



MENNONITE LIFE

JUNE 1978

Delbert Wiens in his essay, "From the Village to the City," speaks of the movement of Mennonites from a village culture to a town culture to a city culture. The presence of the Mennonite World Conference this year at Wichita, Kansas, suggests the recent emergence of the Mennonites into this third phase of their development: the city Mennonite. One may see the city motif in the intricate logistics of the conference, the complex organizational systems, and the sophisticated communication networks which permit 16,000 people to meet together for a week in one place.

This expanded issue of *Mennonite Life* offers two extended articles: first, a photographic review of Mennonite World Conferences from 1925 to 1978 and, second, a photographic essay on selected Mennonite experiences in America. Most of the photographs are from the files of the Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas.

The article on the ten Mennonite World Conferences tells a story of Mennonites of villages and towns moving into an urban and world community. One observes the shifting patterns and styles in World Conferences—from small, formal, male, German-speaking, largely European consultations with limited agendas to mass assemblies attended by whole families from every continent, with simultaneous translations into seven languages, equipped with advanced media systems, offering a broad, multi-purpose program, encompassed by banners, symbols, television cameras, and

many choices.

The text for the capsule descriptions of the first nine conferences is excerpted from an article by Cornelius J. Dyck, "What is the Mennonite World Conference?" He is Professor of Historical Theology at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana, and served in the past as Executive Secretary for several Mennonite World Conferences.

The second article tells of an earlier era—the village period and a few traces of the town culture in the story of the Mennonite experience in America. This photographic essay depicts primarily the life of Mennonites who came to the prairies a century ago and settled not far distant from Wichita. These rare photographs tell stories nowhere else recorded.

Mennonite groups in their separatedness have sought for purity, soundness and obedience. They have also yearned for fellowship and unity. The preface to the proceedings of the 1913 All-Mennonite Convention expresses feelings which may be in the hearts of those who anticipate the 1978 Mennonite World Conference in Wichita:

They had longed to know one another better, now there was the opportunity for those who had never seen each other and whose interests had perhaps sometimes run counter, to look one another in the face, listen to what each had to say on various momentous questions pertaining to the Church of God, and unitedly to pray for the coming of Christ's Kingdom.

The Editors

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Interior of the Singel Mennonite Church in Amsterdam on the occasion of the 1967 Mennonite World Conference.

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Cornelius J. Dyck and Robert Kreider

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Mennonite World Conferences in Review—

A Photographic Essay

by Cornelius J. Dyck and Robert Kreider

The Mennonite World Conference began in 1925 through the efforts of Christian Neff (d. 1946). The first call, however, for an international Mennonite gathering came thirteen years earlier from Heinrich Pauls, minister of the Mennonite congregation at Lemberg in Poland. In two letters to the editor of *Mennonitische Blätter* in 1912 he proposed such a conference be held at Lemberg during the week preceding Pentecost of 1913. The idea was first suggested to him, he wrote, by Brother Regier from Mountain Lake, Minnesota, on a recent visit. The program suggested by Heinrich Pauls included discussion of historical facts in Mennonite history, the missionary calling of Mennonites, what unites and what separates Mennonites from each other, why and in which respects are Mennonites liberal or conservative, and other issues. A communion service was to be a part of the week of fellowship. World War I prevented the realization of Heinrich Pauls' vision at that time.

Meanwhile vigorous discussion about unity and disunity among the Mennonites had also been carried on in North America, the progress of which was undoubtedly reflected

by Regier during his visit with Pauls in Lemberg. This discussion first surfaced publicly in an editorial written by I. A. Sommer in the May 5, 1910, issue of the *Mennonite*. In it he deplored the prevalent disunity and lack of love among Mennonites and went on to suggest the forming of a General Conference of all Mennonites in North America. In the August 10, 1910, issue of the *Mennonite* N. E. Byers, then president of Goshen College, successfully proposed first steps towards such a conference, justifying it with the words: "I am quite sure that if we could get into personal contact with each other and know each other's convictions we would have much more in common than we now are aware of." The meeting subsequently took place August 19-20, 1913, in Berne, Indiana, with Christian Neff, who was visiting America at that time, preaching the convention sermon.

