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Heritage Horizons

...a memorial book was written in His *presence*, recording those who revered Him and those who had the highest respect for His name...Malachi 3:16



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Point of View *by Lenore Lang*

Since the Seminary move to its new quarters last summer, there have had to be adjustments in many areas, among them — use of the Archives computer. Our Director has accomplished that very well, so now we can be up and running in putting out another issue of *Horizons*.

On page 1, see our Director's notes.

On pages 2 and 3, John Siewert has written some fascinating history of some books about Cameroon missions. Is mission work fatal to physical health? You might be surprised.

On page 4 you will find good notes from Archivist Bee Westerman in her regular feature, *Armchair Traveler*.

The great use

of life

is to spend it

for something

that will out-
last it.



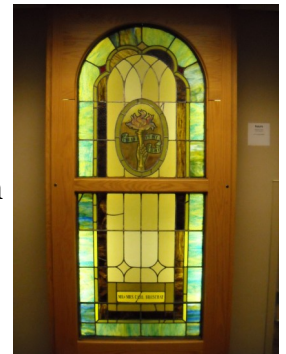
William James

NOTES FROM ARCHIVES DIRECTOR

DR. JACKIE HOWELL

Our new facilities are wonderful! We have spent much time making materials more attractive and more accessible within the physical space of the Heritage Center.

The exhibit area features displays of the Fleischmann Memorial Baptist pulpit furniture, an historic organ, church anniversary plates and mugs and the alumni hanging picture file. The stained glass window graces our entrance. Compact shelving allows our conference, church and seminary archives to be organized and readily accessible.



These are exciting resources for those of you who are able to come to Sioux Falls. We now need to make these resources available beyond Sioux Falls. This will be our focus in the coming months..

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North American Baptist Pioneer Missionaries in Cameroon

By John A. Siewert

What was it like in Cameroon for the early NAB missionaries before the 1914 World War? There are four books written in German that give first-hand descriptions of those days. These have been translated into English and are available in the NAB Conference Heritage Center in Sioux Falls.

The first book was written by Pastor Eduard Scheve of Berlin, Germany. In the early 1890s he organized a mission committee to help Cameroonians in Berlin; these had been sent there by the German Government to study. The committee also had limited funds to send to the struggling Baptists in Cameroon where missionaries of the London Baptist Missionary Society had moved to the Congo after Cameroon became a German colony in 1884. Scheve's Berlin committee was not officially part of the German Baptist denominational body but drew support from Baptist churches. His book, *The Mission of the German Baptists in Cameroon, West Africa (1884-1901)*, written in 1902 and translated by Myrtle Ertis in 2004 tells how Scheve's committee helped send missionaries from America via Germany to Cameroon..

In 1890 August Steffens, a senior student in the German Department of the Rochester, NY Seminary (forerunner of today's Sioux Falls Seminary) wrote to Pastor Scheve telling of his passion for going to Cameroon as a missionary. However Scheve did not answer the letter until five months later. Scheve wanted to expand his committee to be part of the national fellowship of the Baptist churches of Germany so missionaries and not just money could be sent to Cameroon. But his proposal was not accepted and as Scheve wrote later, the "request that this [Cameroon] mission would be received into the Baptist fellowship of Germany, supervised by them, did not receive enough support."

However, the Berlin committee decided to go ahead anyway and assist Steffens in going to Cameroon when apparently it became known that financial support would be forthcoming from supporters in the German Baptist Churches of North America (forerunner of today's North American Baptist Conference). At first this was from churches and individuals with which Steffens had contacts, but later the Conference also voted funds to support Steffens. For the first seven years (1891-1898) the Baptist mission in Cameroon was directed by Baptist missionaries August Steffens followed by Emil Suevern, also a graduate of the Rochester Seminary. In addition eight other North American Baptist missionaries also served in Cameroon during 1891-1898. By 1898 only Anna Steffens and Emil Suevern remained, with five dead from malaria and three returning home early due to illness.



