



## Economic Developments in the United States, 1940-1960.

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### I. Economic Trends in the American Context <sup>1</sup>

The decade of the 1940s has been considered a turning point in United States history. The American frontier had disappeared, and with it most unsettled lands. The national influence of agriculture, employing less than half of the population as early as 1880, was decreasing rapidly so that by 1940, 17.4 percent were in the agricultural labor force while by 1960 only 6 percent remained.<sup>2</sup> The dominance of the agricultural enterprise with the small village as the commercial center was undergoing massive change, with thousands of rural villages/towns simply disappearing. Agriculture clearly was in a transition from the basic rural institution toward modern agri-business with dramatic decreases in rural employment creating the needs for occupational opportunity elsewhere. The agricultural culture had become a part of "industrial America."<sup>3</sup>

A second major event of historical proportions influencing the 1940s and 1950s was the great depression, signaled by the stock market crash of 1929,

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<sup>1</sup> The procedure in this paper will be to consider the larger context in the United States that led up to the 1940-1990 period, then analyzing how these economic developments affecting the Mennonites, with a special focus on the Mennonite Brethren. The paper then makes some comparisons and concludes with an evaluation of the implications.

<sup>2</sup> The figures cited in this section are taken from the 1990 Almanac (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1990), unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> There is a vast amount of American economic history; one source providing background for this paper is Cochran and Miller's The Age of Enterprise. These authors suggest that after 1830, the West was being settled more by speculators than by families concerned about a way of life (37ff). If this is true, it indicates how different the motives of the immigrant Mennonites, who came 50 years later, was.

resulting in massive unemployment, followed by the great dust bowl which covered much of the mid-west from Texas to Saskatchewan. Farmers especially in the mid-central and mid-west were affected in catastrophic proportions. A massive number of farm families were uprooted and shunted to other parts of the nation to find means for subsistence. This initiated a new wave of mobility which was not to stop for many years.

Near poverty conditions had affected almost every segment of the American population. Unemployment, only 4.2% in 1928, jumped to 23.6% four years later in 1932, then decreased to 14.6 by 1940, and was only 5.5% in 1960. In 1935, the average income per person was \$474. In 1945, just ten years later, it had almost tripled to \$1223. And to round out the picture for the end of the time period under consideration, 1960, it had risen to \$2,219.<sup>4</sup>

The depression noted above was to a large extent responsible for the most dramatic shift in employment and occupations in the nation's history. But a third and equally important event was World War II. The war was not only responsible for employment in a rapidly increasing industrial economy, but increasing the wages and employing women: women as a percentage of the labor force rose from 22% in 1930 to 32.5 in 1960, a 45% increase in 30 years. The war also expanded greatly the need for industrial and farm production, putting great stress on mechanization and technical advancement.

By 1960 the situation had changed, stabilized, and improved dramatically. The economic stimulus resulting first from the "New Deal", the war and the post war recovery reached its apex during the 1960s. Productivity was at its peak, evidenced by the U.S. public debt which was lower in

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<sup>4</sup> The figure for 1955 was \$1,881. I mention the 1955 figure since it seems to be rather realistic--I was paid \$1,850 for the 1954-1955 year at Hesston College.

1960(\$1,572 per capita) than any year since 1943, but by 1965 had begun its meteoric rise, continuing until this very moment(\$10,534 per capita--1988). Another significant cause and effect was the rise in population during the two decades. In 1940 there were 131.5 million people in the United States. By 1960 there were 179.3 million people--an increase of almost 40 million 20 years. This increase was obviously the result of high birth rates and massive immigration.

## II. Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren Economic Life, within this Larger Context<sup>5</sup>

The Mennonites along with the MBs, having been in this country at most only two generations, with immigrations from Russia continuing beyond even 1960, lagged behind the larger American profile participating in the "homesteading" and settlement process long after the established population was beginning to move to urban areas.<sup>6</sup> Mennonites and the MBs established church communities in remnants of the frontier and opened up new agricultural areas well into the 1940s, and even later in the states west of Minnesota, Kansas and Oklahoma.<sup>7</sup>

Contrary to the US population, by 1940 the Mennonites and MBs were still

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<sup>5</sup> When comparing the Russian Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren, I will refer to the first as Mennonites and the latter as MBs to save space.

<sup>6</sup> My own family illustrates the process. My grandfather, Benjamin Redekop, and his family left Naumenkov, Ukraine in 1913, settled first at Main Centre, Saskatchewan, and then homesteaded in Montana in 1916. He helped establish the MB congregation at Lustre, Montana

<sup>7</sup> One of the most notorious settlement programs originating in the MB church was the one initiated by Henry J. Martens. Arriving in Hillsboro, Kansas in 1897, he soon organized settlements in western Kansas, Oklahoma and finally in California, a community called Martensville. The spectacular early successes, failures, incriminations etc, are expounded in a chapter forthcoming in Redekop, Krahn and Steiner, 1993.

predominantly and basically rural based, as can be seen by the Table 1 below. The westward movement after the turn of the century, and the subsequent "California fever" which overcame many Mennonite families in Kansas, Oklahoma and Nebraska was substantial. The frenetic mood of number of groups that moved to California produced several tragic settlements which produce much "pain and humblings" already by the turn of the century.<sup>8</sup> Unruh's brief descriptions of the various "mother" congregations, the establishment of daughter settlements, the variety of failed settlements, both traditional MB members, and mission projects provide a fascinating insight into the "settling down" in the new frontier and the subsequent breakdown and breakup of settlements.

