



Gleanings from the Threshing Floor

Bethel
College

Newsletter of the Mennonite Library and Archives
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A New College History

Bethel will mark its 125th anniversary in 2012; this dates from the college charter in 1887. The goal is to have a new history book out in time for the big celebration. This gives only about three years to get the job done.

The writer is Keith Sprunger, and an advisory committee assists him. So far we have several oral history interviews and the writing has begun. Bethel's previous history by P. J. Wedel, published in 1954 was a great achievement. Wedel worked on it for about ten years and it grew to 632 pages; it contains incredible detail. I am much indebted to this book and I refer to it all the time. Our new book will cover our entire span of history but in more compact form and with a broader narrative approach.

An Invitation: We invite comments and memories from alumni and friends. What should be included? What are

the great stories? The momentous events? Get in contact in person, by letter, by telephone, or by email (sprunger@bethelks.edu). Thank you.

Keith Sprunger
Professor of History Emeritus

H. R. Voth photos

Recently I was reading a 2006 University of Manitoba Ph. D. dissertation by Alvina Block, "Changing Attitudes: Relations of Mennonite Missionaries with Native North Americans 1880 to 2004." On pages 80-81 she says, "More recently, the Hopi have asked to have their 'culturally sensitive information repatriated.' In 1994 they requested that the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas should 'declare a moratorium on use of materials relating to the Hopi people and their ancestors,

including field notes, photographs, and drawings.'" She references Michael F. Brown, *Who Owns Native Culture?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003). Brown, on pages 14-15, says, "... in 1994 Vernon Masayesva, then tribal chairman, sent a letter to museums and repositories whose holdings include information about the Hopi. Among these are the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, which houses many of H. R. Voth's photographs. Chairman Masayesva requested that all repositories declare a moratorium on use of materials relating to the Hopi people and their ancestors, including field notes, photographs, and drawings, particularly those containing 'esoteric, ritual and privileged information on religious and ceremonial practices and customs.' The letter asserted the Hopis' ownership interest in all materials relating to their culture and the expectation that these materials will eventually be returned to the Hopi Tribe as part of a comprehensive process of repatriation."

I just wanted to make it a matter of public record that these statements are false. No such letter was ever received by the MLA.

However, we have been restrictive over the last several years in the use of materials, especially Voth photos, that relate to Hopi ceremonial matters. We would certainly be open to exploring mutually satisfactory restrictions with official Hopi representatives.

John D. Thiesen

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Regulations for the Cornet Band

[document found in folder 34, Oct.-Dec. 1899 Bethel College business office files, MLA.III.1.A.9.a]

1. On Wednesday evening band practice may take place between devotional exercise and 8:45.
2. On other school days individual or band practice is permitted only between 4:15 and 6 p. m. It is, however, desirable that only a part of such time be actually so employed.
3. Arrangements for Saturday afternoon are left to Principal, subject to faculty action when deemed necessary.
4. On Sunday no playing whatever is to take place.
5. The members of the band are expected to exercise great care in the selection of music, and during their meetings as well as on the way to and from the meeting place are required to keep their conduct above reproach. Hence no playing is to be indulged in on the way.
6. Band practice is to occur at Park Cottage [where or what was this?], unless changed by action of faculty or directors. Place or places for individual practice to be arranged by Principal.
7. Open air playing is not permitted, unless specially arranged with Principal or Faculty.
8. No "Outside Engagements" are permitted.
9. Not desiring to make arrangements to which the parents concerned may object, the Faculty stipulates that students enter the band only with the consent of their parents.
10. School work must not suffer in consequence of band practice.

Rule 7 was later defined so as to exclude marching while playing.

Above rules with the exception of the first are also by the Principal prescribed for Orchestra, but have not been quite as effectually enforced as those in case of the band. The band rules are as well enforced as any rule of the school, without a single exception. The boys have behaved very nicely in this respect."



Mennonites in Norway??

Several years ago I noticed a folder in our vertical files labeled "Mennonites—Norway." Very strange. It contained only the July 8, 1941, issue of *Kirchenzeitung* (vol. 111, no. 27, the official German periodical of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, which in 1957 became part of the United Church of Christ). On pp. 15-16 of that periodical, there is a short unsigned filler article titled "Norwegen." It describes a 1930 census of church membership by denomination in Norway, with the vast majority being in the Lutheran state church, and then a wide variety of other groups. Right after the Mormons, it says "Mennonite 630." What can this mean?

