

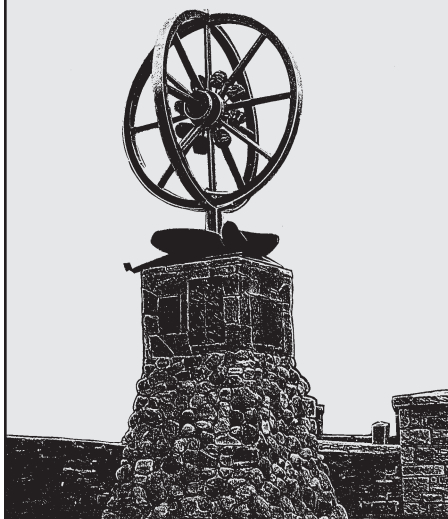
# Ontario Mennonite History

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## Sam Steiner finds surprises in his research

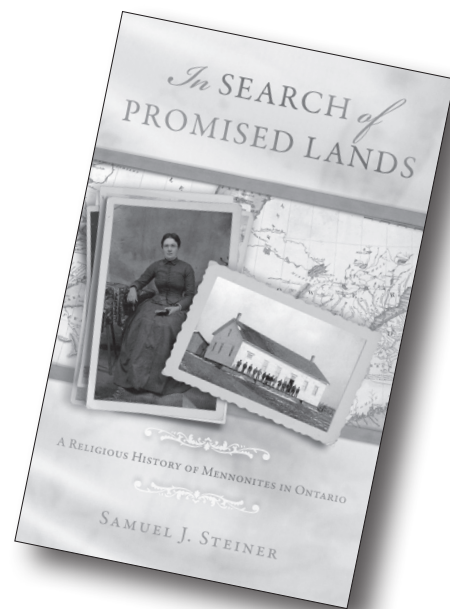
By Barb Draper

At the launch of his new book, *In Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario*, at Conrad Grebel University College on March 28, Sam Steiner talked about “Seven Surprises” he came upon while researching the history of Mennonites in Ontario. The book launch was hosted by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario and Grebel’s Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies.

In her introduction, archivist Laureen Harder-Gissing reminded everyone that the original comprehensive history of Mennonites in Ontario by Lawrence J. Burkholder was written in 1935 before there were any Mennonite archives in Ontario. As Burkholder did his research in homes and churches he began collecting historical documents and the box in which he stored them became the first archives. In comparison, Sam had 700 metres of archival material. Laureen pointed out that his research resulted in a much larger book!

Sam grew up in Ohio; his mother had Amish roots and his father was a Swiss Mennonite. His father was a bishop in the Mennonite Church and both his parents were school teachers. He said his community in Ohio was not much different from the Swiss Mennonite congregations in Ontario, although there were few Russian Mennonites.

The title of his book uses the term “promised lands” which he pointed out has been used by Christians, Jews and Muslims. It has been used to refer specifically to the land of Canaan, to heaven or paradise and also for a longed-for place. As Mennonites sought relief from persecution or economic prosperity, they were searching for these types of “promised lands.”



### Seven Surprises

#### 1. Suffering during the War of 1812

The first surprise that Sam found in his research was the suffering experienced by Mennonites in the Niagara Peninsula during the War of 1812. Just before the war the Mennonites in Upper Canada had reprinted their Confession of Faith as a way of informing their neighbours and the government about their beliefs. During the war they paid a tax or fine to avoid service in the militia.

In the Grand River and Markham areas they paid fines and allowed their wagons to be used to transport equipment and supplies just as Mennonites in Pennsylvania had done during the revolutionary war. Far from the battlefield, these Mennonites largely prospered during the war. But in the Niagara area Mennonites were caught between the two sides. Mennonite families living on the Canadian side of the Niagara River had their properties overrun by soldiers; their food was requisitioned and goods were taken. There are records of long lists of losses suffered by Mennonites while their homes were occupied.

~ Continued on page 2 ~

## 2. Female ministers in the 1880s

The first female Mennonite pastor served in the 1880s. When the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, what is now the Evangelical Missionary Church, began in the 1870s, they were influenced by the holiness movement which took seriously the New Testament references to women prophesying. Janet Douglas was born near Brussels, Ont. and moved to Michigan where she joined the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. She visited Ontario in 1885 and preached in many MBIC churches and camp meetings. In 1886 she helped establish a church in Dornoch, Ont. and served as the first pastor. She was never formally ordained; she and other women were known as the Ministering Sisters.