The depression and dust bowl of the 1920s also contributed to the westward movement as indicated by Unruh congregational reports, which unfortunately do not extend till 1960. The congregational membership in 1953 indicates the relative rural-urban concentrations and residences of MB populations, and the relative strength of more urban congregations toward the end 1940-1960 year period. The Table also provides the general socio-economic and occupational status through the farming and business (retail shops, garages implement sales, etc.) via the "Dominant Economic Rank" column which indicates the rank.

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Table 1

USA Mennonite Brethren Profile, 1953<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Abraham A. Unruh, Die Geschichte der Mennoniten-Brudergemeinde, (Winnipeg: The Christian Press, 1955), p. 480. I have relied heavily on this book for information on the description of MB congregations.

<sup>9</sup> Only those congregations which had survived to 1953 are listed above. There are many congregations which resulted from homesteading or settlement, or mission efforts in new areas, but due to drought, westward movement, or

Congregation/Location	Date	Membership,	Rural/Town/	Dominant
	Founded	1953	City	Econ. Rank
Ebenfeld, Kansas	1875	250	Rural	Farm
Henderson, Neb.	1877	278	Rural	Farm/Business
Carson, Minnesota	1877	164	Rural	Farm
Mountain Lake, Minn.	1877	256	Town	Farming/Bus
Hillsboro, Kansas	1881	840	Town	Farm/Bus
Indiahoma, Okla.	1889	174	Rural	Farm/labor
Dallas, Ore.	1891	340	Town	Farm/Bus
Jose, Colorado	1892	72	Rural	Farm
Hoffningsfeld, Okla.	1893	400	Rural	Farm
Steinreich, Kansas	1893	---	Rural	Farm
Corn, Okla.	1893	650	Town	Farm/Bus
Enid, Okla.	1893	---	Rural	Farm/Bus
Fairview, Okla.	1894	400	Rural	Farm/Bus
North Enid, Okla.	1897	---	Rural	Farm/Bus
Munich, N. Dakota	1897	62	Rural	Farm
Harvey, N. Dakota	1898	207	Rural	Farm
Buhler, Kansas	1902	525	Rural	Bus/Farm
Hooker, Okla.	1904	112	Rural	Farm
Reedley, Cal.	1904	1,360	Town	Farm/Bus
Bessie, Okhla.	1905	167	Rural	Farm
Balko, Okla.	1906	131	Rural	Farm
Lodi, Cal.	1908	95	Town	Bus
Sawyer, N. Dakota	1909	94	Rural	Farm
Rosedale, Cal.	1909	171	Town	Farm
Bakersfield, Cal.	1910	150	Town	Bus/farm
Dorrance, Kansas	1912	40	Rural	Farm
Inola, Okla.	1912	28	Rural	Farm
Tampa, Kansas	1915	51	Rural	Farm
Lustre, Mont.	1917	130	Rural	Farm
Shafter, Cal.	1918	524	Town	Farm/bus
Madera, Cal.	1919	44	Town	Bus/Farm
Ingalls, Kansas	1922	58	Rural	Farm
Winton, Cal.	1922	45	Town	Bus-Agri-bus
Los Angeles, Cal.	1924	--	City	Bus
Orland, Cal.	1923	100	Rural	Farm
Dinuba, Cal.	1925	602	Town	Farm/bus
Blaine, Wash	1937	172	Rural	Farm
Lawton, Okla.	1937	45	Rural	Farm labor
Los Ebanos, Wash	1938	46	Town	Bus
Wichita, Kansas	1943	---	City	Bus
Fresno, Cal.	1942	375	City	Bus
Gula, Tex	1948	42	Rural	Farm

Source: A.H. Unruh.

schism disbanded and moved elsewhere. These are described in Table 2.

The congregations which were spawned as the result of westward migrations or mission work, but which were no longer in existence in 1953 are described in Table 2. The notations of what happened to the congregation provides information on the turmoil of frontier settlement and the economic factors in the life of the congregation. It appears no congregation begun after 1910 was disbanded.

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Table 2  
Congregations Created and Disbanded by 1953

Congregation	Date Founded	Dated Disbanded	Causes/results
South Dakota (7 loc)	1876	Various dates	Joined 7th Day Adventists etc.
Bingham Lake, Minn.	1887	not given	Moved to Sask.
Kirk, Colorado	1892	not given	joined Mt. Lake Drought, emigration
Culbertson, Ne.	1897	not given	Joined 7th Day Adventists
Westfield, Tex.	1897	1899	Combination of disasters
Boone C. Neb.	1897	not given	Catholic invasion
Medford, Okla.	1899	1909	Moved to Beaver Co. and Sask.
Loveland, Colo.	1905	not given	Baptist influence
Laredo, Cal.	1909	1912?	Speculation, entrepreneurship gone amok

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Source: A.H. Unruh

The Mennonite Brethren were witnessing a massive amount of family and community mobility which continued for a number of decades. Table 3 Shows the distribution, as of 1953, using Unruh's statistics.

