



**Mennonite Historical
Society of BC**

2024 Annual Report

1818 Clearbrook Road
Abbotsford, BC V2T 6S3

Phone: 604-853-6177

Fax: 604-853-6246

Website: www.mhsbc.com

Email: archives@mhsbc.com



MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BC

Agenda of the 2024 Annual General Meeting

Friday, 27 June 2025, 2:00pm
Mennonite Heritage Museum
1818 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford, BC

1. Welcome: Richard Thiessen, President
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Minutes of 2023 AGM – 12 April 2024
4. Financial Reports: Marvin Rempel, Treasurer
 - (a) Financial Statements - 2024
 - (b) Budget - 2025
5. Election of Directors

Current Terms:

Ending in 2025: Maryann Jantzen and Richard Thiessen

Ending in 2026: Waltrude Gortzen, Cheryl Isaac, and Marvin Rempel

Ending in 2027: Linda Klassen and Robert Martens

Cheryl Isaac is concluding her time on the Board, and we thank her for her service to the Society.

The board is nominating Maryann Jantzen, Mary Ann Quiring, Rosella Reimer and Richard Thiessen for three-year terms, ending in 2028.

6. Presentation of Committee Reports
7. Questions / Further Business
8. Adjournment

MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BC

2023 AGM Minutes

Friday, 12 April 2024, 13:30pm
Ricky's Country Restaurant
32080 Marshall Road, Abbotsford, BC

Present: Jennifer Martens, Donna Thomas, Richard Thiessen, Grace Wiens, Henry Wiens, Peter Rahn, Luiza Martens, Rosella Reimer, Julia Toews, Irene Adkin, Marie Doerksen, Elmer Wiens, Sally Dueck, Lorna Goertz, Leona Schmidt, Marvin Rempel, Hilda de Haan, Helen Nickel, Laura Unger, Gerhard Rempel, Helga Rempel, Robert Martens, Joan Enns, Arlene Peters, Vern Peters, Evangeline Wiebe, Helen Ho, Bernie Martens, Linda Klassen, Alyssa Barski, Ingrid Epp, Carolina Thurley, Irma Giesbrecht, Sherilynn Williams, Menno Bergen, Richard Toews, David Nickel.

Regrets: Waltrude Gortzen, Laird Oscienny, Dora Dueck, Mary Ann Quiring, Elma Pauls, Karin Giesbrecht, Andreath Pilgrim, Natasha Kitos, Cheryl Isaac.

1. **Welcome** – Richard Thiessen, President

First time: David Nickel, Sherilynn, Luiza Martens, Donna Thomas

2. Motion to waive the notice of motion requirement of 14 calendar days.

Moved by Richard Toews, Second: Helen Ho. **CARRIED.**

3. Approval of Agenda

Correction to remove item #4 which is a duplicate to item #2.

Moved with corrections Robert Martens, Second Luiza Martens. **CARRIED.**

4. **Approval of minutes of 2022 AGM - 5 April 2023**

Moved by Richard Toews, Second: Ingrid Epp. **CARRIED.**

5. **Financial Reports** (as circulated): Marvin Rempel, Treasurer

Reviewed by Henry Martens.

a. Financial Statements 2023

b. Budget 2024

Discussion: MHSBC relies on a small group of donors that provide finances for operations.

6. **Election of Directors**

The constitution & bylaws allow up to 12 directors. Staggered terms are preferred

Here are the current board member terms:

Ending in 2024: Helen Esau Ho, Linda Klassen, Robert Martens, and Elma Pauls

Ending in 2025: Maryann Jantzen and Richard Thiessen

Ending in 2026: Waltrude Gortzen, Cheryl Isaac, Marvin Rempel

Thank you to Helen Esau Ho & Elma Pauls for their service to the board. We are glad to know they will continue to be involved as volunteers for the society.

The board is nominating Linda Klassen & Robert Martens for 3-year terms to 2027.

Invitation made for nominations from the floor. No nominations.

Mennonite Historical Society of Canada recently met and challenged members to have more diverse representations on boards that more closely represent the Mennonite constituency.

All nominations acclaimed. **Carried.**

7. **Presentation of Committee Reports:**

See attached reports. Once all the reports have been presented, motions to be made to include financial report.

