



# Wennogespraech

Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario

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## Mennonites in Essex County: The Early Years

by Henry D. Janzen

Refugees from the Mennonite settlements in South Russia, which had been destroyed during the Bolshevik Revolution and the ensuing civil war and anarchy, were the founders of the Mennonite Refugee Church. This became in turn the United Mennonite Church of Ontario, a branch of which was the Essex County United Mennonite Church. These German-speaking Mennonites came to Canada during the years 1924 to 1930. Their story is one of survival and of growth in a new land which offered both challenges and opportunities for a new life.

It begins on July 17, 1924, with the arrival at Quebec City of about one thousand Russian Mennonite refugees under the leadership of Herman C. Enns. They had crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the C.P.R. steamer "Minnedosa," and most of them had come from the Molotschna settlement. After the completion of the immigration formalities, including the signing of promissory notes for repayment of the travel loans arranged with the C.P.R. by David Toews, the chairman of the Mennonite Board of Colonization, the immigrants travelled westward into Ontario. In Toronto, a number of them left the main body, some going to Vineland and a few to Markham. Most of the rest went on to Waterloo, where they were well received by the (Old) Mennonites and the Amish, among whom they were billeted and with whom many remained until the spring of 1925.<sup>1</sup>

During their stay, however, some of the immigrants made plans for moving on. A number had already travelled to Manitoba; for instance, Nicolai N. Driedger, who was to become so important to the development of the Leamington United Mennonite Church. His family was among these first arrivals, but they left for Newton Siding in December, 1924. They returned east in November, 1927, settling on Pelee Island.

In the fall of 1924, a committee of immigrants and local Mennonites was established in Waterloo to find ways of resettling the newcomers in other parts of the province. When news of job opportunities in Essex County reached them, the committee dispatched four delegates — Herman C. Enns, Jacob Barkowsky Sr., Noah Schneider, and another man whose name has not come down to us



— to the area in November 1924 to explore the possibilities. These four returned with a positive report, like that of Caleb and Joshua of old, who said: "The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land" (Numbers 14: 7b).

The committee commissioned immigrant Jacob W. Lohrenz and his family to be the first to move to Essex County. Since Lohrenz could speak English, having studied in England to become a missionary, they felt that he was the ideal advance settler to pave the way for the others who were to follow in the spring of 1925.

Lohrenz and his family, the first Mennonites to settle in Essex County, lived on the farm of Edmund Wigle on the third concession near Kingsville.<sup>2</sup> N.N. Driedger, in his history of the Leamington United Mennonite Church, points out that Lohrenz, being "already a missionary candidate and [having] ... preached in Russia, . . . was in an excellent position to be the first minister to the Mennonite families coming to Essex County. Mr. Lohrenz, however, left after about one and one-half years to take a ministerial position in the U.S.A."<sup>3</sup> Thus he did not become the pillar around whom the Mennonites might gather,

as families followed him beginning in the spring of 1925. They settled in scattered fashion in Kingsville, Leamington, Wheatley, Olinda, Coatsworth, Harrow, Windsor, and Pelee Island.

Employment was available on farms and in two brickyards: one at Kingsville and one at Coatsworth. Among the more than thirty families and individuals that arrived in 1925 and 1926 were: Jacob M. Barkowsky, Jacob D. Janzen, Nicolai Schmidt, Johann Martens, Heinrich P. Enns, Abram J. Mathies, Heinrich Schmidt, Isaac Tiessen, Daniel Boschman, and Heinrich Thielman.

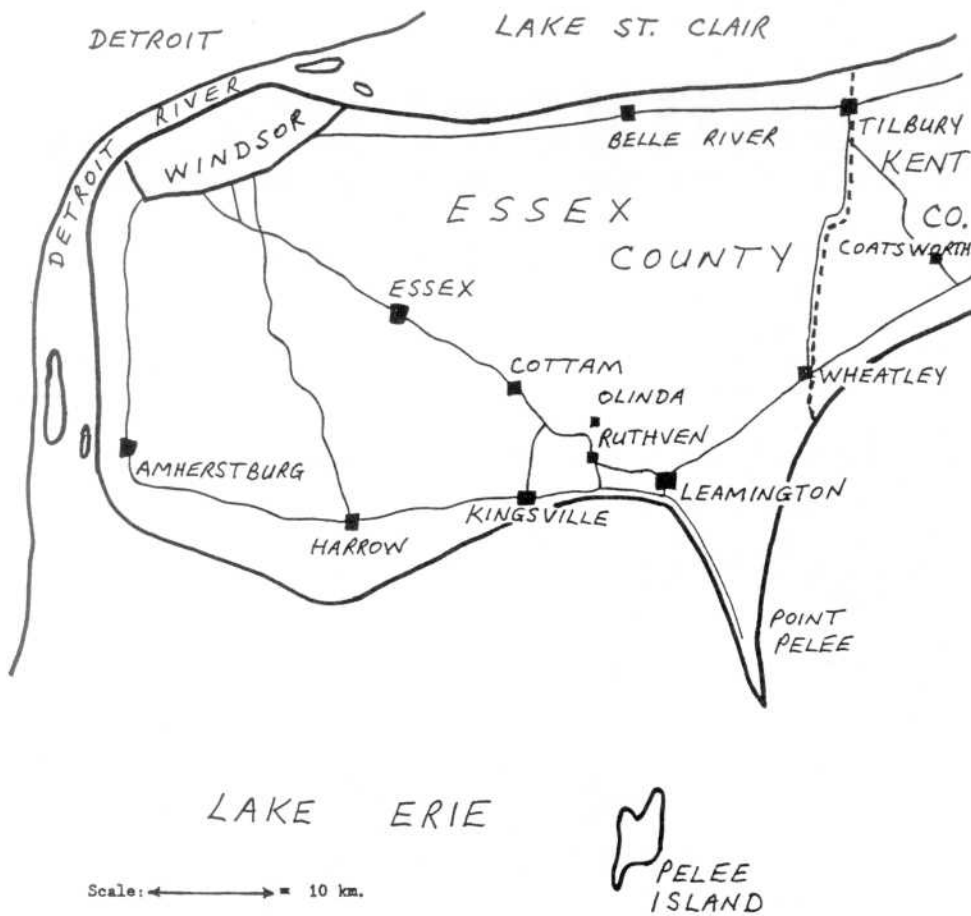
Jacob D. Janzen, who was to become a prominent minister in the Leamington United Mennonite Church, had arrived with his family at Quebec City on August 8, 1924, having crossed on the liner "Empress of France." He went directly to Winkler, Manitoba, but came back east to Leamington on March 6, 1925.