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Table 3

State                      Population by State, 1953

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Kansas	1,764
Nebraska	278
Minnesota	420
Oklahoma	2,102
N. & S. Dakota	363
Colorado	72
Texas	42

Total central States	5,041
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California	3,466
Oregon	340
Washington	218
Montana	130

Total western States	4,154
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Grand Total	9,195
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Source: Unruh.

A tabulation of the populations of the three US districts across the time span under study in Table 4 provides us with further information.

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Table 4

Conference Population, 1935-1962

Year	Middle Dist.	South. Dist.	Western Dist.	Total
1935	1524	3950	1909	7,383
1938	1497	3743	2473	7,393
1941	1433	4154	2988	8,575
1944	1431	4237	3379	9,047
1947	1417	4337	3839	9,590
1950	1464	4345	4138	9947
1953	1493	4534	4470	10,497
1956	1546	4761	4753	11,060
1959	1559	4740	5283	11,582
1962	2325	4980	5916	13,221
Total Gain	52%	26%	209%	79%

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Yearly ave.	1.9%	.97%	7.7%	2.9%	<sup>10</sup>
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Source: <u>Yearbook</u>					

This table provides information on the relative shift of population to the west coast, and also provides information on the relative loss or gain by emigration from one conference and region to the others. Using the total average percentage of growth as the norm, and assuming that the conferences do not differ significantly in their evangelistic outreach efforts and birth and death rates, it is obvious that the central district contributed 27% of its "theoretical estimated " growth to the Western district, while the Southern district contributed 43% of its "theoretical estimated" growth to the Western district.

Summarizing the information available, the Mennonite Brethren seems to be slowing the westward migration by 1950, mid-point of the period under study. The occupational categorization of congregations in Table 1 indicates further that the establishment of the family farm in new lands had largely terminated, and that the base of economic livelihood henceforth would need to be directed toward business or agri-business. This process was already beginning to take place by 1920 in several of the larger earlier MB settlements, especially Mountain Lake, Minnesota, Hillsboro, Kansas, Dallas, Oregon, Corn and Enid, Oklahoma, and Reedley and Bakersfield in California by 1920. The same must be said for the occupational and professional distributions, although the evidence is very sparse.

### III. The 1940-1960 Period and Economic Activity

There is unfortunately little readily available information regarding

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Yearly average population increase was 1.3% between 1930 and 1980.



the more specific economic activities of Mennonite and MB communities during the 1940-1960 period. The time of surveys and community studies was yet to come, and the MB study conferences that were held were concerned basically about "spiritual" and missionary aspects of conference life.<sup>11</sup> It is sociologically most important in any case to analyze the subject from a community and congregational perspective, so that summary statistics can be put into context, hence community studies are the best source. Again unfortunately, few communities studies are available.<sup>12</sup> Especially needed is a community study of a California MB community.<sup>13</sup> We present therefore several case studies of MB communities, both of which were among the first to be settled in North America.

#### I. Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

The town was first platted on May 1872 and incorporated in 1886. The first Mennonites arrived in 1873. The resident population grew rapidly, but began to level off in the 1940 as the following table reveals:

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<sup>11</sup> The conference Yearbooks provide the best direct source for the ethos, basic concerns and activities of the conference. From these reports, one would have no idea whether the membership was rural, urban or extra-terrestrial, as far as the social-economic context is concerned. An occasional comment about the lack of finances is made, while the major concerns are congregational discipline, theological orthodoxy, missions and evangelism.

<sup>12</sup> The Mennonite Life and Mennonite Community journals do provide a number of community studies, including several MB congregations/communities, but unfortunately they are general, weak on specific information, and pitifully lacking in any specific information on the economic life of the community. The story of Hillsboro, Kansas, by Marion Kliever is fortunately something of an exception and provides some information on Hillsboro, which contributed to choosing Hillsboro as one of the case studies. The report on the Mountain Lake Community, also reported in Mennonite Life influenced the choice of Mountain Lake as the other community study.

<sup>13</sup> A study of a California MB community was conducted by Miriam Warner in the 1980s, but it has practically no information on the economic aspects.

Table 6

## Mountain Lake and Hillsboro Population Statistics

Year	Mt.Lake	Hillsboro
1895	595	750
1900	959	750
1910	1,081	745
1920	1,309	1,660
1930	--	1,650
1940	1,740	1,750
1950	1,733	1,980
1960	1,933	2,200
1970	1,965	2,800
1980	2,277	1,950

Source: Mountain Lake, p.72. Hillsboro, p. 172

Three groups of MBs settled in the Mt. Lake area, all some distance from the emerging town of Mt. Lake. One was situated some miles between Mt. Lake and Bingham Lake, (1877) while the other was located some miles south and west of town, (1887) the third group (Carson) settling near Delft. The Bingham Lake congregation lasted only several years before some moved to Kansas and others joined the Seventh Day Adventists. The "south church" moved to the south edge of Mt. Lake in 1901, though most of the members remained on farms south of town.<sup>14</sup>

The little available evidence of activity in the non-farming business sector indicates the overwhelming majority of the businesses were managed and owned by General Conference Mennonites, since a higher proportion lived in or near the town. However, by 1930, some MBs had moved to town and become active in business activities. Some of the best known include a tire sales and repair

<sup>14</sup> There is considerable unclarity regarding the supposed three groups. Mountain Lake, 1889-1986 suggests only two groups settled near Mountain Lake and one near Carson, while Unruh indicates three groups settled near Mt. Lake.

shop, several auto dealerships, a flour mill, and several builders. By 1940, many of the small service centers within a 15 mile radius of Mountain Lake had for all practical purposes died, or become residential centers for farm laborers.

