

MBHS BULLETIN

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THE MENNONITE BROTHERN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF THE WEST COAST

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BANQUET IN KERN COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS GROWING INTEREST IN MENNONITE HISTORY

Almost eighty Mennonite Brethren church members from virtually every M.B. church in Kern County gathered at Hodel's Restaurant in Bakersfield on October 12, 1978, to enjoy an evening of German food and Mennonite History. The main speaker of the evening was Eddie Reimer, an insurance executive from Fresno, who has devoted much time in recent years collecting information and personal reminiscences regarding the Martendale Settlement of Mennonite Brethren in Kern County nearly seventy years ago. His intriguing comments were followed by questions and comments from the audience, some of whom participated as children in the original settlement.

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* NEWS FLASH! *
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* THE 1979 ANNUAL DINNER MEETING *
* OF THE MENNONITE BROTHERN HIS- *
* TORICAL SOCIETY OF THE WEST *
* COAST WILL BE HELD IN LATE APRIL *
* OR EARLY MAY IN BAKERSFIELD! *
* WATCH FOR MORE DETAILS IN THE *
* MAIL SOON! *
* * * * *

The meal was specially prepared by the Hodel family, owners of Hodel's Restaurant and members of the Rosedale M.B. Church. It featured such traditional specialties as sausages, verenika, plumamoos, green beans, zwiebach, and chocolate cake.

Officers of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the West Coast described the work of the Society, and encouraged the gathering to consider establishing a local chapter of the Society in the Kern County area, including the Bakersfield, Rosedale, Shafter and Wasco communities. Mrs. Joanne Frantz was selected to represent the region on the MBHS Board of Directors, and will be assisted by Mr. J. C. Penner of Shafter in determining future activities of the MBHS in Kern County. Other local church members will also be participating in making future plans for developing interest in Mennonite history in the Kern County area.

LOCAL CHAPTERS BEING CONSIDERED

A number of geographical regions across California are being seriously considered for the establishment of local chapters of the Society. The formation of such local chapters would give Mennonite Brethren in various communities the opportunity to meet and work together in activities related to the faith and history of the Mennonite Brethren.

Several meetings have already been held in the Kern County area, as is described in another section of this newsletter.

The Reedley-Dinuba region is also a center of considerable interest, and a preliminary "get-together" is already scheduled for March 11, to explore the possibility of a local chapter being established there. Any Reedley or Dinuba resident interested in attending should contact Jane Friesen at (209) 591-4154.

Another highlight of the evening was the presentation by Dr. Peter J. Klassen, during which the Heritage Tour through Europe and Russia was described in detail. A number of Society members from Kern County will be members of the tour group.

PLANS COMPLETED FOR THE MENNONITE HERITAGE TOUR

With dates and itinerary set for the first MBHS Heritage Tour, excitement is beginning to build as tour members begin their preparations for the July 25 to August 15 excursion to sites in Europe and Russia where Mennonite history was made. Dr. Peter J. Klassen, the tour director and spokesman, will be leading the group to sites in Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and the Soviet Union. The tour will be retracing the steps of Anabaptists and Mennonites of earlier generations who moved from country to country in an effort to find a peaceful home where they could practice their faith without opposition. As far as can be determined, this is the first tour which will be following the particular pilgrimage which the Mennonite Brethren have followed during their history. In addition, the tour will be visiting current sites of Mennonite interest, including the "Umsiedler" settlements near Neuwied, Germany, and Russian Mennonite settlements in Turkestan.

Many Society members and others have expressed great interest in this tour, with the result being that the quota for this tour was quickly filled. Some names are being placed on a "standby" list, should some of the tour members not be able to go at the last moment. In addition, a list is being compiled of those persons who would like to be participants in a similar tour in the future. Those wishing their names to be added to this list should contact the Society President, Jane Friesen, at (209) 591-4154.