To bring these people together into a community of worship was the next step. It should be noted that these Russian Mennonites were composed of two groups: the "Kirchliche," or those who became the United Mennonites, and the Mennonite Brethren. In areas where members of both groups lived, as in Leamington, worship services were generally held together in the early years. The split, when it finally came in October 1932, was an amicable separation.

More Mennonites fled from Russia in the years up to 1930. As Frank H. Epp has concluded, "The best years for leaving Russia were before 1927. They were also the best years for entering Canada . . . Restrictive government measures in response to popular demand were responsible for the closed Canadian gate in the fall of 1929."<sup>4</sup> Some of those who slipped in before the gate closed came to Essex County; many went out to Western Canada, and some of those drifted back east to Essex County; others settled in Northern Ontario.

The Reesor settlement in Northern Ontario was established by a group of Mennonites who left Toronto in June 1925 under the leadership of an Old Order Mennonite minister from Pickering, Thomas Reesor. By the end of 1926, they had set up thirty-five homesteads; they

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Essex County and part of Kent County

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earned money by selling lumber and by working on road construction. They held worship services in their homes until they built themselves a church. On June 18, 1927, Hermann P. Lepp was ordained as minister by Rev. Jacob H. Janzen of Waterloo, and he served the congregation until he moved to Kingsville in 1943. When the Reesor United Mennonite church dissolved in 1947,<sup>5</sup> many of the Reesorites came to Essex County.

Scattered as the Mennonites in Essex County were in the 1920s, they did not allow a Sunday to pass without having some form of worship service, whether it was a regular service with a minister such as Jacob D. Janzen, or a gathering where hymns were sung and a sermon was read, or simply a Sunday school.

Services were held at various places, the principal ones being the Johann Dick home in Cottam, the Johann Berg home in Kingsville, the Johann Martens home in Coatsworth, the Abram Berg home, a large room in Arthur Brown's hotel in Leamington,<sup>6</sup> the Kingsville Town Hall, the Ruthven United Church,<sup>7</sup> the Johann J. Dick home and the German Lutheran Church in Windsor.<sup>8</sup> On one occasion in the summer of 1925 all of the various groups assembled in the Ruthven United Church to celebrate the first baptismal service, with Rev. Jacob H. Janzen officiating.<sup>9</sup>

Rev. Janzen had been installed as Elder of the Waterloo congregation of Mennonite im-

migrants in 1925, and he became Elder, officiating at baptisms and communions, and itinerant preacher for the Essex County groups, which officially were branch-members of the Waterloo congregation. This branch-relationship continued until January 20, 1929, when the Essex County United Mennonite Church, with a membership of about 150, with the largest concentration in the Leamington area, came into being.<sup>10</sup> The first local ministers to be ordained were Jacob D. Janzen and Nicolai Schmidt (1926). Cornelius Tiessen, a ministerial candidate, "declined ordination at the time but continued to preach and to assist in youth work."<sup>11</sup> He accepted ordination in 1933. Isaac Tiessen, who was to become the first pastor of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1932, also preached.

The Mennonite presence on Pelee Island was initiated by a wealthy American, George Cruickshank, who came to Waterloo in 1925 "in search of sharecroppers for his 10 Pelee tobacco farms. He was successful in enticing six Mennonite families."<sup>12</sup> Other families followed in 1926 and later. Some remained, others moved on after a few years' stay. Johann F. Dick, who had been ordained in the Alliance Church in Russia, was the first minister to serve the Pelee Island Mennonite congregation, but he did not stay very long. It seems that a permanent or even a lengthy stay on the lonely island was only for the hardest of souls. There was a great turnover of ministers, but, as N.N. Driedger points out,

It is important to note that the spiritual seed that germinated on the island, but did not come to its full development, came to a culmination in later years in Leamington. Leamington ministers, Jacob Epp, Jacob Driedger Sr., Abr. Rempel, Gerhard Thiessen, and N.N. Driedger gained practice in the ministry on Pelee Island.<sup>13</sup>

N.N. Driedger ministered to the island congregation from November 1927 until December 1930, when he moved to Ruthven and began to serve the Kingsville group. On May 21, 1933, he was ordained as Elder of the Essex County United Mennonite Church by Rev. Jacob H. Janzen. He served that church as Elder in a dedicated and firm manner until 1958. Gerhard Thiessen, the last regular minister to serve on the island, remained until April, 1943. Eventually, the congregation dwindled and church services ceased. In 1953 the last of the Mennonite settlers on Pelee Island departed. As it turned out, Johann G. Wiebe, who had been the first Mennonite to come to the island, was the last to leave.

While some Mennonites were establishing their congregation on Pelee Island, another group was settling at the other extreme of the county in Windsor. In the mid-1920s, a number of Mennonites were attracted to Windsor because of employment opportunities in industry, chiefly in the automobile factories. They came mainly from Manitoba and the Leamington area. Some of these Mennonites settled and made their homes in the city, choosing to live where they gained their livelihood. Others worked in the city but lived elsewhere in the county.