- a) Presidents Report, Richard:
- b) Office & Volunteer Manager Report, Jennifer
- c) Archives Report, Linda
- d) Roots & Branches Report, Maryann:
- e) Library Committee, Robert

Discussion: Query about the status of library merge with CBC. CBA remains in transition with staff and library and no further conversations have been held. Becoming part of the Evergreen consortium would be very expensive and not being pursued at this time.

- f) Website & Computer technical Committee: Elmer
- g) Membership committee:

Discussion: query as to whether other options re membership might be possible outside of the annual Jan 1 to Dec 31 term and might include renewal prompts. MHSBC is considering software that might support further effectiveness and efficiencies in operations including memberships.

- h) Events Committee:

Discussion: 2025 is 500 year anniversary of Anabaptism and MHSBC is considering events to mark this history.

Motion to accept all reports:

Moved by Luiza Martens, second Julia Toews. **Carried.**

8. **Questions/Further Business**

No further comments.

9. **Adjournment: 14:43**

Moved by Henry Wiens, **Carried.**

Submitted by: Helen Esau Ho, Secretary

Board of Directors for 2024

Waltrude Gortzen	Retired Church Secretary, Abbotsford
Cheryl Isaac	Retired Director, Continuing Education, UFV – Abbotsford
Maryann Jantzen	Assistant Professor; Writing Centre Co-Director Trinity Western University – Abbotsford
Linda Klassen	Former Business Owner - Abbotsford
Robert Martens	Poet, Writer & Editor – Abbotsford
Marvin Rempel	Bookkeeper - Langley
Richard Thiessen	Executive Director Mennonite Museum– Abbotsford

Officers for 2024

President	Richard Thiessen
Vice President	Robert Martens
Secretary	Waltrude Gortzen
Treasurer	Marvin Rempel

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Staffing and Personnel

At the beginning of 2024 one of our long-term employees, Mary Ann Quiring, retired. We were able to celebrate Mary Ann's significant contributions to the Society with several of our board members and volunteers on 27 January. Mary Ann was replaced with two part-time employees, Donna Thomas and Sherilyn Williams. Alongside Jennifer Martens, our Office and Volunteer Manager, our three staff members are shared with the Mennonite Museum Society.

The Society has approximately 60 volunteers that provide staffing for the Society and work on a variety of indexing, filing, translation, and scanning projects. Our volunteer structure includes several volunteer coordinators who work alongside our Office and Volunteer Manager. These coordinators maintain weekly contact with our volunteers and provide direct supervision and resourcing. This allows our Office and Volunteer Manager to focus more attention on volunteer policies and procedures and in-take procedures for new volunteers.

Communications

Roots and Branches, our periodical, is our primary means of communication with our members. This year we again published three 32-page issues and a smaller Christmas issue for the year. We send out approximately 400 copies of the newsletter to members, churches, and sister organizations. We also rely on our website [<http://www.mhsbc.com>] and our Facebook page to communicate with our members as well as the general public.

Public Events

The Society held the following events in 2024:

- Heritage Week: 20-23, 26 February 2024: this event included a used book and an "attic treasures" sale, special tours of the Mennonite Heritage Museum with refreshments, and a presentation by Henry Braun, former mayor of Abbotsford
- Genealogy Conference, 3-4 May 2024: presenters included Tim Janzen
- Leonard Friesen Lectures in Mennonite History, 25-26 October 2024

Projects

1. Digitization Projects

This year our volunteers focused most of their efforts on digitizing microfilms from the Central State Archives of the Russian Federation (St. Petersburg) collection. This collection was borrowed from the Mennonite Library and Archives (Fresno, CA). The project has now been completed.

2. Archival Holdings

Linda Klassen heads up our volunteer group that works with processing our archival holdings and uploading images and archival description records to MAID. Linda has written the following section of this report.

As I try to summarize our year in the Project Room, the words “slow and steady” come to mind, as each area moves steadily forward on the projects that come across our desks. Every project has its own distinct features and challenges so progress is often slower than we would wish, but each one tells a small piece of the Mennonite story.

Teamwork is a major factor in getting our jobs done in the archive department and we are blessed with an incredible team! Robert Martens’ desk is the first stop for new donations to MHSBC, where he catalogues and creates accession records to keep track of the new items. Laura Unger works diligently with John B. Toews’ records. This is our largest collection and is the one for which we get the most requests for information. Helen Nickel & Joan Enns work with photographs, sorting and cataloguing each one before posting it on MAID. Our document sorting area includes Julia Toews, Bernie Martens, Hildegard Baerg and Linda Klassen. They bring thoughtfulness and creativity to the sorting process.

