

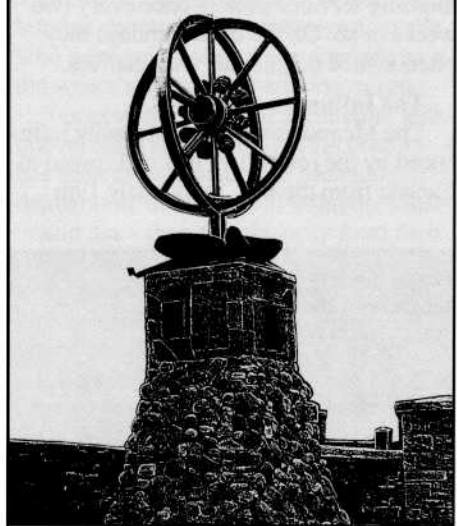
# Ontario Mennonite History

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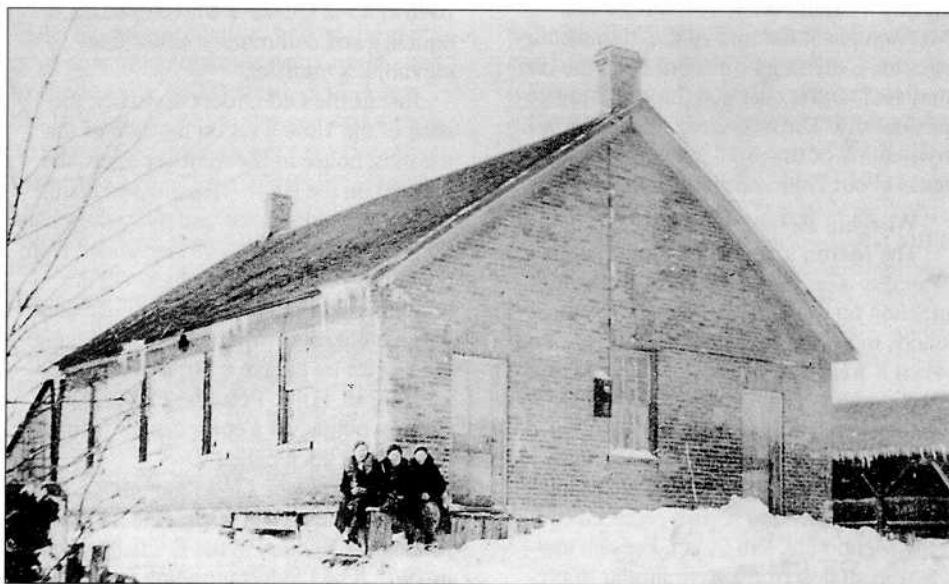
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## The Effect of Revivalism on Worship in the (Old) Mennonite Church of Waterloo Region

by Barbara Draper



*The original Floradale Mennonite Church building erected in 1896.*

My congregation, Floradale Mennonite, celebrated an anniversary in 1996. As I was comparing the building they erected in 1896 with those of other congregations, I was intrigued to find that at the turn of the 20th century the (Old) Mennonite congregations of Waterloo Region were tearing down their meeting houses and building churches. This was also a time of significant change in hymnody and sermon style. The Mennonites of this area switched from singing unison songs in German to singing in four parts from a new English hymnal.

In the twenty-year period from 1895 to 1915, nearly all of the fifteen Mennonite congregations of Waterloo Region rebuilt or remodeled their church buildings. Those that were remodeled replaced the old benches with pews and moved from a U-shape to an auditorium style. The new buildings that were erected, especially after 1901, resembled the churches of other Protestant groups, at least on the outside. Using a toned-down version, the Mennonites copied aspects of the Gothic revival style that was popular in the second half of the 19th century.

In the midst of these architectural changes, the (Old) Mennonites of Ontario adopted a new hymnal, the Church and Sunday School, which was first printed in 1902. This hymnal was in English rather than in German, it had musical notation in four parts and included many gospel songs written in the late 1800's. The 1890's were a time of profound change for the (Old)

Mennonites. During this time they began holding revival meetings, Bible studies and Sunday School conferences. It was also during this time that they began using some English for worship and for conference sessions.

Why did these changes happen, and why did they happen when they did? My explanation is that the (Old) Mennonites of Ontario were increasingly attracted to the revivalism popularized by evangelists such as Charles Finney and D. L. Moody. For most of the 19th century the Mennonite leaders rejected revivalism and those who promoted it were forced to leave the denomination. By the 1880's there was so much pressure to adopt revivalist methods that tension among those in leadership was very high. The result of this tension was a major split in the denomination with the anti-revivalist conservatives forming their own Old Order denomination. After 1890 the forces opposing change were gone and the (Old) Mennonites of the Waterloo area enthusiastically adopted the revivalist theology so predominant in Ontario at the time. They built new churches and developed new patterns of worship to express their new piety. The rapid and profound changes at the turn of the 20th century were the result of the adoption of a new revivalist theology.

Historians have assumed that when the Mennonites began their own revivals in the late 1800's under the leadership of John S. Coffman of Indiana, it was a rebirth of Mennonites spirituality. They

assume that the Mennonite norm through the 17th and 18th centuries was withdrawal and separation from society and that pietism and revivalism was a return to the way of the early Anabaptists. I would argue that Mennonite revivalism was not simply a small course correction. The Mennonites at the turn of the 20th century adopted a theology different from the one they had, and it changed their self-image profoundly. The new churches and new hymnbook of this time express their new ideas about God and about life.

