

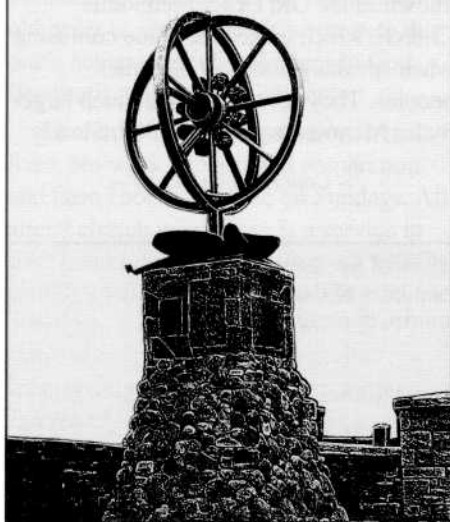
Ontario Mennonite History

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Tribute to ORLAND GINGERICH 1920 - 2002

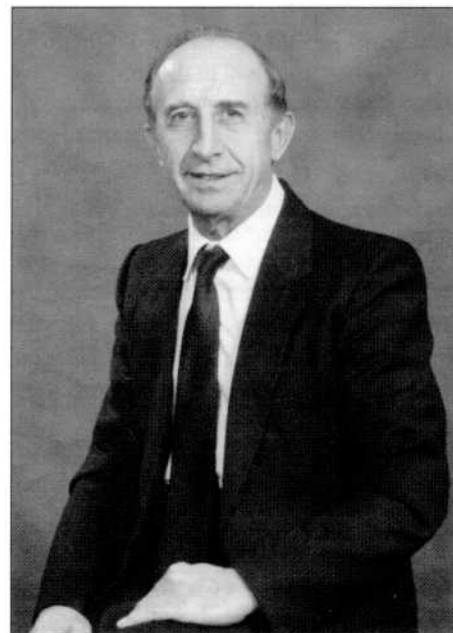
MHSO CHARTER MEMBER
MHSO Vice-President 1965 - 1977
MHSO President 1977 - 1980

Orland spent his early years on the farm cleared by his great-grandfather Jacob W. Gingerich in the late 1820s. It was located on the German Block (the centre section of Wilmot Township) west of Waterloo Township. It had been surveyed in 1824, in anticipation of the coming of immigrants from Europe following the 1822 visit of Christian Nafziger, looking for land to which to bring his family and co-religionists.

The Gingerich family were members of the first Amish congregation organized in Canada. While studying church history at Goshen Biblical Seminary under Harold S. Bender in 1948 Orland was required to write a 5000 word essay on some aspect of church history. He chose to write about the Amish in Canada but found a lack of data on the subject. Bender promised Orland leniency provided he continue the research and produce a more comprehensive history later.

When 35 people interested in promoting research and publication of Ontario Mennonite History met at Conrad Grebel College on May 8, 1965, Orland addressed the group on the topic "Why a Mennonite Historical Society?" Dr. J.W. Fretz, president of the College, chaired the meeting. Orland noted the importance of knowing our history and the need to foster the acquisition and preservation of records and materials by and about Mennonites in a central archives and library to be located at Conrad Grebel College.

The Society was organized several weeks later and Orland was elected vice-president. In November 1966, Orland presented an informative paper on "Early Amish Settlements in Ontario." During a workshop in 1970 on the topic "Preparing to Commemorate Our Heritage" Orland reported plans to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the coming of the Amish to Canada in 1972. Orland provided a fitting climax to the Sesquicentennial Celebrations by completing the promised comprehensive history of **The Amish of Canada** which was published by Conrad Press, Waterloo, late in 1972.



Orland Gingerich

In 1975 an historical plaque was created by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, at the initiative of the Waterloo Historical Society. It was erected on the cemetery grounds across the road from the Steinmann Mennonite Church in honour of the early Amish settlers of Wilmot Township. When the Historic Markers Board received the submitted text for the plaque they contacted the Mennonite Historical Society to provide the source of this documentation. The Society indicated this information regarding the early Amish settlement in Canada was printed in Orland's book **The Amish of Canada** containing pertinent information of their early history "handed down verbally."

In preparation of the Sesquicentennial, a copy of Samuel Street Wilmot's 1830 report on the German Block had been found in the National Archives at Ottawa. However, it did not contain any reference to Christian Nafziger whose contribution to the Amish settlement was to be featured on the plaque. Orland made another search in the archives at Ottawa

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and finally found Christian Nafziger's story in the Council Minutes of September 4, 1822. The contents confirmed the information which had been handed down orally by three generations to a remarkable degree.

Throughout the years of Orland's participation in the program of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario he strongly subscribed to the purpose of promoting interest in our Anabaptist-Mennonite History.

Orland died of cancer on January 23, 2002 at his home on Avalon Place in Kitchener.

The Ontario Old Order Mennonites as Canadian Citizens

by John F. Peters

Old Order Mennonites have lived in what is now known as Ontario, for over 200 years. They were once totally agrarian, but while now still living in the rural community, they make their livelihood in a variety of ways: farming, large poultry barns, furniture making, foundries, school teaching, bookkeeping, quilting, housekeeping, grocery or textile stores, or a stall at the weekly market. Through the past half century the Canadian government has increased its obligations, services and ties with its citizens. In some ways this has made it difficult for the old orders who want minimal contact. Old orders see it as a God's command to obey the government, but at times government legislation violates their tradition, biblical interpretation and conscience.

Their contact with those outside their group varies in frequency and quality by occupation and geographical location. For some, conversations outside the

community will be contained by the visit to the store, post office and bank in town, and the occasional veterinarian visit. For others, a truck picks up their beef or hogs on a regular weekly basis, or a courier truck stops to pick up their manufactured items five days a week. For the David Martin group, there is daily computer contact. Most old orders still use the horse and buggy as their primary means of transportation, the Markham group being the only exception. Old orders are still considered an oddity by tourists, whether seen at the stockyards, walking the streets of Kitchener and Waterloo, or travelling along the roadside by horse and buggy.

Five distinct groups

The five groups have a great degree of similarity, yet within the old order community find themselves as distinct. (They are similar to the Amish, who live near by.) The most progressive of the old orders are the Markhams, who have 11 meeting houses and a membership of 1,332 (December 2001). For 63 years they have used black cars or vans, and telephones. (Since the days when the chrome bumpers were painted, their cars are less conspicuous.) They tend to have more contact with the larger society than any of the others. Their farms are larger, and some work for non-old order employers. However, their theology is definitely old order.

The Dave Martin group began in 1917 over excommunication practices. They now number 350 families and have five meeting houses. Of the old order groups, they strike the outsider as the most paradoxical. While they do not use tractors or public hydro, they send their children to public schools. They participate in government programs such as child tax benefits and old age security. Farming is now secondary to manufacturing. In the past 15 years they have expanded their cottage industry with the use of robots and computers. In manufacturing they are definitely



John F. Peters speaking at MHSO meeting, November 24, 2002.

Photo credit: Larry Rittenhouse

enmeshed in the wider world, with trucks and courier service at their shop doors daily. In other ways they are even more insular than other old order groups with whom they have minimal association. Comments in this paper which address old orders and the government do not relate to the David Martin group.

A much smaller group, officially known as the Orthodox, most of whom live in the Gorrie and Kinloss areas, are the most peculiar and simple. They have three meeting houses and now number about 125 families. One unique characteristic is the wearing of beards for men. They use only farm animals to till the soil. Some have small farm generators. Their dwellings have no flush toilets or telephones. Their numbers augmented when about 15 families severed from the Old Order Mennonite group, who decided, in 1989, to allow the telephone in their homes. There is a much smaller group of several families, known as the New Elamites. Their belief and practice resembles that of the Orthodox group.

The largest church group is officially known as the Old Order Mennonite Church, which makes the name confusing when speaking about all old order peoples. They severed from a much larger Swiss Mennonite group in 1889. Slowly

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Editor: Brent Bauman

Editorial Committee: Linda Huebert Hecht, Lorraine Roth, Sam Steiner, Barb Draper

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Inquiries, articles, book notices or news items should be directed to the Editor, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario c/o Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G6 TEL. (519) 885-0220, FAX (519) 885-0014

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unique features of dress, rules, practice and tradition evolved and were institutionalized. The four groups mentioned earlier evolved from the Old Order Mennonites. (The larger group in the 1889 split identified themselves initially as Old Mennonites, then Ontario Mennonites, and now Mennonite Church Canada).

They have 16 meeting houses and an approximate membership of 2600. They cooperate closely with the Markham group in an extensive parochial school program. They use moderate sized tractors and machinery on their farms. Usually the only horses they have are the ones used for their means of transportation: two styles of buggies. They are wary of any enterprise, whether farm or business, which becomes too big. This writing uses this population base for most of what is said about old orders.

Old order life style

The base for old order belief and practice is twofold: the Bible and tradition. The two are closely interwoven, and are difficult to differentiate. Martyrs Mirror is a treasured book, and reinforces suffering to be part of the community experience. The community is to live peacefully with one another, reinforced by *gelassenheit*. This refers to an abandoning of personal and worldly pleasures and desires, and a submission to the community which, in effect, means to God. Such peaceful living and interdependence calls for humility and self examination. Humility is also seen in belief and practice. In belief one rarely speaks of "hearing God's voice", or sensing God's presence, and certainly not verbalizing some theme not found within old order teaching. One is never sure that one's actions are fully pleasing to God. Heaven is a hope, not a certainty.