Dolores Harder is a vital part of our team. She works with photographs from her home in Duncan, BC and she is our go-to person for all things archive related. We enjoyed a visit from her last fall and had the opportunity to discuss and work through a number of issues together. We appreciate her constant support.

Our plans to buy new shelving for the cold room became a reality when the units arrived in August. This will help with organization and allow us to use our space more efficiently.

We had the privilege of hosting Caroline Klassen, an archivist from Archivo de las Colonia Fernheim, Paraguay, when she visited Canada in September. They are the newest MAID partner and we enjoyed talking about the database and discussing our respective archives.

There has been growing concern about the air quality in the project room, to the point where a number of people have been unable to work there. As dust is something that comes with the job, good air circulation is critical. We would like to improve the air quality with something like a HEPA filter and will continue exploring ways of improving the physical atmosphere of our room.

I am grateful for a committed, dedicated team who bring their unique gifting and perspective to our department. We are also thankful for the constant, enthusiastic support of our staff. We couldn’t do this without them!

3. EWZ Records

We continue to receive numerous requests from individuals, especially in Germany, for digital copies of EWZ files. It became apparent during the year that we needed to train more volunteers to be able to fulfill these requests. Sandie Massie, who had volunteered to fulfill these requests for several years, was not able to continue in this role, which created a backlog of requests. Fortunately, we have now trained several volunteers to fulfill these requests, and we are now back on track in terms of this work.

4. Genealogy

Most of the visitors to our Archives have an interest in genealogy. Our volunteers assist visitors in compiling their family histories and they also respond to emails and letters.

Volunteers have also been quite busy scanning unpublished family histories and newspaper

obituaries. Several of our volunteers, including Cheryl Isaac and Marie Doerksen, are copying obituaries from the digital scans of the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* into the Biographical Wiki database (https://mla.bethelks.edu/mediawiki/index.php/Main_Page) maintained by John Thiesen at the Mennonite Library & Archives at Bethel College. This database includes the full text of obituaries from several Mennonite periodicals, including *Mennonite Weekly Review*, *The Mennonite*, and a number of local newspapers. Our volunteers have entered 3,891 obituaries from the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* as of December 2024.

For many years our volunteers have maintained an obituary collection, including newspaper clippings and funeral bulletins. Over the past several years we have noticed that more and more people are choosing to publish obituaries of their loved ones on funeral home websites. These are often the only published obituary, or they are an expanded version of the obituary published in a newspaper. A project that we began in 2021 was to begin collecting digital obituaries from online newspaper and funeral home websites. At year end we had collected 11,482 online obituaries.

In 2023 we completed our goal of digitizing all the print obituaries in our collection and eliminating the newspaper clippings. We will only keep hard copies of funeral bulletins. We now have 17,850 digitized print obituaries. This gives us a total of just under 30,000 online and digitized print obituaries.

Several of our volunteers also do a significant amount of work with the GRandMA database, operated by Mennonite Genealogy, Inc. Members of the public submit corrections and additions to their family information that is in GRandMA, and our volunteers can log into the database and make the necessary changes. Several volunteers are also working at creating a Legacy database of individuals in the EWZ records. Once completed, this database will be merged with GRANDMA.

We completed a thorough index of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization records for the 1920s. Recent indexing has been carried out by Lorna Goertz, one of our volunteers who has been able to work remotely on this project. She is now entering data from these records into GRandMA.

5. Translation Projects

Volunteers are involved with several other projects, including the translation letters and diaries from German to English. Many of these projects begin as requests from individuals who make a donation to have something translated. Once the project is completed, a copy of the translation is made available to MHSBC.

6. History of Mennonites in British Columbia Project

In 2022 the Society began work on the publication of a written history of Mennonites in British Columbia. The general editor of the project is Dr. Bruce Guenther. Work will continue over the next several years, with the goal of publishing by 2028, which marks the centennial of the establishment of the village of Yarrow, the first permanent settlement of Mennonites in the province.

Submitted by Richard D. Thiessen, President
23 June 2025

OFFICE & VOLUNTEER MANAGER REPORT

Hello, my name is Jennifer Martens and as Office and Volunteer Manager, I am pleased to present my eighth report for the office.

