

MENNONITES OF NIAGARA

Interviewee: Walter Epp  
Interviewer: A. Marshall  
Language: English  
Topics Covered:

Pioneers

They came to Kitchener, Leamington and then to Vineland, Niagara-on-the-Lake, and St. Catharines. They worked in canning factories, General Motors. There was a strong sense of community among the early settlers, which had been with them from the time they were in Prussia and Russia. United (Conference) Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren began having church services in St. Catharines in 1943-1944. There were very good leaders, usually elders or ministers of church were the best. C.P.R. gave credit of over one million dollars to Mennonites to come to Canada.

Own Experience In The Early Years

Mr. Epp came to the Niagara Peninsula in 1941 for health reasons, to find an easier job. He came with his wife and his 2 children. They lived in Port Dalhousie when they first arrived - there were 35 people in one house, 17 adults and 18 children. Mr. Epp first worked at a garage, then for Bell Telephone, maintaining trucks. They first worshipped in the basement of the Calvary Church, and then some Mennonites gathered on St. Paul Street.

Arrival And Integration Of Newcomers

Mr. Epp encouraged people to come to the Niagara Peninsula in 1948-1949, and helped them find work, donated food, clothing and blankets. Some newcomers set up their own leadership structure. Move toward English language now.

Kind And Degree Of Organization Today

There is more participation today. There are more Bible schools today. There are no great differences between Mennonites today.

Ethnic Persistence

Young people do have a strong sense of Mennonite identity. Mr. Epp believes committment to religious beliefs and practices will increase. He believes that the interest in maintaining traditional foods will increase.

Individual's Background

Born: Laird, Saskatchewan, 1908  
His father was a farmer, and the president of the Mennonite Fire Insurance.