Church is a central institution in their lives. No work except food preparation and farm chores are done on Sundays. All attend church when there is a service in their local meeting house. Sunday visiting is highly valued. Church bishops, preachers and deacons are revered, sometimes feared. In the event of a funeral or special service, the community can readily leave their work and attend. The sentiments of the church community play an important role in their conversation and behaviour.

Old orders believe in a distinct separation of church and state. They do not vote in elections. Government is seen as a human institution, riddled with leader aggrandizement, manipulation and power. One treats state ruling bodies with caution and suspicion, while at the same time respecting it. Since the 1960's municipal, provincial and national governments have all moved more closely into the lives of all Canadians. In a direct way, these rulings have impacted the old orders in their beliefs and lifestyle. This relates specifically to location of home dwellings and barns, farmland water run-off, quality of drinking water, sanitation of buildings, farm animal disease control, safety of horse drawn vehicles on public roads, welfare benefits, farm grants and subsidies, payments extracted from wages or taxes to assist those who are unemployed or injured while employed, assistance to the elderly, as well as standards and content of school curricula.

Family is highly regarded, and patriarchy is endorsed. Their family size and interaction in both play and work creates a wholesome environment of exchange between children of all ages. Children work and play in the house, shop, barn and yard. Parents know where the children are, and children know what their parents are doing. Grandparents generally live in a doddy house adjacent to one of their children, and thus have a lot of contact with grandchildren. To a great degree, table foods come from the garden and farm animals. When there are financial needs, the extended family assists, and when these resources are limited the wider community becomes engaged. Similarly, parents are responsible for their children's behaviour, and for their proper launching into adulthood. Parents go to great lengths to get their children satisfactorily established in a meaningful and financial viable vocation. When the family has limited resources, members of the community (and not the church organization) become involved in finances relating to vocation.

Old orders are frugal. Houses are not adorned with fashion furniture, nor are pictures hung on the wall. Clothes are passed on from one sibling to another. They live simply and work hard. Big machinery is seldom the latest, largest and most powerful. A farmer's property will seldom exceed more than 125 acres, and a herd of 50 milking cows. Physical labour

is prized. One spends long hours in the barn and fields. If in the winter there is extra time, one becomes engaged in a secondary activity, such as woodworking. Kin assist one another, as do neighbours.

The process of change

While the old orders see themselves, and are perceived by others to be "separate and peculiar", their practices do change. Separation has shades, colours and texture differences. Furthermore, given the old orders' residence in Canada, they cannot avoid participation in a postmodern world. There are economic, political and social associations and obligations that cannot be avoided. However, this Mennonite community does make choices in terms of what is accepted, what is rejected, what is partially accepted, the rate at which the new is adopted, and what decisions are prolonged. This article addresses this interchange, and to some degree, the rationale for this change.

As with any group of people, change is stimulated by a number of sources. Individuals find they can do some task with greater efficiency by adopting some new device. Old orders may purchase, invent or adapt some artifact which may reduce the time and energy in production. Such a practice may be yet unchartered and not yet defined in terms of church rules, while some push prescribed boundaries. Possibly the margin is somewhat vague, and allows for some experimentation. Every group, whether conservative or liberal have a boundary or edge. Some literally live "on the edge", and this edge is continually redefined. The consideration may be related to production, furniture, or ornamentation on vehicles, buildings, or oneself. Only after someone dares the "trial run" is the activity ruled as acceptable or unacceptable. This may also be true of an ideology, a principle of religious belief. New circumstances may question long held practices. Old order rules prescribe what is forbidden and what is "strongly discouraged". With time the latter category may shift to the forbidden, or to the accepted category. The use of telephones is one example.

Demography places pressure upon existing practices. Farm land in the Waterloo region has become less available and less affordable, and thus the

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community spread, and continues to expand. This meant a reconsideration of modes of communication and travel. It altered visiting patterns. It increased the number of bishops, preachers and deacons. With the government's presence in much of its citizens' lives, old order clergy have had to establish rules in areas totally unforeseen a half century earlier.

Change is expected. Community leaders give much consideration to change. They wish to move at the pace which is true to tradition, the Holy Scriptures and the community. Therefore change is selective. Rapid change is unnecessary and generally destructive to the individual and community. Much of the past is valued and cherished. Change for change's sake is deplored. Fashion, glitz, and consumerism is sinful. Clothing has changed little over the past five decades. Frugality and simplicity are espoused. Competition in sports is despised. (Some young males continue to push the boundaries of acceptable sports activity.)

There is a recognized and institutional means of change. There are biannual meetings where the past and present are reviewed. This relates to theological as well as the practical everyday aspects of life. These council meetings are always held before the biannual communion meetings, and are treated with gravity. On the specified Sunday both male and female members have the option to enter the preacher's room in the meeting house in groups, and voice their feelings about the ebb and flow of the community to the preacher, deacon and bishop. (Some voice their concerns and affirmations during the year in an informal manner as well.)

The clergy then meet for special meetings amongst themselves, to decide upon any change that might be initiated, or which already has begun. The following Sunday they articulate their decision, and affirm the decisions of the past. Only then does the church body partake of communion. This is a central event in their yearly community calendar, and is a process which reinforces community, as well as severity should any deviance be evident.

In a few cases, change is initiated by an individual member, and only later is viewed by a few or many as a violation of community standards. The purchase of a new type of tractor, or hiring a neighbour

to bail hay in a form that is not approved for the membership, are illustrations. The member runs a risk of having his "new" practice tolerated or condemned. If the latter, he will be required to sell the machinery, or stop the deviant practice. Should his actions be accepted, others may follow suit. Some practices border on the inconsequential to those outside the community. However these incidents have significance to the principles and unique history of this community.

Here is an example of a farm rule which most outsiders would not understand, and even some within the community would consider rather trite and unnecessary. One is not to use the tractor as a means of transportation on public roads. This applies to going to the store for groceries, or transporting a load of hay a few kilometres on the public road, from a rented or neighbour's farm. (One may do this haulage legitimately, only if you travel on the public road which directly faces your own property.) One readily sees the tension, when one has the last load of hay at the end of the day, and you are travelling the one kilometre home with the tractor anyway. Some community member may see this as a violation of rules, (granted, a very minor one). The offended member has an obligation to speak to the violator (Matthew 18). For the very sake of offending someone, one is to seek peace and comply to community rules.

Old order beliefs relating to government

Old Order people feel the government is ordained of God, and seek in every way to respect and obey it. It functions to maintain order and to punish those who do wrong. They do pray for government bodies. However, they feel the supreme authority is God, and where their belief conflicts with the law, they feel they must differ with the government, even at great cost and possible suffering. At the first parliament of Upper Canada, in 1793, the state acknowledged this group's peculiarity, (along with Quakers and Tunkers), in exempting them from military service. In World War II their youth served in the Alternative Service Program, to avoid bearing arms.

While the old orders recognize the right of the state, they clash in other areas than warfare. From the writings of Paul, they feel they should "Bear ...one

another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2 and "...provide... for those in (their) own house..." (I Timothy 5:8). They feel it is the responsibility of the church



Olivet Mennonite Meeting House, Peel Township, Wellington County. Photo credit: Brent Bauman

community to care for those within its group. Any compromise would lead an individual or family to depend upon other sources, like the government. Such a practice would shift the members' allegiance away from the church community. (Old orders also feel that the care they administer is more personal.)

Old orders make a clear distinction between church and state. Government is pressured by lobby groups, and politicians often seek their own interests, or the interests of special groups. To avoid being tainted with anything evil in politics, they do not seek office, nor do they vote. (Their counterparts in the U. S. do vote.) Some did vote in municipal elections before the 1930s. Prior to the centralization of schools in 1966 they served on school boards.

Their sense of right living, or Christian living includes being peculiar. In I Corinthians 6:17 one is to "... come out from among them, and be separate", "...they do not belong to the world" (John 17:16) and one is to "...keep oneself untainted from the world" (James 1: 27). This would include the interface with government.

As indicated earlier, old orders had close encounters with the government in not bearing arms in WW II. Thereafter there was a hiatus for about one generation. However, government became increasingly involved with its citizens in a number of different areas: health standards, commerce, education, farm and road safety, and land use.

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Assistance to mothers with children.

The initial Baby Bonus plan was universal. The intent was to facilitate mothers to adequately care for their children's needs. It was changed to Child Care Tax Benefit in 1992, with the provision that monies be given on the basis of income. The maximum for one child is now \$203.66 monthly, and a mother with four children may receive a maximum of \$763.50. One contributes to this plan covertly, through taxation. Old orders have not had a dialogue or confrontation with the government in this matter. Taxes are paid, and they simply do not apply for these benefits.

The Canada Pension Plan (CPP)

Old Age Security began in 1952. It now amounts to \$442.66 monthly for those who have resided in Canada for at least 40 years. The Guaranteed Income Supplement (1967) gives further assistance to those who have no other income. The Old Order Mennonites do not participate in either of these plans.

