Faith versus Culture?: The Mennonite Pavilion at Folklorama in Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1980-1982

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From August 10 to 16, 1980, the Mennonites of Manitoba first sponsored their own pavilion at the annual Folklorama event in Winnipeg. More than thirty years later Folklorama continues to celebrate "ethno-cultural diversity"[1] in Manitoba. In 1980 about thirty cultural groups had their own pavilion.[2] That week in 1980 served as a type of recognition or rite of passage for Mennonites as a Manitoban ethnic subculture. Folklorama began in 1970, so Mennonites had required a decade to achieve that status. Yet this Mennonite pavilion only lasted three years – 1980, 1981, and 1982 – and has never been revived. Why is one of the most clearly-defined and earliest groups of European-origin to immigrate to Manitoba are not represented at Folklorama? The relationship between ethnicity and faith, between culture and religion, is an ancient and oft-debated one, especially among Mennonites;[3] the existence and demise of this Mennonite pavilion highlighted and ignited that

debate in the Manitoba context. This article will draw on published sources and interviews with participants and observers to explore this short-lived experiment.

Two clusters of events organized by Mennonites need to be mentioned as precursors of the Mennonite pavilion. The Mennonite Festival of Art and Music was a series of annual events (1972 to 1987) held at the Polo Park Mall in Winnipeg[4] – usually just a half-day event on Sunday afternoon. In the first year (1972) there were about eighty artists and craftspeople with about four thousand visitors. In addition to various arts and crafts exhibitors, "about a dozen choral groups"[5] and instrumentalists offered both sacred and secular musical pieces. The Women's Committee of the Mennonite Educational Society of Manitoba, auxiliary arm of Westgate Mennonite Collegiate, a secondary school in Winnipeg, sponsored and organized the event. Many persons and businesses made donations. A news article described the 1973 festival as "a combination of art, crafts, music, food and socializing."[6]

On April 7, 1974, the Mennonite Festival of Art and Music was held for the third time, also at Polo Park Mall. Exhibitors had swelled to about one hundred, with "7,000 to 8,000" visitors expected.[7] Organizers saw the response as a remarkable success which "...keeps the Mennonite culture alive and exposes it to other Canadians..." That year coincided with the Mennonite Centennial, which provided an occasion for the art festival to organize a "Historical Mural Contest" for Mennonite artists. The federal government provided a grant for this mural contest. The final year for this festival was 1987.[8]

The centennial celebrations in 1974, marking the initial immigration of Mennonites to Manitoba, were extensive, and many of the events took place in Winnipeg. The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and others helped organize volunteers for this major celebration.[9] Books and articles were published. Low German radio broadcasts emphasized history. A Hymn Sing was held at Centennial Concert Hall in Winnipeg. An oratorio, historical pageant and folk opera were composed and performed. Worship services were held, including a large one at the Winnipeg Arena. The Mennonite Piano Concerto was composed and performed. A Winnipeg group presented the German drama "Prozess Jesu / The Trial of Jesus."[10] Hundreds attended many choral and instrumental concerts. In the 1970s the centennial celebrations and the annual festival of the arts demonstrated how different Mennonite groups could cooperate on one project, in order to both celebrate their history and present aspects of their cultural and religious identity to the general public.

The idea of a Mennonite pavilion at Folklorama grew out of a discussion between John I. Friesen, chair of the board of Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, and John T. Wiens, fellow board member, about ways to raise funds for the school. They collaborated with Westgate Mennonite Collegiate in Winnipeg and approached the organizers of Folklorama, who initially rebuffed them with the response that Mennonites did not represent a country, like the other Folklorama groups. Friesen effectively replied to Mr. Cohen, the Jewish member of the board, that if the Jews had a pavilion, so can the Mennonites, who also had a distinctive religious and ethnic identity. They received the permission.[11]

In April 1980, four months before the Folklorama event, a Mennonite periodical anticipated the Mennonite pavilion.[12] The initial sponsoring bodies, two private secondary schools, were joined by the Mennonite Literary Society.[13] Individuals supporting the periodical, *Mennonite Mirror* (1971-1992), a news periodical published by the Mennonite Literary Society, also tended to look favorably on the pavilion.[14] Note that volunteers relating to Westgate Mennonite Collegiate were among the organizers of both the Mennonite Festival of Art and Music and also (not necessarily the same persons) the Mennonite pavilion.