Basel-Zurich 1925

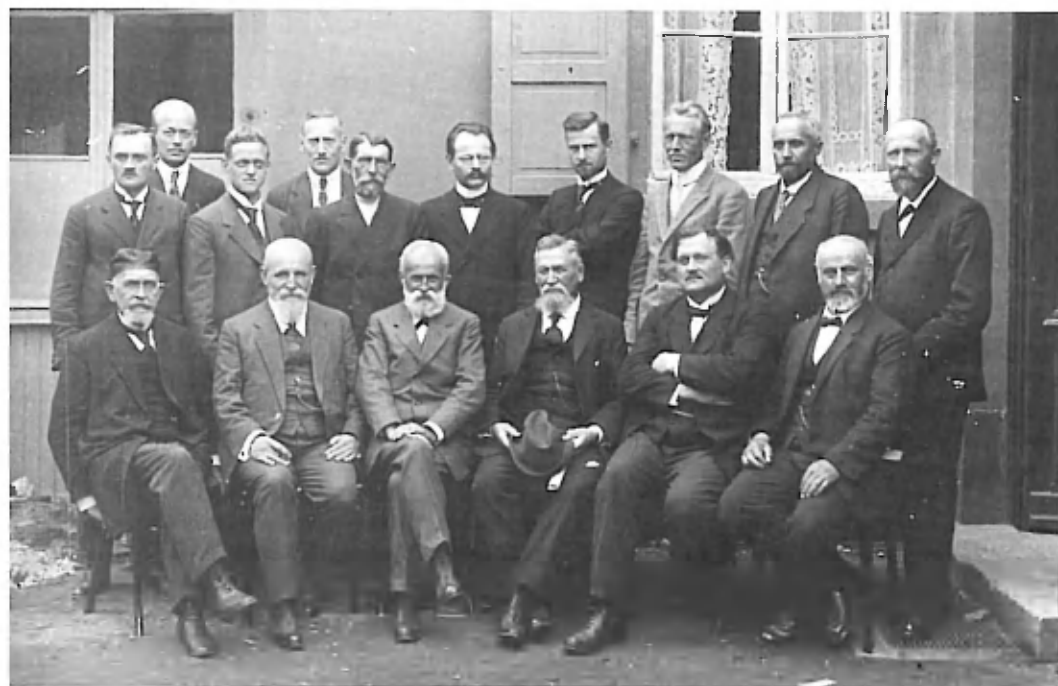
Christian Neff's interest in inter-

Mennonite co-operation arose out of a deep love for the church and a broad theological education received at the universities of Erlangen, Tübingen, and Berlin. His contact with American Mennonites, referred to earlier, was also vital in shaping his vision. Neff was pastor of a Mennonite congregation at the Weierhof in the Palatinate, and president of the Conference of South German Mennonites when he first proposed the idea of a world conference. Following favorable response from his own conference an invitation to participate in a "world-wide" conference was sent to the Mennonites in North America, Holland, Russia, France, Poland, Switzerland, and Germany. No invitation was sent to anyone in the Third World. The invitation went out in June 1924, giving as primary reason for the conference the fourth centennial of the founding of Anabaptism in January 1525.

The response from those invited was enthusiastic and the sessions took place June 13-16, 1925, at Basel and at Zürich. Approximately 100 persons participated in the Conference including the following delegate representation: two Swiss, seven Germans, one French Mennonite, four Dutch, and one American (H. P. Krehbiel). Among the guests was the well-known church historian Walther Köhler, as well as representatives of numerous non-Mennonite Protestant groups in

Left, a meeting in Oberursel Germany, in 1923 of the German Mennonite Relief Commission with representatives from Russia, Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the United States (Wilhelm Neufeld) which bears the label in the archives as "the first world conference of Mennonites."

Right, the delegates attending the 1925 Conference in Basel.



Switzerland. Missionary Johann Klassen brought the only greetings from the Third World by speaking in behalf of "our relatives in the faith" in Java and Sumatra.

Special letters of greeting were received from Jakob Rempel and Benjamin H. Unruh of Russia who were refused entry into Switzerland. They had, however, come to the border at Lörrach and a delegation appointed by the Conference visited with them at the German-Swiss border. Among these letters of greeting Rempel had brought a document adopted by Mennonites in conference in Moscow on January 17, 1925 and addressed to the "Mennonite Congregations in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Canada, United States of North America, Mexico, etc." The document expressed deep gratitude for the help given to them through the Mennonite Central Committee since 1920. In response, the Russian Mennonites had proposed to raise funds equivalent to the help received just as soon as they would be able, and to deposit this in a World Conference treasury which would thereby

be established to encourage the work of such a conference and to aid other Mennonites around the world. They also proposed the establishing of a World Conference office, the publishing of a world Mennonite registry of congregations and institutions, and that the Conference assist Mennonites everywhere in the work of missions, relief, education, emigration, and spiritual life within the congregations. These proposals received the warm support of a Dutch representative, who saw them as a call for the union of all Mennonites to work together at issues of practical concern. This led to "sharp, but clarifying discussion" (*Auseinandersetzung*) among the Dutch representatives themselves and, when others also expressed hesitation at such a step, the matter was referred to Chairman Neff for further consideration, but with the request that another, similar Conference be convened in two, or at most three years.

In addition to the historical commemoration, time was given to a discussion of "How We Can Improve the Spiritual Life of Our Con-

gregations." The keynote address by Jacob Kroeker stressed holy living, separation from the world, the power of the Christian hope, and the centrality of grace in personal and congregational life. Strong encouragement was given to Neff and Christian Hege, who had just begun work on the preparation of a Mennonite encyclopedia. The moderators were Samuel Nussbaumer and Fritz Goldschmidt of Basel, though Neff was the moving spirit behind the Conference. On the last day of the Conference the theological faculty of the University of Zürich conferred an honorary doctor's degree upon Christian Neff.





