

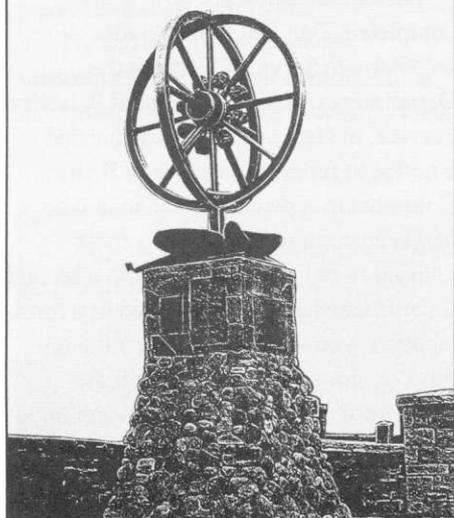
Ontario Mennonite History

THE
NEWSLETTER
FOR THE
MENNONITE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY OF
ONTARIO

VOLUME XXVIII
NUMBER 1

JUNE 2010

ISSN 1192-5515



Walk a Mile in My Dad's Boots

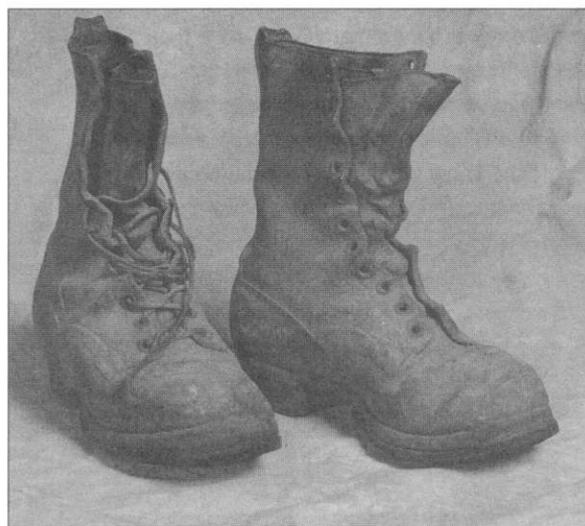
By Ruth Jantzi

In the spring of 2006, my mother, Emmalien Lichti, decided to sell the house she and my father had built and lived in for 34 years in the village of Tavistock. She no longer needed the 1300-square-foot house after the death of my father, Elmon Lichti, in December 2005. This meant cleaning out and preparing the house for the real estate market.

On one of those many cleanup days, my brother, Jim Lichti, was clearing out "stuff" in a storage area my father had in the rafters of the garage, when he came upon an old pair of work boots. He showed the boots to my mother who said, "Why those are the boots dad wore while serving as a Conscientious Objector." Although none of us wanted to have the boots, I felt strongly they should be given to a museum or some organization, since they are important part of Mennonite history.

I knew Conrad Stoesz, son-in-law of Marg and Norm Warren, is involved with the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg and felt that was a good place to start. Conrad has developed a web site telling the story of the Conscientious Objectors and was interested, since artifacts are far and few between. The transfer of the boots occurred in March 2007 when I went to Winnipeg to attend Mennonite Church Canada Leadership Assembly Board meetings.

Two and a half years later, on September 28, 2009, I received a phone call from Brenda Suderman, Faith page writer for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, asking if she could interview me about my dad's boots. She asked a lot of questions and sometimes hard ones, during the 40-minute telephone interview. I asked how she found out about the boots, and then asked her to write her side of the story. Here is what she wrote:



*Elmon Lichti's work boots.
(photo courtesy of Ruth Jantzi)*

"I was visiting the Canadian War Museum this summer with my sons, ages 13 and 15, as part of our museum tours of Ottawa. After looking at most of the exhibits, my sons said they were tired of the "war stories" and so we looked for the exit, which has a place for writing postcards to the head of the museum, Members of Parliament, veterans, and so on. I wrote a postcard asking for the story of peacemakers and pacifists. About six weeks later I got a letter acknowledging my concern, and saying an exhibit was in the works curated by Amber Lloydlangston. I asked Alf Redekopp at the Heritage Centre about this, and he told me about Conrad Stoesz's involvement and the boots. Then when I talked to Conrad, he was about to ship the boots to Ottawa, so we scheduled an interview. Mostly, it was just following a reporter's nose and always being on the lookout for story ideas."

