

Mennonite Archives in Canada

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Record-keeping has been important for churches throughout history. That may not be equally true, however, for the development of archives and proper archival management as far as these records are concerned. Far too often they have found their way into musty basements or attic cubby-holes of some sort, and one must assume that a great deal of significant material has been lost. One could, of course, be challenged to document that generalization, and there will no doubt be exceptions to the rule. Fortunately there is some evidence, of which a little will be marshalled here, that the future of religious archives, in this case churches, looks a little brighter now, and that further losses may be slowed down or perhaps in some instances prevented altogether.

Someone stated recently that Mennonite archives in Canada are now sixty years old, but the birthday celebration did not materialize. If so, why not? One might contend, to begin with, that few people know very much about “archival beginnings” in 1930. A person could also ask, Which Mennonites do you have in mind? After all, Mennonites first came to Canada at least 140 years before those so-called “beginnings.” How then, does one put the archival story, if there is one, into perspective? Is there a way to comprehend the development of Canadian Mennonite archives as a whole?

The creation of the first records may go back right to the 1780s, when a number of Mennonite families from Pennsylvania left the USA to settle in what is now Ontario. They procured land in the Niagara peninsula, and in the vicinity of present-day Kitchener-Waterloo. Their forefathers had come originally from Switzerland and south Germany, where religious persecution, economic forces, and other factors caused their emigration to the Thirteen Colonies about a century earlier.¹

Since then Mennonite communities have emerged in almost every Canadian province. Individual families reside in all the remaining regions of the country. The total population of what is still by all standards a minority group may be as high as 200,000 to 300,000 — depending somewhat on who is counting the persons still claiming the name.

For record collectors and keepers the scattering of Mennonite settlements has been one of the complicating factors in creating archival centres to serve the larger Mennonite body. Sub-groupings, which some might call “divisions,” make the task even more complex. Internal statistics, not generally found in official census tables, indicate the

existence of at least twenty-five larger and smaller entities within the larger Mennonite “family.” Each of these groups cherishes a healthy and well-guarded self-identity, with a history and perspective, and, one should add in this context, a collection of records, all its own.²

Many Mennonites still retain a conscious concern for group cohesion and identity maintenance, making at least some effort to pass on that ideal to the generations ahead.³ In marginally intentional, and sometimes unintentional ways, documents have been a part of that process. Emigration itself required papers of various kinds. Settlement and community development created a role for documents as well. Whether families felt a need to preserve these materials, or had the proper means to do so was another matter. That a farming people in its pioneering years might leave some things undone in this regard is not difficult to appreciate.

Local municipal governments, as Canada had them when the Mennonites first arrived, would make sure, of course, that official documents such as assessment registers, inheritance documents, copies of deeds, vital statistics, homestead registrations and land transfer records would be securely filed for permanent reference.⁴ Congregations, or the bishops who led them, kept their membership records, and the schools, especially after they became public institutions, had to retain certain documents recording essential information as well.⁵ Family records existed also, even though they had a kind of “underground” character because they were normally completely private.⁶

Mennonites arriving in Manitoba, in the 1870s, brought with them a variety of records and manuscripts from their home communities in the Ukraine and elsewhere in Russia.⁷ Some of the groups carried their congregational registers and certain important financial ledgers; some individuals had taken along portions of their family “archives” as well.⁸ Some of these private holdings were exceptionally rich in documents and books, as well as manuscripts, diaries, etc. One of the best known of such collections is the material brought by Peter Toews, a church elder from the settlement of Borozenko, who headed up the *Kleinegemeinde* (“small church”) when it set out for Manitoba after 1874.⁹

Already in this “pre-archival” era there were those who knew, intuitively perhaps, that these were important items that must not be lost. Without the pressure of researchers, there was little reason to do much with them except to store them reasonably securely, and in some rudimentary way to ensure their survival. Even this elementary goal was not always reached. There is reason to believe that much community life documentation, potentially of great interest and use to present-day researchers, has been irretrievably lost or else badly damaged. Fortunately, some of these items have survived in relatively good condition and quite legibly intact to the present day.

Newspapers and journals performed an important preservative function under circumstances where an articulated historical consciousness had not yet developed to a significant degree. These kinds of materials were mostly published in the German language, the main medium of communication for Mennonite emigrants in both the Swiss and Russo/Ukrainian communities of that period.¹⁰

The first publications used by Canadian Mennonites were American in origin, since American Mennonites had a headstart of a hundred years to get such media underway. *Herold der Wahrheit* (“Herald of Truth”), edited by John F. Funk, was a pioneering

venture in this regard. It was begun at Elkhart, Indiana in 1864 largely to serve the Swiss Mennonite community. Its counterpart, founded in 1878 for Russian Mennonites in the USA, was first named the *Nebraska Ansiedler* ("Nebraska Settler"), then two years later, renamed *Mennonitische Rundschau*, ("Mennonite Observer"). Not long afterward it was moved to Scottsdale, Pennsylvania where it remained till 1923, at which time it was transferred to Winnipeg.¹¹ Another newspaper calling itself *Zur Heimath* ("Homeward Bound") was started in 1875; seven years later it became the *Christlicher Bundesbote*, ("Christian Covenant Messenger") which it remained till it merged in 1947 with a Canadian publication, *Der Bote*. This paper, edited by Diedrich H. Epp, had been started also as a Russian Mennonite organ, in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, in 1924.¹²

