



Bulletin

Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario

WATERLOO - ONTARIO

No. 2

April, 1969

THE MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF ONTARIO is only four years old, but it can boast an imposing list of accomplishments! Since 1965, it has not only recorded history, but it has also made history!

The Society's 60 members have looked into the past and charted a course for the future. This Bulletin is designed to tell you about it.

SEMI-ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETINGS

At each of its semi-annual public meetings, the Society has heard historical sketches that opened up new vistas of inter-Mennonite understanding and appreciation. Dr. Norman High told of contributions made by Mennonites to the development of Waterloo County--and beyond, as illustrated by Jacob Y. Shantz who was commissioned by the government to evaluate land in the western provinces for agricultural purposes.

Amish Histories Available

Papers which illuminated Amish history were presented by Bishop Orland Gingerich and Mr. Joseph Stoll. Bishop Gingerich traced the history of the Amish Mennonites from Alsace Lorraine to Waterloo County. His account included interesting anecdotes of Catholic-Amish cooperation and mutual regard. When the late Peter Litwiller died, the bells of the St. Agatha Catholic Church rang in honor of a man who had won the respect of the entire community.

Mr. Joseph Stoll of the Old Order Amish group in Aylmer, and editor for Pathway Press prepared a comprehensive paper on recent Amish migrations to Ontario from various U.S. communities.

Both papers are available upon request for \$1.00 each.

Mennonites from Russia Highlighted

At another meeting, Herbert Enns, treasurer for the Historical Society, gave an illustrated talk on Mennonite village life in Russia before the Revolution. Copies of his talk are available for 50¢. Mr. Jacob Janzen of St. Catharines displayed a scale model which he had built of a Russian Mennonite village. This model village is on loan to Pioneer Village and forms the core of a Mennonite exhibit being set up there.

PAGEANT PRESENTED

The Historical Society's contribution to Centennial festivities was the presentation of a pageant, "The New Commandment," written by Miss Barbara Coffman and directed by Mr. Gerald Loewen. The pageant was viewed by a large audience at the Kitchener Memorial Auditorium, and subsequently at St. Catharines.

ONTARIO HISTORY WRITTEN

During Centennial Year a booklet on the Mennonites of Ontario was published by the Society. Dr. J.W. Fretz authored this soft-cover, 43-page booklet which is available through the Society or at Provident Bookstore at \$1.00.

TO DRAMATIZE "TRAIL OF THE CONESTOGA"

Success in the Centennial Pageant encouraged the Society to make another attempt at dramatization.

The Trail of the Conestoga is being prepared for presentation during Heritage Festival. Mrs. Norma Rudy has written the script based on Mabel Dunham's popular novel.

The play will be staged at Waterloo Collegiate during the last week in June, 1969.

BOOK TO BE WRITTEN

Another major undertaking of the Historical Society is the publishing of a full-length book on the history of Canadian Mennonites. This project is being undertaken jointly with the Manitoba Historical Society and partial support will come from several Canadian Conferences. In addition, special funds are solicited from those who have a particular interest in Mennonite history. Contributions are tax deductible.

Dr. Frank H. Epp of Ottawa, well-known Canadian editor and lecturer, has been named to write this history and research has begun. (An interesting by-product of this work is the new information which always comes to light as a result of research in public archives.) A brochure introducing this history is attached.

MENNONITE HOUSE ON WATERLOO CAMPUS

The John E. Brubacher homestead on University of Waterloo grounds is to be preserved as an authentic Mennonite Home. A joint committee of the Historical Society and the University of Waterloo are carrying out the details of this project. After a fire gutted the house early last spring, Simeon Martin, his two sons, William and Amsey, and Urias Martin took up the task of supplying 27 hand-hewn logs from rock elm trees on the farm of Urias Martin for the reparation of the house. When this is completed, furnishings of the early 1800's will be needed. Hopefully, these will be donated by area Mennonites. Questions should be directed to Dr. J. W. Fretz, Conrad Grebel College.

YOU ARE INVITED: to become a member of the Historical Society. Membership fees are \$3.00 per year; \$10.00 for sustaining membership; \$100.00 for life membership. Send application with fee to Mrs. David Bergey Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario.*

YOU ARE ALSO INVITED: to attend the spring meeting of the Society to be held on April 26 at the George Street Mennonite Church, Waterloo. Dr. Frank H. Epp will speak on "The Discipline Required to Write our Own History."

*Contributions beyond the \$3.00 membership fee are tax deductible.

OTHER ITEMS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

The Pathway Press, R.R. 4, Aylmer, Ontario, is prolific in publishing. This Old Order Amish group has its own presses and book-binding equipment. Under the editorship of Mr. Joseph Stoll, three monthly magazines are dedicated to the preservation of the "plain people." Family Life, in its first year, is a magazine for the home and encourages Christian living; The Blackboard Bulletin, in its 13th year, is for parochial school teachers; Ambassador of Peace, in its third year of publication, seeks to promote peace and nonresistant teaching among the Amish. The Pathway Reading Series are graded readers: three grades are completed with the fourth to be released shortly.

GIFTS TO SOCIETY

The Historical Society has received numerous artifacts and other valuable items for its collection. Leslie H. Witmer and his sister, Mrs. Noah Hunsberger, each donated a pewter plate which it is believed were brought from Lancaster County in 1804.

A Froschauer Bible, printed in 1560, donated by the William W. Snider family, is a valuable item in the collection. This Bible contains family geneology records of fifteen generations. The Snider family also contributed a spinning wheel.

The Jacob Snider family presented a Martin Luther Bible printed in 1724.

PUBLICATIONS

Pioneers of Christendom in Waterloo County, a history of the Preston Mennonite Church, compiled by Leslie H. Witmer and edited by Mrs. Phoebe Sanders.

Beloved Brethren, a history of the Brethren in Christ Church, by Bishop E. J. Swalm. Publication date: July 1.

Geneologies by Lorraine Roth:

- Jacob and Lydia Leonard Brenneman
- Joseph and Anna Kauffman Roth
- Jacob and Cathrine Roth Schwartzentruber
- John and Barbara Schultz Oesch.

- Compiled by D. M. Swartzentruber -