

NOTES FROM THE ARCHIVES



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Canadian Moravian Historical Society, Edmonton Chapter
2304-38 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6L 4K9

What Have We Been Up To?

The Canadian Moravian Historical Society Board held meetings on May 25, 2016, and June 29, 2016. The Board is still struggling with an inadequate number of Board members or Directors. The Board consists of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, four directors elected by the members of the society and one director appointed by the BEC. If you are willing to support or fill a position on the Board, please contact the CMHS President or one of the current Board members (listed at the end of this page).

Conversation at both meetings included the upcoming visit of Dr. Paul Peucher, Director of the Moravian Archives in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Board is hoping to coordinate his visit with the April annual meeting of the Canadian Moravian Historical Society and have him speak.

Mark your calendar: The Annual Meeting is tentatively scheduled for noon, April 22, 2016, at the Millwoods Community Church. More information will be available in the February Newsletter.

Ron Neuman provided a presentation on closed Moravian Churches in Canada at our April 23, 2016, Annual Meeting. The presentation included numerous photos and graphics and we plan to include a summary of the presentation in a future news letter. Due to time constraints, he was only able to cover the Alberta churches. We will have him continue with the closed Moravian churches in Saskatchewan and British Columbia at a future meeting.

It is with deep regret that the CHMS Board accepted the resignation of Brian Pemberton of Calgary. He was filling a director at large position. While it was hoped that long distance communication via Skype and email would have enhanced a Calgary connection and active participation, technical and other difficulties prevented Brian from being able to actively participate on the Board.

CMHS at Synod 2016

Representatives of the CMHS Board attended the Canadian District Synod of 2016. Esther Vitt-Gonzalez, CMHS Vice President, was the official representative. Laurie Ward, CMHS President attended in another capacity.

CMHS Board is having trouble recruiting and retaining Board members. The result is that it is having difficulty meeting its objectives as established within the By-Laws. The Synod therefore directed that the CMHS Board amend its bylaws to encourage new members to join the Society as well as sit on the Board of Directors. This includes changes which would allow the inclusion of non-Moravians to sit as directors and reducing the number of directors that are currently required to sit on the board. Once the CMHS board has formulated new By-Laws, it will then be required to hold a meeting of all Society members for approval of these changes. We are hoping to accomplish the rewrite of the bylaws by January 2017 in order that the recruitment of members for the Board of Directors can be completed prior to our AGM in April 2017 at which time both the revised bylaws and new Board can be approved.

Following is a listing of the Canadian Moravian Historical Society (Edmonton Chapter) Board

President - Laurie Ward, wornout@telus.net
780-487-1802

Vice President - Esther Vitt-Gonzalez

Secretary - Edith Wilson

Treasurer - Ruth Humphreys

Directors - Donna Goodwin

Kerry Bloomer

BECD Representative -

Archivist - Bill Brese

780-440-3050, billbrese@gmail.com

Other - Joel Henkelman, jhenkelm@yahoo.com

Elaine Bloomer (Book Keeper)

The Early Moravians

250 years ago

In 1766 the Moravians had a prosperous and growing community at the confluence of the Rivers Sarpa and Volga in Russia. The colony was named Sarepta. A year earlier a German princess, who had become the Russian empress Catherine II of Russia, invited members of the "Bruedergemeine", as the German Moravians were known, to move to Russia and provide an industrial and civilizing influence over her somewhat backward native population. They were deeded eight thousand acres of land on the west shore of the rivers and an additional thousand acres on an adjoining island. Farms and industry thrived until 1823 when a disastrous fire swept through the town. By 1892 the government was confiscating the property of the Moravians and their churches. That year the last Moravian minister was recalled from the colony and Sarepta ceased to exist. Many families were able to escape the persecution with some ending up in Alberta. One of the Alberta congregations founded by those early German/Russian settlers was called New Sarepta. (from Pioneering in Western Canada, by C. Hoyler)

Didsbury

75 Years Ago

1941 began with Rev. Herman Schulze as pastor of the Didsbury Moravian Church. Over the previous year the church growth rate had been flat with a membership increase of one in 1940 and decrease of six in 1941. Rev. Schulze was one of those departing in November 1941. Pastoral

duties were continued by Rev. William Kroening. Church services were held every Sunday with a morning and afternoon German service and an English service in the evening. Pastor

Kroening lived in Calgary and supported additional congregations; therefore, he was only able to lead services twice a month.