Sometimes local newspapers served the interests of Mennonites along with other readers. In Berlin [Kitchener], Ontario, for instance, the town's first community paper, *Canada Museum*, published from 1836 to 1840, held a good deal of "Mennonite content" in its pages. Manitobans and other western readers had access to a Winnipeg-based German paper, *Der Nordwesten*, ("The Norwester"), which began publication in 1889 and which catered specifically also to Mennonite families.¹³ A more local organ calling itself *Volkszeitung* ("People's Gazette") appeared for a time after 1907 in the Winkler area of Manitoba's Mennonite "West Reserve." A similar one started up in the East Reserve as the *Giroux Advocate*, but changed quickly, in 1914, to the well-known and widely-read *Steinbach Post*. It remained on the scene till the early 1960s.¹⁴

In Mennonite church circles Heinrich Ewert's enterprising *Der Mitarbeiter* ("The Co-worker"), launched almost single-handedly at Gretna in 1906, served a Manitoba and Saskatchewan clientele right up to the time of Ewert's death in 1934.¹⁵ A few years earlier a similar venture had emerged on the East Reserve, when the Church of God in Christ (Mennonite) newspaper, *Botschafter der Wahrheit*, was moved from the USA to Manitoba around 1902 or 1903.¹⁶

These publications and others like them kept for posterity a vast amount of correspondence of which the originals had long since been lost or destroyed. Here one finds the published reports of various meetings, texts of talks and sermons, lists of settlers in scattered settlements, all sorts of community information, financial data, editorial comment, and substantial quantities of trivia now sometimes called the real "stuff of history" — able to fill many of the gaps left by documents and manuscripts which are unavailable in any other form.¹⁷

The Russian Revolution, which changed so many things in the world, had its impact on the Mennonite archival situation as well. It, and the civil war which came on its heels, led to another, even larger emigration of Mennonites who settled in Canada from 1923 to 1930.¹⁸ More than 20,000 persons made the difficult exodus of those years to join Canadian Mennonites who had preceded them in a similar move fifty years earlier, in the 1870s. Many of them had lost everything in the Bolshevik holocaust; many others left behind or sold what few possessions they had. Some saw to it that incriminating documents of any kind would be found in their baggage. Others took great pains to insure that their few precious documents would not be lost in the confusion. Large numbers of irreplaceable photos, for instance, were packed among the few belongings that would remind them again and again of their lost homeland.¹⁹ Diaries too were carefully hidden in some instances, and brought along.²⁰ A few persons stashed away other manuscripts and items such as maps, architectural drawings, correspondence,

certificates of work done in the classrooms, official inheritance contracts, records of land transfers, some institutional records, and family records of various kinds.²¹

More important perhaps was the fact that among the emigrants' "baggage" was also a certain historical self-consciousness about their Mennonite experience in Russia. They had first arrived there at the time of the emigration from Prussia in 1787-89; others had joined them in subsequent years to set up the mother colonies, Chortitza and Molotschna first of all, then later on a host of "daughter" colonies, to accommodate the growing families which created a Mennonite population of about 110,000 by 1917. They had been a German-speaking minority there, in some ways isolated from the rest of the country, at least in the early decades of their Russian experience.²²

But then some things began to change. The communities had become more established, better acquainted with their neighbours and their country; in time many had become quite well-to-do. Young people had started to attend universities. A large number of educational, welfare, and church institutions sprang up in the ensuing years. The Mennonites had also developed a sense of 'peoplehood', sometimes quite inward-looking, but still showing an awareness of togetherness that became even more important when everything seemed to come apart, and everything that they had once held dear began to fall in shambles about them.²³

Many of the newcomers in Canada were teachers and other urbanites who felt out of place in a setting where they had accepted contracts to farm and nothing more. These individuals wanted to keep the story of their earlier life and their one-time communities alive. That meant that documents and records, few as there might be, were more important now than ever. Many started to write about their past, hoping to rationalize somehow the trauma which the Revolution had brought upon them and their friends.²⁴

It was during these early years in Canada, that one of the new immigrants, Bernhard J. Schellenberg, formerly from the village of Osterwick in the Ukraine, began to gather manuscripts of memoirs and village histories, at the same time encouraging others to keep on writing and gathering materials of this sort. As a matter of fact, discussion about setting up a Mennonite archives in western Canada may have taken place as early as 1927, Schellenberg already being involved in the conversations. A Mennonite settlement organization known as ZMIK (Zentral Mennonitisches Immigrantenkomitee, i.e., Central Mennonite Immigrant Committee) asked B.B. Janz to serve as its archivist at this time. Several years later, in 1933, a church organization known as the Conference of Mennonites in Canada asked Schellenberg to serve as official archivist. He was offered a small honorarium for his work, but few if any other specific resources were put at his disposal to carry out the programme.²⁵

By this time Mennonite emigrants from the Ukraine had been publishing their own paper, the *Immigrantenbote*, later renamed *Der Bote*, for about five years. Many documents and manuscripts brought from the "Old Country" were being submitted for publication, and were preserved in that way. Unfortunately the originals were not retained, or else were simply returned to their owners. Schellenberg used the columns of *Der Bote* to publicize his archival concerns, and to outline the "collections mandate" he believed he had received with his assignment.²⁶

This pioneer archivist's success is difficult to assess. His official appointment as archivist terminated in 1941, but there is reason to believe that he continued his work

privately for years after that. No one knows exactly what his collection contained when it was given over to others at the time of his death in 1966.²⁷ His successor, Benjamin Ewert, put much of his effort into collecting and filing newspaper clippings, and compiling statistics of various kinds for the Conference, which had asked him to take over Schellenberg's work.²⁸