Later the MBIC shifted from this holiness emphasis to fundamentalism and the role of women decreased. Janet Douglas Hall is buried at First Mennonite Church in Kitchener and her tombstone does not recognize her leadership role in the church.

## 3. MBIC the largest group in 1900

The Mennonite Brethren in Christ (forerunner of today's Evangelical Missionary Church) brought together the method and polity of the Methodists and the Mennonite way of doing things. When the Mennonite Church divided again in 1889 with the beginning of Old Order Mennonites, the MBIC were the largest Mennonite group in Ontario.

Around 1908 the MBIC suffered a division over the issue of Pentecostalism. Most were opposed to the Pentecostalism movement but about one quarter of the members left, including Solomon Eby. Sam explained that soon afterward their theology began to shift toward fundamentalism.

## 4. The 1920s immigrants were not city people

Ontario Mennonite historians have often seen Russian Mennonites as more urban than Swiss Mennonites. When Mennonite immigrants came in 1923 and

1924, the Canadian government expected them to work on farms and many came from small towns in the Soviet Union.

As they looked for places to settle their families, they tended to look for rural areas. The Reesor settlement in northern Ontario, begun in 1925, was an attempt to establish families on independent farms. It failed partly due to a short growing season. But these Mennonites moved to other rural areas as well—to Essex County and Pelee Island, to Virgil and Niagara-on-the-Lake. They bought farms and sub-divided them to 10 or 12 acres where they developed fruit and vegetable farms. Soon they had formed a cooperative to sell their fruit. Cities were not the first choice of these Mennonites.

## 5. Rapid growth of Low German Mennonites

For more than 50 years it has been difficult to pin down the numbers of Mennonites coming from Mexico and other Latin American countries. They began coming in 1952 and ten years later a church had been purchased in Aylmer. They quickly expanded into Kent and Essex Counties. It is believed that a large percentage of those who came between the 1950s and the 1970s chose to have no religious affiliation.

Today the Old Colony church is the second largest Mennonite Church in Ontario. By the mid-1990s the Low German population was 25,000 to 30,000 and by 2011 it was over 40,000. Some years there were 250 families who came from Mexico, Bolivia or Paraguay. In 2012 they made up 25 percent of the Mennonite population in Ontario.

## 6. Diversity of Amish Mennonites

The Amish have always been congregational and they make decisions locally. In the 1880s they decided to build meetinghouses but the Amish in Mornington Township (Milverton area) were not united. They divided into house Amish and church Amish.

A pattern of division carried on in

the church Amish. Early in the 1920s, some joined the Beachy Amish. In the 1950s the Bethel Conservative Church in Millbank began due to a division and there have been two more divisions since then. In 2015 in Ontario the church Amish are part of eight different congregational groupings, "at least partly due to an inclination to divide" said Sam.

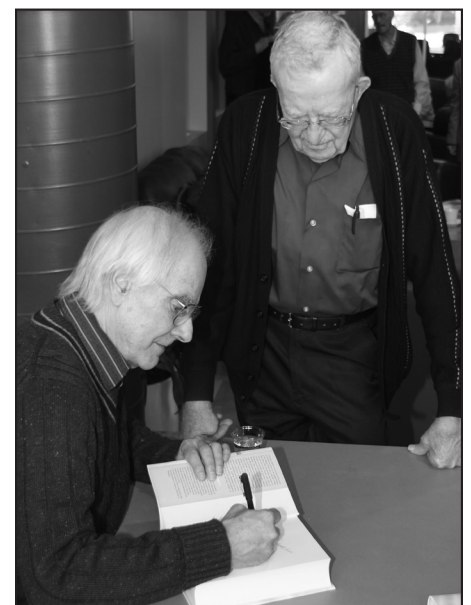
## 7. Mennonite institutions are in decline

Mennonites have started many institutions such as seniors homes, schools, camps, MCC, and financial institutions. Today these institutions struggle to keep a close connection to the churches. Mennonite Savings and Credit Union has loosened its terms of membership and schools are looking for students beyond the church just to survive. Today fundraising is directly to the users, not through the congregations and growth in these institutions does not happen due to denominational initiatives.