I got a copy of the 1930 Norwegian census tables via interlibrary loan (*Folketellingen i Norge 1 desember 1930*, vol. 2 (Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1932)). On page 5, table 1, it gives a figure of 630 person for the category "other confessions with adult baptism." Baptists are listed as a separate category, so it's not clear who would be grouped under this heading. And why did the writer for *Kirchenzeitung* choose to interpret this as "Mennonite?"

Oddly enough, the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* article on "Denmark" (www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/denmark) contains the following paragraph: "The Danish historian, Fr. Hammerich, in his book, *Den Kristne Kirkes Historie* (1891), claims that Mennonites have been in Denmark since 1787. They supposedly came from North Germany and first settled near Frederikstad in Soenderjylland

[Friedrichstadt, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, a well-known Mennonite center, once under Danish sovereignty; see *Mennonite Encyclopedia* article "Friedrichstadt" www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/friedrichstadt_schleswig_holstein_germany] and Fredericia [a different town, in present-day Denmark on the east side of the peninsula]. They practiced immersion and called themselves "Mennonit Broederkirkens." The movement spread as far as Sweden. The first congregation in Copenhagen was established in 1871. It once had four meetinghouses, two in Sweden and two in Denmark, but lost them because of small numbers. A report by H. H. Janzen concerning contacts with this group in 1950, when it claimed 50 baptized members in Denmark, plus 25 in Sweden, 17 in Norway, and three in Finland, appeared in *Mennonitische Rundschau* 73 (1950) 27 September, p. 3, and *Der Mennonit* IV (1951) 7. Later information indicated that this mysterious group really was not a genuine Mennonite group."

H. H. Janzen's article in *Der Mennonit* (Jan. 1951, p. 7), "Gibt es Mennoniten in Dänemark?" even included photos of E. J. T. Hansen, the alleged Mennonite pastor in Copenhagen, and of a church building in Malmo, Sweden, that had been built originally by this group.

Unfortunately, there isn't any further information about these mysterious hints and we must leave our readers in confusion.



Left: This photo was used in the 1917 Graymaroon yearbook and labeled "The First Band 1899-1909." It is probably the "Cornet Band." Names of the persons can be found on our web site at <http://mla.bethelks.edu/archives/numbered-photos/pholist2.php?num=2009-0016>

Mennonite sightings

- Mennonites in Latvia??
<http://www.roots-saknes.lv/Religions/Mennonism/Mennonites.htm> shows a 1927 postcard in Latvian with a picture of Menno Simons and two apparently Latvian Mennonites, Janis Willbergs and Janis Lange. Anyone have any ideas what this is all about?
- Eric Flint, 1632 (Riverdale, NY: Baen, 2000) is an "alternative history" novel in which a small West Virginia town of the year 2000 gets transposed into the middle of the Thirty Years War in Germany. The novel traces the interaction of 20th century ideas and technology with those of the 17th century. A passing reference on p. 404: "His eyes roamed the huge room, scanning the crowd packed everywhere. For all their easy intermingling, Moses [a Jewish visitor to the American town, at a political rally] could easily distinguish the Americans from the Germans, and both from the Scots. Others were unknown to him. A small party of men at one table, acting very ill at ease, he found impossible to place. 'Mennonites,' whispered Balthazar. 'A few hundred of them arrived just two weeks ago. The Americans gave them a grant of unused land in the foothills. Those are their elders.'"
- The *Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter* (Madison, WI), vol. 16, no. 4, winter 2007, pp. 7-8, 12, 14, contains an article by Jack Thiessen, "A Walk in the Garden of Words," reminiscing about Mennonite Low German.
- Mark Horowitz, "Two Environmentalists Anger Their Brethren," *Wired* (issue 15.10, 2007) (http://www.wired.com/science/planetearth/magazine/15-10/mf_burning) profiles two environmentalist technology advocates. One, Michael Shellenberger, "was raised in Colorado by Mennonite parents."

A Historical Survey of the Matter of Schools

Speech by David Goerz at the dedication of Bethel College, Sept. 20, 1893

[translated by Allison Penner in Jan. 2001; original document is in the David Goerz papers, MLA.MS.27, folder 26]

We will limit our survey to a 33-year time frame and will begin with the founding of the Christian School in Wadsworth, Ohio, about which we find the following report in the resolutions of the first General Conference, held in West Point, Iowa, in May 1860: "Resolved, that a seminary should be established, as soon as it is possible within the community."

