

Preservings



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“A people who have not the pride to record their history will not long have the virtues to make their history worth recording; and no people who are indifferent to their past need hope to make their future great.” *Jan Gleysteen*

The Chortitzer Church: Feature Story

Delbert F. Plett, editor *Preservings*.

Introduction.

The feature story for this issue of *Preservings* is the Chortitzer Gemeinde, or Chortitzer Church, as it is now known, in honour of the 100th anniversary of the worship house at Chortitz, Manitoba (Randolph).

In 1874-76 500 families from the Berghthaler Colony from Russia emigrated to Canada *en masse* settling in the Hanover Steinbach area, then known as the East Reserve. From 1878-81 about half of these settlers relocated to the Altona area (West Reserve) where they came to be known as the Sommerfelder. The Berghthaler that remained in the East Reserve were known as Chortitzer, after the village of Chortitz, home of its Bishop or Aeltester and one of its central worship houses.

The Chortitzer Gemeinde, with roots going back to the founding of the Chortitza Colony in Imperial Russia in 1789, is one of the oldest Christian denominations in Western Canada, ranking with the Catholic and Anglican Churches, and is certainly the oldest Mennonite congregation west of Ontario. The Chortitzer Gemeinde has a glorious and inspired history, over 200 years as a vibrant and vital part of the Church of God.

The rigors of the pioneering experience, so totally foreign to those who have known only the comforts of modern affluence, intrigue North Americans more and more with each passing year. The exposition of these heroic times and the saga of the noble and courageous people who settled the Hanover Steinbach area in 1874, building a community with bare bleeding hands, brick by brick and acre by acre of thriving farmland, is slowly being retrieved from the journals, letters and other records which they have left for posterity.

The story of the Chortitzer Church has countless exciting and inspirational chapters—whether internal mutual aid, social services, charity to others in need, the story speaks for the struggle of pioneers everywhere to survive and build a better future for their children and posterity to come. This issue of *Preservings* proudly presents some of these stories.

Dudman-Doerksen, Chortitz 1907.



Photo Caption: Edward S. Dudman (1883-1983) was one of a number of orphan boys from Dr. Bernardo's orphanage in London, England, adopted by Chortitzer families during the 1890s. Edward was taken in by the family of Jakob D. Wiebe, Chortitz, son of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) in 1897.

In 1907 Edward married Regina Doerksen (1885-1965), daughter of Abraham Doerksen (1827-1916) of Schönthal, Manitoba—see article by niece Regina Neufeld elsewhere in this newsletter. Regina Doerksen came from royalty as Mennonites go: brother Abraham Doerksen (1853-1929) was the Bishop of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde near Altona; brother Heinrich was a Chortitzer minister; and brother David was Bishop of the Sommerfeld Gemeinde, Saskatchewan.

Like two of his brothers-in-law, Edward became a teacher, teaching in the German language in the Christian private school in Chortitz, Manitoba. Later he owned the hotel and McCormick-Deering dealership in Niverville.

Obituary, Carillon, October 5, 1983. Photo courtesy of Regina Neufeld, Box 1034, Niverville, R0A 1E0, and Bernhard Doerksen, Stammbaum des Abraham Doerksen, page 101.

Inside This Issue

Feature story, Chortitzer Church	1-9
News and Announcements	11-31
Articles	33-91
Material Culture	92-99
Book Reviews	100-104

The Chortitzer Church: Its Roots, Spirituality and the Pioneering Experience

Bergthaler/Chortitzer Roots.

The Chortitzer people were known as Bergthaler when they arrived Manitoba in 1874-76 because they came from the Bergthal Colony in Imperial Russia. But Bergthal in turn was settled by people mainly from the Chortitza Colony, also known as the Old Colony.

And so the roots of the Chortitzer Gemeinde in Manitoba go back much further than 1836—to the founding of the Chortitza Colony in Imperial Russia by 400 families from Danzig, West Prussia (today Gdansk, Poland) in 1789. The Chortitza Colony consisted of 19 villages with 89,000 acres of land located along the west bank of the Dnieper River, across from the City of Alexandrowsk, which has grown into the modern-day city of Zaporozhe, Ukraine.

The name “Chortitza” originated from the world-famous Island of Chortitza in the Dnieper River. In ancient times, Vikings from the north travelled south along the river to trade with the Greeks and other Mediterranean cultures. After passing the dangerous rapids they stopped on the island to give thanks to God for safe passage. God was called “Hortz” in the ancient tongue, and hence the name Chortitza, literally ‘thanks be to God’ or even ‘Godlike’.

Chortitzer Spirituality.

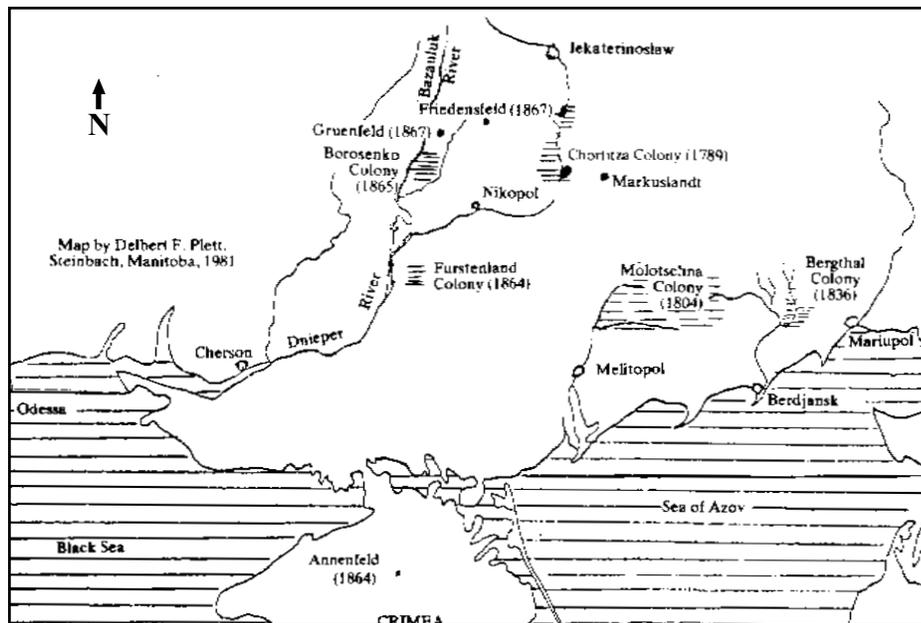
In any case, the name Chortitza, pronounced correctly by the old timers with an “h” sound—almost silent “c”, itself symbolised the very genuine and enduring spirituality and Christian discipleship of the Chortitzer Gemeinde from the time of its inception to the present day. The spirituality of orthodox and conservative Mennonites was based on the restitution of the Apostolic church as rediscovered in Reformation times by Menno Simons, Dirk Phillips, and other seminal leaders. This vision of a renewed Christian community based on the New Testament church or Gemeinde was manifested within the Bergthaler/Chortitzer Gemeinde by an earnest discipleship and the ethos of love and community.

The lifestyle of farming was considered appropriate and conducive towards “...simplicity in Christ...” “Brotherly love,” was to make “them like a great family and no one wished a privilege for themselves at the expense of another.” Those who yielded their lives would be filled “with a new wisdom and knowledge of Christ Jesus.” Christians “...should be satisfied in finding food and clothing; striving after great wealth or position of high distinction in this world....certainly entails a restriction in spiritual benefits. What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul. Matt. 16:26”—Heinrich Balzer, “Faith and Reason,” in *Golden Years*, pages 214-248.

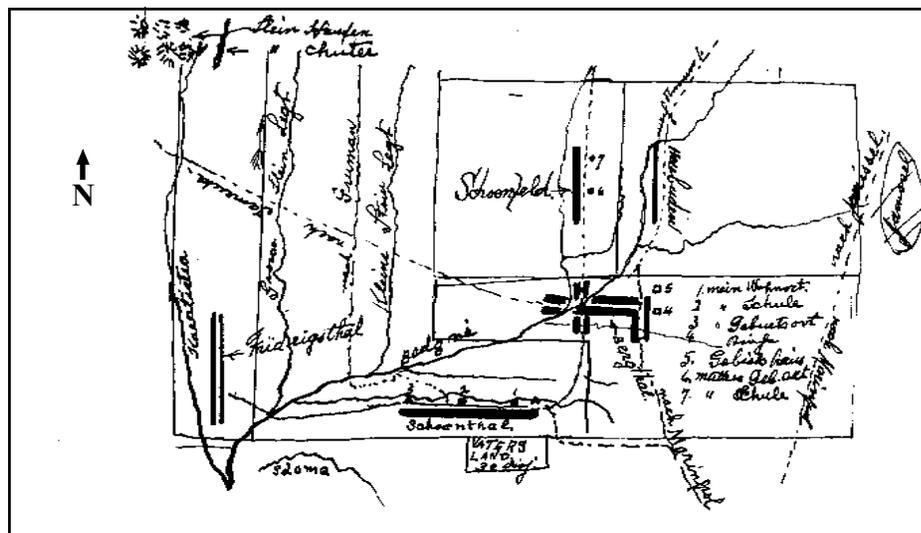
Such a spirituality articulated a faith which permeated the everyday life of believers, as faith become alive and incarnate. Such a faith was made complete and fulfilled by its everyday implementation and practice within and without the Gemeinde, the community of God’s people. Ex-

istential spirituality of this nature has nothing in common with the shallow verbalizing and cynical self-aggrandizement found in the religious cultures and languages of Separatist-Pietism and/or American Fundamentalism.

The Bergthaler/Chortitzer were conservative intellectuals and not given to flights of fancy in their religious disposition. Their theology was practical, enduring and as relevant today as it was in the 19th century. They did not follow and swing



Mennonite Colonies in Imperial Russia, circa 1874, showing Bergthal located northeast of Mariupol. Courtesy of Sarah’s Prairie, page 345.



Map of the Bergthal Colony showing the land complexes of the five villages. The map was drawn by Rev. Heinrich Doerksen (1855-1934), Schönthal, Manitoba, and has never before been published. The legend on the map identifies 7 locations: 1) my place of residence (namely, Heinrich Doerksen’s); 2) my school; 3) my birth place; 4) the big church; 5) the Gebietsamt or Municipal office; 6) mother’s birth place; and 7) mother’s school. He has also referred to “father’s purchased land, 30 desjatten” or about 78 acres adjacent to the south side of the Bergthal land complex, indicating that Abraham Doerksen Sr. had privately been able to purchase an additional block of land for himself. The road to the northeast enters into the Schönthal land and then crosses the “smaller stony slough”, then crosses the road to Grunau, the German Colonist village, and crossing the “large stony slough”, and then entering the Friedrichsthal land spanning the entire west end of the Bergthal land complex. Somewhat further to the northeast was the “Stein Hufen”, literally “stone piles”, and a chutor. Courtesy of great-grandson Wm. Rempel, Niverville, Manitoba.

with each new religious fad and mania which swept east across the steppes of Russia from Germany as did many other Mennonites. Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit they remained true to the faith once received in spite of ridicule and scorn from Separatist-Pietists.

As a result of such faithfulness, the Bergthaler were granted the blessing to discern the coming storm clouds in Czarist Russia and heeded the call of God to take the pilgrim's staff in 1874. This steadfastness was to spare the Bergthaler/Chortitzer from the holocaust of the Soviet inferno which erupted in 1917.

The Bergthal Colony.

The Bergthal settlement was founded in 1836 by 136 young families mainly from the Chortitza "old" Colony, but also including a significant number from the Molotschna. The settlers were reasonably well-provisioned as each family was allowed 5 wagon loads of goods, in addition to cattle and horses. Many were sponsored by well-to-do parents who had the foresight and vision to establish their children on land of their own, something which only 1 in 4 Russian Mennonites could aspire to by this time.

The settlement of Bergthal was located 20 miles northwest of Mariupol and approximately 50 miles northeast of Berdyansk, both seaports on the Sea of Azov. The land consisted of 26,000 acres or about 40 sections. Between 1836 and 1853, five villages—Bergthal, Heuboden, Schönthal, Schönfeld and Friedrichsthal—were laid out along the Bodena River and various tributaries.

The land was relatively level, treeless and grass covered interspersed with occasional deep valleys. A small mountainous formation 3 kilometres north of the village of Bergthal was known as the Kamennaya Mogila, literally "stone graves". The name "Bergthal" was suggested by the Chortitzer Oberschulz Bartsch as it described the physical setting, with the miniature mountain range to the north, and the Bodena valley in which Bergthal, the first village, was laid out—Wm. Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony*, pages 9-28.

The Bergthaler were spared much of the social disfunction caused by landlessness within the Mennonite colonies in Russia. By 1857 the population had grown to 367 families of whom 149 (40%) were landowners and 218 (60%) were Anwohner (126) and labourers (92). These statistics compared favourably with Chortitza and the Molotschna where 42% and 44%, respectively, were landowners. The same statistics also show that 38% in the Molotschna were landless labourers compared to 10% and 20% in the Chortitza and Bergthal colonies. Another source refers to 266 families in Bergthal in 1857: 140 landowning families and 126 Anwohner families who owned up to 32 acres—John Dyck, *Oberschulz*, pages 31-32.

In 1867 the average land ownership in Bergthal was 23.0 desjatin per family compared to 20.5 Old Colony and 24.5 % Molotschna. 36 % in Bergthal were landowners compared to 40 % in the Old Colony and 38 % in the Molotschna. Bergthal had 397 families, Chortitza 1451 and Molotschna 4229—A. Klaas, *Unser Kolonien*, pages 231 and 232. Bergthal had a higher per-



A view of the Kamennaya Mogila, photographed in 1979 by Bergthal historian and cartographer, William Schroeder, back when travelling in the Soviet Union was still a scary adventure. Photo courtesy of Bergthal Colony, page 13. Bergthal's neighbours were Russians to the West, Catholics to the North, Greeks to the East, and Cossacks to the South.

centage of pasture and hay land indicating a greater specialization in sheep, dairy and beef, as opposed to the wheat cash crop economy which prevailed in the older colonies, a characteristic well suited for the more primitive Manitoba economy.

By 1874 when the decision to emigrate was made, the population of Bergthal had grown to 525 families (Note One). The ratio of Vollwirthen (full farmers) to Anwohner (the landless) had fallen, but at 33 per cent was still well above the average among Russian Mennonites of 25 per cent which decreased even further to 20 per cent by 1910.

Bergthal was organized as part of the Agricultural Society (Landwirtschaftlichen Verein) established in 1817 under the leadership of Johann Cornies (1789-1848), the great Russian Mennonite social reformer. The purpose of the society was to improve farming methods and technologies among the Mennonites, in areas such as animal breeding, crop improvements, etc. similar to the Department of Agriculture in modern times. In the elections held March 5, 1869, in Bergthal, the following were elected as Vorsitzer ("Chairmen") for their respective villages: Bernhardt Wiebe - Heuboden, Jakob Kaempfer - Bergthal, and Jakob Braun - Friedrichsthal—*Oberschulz*, page 122.

The 1858 Revisions-Listen (census) for the five Bergthal villages are extant—the lists for Heuboden and Friedrichsthal "remain in the Deposit of the Alexandrowsk Town-Hall (SAZR)" and the lists for Bergthal, Schönthal and Schönfeld are "contained in the Deposit of Mariupol district treasury in State Archives Donetsk region (SADoR)"—Alexander Tedeyev, *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, page 58. These records, when available, will provide a highly accurate cross section of the population of the Bergthal villages in terms of age, number of Wirtschaften, etc. and facilitate more detailed socio-economic analysis, genealogical and family history studies. Such information will also make it possible to study Bergthaler settlement patterns in the E. Reserve, and on the W. Reserve in 1878-81, and to appraise the extent to which old-world village and kinship networks impacted on them.

Leadership.

The Bergthaler were blessed with wise and far-sighted leaders. Like a Moses, Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), Heuboden, led his people from forthcoming danger to a new home and refuge in Manitoba in 1874-76. In 1874 the Imperial Czar offered Gerhard Wiebe a feudal estate complete with land, serfs and the title of nobility for himself and his descendants, if he would persuade his people to remain in Russia. Although severely tempted, he chose the pain and sacrifice of the pilgrim and remained faithful to God even though he was warned by His Imperial Majesty that scorn and ridicule would be his reward.

Other important leaders included Oberschulz Jakob Peters (1813-84), Heuboden, district mayor of the Bergthal Colony in Russia, who received a gold watch and commendation from the Imperial Czar for "diligence in the years 1854 and 1855" when Bergthal provided nursing care and other aid during the Crimean War. Peters was a skilled politician who acted as overseer of the emigration of 3000 people from one continent to another and the transplantation of their communities and social institutions into a new land. Peter Friesen (1812-75), Bergthal, served as Waisenman for the Bergthaler Waisenamt from its inception in 1842 until his death and was the patriarch of three generations of Friesens in Manitoba who followed him in this office.

The settlement had many enterprising citizens such as Abraham Doerksen (1827-1916), Schönthal, who "had a machine shop where he manufactured farm machinery, such as plows, harrows, cultivators and wagons. He employed four carpenters and one blacksmith—Wm. Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony*, page 35. His vision was demonstrated by the fact that three of his sons served the ministry of their church including Abraham, founding Aeltester of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde. Peter Neufeld (1821-1922), Schönthal, was another successful entrepreneur "who operated a store and inn (Schenke) and later owned a Wirtschaft... He evidently owned cattle since he had considerable knowledge of the treatment of cattle ailments common to herds in Russia"—John Dyck, "Kleefeld," *Historical Sketches*, page 150.

Another individual of some distinction was



The worship house of the Bergthal Colony situated in the central village of Bergthal could seat 1000 people. Dimensions 40 by 100 feet. The cross and bell tower were added after 1876. Photo courtesy of The Bergthal Colony, page 37.

Peter Unger (1812-88) BGB A10, born in Einlage, Chortitza Colony, who settled in the village of Bergthal, Bergthal Colony, Russia. Unger also received a gold watch from the Imperial Czar “for services during the Crimean War.” Unger must have been an intelligent and educated man as he was the District (Municipal) Secretary at the time—*Oberschulz*, page 29. Unger immigrated to Canada in 1876 and established the “estate” Felsenton on NE22-6-6E and NW23-6-6E, just south of Steinbach. Unger had 22 children and was the ancestor of the “Felsenton” Ungers.

A third gold watch for honourable service during the Crimean War was received by Abraham Hiebert, Schönthal, also listed as district secretary. Each watch was worth 150 ruble, more or less equal to six good horses. Only four watches of this value were awarded to individuals in the Molotschna and Chortitza Colonies altogether, although 11 watches of lesser value were awarded including one to Samuel Kleinsasser, from Hutterthal, a Hutterite.

Bergthal also had colourful residents such as Johann Schroeder (1807-84), who served as “chief-of-police, fire chief and at times social worker and marriage councillor.” When his second wife died, Johann was preparing to go courting for another wife. His maid, Maria Dyck (1840-1900), an intelligent woman, stood at the door watching these preparations and won his heart by quoting some lines of Goethe’s poetry to him, “... Sieh das Gute liegt so nah”; see Wm. Schroeder, *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, pages 44-46.

Bergthal Schools.

Each village in Bergthal had its own centrally located school house. The teachers were often local individuals who had a gift and interest in teaching the young, but were also hired from the Molotschna and Chortitza Colonies. Teaching methods followed those standard at the time.

The teachers in the Bergthal Colony in 1848 were as follows: Bergthal - Heinrich Wiens (Gerhard Dueck); Schönfeld - Abraham Friesen (Abraham Enns); Schönthal - Franz Dyck (Corn. Neufeld); Heuboden - Abraham Wiebe (Johann Hiebert); and Friedrichsthal - (Johann Buhler)—*Oberschulz*, page 121. The second name listed in

brackets may have been a substitute or teacher trainee. The Bergthal Colony teachers 1857 were: Bergthal - Gerhard Dueck; Schönfeld - Abraham Enns; Schönthal - Cornelius Neufeld; and Heuboden - Johann Hiebert—*Oberschulz*, page 22.

The Bergthal teachers were genuinely interested in the well-being and spiritual growth of their students. In some cases among conservative Mennonites teaching was a stepping stone to leadership in the Gemeinde. This also held true among the Bergthaler as with David Stoesz, who taught in Friedrichsthal and later became Aeltester of the Chortitzer Gemeinde in 1882.

The philosophy of education of conservative Mennonites was that schools should instill children with “Genuine faith ... before the forces of reason take hold and prevent a true understanding of ‘simplicity in Christ’.” The purpose of the school system was not necessarily to excel in the mechanics of learning, but rather “to prepare the youth to live an existential Christian life of piety and reverence for God based on simplicity and love for fellowman. A good education opened a child’s heart to allow a knowledge of Christ to take root.”

Whatever belonged to higher education was seen as leading to “sophistry, unbelief, and corruption of the church, for knowledge puffeth up. 1 Cor. 8:1.”

The truth of this statement was observed in many from among the Russian Mennonites such as historian Peter M. Friesen who attended Separatist-Pietist Bible Schools in Europe and elsewhere and returned to their home communities filled with disdain for their traditional faith and who commenced fervent proselytising for all manner of “fabled” endtimes teachings based on the novels of Jung Stilling who believed that the Second Coming would occur in the east and that the Imperial Czar would be the saviour of the Church in the end-times (Note Two). It was fortunate for these people that they preached extemporaneously as had they carefully composed and written out their sermons as conservative ministers did, their descendants would be extremely embarrassed at the teachings they propagated so fanatically which were proven totally false by the effluxion of time.

The educational system in Bergthal has been unfairly criticized often by writers committed to modernization typology or by those whose religious disposition made it necessary for them to denigrate conservative and orthodox Mennonites.

It is true that Bergthal was not directly affected by the reforms of Johann Cornies in the sense that the schools were never put under his control. But this was probably more of a blessing than a disadvantage. Bergthal received many of the benefits indirectly through the various emigrants arriving in the new settlement as late as 1853 and by teachers hired from the outside, from the Molotschna as well as the Old Colony. e.g. Jakob Warkentin (b. 1836), Tiede, Mol., *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 187, and Johann Abrams (1794-1856), BGB A 58, from Pastwa, Mol., teacher in Schönfeld 1843.

Advocates of the Cornies reforms conveniently forget that these measures caused immense social disruption and disputation when they were implemented in the Molotschna and Old Colonies, alienating the majority of the population. In setting rigid standards Cornies inhibited the creativity of the best of the old-school teachers and prohibited traditional Mennonite art forms such as *Schönschrieben* and *Fraktur* which he regarded as sissified. These advocates also ignore some of the negative aspects of the post-Cornies pedagogy: they were known as frightfully strict and almost abusive disciplinarians, many of their students became vulnerable to a fawning Russian nationalism and/or pan-Germanism, many fell victims to the fanciful teachings of German Separatist-Pietism, and, worst of all, they disdained the Plaut-dietsch language and Low German culture which had once dominated commerce and socio-economic life in Northern Europe and around the Baltic Sea during medieval times.

Those who have denounced the Bergthal schools so completely and thoroughly have obviously never studied the writings of Bergthal/Chortitzer leaders and even ordinary lay-people. The sermons of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) are studded with jewels of Biblical allegory and reveal a sound exegesis and a truly inspired faith as enduring today as when they were written in the 1860s and are far beyond anything ever conceived by his enemies. The journals of Chortitzer Aeltester David Stoesz and minister Heinrich Friesen are concrete proof that the Bergthal school system turned out graduates who were not only imbued with a love of Christ, but also competent writers and gifted thinkers.

Social Services and Mutual Aid.

The spiritual ethos of the Bergthaler/Chortitzer people was evident in the three paradigms of rural agrarian communities; family, village and church. Its faith was put into practice by a myriad of social services, community mutual aid, and ethno-cultural activities.

The mutual aid extended from informal activities such as a *Bahrung* (“barn raising”), pig slaughtering bees (“Schwine’sjkast”), nursing and midwifery services, to more formal institutionalized structures such as the *Waisenamt* (“orphan’s trust office”) which provided for devolution of estates, investment of orphans’ and widows’ funds, and loans to community members, the



The Gebietsamt or Municipal office in Bergthal built during the 1860s. It had a boardroom where the Oberschulz and his 15 member council held their deliberations and office and private residence for the secretary. The Bergthaler did not boast about their financial progress but the well-constructed and modern public buildings speak for themselves. Photo courtesy of The Bergthal Colony, page 30.

Gemeindespeicher (“community granary”) where a year’s supply of flour and seed grain was stored, the *Brandordnung* (“mutual fire insurance company”), and the village assembly (“Schulthebut”) where decisions regarding village life were made in a democratic and public forum.

Social services were provided pursuant to the commitment of the Chortitzer Gemeinde “to look unto the necessities of the saints”. This included access to a sound elementary education for all in the community regardless of wealth or social station, provision of foster parents and/or guardians for orphans, special assistance for the handicapped and disabled, and financial assistance for widows and the elderly. In addition to the more formal institutions already referred to, these social policy objectives were achieved by way of the *Armenkasse* (“poor box”) which provided funds used by the deacons to look after the poor, the



1899 - Peter Neufeld (1821-1922), settled in Ebenfeld, Manitoba, on Section 4-7-6E, a mile west of Steinbach on the north side of the present-day P.T.H.52 where Dr. Paul Peters lives today, staking out a “chutor” of 800 acres of prime farmland for himself and his sons. Peter Neufeld was born in the Chortitza Colony, experienced the move to the Bergthal Colony, and then the 1874 emigration to Canada. Photo courtesy of Audrey Toews, Steinbach, Manitoba.

widows and the fatherless.

These social structures and other community constructs such as closely knit extended families, village communities and, of course, the Gemeinde itself, provided a social safety net for the poor, the disadvantaged and marginalized within the Chortitzer Gemeinde which was centuries ahead of its time. These institutions were transplanted in their entirety from Imperial Russia to Manitoba in 1874 and are generally well-known and have already been dealt with in other sources.

Bergthal became the most successful example of the colony settlement system among the Russian Mennonites. Through wise leadership and the providence of God, Bergthal avoided the extreme factionalism generated by radical Separatist-Pietists whose fervent proselytizing broke up families and church communities in the Old Colony and in the Molotschna Colony.

The landless dispute, a near revolt of disenfranchised workers in the Molotschna Colony, was avoided by the Bergthal landowners who were willing to sacrifice of their property time and time again in order to provide for the needs of their less fortunate neighbours and friends. At the time of emigration, Aeltester Wiebe and Oberschulz Peters set an example by agreeing to a write down of their deposits in the Waisenamt which provided a fund so that even the poorest in the community could emigrate to Manitoba in 1874-6.

Das Verstossene Kind.

The story of “Das Verstossene Kind”, literally the rejected child, better than anything I know, describes the religious faith and spirituality of the Bergthaler/Chortitzer.

On April 12, 1863, “Das Verstossene Kind” was born to a young Russian woman in the home of her relative, the Russian herdsman in Heuboden. The mother had worked as a maid in Schönfeld. She did not want the baby and so it was thrown into a pig pen.

The baby was rescued by Mrs. Johann Doerksen and nursed by Mrs. Jakob Harder, Heuboden. After the foster-mother died, she was replaced by a woman who was indifferent to the child and when the immigration came to pass, they told him that they could not afford to take him along.

The evening after his foster-parents had left,

Oberschulz Jakob Peters found the child weeping by the village well.

“Johann, aren’t you gone yet?” asked Jakob Peters.

Slowly Johann raised himself up, looked fearfully in the direction of the voice and recognized the Oberschulz.

“The others have all left except me,” he replied. “They did not wish to take me along.”

“Then you must come with me,” said Jakob Peters, without hesitation. “You can stay with us until something turns up.”

Johann stood up, took hold of the proffered hand and allowed himself to be led to the Peter’s home. Here the Oberschulz gave him something to eat and drink. Then he said, “Johann, you are now my son; and if you like it here you may stay. Next year I want to move to America and you can come along. I will not leave you here....”

True to his word, the Oberschulz brought Johann to Manitoba in 1876. In 1887 Johann joined the Chortitzer Gemeinde and adopted the name Johann Peters. In time Johann married and raised a large family—*The Bergthal Colony*, pages 39-40. A more detailed account is found in the book about the Oberschulz by John Dyck. The complete heart-wrenching story is told by William Enns, *Das Verstossene Kind*, 132 pages.

East Reserve Settlement, 1874.

About 500 families of the Bergthaler started arriving in the East Reserve in August, 1874. The “Brot Schult Registers” of the Bergthaler Gemeinde, which recorded the aid given to each family by way of loans and credits, indicate that they originally intended to settle in 25 villages with 15 to 20 families in each, which would have been in keeping with the practice in Russia: see Irene Kroeker, “Brot Schult Registers” in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, pages 40-44.

However, the E. Reserve did not have large



Maria Dyck Schroeder (1840-1900), one of the dynamic women of Bergthal, Imperial Russia. She won her husband’s heart by quoting Goethe’s poetry. Photo courtesy of Wm. Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, page 43.

blocks of fertile steppe as the settlers had experienced in Bergthal. In fact, most village sites were limited to 1 or 2 sections, as much of the E. Reserve needed drainage or was interspersed by sandy gravel ridges and sloughs. As a result the larger village complexes as listed in the Brot Schult Registers were soon broken down into some 50 villages of 6-12 families each, a size more suitable to the physical circumstances of the land. The small village formation was also more suited to the primitive Manitoba economy where the farmers could not continue with a cash crop wheat-growing economy as they had been used to in Russia. The settlers had to make a difficult transition to a more basic "subsistence" type agriculture based on mixed farming with emphasis on livestock, poultry and dairy products.

The transformation of the "old-world" style villages into smaller "new world" Strassendorf units was accelerated by the decision of half of the Bergthaler to undertake a secondary migration to the West Reserve, where they settled in the Altona area.