Sam said this last one is "not so much a surprise as a learning."

## Question-and-answer time

After the presentation, someone asked when the Mennonite Brethren in Christ changed their name. Sam answered that it was right after World War II,



*Sam Steiner signs a copy of his new book for Joseph Grove.  
(Photo by Dave Rogalsky)*

partly because they were not united on the peace issue. The MBIC in Ontario tended to have a pacifist position, but the rest of the church was not comfortable with it. They do not have a peace position today. In 1947 they changed the name to Evangelical Missionary.

In response to another question, Sam said he believes the horse-and-buggy

Mennonites are in better shape today than they were 50 years ago. Until the 1960s when Bill Davis was Premier of Ontario they had been part of the public school system. When the small rural schools were closing they asked to have their own schools and Davis agreed that they could. The practice of schooling until age 14 was established during the Davis era. The rate at which they

retained their young people went up after they established private schools. Sam believes they are showing their survival instincts in moving out of Waterloo Region.

More information on the many surprises Sam found in his research can be found on his blog: [ontariomennonitehistory.org](http://ontariomennonitehistory.org).

## ‘Taking community from the farm to the world’ exhibit highlights the work of photographer David L. Hunsberger

*Mennonite Archives of Ontario*

For 40 years, David Hunsberger’s camera was present at special occasions and ordinary days in the lives of Waterloo Region Mennonites. His love of the craft and his subjects comes through in every frame. His archival collection continues to be a source of discovery and delight for anyone seeking a window into our shared local history. Almost 5,700 of his images were donated to the Archives in 2005.

The Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Grebel Gallery and the Hunsberger family have created an exhibit featuring a selection of Hunsberger’s iconic photos depicting themes of peace and community amid the changing landscape for Waterloo Region Mennonites in the 1950s and 1960s. While Old Order Mennonites were encountering a growing fascination with their way of life including a rise in tourism, other

Mennonite groups were embracing institution-building as a way to both maintain their distinctive beliefs and participate in the larger society. The exhibit photos are accompanied by text from Sam Steiner’s new book *In Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario*.

On February 27, over 60 people attended an exhibit reception. In addition to viewing the over 50 images on display, they saw a demonstration of the new Mennonite photo database, MAID. Fred Hunsberger, David’s son, spoke warmly to the gathering of how the Archives has given his father’s work “new life.”

The full exhibit remained on display until April 30. A partial exhibit continues in the Milton Good Library until the end of August. Check the Archives website, [grebel.ca/mao](http://grebel.ca/mao) for details.



David L. Hunsberger.  
(Photo by Fred Hunsberger)



In 1954, David L. Hunsberger photographed Alice Cressman and daughter Ann packing Christmas bundles for Mennonite Central Committee.  
(Mennonite Archives of Ontario photo)

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# Ottawa Mennonite Church more than 50 years old

*By William (Bill) Janzen*

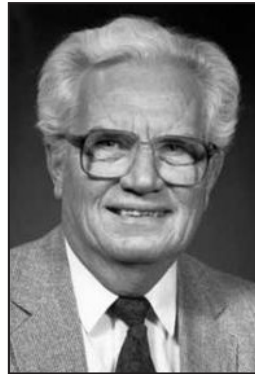
The Ottawa Mennonite Church (OMC) was formally organized in 1959. Many of the early people were “Russian” Mennonites who were drawn to jobs in the expanding federal government in the 1950s. Peter and Helen Wiens, who had come in 1938 already, were key contact people, providing generous hospitality and fellowship for all. The Conference of United Mennonite Churches of Ontario, being aware of these Mennonites, began to encourage them to think about organizing themselves more formally.

In October 1959, Eldon and Hilde Krause had invited the group for a dedication of their new home. Rev. H. H. Epp from Waterloo travelled to Ottawa to attend this event and after the dedication he led the group in deciding to meet every second Sunday, in the afternoon, in different homes. United Mennonite (UM) churches from southern Ontario would send a speaker and singing groups at least once per month.

Within two years the group had become too large to meet in homes so they started meeting in a public school. In 1960 they purchased a two-acre plot of land, helped financially by the UM Conference. But it was not until 1965 that they constructed the first church building. In 1985 the group built a major addition and in 2002 they built another, all on the same property. In 2014, the average Sunday attendance was around 250.

