, that the Mennonite Conference of Ontario churches grew dramatically between the 1920s and 30s, especially in Floradale, Elmira and St. Jacobs. He writes, "This suggests a steady stream of young families was leaving the Old Order for the Mennonite Conference of Ontario." So with the splits and the people leaving for other churches, the Old Order church did not expand much in the first half of the 1900s.

Why did the church mushroom so much in the last half of the twentieth century? One reason they stayed, I believe, is leadership. By the 1950s and 60s, the leadership of the Old Order Mennonite Church had a strong sense of what it means to be a Mennonite; what it means to be Anabaptist; what it means to be Old Order; what it means to be plain and separate from the world. A few people left because they were unhappy with that type of aggressive leadership, but the church prospered. Members felt secure under that leadership. Teachings were strong and firm. New Testament principles were taught, salvation was explained and reading scriptures was encouraged.

The second reason I give for the retention of the members is the Pathway papers. *Family Life*, *Young Companion* and the *Blackboard Bulletin* are three monthly publications put out by the Old Order Amish in Aylmer, Ont. There were articles that explained the need for separation from the world and there were stories that showed people living simply and biblically. The three papers resonated with the plain people. The written word is powerful. I believe these papers had a huge impact on my thinking in my growing-up years and I don't think I am alone.

At his book launch, Sam Steiner mentioned that he believes the Old Orders retained a larger portion of their membership and their young people after they had their own schools. When I first

~ Continued on page 4 ~

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read that, I thought, “Ach Sam, I doubt that.” But I began thinking about it and it began to make sense. When I drew up a chart of when meetinghouses were built, I started to really believe it. As an educator myself I find that fascinating, but I shake in my shoes at the huge responsibility for parents and teachers.

A fourth reason for the growth in the latter half of the 1900s compared to the first half is that there were fewer forces from outside the community that were directly attempting to influence our belief system.

In 2009 the *Brotherhood Journal* was first published. It is a monthly publication with writers from each church district all across our church. It is a vehicle to share the news of our churches and families. When your belief system spills over into your very life and work, then even how you do business is a part of your belief. The *Journal's* subtitle is “Connecting the Old Order Mennonite communities in Ontario.” I believe it does that; I believe it is a community builder.

Community is an important word to all of us, but especially so to the Old Order. What is the worldview, or maybe life-view of the Old Order compared to the rest of the Christian community?

- Old Order Mennonites are less evangelical, putting more emphasis on “train up a child.”
- Less individuality; more community.
- Less “me”; more “we.”
- Less personal conversion; more following Christ.
- Less emphasis on institutions; more emphasis on home.
- Less “my rights”; more serving the community
- Less doctrine; more obedience.
- Less education; more simple, trusting faith.
- Less a personal sense of who I am; more a personal sense of who God is.
- Less missionary work; more light to the world and salt of the earth.
- Less talk; more walk (that one sums them all up).

Why do Old Orders start new communities? I asked a few people this question. The answer that always came first was, “To give our young people a chance to farm.” Farming was traditionally seen as a lifestyle that is closer to nature, closer to creation and therefore closer to God. Today farming is big business and more technical and mechanical, so I’m not sure if that still applies, but farming has for many years been who we are. That fact that I am not a farmer is a deficiency on my part, not a strength. I grew up on a farm, but didn’t make the grade, so I became a schoolteacher. So the first reason to start new communities remains—cheaper land for farms.

A second reason to start new communities is to spread the Gospel by being a light to the world. The lifestyle and heritage of practical thinking and honesty and integrity is being a light to the world and the salt of the earth. We may not be known to go on foreign missions, but we believe the Old Order presence does make a difference in a community.

A third reason that people start new communities is to improve certain unhealthy practices that have crept in a large community and are difficult to change, especially in a traditional-minded community. A new, small community has a better chance to start over and improve and make minor changes.

Chronology of Settlements

Waterloo	1800
Mount Forest	1967
Chesley	1993
Kinloss	1994
Teeswater	1994-2002
Dunnville	1995-2000
Lindsay	1999
Massey	2006
Matheson	2013

In a new, small district, a community feeling is very important—a feeling of mutuality; a feeling that “we’re in this together.” There is an urgent need to work together. It takes a pioneering spirit, a determined spirit and a hardy personality to start a new community. But when you have settled down and others have followed you, you should have a soft nature, willing to cooperate and listen to others’ ideas. So, in a nutshell, we could say new communities need people with determined, soft natures. I think you call that an oxymoron.