### Worship Before 1890

The Martin's meeting house in north Waterloo was one of the early permanent meeting houses built in Waterloo Region. It stands today appearing very much as it did when it was built in the 1830's. Old Order meeting houses, even those built within the past ten years all use the same style; they are very similar to the original style outside and inside. Photos, sketches and descriptions of the meeting houses replaced by First Mennonite, Erb Street, Breslau and Preston all describe a style similar to present-day Old Order meeting houses. When the Mennonites moved to Waterloo from Pennsylvania in the early 19th century, their first places of worship were often log buildings that were also used as schools. When they began to erect more permanent structures, they patterned them after those of the Quakers. The simple, gabled, rectangular building has two doors on the longer side. The windows, often with 15 panes, are positioned all around the building to balance the effect. The larger meeting houses also have doors at each end.

At first the Waterloo Mennonites built frame buildings, but soon they were also using stone or brick. The interiors of these buildings were also plain. The Martin's meeting house has unstained wainscoting on the lower walls while the upper walls are painted white. There are no pictures on the walls or any other ornamentation. In the Martin's meeting house the benches are made of unvarnished pine planks. The benches are arranged in a U-shape, all facing the pulpit along the long side, opposite the doors.

The pulpit is slightly raised, but a good view from the rear benches is assured by

the fact that the back four benches all around the room are also raised in a kind of bleacher style. In many early Ontario Protestant churches, the pulpit was raised high above the people so that everyone could see and hear. The Mennonites followed the Quakers who emphasized equality and community rather than elevating a minister.

Just as the Old Orders do today, the men of the 1880's sat on the side of the meeting house to the minister's left, the women on the right. Men entered using the doors on their side and hung their hats on pegs attached to racks suspended from the ceiling above the benches. On the women's side of the meeting house there was a cloakroom where they could hang their coats and leave their bonnets.

In 1836, H. W. Peterson of Berlin, Ontario published a collection of German hymns in a book called, *Die Gemeinschaftliche Liedersammlung*. It was used until the arrival of the first official Mennonite hymnal in the English language in 1902. The *Liedersammlung* is still used by the Old Order Mennonites today and it has gone through many printings.

Before the 1840's the Mennonites of Waterloo organized their own schools where children learned to read and write High German. Even with the arrival of public education in Ontario in the 1840's, many of the local schools retained instruction in German. Many non-Mennonite German-speaking people had moved to the Waterloo area by the 1850's and some schools retained German instruction until at least the 1870's. By the late 1800's, when most education was in English, it was becoming more difficult for people to read the hymns and the Bible in German. An additional problem is that German is written in Gothic script which is difficult for a person accustomed to the Roman script used in English.

The Mennonites of Waterloo Region, on the whole, were descended from Swiss Anabaptists who had migrated to the German Palatinate where they adopted the local dialect. This unwritten dialect came to be known as "Pennsylvania Dutch" and was the language of conversation of Mennonites. The Old Orders still use this

dialect in their homes. The Pennsylvania Dutch dialect is different enough from written High German that without additional instruction, the Bible and hymnbook are difficult to read and understand.

A typical worship service before 1890 was two hours in length. Two sermons were preached by two different ministers using the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect. At the end of each sermon the congregation knelt for prayer. Ministers did not use written notes since it was expected that the Holy Spirit would provide the words to speak. The ministers, deacons and bishops were unpaid and there were no weekly offerings. Small collection boxes at the men's doors were used whenever funds were needed for such things as support for widows and orphans. The ministers were untrained and chosen from among the congregation. When a minister was needed, the presiding bishop asked for nominations. If more than one person was nominated, the individual was chosen from among the nominees by lot. In describing the preaching style of this period, J. C. Wenger says, "the sermon was preached with few gestures if any, with dignity and sincerity, sometimes with tears but never with a loud voice or with exuberance that would have been considered poor taste in the exposition of God's Word." Sermons involved lots of scripture references and often told the story of salvation. Most ministers preached by rote; they tended to repeat phrases and often they spoke in a kind of sing-song or chanting style. Some Old Order ministers still use this chanting style when they preach, pray or read a hymn. Congregations were not closely defined in the 19th century. A body of ministers served the district and each year after 1836 a booklet was published which indicated where services would be held on a given Sunday. Each meeting house had services every two or four weeks. Mennonites in the 1800's attended Sunday morning services usually once every two weeks or so. On the other Sundays they often visited neighbours and relatives.

### The Influence of Revival

The Mennonites were profoundly influenced by the revivalism that had spread to Canada from the U.S. in the early 19th

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century. The earlier revivals of Jonathan Edwards were Calvinistic; they had a theocentric concept of the universe and assumed that God decides who will be saved and that revival comes when God gives it. Charles Finney and his contemporaries preached that access to salvation comes only when a person repents and requests it. There was a greater sense that salvation had become a human responsibility. Nineteenth century revivalism assumed an emotional piety and strong evangelism. The task of Christians was to spread the gospel and to win souls; in return Christians could be assured of a warm feeling of closeness to Jesus Christ and a place in heaven.

Like other denominations, Mennonites found the message of revivalism appealing. Mennonite piety had emphasized being more than doing. They were taught to encourage morality in each other. Worldliness was shunned, not so much in an attempt to have no contact with neighbours, but to avoid a wrong set of priorities that ignored the importance of God. The Mennonites had not believed it was necessary to know that you were saved; they believed it was important to follow the teachings of Christ in the New Testament.