The Mennonite pavilion was located at the University of Winnipeg campus. Riddell Hall cafeteria served as the main venue and a theatre, seating about 150 people, held the numerous musical performances, and the foyer of Centennial Hall hosted the crafts display. Visitors could sample Dutch-Russian Mennonite food, hear Low German folk music from *Heischratje und Willa Honig* / Locusts and Wild Honey, listen to concerts of "German folk songs, white and negro spirituals and gospel hymns,"[15] play crokinole (*Tjnippsbrat*, in Low German), and munch sunflower seeds (*Knacksoht*). Unlike most of the other pavilions, no alcohol was served.[16] Like the Mennonite Festival of Art and Music, one could see displays of "traditional Mennonite crafts including spinning, embroidery, and crocheting as well as demonstrations of quilting and spinning" and "paintings by Manitoba Mennonite artists and a collection of Kroeger clocks."[17] An average of two thousand visitors per night visited the pavilion, and proceeds of about $11,500, shared equally by Westgate Mennonite Collegiate and Mennonite Collegiate Institute, were received over the course of the week.[18]

It is significant to read how the *Winnipeg Free Press* reported on activities at the Mennonite pavilion. The religious dimensions of Mennonite life were not noted – not even religious music. The newspaper highlighted the "humorous country and western style"

of the "pop group," called "Locusts and Honey," who sang songs in Low German,[19] writing: "Hear such innovative musical instruments as the plunger, the upside-down bathtub and hockey stick."[20] Given the exceptional achievements of Manitoba Mennonites in the areas of instrumental and choral music, especially in Winnipeg, note that the Winnipeg newspaper highlighted this folk music group. The organizing committee had difficulty choosing the type of entertainment that fit with and appealed to those attending Folklorama.[21] Other pavilions had colorful costumes and dancing but not the Mennonites. Other pavilions could lubricate their guests with alcohol but not the Mennonites. Mennonites specialized in more sober choral pieces, especially in the classical and religious genres, and had only the one humorous folk music group.

Some Mennonites felt the incongruity of describing Mennonite reality as a specific ethnic/cultural set of behaviours rather than a religiously-motivated ethic applicable to any ethnic group. In an article following the close of the festival, an article in the *Mennonite Reporter* noted: "Not everyone was happy with the idea of Mennonites identifying so closely with an ethnic or multicultural event, particularly those Mennonites who are reluctant to publicly emphasize the Low German ethnic aspect of the Mennonite heritage."[22] Most of the other pavilions represented countries outside Canada from which the cultures of ethnic Canadians originated. But what country was the "Mennonite" country? Was their country of origin the Netherlands, or Germany, or Poland, or Russia or Paraguay – all locations where they and/or their ancestors had lived?

Opposition to the pavilion was publicly expressed in August by *Mennonite Brethren (MB) Herald* editor, Harold Jantz, who wrote that a Mennonite pavilion "has no place in Folklorama," because "the message was confusing and did not point to the heart of what it means to be a Mennonite."[23] Jantz argued that "to be a Mennonite Christian is to embrace Christ and to be part of a living fellowship in him....It surely does not mean that only those whose family names have the ring of German-Dutch origin...or who can speak German or who show an acquaintance with some favored foods, are Mennonite." Jantz reminded his readers that Mennonite Brethren communities in both Zaire (Congo) and India were larger than in Canada and that they would have "found virtually nothing to identify with" at the pavilion.

One major published response to Jantz's editorial came from *Mennonite Mirror* editor, Ed Unrau, in its October 1980 issue.[24] According to Unrau, Jantz would "deny the ethnic quality of being Mennonite," thus "denying their previous historical experience

without replacing it with anything." Unrau stated that the pavilion should show that Mennonites are sometimes more than the "Dutch/German/Russian elements... . It must be made clear that Mennonites are continually reformulating what it means to live an Anabaptist way of life in a complex world." Unrau conceded that the 1980 pavilion "might well" have confused Mennonites from other countries. He implied that the future 1981 pavilion would introduce more information about the clearly religious aspects of Manitoba Mennonite life.[25]

Unrau then criticized Jantz and the Mennonite Brethren for presenting a "confusing" picture of Mennonites to the world, by getting some of their "theological orientation from non-Mennonite streams." Unrau hoped that the pavilion could portray Mennonites as "standing apart from the world but also from the mainstream of Christianity, including fundamental evangelical Christianity." In the November 1980 issue of the *Mennonite Mirror* Jantz responded to Unrau's report on the Mennonite pavilion. Unrau's criticism of Mennonite Brethren looking to non-Mennonite sources annoyed Jantz, who rejoined: "I may stand apart from the world, but I won't stand apart from fellow Christians. We will want to stand together with other Christians, even when we don't agree on some things."[26]