Brenda's story first appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on October 4, 2009. The Canadian Press picked up the story, and four days later our local *K-W Record*

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published a quarter- page article.

Two days after the story appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, my mother was at Tavistock Mennonite Church, quilting at the women's meeting, when Pastor Paul Adams came down with a folder in his hand and showed my mother the article from the Winnipeg newspaper. He asked her if she knew anything about the boots and she proceeded to tell the women the story. Paul then told the women how he got hold of the story. Half way around the world in South Korea, Will and Ana Loewen were serving with Mennonite Church Canada Witness. Will, a former pastor at Tavistock Mennonite Church where my parents attended, alerted Pastor Paul to the story as he has his computer set so that GOOGLE regularly posts references to "Tavistock" and "Mennonite." That was how he read the article printed in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and sent the link to Paul.

Recently I spent an afternoon with my mother asking her questions, looking at Dad's two photo albums and autograph books, and exemption and travel documents related to my dad's CO experience. Among those documents was a Notice of Disposition of Claim for Exemption from World War I, for my Grandpa John E. Lichti, my Dad's father, dated November 29, 1917, giving exemption from combatant service only on account of religious belief. As well there was a certificate of protection and Canada Registration Board Certificate for my Grandpa, which he was required to carry on him at all times.

My Dad had some of his story recorded in a little brown book. In it he wrote:

In September 1939, Canada declared war against Germany, and by early 1940 the National Service Board began a registration of everyone between the ages of 18 to 40 in order to get a national assessment of all available man power....When you reached draft age, you were called to take a medical examination. If you passed your medical examination A1,

you were subject to be called for military training by the Department of National War Service.

It was during this time that the Historic Peace Churches made initial contacts with government officials, and military exemption was negotiated. A number of elder churchmen, J.B. Martin, Jacob R. Bender, Ernie Swalm, C. F. Derstine, Noah Bearinger, Elvin Shantz, to name a few, appealed to the government to provide an alternative to serving in the war. These men, who were often out of their comfort zone dealing with Prime Ministers, high government and military officials, were able to negotiate an acceptable arrangement with Selective Service to set up work camps.

In the summer of 1941, the first group of local young men were called to report to Montreal River work camp, 85 miles north of Sault Ste. Marie on the shores of Lake Superior. Being a pacifist, my Dad was able to obtain Conscientious Objector status, and in December, 1942 he was called to report to Montreal River. He received a notice for alternative service that reads: "You must leave your home on January 4, 1943 in time to allow you to connect with the Canadian Pacific train which leaves Galt, Ontario at 9:13 p.m. via Toronto to Sault Ste. Marie."

There were 165 young men, ages 21 to 25, who were called to work on the Trans Canada Highway #17. In the dead of the bitter cold winter, with temperature at 42 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, far from civilization, my father, along with many other young men, worked eight hours per day, for 50 cents a day (under 7 cents an hour)! They cleared trees and brush, moved gravel and stones for fill, dug through frozen terrain, and shoveled gravel onto trucks by hand or onto a sleigh pulled by a team of horses, making way for the Trans Canada Highway. Their tools were pickaxes, hand shovels and 2-man logging saws—very primitive tools by today's standards!

Dad wrote: "In the spring of 1943,

the National Selective Service felt we would be of more value to the country in agricultural and industrial employment, so we were called back home to work on farms or in canning factories." My father came home and went to work for the summer for a farmer who lived two concessions away. My mother stated that Dad always felt this farmer, who had no use for Mennonites being exempted from military service, registered a complaint about my Dad's performance which my father always felt was unjustified.

For the Conscientious Objectors serving as farm labourers, wages were pegged at \$40 per month, of which \$25 was sent to the Canadian Red Cross. Married men were allowed \$10 per month extra, and only \$15 a month sent to the Red Cross. My father was a single man for the first year, as my parents were married in November, 1945.