Mrs. Catharine Huebert tells us that "the Henry C. Huebert family arrived in Windsor in October, 1926, after moving about in Manitoba for two years."<sup>14</sup> They were among the very first arrivals, and their home became a center of Mennonite activity in the city. It was there that Rev. Jacob H. Janzen conducted the first formal Mennonite worship service on the evening of April 3, 1927. According to Mrs. Huebert, by 1929 three ministers, Wilhelm Schellenberg, Jacob Braun, and Johann J. Dick, had joined the growing group of Mennonites in Windsor.

During the late 1920s and early 1930s, before the Depression, the Windsor congregation

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First group of Mennonites after a meeting at a house near Leamington in May, 1925.

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flourished. It held regular worship services and Bible studies in various home and sometimes in the German Lutheran Church. Other activities, such as catechism instruction, choir practices, Sunday school for the children, and a sewing circle for the ladies, were also carried on. Ministers from Leamington sometimes served in the worship services. Mrs. Heubert adds, somewhat wistfully, that "[w]hen the Depression came, many Mennonites dispersed to county farms. Rev. Schellenberg also left in 1930 for Harrow and then for Leamington. . . . When Rev. Jacob Brauns moved to New Hamburg, we were left with one minister, Rev. John Dick . . ." <sup>15</sup>

The outbreak of war in 1939 created severe problems for the congregation. N.N. Driedger sums up the unhappy situation as follows:

Because of the hostilities in the early and middle forties, services in Windsor were cancelled. The specific reason for cancellation was that a Windsor club for the promotion of German culture had received a bad name in the community, and so the Mennonites, fearing identification with that group, decided to discontinue their official worship. <sup>16</sup>

A formal congregational organization was not re-established until 1983.

Meanwhile, in the southern part of the county, the Mennonites in the Leamington-Kingsville area were coming to grips with three crucial issues: the geographical problems of a church organization that was centered in Waterloo but extended to Reesor in the north and to Harrow in the southwest; the relationship between the "Kirchliche" and the Brethren; and the lack of their own church building in Essex County.

The first issue was settled at a meeting of church councils on January 20, 1929, in Leamington. <sup>17</sup> What had been the all-inclusive United Mennonite Church of Ontario was

divided into three smaller sections, each with its own church administration: the Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, the Reesor United Mennonite Church, and the Essex County United Mennonite Church.

The second matter was resolved less than three years later, following the establishment of the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario on January 31, 1932. Abram A. Huebert gives an account of how the separation was accomplished:

The Mennonite Church whose members also greatly increased in number entertained the thought of building a church. Being two distinct denominations our brethren held that the close co-operation, which had existed so far in having our worship services together, might cause future difficulties. At the same time the Kitchener Church and her branches had agreed to organize a Mennonite Brethren Conference, thereby giving the branches the status of independent local churches. Therefore at a meeting on October 2, 1932 in Leamington with 16 members present, it was decided to form an independent (Mennonite Brethren) Church. On behalf of the church the brethren, Isaac Tiessen, Franz Bartel and Henry Koop informed Elder N.N. Driedger of the United Mennonite Church of this decision. <sup>18</sup>

Once the Mennonite Brethren were on their own, they rented a hall above the T. Eaton Company order office. In 1934, when the lease expired, they moved their worship services to the hall above B. Watson's store, although they sometimes met at the former CJSP building. The search for a permanent home culminated in the purchase of a lot on Elliott Street in Leamington, where the construction of a building began in the summer of 1939. The dedication service for the new building was held on December 24, 1939, just in time for Christmas. <sup>19</sup>

The third issue took a bit longer to settle, but in April 1933 the construction of a church building for the United Mennonites was begun on Oak Street in Leamington. N.N. Driedger has provided details of this project in his history, and the interested reader may search them out there. Suffice is to say here that the original church had to be enlarged in 1936 and again in 1948; these building additions reflected the substantial growth of the congregation from a membership of 329 in 1933 to a membership of 807 in 1948, not including adherents in each case. <sup>20</sup>

This important step of building a church in Leamington firmly established that town as the major center of Mennonite activity in Essex County. It also had serious repercussions for the Mennonite groups in other areas of the county. After the dedication of the church building on November 25, 1934, worship services in Kingsville were cancelled. Church groups in the other areas — Pelee Island, Windsor, and Harrow — soon also felt the full effects of what some might view as colonialism, as the importance of their existence came to be measured largely in terms of their benefit to the welfare of the Leamington church.

This "colonialism" is best illustrated by the matter of church dues. The 1929 "Statuten" of the Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church specified that the funds for the general treasury of the church were to be raised through an annual levy. The amount of the levy was to be determined annually by the membership or by a delegated committee and was to be paid semi-annually. This levy was to be paid by each member and by every new member upon joining the church. Ministers and active ministerial candidates and their families in both cases, Sunday School teachers, and those over sixty were exempted. <sup>21</sup>

The 1934 "Statuten" of the Essex County United Mennonite Church repeated verbatim the Waterloo-Kitchener article. In Essex County, this levy was applied to all taxable members, whether they lived in Leamington and attended the church there or not. This practice evoked various reactions in the areas outside the Leamington-Kingsville core. N.N. Driedger says about the Pelee Island Mennonites that, "when it came to paying dues to the entire church effort, they were not reluctant to fulfill their obligation." <sup>22</sup> His assessment may be correct in this case, but not all of the outlying church groups felt the same way.