Jantz developed his criticism of the pavilion, stating that giving the public a predominantly ethnic definition of Mennonites "confuses our Christian witness." He continued:

> Part of his [Unrau] problem is that he reveals so little understanding of how faith relates to culture. I have no difficulty in conceding that the Mennonites of Manitoba have many of the characteristics of an ethnic group. For the most part, they share a common history, carry many of the same family names, come from a fairly narrowly defined place of origin, many speak a common German dialect, and practice many of the same customs. But, because that is the case, we would surely not want to freeze the meaning of Mennonite in that ethnic-cultural mold. Neither would we want to put these ethnic characteristics forward and say to the world, "There, that is what it means 'to be a Mennonite.'"

Immediately following this letter from Jantz in the November issue of *Mennonite Mirror*, an unsigned response from the *Mirror* editors urged people to read the prior *Mirror* report in the October issue. The editors accused Jantz of "cast[ing] aspersions on the Christian commitment of the [Mennonite pavilion] participants." "We [*Mirror* editors] regret the attack on the Christian integrity of our managing editor." Although to me Jantz does not appear to attack anyone's Christian integrity, his sharply-worded criticism can hardly be described by his own closing phrase, "Cordially

yours." Tensions between Mennonite Brethren and General Conference Mennonites[27] clearly emerged in this instance. One attendee said that he had noticed more Mennonite Brethren coming to the pavilion in 1981. He confidently claimed that the "...criticisms raised last year in the *MB Herald* seemed to be more of an advertisement than a detraction. This year is better than the last."[28] Given the demise of the Mennonite pavilion after 1982, I wonder if this hopeful assertion of increased attendance was wishful thinking.

This controversy highlighted aspects of the contrasting beliefs and practices of the two major Dutch-Russian Mennonite groups in Manitoba at that time, the Mennonite Brethren and the General Conference,[29] whose differences originated at least as far back as a century in Russia at the origins of the Mennonite Brethren. Mennonite Brethren emphasized personal choice and clear individual conversion to the way of Christ. In the Manitoba of the 1950s and 1960s the Mennonite Brethren largely transitioned from German to English in their congregational life. By the 1970s some Mennonite Brethren in Manitoba sought to downplay or shed their ethnic characteristics in light of the mission imperative to people from all cultures. By the 1970s some Mennonite Brethren leaders were identifying with, and participating in, "...transdenominational evangelical institutions and organizations."[30] Cultural traits such as Low German and "Mennonite" foods were not effective tools for mission outreach to the general population in western Canada, which included some newly-arrived immigrants from Asia and other continents.

Even among General Conference leaders, some questioned the emphasis on Dutch-Russian Mennonite ethnic characteristics.[31] In 1974 the Chinese Mennonite Church began as an outreach of the General Conference.[32] In 1979 some Manitoba Mennonites supported refugees from Southeast Asia (Vietnamese, Hmong, and Laotian) and a few of these groups began relationships with existing Mennonite conferences, both Mennonite Brethren and General Conference. Between 1979 and 1985 Mennonites in Canada sponsored more than 4,600 Southeast Asian refugees.[33] If they wanted to encourage these refugees to identify with Mennonites, then so prominently emphasizing the traditional Dutch-Russian Mennonite folkways did not make strategic sense.

Bernie Wiebe, General Conference editor and leader, took a middle road on the Mennonite pavilion, believing that the ethnic emphasis was a partially helpful message; rather than abandoning the pavilion as Harold Jantz argued, Wiebe urged the planners to organize the pavilion to show that the "...true core of Mennonite lies

more in our peoplehood as believers in Christ who are deeply committed to support each other and to serve wherever needs exist in the world."[34] He urged them to include Mennonites of "native Indian descent, Vietnamese, Indian, Chinese, Negro, etc. and some of their foods and folkways, to illustrate the New Peoplehood in Christ we are trying to become." Commentator Roy Vogt, *Mennonite Mirror* editor and pavilion committee member, also wrote: "As more people from other backgrounds join us [Mennonite church], their traditions will also have to become part of what we enjoy, just as a Mennonite pavilion in Africa would present us with a vastly different mixture of music and food."[35]

About thirty years later, John I. Friesen recalled these events and mused:

> Certainly, I do not feel that the members of the initial organizing committee clung so strongly to Russian Mennonite ethnic characteristics, that it would have precluded the incorporation of non-Russian Mennonite ethnicities in the Mennonite pavilion. It is interesting to speculate how the Mennonite pavilion might have evolved had it continued in operation for a long period of time. Is it possible that, over time, Mennonites other than those of Russian Mennonite ethnicity might have participated in the Mennonite pavilion?[36]