Some Mennonite historians (especially those who were themselves strongly influenced by Mennonite revivalism) see the church in the mid-19th century as so withdrawn and insular that it was dying spiritually. John Hostetler speaks of the "recovery of evangelism" which he sees as a return to what the early Anabaptists practiced, and he views the 18th and 19th centuries as a time when the church was asleep.<sup>2</sup> The editor of the 1949 *Mennonite Quarterly Review* refers to the Mennonites in the mid-19th century as "a quiescent, retarded, non-missionary, self-contained and largely self-satisfied unorganized group."<sup>3</sup> Whether the Mennonites of the 19th century are seen as a God-fearing, humble community or withdrawn people who were spiritually asleep depends on the writer's attitude toward revivalism.

I believe the extent of Mennonite withdrawal from society in the 19th century has been exaggerated. The Mennonites deliberately tried to avoid influences that would draw their people away from their simple faith, but they did not avoid contact with their neighbours. They raised local orphans in their homes who sometimes joined the church, and there are several examples of people who chose to join the Mennonites. When they purchased land in large blocks in this area, they did not hesitate to sell to non-Mennonites. The Mennonites did not traditionally socialize or worship with people from other denom-

inations (except perhaps at funerals) but they regularly worked together with their non-Mennonite neighbours. They expressed their faith in quiet ways, but they did not advocate totally withdrawing from the world.

There had been steady growth in the Waterloo area in the first half of the century as new congregations were established from the early 1800's until 1855. After the 1850's, expansion stopped and almost no new congregations were developed between 1855 and the end of the century. One reason for this lack of increase was that those who were attracted to revivalism before 1890 began to leave the Mennonite Church.

In Ontario, conflict began in the Vineland area when Daniel Hoch, a minister, accused the church of being dead and prayerless and he began to organize prayer meetings. When other ministers objected, the issue of prayer meetings was discussed at the annual conference of ministers and bishops. The decision made in 1847 was that prayer meetings were permitted, "as long as it is done in an evangelical order, especially with the weak and the sick."<sup>4</sup> In spite of this attempt to compromise, Hoch continued to use the methods of "experimental religion" and after much debate and recrimination, Hoch withdrew from the Mennonite Church in 1849.

The Hoch controversy had limited effect in the Waterloo area, but there was an element in the church that was attracted to evangelical piety. There were several denominations in the area that held revival meetings and used an evangelistic style, including Methodists, Evangelical Association, United Brethren and Baptists. These groups also held camp meetings and bush meetings that were quite lively. There were many opportunities for Mennonites to hear the message of revival.

By the 1870's, the situation in the Mennonite church had become very tense. Frequently there were complaints that the church was too formal in worship and too reserved in expressing its faith. The dissenters wanted more aggressive evangelistic services with preaching about crisis conversion. When some preachers began moving in that direction with emotional Christianity, prayer meetings and revival meetings, they were soon in trouble with the rest of the leadership. In 1874 the supporters of a more evangelistic style formed their own conference. They became known as the "New" Mennonites and held meetings in homes, schools, halls or whatever was available. Often they had open-air meetings that they called "field meetings" or "bush meetings." L. J. Burkholder described them as having a new kind of zeal and enthusiasm.<sup>5</sup>

### Adapting to Revivalism

Historians generally agree that John F. Funk of Indiana had a profound influence on the Mennonite Church in the late 19th century. While working in Chicago as a young man, he was converted at a Presbyterian revival meeting. Funk chose to be baptized into the Mennonite church and from that time on he worked tirelessly to improve the church. He was certainly influenced by D. L. Moody with whom he worked in Chicago for a few years. Funk began publishing the *Herald of Truth* for the Mennonite Church, available in both German and English. He used all the influence he had to encourage the development of evangelism, mission work and Sunday Schools. Funk also published many books. Funk was ordained and preached in places other than his own congregation.

In Indiana where Funk was working, the more conservative element broke away from the main body of the Mennonite Church under the leadership of Wisler in 1872. There was less opposition within the church of Indiana to aggressive evangelistic work and that is where Mennonite revivalism first took root. It spread rapidly throughout the Mennonite communities of North America.

Between the mid-1870's and 1889 there was great unrest in the Mennonite Church of the Waterloo area. The issues of contention were those of preaching in English, Sunday Schools, evening meetings and "protracted" or a series of revival meetings. In the congregations of Waterloo Region there were some Sunday Schools and evening meetings, although the more conservative element viewed them with misgiving. Because these issues seem so minor, historians have often assumed that the real issue was personality conflicts. This may have been a contributing factor, but I believe Mennonite leaders who objected to the new innovations recognized a movement toward a new theology. Because they were not theologically educated, they did not have the words to articulate their concerns. All they were able to say, over and over again, was that the church was adopting "worldly" standards. Their arguments convinced very few and were often dismissed as narrow-minded.

Abraham W. Martin, the bishop of Woolwich, who later led the Old Order division, wrote a letter expressing his concern about the evening meetings, Bible readings and Sunday Schools in Indiana. It wasn't the Bible reading that was his primary concern, but the way in which it was done. He suggested that confessing sins in public attracts attention to oneself and neglects humility. He believed that confessing the Saviour should be done by

deeds and actions, rather than by words spoken in public.<sup>6</sup>

Those who were opposed to worldliness and the demise of humility were dismissed as being behind the times and steeped in obsolete tradition. However, I believe there is some truth to the concerns of this conservative bishop. Mennonite revivalism, with its confidence in a superior spirituality, led to a mindset that allowed a separation between the domain of the spirit and that of day-to-day living. Spirituality became something to be expressed in words. For bishop Martin, day-to-day living was more important than what was said at a public meeting.