The Windsor congregation, for instance, raised objections to the payment of dues to the Leamington church. The following letter written by Heinrich Huebert to the treasurer, J. Founk, in Leamington and dated at Riversdale on February 21, 1937, is illuminating:

Dear Friend J. Founk:

This is to inform you, that as a result of the decision of the congregational membership of Windsor on the 7th of February of this year, we intend for the year 1937 to contribute 1.50 per member for church dues. The reasons for the reduction of the dues from 2.25 to 1.50

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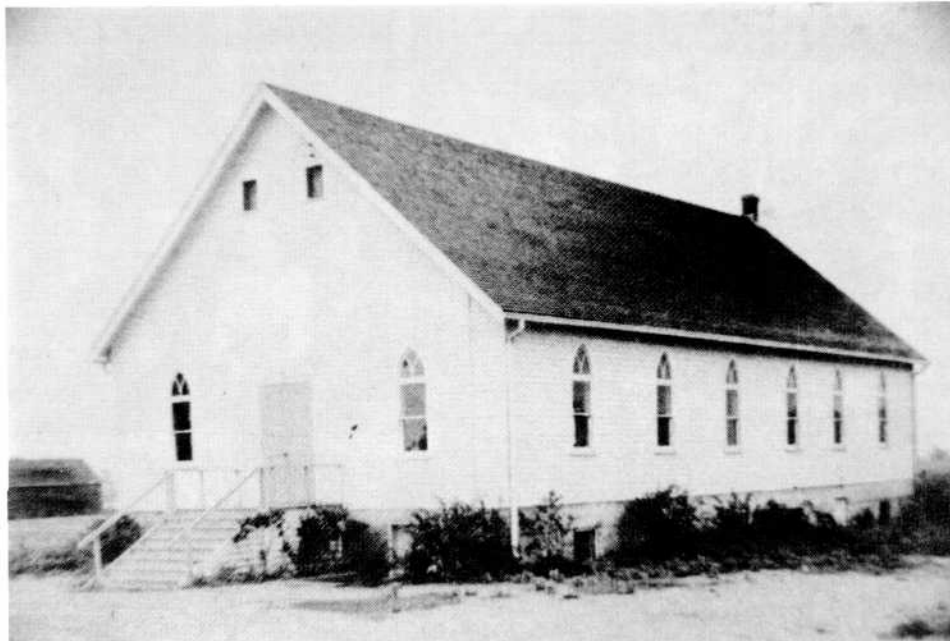
per year are as follows: the ministerial visits for the year 1936 were only sparsely carried out. As far as we know, there were only 6 worship services in the previous year instead of the promised 12; that is, 50% fewer. Besides, we Windsorites are at a great disadvantage compared to you as far as the church is concerned. The majority of our members do not have a car at their disposal, so that attendance is quite difficult for us. I personally have been there only about 3 times in the past year. In addition, we also derive no benefit from the Sunday School and the German classes. These, then, are the chief reasons why the levy has been reduced. We believe that we have an excellent reason behind us, and we ask therefore that it be taken into consideration.

With greetings, Your  
H. Huebert

[Author's translation of Heinrich Huebert's German letter.]

It might be worth noting that the concerns expressed here had already been stated a year earlier in a letter dated March 26, 1936, and that in a letter sent to Mr. Toews on April 4, 1938, Huebert repeated the Windsor rationale for paying lower dues and reaffirmed that \$1.50 was enough for the Windsorites, even though the levy for Leamington-area members had risen to \$3.00.<sup>23</sup> He complained about the lack of response to his 1937 letter, but added that the Windsor members might pay \$1.80 this year (1938) in view of the church building expenses. In a letter dated May 14, 1939, Huebert stated that the Windsor group was now prepared to pay a levy of \$2.25 per member and to have collections for the Leamington church building fund, but would oppose any special membership levy for that purpose.

Two things are noteworthy about these letters. First, the protests arose from membership meetings and represented the group posi-



Essex County United Mennonite Church  
on Oak Street, Leamington, in 1934.

tion; they were not the isolated complaints of a few malcontents. Second, a feeling of being outside the hub of activity, compounded by a sense of being neglected while still being asked to pay the full levy, is clearly evident.

The members of the Mennonite group in Harrow were also somewhat less than ecstatic about the requirement that they pay dues to Leamington. Since they were all "Kirchliche" Mennonites, they were considered to be members of the Essex County United Mennonite Church. But they were acquiring an identity of their own, separate from the Leamington-area Mennonites. The Harrow congregation had begun in the spring of 1929 when a group of Mennonites settled on a 205-acre farm about four miles northwest of the town. Rudy Papke summarizes the beginnings in this way:

A group of Mennonites had decided to

join together to purchase this farm, and to divide it into individual parcels, and to go into market gardening . . .

In March of 1929, about five families moved into the old farmhouse and began construction on a small house for each family. Whenever a small house was completed to a liveable stage, the family would move into it, thereby making room in the farmhouse for another family. The original group of purchasers consisted of about twelve family units.

The group began meeting for worship in the living room of the old farmhouse, [and] . . . Gerhard Papke usually led these meetings . . . Occasionally ministers would come from Leamington and conduct Sunday morning . . . On rare occasions Aeltester Jacob H. Janzen from Kitchener would come and conduct the service.<sup>24</sup>

As time passed, services were held in various homes until 1946, when the Harrow town hall was made available as a meeting place. In 1944 Hermann Lepp arrived at Harrow, having moved to Kingsville from Northern Ontario in the previous year. He purchased a farm and immediately set about organizing the Harrow Mennonites into a unified congregation. In 1951, the congregation built its own church,<sup>25</sup> and on January 1, 1953, it was chartered as the Harrow United Mennonite Church. One of the effects of this development was to make the Leamington-area Mennonites realize that their church on Oak Street was no longer properly the Essex County United Mennonite church. On October 28, 1957, the name was officially changed to Leamington United Mennonite Church.