PACIFIC BOOKSHOP FEATURES MENNONITE BOOKS AND LITERATURE

The Pacific Bookshop, owned and operated by Fresno Pacific College, has become the major west-coast source for Mennonite materials of all sorts, according to Phil Hofer, the bookstore's manager. Virtually all Mennonite Brethren materials now in print are available at the shop, which is located adjacent to the women's residence halls on the Fresno campus.

In addition, a multitude of other historical and theological books and materials are in stock, including both Mennonite and non-Mennonite authors and sources.

The Pacific Bookshop is the sole western distributor for the recent translation of P. M. Friesen's comprehensive history of the Mennonite Brethren, The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia.

Members of the Society are encouraged to become familiar with the extensive resources of the Pacific Bookshop. Materials may be ordered by mail by writing: PACIFIC BOOKSHOP, Fresno Pacific College, 1717 South Chestnut Avenue, Fresno, California 93702. The phone number is (209) 251-7194.

ARTIFACTS AND SUCH . . .

The lessons of history are found in the strangest places! It is not only in such obvious places as books and letters that items of historical interest are to be located. Instead, people have used every possible means to put their special mark upon their times. Diaries and journals frequently contain information of extreme historical value. Pictures record history not only on their front side, where the faces and places of significance are frozen for generations, but also on their back sides, where people have jotted down the names, dates, locations, and circumstances of the picture on the front. The fly-leaf of many an old book contains the family records of the past generation, and clippings, notes, and locks of hair are often hidden within the pages. Trunks and drawers are sometimes lined with the newspapers of Zionshotes that reveal the cherished history of the possessor. In short, don't overlook the possibility that your own history is found in the most unexpected places around you.

ROOTS AND BRANCHES . . .

Each person carries within himself the imprint of many earlier generations. Perhaps that is why most people have a compelling curiosity to discover not only the identities, but also the personal qualities and characteristics of their forbears. Indeed, sometimes one can find out much about himself or herself by uncovering the impact which each generation has had upon the next in one's own background.

The primary tool for family research is the PEDIGREE CHART. This is a visual diagram of a person's ancestry. It begins with an individual, and then branches out to parents, and then grandparents, for as many generations as the chart can hold. From one individual, to two parents and four grandparents, the chart continues to grow, doubling with each generation, so that a many-branched tree is formed, with eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great-grandparents and so on. Conceivably, if enough information were available, a pedigree chart could be constructed carrying one's ancestry back all the way to Adam -- or to Noah at least. A brief pedigree chart is reproduced on the back of this page, and I invite you to fill it in for yourself as an exercise in determining your own knowledge about your background. One thing to remember is that male ancestors are always given the even numbers on the chart, with female ancestors receiving the uneven numbers. This provides a standard format for all pedigree charts, so that any person who knows the principles can read any other person's chart with complete ease.

The chart is only valuable if it includes at least some basic information about each person on the chart. Usually this information includes birth, marriage, and death data. Both dates and places are important, and are usually called for on the chart. This provides some way of distinguishing between persons with the same name (and there are many John Friesens, etc!), but also provides some basic information so that some basis exists for verifying the data.

Family research must always begin with the present and work back, generation after generation, until the earliest known ancestor is recorded. One cannot start with an ancient person with the proper last name and expect to work down, generation by generation, until at last, by some miracle, one finds himself descended from that renowned ancestor. For one thing, having a common last name doesn't prove a relationship. Secondly, more recent generations are usually easier to prove, and one can avoid a lot of wasted time by doing the easiest tasks first. So search your own memory, contact your most knowledgeable relatives, look at your own family records, and then see how much of your own PEDIGREE CHART you are able to construct.