Commentator Ed Unrau also wanted to reform the pavilion to highlight the religious aspect of Mennonite identity. Unrau acknowledged some of the logical anomalies of trying to communicate both the religious content and the ethnicity of Mennonites in Manitoba. He asserted that "...one remains and maintains his or her Mennonitism by choice,"[37] that "...being Mennonite is a way of life, an attitude, that one chooses," in contrast to an ethnic tradition that one is born and raised in. Unrau also felt a little uncomfortable at some the musical entertainment because he could not tell "whether they were in church or at a performance." This uncomfortable feeling pointed to the basic anomaly of presenting Mennonite identity – both cultural and religious – in this public setting.

In 1981, the second year of Folklorama, an editor of the *Mennonite Mirror* apparently promised a more "balanced picture of Mennonite life,"[38] although it appears that not much changed.[39] As in the first year, one could also learn about some of religious emphases found in Mennonite churches, such as information about the activities of Mennonite Central Committee, an international relief and development organization, and Mennonite Disaster Service, an agency responding to natural disasters in North America.

Rudy Regehr, "mayor" of the pavilion, said that "the displays you see are the cultural fabric, the ethnic basket if you like. Our religion would be a part of what goes into that basket."[40] John I. Friesen described the type of image they hoped to project: "Our cultural life and our religious faith have always been linked quite closely. Our literature, our art...have all been influenced by our religion. This religious faith and the ways in which we express it must be projected in the Mennonite pavilion."[41]

Although it appears that the organizing committee was not in principle closed to incorporating non-Dutch-Russian Mennonite ethnicities into the pavilion, a major reform in the religious or ethnic content of the pavilion did *not* occur, and thus no "answer" emerged to the more fundamental criticism – that the very existence of a pavilion of a religious group at an ethnic festival was a both logical and theological contradiction and a confusing message in a group of pavilions, each centered on one ethnic group.

After the second year, the three sponsoring bodies decided not to continue their leadership involvement. Instead, the Landmark Drama Society, led by Wilmer Penner,[42] organized the 1982 Mennonite pavilion. Penner, who lived in Landmark but worked in Winnipeg, had centered his group on presenting programs of music, readings, and drama in Low German. Proceeds from the 1982 event, probably about $7,000, were donated to the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba. Again, organizers said that the profits from the event did not "justify" the effort.[43] That was the last Mennonite pavilion.

Although organizers gave raising funds for the schools and the museum as the reason for this pavilion, I sensed another set of motives – both assertive and defensive. As progressive Mennonites saw Low German and High German waning among the younger generation and the traditional Dutch-Russian Mennonite folkways becoming more precarious in the face of modernization, a desire to formally assert the Mennonite folk culture rose up. In 1981 one editor of the *Mennonite Mirror*, Al Reimer, revealed that his motivation for supporting the Folklorama pavilion stemmed from a defensive perspective concerned with the disappearance of ethnicity among Dutch-Russian Mennonites: "We are fighting for ethnic survival, and anything that helps to delay our ethnic demise is to be welcomed, including a Mennonite pavilion at Folklorama."[44] For him the confusion between the ethnic and the religious was tolerable, as long as it promoted the traditional cultural traits of Manitoba Mennonites. For the second year, the *Mirror* tried to reassure its readers that "...insiders say that a really first rate pavilion takes years to develop."[45] Yet 1983 was the final year of the

Mennonite pavilion – not the last attempt to emphasize the non-religious expressions of Mennonite ethnicity, but the last attempt in that very public and inter-ethnic context.

By 1983 Reimer affirmed the mandate of the *Mennonite Mirror* but gloomily mused: "The time may come when the Mennonites in this area will be virtually indistinguishable in a cultural and ethnic sense from the rest of the community. If and when that happens we may declare ourselves redundant and quit."[46] It appears that he could not envision any viable Mennonite identity disconnected from traditional Dutch-Russian Mennonite ethnic characteristics.