The United Mennonite congregation, as it has grown in the Leamington area over the years, has had many positive features. From the outset there was strong leadership, which



At a Sunday School teachers' picnic on Point Pelee in 1931: the gentlemen, l-r, are Daniel Boschman, Isaac Tiessen, Henry Thiessen, and Henry Thielman; the ladies, l-r, are Anna Friesen (Mrs. A. Fischer), 2, Anna Wiens, and Erna Hamm (Mrs. P. Willms)

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ensured that the Leamington United Mennonite Church became the dominant Mennonite congregation in the county. It became a large, energetic, cohesive unit whose influence was widely felt. Probably the most remarkable qualities of this Leamington congregation have been its sense of looking after its own, of caring for its members, and its ability to mobilize its members to work together to achieve its goals.

Two institutions stand as testimonies of these qualities in action: the United Mennonite Educational Institute, which opened in the fall of 1947 as a four-year high school to provide Christian secondary education for its young

course, this has been a carry-over from the conditions in South Russia, where the Mennonites were strongly discouraged from proselytizing among the native population; it may also be an effect of the ethnicity which has been so carefully tended, including the reluctance to let go of the German language in favour of the English.

The neglect of local outreach has had as a corollary a lack of a sense of church-planting. Whereas Mennonite, and other, churches in other regions would generate sister churches when numbers warranted, the Leamington church would simply enlarge the building. In 1948, for instance, rather than planting a new church in Kingsville or Essex, the Leamington

planting. The former was a breakaway on the part of a group that felt its needs were not being met within the Oak Street church; the latter was simply the creation of a second meeting place for a segment of that huge congregation, which had grown to over 900 members plus adherents, for the Oak Street building could not stand further enlargement. The eventual attainment of autonomy by the North Leamington United Mennonite church on November 1, 1980, was a traumatic experience for some, a dream-come-true for others.

The Harrow United Mennonite Church was a parallel development and cannot be regarded as a church-planting project of the then Essex County United Mennonite Church. It is to the credit of the Mennonites in Harrow that they resisted the pull of Leamington and founded a church of their own. As regards Windsor, N.N. Driedger says that "[h]ad a qualified mission worker been summoned to Windsor at the opportune time, as is the practice of our conferences today relative to the cities, a permanent Mennonite church in Windsor might have been established."<sup>27</sup> His comment largely misses the point. Perhaps if the Leamington church had helped the Windsor Mennonites to re-establish themselves as an independent congregation, the church in Windsor might have recovered and flourished after the hiatus during World War II. The lack of a church-planting spirit in the Leamington congregation was likely one of the factors which ensured the fading away, for almost four decades, of the Windsor effort.

The early years of Mennonite activity in Essex County were indeed interesting years, and the complete story is yet to be told. Much needs to be re-examined and re-interpreted: minutes, letters, diaries, and the like. Indeed, there is room for a new, objective, thoroughgoing history of the Mennonites in this region to be written.

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*Picking tomatoes near Kingsville in 1936.*

people; and the Leamington Mennonite Home, which opened in 1965 to attend to the needs of the aged. The facilities of the U.M.E.I. also serve as a community center for all; the more recently constructed apartment buildings adjacent to the Home accommodate the seniors who can still look after themselves. This creation of institutions to satisfy most of the religious, educational, and social needs of the Essex County Mennonite constituency seems to have been modelled on the Russian experience. As commendable as these developments have been, they are the result of a characteristic of the Leamington-area United Mennonites which unfortunately has had a negative side: an inward-looking which tends to exclude, rather than to include.

In his study of the Waterloo-area Mennonites, J. Winfield Fretz concludes:

In retrospect I have been impressed with the way in which the Waterloo church communities have maintained themselves without proselytizing at the expense of other denominations. The churches have maintained themselves, and even expanded, by the process of natural growth.<sup>26</sup>

Much of what Fretz says can be applied as well to the Leamington United Mennonite Church. It also has expanded by a "process of natural growth" and by the absorption of successive waves of Mennonite arrivals from overseas and elsewhere. It has not had to proselytize to grow. This accounts in part for the general lack of a sense of outreach into the community, even among the unchurched. Ultimately, of

congregation doubled the size of the existing building by adding a large east-west wing. The establishments of the Faith Mennonite Church on June 18, 1961, and of the North Leamington United Mennonite Church on June 7, 1954, the stories of which lie beyond the scope of this paper, are not examples of church-

