



# ARCHIVES NEWS

Respecting the Past | Forging the Future

December 2023

[mennoniteusa.org/archives](http://mennoniteusa.org/archives)

## Inaugural Newsletter

Greetings from the Mennonite Church USA Archives!

I am thrilled to introduce our inaugural newsletter, created for our most valued supporters. It offers an inside look at the vital work we do in preserving and sharing our rich Anabaptist faith heritage.

Your ongoing support makes this work possible, and we invite you to journey with us in preserving the stories that shape our community.

Thank you for being a crucial part of our mission.



Olivia Krall  
Archives Coordinator

## Goshen students make annual visit to MC USA Archives

Every fall for at least the last 22 years, the History Junior Seminar class from Goshen (Indiana) College has visited the Mennonite Church USA Archives. This year was no different. Professor Philipp Gollner and seven of his students visited the Archives in Elkhart, Indiana, on Tuesday, Nov. 7, 2023.

Gollner has been accompanying students since he began teaching the class in 2016. He said that the visit to the Archives is important, so students can “see the value of what’s being preserved, not for the sake of preservation, but for stories that impact their lives now and that will impact their careers in the future.”

Olivia Krall, MC USA Archives coordinator and Goshen College alumna, led the students on a behind-the-scenes tour of the Archives and its collections. She showed the students how to access archived information and talked to them about a career as an archivist.

“In Junior Seminar, we’ve been discussing theories, approaches and ethics of historical research,” said Naomi Klassen, a history major at Goshen College. “We’ve discussed the significance of who is keeping historical records. The caretaking of history often tells a story in itself. Archives have the power to give attention to certain stories and limit others. Visiting the archive today reminded me of how important it is to have dedicated staff who care about representing lots of different legacies.”

The visit also helps the students prepare for their senior thesis project, which requires the use of primary sources. A couple of the students are already planning to return to Elkhart to do archival research, and another has just started as a volunteer, according to Krall.

“This visit is an important way for the MC USA Archives to engage with students and build relationships between us and Goshen College,” said Krall.



# New Collection Highlight: Guy O. Graber, World War I Conscientious Objector

By Olivia Krall, MC USA Archives Coordinator



## Order of Induction into Military Service of the United States.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

To Guy O. Graber  
(Christian name.) (Surname.)

Order Number 1575 Serial Number 12

**Greeting:** Having submitted yourself to a local board composed of your neighbors for the purpose of determining the place and time in which you can best serve the United States in the present emergency, you are hereby notified that you have now been selected for immediate military service.

You will, therefore, report to the local board named below at Court House, Bryan, O., at 1 P. m., on the 21 day of July, 1918, for military duty.

From and after the day and hour just named you will be a soldier in the military service of the United States.

W. C. Willett

Member of Local Board for \_\_\_\_\_

Report to Local Board for \_\_\_\_\_

LOCAL BOARD  
FOR THE COUNTY OF WILLIAMS,  
STATE OF OHIO, BRYAN, OHIO

Date July 13, 1918

"May we keep on praying that we may be steadfast in our faith with these trials we have to meet each day."

This line was written by Guy O. Graber in 1918, at Camp Sherman, Chillicothe, Ohio, just after his conscription into service for World War I. I stumbled upon this sentence as I was cataloging Graber's papers, which arrived at the Mennonite Church USA Archives this summer through a donation from his granddaughter. The emotion behind his words has stuck with me.

Graber's letters, journals and official documents detail the perils of being a Conscientious Objector (CO) in World War I, from the day of his conscription and arrival at the Bryan County (Ohio) Court House to his time at Camp Sherman and the end of his farm furlough in 1919. A CO is someone who refuses to fight based on moral or religious grounds. During World War I, COs were assigned to non-combatant roles, such working on farms, providing medical aid or driving field ambulances.

Despite the harsh realities of nonresistance, Graber remained steadfast in his faith. His journal

Citation:  
Guy O. Graber Papers, 1893-1960.  
HM1-10515C. Mennonite Church USA Archives – Elkhart, Elkhart, Indiana.

depicts his refusal to wear a military uniform and the consequent intimidation he faced to change his beliefs. It was only after an array of officers, including colonels, sergeants and a captain, failed to coerce Graber into military service that they finally transferred him to a CO unit.

His letters also show the challenges his peers faced. A letter from Sept. 3, 1918, describes fellow COs getting sent away. Graber writes, "It's to God for those boys that have to leave again. They certainly have my sympathy." Another letter written to Graber from a friend pleads for help to find a farm on which to serve his furlough, to protect himself from the "patriotic sentiment that is so against the Mennonite people" near his camp.

Graber's longing for the war to end permeates his collection. In one letter, he writes, "I don't believe an hour passes that I don't think of home."

Collections such as these make our Archives unique and valuable. Graber's letters and journals and similar unpublished works give us a window into how people understood their lives and how they responded to the challenges that defined their generations.

"But this life is only a vapor and soon passeth away. So let us live a life that when we die, we can live in that Home above which is shepherded for all those that love Him." – Guy Graber Sept. 29, 1918.



Colleagues Marie Anne Subklew-Jeutner and Bernhard Thiessen in the Archives.

## Report from German researcher studying the Cold War

*Written by Bernhard Thiessen, Chair of the Board of the Center for Peace Theology (ATF), Hamburg, Germany. Ph.D. Student at the VU Amsterdam, retired Mennonite Pastor living in Berlin, Germany*

June 9, 2023

I am conducting research about the time of the Cold War and the Iron Curtain in Europe, 1945- 1990. I am especially interested in the issue of how the Mennonites acted in that time and tried to build bridges between the different ideologic political blocks. I spent nearly two weeks studying in the MC USA Archives and at the Mennonite Historical Library (MHL) at Goshen College.

Through research in Germany, I learned that an East German Lutheran pastor had the order from the secret police (Stasi) to get in contact with the Historical Peace Churches trying to monitor their opinion on the GDR (German Democratic Republic, that is East Germany).

Amazing, what kind of documents you have in your archives. I found the translation of the article written by this pastor in 1962 – just a year after the Berlin Wall was built – with the argumentation why the Berlin Wall was

good for the East German churches! In fact, John H. Yoder was influenced by this East German pastor and translated his article from German into English: 'The Wall: An Opportunity for the Churches in East Germany' and hoped to publish it in the USA.

I'm very thankful that [MC USA Archives Assistant] Roberta Yoder helped me to find this and other important papers. So, I also found documents that show how the Mennonites got in contact with the oppositional Christian peace movement in the 1980s. These Christian groups took part in the peaceful revolution in 1989, which helped to bring down the Berlin Wall.

I am also thankful that Roberta and Joe Springer from the MHL in Goshen and all of the other North American Mennonite archivists are working so well together, helping each other with information and digital copies.



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**Inside:** New collection!  
Guy O. Graber, World War I  
Conscientious Objector

[mennoniteusa.org/archives](http://mennoniteusa.org/archives)



Titled "Two Women with Contrasting Dress," this quarter's website cover photo is our most viewed image on Flickr, with over 19,000 views! Photographer Tijn Olij-Spaan took the image at the 8th Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Amsterdam in 1967. The woman on the left is Fannie Peachey, a Mennonite from Rosedale, Ohio, and on the right is a non-Mennonite guest who attended the conference with a Mennonite couple. Her identity is not known.


*Citation: Mennonite World Conference Records, 1925-2003. X-009.  
Mennonite Church USA Archives - Goshen. Goshen, Indiana.*



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collection on Flickr.

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# Historical Archives



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