2024 saw some major changes in the faces in staffing of MHSBC. Mary Ann Quiring retired from over 20 years of service. Together with her volunteering years, she contributed 25 years to the Society and words cannot express the gratitude for all her years of service. She served these years with passion and pride in her work, and we will all miss her dearly on our staff team. A luncheon was held in her honour at the end of January (the same date as the Literacy Fair in Abbotsford, so we didn't host a booth there this year).

In February we celebrated Heritage Week with a Used Book Sale and co-hosted featured events with the museum. We always have used books for sale but for this event we set out many tables and promoted a number of books. Shoppers love to rummage through the bins of books to find "Menno Treasures". We still had some stock of items from our previous years' Vintage Treasures Market and most of those sold as well.

In the wake of Mary Ann's retirement, we on-boarded 2 new employees as Administration Assistants. We welcomed Sherilyn (Isaac) Williams, Administrative Assistant, Office Support; and Donna (Klassen) Thomas, Administrative Assistant, Project Coordination & Communications. You have probably seen a change in our graphics, and it has been a real coup to have Donna on staff with her background in graphic arts do such amazing work on quick turn around for our office and committee requests.

In March, we hosted 2 UFV Library Practicum Students, Natasha Kitos and Andrea Pilgrim for two weeks, and they did much work cataloguing and shifting in the collection as more books were added. We also hosted specialized training for our library volunteers on how to catalogue using our Library program, Resource Mate.

April 12, 2024, we held our AGM at Ricky's after our Volunteer / Staff Appreciation Luncheon.

Truly, the work our volunteers do, and this includes our hard-working board, means so much to so many and it is a privilege to recognize all the hours and care that goes into the work that they all do for those who need us now and for future generations. For significant long term service awards, we gave gift cards which were donated to our society for this purpose. It is important for our volunteers to be able to enjoy these tokens of appreciation fully because they know that it does not cost our society in order to acknowledge their contribution in this way. We would love to have more sponsors who would be willing to donate gift cards for this purpose.

In May, we hosted our Genealogy Conference. This was the first one without Mary Ann, which felt very odd! In June, we were visited by 2 representatives from the City of Abbotsford, the Culture department who came to connect with us and see our facilities, and then later, a representative from Destination BC, here to evaluate how accessible our facilities are for those with disabilities. Both visits were a success. In July, our Archives volunteers hosted MCC's researcher, Sam Labun, who spent many weeks scouring our holdings for information about Mennonites and their interactions with Indigenous peoples.

Throughout the year, we continued with 'research by appointment' and helped people at individual workstations; the dual monitor station is still available for those who feel more

comfortable with that arrangement, but it saw less and less use as the year progressed and we moved farther and farther away from the time of the “lockdowns” of the early 2020s. Many of our patrons still call ahead to make appointments for research help (we love that), and with such great verbal promotions/personal invitations from our museum compatriots on the first floor, we also saw more patrons dropping in with this encouragement (we accommodate drop in patrons as best we can). Our Patron Assistant volunteers are the backbone of our on-site research help.

Communication from the office continued via email (10 news & notes plus related correspondence), 3 memos about the AGM, mail outs, social media and phone calls. We use gmail for these, and in 2025 we will transition to using Zeffy for communications. 53 (36 in 2023) reference questions came across my desk plus countless more that were fielded by Mary Ann, Sandi, Linda, Rosella, and more of our volunteer team both on and off-site. We receive much of our communication support from Elmer via our website and social media posts, and Robert, who writes and sends out our press releases. Our Facebook page was expanded to include posts for photo identification and to commemorate Mennonites of note in BC (thank you, Dave Loewen). Another great source of communication support comes from our editorial team of the Roots and Branches Newsletter (Thank you!).

In summer, a perk for our volunteers was to be invited to u-pick the museum blueberries. Volunteers could pick and pay at the front desk.

In September we hosted booths at two events: the CBC Service Fair and the MCC Festival. These are great outreach events, promoting our programs and attracting new volunteers and visitors, as well as connecting with regulars and supporters. In mid-September, staff took part in a CPR workshop, and I was very pleased that Marvin Rempel was able to set up a new computer for me to use. The old one kept crashing when I tried to operate programs which became quite problematic. It was a thrill to host Caroline Klassen, an archivist from Archivo de las Colonia Fernheim, Paraguay, who visited us. It was amazing to connect with her!