In 1966 the government introduced the Canada Pension Plan. All persons would receive a Social Insurance number. In this universal plan all employees and employers each contribute 1.8% of the employee's income. It's stated plan was "to make financial provision for their retirement and to protect themselves and their dependents or survivors against loss of income in the event of disability or death." At the age of 65 all Canadians who have participated are eligible to receive monthly pensions.

Old orders could easily decline the receipt of such monies, but they were forced to contribute. They first made their appeal for exemption in April, 1966, eventually receiving a negative response on the principle of universality. By April of 1967 there was considerable local public support, as well as support from the Kitchener Chamber of Commerce for the position of the Old Orders. By October, milk and cream cheques were garnished at source. Old Orders were asked to submit the names of the banks they used, as well as the agencies to whom they sold milk.

On October 16, 1967, in a four page letter written through channels of the Mennonite Central Committee, the Old Orders again stated their position to the government. They respected the

government, and expressed their satisfaction with the freedom they enjoyed. In their view the new policy was an insurance plan: you pay in and later you receive monetary benefits. They said the pension policy was a blatant violation of their religious convictions and practices of over 450 years. For them, any mutual aid or welfare should be a practice of the church, not of government. The aid they offered one another was much more respectful, with care within the brotherhood. They asked to be exempt from the pension program, but should this not be possible, their cheques for milk and cream could be seized (as they subsequently were), they would pay fines, and if need be, would go to prison "for our convictions". They also stated that they would entertain migration, should an acceptable agreement not be reached.

Though a response was promised, they did not receive any answer for a year. When it did come, it was negative. Eventually there was some further action in Ottawa. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau reviewed the case with his Cabinet, and the response was negative.

On May 22, 1970, four Old Order Amish and Mennonite ministers (and a MCC assistant) met with 14 government representatives. This was a rather bold step for the old orders, because they showed great hesitancy to create a matter of the magnitude of addressing the government directly. For over two hours, they discussed the Old Order's concerns, and heard an articulation of their religious beliefs, and their understanding about welfare and insurance. The questions were direct and specific. In the end, the parliamentarians were pleased with the encounter and most were agreeable to their stance. The House of Commons did pass this legislation on Nov. 7, 1974 (which included the Hutterites). This matter hinged upon legislation, not interpretation, and thus was a matter, not of the civil courts but of government. The old orders were persistent. Discussions teetered between two government principles: universality and religious freedom.

The Social Insurance Number (S I N)

Social Insurance Numbers were introduced by the government in 1959. This was the Canadian government's system of keeping close track of all recipients of Old Age Pension. It was to be used solely for this purpose. The old orders resisted this move. They

considered this a serious compromise with the world. They felt it would eventually be used in matters apart from the social insurance program. They were given assurances that it would not. We now know they were right. These numbers play a central part in our society, being used extensively by the government, banks and employment agencies. Old Orders do not object to the use of numbers, but they are opposed to a numbering system designed especially for accessing the programs they do not believe in.

In 1974 Old Orders gained the right to be exempt from the use of the Social Insurance number. In its place they use a nine-digit number beginning with a zero. With this number on income tax files, the government automatically makes exemptions to CPP and self-employed earnings. A few old orders obtained a SIN number before joining the church. With the bishop's signature, an exemption is also made.

Education

In 1965 the Ontario government was on a fast track to consolidate schools. The larger portion of old orders resolved to begin their own private schools. This decision moved them into the media, and a long series of discussions with those in both the provincial and municipal governments. This event shifted the Old Order Mennonite community into a mode of quickly becoming "worldly wise" in provincial and educational politics. From this point they recognized that issues with the government would emerge, and that they could and would address them.

The Old Order wished to withdraw from the public school system for the following reasons.

- Teaching of evolution
- Emphasis upon space travel
- Physical training, exercises, dancing etc., plus clothes required.
- TV teaching
- Children being exposed to profanities, pornography, etc. learned from children raised in different environments.
- Long early morning bus trips, longer school days
- Junior High Schools would include Grades 7&8 (from records)

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A committee was formed with representation from the Old Order Mennonite, Amish and Hoover (Orthodox) groups, initially including a preacher. Meetings were held, and letters were written to William Davis, then minister of education, as well as meetings and letters to local municipal and education members. The old order community was faced with a number of concerns. They had no understanding of an educational program. Who would be qualified to teach? Who/how would the program be financed? What response would the government have to their desire that their children to be released from formal schooling at age 14 at which time they would give them two years of practical training in a life style and vocation appropriate to the Old Orders?

In 1966 the first six or seven schools functioned, and in about five years the program was fully accepted in the larger community. A local gifted teacher in the public school system served as superintendent for 30 years. The school program of the Markham and Old Order Mennonite communities, now numbers 45 schools, 13 of which are one-room. This totals 80 classrooms, and 95 teachers and assistants. A total of 1,168 children attend these classes. This action, 38 years ago, has also helped form a more cohesive body to confront any groups who are not tolerant of their values and life style. The above figures could be augmented by about 15% if one were to include other conservative groups. With time, sophistication and administration increased, as new needs were recognized and addressed.

A school administration board administers the overall school program. This includes setting goals and addressing provincial education concerns. They also facilitate in the ordering of books, and the writing of school texts they wish to use in their curriculum. Each district has a school board of three men who set the salary and hire teachers, address concerns of parents, and attend to general building maintenance. A custodian is employed to clean the classrooms daily.

The perspective new teacher attends and assists in the classroom for six weeks in spring. To prepare her more specifically for teaching, she attends a two week session in summer. A variety of senior

teachers give instruction. During her first years of teaching, a tutor will be appointed to assist her.

To defray the expenses related to the school system, a church collection is taken from the entire membership in January and June. It is expected that parents whose children have already gone through the school system will also contribute. Costs amount to almost \$900 per child. Children in kindergarten attend either full day or half day sessions. Generally this is an abrupt change for young children, because it is the first time they are in an all English speaking environment.

Old order schools have countered the public school system's history texts which includes stories of war, with their own grade seven and eight texts. These texts now include some Mennonite history. They have also produced their own arithmetic and language texts. Each student is tested by a common standard each year.



Yatton Parochial School, Peel Township, Wellington County. Photo credit: Brent Bauman

Current issues in the school system.

At least three issues are currently being addressed with the government. Students commonly attend through the term in which they have their 14th birthday. This exit from school is earlier than that found in the public system. Old orders argue that the formal training in school to age 14 is adequate, and that at least two years of additional apprenticeship is done in their homes and neighbouring farms in their larger community. About 98 percent of all parents with children between ages 14 to 16 who are not in school have signed forms stating their children are not wage earners.

The Ministry of Education is instituting a policy in which each school student in the province has a number. The

purpose is to more efficiently and effectively follow their educational progress in school. While the existing provincial government says there is no intent to use such a record for matters other than education, one cannot be sure this will always be the case in the future. On Feb. 19, 2002, about 100 people representing the old orders and a number of other Christian private schools met in an old order school and voted decisively not to cooperate. "We don't want to be part of that system", they said.

Since the water crisis in Walkerton, Ontario, the government is moving somewhat irrationally to "avoid" a repetition of this same problem. All schools are to have a chlorination system installed. Engineers, with a fee up to \$5000 will test the water and arrange installation. Each school is to have someone trained to test the water daily, then send in a test sample biweekly, and do another test bimonthly. Every three years this training must be repeated. This program is not sensitive to rural conditions. The installation is not done on the basis of each school's water quality. Many schools in Ontario know they cannot afford such a venture. Schools run by the Old Order Mennonites and Markhams are now installing clay filters for drinking purposes. Presently the old orders are waiting to see what will further emerge with provincial policy.

Employment Insurance and Workman's Compensation

Both of these plans are required by every employer in Canada. Only the self-employed are exempt from paying Employment Insurance. Through the past 30 years old orders have obtained an increasing proportion of their revenue from cottage industries. This has meant more direct sales with the public and with businesses who have specific standards of quality. These shops, generally located on the farms, hire old order employees as well as others. Some old orders work for establishments owned by others in their church community, while a few are employed by non-old order employers. For many years "a lot of home-made solutions" have been adopted, in which employees became "partners" with the employer and did not pay Unemployment Insurance or Canada Pension.

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This arrangement is no longer tenable. Old Order Mennonites would like to see a better fit of this scheme, and are working to that end. The Old Order school system wishes to adopt an appropriate plan for its employment of school teachers. The Markham have no rule or principle regarding Employment Insurance (nor with the Canadian Pension Plan) for their members. Many of their teachers (and employees in the larger work sector) now receive these benefits. Markham teachers are the larger proportion of the teaching staff. A few of the Old Order teachers see some merit in the Unemployment Insurance plan. However the Old Order Mennonite religious leaders wish the principle of community responsibility for the total care of its membership to remain uncompromising. They are currently seeking a means that this will be possible.