Danzig 1930

The second Mennonite World Conference was called the World Relief Conference, and met in Danzig from August 31 to September 3, 1930. Nonlocal attendance was small, including three Canadians and three Americans. The program was devoted exclusively to a study of the relief work of the Mennonite churches in Europe and North America. Particular attention was given to the great need of the Mennonites in Russia at that time, and to immigration and resettlement problems in South America and Canada.

David Toews, C. F. Klassen, and Harold S. Bender played a major role in the Conference deliberations. Because of the nature of the problems considered, many of the sessions were closed to all but those involved in the planning of help for the Russian Mennonites.

The Conference closed in a somber mood after adopting a resolution summarizing the work of the sessions and issuing an appeal to the Mennonite brotherhood everywhere to support with prayers and gifts the relief and resettlement work being carried on in behalf of

the Mennonites in Russia. As in 1925, there was no representation from the Third World, nor did any women participate in the program.

Upper left, delegates to the Danzig conference.

Lower left, unidentified, B. H. Unruh of Germany, David Toews of Canada, unidentified, C. F. Klassen of Canada, S. H. N. Gorter of the Netherlands, unidentified. Seated, Christian Neff and unidentified.

Lower middle, (1) Jacob Kroeker of Wernigerode, Germany, and Christian Neff of Germany; (2) Toews, P. Klassen, Unruh, and Klassen; (3) delegates visiting in front of the Danzig Mennonite Church.

Lower right, the former Danzig Mennonite Church after World War II now used by the United Evangelical Church.





Amsterdam 1936

The invitations to the third Conference, held at Amsterdam, June 29 to July 3, 1936, included the congregations in Asia and Latin America, though no representatives were able to come from there. A greeting was received from the missionaries in India. While there were still no women on the program, the official opening words of the Conference read "Dear Brothers and Sisters." The Conference celebrated the fourth centennial of Menno's conversion and focused on his significance for the Mennonite brotherhood.

Further efforts were made to aid the Russian Mennonite refugees then living in Canada, through collections for their travel debts. An international Mennonite relief center was established at Karlsruhe for this purpose. Some fifteen North Americans attended the Conference, six of these coming from Canada. Harold S. Bender served on the preparatory committee with Christian Neff.

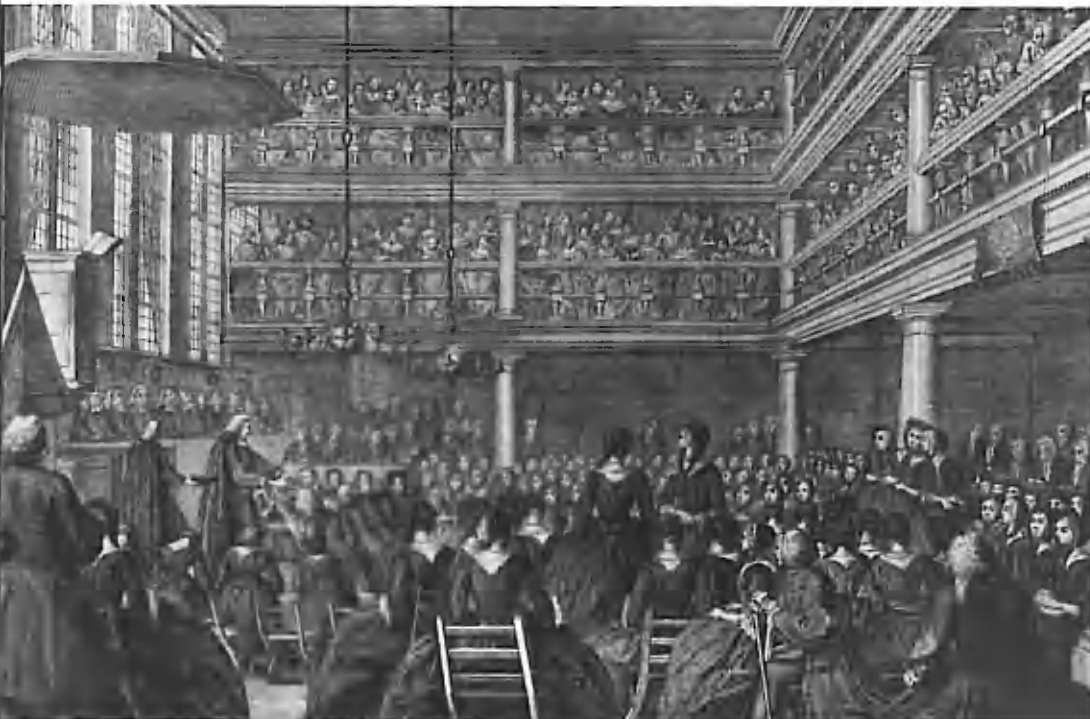
Immediately following the Conference some twenty leaders met at Fredeshiem near Steenwijk, Netherlands, to discuss nonresistance and formed an International Mennonite Peace Committee. A message in behalf of the peace witness was sent to all Mennonite congregations around the world.