Ruth Jantzi passes her father's work books to Conrad Stoesz of the Mennonite Heritage Centre. (photo courtesy of Ruth Jantzi)

After his farm work term was completed, Dad had to report to an Alternate Service Officer at the Department of Labour, National Selective Service, in Galt, where he was handed a notice to report for service in British Columbia to replace married men who had been serving there. It was most unusual to be sent into CO camp a second time. If assistance was required as a farm labourer, you were exempted, although this was not failure proof. My father came from a family of six boys and three were of draft age, so maybe someone felt that was enough farm assistance.

My mother stated that Dad didn't have any ill feelings about being sent to British Columbia. He saw it as an opportunity to see the "world" and meet Mennonite men from other parts of Canada—this was 1943 when travelling wasn't a common occurrence.

In November, 1943, my father left by train bound for Vancouver, transferring to Green Timber Manning Depot in New Westminster, B.C. on the lower mainland and then to Lake Cowichan on Vancouver Island, where his younger brother Stan was already stationed. Here the men were issued a numbered metal bracelet, similar to a dog tag, to identify victims who may be caught in a forest fire. We still have his identification bracelet (#7728), as well as the train ticket to Vancouver.

They worked at a government reforestation project which entailed cutting firewood from burnt out snags, and clean-up in preparation for planting tree seedlings. It was here that Dad met Rufus Jutzi and their friendship continued until Dad's death. My father always spoke very highly of Rufus. In Dad's photo album is a picture of Rufus carving a turkey, and my mother thought he was the camp cook.

Before returning home to Ontario, Dad had hernia surgery at King's Daughter Hospital in Duncan, B.C., where he spent 12 days in bed. He was released from hospital and travelled home by train—we have his return train ticket dated March 18, 1944. When reporting back to the National Selective Service, an alternate service officer looked at Dad's file and remarked, "You should never have been sent to B.C."

I asked my mother how the predominately Lutheran community in the Tavistock/East Zorra Township area

felt about the Mennonite boys being exempted from military service. She said that young people were advised not to go into town on Saturday night, to keep a low profile, and be on their best behaviour. Vernon Zehr, pastor at Cassel Mennonite church where our family attended, wrote a booklet reflecting on events in his lifetime. In the chapter, "The World at War" in this book, Reflections, Vernon wrote:

"Many of the draftees went into the army unwillingly, perhaps for a variety of reasons. Mennonite youth were able to get deferments for conscientious reasons. This created feelings of resentment and some ill will even in communities which before had been very congenial. It did not seem right to people that their sons should be drafted for cannon fodder as many were killed or maimed, while the conscientious objector on the next farm was allowed to stay at home."

What is the significance of these old worn out boots? These boots represent an era when young men stood firm in their belief that war was wrong and chose not to be conscripted into military service. These boots talk about many steps and many miles walked to promote peace. They represent a commitment to faith, and a willingness to follow conscience and the Anabaptist teachings on being a peacemaker.

CO camp, as it was commonly referred to, expanded the range of my father's world, and through the years, he would talk about the other men he

met. He took great pride in showing his camp photo albums to his five grandsons. He would remind them that his pay was 50 cents a day, and pork and beans was a daily meal.

Along with the boots, our family donated a metal sock-drying rack and a dozen or more metal tacks which were driven into the soles of the boots for extra



Elmon Lichti and his brother Stanley at CO camp. (photo courtesy of Ruth Jantzi)

traction. These humble and worn boots provide a valuable and rare glimpse into the lives of the "CO boys." Also in my parent's safe, we found a small first-aid kit and a number of ration coupons from the time, as well as a list of men from various faith groups who also received military service exemptions and who were in Montreal River Alternative Service Work Camp in January 1943. Faith groups listed are Mennonites, Amish Mennonite (which included my

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Ontario Mennonite History is published semi-annually by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario N2L 3G6, and distributed to all members of the Society. It is distributed free of charge to public libraries and school libraries in Ontario, upon request.

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Editorial Committee: Linda Huebert Hecht, Lorraine Roth, Marion Roes

Financial assistance from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture is gratefully acknowledged.

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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Dad), Mennonite Brethren, Old Order Mennonite, United Mennonite, Waterloo Conference, Christadelphian, Pentecostal, Plymouth Brethren, and Gospel Hall.

