



Mennonites and World War II: Books in the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies

by Kevin Enns-Rempel

The following books in the Center's library collection help to tell the story of the Mennonite experience in World War II. All may be checked out from the Center by anyone with a Special Borrower's card (no charge to Historical Society members, \$25 a year for anyone else).

Bartel, Siegfried. *Living With Conviction: Germany Army Captain Turns to Cultivating Peace.* Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1994.

North American Mennonites may forget that Mennonites found themselves on both sides of the struggle during the war. Bartel, a Mennonite living in Poland at the time of the war, joined the German Army in 1937 and fought on the eastern front until the war ended in 1945. He later migrated to Canada, where he still lives today. This book "traces the story of one man's struggle to overcome guilt and become convinced that the way of peace is the only alternative to war."

Frazer, Heather T. & John O'Sullivan, eds. *"We Have Just Begun to Not Fight": An Oral History of Conscientious Objectors in Civilian Public Service During World War II.* New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996.

This collection of oral history interviews with fifteen men who served in CPS and two "CPS wives" documents the varied experiences of those who performed alternative service during the war. It includes accounts by members of historic peace churches as well as objectors from other religious, political and philosophical orientations.

Gingerich, Melvin. *Service for Peace: A History of Mennonite Civilian Public Service.* Akron, Pa.: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1949.

This book is the single most complete account of the Mennonite Civilian Public Service program. It includes information on every CPS camp operated by Mennonite Central Committee during the war.

Goossen, Rachel Waltner. *Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947.* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

The decision to be a conscientious objector to the war fell more directly on men than on women, since only men were subject to military service. Goossen explores the ways in which women expressed their opposition to the war and performed alternative service even though not required to do so by the Selective Service program.

Hershberger, Guy F. *The Mennonite Church in the Second World War.* Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1951.

Hershberger focuses on how the "Old Mennonite" Church anticipated and responded to the challenges of the war, particularly in terms of conscription and alternative service. Though it focuses primarily on that one specific Mennonite group, the book also contains information pertaining to other Mennonite groups.

Keim, Albert N. *The CPS Story: An Illustrated History of Civilian Public Service.* Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 1990.

This brief and profusely illustrated book offers a basic overview of the many ways that CPS participants carried out their alternative service duties during the war.

Loewen, Harry, ed. *Road to Freedom: Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering.* Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2000.

For Mennonites still living in the Soviet Union, the war was a particularly difficult and often terrifying experience. In 1998 several thousand survivors of that experience gathered in Manitoba to share their stories and memories. Harry Loewen edited this collection of stories and photographs drawn from that event.

Thiessen, Edna Schroeder & Angela Showalter. *A Life Displaced: A Mennonite Woman's Flight from War-torn Poland.* Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 1999.

Edna Schroeder Thiessen was born in 1926 near Warsaw, Poland. This is her story of the war years and her subsequent flight from Poland through Germany to Saskatchewan.

Van Dyck, Harry R. *Exercise of Conscience: A WWII Objector Remembers.* Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1990.

The author, who was raised in a Mennonite community in Nebraska, recounts "the tedium and adventure, the drama and humor" of the CPS camps.

Yoder, James D. *Black Spider Over Tiegenhof.* Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1995.

This novel, set in the Vistula River delta region of Poland, explores the ways in which Mennonites of that area responded to Hitler's Third Reich.