Since we are co-located with the Museum, our staff and volunteers met for Morning Coffee Time in the café once a week (a different day each week) as a way of connecting with others in the building. This is a time to share information, make announcements and celebrate birthdays. We also took the time to go over Health & Safety topics such as how to spot heat stroke vs. heat exhaustion in the hot weeks we had in the summer (and what to do), and earthquake and fire safety, including hearing a sample of the alarm (it is not a bell, it is a beeping sound). We have several volunteers in their 80's and 90's and we like to celebrate these amazing people. The Morning Coffee Times have been so well received -educational and connecting-, yet after October announcements from the Museum Society came about to shorten café hours, we were unable to continue those Morning Coffee Times (the café hosted the meetings and now staff hours have been shortened).

Work on the shift from network to google workspace continued throughout the year. Building and adding data to our volunteer management software continued and has become a time-saving and useful tool to track volunteer hours and information. Elma Pauls has continued to faithfully look after much of the data entry and along with Donna, the training of volunteers on how to log hours online using Better Impact. Our volunteers have come alongside us and are using Better Impact to track their hours (both onsite and offsite volunteers can do that easily), each has a profile and can “earn” badges for accumulated

hours. The plan is to gradually have our schedules and roles managed by the software and to make it even more useful and enticing to use for potential volunteers and new recruits. Work on this is continuing.

October was exciting for our EWZ record team, Marvin and Rosella set up a way for multiple research volunteers to look after queries and trained the team on how to use the system. We see so many requests for genealogy help involving EWZ records, there is way too much work for one person and is overwhelming at times. We are still looking for more volunteers to join this team. Another excitement was when Leonard Friesen came to give a lecture series co-hosted by the museum and historical society October 25 and 26. Still more activity, when MHSBC hosted Dr. Lynn Kleinveldt, Assistant Professor, Department of Information Studies, University of the Fraser Valley, and her class for a tour of our Library and Archives on October 22nd.

Grace Wiens has spent her volunteer hours this year organizing, fine tuning and tracking our Used Book inventory. Over \$2000 was raised by selling our used books. We are looking for a volunteer who would be interested in posting these books on Facebook and making sure those books get to our shoppers. (There is local pick up only). Robert Martens assesses books that are donated to us, and the books are either sent over to our Library team or to the used books depending on their use. Our most regular volunteer in the library this year has been Alyssa Barski, and many book piles have shrunk down because of her diligent work. Mary Ann, Paul, Alyssa, Jeanne and our two practicum students were a very busy team this year.

Our volunteers and friends of the society donated more hand-crafted items for our table at the museum's Christmas Market in November and we were thrilled with the \$1080.00 raised for the society. The Museum Yarn & Garn group helped by organizing our items and hosting them on their tables. MHSBC also had an information table for shoppers to peruse our brochures and other print material/promotions. Volunteer help will be needed again at next year's market.

On December 6th, our annual event, the volunteer/staff Christmas Social hosted by the museum, is a highly anticipated event as it is the only time of year both societies have the opportunity to meet together all at once with spouses.

December 12th was the last day we were open to the public, and while in previous years our MHSBC still came in for another week to work on projects, they were unable to do so as the staff was laid off for 7 weeks.

November and December are months when we see most of our membership renewals. We love our members and look forward to renewals and new subscribers. Gift memberships continue to be popular. Talk up the Roots and Branches and membership to a friend or neighbor this year and help our membership grow! Our society depends on membership and contributions to keep running for future generations. Please help and thanks go to our volunteers who endorse our society by also being members and purchasing gift memberships for their friends and families!

We grew to 60 in 2024, and we are still looking for volunteers. We need more help in our Library, IT, digitizing, scanning and more. Those who are retro tech buffs, we need you for moving our analog data to digital, including audio cassettes, video, reels, slides and more. We

are expanding our teams in the project room who are working with documents and photos. Shifts are 2-3 or more hours per week and some projects for the society lend themselves to off-site work. We are looking for volunteers who are available for our reference/reception desk for a couple hours from 2-4pm Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays. Contact me to find out more! Are you a writer? I am looking for someone to do interviews and write articles for office communications projects. Let me know if you are interested and curious to find out more.