Ironically it was this difficult adjustment period which would in fact lay the foundation for the future prosperity of the entire region.

Charity of the Pioneer Gemeinde.

One of the most inspiring chapters of the Chortitzer story is the charity of the pioneer Gemeinde. Notwithstanding the harshness of the pioneering process and the restructuring required to adjust farming strategies for the primitive Manitoba economy, the Chortitzer were already actively sending aid to assist poor and landless Mennonite families in Russia as early as the 1880s. The *Mennotische Rundschau*, a contemporary Mennonite newspaper, is full of examples of such aid which was gathered and sent to various colonies in Russia.

The story of the "Lilges Gemeinde" has already been told by Dick Wiebe, Greenland, who wrote a series of articles published in *Preservings*, No. 3, pages 8 and 11, No. 5, page 10, and No. 7, pages 22-23. A community of the Moravian Brethren Church settled in Bruderheim, Alberta, in 1895. Their leader was Bishop Andreas Lilge, and hence the name.

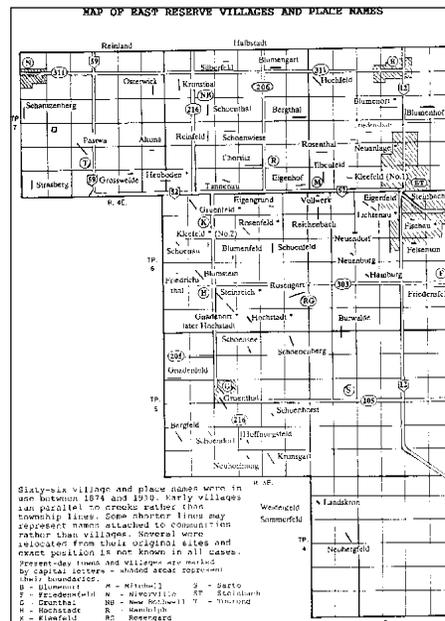
The Moravians were destitute and in danger of starvation. Being familiar with the Mennonites from Russia, they appealed to the Bishops of the Mennonite Church in Manitoba for help. Dick Wiebe's grandfather, David Stoesz, the Chortitzer Bishop at the time, was actively involved in the aid effort. The response was dramatic and substantial, with railway wagons full of cattle and other material goods shipped to Alberta.

A granddaughter, now an old lady, recently recalled how moved and inspired the Moravian leaders had been when they arrived in the East Reserve. Instead of being treated like beggars asking for help they were hosted like royalty. Bishop Stoesz had insisted that they sleep in his own bed. "You see," she said, "they not only gave them the aid but also let them sleep in the best bed they had. If it had not been for the Mennonites our people would have starved to death," she added with tears in her eyes.

The following record dated January 11, 1895, appended to one of the early Chortitzer church

registers, shows the aid provided by the village of Alt-Bergthal: "Kornelius Toews and Peter Sawatzky - 1 cow given; Julius Toews - 1 cow given; David Falk, David Falk and Heinrich Wiebe - 1 pair 4 year-old oxen given; Peter Falk and Jakob Falk - 1 pair 3 year-old oxen given; Peter Toews Sr. and Peter Toews Jr. [the future Aeltester?] - 1 cow given; Jakob Hamm - \$1 given; Kornelius Wall and Peter Klassen - 1 cow given; and Jakob Wiebe [the teacher] a 3 year-old ox, \$21, without interest for 3 years"—courtesy John Dyck, *Historical Sketches*, page 19.

Another example of pioneer charity occurred in the 1890s when various Chortitzer families took in English orphan boys put out for adoption by Dr. Bernardo, London, such as Edward S. Dudman (1886-1983) by Jakob D. Wiebe, Chortitz, and Henry Choote (1883-1943) by the Toews family



East Reserve Villages circa 1880. The map of Hanover Steinbach shows 66 village and place names in use in the area between 1874 and 1910. Map courtesy of John Dyck, Working Papers, page 11.

in Bergthal, etc. Both of these boys were born in London, England, and grew up to be useful and productive citizens.

These were remarkable achievements which speak well for the culture and spiritual ethos of our community.

Historiography.

The people of Bergthaler and hence Chortitzer background are blessed with the best documented history of all the Russian Mennonites. The Bergthaler were a literate and articulate people and since they emigrated *en masse*, they were able to take much of their Gemeinde (Confessional) and Gebietsamt (Municipal) records along to Canada where some of this material has been preserved. Very critical are thousands of pages of records in the files of the Chortitzer Waisenamt, which governed estate settlements, administered the affairs of orphans, and acted as precursor of the present-day Credit Unions.

One of the best examples of this "Schriftentum" is the *Bergthal Gemeindebuch*,

published by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society in 1993. It is a parish register of all births, marriages and deaths in the Bergthal Colony between 1836 and 1874. The book also includes the Quebec ship records of all Mennonite immigrants between 1874 and 1880 as well as the 1881 census covering both East and West Reserves. With this one single resource people of Bergthaler (including Chortitzer and Sommerfelder) background can document their entire family genealogy back to the late 18th century in several hours.

Unfortunately for those who have not yet purchased their personal copy, the 1000 copies of this book printed are almost sold out. Less than a 100 copies remain, making it a run-a-way Mennonite bestseller.

Some modest beginnings have also been made in documenting the rich history of family, village and church life prior to the turn of the century and after. Noteworthy in this regard are Volumes One and Three of the East Reserve Historical Series, which contain many articles pertaining to these topics as well as translations of sermons, journals, etc., necessary to an understanding of this time period in our history. Much additional material is also found in *Preservings*, being the newsletter of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society.

The documentation and telling of the Chortitzer story is only just beginning and, hopefully, many books and Ph.D.s dealing with various aspects of its social, cultural and ecclesiastical history will be forthcoming. Anyone who wishes to combine the excitement of academic achievements with a study of their own heritage and attaining recognition for pioneer scholarship in Canadian social history or any of the other social sciences would be well advised to consider this topic.

The power of historiography to articulate how people regard themselves and others has clearly been established. Those writers during the past century who have chosen to write misrepresentations and lies about the Chortitzer people and other conservative Mennonite denominations will one day have to give account for themselves. At the same time, this does not diminish the responsibility of each individual, and each family, and each congregation, to record and document their own history, for failure to do so, will leave their descendants exposed and extremely vulnerable to the lies and untruths written and told by others.

A detailed study of the Chortitzer Gemeinde is bringing to life the story of the first generation of Mennonite pioneers who settled southern Manitoba in 1874. Their voice speaks for many others, affirming the vitality of their culture and the veracity of its spiritual ethos. Through the lives of these pioneers, a window is opened upon their society and culture as it was when they arrived in Canada, strong and self-confident, before it was castrated by the ethnic-cleansing measures implemented by the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Governments in 1916 and rendered anemic by the inroads of the religious culture and language of American Fundamentalism in the decades following.

Endnotes:

Note One: There seems to be some question as to the actual number of Bergthaler emigrating from Russia in 1874-76. In the commissioning docu-

ment of the Bergthaler Gemeinde to delegates Jakob Peters (1813-84) and Heinrich Wiebe (1839-97) dated February 20, 1873, the population is described as 525 families: 1363 females and 1491 males—published in John Dyck, *Oberschulz Jakob Peters*, pages 49-51. Frank Epp, *Menn. in Can. Vol One*, page 212, uses the figure of 3403 people. Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe in his book refers to 500 families in Bergthl but this is probably referring to the families who actually emigrated to North America. Note Two: Urry, *None But Saints*, page 227.

For Further Reading:

James Urry, *None but Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789-1889* (Winnipeg, 1989), 328 pages.

William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg, 1986), 141 pages.

John Dyck, *Oberschulze Jakob Peters 1813-1884: Manitoba Pioneer Leader* (Steinbach, 1990), 138 pages.

D. Plett, "Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) - A Father of Manitoba," in *Preservings*, No. 6, June 1995, pages 1-14.

D. Plett, "Education in the East Reserve 1874-1920," in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, pages 2-29.



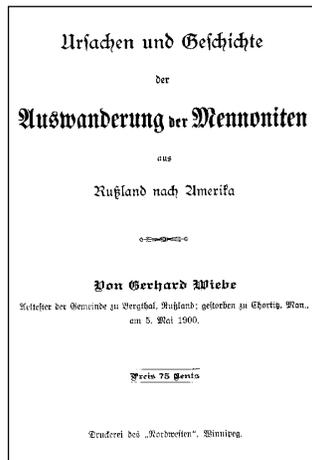
A typical Chortitzer family, 1911. Conservative Mennonites are known for their large and tightly-knit families and family values. Diedrich D. Wiebe, Chortitz, Manitoba, (1868-1930) was the youngest child of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) and the publisher of his father's memoirs, Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung in 1900. Back row: l - r. Back row: Diedrich K. Wiebe, Elisabeth Wiebe and Gerhard K. Wiebe; middle row: David K. Wiebe, Katherina Pries Wiebe, Margaretha K. Wiebe (Mrs. Henry K. Funk), Mr. Diedrich D. Wiebe. These five children were all from the first marriage to Margaretha Klassen; front row: Katharina P. Wiebe (Mrs. Franz S. Giesbrecht), Anna P. Wiebe (Mrs. Peter B. Fehr), Justina P. Wiebe (Mrs. Dietrich Toews and later Mrs. Jakob T. Dueck), Maria P. Wiebe (Mrs. Johann T. Dueck), Johann P. Wiebe and Jakob P. Wiebe. Diedrich D. Wiebe served his community as Waisenvorsteher for a number of years before he was elected to the ministry prior to the immigration to Paraguay. Photo courtesy of grandson Dick Wiebe, Ste. Annes, Manitoba.

Chortitzer History Book

Many people of Chortitzer background are anxiously awaiting the publication of the "Chortitzer History Book" researched and written by Gus Dueck during the 1980s. The manuscript has seen various revisions and the draft which I was fortunate to see in 1996 consisted of some 200 pages, 8" by 11" format with a number of introductory chapters outlining the origin of the Mennonite faith, the emigration to Russia and then to Manitoba, several chapters on the history of the church in Manitoba, as well as chapters on each of the church districts. In addition the manuscript included more than a hundred photographs of pioneer members of the Chortitzer Church which will add a personal dimension to the work for many readers who are descendants of these families.

The manuscript I reviewed was a well-documented historical work and very readable at the same time. When published it will mark a major stepping stone for the Chortitzer Church and its people. People who know their own history and are proud of it can learn from the mistakes of the past, and are generally much more fulfilled and enriched as individuals.

Members of the "History Book Committee" include Ben Rempel and Bishop Bill Hildebrandt. A firm publication date has not yet been announced.



In 1900 Dietrich D. Wiebe published the memoirs of his father, Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten von Rusland nach America (Chortitz, 1900), 60 pages. It was the first book published by the Bergthaler/Chortitzer people and one of the first to be published within the Manitoba Mennonite community. The book was later translated by Helen Janzen and published in English in 1981 by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society as Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America (Steinbach, 1981), 73 pages.

Chortitzer Church Registers on CD ROM?

Randy Kehler, HSHS board member, is interested in scanning all the Chortitzer Church Registers from 1878-1907 onto CD ROM. The complete work would result in a two CD ROM disk set containing about 5,000 pages of material. This would be an immensely convenient format for researchers to access this material which would allow them to track every Bergthaler/Chortitzer family from 1878 to 1907, including all births, marriages and deaths. If 12-18 orders were received the cost per set would be about \$50. These CD ROMs will be of particular interest to Archives and Universities as well as serious students of Bergthaler/Chortitzer history.

Randy has recently completed a major book project, the *Peter Kehler 1808-1997* family book, and now again has time to pursue the scanning of photographs. Anyone with a collection of old photographs can contact Randy and arrange for the pictures to be scanned. This can be done almost immediately, so that the pictures can be returned to the owner right away. Once the pictures are scanned onto computer, they can be loaded onto a CD ROM and permanently stored in the HSHS files.

Randy is also interested in collecting copies of old "Funeral Letters" and "Wedding Invitations". These documents can be of great interest to historians as they usually list the places of residence of the people invited.

Anyone interested in any of the foregoing projects is asked to contact Randy Kehler, Box 20737, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2T2.

Feature Article

Chortitz Church Centennial

By Jacob K. Doerksen, Box 154, Ile des Chenes, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

We are told that on June 19, 1897 the Church at Chortitz was filled to overflowing by people who came from all directions. The reason being the dedication of a new Church building. 100 years later, on June 29, 1997 something similar happened. People again came from all directions, and filled the church to overflowing. This time it was for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the dedication which took place in 1897. The weather was mild, lightly overcast with a slight breeze and we were able to accommodate many quests inside and out. The congregation at Chortitz is grateful that so many people came. Many came as visitors while for others it was a homecoming.

For some Chortitz was the former place of their worship, Sunday school or baptism. One such individual was Mrs. Tina (Henry) Harder of Grunthal. She was baptized here in 1920 when she was 20 years old. She is only three years younger than the Church building and probably has experienced almost as much in her lifetime as may have occurred during the 100 years that the building has stood. We wish her, in her senior years, as well as all other guests, health and gladness and thank you for coming.

Anniversary Celebrations.

The celebration was held during the afternoon of Sunday, June 29, 1997 Aeltester (Bishop) Bill Hildebrandt served us with devotions based on the text taken from Psalm 100 and also from that used in 1897—Psalm 116:12-14.

Deacon Jacob Klassen hosted the celebration. After opening with a welcome to all guests and a reading from Psalm 103 he spoke on the history of the Church building and other highlights. He also read a small portion of the sermon and a prayer used by Aeltester David Stoesz at the original building dedication. Rev. Cornelius Peters of the Silberfeld Church and Orlando Hiebert of the Steinbach Hanover Historical Society Inc. conveyed their greetings. Flowers and a written greeting was also received from Reeve Aron Friesen of the R.M. of Hanover.

Songs number 549, 345, 603, 725, and the last verse of 390, "Song before the meal", out of the *Gesangbuch*, were sung. After the program a picnic-style Faspa was served.

Significant Events.

100 years have now passed since the Church at Chortitz was replaced with the present building and during this time much of major importance has happened in our Church community. Some of those that stand

out maybe the most are World War One and all the issues that our people faced over going to war.

Secondly, the school issue when our Church lost control of our schools and the move to Paraguay in the 1920s.

Thirdly, World War Two when the issues

we are thankful for it.

Ministerial Elections.

The worship building at Chortitz served as focal point for almost all of the issues facing our Church until well into the expansion era. Rev. Johann H. Schroeder



Photos show the "centennial" events at the Chortitzer church, Chortitz, Manitoba, on June 29, 1997. Photos and story courtesy of The Chronicle, No. 17, No. 7, July/August 1997, cover page.

first addressed during the first World War became much more acute and with the final result being a second move to Paraguay in 1948. Then came the years of expansion. More churches were built. First in Niverville and then in Weidenfeld, Silberfeld, Rosengard, Steinbach, Winnipeg, Mitchell, and this was followed by expansion West and East—Prespatou, Osler, Thedford, Listowel, and again back to Manitoba with Zion joining us.

It may be added that the Church at Grunthal was built in 1886 to serve as a southern centre for the Church and already existed when the new Church was built in Chortitz. The Lord has been good to us and

chronicled the days and more days when meetings were held in Chortitz and Grunthal regarding the school issue and the move to Paraguay. During the 1920s it was decided that many of the Chortitzer people would move to Paraguay.

At first it seemed that only two Ministers were going to remain in Manitoba so on December 6, 1926 it was decided that more Ministers must be elected and ordained, from those staying. Fifteen days later three Ministers and one Deacon were elected, among them was Aeltester Peter S. Wiebe as Minister. On August 21, 1927 at 2:30 in the afternoon Aeltester Martin C. Friesen had his farewell address in Chortitz

before moving to Paraguay. Many other ministers also spoke as well as Aeltester David Doerksen from Saskatchewan.

Schroeder's journal also recorded other interesting occasions, like Sunday, October 29, 1922, when Rev. Peter Toews presided at the marriage of no less than four couples in the Chortitz Church. On June 20, 1948, another farewell service was held for the second group moving to Paraguay. Again the Church was filled to overflowing with services held in the morning and again the afternoon with seven speakers speaking, three in the morning and four in the afternoon.

Above all this I am sure that even though in the early years weddings and funerals were held at home, many were also held in this church.

Bishops.

Over the years many Aeltesten (Bishops) and Prediger (ministers) have served here, 61 in all. 8 of these were also elected as Aeltesten. 5 moved to Paraguay in the 1920s and 5 in 1948. Aeltesten who served here were the following: Aelt. Gerhard Wiebe in Russia and when they first came to Canada; Aelt. David Stoesz 1879-1903; Aelt. Peter Toews 1903-1915; Aelt. Johann Dueck 1915-1923.

From 1923-25 we had no Aeltester so we were served by Aelt. Heinrich Friesen of the Sommerfelder. Aelt. Martin C. Friesen 1925-1927, Aelt. Heinrich Friesen of the Sommerfelder again 1927-1931. In October of 1931 Aelt. Peter A. Toews of the Sommerfelder came to conduct an Aeltester election. Aelt. Peter S. Wiebe was elected and ordained by the same Aeltester in March of 1932. He remained Aeltester until 1961 when Aelt. Henry K. Schellenberg was ordained. He remained until 1983 at which time our present Bishop, Bill Hildebrandt, was ordained.

Ministers.

Ministers who have been ordained in Chortitz since 1924 were: Rev. and later Aelt. Martin C. Friesen 1924; Rev. and later Aelt. Peter S. Wiebe 1930; Rev. Cornelius W. Friesen 1930; Rev. Peter G. Falk 1933; Rev. Heinrich G. Klippenstein 1939; Rev. Jacob C. Friesen 1939; Rev. Abram F. Kehler 1948; Rev. Peter S. Kehler 1948; and Rev. Heinrich S. Kehler 1955. Rev. Abram F. Kehler is the only one alive today and was able to attend our celebration.

Deacons.

There were 11 deacons before 1926 when Abram P. Schroeder was elected. He remained until 1960. In 1973 Jacob Harder was elected and ordained. He remained until 1984 when our present Deacon, Jacob

Klassen, was elected and ordained. Both the last two deacons were able to attend our celebrations.

Song Leaders.

Over the years many song leaders have served: Heinrich Klippenstein, Heinrich Harder, Johann Rempel, Gerhard K. Kehler, Jacob Harder, Jacob G. Stoesz, Peter G. Falk, Jacob Wiebe, Jacob K. Kehler, Peter S. Wiebe, David Hiebert, Johann S. Kehler, Henry S. Kehler, Cornelius Hiebert, Heinrich Hildebrandt, Peter S. Kehler, Johann K. Rempel, Henry P. Wiebe, Abram F. Kehler, Peter W. Dueck, Abram K. Funk, Johann W. Dueck, Gerhard U. Kehler, Peter C. Hiebert, Diedrich W. Dueck, Jacob H. M. Doerksen, Jacob F. Schroeder, Abram Enns, Abram H. Kehler, and our present leaders, Abram Funk and Abe Dueck.

Sunday Schools.

Until 1919 the schools among the Chortitzer Mennonites were private schools. They were conducted in the German language and the Bible, New Testament and Catechism were used for reading and memory assignments. Only songs out of the "Gesangbuch" were sung. In 1916-19 the private schools were outlawed by the Provincial Government and replaced with public schools over the next ten years.

The time originally used to educate children in Christianity was now lost and a new system had to be developed. In areas where public schools were first formed, Saturday schools were implemented. This gradually turned into our present Sunday schools. On August 21, 1932, Sunday school was first held in Chortitz with 22 students present and Peter Peters as teacher. In the late 1930s and early 1940s Saturday schools were once more conducted with Johann Goertzen and later Heinrich G. Klippenstein and Peter S. Wiebe as the teachers.

Jacob F. Klassen taught from 1945 until he moved to Paraguay in 1948 and also Abram F. Kehler until he was ordained as minister in the same year. In 1949 a separate Sunday School building was established with Heinrich S. Kehler and Cornelius S. Blatz as teachers. From here on the attendance grew until 1968 when the present Sunday school building was built. We do not have the names of all the teachers but there have been up to 16 teachers and 130 students at one time. At present our Sunday school is small with 8 students and 3 teachers. They are Aron Doerksen, Peter Funk and Jacob Doerksen.

Growth and Change.

During his dedication service Aeltester David Stoesz expressed concern that his de-

sire was that a time would not come where the Ministers would be speaking to empty pews. From Aeltester Peter S. Wiebe's records we see that services in this building was very well attended in times past. He leaves a record of Communion recipients for the years, 1938 to 1943. They were anywhere from 317 persons in October of 1938 to 464 persons in June of 1943. Also the number of baptismal candidates are given from 1932 to 1961. They numbered from 7 persons in 1958 to 66 in 1940.

During this time changes to the inside of the building were also made. In 1943 the pulpit was moved from the South wall to the East end and the seating was rearranged. Also the West entrance became the main entrance and the North entrance is not used anymore.

Conclusion.

Time has not stood still since the worship house in Chortitz was dedicated. In it's senior years the church at Chortitz has taken a back seat to the many other fine Church buildings in our conference. It does not offer what others do. We do not have banquet facilities or such for weddings or funerals but what remains important is that it is used for that which it was originally dedicated, which is to glorify God and worship our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We have Sunday School and worship services every Sunday morning and we invite each one of you to come and join us, it will be a blessed experience.

About the author.

Jacob Doerksen is a Sunday School teacher in Chortitz. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and a frequent contributor to *Preservings*.

See article by Jakob K. Doerksen in *Preservings*, No. 10, June 1996, Part One, pages 34-35, regarding the 100 year history of the worship house at Chortitz, Manitoba.

"Preservings" is the Newsletter of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc., Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, published semi-annually at Steinbach, Manitoba. Editor, Delbert Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba. The publication of the Newsletter is funded in part by "D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation Inc." We are always looking for more individuals who may want to contribute articles and/or photographs. Please send subscriptions, articles and/or photographs to HSHS c/o Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0. Annual subscription membership fee is \$10.00.

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society

Annual Meeting- Jan. 17, 1998

Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) and Banquet of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society celebrating the history of the Chortitzer Church, 1789-1998.

DATE: Saturday, January 17, 1998

PLACE: Mitchell Senior Centre, Mitchell

Agenda - Symposium

3:00 p.m. SYMPOSIUM - Papers will be presented on various topics of the history of the Chortitzer Church.

- Symposium chair - Dr. Adolf Ens - Introduction to Chortitzer historiography
- Rev. Bill Rempel - Heinrich Doerksen and the Saskatchewan Sommerfelder.
- John Dyck - "Chortitzer Brandordnung"
- Conrad Stoesz - Kornelius Stoesz
- Jake Doerksen - The Manitoba Schools Act 1890
- George Rempel - The Mexican Mennonite Historical Society

Attendance at the symposium is **FREE**. Everyone welcome!

5:00 BUSINESS MEETING - The H.S.H.S. will hold its Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) membership and business meeting, election of directors, President's report, financial statement, etc.

Banquet and Entertainment

6:00 p.m. COCKTAILS - Come early. Enjoy the punch and get acquainted!

6:30 p.m. BANQUET - Enjoy a traditional Mennonite meal of ham, farmer sausage, Verenike, fried potatoes. Supper will be served in the Senior Centre.

7:45 p.m. SPEAKER - Dr. Royden Loewen, Award-winning historian and Professor, now Mennonite Chair, University of Winnipeg, is our after-dinner speaker. Dr. Loewen will present a paper "Chortitzer, Journals and social history."

8:15 Break

8:30 DRAMA: Anne Funk and her drama group, "Up Deutsch Lache", have entertained 1000s all over Manitoba. Tonight Anne Funk and Elfrieda Unger preform "Ella Kjemmt nich met Gemack" a Plaut-deitsch skit about two sisters who get involved in a telephone scam. John Toews joins them for a second skit in English, "Songs of the heart" a humorous drama about a conflict between an opera star and an up-and-coming Country western singer and the music they love.

9:00 p.m. MUSIC: *Willy Wiebe*, Classical Guitarist.



Dr. Roy Loewen, speaks about "Chortitzer, Journals and social history."



Tickets \$20.00

\$20.00 per ticket includes banquet and entertainment. Come out, meet your friends, and enjoy a fabulous evening. The entertainment deal of the year!

Special Bonus: The first 50 Guests or couples will receive a complimentary copy of our latest Issue No. 11 of *Preservings* featuring the Chortitzer Church.

News and Announcements

President's Report

by Orlando Hiebert, Box 8, Tourond,
Manitoba, R0A 2G0

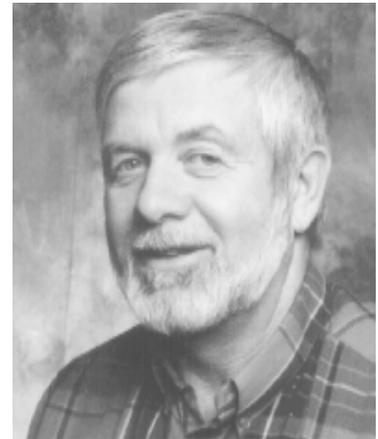
The HSHS is again involved in a number of projects in this second half of 1997. I feel that both the annual meeting which we sponsored jointly with the MMHS and the family histories symposium also jointly sponsored were well received and attended. We are again planning what we hope will be an interesting annual meeting and a March family histories symposium.

Some changes have taken place on our board. I would like to welcome Paul Loewen to the board of HSHS. I speak for the board in saying that we are gratified by his interest in

our attempts to chronicle and preserve the history of our area and its families. I would also like to thank Mrs. Irene Kroeker for the years of time spent on the board as board member and secretary and for her research and articles to the news letter. We will miss you and we wish you well in your new endeavour as editor of the Hanover Teachers Society newsletter.

In this newsletter we have placed emphasis on the story of the Chortitzer. Many of us have thought that the history of this group has not been recorded as well as it should have been and that this and future efforts will help right this situation.

With the 125th anniversary of the coming of the Mennonites to south eastern Manitoba approaching I hope that there will be a ground swell of activity and enthusiasm to celebrate and record the distinctives of our heritage.



Orlando Hiebert, President of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc.

Errata.

Unfortunately, I, the editor have to confess to a number of errors which occurred in Issue No. 10, June 1997, of *Preservings*. Please note the following corrections:

1) In the caption to the photograph on page 1, Part One, it was stated that Anna Wiebe was the daughter of Johann P. Wiebe, Alt-Bergfeld. This is incorrect, as Anna Wiebe's father was Jakob H. Wiebe (1835-1914).

2) The list of descendants in Martin Friesen's article about Marigan Weiland Friesen Wiebe includes Albert Friesen, Auto-City Insurance. This was my error and not the authors. Albert is related through the Friesens but is not a descendant of Marigan. Albert is a great-grandson of "Waisenman" Cornelius T. Friesen.

3) In the photo caption on page 39, part two, of the article on Aganetha "Agnes" Fast, Agnes Fast is incorrectly referred to as Maria Fast.

4) In the photo caption, page 17, part two, for the article on "Anna Klassen Goossen (1839-1927)", the Peter Goossen in the photo is now believed to be Peter B. Goossen (1895-1978) and not Peter D. Goossen (1890-1972) as stated. John R. Goossen of Ste. Anne (Greenland), son of Peter D., was not aware that any photo of his father was extant. He also pointed out that his father was married and a member of the church by 1913. Therefore it would be highly unlikely that the picture would be of him. Peter B. Goossen was the son of Cornelius P. Goossen (1839-1916), one of the original 18 Steinbach pioneers. In 1920 Peter B. Goossen wrote and published a booklet of poetry dealing with his experiences, entitled *Erfahrungen in Reime gebracht* (Steinbach, 1920: Steinbach Post Druckerei), 41 pages.

5) In Harvey Bartel's article, "Blumenhof Cemetery SW25-7-6E," in Part Two, page 75, in the first paragraph, Heinrich Bartel married Anna T. Dueck and not Anna T. Reimer as stated.

Ethnic Cleansing 1916.

In working with the journals of pioneers such as Jakob B. Koop (1858-1937), see article following, one is continually impressed with the wide intellectual horizons of the 1874 Mennonite settlers in Manitoba. This journal and numerous others like it provide unequivocal evidence that these pioneers were literate and articulate in German to a degree not to be equalled among their descendants in the English language until the current generation of university-educated young people.

It is evident that the conduct of the Provincial Government in 1916-19 of outlawing the Christian private schools of its Mennonite citizens was a major tragedy for literacy and education from which the citizens of the Hanover Steinbach area did not even begin to recover

6) In my article on Maria Brandt Plett (1843-1927) (Part One, pages 78-80) I indicated that there was no definite information as to where Maria lived between 1874-5, when son Isaac was listed as attending school in Blumenort, and 1877 when Kleine Gemeinde insurance records indicate that she had acquired a property in Steinbach. However, this situation can now be clarified courtesy of David K. Schellenberg who had in his possession a list of students of the first formal school classes in Steinbach in 1875-76. According to this record Isaac D. Plett, Maria's son, was attending school in Steinbach in that year which almost certainly indicates that she had moved to the village by the fall of 1875, 2 years sooner than earlier thought. I am indebted to Rev. D. K. Schellenberg for sharing this information with me.

I always appreciate being informed of errors. I mark them on a master copy so hopefully they will not be repeated in the future.

Editorial

until the 1950s: see "Education in the East Reserve," in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, pages 1-29.

The results of the ethnic cleansing measures implemented by the Provincial Government of T. C. Norris in 1916 are still reverberating in the Mennonite community to this day. Of the estimated 45,000 Russian Mennonites in Western Canada in 1921, some 9000 escaped Norris' Fascist oppression by emigration: 7000 in 1922 to Mexico and almost 2000 in 1926-7 to Paraguay.

