



The Historical Commission — through its four archives (Fresno, Abbotsford, Hillsboro, and Winnipeg) — continues to offer

research and archiving services to MB churches — their institutions and their people.

One of my roles is keeper of the Winnipeg archives (Centre for MB Studies), where I adapted to the COVID restrictions by offering research help to users online. Looking for a baptism photo, an obituary of a loved one, a book, magazine article, or church decision on some theological issue? There are online research resources available to help you with your quest. Ask me to connect you with these if you are interested.

A recent COVID project of mine involved the digitization of audio cassette recordings. In 1987, Frieda Esau Klippenstein interviewed 34 Mennonite women for an oral history project, documenting the experience of Mennonite domestics associated with the Mary Martha Home in Winnipeg. These immigrant women — usually for a year or two, but some longer — had worked for wealthy Winnipeg families in their homes during the 1920s through to the 1950s — cooking, cleaning, and child minding.



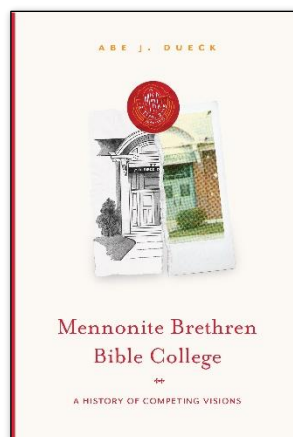
It was then, as it is today — many care worker jobs were done by newcomer women. The Mennonite women from the Mary Martha Home — also newcomers to Canada — did what they could to help their families resettle in Canada.

For many years, the women were under the supervision of Anna Thiessen (1892–1977), matron of the Mary Martha Home, a house at 437 Mountain Avenue and ministry of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba.

When the Mary Martha Home closed in 1959, more than 2,200 women had benefited from its housing, support, and advocacy services. The digitization of the interview cassettes ensures that researchers will be able to access the interviews, even as the original cassette tape recordings deteriorate with time.

To listen to a 3-minute excerpt from one of Frieda's interviews, see <http://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/> and follow the prompts. You will also find links to other documents related to the Mary Martha Home.

My other role is to work part-time for the Historical Commission, which funds research grants and publications. For application criteria and details concerning these initiatives — and the news releases announcing past recipients and their projects — see the Commission's website, <https://mbhistory.org>.



The Commission's most recent publication is Abe J. Dueck's book, *Mennonite Brethren Bible College: A History of Competing Visions*. The book — to be released in spring 2021 — documents and assesses the Canadian Mennonite Brethren church's education agenda from 1944 to 1992, a story of

competing visions. To purchase your copy, see <https://www.kindredproductions.com>.

For more information on these initiatives and resources, contact me at jon.isaak@mbchurches.ca.

The Historical Commission is a funded ministry of the US Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and the Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches.

Elected board members include **Don Isaac**, chair (Hillsboro), **Patricia Janzen Loewen**, vice-chair (Winnipeg), **Chris Koop** (St. Catharines), **Benny Leung** (Calgary), **Maricela Chavez** (Fresno), and **Valerie Rempel**, recording secretary (Fresno). Archival representation on the board includes **Kevin Enns-Rempel** and **Hannah Keeney** (Fresno), **Peggy Goertzen** (Hillsboro), **Richard Thiessen** (Abbotsford), and **Jon Isaak**, executive secretary (Winnipeg).