Farm Taxation

Ontario law requires all farmers who earn over \$7,000 to register with either the Ontario Federation of Agriculture or the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario unions. In 1999 a government Tribunal met in the Mennonite Central Committee's Kitchener office with old order representation. They stated that their actions were one of conscience. The government accepted their position and requested a detailed list of the name of every old order farmer who was eligible for this new arrangement. Old orders are exempt from joining these unions for religious reasons. Under this provision they receive farmer tax exemptions.

Cemeteries

In 1991, under the Perpetual Care and Maintenance Fund, the Ontario government required all bodies who have a cemetery to place a \$100,000 bond with the government. In addition, a payment of \$150 is levied for each person buried. These monies would then be used in the event the cemetery is abandoned by the ownership body.

Old orders found this an infringement on their corporate responsibility. (It was also unwieldy and costly.) In 1991 a significant representation of old orders (including the Amish) went to Queen's Park (Toronto) to discuss the matter with legislators. They made an agreement that they would collectively be responsible for their cemeteries in perpetuity. Should a cemetery be abandoned, the existing old

order collective would attend to arising needs. No monies were required by the government. Deacons annually report the number of internments made.

With the addition of new cemeteries, new registration and a visit to the Legislative building is required. This was done in 1998 and in 2000. Three additional cemeteries will be added by the old orders this year.

Other matters

All guns in Ontario must be registered. Old orders use guns on obnoxious undomesticated creatures and pests around the farm such as racoons and ground hogs. A few like to hunt deer in the local vicinity, and fewer go out on a multi-day hunt. Gun owners are required to take a course on the use of ammunitions and guns. Old order gun owners attend these courses. A gun license application includes a photo identification. With the bishop's signature, this requirement is waived.

It is the plan of the Ontario government that every domestic farm animal used for consumption be traced from birth to death. Animals receive a permanent number, so as to be tracked. This may illicit a response from the old order community in the future.

Conservation authorities now require that farmers pay closer attention to animals in and near streams, ponds, lakes and marshes. They also require that manure be properly stored, with a roof over the storage. The government has provision to cover 75% of these costs. Old Orders do not accept such "handouts" or "assistance". The leadership of the community wish to address the concern. Some farmers have borne the expense of building manure storage sites. A few have consulted specialists in the field of environment to use more nature-oriented means for water run-off, etc. This concern is being addressed.

Periodically the government adopts new standards for lights and signage on horse or tractor drawn vehicles. Old Order Mennonites have no problem with such compliance.

With a letter from the deacon, old orders are exempt from jury duty.

Old orders rub shoulders with the law when they discover the growth of marijuana plants in their corn fields. Such cultivation by outsiders is not unusual. In

one case a farmer's son quickly reported by phone a perpetrator in the field, and authorities were able to arrest him in his car a few kilometres from the farm.

When old orders are involved in a traffic accident or some law infringement involving another party, they seek to avoid the court. They oppose the "wheeling and dealing" and pursuit of unreasonable high financial awards in court procedures. They have no insurance plans from which monies are drawn. While they wish to make fair financial amends in areas in which they bear responsibility, they often over compensate rather than fight or challenge the case. A committee to address the concern is selected with consultation with the deacon. Settlement costs are born by the total community.

In matters which necessitate an engagement with the federal or provincial government, old orders often use the channel of the Mennonite Central Committee. In recent decades they have not sought MCC's advice. MCC circulates information to conservative groups regarding a concern some group(s) have raised, and a meeting is proposed, often in a room on the MCC premises. When necessary MCC arranges a meeting with government officials.

Old orders call for the services of lawyers, especially with regard to land titles. Lawyers are also used for other legal matters. They seek their advice and wish to follow proper procedures. Old orders are not comfortable with the process of court in which there is "wheeling and dealing", and where unreasonable figures are used in negotiating settlements.

Old orders are reluctant to initiate, meet or address legislators and their staff. They take an apologetic and respectful stance. They wish to remain the quiet in the land. In more recent years they recognize that they must present their position before the government. They are also not accustomed to having the government consult them regarding some imminent legislation which might be contrary to their life-style. Some fear the current generation will lose their sense of suffering and hardship for the sake of their convictions. They fear negotiations may become too common a practice, and possibly compromising.

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Old orders have sought to remain true to their convictions and the ways of the forefathers. Their mode of life is distinctly one of community, in contrast to a dominant individualistic life style in the larger society. Church leaders seek to ascertain the voice of the community in the context of tradition and scriptures in an ever changing environment.

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The writer has been greatly assisted in discussions with Rick Cober-Bauman, Levi Frey, Amsey Martin (including the editing of a draft of this paper), Donald Martin, and Doug Snyder.

John F. Peters lives in Waterloo and is Professor Emeritus, Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Wilfred Laurier University.

Education Among The Plain People of Waterloo, Wellington, and Perth Counties

by Amsey Martin

A Brief History

Mennonites have always recognized the need to educate their children. In 1802, two years after the initial Mennonite settlers arrived in Waterloo County, they opened it, the first Mennonite school in British North America. When the government of Ontario opened public schools in 1842, the Mennonites quit operating their own schools and sent their children to the public schools¹. Except for concerns regarding patriotism during the Second World War, the Mennonite families perceived the education their children received in the public schools to be adequate until approximately 1964.

At that time it became apparent that the public officials in Ontario were planning to erect large central schools to provide equal educational opportunities for all children, both urban and rural. This direction posed a problem for the various groups of Plain People scattered throughout Waterloo, Wellington, and Perth Counties. These people did not want to see their children climbing onto school buses every day. Large central schools, they reasoned, would provide greater exposure to sex education, Darwinist evolution, movies, as well as other potentially undesirable influences. Parents feared there would be pressure to wear gym clothes and increasing exposure to the modern practices and thinking of the broader society.

Deuteronomy 6:6,7 says, "And these words which I command thee ... thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children..." Because the responsibility to teach children is given to parents, the Plain People believed it was more appropriate to send their children to schools owned and operated by the church than to public schools which were run by the government, especially so if the environment in the latter was undesirable.

By 1965 leaders of the Plain People began planning to withdraw from the public school system and establish their own schools. In the fall of 1966, nine one-room schools were operating in Waterloo and Wellington counties². The parochial schools in these municipalities eventually became known as the Waterloo Wellington-Perth Parochial Schools (WWPPS). Initially not all parents of the Old Order Mennonites and Markham-Waterloo Conference sent their children to these new schools. Only after these schools were in operation for several years and seemed to be enjoying some degree of success did most parents in these churches send their children to the parochial schools³.

The Schools Today

In the following years, additional schools were gradually added as confidence in the school system grew and as the church communities expanded. Thirty-five years later, during the 2001-2002 school year, there were sixty-one school locations: thirty-six were owned by the Old Order Mennonites, eleven by the Old Order Amish, eight by the Markham-Waterloo Conference, and six

by the Orthodox Mennonites. Twenty-seven of these schools had grades one to eight in one classroom. One hundred and twenty-two teachers and assistants were teaching a total of 1706 students.

In 1966 James Bauman was asked to teach in one of the classrooms and provide supervision of the beginning teachers. He was well qualified. Not only did he have a teacher's certificate as well as some teaching experience in the public school system, but he was also blessed with God-given talents of tactful and compassionate leadership. For thirty years, until 1996, James Bauman stayed with WWPPS. For a number of years he continued teaching in one of the classrooms besides giving leadership to other teachers and board members. Later, as this private educational system grew and expanded, he spent most of his time in administrative duties. No doubt the success these schools have experienced, especially in the early years, is due largely to the blessings God imparted through this one man's dedication.

Fortunately, some teachers remained in the classroom and gained a number of years' teaching experience. This core of experienced teachers assisted James Bauman with various tasks. These teachers took speaking assignments at teachers meetings, taught summer teacher-training sessions, and coached new recruits in the classrooms as student teachers. In 2002, this group of experienced teachers was still exercising a substantial degree of control over the instructional activities in the schools.

In 1996, when James Bauman requested to be relieved of his duties, many meetings were held to determine how the system was to proceed. Eventually his duties were distributed among various people. Several important consequences of these changes were the establishment of the Advisory Board and the Teacher Teams.

The five-man Advisory Board has provided senior leadership in vital areas. One of these men serves as hiring-contact person and another as the government contact person. Two of these men are from the Markham-Waterloo Conference and three from the Old Order church. The Amish have their own Advisory Board. Any major concerns not directly related to the teaching curriculum are taken to the Advisory Board. The board members

assist with the difficult personal relationship problems that are inevitable when many people work so closely together. The fact that these men are appointed by church officials gives legitimacy and authority to their position and decisions.

Another important feature of this parochial school system is the mentoring program referred to as "Teacher Teams." Most teachers with over ten years of classroom experience are teamed with one or more teachers with less experience. The senior partner is expected to make several visits per year to his junior partner to answer any questions and to ensure that the teaching and learning processes are effective. The junior partner is encouraged to request help with any aspect of his classroom experiences - from instructional concerns and evaluation procedures to discipline problems. This program ensures that inexperienced teachers have access to the help, ideas, and sympathies of those with more experience. These teams are set up by the summer-school committee with the guidance of the Advisory Board. Teams are reviewed annually and necessary adjustments are made in order to keep the program running smoothly.