In Paraguay, for example, hundreds died from diseases while they prepared to settle and tame "the Green Hell of the Chaco." These victims of the Provincial Government's ethnic cleansing measures were every bit as dead as the victims of the rapes and murders of Machnov and Stalin in Russia, and one day their blood will be upon the account of T. C. Norris and his fellow Orangemen.

The 35,000 "Kanadier" who remained in Manitoba and Saskatchewan had no choice but to accommodate themselves to the cultural rape, which they did: after all, this was the Mennonite way—accept oppression, do not complain. Two generations of Canadian citizens were illegally robbed of their birthright, language and culture, a fact which has not yet been dealt with by Canadian historians and others who like to trumpet the assertion that Canada is a country of justice and equity for all.

One of the results of being denied their language, schools and culture as they had been guaranteed by the Canadian Government in 1873 and forced assimilation, was that many Mennonites came to see themselves as second-class citizens to the Anglo-Saxons and their culture as inferior. The old ways came to be disparaged and ancient writings and artifacts were destroyed.

Being thrown into hastily established public

school system—which can never equal the quality of a well-run private school system—created two generations of students who were now quasi-illiterate in English as well as in their native Low German/Plaut-Dietsch and High German tongues. It would not be until the 1960s and 70s that a new generation of University-educated young people would equal in English the literary abilities of their great-grandparents in their picturesque Danziger High-German dialect.

This in turn made the Manitoba Mennonite community extremely vulnerable to the triumphalist propaganda of American Fundamentalism which for many became a siren song and a safe vehicle of integrating into wider society. Even the so-called Mennonite intelligentsia—judging their historical forbears by the situation in 1950s and 60s, turned on their traditional heritage and culture, condemning same as narrow-minded, illiterate and myopic.

I wonder, would there be an interest in a future feature edition of *Preservings* exploring the impact of the 1916 ethnic cleansing measures of the Norris Government and the nuances thereof, with reference of course to the East Reserve? It would have to be a multi-disciplined examination of the entire spectrum of life and culture, including psychological ramifications, literary, etc. Would this be a suitable topic for one of our 1999 issues, the 125th anniversary of Mennonite settlement in Manitoba? One way to stimulate such a dialogue might be to dedicate an earlier issue of *Preservings* to the World War One period, focusing on the events, stories and personalities which speak for the era.

Perhaps the Mennonite community is not yet mature and sophisticated enough to tackle such an issue. No doubt, some who might want to write on the subject would be scared to speak out for fear of negative repercussions in their employment or otherwise.

I would appreciate comments on the topic. Or is it better to simply forget about the issue which has already been under a veil of silence for three-quarters-of-a-century? On the other hand, can such ethno-cultural rape and trauma ever find healing if it is not brought out into the open and discussed? Is there anything to fear but fear itself?

Jewish Analogy.

Some readers may have noticed the comparisons between the Mennonite and Jewish cultures referred to in the last issue of *Preservings*, No. 10. On October 18, 1997, I was in Toronto and had the privilege of meeting with my friend and former law school classmate, Harold Arkin, now a Corporate attorney with “Rye and Partners”. While having lunch in the dining room at Osgoode Hall (where I was accepted in 1969 as a law student but did not attend), we discussed the analogy further. Harold’s father was well-known as one of the founding members of the Jewish Historical Society of Manitoba and thus Harold grew up with an avid interest in history and cultural developments.

The Jewish culture can be categorized in four groups: the orthodox who practice tradi-

tional Judaism and have adopted 19th century dress and customs as normative; conservative Jews who practice traditional Judaism, but are modern in other respects; reformed Jews who do not uphold traditional Jewish rites and ceremonies but practice a modernized form of the faith; and secular Jews who are non-religious but otherwise proud members of their ethno-cultural group.

The comparable categories among Mennonites would be as follows: the orthodox, who practice orthodox teachings and have adopted 19th century dress and culture as normative—our “horse and buggy” Mennonites; conservative Mennonites, who practice orthodox teachings but accept contemporary culture to some degree; reformed Mennonites who have adopted the religious culture and language of other confessions such as Separatist-Pietism and/or American Fundamentalism, but retain some degree of ethnic identity; and the secular or non-religious who are conscious and proud of their culture and heritage but no longer practice the faith.

When I wrote *The Golden Years* in 1985 I used the nomenclature of cultural, Pietist and Anabaptist Mennonitism which seemed ad-

equate to describe the situation in the 17th and 18th century. But this terminology is not sufficient to describe the contemporary Mennonite world which has become more sophisticated and complex.

A Sleeping Giant?

In the Jewish culture the orthodox and conservative segments are more powerful than the reformed and secular groups. This is probably also true in the American Mennonite tradition where the largest single body, the Mennonite Church (formerly known sometimes as the “old” Mennonite Church), would be more in the conservative category than reformed.

In the Russian Mennonite tradition the reverse is the case and the reformed Mennonites control practically all ethno-cultural institutions such as media and inter-Mennonite institutions. With the rapid growth of the orthodox and conservative churches in Latin America, whose growth rates have far exceeded those of Canadian Mennonite denominations, this need not necessarily be the case forever.

The Latin American Mennonite community now numbers 150,000 compared to the Rus-

Heroes or Dupes?

There is an important side story to these events. While the Manitoba, and Saskatchewan and Canadian governments were executing ethnic cleansing measures against their Mennonite citizens, hundreds of Low German boys were fighting and giving their lives for their country in France: boys like Peter W. Friesen (1895-1917), whose father was a Steinbach machinery dealer during the 1880s and 90s; Jakob H. Cornelsen (1898-1917) from Rosenort, great-nephew of Heuboden (Seaton) deacon Abraham E. Kornelsen (1845-93); and Franz K. Reimer (1903-77), son of pioneer merchant Klaas R. Reimer. Were these boys and hundreds others like them, heroes or were they dupes of their government?



Franz K. Reimer (1903-77) was wounded in action in France in 1917. Former Steinbacher, Peter W. Friesen (1895-1917) died in action in France on November 11, 1917, exactly a year before the Armistice. Were these boys dupes of their government? Photo courtesy of Bob Brandt, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Jakob H. Cornelsen (1898-1917) was killed in action at Vimy Ridge. These boys believed they were fighting for God and country and that they gave their lives for freedom, but back home both levels of government were executing ethnic cleansing measures against their people to eradicate their culture and religious freedoms solemnly guaranteed by the Canadian Government only 44 years earlier. Photo courtesy of Furrows in the Valley, page 419.

sian Mennonite community in Canada which had just over 100,000 church members in 1989 for a total estimated around 150,000. This, of course, does not count secular Mennonites, "Swiss" Mennonites, and many thousands more attending all manner of Baptist and other American Fundamentalist-type churches. But these numbers also include some 30,000 or more who have returned to Canada from Latin America during the past 3 decades, and others, many of whom would be considered in the conservative camp.

Conservative and Orthodox Mennonites also have the advantage of having a clear and intellectually defensible theological position whereas reformed Mennonites are generally articulated by a hodge-podge of outside influences and alien religious cultures. Nevertheless the reform groups in the Russian Mennonite tradition have maintained clear control and domination over conservative and orthodox co-religionists by a variety of control techniques, including the articulation of the historical experience, skilful use of the media and propaganda, strategic proselytizing, etc.

The founding of the General Conference Church (and also the Holdeman Church) in the 1860s was articulated by the religious culture and language of the American Revivalist movement, later reinforced in Canada by the influx of Mennonites from Russia after the Soviet Revolution many of whom had adopted the religious culture and language of Separatist-Pietism. But the GCs were unique in that they moved back to a more conservative Mennonite ethos in the 1950s and subsequent decades, a trend which might well be strengthened by a GC/Mennonite Church merger.

As noted in some of the articles following, the Latin American Mennonite community is beset by many dangers not the least of which is a burgeoning prosperity and development of a powerful and wealthy upper class. Will these people assume leadership roles within their communities as is already evident in Mexico, or will they use their wealth merely as a stepping stone for assimilation into their host societies as has too often been the case in Canada?

Like Orthodox and conservative Christians everywhere, Latin American Mennonites are also beset by all manner of proselytizers who seek to destroy those whose vision was to replicate the New Testament community and to be the Church of God.

Certainly Latin American Mennonites will be a well-spring of Low German culture and the Plaut-Dietsch language for decades to come and will provide a source of continual renewal and a possible renaissance sometime in the future. The conservative Mennonite community is like a sleeping giant which may well awaken and assume its destiny in the 21st century.

Kanadier Diaspora.

Over the past few issues we had ran several stories featuring individuals related to the pioneer settlers of our local community who have attained fame and success. The story by Robert Loewen on John Denver, Issue 8, (related to

the Kleine Gemeinde Koop family) and John Dyck on Alfred van Vogt, Issue 10, (his science fiction novels sold in the tens of millions), who hails from an Old Colony background and whose great-grandparents pioneered in the East Reserve village of Chortitz in 1874, caught considerable interest.

Although I consider this as "pop" history, far removed from the quintessential "nitty-gritty" of collecting documents, interviews and writing the history of the every-day and common place, these stories do have significance as they help to dispel at least some of the negative perceptions of the "Kanadier" people created by earlier writers such as Peter M. Friesen and Frank Epp, who considered them a lower genetic and socio-economic race.

It is ironic, for example, that Alfred van Vogt, by far the most widely published and widely read writer ever to come out of the Russian Mennonite tradition was an "Old Colonier". Too often we have not had enough pride in our ethno-cultural group to track these success stories.

We plan to run more of these items. In this issue we proudly present the story of Major-General Dennis Reimer, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, C.E.O. of the most powerful military machine in the world. Reimer comes from what would be called the "Kanadier" in Canada, the 1870s immigrants. Much to my surprise, it turned out that Major-General Reimer's father was my fourth cousin on the Siemens side.

Another story along this line, although more directly related to the East Reserve, is that of Cornelius Sawatzky, Governor of Boqueron Province in Paraguay.



John Denver (1943-97). Folk singer John Denver died in a tragic plane crash into the Pacific Ocean off Monterey, California, on October 12, 1997. John Denver, born John Deutchendorf, grew up in Corn, Oklahoma, where he worked for Cornelius Kroeker in the wheat harvest. He had a very close relationship with his grandmother, Anna Deutchendorf, known as "grandma Dutch" who used to take him fishing at the creek when he was little boy. 14 of his albums went gold and 8 were ranked platinum, with over 1,000,000 units sold. The LP "John Denver's Greatest Hits" sold over 10,000,000 copies world wide. From Washita County Enterprise, Oct. 16, 1997, page 12, and The Sunday Oklahoman, October 19, 1997, Section A, page 24, courtesy of Jo Ferguson, Midwest City, Oklahoma. John Denver had numerous relatives in the Hanover Steinbach area being a descendant of the Muensterberg Koops, Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia.

The Soviet Inferno, 1917-87.

Congratulations to Professor Royden Loewen, HSHS board member, for a successful symposium on "Mennonites and the Soviet Inferno", organized in his position as Mennonite Chair. August 22 and 23, 1997. The purpose of the symposium was to kick-start a more detailed study of the 100,000 Mennonites who suffered under the Communist regime in Russia and of the 35,000 who perished. The most intense repression occurred in 1937-1938, being the height of Stalin's most vicious purges.

An estimated 300 people attended the symposium and heard papers by Harvey Dyck (University of Toronto), Terry Martin (Harvard), Colin Neufeldt (University of Alberta), Anne Konrad (Toronto), Marlene Epp (University of Waterloo), Walter Sawatzky (AMBS), Harry Loewen (former Mennonite Chair), and others.

The event sparked controversy in terms of whether Mennonites are entitled to speak of a "holocaust" or whether this "trivializes" the experience. Brisk debate and personal probing is always welcome and sure to stimulate the scholarly process of research and writing, something too often missing in Mennonite studies.

From the papers presented it was evident that much work awaits to be done in this exciting—but invariably tragic—field of studies.

Family Newsletters.

An interesting development in recent years is the family newsletter which a number of extended families are publishing in order to maintain some sort of family identity and momentum in documenting the clan history. The "Harder Family Review" (now in its 39th issue) published by my friend and "cousin" Dr. Leland Harder, Box 363, North Newton, Kansas, 67117, is one of the more highly developed examples of this genre of writing. "The Ratzlaff Report" is a newsletter for persons with that surname and can be ordered from P. Geoff, Box 1482, Elgin, Illinois, 60121-1482.

The "Klippenstein" newsletter is an example of such a newsletter in Manitoba.

Volume 1, No. 1, of "The Barkman Letter" being "A Newsletter for the Family of Peter M. Barkman" has recently been published. The editors are Jerry Barkman and Johanna Ferguson. Those readers up on their Steinbach history will recall that Peter M. Barkman was the youngest brother of Jakob (1824-75), the Steinbach minister and leader who drowned in the Red River in 1875. Those interested in "The Barkman Letter" can write Rev. Jerry Barkman, 137 NW Reed Ln., Dallas, Oregon, 97338. Subscription rate is \$10US annually.

Articles.

The purpose of *Preservings* is to publish article of relevance to the history and culture of the East Reserve, Hanover Steinbach, community. If you are interested in writing and/or publishing an article, please contact the editor at 1(204)-326-6454, or 1(204)326-9022, or 1(204)474-5031, or submit your article o/c Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0.

In August I received an unsolicited article

from Cliff Regehr, Royston, B.C., regarding his parents. It was an excellent piece and I immediately decided to publish it in the December issue, No. 11. Thanks, Cliff. It was a nice feeling as Editor to receive material like this, and so I thought I would make another appeal for writers.

I know there are probably dozens of people out there who might like to write something for *Preservings*, whom I don't even know about. If you are interested please, give me a call or drop me a line. There are thousands of stories out there that need to be written and published. No family or individual is too unimportant.

Preservings is not an academic journal, although we are happy and fortunate to have a number of academics contributing articles from time to time. But we very much want to retain our niche as a publication vehicle for so-called amateurs, family historians, genealogist, etc. many of whom have access to private family archives and primary source materials not available to professionals. Our mission is to document and preserve grass-roots social history in the East Reserve, Hanover Steinbach community.

We are especially interested in articles from the Clearspring settlement and the German Luthern settlement in the Friedensfeld area. We are pleased that Ed and Alice Laing have contributed another article regarding Clearsprings and welcome the article by Art and Evelyn Krentz, the first we have published from the Friedensfelders. We hope to receive and publish many more. Please remember that each day, vital stories, facts and details of our exciting local history are going lost.

Please also remember that we are a regional historical society and not an ethno-cultural historical society. Although the E. Reserve was settled in 1874 by the Berghaler and Kleine Gemeinde peoples, we are interested in all historical events of relevance to the Hanover Steinbach area.

Assistant Editor.

The HSHS is continuing to search for an assistant editor for *Preservings*. Hopefully someone can also be found who would be interested in taking over as editor by 1999. If you or anyone you know might be interested, please contact Delbert F. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

"Preservings" Index.

Several writers have noted that the amount of material being published in *Preservings* would make an index very useful. The volume of material may get to the point that our own researchers will not be able to access articles and research materials, or only be able to do so with great effort.

In order to complete such a task, the HSHS requires a volunteer or volunteers with some free time to create a topical index as well as an author index. The index would then be printed and mailed out as a supplement to some future issue of *Preservings*. If you, or anyone you know, would be interested, please contact Delbert F. Plett, at the above address.

New Format.

Readers will notice that with this issue No. 11 we have returned to the single package for-

mat for *Preservings*. Hopefully it will be a leaner and better production. Unfortunately the smaller format will also make it impossible to publish all the available material and articles which are submitted.

While a selection process may improve the quality of the material, we hope that it will not discourage novice writers. One tip, material submitted just before or even after the deadline for articles has much less of a chance to be published that material received well in advance. Articles where a significant amount of editing is required will probably not get published until the next issue if they are received late.

Woman's Issue.

As expected, our June 1997 issue, No. 10, of *Preservings*, and particularly, the feature articles, proved controversial although less so than initially anticipated. This issue received wider exposure than previous ones, largely because of an article by Margaret Loewen Reimer, "Stories of women and communities offset 'Russländer' history," in *Mennonite Reporter*, July 28, 1997, Volume 27, No. 15. This article was later reprinted in *Voice*, September, 1997, Women's Missionary and Service Commission of the Mennonite Church, page 14.

We received a number of letters to the editor which we are publishing in this issue. We are pleased with this response as it will stimulate a dialogue and further the scholarly process. Our Society is committed to accuracy and the integrity of historical writing which invariably means that there is more than one side to a story. We do not believe nor promote a "sanitized" history, whatever the context may be. The letters speak for themselves...

Letters to the Editor

Victor Peters
234 Oak Street
Winnipeg, R3M 3R4
June 25, 1997

Dear Sirs:

May I congratulate Delbert Plett as editor and [Orlando Hiebert] as President for the excellent and outstanding work you are doing in preserving our historical heritage. But it is more than that. The material you present is provocative, stimulating and interesting. Please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely "Victor Peters"

RR 5, Cambridge,
Ont. N1R 5S6,
June 26, 1997

Dear Delbert,

Thank you again for the historical articles. These publications will be valuable resource tools for anyone in the Mennonite community who has the occasion and/or the interest in future to search out his or her roots, for whatever reasons.

I thought your introduction to the article on the Pioneer Women of the East Reserve was especially well-thought-out and well-written. To me it was enlightening. The photos of Steinbach's Main Street 60 or 70 years ago are a valuable treasure. I thought I had seen all the historical photos of Steinbach but these were a first for me.

Each time I read one of these articles it reminds me of how fortunate we were to live in Steinbach before the post-war cultural revolution decimated the popular language and the culture that went with it.

The following is not a criticism, only a comment. From my perspective it was not American Fundamentalism so much as a distortion of it, that hastened this revolution. It seems to me that given the value system which the Kleine Gemeinde developed early on, with the noticeable place of honour it accorded to material success, the pioneers' descendants were left later on with weakened spiritual defences against the pressures of the secular society.

When that society knocked at the door with all its glittering promises, to many a Jake, Henry or Tina things like a second language or the humiliation and pain that accompany the Bib-

lical teachings of repentance and discipleship, seemed hopelessly out of date, hopelessly irrelevant.

Of course the same situation without the language dimension, affected the Anglo-Saxon community too because resistance against these Biblical realities is not restricted to Mennonites, it's universal.

Sincerely "Gerald Wright"

Harry Loewen, Ph.D.
4835 Parkridge Dr.,
Kelowna, B.C. V1W 3A1
June 30, 1997

Delbert F. Plett
Box 1960
Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0

Dear Delbert,

I have received the double special issue of *Preservings* (June 1997), for which I'm most grateful to you. I have not read all the articles as yet, but I've read enough to see that this issue on the role of women is most timely and important. In all Mennonite communities the

history of the role of Mennonite women still awaits major publications. Thankfully, good beginnings are being made and you are contributing significantly toward that history.

Your introductory article is most appropriate. You don't mince words and you're not afraid to step on people's toes where necessary. And your criticism of our strident Mennonite feminists, our poets who use (perhaps better abuse) our history to shine in the world, and even our historians who understandably are often one-sided, is well taken.

Perhaps one comment with regard to Ted Regehr's book: The readers' committee consisted of representatives of all Mennonite groups, including women, Kanadier, Russlaender and Swiss, and advised the author on many issues. But you are correct, the Russlaender bias of the author shows through no doubt. On the other hand, you may have seen Harold Jantz's (a fellow-Russlaender!) condemnation of the book in the MB Herald—unjustly, I might add,

I am so glad that Royden Loewen came into my position at the University of Winnipeg and now continues the programme so well. As you know, when professors retire, the universities more often than not fail to replace the outgoing academics—for financial reasons. In this case not only was I replaced, but the University also placed the continuation of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* on a high priority. And Royden is both an excellent scholar and a fine person and friend.

To return to the role of women, I may one of these days send you something about my mother, Anna Wiebe Loewen (1910-1988) who married my father Nikolai Loewen of Friedensfeld, Ukraine. Or do you publish only Kanadier material in your newsletter?

The enclosed cheque for is meant as a donation toward *Preservings*.

I wish you well in your busy schedule. My wife Gertrude asks how you can do all the work you're doing. Humorously I point to myself and tell her that's how hard Delbert is also working!

Cordially yours,
"Harry Loewen"

Editor's Note: Harry, I would welcome a chance to see the article. There is a lot of interest in our community about the fate of relatives, friends and neighbours who remained behind in Russia after 1874 and suffered the devastation of Machnov, the purges, etc.

July 2, 1997
Preservings
Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc.,
Box 1960
Steinbach, MB ROA 2A0

Dear Mr. Editor,
Re: No. 10, June 1997.

When reading the article "Pioneer Women of the East Reserve" by Delbert Plett, I find myself alternating between saluting Delbert

Plett's interest, indeed acumen as a historian combined with his genuine love of his people, and being infuriated at his myopia in matters of literary interpretation.

Occasionally, also Mr. Plett's explicit love of the Kleine Gemeinde turns to blind infatuation, making the reader believe the Kleine Gemeinde is a microcosm of the former British Empire on which the sun never set.

Historical perspectives are debatable issues, good literature is not. And writers thereof cannot be dismissed readily; as matter of fact they cannot be dismissed at all. The creative process is the only one which minutely approximates our comprehension of the Divine, in that the Divine as manifested to mankind initiated Creation.

Every Mennonite writer worth the term has been scarred, generally very badly scarred by the Mennonite experience. It is no exaggeration to state that it is almost impossible to be a Mennonite in good standing and to be a writer. Di Brandt and other writers have every reason to fume at the judgementalism, legalism and hypocrisy of the Mennonite church as it ever was.

The same applies to Pat Friesen and "The Shunning" which Mr. Plett attempts to dismiss as being too polemical. I have yet to read a more accurate rendition of what Mennonite church bosses have done, are doing and will do to those who march to the tune reserved, always, for the very few (including women).

Furthermore, the publishing world has stringent standards; internationally they are one lot whom respect is due. Some of the writers Mr. Plett lauds have resorted to unethical tactics in that they got their potboilers published by vanity presses. This is the litmus test of literature and it the one and Friesen passed with honours.

Sincerely yours
"Jack Thiessen"

Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen
17610 NW Prairie Creek Rd.,
Newton, Kansas, 67114-8004

July 2, 1997

Dear Delbert;

Just a note to thank you for the impressive double issue of *Preservings*! You are such a prolific writer and publisher!

I have completed a first draft for Vol. IV of your Historical Series, on the Bergthaler/Chortitzer Furniture tradition, and I hope to send you a draft in August, after we've "gotten through" our second wedding of this summer and lots of relatives from Germany. Please note also that the spelling of my name etc. on your mailing label needs to be corrected, if possible.

Best wishes "Reinhild"

Natasha Sawatzky
2406 Roys Ave.,

Elkhart, Ind., 46517
June 29, 1997
Editor
Preservings
Box 1960, Steinbach
Manitoba, ROA 2A0

Dear Editor:

I was delighted to receive the double issue of *Preservings* dedicated to women's history. Of course, I read your stimulating introduction and the article on Maria Koop Plett, my great-grandmother. I am amazed at the amount of text and serious scholarship reflected in the newsletter. I need to devote more time to read it all carefully. This is such an important work.

I have a copy of Maria's journals and will read same on my own. I am not very clear yet where I will go with my interests. I have decided to attend Princeton Seminary in New Jersey this fall, concentrating on religious history. I need so much more background. But I am always thinking of my own background. I am encouraged that others, such as yourself, are concerned with collecting stories and "preserving" them and that there is a wealth of material there that has not been utilized yet. It seems to me that I ought to make use of my language skills and my ability to read Gothic [German] handwritten script. I imagine there are not too many of my generation of Russian Mennonites who have learned that. Sometimes it feels like a responsibility.

So, please know that I remain serious about historical scholarship and our background. I am especially interested in women's history and therefore very grateful for the issues you sent me. Thank-you ... you are doing invaluable work.

Sincerely "Natasha"

Regent College
5800 University Blvd.,
Vancouver, B. C.
V6T 2E4

Dear Delbert

Thanks for the latest copy of *Preservings* and its celebration of the women of the [East Reserve]. You continue to do your people an outstanding service. I continue to be amazed at the rich documentation available for the Kleine Gemeinde. Keep up the good work.

Best wishes for an enjoyable summer—ours in B.C. simply hasn't come to date.
"John Toews"

181-12th St. N.W.
Medicine Hat, Calgary
T1A 6P6
July 9, 1997

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society.

On our trip to Winnipeg last week we toured out to Steinbach and visited the Heritage Museum; while there I purchased a copy of "His-

torical Sketches of the East Reserve 1874-1910". I must commend you on a great book. We have found it very interesting and informative. The reason for this letter is on page 711 among the endnotes #47 there is reference to a family book-"Heinrich D. Friesen, Familien=register (Inman, Kansas 1908), 45 pages.

The above title has really stirred up the curiosity. We are working on my husband's mother's history and Heinrich Delesky Friesen was his great-grandfather. Gerhard Schellenberg Friesen was his grandfather. Tina (Koehler) Friesen was his mother. Tina was out of the G. S. Friesen second family.

I've noticed that Gerhard's sister Katharina Loewen moved to Kansas and feel this book may very well be some of her writings.

Now the big question—Do any of the members know if there is a copy of the book still in existence and if so where it may be found. I would appreciate any information that you may have regarding the book.

Thank-you for taking the time to read this letter. We will deeply appreciate hearing from some one in the Society.

"Mrs. J.D. Lorne Hood"

Editor's Comment: Mrs. Hood was advised that the Heinrich D. Friesen book she referred to, is about a different Friesen line, actually the major Abraham von Riesen line. But Heinrich Delesky Friesen (1827-77) was the ancestor of another prominent Kleine Gemeinde family whose descendants include son Jakob S. Friesen, pioneer publisher (*Preservings*, No. 9, June 1996, Part Two, pages 10-13). Other prominent descendants include great-grandson Dr. Archie Penner, formerly of the Steinbach Bible College and his nephew Wilmer Penner, the renown Low German dramatist. *Preservings* articles dealing with this family are: Issue No. 5, page 11; Issue 2, page 7; and Issue 6, page 25. Additional information may be found in the Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series, particularly Volumes 4 and 5.

James Urry
Dept. of Anthropology
Victoria University of Wellington
Box 600, Wellington
New Zealand
10th July, 1997

Dear Delbert,

The arrival of yet another feast of research and writing in the latest *Preservings*, has stirred my conscience and put finger to keyboard.

My sincere apologies for not writing and acknowledging the receipt of the earlier volumes. I can only plead pressure of work which each year seems to get worse and worse. The fact that the University is being "restructured" has not helped. It is like having the builders in when the relatives decide to come and stay.

All I can say is that the volumes are very welcome and well received and prick my conscience further to get back to my Grunthal

manuscript.

The death of Roy Vogt was extremely sad indeed! As you know we had become great friends and his sudden passing shocked and saddened me.

Roy Loewen and I keep in touch via email and John Dyck and I also maintain irregular contact on various issues using the same medium. When are you getting on the email and chasing KGs around the globe instead of seeking them over the creek close by?

All the best for now.

Regards "James"

July 4, 1997
2605 Avebury Ave.
Victoria, B.C.
V8R 3W3

Dear Editor,

Your feature story on pioneer women in the June, 1996 issue of *Preservings* made very interesting reading. My home territory, therefore of course interesting. I liked most of the article.

I'm worried about your attention grabbing introduction. Not too many Mennonites will fly to Karen Toole-Mitchell's defense. Her remarks, as you may know are not original and not expressed by militant feminists only, Spong comes to mind. If you are in part glossing over the extent of oppression of women by developing the fact that part of your study group had controls for incorrect behaviour toward women, you wrong those who were mistreated. Even a quiet child can overhear in conversation how Mennonites within your study group were not immune to the perpetration of molestation and the exercising of extreme mental cruelty towards females both young and older.

Shunning not an important part of the culture? "Any man's death diminished me," the poet Donne said. One could say hurt for death. It matters.

I wonder also whether you have read Oskar Kossmann who stated that by the 18th century people in North Poland no longer were Netherlanders but Germans due to intermarriages and the resultant thinning of Dutch/lowland blood. Your unfortunate choice of the word Germans when referring to servants in the late 19th century seems to miss this point.

Next. The use of one caption for a photo is puzzling. "Note that Maria is wearing a 'Haube'". This is 1931. How long other women in the western world wore a "Haube" I don't know. Suffice to say that as far as wearing a "Haube" is concerned, so did Queen Victoria, my grandmother and countless other non-Mennonite women. I checked on usage of the "Haube" with the Dugald costume museum in the 1980s.

Lastly you speak of the obsession, my word, of Mennonite academics with the 90 wealthy Gutsbetzler of Russia in 1910, and then make an unfortunate claim about land in your matriarchy article, wherein a Plett owns 3 morgen of land (120 acres). The fact that this is 3 times

that of other landowners is interesting but...

According to my research with reference material in my home:

- 3 morgen= 1.89 acres
- In Prussia (1909 and 1920s ref. in Meyer's Lexikon) older and then still valid 1 morgen= 2553.23 sq. metres
- 4047 sq. metres to an acre
- Morgen= German land measure which originally could be ploughed in a forenoon-varied with German states.....
- A HubW or Huben Wirt in Ernst Bahr appears to mean proprietor of a Hube
- 10 3/4 sq ft= 1 sq metre
- sq "Rute"= sq rod/pole/perch (30 1/4 sq. yds)

As an aside, in some genealogical information I saw at a young friend's, (who asked for and had received information on her von Riesen and other ancestors) you were cited as a reference person who stated in effect that likely for reasons of simplicity Ab. von Riesen changed his name to Friesen in Russia. In view of this citation please note that vol. 2 of the 1793 "census" in the region of Danzig by Ernst Bahr says under Zeitemphiteoten, Pg. 281, that "Olim Ebler, jetzt Abrah. Friesen HubW is using 1 H, 24M, 273 R emph. brauchbar Land a 60 Gr.p.M etc. in Kalte Herberge" and furthermore in Kuchwerdersche Dämme und Quellen pg 289, "Gregor Ellas (Ebler) jetzt Abrah. Friesen von Kalte Herberge, ungebaut 2M, 199 R emph. Zinsland." (At the time I saw the citation I told my young friend, if D. Plett said it, it must be true—please don't shatter my trust in you!)....

