

Tape 10

MENNONITES OF NIAGARA

Interviewee: Frank Steingart  
Interviewer: A. Marshall  
Language: English  
Topics Covered:

Pioneers

They first came in about 1920 and settled in Vineland, Virgil and St. Catharines. They had to farm and were not allowed to work in factories. They worshipped in halls they had rented. Great sense of community, since they had come from small villages in Russia. There was a strong sense of identity with other Mennonites. There were group leaders on trains and ships who talked to government officials. These leaders were voted in and they had to fill the position. Mennonite Colonization Board was formed in Canada by Mennonites who came in 1878-1879. Mr. Steingart never received financial assistance from friends upon his arrival in Canada. The CPR gave credit to him, so that he could come with his wife and child to Canada - \$550. MCC had an office in Rustin, Saskatchewan and helped immigrants a great deal.

Own Experience In The Early Years

Steingarts came to Alberta after being encouraged by a brother-in-law (preacher) who helped Mr. Steingart get a job on a farm, and a place to stay, on that same farm. They worshipped with the people with whom they lived, since they too were Mennonites. They came to the Niagara Peninsula in 1937 from Manitoba, driving an old car. They had friends here who advised they to stay because they could find work here. Mr. Steingart bought a farm in St. Davids and lived there for 5 years, then bought another farm. Again they rented a hall in which to worship. They went to preachers, lawyers or doctors for assistance.

Arrival And Integration Of Newcomers

Mr. Steingart encouraged friends to come to the Niagara Peninsula from out west, but he could not assist them financially. Sense of community became stronger with each new wave of immigration.

Kind And Degree Of Organization Today

Today there is more money and more participation. There are not great differences between Mennonites to present any problems. Mutual Burial Society covers all Mennonites.

Ethnic Persistence

Young people do have a strong sense of identity.

Individual's Background

Born: Southern Russia, 1896  
Father's occupation: farmer and owner of a flour mill  
They felt at home as soon as they arrived in Canada.