A nine-member Book Committee addresses concerns regarding the curriculum and the availability of textbooks. In the past, many textbooks discarded by the public schools could be used in the parochial schools. That source, however, had dwindled to almost nothing by 2002. Over the years, senior teachers within WWPPS and James Bauman developed courses for all grades in arithmetic, for grades 4-6 in English grammar, grades 4-6 in geography, grades 1-2 in phonics, and grades 7-8 in history. With permission from publishers some textbooks were reprinted. The books that are purchased and the courses that are developed stress the basics in education and use older methods of pedagogy. Because teachers and parents recognize that the majority of graduates from parochial schools will labour on farms, in kitchens, and in shops in the parochial school communities, the instructional programs and the textbooks attempt to prepare students for such practical employment activities.

Each local school community has a three man school board usually elected

from the pool of parents within the school community. The board is responsible to hire and pay the teachers, maintain the premises, provide a link between the school and the parents, and offer support to the teacher.

Teachers are hired in March. New teachers without experience are asked to devote two weeks to practice-teaching in the classrooms of two different experienced teachers-one week with each of the two teachers. This activity takes place sometime from March to May. During these practice-teaching sessions the beginning teachers do their first actual teaching. This student-teaching is coordinated by a few of the experienced teachers.

Old Order Amish and Orthodox Mennonites generally hire teachers who serve within their own respective church groups. The Old Order Mennonite and Markham/Waterloo teachers, however, freely teach in schools of either church.

Two weeks in August are set aside for a professional development course simply called "Summer School." The summer-school committee, a team of seven older teachers, plans the topics and coordinates the events. Three separate tracks, one for teachers of eight grades, one for teachers for junior grades, and one for teachers of senior grades, are run concurrently. Classes during the first week are designed specifically for beginning teachers and for those starting their second year. The topics are more practical than theoretical. There is an emphasis on teaching techniques, developing a daily and weekly schedule for a multi-grade classroom, and becoming familiar with the instructional materials in core subjects like arithmetic, reading, English, and phonics. Considerable time is spent completing exercises at the grade seven and eight levels in arithmetic and English grammar. Teachers with two or more years of experience are invited to attend sessions during the second week when topics such as history, geography, science, music, discipline, and others are discussed. The summer school committee members as well as several other teachers do most of the teaching during the first week. During the second week up to twenty teachers might be involved in making presentations or leading discussions on a variety of topics.

Although the two-week course is fairly strenuous and comprehensive, this brief training session and the two weeks of student-teaching are the extent of the preparation beginning teachers receive before their big day-the first day of school.

Three teachers' meetings are held throughout each school year. Teachers are expected to attend if at all possible. A new teachers' meeting committee plans the program for each successive meeting and asks various teacher or Advisory Board members to contribute. These meetings serve two purposes: they provide opportunities for professional development; and, as their title indicates, they serve as a place to meet peers. Not only should teachers leave with their teaching skills honed, but also, after having shared with their colleagues, should return to their respective schools with rejuvenated spirits.

Annually supplies are bought collectively by tender for all schools within the system. These supplies are stored in a vacant classroom and distributed to the individual schools in July.

A committee of ex-teachers administers standardized tests to all students once a year. Test results provide teachers with an independent evaluation in order to make a comparison with the scores students obtain on teacher-prepared tests. Such comparisons prove helpful when making difficult decisions regarding promotion of students. The standardized test results are put on a graph to show how the entire school system compares with the group of students on which the tests were standardized. These graphs also identify particular schools that achieve low scores. Standardized reading and vocabulary tests are administered annually; standardized math tests are administered every third year. Test results are kept on file indefinitely.

The Orthodox Mennonite and the Old Order Amish groups operate separately from WWPPS as far as funding is concerned. Both Old Order Mennonite and Markham/Waterloo churches operate a separate bank account for the school they own. The individual local school boards receive their funding from these accounts. A deacon from each group is responsible for the account of his group. The Old Order Mennonite Church pays

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for all the supplies and the senior-partner expenses, then annually invoices the other groups for the goods and services they received. A few times each year, the churches ask their own congregations for funds to replenish the bank accounts. No government money is available nor would it be accepted.

Although students leave school at fourteen years of age, parents are requested not to permit their children to work in a public place of employment until they have attained the age of sixteen years. Politicians and education officers know that these children graduate two years early but are currently choosing to ignore this fact. The plain churches find this level of civil disobedience justifiable because they could not with a free conscience send their children into the environment of the public high school. Acts 5:29 states, "We ought to obey God rather than man."

The philosophy of education among the WWPPS can be understood by an oft-repeated adage: "More is caught than taught." Another cogent proverb makes the observation that education is what remains after what has been learned has been forgotten. Reference to these proverbs should not be construed to mean that the material to be covered in class is not considered important. Much effort is put into this system, and hundreds of thousands of dollars are spent annually to operate these schools. Although the Plain People take education seriously, teachers are encouraged to appreciate that the importance of the three R's is significantly less than the value of good character development. Friendship, love, social skills, submission to authority, and other Christian virtues cannot be replaced by becoming well-educated.

One basic fundamental in the life of the Plain People is what has been called the barn-raising principle. It speaks of collective effort, of assisting one's fellow man, and of brotherhood. A thread of this principle can be seen throughout the entire framework of WWPPS. These schools are not run by a few celebrated, lettered individuals, but by the collective efforts of many people. All parents, students, teachers, and board members must pull together if an ongoing success is to be enjoyed. Operating these parochial schools is a corporate effort.

A Look To The Future

Thirty-six years ago the operation of private church-owned schools was a dream. Today it is a reality. Numerous hurdles have been met and overcome. What will the future hold? With education in the public arena in a state of flux, new challenges for the parochial school system are a very real possibility. We face the future with the knowledge that only by the providence of our Almighty Creator have we come this far. We trust firmly that His guiding hand will provide in the future, whether peaceful pastures be ours or if storm clouds appear.

Endnotes

- 1 "Pleasant Places" page 123.
- 2 "Decades of Challenge" by James Bauman. Printed in "Journal of the Center for Pennsylvania German Studies" Millersville University, Vol. #7, No.4
- 3 Ibid.

Amsey Martin lives in Yatton, Ontario. He is a deacon in the Old Order Mennonite Church and has been a teacher at the Yatton Parochial School for several years.

Old Order Mennonite Mutual Aid Programs

by Levi M. Frey

Last December 30th, Mervin and Mildred Martin were spending a quiet Sunday afternoon at home. Suddenly they noticed that their barn was on fire. With the help of the firemen and neighbours, most of the cattle were removed from the burning barn before it collapsed. The entire structure and the rest of the contents were destroyed. The firemen managed to save the rest of the buildings.

A barn fire is a spectacular, heart-wrenching experience. It is also an opportunity to bring out the very best in people of the neighbourhood and the church community. A barn fire is a catalyst from which springs mutual aid at its finest.

But I was not asked to describe barn fires. I was asked to share about barn raisings. More specifically, I was asked to explain how the Old Order Mennonite Church administers various areas of their mutual aid program. I plan to spend some more time on that topic, but I will also try to give a brief description of some of the other mutual aid programs in the Old Order Mennonite Church. The Fire and Hazard Fund is the one that takes care of barn fires. I will also describe Hospital Aid, helping the poor and the needy in the church, the Freewill fund, church building and our school system.

Old Order Mennonites believe very literally in some Biblical teachings which some other denominations take in a more figurative sense. We believe in a literal separation between church and state. We do not believe that the church should have any part in governing the country. We should submit to government laws as long as they do not violate our conscience, but we should not become a part of the government. Therefore we do not vote in any elections, nor will we serve on a jury.

We also believe that the church is responsible for taking care of any needs which its members suffer from. We believe that the Canada Pension Plan, the Child Tax Benefit Program, and other government grant programs are taking the place of programs which are the responsibility of the church. Therefore we will not participate in any of these programs. The government has granted us some exemptions, but in other cases we simply do not participate. We feel that the government is usurping the role which rightfully belongs to the church.

A barn raising is the part of mutual aid which is most visible to the world in general. Because it is so visible, it is also impressive. But we must realize that there are myriads of things which must interact properly, long before the day of the actual barn raising. Even with hundreds of people working together it is not possible to build a barn in a day, the way some people believe. It takes hundreds of hours of preparation before it can happen. Let us briefly look at some of the main pieces of the puzzle as it takes shape.

The very first thing that happens, probably while the firefighters are still working at trying to prevent the fire from spreading to the other buildings, is the appointment of a building committee. The

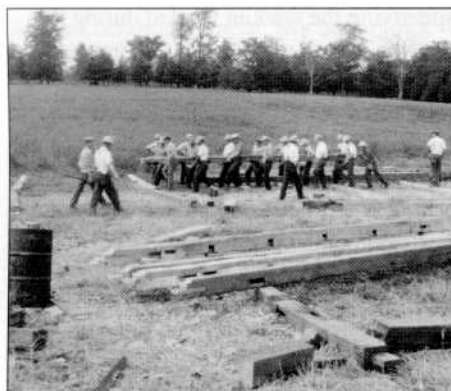
members of the committee are farmers from the neighbourhood. The deacon of the local church district appoints one member. The farmer suffering the loss also appoints one person. These two together decide on a third person. Traditionally a building committee always consisted of three couples. The last few committees actually consisted of five couples, to try to lower the stress factor on committee members by spreading out the workload. I am not sure who appointed the fourth and fifth members of Mervin's committee, but I expect it was a group effort.