Keep up the good work and accept this Mennonite watchdog missile as a small contribution to a better understanding of our common heritage.

Sincerely Yours, "Hilda Matsuo"

P.S. Back from Winnipeg. People there seem to be happy you are getting things down but admit to seeing errors and feel your haste is in part to blame. Don't be discouraged but please be careful, be aware that in years to come you may quoted, errors and all.

Editor's Comment:

The situation with Abr. v. Riesen of Kalteherberge, Prussia, is confusing. According to the research of Henry Schapansky, the Abr. v. Riesen resident in Kalteherberge in 1793 was another (non-immigrant) Abr. v. Riesen (1757-1829), son of Paul v. Riesen, Fürstenwerder: H. Schapansky to author Aug. 31, 1990. This is the Abr. v. Riesen listed in Bahr, Vol 2, page 281. "This family is not without interest for Canadian historians, since Margaretha Friesen, wife of David Toews, the chairman of the Colonization Board in Canada, was a relative...." By 1798 the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) Abr. v. Riesen was resident in Kalteherberge as son Peter was listed as being from there on the occasion of his baptism. It is my understanding that both A. v. Riesens were prominent well-to-do landowners. The KG A. v. R. also was a "Grutsmueller"(grist miller) and had previously lived in Tiegenhagen where son Peter was born in 1779.

News from the Editor

H.E. Plett Awards

The name change of the KG von Riesens has been attributed to their wish not to be associated with nobility, which the "von" implied in Prussia and Russia. Actually A. v. Riesen Sr. and son Peter never changed their name. Some of Peter's descendants who settled in Beatrice, Nebraska, use the name "von Riesen" to the present day.

Regarding the "morgen" of land, I used the data of 40 acres per morgen as provided on the list of Mennonite land holdings in Prussia, on the internet, MMHS website.

Unfortunately we all make mistakes. Although never excusable, it is part of the research and development process which must occur. If we cite sources others can correct our errors and take up the research where we left off. Thank-you for taking the time to draw these matters to my attention.

Hilda Handziuk
782 Union Ave E
Winnipeg, R2L 1A6
August 1, 1997

Dear Sir:

I just had the opportunity to read one of your issues of *Preservings* and was really impressed and found it of great interest, especially some of the people I knew.

I do not know if anyone can subscribe and become a member? But since my heritage is of Mennonite background, I myself was still born in the Ukraine and immigrated to Canada with my parents and grandparents, so sure hope I can.

I would like to become a member and am sending you \$__00: \$10.00 membership fee and \$__00 donation.

If there is any information you can send me and also a receipt, I would be very grateful.

Sincerely "Hilda Handziuk"

255 Wakina Drive
Edmonton, Alberta
T5T 2X6
August 6, 1997

Dear Editor:

Many thanks for taking the time to see my sister from Seattle and I, in June with our brother Bob Brandt. We value your insights and appreciate the tremendous work you have done, researching and documenting our common heritage. I came home and within a few days read the "Blumenort" book (Loewen)—over 600 pages of impressive pages....

It was a fascinating read, along with copies of *Preservings* for a non-Mennonite such as I who am descended from them. (I grew up with my mother's people—English.)

My sister received another *Preservings*, however, I have received no acknowledgement of membership. Am saddened that you annual meetings are held during the winter as I might otherwise come.

The contribution of the people in your area

The Genealogy and Family History Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society has announced the winners of the "Henry E. Plett Memorial Award" for 1997. The award is given annually to two Manitoba high school students for research and documentation of a Mennonite Family History.

First prize was awarded to Pamela Plett of the Steinbach Christian High School and presented at the June 23, 1997, school graduation service. Pamela received the first prize of



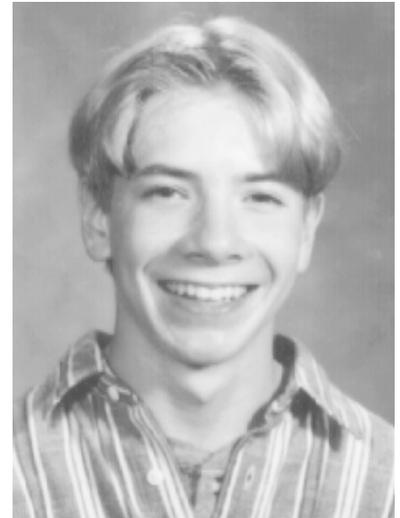
Pamela Plett, photo courtesy of The Messenger, August 20, 1997.

\$250.00 for her research and article on, "My Family History: from Abraham Klassen to Pamela Plett".

Mark Schaan, a recent graduate of Westgate

Mennonite Collegiate, Winnipeg, was the winner of the second prize. Schaan was one of several Westgate students who chose to research their family history to fulfil an assignment for their course in Mennonite history.

The "Henry E. Plett Memorial Awards" were established by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Inc. to encourage and stimulate the interest of high school students in their ethno-cultural and religious heritage.



Mark Schaan, 1997. Mark is the first student from Westgate Mennonite Collegiate to receive an award and, hopefully, not the last. Photo courtesy of Janis Thiessen, Mark's history teacher.

continued on next page

to Canadian life is outstanding and I congratulate you on your effort to record it.

Sincerely "Pat Walker"

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society,
Sept 25, 1997
Greetings;

To whom it may concern:

In reading through the September issue of "Voice" magazine, I found this article taken from the newsletter which you publish. I would appreciate so much a copy of the June 1997 issue telling the stories of women involved in the first migration from Russia to Canada in the 1870s.

When will someone write the history on the group who went from Canada to Mexico? I am eagerly waiting to learn more of that migration. I know that some have returned to Canada and elsewhere, because I have met a few of them—especially the young ones need to know

more about this part of their background. Two of my own grandsons are marrying girls from that group.

I have always been keenly interested in cultural history, how people lived and why and how they managed their lives. I was born and raised in a large family in a Mennonite home having Swiss and English-Irish ancestors, who came to the Eastern U.S. instead of Canada or Paraguay. I have always felt a sort of compassion for the group that went to Mexico. Their best reasons did not always materialize.

My brother Ivan Headings and his wife Louise, lived in Steinbach for many years. It is still home to Louise and her son Roger—my brother passed away some years ago. Thanks so much for your help and consideration. In anticipation—

Mrs. C. Buerge
6501 Springhill Dr. N.W.
Albany, Oregon, 97321

Governor visits Steinbach.

Cornelius Sawatzky, Governor of the Department or Province of Boqueron in Paraguay visited friends and relatives in Steinbach on August 12, 1997.

Sawatzky has deep roots in southeastern Manitoba. His maternal grandfather Cornelius T. Sawatzky was born in Grunthal, Man., in 1900, son of Peter F. Sawatzky—BGB C7; *Grunthal History*, pages 37 and 49; *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, page 41. His paternal grandfather was Cornelius F. Sawatzky, son of Cornelius Sawatzky.

Governor Sawatzky was born in the Menno Colony, Paraguay and grew up in the villages of Lichtenau and Ebenfeld. He worked for the Co-operative Menno Colony for 25 years, from 1984-92 as Oberschulz or overseer of the entire settlement of 13,000 Mennonites. The Colony has extensive commercial operations producing 270,000 litres of milk daily (one-quarter of Manitoba's total production), 60,000 head of beef annually and is a major producer of cotton, peanuts and hay.

In 1993 Sawatzky ran successfully for election as Governor of Boqueron, a Department with a population of 35,000 half of whom are Indians including the well-known Lenqua. The Governor is assisted by 7 elected council members. The Government offices are located in Filedelphia.

The Department Government is responsible for schools, roads, health, etc. Since the Mennonite people provide these services themselves, a lot of the work deals with the Indians, particularly with building schools and establishing farming opportunities.

Sawatzky reports that the democratic process is slowly becoming rooted in Paraguay. The country's constitution was amended in 1992, providing for various democratic reforms.

Under the new Constitution Sawatzky cannot run for re-election when his terms is over in 1998. He plans to run for the Paraguayan Congress representing Boqueron. The seat is presently held by Heinrich Ratzlaff, who hails from the Neu-stadt Colony (1948 immigrant). Sawatzky and Ratzlaff were the first Mennonites to run for elected office in 1993 after the constitutional amendments. Walter Thielmann, from Fernheim (1930s immigrants), served as Minister of Industry under Strassner, but he was a government appointee and not elected. Thielmann was widely known in the Steinbach-Landmark area being a second cousin to the Pletts.

Governor Cornelius Sawatzky has numerous relatives in the Steinbach area. His wife, nee Lene Friesen, is a granddaughter to Martin C. Friesen, Osterwick (New Bothwell), Aeltester of the Chortitzer Gemeinde who led his people to Paraguay in 1926. She is a cousin to Peter Friesen, Eastman Feeds, and Martin Fehr, Fehr's Sheet Metal, Steinbach. On the Sawatzky side Cornelius is related to Dr. Walter Sawatzky, AMBS, Elkhart; Dr. Rodney Sawatzky, Conrad Krebel; Ted Friesen, D. W. Friesen; John Rempel, Hart Feeds; and Jim



Cornelius Sawatzky and Martin Fehr, August 12, 1997.

Penner, Penner Foods: see Schapansky, "Bergthaler Sawatzkys," in *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part Two, pages 14-16.

For additional information regarding the Governor's visit, see Peter Dyck, Carillon News, August 18, 1997.

Director Resigns

It was with great regret that the HSHS Board of Directors received the resignation of Irene Enns Kroeker on June 19, 1997. Irene has made a tremendous contribution to heritage preservation in the Hanover Steinbach area during her five years of service as a board member.

On January 20, 1995, Irene was elected as the third President of the HSHS, becoming not only our first woman president, but also our first president of Chortitzer background. Prior to this she served as book review editor for *Preservings* and contributed numerous articles. In 1996 Irene was elected as a director of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society serving on the Executive Committee.

During the late 1980s Irene did extensive research on the history of "Blumengard", the village 4 miles west of Blumenort where she grew up. Later she compiled this material into a lengthy paper published in *Historical Sketches*, pages 63-103. She also gathered new primary source material regarding the neighbouring village of Hochfeld compiling an article published in *Historical Sketches*, pages 130-136.

In addition Irene collected many journals of Chortitzer people some of which she translated and published such as the journal of Rev. Heinrich Friesen, Hochfeld, published in *Historical Sketches*, pages 465-596, an immensely valuable primary source of information regarding the East Reserve. As the first woman doing serious historical research and collection of primary source material in the Hanover Steinbach area she has served as a



Irene Enns Kroeker, courtesy of *Preservings*, No. 6, June 1995, page 15.

model for many others, demonstrating that her Chortitzer forebears were literate and articulate people.

Irene is married to John Kroeker, C.E.O. of Puratone Feeds, Niverville, and has 2 children. She is a resource teacher in Mitchell, Manitoba and has taken on several new duties involving her profession.

We thank Irene Kroeker and acknowledge her for the wonderful work she has done. Many descendants of the Blumengard pioneers and the E. Reserve community in general will be the benefactors of her dedication in the years to come. We wish her all the best in all her future endeavours.

Murder in the Jungle

As told by uncle, Peter P. Plett, Box 886, Arborg, Manitoba, R0C 0A0

North Americans are almost immune to the horrors of modern crime. They are fed a daily diet of murders, rapes and other violent crimes every time they open a newspaper or switch on their Television set. But when a brutal murder occurs in a peaceful, pacifist community in the jungles of Belize, the experience is traumatizing and life shattering in the most horrible and devastating way.

On January 24, 1997, Denver P. Dueck, Spanish Lookout, Belize, became the victim of a brutal act of violence. He was 23 years old at the time and in partnership in his father's land clearing business. Denver was a cat operator and mechanic by occupation.

Denver had accepted Christ as his Saviour and was baptised in the Kleine Gemeinde church at Spanish Lookout, Belize, upon the confession of his faith in early 1996. During the summer he had some spiritual struggles and was targeted by the Rudnerweider Church to lure him into the religious culture of American Fundamentalism and away from his parental church and community (Note One). Through the leading of the Holy Spirit Denver came to victory over these temptations committing himself to a genuine discipleship in Christ.

On January 24, 1997, Denver was delivering a load of diesel fuel to one of the firm's Caterpillars working at Banana Bank. He was good-hearted person and had stopped to pick up two hitch hikers as was also recommended by the Gemeinde to show love and compassion to neighbours living outside the Colony many of whom are desperately poor.

The hitchhikers climbed onto the back of the pick-up but some time later indicated that they wanted Denver to stop. But instead of getting off, the hitchhikers jumped into the cab of the truck.

A short time later the hitchhikers pulled out their guns and forced Denver to pull off on a side bush road. They tied him to a tree and pointed their guns at him. At this time, Denver had said, "I know what you want to do to me, but I love you anyway. I forgive you, for what you are doing. Whether you shoot me or not I will not do anything to you." Then Denver prayed out loud.

One of bandits fired his gun, mortally wounding Denver. But he was not dead, and so the other bandit told him to shoot again. The first one said, "I can't do it." The other bandit shot the second bullet. They took his clothes and robbed him. Denver died later in the day at the Belmopan Hospital.

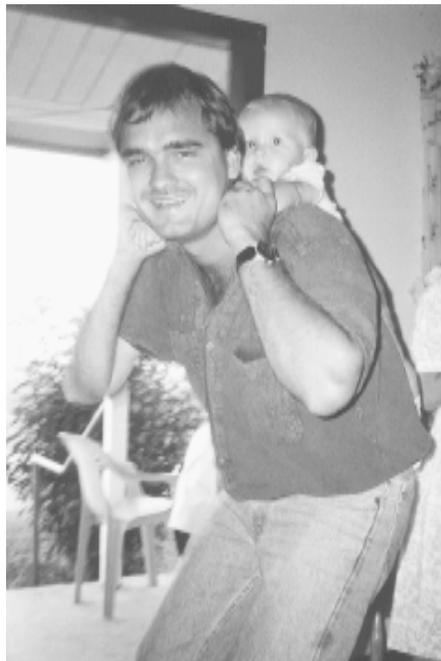
The culprits were caught and confessed

to the brutal crime. It was a gang related murder, and the perpetrators were following orders to obtain a new model half-ton of a certain description.

Denver is the son of Margaret Plett and Abram L. Dueck, Rosenort, Spanish Lookout, Belize. He is survived by 11 brothers and 2 sisters.

His violent death shocked the entire community. The funeral was held on Monday, January 27, 1997. Almost 2,000 people attended and filed by the casket.

Denver's mother has written an account of the tragic events in which she also described the funeral service. "Son Ben



Denver P. Dueck (1973-97), with nephew Marlin Dueck in Christmas, 1996. Photos courtesy of brother Jacob Dueck, Box 4119, Arborg, Manitoba, R0C 0A0.

brought a message in Spanish. Klaas Friesen spoke in English and some Plaut-Dietsch. ... Finally the family said their last 'Good-byes'. The coffin was closed and carried out at about 6:20 P.M. It was dark already and lights had been set up in the graveyard." After Denver's interment, lunch was served for all the mourners.

The tragedy for the Spanish Lookout community was magnified by the deaths of two girls, Norma Reimer and Emily Braun, who had drowned in the Belize River and whose funerals were held earlier the same day.

A macabre element was added to these events when Denver's oldest brother Ben noticed "a dark man standing under a tree across from the store. He looked suspicious, so Ben stopped to ask what he was doing.

The man asked if we would be having a funeral?" Later the police identified the man as Harry Trapp, one of the murderers.

Denver's brutal death was front page news in the national newspapers of Belize. Although the murderer's attorney alleged that a confession had been obtained by torture, the Prime Minister of Belize congratulated the police for their efficiency in solving the brutal crime. See *The Reporter*, Sunday, February 9, 1997, Volume 30, No. 6.; *The Cayo Trader*, February 2, 1997, Vol. 4, No. 4.; *The Belize Times*, Sunday February 9, 1997, Volume 4040; and *Amandala*, February 9, 1997, No. 1430.

The story of Denver P. Dueck is of interest to the people of the Hanover Steinbach area as he had thousands of relatives here who share the grief of the bereaved family and who are proud of the noble and Christlike way he faced death.

Endnote:

Note One: The Rudnerweider Church from Canada has recently targeted the Kleine Gemeinde community in Spanish Lookout, Belize, for proselytizing. They are actively seeking to alienate the marginal members of the Kleine Gemeinde and to convert them to the religious culture and language of American Fundamentalism (Matthew 18:6). The religious dogma of American Fundamentalism is generally characterized by "legalistic" salvations plans, deferral of the reign of Christ and the gospels (dispensationalism), "fabled" endtimes teachings (premillennialism), and the belief that they are the only true Christians.



Happier Days. Denver with his brothers and father in 1992. Back row; l. to r. Cornie, Clarence, Norman, Ben, Werner. Middle row, Abe, Jacob, father Abram L. Dueck, Edward and brother-in-law Henry Reimer. Front row kneeling, Milton, Otto and Denver. Photos courtesy of brother Jacob Dueck, Box 4119, Arborg, Manitoba, R0C 0A0.

Major-General Dennis Joe Reimer

by Delbert F. Plett

Introduction.

How did a barefoot Mennonite boy born in Enid, Oklahoma, in 1939, become the most powerful military man in the world? Major-General Dennis Joe Reimer was appointed Chief of Staff, United States Army, Washington, D. C., June 20, 1995. This is the position previously held by Major-General Colin Powell.



Major-General Dennis J. Reimer; head of the most powerful military machine in the world. Photo courtesy of the Pentagon, 1997.

Biography.

Dennis joined the Army in 1962, racking up an impressive career in the artillery service and various command positions. He served his first tour of duty in Vietnam in 1964, as an advisor to the Vietnamese Army. By 1979 he was Deputy Commander, V Corps Artillery, U.S. Army Europe. In 1986 he was appointed Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Element, Republic of Korea. In 1988 he was appointed Commanding General, 4th Infantry Division (Mechanized). In 1990 he served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations and Plans for the Army during "Desert Storm". In 1993 he was appointed Commanding General, Forces Command, Fort McPherson, Georgia.

In his position of Chief of Staff, United States Army, Major-General Reimer deals with all manner of difficult issues, from harassment cases to major military decisions. In this position he is the C.E.O. of the most

powerful military machine on earth. He is interviewed by the national and international media on a regular basis.

Dennis Reimer is married to the former Mary Jo Powers. His numerous medals include 6 Bronze Stars, a Purple Heart, Distinguished Flying Cross and 2 Legions of Merit. On June 19, 1997, Dennis was inducted into the prestigious ROA Minuteman Hall of Fame "for his patriotic service to the nation in war and peace, his devotion to the citizen-soldier tradition, and his total force leadership role in preserving freedom."

Family History.

Major-General Reimer is the son of Walter and Rebecca Unruh Reimer, presently retired in Medford, Oklahoma. Walter is the son of Jakob Reimer (1871-1951), who took part in the Oklahoma land run and was a charter member of the Medford General Conference Mennonite Church when it was founded in 1893. Jakob Reimer was married to Maria Froese. He was the son of Peter Reimer (born 1833) who lived in Kleefeld, Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia. Those up on their East Reserve history will recall that C. S. Plett (1820-1900), Blumenhof, Manitoba, pioneer in 1875, was one of the founding settlers of Kleefeld in 1854 and served as the village mayor: see "Road Naming: "C.S.Plett Road" in *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part Two, pages 53-56.

The Peter Reimer family immigrated to the United States in 1886 where they settled near Hillsboro, Kansas, and belonged to the Bruderthal Mennonite Church. Peter Reimer was married to Agatha, daughter of Martin Duerksen (b. 1798) and Agatha Rempel (b. 1798), Sparrau, Molotschna 1835. According to the Gemeindebuch of the Bruderthal Church, Peter was born in Ohrloff, son of Peter Reimer. The Peter Reimer family transferred their membership to the Medford General Conference Church in 1896.

Genealogy.

According to the research of Henry Schapansky, Peter Reimer (b. 1833) was the son of Peter Reimer (b.1804) and Anna Wiebe (b. 1810) who lived in Margenau, Molotschna, at the time of the 1835 census. Peter was the son of Jakob Reimer (b. 1772) who emigrated from Prussia to Russia in 1815 settling first in Ohrloff, Molotschna, and moving to Margenau 4 years later. Jakob was the son of Peter Reimer who lived in Burwalde, Prussia, at the time of the 1776 census. Later he lived in Plattenhof and died somewhere between 1792-6. Although he was listed in 1776 as a "Zimmerman" (finnish carpenter), Peter was a man of medium wealth, a status shared by only 1 in 4 Men-

nonite families in the Grosswerder. This was typically somewhat equivalent to an antebellum plantation owner in the southern States with modest means, landowner with a number of servants, etc.

One of the more interesting connections in the ancestry of Major-General Reimer is that of Anna Wiebe (b. 1810) who married Peter Reimer (b. 1804). According to Henry Schapansky, she was the daughter of Dirk Wiebe (1788-1813), son of Dürck Wiebe Wirtschaft 20, Rosenort, Molotschna, 1808 census, and Katharina Siemens (b. 1790), daughter of Claasz Siemens (1758-1834), living on the neighbouring Wirtschaft 18, Rosenort, 1808 Census. Both Siemens and Wiebe were wealthy farmers with a rare double Wirtschaft. Wiebe, for example, had 15 horses and 28 cattle, about 4 times the Molotschna Colony average.

Katharina Siemens was the daughter of



Major-General Reimer talks with a soldier in the field. Photo courtesy of Jo Ferguson and The Officer.

Claasz Siemens, patriarch of a major Kleine Gemeinde dynasty: see *Preservings*, No. 10, June 1996, Part One, pages 21-22, for more information on the extensive influence of this family and its matriarchal connections. Katharina later married for the second time to Gerhard Fast (b. 1789), uncle to Kleine Gemeinde school teacher Bernhard Fast (1809-78), Rosenort, Molotschna. For more information about the family of Katharina Siemens and the sudden unanticipated death of her daughter, Anna S. Wiebe, see *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 354-56.

Through the Siemens connection, Peter Reimer (b. 1833) would be related to 1000s of Kleine Gemeinde people. He would be the second cousin to my grandmother Elisabeth Reimer Plett (1870-1947), Ralph

Friesen's grandfather, Klaas R. Friesen, and Jakob Reimer (1871-1951) would be a third cousin to our fathers, and Walter Reimer would be our fourth cousin, and Major General Dennis Reimer would be a fifth cousin to Ralph's children. Likewise all the descendants of Mrs. David Klassen (Kleine Gemeinde delegate to North America in 1873), nee Aganetha S. Brandt (1816-1904), who settled in Rosenhof, Manitoba, would also be related. Another large clan is that of Sarah Siemens (1809-85) who married Cornelius Janzen (1812-64), Neukirch, Molotschna, and whose descendants include Dr. Royden Loewen, Mennonite Chair, University of Winnipeg.

Comments.

So in a long, round-a-bout way, that explains how Dennis Joe Reimer, a barefoot Mennonite boy in Medford, Oklahoma, came to be Chief of Staff of the United States Army. We are proud of you Dennis and welcome you to the family circle. But be forewarned, don't invite us to the Pentagon for dinner just yet, there are tens of thousands of us, spread out all over North and South America, and we're very hungry people.

Acknowledgements.

I am indebted to my friend and "cousin" Jo Ferguson, Midwest City, Oklahoma, for her assistance in locating the family of Major-General Dennis Reimer and the information and photographs she sent me. Further information about Major-General Dennis J. Reimer is found in Cmdr. William L. Hendrix, "Army Chief of Staff Honoured by ROA," in *The Officer*, IXXIII, No. 6, June 1997. I acknowledge the research and genealogical genius of Henry Schapansky, New Westminster, B.C. who was able to track the Reimer family lineage in record time and provide me with the genealogical skeleton necessary to flesh out the family tree and to identify various connections: H. Schapansky to author September 23, 1997.

**Dyann Canon, a
Kleine
Gemeinder?**

Apparently movie actress Dyann Canon is also a Siemens descendant being a relative of Steinbach pioneer Abraham S. Friesen (1848-1916) and thus also a member of the Kleine Gemeinde von Riesen dynasty. She is the daughter of Ben Friesen of Oregon and/or Washington State and has a brother, David Friesen, a famous French horn player. Friend and "cousin" Jerry Barkman, Dallas, Oregon, is currently attempting to obtain more information regarding this connection for *Preservings*. Anyone with additional information in this regard is also asked to contact the editor.

**HSHS Board Meeting,
June 19, 1997.**

The meeting was chaired by President Orlando Hiebert with Henry Fast, Jake Doerksen, Doris Penner, Irene Kroeker, Lynette Plett, Lois Loeppky, Randy Kehler, Ralph Friesen, Royden Loewen, D. Plett, and John Dyck in attendance. Business:

- 1) Newly elected directors, Lynette Plett and Ralph Friesen, were welcomed to the meeting by HSHS President Orlando Hiebert.
- 2) Paul Loewen was appointed to the Board of Directors effective immediately.
- 3) Date for Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) was set for January 16, 1998, Friday, or January 17, 1998. Topic of the A. G. M. to be the Chortitzer Church and people, in honour of the centennial of the worship house at Chortitz, with details to be arranged by a committee consisting of Orlando Hiebert, Irene Kroeker, Randy Kehler, Lois Loeppky and Jake Doerksen.
- 4) The June 1997 issue of *Preservings* was released and accepted by the board. The December issue will focus on Chortitzer to tie in with the A.G.M.
- 5) Ralph Friesen and D. Plett will look into the feasibility of organizing a writer's workshop to assist our many writers improve their writing skills.
- 6) Irene Kroeker resigned from the Board.
- 7) Lynette Plett is appointed Corporate Secretary.

**Museum Director
Resigns.**

Harv Klassen, managing director of the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba, has resigned, effective December 31, 1997. Harv served in this position during the difficult years when the Museum was dealing with a huge mountain of a crushing debt load. He leaves the office as the liquidation of the debt is eminent and feels this is a good time for someone else to step in.



Photo of Harv Klassen courtesy of Carillon, August 10, 1997.

Paul Loewen

The HSHS is pleased to announce that Paul Loewen of Steinbach has been appointed to the Board of Directors, effective June 19, 1997. Paul is a graduate of Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas, with a Bachelor of Arts Degree, and a graduate of Bethel Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, with a Master of Divinity Degree. In 1993 he received an Honorary Doctorate, Business Administration Degree.

Paul is the President of Loewen Windows of Steinbach. He is married to Mary Rempel, with two daughters and one son. They reside in Steinbach where they attend the Emmanuel Evangelical Free Church. As such Paul speaks for many local residents who are not directly involved with a Mennonite Church, but who are very interested in our local heritage and culture.

The HSHS is pleased to have Paul join our board. We trust that this new position will enable him to pursue his historical interests and contribute to various aspects of heritage preservation.



Paul Loewen, appointed to HSHS board of directors. Photo courtesy of Carillon News, June 30, 1997.

Mexican Mennonites 75th Anniversary

A special report on the Mexican Menonites and 75th anniversary celebrations

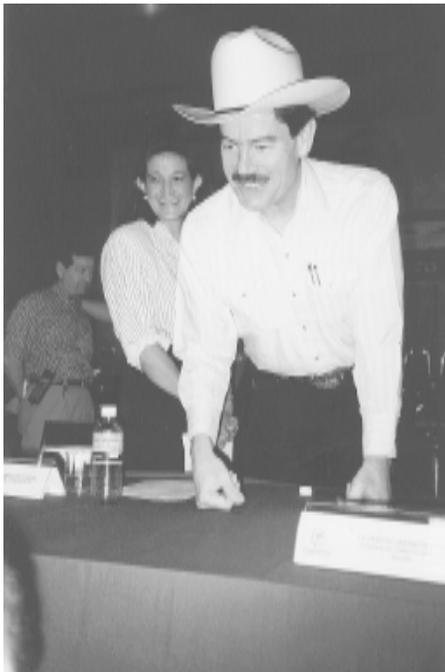
August 14, 15 and 16, 1997, in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, by Delbert F. Plett, Q.C., Editor *Preservings*.

Introduction.

The purple dawn shimmered over the horizon framed by the Sierra Madres mountains. The rays of the bronze-fired sun danced over jagged bluffs and splashed across the Bustillos valley, 1,000,000 acres of red virgin soil stretching north for 90 kms.

A snorting steam engine trailing passenger and freight wagons stopped at the end of a railway spur in a freshly laid-out town site, clouds of smoke wafting into the prescient sky. The place was named Cuauhtemoc, the legendary Aztec king who fought Cortez during the Spanish invasion of Mexico in the dawn of the 16th century.

It is 1922 and only short years before, Poncho Villa rode his calvary through these mountain valleys. From 1910 to 1917 Mexicans fought a civil war laying the foundations for the modern Mexican State. The cost was 1,000,000 lives lost. President Alvaro Obregon decided that Mexico needed new immigrants to help save it from the devastation of the civil war.



The Governor of the State of Chihuahua, C. P. Francisco Barrio Terrazas and Senora Hortencia de Barrio, enjoy their visit to the Mennonite 75th anniversary celebrations in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, August 14, 1997.

Mennonites, 1525.

The Mennonites were a religious community originating in the Anabaptist wing of the Reformation in 1525. Many thousands suffered martyrdom, others fled from Holland, Belgium and northern Germany to Danzig, Prussia (to-

day Gdansk, Poland) to escape persecution.