New Volunteers:

Alyssa Barski, Paul Zukowski, Jeanne Dueck, *Library*
Diane Klassen, Anita Klassen, *Data Projects*
David Vogt, *Digitizing*
Katharina Kriegelsteiner, *in-house German Translation*

Retired from Volunteering:

Peter Rahn, *Translator (but may come out of retirement in 2025 to translate one of his books for English readers, we hope)*

Long Term Service Awards:

5 Years Lorna Goertz
10 Years: Irene Adkin, Cheryl Isaac, Marvin Rempel
15 Years: Hildegard Baerg

I am thankful to each one of our volunteers for the dedicated work that they do, and for the extraordinary people that they are. Together with staff, volunteers, and all our supporters, MHSBC is our “happy place”!

With gratitude,
Jennifer Martens

ARCHIVES REPORT

As I try to summarize our year in the Project Room, the words “slow and steady” come to mind, as each area moves steadily forward on the projects that come across our desks. Every project has its own distinct features and challenges so progress is often slower than we would wish, but each one tells a piece of the Mennonite story.

Teamwork is the key to our success, and we are blessed with a great team! Robert Martens’ desk is the first stop for new donations to MHSBC, where he catalogues and creates accession records to keep track of the new items. Laura Unger works diligently with John B. Toews’ records. This is our largest collection and is the one for which we get the most requests for information. Helen Nickel & Joan Enns work with sorting and cataloguing photographs. Our records sorting area includes Julia Toews, Bernie Martens, Hildegard Baerg and Linda Klassen. They bring thoughtfulness and creativity to the sorting process.

Dolores Harder is a vital part of our team. She works with photographs from her home in Duncan, BC and she is our go-to person for all things Archives. We enjoyed a visit from her last fall and had the opportunity to discuss and work through a number of issues together. We appreciate her constant support.

Each of these areas come together in the Mennonite Archival Information Database (MAID), which is the centre of our department. Here we post photos that become accessible to the public and are available for purchase. MAID also serves as an index for our textual records, making them available to interested parties. We are one of 17 partners from Canada, the USA and Paraguay. MAID is a rich resource of Mennonite history.



The screenshot shows the MAID website interface. At the top, there is a header with the MAID logo and navigation links. Below the header, the main content area displays the profile for the Mennonite Historical Society of British Columbia (repository). The profile includes sections for Identity, Contact, Description, and Access. The Identity section shows the identifier MH5BC and the authorized form of name. The Contact section provides the street address, telephone, fax, email, and URL. The Description section includes a history of the society and a list of holdings. The Access section shows the opening times. On the left side, there is a sidebar with a search bar and a list of holdings, including various fonds and collections.

<https://archives.mhsc.ca/index.php/mennonite-historical-society-of-british-columbia>

In September, we had the privilege of hosting Caroline Klassen, an archivist from Archivo de las Colonia Fernheim, Paraguay. They are the newest MAID partner and we enjoyed talking about the database and discussing our respective archives.

Our plans to buy new shelving for the cold room became a reality when the units arrived in August. They improve organization in the cold room and allow us to use our space more efficiently, for which we are grateful!

There has been growing concern about the air quality in the project room. As dust is something that comes with the job, good air circulation is critical. We have discussed ways of improving the physical atmosphere of our room and will need to explore this further.

I am grateful for a dedicated team who bring their unique gifting and perspective to our department. We are also thankful for the constant, enthusiastic support of our staff. We couldn't do this without them!

Linda Klassen
MHSBC Archives

ROOTS & BRANCHES REPORT

In 2024, the Roots and Branches editorial committee once again produced three full-length issues as well as a shorter Christmas edition. Robert Martens and Maryann Tjart Jantzen continue as editors of the full-length issues, with associate editors Julia Toews and Louise Bergen Price in charge of choosing pictures and also offering advice on content and layout, as well as contributing articles. This year Julia and Louise once again put together a wonderful Christmas issue. I am very thankful to work with such a collaborative and cheerful committee: as the old saying goes, “many hands make light work.”

The February issue provided historical glimpses of how Mennonites were affected by Soviet repression during the 1920s and 1930s. Several articles in the June issue also highlighted the trauma and oppression experienced by so many Mennonites who remained in the Soviet Union after the 1920s. And Christina Janz Amazonas’ article traced her genealogical journey of piecing together the family tree puzzle of her grandfather’s siblings, whose families were dispersed over three continents after the Soviet takeover of Russia.