In 1987, a few years after the last Mennonite pavilion, yet another published interpretation of this issue of Mennonite ethnicity and its expression came from John D. Redekop, a Mennonite Brethren intellectual. In his *A People Apart: Ethnicity and the Mennonite Brethren*, he cited and questioned the Jantz editorial opposing the Mennonite pavilion at Folklorama. Here we see two Mennonite Brethren in conflict over this issue. Redekop's argument is centered in the following:

> But Jantz's assumptions are dubious. Yes, the witness [of Mennonites at Folklorama] is indeed confused but not because ethnic Mennonites call themselves ethnic and act like ethnics but because Anabaptist churches call themselves Mennonite. Many of us have no race or ethnicity other than Mennonite. Does Jantz want to deny our ethnicity and thus, ethnically, to be nobodies? Why should I deny who I am? I am a Christian...of Mennonite ethnicity. Jantz' criticism lacks both accuracy and credibility. If I'm not Mennonite than [sic] what am I ethnically. One does not simply decide Mennonite means church by saying so... . Now there may be good reasons why Mennonites should not have even a "teetotalling" pavilion at Folkorama but, I suggest, it is far-fetched to cite Mennonite non-ethnicity as that reason.[47]

It appears that Redekop misunderstood Jantz, who did not write that Mennonites have no ethnicity. Jantz argued that the most important, the most central meaning of the word Mennonite was a religious orientation of personal commitment rather than a set of ethnic/cultural characteristics. Yet Jantz does not deny Mennonite ethnicity as historical fact:

> I [Jantz] have no difficulty in conceding that the Mennonites of Manitoba have many of the characteristics of an ethnic group. For the most part, they share a common history, carry many of the same family names, come from a fairly narrowly defined place of origin, many speak a common German dialect, and practice many of the same customs. But, because that is the case, we would surely not want to freeze the meaning of Mennonite in that ethnic-cultural mold.[48]

Redekop's radical linguistic solution was to distinguish the terms "Mennonite" and "Anabaptist" by giving the first an ethnic meaning and changing the name for the religious grouping to Evangelical Anabaptist Church, that is, to linguistically disconnect "Mennonite" and "Christian faith."[49] Redekop would separate the two phenomena [ethnicity and religion] "publically and officially" and "strongly and unashamedly affirm both."[50] Redekop's proposed solution, however creative, was one person's fruitless attempt to jettison about four centuries of many groups using some form of the word "Mennonite" to denote a religious/theological reality.

Conclusion

After three years (1980, 1981, and 1982) organizers abandoned plans for a Mennonite pavilion at Folklorama. The *Winnipeg Free Press* noted that "organizational problems"[51] caused the Mennonites to cease this pavilion, which had lasted merely three years, but that they "planned to have a pavilion next year." The latter prediction never came to pass.

This run of three years contrasted with the longer-lasting Mennonite Festival of Art and Music, which lasted sixteen years (1972-1987) and continued during the same time as the Mennonite pavilion. In fact, in 1983 the twelfth festival added a more scholarly component, a visual arts symposium financed by the federal government. Mennonite artists from throughout Canada and a few from the U.S. made oral presentations, and the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery had an exhibit of artistic pieces.[52] This stand-alone festival did not have to face the ethnic and religious quandary or define "Mennonite" content in art; the subject matter of the festival became any art or music produced by Mennonites.

Why did the Mennonite pavilion "die" after only three years? Various people provide different answers and different primary emphases to that question. The initial sponsors state that they abandoned their leadership of the Mennonite pavilion due to volunteer fatigue, not due to opposition to a Mennonite pavilion at Folklorama. As John I. Friesen wrote in 2013:

> It is true that the Mennonite pavilion at Folklorama was the flashpoint which, once again, ignited the debate about ethnicity and religion. That the tensions, which developed as part of this public discussion, in any way affected the demise of the Mennonite pavilion is questionable in my mind. Certainly, I do not recall that it was a factor in the decision of the initial organizing committee to discontinue our participation in

> Folklorama. Naturally, I do not speak for Wilmer Penner's group; they were the last group to run the Mennonite Pavilion.[53]

However, it is this writer's opinion that the theological question about a religious group, such as the Mennonites, at Folklorama may have contributed to an overall question mark over the enterprise in the eyes of some Mennonites. The larger context of this story suggests that more than organizational problems or volunteer fatigue caused its demise. One may ask why did willing volunteers not flood the organizing committee? Perhaps prospective volunteers hesitated because they did not want to give the message to the public that their Dutch-Russian Mennonite culture was the only way to be Mennonite. Manitoba Mennonites, both Mennonite Brethren and some General Conference, had difficulty, I suggest, facing what had become the uncomfortable ambiguities and contradictions of demonstrating a uni-dimensional Mennonite ethnicity in that public setting.

