

# Annual Report



2004

# Mennonite Historical Society of B.C.

## Annual General Meeting - 2004

### Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Minutes of 2003 AGM - May 8, 2004
3. Committee Reports

- a. Events
- b. Newsletter
- c. Archives

4. Financial Report

- a. Financial Statements - 2004

**"Moved** by Ben Braun, **Seconded** by Edward Hildebrand that the financial transactions of the Society as detailed in the Financial Statements contained in the Annual Report be approved."

- b. Budget 2005

**"Moved** by Ben Braun, **Seconded** by Louise Price that the Budget for 2005 as detailed in the Annual Report be approved."

5. Election of Directors

**"Moved** by Hugo Friesen, **Seconded**, by Helen Rose Pauls that the persons listed below be elected as Directors for three year terms ending on the date of the AGM in the year indicated."

John Konrad	2008
Peter Neudorf	2008
Louise Price	2008
Lora Sawatsky	2008

6. The Peter Barga Project - Ruth Derksen Siemens

7. Refreshments

## Mennonite Historical Society of B.C.

### Minutes Annual General Meeting – 2003

Date: May 8, 2004

Place: Garden Park Tower, Abbotsford, B.C.

Present: 150

1. John Konrad opened the meeting and welcomed the members.
2. Minutes of the last AGM as reported in the Annual Report were approved. m/s/c Henry Neufeld, Helen Rose Pauls.
3. Upon a motion by Henry Martens, seconded by Edward Hildebrand it was resolved that the financial transactions of the Society for the year 2003 as detailed in the Annual Report be approved.
4. Upon motion by Henry Martens seconded by Peter Neudorf, it was resolved that the Budget for 2004 be approved.
5. Election of the Directors listed below to serve for the terms indicated were approved. m/s/c Henry Neufeld, Louise Price.

Lora Sawatsky	2005
Ben Stobbe	2006
Ben Braun	2007
David Giesbrecht	2007
Helen Rose Pauls	2007
Richard Thiessen	2007

6. Meeting was adjourned.

Minutes compiled by E. D. Hildebrand

## Board of Directors

- Ben Braun - Retired Computer Programmer, Abbotsford
- David Giesbrecht - Librarian, Regent College, Abbotsford
- Edward Hildebrand - Retired Executive, Vancouver
- John Konrad - Management Consultant, West Vancouver
- Peter Neudorf - Retired IBM Technician, North Vancouver
- Henry Neufeld - Social Worker, Delta
- Helen Rose Pauls - Teacher, Chilliwack
- Louise Price - Library Technician & Writer, Abbotsford
- Lora Sawatsky - Retired Teacher, Chilliwack
- Ben Stobbe - Retired Public Service Manager, Victoria
- Richard Thiessen - Librarian, Columbia Bible College,  
Abbotsford
- Dr. John B. Toews - Professor of Church History, Vancouver

## Officers

- President - John Konrad
- Vice-President - David Giesbrecht
- Secretary - Edward Hildebrand
- Treasurer - Ben Braun

## President's Report

On behalf of the board of directors, I am pleased to report that 2004 has been another successful year in the life of our Society. In terms of public participation, we have again seen a significant increase in the number of people visiting our centre. We have sponsored three well-attended public events, a genealogy workshop, improved our newsletter and expanded our website. For the first year we have made our financial statements available on line for greater accountability to our members. We have also enjoyed increased volunteer participation which has allowed us to gather, process and preserve more historical information which would eventually be lost. Thanks to the generosity and loyalty of our constituency, we have again received enough financial support to maintain our programs

John Konrad - President

## Major Events

Special events serve to connect the Mennonite community. With many others, we explore certain stories from the past, celebrate our rich heritage, and enjoy being together as an extended Mennonite family.

This year, we held three special events:

**Feb. 21, 2004** Lecture at the Garden Park Tower:

Dr. Heinrich Loewen, archivist from the Centre of M.B. Studies in Winnipeg.