The Didsbury Moravian Church as it appeared in the early 1940's.

50 Years Ago

In 1958 Didsbury had a student pastor, Gilbert Stelter. Church growth was flat with an increase of one member, from 48 to 49. Vernon Befus and Daryl Cook represented Didsbury at the Young Peoples Convo and brought back a photo and slide presentation. Mission Fest was held on November 3rd with guest speakers Rev. Wilton and Cecelia Schwanke from the Alaskan Mission Field. The Sunday School raised enough money to renovate the church basement to facilitate a large Christian Education Program.

In 1959 Rev. Eric Schulze was installed as the Pastor. For the next three years the church continued to grow at a slow pace. Membership increased by two or three members every year; however, the core membership was shrinking. Active members taking part in various church organizations shrank from 16 to 10. Mr. and Mrs. Ron Luft moved to Olds, Alberta, in 1962. The Wilfred Luft family left the following year. Mr. Luft was the Church Treasurer and Sunday School Superintendent. His wife was the Church Pianist. Individuals willing to step up read only German so were unable fulfill the church leadership role. There was a feeling in the congregation that it may be time to close the church.

After much prayer and deliberation it was decided that closing would be the right decision and the final service was held on Sunday, June 30, 1963, with Rev. Al Taylor officiating.



The Didsbury Church as it appeared before closing.

Throughout the summer Rev. Taylor continued to make routine visits to Didsbury and the Moravian families. One family joined another local Didsbury church and five families transferred to the Calgary Moravian Church. The church contents were sold at auction and the church building is still standing west of Didsbury (status unknown at time of this publication). By 1966, 50 years ago, the Didsbury Moravian Church had closed and the congregation no longer existed.

Vancouver

When was it founded?

The Vancouver Moravian Church was founded in 1927. In July 1928, Rev. Theo Weingarth was installed as the first permanent pastor. One of his first tasks was to begin a new church diary. The first page and a half contain a short historical sketch by Rev. Weingarth giving an account of the events from 1919 to the church founding in 1927. It is in this historical sketch that the date was established as Sunday, May 15, 1927, and that date became official.

In 1957, 30 years later, at a Church Council meeting and later at a Joint Board Meeting the date was questioned. Several of the Charter Members were still active in the church. Rev. Wilfred Harke was the current pastor and determined that the date conflict should be researched. Rev. Charles Gutensohn, who was involved in the actual founding of the congregation, supported Rev. Harke in this task.



Rev. Wilfred Harke

The first church record book of the congregation, "The Church Book of The South Vancouver - Lulu Island Moravian Congregation" was located. The book recorded that the church was organized on May 17, 1927, on Lulu Island in the home of Brother and Sister Emil Selmer. Charter members were interviewed and confirmed the May 17th founding date.

Additional research revealed why the congregation was organized on Tuesday evening and not as planned on the previous Sunday the 15th of May, 1927, but Rev. Gutensohn was unable to secure the signatures of all of the members to the 'Brotherly Agreement' by that



Vancouver Moravian Church

date so it was thought best to postpone the organizational meeting to Tuesday evening, May 17, by which time all signatures had been obtained.

Based on this information Rev. Harke wrote a letter to the PEC, Northern Province requesting that the date change be made in all official records and publications. On January 13, 1958, Rev. Kenneth Hamilton, President of the PEC responded, granting the request. The official founding date for the Vancouver Moravian Church was changed from May 15 to May 17, 1927 (from Church Correspondence, 1957, 1958).

Bruderheim

100 Years Ago



The Bruderheim Confirmation Class, 1906 with Rev. Gutensohn. Back - Adolph Schultz, Edward Sampert, Reinhold Schneider, Fredrich Otto, Emil Henkelman, Frederich Henkelman, Walter Hatelt. Front - Alvina Werner, Elizabeth Schultz, Hilda Schneider, Martha Prochnau, Lydia Gediskke, Martha Fibke.

The regular session of the Church Council was held on January 3, 1916. The meeting was opened with prayer and a scripture lesson. The minutes of the previous meeting and the treasurer report were read and adopted. August Schultz was reelected as an elder, G. Frederking as a trustee and Ed Kittlitz as treasurer. Pastor Gutensohn was elected secretary and R. Otto as janitor.