Others argue that the demise of the pavilion was due to a poor response from the general public, who did not respond to the faith content of the exhibits. This perspective, similar to Ed Unrau's editorials, would encourage an integrated presentation of faith and ethnicity for Manitoba Mennonites. As one General Conference historian, John J. Friesen, wrote in 2013:

> I think actually the organizers of the Mennonite pavilion presented Mennonite faith well within its culture in a way that had much more integrity than [Harold] Jantz allowed. The crucial contradiction was that when the Mennonite faith within culture was presented well, with choirs singing traditional hymns, Folklorama-goers were not interested because it did not fit the mold of the other pavilions. I think it is this contradiction that eventually caused the demise of the Mennonites at Folklorama. The Mennonite pavilion failed precisely because it tried to honestly integrate faith and culture. It failed because it included too much faith, not as Jantz argued, that it had too much culture and not enough of an emphasis on faith.[54]

Unlike Friesen's statement that Jantz wanted more faith content in the pavilion, this author believes that Jantz advocated against a Mennonite presence at Folklorama because any presentation of faith and ethnicity, of any balance between the two, was going to be confusing and unreflective of Mennonites throughout the world. From another angle, we also see that Friesen recognized that the Mennonite pavilion "did not fit the mold of other pavilions," and therefore did not receive a positive response from the non-Mennonite visitors. So both Friesen and Jantz felt that a Mennonite

pavilion did not readily fit at Folklorama, Jantz for theological reasons and Friesen for more practical ones.

For some Manitoba Mennonites the waning of their Dutch-Russian Mennonite ethnic characteristics caused them to cling more strongly to that ethnic identity in the context of Folklorama. These worries may have precluded the incorporation of non-Dutch-Russian Mennonite ethnicities in the Mennonite pavilion.

Significant tensions between General Conference and Mennonite Brethren, still considerable in the 1980s, emerged in this story. These tensions did not in themselves doom the Mennonite pavilion but made negotiations about the pavilion and any possible major reformulation more difficult.

The demise of the Mennonite pavilion was not, it appears to me, an especially major event or loss for Manitoba Mennonites.[55] They had many other contexts, organizations, and settings to express their religious and cultural identity. In a sense Mennonites had a few entire denominations[56] and a few Manitoba towns (Steinbach, Altona, Winkler) where they very much dominated the religious, cultural and economic scene. Also, in Steinbach the Mennonite Heritage Village presented in a major museum setting both the ethnic and religious dimensions of Manitoba Mennonite history – with contemporary reality as a minor theme.

Manitoba Mennonites generally did not get involved in leadership at the German pavilion at Folklorama, even though they usually spoke High German and Low German. However, in the late 1980s, when a Paraguayan pavilion was introduced in Folklorama, the involvement of Mennonites was heightened. The organization and leadership of the Paraguayan pavilion in 2008, for example, was comprised of many Mennonites.[57] Even though native Paraguayan ethnicity is indigenous and generally Hispanic in origin and some of the significant folk music and folkways originated from those two cultures, the significant involvement of German-speaking Mennonites (many who also speak Spanish) in the twentieth century history of Paraguay has resulted in a significant "flavour" brought by Mennonites to the Paraguayan pavilion.

The story of the short-lived Mennonite pavilion at Folklorama represented one minor step in the waning of twentieth-century Dutch-Russian Mennonite cultural characteristics among Manitoba Mennonites, and also served as a flashpoint for theological debate about the meaning of Christian faith and ethnicity.

Notes

1 In 2013 there were about forty pavilions open in two weeks – with ca. 425,000 pavilion visits. The website boasts that Folklorama is the "largest and longest running multicultural event of its kind in the world!" www.folklorama.com.

2 A Folklorama pavilion is not usually a building owned only by the organization sponsoring the Folklorama event or one that is used exclusively for Folklorama. These "pavilions" are usually community centers, schools, church recreational halls, or other types of buildings with various public and/or private uses throughout the year.

3 Rodney Sawatsky, "Mennonite Ethnicity: Medium, Message, and Mission," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 9 (1991): 113-121, is an excellent discussion from the perspective of a Dutch-Russian Mennonite. In a Manitoba context, one could study how the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba, communicates Mennonite religious faith and Mennonite ethnicity to the public.

4 Rudy Regehr, "Mennonite Art and Music Festival," *Mennonite Mirror* 1:8 (Apr. 1972): 17. , Mennonite Heritage Centre has some programs from this event – one dated April 15, 1984, which refers to the event as the "13th Annual" one. Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Vol. 2444, no. 3, Fine Arts Committee, Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.

