



Pandora Avenue, Berlin/Kitchener

Susannah Cressman & Berlin Mennonite Church

In 1916, Susannah Cressman wrote in her diary about the campaign to change the name of her city, Berlin, to Kitchener. In a controversial and polarizing campaign, citizens of the city

were asked to reject its Germanic name and accept the name of the recently deceased British war hero, Lord Kitchener.

On May 10 she wrote, “Vote taken on changing the name of Berlin, majority for...the greatest nonsense the city has ever committed.” Later she wrote sarcastically “such is the wisdom of our highly educated and wise town fathers, who are making money out of it.” She felt the true reason for the name change was not patriotic, but so local industrialists could swell their profits with military contracts.



Mennonite Archives of Ontario

Susannah Cressman with grandson Fred, 1920s. Fred would become a conscientious objector during the Second World War.

The Berlin Mennonite Church, which Susannah Cressman attended, now faced a dilemma. If they chose to take the name *Kitchener Mennonite Church* they would, in the words of preacher U.K. Weber, be taking the name of a “warlord.” They opted instead for the name *First Mennonite Church*.



Berlin Mennonite Church, 1902. Although the building is much changed, First Mennonite still stands on this site at King Street East near Stirling Avenue in Kitchener.