MENNONITE LIFE
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MENNO SIMONS (1496-1561)
A Pictorial Story

I. Friesland, The Netherlands

Menno according to Jan Luyken. The other pictures show contemporary life in the vicinity of Witmarsum, where Menno was born and was priest.
Menno’s Witmarsum

Menno Preaching (Peter Holsteyn). (Top, left) Church in Pingium where Menno was priest and had his first doubts regarding Mass. (Left) Exterior and interior of First Menno Simons Church, Witmarsum, where Menno is supposed to have preached. (This is the place where the Menno Simons Monument is located now). (Below) “White House” was used as Mennonite parsonage during 19th century and is supposed to have sheltered Menno at the time of his withdrawal. Menno can hardly have lived in this house or preached in the church (left, bottom) after he left the Catholic Church. He would not have survived.
Witmarsum Today

The pilgrim to Witmarsum may view scenes which will remind him of the spiritual struggles and the daily concerns of Menno. The Dutch Mennonite brotherhood has for many years taken an interest in preserving these sites of Menno's activity. This interest has spread to the rest of Europe and the American continents.

The death of Menno Simons on January 31, 1561, is being commemorated by various observances in many parts of the world.

(Left) Mennonite church and parsonage. The church was replaced in 1960 (see bottom). (Center) Menno Monument of Witmarsum. Site of first Mennonite church. (Bottom) New church under construction. (Below) Board of congregation, Bible class and table set for Lord's Supper. Pastor of the church is Leo Laurence, who attended Mennonite Biblical Seminary and had much to do with the building of the new church. American Mennonites supported the project.
Map Showing Where Menno Lived

This map shows the major places of Menno’s activities. He was born and active in Witmarsum, Netherlands (west). After his conversion in 1536 he lived underground in the neighboring provinces of Groningen (Netherlands) and East Friesland (Germany) for a number of years. Many Anabaptist and Reformed refugees went from Catholic Netherlands to German East Friesland.

(Below) Scenes from contemporary life in East Friesland.
II. East Friesland, Germany

(Below, left) Melchior Hoffman, who transplanted the Anabaptist movement from Strasbourg to Emden, East Friesland. This etching by Christopher van Sichem shows him in prison in Strasbourg. In 1530 he baptized 300 followers in the Emden Reformed Church, starting the Anabaptist movement in the north. The church in which this took place was destroyed during World War II (right, below). From here the Anabaptist movement spread to the Netherlands where Menno joined it in 1536. When Menno fled to East Friesland, he found shelter on the estate of Ulrich van Dornum at Oldersum. The building (bottom) is the remnant of his castle, which was torn down in 1954. The picture on the right below shows a part of Emden in which the Mennonites lived in the early days (known as 't Falter) and the new church which includes the parsonage occupied by Dr. Heinold Fast, the pastor, and his parents.