In Waterloo Region, the issue that sparked the final division between Bishop Abraham Martin and the other bishops was Martin's refusal to baptize thirty converts who had been attending a series of protracted meetings. When a neighbouring bishop baptized them, the leadership was bitterly divided. The issue dragged on for a few years before the Old Orders organized themselves into a separate conference. The congregations north of the Woolwich-Waterloo boundary were almost solidly Old Order. Within a few years, St. Jacobs and Floradale had small (Old) Mennonite congregations.

With the formation of a separate Old Order conference, the way was open for the main body of the Mennonite church to bring in the changes that had brought so much contention. Through the 1890's there were many changes. At the conference sessions in 1890 there was a resolution that English preaching be held at Preston on some Sunday afternoons. Sunday Schools were begun by many congregations during the 1890's. By 1893 there was a singing school held in the meeting house in Berlin (Kitchener). Singing schools had been around before that, but never officially sanctioned by the church.

These singing schools taught the Mennonites to sing in four-part harmony which was not generally used before that time. It was sol-fa instruction with a different shape for each note of the scale. These shaped notes had been developed by Joseph Funk of Virginia in the 1840's. The (Old) Mennonites adopted four-part harmony for Sunday morning worship sometime around the turn of the century.

John S. Coffman was also very important in bringing change to the Mennonite Church. Coffman worked with John F. Funk in Elkhart, Indiana as an editor. He also spent much of his time travelling to Mennonite communities where he was invited to preach. Coffman's preaching was very different from that of traditional Mennonite ministers. He did not use the

chanting style characteristic of his day; he spoke in a conversational tone. At a time when ministers were expected to speak extemporaneously, Coffman systematically arranged his points with an outline. As one of the earliest revival preachers, John S. Coffman was careful not to attract too much criticism. He tended not to use too many gestures, especially after he had been criticized for drawing attention to himself by doing so. Coffman was always pushing the limits of what was acceptable, but he was careful to operate within these limits.

Coffman was particularly effective in the congregations of Waterloo Region. In 1891, he came to this area and spent six weeks preaching in various congregations. Because a series of meetings was frowned on, Coffman would announce only one evening meeting at a time. Each night, the next meeting was announced. The people flocked to hear him and sometimes there was no more room half an hour before the meeting was to begin. During his 1891 visit, Coffman preached 44 times in four weeks and also visited twice that many homes. He returned to Ontario in the winter of 1892 and spoke in many of the Waterloo churches. There can be no doubt that Coffman was very influential in bringing a new sense of enthusiasm to the Mennonites of the Waterloo area.

There were several other evangelists in the Mennonite Church who followed the style of John S. Coffman. In 1904 and 1905, A. D. Wenger, a young minister of Pennsylvania, held a total of 15 series of meetings in Ontario with 385 converts, most of whom joined the Mennonite Church.<sup>7</sup> S. F. Coffman, the son of John S. Coffman, came to Vineland in 1898 and he frequently preached to the Mennonites of Waterloo Region. The result of all this evangelistic activity was a new vision in the Mennonite Church. Christianity became, not a quiet faith, but an active power to be used for building up the Kingdom.

### New Church Buildings

In spite of all the conversions of the 1890's, there was no resulting development of new congregations. There was a new concern for mission work, but the histories of local congregations generally do not argue that they were bursting at the seams. In 1924 a new congregation was developed in Elmira, but the majority of the members came from the Floradale congregation and there was some discussion about closing Floradale altogether. The predominant reason given for putting up new buildings was not that they were overcrowded, but that the buildings were old and in need of repair.

The Snyder congregation in Bloomingdale was the first to move away from the traditional meeting house style. The building was destroyed by fire in 1872 and so they tore down the remains and erected a new building on the same site. Menno Bowman, the minister who led the building project, joined the New Mennonites shortly after it was completed. There were so many people in the Snyder congregation who supported the New Mennonites that for several years the new building was used exclusively by them. By 1880 the (Old) Mennonites again were in possession of the building after they were able to produce a deed to the property.

Pictures of this building seem to indicate that it had a basement so it must have been the first Mennonite congregation in the Waterloo area to have one. The building itself was fairly simple with plain windows. It is the entrance that shows there has been a change; rather than two doors in the long side, it had an entrance at the gabled end. This movement of the doors from the side to the end is significant for it indicates a shift toward the church style of other denominations. When it was first built and used by the New Mennonites, the Snyder (Bloomingdale) church had a single entrance, but when the (Old) Mennonites regained control they replaced the single entrance with separate doors for men and women.

The Weber congregation at Strasburg (Pioneer Park) was the next one to move away from the meeting house style. In 1895 they tore down their stone meeting house and replaced it with a new brick building with a basement. Noah Stauffer, the minister, was fairly progressive and construction was under his leadership. This building was slightly more ornate; the windows had a very slight arch to them and the brickwork was patterned in a style common to many churches of the time. Except for the double entrance at the front and the fact that the windows do not have a Gothic arch, this building is very similar to the Wesleyan Methodist church built in Elmira in 1873. The shallow brickwork columns between the windows (reminiscent of buttresses) and at the front are also found on many churches built in the 1870's and 80's in Waterloo Region. The architect for the Weber church was clearly following the pattern popular among other churches of the time. In 1896 the Hagey church near Preston was remodeled. The front entrance was moved to the end facing the road with the pulpit at the opposite end. The old pews were changed to floor level and adapted with two aisles. The women sat on the left and the men on the right. Burkholder says that the Hagey church was the first to remodel the meeting house into a church



and that it was "not done without considerable opposition."<sup>78</sup>

In 1896 the Floradale congregation built a new building. This was not a new congregation, but it was reduced to holding meetings in homes for a number of years because in 1889 the Old Order majority kept the meeting house. The new Floradale church also had a double entrance at the end, opposite the pulpit. Inside the women's entrance there was a cloakroom while the men's entrance opened into an open hallway with hooks on which to hang their hats and coats. The exterior size and shape of this building was similar to the meeting houses; it had no patterns in the brick, the roof had a lower pitch and it had no basement. Forty years later this building was torn down and replaced with a new building. The reasons given for its replacement are that it was in poor condition and drafty, not that it was not large enough.