Construction of two Bible colleges in Winnipeg, Mennonite Brethren Bible College (1945) and Canadian Mennonite Bible College (1947), provided libraries in which Mennonite historical material could find potentially more permanent homes. Church historians on the faculties of these institutions, notably men such as Abraham Unruh for MBBC, and a little later Gerhard Lohrenz for CMBC clearly understood the significance of archival materials for their own research and writing, and as a source of heritage education for their respective church constituencies. Lohrenz also inherited the archival mantle of his Conference, when Ewert needed to lay down that assignment. Again one finds only sketchy records of what he gathered, but Lohrenz did try to communicate to others the importance of archival material. He also managed to direct many rare historical books to the library of CMBC, while simultaneously undergirding the value of record-collecting, both in special committees set up to do so, and by his own writing and publication efforts.²⁹

Meanwhile, some Canadian Mennonite archival material was finding its way to non-Canadian institutions such as the Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA) of Bethel College at North Newton, Kansas. Dr. Cornelius Krahn had been building up an American Mennonite archives in this community since his arrival in the late 1930s. Several large collections of personal papers such as those of Jacob H. Janzen of Waterloo, Ontario, and the A.A. Friesen collection from Rabbit Lake, Saskatchewan, must therefore be consulted at the MLA where they are still lodged today.³⁰ Some Ontario Swiss Mennonite documents, such as portions of the S.F. Coffman papers, and also other related material, had been transferred to Goshen College, where Dr. Harold Bender was promoting archival work as well as the Mennonite Historical Library for the (Old) Mennonites, and the constituency at large.³¹ It was the lack of adequate archives in Canada, these men argued, that made such gathering north of the border necessary. Too much material was being lost — better to save it in foreign repositories, they said (and justifiably so), than not to save it at all. The passing of these avid collectors, along with the creation of Canadian facilities, and a more professional way of defining regional acquisition mandates was gradually to terminate the southward move of documents, till in the late 1960s and early 1970s it ceased altogether.

The shape and force of Canadian Mennonite archival development owes a good deal, understandably, to Mennonite institutional expansion in the early 1960s.³² Several larger groups of Mennonite congregations began to reorganize for more effective inter-provincial and national activity during this period. The Evangelical Mennonite Conference and the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, both organized in the late 1950s, would not set up central, record-creating offices till some years later. The Conference of Mennonites in Canada did begin to do so around 1962, and the Mennonite Brethren of Canada followed suit in 1967.³³ When the Mennonite Central Committee, a relief and service organization with headquarters in the USA, became a binational body, it set up Canadian offices in Winnipeg, and soon branched out into several other provinces as well. MCC (Canada), as it came to be called, had its beginnings in 1962; MCC (Manitoba) only two years later, with other provincial groups

emerging during the same period.³⁴ The creation of these programmes terminated others such as the work of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, which had managed the Mennonite emigration from the Soviet Union in the 1920s and the post-World War II years; the Conference of Historic Peace Churches and the Non-Resistant Relief Organization in Ontario; and the Canadian Mennonite Relief and Immigration Council — all of which had assembled extensive records that now needed to be secured and preserved in more permanent locations.³⁵

That these were indeed significant materials was to be documented with the production of the carefully researched and detailed history of the Colonization Board written by Frank H. Epp, and published in 1962.³⁶ Twenty or more file drawers of records of this organization had been shipped to CMBC by this time.³⁷ Canadian Mennonites had never before published a book based so solidly on archival sources as this one was, although a sociological study by a German scholar, E.K. Francis might possibly rank a close second.³⁸

This new interest in archival records had been anticipated, perhaps, by the pictorial album of Walter Quiring, entitled *Der Kanadische Mennonit. Ein Querschnitt in Bildern* (1961), with an English translated edition, *The Canadian Mennonite. A Pictorial Survey*.³⁹ The editor of *Der Bote* (Quiring had had that job from 1955 to 1963) then produced a similar work on Mennonites in Russia entitled *Als Ihre Zeit Erfuellt War. 150 Jahre Bewaehrung in Russland* (1963).⁴⁰

Other writers were soon to emulate Epp's initiative. Henry J. Gerbrandt's 1970 history of a church group, the Bergthaler Church of Manitoba, was also based very firmly on archival sources laboriously assembled from private holdings at a time when very little central collecting of local congregational records had been undertaken anywhere.⁴¹ Another work on the emigration of the 1920s had appeared three years earlier. The researcher and author of the book was John B. Toews of Calgary, Alberta. His study made extensive use of documents and other records published earlier in *Der Bote* and *Mennonitische Rundschau*, along with the personal papers of B.B. Janz, who had been a major figure in that migration.⁴²

The Manitoba Mennonite centenary celebrations in 1974-75 highlighted the coming of Mennonites to Western Canada a hundred years earlier. Those immigrants, when they first arrived in Canada, had also spent some time in Ontario before moving on to the Red River Valley region further west. That story could now be retold in a meaningful context. A good deal of historical research came with the retelling; old documents related to these themes became more accessible; and their archival preservation seemed to gain a priority it had not had in Mennonite communities before.