When people start a new community, they will often sit down together and decide on long-term, common goals. In some cases, newly interested people are interviewed to assure that all have the same goal in establishing a new community. If some people arrive with an aim to improve certain standards and others see only cheap land, a clash can be expected.

The Old Order ministry takes less rather than more leadership in establishing new communities. People interested in starting a new community seek the blessing of church leadership, of course, but the establishing of new communities is not a ministry decision. After a few families are there, ministry will offer to come and hold church services, usually in homes.

Once enough people have settled there, ordinations are held and the new community has become a permanent settlement. When the time seems ripe, a new meetinghouse is erected. Expenses like this are shared with the whole church, with all the communities.

New communities face many challenges: establishing relations with a new and unfamiliar local government, land agencies and lawyers; developing relationships with long-time natives of the area; deciding which end of the community gets the new church; developing Old Order infrastructure such as harness shops, blacksmith shops or bulk food stores. They need to sort out where to buy dress material and black coats suitable for the plain people and negotiate with local doctors and hospitals so they can deal with “self-pay” patients that do not have OHIP. In an increasingly plastic-money society, will local businesses accept cash? Will local banks understand when I say I don’t use a banking card even when they give it to me? How will residents of the local town react to horse droppings on the crosswalk of their main street? Needless to say, starting a new

community is not for the weak-kneed or the faint of heart.

The challenge continues. If the Old Order Mennonites are going to remain a farming community, if our farms are going to be affordable and viable, if we are going to retain a measure of separation from the world, then we need new communities. We need to spread out. How will we retain the community spirit? Will we stay separate from the world? Will we keep

the connection between our faith and our culture? These are challenges. "Oh God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come."

Amsey Martin, an Old Order deacon and schoolteacher, gave this address to the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario at Floradale Mennonite Church on Oct. 24, 2015.

Glimpses of a former Old Colony settlement

By Barb Draper

When Jacob Reimer was young, living in difficult conditions in northern Ontario, his family received food aid from Mennonite Central Committee. Reimer, who is now a minister in the Old Colony Mennonite Church of Ontario, told his story at the MCC meat canner fundraising breakfast in St. Jacobs on March 19, 2016.

In 1957, when Reimer was a child in Mexico, his parents decided to move to Canada. Land was scarce and a group of Mennonites were looking at northern Ontario while others moved south to Belize, Bolivia or Paraguay.

Jacob's father had lost his right leg at the age of 17 and he didn't think he would be able to go into the jungle, so the Reimer family moved to Ontario. They sold everything and used most of the money to pay for their trip in the back of Cornelius Peters' 1953 GM pickup with a homemade camper.

For the summer they worked in southern Ontario as farm labourers and then they moved north of New Liskeard to an old house covered in nothing but Tentest sheeting. Jacob remembers that there were cracks in the walls in the upstairs bedrooms and in the morning there would be a white mound on the covers where their breath froze. Sometimes the snow would drift in between the cracks.

They were joined by his mother's brother's family and so there were many children living in that house with no plumbing and no power. He remembers as a 13-year-old going to the bush to cut wood with a bow saw and dragging the logs in by hand.

He was not aware that the adults were worried about feeding everyone, but he does remember they would go out to the town dump, scrounging for food. They would back up to the dump and then collect cardboard so that if anyone came along they could pretend to be dumping cardboard.

One day a 1953 GM panel truck came down the back road they lived on and asked the children if their parents were home. Harvey Taves, from MCC in Kitchener, brought them flour, cereal, apple butter and also canned meat. He said he's never been able to find out how he knew that they were in need, so far from Harvey's home in Kitchener.

While paging through back issues of *The Canadian Mennonite*, I discovered some information. An article printed Aug. 10, 1956, reported that G.G. Klassen and P.T. Harder from Durango, Mexico, and Anson Hoover and Elam S. Martin from Waterloo County, Ontario, were touring northern Ontario accompanied by Frederick Widdifield from the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests. They were offered about a thousand acres of Crown land as well as some farms already under cultivation. Klassen was quoted as saying that they were well treated by the Mexican government, but they were in need of more land. An accompanying photo showed them looking at the soil in the marshes of Sutton Bay, northeast of New Liskeard.