The Martin's meeting house, built in the 1830's is now about 160 years old and is still being used. The Elmira meeting house is 130 years old; it has been enlarged and renovated, but the basic structure remains. The other meeting houses that were torn down in the early 20th century might also have been adequate for many years if the congregations had not been clamoring for a new design.

In 1901 the Blenheim congregation, near New Dundee, tore down its meeting house and erected a new building. In the summer of 1902, new buildings replaced the meeting houses at First Mennonite and at Erb Street. Of course these changes did not come without opposition. One of the Old Orders of the time, Peter Shirk, commenting on the controversy at First Mennonite said they had great disunity and voted in the new design with a small majority. He wrote that: "It seems there could almost be another division, at least many say they no longer feel at home there."<sup>79</sup> When it was finished the same writer commented that "From the outside, if a steeple and a cross were on top it would resemble a Catholic church more than a Mennonite meeting house." His comment about the new Erb Street church was that "the house is still good, but they want a new one... built to conform to the city." He also commented that the preacher at Blenheim spent two months studying at Elkhart and that was why "new and ornamental meeting houses must be built." The new church buildings at Blenheim, First Mennonite and Erb Street were clearly different from the meeting houses they replaced. They were built with basements to accommodate Sunday School classes. The roof line is steeper than those of meeting houses and the interiors have high ceilings.

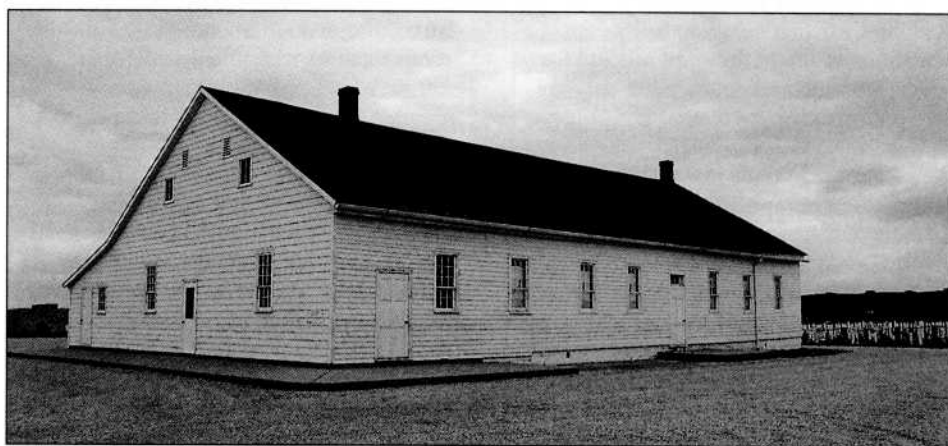
The exteriors have designs in the bricks and at Erb Street the tall, narrow, rounded-arched windows are very decorative. Transoms and fanlights also make these buildings more like United and Presbyterian churches than the meeting houses they replaced.

In 1904 the Biehn church, near New Hamburg, was rebuilt. It was very simple with plain windows. This simple style was the exception, however. In 1908 Breslau and Mannheim tore down their meeting houses. The new Mannheim church was very similar to First Mennonite while the Breslau church was patterned after Erb Street. The new St. Jacobs church built in 1915 was also in the style of Erb Street and Breslau except that it was of red rather

quite similar to other churches built at the same time. With the adoption of revivalist theology, the Mennonites were also ready to adopt the predominant building style of other churches. When they abandoned the traditional Mennonite theology they also abandoned the traditional building style.

### New Music

Along with the changes in places of worship, the Mennonites in Waterloo began using English in their services after 1890. The change in the language of worship came gradually as some of the older ministers were not comfortable in English. The congregations in the northern part of the Region were generally slower to shift to English.



*Martin's meeting house as it appears today on the northern edge of Waterloo.*

than yellow brick. When Elmira, Shantz and Floradale built new buildings they also were replicas of Erb Street, Breslau and St. Jacobs.

There were significant changes in architecture made during these years. In 1900 there were fifteen (Old) Mennonite congregations in Waterloo region. By 1908 seven of them had torn down their meeting houses and built churches. By 1915, all except the small, struggling Detweiler congregation had either built a church or had remodeled their meeting house to resemble a church. The pews were in rows so that the congregation no longer faced each other. This change in style shows that simplicity and community were no longer the predominant values. The emphasis was on individual spirituality for which the rows of pews were adequate.