My dad's boots will be part of a temporary exhibit at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa from December 2011 to April 2012 high-lighting the history of peace advocacy in Canada. Plans are underway for this peace exhibit to then

travel across Canada. If my father were still living to see all the publicity and fuss he and his old worn out leather boots are getting, I know he would be deeply humbled. My Dad spoke more with his actions than with words.

Conrad Stoesz say that there are very few artifacts related to the experience of CO's. If there are artifacts in your family that you no longer want to keep and would like to have kept for the future as a reminder of a difficult period of our

Mennonite History, or if you would be willing to lend them for the peace exhibit in Ottawa, please contact me or Conrad Stoesz. Do it soon while we still have the people who can tell us the story! *

Ruth Jantzi gave this presentation at her church, Erb Street Mennonite, on Peace Sunday, November 8, 2009.

Peter Martin Cabin restored

Pioneer Peter Martin came to Canada with his wife, Anna Zimmerman, and several of his 17 children in 1819. The family settled in north Waterloo Township and Peter donated the land for the Martin's Meetinghouse.

Before Peter and his family came to Canada, they lived in a log cabin that was built by his family on the southwest end of the David Martin property in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. This was the original David Martin who came to Pennsylvania in 1727.

This log cabin remained standing until about the 1970s when it was carefully dismantled with the hopes of rebuilding it in the future. Beginning in 1980, the

Swiss Pioneer Preservation Associates was organized to preserve the memory of the pioneers to the Weaverland Valley and established a museum of farm life at Big Spring Farm, 739 Spruce Road, New Holland, PA.

It is at this location, about half a mile from where the original structure stood that the Peter Martin cabin has been reconstructed. In an effort to establish the date of its original construction, the Swiss Pioneer Preservation Associates engaged



The assembled Peter Martin Cabin. (Swiss Pioneer Preservation Associates photo)

the help of the Tree Ring Laboratory of Columbia University to learn more about the time that the cabin was built. Bill Callahan took various samples of

wood from the salvaged logs and drilled core samples about the diameter of a dime as well as some cross-sections of the logs. His results have shown that the trees were cut while in a dormant stage

(during the winter) and the trees were

locally grown. Tests also showed that the cabin was probably built in 1786. At that time log cabins were not as common in that area and were usually built of squared timbers, rather than the round logs used in the Peter Martin Cabin. *



The Interior stair of the Peter Martin Cabin. (Swiss Pioneer Preservation Associates photo)

Heidelberg Train Station

Request for Information

The Waterloo Central Railway is looking for information, photos, memories and location of the Heidelberg Train Station on the Grand Trunk Railway between Elmira and Waterloo. A newspaper account of a "Fatal Railroad Wreck On The Elmira Line" in The Daily Telegraph, Berlin, Ontario, Monday, September 8, 1902 states: "The scene of the accident about a mile south of the Heidelberg flag station and about two miles north of the Waterloo Depot. Through the Clemmer farm, there is a long curve and just as the end of it was reached, the tender left the track.... At this point there is an embankment of about ten feet on each side of the track."

Although the village of Heidelberg is several miles away, it is thought that the Heidelberg station was approximately where passengers currently get on and off the train at the St. Jacobs Farmers' Market. A 1925 newspaper item described the new depot as small in area, yet warm and comfortable.

As a railway that uses heritage equipment, the Waterloo Central Railway would like to erect a shelter at the Market that is similar to what was there before. If you, or a family member who might have lived in the Heidelberg/St Jacobs area many years ago have any details to share about riding the train or waiting in the station—or perhaps seeing the station—please contact Neal Moogk-Soulis at 519 886-8468 or neal_ca@rocketmail.com *

New books

Woldemar Neufeld's Canada: A Mennonite Artist in the Canadian Landscape 1925-1995. Laurence Neufeld and Monica McKillen, eds., Hildi Froese Tiessen and Paul Tiessen (text). Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2010, 146 pages.