Upper left, participants in the third World Conference at Amsterdam.

Middle left, participants in the 1936 World Conference at the Elspeet Conference Center of the Dutch Mennonites.

Lower left, seated are David Toews of Canada, C. F. Klassen of Canada, Benjamin Unruh of Germany, A. A. Sepp of the Netherlands, Christian Neff of Germany, Emil Händiges of Germany, and P. R. Schroeder of the United States; second photo: Neff, Händiges, Schroeder, P. C. Hiebert of the United States, and C. Henry Smith of the United States.

Below, etching of a Mennonite baptism in Amsterdam in the 18th century. Picard.





Goshen and Newton 1948

The fourth Conference was to be held in the United States in 1940, but the coming of World War II prevented this. In 1946 Christian Neff, pioneer leader of the conferences, died. At the urging of the General Conference Mennonite Church and, with some hesitation, the Mennonite General Conference, Mennonite Central Committee agreed to take the initiative in planning for a fourth Conference. It was soon agreed that it should be held in North America at two locations, Goshen, Indiana, and Newton, Kansas, from August 3 to 10, 1948.

At least one representative from the Third World was able to come (India) and, while no women seem to have been on the official program, Margaret Greenwalt of the Netherlands did share a brief testimony on "Nonresistance Under Test."

Several thousand visitors participated in the sessions at both locations, but only twenty-seven were able to come from overseas, largely through the aid of the North American congregations.

Upper left, the participants in the fourth World Conference at Newton, Kansas. In the foreground are members of the Executive Committee of the Mennonite Central Committee: J. J. Thiessen, C. F. Klassen, Orle Miller, P. C. Hiebert, Henry Fast, and H. S. Bender.

Lower left, four scenes of fellowship at the Goshen session.

Upper right, arrival by air of delegates from the Netherlands, Germany, and Switzerland.

Middle right, delegates from overseas.

Below, a group of delegates at the Goshen session.





Basel 1952

The fifth World Conference was held on the grounds of the St. Chrischona Bible School near Basel, Switzerland, August 10-15, 1952. It was the first conference to have a large number of official delegates. The Preparatory Commission had set a quota of two hundred delegates, one hundred from America and one hundred from Europe and elsewhere. Holland was to have thirty-five, Germany thirty, the French, Alsatian, and Swiss conferences ten each, and five for other lands. Of the approximately two hundred delegates that came one hundred twelve were from North America.

The officers of the Preparatory Commission were asked to serve as the executive officers of the Conference. Thus Harold S. Bender became chairman. The general theme was "The Church of Christ and her Commission," which focused attention on the nature of the church and on her world-wide mission. Discussion and special interest groups were convened for the first time at this Conference. Daily attendance averaged approximately 600 persons.

Upper left, delegates at the fifth World Conference at St. Chrischona Bible School near Basel, Switzerland.

Upper center, J. M. Leendertz of the Netherlands, J. J. Thiessen of Canada, B. H. Unruh of Germany and H. Craandijk of the Netherlands.

Lower center, C. F. Klassen, Harold Bender and Prof. Fritz Blanke of the University of Zurich entering the Gross Münster of Zurich for a commemorative service.

Lower left, a women's meeting at the Basel Conference.





Karlsruhe 1957

The sixth Conference was held in Karlsruhe, Germany, from August 10 to 16, 1957. Attendance exceeded all of the previous conferences, averaging 1000 daily, 2500 on Sunday. There were 248 delegates: United States eighty-eight, Canada twenty-two, South America five, Holland forty-two, Germany sixty, France eighteen, Switzerland eight, Belgium and Austria each one, Asia three. The main theme was "The Gospel of Jesus Christ in the World." Lectures and discussions centered around the polarity of church and world, with considerable emphasis on the lostness of the world. Separate discussions were held by historians, theologians, and others as well as by agency people in the field of missions, evangelism, relief, and peace. A preliminary draft of a constitution was adopted for approval by the member conferences.

Upper left, delegates attending the sixth World Conference at Karlsruhe.

Lower right, Walter Dyck of the United States listening to a translation of an address.

Lower middle, conference officers: Olin Krehbiel of the United States, Abram Braun of Germany, Harold Bender of the U.S., H. W. Meihuizen of the Netherlands, H. H. Janzen of Canada, and Samuel Gerber of Switzerland; conference officers in front of Schwarzwaldhalle, Karlsruhe.

Lower middle, vertical photograph, visiting in front of Ebenezer Hall at the Basel 1952 Conference.

Lower right, meal preparation for the Basel 1952 Conference.





