

Report of the Virginia Conference Historical Committee

Timothy Jost, Chair, January 14, 2019

The conference archives continue to be overseen by Simone Horst, the EMU Special Collections Librarian, with volunteer assistance from Ken Seitz and Dennis Kuhns. As we have reported in the past, most boxes in the archives are full or nearly full and there is little room on the shelves for more boxes.

Many of our congregations currently prepare materials digitally. We encourage adding the archives to circulation lists and sending material digitally rather than on paper. Of particular archival value are committee minutes, annual reports, and membership lists. District records and collections related to individuals with particular ties to the Conference are also encouraged. We welcome church bulletins, but encourage digital submission as paper bulletins consume space.

Digital materials can be sent to archives@emu.edu. Congregations that prefer to send paper materials can still send them to Virginia Mennonite Conference Archives, Hartzler Library, 1200 Park Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Simone Horst is in the process of digitalizing the conference archives indices. A project is also underway to digitalize issues of the *Windsock*, the Eastern Mennonite School student newspaper.

Dr. Steve Nolt, Professor of History and Anabaptist Studies at Elizabethtown College, continues work on the Virginia Mennonite history, co-sponsored by the Virginia Mennonite Conference and the Shenandoah Valley Mennonite Historians. Dr. Nolt is released from teaching this semester, and looks forward to making progress on the book. He is currently working on a chapter about Virginia Mennonites in the Civil War. He will be making another trip to Harrisonburg and the archives soon.

Eastern Mennonite University hosted the Kauffman Museum "Voices of Conscience" Traveling Exhibit, co-sponsored by the Virginia Mennonite Conference, during October and November. The Exhibit documents the experience of Mennonites and other pacifists during World War I. Coordinated with the Exhibit, Phil Kniss gave a talk, "Lloy Kniss and Mennonite conscientious objection to World War I," while Duane Stoltzfus of Goshen College offered a presentation, "On the Front Lines of Conscience: An Account of Four Hutterites Imprisoned at Alcatraz"

Simone Horst reports in her write-up of the Exhibit:

The exhibit also hits close to home for those of us in the Shenandoah Valley, as it mentions the trial of Rhine Benner and L.J. Heatwole. In the summer of 1918 Benner, a Mennonite mission worker in Job, WV, wrote to his bishop, Heatwole, for advice about what to advise his congregation to do in regards to the purchase of war bonds. Heatwole advised him to "contribute nothing to a fund used to run the war machine." The letter found its way to officials in D.C. and subsequently Benner was briefly jailed, Heatwole was indicted, and both were put on trial for violating the Sedition Act of 1918 by instructing their parishioners to not buy U.S. bonds and War Savings Stamps. They pled guilty and we each fined \$1,000 (roughly \$16,000 in today's money).

<https://anabaptisthistorians.org/2018/11/08/voices-of-conscience/>

