

Mennonite Historical Society
of
British Columbia
February 1997

NEWSLETTER

Dear Members and Friends,

We look forward to a new year of challenges and opportunities for your Society. We again plan to present a series of Heritage Lectures, and about mid-year, will also move the Archives to a new location in the Garden Park Tower. Further details will be given later.

Heritage Lectures

The first lecture:

**February 15, 1997 at 7:00 PM
Clearbrook Community Centre**

Dr. Harvey Dyck

The Soviet Mennonite Inferno
Memorializing the Victims of Terror and Repression

Dr. Harvey Dyck needs no introduction to our audience. In his position as a Professor of Russian History and Director of the Research Program into Russian and Soviet Mennonite Studies, he has for the past two years led a research program at the Russian and Soviet Archives in Zaporoshje. Your Society and the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg have joined in support of this program. Harvey will be speaking on this subject.

This will be a most important lecture and should be attended by all members concerned with the fate of some of our less fortunate brethren Russia. It may be of particular interest to those that escaped Soviet repression in the 1940's. Many left without knowing what had really happened to fathers, sons, and brothers, who had been seized in the middle of the night, never to be heard from again. Harvey's work may shed some light on their fate.

The lecture promises to be a rather somber tale that may leave some of you with a heavy heart. Tens of thousands of our brethren along with millions of others became innocent victims of the Soviet terror. They lie unknown, in unmarked graves in the Gulags spanning Siberia. We will never find their graves, but through this project we may learn where and when they perished and thereby at least memorialize their passing. Please come and help us support this program.

Archives

GRANDMA

We have recently acquired a computer program called GRANDMA, an acronym for Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry. It contains 135,000 names from 7000 families, Ship Lists with 14,000 names from 2500 families, the Rosenort Church Book, and other information of interest to persons involved in such research. Staff will help visitors use this program.

Volunteers

When we move to our new and more accessible quarters about mid-year, we hope to make the archives and our other facilities available to members and visitors for more than the present three hours, five mornings per week. Budgetary constraints do not allow us to hire staff for this purpose. We must therefore rely on the traditional Mennonite way to resolve this need - that is, volunteers. If you are interested in this work and can spare a few hours, or a few half days per week, on a REGULAR BASIS, your help would be much appreciated. We ask all interested parties to contact our Chief Archivist, Hugo Friesen, for more details. He can be reached by calling 853-6177 or 859-4905.

Membership

All members who gave a donation at the Annual Banquet last October have been registered as members and will remain on the mailing list for 1997. Those of you that could not attend at that time and would like to remain on the list are requested to renew their membership at this time. We are still drawing down reserves to maintain our programs and need your help and support if we are to continue. Thank you.

Coming Events

May 3, 1997 - Annual General Meeting - Community Centre

May 1998 - North American History Conference - at CBC

The Directors.