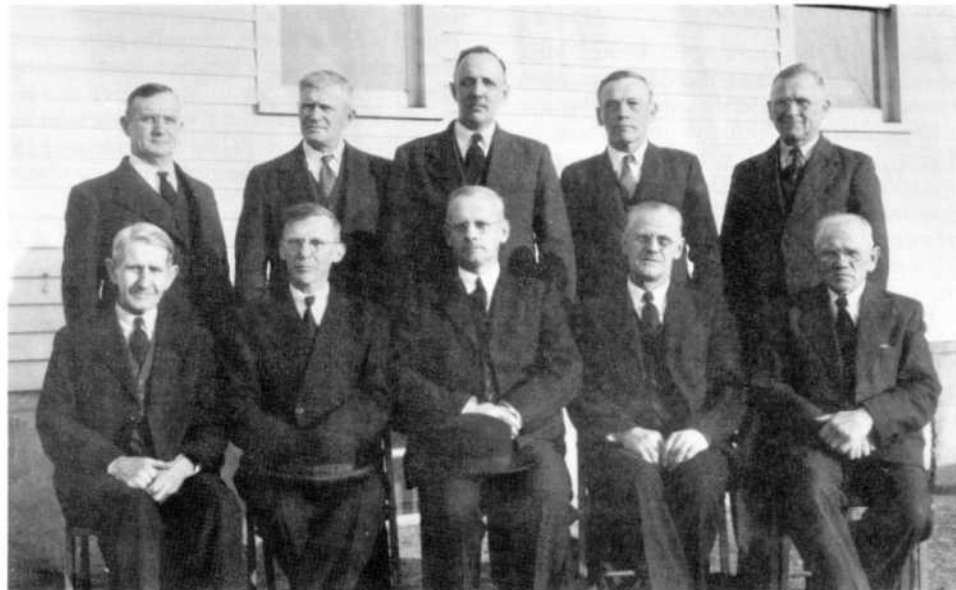


*Mennonite Brethren Church on Elliott Street, Leamington, in the early 1940s.*

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## Notes

1. Nicolai N. Driedger, *The Leamington United Mennonite Church: Establishment and Development 1925-1972* [trans. Jacob N. Driedger] (Leamington, 1972), pp. 17-22.
2. Driedger, p. 23.
3. Driedger, pp. 23-24.
4. *Mennonite Exodus: The Rescue and Resettlement of the Russian Mennonites Since the Communist Revolution* (Altona, Man.: D.W. Friesen, 1962), p. 242.
5. Hedy Lepp Dennis, "Reesor — Yours to Remember," Script for Slide Presentation, 1984, pp. 3, 6, 14, 20.
6. Driedger, pp. 28-30.
7. *Thanks Be To Thee: Leamington Mennonite Brethren Church Golden Anniversary 1932-1982*, ed. Cornie and Erna Hamm et al (Leamington, 1982), p. 2.
8. George G. and Mary Tiessen, "Windsor," *Memories: Sixty Years of Mennonite Life in Essex and Kent Counties 1925-1985*, ed. Mary M. Janzen et al (Leamington, 1985), p. 74.
9. Driedger, p. 30.
10. Driedger, p. 32.
11. Driedger, p. 31.
12. Driedger, p. 167.
13. Driedger, p. 169.
14. Quoted by Driedger, p. 165.
15. Quoted by Driedger, p. 166.
16. Driedger, p. 166.
17. *Statuten der Waterloo-Kitchener Mennonitengemeinde* (1929), p. 1.
18. Quoted in *Thanks Be To Thee*, p. 2.
19. *Thanks Be To Thee*, p. 13.
20. Driedger, p. 78.
21. *Statuten*, p. 13.
22. Driedger, p. 169.
23. The minutes of the "Bruderschaft" of February 6, 1938, record the decision that church dues be set at \$3.00 per member for Leamington-area members



*United Mennonite Ministers and Deacons, March 1948. Back row, l-r: Jacob D. Janzen, Gerhard Thiessen, Hermann Lepp, Nicolai Schmidt, Abram Rempel. Front row, l-r: Jacob Barkowsky (deacon), Jacob Epp, Nicolai N. Driedger, Jacob N. Driedger, Henry Wiens (deacon).*

and at \$2.25 per member for those in Windsor, Harrow, and Pelee Island.

24. "A Brief History of the Harrow United Mennonite Church," *Memories*, p. 11.
25. According to the minutes of the Leamington "Bruderschaft" of October 30, 1950, the Leamington membership agreed to the request of representatives of the Harrow district for financial aid of \$3,000 to help cover the cost of building a church in Harrow, but specified that the money was to be raised by voluntary donation. At this meeting the Leamington members reminded those from Harrow that, since

they were still members of the corporation of the Essex County United Mennonite Church, they were responsible for contributing to the Leamington church treasury such moneys as had always been required up to this time, as for provincial conference dues, etc. One detects here and elsewhere a certain lukewarmness in the Leamington attitude to the idea of the Harrow Mennonites striking out on their own.

26. "Wilderness, War and Gemeinschaft," *Mennonegespraech* 3 (September 1985), p. 16.
27. Driedger, p. 166.

## "New Mennonites" in Waterloo County

[The following is transcribed from the minute book of the New Mennonite congregation at Blair, Ontario. The New Mennonites joined the Reforming Mennonites in 1875 to form an earlier United Mennonite group. After later mergers they became the Mennonite Brethren in Christ (now Missionary Church). — Ed.]

### Order of Business for the semmeanul conference of Waterloo County 1869 in connection with the New Mennonite congregation.

- 1st Conference called to order by singing and prayer.
- 2nd Apointment of officers.
- 3rd Reading of the minuts of last sessin.
- 4th Examination of Ministers
- 5th Examination of Church record
- 6th Examanation of places of apointments
- 7th Report of Specel Conferences
- 8th Reports of Comite
- 9th Apointment of Comite
- 10th Defferd business
- 11th New busness
- 12th Apointment of time and place of next Conference
- 13th Adjournment

### Semeanul Conference meet at Blair Sept the 11th 1869

- 1st Confrence called to order by singing and prayer
- 2nd Rev. John McNally Elected Chairman and Mr. Joseph Bowman was apointed secretary.
- 3rd Minuts of last sessin Read and addopted.
- 4th Resolved that Bro. McAuleys Nuw Rulls for conducting semmeanul Conferences be addopted.
- 5th Resolved that the Reports of specel Conferences be Received and addopted.
- 6th Resolved that we do unite to make use of specel means of grace as soon as poseble for the advancement of the cause of Christ in our Church.
- 7th Resolved that we thankfully except of Bro. Davied Schniders offer of a book to be used as a Church Reccord.
- 8th Resolved that Bro. McAuley be apointed to Record all the Names of our members in said Church Reccord.
- 9th Resolved that we adjourn to meet again at Blair the second fryday of May 1870 and that our sacrement and prepartory meetings be held on the two following days.

### 10 Resolved that we have a printed plan of apointments for the year 1870.

- 11th Conference was then Closed by singing & prayer.  
 Rev. John McNally      Mr. Joseph Bowman  
 Chairman                      Secretary

### Half yearly confrence meet at Blair Dec 18th 1869

- 1st this confrenc was called to order by singing & prayer.
- 2nd Rev. J. McNally apointed Chairman and Rev J McAuley secretary.
- 3rd the minuts of last seshion read & addopted.
- 4th the invitation was extended to Bro. Samuel Shirk and J. Strome to take advizery seats in the confrence during its seshion the invetation being responded to.
- 5th Church Record approved of.
- 6th Resolved that Bros. Jacob Z. Dettwiler & W. Clemens be a comity to vissit Rev. Samuel Schlichter conserning a promis he made to Bro. J.R. Detwiler in connection with a dificulty existing between J.R. Dettweiler and Solemn Gehman.
- 7th Resolved that Bros. Jacob Huber & Reithlinger be a comity to visit Nathen Cassel & wife.