In 1924, when Woldemar Neufeld was 14 years old, his family fled from Ukraine to Canada and came to live in Waterloo. As Neufeld developed his artistic skills he painted many scenes from the local countryside and the city of Waterloo. This large, hardcover book includes more than 240 vivid copies of his paintings and block prints. Hildi Froese Tiessen and Paul Tiessen tell the story of his life and his artistic development. Laurence Neufeld is the son of Woldemar Neufeld.

In the Wilds of Turkestan. Hermann Jantzen, translated by Erica Jantzen. Waterpark Publishing, 2207-6 Willow St., Waterloo, 2009, 207 pages.

Hermann Jantzen (1866-1959) was among a group of Mennonites who moved from Ukraine to central Asia in 1880 under the leadership of Claas

Epp. Before the revolution Jantzen was a leader among the Mennonites in Turkestan and served the government as a translator and a forester. Later he was a missionary both among the Muslims of Turkestan and in Europe after World War II. His autobiography, *Im Wilden Turkestan* was published in the German language in 1988. Erica Jantzen has translated this work into English.

Over Mountains and Valleys.

George Reesor, ed. Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario, 2009, 593 pages.

George Reesor has organized and translated the wide variety of letters received by his great-grandfather, Bishop Christian Reesor of Markham, Ontario between the years of 1859 and 1915. Most of the letters are from leaders of other Mennonite communities—in Ontario, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Manitoba. *

Award of Excellence to Lorraine Roth

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada release

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC) named Lorraine Roth of Tavistock, Ontario as the recipient of its 2010 Award of Excellence for her lifelong contribution to the preservation of Canadian Mennonite

history. The award, made at the Society's January 23 annual meeting in Steinbach, Manitoba, especially noted her meticulous research on the history of Amish Mennonite families who settled in Upper Canada beginning in the 1820s.

Roth, 79, became interested in family history as a teenager, and published her first genealogy in 1963. She began serious research on Amish



Lorraine Roth received the Award of Excellence from Sam Steiner, President of the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, on January 30, 2010 at a meeting of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario board of directors. (Photo by Barb Draper)

origins in Europe in 1969 when she lived and worked there for 1 ½ years. Over time she compiled 25 family histories and assisted with another 15 or 20. She wrote the historical background when the Amish Mennonites celebrated their sesquicentennial in Canada in 1972, and in 1998 published *The Amish and Their Neighbours: The German Block*, Wilmot Township, 1822-1860, the definitive work on the early Amish settlement in Waterloo Region. She published a collection of biographies, *Willing Service: Stories of Ontario Mennonite Women*, in 1992.

Roth was a charter member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, and served on historical committees for the bi-national Mennonite Church, the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, and the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. In retirement she continues to maintain detailed genealogical files on over 100 Amish Mennonite surnames. *



This monument was dedicated on October 10, 2009 in the former village of Khortitza, Ukraine in memory of all the Mennonite victims who died and were buried without graves during the Stalinist years of religious oppression. The inscriptions are in English, German, Russian and Ukrainian. (Photo credit: Alf Redekopp)

Women's Sewing Circles first began 100 years ago

Mennonite women have always assisted people in need and Mennonite women got together to sew for needy families as early as 1895. In 1907 Lena Weber, who had been working at the Toronto Mission, drew attention to the needs she saw there. The first organized women's groups in Ontario began in 1908 when the Waterloo Charity Circle was formed in March, 1908 at Waterloo Mennonite Church (Erb Street Mennonite).

Mary Burkhart had served as a missionary in India and when she visited Ontario in 1917 she encouraged all congregations to establish sewing circles. As a result the number of churches with an organized women's group rose from three to twenty. From 1917 until 1927 it was officially called the Ontario Branch of the General Sewing Circle Committee cooperating with groups in the United States.

The official name has changed several times over the years. In 1923 the official name became the Ontario Women's Missionary Society although informally people still called it Sewing Circle. With growing interaction with the Amish Mennonite Churches, the first Amish member served on the Executive

in 1952. In 1955 the name changed again to the Women's Missionary and Service Auxiliary. The 50th anniversary of the organization was celebrated in 1967, showing that they dated the beginning of WMSA as 1917. In 1974 it became the Women's Missionary and Service Commission.