Table 7 provides the list of businesses and their proprietors in Mt. Lake, for two time periods.

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Table 7  
Mountain Lake Business Proprietorships

Business	Total # 1936	Total # 1962	Gen. 1936	Conf 1962	Menn. 1936	Breth. 1962
Auto dealerships	4	2	1	1	3	1
Bakers	1	1	1			
Bankers	3	3	3	2		
Barbers	2	2	2			
Blacksmiths/welding	1	3	1	2		
Body Shop	1	2		1		1
Builders/contractors	7	6	4	4	3	2
Cafe/Restaurant props.	4	6	1			
Carpenters/finishers	3	5	1			2
Coop Creamery manag.	1		1			
Coop Elevators manag.	1		1			
Coop Oil/Gas, manag.	1	1	1			
Dentists	2	3	1	1		
Dray/Trucking	2	3	2			3
Druggists	3	2	2	1		
Electrician	1	2	1	1		1
Feed/Seed Mills	3	2	1		1	
Garages/Tire shop	2		1	1	1	
Greenhouse		1			1	
Harness/Shoe rep.	1	1	2			1
Hotels	1		1			
Implement Dealers	3	5	2	1	1	1
Insurance/Real Estate	3	5	2	3	1	2
Jewelers	2	1	1		1	1
Lawyers	1	1	1		1	
Lumber Yards	1	2	1			
Managers,utilities	1	4	1	3		1
" hospital	3	2	3			1
" Menno. Mutual	1	1	1			
Manufacturing		3				1
Medical Doctors	5	3	5	2		1
Morticians	1	1	1	1		
Oil/Gas del.	2	4	2	2		

Photographers	1	1	1			
Plumbers	1	1			1	
Publishers	1	1		1		
Service Stations	3	3	1	1	1	1
Sheet Metal	1		1	1		
Stores, hardware	4	3	4	3		
" Grocery	2	4	1	1	1	1
" Clothing	1	1				
" Furniture	3	1	1	2	1	1
" General	9	3	6	2	1	
Theatre	1		1		1	
Well Drilling	1	1		1		1
Totals	95	100	61	39	20	25

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Source: Mountain Lake, 1886-1986 <sup>15</sup>

This profile provides a picture of the basic services supplied in a small rural town during these years; it also shows the shifts in services and businesses in the 26 year period. The proportion of Mennonite(GC and MB) /non-Mennonite businesses decreased between 1936 and 1962.<sup>16</sup> The MB gained slightly over the GC during the 26 year period.

Three cooperatives were operating in Mt. Lake in 1936, a grain elevator(1901), a creamery(1895), an oil/gas coop,(1933).<sup>17</sup> Mutual aid cooperatives had also been initiated including the "Mennonite Aid Society", a burial society, and the "Canada and States Mutual Insurance" company. By 1960 , only the oil/gas cooperative remained. The initiative for the

<sup>15</sup> The classification by GC or MB is based on judgement by several persons knowledgeable about Mt. Lake, and may not be totally accurate. The totals of GC and MB proprietors do not add up with the total numbers of businesses because there were also non-Mennonites.

<sup>16</sup> Comparing the total number of GC and MB population with their relative involvements in city business activity would be very interesting, but these figures were not available to the author at the time of preparation of the paper.

<sup>17</sup> J. Winfield Fretz has variously cited Mountain Lake as a model of cooperative spirit. Indications that the cooperative spirit was giving in to individualistic competition is indicated by the fact that there were five service and oil stations owned by Mennonites in 1936

cooperative movement came basically from several General Conference Mennonite leaders; the MB involvement seems to have been relatively passive.<sup>18</sup>

## II. Hillsboro, Kansas.

Hillsboro was first settled in 1871, and by 1874 thirty-five Russian Mennonite families settled there. Among the immigrants were several groups of Mennonite Brethren, one settling at Ebenfeld, south of Hillsboro, another at Lehigh in 1884, and yet another group settled near Johannestal in Marion county which moved to Hillsboro in 1881.

Hillsboro seems to have a different profile since a considerable number of MBs settled in the surrounding area as well as in Hillsboro and thus created a larger "critical Mass" which increased the relative strength of the MB presence. Even though Mountain Lake had a bit larger population for a time the location of the MB publishing house at Hillsboro, the establishment of Tabor College in 1907, and the southern conference and mission headquarters contributed to Hillsboro resulted in Hillsboro becoming the leading MB center in the midwest. There was thus considerable migration of MBs to and from Hillsboro, especially to the west, during much of Hillsboro's history.

See table 6 for the Hillsboro population and comparison with Mountain Lake. The Mennonite Brethren population profile of the Hillsboro community can be partially inferred from the membership of the City MB congregation, shown in Table 8 compared with the population of Hillsboro itself.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Fretz, Christian Mutual Aid, 1947

<sup>19</sup> The membership of the Hillsboro MB congregation was about half that of the population of Hillsboro itself, according to table 6 and 8. A number of the congregation members were undoubtedly farmers so the figures can only suggest the profile.

