



Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the West Coast

BULLETIN

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JULY 1981

EVENTFUL ANNUAL MEETING HELD

The annual meeting of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the West Coast was held on Saturday, May 2, 1981 at Fresno Pacific College.

The afternoon activities consisted of several helpful workshops. Katie Funk Wiebe gave some experienced advice and counsel on "Writing Your Memoirs." "Tracing Your Mennonite Ancestors" was the subject of another workshop led by Alan Peters. The mysteries held in the archives were revealed to anyone who attended Rachel Hiebert's workshop "Your Mennonite Brethren Archives: What They Contain and How You Can Use Them".

The evening festivities began with the annual veranika supper to whet the appetites of more than 125 people for more knowledge of our Mennonite heritage. The guest speaker was Katie Funk Wiebe, a seasoned Mennonite author and teacher of English at Tabor College. Her address centered around information she uncovered in writing her book, Women Among the Brethren. She presented much often-overlooked information about the significant contributions made by women in the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Another highlight of the evening was the presentation to the Society of a rare old map of the Molotschna by Wilbur Reimer on behalf of the John J. Reimer family.

SOCIETY'S FRESNO AREA TO SPONSOR FILM

The Fresno area will sponsor on July 25, 1981, the California premier of the films "Heimat fuer Heimatlose" and "50 Jahre Fernheim". These films are dramatized documentaries of the settlement and continued economic, social and spiritual development of the Mennonite colonies of the Gran Chaco of Paraguay. Dave Dueck, from Winnipeg, Manitoba, was commissioned to produce these films by the Fernheim Colony to commemorate its 50th anniversary in 1980. He will be here to show the films and interact with you, the viewers, about what went on behind the scenes. Both films were originally produced in German and have now been translated into English through the assistance of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of Canada. Mr. Dueck is making plans for another film dealing with the Russian Mennonite experience.

THE DETAILS: July 25 at Fresno Pacific College. The evening will begin with a pot luck picnic supper on the lawn north of Alumni Hall at 5:00. Bring your own table service. Beverages will be provided by the Society. The film will begin at 7:30 in Alumni Hall. If you cannot stay the whole evening, come for the picnic or for the film. There will be no admission charge for the film, but an offering will be taken.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE REEDLEY-DINUBA-KINGSBURG AREA, SEE PAGE 2

REEDLEY-DINUBA-KINGSBURG-VISALIA

AREA TO MEET

There will be a meeting of the Dinuba-Kingsburg-Reedley-Visalia area of the Society on Sunday afternoon August 16 at 3:00 in the Kingsburg Mennonite Brethren Church Social Hall. The theme of the afternoon will be: The Mennonite Brethren Family at the Turn of the Century. Alan Peters, Mennonite genealogist from Fresno, will discuss family lifestyles at home and church. Otto Reimer's presentation will be a reminiscence of MB family celebrations (e.g., birthdays, weddings, baptisms, holidays, etc.)

Faspa will be served after the meeting (no charge, but an offering will be taken). The activities will conclude in time for you to attend a 6:00 evening service at your own church. For reservations call: Grace Seibel Thiessen, 591-3505, or Jane Friesen, 591-4154.

RUSSIA TRIP?

During the summer of 1979, the Society sponsored a trip to Russia with Dr. Peter Klassen as the tour leader. About thirty Society members enjoyed visiting areas where their ancestors, both spiritual and physical, lived. Many places of importance to the Mennonite people were visited. The tour was an informative and interesting experience for those who were able to participate.

We have had several requests to sponsor a similar trip, either in the summer of 1982 or in conjunction with the Mennonite World Conference in the summer of 1984.

The trip would include visits to the Netherlands where Menno Simons served, the Danzig area of Poland where our forefathers sought respite from persecution, the Ukraine where

MOLOTSCHNA MAP READY

Our Molotschna map prints will be here soon. Prints of the rare old map donated to the Society by the John Reimer family, are being processed at this time and should be ready for distribution by August 1.

The copies will be limited edition numbered prints. Only three hundred of these fine quality collector's maps will be printed and a register of their distribution will be kept. The prints are 16" x 20" and come unframed. Nearly one hundred have already been ordered so we urge you to order yours soon. Maps are \$25 each plus \$5 for handling and mailing. If several maps are ordered at one time, the service charge applies only to the first map.

Numbers on the maps are assigned on a first come first served basis. If you want a low number, you will want to order your copy immediately.

The original map is in the Archives of the Hiebert Library at Pacific College and we invite all of you to stop by to see it.

Katherine the Great granted land to German farmers. Along the way, there will be opportunities to visit with some of the Mennonites still living in these lands.

The Society is willing to arrange the trip when about thirty people have indicated their intent to participate. If you are interested in such an experience, please write us soon.

AN INVITATION TO SHARE

Most good things nowadays come with a price tag. It is no different for the Historical Society. The various projects of the Society all come with built-in costs.

Take this newsletter itself as an example. While it is written and edited by unpaid volunteers, the materials, duplicating, and mailing costs mount up quickly. Add to this the costs of other activities of the Society, including the purchase and collection of historical materials, the financial support of Mennonite-related research, and the underwriting of other activities sponsored by the Society, and you end up with a real challenge: to find the financial resources to complete successfully each important activity.

Fortunately, the Society has many generous members and friends, who reap the double benefit of participating in each significant, historic project, and of enjoying the special incentives which come from making a tax deductible contribution.

MEMBERSHIPS-- The major source of our financial support comes from membership dues. With a growing and active slate of members, the Society has been able to expand its level of activity significantly over the past few years. Each dues-paying member can rightfully claim an important role in supporting the costs of this newsletter, the growth of the archival

SOCIETY OFFICIERS FOR 1981-1982

- President.....Jane Friesen
- Vice President.....Wilbur Reimer
- Secretary-Treasurer.....Alan Peters
- Curator of Artifacts.....Dan Enns

collection, and the fruits of the other projects of the Society. Be sure to notice the membership form found on the last page of this newsletter, and join the Society if you are not already a member. Remember, too, that memberships are renewable each year after the Annual Meeting, so it may be time now for many of you former members to renew your memberships.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS -- Certain projects of the Society require a special level of funding. Last year for example, a large number of historic documents at the City Archives of Danzig were copied as a result of special donations made specifically for that project. Other donations are even now helping to underwrite the costs of preparing the written history of the Mennonite Brethren Churches of Russia since the Revolution. It will take a similar level of generosity to make possible the translation into English of B. H. Unruh's comprehensive lists of Mennonites who emigrated to Russia during the 1800's. These lists, incidentally, are of invaluable assistance to those who are seeking genealogical information about their Mennonite ancestry.

Your generous contributions serve the double purpose of financing the far-reaching activities of the Society, and at the same time bringing to the donor the harvest of information of historical and family significance, and tax benefits as well. Take time now to share in the deeply satisfying work of the Society by sending in your membership or special contribution.