In 1788-89 400 families moved on to southern Russia (today Ukraine) and established the Chortitza Colony, on the west bank of the Dneiper River. It was named for the world-famous Island Chortitza, earlier the home of Ukrainian Cossacks and before that a place of worship for ancient Greek and Norse traders. The name 'Chortitza' came from the ancient word 'Hortz' or God, roughly translated meaning, 'thanks be to God'. Since Chortitza was the oldest settlement its citizens were called "Old Coloniers".

In 1803-4 another 400 families left Prussia and founded the Molotschna Colony, situated on the Molotschna or 'milk' river. The colonies quickly became model farming settlements for Imperial Russia.

In 1870 the Russian government instituted a Russification program which included educational reform, universal military service, etc. Understandably these measures caused great concern.

The Canadian Government needed people to settle in the newly established Province of Manitoba. Hearing about the situation, and being aware of the prowess of the Mennonites in establishing pioneer settlements under adverse conditions, the Federal government sent Wm. Hespeler to Russia to persuade them to come to Canada. A critical part of the inducement was a letter dated July 23, 1873, guaranteeing religious freedom, language rights and control of their own schools.

Three denominations of Mennonites immigrated to Manitoba in 1874-78: 750 Kleine Gemeinde from the Molotschna settling in Steinbach and Rosenort; 3000 from Bergthal, an 1836 daughter colony of Chortitza, settling in the Grunthal, New Bothwell and Altona areas; and 4000 Old Coloniers from Chortitza, Russia, settling in the Winkler area. For several years Mennonites constituted over half of the population of Manitoba.

Manitoba 1916-19.

1916-19 were years of tumult and chaos as nations and cultures were caught in the slaughter and tragedy of World War One. These were the best of years for munitions manufacturers, but bad years for people like Mennonites who wanted to live by the Good Book and who took literally the teachings of Jesus to love your enemy.

In Soviet Russia, the armies of anarchist Nestor Machnov, considered a freedom fighter by some, murdered, raped and pillaged their way across the eastern Ukraine. The prosperous settlements of the Mennonites were vulnerable targets for these miserable peasants hoping to establish a workers' paradise.

In Manitoba, Canada, Sheriffs' officers and police stormed farmyards in the Winkler and



The municipal granary near Neuendorf, 3 km west of Cuauhtemoc on Hwy 16, where the 75th anniversary celebrations were held. The huge public building has a capacity of 6,000 people and was almost full for some of the main events and presentations.

Altona areas, arresting Mennonites and particularly ministers who refused to heed a new law which closed their traditional Christian private schools—schools which had been promised in perpetuity only 40 years earlier.

Riding a wave of WASP anti-German and anti-pacifist hatred which could only be described as mass hysteria, the newly-elected government of T. C. Norris in 1916 outlawed these schools and implemented ethnic cleansing measures including ruinous fines and imprisonments for clergy who counselled their parishioners to abide by their guaranteed civil rights. According to one report 2018 cases were referred to the police in Manitoba in 1921. Another source states that at one point six Mennonite ministers were in jail in Winnipeg. The Russian Mennonite population in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in 1921 was about 42,000.

One senseless aspect of this cultural rape was the abolition of historic place names which the Mennonites brought to Manitoba in 1874, some of which had already been used in Prussia for half a millenium and more. Other names, such as Chortitza, originated in Russia with a history as ancient as time. e.g. The central village of Chortitz, Manitoba, was renamed Randolph, a name more suitable for a pet dog or stud bull.

From Stalin, Machnov and the boys nothing better could be expected, but surely T. C. Norris' mother must have taught him better. The post-WWI era was a time when Orangemen myopia reigned supreme. Other ethno-cultural groups including the French and Ukrainians were likewise arbitrarily deprived of their civil rights. The situation of the Mennonites was unique in that they had negotiated these rights as a condition of coming to Manitoba. Had these rights not been granted they would undoubtedly have joined 10,000 of their co-religionists who settled in Nebraska and Kansas.

Instead of intervening in support of guarantees it had given in 1873, the Canadian Government joined in the betrayal and withdrew



A typical 4-seater buggy once common in the Cuauhtemoc area. Pulled by spirited quarter horses, these buggies filled the roads until two decades ago. Today they are historical time-pieces and no longer to be found in the Cuauhtemoc area. Courtesy of Deutsch Mennonitische Rundschau, Nummer 17, Sept. 1997, page 9.

voting rights and closed down Mennonite newspapers as a threat to national security. The constitutional issue regarding the Christian private schools of the Mennonites was litigated but a fair hearing could hardly be expected under the circumstances.

Mexico 1922.

Realizing this was a battle they could not win, the Old Colony Mennonites—who by now also had large settlements in the Hague and Swift Current areas in Saskatchewan—elected delegates to travel to Mexico where they were granted a *Privilegium*. This document guaranteed them the rights which the Manitoba government had so heinously abrogated. To insure that the same thing would not reoccur, the Bill of Rights was approved by the Mexican Parliament.

The delegates purchased a tract of land northwest of Chihuahua from the Zuloaga family consisting of 600,000 acres. The Zuloagas were so wealthy they had a magnificent miniature cathedral on their *Hacienda* laid out on the foothills of the eastern mountains overlooking the Bustillos valley. As required by the purchase agreement they built a railway line up to the land purchased.

By 1922 6,000 Old Colonier and 1000 Sommerfelder (a branch of the Bergthaler denomination) from Manitoba and Saskatchewan—roughly a sixth of the total, decided to leave Canada where they had pioneered and prospered for half-a-century. It is well documented that the exiles included some of Canada's finest and most progressive farmers.

Between 1922 and 1926 36 chartered trains loaded with emigrants, household goods, livestock, farm tractors, draft horses, Holstein cows and steam engines left Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The first Old Coloniers arrived in San Antonio de los Arenales in March, 1922, followed in August by the Sommerfelder. The settlers detrained on a level plain traversed by creek beds, framed on both sides by ranges of the Sierra Madres, known locally as the 'Tara Humara'. Hitching horses and tractors to plows they made the first tentative furrows, turning over rich red soil.

The newly-built train siding became the

modern city of Cuauhtemoc. With a population of 116,000 it is now the third largest in the State of Chihuahua. The growth was mainly articulated by the adjacent Mennonite colonies.

The Old Coloniers from the Winkler area settled in the "Manitoba Plan" immediately adjacent to Cuauhtemoc and those from Swift Current, Saskatchewan, settled to the north in the "Swift Plan". The two settlements were separated by the "Grentz boach" (border mountain), a stone behemoth projecting from the valley floor. Another settlement was located further south in Durango.

Modern Cuauhtemoc.

The original 7000 settlers have increased to 65,000, half of whom live in 144 medieval-type "Strassendorf" street villages spread out over a 80 kilometre area northwest of Cuauhtemoc. The others, often the poorer people, have moved on to various newer settlements across Mexico.

The majority of the 35,000 Mennonites in Cuauhtemoc are farmers. Not far behind is a thriving business sector made up of small repair shops, factories and retail establishments.

The modern-day Mennonite settlement stretches for 40 kms northwest of Cuauhtemoc sprawling out for 5-10 miles along each side of a recently-completed 4-lane highway all the way to Rubio, a small Mexican town, and beyond to Jagueyes and Santa Clara, 80 kms to the north.

I last visited the State of Chihuahua and Cuauhtemoc in 1985. Even casual observation reveals incredible growth in the northern part of the State. Factories line the freeway south of Juarez (El Paso) to Chihuahua City for 20 miles. Free trade has provided an employment boom and money for modern infrastructure which other North Americans have enjoyed for several decades.

For example, the district of Jagueyes, settled

by 1200 Kleine Gemeinde from Steinbach and Rosenort, Manitoba, in 1948, did not even have decent gravel road access to markets in 1985. In 1997 the colony has paved highway access on 3 sides and there is talk of a major highway to connect Juarez with Cuauhtemoc which will traverse the settlement within a few years.

Changes have also occurred within the community. The unique "top buggies" pulled by spirited quarter horses are no more. Although the conservative Old Coloniers long shunned the automobile as a symbol of the evils of modern society, the breeding of fine horses was highly developed.

The steel-wheel tractors for which the Old Coloniers were famous have long since been replaced by air-conditioned John Deeres and self-propelled corn harvesters.

Each side of the 4-lane highway north of Cuauhtemoc for 20 miles is lined with prosperous-looking repair shops, small factories and spacious homes built of concrete slab with all modern amenities, including a few satellite dishes.

The signs of the burgeoning industrial growth needed to provide work to an ever increasing labour force are visible. 1292 Mennonites are employed in factories, cheese production and retail enterprises in the Manitoba and Swift Colonies alone. Local wages are about \$90US per day. The minimum wage is \$30US per day. Mexican day-labourers earn about \$20US per day.

Since most firms are family run this does not reveal the extent of local business operations. The inventiveness of the Old Coloniers for manufacturing, often equipping their small factories with machines of their own design and construction, is evident everywhere. Products range from plastic PCB fertilizer containers to gas stoves and all manner of agricultural implements.

"Electrisola" a modern factory which will



A view of the 75th anniversary grounds. In the foreground, Peter Enns Rempel, chairperson of the anniversary committee. Rempel is a large-scale apple grower and merchant who has provided the leadership for many new cultural activities in the Cuauhtemoc area including a historical society and credit union.



The anniversary grounds, view to the southeast. The women to the left are wearing traditional Mexican Mennonite dress while the men to the right sport stetsons and overalls ("Schlabeckse"). At the rear, a row of farm equipment currently in use in the area, including Cornelius Banman's 8670 4-wheel drive JD and self-propelled combine-corn harvester. In the background, the fabled Tarra Humara mountains.



Kleine Gemeinde students from Jagueyes, lead off the morning parade on August 15, 1997.



Two sweethearts, granddaughters of my cousin Pauline (nee Plett) and George F. Kornelsen, Jagueyes. The two cousins, Rosanna and Gloriana Kornelsen, enjoy their lunch.



A group of seniors most over 90 years-old are being interviewed. They were all born in Manitoba and reminisced about the pioneering experience in Mexico in 1922. In the foreground (right hand side) is Isaac W. Friesen born in 1905 near Steinbach, Manitoba, who moved to Jagueyes, Mexico, in 1948. Standing in the background is Bram Siemens, publisher of the "Deutsche Rundschau" and operator of a Low German radio station. The 2 women on the left-hand side are wearing traditional Mexican Mennonite dress.

produce fine grade wire for the computer assembly plants in Juarez is being built by a German conglomerate 5 miles north of Cuauhtemoc. With a price tag of \$15,000,000US it will employ several hundred local technicians who have been sent to the United States for training.

The owners, planning to build a factory somewhere in northern Mexico, were pleased to construct it on the colony. Here they can utilize local German-speaking people, widely known for their work ethic and loyalty. This is a strategy already familiar to Manitoba manufacturers such as Pallisers, Loewens, Monarch Industries and others.

Farm Economy.

The Cuauhtemoc region continues to be largely dependant on the farm economy. Like new settlements everywhere, the Mennonites in Chihuahua had to go through decades of painful learning—which crops to grow, where to find markets, etc.

The initial mainstay of the infant settlement was the dairy industry which was transplanted in its entirety from Manitoba. During the early years every farm had a small dairy and milk was shipped to cheese factories. Today 315,000 litres of milk—about 30 per cent of Manitoba's total production—are processed daily resulting in 34,000 Kg of cheese.

Mennonite cheese continues to be a cornerstone of the farming economy and is a delicacy for which the Cuauhtemoc area is famous throughout Mexico. A considerable quantity of milk is pasteurized and consumed locally.

Many families still insist on making their own butter, a local delicacy.

The second major crop is corn. Last year's production was 215,000 metric tonnes. Irrigated acreage totals 25,000 hectares with additional land being added continually. The crop averages 8,500 Kg per hectares. Jagueyes corn and beef grower, David P. Plett, claimed that production compares favourably with Nebraska.

A smaller corn grower would have 80 acres irrigated or twice that amount of dryland with an equal acreage seeded to beans. The largest corn producer last year produced 3000 tonnes.

Kornelius Banman, Swift Colony, is typical of a larger corn grower with 400 acres of irrigated corn and another 400 acres in other crops. His farm is equipped with a 280 horsepower 8670 John Deere 4-wheel drive tractor and JD combine with 6-row corn header.

The third major facet of the Cuauhtemoc farm economy is apple production. Apples have become big business in the region and the Mennonites, particularly in the Manitoba plan, have gone into production in a big way.

Two of the leaders in developing the apple industry are Peter Rempel and his nephew Jakob Heide. It is a picturesque sight to drive through the "old world" villages north of Cuauhtemoc around Easter time, when the apple orchards are in bloom. One of the two major varieties is the Golden Delicious.

Most farms in the region also provide employment for local Mexicans, particularly labour

intensive work such as apple picking.

The soil in the Swift Plan is red while the Manitoba Plan has less fertile white soil. Local farmers are also developing speciality crops such as chile peppers and beans.

75th Anniversary, 1922-97.

The 75th anniversary celebrations took place in Cuauhtemoc on August 14, 15 and 16. The site was 5 miles east of Cuauhtemoc in a municipal granary with a seating capacity of 6000 people. It was almost full for many of the presentations.

The opening ceremonies included a visit by the Governor of the State of Chihuahua, C. P. Francisco Barrio Terrazas, and Senora Terrazas.

In his address to the morning assembly, the Governor praised the Mennonites for their hard work, industriousness and model communities.

He stated that "the anniversary celebrations were an example that when the Mennonites organized something it was done well." He "was proud that the Mennonites had chosen to settle in the State of Chihuahua" and that they "have often served as a model and will continue to be so in the future."

Later the Governor and his wife, together with a large entourage enjoyed a traditional Mennonite meal in the eating hall. Lunch and supper were served each day for up to 4,000. The menu included Mexican dishes such as tacos and chile peppers revealing that cultural influences work in both directions.

Another well-known guest was Jakob Giesbrecht, Vorsteher or overseer of Menno Colony, Paraguay, speaking on behalf of 30,000 Mennonites in his country, mainly of Bergthaler origin, who emigrated from Manitoba to Paraguay in 1926. Giesbrecht congratulated his co-religionists in Cuauhtemoc stating that they "had been a testimony of spiritual life and a model of economic progress."

The event was attended by hundreds of well-dressed, smart-looking young people. The young men typically wear expensive cowboy boots, stetsons, and tight jeans. The young women wear anything from traditional flower-patterned long-skirted dresses and kerchiefs, to Calvin Kleins and modern hair styling. Many of the young women wearing black head-bonnets would provide serious competition to Kelly McGillis, Harrison Ford's co-star in "The Witness", playing the demure but seductively-attractive Amish widow.

Hundreds of young families, with 2 or 4 and even more children, spent the day together enjoying the event. Those interested in familial values would note the obvious closeness of these couples as well as extended family units.

Peter Enns Rempel, whose grandfather came from Blumenort, Manitoba, near Gretna, spearheaded the organizing committee. Rempel, himself a large-scale apple grower and merchant, applied his tremendous energy and organizational ability to the task, with splendid results.

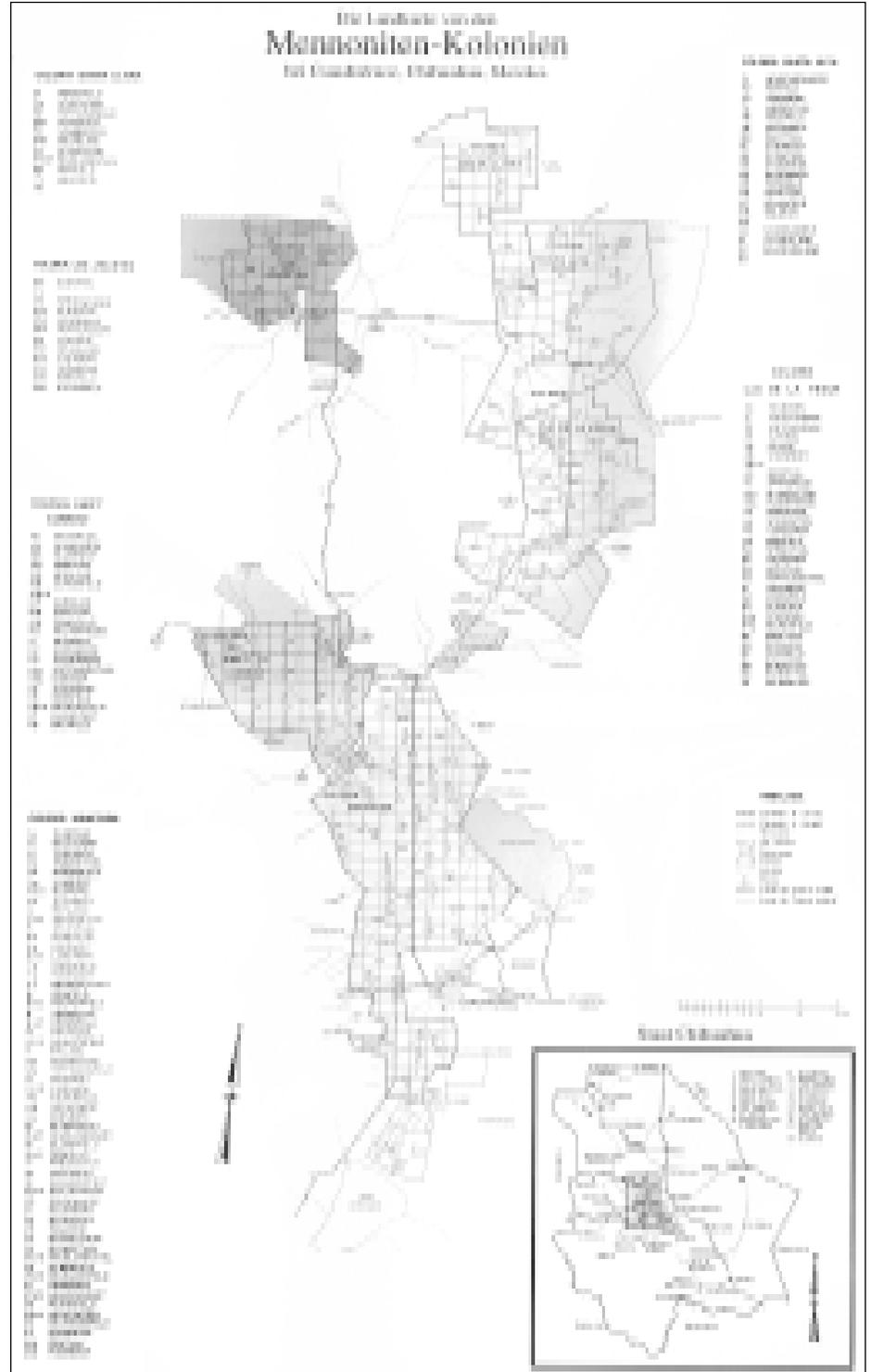
The anniversary festivities were well planned and no detail was omitted. It was one of the best executed events of this nature I have

attended. Each day started with a parade which included typical horse-drawn vehicles of earlier times, antique farm equipment as well as modern machinery. Tours were available and a history book was published.

One outstanding feature of the anniversary celebrations was a hour-long video especially produced for the event, outlining the history of the Mennonite settlements at Cuauhtemoc. The video,

produced by Winnipeg film maker Otto Klassen, was shown in both Spanish and Low German. It is also being made available in English.

The 75th anniversary celebrations were a magnificent success and congratulations are in order. The event heralds the very substantial and significant achievements of the Mexican Mennonites, something which they can and should be proud of.



Current up-dated map of Mennonite Colonies in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, showing the names and locations of 144 "Strassendorf" street villages situated in 6 major colonies. The settlers brought many of the centuries-old villages names along with them from Manitoba. The process of transplanting these ancient place names from one country to another itself is a tradition over 400 years old.



The farm of Cornelius Banman, Schönfeld, Campo 106, Swift Colony, view to the northwest. The villagers have blacktopped the village street with their own funds. Courtesy "75 Anniversary Calender".



Blumenort, Manitoba Colony, view towards the south, showing various business and farm operations. The Tarra Humara mountains in the rear surround the Bastillos Valley and define the horizontal dimensions and physical horizon of its inhabitants. Courtesy "75 Anniversary Calender".



Organized by Bram Siemens in 1987, baseball has become a popular sport among the Old Colonier in Cuauhtemoc. The players of the Aquilas won the semi-finals, achieved in the final game versus the Cazadores. The final playoff series began September 6, 1997. Courtesy of Deutsch Mennonitische Rundschau, Nummer 17, Sept. 1997, page 10.



The champions of baseball 1997 were the Cazadores from Campo 25. Each player received a trophy from the "German Baseball League". Left to right: standing, Hein Krahn, Jakobo Krahn, Abram Wiebe, Peter Wiebe, Franz Wiebe, Abram Loewen, seated: Franz Dyck, Johan Enns, Abram Krahn, Isaak Enns, Hans Krahn and Jakob Wiebe. Courtesy of Deutsch Mennonitische Rundschau, Nummer 19, Oct 15. 1997, page 25.

Newspapers and Radio.

Abram "Bram" Siemens has made an important contribution to the local community. Originating in Paraguay, he came to Mexico 11 years ago. In 1987 Bram started a Low German radio station—probably the only one in the world—renting air time from a Spanish station. The programming includes news reports and commentary, sickness and funeral announcements.

In 1992 Bram also started the "Deutsche Mexicanische Rundschau", a German newspaper read by local Mennonites. The operations of the radio and newspaper are funded by Low German advertising paid for by Mexican businesses in Cuauhtemoc soliciting their trade.

When Bram arrived in Chihuahua he also organized baseball teams among the Old Colonier men. It is a culture shock to see these uniformed ball teams meeting regularly in scheduled play.

Another newspaper read in the area is the "Mennonitische Post" published by the Mennonite Central Committee in Manitoba, but its effectiveness is hampered by a patronizing attitude. Ironically, MCC, with an international reputation for sensitivity in dealing with different cultures around the world, has chosen to adopt modernization typology to define its dealings with orthodox Mennonites in Latin America and elsewhere, notwithstanding that they form its largest potential support group.

Challenges.

Like all ethno-cultural groups, the Mexican Mennonites face many modern-day challenges.

The implementation of NAFTA, while good for Mexico generally, created immense hardships for the Cuauhtemoc settlements. Overnight local products such as oats and other cereal grains became unviable with the termination of subsidies and tariff barriers.

Coupled with several years of drought it created a crisis as many local farmers lost farms and businesses in the resulting depression. The situation was comparable to the farm crisis in western Canada in the 1980s.

Another problem is land shortages and the high land prices which makes it impossible for young people to continue their chosen life style of farming. Even after land prices plummeted in the aftermath of NAFTA and the drought-created recession, land is selling for \$500 per acre Cdn for dryland, and \$1,000 Cdn per acre for irrigated land.

Several hundred acres are required for a viable farming enterprise, far beyond the means of anyone whose family does not have substantial assets. As a result 27,000, often the poor, have chosen to return to Canada over the past 3 decades. This situation might have been ameliorated had the Colonies themselves organized to buy land elsewhere for the landless and assisted them in getting started.

The Kleine Gemeinde at Jagueyes, for example, recently purchased a 10,000 acre parcel of irrigation land, enough for 3 new villages of 20 families each.

At the same time, many orthodox Old Coloniers from Mexico and Sommerfelders from Paraguay have moved to Bolivia hoping to continue their traditional life-style and ancient Low German culture. These settlers are purchasing some of the most fertile land in South America. By now there are 30,000 Mennonites in Bolivia.

Another challenge facing the colonies at Cuauhtemoc and elsewhere in Mexico is a stream of American Fundamentalist missionaries (including Canadian Mennonites) who see these people as fertile ground for their religious dogma. This is disconcerting for those who feel that each culture created by God in some unique way demonstrates the majesty of His creation. Some of these Fundamentalists have the cultural sensitivity of "Nazi Aktion Kommandos" and would not recognize genuine spirituality if it steam-rollered over them.

Perceived cultural superiority and modernization typology often contributes to each group gaining some converts, leaving broken families and fractured communities in their wake. In some cases, extreme proselytizing has broken up entire communities with the result that the young and vulnerable were left without a social embryo and extended family networks, leaving many confused and disjoined. This has sometimes been turned against these people as evidence of alleged racial inferiority, like a rape victim being told she is dirty and stinky. Perhaps, at some point, the victims will unite to launch a class-action law suit against the perpetrators for damages and dysfunctional lives caused by these actions.

Racism is a significant factor, particularly for those choosing to return to Canada. Instead of being met at the border by authorities with damage cheques and profuse apologies for the heinous conduct of the Canadian and Manitoba governments in 1916-27, many are met with condescending and racist attitudes, particularly in the media.

Racism occurs when the misdeed or misfortune of one individual is attributed to an entire society followed by the belief that one race or community is superior to the other. If one person of Mexican Mennonite background is caught smuggling drugs, every person of the community is deemed equally guilty.

Unfortunately these attitudes are often mirrored among modern Canadian Mennonites, many of whom have sought to assimilate as fast as possible. As a result they have added fire to the racist perceptions instead of defending their co-religionists as would be the case among other ethno-cultural communities such as the Jews or Italians.

Undoubtedly one of the best defenses to these problems will be increasing affluence. It is easy for even unsophisticated proselytizers to propagate the idea that economic superiority equals religious, cultural and racial superiority.

Modern leaders like Peter Rempel and Bram Siemens are making a positive impact. By providing communication mediums such as news-

papers, radio, history books and documentary videos, they are affirming the spiritual ethos and cultural health and vitality of their community.

Connections.

The destiny of the Mennonite community at Cuauhtemoc is inexorably tied to that of Canada. Thousands of Manitobans have close relatives there. With the advent of NAFTA, many are taking advantage of these connections to pursue business opportunities.

I also have relatives in Chihuahua, including 20 cousins and their families living in Jagueyes. In 1948 my grandfather, Heinrich E. Plett, born in Fischau, Russia in 1870 and resident in Manitoba since 1875, decided to immigrate to Mexico together with 8 of his children and their extended families. Grandfather died in Jagueyes, Mexico, in 1953, and is buried in the Ebenfeld church cemetery. My grandmother Elisabeth Reimer Plett, born in Steinbach, Russia, in 1870, died in Blumenort, Manitoba, in 1947, a year prior to the emigration.

I am proud of my Mexican connection and of my grandfather who lies buried there.

Consequences.

The economic loss resulting from the ethnic cleansing measures of the Norris Government in 1916-19 are hardly quantifiable. If the estimated 3,000 farmers and business owners in the Cuauhtemoc area alone were in Canada today, they would be contributing in excess of \$1,000,000,000 annually to our GNP. The total annual economic loss to Canada from the 150,000 descendants of the 1922-27 exiles presently in Latin America could easily exceed three billion dollars. A tragic example of social engineering gone mad.

Imagine also the tourist bounty to Manitoba had our 'horse and buggy' Mennonites never been exiled. St. Jakobs, centre of Ontario's Amish-Mennonite country, draws over 1,000,000 tourists annually, the third largest tourist attraction in the Province.

At a time when some public schools seem to function primarily as breeding grounds for city youth gangs and drug dealers, it seems astounding that the Provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan would exile almost 10,000 of their best farmers for the "crime" of wishing to educate their children using the Bible as primary textbook and the instillation of Christian values as the educational agenda.

The closing of the Mennonite private schools which heralded the betrayal of the letter of privileges and the rape of an entire people, also threw the 32,000 "Kanadier" Mennonites remaining in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, into severe cultural trauma. Two generations of Mennonites grew up to see themselves as second-class citizens. Forced into hastily established public schools, it would take until the university-educated generation of the 1960s and 70s before their descendants achieved the literacy in English that their great-grandparents had possessed in

their picturesque Danziger High-German dialect and Low German/Plaut-deitsch mother tongue. In the meantime much of their centuries-old culture has been lost.

Although the Saskatchewan and Manitoba governments have successfully whitewashed these events as remedial actions taken to enlighten a recalcitrant and backward people, the matter of damages payable by the Canadian government for breach of guarantees given in 1873 has not yet been addressed.

The story of the Mexican Mennonites and their exile from Canada in 1916-22, forms one of the black chapters in our history. Whether future historians and governments will see fit to acknowledge the same, remains to be seen.

Conclusion.

Like Cuauhtemoc, the Aztec King, whose people and culture were raped and vanquished by Cortez and his Spanish Conquistadors, the Mexican Mennonites have also been assailed by enemies and suffered vengeful attacks. Cuauhtemoc was eventually captured, mercilessly tortured and cruelly executed, but thus far the Mennonites have withstood and overcome each adversity and challenge.

The lights of the City of Cuauhtemoc sparkle on the eastern foothills of the 'Tarra Humara' (the *Veajo*, the 'old ones') as night falls. I can only believe that the spirit of Cuauhtemoc smiles as his warriors stand watch over the picturesque villages slumbering in the valley below.

Mennonite Landing Site

The House at the Mennonite Landing Site; by Ernest Braun,
Box 595, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0.

The juncture of the Red River and the Rat River holds a special significance for all the Bergthaler/Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites who immigrated to Manitoba in the 1870s. There is something that prevents me from stepping lightly on the mud of the eastern bank of those two streams, for just over 120 years ago, my forefathers stepped ashore there amid mosquitoes, dogged determination and desperate hopes. Latterly, a special committee has erected a memorial to those people just a few dozen yards into the bush and from that cairn a single path leads down to the water.

This spring, the Red River flood of '97 added a chapter to that spot when it planted a small house neatly between the trees right on the very spot where those feet trod so long ago. It's almost as if nature itself saw something remiss in leaving that spot vacant, and took it upon itself to do what man has never done - dropped a house there so exactly that on three sides the walls are wedged against sizable trees, and yet without damaging a board. What nature planted there is really the handiwork of man; in this one detects an irony and maybe even a sense of humour, something nature is seldom accused of.

