

Mennonite Historical Society Explores War of 1812

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada (MHSC), hosted by the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, held its annual meeting on January 21, 2012 at The First Mennonite Church in Vineland, Ontario.

Two special events highlighted the meeting otherwise focused on ongoing projects of the Society. Prior to its meeting board members toured local Mennonite and Brethren in Christ historical sites, including recently installed plaques commemorating the conscientious objection of the peace churches who refused to serve in the militia during that conflict. Dr. Jonathan Seiling, a Mennonite historian who is preparing a manuscript on the War of 1812, recounted to Society members a number of specific accounts of how young Mennonite men and women responded to the demands of the military through their claims for losses during the war, and through the oral accounts preserved in a number of family histories.

The Society's Award of Excellence for 2012 was given to Irene Klassen, a founding member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta (MHSA). She has served as the editor of the Alberta society's *Newsletter* for 16 years, and has been the organization's secretary for many years. She has been a regular volunteer at the MHSA's Archives and Library located in Calgary. Klassen has published several books, including *Their Mark: Their Legacy*, a compilation of biographies of significant leaders in the history of the Conference of Mennonites in Alberta (now Mennonite Church Alberta).

The Award of Excellence is given annually to persons who have made a significant contribution to the advancement of Canadian Mennonite history by way of research and/or writing.

In its work on Society projects, the MHSC heard that Esther Epp-Tiessen's history of Mennonite Central Committee Canada is on schedule, with publication planned for 2013. The text will take a chronological approach, and include substantial analysis of Canadian Mennonite relief efforts prior to the formation of MCC Canada in 1963. The working group preparing a new national Mennonite genealogical website reported half of the required funds were in place, with the balance to be raised in 2012. The site will make digitize primary source documents, with transliteration and translation from German if required. The Archives Committee of MHSC spent a profitable half-day discussing policy manuals and mission statements. The group plans to spend a day on preservation and classification of photographs at next year's meeting.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada was established in 1968 to sponsor the *Mennonites in Canada* history series by Frank H. Epp and Ted D. Regehr. Its membership is composed of six provincial Mennonite historical societies, four Mennonite denominational bodies, Mennonite Central Committee Canada and the Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg.

The 2012 executive is Lucille Maarr (Montreal, Quebec), President; Royden Loewen, (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Vice-President; Alf Redekopp (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Secretary; Richard Thiessen (Abbotsford, B.C.), Treasurer; and Maurice Martin (New Hamburg, Ontario), fifth member.

Photo attached.

Caption: Irene Klassen

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