Kitchener 1962

The seventh Conference was held at Kitchener, Ontario, from August 1 to 7, 1962. Attendance again exceeded all previous records, with 12,500 persons registered and an estimated equal number of persons driving to the sessions evenings and for Sunday. It is likely that there were more Mennonites together at one place than ever before in their 400-year history.

A roll call of nations indicated that no fewer than twenty-five countries were represented, and that there were at least 500 non-North Americans present. The Conference theme was "The Lordship of Christ." Harold S. Bender, who had been instrumental in so much of the life of the World Conference, attended part of the Conference sessions only. He died in September of that year. An unprecedented spirit of fellowship and mutual understanding pervaded the sessions.

Upper left, one of the large assembly sessions at Kitchener.

Lower left, delegates to the 1962 Conference from outside the United States and Canada.

Upper right, members of the Presidium of the World Conference: Hendrik W. Meihuizen of the Netherlands, Erland Waltner of the United States, Peter Wiens of Paraguay, Harold S. Bender of the United States, and Jesse B. Martin of Canada.

Middle right, registration line at Kitchener.

Lower right, the Ontario Planning Committee: Dan Wagler, Elven Shantz, Jesse B. Martin, Jacob Fast, C. J. Kempel, and C. J. Swalm.



Amsterdam 1967

The eighth Conference returned to Amsterdam, The Netherlands, July 23-30, 1967, under the theme: "The Witness of the Holy Spirit." For the first time a Study Guide of 28 pages had been prepared in advance and distributed among Mennonite congregations around the world to encourage spiritual preparation for the meetings. The Conference became in itself an experience of the presence and power of the Spirit. Approximately 6000 persons participated in the sessions, of whom one-third came from North America.

Except for China, Russia, and East Germany, the major countries

Upper left, leadership of the eighth Conference.

Middle left, one of the large general sessions.

Lower left, Dutch women in regional costumes.

Lower middle, the book store.



of the world in which Mennonites live were represented. This welcome development was not without its problems, however, particularly in the area of verbal communication. A Conference travel fund had been set up to give financial assistance to persons to come to Amsterdam. The program became more elaborate with theme addresses, evening addresses, reports from around the world, sermons, and thirteen sectional meetings. The Bible study groups, prayer groups, and the Communion Service were felt by many to have been particularly meaningful experiences of faith and worship. A significant development was the adoption of a "Conference Message" to the churches and the world. The approval of a constitution facilitated the continuing planning for another Conference.

Upper right, missionaries and nationals from Asia together with mission executives.

Middle right, the opening of the 1967 sessions with C. J. Dyck, Jan Matthyssen, J. A. Oosterbaan, Erland Waltner and J. J. J. v. Sluys.

Lower right, a study in alternative life styles.





Curitiba 1972

The ninth Conference convened at Curitiba, Brazil, July 18-23, 1972, the first meeting in the Third World. The theme "Jesus Christ Reconciles" was discussed in formal presentations, sermons, Bible study groups, small groups, and many informal settings, as well as in the seventeen related special Work Groups. The presence of the Conference in the Third World and the Travel Fund helped significantly to increase non-North American and European representation. A delegation from the USSR was not able to come but sent a telegram of greeting. Mennonites and Brethren in Christ from thirty-three nations were represented.

Upper left, the conference hall at Curitiba, Brazil.

Lower left and middle, Latin America musical ensemble and choir.

Lower right, the Conference Presidium with C. J. Dyck standing and speaking.

Upper right, some 2,000 attending the opening session.





Wichita 1978

Sixteen thousand delegates and visitors are expected to take part in the tenth Mennonite World Conference which convenes in Wichita, Kansas, July 25-30, 1978. One thousand of the delegates will come from countries other than the United States and Canada.

The theme of the 1978 assembly is "The Kingdom of God in a Changing World." Those who have led in the preparation for the Wichita conference speak of their expectations for this tenth World Conference:

• "Whenever we meet, we stand at a turning point, and we decide whether we go forward or backward." Takashi Yamada, Japan.

• "I hope that the Mennonite World Conference will unify Mennonites. I'm happy that there are Mennonites in forty different countries. But I don't see reason for four different Mennonite groups in one city, nor can I understand your hair-splitting difference. I believe we would do much better if we were united." Million Belete, Ethiopia.

• "The Tenth Assembly will be an event without precedent since the time of the Anabaptists." Kabangy Shapasa, Zaire.

• "There is still a lot of loyalty that comes from our common roots. The Mennonite World Conference is designed to keep the family intact, but it is tough. It is hard to talk to each other." Marvin Hein, Hillsboro, Kansas.

• "There is a peoplehood emerging that is deeper than blood... a fellowship of people who love each other, and who stand together in one kingdom against the one hundred and fifty kingdoms of the world." Paul N. Kraybill, Lombard, Illinois.

• The Mennonite World Conference is an "experience of celebration of our brotherly love in Christ." Takashi Yamada, Japan.