Continued on page 16

# Genealogical Sources for Canadian Genealogists at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society

by Lloyd Zeager

The library and archives of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society is the major research center for Pennsylvania Mennonite and Amish history and genealogy. It is supported by more than 2,200 Society members and the Lancaster Conference of the Mennonite Church, for which it serves as the official repository. It was organized in 1958, and the present building was erected in 1964.

Genealogy and local history are focal points of the Society's collection. Even though the library has many materials on church history and theology, most researchers come to study some aspect of family history or local history. The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society collects materials dealing with Lancaster County and adjoining counties in Pennsylvania as well as places farther west, north, and south where Mennonites have migrated. The Society's quarterly journal, *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, includes major genealogical articles—for example, the special issue of April 1986 on the Pennsylvania Mennonite migration to Canada—along with other features of interest to genealogists such as research notes, queries, genealogical tips, and book reviews.

Because many of the Mennonites who migrated to Ontario in the late 1700s and the 1800s came from Pennsylvania, the Society's library is useful to Canadian genealogists. While it does not attempt to collect items for Ontario that would be suitable for extensive and detailed research—such as newspapers, census lists, tax registers, and maps, it does collect such Lancaster area items of interest to Ontario researchers. Lancaster County formed a kind of funnel through which family lines traveled on their way west, north, and south. Some families, especially the ones arriving from Europe in the mid-1800s, did not remain for more than a few years while other families lived there for several generations until some or all descendants moved elsewhere.

The Society's genealogical card file is a good place for genealogists to begin their search. More than 200,000 three-inch-by-five-inch cards comprise this file. It is arranged alphabetically by individual names according to surname. The individuals' names are generally heads of households, who happen to be males. Information on each card, if complete, includes the name of the head of the household, his birth date and date of death, and the names of his parents, including his mother's maiden name. Then follows the date of his marriage, his wife's name, and her dates and names of her parents. Following this appear their children in order from oldest to youngest by name, birth date and date of death, and name of each spouse with dates. Usually one or more notes of sources of the information are given. The persons listed in this file are mostly from Lancaster and adjoining counties in Pennsylvania but are not limited to those areas. They are mostly Mennonites but likewise are not limited to that

religious denomination. The file contains numerous cards of families living in Ontario who, even though they themselves never lived in Pennsylvania, have ancestral background in Pennsylvania.

Published family histories supplement the genealogical card file. The library has more than 1,700 published family histories. About forty of these are classified under Canadian genealogy, but others have Canadian connections. Some of the published family histories have been indexed in the genealogical card file, but the file also includes information in unpublished sources such as manuscript genealogical compilations in the possession of the Society. Likewise, many published family histories include information not listed in the card file.

The library has numerous basic works on Ontario local history and genealogy, including Ezra E. Eby's *A Biographical History of Waterloo Township* (1895-96 and several reprints) and most of the first twenty-two volumes of *Ontario Archives*.

Other Pennsylvania materials useful to Canadian researchers include the will indexes and abstracts for Lancaster and adjoining counties; deed and orphans' court abstracts for Lancaster County; patentee maps for all townships in Lancaster County showing plots of land sold to the first immigrants from Europe; cemetery transcriptions; files on individual surnames; and census records of Lancaster and adjoining counties which begin in 1790 and continue for ten-year intervals during the time when ancestors of present Canadians lived in Lancaster and other southeastern Pennsylvania counties. Other published sources include *The Pennsylvania Archives* and *Colonial Records* and the series of publications by the Pennsylvania German Society, some of which include information of particular interest to Canadians. The Society is attempting to collect transcripts on Ontario Mennonite cemeteries, especially ones with dates from the nineteenth century, and published materials relating to Erie and Niagara counties in New York and other areas along the route of migration from Pennsylvania to Ontario.

The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society is open to researchers five days per week, Tuesday through Saturday (closed Sundays and Mondays), from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The address of the Society is 2215 Millstream Road, Lancaster, PA 17602, and it is located along U.S. Route 30 six miles east of Lancaster. All researchers are welcome. There is no charge to members to use the library; nonmembers pay a fee of \$2.00 per day. Persons unable to make a personal visit may avail themselves of the genealogical research service which the Society offers. Research related to one individual name is \$10.00 for members and \$15.00 for nonmembers. Translation of German script can be done for \$8.00 per hour. One should inquire about these services before making specific requests.

The Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society has many rich sources of information. The Canadian researcher visiting the library and archives should be amply rewarded in a search of the Society's materials.

## Book Notes:

by Thomas A. Sherk

Schürch/Sherk: Rene Schürch of Bremgarten, Switzerland has recently published a 294 page hard cover volume entitled *Schürch von Sumiswald*. This work, which has numerous pictures and illustrations, traces the ancestral lines of the Schürch family of Sumiswald, Switzerland, beginning with Caspar Schürch and Margaret Trüssel who married in Sumiswald in 1610. The book contains numerous references to the Täufer or Mennonite Schürch families, including a fascinating discussion of the old hereditary Schürch farmhouses in Sumiswald dating from 1425. The author used church and civil records in Sumiswald as primary source material for his research. The text is written in parallel columns of German and English, so it is easily understood by North Americans. The volume sells for \$70.75 Canadian which includes air mail postage from Switzerland. Make cashier's cheques payable to Rene Schürch. Order from:

Rene Schürch  
Seftastr. 40  
CH-3047 Bremgarten  
Switzerland

\* \* \* \* \*

by Lorraine Roth

As part of their anniversary celebrations on June 7 & 8, 1986, Poole Mennonite Church published *A HISTORY OF THE POOLE MENNONITE CHURCH, A PEOPLE ON THE WAY, 1874-1986*.

