

California Mennonite Historical Society

Annual Meeting

Saturday, April 19, 2008

Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary
4824 E. Butler Ave., Fresno, California

Schedule of Events

[There will be no afternoon session this year]

6:00 (British Columbia Lounge)

Dinner & Business Meeting

Reservations required. See below for details.

7:30 (Chapel)

James Juhnke

“Revisiting the Great Trek, 1880-1884”

In 1880 more than one hundred Mennonite families set out on a long journey to the Russian frontier of Central Asia from the colonies of Molotschna in the Ukraine and the Trakt in the Volga region. Today this migration is most often remembered as an unfortunate example of religious fanaticism and a warning against the danger of following deluded religious leaders such as Klaas Epp Jr. But is there more to the story?

For this year's annual program, Professor James Juhnke will tell the background and main events of the "Great Trek" of 1880-1884; describe the life of the Mennonite community of Ak Metchet near Khiva, 1884-1935; and analyze the ways this story has been interpreted and mis-interpreted in North America and Europe. He will include some comparison of the 1870s movement to North America with the Great Trek to the East. Juhnke concludes that the role of Klaas Epp Jr. has been overemphasized, and that the Ak Metchet community was more of a success than we have realized.

James Juhnke was a professor of history at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, from 1967 until 2002. He is the author of several books on Mennonite and American history, including *A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites* (1975), *Vision, Doctrine, War: Mennonite Identity and Organization in America, 1890-1930* (1989), and *The Missing Peace: The Search for Nonviolent Alternatives in United States History* (2001, 2004). In May-June 2007 Professor Juhnke led a tour group that followed the route of the Great Trek, and his presentation will draw on the group's experiences on that trip.

Tickets for the dinner are \$10.00 for Historical Society members; \$15.00 for non-members. New memberships (\$25) paid at the door will qualify for the member ticket price. There is no charge for the 7:30 program alone. Reservations for the dinner must be made by April 16. Call 559-453-2225 for reservations.