Nonetheless, there it is. Perhaps there is a further significance in the fact that the footing of the house is made of huge timbers broad-axed and notched, obviously by a race of giants long passed off the face of the earth.



Photograph of the junction of the Red and Rat Rivers, also known as the Mennonite Landing Site, showing the house deposited along the path to the memorial cairn up the river bank. This is also the first picture we have published showing the Mennonite landing site from the river view, taken from the point on the south side of the Rat River, a popular spot with anglers. Photo by Ernest Braun, September 13, 1997.

PM Invited - 125th Anniversary

The Prime Minister of Canada invited to help the Manitoba Mennonites celebrate 125th anniversary of settlement in Canada—from the *Carillon News*, October 23, 1997.

"Prime Minister Jean Chretien has been invited to help celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Mennonite settlement in southern Manitoba in 1999. The invitation to the Prime Minister, sent by Reeve Aron Friesen of the RM of Hanover was endorsed Tuesday by Steinbach Town Council.

In his letter Reeve Friesen notes the Mennonites arrived in southern Manitoba in 1874 at the invitation of the Government of Canada. "It is my belief that the settlement in Manitoba resulted in not only a greater prosperity for the Province of Manitoba, but also Canada. Your attendance at this special event would reaffirm that the Government of Canada is still proud of its decision to include Mennonites as a part of the multicultural society of Canada," the letter states.

The reeve points out the first Mennonites to southern Manitoba settled in an area which later became the Hanover Municipality and the Town of Steinbach [now City of Steinbach]. The invitation to the prime minister is for a celebration on August 1, 1999 at the Mennonite Heritage Village.

Chretien is scheduled to open the Pan American Games in Winnipeg in late July of that year." From the *Carillon*, October 23, 1997, Section A, pages 1-2.

Editor's Comments.

On October 23, 1997, the invitation to Prime Minister Chretien was also endorsed by the Council of the Town of Altona. The council of the Rural Municipality of Hanover has taken the early initiative in planning for the 125th anniversary celebrations. This is an important milestone for all the estimated 200,000 Canadians of Russian Mennonite background as well as the 150,000 Mennonites in Latin America, who originated in Manitoba.

The anniversary will also be of significance to all Manitobans interested in the early history of the Province. Organizers are hopeful that the Prime Minister's visit will spark interest in the 125th anniversary of the Mennonite

settlement in Manitoba and that it will be endorsed by all municipalities having a substantial Mennonite population, including the City of Winnipeg, R. M.'s of Morris, Stanley and Reinland, as well as various Towns and villages, and, of course, by the Federal and Provincial Governments.

Hopefully the 30,000 member Mennonite community in Winnipeg, most of whom have roots in southern Manitoba, will celebrate the milestone, which is also the 125th anniversary of Mennonites living in Winnipeg. One would expect that the various ethno-cultural institutions and colleges would organize events around the theme.

Contact persons for anyone wishing further information are Ernie Epp, Chief Administrative Officer of the R. M. of Hanover (326-4488), Reeve Aron C. S. Friesen and Councillor Norman Plett.



Prime Minister Chretien invited to share 125th Anniversary celebrations [Carillon News stock photo]

HSHS Board Meeting, October 27, 1997.

Board Meeting of the HSHS October 27, 1997. The meeting was chaired by President Orlando Hiebert with Henry Fast, Jake Doerksen, Lynette Plett, Lois Loeppky, Ralph Friesen, D. Plett, Paul Loewen and John Dyck in attendance.

Business:

1) Newly appointed director Paul Loewen was welcomed to the board by President Orlando Hiebert.

2) John Dyck, HSHS Research Director, announced that his time will be free to pursue the editing work on Volume Four in November. Ralph Friesen is assisting with the editing work. John Dyck and Ralph Friesen will investigate various grant and funding programs with respect to publication of Volume Four.

3) John Dyck advised that he was keeping office hours in the HSHS office at the Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach, Manitoba, from 9 a.m. to 12 a.m. every Tuesday. John can be reached in Winnipeg at 256-1637 for appointments. An ad is to be placed in *Preservings*.

4) Plans for the A.G.M. January 17, 1998, were discussed. The feature is to be the Chortitzer Church. The committee consisting of Orlando Hiebert, Jake Doerksen, Lois Loeppky, Irene Kroeker and Randy Kehler will meet and finalize the details. A banquet will be considered as well as a guest speaker and entertainment section.

5) Ralph and Delbert will pursue further the idea of a writer's conference, possible to be held in conjunction with the 1999, A.G.M. Lynette Plett volunteered to join the committee.

6) D. Plett reported on Issue 11 of *Preservings* which is well on the way and should be out in time for Christmas.

7) The board approved a request from the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) to microfilm *Working Papers* and *Bergthal Gemeindebuch*, as this will make the material widely available and more accessible to researchers.

8) Orlando Hiebert reported that the HSHS was again sponsoring a "Family History and Genealogy Day" at the Heritage Village Museum, Saturday, March 7, 1998, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. Speakers and details of displays to be announced. An ad to be placed in *Preservings*.

9) President Orlando Hiebert reported regarding the 125th anniversary celebrations of the Mennonite settlement in Manitoba being initiated by the R. M. of Hanover. An individual is being sought who would be interested in chairing and coordinating these events. The board was very supportive of the idea and enthusiastically endorsed the plans.

The R. M. of Hanover is currently looking for volunteers who would be interested in serving on a committee which would co-ordinate activities for the various events throughout 1999 celebrating the 125th anniversary of the Mennonites settlement in Manitoba.

Anyone interested is asked to contact Ernie Epp, Chief Administrative Officer of the R. M. of Hanover (326-4488).

City of Steinbach - October 25, 1997

Congratulations - City of Steinbach

Congratulations! City status has officially been awarded to Steinbach effective October 25, 1997. Accolades are in order to the Mayor and Council of Steinbach,

This announcement signals the commencement of the fourth period in the community's history.

Strassendorf Period, 1874-1911.

The first period, known as the "Strassendorf" period, started on September 24, 1874, when the 18 founding families arrived and commenced surveying out a new village along the banks of a small creek. They named it Steinbach in honour of the village in Imperial Russian from whence the majority of them had left a mere two months earlier. The term "Strassendorf", literally street village, referred to the traditional Mennonite village, modelled on the ancient villages of northern Europe, but where all the land was held in common by the community and apportioned to the villagers in "kagels", a block of which was known as a "Wirtschaft." The first mayor was Abraham S. Friesen (1848-1916), also a dynamic pioneer entrepreneur.

This period ended on October 28, 1911, the day Mayor Johann G. Barkman (1858-1937) was successful in registering plan 1711 at the Winnipeg Land Titles Office. This signalled the completion of the immense task of surveying the village so that each land owner could get title to his own property. It resulted in a complete transformation for the community, changing it into a typical North America village. Although most of Steinbach's wealthy entrepreneurs were conservative members of the Kleine Gemeinde they did not impede this progress, realizing that these changes were necessary to meet the business challenges of the day. Mayor Johann G. Barkman served Steinbach for a record 25 years, a feat for which he has not yet received recognition.

Village Period 1911-46.

During the "village" period Steinbach continued under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Hanover, but on March 1, 1920, it was formed into an Unincorporated Village District with a council consisting of John D. Goossen (son-in-law to the first mayor), Klaas B. Reimer, and Klaas R. Barkman. The U.V.D. Committee provided local leadership working closely with the Board of Trade to build on the commercial and agri-business foundations of Steinbach already laid by pioneers such as Klaas R. Reimer, Peter K. Barkman, Abraham S. Friesen and Franz M. Kroeker.

Town Period 1947-97.

The village period ended on January 1, 1947, when Steinbach became incorporated



Mayor Les Magnusson and City Secretary Wendi Friesen, inspect the new sign on the civic centre doors, announcing the "City of Steinbach". [Carillon News photo. Nov 3, 1997.]

as a Town, under the leadership of Mayor Klaas R. Barkman.

City Period, 1997.

The "town" period, which lasted for half-a-century, was officially ended October 25, 1997, when Steinbach became a City. This is an immense milestone recognizing Steinbach's status as the regional center for southeastern Manitoba. It also recognizes the growing importance which the region, with its growing prosperity, represents to the entire Province.

One would expect that the 125th anniversary celebrations of the settlement of the com-

munity would be an excellent opportunity to focus on some of these developments.

In achieving City status, Steinbach has certainly affirmed in the most significant way, the hopes and dreams of its founders and the spiritual ethos and vision of a pioneering people.

Congratulations, CITY OF STEINBACH!

125th Anniversary

Announcement:

Readers are reminded that 1999 is the upcoming 125th anniversary of the settlement of the Hanover Steinbach area. If you have any suggestions as how to celebrate this important event, contact any members of the Board of Directors of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society.

Attention Readers:

If you have not paid your 1996 or 1997 membership fee, this may be the last issue you will receive. To avoid being taken off our membership list, send your membership fee of \$10.00 to HSHS, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba Canada, R0A 2A0. Members outside of Canada should pay in U.S. funds to cover additional mailing costs.

Erdmann Harder, Paraguayan Playwright

By Wilmer Penner, Box 1305, Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0

Erdmann Harder, of Filadelfia, Paraguay, is the author of "Jeschafstmaun", a romantic comedy based on life in a Paraguayan Mennonite Darp. Through the "schachring" of Reima, and his courtship of Waltraut, it takes a humorous look at Mennonite ways of living together.

If it reminds the theatre-goer of life in an earlier Manitoba, this is no coincidence. Erdmann's mother left Grunthal as a child, leaving behind her home—the last house-barn in Grunthal village to be demolished. A touching moment in the drama tour came in Altona, where the son of the Jacob Harder who left that village at the age of nine could be introduced to his 'hometown' fans.

Under the auspices of the Manitoba-Paraguay Cultural Exchange, the play has had a successful fall tour of southern Manitoba. Audiences totalling 2300 saw the six performances in Steinbach, Winkler, Altona and Winnipeg.

A Plautdietsch renaissance indeed!

Because of this success, an April tour in Manitoba and Ontario is planned. This summer, the Canadian troupe has been invited to bring the show to Filadelfia and the rest of Paraguay.



Erdmann Harder, Paraguayan Playwright

Tribute to Dr. George K. Epp

By friend and colleague Victor Janzen, Box 1509, Steinbach, R0A 2A0

George K. Epp was born on 26 October, 1924, in the village of Osterwick, near Chortitsa, Ukraine. His father, Kornelius Epp, was teacher and—as he would not compromise his Christian principles to the Communist Government, the family was forced to move several times. By the time World War II broke out, they lived in Franzfeld, Yasykovo.

During the German occupation, George Epp was forced to enlist in the army and after the war ended up in Germany as a refugee. To avoid being "repatriated" back to the Soviet Union, he joined the first group of Mennonite refugees going to Paraguay on the Dutch ship, *Volendam*, as Canada would not accept any refugees at that time.

In Paraguay George Epp helped found the colony named after the ship, *Volendam*, where he also was elected as lay-minister. In 1948 he married Agnes Froese, who became a true supporter and help in his works later in Canada.

In 1954 they were able to immigrate to Canada, making their home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Here he was able to pursue his education at the University of Manitoba, working as glass-blower to support himself and family. Two boys were born to them in Canada.

Eventually George acquired his Ph.D. in history. He taught in colleges and at the Universities. He served a term of five years as president of Canadian Mennonite Bible College and became the first president of Menno Simons College, which was founded under his initiative.

All this time he was also very active in Church and community work, serving one term as Pastor of Douglas Mennonite Church.

His great concern, however, was to write the history of the Mennonites in Russia. He collected material and spent his "free" time sorting and compiling his material.

On his last trip to Germany, where he was to give presentations on certain topics on the history of the Mennonites in Russia, he started bleeding internally and had to be hospitalized. Cancer was diagnosed which would require surgery, but he asked to be transported home to Canada. After fur-

ther tests, he was operated on and underwent treatment. When out of hospital, he continued to work hard on his history project, with the help of his wife, Agnes, who faithfully typed and proofread his manuscripts. His condition, however, deteriorated, when cancer spread through his body and he had to be hospitalized again. Here he experienced the joy of seeing his first volume of *The History of Mennonites in Russia* in a printed edition.



George Epp (1924-97)

Because of the severe pain he endured, he was often under heavy sedation, which made communication difficult or impossible. Finally, on 25 October, 1997, his Lord, whom he had faithfully served all his life, called him home and ended his suffering.

Throughout his life, George still had time, or made time for his fellow man, his friends, parishioners, students, and colleagues, which left too little time for the family.

Rest in peace, George, friend, pastor, teacher, mentor, husband, father and grandfather.

Gdansk Millennium 997-1997

Many of the residents of the Hanover Steinbach area have roots in Gdansk, Poland, formerly Danzig, Prussia. This includes all those of Russian Mennonite descent as well as many German Lutherans. Most of these residents will have some ancestors indigenous to the lands formerly known as Prussia. As such these people will be interested to know that the City of Gdansk, formerly Danzig, is celebrating its 1000th year anniversary next year. A host of special activities and celebrations are planned to mark the occasion.

As a member of the Hanseatic League, Danzig was an extremely wealthy City and seaport in medieval times. The area boasts several beautiful cathedrals as well as the world famous Marienburg Castle in Malburg dating back to the 13th century. In the area east of the City there are numerous "Vorlaubhauser" and other material culture which attest to almost five centuries of Mennonite life and a millennium of Plaut Dietsch culture in the Werders. And not to forget, Danzig/Gdansk has miles and miles of pristine beaches.

Anyone interested in obtaining more information about the 1000th Anniversary of Gdansk can write "Organising Committee of the 1000th Anniversary of Gdansk," ul. Waly Jagiellonskie 1, 80-853 Gdansk, Poland or phone (0-58) 31 97 55,31 39 72.

Jack Penner MLA Visits Zaporozhye

Emerson MLA Jack Penner had opportunity to explore his Mennonite heritage during recent trade mission to Ukraine.

I recently returned from a provincial government trade mission to Ukraine, where we cultivated our economic and cultural relationships with that country. I would like to describe our journey to Ukraine as a step back in time. Areas we visited are and have stood still for decades. The architecture demonstrates the immense wealth that must have once existed there. The City of Kiev is a treasure of historical architecture not seen in many other parts of the world.

The City of Lviv and the surrounding region are the areas from which most of the Ukrainian people in Manitoba originated. Again, these areas illustrate enormous past wealth, as seen in the large, well-preserved churches and the many other ornate buildings dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries. This area was once ruled by Poland. Later it became Russian territory and was governed under the Communist system.

The Zaporozhye area in the southeast part of Ukraine was virtually destroyed during the Russian Revolution and suffered further damage during the Second World War, when German forces occupied the region. However, the Russians eventually regained control. Much of the city was rebuilt during the Russian occupation of the Zaporozhye area, as is demonstrated by its architectural style. We were told there had been 2200 statues of Lenin in the city of Zaporozhye alone at one time. Now there is only one Lenin statue left and they were debating whether they should retain it in remembrance of what not to do or how to govern.

We were quite impressed at how freely we could travel in the Ukraine, as well as how well stocked their stores and markets were. Everywhere we went, the residents were friendly and answered our many questions. Our travels took us to several of the Mennonite villages in the Chortitza and Molotschna areas. The country has tremendous tourism potential, as many people are interested in discovering their Mennonite heritage. They will be impressed by what they find and how helpful people are about providing information. Still other visitors will want to spend time in the historic churches and see the other well-preserved buildings of centuries past. Or, they may simply want to take in the region's natural beauty.

We visited villages such as Neuendorf, where we saw the "Hildebrand House" and we wondered if this could have been Dora's great-grandfather's house. We were very impressed by the architecture and the solidness of these buildings, which could have been our family heritage. Who knows?

Also impressive were the schools for girls and boys and the "Kindershule". It demonstrated how important education must have been to our people and it begs the question, is it still as important here in Manitoba?

The careful layout and planning of communities, the sturdy buildings, and the many old factories in both the Molotschna and Chortitza areas, were indicative of a very progressive and wealthy

people. Agriculture must have been the backbone of the Mennonite communities, and it is still very important to the people living in the old Mennonite homes today. By the way, many of the factories built by the Mennonites and taken over by the Russians are still operating today, one example being the Wilm's flour mill in Halbstadt.

Of particular interest to me were the collective farms. Some of them were very large, covering twenty to thirty thousand acres, with 1000 head of cattle and 2000 hogs. A number had small industries located on them as well, such as oil crushing plants, a buckwheat dehulling facility, a sausage plant and a flour mill. One farm we visited had 600 residents. Of these, 363 worked on the farm while the others were seniors collecting a pension of \$40 US a month. As a point of interest, the people working on this farm had not been paid at all this year. The farm manager told us he would harvest his sugar beets, have them processed and give the sugar to the people living on the farm in lieu of wages. All the people working on the farm had their own gardens and livestock such as geese, ducks, chickens, cows, pigs, goats and sheep, so there was no shortage of food. Some of the residents sold their own produce along the roadside to earn some money.

On another farm we were shown a brand new tractor, a 350 horsepower Winnipeg-built New-Holland model. They were very impressed with its capabilities. Equally impressed were workers at another collective farm who had a new John Deere combine [Endnote] which had also been put to very good use. These farmers told us that they needed many more of these machines to make their operations more efficient. The North American-built machinery looked very impressive compared to the older Russian-built equipment most had to use on their farms.

It became very apparent that this country has a huge agricultural potential and their government leaders know it. On numerous occasions they asked for assistance and advice in forming partnerships with our province, our businesses and our agricultural communities. We met with Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma and his government, the prime minister and many of his cabinet. They indicated to us a desire to pass legislation which would allow private ownership of land, as well as privatization of many of their factories and businesses.

We had a meeting with the head of their Oblatz, their equivalent of our province and premier, his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Industry and Minister of Agriculture in the Zaporozhye area. After the meeting where we discussed future development, the Minister of Agriculture asked us for a private meeting to discuss how we marketed our products. I agreed to this and six of their farm leaders also attended this meeting. We spent three hours discussing markets, prices, cropping practices and modern farm practices. They wondered if we would be interested in coming back to share our way of farming with them. An opportunity perhaps? They

certainly have huge potential for increased agricultural production in the Ukraine.

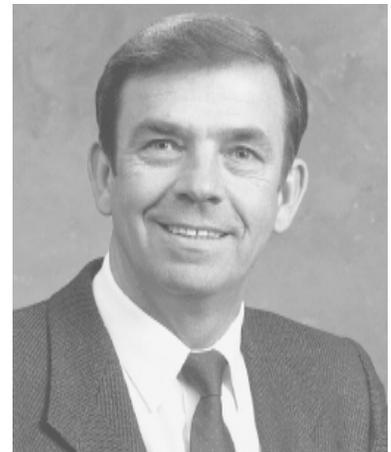
When Sunday came around, we attended a Mennonite church service in Zaporozhye, and we met 70 parishioners of Mennonite descent. The language used in church was German and translated into Russian. We really felt at home there. Reverend Frank Dyck and his wife Nettie serve the church, which is located in downtown Zaporozhye.

One thing I found interesting in my meetings with government officials was their interest in discussing a church which had been built by the Mennonites. It was located in Neuendorf and they were interested in giving the church building back to the Mennonites. This is something I would like to discuss with some of our church leaders in Manitoba, as well as the Mennonite Central Committee.

I believe there is a real opportunity for the Mennonite community in Canada to assist the Mennonite community in Zaporozhye. We could help them in gaining access to this building, opening an office for the MCC, as well as an activity centre — in other words, a church in our old village in Ukraine. This would demonstrate a willingness to become involved in rebuilding the Ukrainian economy, as well as a desire to reestablish the church for Ukraine's Mennonites.

The strong ancestral links between the people of Manitoba and Ukraine offer a unique opportunity to work together. We look forward to further developing those economic and cultural relationships. Both of our countries have much to gain by strengthening these ties.

Jack Penner, Box 64, Homestead, Manitoba, R0A 0S0



Jack Penner, MLA visits Ukraine [Carillon News photo Nov 10/97]

Endnote: This must have been the "Schors Collective Farm" in the eastern Molotschna visited by the 1996 Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour on April 9, 1996. This Collective is farming some of the same land farmed by our Kleine Gemeinde ancestors during the 1850s and 60s—Editor's Note.

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society

Genealogy and Family History Day - March 7, 1998

The Annual Genealogy and Family History Day sponsored by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society will again be held at the Heritage Mennonite Village on March 7, 1998.

DATE: Saturday, March 7, 1998

PLACE: Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach

Agenda

10:00 a.m.: The day opens with opening remarks and welcome by HSHS President Orlando Hiebert.

Twenty Exhibitors display their research and new findings in the historical "Display Hall" of the Museum. Exhibitors include Marianne Janzen, Rudy Friesen, Alfred Wohlgemuth, Mennonite Books, Jake and Hildegard Adrian, Ernest and Henry Braun, M. B. Archives, Heritage Centre Archives, John Dyck, Ralph and Hilton Friesen, and others.

12:00 a.m.: - A traditional Mennonite lunch of soup and pastries will be served by the Auxilary.

1:00 p. m.: **SYMPOSIUM** - Papers to be presented: Richard Thiessen, "Computer technology and genealogy," Alf Redekopp, "Russian archives" and "Internet and family history," John Dyck, "New sources," Wm. Schroeder, "Wiebes of Alt-Bergfeld" and others , , , .

4:00 p.m. - The exhibition closes.

ADMISSION \$2.00. Admission entitles guests to visit "Genealogy Day" exhibits and symposium as well as all museum displays and the feature display in the gallery.

EVERYONE WELCOME. Lunch: soup \$2, pastries \$2 and coffee or tea \$1. Prices subject to change.



A view of one of the display tables from March 8, 1997. HSHS research director John Dyck explains his display.



Alfred Redekopp talks to a full house about "Surfing the Net for cousins from California to Khazakstan," March 8, 1997. Photos from Preservings, No. 10, Part One, page 33.

ATTENTION - Family Historians and Genealogists:

There is still room for a few more exhibitors at the 1998 "Genealogy and Family History Day." Take advantage of this opportunity to exhibit your research, family books and records. Many people have made exciting new discoveries from visitors to their exhibits and have established valuable genealogical connections. If you are interested or need more information, please contact HSHS President Orlando Hiebert, Box 8, Tourond, Manitoba, R0A 2G0

Articles:

Bergthaler/Chortitzer Friesens

by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack Street, New Westminster, B. C., V3L 4V5.

0. Introduction.

The purpose of this and subsequent articles is to investigate the ancestry of the Friesens recorded in the Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch (BGB), and who therefore lived for some time in the Bergthaler Colony. Where possible connections will be made from the 1776 West Prussian census and to the Manitoba 1881 census. Initially, these articles will focus on the male Friesen lines. The sections which follow are not in any particular order, except by natural family groups.

I should mention, at the risk of repeating what I stated elsewhere, that the names Friesen and von Riesen are for all purposes the same name. There is overwhelming evidence from the church and other records in support of this assertion. Von (Van) Riesen is the older form, and was retained by many of the more urbane West Prussian Mennonites, particularly among the city dwellers around Danzig, Elbing and Marienburg. The von Riesen were from the town of Ryssen in Overijssel and not from Friesland, as might be supposed (the name which denotes a person from Friesland is Fröse). Some of the earliest records show the forms "van Ryze" and "de Ryze".

How and why some van Riesen transformed their name to Friesen is not too clear, but this change was underway in the 1700s. The more conservative Mennonites tended to drop the "de", the "van" and "von" from their names in the interest of simplicity (in both a practical and a moral sense). The de Fehrs and de Walls dropped the "de" and the von Dycks and von Bergens dropped the "von" (incidentally, the "de" is not the French "de" but the Netherlandic "de" meaning "the"; i.e., de Wall(en), or de Waal meant the person from Waal). Some persons in the mid-1700s were writing their name as Riesen, but many had already transformed this into Friesen.

1. Jacob Friesen of Lindenau 1776.

Jacob Friesen of Lindenau was a Grüzmacher, a grist miller, and in 1776 was listed as having 4 sons and 2 daughters. His wife's first name was probably Agatha (that is one of his wives, if he was married more than once). He died before 1795.

These children include:

- 1.1. Jacob. He was probably not included in the 4 sons and was probably the Jacob Friesen listed at Marienburg in 1776. He was a Krämer (storekeeper);
- 1.2. Martin (b. 1766, bapt. 1784);
- 1.3. Aganetha (b. 1765, bapt. 1783) married (a) an unknown Dyck, (b) Franz Berg,

(c) Isaac Ens, (d) Johann Breuil, (e) Nicholas Dyck. She came to Russia in 1788-89 with her first husband and lived at Neuendorf, later Osterwick, Old Colony;

1.4. Peter (b. 1769, bapt. 1787). He came to Russia in 1796 and settled at Neuendorf: Wirtschaft 4 1802 (B.H. Unruh, p. 249), Wirtschaft 3 1808: BHU, 267, Old Colony. His wife was Anna (b. 1780) whose maiden name is currently unknown;

1.5. Eliesabeth (b. circa 1771, bapt. 1789);

1.6. Bernhard (b. 1776, bapt. 1795) married (1802) Anna Gerbrand (b. 1769) and moved to Russia in 1816. He eventually settled at Friedensdorf, Molotschna, 1835 census, Wirtschaft 17.

1.2. Martin Friesen.

Martin Friesen (b. 1766) came to Russia at the same time as brother Peter. He is listed at Rosenthal in 1802, Burwald in 1803 and 1808 (Wirtschaft 1: BJU, p. 274), a moderately well-off farmer with 7 horses and 11 cattle. His first wife was Eliesabeth Braun, his second wife was Sara (b. 1779) whose maiden name is currently unknown. Possibly she was a daughter of Johann Klassen of Kronsweide. His children include:

- 1.2.1. Margaretha (b. 1786);
- 1.2.2. Eliesabeth (b. 1788);
- 1.2.3. Jacob (1793-1843) married (a) Maria Rempel, (b) Maria Dyck. He moved to Bergthal. BGB A15;
- 1.2.4. Agatha (b. 1795);
- 1.2.5. Martin (b. 1801), married Helena Unger;
- 1.2.6. Johann (b. 1804);
- 1.2.7. Abraham (b. 1807) married Margaretha Penner. He moved to Bergthal. BGB A2;
- 1.2.8. Helena (b. 1808);
- 1.2.9. Peter (b.8.2.1812, d.6.1875) married 1832 Anna Banmann (b.1808). This last entry is my conjecture which agrees with all the data, but for which no primary documentation is on hand.

1.2.3. Jacob Friesen (1793-1843).

Jacob Friesen married Maria Rempel (1793-1827). He married again to Maria Dyck (b. 1800). Jakob Friesen died soon after the Bergthaler Colony was established. In 1844 his widow married Jacob Harder (1818-50), also of Bergthal, BGB A15. Jacob Friesen's family includes:

- 1.2.3.1. Helena (1817-41) married Jacob Sawatsky, BGB B3: *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part Two, page 16;
- 1.2.3.2. Martin Friesen (1820-59) married Helena Hiebert (b. 1816). His second wife

was Susanna Suderman (1834-58) and his third wife was the widow Sarah Funk, nee Siemens (1818-99). His widow married Heinrich Striemer in 1862. BGB B9. They came to Canada in 1874 and settled in Kronsgard, WR. Martin's children were:

1. Jacob Friesen (b. 1845);
2. Helena Friesen (b. 1853) married Johann Gerbrandt;
3. Abraham Friesen (1854-1921) married Katherina Striemer and came to Canada with the Bergthalers. Schönau, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;
4. Johann Friesen (1857-1944) married Maria Abrams (1860-1925) (later Aganetha Abrams), Neuanlage, West Reserve, 1881 Manitoba census. Their son Abraham (1894-1987) married Agatha Schulz (1898-1971) and they are the parents of Dick S. Friesen, retired farm machinery dealer in Steinbach—see Cathy Barkman, *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part Two, pages 25-27;
5. Martin Friesen (1859-1929) married Maria Ens (1860-1973) daughter of Klaas Enns who died in Russia. Martin married for the second time to Helena Friesen. Martin is found in the Miscellaneous category, West Reserve, 1881 Manitoba census. They lived in the Plum Coulee district. Their daughter Helena married Cornelius H. Friesen (1903-76) minister of the Bergthaler Church in Grunthal. Their son Jakob E. Friesen was the father of Henry D. Friesen, Steinbach realtor, formerly of Grunthal. Their son Frank E. Friesen was the author of *The Martin Friesen Genealogy* (Winkler, 1976), 32 pages, from which much of the information for this section was taken;
- 1.2.3.3. Jacob Friesen (b. 1828) married Maria Leycke and was the Gebietschreiber for the Bergthaler Colony. BGB B122. He came to Canada with the Bergthalers, Schönweise, East Reserve, 1881 census. His oldest son Bernhard (b. 1855) married Helena Abrams, Silberfeld, West Reserve, 1881 census;
- 1.2.3.4. Anna Friesen (b. 1830) married Jakob Reimer;
- 1.2.3.5. Margaretha Friesen (b. 1832) married Peter Penner;
- 1.2.3.6. Johann Friesen (1833-60) married Katherina Falk (1831-1923), who later married his cousin Abraham Friesen. BGB B 137. His children include:
 1. David (1856-93) married Anna Wiens (later Anna Klassen). Schönsee, East Reserve, 1881 Manitoba census. Their son David Friesen later moved to Altona where he founded the printing firm of "D. W. Friesens & Sons". David's sister Helena

(1884-1960) married Johann Friesen (1881-1916), and they were the parents of Rev. C. H. Friesen (1903-76), Grunthal (see 1.2.9.5.);

2. Katherina (1858-1936) married Bernhard Wiebe (1854-1916) BGB A137: Gnadefeld 1881 census BGB 154-370. See article by Ann Funk, "Auswanderung! 48," elsewhere in this newsletter regarding their grandson Bernhardt S. Wiebe (1913-71);

3. Anna (1860-1926) married Bernhard Penner;

1.2.3.7. Justina Friesen (b.1837) married Cornelius Toews (b.1840);

1.2.3.8. Heinrich Friesen (1839-1917) married Maria Thiessen (1840-1917). BGB

Sawatsky. BGB B177. Gnadefeld, West Reserve, 1881 census;

1.2.7.3. Martin (b. 1838) married Margaretha Klippenstein. BGB B213. He came to Canada with the Bergthalers. Neu-Bergthal, West Reserve, 1881 census. He was the father of Johann M. Friesen (1865-1932) elected as a Bergthaler minister in 1895 and serving as Inspector of Mennonite schools from 1906-9;

1.2.7.4. Jacob (b. 1841) married Helena Bergen. BGB B13(a). They came to Canada in the 1870s. Gnadefeld, West Reserve, 1881 census;

1.2.7.5. Johann (b. 1849) married Adelgunda Friesen (daughter of Peter Friesen, b. 1812). BGB B375. Gnadefeld, West Reserve, 1881 census.