Probably Anson Hoover and Elam S. Martin accompanied the delegation because they too were considering moving to the wilds of northern

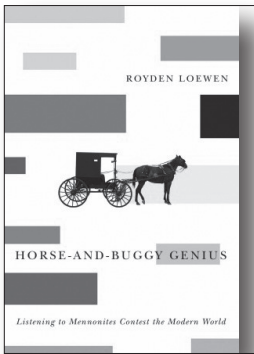
Ontario. In 1956, Elam S. Martin left the Independent Old Order (David Martin) group and Hoover was part of his splinter group for several years. Today, those who followed Elam Martin are known as Orthodox Mennonites.

A report in the Jan. 10, 1958 issue of *The Canadian Mennonite* says that MCC arranged to send assistance in the form of clothing and food for the 210 Mennonites from Mexico who were living in the New Liskeard, Thornloe and Matheson areas. In late 1957 Dave Schellenberg of Elim Creek, Manitoba, visited the area to assess the needs. The largest group was in the Matheson area where 28 families purchased farms from French-speaking homesteaders and had hired Peter Bueckert as a teacher. There were no resident ministers.

The Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee from Manitoba also sent aid. On April 18, 1958, it was reported that 1,800 bushels of seed oats were sent to the Old Colony settlement in Matheson. Distribution of the aid was to be supervised by the MCC office in Kitchener with assistance from Jacob Rempel, an Old Colony minister from Manitoba.

This settlement was not successful in the long run. After a couple years the families moved away; some went to the Aylmer area, others to Manitoba or to the Rainy River area. It is interesting that in recent years, an Old Order community was established in the Matheson area while a Markham-Waterloo Mennonite group has begun a settlement in the Thornloe/New Liskeard area.

New Books...

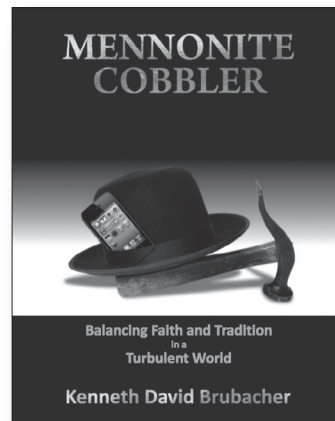


*Horse-and-Buggy Genius:
Listening to Mennonites Contest
the Modern World.*

Royden Loewen.
University of Manitoba Press,
2016, 244 pages.

Royden Loewen is the Chair
of Mennonite Studies at the
University of Winnipeg where
he teaches history. Between
2009 and 2012, he led a team

researching various horse-and-buggy Mennonite groups
including Old Order and Orthodox Mennonites in Ontario.
The book also presents the worldview of Old Colony
Mennonites in Latin America and compares how various
horse-and-buggy Mennonite groups cope with the pressures
of the modern world.



*Mennonite Cobbler:
Balancing Faith and
Tradition in a Turbulent
World.*

Kenneth David Brubacher.
Privately published, 2015,
258 pages, hardcover.

Ken Brubacher grew up
in Elmira, Ont., part of the
family who ran Brubacher's
Shoes. He reflects on his
life and how it was affected
by his parents' Mennonite

upbringing. His tone is whimsical, but he brings insight to bear
on life in a Mennonite community, especially in the 1950s and
60s. The book is available at mennonitecobbler.com.

Book Review: Gascho family a microcosm of Amish history

Reviewed by Barb Draper

Gascho Gleanings: The Genealogy of David R. and Barbara Gascho – 2014.

Compiled and published by the family.
2014, 320 pages, hardcover.

This history of the Gascho family, an Amish family who
moved to Waterloo Region in 1848, shows how diverse and
multifaceted a family can be over a few hundred years. It traces
the earliest records of the family from the Lorraine area of
France in the 1700s and tells the story of how they tried to keep
the faith and make a living over the years.