• "Our real roots are found in Christ. It is not the place or the people that we identify with but the stand they take." Million Belete, Ethiopia.

• "I fear a painless, neutralistic otherworldliness without application to our social responsibility." Jan Matthijssen, the Netherlands.

• "Most of the good things have come out of the unilateral precedents of the older Mennonites. We hope to move from solo to unison; from one-sided endeavors to joint work." Takashi Yamada, Japan.

• "The Holy Spirit is working in our midst. We are listening to each other. This will result in edification and growth of our brotherhood." Million Belete, Ethiopia.

• "The leaders from [Asian, African, and South American] churches want to know what there is about the Anabaptist vision that can help them. They want scriptural background from people who are committed to serious discipleship." Paul N. Kraybill, Lombard, Illinois.

Left, aerial view of Wichita. Photo Wichita Chamber of Commerce.

Right, Million Belete of Ethiopia, Conference President; Takashi Yamada of Japan, member of the Presidium; and Paul N. Kraybill, General Secretary.





Windows to the Mennonite Experience in America—

A Photographic Essay

by Robert Kreider

The Mennonite experience in America can be told in stories, historical narratives, analytical studies, photographs, and many other ways. Assembled together here are photographs—some almost a century old and few less than forty years old and virtually all to be found in the collection of some 30,000 photographs in the Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas.

Most of the photographs portray the early days of Mennonite life in the prairie states. These photographs—some faded, some sharp and clear, some the only existing copies—tell in part the story of many Mennonites who are hosting the tenth Mennonite World Conference at Wichita.

Quilts

Mennonites have preserved and cherished art forms which suggest their sense of identity, their quest for beauty and meaning, their feeling for values. One sees art forms in the design of barns, gardens, foods prepared, hymns sung, family celebrations, and crafts. Among these old art forms are home-crafted furniture, braided rugs and quilts—these forms of art by no means limited to Mennonites. If one attends

an MCC Relief Sale one sees hundreds of beautifully designed and stitched quilts auctioned off to eager bidders—the income going for support of world needs.

On these pages are views of the

quilting art: Lena Bixel of Bluffton, Ohio, more than a generation ago sewing on a quilt and a group of women of the Bethel College Mennonite Church enjoying the fellowship of a quilting bee.





The Plain People

The Plain People—the Old Order Amish, the Old Order Mennonites, the Hutterites, and others—are not only a delight to the photographer but also appeal to those of our age who long for more simple and less cluttered lives, a gentle and caring community, more humane relationships, and an intimate daily communion with the good earth and all of God's creation.

Whereas most photographs of Mennonites are quite formal—people standing in rows in their Sunday best clothing and looking solemnly into the lens of the camera—these photographs of the Amish and other Plain People capture persons engaged in the daily chores of house and farm.

Left, a barn-raising in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Below, an Amish buggy south of Yoder, Kansas

Right, Mennonite schoolchildren at Hinkeltown, Pa., in 1940 (FSA photo).



Wadsworth and Halstead

The first Mennonite school of higher learning to open in America was the Wadsworth Mennonite School (Institute) of Wadsworth, Ohio, which served from 1868 to 1878. Many of those who were to give leadership to Mennonite missions, education and conference programs later in the century studied at Wadsworth.

Within four years of the closing of Wadsworth, Halstead Seminary at Halstead, Kansas, was established, which also was to serve for ten years before it was in turn succeeded by Bethel College in 1893.

American Mennonites, who have viewed higher education with a wary eye, nonetheless founded schools, which were to become colleges, within the first years of their arrival in the new western lands.

Upper left, the Wadsworth School, Wadsworth, Ohio, c. 1870.

Lower left, student body of the



Halstead School of 1886-87. The teachers are H. H. Ewert and H. O. Kruse. Standing in the second row on the left are David Toews (first) and C. E. Krehbiel (third). At least two of the students were Indians.

Upper right, Halstead Seminary graduates in the Class of 1893: Lizzie Dester, Maggie Dirks, David Toews, E. J. Hirschler, H. J. Kliever, W. B. Unrau, Martha Krehbiel (Mrs. R. A. Goerz), and P. H. Richert.

Middle right, a reunion of Wadsworth School alumni at the 1917 General Conference at Reedley, California, front row—S. S. Haury, Upland, Calif.; A. M. Fretz, Perlkasie, Pa.; Jacob Schowalter, Upland, Calif.; and William Galle, Moundridge, Kans.; second row—H. R. Voth, Goltry, Okla.; A. S. Shelly, Bluffton, Ohio; C. J. van der Smissen, Berne, Indiana; Phares Hunsberger, Reedley, Calif.; Hillegonda van der Smissen, Newton, Kans.; and Mrs. Phares Hunsberger, Reedley.

Lower right, the Indian Industrial School operated by Christian Krehbiel and family at Krehbieltown (Halstead), c. 1888.