These were years of active planning for archival development within the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. For the first time, budget moneys began to be set aside annually to pay for staffing an office, and for financing certain other aspects of an archival programme, properly so called. A history-archives committee created to direct these activities came into being at the same time. Its name suggested that archives would need to be seen as having broader purposes than simple storage and preservation; they were to serve the general historical interests of the sponsors as well.⁴³

Similar steps were taken in other groups and localities. In the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren the idea of an archives had originated around 1950. At that time

Dr. A.H. Unruh, professor at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, undertook extensive research to write a history of the Mennonite Brethren Church. In the process he became acutely aware of the lack of historical resources, and proposed the creation of an archival deposit. At that time, however, no moves were taken in this direction. Then in the late 1960s an MBBC librarian, Herbert Giesbrecht, began actively to collect some basic MB materials such as its national and provincial yearbooks. At about the same time the late Dr. John B. Toews, then president of the College, helped to secure the personal papers of B.B. Janz of Coaldale, Alberta. This collection of correspondence, and other materials related to the Russian Mennonite immigration of the 1920s, formed the nucleus of a genuine archival deposit at the College. In 1969 the Mennonite Brethren Conference appointed Giesbrecht as archivist with a mandate to devote a quarter of his time to archival work. Four years later, in 1973, the Conference provided more space for the storage of the materials acquired by Giesbrecht and some of the faculty members who were also participating in this programme.⁴⁴

At Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario, Dr. Frank Epp, president from 1973 to 1979, cherished a clear vision of archival development in his institution. He had brought with him the extensive files (ten or more four-drawer file cabinets' worth), gathered while serving as editor of *The Canadian Mennonite* from 1953 to 1965. He had also collected a great deal of additional documentary material in preparation for Volume I of his *Mennonites in Canada*, which appeared in 1974.⁴⁵ In the course of his research he would frequently draw attention to the voluminous records on Mennonites held in places such as the Public (now National) Archives of Canada in Ottawa, and regional repositories. Ernest Dick, an archivist at PAC, helped to publicize that data as well.⁴⁶

Epp was able in this way to extend significantly the holdings of the newly formed Conrad Grebel College archives, based on collections that had originated as early as the 1930s. At that time L.J. Burkholder, a one-time bishop in the Markham area, had been gathering materials for a history of the Mennonites in Ontario.⁴⁷ Much of the material which he had assembled found a temporary home in a "Mennonite Box" located at the Archives of Ontario. Meanwhile, a significant amount of material originating with the Mennonite Conference of Ontario had been accumulating elsewhere, and a number of large holdings of personal papers of ministers were waiting to be brought together as well.⁴⁸

Some of these holdings were finally moved to the Rockway Mennonite Collegiate, which had begun operations in 1945. Dorothy Schwartzentruber of the Golden Rule (later Provident) Bookstore served as an archival supervisor of these holdings. A good deal was sorted and organized during this time. When Conrad Grebel College opened in 1965, a decision was taken to move the Rockway collection to this new location. Here a volunteer, Lorna Bergey, took charge of the growing deposit, while at the same time furthering the development of a more inter-Mennonite focus, through acquiring other materials as well.⁴⁹

The middle and late 1970s witnessed the birth of additional initiatives in archival work for all three of the emerging centres at Waterloo and Winnipeg. At Conrad Grebel College, Sam Steiner became the first salaried, albeit part-time archivist of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario. The records of such bodies as the Mennonite Conference of Ontario, the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, Conference of

United Mennonites in Ontario, the Conference of Historic Peace Churches, the Non-Resistant Peace Organization, and later MCC (Ontario), were nevertheless to remain the core elements of the CGCA holdings. When a retired historian, Dr. David G. Rempel from Palo Alto, California, deposited a major microfilm collection of documents filmed in a Leningrad library (dealing with Mennonites), the value of these holdings was greatly enhanced.

In 1974, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada hired Lawrence Klippenstein as part-time archivist, then extended the position to full-time some years later. The CMC archival collection moved very briefly to a new basement facility in 1975. In 1978 this deposit found permanent quarters in the Mennonite Heritage Centre, a large new campus building provided through a generous donation by the P.W. Enns Family Foundation of Winkler, Manitoba. These new quarters included a large vault for record storage, a work area for sorting material, a reading room for researchers, offices for staff, and a gallery for exhibitions and displays.⁵⁰

A smaller Mennonite group known as the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, decided to place its accumulated records with the Centre as well. Some church registers, congregational records, and personal papers which had been gathered were deposited under the care of an EMMC representative, Frank Zacharias. An inventory of this material is available. More material has come in recent years due to the preparation of a history of the Conference published in 1987.⁵¹

At the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, the archives moved into a new and expanded basement facility thanks to the construction of an additional building on the campus in 1979. Ken Reddig, a local high school teacher, became the assistant to Herb Giesbrecht, and then went on to become Head Archivist and director of the Centre for MB Studies in 1980. In 1981 a part-time staff member was added to assist in developing finding aids, and the cataloguing of new materials. The Katie Peters genealogy collection, deposited several years ago, and the hiring of Alfred Redekopp to process this material, brought a significant new dimension of research potential to the CMBS archives.⁵²

The work of Mennonite Genealogy Inc., and at least three other smaller centres, need to be noted in this survey as well. MGI, as the first of the four is generally referred to, had its beginnings in a private project begun by an avid genealogist, Abram A. Vogt of Steinbach, Manitoba. Most of his work of collecting data on Mennonite families occurred in the period 1945 to 1968. An organization formed to sustain these efforts resulted in the incorporation of Mennonite Genealogy Inc. in 1967. When Vogt died, members of the organization continued the task of keeping the project going and growing, as it has to the present day. In 1978 the materials were all moved to Winnipeg, first to the Mennonite Heritage Centre for several years and then to more permanent quarters at their present facility in the basement rooms of Autumn House, a senior citizens' apartment complex in the city.⁵³

