



King Street East at Scott Street,  
Berlin/Kitchener

# Mary Ann Cressman

Mary Ann (Nahrgang) Cressman was the “founding mother” of the Mennonite Women’s Missionary Society in Ontario. She persuaded Mennonite sewing circles in the province to join their sisters in the United States to support Mennonite

missionary efforts and needs in their own communities.

Travelling to local churches, she urged women to “**take hold**” of these tasks and made sure that “**the men...understand what we are about.**”

As the Non-Resistant Relief Organization urged financial contributions to the relief of war suffering as a sign of gratitude for their continued conscientious objector status, these fledgling women’s groups produced 498 garments for the Red Cross in 1918.

Mary Ann’s husband, Menno C. Cressman, offered his dry goods store as a “Mennonite centre” to collect the garments. Together, the Non-Resistant Relief Organization and women’s sewing circles would form two pillars of what would become Mennonite Central Committee Ontario. The sewing circles are also the antecedent of the group Women of Mennonite Church Eastern Canada.



Mary Ann and Menno C. Cressman outside their dry goods store on King Street East in Kitchener with their children and others, ca. 1905. Mary Ann (second from left) lost an arm in a buggy accident, which never seemed to hinder her tireless work with the Mennonite Women's Missionary Society.