Topic: "Umsiedler: Survival in a New Culture"

**May 8, 2004** "Mennonites and Art" ....featured artist Ray Dirks, who is the curator of the Mennonite Heritage Gallery in Winnipeg.

We gathered together eighteen contemporary painters from the local Mennonite community, who exhibited their work in the Garden Park Tower during the afternoon and evening.

Ray Dirks gave an evening lecture about art and faith.

**October 16, 2004** Annual Fundraising Banquet at CBC gym.

Over 500 people came out to dinner and a lecture by Dr. Harry Loewen on "Shepherds, Servants and Prophets; Saints and Sinners among Russian Mennonite Leaders".

Events for 2005 include:

**March 5, 2005** ..Lecture by Dr. Bruce Guenther on the history of the Bible School movement.

**May 15, 2005** "Mennonite Piano Concerto" with Irmgard Baerg & Betty Suderman

**Oct.15, 2005** Annual Fundraising Banquet with Dr. John Ruth: "Swiss Mennonites and MCC"

Events Committee: Ben Stobbe, Richard Thiessen, David Giesbrecht, Hugo Friesen, Dr. John B. Toews, Helen Rose Pauls [chair]

## Special Projects

### Molotschna '04 Project

2004 marked the bicentennial of the founding of Molotschna, the largest Mennonite settlement in Tsarist and Soviet Russia. To mark this occasion, a major academic conference, "Molotschna and its Neighbours" was held in several southern Ukrainian centres, notably Zaporozhye and Melitopol, in early June. Mennonites have been returning in considerable numbers as scholars and tourists in the last decade. A renovated former historic girls' school now serves as a Mennonite regional relief centre, specializing in medical and educational projects. MCC and other Mennonite agencies are also actively at work in Ukraine.

Thirty seven papers from researchers in seven countries on three continents were presented at the June conference in Ukraine, most of them from Ukrainian and Russian scholars. Ceremonial events were held at three Molotschna village sites as well as in the city of Dnepropetrovsk. The major event was the unveiling of the Settler's Monument in Halbstadt/Moloschansk with Canadian Ambassador Andrew Robinson participating. Canadian novelist Rudy Wiebe presented a major address to Ukrainian university students at the historic Potemkin Palace in Dnepropetrovsk. The events received wide coverage in regional Ukrainian newspapers and television.

In addition to the academic conference bicentennial activities included the unveiling of several memorial monuments. The Mennonite International Memorialization Committee for the Former Soviet Union supervised the placement of a Settlers' Monument in Moloschansk (formerly Halbstadt). Two benches at the railway station of Svetlodolinskoe (formerly Lichtenau) recall the voluntary migration of Mennonites to freedom in the West and involuntary deportation to the eastern Gulag. The station is on the railway line built by the Wall brothers and other Mennonite investors. Two plaques placed in Vladovka (formerly Waldheim) recognize the role played by Agnes and Cornelius Warkentin in the establishment of a still existing hospital. The second plaque was placed at the local school which occupies the site of the former Isaac Neufeld factory. In Bogdanovka (formerly Gnadenfeld) a monument was placed at the site of the former Mennonite cemetery.

An historic Sunday worship service was conducted in the famous former Zentralschule (regional High School) in Halbstadt, the first such service since 1943. Local and regional officials and many villagers attending each event expressed sincere appreciation for the multiple contributions which Mennonites made to the history of the region. One local leader said explicitly that "we wish to build on the past which you so richly gave us."

An extensive photo exhibit consisting of 139 historic Molotschna images was opened in Melitopol. The exhibit was opened in the Melitopol Museum of Regional Studies. It will also go on display in the Zaporozhye Museum of Regional studies in autumn.

Our Society provided a number of pictures from our digital collection and contributed funds to help with the monument projects.

J. Konrad

## **Odessa Project**

For the past year we have continued to co-fund the research of Dr. Paul Toews of Fresno into the Archives in Odessa, Ukraine. Through this work we have received additional microfilm containing valuable records of the Mennonite experience in Russia. This project may be coming to an end. However, Dr. Toews has now found a new source in Moscow. We intend to participate in this venture.