(detach and return by mail)

THE BULLETIN RESPONSE SHEET

I wish to become a member of the Mennonite Brethren Historical Society of the West Coast. Enclosed please find my membership fee as follows:

\$25.00 Family Membership
\$12.50 Individual Membership
\$ 7.50 Student Membership
\$ _____ Other Contribution

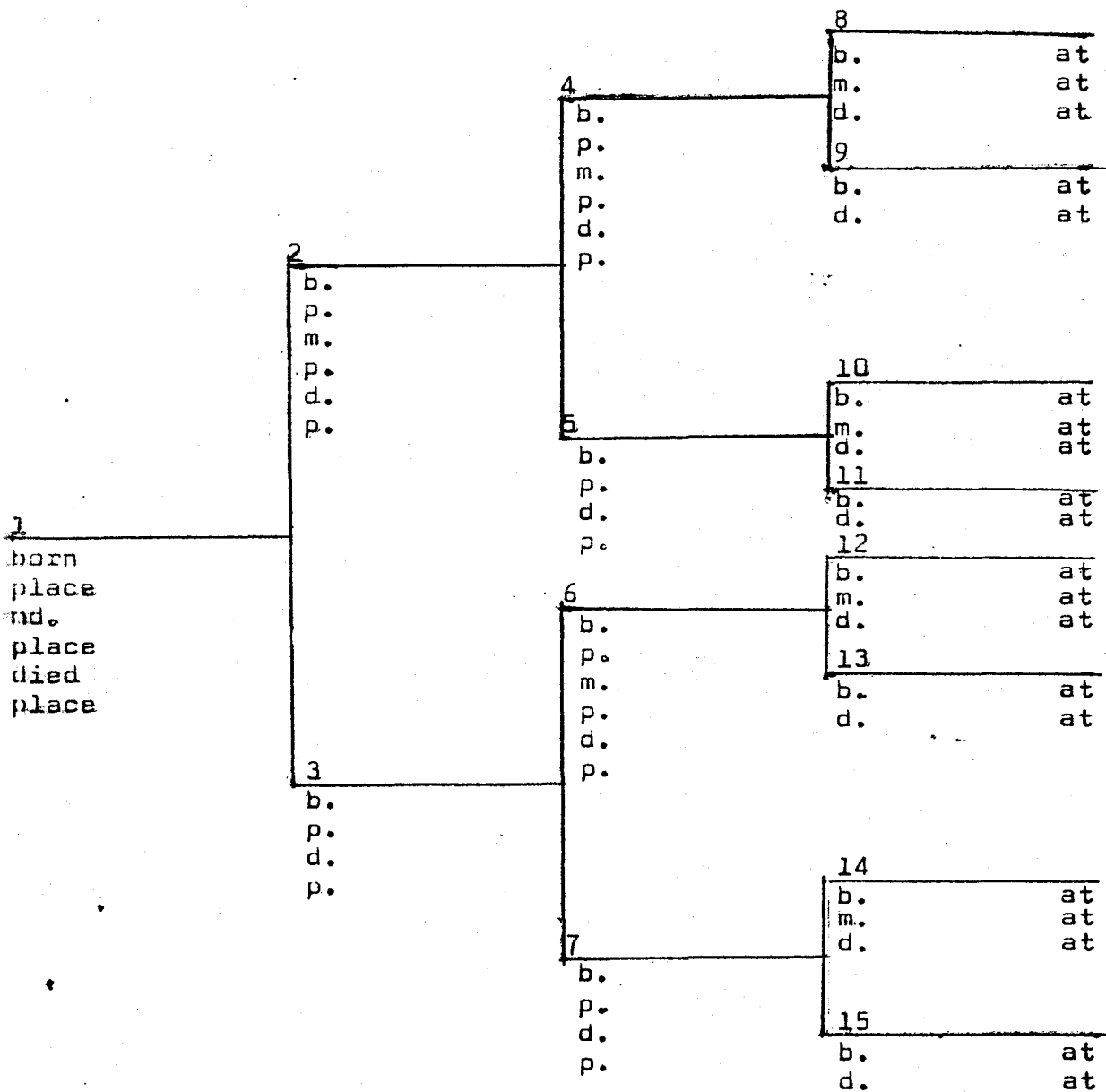
I would like more information about how I can help the Society be more active in my own community.

Other comments: _____

Send to: The MBHS BULLETIN
4949 East Heaton Avenue
Fresno, California 93727

Signed: _____
Address: _____

PEDIGREE CHART



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