Table 8

## Membership, Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Church

Year	Membership	% Increase, ave.
1881	20	
1891	75	2.75
1901	140	.8
1911	290	10.7
1921	540	8.6
1931	560	.03
1941	700	.02
1951	825	1.17
1961	780	-.05
1971	845	.08
1981	780	-.07

Average yearly increase: 2.67

Source: Harms, 1987

The percent membership increase (decrease) of the Hillsboro congregation is around the average population growth of the general population at the time, so with the massive influx of migrants from Russia until the 1920s, there must have been massive out-migration to other areas. There is no information on the number of Mennonite Brethren living in Hillsboro itself, but there were two General Conference congregations in the town along with the MB congregation, with the Ebenfeld congregation several miles to the south, it must be concluded that Hillsborg was a "Mennonite town."

The developing economic and business activities must have been strongly influenced by the Mennonite Brethren, and the following table, provides information on the economic activities of the MBs. Of course their interaction with other Mennonites groups and non-Mennonites must have influenced them in turn.

Table 9  
Hillsboro Business Proprietorships

Business	Total#		Gen. Conf.		Menn. Breth.	
	1945	1960	1945	1960	1945	1960
Auto dealerships	3	4		2		2
Auto stores	1	2	1	2		
Auto repairs	1	4		2	1	2
Barbers		2				1
Bankers	4	4	1	1	3	3
Beauty parlor		3		1		1
Body shops		1				1
Book store		1				1
Broom maker	1		1			
Building Mat.		1				
Cafe/restaurant		4		2		
Carpenter/builders		9		2		4
Chiropractor	4	2			3	1
Clothing store	1	3		2		
Coop oil assn, (Mgr)	1	1			1	
Coop creamery, "	1	1	1		1	
Coop grain	1	1			(equally divided)	
Coop elect		1			1	1
Credit Union		1				
Dairy	1	3			1	2
Dept. stores	2	2			1	
Dentists	1	3		1	2	
Dry cleaning		2		2		
Electricians		3			1	2
Farm equipment		2				1
Finance co.		1				1
Flour milling	1					
Floral store		1			1	
Furniture stores	1	1			1	
General/variety store	1	3				
Glass		1				
Grain dealers	1	1				
Grocery stores,	2	3			1	1 (1 MB/GC)
Hardware stores	1	2	1		1	1 (1 MB/GC)
Hatchery	1	1			1	
Home furnishings	1	1				
Hotel/motel	1	1	1			
Implements		2				
Insurance	1	2				1
Jewelers	1	2	1			1
Laundry		1				
Lockers		1				1
Lumber/bldg Mat.	1	3				2
Machine shops	2				1	
Manufacturing	1	2				2
Meat market	2		1		1	
Medical doctors	3	4	1		1	3

Motor co.	1		1			
Oil/gas	2	3	2	1	1	2
Optometrists	1	2			1	1
Painters		2				1
Plumbing		3				2
Photography		1				
Produce brokers	1				1	
Repair, radio etc.		4			1	3
Service stations	1	6			2	4
Shoe repair/store	1	1				
Trucking		2			1	1
Variety store	1					
Welding shop	1	3			1	2
Variety store		2				
Veterinary		1				
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Total	52	125 <sup>20</sup>	12	18	31	51

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Source: Wiebe, 1985, and Tabor College Blue Jay.

As in Mountain Lake, number of establishments increased between the two time periods with certain types of businesses ceasing while others have emerged. As in Mountain Lake, there was a strong undercurrent of cooperatives philosophy, resulting in a cooperative creamery, formed in 1935, a cooperative grain elevator organized in 1918, and a cooperative oil association, organized in 1939. Wiebe indicates that the Mennonite Brethren leadership and participation was about equal with the General Conference. It is quite probable that the cooperative activities were largely motivated by General Conference in Mountain Lake because of the larger GC presence in the town. By 1960, the ownership of the creamery and oil cooperatives had also changed, as it did in Mountain Lake.

Meaningful comparisons of the occupational distribution between the Mennonite and MB groups in the Mountain Lake and Hillsboro context and within

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<sup>20</sup> Marion Kliever states there were 140 businesses in Hillsboro in 1954. This compares closely my figures; I have deleted city and county offices and the MB conference related offices which Kliever included.



the MB context would require accurate membership figures of all the congregations plus their occupational classifications.

### III. Analysis

The MB experience parallels very closely that of the other Russian Mennonite groups; in fact differentiating between groups is rather difficult. Of course there are considerable regional differences, such as the proportion of agricultural and non-agricultural as compared with the other Mennonite Brethren centers. But the communities we have highlighted do provide some "benchmarks" for theorizing, so we now turn to a more general analysis of the Mennonite Brethren economic life in the two-decade period.

One important piece of information for insight into the economic life of a group or society is its occupational structure. Unfortunately no data on occupational categories for the Mennonite community at large before 1975 exists. Based on the Mountain Lake and Hillsboro material presented above, it seems that by 1940, the Mennonite and MB communities had become increasingly involved in businesses focussing on agriculturally based activities.