There are some very interesting stories in this collection,
including information about the short-lived Amish settlement
in Haldimand County, near the town of Canborough, south of
Hamilton in the early twentieth century. It only lasted about five
years, but the Gaschos were an important part of the settlement.
This section was written by Joseph Stoll, an Amish historian
who married into the Gascho family. I also found it interesting
to read about the family who decided to move to Aylmer to join
the Old Order Amish there.

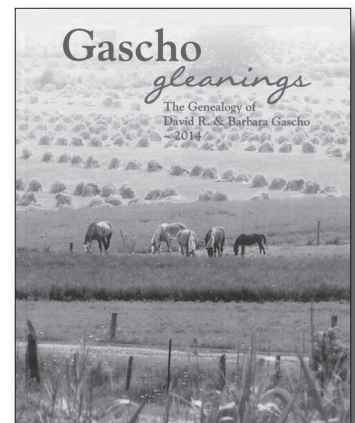
The family has scattered far and wide. The parts of the
family who have remained Amish frequently married other
Amish from the U.S. I was interested to see that some families
have moved to outlying Amish settlements in Ontario and that
some from the Aylmer area have married people with names
like Reimer, Weiler and Dyck. Other parts of the family have
not remained Amish or Mennonite and many of them are now
scattered far and wide across Canada.

This book has a great
collection of photos and
maps. As well as historic
family photos, including
houses and barns, there are
copies of deeds, obituaries,
and other items of interest.
Some of the families also
included more recent family
photos.

Because it is primarily
a genealogy, the book is not
easy to read. It takes time
and concentration to deal
with the many names. The book is compiled from many sources
and so does not follow one narrative.

The committee who put this book together—Edith and
Earl Wagler, Andrew and Dorothy Gascho, Harold and Nancy
Wagler, Mary and Delmer Erb, Norman and Sharon Roes—
compiled much more than names and dates. They have done a
good job in identifying their sources making it a reliable source.
Anyone interested in Amish history, or related to the Gascho
family, will find this book worth reading.

The book is available for \$45.00 from Harold Wagler at 519-
595-4582, hnwagler@cyg.net, or from Norman Roes at 519-595-
4379, nsroes@cyg.net.



Hugo Friesen and Ted Regehr receive awards of excellence

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada release

Meeting at the new Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, B.C., gave the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC) the opportunity to see this new facility that tells the faith story of Mennonites in the Fraser Valley and is also the new home of the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. Representatives from Mennonite historical societies and organizations from across Canada met on Jan. 13-16, 2016.

Among the many reports was a success story about the first ten months of the Mennonite Archival Imaging Database (MAID). This collaborative project gives the public greater online access to photos held by Mennonite archives and has brought publicity and interest to these collections with 41,000 unique visitors to the MAID website and 160 images purchased in ten months. A new member of the MAID project is the Mennonite Library and Archives, Fresno.

This year the MHSC Award of Excellence was given to Hugo Friesen of Abbotsford, B.C., and Ted Regehr of Calgary, Alta. Friesen, a teacher and principal before his retirement, was involved in the early attempts to organize a Mennonite archive in B.C. and became the first archivist for the Mennonite Historical Society of B.C., serving from 1993 to 2005. He coordinated all the

activities of the archives in its early years and has continued to work as a volunteer.

Ted Regehr worked at the Public Archives of Canada from 1960 to 1968 after which he taught history at the University of Saskatchewan. He has contributed much to the preservation of Mennonite history in Canada, serving as president of the MHSC in its early years, writing many books and articles including *Mennonites in Canada Volume 3*, and working with the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta and its archives and library. Regehr mentioned that it was Frank H. Epp, his pastor when he lived in Ottawa, who got him involved in Mennonite history.

The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO), which began 20 years ago in 1996, continues to grow. Sam Steiner reported that it is difficult to keep the statistics up to date, especially congregational information that needs to be done at the grassroots level.

Among the discussions about future projects was how to do more digitization of books and periodicals. Accessibility and search ability are enhanced when these things are in digital form, but it is



Hugo Friesen (left) and Ted Regehr received Awards of Excellence from Lucille Marr, president of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, on Jan. 16. In the background is a painting from the "Along the Road to Freedom" exhibit on display at the new Mennonite Heritage Museum in Abbotsford, B.C.

labour intensive to put them online. The Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies reported that the *Christian Leader* magazine has been digitized and is ready to be released on a USB stick.