1.2.9. Peter Friesen (2.2.1812-6.1875).

Peter married Anna Banmann (b. 2.2.1808) BGB A3.

It is interesting that there were three Friesens who married Banmanns, all at approximately the same time. The Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch (BGB) lists a Peter Friesen (b. 14.2.1812) who married (first marriage) Maria Banmann in 1835, BGB A99. There was also a Jacob Friesen (1819-62) who married an Eliesabeth Banmann (1821-1903) in about 1842. Jacob Friesen was not a Bergthaler, but his family did immigrate to Manitoba in the 1870s.

The difference in birthdates of the two Peter Friesens is 12 days which is the difference in the Russian and Western Calendars at that time, and which might lead one to suspect these two Peter Friesens were one and the same. However, a close look at the data rules out this possibility. It may be possible as well, that there is an error in one of the dates, for instance Peter Friesen's wife Anna Banmann also had a birthdate on February 2 (although a different year) which may just be a coincidence. The Peter Friesen whose birthdate was 14.2.1812 also had a birthdate of 26.2.1812 according to later records, demonstrating that the 14.2.1812 date was according to the Russian calendar. Of course, there is other data which rules out the confusion between the two Peter Friesens.

Having said this, there is yet another coincidence which requires some comment. Peter Friesen (b. 14.2.1812) and Jacob Friesen (b. 5.12.1819), were brothers, and apparently grandsons of Johann Friesen, listed at Lindenau in the 1776 West Prussian census (listed with 1 son and 1 daughter). Whether or not there is a connection between Jacob and Johann Friesen of Lindenau must remain a matter for conjecture at this point.

Anna Banmann was the daughter of Kornelius Banmann (b. 1782) and Anna (nee Fröse, b. 1775). They lived at Kronsweide in 1803 and Kronthal in 1814, where they owned Wirtschaft 5. They were well-off with 8 horses and 11 cattle, BHU, p. 285. Waisenman Kornelius Friesen was therefore named after his maternal grandfather.

Anna Banmann Friesen was living with her daughter Susanna and Susanna's husband Abraham Friesen (b. 1839), son of another Peter Friesen (b. 1810) at Osterwick, East Reserve, 1881 census.

Peter Friesen was the first Waisenman of the Bergthal Colony when its own Waisenamt was established in 1842 and served until his death, 32 years and 8 months: Katharine Wiebe, *Historical Sketches*, page 186. His widow and children immigrated in 1876 with the last group of Bergthaler to leave Russia. Peter Friesen must have been a successful farmer as his widow is listed as one of the wealthier members of the travelling party with 1875 ruble or \$1175: John Dyck, *Oberschulz Jakob Peters*, page 119.

Peter Friesen's children:

1.2.9.1. Kornelius (1833-1909) married Anna Töws, BGB B136. He was "Waisenman" Friesen and lived at Osterwick, East Reserve at the time of the 1881 Manitoba census. Sons Peter (b. 1857) and Kornelius (b. 1860) are listed separately at Osterwick, 1881 census. Peter T. Friesen married Marigan Weiland: see Martin Friesen article in *Preservings*, June 1997, No. 10, Part One, pages 52-54. An excellent biography of son Cornelius T. Friesen (1860-1929), also "Waisenman" Friesen, by Katherine Wiebe, was published in *Preservings*, June 1996, No. 8, Part One, pages 36-40;

1.2.9.2. Susanna (b.1840) married Abraham Friesen (b.1839), son of another Peter Friesen (unrelated). Susanna and Abraham lived at Osterwick, 1881 Manitoba census;

1.2.9.3. Peter (b. 1843) married Margaretha Löwen. BGB B271. Osterwick, East Reserve, 1881 Manitoba census;

1.2.9.4. Martin (b.1847) married Katherina Penner (later Maria Rempel and Margaretha Löwen, widow of his brother Peter). BGB B315. Weidenfeld, West Reserve, 1881 census;

1.2.9.5. Johann (1849-86) married Anna Bergmann (1853-90). BGB B373. Weidenfeld, West Reserve, 1881 census. Their son Johann (1881-1916) married Helena, sister to D. W. Friesen, Schönsee, and later Altona (see 1.2.3.6.).

1.4. Peter Friesen (b. 1769, bapt. 1787).

As mentioned above, this Peter Friesen came to Russia circa 1796, at about the same time as his brother Martin. He lived in the village of Neuendorf 1802 (Wirtschaft 4) and 1808 (Wirtschaft 3): BHU, pages 254, and 267. He founded his own homestead according to the 1808 notation. We do not currently know the name of his wife, Anna (b. 1780), and it is likely he was previously married. His children include:

1.4.1. Agatha (b. 1798) who married Martin Wiebe;

1.4.2. Peter (b. 1800);

1.4.3. Jacob (b. 1802);

1.4.4. Bernhard (1805-53);



David W. Friesen (1879-1951) was born in Schönsee, near Grunthal, Manitoba. In 1894 the Friesen family moved to the West Reserve where David started a store in 1907 which was to prosper and become the modern-day printing giant, "Friesens Corporation" Altona. Photo courtesy of Ted Friesen, Johann & Agatha Klippenstein book, page 103.

B183. They came to Canada in 1875. His widow Maria (b.1840) was living with the Heinrich Heinrichs family at Rudnerweide, West Reserve, 1881 census, as were his children Katherina, Maria, Heinrich, Agatha and Jacob Friesen.

1.2.3.9. Aganetha Friesen (b. 1841) married Jakob Dueck.

1.2.7. Abraham Friesen (b. 1807).

He married Margaretha Penner. BGB A2. He came to Canada in the 1870s and is found at Gnadenthal, West Reserve, Manitoba, where he was living with the Heinrich Hieberts at the time of the 1881 census. His children include:

1.2.7.1. Abraham (b. 1831) married Katherina Falk, widow of his cousin Johann Friesen. BGB B203. He came to Canada with the Bergthalers. Gnadefeld, West Reserve, 1881 census. Some of his sons moved to Paraguay in the 1920s;

1.2.7.2. Heinrich (1833-1912) married Maria



On this picture are Waisenman Cornelius T. Friesen and Gertruda Dyck Wiebe Friesen. She was the widow of Heinrich D. Wiebe, son of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900). Cornelius and Gertruda were married on February 28, 1909. Martin C. Friesen married his step-sister Elisabeth Wiebe on July 18, 1911. From left to right: back row, Gertruda D. Wiebe, Elisabeth D. Wiebe, Peter D. Wiebe, Martin C. Friesen and Heinrich C. Friesen; Middle row: Johann D. Wiebe, Jakob D. Wiebe and Jakob C. Friesen (still living today in Colony Bergthal, Paraguay); Front row: Helena D. Wiebe, Mrs. Gertrude Dyck Wiebe Friesen, Abram D. Wiebe, Waisenman Cornelius T. Friesen and David C. Friesen. Martin C. Friesen later became the father of the Menno Colony, Paraguay. Photo courtesy of Mrs. David C. Friesen/Katherine Wiebe.

1.4.5. Gerhard (b. 1808).

1.4.4. Bernhard Friesen (1805-53).

Bernhard Friesen married Helena Dirksen and later Katherina Klippenstein. BGB A39. His children include:

1.4.4.1. Peter (1835-1915) married Katherina Thiessen and later Aganetha Peters. BGB B194. When they came to Canada they settled at Grünthal, East Reserve, 1881 census. He was buried in the old village cemetery in Schönfeld where many skeletons were recently unearthed: see *Carillon News*, May 3, 1995, and May 31, 1995. Peter Friesen was the father of the well-known chiropractor "Doctor" Peter P. Friesen (1878-1969) whose family history is recorded in the book by Helene Friesen, *A Genealogy of Peter P. and Agatha Friesen* (Grunthal, 1978), 85 pages;

1.4.4.2. Katherina (b. 1838) who married Jacob Penner;

1.4.4.3. Bernhard (b. 1843) who married Helena Dirksen and later Anna Hildebrandt, BGB B389: Schönthal, West Reserve, 1881 census. Note that B 389 gives an incorrect birthdate for Bernhard Friesen. His correct birthdate is 29.11.1843 (Russian)=11.12.1843 Western;

1.4.4.4. Aganetha (b. 1845) married Kornelius Friesen (b. 1838) (son of Heinrich Friesen (1802-75);

1.4.4.5. Anna (b. 1847) married Kornelius Dyck.

2. Johann Friesen, Lindenau 1776.

There were two Johann Friesens at Lindenau, Prussia, in the 1776 census, both



"Dr." Peter P. Friesen was also a blacksmith and was known as "Drootbranna" Friesen. He founded a large dynasty and many of his descendants are still prominent in the Grunthal area, including Larry Friesen, owner of Roadside Poultry, and Jac N. Friesen, former Councillor of the R. M. of Hanover. Photo courtesy of Peter P. and Agatha Friesen book, page 21.

listed with one son and one daughter. Possibly, they are father and son. It appears that Abraham Friesen (15.12.1759-22.10.1835) was the son of the senior Johann Friesen. His mother was Sara (nee Warkentin) (b. 1732).

It appears she remarried Johann Mathies in 1793, after the senior Johann Friesen's death.

Both Johann and Abraham Friesen were likely members of the Rosenort Gemeinde. We know little about Abraham's first wife, but he was married at the time he came to Russia in 1795. His mother, listed as Susanna Warkentin by BHU, followed a year later in 1796, BHU 302.

2.1. Abraham Friesen (1759-1835).

Abraham settled at Schönhorst where he is listed in 1802 and 1803: BHU 215 and 248. After the death of his first wife, he married an Eliesabeth Warkentin who had come to Russia in 1805. She later married Bernhard Giesbrecht (1775-1851).

Abraham Friesen's children include:

2.1.1. Sara (1790-1854) married Peter Penner (1787-1835);

2.1.2. Eliesabeth (1807-55);

2.1.3. Johann (1810-55);

2.1.4. Peter (1812-91);

2.1.5. Gerhard (1815-16);

2.1.6. Aganetha (1817-55) married Abraham Zacharias (b. 1814);

2.1.7. Jacob (1819-62);

2.1.8. Gerhard (1819-1904).

2.1.3. Johann Friesen (1810-55).

This Johann Friesen was not a Bergthaler, but his family is of interest because most of his children came to Canada in the 1870s. He married in 1833 to Susanna Dyck (d. 1900) who later married Johann Berg (1828-89).

His children include:

2.1.3.1. Peter (b. 1824) married Maria Elias. Apparently this family stayed in Russia;

2.1.3.2. Johann (1836-1902) married Helena Bergen and came to Canada in the 1870s. Neuenberg, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;

2.1.3.3. Abraham (1838-1905) married Kornelia Rempel. Neuenberg, West Reserve, 1881 census;

2.1.3.4. Jacob (1840-1927) married Helena Siemens, Neuenberg, West Reserve, 1881 census;

2.1.3.5. Susanna, married Nicholas Harder;

2.1.3.6. Isaac;

2.1.3.7. Eliesabeth, married Nicholas Peters;

2.1.3.8. Gerhard;

2.1.3.9. Anna, married Kornelius Harder;

2.1.3.10. Aganetha (b. 1855) married Dietrich Bueckert.

2.1.4. Peter Friesen (1812-91)

This is the Peter Friesen mentioned above whose birthdate is 26.2.1812 Western style, 14.2.1812 Russian style. He moved to Bergthal, BGB A99, and later to Canada in the 1870s, Rosenthal, East Reserve, 1881 census.

His first wife was Maria Banmann (1815-60), apparently also a daughter of Kornelius Banmann of Kronsweide/Kronsthal, as mentioned above. Later he re-married Maria (nee Wall) and Margaretha (nee Bergen).

His children include:

- 2.1.4.1. Eiesabeth (b.1837) married Kornelius Wall;
- 2.1.4.2. Anna (1828-99) married Abraham Friesen (1840-1916), son of Jacob Friesen (b. 1801) see below;
- 2.1.4.3. Peter Friesen (1840) married Anna Penner. BGB B238, Pastwa, East Reserve, 1881 census;
- 2.1.4.4. Maria (1841) married Gerhard Klassen;
- 2.1.4.5. Susanna (1843) married Jacob Rempel;
- 2.1.4.6. Kornelius (1845-47);
- 2.1.4.7. Aganetha (1847-64);
- 2.1.4.8. Agatha (1847-69);
- 2.1.4.9. Sara (b.1852) married Heinrich Klippenstein;
- 2.1.4.9. Adelgunda (b.1854) married Johann Friesen. This Johann Friesen was a son of Abraham Friesen (b. 1807) mentioned above;
- 2.1.4.10. Kornelius Friesen (b.1856) married Katherina Neufeld. He is listed under Miscellaneous, West Reserve, 1881 census;
- 2.1.4.11. Abraham (b.1859) married Maria Dyck. He is also listed under Miscellaneous, West Reserve, 1881 census;
- 2.1.4.12. Margaretha (1864);
- 2.1.4.13. Aganetha (1866).

2.1.7. Jacob Friesen (1819-62).

Jacob again was not a Bergthaler, but his family did come to Canada in the 1870s. He married Eliesabeth Banmann (1821-1903), again a daughter of the Kornelius Banmann previously mentioned. His widow married Isaac Fehr, later of Reinland, Manitoba.

Jacob Friesen's children include:

- 2.1.7.1. Eliesabeth (1843-43);
- 2.1.7.2. Kornelius (1844-44);
- 2.1.7.3. Anna (b.1847). She stayed in Russia;
- 2.1.7.4. Jacob (1848-1915) married Eliesabeth Fehr. Osterwick, West Reserve, 1881 census (his birthdate actually spans two years being 22.12.1848 (Russian) and 3.1.1849 (Western));
- 2.1.7.5. Susanna (1855-65);
- 2.1.7.6. Maria (1857) married Johann Fröse;
- 2.1.7.7. Kornelius (1859-60);
- 2.1.7.8. Abraham (1861) married Anna Wall. Abraham Friesen is listed under Isaac Fehr's name, Reinland, West Reserve, 1881 census.

2.1.8. Gerhard Friesen (1819-1904).

He was not a Bergthaler, but moved to Canada in the 1870s. His first wife was Judith Siemens, his second Anna Werner. Schönwiese, West Reserve, 1881 census. His children include:

- 2.1.8.1. Peter (1847-1917) married Katherina Berg. Schönwiese, West Reserve, 1881 census;
- 2.1.8.2. Jacob (b.1849) married (1) Aganetha Löwen, (2) Maria Kornelsen. Schönwiese, West Reserve, 1881 census;
- 2.1.8.3. Gerhard (b.1851) Schönwiese, West Reserve, 1881 census;
- 2.1.8.4. Anna (1853-55);

- 2.1.8.5. Gertruda (1854-65);
- 2.1.8.6. Johann (1856-58);
- 2.1.8.7. Abraham (1858-1914) married Katherina Dyck. Schönwiese, West Reserve, 1881 census;
- 2.1.8.8. Katherina (b.1860) married Johann Wall;
- 2.1.8.9. Johann (1863-1943) married Maria Wiebe;
- 2.1.8.10 Isaac (b.1865) married (1) Susanna Neufeld, (2) Maria Hiebert, (3) Helena Bergen;
- 2.1.8.11. Anna (1867-68);

Note: Some of the above information is from personal communication of Eva Beaulac, Mission B.C.

3. Peter Friesen (b. 1751).

We know very little regarding this Peter Friesen. He is not listed separately in the 1776 census, and the place of his origin is unknown (BHU). It is possible that he was a craftsman, possibly a carpenter and it is likely he was not married in 1776. The name of his first wife is unknown and his second wife was Anna (b. 1773) whose family name is unknown.

Peter Friesen came to Russia in 1788-89 and settled at Neuendorf (Wirtschaft 35, 1975 BHU). By 1802 he had given up his Wirtschaft and was living as an Einwohner in Neuendorf (No. 60 (1802) and No. 16 (1808), BHU p 256 and 273). He had possibly retired or was pursuing a trade.

Peter Friesen's children include:

- 3.1. Peter (b. 1780);
- 3.2. Sara (b. 1786);
- 3.3. Kornelius (1790);
- 3.4. Anna (b. 1794);
- 3.5. Maria (b. 1800);
- 3.6. Johann (b. 1802);
- 3.7. Jacob (b.1806);
- 3.8. Isaac (b.1808).

3.1. Peter Friesen (b. 1780).

Peter Friesen married Helena Thiessen (b. 1780), daughter of Wilhelm Thiessen, Schönhorst. He was a carpenter and by 1814 was living in Osterwick as an Einwohner: BHU, 284.

His children include:

- 3.1.1. Wilhelm (b. 1804);
- 3.1.2. Peter (1806-31);
- 3.1.3. Jacob (b. 1810);
- 3.1.4. Johann (b. 1812).

3.1.2 Peter Friesen (1806-31).

Peter Friesen married Barbara Dyck but died in his early years.

His children include:

- 3.1.2.1. Peter (1828-1903) married Maria Rempel;
- 3.1.2.2. Gerhard (1830-30).

3.1.2.1. Peter Friesen (1828-1903).

Peter Friesen moved to the Bergthal settlement, BGB A184, and later to Rosenbach (Fürstenland). This family came to Canada in the 1870s and resided at the Scratching

River Settlement according to the Manitoba 1881 census [Editor's Note: Although they were listed with the Scratching River settlement they were definitely not part of the Kleine Gemeinde settlement there, and possibly there is some error here.]

His children include:

- 3.1.2.1.1. Barbara (1853-1920) married Kornelius Thiessen;
- 3.1.2.1.2. David (b.1855) married Helena Neufeld, Scratching River, Manitoba 1881 census;
- 3.1.2.1.3. Peter (b.1857) married Anna Penner, Scratching River, Manitoba 1881 census;
- 3.1.2.1.4. Bernhard (b.1859) married Helena Ens, Scratching River, Manitoba 1881 census;
- 3.1.2.1.5. Maria (1860-1938) married (1) Peter Martens, (2) Franz Günther;
- 3.1.2.1.6 Abraham (b. 1862) married Helena Löwen;
- 3.1.2.1.7. Margaretha (1863-74);
- 3.1.2.1.8. Gerhard (1865-68);
- 3.1.2.1.9. Margaretha (1867-68);
- 3.1.2.1.10. Gerhard (b.1868) married (1) Katherina Neudorf, (2) Anna Fehr
- 3.1.2.1.11. Margaretha (b.1869) married Dirk (Dietrich) Schröder;
- 3.1.2.1.12. Johann (b.1871);
- 3.1.2.1.13. Heinrich (b.1877);
- 3.1.2.1.14. Isaac (1879-1965) married Maria Wiebe.

3.1.3. Kornelius Friesen (1790-1868).

Kornelius married Agatha Thiessen (1795-1850) early in 1814, apparently a sister to Helena Thiessen who married his brother. Like his brother, Peter, he is listed as an Einwohner in Osterwick in 1814: BHU, 284. Later he moved to Bergthal, BGB A89. His second wife was Maria Friesen.

Kornelius Friesen's children include:

- 3.3.1. Maria (b.1818). BGB A89a indicates that Maria had a son Peter Buhr out of wedlock, and later joined a Lutheran church;
- 3.3.2. Helena (b.1822) married Karl Striemer;
- 3.3.3. Katherina (b.1825) married Johann Höppner;
- 3.3.4. Peter (b.1829) BGB B96. He came to America in 1874 and originally settled near Fargo, N. Dakota;
- 3.3.5. Agatha (b.1836) moved to the Molotschna;
- 3.3.6. Kornelius (b.1839) BGB B244. He married Justina Berg and settled near his brother in N. Dakota.

4. Kornelius Friesen (1746-84).

This Kornelius Friesen is apparently not listed in the 1776 census. This would indicate that he was in non-Prussian territory areas that included the Scharpau, the Danziger Nehrung or Danzig city. The dates of Kornelius are from a personal communication of Bert Friesen of Winnipeg. It seems his wife Anna (b. 1747) later married Johann Neufeld. Kornelius, or his wife (possibly af-

ter her second marriage), later moved to Neustädterwald, then Einlage (Rosenort Gemeinde).

The children of Kornelius Friesen include:

4.1. Gerhard (b. 1765). He moved to Russia in 1788-89 and settled at Schönhorst, Wirtschaft No 10: BHU, 241, later moving to Nieder-Chortitza in 1803;

4.2. Abraham (1768-1817);

4.3. Kornelius (1773-1815). He came to Russia in 1793 as a single man and received one of the homesteads of Johann Janzen of Schönwiese. Wirtschaft 9: BHU, 244;

4.4. Johann (b. 1774). He came to Russia in 1796-98 with his widowed mother and 2 younger sisters (see below). He married Katherina Mandtler of Marienburg and received the Einlage homestead of Gerhard Janzen. He moved to Nieder-Chortitza where this village was founded in 1803;

4.5. Margaretha (1779-1812);

4.6. Helena (b.1781) married Wilhelm Redekop of Neuendorf. Her mother was living with them in 1802.

4.2. Abraham Friesen (1768-1817).

Abraham moved to Russia in 1788-89 with his brother Gerhard. In 1791 he married Anna Dirksen and established a homestead in Neuendorf, Wirtschaft 25 (1795: BHU, 241), Wirtschaft 12 (1802; BHU, 254). Later he moved to Nieder-Chortitza, Wirtschaft 30: BHU, 282, possibly inheriting a homestead of his brother.

Abraham Friesen's children include:

4.2.1. Maria (1792-1804);

4.2.2. Anna (1793-97);

4.2.3. Abraham (b.1794);

4.2.4. Kornelius (1797-1885);

4.2.5. Anna (b.1797);

4.2.6. Jacob (1801-86);

4.2.7. Peter (b.1806);

4.2.8. Helena (b.1814) married Jacob Dirksen.

4.2.4. Kornelius Friesen (1797-1885).

Kornelius Friesen married Anna Kähler and later came to Canada where he was living with Jacob Zacharias in Schönwiese, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census. He was not a Bergthaler. His children include:

4.2.4.1. Kornelius (1824-1912) married 1) Sara Harms, 2) Aganetha Peters. Neuenberg, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;

4.2.4.2. Sara (b. 1828) married Peter Fröse;

4.2.4.3. Abraham (1830-1910) married Justina Ens, Schönwiese, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;

4.2.4.4. Helena (1822-1904) married Abraham Döll;

4.2.4.5. Gerhard (b. 1835) married Susanna Ens. Schönwiese, West Reserve, Manitoba, 1881 census;

4.2.4.6. Peter (1845-1905) married Aganetha Theichrob. Schönwiese, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census.

4.2.6. Jacob Friesen (1801-86).

Jacob Friesen (1801-86) married Helena

Dyck and later moved to Bergthal, BGB A36. [Helena Dueck was a sister to Agatha Dueck, mother of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), Chortitz, Manitoba (E.R.)]. Jakob Friesen came to Canada as a widower and was living with Johann Kähler in 1881. Hochfeld, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census.

Jacob Friesen's children include:

4.2.6.1. Helena (b.1829) married Peter Buhr: see Nettie Neufeld, *Descendants of Peter*



1905. Peter Friesen Buhr (1862-1914). His Daughter Katharina Buhr married Bernhard Friesen and they were the parents of Nettie Neufeld, author of the "Peter Buhr" family book, and Lenora, Mrs. Abram J. Thiessen, founder of "Thiessen Bus Lines", formerly of Rosenfeld, Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Nettie Neufeld, *Descendants of Peter Buhr 1816-1887 (Steinbach, 1984)*, page 68.

Buhr 1816-1887 (Steinbach, 1984), 135 pages, for a listing of this family. Son Peter F. Buhr married Aganetha Abrams and they were the grandparents of Nettie Neufeld, a frequent contributor to *Preservings*.

4.2.6.2. Jacob (1834-1910) married Helena Penner. BGB B186. Moved to Butterfield, Minnesota;

4.2.6.3. Kornelius (1837-39);

4.2.6.4. Abraham (1840-1916) married Anna Friesen, BGB B187. Moved to Butterfield, Minnesota;

4.2.6.5. Heinrich (1842-1926) married Agatha Hiebert, BGB B232. Hochfeld, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census. A number of Heinrich's journals are still extant and have been translated and published by Irene Kroeker in *Historical Sketches*, pages 465-596.

4.2.6.6. Aganetha (1845-1936) married Peter Dyck;

4.2.6.7. Maria (1848-1917) married (1) Erdmann Buhr, (2) Aron Buhr.

Note: Some of the above information, and further additional information is from the excellent family history, "The von Riesen-Friesen story 1769-1987" by Adeline (C. J.) Friesen of Mountain Lake, MN.



Heinrich Friesen (1842-1921), Hochfeld, Manitoba. Heinrich Friesen served the ministry for 40 years—4 years as deacon and 36 as minister. He preached 998 times and conducted 71 funerals and 21 weddings. Photo courtesy of Irene Enns Kroeker, "Rev. Heinrich Friesen," in *Preservings*, No. 5, January, 1995, page 13.

4.2.7. Peter Friesen (b. 1806).

We know very little regarding this Peter Friesen, if he was married, and if he had children. He appears to have come to Canada in the 1870s and was living at Reinland, West Reserve, at the time of the 1881 census.

5. Jacob Friesen of Einlage.

Jacob Friesen was probably born circa 1750, son of the Abraham Friesen, mentioned as a Landowner at Einlage, West Prussia, in 1772. He probably inherited Abraham's farm and in 1776 is listed of middle-class economic status with two sons. Because he was a member of the Rosenort Gemeinde, and most of the church records for Rosenort have been lost, we know very little regarding this Jacob Friesen.

In later years his sons moved to villages in the south and west, presumably because some of the lands were less developed and therefore less expensive. These villages include Czatkau on the west bank of the Vistula, Oberfeld and Kurzebrach in the Marienwerder to the south, all of which belonged to the Heubuden Gemeinde. Many of his children later moved to Russia in 1818-19.

His children include:

5.1. Abraham (b. circa 1773, d. 1826);

5.2. Johann (b. circa 1775);

5.3. Jacob (b.1776) married (his second wife) Susanna Klassen, lived at Czatkau, moved to Margenau, Molotschna in 1818 (1835 census);

5.4. Peter (b.1789) married (1) Helena Dyck, (2) Anna Klassen, moved to Lichtnau, Molotschna in 1818 (1835 census);

5.5. Kornelius (b.1796) moved to the Molotschna in 1818, settling in Marienthal in 1824 (1835 census);

5.6. Anna (b.1801) married Jacob Dyck.

5.1. Abraham Friesen (1773-1826)

He probably spent his early years at Einlage but later moved to the southern areas of the Werder (Marienwerder). His second wife was Anna Dyck (b. 1792) whom he married in 1814. The church records seem to indicate this was a first marriage for Abraham and Anna, but this is probably a mistake. Anna Dyck was a daughter of Martin Dyck of Pastwa. After Abraham's death, she married Aron Regier (b. 1807) of Sparrau, Molotschna.

Abraham Friesen's children include:

5.1.1. Katherina (b. 1804);

5.1.2. Sara (b. 1805) married Heinrich Funk, later of Chortitza;

5.1.3. Peter (b. 1810);

5.1.4. Martin (b. 1814);

5.1.5. Abraham (1816-71);

5.1.6. Katherina (b. 1820);

5.1.7. Jacob (b. 1822);

5.1.8. Anna (b. 1825).

Abraham Friesen came to Russia in 1818, settling in Margenau, but later moving to Sparrau, Molotschna (1835 census). At least two of Abraham's children moved to the Bergthal colony, namely Peter and Abraham.

5.1.3. Peter Friesen (b.1810).

Peter Friesen married 1) Eva Kornelsen, 2) Anna Abrams. He was born at Kurzebrach, Marienwerder (Heubuden Gemeinde), on 13.8.1810 or 25.8.1810. He moved from Sparrau, Molotschna, to the Bergthal colony, BGB A207. When the Bergthalers immigrated to Canada in the 1870s, he and most of his family remained in Russia. The exceptions were:

5.1.3.1. Abraham (b. 1839) married Susanna Friesen, daughter of the Peter Friesen mentioned above, BGB A202. Abraham came to Canada and settled at Osterwick, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census.

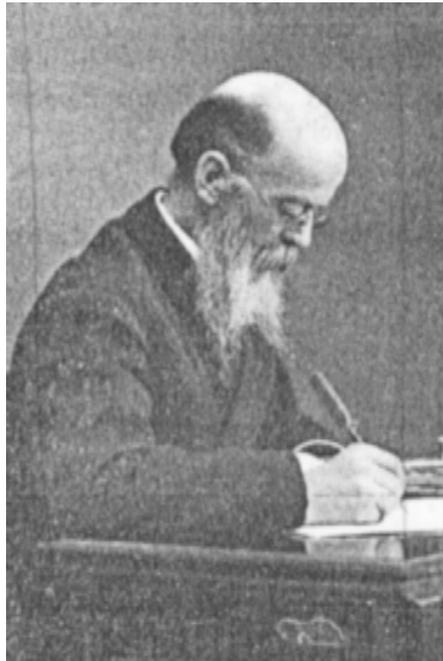
5.1.3.2. Anna (b. 1851) married Jacob Falk: Kronsgard, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census.