The non-farming activities began slowly, already before the turn of the century, but had been pretty well established by the beginning of World War II, (1940). Foremost among these were flour milling,<sup>21</sup> dairy and creamery services, grain buying and selling, retailing of motor oils, heating oils, farm machinery sales, auto sales, lumber sales, sales of domestic supplies such as clothing and groceries, and a wide variety of services such as auto repairing, well drilling, plumbing and heating, shoe repair, cafes, and beauty

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<sup>21</sup> Even though Hillsboro had no flour mills there were many in other neighboring towns including several in the Buhler, and numerous ones in the Newton area. Mountain Lake had one, which however was no longer operating by 1940.

shops (the latter clearly not traditionally Mennonite businesses).<sup>22</sup>

Even though Who's Who Among Mennonites has serious limitations, some indications of the cumulative occupational/professional structure (basically of males) which obtained by 1943 can be gained from a summary of the information provided. Table 10 provides this information.

Table 10  
Occupations/Profession Distribution in Who's Who.

Profession/Occupation	Number	Gen. Conf.	Menn.	Breth.	Delta <sup>23</sup>
Accnts/Bkkprs	2	2			
Artists	2	2			
Barristers	4	3			
Bankers	11	9	2		4
Chiropractors	3	3			
Dentists	3		3		
Farmers	6	6			
Funeral Dir.	1		1		
Grain Buyers	1	1			
Hatcheries	1		1		
Ind. Admin.	1	1			
Insurance	5	4	1		
Loan co.	1	1			
Medicine	51	35	16		14
Millers	3	3			
Manufacturing	2	1	1		
Newspapers	1	1			
Academics	54	32	22		12
Totals	152	104	47		

Source: Warkentin and Gingerich.

<sup>22</sup> A tabulation of the occupational pursuits of the Who's Who Among Mennonites operative in 1943, reveals that only six Mennonite Brethren are listed as being in business or business professions: four of these were bankers, all born between 1871 and 1889, while another was an undertaker, born in 1903, and the other an owner of a hatchery, born in 1894.

<sup>23</sup> Delta refers to the theoretical value of a category. I.e, the expected score if all things are equal. The MBs membership has been remarkably close to 33% of the General Conference through the years.

The astounding numbers of persons pursuing the medicine and academic categories provides some very interesting material for analysis, even though the representativeness must be seriously questioned.<sup>25</sup> Assuming the gathering of material did not favor the General Conference, it is observable that the Mennonite Brethren are quite similar to their cousins except in the academic field.<sup>26</sup> Extrapolation backwards from figures produced in 1975 may give us additional information of what the situation was like 15 years earlier, assuming conditions had not changed too drastically rapidly during the 60s and 70s. See Table 11.

Table 11  
Mennonite and MB Occupational Distributions

Occupation	Warner <sup>27</sup> , 1985 %	Kauff/Har 1975 %	MB <sup>28</sup> 1975 %	Kauf/Dried 1989 %
Professional and Tech.	12.1	15.9	14.1	28
Bus. Owner or manager	7.4	→ 1.1	5.3	9
Sales and Clerical	8.1	6.8	5.9	11
Craftsmen and Foremen	12.1	4.9	6.2	5
Machine Operators	6.	4.8	4.4	4

<sup>25</sup> I do not imply that Mennonites and MBs were not going into the larger commercial world, but the evidence is relatively sparse. The defection of Mennonites from the fold has been going on a long time but very little research has been done on this "threatening" topic.

<sup>26</sup> The number of professors, medical doctors and ministers included indicates the unreliability of the representativeness of the book. The Mennonite Business and Professional People's Directory, 1978, the only other tabulation of Mennonites in the business world is equally unrepresentative and does not give much insight as to what obtained between 1940-1960.

<sup>27</sup> Warner's study focused on a congregation in central California during the early 1980s.

<sup>28</sup> Hamm's study "breaks out" the MB statistics from the Kauffman and Harder study which does not report on the various Mennonite constituencies.

Laborers (farm/nonf)	12.8	2.5	1.2	1
Farm Owners/Managers	0	10.9	12.9	7
Service Workers	8.1	3.0	2.9	4
Housewives	0	32.5	31.8	25
Students	3.4	13.8	15.3	6
Retired	29.5	0		
Misc.	3.4	0		

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Source: Warner, Kauffman and Harder, Hamm and Kauffman and Driedger

This table suggests that MBs in 1975 and 1989 were very similar to other the Mennonite groups on occupational distributions. Without accurate statistics on church membership in all groups in either community, it is difficult to definitively conclude how the Mennonite Brethren compared on their economic activity, including occupational and professional participation, with other Mennonite and non-Mennonites in their communities during the period 19450-1960.<sup>29</sup>

One of the most interesting historical observations about Mennonite communities with MB membership is that many of the more fundamental and substantive economic sectors, such as processing and sales of dairy, poultry and grain products, and some services, such as sales of oil and gasoline, were originally organized as cooperatives. Hillsboro and Mt. Lake each had at least 3 such industries, owned by Mennonites, including Mennonite Brethren, many still operative in 1940.<sup>30</sup> By 1960 however, these cooperative organizations were gone, or in the process of dissolution, either through privatization, or

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<sup>29</sup> The Warkentin and Gingerich data provides an overwhelming impression that the MB membership is very strongly represented in the professional occupations, especially medicine, dentistry, chiropractors, education, especially university positions, institutional and governmental administration as compared to the other Mennonite groups. What is astounding is the number of Ph.D and M.D. degrees awarded to persons born between 1875 and 1900 to GC and MBs alike. This proposition also needs careful analysis.