However, the term seminary seems to not have made a universally good impression, because at the following conference in May 1861 in Wadsworth, Ohio, a longer explanation was added to the above resolution as justification for said terminology, which was finally replaced with the name "Christian Mennonite Educational Institution." The explanation in question reads as follows: "Most importantly, we hold, at least for the beginning, a Christian Mennonite educational institution to be absolutely necessary as a basis for the union of our Mennonite denominations as well as the expansion of God's Kingdom and of the missions." Further negotiations about the school issue resulted in the resolution: "that the traveling preacher (of the General Conference) will be given the power to gather pledges of contributions for the establishment of a Mennonite College." Pastor Daniel Hege from the Summerfield congregation faithfully and honorably carried out this assignment until his death, which unfortunately interrupted his work in 1862. In October 1866 the newly built school building in Wadsworth, Ohio, which cost over \$12,000.00, was dedicated, but was not given over to use until spring of 1867. Unfortunately, with Brother Hege's death, a very noticeable hole in the circles working for the collection of financial resources seemed to have opened up, because the conference directly following the dedication recorded a deficit of over \$2000.00. Just six years later, in 1872, the debt had already risen to approximately

\$4000.00, and the conference of 1875 shows it at about \$8000. In addition to these financial difficulties, internal problems cropped up as well, and in 1878 the conference had no choice but to pass a resolution to sell all of the school's property, thereby ending its 11 or 12 years of activity, much to the regret of the school's supporters in our congregations, for in spite of the financial failure, the school had become a great blessing and advantage for many individual brothers and congregations, and today our congregations still enjoy the blessings that came out of the Wadsworth Seminary.

Meanwhile, new life sprouted out of the ruins, for the death knell of the Wadsworth Seminary had not yet rung as the school issue was given new life on the Kansas prairies. The school issue has primarily the Kansas Conference (founded in 1877) to thank for its origin, and until the transition of the Kansas Conference into the Western District Conference, the issue of schools remained one of the main subjects out of all its proceedings. The result of the school efforts of the Kansas Conference was the founding of the Kansas Preparatory School [*Fortbildungsschule*] in 1882. How heavily the endeavors of the Kansas Conference leaned on the previous school activities of the General Conference even before the opening of the Kansas Preparatory School can be seen, for example, from the following resolution of the third Kansas Conference in 1879: "Since the Kansas Conference has learned that it is obliged to the Mission Board of the General Conference of North America to start a missions school in the West in place of the abandoned Mennonite school in Wadsworth, Ohio, it is desirable for the Kansas Conference to combine its desired preparatory school with the missions school, in the case that such a school can be relocated to Kansas, even if just temporarily."

The preparatory school opened in a school building provided by the Alexanderwohl congregation, then moved to Halstead in 1883, where the Halstead College Association very generously built a suitable building and let the Kansas Conference use it for the first five years free of charge, after which they rented it

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to them inexpensively. In spite of the fact that the school didn't need to worry about accommodations, its expenses greatly exceeded its income, and the yearly re-occurring deficit in the school accounts added up to a heavy debt. This burden fell almost completely on the congregations of the Kansas Conference, since the General as well as the Western District Conferences refused to take part financially in the Kansas Preparatory School. The Kansas congregations carried this burden faithfully until a way opened in the development and execution of the Bethel College project for general participation from congregations in other states. Now, the burden of maintenance cost should come from the school's income and from an endowment of over \$60,000.00, in which school supporters from East, West, North, and South participated.

Just as the efforts for the founding of the preparatory school depended on those of the General Conference, the efforts of the undertaking of Bethel College are bound not only to the General Conference, but also to the preparatory

school; the womb of the preparatory school contains the seed from which Bethel College developed. The name Bethel College was given by the committee of the Kansas Preparatory School, the organization of the Bethel College Corporation was supported by the Kansas Conference, and the work of the preparatory school was transferred to Bethel College. Bethel College's curriculum is an extension of that of the preparatory school, and the Bethel College building an extension of the rooms of the preparatory school, just as they stand here next to each other, in order to complete each other and together form one whole. Now let the blessing which has rested on the preparatory school also enter into Bethel College, so that Bethel can become a lasting blessing to our congregations, in the spirit that showed itself in the resolutions of the first General Conference, which then also contributed to the success of the preparatory school, and will hopefully also inspire our congregations and school supporters in the future.

