**ANNUAL REPORT**

**WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE HISTORICAL COMMITTEE**

June 2024

The Western District Conference Historical Committee remains firmly convinced that understanding the Western District's unique history, as well as the distinctive history of the Mennonite denomination, is essential for moving confidently and appropriately into WDC's future.  Among the year's activities are the following:

- Unanimously recommending to the family of Lawrence Hart and the leadership of the Koinonia Mennonite Church the publication of a manuscript entitled "The Cheyenne Way of Peace.'  We believe that the final decision to publish must be left to Lawrence's descendants and congregation, but the committee has pledged to prepare the manuscript for publication once it receives permission from the aforementioned groups to do so.

- Questions have been raised regarding access to indigenous archive materials.  The committee has devoted considerable time to discussing this issue with John Thiesen, director of the Mennonite Library and Archives and a member of the Western District Historical Committee.

- 2024 is, of course, the sesquicentennial of the major Mennonite migration from Prussia, Russia and Polish Russia to the Central Plains States.  Many congregations and communities are planning celebratory events to mark the anniversary, perhaps none more zealously than the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association (SMCHA).  SMCHA has planned a three-day celebration at Eden Mennonite Church (Moundridge) on 23-25 August, complete with an original drama, multiple seminars, a special choir, a worship service, and lots of ethnic foods. The committee has offered advice and counsel to some of the seminar presenters.  Some committee members have also served as regular contributors to SMCHA's Facebook site with brief vignettes about Anabaptist and Mennonite history.

Committee members are Roger Juhnke, Brett Klingenberg (secretary), Dale Schrag (chair), Renae Stucky, and John Thiesen. ex officio.

Submitted by Dale Schrag, chair