The congregation was organized out of the Wellesley Amish Mennonite Congregation in 1874 by those members who were moving to Mornington Township. 1986 was the centennial of the building of their first meetinghouse.

The committee put together an interesting record of events and people with an excellent collection of photographs.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Avon Mennonite Church, Stratford, Ontario celebrated the 35th anniversary of their presence in Stratford, beginning with a Summer Bible School in 1951, and the 25th anniversary of the erection of the church building.

As part of their celebration on June 21 & 22, 1986, they released a Church Directory. It contains a page of historical highlights of the congregation prepared by their historian, Reta Baechler.

# “New Mennonites”

Continued from page 14

- 8th Resolved that was as a congregation in Waterloo Desire that the folowing questions be interduced at our anul confrence namly 1st if the anuel confrence would approv of having the sacrement of the Lords supper quartly and 2nd if the confrence deem it nessary to call a Bishop to adminester sacrement & 3th wether the confrence would consider it proper to have the bishops take there seats with the common ministers and the confrence hav the privlig of choosing a Bishop anuley or as the confrence may think best from any of the ministers.
- 9th Bro. McNally apointed delegate to go to the anul confrence.
- 10th it was resolved by this confrence that we as a congregation in Waterloo do express our willingness to our old Menonite Brethren and do urge an investigation into the difficulties existing between Bro. [Daniel] High & [Dilman] Moyer as we believe a union would not be beneficial for either party without.
- 11th Resolved that Bro. McAuley keep his Horse and we do assist him in paying for the same.
- 12th Moved that we adjurn to meet on the second Friday of May 1870 carried.
- 13th Confrenc closed by singing & prayer.  
John McNally & John McAuley  
Chairman secretary

**Wilmot, waterloo County** february the 13th 1870  
this is to certify that a few of the members of the New Mennonite congregation meet at Rev. Samuel Schlichters where the following Charges were enterd against Bro. John McCauley.

- 1st that Bro McCauley is charged with unbecoming conduct with his step sister.

2nd that is is also charged with having misrepresented Rev. John McNally.  
enterd by Jacob Z. Dettweiler  
this sertifys that I do most Humble acknowlej to the above charges and do sincerely begg for forgivness.  
John McAuley  
\* \* \* \* \*

Brother McCauley's request is granted, but while the Brethren do feel it there christian duty to forgiv Bro. John McAuley they are at a loss to know whether it will be for the best or not to have Bro. J. McCauley continued as our minister

february the 26th 1870  
the members meet again at Blair to consider as to Bro. J. McAuley's continuing as there minister when the members all express there willingness to forgiv J. McCauley, but quite a discution arose as to his being continued, when a small mejorety carred in favour of his continuing as before and to try and do the best we can

Jacob Huber, chairman

**May the 6th 1870 Half yearly confrence**  
meet at Blair. called to order by singing & prayer. Rev. A.Z. Detweiler apointed Chairman and S.B. Bauman secretary.

- 1st resolved that the apointment at St. Jacobs be continued acording to the Plan.
- 2nd that A.Z. Detweiler and John S. Huber be apointed to go with Rev. Samuel Schlichter to the Baptist trustee at the Baptist and New Menonite Church at New Dundee to consult with said trustee as to reparing or selling the Manonite shair of said Church.
- 3rd that Bro John McAuley's case be left as it was
- 4th that Bro. J. McAuley's request be granted as to his having the privilege of continuing or dropping any of his apointments as he may think proper.
- 5th that Bro Jacob Huber be apointed secretary & tresury in Bro. Jacob Dettweilers place. confrence closed by singing & Prayer.

Rev. A.Z. Detweiler Chairman  
S.B. Bauman secretary

## June the 6th 1870 meet at New Dundee

where it was resolved to except of the offer of the Baptists to buy the New Menonites shair of the Church of New Dundee providing they give two hundred and twenty dolers for the same. Upon which the Baptised agreed to giv the stated sume, \$100 and 20 dolers to be paid by January 1871 and \$100 in a year from that. Our apointments to be continued untill new years.

Rev. Samuel Schlichter, trustee

**At a Special Conference of the New Mennonites held at Blair Dec. 9th 1870** the following resolutions were passed

- 1st Resolved, that Bro. John S. Huber shall be treasurer and collector of the Notes and money for the now sold share of New Dundee Meeting house.
- 2d Resolved, that Samuel Schlichter shall have \$39 and Samuel B. Bowman \$61 of the first note, and \$20 of the first Note Shall be applied to the improvement of the Blenheim union Meeting house, so soon as the Evangelical Methodists will give in other \$20 for the same purpose.
- 3d Resolved that John McNally, Abraham Sharick and Jacob Z. Detwiler shall be Trustees for the New Mennonite Meeting house in or at Blair.
- 4th Resolved, that John Huber shall collect the Subscription for the Blair Meeting house.
- 5th Resolved, that Rev. John McNally Shall represent our congregations in Waterloo and vicinity, at our next General confrence in Markham.
- 6th Resolved, that our next half yearly conference shall be holden at Blair on the 2d Saturday in May 1871, at 9 o'clock a.m.

Rev. John McNally Chairman  
Rev Sameul Schlichter secretary

Continued next issue

I would like to become a member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. I will be informed of all Society events, will be eligible to serve on the various committees of the Society, and will receive *Mennogespräch* as part of my membership.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

SPECIAL INTERESTS \_\_\_\_\_

**Memberships:**  
Student - \$5.00  
Regular - \$10.00  
Additional memberships at same address (one mailing) - \$5.00  
Sustaining - \$15.00

**Mail to:** Secretary, Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario  
c/o Conrad Grebel College  
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G6