The archives of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) at Steinbach, Manitoba, and the new Mennonite archives at Columbia Bible College (CBC) in Clearbrook, British Columbia, are now actively promoting modest programmes as well. David K. Schellenberg began his work at the EMC centre in 1980, when he was still editor of *The EMC Messenger*. At his retirement he was invited to remain archivist on a voluntary basis. He has been aided informally, especially in the genealogical aspects of

the holdings, by persons such as Delbert Plett, a local barrister who has contributed significantly to the recent publication of EMC genealogical and other historical materials.⁵⁴

An inter-Mennonite organization known as the Mennonite Archival Association in the Fraser Valley of British Columbia, became the umbrella group which sponsors the archives of Columbia Bible College (CBC) at the present time. David Giesbrecht, librarian at the college, and Esther Born, also of Clearbrook, have carried the main responsibilities of making this relatively new deposit the nucleus of a functional archival centre for the various Mennonite communities of the province.

Formally opened in 1987, this archives has attempted to bring together materials from groups such as the provincial Mennonite conferences, the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia, Bethel Bible Institute, Mennonite Central Committee (B.C.), and the Mennonite Educational Institute, which has had its own holdings for some time. Hugo Friesen, now a retired principal of the school, has been looking after the MEI materials for at least ten years.⁵⁵

Another provincial archives came into being about fifteen years ago at Rosthern Junior College in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. A member of the college staff, Bernie Thiessen, has been the supervisor of these holdings. Most of the material consists of newspapers and books from the library of the late David Toews, an important church leader of that community before 1950.⁵⁶

To complete a list of all the Mennonite archival centres in Canada one must mention as well the small yet important holding of Saskatchewan Mennonite Brethren materials at Bethany Bible School in Hepburn, Saskatchewan;⁵⁷ and the beginnings of at least one more collection in Alberta: the start-up work of the Mennonite Historical Society of the province, which presides over some materials held at the Mennonite Central Committee offices in Edmonton.⁵⁸ The Rockmere Christian Studies Centre of Moores Mills in New Brunswick, and the Mennonite Brethren Bible School, *Institut Biblique Laval* at St. Laurent, Quebec, might find themselves well-situated to encourage archival work in their regions as well.⁵⁹

The significance of archival work is not necessarily appreciated everywhere in the Canadian Mennonite community. Its foundations have been laid, however, and considerable progress is evident already. It is true that most of the training of the current archivists has been obtained on the job, rather than by formal archival education. Budgets, where they exist at all, remain very modest, and storage space is at a premium in all repositories. All three of the larger centres which were able to acquire more room a decade or so ago, are talking about the need for expansion. As holdings have grown, pressures have increased for more numerous staff to process materials acquired, and to administer the programmes now in place.

Most of the ten locations are able to access their materials easily, and provide at least some facilities for researchers to use the archives for their work. Finding aids are still somewhat limited, and relatively little progress has been made in creating union lists of manuscripts, inventories and other forms of research tools for archives users. The three larger centres at Waterloo and Winnipeg are now computerized, however, and work has begun on the preparation of a common directory of serials held in these centres. Some lists and indexes have been shared, and more of these types of finding aid should be available in the near future.⁶⁰

A number of the archivists have had working relationships with existing provincial and national archival bodies, and several have taken part in developing these organizations.⁶¹ An effort is made annually to hold at least an informal meeting of Canadian Mennonite archivists, usually in conjunction with the AGM of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, scheduled for December of each year. Educational outreach through workshops, seminars, lectures and private consultations is often undertaken by the archivists as well.

These archivists are in touch at the same time with a larger continental group calling itself NAMAL (North American Mennonite Archivists and Librarians), which attempts to meet at least every two years.⁶² A directory listing all the known Mennonite archival holdings of the world reached two editions, and has now been republished in a third.⁶³ The quarterly research and archives newsletter, *Mennonite Historian*, has been carrying news of Mennonite archival developments since its inception in 1975. Local publications of several Mennonite provincial historical societies, for example, *Mennogespreech*, edited by Sam Steiner at Conrad Grebel College, assist in such public relations activity as well.⁶⁴

All these programmes continue, nonetheless, to wrestle with the need within their Mennonite constituencies to increase public awareness of the importance of archives, and to make these materials as useful as possible to the larger community. Several of the archivists use extensive portions of their time for leading workshops and seminars, and participating in historical societies to promote awareness and use of the archives which they service in the workplace.

More work is still required to bring existing facilities up to accepted national and international standards with respect to such matters as storage, adequate conservation programmes, and reference and retrieval provisions at each repository. Retrieval methods do not always keep up with the requirements of full control of the material, or public demands for access and use. Some of the centres are waiting for revitalization; others, simply for resources to make them more than small storerooms for dormant holdings, the very survival of which may be at risk.