August Steffens

In the meantime missionaries from Germany would also go to Cameroon. Writing later, Pastor Scheve made it clear the Americans initiated the mission: “It has to be considered a mark of progress that finally, after the preceding daring venture by brethren of America into the (Cameroon) mission field, there now are brothers and sisters in Germany who went out as well...” Scheve’s book quotes many reports and letters from the missionaries telling of their first-hand experiences as they were the first to enter many Cameroon villages with the Good News of Jesus.



E. R. Sivers und Frau.

In 1898 the field directorship of the Cameroon mission was assumed by missionary Jacob Hofmeister of Rielingshausen, Germany. The other three books (of the four mentioned in the first part of this article) are a set of the 1898-1916 diaries of Jacob Hofmeister. The first and second of these volumes were translated by William Rentz (NAB missionary to Cameroon 1957-1964) with the third by Dr. Dieter Lemke (Cameroon 1967-1973 and later several short terms) with the title *Missionary Jacob Hofmeister: Experiences in Mission Service in Cameroons*. Hofmeister mentions the NAB missionaries with whom he worked at times on the same stations, as well as the others he got to know at missionary conferences and other places since he traveled widely as the field director.



Hofmeister’s three volumes of his 1898-1916 diaries tell of repeated daring ventures as he moved from village to village to open the way for the planting of churches and encouraging new Christians to strengthen their witness.

But his missionary work came to an end in a British Prisoner of War camp within a year after World War I spread to Cameroon, since it was a German colony. After moving inland away from the battles between the German and British military, he ventured back into territory under British control to encourage the Christians. There he was taken captive by unfriendly Cameroonians and turned over to the British. He was wearing markings of the German Army on his shirt so he would not be considered a spy. He had been ill-advised to do so by German officials still in control of the interior where the German missionaries had fled. Thus the British treated him as a POW. Eventually he was taken to England and released and allowed to return to Germany. In 1927 Hofmeister would return to Cameroon. Still weakened from the ill effects of his wartime experiences, he asked Carl Bender, an American who had served in Cameroon from 1899-1919 to return from Illinois and be the missionary in charge of the Soppo mission station.



THE ARMCHAIR TRAVELER

by Archivist Berneice Westerman



It has taken some doing to get this Armchair in motion again. The Seminary move from Grange to Summit Avenue has taken some squeaks out of the chair and put others into it — and me! Please notice our new address. You will find it and our new telephone number on page one of this publication.

First we want you to know of the blessings because of the move:

It is good to have all of our materials in one area. Our staff and materials are all within a reasonable area. Our lovely space-saving movable shelves are very nice to have, since even I can move six of them out of the way to make space in an area where I need to find information for you. We do not need electricity to move those shelves — just our own arms! When a lady from the American Baptist Conference came to visit us, she said the shelves in their Archives were so tall that electric power was needed to move them, so she was wishing for shelves like ours.

Here now in our new quarters, when a person walks into a dark room, lo and behold, the lights come on. Then when that person leaves the room, the lights go out, after a pause. Sometimes I do not move around enough as I am doing my work, and the lights go out while I am still working. I can still see the computer screen, so if I want more light I wave my arms around — and soon the lights come back on. Modern technology is rather amazing.

There is a “downer” for me because of the move:

One of the “downs” for me is that I do miss seeing and talking with the Seminary students. In the old building we were in the Library area, and now the Library is across the street, so my contact with the students at coffee times and hall-way meetings is much less.



Another blessing for me in Archive work:

My sincere thanks to Myrtle Ertis who translated from the German: The 19th General Conference Souvenir Book (now called Triennial). As I typed her work I learned that in 1919 there were eight churches: First German, Second German, South Chicago, Oak Park, Englewood, Immanuel, Irving Park, and Humboldt Park,— one Old People’s Home, and one Deaconess Home in Chicago. The Deaconess Home served as a place where people could get medical care from women who had been trained as nurses and church missionaries.

Some of those eight churches have now merged with others, but the roots of them are still alive. One of the merged groups is now known as Northwest Fellowship.