After the integration of three Mennonite conferences in Ontario in 1988, the new name was Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. It took a few years for the women's groups to also integrate, but they changed their name in 1995 to Women of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. After MCEC changed its name to Mennonite Church Eastern Canada in 2001, the women also officially became the Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.

Presidents:

1917-1936: Amelia Nahrgang (Mrs. Menno), Wilmot, Ont.
 1936-1941: Martha Bechtel (Mrs. Nelson), Hespeler (Cambridge), Ont.
 1941-1947: Clara Snider (Mrs. Enos Nafziger), Waterloo, Ont.
 1947-1951: Helen Betzner (Mrs. Isaac High), Kitchener, Ont.
 1951-1954: Cora Groh (Mrs. Harold), Preston, (Cambridge), Ont.
 1954-1957: Margaret Brubacher (Mrs. Elmer), Kitchener, Ont.
 1957-1961: Lorna Bergey (Mrs. David D.), New Dundee, Ont.
 1961-1964: Naomi Martin

(Mrs. Jesse B.), Waterloo, Ont.
 1964-1967: Verna Jutzi (Mrs. Alvin), Baden, Ont.
 1967-1970: Margaret Cressman (Mrs. Eben), Preston (Cambridge), Ont.
 1970-1974: Alice Koch (Mrs. Lester), New Hamburg, Ont.
 1974-1977: Vera Snyder (Mrs. Nelson), Waterloo, Ont.
 1977-1980: Florence Schlegel (Mrs. Earl), Tavistock, Ont.
 1980-1983: Naomi Brubacher (Mrs. Leonard), Elora, Ont.
 1983-1986: Gloria Musselman (Mrs. Gerald), Cambridge, Ont.
 1986-1989: Florence Steinmann (Mrs. Arthur), New Hamburg, Ont.
 1989-1992: Rita Bauman (Mrs. Omar), Elmira, Ont.
 1992-1995: Joyce Zehr, Tavistock, Ont.
 1995-1998: Dodie Lepp, Beamsville, Ont.
 1998-2004: Anna Mary Brubacher, Leamington, Ont.
 2004-2010: Shirley Redekop, Floradale, Ont.
 2010 - Patty Ollies, Milverton, Ont. *

Compiled by Ruth Jantzi, Secretary/Treasurer of Mennonite Women Canada. Information from 1917 to 1986 obtained from Willing Service: Stories of Ontario Mennonite Women, by Lorraine Roth, 1992. The writer apologizes to anyone who may have been missed unintentionally.

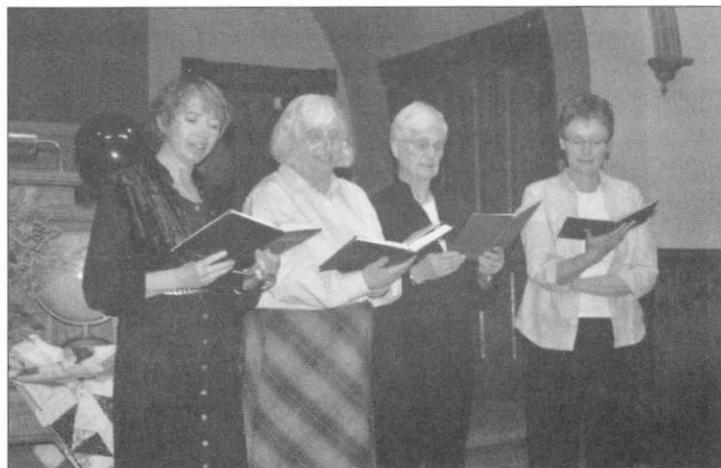
102 with so much to do – over a century of women's work

by Marion Roes

On April 20, Erb Street Mennonite Church women celebrated the 102nd anniversary of the Waterloo Charity Circle. That first group formed in March 1908 at the Waterloo Mennonite Church, now Erb Street. "The church work of Ontario Mennonite women has a history of reaching back further than 1908, but that year does mark the beginning

of organized women's work in the officially recognized program of the church." [Karl Kessler, *Path of a People: Erb Street Mennonite Church, 1851-2001*, (Waterloo, ON, 2001) p 67.]