This new source promises to be of exceptional interest. Almost all of the Archival records found to date originate in Odessa or Zaporozhje and pertain to the Mennonites in the southern Ukraine. The Moscow records refer to the Russian and Siberian Mennonites and the work of the AMLV. (Allrussischer Mennonitischer Landwirtschaftlicher Verband - All Russian Mennonite Agricultural Union)

E. Hildebrand

## **Peter Barga Project**

Ruth Derksen Siemens, a professor at UBC, is working on a project based on correspondence organized by Dr. Peter Barga of Edmonton. Dr. Barga inherited from his parents a trove of more than 400 items of correspondence between his parents, who immigrated to Canada in the 1920's, and friends and relatives who had stayed behind in Russia. These letters cover a time span of almost forty years and tell a heart rending story of the tragedy that befell the Mennonites who stayed behind. Dr. Barga organized and translated this volume of correspondence.

When Ms. Siemens learned of this collection, she organized a series of video interviews featuring Dr. Barga and this correspondence. These interviews will eventually be combined with either film footage or re-enactments, possibly on site, to provide an hour long documentary that will graphically display the suffering that occurred in Russia among Mennonites and others.

The Mennonite Historical Society of B.C. assisted in raising funding for the first phase of this project. Funding for the major film phase will be raised commercially.

E. Hildebrand

## Newsletter

**Roots and Branches.** Our newsletter now has a name reflecting our purpose—roots to link us to the past, branches reaching to the future.

It has been exciting and gratifying to see members take the initiative and write articles for the newsletter. So far most of these initiatives have come from board members and volunteers, but hopefully the membership at large will soon become involved as well. It is important to record these stories now, for future generations. With all these contributions, it has been easy to fill the 16 pages of each issue with quality material.

New columns have been *Photo Gallery* and *What's in a Name*, and we hope to have a regular column on research tips. We will continue with regular articles on Mennonite communities in BC, profiles of board members, life stories of interesting people, books reviews, stories/letters from the past, and archival reports.

This year, the newsletter is coming out 3 times a year, 16 pages per issue. This cuts down the work of editing and mailing quite significantly, while maintaining the same number of pages as in previous years. We will evaluate this at the end of the year. The publishing/editing process has also been streamlined, and seems to be running more smoothly.

Thanks to all who have contributed, to Hugo and Jean Friesen for proof-reading, and to Mary Ann Quiring and office volunteers for the work they do.

Louise Price - for the editorial committee

## Financial Support

Once again we thank our growing membership for their most generous support in this past year. We believe our work honours God, as well as our ancestors who served their community so faithfully, and therefore your support will be doubly rewarded. This past year your generosity allowed us to end the year with a small positive balance

Even though most of the work of the Society is done by volunteers, there are cash costs that must be met and these are inevitably rising. Our costs for premises, part time staff and operations are almost \$50,000 per annum. About one third of this is covered by investment income and gains on book and tape sales. For the balance, we are totally reliant on our faithful members.

Next year, in addition to our basic operations, we hope to fund our share of the new Moscow project and the cost of converting our entire index to a digital, or computerized system. This will allow much better access to our Archives for both scholars and interested members. The major burden of this work will be again borne by our volunteers over the next several years. But there are also cash costs, most of which are payable up front.

Ed Hildebrand



## The Archives

### Volunteers and Visitors

Once again we want to acknowledge the vital work of our 20 plus volunteers. They have given 3000 hours of time and energy to our Centre in each of the last two years. Our secretary and office manager, Mary Ann Quiring, who has a part-time paid position, provides continuity and assistance as required and also gives many hours of volunteer time.

Visitors continue to drop in to find their family genealogy, to check on their family history and faith roots, to browse in our library and other resources and to make purchases. In 2004 we had approximately 1800 visitors; it should be added that many inquiries come by way of e-mail and telephone.

### Changes and Additions

We are anticipating the inception of a comprehensive indexing and search program, Inmagic, to be introduced some time in 2005, which will enhance our ability to store and find information on a myriad of topics.