Next page, the Halstead Orchestra of 1892-93, Halstead, Kansas







Cheyenne Neighbors

Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians had roamed the plains of Kansas in pursuit of buffalo only a few years before the Mennonites established homes and fenced in their land in the mid-1870's.

The first Mennonite mission work in Oklahoma territory opened among the Arapaho Indians in 1880 under the leadership of S. S. Haury, earlier a student at Wadsworth. Thus began for the Mennonites an almost century-long association with the Cheyenne and Arapaho people. On these pages are rare photographs of the people of whom Rob-

ert Hostetter writes in his drama, "Cheyenne Jesus Buffalo Dream," to be presented at the Wichita conference.

ma, a Cheyenne who helped missionary Rudolphe Petter in the beginning as interpreter and evangelist.

Below, Treaty Council of 1868 between the U. S. Commissioners and Indian chiefs at Ft. Laramie, Wyoming.

Right, Cheyenne encampment near Darlington, Oklahoma, c. 1890.

Lower right, Madwolf, first adult Indian Christian at the Havenoom Mission Station, Clinton, Oklahoma.

Lower right corner, Harvey Whiteshield, Cantonment, Oklaho-







Upper left, home of H. R. Voth near Gotebo, Oklahoma, c. 1915.

Middle left, mission school at Cantonment, Oklahoma, c. 1890.

Lower left, Mennonite mission buildings at Cantonment, Oklahoma, c. 1890, later destroyed by fire.

Right, Cheyenne Indians in El Reno, Oklahoma, in 1891 the distribution of beef ("beef issue") and tribal dances.







Right, the Indian Mission School at Cantonment, Oklahoma, 1890 or 1891.

Lower right, the mission chapel and mission house at Hammon, Oklahoma; two Indian students at the Halstead School, c. 1888.

Below, Missionary H. R. Voth and daughter Frieda with six Indian children attending the Halstead School, c. 1890.

Upper right, Old Horse and family; Magpie Family, early Cheyenne converts.

Middle right, the government agency house in Darlington, Oklahoma.

Lower right, Mennonite missionaries at Darlington, Oklahoma, c. 1891: Martha Moser, Mrs. A. Sudermann, J. H. Richert, J. H. Schmidt, H. R. Voth, Frieda Voth, Abr. Sudermann, Anna Voth, and Miss Penner.