The Gothic style of architecture remained popular in the late 19th century. The new churches built by the Mennonites were a toned-down version of this Gothic style. The Mennonites tended to use rounded rather than peaked windows and until the 1950's the buttresses were suggestions only, but the buildings appear

Evangelism became an important theme not only of preaching but also of singing. To express their enthusiasm for spreading the gospel, the Mennonites began to use English hymns. It would have been possible to sing the old German words to faster, more upbeat tunes, but there is nothing to suggest that they did so. Sometime between 1890 and 1910 the German books were replaced with new English ones. These were not translations of German hymns; the new Mennonite hymnals were collections of hymns of English and American origin.

*The Church and Sunday School Hymnal* was published in 1902 as the first official English hymnbook of the Mennonite Church. It became very popular and was accepted immediately. In 1911 a supplement of another 120 hymns was added and this supplement was included in subsequent editions. This hymnal has gone through many re-printings, the most recent one in 1985.

I believe that there is an important difference between the theology of the *Liedersammlung* and that of *The Church and Sunday School Hymnal*. A. B. Kolb, one of the compilers of the English hym-

nal wrote hymn 248 in which he expresses confidence that a Christian, as long as he feels the living fire of Christ within him, can live free from sin and do God's holy will here on earth. He rejoices that he need feel no fear with Christ beside him and that he will spend eternity with Christ. This confidence of achieving heaven and confidence in the ability to conquer sin in this life is repeated over and over in the songs of *The Church and Sunday School Hymnal*. The songs of the *Liedersammlung* do not have this sense that sin can be conquered in this life. Life on earth is seen as a struggle; there is no confidence in humanity's achievements. The people are admonished never to tire, but to wrestle toward the kingdom of heaven. These German songs assume that it is the Christian's duty to follow the teachings of Jesus; they call on God for grace, strength and courage but they are less optimistic about overcoming sin in this life.

I was able to trace most of the authors and dates of composition for the 412 songs of the *Church and Sunday School*. There are some old classics as well as 31 written by Isaac Watts and 19 by Charles Wesley. Most of the songs, however, were written after 1850. This hymnal used new songs; it reflects the gospel mentality of its day. The tone of the songs is enthusiastic and confident; the people who sang them believed that when Christ's message was spread throughout the world it would make the world a better place. The hymns of the *Liedersammlung* emphasize the need for penitence and an upright life. Recurrent themes are humility, encouraging each other, working

together, persevering, obedience and of being like Jesus. There is an assumption that Christians are responsible to be faithful and that heaven will be a time of reward for those who have been faithful.

The themes of the new English songs are very different. Rather than a community that works together so that by encouraging each other they can stay on the straight and narrow path, the presupposition is that individuals need to be closely linked to Jesus. Life involves waiting near the cross until we get to meet Jesus in heaven. The work of the Christian is to praise God and spread the gospel. The power of conversion is strong enough to conquer sin. The responsibility of Christians is to gather converts.

A significant part of these gospel songs is the rhythm. They tend to have simple harmonies and are not hard to learn. Many songs have harmonized echoes in the refrain which provide some variety. A marching beat also expresses confidence and a sense of triumph.

When the (Old) Mennonites of Waterloo Region heard and adopted the message of John S. Coffman in the 1890's, they were no longer satisfied with the old German hymns and readily adopted the English hymnal when it became available after 1902. They were happy to leave behind the mournful, slow singing of the German songs with their emphasis on humility and to adopt the sprightly 4-part harmony of the gospel songs.

Revivalism was the predominant theology of the (Old) Mennonites in the early 20th century throughout North America. These were the days when they first organized missions in local cities and overseas. They began publishing magazines, tracts

and education material; they began Bible Schools and further developed Sunday Schools. Many Mennonite leaders attended Moody Bible Institute. There was great enthusiasm to spread the gospel and change the world.

By the time the Mennonites joined the revivalist bandwagon, revivalism was changing and dividing into modernist and fundamentalist camps. The Mennonites were drawn into fundamentalism under the leadership of Daniel Kauffman. It wasn't until Harold S. Bender provided a new interpretation of Mennonite history with his "Anabaptist Vision" in 1943 that Mennonites began to move away from fundamentalism. Bender, as a teacher at the seminary, had a great influence on congregational leaders.

It took years for the change to happen, but slowly the (Old) Mennonite Church shifted away from fundamentalism and revivalism. By the 1960's a theology based on discipleship and community was once more emphasized. There were those who objected to this shift toward "liberalism" and even today there are members in some congregations who feel there is a lack of Christ-centred spirituality, revival meetings and zeal for missions. Recently, some congregations have constructed new buildings with a semi-circular auditorium which is almost a return to the meeting house shape where members can see each other. The Mennonite Church has published three hymnals since the *Church and Sunday School*, each with progressively fewer revivalist gospel songs and more songs about discipleship and the community of believers. We have returned to a more distinctive Mennonite perspective.



The new Floradale Mennonite Church building erected in 1936.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 J. C. Wenger, *The Mennonite Church in America*, (Herald Press, 1966) p. 77.
- 2 John A Hostetler, *The Sociology of Mennonite Evangelism*, (Herald Press, 1954) p.47.
- 3 *MQR*, July 1949, p 122.
- 4 Isaac Horst ed. and trans., *Close-Ups of the Great Awakening*, (1985) p 167.
- 5 L. J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario*, (Friesen Printers, 1986, first published 1935) p. 193.
- 6 *Close-Ups*, p 147.
- 7 Burkholder, p. 164.
- 8 Burkholder, p. 83.
- 9 *Close-Ups*, p. 306.

Barbara Draper lives in Elmira. This article is from the essay that won the 1998 J. Winfield Fretz Award for Studies in Ontario Mennonite History.