## Ministers

The first minister was Rev. Bill Dick who served from 1961 to 1966 on a half-time basis while also pursuing graduate studies. During these years the group developed a Sunday School, weekly Bible Studies, singing groups, a women’s group, etc. The people also enjoyed various recreation activities including curling, bowling, tennis, Sunday afternoon picnics, and outings in the Gatineau Hills.



*William (Bill) Dick,  
first pastor*



*William (Bill) Janzen  
part-time pastor in the 1970s*



*Don Friesen served as  
pastor for 34 years.*

Of course, since Bill Dick was only half-time, other people had to take turns preaching and carrying other responsibilities. This load became heavy when the Dick family moved away, leaving the church without a minister for one year. During this time Jake Koop preached up to twice per month while also serving as chairperson and deacon.

The next minister was Frank Epp who served from 1967 to 1971, again on a half-time basis. His other half-time position was with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Peace Section. This was a challenging time. The Vietnam War was raging, protest demonstrations were widespread, thousands of draft-age Americans came to Canada and young people everywhere were challenging established institutions including the church.

Frank worked hard at interpreting these developments and accommodating the “ferment.” He also felt that the church had to help the “draft-dodgers.” Thus, an office was set up in the church basement to counsel these newcomers with immigration, employment and other issues. That all this led to some stresses is understandable, given that all three deacons either had been, or still were, in military work.

When the Epp family moved to Waterloo in 1971, Adolf Ens and I accepted ministerial responsibilities, each serving on a quarter-time basis while pursuing graduate studies the rest of the time. The various programs continued. These included a recreational volleyball program for neighbourhood teenagers in which Ottawa police officers often joined us.

In 1974 Adolf returned to his work as a professor at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg while I continued in the ministerial work for two more years. Since the sharing of preaching duties was now even more important we created a “pulpit team” of four people, each of whom preached three or four times per year.

In 1976 Alma Coffman came and served for nearly two years. In 1978, Don Friesen began what became a 34-year ministry. He started on a three-quarter-time basis but in 1983 it was changed to full-time.

In 1990 we hired Gordon Driedger as our first youth minister. Six others have followed including Darrel (Chip) Bender, Katie Derksen, Emily Schaming, Craig Neufeld, Sarah Johnson and Carrie Lehn. After the Friesen family retired to Winnipeg in 2012, George O’Reilly and Carmen Brubacher served as our lead ministers on an interim basis. In the

spring of 2015 we hired Anthony Siegrist as our lead minister.

### Characteristics

As noted, most of the early OMCers were from those Mennonites who had migrated from Russia in the 1920s. In fact a number had been born in Russia. Being more interested in higher education than other Mennonites in Canada, they soon qualified for government jobs. In later decades people from many other Anabaptist backgrounds have come to the church, as have people from Anglican, Catholic, Baptist, Lutheran, United, Alliance, Christian Science, and other traditions. This diversity brings certain challenges but it also encourages us to focus on essentials.

The composition of the church has been relatively transitory. Don Friesen used to say that during his 34 years at OMC he had at least three different congregations. To an extent this transitory character will be true also for other urban congregations. Some of it can be attributed to people getting posted to jobs elsewhere, but it also happens that people lose interest in the church and its teachings. Another factor, for OMC, is that a number have moved away for their retirement years.

Most people at OMC do not have siblings or parents or other relatives in the city. They do not go there for Sunday dinners. Children do not have



*Ottawa Mennonite Church today. The most recent expansion was completed in 2003.*

grandparents to cheer for them at special events, so people look more to each other for friendship, counsel, and support in cases of illness or other situations of need. In many ways this deepens the relations among people in the church, but some newcomers feel that this makes it more difficult to find a place in the network of relationships.

The Ottawa church has sponsored refugees continuously since 1979, probably establishing a record for congregations our size. Our refugee committee has done the work and the congregation has provided support as requested. This has also led to a refugee housing program supported by United and Catholic congregations as well. Maintaining the buildings and administering the program has required a lot of work. Also to be acknowledged is that only a few of the refugee families have continued to worship with us.

The church has run Ten Thousand Villages (TTV) sales since the 1970s when the program was called Self-Help Crafts. In the 1980s it started hosting such sales at the church building on Fridays and Saturdays during the month of November. Ordering

the goods, setting them up, doing publicity, and running the sales requires a lot of volunteers. Interestingly, some volunteers “pour” themselves into this work wholeheartedly but would prefer not to relate to the church in a closer way. The church has also set up two TTV stores though one on them had to close in 2014.