<sup>30</sup> This is equally true of Canadian communities such as Altona. See Thiessen Epp; see also Fretz, 1947,

being bought up by a larger organization. No strictly locally owned cooperative existed at the end of the period.

Very little information on the relative "prosperity" or wealth of the Mennonite Brethren during this period, or any other for that matter is available. My impression has always been that Mennonite Brethren were usually better off financially than their Mennonite cousins. A comparison with other Mennonite groups on income would be most helpful, but none is available for this time period. The Kauffman/Harder study of 1975 indicates the MB income is less than the Mennonite Church(MC), while the Kauffman-Driedger research for 1989 shows that the Mennonite Brethren had the highest median income(39).<sup>31</sup>

One other set of statistics may be of some relevance. The Mennonite Central Committee has reported back to the supporting constituencies what it has received from them. The following table reports on several categories of contributions.

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Table 12

Comparative MCC Contributions

Church	Relief Contrib. (1941-1950)	Menn. Aid Cont. (1945-1950)	Population 1950	Per-capita
Mennonite Church	888,106	313,362	56,746 <sup>32</sup>	21.17
General Conf.	891,763	252,311	44,614	25.64
Mennonite Breth.	356,901	169,424	19,947	26.38

<sup>31</sup> It has been my position that the MB incomes are underreported in the 1975 study.

<sup>32</sup> These figures apparently include both U.S. and Canadian memberships; the population for the General conference is an estimate.

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Source: John Unruh; Mennonite Yearbook. pp.377-380.

According to this information, Mennonite Brethren per-capita giving was \$26.38, as compared to \$25.64 for the GCs, and \$20.10 for the MCs. The conventional wisdom has been that Mennonite Brethren were not as committed to MCC material assistance as the other groups. Hence by comparing the contributions compared to population, indicated by the Delta in Table 12 it becomes reasonable to suggest that Mennonite Brethren (in Canada and United States in this case), were as a group as successful economically and were as generous as the other groups, or that some individuals were more generous.

Even though the data presented in this exercise is by no means very adequate, it is possible to make a number of observations or postulates which invite further analysis and study, specifically applying to Mennonite Brethren but just as applicable to the other groups.

A. External factors which influenced Mennonite and MB economic activity in the 1940s-1960s.

1. The end of available new lands through the termination of the frontier and increasing population growth by 1940 created increased competition for agricultural land.

2. World War II exercised a number of demands, including military manpower and labor for war production, increasing the value of education and industrial employment in the larger towns and cities.

3. Economic opportunities in the west, especially in California, attracted many people and resulted in substantial migrations and mobility to and from the West Coast.

4. The increasing consolidation of family farms into larger agribusiness began directing the excess populations toward larger towns, causing

the smaller service villages to disappear or become bedroom communities.

5. The increasing opportunities and status offered through education became attractive to young people from the community.

B. Consequences for Mennonite and MB community and religious life.

1. Many young people forsook the family/farm matrix and moved into a vast number of professions and occupations via the educational channel, choosing overwhelmingly the service professions in order to rationalize their leaving the "local orientation" for the "cosmopolitan".<sup>33</sup>

2. Many others left the farm to become laborers, service workers, and proprietors/owners of small businesses in the local communities, especially in the larger towns and engaged in occupational forms dependent upon the "opportunity structure", i.e. the mix of personal abilities, availability of resources and economic need. For example in Mountain Lake the need for building contractors provided such an opportunity.

3. Others became owners/managers of larger farms or businesses as they were able to expand businesses based on the resources they inherited from their family farm enterprises, which had been more successful than their neighbors.<sup>34</sup>

4. Still others were beginning to become entrepreneurs in the home towns, with a few becoming owners/managers of businesses and companies in other areas of the country, in part assisted by having gone on for an advanced degree, personal resources, drives and abilities and family assistance, in other words the advantages listed in points 1-3 preceding.

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<sup>33</sup> These terms are defined below.

<sup>34</sup> We know from the Mennonite experience in Russia that Mennonites were not equal in their abilities and achievements and that this created enormous economic differences.

In sum, the Mennonites and MBs participated in the massive changes taking place in the United States, and benefitted from the general economic upturn, and as section C will suggest, left the basically communal orientation and "caught up" with the prevailing individualistic economy by 1960.

C. Evaluation of the changes indicated by the evidence.

1. The exchange of the rural base of the Mennonite and MB community and the family farm for the small town as center of the community fabric seems to have been initiated when the congregations moved into town, circa 1910-1920. The process was consolidated by the 1920s and 1930s, but the dust bowl, and the "California fever" disrupted the developing stability of the "town culture."