### Acquisitions

- Genealogies and Family Histories have grown by about 40 to total over 270 at the end of 2004.
- Our EWZ microfilm collection has grown to number almost 300, thanks to donations received from Dr. Tim Janzen and others.
- Our digital Photograph Collection has grown to approximately 2000 scanned and identified images. There are others that wait to be scanned by the 3 – 4 volunteers involved in this work.
- We received the Cedar Hills Mennonite Church files (they have amalgamated with another group) which amounted to about 10 boxes of historical documents. .
- From Don Fehr we received Reinländer & Swift Current church register transcriptions.
- In addition, we have received numerous donations of a variety of books, historical documents and even some artifacts.

### Books & CD's

Our sales of books and CD's, etc. amounted to over \$13,000 (gross) in 2004. Best sellers were: Mennonite Historical Atlas (Helmut Huebert), Building on the Past (Rudy Friesen), The Molotschna Historical Atlas (Helmut Huebert), "Stimmt An", a CD by the Wiebe Family, and videos and DVDs of "And When They Shall Ask".

### Projects

- Extracting and indexing obituary information from Der Bote, Die Rundschau, Der Steinbach Post & The Canadian Mennonite.
- Extracting & indexing genealogical information from the EWZ microfilms.

- Scanning & cataloging photographs.
- Accessing and indexing of Cedar Hill Mennonite Church documents, Yarrow Committee materials and many miscellaneous items.
- Career Start Federal Grant – allowed us to hire CBC student Jonathan Neufeld for a 10 week period.

### Events

- We had a booth at the MCC Relief Sale which gave us some exposure. We will discontinue this practice since the sale of materials does not fit the criteria of MCC's purposes.
- Genealogy Workshop – This event, on Saturday November 13, attracted 22 participants. Speakers were: Tim Janzen – Sources of Mennonite History; Richard Thiessen – Mennonite Naming Practices, and Don Fehr – Indexing of Manitoba Mennonite Church Registers. Credit must be given to Mary Ann Quiring and Richard Thiessen for making the arrangements and conducting the sessions.

### Volunteer List

Erna Block	Agatha Klassen
Verna Crofton	Erika Klassen
Marie Doerksen	Jean Neufeld
Mary Epp	David Nickel
Nellie Epp	Vi Ratzlaff
Hugo Friesen	Helga Rempel
Jake Geddert	Erica Suderman
Duane Goertson	Ethel Suderman
Dolores Harder	Frank Toews
Ed Hildebrand	Mary Willms
Lydia Isaak	Mary Woelk

Hugo Friesen, Archivist

# Financial Statements



## Accountant's Report

To the Directors  
The MHS of BC  
Abbotsford, B.C.

I have reviewed the balance sheet of the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia as at December 31, 2004 and the Statement of Receipts and Expenditures for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of the management and Directors of the Society.

I conducted a review to determine if the financial statements are free of material misstatement. I reviewed, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. The financial statements have been prepared on a cash basis.

The financial statements present fairly the financial position of the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia as at December 31, 2004 and the results of operations for the year ended, in accordance with principles of cash accounting.

Original signed by,  
Henry J. Martens

Henry J. Martens  
Abbotsford, B.C.  
April 5, 2005.

## Financial Statements

### Financial Report

Financial Statements for 2004 (with comparative statements for 2003) and a Budget for 2005 are included in this Annual Report for your consideration.

Comments:

#### Current Year

1. We have significantly upgraded our Computers and Software.
2. Long term Endowment is shown at cost (\$185,366). Market value as at December 31, 2004 was \$224,830 (2003- \$220,893). This is an increase of \$23,937 for the year.

#### Budget

1. The current projects item in the 2005 Budget includes another Phase of the Odessa document retrieval project.
2. The Board has introduced two scholarships of \$500 each to encourage high school and University students to become involved in Mennonite History and historical issues. These were not funded in the year 2004; however we intend to fund them in the current year.

Thanks to Henry Martens for performing the Society's financial review for the 2004 year.