

Historical Committee
Dale Schrag, Chair

Although its work was somewhat disrupted by the Coronavirus, the Historical Committee of the Western District Conference did have a productive year. Activities included

- Sponsoring three workshops at the 2019 Assembly of WDC.
 - “Creative Responses to the Arizona Borderlands” (Raylene Hinz Penner)
 - “Making Reparations: Personal Journey for Land and People” (Florence and Weldon Schloneger)
 - “Women in Ministry: Forty Years in Review” (Lois Barrett and Dorothy Nickel Friesen)
- Co-sponsoring the “Imperfect Peace Witness” Bus Tour at the 2019 Assembly of WDC.
 - This event, led by Brian Stucky of Goessel, focused on the “almost lynching” of John J. Schrag in 1918 for his refusal to buy war bonds.
- Recommitting to updating and adding relevant Western District Conference-related entries in the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (GAMEO). This effort was begun by an earlier iteration of the WDC Historical Committee, but it never quite took hold. The contributions made this year include
 - With the help of David Haury, volunteer archivist at the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, more than a dozen entries were submitted to GAMEO, the majority of them individuals with strong Western District Conference ties. Examples include (Elma Esau, Elmer Ediger, Jacob B and Agatha Ediger, E. E. Leisy, Amelia Mueller, J. Lloyd and Blanche Spaulding, Malcolm and Esther Wenger).
 - Entries for some Western District congregations (e.g., First Mennonite Church of Beatrice, Nebraska, and Beatrice Mennonite Church) were updated by committee member Brett Klingenberg.
 - The Historical Committee has pledged to ensure that in the next year every WDC congregation will have an initial—or updated—entry in GAMEO.
- Monitoring developments in the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College, the official repository for WDC archives. Developments of note include
 - The steady processing of papers of deceased individuals with important WDC connections (see above).
 - Weldon Schloneger’s digitization of the photo collections of Rodolphe Petter and Anna Linscheid, both of whom served as missionaries to the Southern and Northern Cheyenne in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
 - The MLA is joining with several other US and Canadian Mennonite archives in a new online Mennonite Archival Information Database.
 - The successful completion of an effort to raise a one-million-dollar endowment for MLA operations, undertaken to replace the annual income that previously came from the Mennonite Church USA.

Committee members are James Juhnke, secretary; Roger Juhnke; Brett Klingenberg; Raylene Hinz Penner; Dale Schrag, chair; John Thiesen, ex officio.