International service has been quite strong. For many years there were always some OMCers serving abroad under MCC or Mennonite Economic Development Associates (MEDA) or a mission board. Particularly noteworthy is the record of Larry Nafziger who has served four MCC terms, three of them with his wife Jane Snider, in Africa and Asia. Other people have gone out under other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and still others have been posted abroad by the government.

OMC has been quite active ecumenically. We have long shared Good Friday services with several United Church congregations. Our representatives have been prominent on the Christian Council of the Capital Area (CCCA). In 1982 when the CCCA sponsored the Christian Festival attended by 25,000 people, OMC representatives did the lion’s share of the organizing. Other OMCers have been active in the Ottawa Lay School of Theology and Spirituality. Several have led in the Ottawa Interfaith dialogue group.



*Ottawa Mennonite in the 1970s; it was constructed in 1965-66.*



*Ottawa Mennonite's  
50th anniversary quilt made in 2009.*

In 2014 we started the O-Town Ark for young adults. This is a good-sized house near the downtown area where young adults who've come to Ottawa for a semester or a year can rent accommodations. Our youth minister lives there and coordinates activities which include, among other things, a weekly pot-luck dinner where young adults who do not live there, can come and join in. It thus serves as a gathering place for young adults.

Our relationship with the larger Mennonite world is ambivalent. Our theology, in my view, is strongly Anabaptist. Dozens of our young people have spent summers at Mennonite camps, especially Silver Lake, 600 km away. Many others have studied at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo and Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg. However, many

OMCers feel a certain gratitude for being some distance away from the larger Mennonite centres.

OMC is the largest Mennonite church in the Ottawa area but it is no longer the only one. The Mennonite Brethren (MB) had a modest congregation here in the 1980s and 90s. It closed but in the last decade two other MB groups have started. So, too, has a satellite of the Brethren in Christ, "The Meeting House." In addition there are now four small congregations associated with Mennonite Church Eastern Canada (MCEC): two are Ethiopian, one is Chin and another is English-speaking. How OMC can and should relate to these groups has been somewhat uncertain.

The church is less "political" than people might expect given that it is in the capital, though certainly OMCers have opinions and the preaching and teaching has social implications. Likewise, OMCers tend to say little about their professional accomplishments whether in government, academic or artistic fields. There is an understanding that the church is to be a place for people despite differing views and regardless of whether they are socially "successful."

Most people have found our worship services inspiring. Don Friesen was an exceptional preacher. Others, very gifted in music, have given themselves wholeheartedly, year after year. We have two choirs, sometimes three, and at least one other music group. The children's feature often draws two dozen children to the front. Scripture readings are seen as important. Our congregational singing

includes variety but most of it is from hymn books, not from a screen.

### Concluding Observations

We have gathered, week after week for over fifty years, to worship God and to learn about following Jesus. In this way we are like thousands of other Christian congregations. We have had a strong Sunday School, thanks to many devoted teachers. We work at attracting young adults, at welcoming newcomers, at incorporating refugee families, at supporting people in need, at encouraging one another in faithful living, and at nurturing a sense of community. For many this has been very positive. People have continued to identify with OMC long after they moved away, but we have not been the right church for everyone. We have struggled with difficult issues, not always to everyone's satisfaction. But most of us are deeply grateful for the church, believing that God has blessed us in the past and will continue to do so.

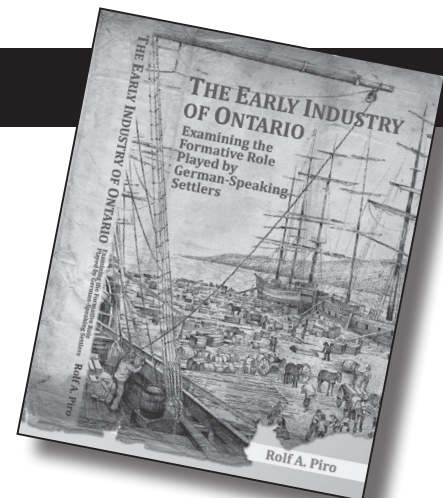
*Bill Janzen grew up in Saskatchewan but came to Ottawa in 1968 to go to school. He soon connected with the Ottawa Mennonite church and has remained so ever since. In 1975 he became the founding director of the Ottawa Office of Mennonite Central Committee, retiring from this position in 1975. He has several graduate degrees including a Ph. D in Political Science from Carleton University.*

## New Book

*The Early Industry of Ontario: Examining the Formative Role Played by German-speaking Settlers.*

Rolf A. Piro. Self-published, 2013, 223 pages.