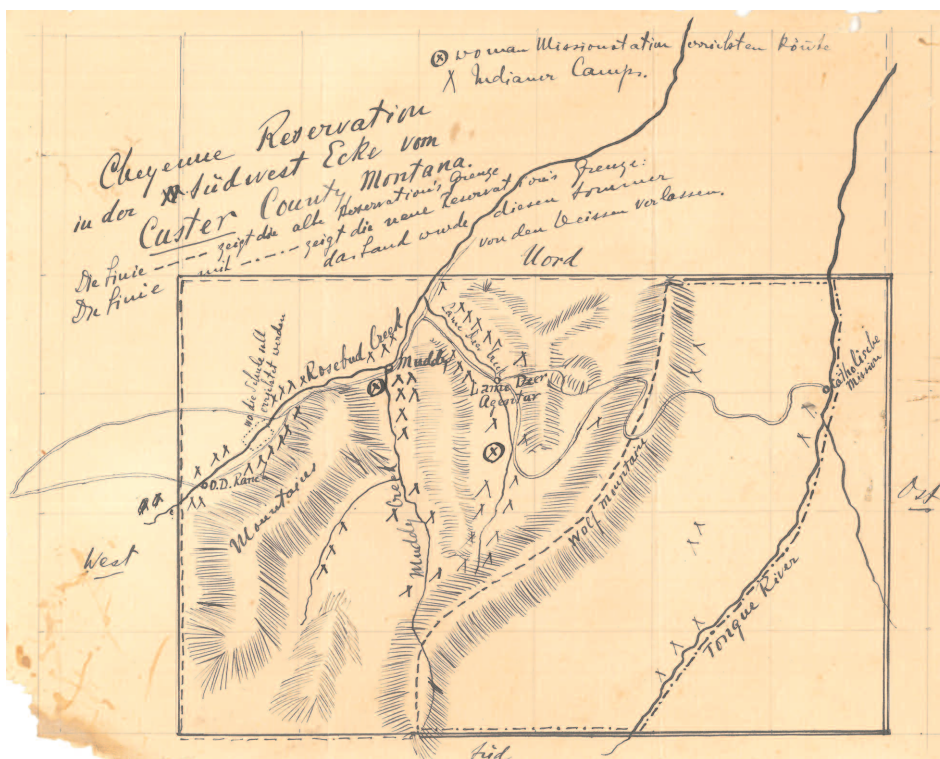
Vistula Mennonite Studies Project

We now have a web page that brings together all the information related to this ongoing project: <http://www.bethelks.edu/mla/vistula.php>

Among the materials linked here are the several thousand scans done by volunteer James Shaw in 2006-7 from microfilms of the Vistula Mennonite church records. We are continuing to organize and annotate these scans, but they are now all available on the web site.

We are also continuing to work towards publishing an English translation of Wilhelm Mannhardt's 1863 book *The Military Exemption of the Prussian Mennonites*. Despite its age, this is still the central historical work on the Vistula Mennonites. We hope to have the translation ready for publishing in 2009.

During 2006-2007 we had three volumes from our set of church record books from the Danzig/Gdansk Mennonite congregation treated by a professional paper conservator, Richard C. Baker, in St. Louis. This set of record books was recovered from the burned church building by MCC workers right after World War II. The books are in rather poor condition, burned around the edges from the fire that destroyed the city during the last weeks of the war. The two primary volumes date from the late 18th century. The cost for this was about \$1500 per volume. (There are probably 15-20 more such record books that could benefit from similar treatment. The only obstacle is lack of money.) Currently we are working on raising money, through the Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee, to have the original books scanned and posted on our web site. On 9 May 2007 we received a request from Frank Wiehler, chair of the Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein in Germany, to transfer records relating to the Prussian Mennonites to the Mennonite archives in Weierhof, Germany (Mennonitische Forschungsstelle). The primary focus of the request is the Danzig/Gdansk books.