It was decided that a contractor should be hired to lift the church four feet to provide space for a basement. This would allow room for a furnace, school and space for growth. To diminish cost, the members agreed to haul the gravel for the basement from Beaver Hills. It was further agreed that income from the church wheat sales be used to pay for the basement upgrade.

Various members again agreed to provide seed oats for the church land and two sacks of oats for the pastor's horse. They also agreed to bring a load of firewood for use in the church and parsonage. An agreement was made to buy a sofa for church use. It would be paid for with money being contributed voluntarily. A motion to hire a carpenter to make a door for the opening between the gallery and the tower was adopted.



Bruderheim Church before basement addition

(Editor's note: The contract for the church basement upgrade was not signed until the spring of 1917. Several church members needed to be reminded that they had not yet brought the wood and stones they had agreed to provide for the project. It is recorded that the October 31, 1917, Church Council meeting convened in the new basement.)

Moravian Mileposts

The 'Moravian Mileposts' was a quarterly publication of the youth of the Canadian District. In 1966, 50 years ago, Pat Henning was Editor and Dianne Harke was Associate Editor. Following are some of the highlights from the Moravian Youth Groups around the District:

Edmonton - Sandra Schwanke reporting. February 6 was Youth Sunday and Colin Harke, Brenda Noske, Wayne Henning and Lois Harke volunteered to participate in the directing of the morning worship service. February 11th the Edmonton Youth joined the Rio Terrace in toboggan races and later in the month for a hayride at Clem Schmidt's.

Emily Schmidt reported later in the year. On September 24th the Edmonton and Rio Terrace held a cold and damp wiener roast at Storyland Valley. Later in October the Youth Group went out to New Sarepta for a Halloween hayride and haunted house tour

Calgary - Valerie Medd reporting. It was reported that Youth Group membership was growing in Calgary. Several evenings were spent at the Foot Hills Arena for an evening of skating with refreshments at a member's home afterward. On November 3rd a joint and belated Halloween party was held with the Evangelical United Brethren Church Youth Fellowship.

Rosie Elliot reported that the fall season kicked off with a skating party and meeting to elect new officers at the Groeninger home.

New Sarepta - Beatrice Kittlitz reporting. The first and organizational meeting of the Youth Club was held at the home of Dwayne Harke on January 23. A sleighing and tobogganing party, ending with refreshments was held at the home of Hope Eckert on February 27.

Rio Terrace - Diana Hertz reporting. The first meeting of the year was held on January 16 and a new executive was elected. On February 6th, Youth Sunday, the boys of the Youth Group conducted the Sunday Service. The girls were all involved in teaching Sunday School so were involved elsewhere. On their way to the hayride, referenced under Edmonton, the group decided to 'follow the leader' since no one knew the way. The leader got lost and the last car got stuck making for a memorable event. On March 19 Mr. Layfield, Manager of Jasper Dairies, took the Rio Terrace and Edmonton groups on a Dairy tour, concluding at his home for refreshments.

Vancouver - Bob Boettcher reporting. Several youth meetings were held with discussions on topics such as: the dress of teenagers, flattery and prejudices. A social was held to celebrate the departure of a friend of the group who was beginning a nine month trip across Europe. Several of the youth visited Edmonton for a variety of reasons.

Bruderheim - Bonnie Liske reporting. January was spent rehearsing for the Youth Program which was put on for youth from outside the church. The program was a success. February 20 the group saw a film titled "Christian Courtesy in Dating." The evening concluded with an argument as to whether a boy should kiss a girl on the first date. A winter highlight was the sleigh ride. The evening concluded with a hotdog party at Frey's. On April 8th a supper and Candle Light Service was held at Josephburg. Approximately 40 youth attended. In fall several volleyball games were played with the 'Rebels', led by Tim Bartz, holding the best record by winning 7 of 11 games.

Jane Wedman Boettcher passing

Jane Wedman Butzine Boettcher died on August 23, 2016, in Bethlehem, PA. She was one week shy of her 90th birthday. Jane was a daughter of the late Rev. Sam Wedman, for whom Wedman Lodge at Camp VanEs was named. She served as a missionary nurse in Nicaragua in the 1950s and resided for several years in Watertown, WI. Jane was predeceased by her husband, Samuel Boettcher, brother to Rev. Erwin Boettcher. She is survived by her son and several nieces and nephews. A memorial for her will be held at Camp VanEs on October 11, 2016.