The building committee is responsible for everything. They must first consult with the farmer, in order to come up with a blueprint for a new barn. It is they who hire the head carpenter, the concrete crew, the bulldozers, and they are the ones who co-ordinate everything to work together smoothly.

The wives of the men on the building committee are responsible for ensuring that all the hungry workmen are fed. Cold weather and hard work make for hungry stomachs! Food must be procured, and all the women and girls who show up to help must be coordinated also.

Money is borrowed by the committee from within the community, to pay for construction costs on a short-tem basis, until the project is completed and the costs are totaled and collected from the general church community. A bank account is set up through which to channel the money.

December 31, the day after Mervin's fire was not a good Monday to hire heavy construction equipment, because many businesses were closed that day. That gave an extra day to finalize plans. New



Sorting the beams and timbers in preparation of building a new barn.

Photo credit: Mennonite Archives of Ontario

Year's Day is a church holiday for our people, so clean-up began in earnest on Wednesday morning. The concrete footers for the new barn wall were poured on Thursday. The forms for the walls were set up and filled with concrete on Friday. Forms were removed on Saturday, leaving Sunday for the concrete to set. Monday morning at seven o'clock the trucks started hauling in gravel fill inside and around the foundation. Later that same day the support posts and beams for the second storey were put into place, and the joists started. By Tuesday evening all the floor-joists and the floors were in place. The picture in the *Elmira Independent* was taken the following day, Wednesday, the day of the barn raising. By Thursday evening the roof was finished and all the barn siding was in place. From the road, the barn would have looked almost complete. This was the eighth actual working day.

Meanwhile, in the bottom storey the cow stalls and the calf pens were taking shape. There were always lots of volunteers around to do whatever needed to be done.

Progress during the next few weeks was less dramatic, but there were still hundreds of smaller things to finish, milking equipment to install, pens to weld up, windows and doors to fasten.

The cows were milked in the new barn on February 1, four weeks and two days after clean-up first began. By that time, between twelve and fifteen hundred volunteers had been fed, and probably twelve thousand hours of labour had been donated. Sixty thousand dollars worth of concrete had been poured, and eighty thousand dollars worth of lumber and roofing steel had been put in place. Except for some minor details, the barn was finished.

In a month or so, when all the bills have come in and have been paid, the committee will summarize the replacement costs. They will finish the list of losses which they have come up with, along with their estimate of the values. They will document a comparison between the old barn and the new one, in both value and size.

When all of these things have been put on paper, the 18 deacons of our church will have a meeting to determine how much of the cost will be covered by the church Fire and Hazard Fund. This

amount is based on the value of the lost property for contents - crops, livestock, or machinery - but on replacement cost for buildings. Adjustments are decided by the committee of the church deacons, but it usually ends up that 85% to 95% of the costs are paid by the brotherhood.

Let us for illustrative purposes imagine that the number to be paid by the church fund for Mervin's barn ends up being two hundred thousand dollars. Each deacon already knows what percentage of total church membership is in his local congregation, so he will calculate how much of the total is to be raised in his district. I believe our district, called Spring Creek, is 7% of the total. So on the next Sunday morning after regular church services, the deacon will announce that there was a meeting to determine the cost of replacing Mervin's barn, and the amount to be collected in the Spring Creek church district is fourteen thousand dollars. He would appreciate having the money sent to him in the next two weeks, so the matter can be taken care of.

Some time in the next few days, each member decides how much he will contribute. And here let me state that Old Order Mennonites are just as human as anyone else; it shows up at this point! Some will divide \$14,000 by 63 families in the district, and write a cheque for \$222.22. Someone will decide that his barn isn't nearly as big as Mervin's, and anyway, he had tough luck with the cattle last summer, so he rounds off and writes his cheque for \$200. Someone else will remember that there are at least fifty - or was it sixty? - families in Spring Creek district, so he will divide by fifty just to be on the safe side. He decides to round his cheque off, too, and writes one for \$300. His neighbour does the same calculation, remembers the time the brotherhood helped him out of trouble, and rounds his cheque off to \$500... This is mutual aid in action. This is the way contribution amounts are determined for all collections.

Each deacon has a local bank account in which to deposit all the cheques which are sent to him. He writes a cheque for all of the money which he collects for the Fire and Hazard Fund, and sends it to the deacon who is responsible for the central fund. This deacon will then issue a cheque to the building committee for the exact

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amount which had been determined by the deacons for Mervin's barn. Any excess collected will remain in the central fund to pay for small losses.

The building committee now takes the money and pays the loans which had been taken to temporarily finance the construction costs. Their mandate is then completed, and they go home with a sigh of relief, with a lot of fast-gained experience under their belt. They are ready to offer advice to the next disaster committee.

Some other things are paid out of the Fire and Hazard Fund, too. Sometimes a natural catastrophe will destroy some livestock. If a farmer loses more than 10% of his livestock, he is reimbursed for part of his loss. The amount is determined by the local deacon, or he may ask several other deacons to help him with a decision. The man's financial position, or years in farming, may have an influence as to how much the church will help; amount may vary from 25% to 75%.

If a case arises where a member is at fault in a traffic accident, this fund is the vehicle through which the member is assisted. Lawsuits arising from traffic accidents are approached on an individual basis, through a church appointed committee of lay members and deacons. This is a new phenomenon, and we are still feeling our way along without direction from past experience.

Old Order Mennonites do not believe in any form of outside insurance, so we do not participate in the Ontario Hospital Insurance Program. We pay our own hospital bills, and then the brotherhood helps along. All eighteen deacons have signing authority on the central hospital aid account, so our local deacon will write a cheque to cover 75% of hospital or specialist bills which we have paid. In cases of financial difficulty or extremely high bills (such as a recent bone marrow transplant which was done on a two-year-old) an amount greater than 75% will be paid. Some people who are well off financially may choose not to have hospital bills reimbursed by the church Hospital Aid plan.

Needs for the hospital fund are announced twice a year, and amounts are based on the payments which were made out of the fund in the past six months. All the money collected by the local deacon is



This 1977 photo shows the many hands needed to complete the job. Photo credit: Mennonite Archives of Ontario/K-W Record (Gerry Bookhout)

sent to the central fund, even if it is in excess of the requested amount. This account must always contain a fairly large reserve.

If a new church is built to replace an existing one, or in a new community, the procedure is somewhat similar to the barn fire procedure. A committee is usually elected at a special meeting which was called to determine the need for construction. Money to cover the initial construction costs is borrowed from members of the community, many of whom may have volunteered it. The entire construction is done with volunteer labour. After completion, the committee will forward the summary of costs to the deacons. Each deacon will calculate the portion of the cost to be raised in his home community, and announce the amount to be collected. He will then write a cheque to the committee for the exact amount of the cost for his district. Any excess which is collected stays in his local church account. The committee is responsible for paying the construction loans.

If repairs are made to a church property, only the local congregation is asked to pay for it. Unless there is a special project, an announcement is made once a year with an amount to replenish the local account for church maintenance and heat.

In our Mount Forest community, ministers are asked to travel to new communities quite often, to help with preaching assignments. Our deacons use

funds from the local accounts to pay traveling costs for the minister and his wife on such occasions.

The deacons are responsible for looking after those members who suffer financial hardships throughout the year. This could include doctor bills not normally paid out of the Hospital Aid fund, paying a nursing home to care for an eccentric older man who has no close relatives to take care of him, or assisting a few isolated families with school tax costs. Once a year at a meeting of all the deacons, these costs are equalized so that each church family will be paying an equal amount, through their local church account.

Once a year a Freewill collection for outside relief is announced. There is no amount specified for this collection. Some members prefer to do their giving to various organizations on their own, while others prefer to do it through the church. The local deacon forwards all the money from this collection to a central Outside Relief Fund, and then the committee of deacons issue cheques to various charities of their choice. Most of this money goes to Christian Aid Ministries and Mennonite Central Committee, and the rest goes to other local and national charities such as Red Cross, Gideons, and ARC Industries.

The Old Order Mennonite Conference and the Markham-Waterloo Conference, together with a few smaller church groups, operate an elementary school system consisting of over sixty schools with over 1700 students. Most of these schools are administered by the Old Order Conference. Supplies are mostly bought through a central warehouse. One of the deacons is in charge of the central school fund. Twice a year we collect money through the usual manner, with a church announcement specifying the amount needed during the next six month period. All the money collected for the school collection is forwarded to the deacon in charge of the central fund. He in turn forwards the amounts which the secretary of each school board estimated he will need for the next six month operating costs.

These are some of the most formal mutual aid programs which are found in the Old Order community. There are many informal programs in effect in the community on a daily basis, too, but we

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will not go into details about the boys and girls who help out young couples for very little pay, the equipment sharing and labour sharing which goes on all the time, the quilting bees, the semiannual church housecleaning, the shared school cleaning duties, and so on.