For a few hours on Tuesday afternoon, women gathered



Lynn (Jewitt) Keller, Grace (Martin) Schweitzer, Merlyn (Snider) Martin, and Mary (Snider) Martin sing an old song from Junior Hymns.

to knot comforters, stitch a quilt and tell stories. After singing, "Great God the Giver of all good" and amid much chatter and laughter, a delicious comfort-food supper of scalloped potatoes with sausage, jellied salad and mixed vegetables was enjoyed. Dessert was angel food cake with lemon sauce.

Grace Schweitzer, president of the Erb Street WMCEC, hosted the evening's program of readings, along with trivia tidbits and hymn singing, led by song-leader Ruth Jantzi. Readers gave glimpses of the women's mission work including: meetings; items sewn, embroidered, knotted and quilted; social committee meals cooked, relief sale pies baked. A quartet and accompanist of former members and daughters of members sang "Somebody" from Junior Hymns, and "When we walk with the Lord."

The group sang a song well-remembered from their growing-up years as members of the Erb Street girls club called Cheerful Sunshine Band: "Jesus wants me for a sunbeam." A few stories were told and the program ended—but the stories and remembrances went on.

When asked why the celebration wasn't held in 2008 for the 100th year, the answer given was that the women quilted and knotted their way through years 100 and 101!

Grace's program material was taken from *Path of a People and Lorraine Roth's 1992 book Willing Service: Stories of Ontario Mennonite Women*. Additional resources she used were meeting minutes and the 60th Anniversary program for the Women's Missionary and Service Auxiliary held at Erb Street from Mennonite Archives of Ontario (MAO) at Conrad Grebel University College. This 102nd anniversary information will be given to MAO, so that it too is available for future celebrations. *

Marion Roes is church historian at Erb Street Mennonite Church.

Book Review

Worship at 'George Street'—A History of our Transitions, 1924-2008. Karl Dick. Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, Waterloo, 2008, 270 pages.

By Barb Draper

Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church, informally known as "George Street," was organized by immigrants who came to Waterloo Region in the 1920s. They fled from the suffering and chaos in Ukraine that followed World War I and the Russian Revolution. About 800 people arrived in Waterloo in 1924 and were hosted by the Mennonites of Waterloo County.

Because their language and culture were quite different from the local Mennonites, the émigrés

soon began meeting separately. For a while the group met in a rented second floor room on King Street in Kitchener, but by 1928 the congregation began renting their present building, a former Presbyterian Church.

Dick used a variety of written sources in putting this history together, including a variety of personal memoirs, unpublished manuscripts as well as records and minutes from the congregation. The many photographs contribute a great deal to an understanding of these stories from the past.

W-K Mennonite was known for its choirs and its music. It also had a large Sunday School and Vacation Bible School, especially in the years after the baby boom of the 1950s. Over the years the congregation has often lamented the fact that young people

have tended to drift away, either as inactive members or have transferred to different congregations.

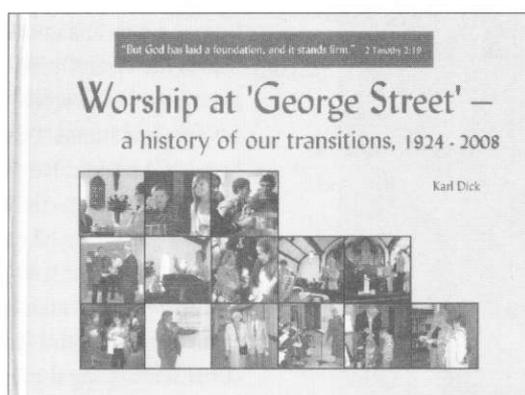
One of the on-going emotional struggles at W-K has been over the use of the German language. In the early years, everyone spoke German and that was the language of worship, but subsequent generations preferred to use English. Meanwhile Mennonite immigrants from Europe and South America who came in the 1940s and 50s appreciated a place where they could worship in German. For most of its existence, W-K has used two services, one German and one English.

Unlike many congregational histories, Dick openly discusses many of the major conflicts experienced by the congregation. One of the very interesting parts of the book comes at the end where Dick reflects on the reasons for the many clashes between factions and with the pastor. He suggests that one reason for re-emerging conflict may be that those who

left Ukraine after the First World War viewed the role of the minister differently than those who came after the Second World War.