The past fifteen years have witnessed the birth and growth of a Canadian network of Mennonite archival centres serving their own communities, and outside groups also. It remains to be seen whether sufficient resources and vision exist to parley these achievements into adequate, mature programmes, which future needs will undoubtedly call for and justify.⁶⁵

Notes

- 1 For a recent scholarly account of Mennonite beginnings in Canada see Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada 1786-1920. The History of a Separate People*. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), 67ff.
- 2 A graphic attempt to depict the entire spectrum of Mennonite groups in Canada is in Margaret Reimer, *One Quilt, Many Pieces: A Reference Guide to Mennonites in Canada* (Waterloo, Ont.: Mennonite Publishing Company, 1990, 2nd ed.). It mentions a total Mennonite membership of 102,425 persons, meaning adult baptized individuals. This would suggest a community of about 200,000, if unbaptized persons (particularly children) are included. The penultimate Canadian census (1981) puts the "Mennonite population" at 189,290, distributed as follows: Newfoundland, 90; Prince Edward Island, 5; Nova Scotia, 220; New Brunswick, 100; Quebec, 1075; Ontario, 46,485; Manitoba, 63,490; Saskatchewan, 26,265; Alberta, 20,540; British Columbia, 30,895; Yukon, 45, and Northwest Territories, 80. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
- 3 On the theme of boundary maintenance and ethnic identity, see recent publications by Dr. Leo Driedger of the University of Manitoba, for example, *The Ethnic Factor. Identity in Diversity* (Toronto and Montreal: McGraw Hill Ryerson, Ltd., 1989), and *Mennonite Identity in Conflict* (Lewiston and Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988). See also J. Winfield Fretz, *The Waterloo Mennonites. A Community in Paradox* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1989).

- 4 One finds collections of this sort today in the municipal archives of such regions as the Municipality of Hanover and the Municipality of Rhineland, in southeastern and southern Manitoba respectively. Very significant portions of these collections have been microfilmed, and may be researched in the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Land title offices in a number of prairie towns, as well as provincial archives, along with the National Archives of Canada, also hold related materials.
- 5 Examples are the semi-annual and year-end register reports sent in to provincial departments of education by teachers of public schools. MHCA holds hundreds of old registers and records of trustees from school districts in southern Manitoba which were closed when larger divisions were created in the 1960s. Church records of many congregations, and large ledgers of corporate membership listings as kept for instance by the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba (ca. twenty local communities), and microfilm copies of similar ledgers produced by the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church and Old Colony Church in Manitoba are held at MHCA as well.
- 6 Two of the largest known collections of various family registers, published and unpublished, are located at the Centre for MB Studies (note especially the Katie Peters papers), and Mennonite Genealogy Inc. in Winnipeg. Another major collection, related more to the former Kleingemeinde Mennonite community of Manitoba is found at several locations, including the EMC Archives, in Steinbach, Manitoba. For an inventory of the first of the above-mentioned holdings see Alfred Redekopp, ed., *A Guide to the Genealogical Resources of the Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies* (Winnipeg: Centre for MB Studies, 1989), and also Ken Reddig, "Genealogy: A Service For God's Glory," *Mennonite Historian* XII (March 1986), pp. 1-2.
- 7 On the emigration of the 1870s, see Bill Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1986, 2nd ed.).
- 8 One of the largest collections of records to survive the trip included financial and welfare records from the colony of Bergthal, north of Mariupol. These colonists emigrated *en masse*, and their descendants have preserved the collection as part of a *Waisenamt* (Orphans' Office) deposit held by the Chortitzer Mennonite Church at Steinbach, Manitoba.
- 9 The original Toews papers are now located at MHCA.
- 10 The Mennonites of Russia had carefully retained the use of the German language throughout the pre-1870 period of residence, continued to use it widely in Canada up to World War II and in some communities do so up to the present time. The Swiss Mennonite emigrants who came from Pennsylvania to Ontario in the late eighteenth century had a century of American life behind them, but sustained the use of German right through the nineteenth century up to the 1930s.
- 11 A complete run (with possibly a few small gaps) of *Herold der Wahrheit* exists only at Goshen College, in Goshen, Indiana. The *Rundschau*, with its antecedent, *Nebraska Ansiedler*, may be consulted at the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg. The entire run of this newspaper has been microfilmed by University Microfilms at Ann Arbor, Michigan. An index to the first years (1880-1899) prepared by Bert Friesen is now available at the Centre for MB Studies also.
- 12 Mennonite Library and Archives in North Newton, Kansas, holds the back issues of *Christlicher Bundesbote*, while *Der Bote* can be found at MHCA in both microfilm (up to 1980) and original hard copy. It may be checked in part through an index, *Der Bote Index 1924-1947*, edited by Peter H. Rempel and Adolf Ens, and published by CMBC Publications, Winnipeg in 1976. A second volume of this index (covering 1945-1963) was published earlier this year.
- 13 See Arthur Grenke, "The Secular German-Language Press of Winnipeg, 1889-1914," *German-Canadian Yearbook* edited by Gerhard Friesen and Karin Guertler, Vol. X (Toronto, 1988), pp. 81-98.
- 14 Back issues of the *Steinbach Post* are held at MHCA (which has also microfilmed the first ten years) and the office of Derksen Printers, Steinbach, which used to publish this newspaper. A microfilm copy of the years 1923 to 1962 (final year) is available at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba.
- 15 A complete set of *Der Mitarbeiter* is available at MHCA in original hard copy and microfilm.
- 16 This periodical was begun in 1897 by John Holdeman, who remained its first editor till he died in 1900. He was assisted by Aeltester Peter Toews of Manitoba. When Johann Dueck, also of Manitoba, took over from Holdeman, the editorial office was moved to Canada for a number of years. See Clarence Hiebert, *The Holdeman People. The Church of God in Christ Mennonite, 1859-1969*. (South Pasadena, Ca.: William Carey Library, 1973) pp. 217 and 232.
- 17 A useful collection of such materials related to the 1870s migration from Russia to North America is in Clarence Hiebert, comp. and ed., *Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need. A Scrapbook About Mennonite Immigration [sic] from Russia 1870-1885*. (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1974).
- 18 The story has been ably recounted in Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus. The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites Since the Communist Revolution* (Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen and Sons Ltd. for Canadian Mennonite Immigration and Relief Council, 1962).
- 19 Hundreds of these surfaced in the photo album collections published by Walter Quiring and Gerhard Lohrenz, as noted above. Many more remain lodged in private family archives today.