2. The period roughly from 1940 to 1960 seems to have been the period of entrenchment, stability, progress and increasing prosperity for the Mennonite and MB communities. The geographically stabilizing Mennonite population capitalized on the opportunities presented by the economic prosperity resulting from the recovery from the depression, the stimulus of the war and opportunities provided by agricultural and related technological developments emerging nationally.<sup>35</sup>

3. The transition from a communal ethic, with the emphasis on mutual aid and collective obligations and responsibilities increasingly gave way to individualistic interests, which seems to have taken place between 1935 and 1960. By 1960, for example, the cooperative emphasis and the businesses which expressed it had either been dissolved, or gone over to non-Mennonite control. The causes for this are clearly the result of the larger society economic

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<sup>35</sup> This does not deny the continuing exodus of young people from every Mennonite community, but this also reflects the national scene.



forces on the one hand, and the inroads of American individualism on the other, coinciding with the fundamentalist and evangelical forces which were increasingly making themselves felt in Mennonite communities. The economic activities and growth was expanding into non-family farm directions, especially small agriculturally related business.

4. Finally, and most importantly the two decades witnessed the transition from a "local" to a "cosmopolitan" sociological ethos.<sup>36</sup> The "local" is defined by Robert K. Merton as a person who:

"confines his interests to [his] community. [Which] is largely his world. Devoting little thought or energy to the Great Society, he is preoccupied with local problems to the virtual exclusion of the national and international scene. He is, strictly speaking, parochial"(393).

The "cosmopolitan" is defined as follows:

He has some interest in [the community] and must of course maintain a minimum of relations within the community...But he is also oriented significantly to the world outside the community, and regards himself as an integral part of that world. He resides in [the community] but lives in the Great Society. If the local type is parochial, the cosmopolitan is ecumenical"(393).

This proposition, I would argue, is justifiable from the evidence presented in this paper; however this proposal has been given credence in research the author conducted by intensive interviews of 100 entrepreneurs in 1985-86. The data presented unequivocal evidence that the entrepreneurs who were in business before the war and until some years after the war, were "local" in their life-style and ethics. The entrepreneurs who emerged after about 1960 seemed to express the "cosmopolitan" value system and

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<sup>36</sup> These terms can also be defined as alternatives to the famous "Gemeinschaft" versus "Gesellschaft" types of social structure introduced by Toennies.

individualistic stance.<sup>37</sup>

What differentiates Mennonite Brethren most from the other Mennonite Groups? Very little of a specific or concrete nature. But there are several subtle characteristics which I hypothesize can be identified: 1) I would propose that the Mennonite Brethren have proceeded further and earlier on the "cosmopolitanization" than the other groups. My personal experience, and acquaintanship with the Mennonite Brethren community suggested this to me many years ago, and analysis of the occupational and professional differences presented above bear this out. Mennonite Brethren became "cosmopolitan" academic scholars, medical professionals, musicians, business executives in distant industries, etc. sooner after arrival in America and in greater numbers than the other Russian Mennonites.

2) Mennonite Brethren have been more "enclavic" in their economic and business activities and relations than other Mennonite groups. That is, other things being equal, MBs have tended to assist each other more, and do less business with Mennonites of other groups.<sup>38</sup> This has tended to develop a certain similarity of Mennonite Brethren farming and other pursuits. The sociological "networking principle" in other words, has tended to turn in toward fellow members than to others. The migration to California, and the tendencies to settle in enclaves as well as concentrate economic activites

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<sup>37</sup> This thesis is developed more fully in my Mennonite Entrepreneurs, (tentative title), forthcoming.

<sup>38</sup> This proposition cannot be very easily identified for little if any research evidence exists. The basic source for this would be interviews with persons who have historically been in positions to comment; the basis for this material is rapidly evaporating due to the increasing cooperation between the Mennonite groups.

tends to bear this out.<sup>39</sup>

I propose the causes for these hypothesized differences on the part of the Mennonite Brethren can be attributed to the factor that has operated in the Mennonite and MB relationship since 1860 generally, namely the blend of Anabaptism and Pietism. In reference to the more rapid cosmopolitanization of MBs, I propose the Anabaptism/Pietism blend somehow contributed to a harmonizing of faith and personal striving, somewhat similar to Weber's famous "Protestant Ethic" thesis which suggests there is a compatability between capitalism and Calvinistic Christianity.<sup>40</sup>

In reference to the "enclavic" tendency in economics, it does not take great acumen to suggest that this tendency is merely an extrapolation of the "enclavic" relationship observed for generations in the ecclesiological and social plane between Mennonites and the MBs. Clearly, if there are religious reasons to separate in congregational and resultant social relationships, it seems rather logical to assume that this will carry over on the economic as well.<sup>41</sup> If this were not the case, then all of our assumptions about the influence of faith on economic life, and vice versa, would be nullified.

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<sup>39</sup> The following story, related often by my parents when I was young, provided me with an early interpretation of Mennonite Brethren ecclesiology and social relationships structure. My Father, the son of an MB minister, fell in love with an EMB girl who, in anticipation of marriage, agreed to join the MB church. The ministers requested that she be rebaptized, but she refused, maintaining her EMB Elder father had baptized her on her confession of faith. Since my Father supported his betrothed, he was firmly told the alternative was to leave the church. After making the easy but painful choice, he began to experience subtle but unmistakable changes in his business relations as well as his social relationships, implying that he had left "the true church."

<sup>40</sup> I have maintained that the Mennonites do not fit Weber's thesis, but the Pietist influence does seem to offer some plausibility that the MBs are more "Calvinistic" than other groups.

<sup>41</sup>