Conflicts around how to do worship properly has been an on-going concern for the George Street church. Although hurts from the past have gone deep, Dick concludes his history with confidence for the future.

This is a large book, with large pages and a great deal of information. While it may be almost too much information for the casual reader, members of the congregation and future researchers will find it very useful. The book is dedicated to the memory of Herbert Enns who not only helped to gather information about the congregation over the years, but made a generous estate gift to make the book possible. *



Jacob Woolner, Mennonite Preacher

By Maryanne Szuck

This is a story of a young English Anglican boy who became a German Mennonite preacher in Breslau back in the 1860s. My great-great-great-grandfather, Isaac Woolner, was born in 1792 in the County of Suffolk in England. In 1812 he and his brother, William, were both enlisted members of His Majesty's 43rd Regiment of Foot which fought in various places in Europe during the Napoleonic



In April, 2009 a replacement monument was erected for Jacob Woolner. (photo courtesy of MaryAnne Szuck)



The back of the monument includes a memory to Jacob's mother, Sarah Hembling who was buried in an unmarked grave in Bridgeport. (photo courtesy of MaryAnne Szuck)

Wars. For their military services they were granted an opportunity to start a new life in Upper Canada.

In 1832 Isaac brought his wife Sarah Hembling and their five children to Canada to claim the land they had been promised. They sailed several weeks across the Atlantic Ocean to reach Canada. William and his wife Phyllis, came later in 1834.

Jacob, one of the children, was born in 1826. He was six years old when the family came to Canada in 1832. Very shortly after arriving in the Bridgeport area, Jacob's mother, Sarah, and the youngest brother, James, died of cholera. The surviving members were taken into the care of other families.

Jacob stayed with Deacon Samuel Eby's family and the remaining Woolner children were placed in different foster homes while Isaac continued on to Marsville near Orangeville where the promised lands were located. After Isaac established himself on the land accorded him by the Land Registry Office in Montreal, he married widow Bridget Connor, and started a second family. Some years later it was discovered that in 1825 the land had been deeded to a United Empire Loyalist, and after considerable legal effort to have the error corrected, Woolner was forced to forfeit his title to this property. He was allotted alternative land and financial compensation for the development he had done including the buildings. The disputed land was not connected to Bridget Connor.

Back in Bridgeport, Jacob sadly missed his mother and absent father. Young Jacob was raised by the Mennonite Deacon, Samuel Eby, and his wife, Elizabeth Brech. He became part of that family and was thus grafted into the Mennonite community. As the months passed, he came to love his foster parents

and the Eby children and soon the young English boy spoke Pennsylvania German like all the local folks.

When Jacob's father, Isaac, finally arrived to claim his son, Jacob did not want to go. So Isaac agreed to let Jacob live with his adoptive family, the Samuel Eby family, that reared him to manhood.

Jacob married a Pennsylvania German Mennonite woman, Hannah Schiedel in 1849 and they farmed one mile west of Kossuth which is now airport property just south of Breslau. Jacob and Hannah were part of the Cressman Mennonite meetinghouse.

In 1867, the year that Canada became a nation, Jacob was ordained as a Mennonite preacher by Bishop Joseph Hagey at the Cressman Mennonite Church in Breslau. Hagey was also from the Breslau Mennonite community. Jacob Woolner could preach fluently in both English and German.

The Mennonite church reaped the benefit of the services of an energetic leader in Jacob—the harvest that Samuel Eby and his wife Elizabeth had sown. Jacob served as a minister at Breslau from 1867 to 1890. He died in 1917 at the age of 91 and is buried in the Breslau Mennonite Church cemetery.

Jacob and Hannah had 10 children, including John, my great-grandfather and Jacob Jr. who followed his father's footsteps, also becoming a Mennonite preacher. Jacob Jr. was ordained in 1897 and served as a helper in Waterloo County as needed without being assigned to any one congregation. *



Jacob Woolner with his sons: (from left) John, Martin, Jacob Sr., Jacob Jr., Solomon. (Photo courtesy of MaryAnne Szuck)