- 20 An important collection of diaries in twenty-one small volumes was donated recently to MHCA by Helen Klassen and Katherine Thiessen from British Columbia. These writings (dated 1896-1919) are the notes of one Abram Dyck, a Mennonite industrialist in Chortitza, Ukraine who died during the Russian Civil War in 1919.
- 21 See for example, the fifteen documents of Heinrich Thiessen, preserved by descendants in Winkler, Manitoba. Copies of all the items were deposited at MHCA recently.
- 22 On the first century of Mennonite life in Ukraine, see the new interpretation of James Urry in *None But Saints. The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1989).
- 23 The total period of 200 years of settlement in Russia is treated thematically in John Friesen, ed. *Mennonites in Russia, 1788-1988. Essays In Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz*. (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989).
- 24 The work of the Canadian Mennonite "literati" of the 1930-1950 period can be surveyed in George K. Epp, "German Mennonite Literature in Canada," in *Unter dem Nordlicht. Anthology of German Mennonite Writings in Canada*, ed. George K. Epp and Heinrich Wiebe (Winnipeg: Mennonite German Society of Canada, 1977), pp. ix-xxvii. Some of the papers of Arnold Dyck, and copies of Gerhard Friesen's work (better known as Fritz Senn) are being gathered and preserved at Menno Simons College in Winnipeg.
- 25 See B. Schellenberg, "Neue Aufgaben?," *Der Bote* IV (29 June 1927), and "Protokoll der sechsten Vertreterversammlung der Immigranteneingewanderten seit 1923 in Reinland am 23-25 Nov., 1927," *Der Bote* IV (14 December 1927), p. 5.
- 26 Schellenberg published his thoughts on archival work in a series of weekly articles which appeared in *Der Bote* in the period of 8 May — 15 June 1938.
- 27 See also Lawrence Klippenstein, "B.J. Schellenberg. Recherchen und Schriften," *Der Bote* LXI (8 February 1984), p. 12.
- 28 The surviving collections of Schellenberg and Ewert are presently found at the MHCA in Vols. 548-552 and Vols. 542-545 respectively.
- 29 Unruh's major work was a history of the Mennonite Brethren, entitled *Die Geschichte der Mennoniten Brudergemeinde, 1860-1954* (Winnipeg: General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church in North America, 1955). On the involvement of Lohrenz, see an unpublished paper by Robert Poettecker, "History of the CMC Archives," Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, 1988, and Gerhard Ens, "Gerhard Lohrenz. His Life and Contributions," in *Mennonites in Russia*, pp. 1-8.
- 30 Jacob H. Janzen was an immigrant Mennonite author and minister who had also come to Canada in the 1920s. He did most of his writing and publishing after leaving Ukraine. Friesen began his career as a teacher in Ukraine, then emigrated to Canada where he became a businessman. His personal participation in a delegated commission sent to North America to study resettlement prospects make his papers a valuable source for the study of this and other related topics.
- 31 Bender, though an American Mennonite, had close family connections in Ontario, hence could rely on good contacts for soliciting contributions to the archives he represented at Goshen, Indiana.
- 32 Institutional expansion will be a central theme in a projected third volume of *Mennonites in Canada* presently being written by Dr. Ted Regehr of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, with assistance from Marlene Epp of Waterloo, Ontario. Pertinent Mennonite records are being exhaustively researched for this project.
- 33 For an organizational history of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, see Jacob Peters, *Organizational Change within a Religious Denomination: A Case Study of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 1903-1978*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Waterloo, 1986.
- 34 See Frank H. Epp and Bert Friesen. *Partners in Service. The Story of Mennonite Central Committee Canada* (Winnipeg: MCC (Canada), 1983).
- 35 At present these records are located in the MHC archives. A detailed inventory and finding aid is available to researchers.
- 36 The book came out in a second edition in 1976.
- 37 The papers were originally held by the first offices of the organization in Rosthern and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
- 38 E.K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia. The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona, Man.: D.W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., 1955).
- 39 The pictures are somewhat thematically organized with a minimum of information about each, and without an index to the whole collection.
- 40 The German edition was published in Saskatoon. Later an English edition came out in Kitchener, Ontario, under the ownership of Aaron Klassen, a local businessman who had bought the rights to the original volume. It is entitled, *In The Fullness of Time. 150 Years of Mennonite Sojourn in Russia*.
- 41 Henry J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith. The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba* (Altona, Man.: Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1970).