5 Mavis Reimer, "Pioneer life paintings...," and "Quilts put on View...," *Mennonite Mirror* 9:8 (1980): 20.

6 Lore Lubosch, "An April Festival of Arts," *Mennonite Mirror* 2:7 (Mar. 1973): 5-6. This consciousness and highlighting of Mennonites in the arts occurred in that decade in other major Mennonite communities, such as Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. *Festival Quarterly*, a private periodical was created there in 1974 by Merle and Phyllis Good.

7 "Art Festival," *Mennonite Mirror* (Jan. Feb. 1974): 59. A photograph of the festival committee showed Susan Froese, Betty Epp, Eleanore Loewen, Irene Enns, Irmgard Friesen, and Anna Penner.

8 Peter Rempel, the coordinator of the Art and Music Festival states: "The Westgate Women's Auxiliary held the last Art and Music Festival at C[anadian] M[ennonite] B[ible] C[ollege] in 1987." He continues: "It was not continued thereafter due to volunteer fatigue and the failure to find a new coordinator." Peter Rempel, email to David R. Smucker, June 21, 2013.

9 *Mennonite Reporter* 4:24 (Nov. 25, 1974) is an entire Centennial of Russian Mennonite Immigration issue, providing historical input rather than description of 1974 events in Manitoba. Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Centennial Events, 1974," *Mennonite Mirror* (Jan. Feb. 1974): 3, 39 gives a brief year-long schedule of events in the East Reserve, West Reserve and Winnipeg. A book-length pastiche of many short articles on Manitoba Mennonite history (not events of the centennial celebration) emerged in 1974: Julius G. Toews, Lawrence Klippenstein, eds., *Manitoba Mennonite Memories: A Century Past but Not Forgotten* (Altona and Steinbach: Manitoba Mennonite Centennial Committee, 1974).

10 "The Trial of Jesus," *Mennonite Mirror* (Nov. 1974): 23.

11 John I. Friesen, interview by David R. Smucker, May 17, 2013. One could also study the history of the Jewish pavilion at Folklorama in terms of comparison and contrast with the Mennonite pavilion.

[12] "Pavilion Set for Mennonites at Folklorama," *Mennonite Mirror* 9:8 (Apr. 1980): 9. Even in faraway Pennsylvania, a notice appeared: "Mennonites Join Winnipeg Folklorama," *Festival Quarterly* (May June July 1980): 26.

[13] *Mennonite Mirror* 9:10 (June 1980): 16, and 9:8 (Apr. 1980): 9.

[14] *Winnipeg Free Press*, Aug. 9, 1980, 17, states that the sponsor of the 1980 Mennonite pavilion was the Mennonite Literary Society and did not mention the schools. Perhaps this reflects the perception that Folklorama did not present religious content.

[15] Casimir Carter, "Music makes culture sing," *Winnipeg Free Press*, Aug. 12, 1980, 26, which notes that the Morden Male Choir, conducted by Jake Zacharias, will sing these types of songs.

[16] "Mennonite Pavilion," *Winnipeg Free Press*, Aug. 9, 1980, 17, rather than just refraining from mentioning alcohol, specifically states that "no alcohol is served."

[17] "Mennonite Pavilion," 17, has a photo of the pavilion's "mayor," Ken Loewen, and notes for the queen, "none chosen."

[18] John Friesen, "Thanks to Folklorama volunteers," *Mennonite Reporter* 10:23 (Nov. 1980): 7. John T. Wiens thought that figure may have represented revenue, not profit after expenses. John T. Wiens, telephone interview, June 4, 2013.

[19] Carter, "Music makes culture sing," 26. Note that the English newspaper omitted the word "wild" in their translation from Low German.

[20] "Mennonite Pavilion," 17.

[21] John T. Wiens, telephone interview, June 4, 2013.

[22] Allan J. Siebert, "Mennonite Pavilion is Popular Attraction," *Mennonite Reporter*, Sept. 1, 1980, 3.

[23] Harold Jantz, "What business do we have in Folklorama?" *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, Aug. 29, 1980, 13.

[24] Ed Unrau, "Our Word," *Mennonite Mirror* 10:2 (Oct. 1980): 22.

[25] In an interview with the author, John I. Friesen did not recall that the planning committee made any major changes from 1980 to 1981 with respect to the religious content of the pavilion exhibits. John I. Friesen, interview by David R. Smucker, May 17, 2013.

[26] Harold Jantz, "Mennonites in Folklorama," *Mennonite Mirror* 10:3 (Nov. 1980): 27.

[27] Two Mennonite conferences, the General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church, amalgamated and in 1999 became known as Mennonite Church Canada. As this paper focuses on events prior to the formation of Mennonite Church Canada, however, the term "General Conference" will be used throughout.