This hand drawn map of the Cheyenne reservation in Montana was made by Rodolphe Petter on an exploratory visit and attached to a letter to the Mission Board, dated Sept. 12, 1901. It shows Cheyenne camps and proposed sites for mission stations. (folder 3, Mission Board files, MCA.I.A.1.b)



Bibliographic Discoveries

- We recently cataloged *Christliche Lieder zum öffentlichen und Privat-Gebrauche* (München: gedruckt bei Matthäus Pössenbacher, [1830?]). Ours is the only copy listed in the international WorldCat database. It was originally in the Christian Krehbiel (1832-1909) papers. It belonged to his mother-in-law Katharina Strohm (1815-1892) and includes her signature dated Feb. 25, 1835.
- Among some books of H. D. Epp, donated in July 2004 by his son Carl Epp of Henderson, Nebraska, was a volume of *Monatsblätter für öffentliche Missionsstunden*, vol. 25 for the year 1890, published in Calw, Germany. On the cover was the bold signature of C. H. Wedel.

GRANDMA data entry

The GRANDMA (Genealogical Registry AND Database of Mennonite Ancestry) database has significantly changed Mennonite biographical and family history research over the past decade. The project is sponsored by the California Mennonite Historical Society (<http://www.fresno.edu/affiliation/cmhs/gpc/home.htm>)

The MLA has been submitting information to the GRANDMA database project from its early stages in 1993. We have focused mostly on original church membership record books that reflect the immigration to the plains states in the 1870s. Since the last newsletter we have added the following records to our database:

- First Mennonite, Pretty Prairie, Kansas
- Burrton, KS, Mennonite Church
- Inman, KS, Mennonite Church
- First Mennonite, Ransom, Kansas
- Hanston, KS, Mennonite Church
- First Mennonite, Hutchinson, KS
- Bethel College Mennonite Church
- Kingman, KS, Mennonite Church (in process)

We are almost done with the Kansas church records to which we have access. Unfortunately, there are quite a few prominent Kansas churches for which we don't have records: Buhler, Garden Township, Swiss (Whitewater). If any of you can arrange for us to have access to the early records of these congregations, we would appreciate it.

Mennonite Life

We regret to announce that *Mennonite Life* has suspended publication as of fall 2008.

Over the decades of its existence, *Mennonite Life* has mostly focused on a particular niche for its readership. We have attempted to reach a literate, well-informed audience, but not a narrowly specialist one.

One of our major strengths since the beginning in 1946 has been in the use of visual materials. No other Mennonite publication has done this so extensively. In the web era, since 2000, we have also been able to add a good deal of audio excerpts. Related to this has been our ongoing focus on the arts.

We have intentionally covered a wide variety of topics across several disciplines. Thus one might call our approach "Mennonite studies."

During our paper publication era, 1946-1999, we were able in certain ways to measure our readership, simply by counting the number of subscribers, and by sending out occasional paper-based surveys to subscribers. In the web era, 2000-present, measuring is more difficult. We regularly send out an announcement of each issue to a list of around 275 email addresses. Some of those addresses are themselves lists, so that an unknown number of recipients (at least several hundred) are told of each issue when it becomes available.

One other way to measure our situation is in our contacts with writers and submissions. Here the situation is gloomy, and it was so already ten years ago, before the transition to the web format. We do not receive enough submissions for real viability for *Mennonite Life*.

Although we do have enthusiastic readers, and hear from them, it appears that our publishing niche is no longer viable in the Mennonite world. Mennonite publications have split into two segments – those intended for the broadest possible audience, and those consisting of academic specialists writing for other specialists. Readers and writers for a niche in between these don't seem to be a critical mass in the Mennonite world anymore.

Although we are suspending publication, we do intend to maintain our web site so that past and recent *Mennonite Life* issues remain easily available.

Wedel book series

Very soon we hope to publish, with Pandora Press in Canada, two more Wedel series volumes: *Mennonites in Latin America: Historical Sketches* and *Menonitas en América Latina: Bosquejos Históricos* by Jaime Prieto, the English and Spanish versions of his Menno Simons lectures at Bethel College in 2005.

Friends of the MLA

The purpose of the "Friends of the Mennonite Library and Archives" (and friends of the Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton) organization is to provide a more active sense of support and participation for the MLA and to promote Mennonite studies in general for the central Kansas audience.

Annual membership in the Friends of the MLA is \$25. Please become our friend!

Since the last newsletter we have sponsored the following program:

- Apr. 17, 2008, Jaroslaw Pająkowski, "Mennonite Settlers in the Lower Vistula River Valley in the 17th and 18th Centuries"

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Identify This



Several photos of this mill were found in a folder labeled "Bernhard Warkentin Mill" but they don't appear to be either Newton or Halstead. Can someone tell us where this is?



Can you identify this building under construction? On the back is handwritten "July 31" but that probably doesn't mean 1931. The photo looks older than the 1930s.