## People and Projects

### CHURCH ANNIVERSARIES

**Steinmann Mennonite Church** and **St. Agatha Mennonite Church** are celebrating their joint roots with a 175th anniversary. There are various celebrations being held to commemorate the establishment in 1824 of what would become known as Wilmot Amish Mennonite Church. The two present congregations formed in 1957. Joint services will be held at Steinmann on September 26, and at St. Agatha on June 13. All services are at 9:45 a.m. with fellowship meals following. Next year Wilmot Township itself will mark its 150 anniversary with various events.

**Stirling Avenue Mennonite Church** celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. On the weekend of November 6 and 7, 1999 they will host a historical retrospective with several events. "Looking Back Historically, Charter Members who Started the Church in 1924" will include displays and bus tours of former farm locations. More anniversary celebrations will take place on the weekend of February 5 and 6, 2000.

**Elmira Mennonite Church** is also celebrating its 75th anniversary with a weekend of events taking place September 24 to 26.

### NEW BOOK AVAILABLE

Plucked up by the Roots by Leonard Freeman is now available at many Elmira area stores, Reader's Ink or from the author: Leonard Freeman, R.R. #1, Elmira, Ontario. N3B 2Z1. The price is \$9.95.

### UPDATED LITWILLER GENEALOGY

The Peter Litwiller and Elizabeth Lichti Family History and Genealogy, compiled by Mary and Earl Litwiller and edited and designed by Lorraine Roth and David and Carolyn Kaylor, published in 1998, is an updated version of the 1981 edition. It also includes additional information on Peter Litwiller - the result of research done since 1981.

### CHURCH HISTORIES IN THE WORKS

A number of congregations are preparing for upcoming anniversaries by compiling their histories. Alice Koch is working on the history of the Nith Valley Mennonite Church near New Hamburg for the church's upcoming anniversary. Karl Kessler is researching the history of Erb Street Mennonite Church in Waterloo for their anniversary.

### NEW WEB ADDRESS

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada has now completed its web site for the Canadian Mennonite Encyclopedia on the World Wide Web. Therefore it now has a new internet address: <http://www.mhsc.ca/>.

### MOYER FAMILY REUNION

The Moyer Family Reunion will be held July 2-4, 1999 at Jordan, Ontario. This weekend event will mark the family's 200 years in Canada. Jacob and Dilman Moyer were among the first group of Mennonites to migrate from Pennsylvania to Ontario

in 1799. The weekend includes workshops led by people like: Helen Booth, Jordan Museum curator; Katherine McCracken, Joseph Schneider Haus assistant curator; and Lorna Bergey of the Pennsylvania Folklore Society. The guest speaker for the weekend will be John Ruth of Pennsylvania. He will speak Saturday afternoon at Heritage Christian School, Jordan, as well as Sunday morning at First Mennonite Church, Vineland. The afternoon will a picnic at nearby Charles Daley Park on Lake Ontario.

### For more information:

call Marie Troup at 905-562-4253  
email Norm Moyer at [nmoyer@computan.on.ca](mailto:nmoyer@computan.on.ca)  
mail The Moyer Society,  
PO Box 97, Jordan Station,  
Ontario. L0R 1S0

### MEETING AT MARTIN'S

To commemorate the Amish connection in Woolwich Township a service will be held at Martin's Meetinghouse at the north end of Waterloo on King Street on July 4, 1999. The afternoon's events will include a traditional Amish worship service as well as historical presentations by Lorraine Roth and Orland Gingerich.

### DETWEILER'S MEETINGHOUSE

The renovations to the Detweiler meetinghouse will soon be complete. A dedication service will be held on the afternoon of September 26, 1999. John Ruth of Pennsylvania will be the guest speaker.

## Book Review

*Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers* (Studies in women and religion v.3)  
Editors: C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert Hecht.  
(Wilfred Laurier University Press: Waterloo, Ont., 1996.)  
414 pages, \$29.95.

Reviewed by Lorraine Roth

Given the scant documentation, "profiles" is a somewhat ambitious description of the stories of these women of the sixteenth century. Glimpses might be more correct. The editors and authors have done a good job of placing these "glimpses" within a context — both the Anabaptist movement as well as the

general religious milieu, so that in many cases profiles do emerge.

The Introduction to the book provides a concise overview of the Anabaptist movement. The descriptions of the contexts — leaders and events — do the same for each of the three different geographic areas represented by these stories. Thus the stories are provided with a much broader base than the sometimes scant documentation would otherwise allow.

In addition to the introductions, another excellent feature is the inclusion of maps showing every city, town and hamlet mentioned in the various stories.

The reader will soon notice that the authors of stories are not given. They are listed alphabetically, including a list of the stories to their credit, after the index. This

is a valuable listing, but this reviewer would have liked to have seen the authors' names along with the stories as well.

### Switzerland

The first area featured is northern Switzerland, from St. Gall in the east to Biel in the west, with Zurich in the middle. The first few stories cover the very early period of Swiss Anabaptism — 1525 to 1530. Margaret Hottinger from Zollikon, near Zurich, was exposed to radical reform ideas even before the first baptisms took place in Zurich. Jacob, her father, was an outspoken peasant who dared to confront the clergy on matters of faith and practice.

Margaret Hottinger was arrested in November, 1525, along with the leaders Grebel, Mantz, Blaurock and Sattler. Sattler recanted on this occasion, but

Margaret did not. The following year, however, Margaret did confess she had erred in order to gain her release. When Margaret, her father and brother Felix tried to flee to Moravia, they were arrested — Margaret was drowned, her father beheaded.