Just one more thing before I close, to prove why I still believe that God has both a sense of humour, and a flair for the dramatic. I never did tell you why Mervin and Mildred Martin were at home that Sunday last December. In the more than nine years since they were married in September of 1992, God never saw fit to bless their home with children. On the day of the barn raising, at noon, they rushed to the hospital to deliver a baby girl, their first child.... Praise the Lord!



Mervin and Mildred Martin's new barn.
Photo credit: Brent Bauman

The Old Order Mennonite Conference church deacons administer a number of mutual aid programs for the benefit of the members of the church. Here is a brief summary of some of them.

Fire and Hazard Fund

- the "Barn Raising" fund
- also covers losses from accidents and natural disasters
- amount of payments determined by deacons on a case-by-case basis
- collections held as required for major disasters
- one central fund with small reserve
- only one deacon has cheque-signing authority

Hospital Aid Fund

- covers hospital stays, specialists, day surgeries
- payments are generally 75% of amount paid by members
- collections are held twice a year to replenish account
- one central fund with six-month reserve
- all deacons have cheque-signing authority

Local Church District

- collector account for all collections
- for church maintenance, heat, members in dire straits

- collections held in December to replenish
- account is in local bank with 12-month reserve
- local deacon has sole control

Outside Relief Fund

- payments to other registered charities, determined by deacons
- "freewill" collection; no amount is specified
- collections are held once a year
- one central account with no reserve

School Fund

- pays all school supplies, teacher wages, buildings, operating costs
- amount of collections determined by projected operating costs
- collections held in January and July
- central fund with reserve
- each school board secretary has local account with six-month reserve
- one deacon responsible for paying general supplies and dispensing reserves to local school boards for operating expenses

Levi M. Frey is a bookkeeper who lives near Mount Forest, Ontario. This article is adapted from a presentation he gave in Waterloo to the Association of Mutual Aid Societies on March 7, 2002.

Old Order Mennonite Music

by Martin A. Frey

I grew up in the Old Order Mennonite tradition where vocal music is the only type of music used. Singing is still done without accompaniment. My experience with music in the Old Order Mennonite setting was from about 1920 to 1940 and during this time I was introduced to a number of different settings where the art of song was used.

Probably my first experience would have been the worship service songs, sung in unison. These songs are all written in German and I will admit their meaning escaped my understanding for a long time. Over the years, of course, this changed somewhat as the ministers would endeavor to explain the words' meanings. All of this helped me get a better grip of

the German language. This is probably the basis for young Old Order Mennonites today as well.

In the South Peel church (near Wallenstein, Ont.) which I attended most often, there were two Brubacher brothers with exceptionally strong voices who led the singing. The songs were relatively easy to follow in the slower tempo in which the singing is conducted.

The song books used for church services, as well as any related services such as weddings in the homes, funerals, etc., are the small songbook called *Lieder Sammlung* (song collection) which was compiled by Bishop Benjamin Eby in the 1830s. The songbooks have no notes, but are words only. There is a tune number

listed with each song that corresponds with a metrical tune index printed in the song book *Philharmonia*. There may be a mild variation between the printed notes of the song in the *Philharmonia* and how it is customarily sung, but in general the printed tunes are followed reasonably well.

The song leader (Vorsaenger) needs to be familiar with these tune numbers. There are no printed bulletins to warn him ahead of time what song will be sung, but when it is announced, the minister will read a number of verses and this allows the song leader to be prepared to start the singing. It is important for the song leader to be fully familiar with the different

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tunes that will be needed. At the end of the service, the leader has the option of choosing a closing number. The song leader is always a male.

In the Pennsylvania churches of the Old Order Mennonites, there is a table set up in front of the pulpit called the "singers' table." Here a number of able singers gather for the service and in this way can help each other. In our area, each song leader is on his own. He will choose a seat somewhere in the middle of the men's section in order to be more central. Each church will have its own leader, but he may have a companion singer alongside for confidence and help if needed.

Over the years Old Order Mennonites have also conducted singing school courses during the winter months to encourage the use of song. At the age of approximately 14, I had the good fortune to attend one such singing school. It was held at the home of Elias Brubacher, who was also the instructor. He was one of the Peel church song leaders and knew his music well. He taught the basic rudiments of music with four-part singing and was

able to explain how to transpose music from the various keys in which the songs are written. The attendance at these schools are all young Old Order Mennonites. The music learned in this way has been a great encouragement in continuing the art of singing without accompaniment. When these people sing in four parts they have good harmony.

I also attended singing school sessions at the Three Bridges school in approximately 1933 led by Levi Bowman. Onias Weber also led singing school there in the early 1950s. No doubt there have been other singing schools since that date, but I am not sure of when or where.

Sunday evenings are the regular get-together times for the young people and are mostly spent singing. In my day the most commonly used book was the *Church and Sunday School Hymnal*. There may also be daytime singing such as at weddings or wherever a group may be gathered. Quiltings are an occasion for girls to sing rounds or choruses. Musical instruments are not permitted in the Old Order Mennonite denomination. The only exception is the mouth organ if it is used privately.

Today a good source of early instruction in music is the Old Order parochial schools where it is part of the curriculum. In some schools, if the teacher feels less qualified to teach music, a music teacher may come in weekly or bi-weekly to fill this need. This instruction is geared to the basics so the students may be able to read music and learn new songs for themselves. Hymn books are used in the schools as a source of printed music, but they also use rounds and choruses to build familiarity with four-part harmony. Again, no instruments are used other than a pitch pipe or tuning fork.

With this program of teaching music from one generation to the next, where the present has received from the past and will forward its knowledge on to the next generation, the ability to sing will live on.

Martin A. Frey lives in St. Jacobs, Ontario. Martin taught singing school many times in the Markham-Waterloo Mennonite conference, an off-shoot of the Old Order denomination. He is fondly remembered as having taught singing school in the Markham area in the 1950s.

Book Reviews

Path of a People: Erb Street Mennonite Church, 1851-2001

by Karl Kessler,
(Waterloo: Erb Street Mennonite
Church, 2001)
167 pages. \$25.00.

Reviewed by Brent Bauman

When a church reaches a significant milestone like 150 years, a book telling of its journey through the past one and a half centuries is expected, some might argue mandatory. Erb Street Mennonite Church has marked this anniversary with not one, but two books. One is historical, for which this review is based on, and the other culinary (see next review).

One of the challenges of writing a congregational history is knowing your

audience. The majority of the people buying them on this special occasion are not avid history buffs, but current and former members curious about the background of the church they hold dear to their hearts.

Karl Kessler seems to realize this fact as he formats his book without footnotes and annotations that the casual reader might find distracting. What is left is an attractive volume with many glossy photographs, and a crisp, smooth flowing narration of the past 150 years of what is now called Erb Street Mennonite Church. Because it is an early Waterloo County church, he also includes a brief overview of how Mennonites got to Canada in the first four chapters. Kessler starts his story by explaining their origins in Europe as Anabaptists during the Radical Reformation. This leads to their journey to Pennsylvania, and eventually the purchase and settlement of Waterloo Township. He also includes a brief history of Russian Mennonites to tie in their arrival at Erb Street in 1924.

But there is also another group who will read a congregational history, and that is the local historian. The history of Erb Street and the City of Waterloo are intertwined, and therefore will attract the historian as well. Here Kessler must include detail and accuracy if the book is to be credible in the wider community.

There are many significant names and events to be found in Erb Street's history. Early settlers and entrepreneurs like Abraham Erb and Jacob C. Snider, and local politician Elias Snider were among those who turned Waterloo from a pioneer settlement to an urban centre. On a parallel track, church leaders like Jonas Snider, Noah Hunsberger, and J. B. Martin guided a rural congregation into becoming a modern urban church.

The history of Erb Street, in many ways parallels the story of the larger Mennonite Church in Ontario over the past two centuries. The book has detailed accounts of how many issues including;

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dress, worldliness, political involvement, women's roles, Sunday School, English language, and evening meetings impacted Erb Street, just as it did the Mennonite Church as a whole. Many of these issues were at the centre of the schism with the Old Order Mennonites.

In the end Kessler does a fine job of leading the reader, of either group, through the many twists and turns this congregation took through schisms and growth in the past 150 years.

Brent Bauman lives near Drayton, Ontario. He is editor of the Ontario Mennonite History, and author of Forged Anew, A History of the Floradale Mennonite Church.

Be Present at Our Table

compiled by Sandra Schiedel and Margaret Stockie, (Waterloo: Erb Street Mennonite Church, 2001) 232 pages.\$15.00.

Reviewed by Trijntje Miller

The culinary experience tends to be a forgotten but vital part of history. This cookbook reflects the Erb Street Mennonite Church's culinary experience throughout its history.

The title is appropriate since mealtimes are often a time of thanksgiving and recognition of God's hand upon the lives of those represented in the book. The prayers and anecdotes are priceless, illustrating how things were at a given point in time. Elsie Shantz writes that her mother used the Caramel Frosting recipe "frequently during World War II when sugar was rationed as we had our own maple syrup..... She baked this in the lid of her large Wearever aluminum roast pan." (p.21) Bonnie and Jim Gingrich comment that "Dad built a house in 1950 on a two acre lot on Highland Road West and needed to plant a large garden." (p.5)

The section dividers are beautiful, and generally appropriate to each section. A lot of time and effort went into these well photographed, period specific visual

displays. There are no recipe dividers within the sections but the index is well laid out, allowing users to find their preferences easily.