Mennonites are included among the German-speaking settlers who began using water power and developing agricultural and other industries in Ontario's early years. It concentrates on the period from 1783 to 1813. Order through [amazon.ca](http://amazon.ca).



# Sam Steiner receives award from MHSC

By Lucille Marr

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada held its annual general meeting Jan. 16-17 at Conrad Grebel University College in Waterloo. Members from across Canada had the privilege of experiencing the variety in the Ontario Mennonite story. Ray Dirk's travelling exhibit "Along the Road to Freedom," told visual stories of women who led their families out of the Soviet Union during World War II to lives of freedom and peace in Canada. An excursion organized by board member Maurice Martin took society members to a local Old Order church, a two-room school house, and dinner on an Old Order farm. Amsey Martin, an Old Order deacon and school teacher, articulately explained their worship and educational practices, graciously responding to the questions of his visitors. The final stop was a highlight when 20 society members were hosted by a local family with a sumptuous meal of farmers' sausage, scalloped potatoes, home-grown vegetables, and finished by freshly baked pies.

It was a delight for the society to be able to award Sam Steiner, who has devoted much of his life to preserving the Ontario Mennonite story in all of its complexity, with the MHSC Award of Excellence. The Award is given annually to persons who have made significant contributions to the advancement of Canadian Mennonite history by their research and writing. As director of the Mennonite Archives of Ontario for three decades, Sam Steiner promoted its growth and expansion. Under his leadership, copies of Canadian family and church-related collections were brought from the Mennonite Archives at Goshen College to Waterloo. He also prioritized collecting genealogical information requested by so many. In his role as archivist, he was the founding editor of *Mennogespräch* (Menno-conversation), now *Ontario Mennonite History. In Search of Promised Lands: A Religious History of Mennonites in Ontario*, recently released by Herald Press in its studies of Anabaptist and Mennonite History series, is a welcome culmination of his dedication to collecting and preserving Mennonite history.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada owes a debt of gratitude to Sam. His long standing service on the executive committee of the society shaped its direction. His was the vision that instigated the highly successful Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia On-line (GAMEO), the governance of which was taken on recently by Mennonite World Conference. Sam is still a member of the Canadian editorial committee which continues to provide articles. In January it welcomed a young francophone historian Zacharie Leclair, of the Société d'Histoire mennonite du Québec to their group. His translations of articles into French should provide an important feature in the movement towards becoming global and multi-language. Finding a general editor is a priority as this project continues to grow.

It is rewarding to see other areas significant to the society's work continue to develop. An important committee of the MHSC is the archives group which announced that hard work over the



*Sam Steiner receives the Award of Excellence from Lucille Marr*

past year has resulted in a functional "Mennonite Archival Image Database" (MAID).

MHSC is excited to announce plans for a new project designed to celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2018. The Mennonites in Canada series tells the story until 1970. Celebrating 50 years will be an ideal time to tell the story of "Mennonite newcomers in Canada." It is hoped that this project will stimulate provincial societies to collect oral histories. Plans are also being made for a fiftieth anniversary history conference which it is anticipated will result in a monograph.

Established in 1968 to sponsor the Mennonites in Canada history series by Frank H. Epp and Ted D. Regehr, the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada comprises six provincial Mennonite historical societies, four Mennonite denominational bodies who report through their archival centres (Mennonite Heritage Centre, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, Mennonite Archives of Ontario), Evangelical Mennonite Conference (Steinbach), Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, Mennonite Heritage Village (Steinbach), and Institute of Anabaptist and Mennonite Studies (Waterloo).

The 2015 executive is Lucille Marr (Montreal, Quebec), President; Royden Loewen, (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Vice-President; Alf Redekopp (St. Catharines, Ontario), Secretary; Richard Thiessen (Abbotsford, B.C.), Treasurer; with Maurice Martin's (New Hamburg, Ontario) resignation, Barb Draper (Elmira, Ontario) has agreed to take on the position of fifth member.