Historians generally give the impression that the authorities had successfully suppressed the Anabaptist movement in the Canton of Zurich by 1530. In the city of Zurich and the village of Zollikon nearby this may have been the case, but it survived in other more remote areas for more than a century.

### South Germany/Austria

The second area covers the much larger geographic area of southern Germany and the Tirol, western Austria. Anabaptism in these areas is characterized as more spiritualist than the biblicism of the Swiss. In south Germany, it was also somewhat influenced by the apocalypticism of Thomas Muntzer, the leader of the Peasants' Revolt, and Hans Hut who predicted that Christ would return in 1528. Many Anabaptists, especially from Tirol, fled the severe persecution in these areas, giving rise to Hutterian communities in Moravia.

A number of women from the nobility became Anabaptists in this area. They were usually confident, capable women who took on and were given certain leadership roles. In some cases their husbands were also Anabaptists, or were at least sympathetic. These women presented a challenge to the ecclesiastical and civil authorities who hesitated to punish them as severely as the law required. Repeat offenders, however, were often warned that there would be no leniency.

The story of Anabaptism in Augsburg and its environs and the part which many women played in it is a very interesting one. After the first major crack-down in 1527, the movement operated underground and was heavily supported by women. They hosted meetings, collected and distributed alms, and testified to their faith, encouraging others to join.

The women could advertise meetings and invite persons to the meetings or to the Anabaptist faith while going about their work.

Of interest, because of the participation of several women, was the discussion between Pilgram Marpeck and Spiritualist Caspar Schwenckfeld between 1542 and 1547. The two leaders carried on their literary dispute by writing to their women supporters. George H. Williams, a writer on the Radical Reformation, called the controversy between Marpeck and Schwenckfeld and these women the "war

of the radical ladies" (*Damenkrieg*).

Jacob Hutter succeeded George Blaurock as an Anabaptist leader in the Tirol, following Blaurock's execution in 1529. Hutter fled to Moravia as did Katharina Purst where the two were married. When persecution dispersed the Anabaptist community in Moravia, Jacob and Katharina returned to Tirol, continuing their Anabaptist activities as best they could until their arrest and execution — Jacob in 1536 and Katharina in 1538.

In this section the authors discuss the possible reasons for and procedures for recantation. The outcome of these recantations varied. Some went into forced or voluntary exile. Some went right back to their Anabaptist activities — one may wonder about their integrity. Some were never heard from again, and thus we may assume they left their Anabaptist connections and convictions.

The two chapters dealing with women's experiences in the Hutterian communities use a different approach. For the first essay, the authors studied the experience of the women as gleaned from references in the Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren. Although the Hutterites did not suffer as much persecution at the hands of the state officials, they did suffer from marauding Turkish forces in the sixteenth century and again during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). Both men and women were frequently captured, but it was the women who suffered the indignities of rape.

The chapter "Women in the Hutterite Song Book" also deals generally with the place of song in the Hutterian community and the space given to women — Biblical, Apocryphal and Anabaptist — in those songs. The experience of persecution and martyrdom of women was also included in the songs.

### North Germany/Holland

The third section features the North German and Dutch Anabaptist experience including the fiasco at Munster. It also includes Strasbourg in Alsace. Although Strasbourg would belong to the South German/Austrian section geographically and included Swiss Anabaptist refugees, the women whose stories are told here belonged to Melchiorite or North German Anabaptism.

Melchior Hoffman came to Strasbourg about 1529 and began publishing his views on Biblical prophecy, thus distinguishing himself as leader of Anabaptist apocalypticism. The introductory chapter in the section briefly describes the activities of Hoffman at Strasbourg, the Anabaptist "crusade" at Münster —

initially led by Jan Matthijs, and the survival of Anabaptism under David Joris and Menno Simons. Many of the details, however, are found in the subsequent stories.

Ursula Jost and Barbara Rebstock were two of the more outstanding of the prophetesses in Strasbourg. Hoffman legitimized the prophesying of women by quoting the prophet Joel: "... I will pour out my spirit ...; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, ..."

Details of the events and personages involved at Münster are highlighted in several stories.

David Joris had not approved of the violence used by the Anabaptists at Münster, and after their demise, he sought to establish himself as the leader of the scattered Melchiorites. He made it clear that he also did not agree with Hoffman's approval of prophets, especially women. His confrontation with Barbara Rebstock in Strasbourg has been mentioned. It is interesting, then, to find that a considerable number of women played a significant role in Joris's life and ministry. Many of Joris's supporters were women of social standing and wealth.

The women profiled in the remaining stories are from a later period and reflect the reaction of Menno Simons to the sword-bearing Anabaptists of the Münster era. The stories of these women (except the last one) are all found either in *Martyrs' Mirror* or as hymns in the *Ausbund*.

This last section does not flow as freely as did the first two. No doubt, this is due to the various authors whose stories were written to stand on their own, not as part of this volume. From that perspective, the editors did an excellent job of putting these stories together to form a relatively cohesive unit.

In the "Appendix," Huebert Hecht reviews the most popular literature on the Radical Reformation for their content and view of the role of women in the Reformation and Radical Reformation and the more current studies which pay particular attention to the role of women. Although the subject of this book does not make for light reading, the writers and compilers are to be commended for this very readable collection of stories highlighting the experiences and role of women in the early period of the Anabaptist movement.

*Lorraine Roth lives in Waterloo. She is the author of several books including her latest **The Amish and Their Neighbours - The German Block, Wilmot Township 1822 - 1860.***