



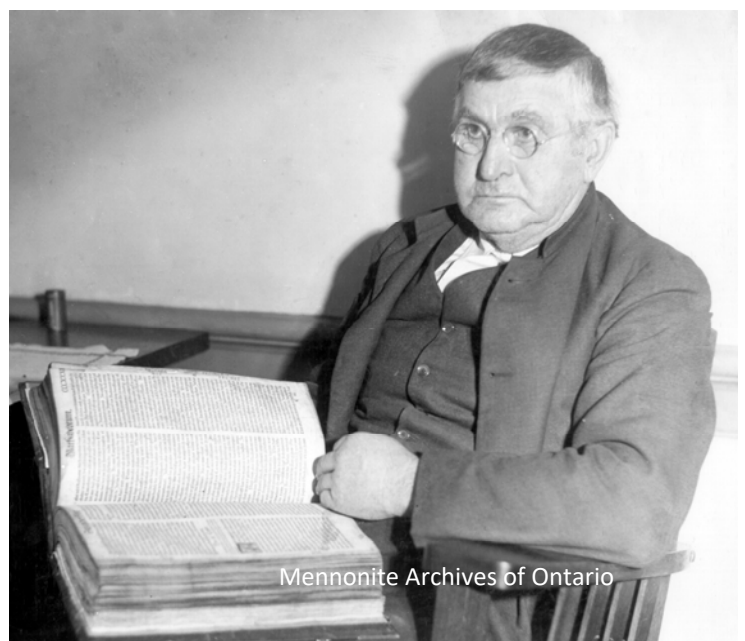
8327 Steeles Ave. E., Markham

Thomas Reesor & the Non-Resistant Relief Organization

After receiving assurances of exception from conscription, Mennonite and Brethren in Christ leaders decided to raise funds for the relief of war suffering as a gesture of appreciation to the Canadian government and society for affording them this privilege.

In January 1918, they formally organized the Non-Resistant Relief Organization (NRRO). By war's end, the NRRO had raised \$80,000 from Ontario Mennonites towards the relief of war suffering.

Thomas Reesor was one of the founding members. His relief fund for war widows and orphans was the genesis of the NRRO. The formation of the NRRO marked an unprecedented level of cooperation among Mennonites and Brethren in Christ in Ontario. After the Second World War, the NRRO was folded into Mennonite Central Committee Ontario.



Thomas Reesor with the Reesor family Bible, ca. 1950

To The Various Branches Of The Mennonite, and Tunker Churches in Canada

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these”

The Non-Resistant Relief Organization was formed in the Month of January, 1918, having for its object the raising of a MEMORIAL FUND, to present to the Government of Canada in recognition of our religious liberty, and for the purpose of relief work made necessary by the present war conditions. The fund is to be used by the Government in whatever way may be found necessary while at the same time using it in harmony with the faith and practice of the religious bodies constituting this organization.

The objects of the organization have considerably delayed on account of uncertainties which obtained relative to the legal status of the churches represented in this movement, under the Military Service Act of 1917, and the Order in Council of April 20th, 1918.

After considerable enquiry and effort these uncertainties have in a large measure been cleared up, and with gratitude to our God, and grateful appreciation to the Government of Canada, we rejoice to be able to say, that we, as a Non-resistant people, shall be permitted the continuance of the privilege of honoring God, and His Gospel principles, and our personal convictions, by being relieved of the duty of taking up arms, and engaging in military service.

While many of our people have been sharing in the works of charity and relief of suffering, giving generously of their labor and means, as far as consistent with their peace-loving principles, the movement in connection with this organization is a special effort, and affords a favorable opportunity to do more work along the same lines, and to share more fully in the privations and burdens of our fellow citizens, and to support the charitable work of the Government.

The Government of Canada has been earnestly solicited to devise for us some plan by which such a donation could be expended for the benefit of the worthy poor, either at home or abroad who are in actual need of relief (preferably widows and orphans) and who are not pledged to support, as war dependants.

In view of the foregoing facts, this letter comes as an earnest appeal to every member of the churches forming this organization, for a generous financial contribution, in the name of Him whose word says, “But to communicate, and to do good forget not, for with such sacrifice the Lord is well pleased”. We should show in a very practical manner, that while we as a people are averse to the bearing of arms, or engaging in carnal warfare in any form, we nevertheless are not a selfish, and unsympathetic people in the matter of our duty towards suffering humanity, fulfilling such duties in harmony with the principles which we profess and by which we live.

We therefore bespeak for all of our people, a large heartedness, and a liberal response to this most worthy cause.

The methods of raising this fund will be left to the choice of each individual congregation, or district, but care should be taken that any method chosen is in full keeping with the principles and practices of those churches, and that it may be done in as private a manner as possible.

Formulated by—D. W. Heise, S. F. Coffman

Approved by—S. Goudie

Executive Committee—I. J. Burkholder, S. Goudie, D. W. Heise, Thos. Reesor, C. Gasho.

P. S.—All contributions should be forwarded to Eld. Thomas Reesor, Treasurer, R. R. No. 2., Pickering, Ont.

Fundraising letter sent out by the
Non-Resistant Relief Organization



AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE

20 SOUTH TWELFTH STREET

PHILADELPHIA, PA.

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ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE OFFICE

SEND RELIEF SUPPLIES TO STORE ROOM
15TH AND CHERRY STS., PHILADELPHIA

SECRETARIE

WILBUR K. THOMAS, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
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WILLIAM B. HARVEY, FARM FURLOUGH
MARY H. WHITSON, IN CHARGE OF STOREROOM
J. LAWRENCE LIPPINCOTT, CHR. FARM COM.

January 10, 1919.

Dear Friend:

The American Friends Service Committee has very much appreciated the moral and financial support of the Mennonite Church. Realizing the vital issues at stake and the importance of even closer co-operation between our two religious denominations, arrangements have been made for a number of your prominent men to become associate members of our Committee, and increased publicity is being given concerning your support in the work of reconstructing the homes and hearts of the civilian population of France and elsewhere.

There has never during the centuries of the existence of our two organizations been such an opportunity for us to show to the world, and particularly to our military critics, the absolute sincerity of our position, for while our young men generally in military camps and those of us who are older have not been able to support the military program of the government, having always been opposed to war, we are willing and glad to engage in the constructive peace work which has opened to us. Much of the effort of our organization abroad in months past has been spent in evacuating civilians from the bombarded villages and in the immediate relief of dire distress of many kinds; that was an all important service.

The war has closed, for which we are profoundly thankful. With this changed condition comes new opportunities for service. The efficiency of our workers abroad has been well established; one result of this has been the request by French authorities for us to rebuild forty-four villages, embracing twenty-five hundred families, etc., in the district west of Verdun. This region was perhaps the most devastated of any portion of France. Our people abroad having faith in their sympathizers in the homeland have accepted this great work. Will we see it through to a successful finish?

Excerpt from one of many appeals to the Non-Resistant Relief Organization for funds to relieve the suffering of war