The introduction to the last section, The Table Of Our Present Day, encourages readers to anticipate healthful recipes containing low fat, low sugar, and no artificial foods. However, only two recipes refer to "light" ingredients (p.162, 216) and only one submitter comments on her need to change her recipe collection due to heart disease. The recipes in this section do not reflect the introduction or take the diseases of our day into consideration.

Nevertheless, the Erb Street Mennonite Church can be proud of their anniversary cookbook. It recognizes the culinary background and roots of the church as well as where they are today. It is a good culinary history of the church.

Trijntje Miller lives in Waterloo, Ontario. She is the editor of the cookbook Stack Your Dishes: a celebration of recipes from Conrad Grebel College.

Book Notes

The Family History and Genealogy of Jacob (Wagner) Giingerich and Veronica Litwiller from 1825 - 2000 is an up-date of the 1975 publication. The compilers only partially achieved their goal, because some families were not contacted, some did not adequately respond, and in a few cases new information which was submitted was not recorded. Due to time restraints, the index is limited to the persons in the 1975 edition — with the page numbering of the 2000 edition, however.

Alvin Gingerich was compiler-in-chief, but, as in the 1975 edition, his name appears at the end of the list of assistants instead of at the top — librarians, beware!

This new edition, however, is very attractively printed with full-colour cover, inside and out, and with a generous supply of photographs. *Submitted by Lorraine Roth*

Hedy Lepp Dennis, author of *Memories of Reesor: The Mennonite Settlement of Northern Ontario, 1925-*

1948 (Leamington: Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Association, 2001), 179 pages, has compiled a book that tells the experiences of Mennonites who pioneered in this small northern community. She uses many maps and photographs to supplement the text. This is the fourth volume in the Essex-Kent Mennonite Historical Series.

John Landis Ruth, author of *The Earth is the Lord's: A Narrative History of the Lancaster Mennonite Conference* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2001), uses 1390 pages to tell the story of one of North America's original Mennonite settlements from its beginnings in Switzerland. Several pieces of previously unknown material has been uncovered. Ruth is a well known historian and story teller throughout the Mennonite community, and this massive work will provide a great deal of information for other historians and genealogists. It includes some accounts of the migration of Mennonites from Pennsylvania to Ontario. \$93.79.

Abraham Martin, author of *Especially for Mennonites - a Message of Love* (Wellesley: author, 2001) 471 pages, reflects upon his life as a David Martin Mennonite - including his excommunication from the group in 1997. Martin quotes extensively from the Bible and classic works such as Martyr's Mirror and the Complete Writings of Menno Simons. Abraham Martin past away in November 2001, shortly before the book was released for sale. Copies can be purchased from Peggy Shantz of R.R #1, Wellesley, ON N0B 2T0.

Helen Grace Lescheid, author of *Lead, Kindly Light* (Belleville: Essence Publishing, 1999) 192 pages, extensively uses her mother's journals to tell the story of Neta Loewen's life. Born in Russia in 1912, Neta lived through the Russian revolution, Stalin's purges, the Second World War, and immigration as a widow with a four young children to Austria and then to British Columbia. It is told as a story of faith in God and courage to carry on. \$17.95.

Gerald C. Ediger, author of *Crossing the Divide: Language Transition Among Canadian Mennonite Brethren 1940-1970* (Winnipeg: Centre for Studies, 2001) 236 pages, looks at the changes that took place in the Mennonite Brethren church with the shift from the German to English language. Ediger is a church

history professor at Canadian Mennonite University. \$19.95.

Royden Loewen, author of *Hidden Worlds: Revisiting the Mennonite Migrants of the 1870s* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002) 140 pages, examines the 1870s Mennonite immigrants to Manitoba from Russia. With the use of diaries, wills, newspapers, and other materials Loewen shows how this group adapted to their new home. \$22.95.

People and Projects

IMPORTANT ADDITION TO THE ARCHIVES

The Mennonite Archives of Ontario now has a Froschauer family Bible in its collection. It was printed in 1531 by Christopher Froschauer of Zurich, Switzerland only six years after the beginning of the Anabaptist movement. The Bible, complete with hand-painted pictures, was donated by George and Anna Reesor of Markham to the archives in the fall of 2001.

En route to Conrad Grebel University College much of this bible's history has been lost. What is known is that it was printed in 1531 by Christopher Froschauer, who opened his shop in Zurich in 1521, and began printing Bibles in 1524. In 1529, he produced the first complete German translation of the Bible, several years before Martin Luther. The "Froschauer Bible" as it came to be known, was the favoured version among Anabaptists.

It is unknown when this particular book came into the Reesor family's possession, but it is certain that it came to North America with Peter Reesor in 1739. It came to Canada 65 years later when Christian Reesor emigrated from Pennsylvania to the Markham area. Here it remained an important part of the Reesor family heritage. Kept in the family home, wrapped in plastic, it was almost lost to a fire several years ago. It was the first item George's mother grabbed as she fled her house. It came into the hands of George and Anna Reesor two years ago.

The Bible is part of a 26-book collection so far donated to the Mennonite Archives of Ontario Archives by George Reesor. Reesor's grandfather, Rev.

Thomas Reesor, was an Old Order Mennonite minister in Markham. He was instrumental in the formation of the Non-Resistant Relief Organization (see Vol. XVII, No. 2, pg 13), and in the 1925 founding of the Mennonite settlement in Northern Ontario that bears name.

The bible will now be preserved in the climate controlled archives adjacent to the Conrad Grebel University College library. Under archivist Sam Steiner's watchful eye, the Reesor's Froschauer Bible will be well protected. *From Grebel Now.*

HAMILTON MENNONITE CHURCH CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

On the first Sunday of 2002, banners and symbols depicting Hamilton's church life and music - including the song, "Open doors," written for the anniversary by Rick Paw - were used to celebrate the milestone during the morning worship service. Scripture was read by three generations of the Walt Dueckman family. Phil Bender, co-pastor, spoke on the topic, "First we remember."

Outside the church a new banner was unfurled. For one year it will proclaim their thankfulness to the community. Julie Bender, co-pastor, led in a closing prayer after which "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" was sung.

They are planning a number of other events throughout the year; such as a joint service and lunch with the Welcome Inn Church, an exchange with another 50-year-old church and social events with the community. The main celebration will be November 2-3, which will include many former participants. In December, they will end the anniversary year with a Christmas program given by the children. *From Canadian Mennonite and Betty Willms*

AVON MENNONITE CHURCH CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

Avon Mennonite Church is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. Special events began January 13 when Avon's first pastor, Jacob Spenler, returned to speak. A noon potluck provided time for reminiscing about Avon's early years. Many former pastors returned throughout the early part of the year to mark the anniversary. Anna Bender, spouse of former pastor Ken Bender (deceased), was at Avon on February 3, Arthur Leis on April 7, Winston Martin on May 5, and Doris and Rod Weber on June 2. The

primary celebration will be on June 28-30 with a barbecue on Friday evening. Saturday evening will include memories of the Dew Drop Inn coffeehouse of the 1970s. A celebration on Sunday afternoon will include an audio-visual montage of the congregation. A congregational history book is also being written to commemorate the occasion. Avon currently has 113 members, and a regular attendance of about 160. Pastors are Gary Horst (since 1984) and Anne Campion (since 1999). *From Canadian Mennonite*

EDNA STAEBLER RESEARCH FELLOW AWARDS

Winner of the 2002 Edna Staebler Research Fellow award was Dr. Paul Tiessen of Waterloo. His project is entitled *Gordon Christian Eby's poetics of life and language: Mapping the modern world, from pre-war Berlin to post-war Kitchener (1911 - 1919)*. Barbara Draper of Elmira was last year's recipient for her work on *Worship and Community Life of the Mennonites of Waterloo County in the Nineteenth Century*. Draper presented her paper on February 21, 2002 at Joseph Schneider Haus in Kitchener. The awards are given to those who "increase knowledge and expand understanding of the folk and founding peoples of Waterloo County/Region." *From news release*

HISTORICAL DISPLAY

A historical display by Woolwich Historical Foundation/Marion Roes of Dreisinger Furniture and Funeral Service in Elmira will be presented this summer. It will consist of over 60 pictures, ads, articles dating from 1878, plus some artifacts. People are also invited to look around the 140 year old building - tin ceilings, original electric lights, 80+ year old elevator and squeaky wood floors. It will be at Dreisinger Furniture Store at 7 Arthur St. N. in Elmira from June 1 to August 3. The book *Woolwich at the Turn of the Century: 1900* will be displayed and for sale as well. For information call Marion Roes 519-883-1448.

BURKHOLDER REUNION

The Burkholder Family Association is sponsoring a family reunion on July 13, 2002 in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The gathering will be held at the Groffdale Mennonite (Brick) Church. This is the church the Burkholders attended when they came to the United States in 1755. *From Canadian Mennonite*