# Maurice Martin writes about his growing-up experiences

By Dave Rogalsky

**S**purred by requests from his thoroughly modern children to tell them stories of his growing-up years in the Ontario Swiss Mennonite homeland of Waterloo County, Maurice Martin, a retired pastor and area church worker, wrote *One Mile East of Edensville* and self-published it in 2013. His home on the farm was “the centre of innocence,” as he remembers it.

He has now added *I'm so Glad for Sunday . . . When I can go to Church*. The title is based on a song the Mennonite Media Network used as part of its curriculum in the 1950s when Martin was growing up in the changing and modernizing Mennonite Church of Ontario and Quebec. The Martin family attended St. Jacobs Mennonite Church.

Together, the two books open a window into church life in Swiss Mennonite congregations of the past. It explores some of the internal forces at work leading to the split with the Conservative Mennonites, with their distinctive straight-cut coats and cape dresses.

Martin does a fine job in this latter book, which is grittier, digging deeper into the story, compared with the nostalgia-driven first book. He examines inclusion/exclusion in the com-

munity, both imposed and self-chosen, as well as his developing theological thought and influences. It includes photos by David L. Hunsberger, one of which has Martin singing in a Sunday school choir.

Using the device of creative non-fiction, he remembers his stories as Marvin, with whom he shares a birthday. In this way they are his stories and not those of his family or other community members who lived on a farm a mile east of Erbsville, now in the northwest corner of the City of Waterloo. Martin does not have to be accountable to his siblings who remember things differently. The stories, set in the late 1950s and early '60s, trace Marvin's life from Grade 1 to the end of high school.

Martin doesn't think there will be a third book, as he doesn't feel moved to write about his years of becoming a pastor. “Others have done that already,” he says.

All 150 copies of the first volume are sold out, but if 10 people ordered it, Martin would do a second printing. Copies of the second can be ordered by e-mail to [mauricem@sympatico.ca](mailto:mauricem@sympatico.ca).

(Reprinted from *Canadian Mennonite*, April 27, 2015.)

## ‘MAID in Canada’: New website provides access to thousands of historic Mennonite photographs

by Laureen Harder-Gissing

**F**amily reunions at the old homestead, prime ministers glad-handing across the countryside and nurses serving during the Vietnam War. These are just a few of the photographs found in the new Mennonite Archival Image Database (MAID), which provides public access to photographs of Mennonite life in Canada and around the world. Seven Canadian Mennonite archives contributed 80,000 archival descriptions to the new site at [archives.mhsc.ca](http://archives.mhsc.ca). Over 10,000 of these records are already accompanied by scanned images.

MAID was born three years ago when I proposed my dream of a national Mennonite photo database to a meeting of archivists at the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. The response was immediately enthusiastic, and a “group of seven” Mennonite archives raised \$26,000 to develop the project.

MAID is expected to be a rich resource for historians and genealogists, but it is also expected that the general public will be drawn in. Those of us who worked on this project were constantly distracted by the intriguing images we discovered, not only of Mennonites but also communities across Canada and in other countries. Ontario communities also figure prominently, especially the Niagara, Markham, Leamington, and Waterloo regions. MAID includes an online ordering system that allows site visitors to purchase copies of images for non-commercial use.

The project is a collaborative, “made in Canada” approach, sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada. The seven archival partners are the Mennonite Archives of Ontario, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, the Plett Foundation, and the Mennonite Historical Societies of Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. Other archives with significant Mennonite photograph collections are invited to join. Winnipeg archivist Conrad Stoesz and I will be speaking about MAID at Mennonite World Conference in July.

MAID is seeking financial supporters to sustain and grow the database. We are pleased that the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario is one of the organizations that has committed to contributing annual support. More information can be found on the website at [archives.mhsc.ca/support](http://archives.mhsc.ca/support). Already, Google indexing has put MAID onto the first page of many Google searches about Mennonites, along with the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online ([gameo.org](http://gameo.org)). It is encouraging to see reliable historical information about Mennonites figuring prominently in Internet search results.

The Mennonite Archives of Ontario is seeking volunteers to scan 10,000 additional images into MAID. If you are interested, contact me at [marchive@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:marchive@uwaterloo.ca).