[28] David Bergen, "Mennonite pavilion...," *Mennonite Mirror* 11:1 (Sept. 1981): 11. The comments were by "Jake Rempel."

[29] From my perspective today, not a Dutch-Russian Mennonite and about thirty years later, it appears that Jantz had a more theologically-informed understanding of faith and culture in his analysis of this Mennonite participation in Folklorama. However, both the responses of Jantz and editors of the *Mirror* were shaped by antagonisms between Mennonite Brethren and General Conference. Harold Jantz wrote that his "Mennonite Brethren sensitivities certainly moved me in a direction that would have distanced me from the idea of a Mennonite folk pavilion, but were not

shaped solely there." Harold Jantz, email to David R. Smucker, Feb. 13, 2013.

30 Abe J. Dueck, ed., *The Mennonite Brethren Church Around the World: Celebrating 150 Years* (Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 2010), 66.

31 Helmut Harder, Winnipeg, interview by David R. Smucker, Feb. 17, 2013. In contrast, Adolph Ens, as a General Conference member, remembers feeling indifferent about the combination of ethnicity and faith at the Mennonite pavilion. Adolph Ens, Winnipeg, interview by David R. Smucker, Jan. 20, 2014.

32 Friesen, *Building Communities*, 123-24.

33 Royden Loewen and Steven M. Nolt, *Seeking Places of Peace* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2012), 186-87.

34 Bernie Wiebe, "Letters," *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, Sept. 26, 1980, 10.

35 Roy Vogt, "Observed Along the Way," *Mennonite Mirror* 12:1 (Sept. 1982): 14.

36 John I. Friesen, email to David R. Smucker, May 30, 2013.

37 Ed Unrau, "Folklorama '80: A Good Beginning," *Mennonite Mirror* 10: 1 (Sept. 1980): 8-9.

38 Al Reimer, "Mennonite Pavilion...," *Mennonite Mirror* 10:10 (June 1981): 6.

39 John I. Friesen stated that they did not change their approach in 1981. John I. Friesen, interview by David R. Smucker, May 17, 2013.

40 David Bergen, "Mennonite Pavilion 1981," *Mennonite Mirror* 11:1 (Sept. 1981): 11.

41 "Pavilion Set for Mennonites at Folklorama," *Mennonite Mirror* 9:8 (Apr. 1980): 9.

42 Penner stated that he was involved with the 1980 and 1981 pavilions. His group led the process only in 1982. Landmark is about forty-one kilometres from downtown Winnipeg. Wilmer Penner, interview by David R. Smucker, Feb. 15, 2013.

43 Ibid.

44 Al Reimer, "Reflections on this year's Mennonite pavilion at Folklorama," *Mennonite Mirror* 11:1 (Sept. 1981): 22.

45 David Bergen, "Mennonite Pavilion 1981," *Mennonite Mirror* 11:1 (Sept. 1981): 11.

46 Al Reimer, "The *Mirror*'s Faith in the Future," *Mennonite Mirror* 13:1 (Sept. 1983): 30.

47 John D. Redekop, *A People Apart: Ethnicity and the Mennonite Brethren* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1987), 67.

48 *Mennonite Mirror* 10:3 (Nov. 1980): 27.

49 Redekop, *A People Apart*, 153, 167-181.

50 Ibid., 148.

51 "It's food and fun time again," *Winnipeg Free Press*, Aug. 5, 1983, 14. I found no mention of it in the *Mennonite Mirror* for 1983.

52 "Symposium in Visual Arts to Complement Festival," *Mennonite Mirror* 12:8 (Apr. 1983): 19-20

53 John I. Friesen, interview by David R. Smucker, May 17, 2013.

54 John J. Friesen, email to David R. Smucker, Oct. 22, 2013.

55 In 2012 and 2013, as I asked some Manitoba Mennonites about their memories concerning the pavilion, I noted that many could not remember how many years it lasted or precise details of the events. Even John I.

Friesen called it a "distant memory" for him. Most *did* remember that there had been disagreements about it.

[56] For example: General Conference / Conference of Mennonites in Canada, Mennonite Brethren, Evangelical Mennonite Church, Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church.

[57] The website of the Paraguayan Club of Winnipeg (www.paraguayclubinc.ca) indicates that in 2008 all four officers had German-language "Mennonite" surnames. The pavilion began in the late 1980s, and the club was founded in 1994. I note that in the 2013 Folklorama there was no Paraguayan pavilion.