- 42 John B. Toews, *Lost Fatherland. The Story of Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921-1927* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1967). The B.B. Janz papers are lodged in the archives of the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg.
- 43 For a brief survey of the new CMC archival initiatives which began around 1974 see an unpublished paper by Russell Sawatsky, "A History of the Program of the History-Archives Committee, 1974-1988," Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1989. Annual reports on subsequent CMC archival developments have been published in *CMC Bulletin* (now *CMC Reporter*) since 1974.
- 44 See Ken Reddig, "Centre for MB Studies Twentieth Anniversary," *Mennonite Historian* XV (June 1989), p. 5. The deposits of a major collection of material dealing with Mennonite hymnology by Esther and Ben Horch, and the film archives of Dueck Film Productions, of Winnipeg, have been important events for the CMBS anniversary year.
- 45 The Frank H. Epp papers now constitute the largest collection of personal documents left by any one individual in the Mennonite Archives of Ontario.
- 46 See Ernest J. Dick, "Resources on Mennonite History in the Public Archives of Canada-Part I, *Mennonite Life* XXX (December 1975), pp. 26-28, and Part II in XXXI (March 1976), pp. 19-22.
- 47 L.J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario* (Markham, Ont.: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935).
- 48 The "Mennonite Box" eventually also found its way to the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, and was incorporated into the larger body of materials there.
- 49 Based on interviews with Sam Steiner, archivist at CGCA till the end of 1990, when Reg Good replaced him. See also Steiner's article, "Genealogical Resources at the Conrad Grebel Library and Archives," *Mennogespraech* Vol. 2 (September 1984), pp. 13-16.
- 50 The Heritage Centre was officially opened in January 1979, although archival materials had been relocated there in October of the previous year. On these developments see Lawrence Klippenstein and John Friesen, "The Mennonite Heritage Centre. For Research and Study," *Mennonite Life* XXXIII (December 1978), pp. 16-19.
- 51 A general history of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference is in Jack Heppner, *Search for Renewal. The Story of the Rudnerweider/EMMC 1937-1987* (Winnipeg: Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference, 1987). Martha Martens is presently the EMMC representative responsible for this group's collection at the MHCA.
- 52 See Ken Reddig, "The Mennonite Brethren Archives in Winnipeg," *Mennonite Life* XXXIV (December 1979), pp. 1-2. Reddig also edited *Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada Newsletter* from 1979 to 1981, at which time it merged with *Mennonite Historian*. This newsletter often carried news about happenings at the CMBS and its archives.
- 53 Information is gleaned from relevant brochures published by MGI, and conversations with staff, including Hanna Rempel.
- 54 Plett made his debut as genealogist with the publication of *Plett Picture Book. A Pictorial History of the Children and Grandchildren of Cornelius Plett (1820-1900) and Sara Loewen (1822-1903)* (Steinbach, Man.: D.F.P. Farms, Ltd., 1981.)
- 55 See related entries in Lawrence Klippenstein and Jim Suderman, eds., *Directory of Mennonite Archives and Historical Libraries* (Winnipeg, Man.: Mennonite Heritage Centre, 1990), 3rd ed., 2ff., and also Hilda Born, "B.C. Mennonite Archival Association Launched," *Mennonite Historian* XIV (June 1988), p. 9.
- 56 *Directory of Mennonite Archives*, p. 3.
- 57 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 58 The custodian of this collection is Henry Goertzen, now residing in Didsbury, Alberta.
- 59 Rockmere already holds extensive runs of a number of Mennonite periodicals, and the Institut Biblique Laval will no doubt become a focal point for collecting Mennonite Brethren church records in Quebec.
- 60 A very useful new research tool in this area is the grant-funded MHCA repository guide, *Resources for Canadian Mennonite Studies. An Inventory and Guide to Holdings of the Mennonite Heritage Centre*, edited by Lawrence Klippenstein, Adolf Ens and Margaret Franz, and published by the Heritage Centre in 1988. Many smaller archival items held by the Centre are noted and briefly described in a series of articles under the heading "Aus dem Archiv," written by Lawrence Klippenstein for *Der Bote* in the period 22 September 1982 to 7 March 1984.
- 61 The involvement, for instance, of Ken Reddig, Dennis Stoesz, Lawrence Klippenstein and Jim Suderman in Manitoba archival organizations can be traced in various issues of the *AMA Newsletter*, 1980 to the present. Sam Steiner is currently treasurer of the Ontario Council of Archives. Messrs. Reddig, Stoesz, Steiner and Suderman have all taken the special course for archivists offered annually by the National Archives in Ottawa. Dr. Ted Regehr, sometime consultant for the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives,

worked at the National Archives for a number of years before joining the history faculty at the University of Saskatchewan, where he is at present.

- 62 This organization has published six issues of a newsletter called *The Mennonite Librarian and Archivist*. A report on a recent Mennonite archivists' session is in "Canadian Mennonite Archivists Meet," *Mennonite Historian* XV (December 1989), p. 5.
- 63 The *Directory* mentioned above lists more than forty institutions in eleven different countries. It is trilingual, giving all entries in English, German and French.
- 64 The first issue of *Mennonite Historian* came out late in 1975. It was initiated by the Mennonite Heritage Centre, and edited by Lawrence Klippenstein. Since 1987 it has been published jointly by MHC and the Centre for MB Studies in Winnipeg, with Ken Reddig serving as co-editor till the fall of 1990, at which time he joined the staff of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. Alf Redekopp gathers and edits material for a special genealogy page in each issue. An index to *Mennonite Historian*, edited by Jake Wiens, is available for the period 1975-1986. The first issue of *Mennogespraech*, published twice annually, appeared in 1983.
- 65 The first article on Canadian Mennonite archives to be published nationally in the professional literature was Ted Regehr's research note, "Mennonite Archives in Canada," in *Archivaria* 5 (Winter 1977-78), pp. 164-165. See also Marlene Epp, "Women's History and Mennonite Archives," *Archivaria* 30 (Summer 1990) pp. 167-170. Numerous articles on the archives of Mennonite Heritage Centre and the Centre of MB Studies have appeared in Manitoba's *AMA Newsletter* since it began publication in 1980. A "preview" of this article appeared as "Mennonite Archives in Canada," *AMA Newsletter* Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1988), p. 1.