MHSC is proposing "A People of Diversity" project and has applied for a grant to help celebrate Canada's 150th anniversary in 2017. If the grant is approved, there are plans for an oral history project and a conference that would recognize how diverse the Mennonites in Canada have become since 1970.

The MHSC executive for 2016 includes Richard Thiessen as president, Royden Loewen as vice president, Alf Redekopp as secretary, Conrad Stoesz as treasurer and Barb Draper as member-at-large.

J. Winfield Fretz Publication Fund in Ontario Mennonite Studies Sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario.

Dr. J. Winfield Fretz was the first president of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. This fund is named in his honour.

The fund is available to any individual or charitable, church or community-based organization that requires financial support for the publication of research as a book, film or other form of media. Projects should illuminate the experience of Mennonites in Ontario.

Normally up to \$2,000 is available per project. Applications are accepted twice yearly, May 1 and December 1. More information: mhso.org/content/fretz-publication-fund

The Archives Gets Personal: New Collections

By Laureen Harder-Gissing

The Mennonite Archives of Ontario continues to receive records from congregations and organizations, but since the opening of our new archives, personal and family records have been received in particular abundance.

Getting archival materials ready for public access can be a long process. When records arrive, they are checked for mold, insects or other active threats. If all is well, records are sorted, any duplications are usually removed, and the records are placed in acid-free containers to prolong their life. Following this, an archival description is created. This involves reading and researching the records to answer questions such as: Who created them? When? Where? Who do the records speak about? What topics do they address? How do they relate to other records in the Archives? Descriptions are written up and posted on our website (grebel.ca/mao) for researchers to find. The materials are then placed in our climate-controlled vault. Any photographs in the collection are usually scanned and posted to the Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID) at archives.mhsc.ca.

The past few months have seen several personal and family record collections go through this process. The following collections are now open to researchers who wish to explore them further by making an appointment at the Archives:

**Dorothy Swartzentruber Sauder,
1924-2012: MCC Volunteer and European traveller**

Dorothy Swartzentruber volunteered with Mennonite Central Committee in Germany after the Second World War. Her letters home and several photo albums document her time in Germany and travels in western Europe as the continent re-emerged from the ashes of war. Dorothy returned home to play an important role in Mennonite church administration in Ontario, including having charge of the first Mennonite Archives of Ontario.

**Simeon Reesor
(1896-1988): Conscientious Objector of the First World War**

The son of a Markham area farmer, 21-year-old Simeon Reesor had to navigate the military bureaucracy to have his request to be viewed as a conscientious objector honoured. This involved a couple of stays in military camps in Niagara, from where he wrote home to his fiancée, Annie Wideman.

**Rita Rempel Gossen Krueger
(1903-1994): A Bride and Her Wedding Gift**

When Rita Rempel married Heinrich Gossen in Halbstadt, south Russia in 1924, her mother gave her a handwritten recipe book. The book was passed down through generations of Gossen women before arriving at the Archives.

Franz and Anna (Toews) Tiessen: Stories of War, Revolution and a New Canadian Life

Franz and Anna both grew up in the village of Schoenfeld in south Russia and met again as immigrants to the Leamington

area, where they married in 1932. In later life, they both wrote of their experiences. Franz also collected autobiographical writings of relatives and friends describing the violent, life-changing events they experienced in Russia. A series of 12 photographs show the Tiessen family in pre-revolutionary times, depicting a vanished world.



Cousins in Schoenfeld, 1913, from the Franz and Anna Tiessen collection. See <http://archives.mhsc.ca/sigs7> for photos details.

The Archives Gets Personal: New Exhibit

Conchies Speak: Ontario Mennonites in Alternative Service, 1941-1946

Through taped interviews, photographs, newsletters and love letters, the Ontario Mennonite conscientious objections ("conchies" or "COs") of the Second World War tell their stories.

This exhibit features personal profiles of 15 COs written by students in Marlene Epp's Mennonite history class in the fall of 2015. Admission is free, and the exhibit runs until December 2016. For more information, see uwaterloo.ca/grebel/altservice.



Conscientious objectors from Ontario in British Columbia.

For names, see <http://archives.mhsc.ca/52-2>.