The September issue included several articles on how, even before the Bolshevik Revolution, Mennonites were increasingly “adapting, and in some cases, integrating into the greater Russian Society.” The shorter Christmas issue featured a selection about a Mennonite family celebrating Christmas in Brazil in the 1930s, as well as an archival selection by Jacob Hildebrandt in which he recounted the impoverished but memorable Christmas of 1919 in a Ukrainian village.

Typically each issue of Roots and Branches also features articles on a variety of historical topics and artwork by local artists, along with book reviews, event reports, a genealogy column, relevant news releases, and announcements of upcoming events. We also include articles commemorating the lives of notable British Columbia Mennonites .

We try to provide a broad range of material so that all readers will find something of interest. We welcome receiving any of the following: letters and photos from the past; “mystery” pictures that need identification; short personal narratives; book reviews; biographical sketches; articles of historical interest. Contributions can be in English or German (we will translate). All contributions are subject to editorial approval and revision, as needed.

Please direct any letters, comments or questions to the Newsletter Committee c/o the Mennonite Historical Society of BC, or email archives@mhsbc.com.

Submitted by Maryann Tjart Jantzen
MHSBC director and Roots and Branches co-editor.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE REPORT

The Library Committee has not been meeting, but work is being done on a backlog of books accessioned to the MHSBC Library. I’d like to thank all those individuals who are quietly working to sustain the Library system. We would welcome any volunteers to assist us in this.

Submitted by Robert Martens

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

As of December 2024, we had a total of 243 paid members for the year plus 9 lifetime members (\$750 each) plus 16 honorary lifetime members.

Paid Members Included:

Fraser Valley & Vancouver	189
BC	23
Alberta	9
Sask	3
Manitoba	4
Ontario	5
Lithuania	1
US	9

Our Honorary Members Include:

1. Fehr, Don (*passed away*)
2. Friesen, Hugo & Jean (*passed away*)
3. Giesbrecht, David & Betty (*Betty passed away*)
4. Harder, Dolores
5. Hildebrand, Edward & Agnes (*passed away*)
6. Janzen, Tim & Rachael
7. Konrad, John
8. Neudorf, Peter & Helga (*Helga passed away*)
9. Pauls, Ernie & Helen
10. Penner, Jack
11. Price, Victor & Louise
12. Redekop, Peter
13. Sawatsky, Roland & Lora (*Roland passed away*)
14. Suderman, Peter (*passed away*)
15. Toews, John B & Lillian
16. Quiring, MaryAnn

Mandate of the Membership Committee:

(as set out by board decision of May 20, 2015)

The Goals of a Membership Committee is to:

- Increase membership,
- Recruit new members,
- Communicate with members,
- Remind members of renewals, and
- Address membership related issues

*The membership year is January to December.
Persons joining mid-year receive all back issues
for that year, at time of payment.*

Benefits of MHSBC Membership:

- Support the preservation of MHSBC
- Receive the MHSBC Roots & Branches magazine 3 times a year
- Receive invitations to MHSBC events
- Entitled to 10% off purchase of MHSBC Archive books, CD's, DVD's
- Voting privileges at AGM (April of each year)
- Become familiar with and preserve the history of Mennonites

EVENTS COMMITTEE REPORT

During the week of Feb 20-26, 2024, we honoured Heritage Week:

- 2 tables of used books, vintage clothing and collector cars.
- A perogy and Farmer Sausage dinner along with a HouseBarn Exhibit tour;
- Presented a film - The Flood of 1948;
- Hosted Cupcakes & Coffee with Tracy Dueck;
- Faspa and conversation with Henry Braun which was very well attended.

On Friday, October 25 and Saturday, October 26, we co-hosted with MHM Leonard Friesen who spoke on the Early Settlement of Russia and a Contemporary Look at former Soviet Union.

Submitted by: Cheryl Isaac, Event Committee Chair

**MENNONITE HERITAGE MUSEUM
& MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF BC PRESENT:**
Lectures in Mennonite History

Leonard Friesen

FRIDAY, OCT. 25 @ 7 PM
**The Mennonite Settlement of
Chortitsa and Molotschna in the
Russian Empire, 1789-1848**

SATURDAY, OCT. 26 @ 2 PM
**Soviet Mennonites after Stalin,
from Krushchev to Gorbachev:
1953-1991**

Registration REQUIRED 604-758-5667

**MHM | mennonite
heritage museum**

1818 Clearbrook Road
Abbotsford, BC V2T 5X4
www.mennonitemuseum.org
info@mennonitemuseum.org