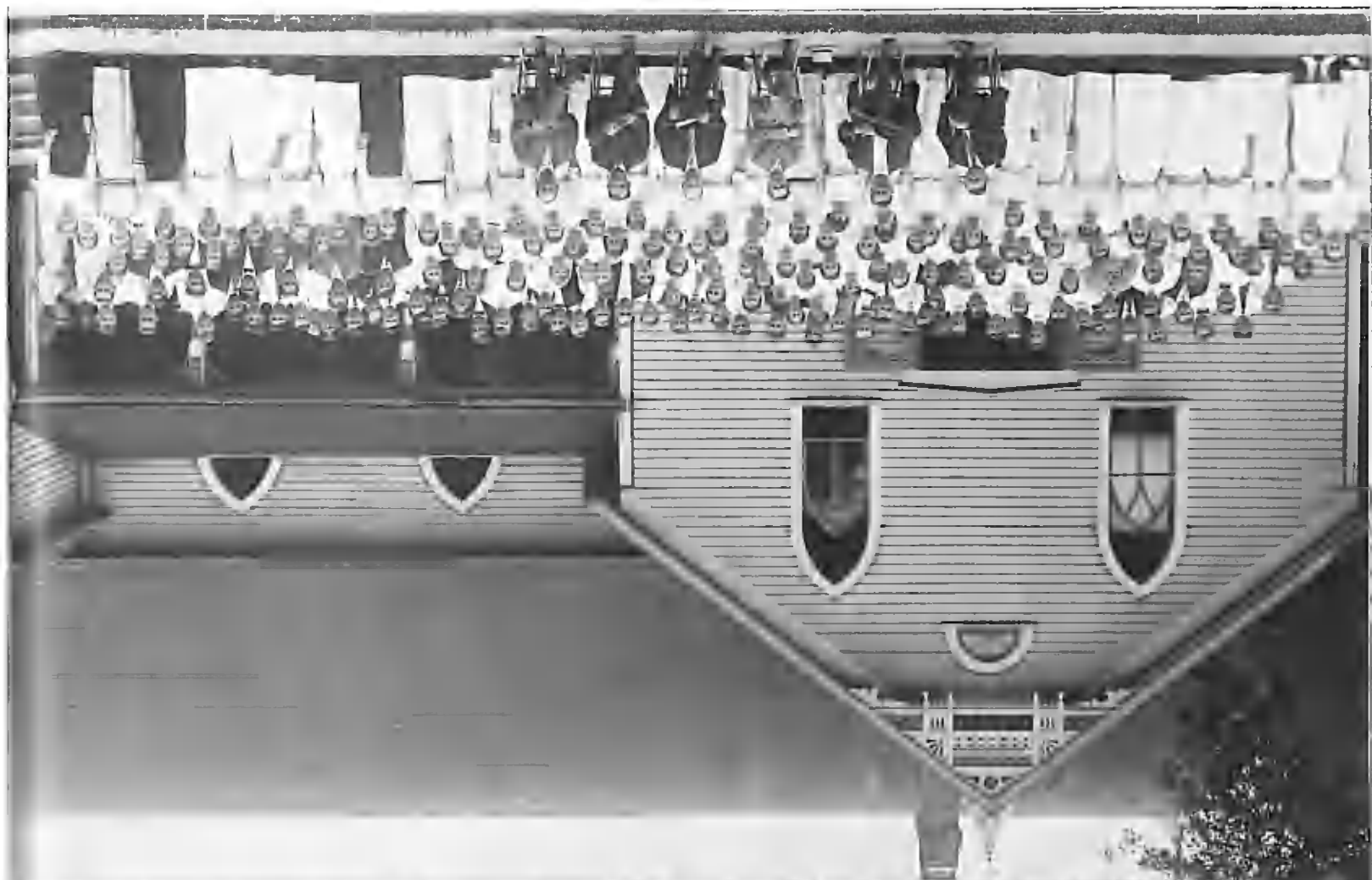
Early Years on The Prairie

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad was extended to Newton, Kansas, late in 1871 (upper right). Within two years streams of Mennonite immigrants arrived in Newton and fanned out across the prairie.

Some of those who migrated to Kansas in the 1870's built dug-out or sod houses like those of the Indians (middle left). Soon they built houses of worship (below, the large Alexanderwohl Church of Goessel, Kansas, a scene from 1886).

Twenty three years after the coming of the Mennonites to Kansas the stone foundation of the Bethel College (upper left) was laid, but for five years the building remained unfinished and empty. By 1893 the stone building was completed and soon frame houses from the closed Halstead Seminary were moved to Newton to join the great stone structure on the prairie (lower right).





Meeting Houses, Hospitals and Song Fests

As they have done in new communities in Russia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil and Zaire, the Mennonite immigrants have built in the early years of their settlements meeting houses for worship. Upper left is the stone meeting house of the Springfield Mennonite Church, Pleasant Valley, Pennsylvania, and lower left is the Bethel Mennonite Church of Mountain Lake, Minnesota. The latter shows a choir of the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, General Conference and Mennonite Brethren churches presenting a Song Fest on July 16, 1916.

Sunday Schools were organized. Below is a Hillsboro group leaving for a Sunday School picnic.

Hospitals were established such as the Bethesda Hospital of Goessel (upper right), which dedicated a new wing on May 10, 1903.

The immigrant congregations formed conferences for mutual strengthening. In the middle right one sees the outdoor kitchen for the 1914 General Conference at Meno, Oklahoma, September 2-7, 1914.





Farmsteads and Institutions

Within a few years of arrival the immigrants built permanent homes and soon they had photographs taken of their new homes and farms—placing in the foreground with the family a faithful team of horses, a new touring car or other prized possessions—and always wearing their Sunday best (below, three farmsteads). All of these photographs are from the years 1885 to 1910.

Left and upper left, the farm house of Gustav Harder near White-water, Kansas, the house built in 1884 and destroyed by a tornado on January 8, 1941.

They also established burial and disaster aid organizations, hospitals, newspapers, elementary schools (such as the Buhler school, middle right), orphanages (Salem Orphanage, Hillsboro, upper right), and many other mutual aid societies.





Towns and Business Enterprises

Mennonites arriving on the Santa Fe Railway in the 1870's staked out homesteads on the virgin prairies. A few moved into the towns—as the Claassen, Warkentin and Goerz families who built mills in Newton or Halstead. Others established banks.

Left is the Buhler Mill and Elevator Co. of Buhler, founded by Mennonites. On the upper right is the Main Street of Newton in the 1930's—the H. P. Krehbiel-owned bookstore in view (now General Conference headquarters), which was splashed with yellow paint by local militants during World War I. On the middle right is the Main Street of Newton on Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, marking the end of World War I.

Mennonite technological ingenuity is to be seen below in the horse drawn wheat combine of C. Schrag and Son, Ritzville, Washington, in 1906.



Hardship and Disaster

Life on the prairie has also known hardship and disaster. On arrival in the 1870's the immigrants encountered plagues of grasshoppers—the sky sometimes black with millions of these predators.

Floods occasionally covered towns and farmlands, as in the 1903 flood of the Arkansas River at Halstead (below).

Fires have destroyed historic

churches as the Hoffnungsau Church of Inman, Kansas, on February 14, 1948 (lower left).

Droughts have parched the earth and dried up the crops as in the dry years of the mid-1930's: a dust storm on February 21, 1935 in Western Kansas (upper right). The dust storm and the Great Depression of the 1930's forced many to leave the parched prairies and led many to seek fortunes farther West (right—both Farm Security Administration photographs).