5.1.4. Martin Friesen (b.1814).

Martin Friesen (b.18.9.1814) married Helena (b. 1816). I am almost sure that this is the father of Peter M. Friesen, the M.B. historian. There are very few references regarding the personal life of P. M. Friesen and those that do exist are not straight forward. P. M. Friesen's own brief incidental reference seems to refer to his maternal ancestors, although this is difficult to unravel. Nevertheless, the circumstantial evidence seems to indicate that this is the correct connection.

5.1.5. Abraham Friesen (1816-71).

Abraham Friesen married Katherina Schwartz, BGB A100. He was elected Lehrer



Peter M. Friesen (1849-1914), wrote the Separatist-Pietist historical work, The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, 1065 pages, in which he wrote mainly disparaging and untrue things about conservative Mennonites such as the Bergthaler and Kleine Gemeinde. The fact that two of his uncles were Bergthaler would establish that his family was quite conservative and in a round-a-bout way this might help to explain why he was so fanatically biased against the orthodox Mennonite church and its faith and practice. Presumably P. M. Friesen must have had some sort of a falling out with his family. Photo courtesy of The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia, page 982.



Photo Seven: Abram Friesen (1816-71) emigrated to Pastwa, Molotschna, in 1818, and later moved to the Bergthaler Colony, where he was elected as a minister. His widow, nee Katharina Schwartz (1819-97), came to Manitoba and pioneered in the Strassberg-Pastwa area together with several of her children. Five of her children are shown on this photograph taken before 1899: l. to r. Cornelius (1864-1928), Peter (1858-99), Aron (1848-1923) Abraham (1839- ?) and Aganetha (Mrs. Peter Harder) (1851- ?) seated in front. Photo courtesy of Dr. Rhinehart Friesen, Working Papers, 114.

(Minister) in the Bergthal Gemeinde in 1849. His widow and children moved to Canada. Katherina Schwartz Friesen is found at Strassburg, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census, with her sons Peter and Kornelius. Abraham Friesen's children include:

5.1.5.1. Abraham (b. 1839) married Maria Hiebert, BGB B265. Strassburg, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;

5.1.5.2. Johann (1841-78) married Anna Klassen, BGB C11. This family came to Canada as well. Anna married Jacob Krahn (b.1841) after her husband's death. Strassburg, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census. Johann Friesen's children, Katherina, Johann and Abraham are found under Jacob Krahn's name in 1881.

5.1.5.3. Katherina (1844-61);

5.1.5.4. Agatha (1846-49);

5.1.5.5. Aron (1848-1923) married Anna Löppky, BGB B325. Strassburg, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census: see article by John K. Friesen, "Aron Schwartz Friesen and Anna Loeppky Friesen," elsewhere in this newsletter;

5.1.5.6. Peter (1850-51);

5.1.5.7. Agatha (1851-1932) married Peter Harder;

5.1.5.8. Jacob (1854-76);

5.1.5.9. Peter (1858-99) married Helena Klassen. Son Peter K. Friesen (1887-1946) was a cattle buyer and owned a store in Steinbach and his daughter Helen married Eugene Derksen, Printer. Son Jakob K. Friesen was the father of Cornelius L. and Peter L. Friesen, deceased, grain farmers in the Strassberg/Tourond areas;

5.1.5.10. Kornelius (1861-61);

5.1.5.11. Kornelius (1864-1928) married Maria Penner.

6. Isebrandt Friesen (1740-1803) of Heubuden 1776.

Isebrandt Friesen (1740-1803) was a son of Isebrandt Friesen of Plattenhoff, Prussia, listed in the census of 1776 as having one son. He would appear to have been born before 1720, and was probably married at least twice. The son listed in 1776 was Nicholas (b. 1774) who immigrated to Russia in 1803 and stayed with his (half) brother Isebrandt (1740-1803) at Schönhorst (Old Colony): see "Lineage of my grandparents Klaas Friesens," by Helena Janke, in *Profile 1874*, pages 209-12, translated by D. Plett. Nickolas or Klaas was the father of Cornelius F. Friesen (1810-92), veteran Molotschna school teacher who settled in Blumenort, Manitoba, in 1874, with a large descendency.

Isebrandt Friesen (1740-1803) was living at Heubuden in 1776 where he is listed with two sons, Isebrandt and Wilhelm. We do not know the name of his first wife, but his second wife was Agatha Dyck (b. 1745), widow of Wilhelm Bollee. Isebrandt immigrated to Russia circa 1788-89 and established a Wirtschaft at Schönhorst, Wirtschaft 9: BHU, 241. Isebrandt Friesen's children include:

6.1. Isebrandt (b. 1767) married Katherina (b. 1766, maiden name currently unknown). Wirtschaft 15: BHU, 242. His wife could have been a daughter of Abraham Theichrob of Schönhorst. At any rate, he received Abraham Theichrob's homestead after the latter's death, prior to 1795.

6.2. Wilhelm (b. 1772) married Maria Albrecht. Schönhorst, Wirtschaft 30: BHU, 242. It seems he took over the homestead of Wilhelm Bollee and was sharing the homestead of his step-sisters Maria and Agatha Bollee.

6.1. Isebrandt Friesen (b. 1767).

Isebrandt Friesen's children include:

6.1.1. Isebrandt (b. 1790);

6.1.2. Katherina (b. 1791) married Isaac Braun;

6.1.3. Jacob (1794-1867) married Margaretha Epp;

6.1.4. Heinrich (1802-75) married (1) Katherina Driedger, (2) Katherina Klippenstein. This last entry is somewhat speculative as there was more than one Isebrandt Friesen at Schönhorst at the time. It is however the most probable connection.

6.1.4. Heinrich Friesen (1802-75).

Heinrich Friesen moved to Bergthal, BGB A75. His widow and children came to Canada in the 1870s.

Heinrich Friesen's children include:

6.1.4.1. Heinrich (b. 1828) married Agatha Thiessen. BGB B100. Schönthal, Manitoba 1881 census;

6.1.4.2. Isebrandt (b.1830) married Helena Harder. BGB B118. Sommerfeld, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;

6.1.4.3. Katherina (b.1832) married Abraham Doerksen (1827-1916), Schönthal, Manitoba. They were the parents of three prominent clergymen: Abraham Doerksen, founding Aeltester of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde, Heinrich Doerksen, minister of the Chortitzer Church for 46 years; and David Doerksen, Aeltester of the Saskatchewan Bergthal Church;

6.1.4.4. Maria (b. 1834) married Peter Sawatsky;

6.1.4.5. Justina (b. 1836) married Johann Sawatsky;

6.1.4.6. Kornelius (b. 1838) married (1) Aganetha Friesen, (2) Eliesabeth Funk. BGB B 232a, Schönthal, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census. Living with the Kornelius Friesen family at Schönthal in 1881 was his step-mother Katherina;

6.1.4.7. Helena (b. 1842) married Jacob Kähler;

6.1.4.8. Jacob (1842-44);

6.1.4.9. Jacob (1844) married Susanna Schröder. BGB B282. Sommerfeld, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;

6.1.4.10. David (b. 1846) married (1) Barbara Klassen, (2) Anna Janzen. BGB B341. Sommerfeld, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;

6.1.4.11. Anna (b.1849) married (1)

Kornelius Epp, (2) Dirk Harder.

7. Isebrandt Friesen of Petershagen.

Isebrandt Friesen was listed in the 1776 as a resident of Petershagen, Prussia, a gardener (vegetable farmer) and was of poor economic circumstances. We know very little of this Isebrandt, and no children are listed in the 1776 entry. He did however have a son Johann (1768-1835) who was probably included in the count of one of their relatives (he may have been taken in by relatives). Isebrandt Friesen died before 1788.

7.1. Johann Friesen (1768-1835). Johann Friesen married Helena Schwartz in 1796, and in 1804 moved to the Molotschna where he is listed in 1808 as the owner of Wirtschaft 3 in Muntau: BHU, 306. Apparently, they only had one son Johann (1797-1872). In the 1835 census this family is listed as family No 23.

7.1.1. Johann Friesen (1797-1872).

This Johann Friesen married (1) Anna Neufeld (2) Renatha Bartsch, (3) the widow

Aganetha Löwen. At the time of his death, Johann Friesen was living in Blumstein, Molotschna. Some of Johann Friesen's children later joined the Templar movement and



1908. Martha von Riesen (1891-1958) returned to Russia from Palestine after the death of her father in 1909. She married Abraham Toews and immigrated to Winnipeg, Canada, in 1925. Photo courtesy of Helen E. Regier, *The Friesens 1768-1983*, page 227.

later moved to Palestine. Johann Friesen's children include:

7.1.1.1. Johann (1821-25);

7.1.1.2. Abraham (1823-1903);

7.1.1.3. Peter (1824-62);

7.1.1.4. Johann (1826-88) married Agatha Harder;

7.1.1.5. Helena (1828-49);

7.1.1.6. Heinrich (1829-29);

7.1.1.7. Heinrich (1830-1903);

7.1.1.8. Jacob (1836-1909) married (1) Katherina Theichrob, (2) Susanna Berg.

7.1.1.9. Isebrandt (1839-46);

7.1.1.10. David (b.1843);

7.1.1.11. Kornelius (1846-47);

7.1.1.12. Aganetha (1849-49);

7.1.1.13. Aganetha (b. 1850).

7.1.1.2. Abraham Friesen (1823-1903).

Abraham Friesen married Maria Heinrichs in 1850 and moved to the Bergthal Colony. BGB A166. In 1872 they moved to Canada with the Bergthalers where they settled in the village of Hochfeld, 2 miles west of Blumenort. By the time of the 1881 census they had moved to the West Reserve. [They are listed in the 1881 census as resident at Scratching River, Manitoba, but there must be some mistake as they were definitely not part of the settlement there which was Kleine Gemeinde.]

Abraham Friesen's children include:

7.1.1.2.1. Johann (1851-1921) married Katherina Hiebert. BGB B372, Reichenbach, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;

7.1.1.2.2. Abraham (b. 1853) married Anna



*Jakob von Riesen (1836-1909) born in Muntau, Molotschna, joined the Friends of Jerusalem or Templars, a Separatist-Pietist movement who took literally the eastward chiliastic teachings in vogue among the Russian Mennonites in the late 19th century, but adding a Zionist component to the same. In 1902 Jakob von Riesen joined a group of Templars who moved to Palestine where they established model irrigation farms in Wilhelmina, now part of Tel Aviv, Israel, and where Jakob died in 1909. The connection to the Templars is exceedingly interesting because the orthodox Mennonites who emigrated to Canada in 1874 were conservative intellectuals, sober and rational, people not given to flights of fancy and categorically opposed to any kind of millennialist teaching as unscriptural. In this regard, of course, history has proven them 100 per cent correct. Photo courtesy of Helen E. Regier, *The Friesens 1768-1983* (North Newton, Kansas, 1983), page 219.*



Abraham Friesen (1828-1903). Among his many prominent descendants are Larry Kehler, formerly Executive Secretary of the Canadian General Conference Mennonite Church, and Dr. Rodney Sawatzky, past President, Waterloo University. Photo courtesy of Helen E. Regier, The Friesens 1768-1983, page 13.

Penner. Incorrectly listed as Aron in the 1881 census;
 7.1.1.2.3. Maria (b.1856) married Jacob Reimer;
 7.1.1.2.4. Katherina (b.1857) married Jacob Hiebert;
 7.1.1.2.5. Helena (b. 1859) married Johann Buhr;
 7.1.1.2.6. Anna (1862-89) married Kornelius Rempel;
 7.1.1.2.7. Margaretha (b. 1864);
 7.1.1.2.8. Peter (b. 1866);
 7.1.1.2.9. Aganetha (b. 1867) married Johann Buhr;
 7.1.1.2.10. Agatha (1872-96) married Kornelius Rempel;
 7.1.1.2.11. Susanna (b. 1875) married Jacob Buhr.

8. Other Bergthaler Friesens.

In addition to the Friesens mentioned above, there were two Friesen families of which little is known of the earlier history beyond that found in the Bergthaler Gemeinde Bücher.

8a. An Unknown Friesen.

He married Maria Dirksen (b. 1797) of Neuendorf, Russia. She later married Heinrich Thiessen (1802-51) and they moved to Bergthal. BGB A79. The Friesen children include:

8a.1. Maria (b. 1822) married (1) Johann Günther, (2) Franz Harder;
 8a.2. Susanna (b.1823) married Kornelius Kröcker.

8b. Peter Friesen (b. 1822).

Peter Friesen apparently came from Chortitz and married Sara Schwartz. BGB A185. He was probably related in some way to some of the other Friesens who came to Canada in the 1870s. They moved to Canada in the 1870s and settled at Pastwa, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census.

Peter Friesen's children include:

8b.1. Jacob (b. 1845) married Margaretha Penner. BGB B312, Silberfeld, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;
 8b.2. Sara (b. 1849) married Johann Wall;
 8b.3. Katherina (b. 1851) married (1) Isaac Peters, (2) Peter Martens;
 8b.4. Aganetha (b. 1853);
 8b.5. Anna (1855-56);
 8b.6. Peter (1857-57);
 8b.7. Anna (b. 1859) married Peter Kröcker;
 8b.8. Johann (b. 1865) married Maria Martens.

9. Conclusion.

This paper has focused only on the families headed by a Friesen, as listed in the Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch index. There were of course other Friesens connected to the Bergthaler families, through marriages or otherwise. There were many Friesens, as well, who came to Canada in the 1870s of the Fürstenwerder Colony, Kleine Gemeinde, or other origins. These families have not been considered in this paper.

We can observe, in the data presented, a relatively strong growth in the number of family members during the 19th century. So that many of the Bergthaler Friesens had cousins (or second cousins) in the U.S. or Russia. This seems typical for many of the Canadian Mennonites who came to Canada in the

1870s.

Another observation from the data is that the Bergthaler families seem to reduce to about 9 family heads at about the time of the 1776 census. Since 9 family heads represents a relatively insignificant number of families, it is difficult to draw generalities in respect of economic or occupational status. There is both 1 poor and 1 middle class family in this 1776 cross-section, the rest appears to have been of average economic status.

One observation which does fit in with a great deal of other data I have observed, is that considerations of land ownership seem to have affected the motivation for immigration after 1815, among other reasons. I make this observation from the fact that many delta families appear to have settled in the Marienwerder in the years 1780-1820, due presumably to the availability of land. Many of these families later went to Russia after 1815. So that economic land availability factors, while not perhaps the principal reasons for immigration, probably did play a role in motivating families to immigrate. This contrasts with the earlier immigrations where the motivational factors, while complex, and more encompassing, appear to centre more strongly on the preservation of religious beliefs, related culture and way of life, and an opposition to the Prussianization of their homelands.

Nathalie Schapansky receives Ph.D.

Since Henry Schapansky, foremost expert on the genealogy of the Prussian Mennonites, is such an active contributor to these pages, it will be of interest to our readers that his wife Nathalie has successfully defended her Doctoral thesis, "Negation, Referentiality, and Boundedness in Breton: A case study in markedness and asymmetry" on November 22, 1996, at Simon Fraser University.

Although the awards ceremonies are held in June of each year, November 22 is the date she is entitled to use the title "Doctor". Over the years Nathalie has presented numerous papers on linguistics (Linguistic Society of America, Canadian Linguistic Association, etc.) in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Diego, Charlottetown, Montreal, Calgary, Mexico City, and Rennes, France.

It is evident that Nathalie is extremely brilliant and accomplished in her field. We at the HSHS wish her well in her chosen profession. Congratulations, Nathalie upon this most significant achievement. Good Luck!



Nathalie Schapansky 1997.

Borosenko Massacres, 1919

The Murder of Katharina Teichroeb Bergen (1872-1919), Ebenfeld, Borosenko, December 4, 1919: as compiled by granddaughter Margaret Bergen, 405-246 Roslyn Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L 0H2.

This is the story of one family who experienced this horror. The material for this story came from two audio tapes, one by my father, Jakob Bergen, who escaped from the Machnovcszy, and the other by Mrs. Tina (Peters) Froese, who witnessed the murder of my grandmother (Note One).

My grandfather, Jakob Bergen (1872-1941) of Schönhorst, Old Colony, Ukraine, married Katharina Teichroeb (1872-1919), from Ebenfeld, Borosenko Colony. They first lived in Steinbach, Borosenko. Here Johann (1895-1919) and Jakob (1897-1991) were born. The Bergen family then moved to Ebenfeld, onto the farm of great-grandfather, Johann Teichroeb, as he was ready to retire. Here the other children were born [Susanna (1898-1987); Heinrich (1900-38); Abram (1905-38); Peter (1907-38); Solomon (1913-22)].

The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917, brought with it chaos and disorder. One aim of the revolutionaries was to get rid of the rich people, and have a working man's paradise. Thus the bandit, Machnov, and his followers (Machnovcszy) had the freedom to plunder and murder the well-to-do Mennonites. They were well armed. The people of Ebenfeld also had guns, and did try to protect themselves. These guns had been left behind when the White Army retreated. My father's family, the Jakob Bergens, lived in Ebenfeld. Word reached them that the Machnovcszy were going to shoot Jakob Bergen, Sr. (I suppose this was because he owned a lot of property in Ebenfeld and also a chuter (estate) in Uralsk).

One day several drunk Machnovcszy came to Ebenfeld and entered the Bergen home. Susanna pushed them out and closed and locked the door. Then the bandits started to shoot. Jakob Bergen, Sr. and Jakob Jr. shot back. This continued for three days and nights. Henry also eventually joined them. (I didn't hear of any one actually being killed or even injured.) Johann was not in the house and did not do any shooting.

The Bergens knew that they could no longer stay in Ebenfeld. Johann drove his mother and Solomon to Felsenbach. The others stayed another day, but they knew that they could not keep this up. So the next evening they drove the cowardly bandits out of the village. The Bergens then quickly drove to Felsenbach. Soon after, the terrible news reached Felsenbach that all the families in Ebenfeld and Steinbach had been slaughtered.

John and his fiancée had left Ebenfeld, because they expected a massacre. But it was so cold outside, so they returned, and hid in the home of some Russian friends. They thought that they would be safe there. But the Machnovcszy came there, and took them both and murdered them in a neighbour's house. (Johann had a very good relationship with the Russian workers and he had not been on the hit list.) The Russians in the neighbouring villages heard of the slaughter, so they soon came and plundered the houses. They shook the feathers out of the casings, and took the casings. They even took the clothes off some of the corpses.

The Bergen family was the only family that had fled from Ebenfeld before the massacre (Note Two). Now the Machnovcszy bandits searched for this family, as Jakob Bergen had defended himself earlier in Ebenfeld. At this time Mrs. Bergen, Jakob, Jr. and probably some of the younger siblings were in Felsenbach. Mr. Bergen and Susanna had gone to Nikolaithal. On a previous occasion Mrs. Bergen had gone with her husband, but not this time.

Mrs. Bergen and Jakob, Jr. were in the Peters home in Felsenbach. Tina (Peters) Froese tells the story: "Some Machnovcszy came to our place. The first thing they asked for was food, so we gave them Borscht in the Vorhaus (front room). Mrs. Bergen and my mother sat in the Eckstube (corner room). Jakob, Jr., slept on the schlopbank (sleeping bench). My brother Heinrich, Gretchen and I were in another room.



Jakob Bergen (1872-1941) and Katharina Teichroeb Bergen (1872-1919) with the older two children Johann (1895-1919) and Jakob (1897-1991), both of whom were born in Steinbach, Borosenko. Jakob Jr. was the father of Margaret Bergen. Katharina Teichroeb Bergen was horribly murdered on December 4, 1919. Photo courtesy of Margaret Bergen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

In the evening another band of Machnovcszy came. One of them came immediately to me, pulled out his sabre and spoke to me in Russian. I did not answer. I just looked at him. I thought he would hack me up. Then another Machnovcszy came and said that they were looking for Susanna. (They would have been able to get her when they had come a previous time. Then she was lying in bed, ill, probably typhoid fever. A Machnovcszy sat beside her and protected her.) The Machno-vcszy who was standing in front of me did not hack me. He went on to Gretchen, and she went with him.

He said something to her in Russian. Then they went into the Eskstube (corner room) where Mrs. Bergen and Jakob were. They came for Jakob, but when he gave his mother a good-bye kiss, which identified her, they grabbed them both, and led them out to the barn. As they were being led past an open door, Mrs. Bergen told Jakob (in Low German) to flee. The Machnovcszy would not have understood this. Jakob managed to escape through the open door into the dark night. No one expected that the Machnovcszy would harm Mrs. Bergen.

Then those Machnovcszy who had been eating in the Vorhaus (front room), came out and told us that if they had known that the Bergens were hiding in this house, they would have warned us, that this other band of Machnovcszy was looking for them. But how could we have trusted them with this information. These Machnovcszy knew that the other Machnovcszy were searching for the Bergens in Felsenbach.

My brother, Heinrich, and I left and went to a Russian home—they had been our servants and were our friends. Soon Gretchen, and her husband and child, Lena, came here, too. They told us that Mrs. Bergen had come back. Her hands were chopped off or her arms chopped up.

They did this, hoping she would tell them where her husband was, but she didn't tell them. She had wrapped her arms in an apron. She said that the Machnovcszy would return. Gretchen told her to hide behind the pig sty. She would look for some linen to bind her hands. I followed Gretchen back, but when we got there, Mrs. Bergen was gone. She had already run to the Wielers. Mrs. Wieler had put her in the Kleine Stov (small room). Mrs. Bergen was holding her arms in a basin of water. All night long, two Machnovcszy stood in the kitchen at a window, keeping an eye on her. She lay there until morning with her arms in the water. Wielers couldn't do anything.

In the morning several Machnovcszy came to our house and asked, "Where is the woman we took yesterday?" We said that we didn't know where she was. Then they immediately went to the Wielers, and found her there. They dragged her behind a straw pile and shot her. There she lay. As the Machnovcszy were still here, we couldn't remove the body.

Frank Froese, my fiancée, went by there and saw some dogs gnawing on her feet. He investigated, and found a woman lying there. He covered her with straw. When the Machnovcszy left, we got the body. It was all bloody. The Machnovcszy had hacked her across her head, breasts, and arms. We wrapped the body in a cover-all apron, as all our linen had been stolen by the Machnovcszy. We buried her in the cemetery in a common grave with two other murder victims, Froese and Liese Funk. Only Froese had a coffin. There just weren't enough coffins. We said a prayer and filled in the grave."

A band of Machnovcszy had wanted to murder all of Felsenbach too, but one of the Machnovcszy



Johann Bergen born in Steinbach, Borosenko, in 1895, was murdered in Ebenfeld, Borosenko, December 4, 1919. Photo courtesy of Margaret Bergen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

had been able to prevent this. I mentioned earlier that Jakob had managed to break free from the bandits and dash out an open door into the night. The Mahnovcszy shot at him but didn't hit him. He ran in stocking feet in the snow for about ten miles to a Russian village.

He relates, "I didn't know where I was. I slept among the cattle. In the morning I was so stiff from the cold, that I couldn't stand up. I crawled away from this spot.

A Russian who saw me, knew what had happened. He took me into his house and let me warm up on his brick oven. I slept there all day. He was one of the good Russians. He asked me who my father was. When I told him he said that my father had been good to him, so he would save me. He said that I could not stay here, as there were murderers in this village also, and if they found me here, they would kill us both. So that night he put me in a wagon, covered me with straw, and drove me to the White Army. (At the time the Red and White Armies were fighting for supremacy.) Had we been caught by the Machnovcszy, we would both have been killed."

At this time, only Mrs. Bergen and Johann were murdered. The rest of the Bergen family survived. They eventually returned to Schönhorst, Old Colony, the home village of the Bergens. Here Jakob, Sr. remarried, the widow of Martin Bergen. He died in 1941, and was buried in Schönhorst, in the same grave as his own father.

Solomon became quite ill, fleeing in the cold wet weather, from the Machnovcszy. He never recovered, and died of pneumonia in 1922 in Schönhorst. Jakob, Jr. married Maria Peters of Neuendorf and emigrated to Canada in 1923. Abram, Peter and Heinrich were taken during Stalin's purges of 1938, and were never heard of again. In 1943, the rest of the family fled to Germany. Susanna, and the widows of Peter and Abram

and their families, emigrated to Canada after World War II. Heinrich's widow and five of her children were transported to Siberia from Germany in 1945. (These five children emigrated to Germany in the 1980s and 90s. One of her sons made it to Canada after World War II, and another son managed to escape the Russians and stayed in Germany.

Editor's Note:

The story of the murder of Katherina Teichroeb Bergen in Felsenbach, Borosenko, Russia, continues the story of the massacre of the inhabitants of Steinbach, Ukraine, which was published in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part Two, pages 5-7. The story is of interest to the citizens of the Hanover Steinbach area as Katharina lived originally in Steinbach, Borosenko. With the exception of three villages, the entire Borosenko region was originally settled in 1865 (in North America we might have said Homesteaded) by the Kleine Gemeinde, who later founded the communities of Steinbach, Blumenort, Blumenhof, Gruenfeld (Kleefeld), and Friedensfeld, Manitoba, in 1874. When they departed from Russia most of their properties were sold to Old Colony Mennonites who took over their farms and Wirtschaften.

The victims of these massacres were buried in the village graveyards alongside the graves of the

Kleine Gemeinde such as my great-grandmother Elisabeth S. Friesen, who died in childbirth in Steinbach, Borosenko in 1873. Elisabeth was 23 years old at the time and now lies buried in an unmarked grave in the village cemetery which she shares with the victims of the 1919 massacre.

The author Margaret Bergen is the granddaughter of Katharina Teichroeb Bergen who was murdered by Machnov bandits in 1919. Margaret has compiled this article from two German tapes describing this event recorded by her father, Jakob Bergen, and another by Mrs. Tina (Peters) Froese, a witness to the gruesome murder.

Margaret Bergen is the sister to Marie Bergen, whose husband John Schroeder, former owner of Assiniboine Travel, Winnipeg, passed away on September 21 1996. Martin Bergen, Winnipeg real estate tycoon, is a second cousin to the Bergen sisters, being the grandson of Martin Bergen of Schönhorst, Chortitza "Old" Colony.

Endnotes:

Note One: My father has told us this story many times. My sister, Anna, and I remembered some things that were not on the tapes, and I included those in this account.

Note Two: Actually several other individuals had also left Ebenfeld prior to the massacre.

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Jakob B. Koop (1858-1937): Twincreek Pioneer

Jakob B. Koop (1858-1937): Journal, 95 pages, courtesy of granddaughter Helena Koop, Blumenort, Manitoba.

Introduction.

The first item in the Jakob B. Koop Journal, pages 1-17, is an account of the journey of the first group of Mennonite settlers to arrive in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on July 31, 1874, which included the extended Koop family. This account, with only minor alterations, has already been published in *Storm and Triumph* (Steinbach, 1986), pages 330-332.

The authorship of this excellent account, probably the most extensive of these 1874-78 immigration travelogues, can now finally be definitely established as being Jakob B. Koop. On page 12 he has added the following notation in brackets: "I also note that my father was sick when we departed from Russia. Now, however, that he had also completed the sea journey, he was quite well. I was 16 years old at the time and had much work to look after my parents and siblings. For father could not look after anyone like other fathers and instead he had to be looked after because of sickness."

Those who are interested in this detailed immigration account can read the previously published account which varies only in minor details. The earlier published version of this account was taken from the Journal of Katharina Loewen, Mrs. David K. Kroeker (1874-1910), niece to Jakob B. Koop. Evidently she transcribed the account into her own journal in 1888.

Journal, 1874-1922.

Saturday, August 1, my parents, siblings, as well as the majority of our travelling group, returned on the same ship until they were adjacent to our land (or approximately adjacent to Niverville). But I as well as many others remained in Winnipeg in order to purchase oxen and cows and whatever else we required of the necessities of life. Here the people disembarked and all the travelling by water and by railway was finally over. The journey to America, thanks be to God, had been put behind us.

Now they had some 6 miles to traverse across land until they reached the Schantz immigration houses for which purpose W. Hespeler had hired Half-breeds to transport the trunks and also those who wanted to sit on their carts. They required 3 days time before everything had been hauled away from the river.

I and others remained in Winnipeg and returned by land with oxen, wagons and cows to the immigrations houses. Here we remained for approximately 1 week as we took counsel where we would want to settle, whether to go to the Scratching River (Rosenort) or on the East Reserve, for a number were moving to the Scratching River. But we came to a decision and moved onto the East Reserve and settled on Section 22-7-6E and built a village which was named "Blumenort".

Here we firstly pitched our tent and then we drove to Winnipeg and purchased lumber



The Jakob B. Koop family in 1897. The children are Jakob, Peter, Abram, Cornelius and John. Photo courtesy of Peter S. Koop, Steinbach, Manitoba. Mrs. Koop, nee Helena Nickel, was working as a maid for Jakob's parents when he married her.

and built ourselves a dwelling house where we lived for approximately 8 years. During this time I also took out a Homestead for myself being the NE34-7-6E. My father had taken up two quarters for himself on Section 17-7-6E which also belonged to the village of Blumenort. But then they found out that it was too large a village for this region as 34 quarter sections of land belonged to the village.

Because the village was too large permission was granted to start a new settlement. We reached an agreement to build a new settlement—there were 6 farmers including my parents, myself, Peter Loewens, Peter Klassens, and Peter Friesens. We went on Section 16 as well as half of 17-7-6E. Here we built a village and called it "Neuanlage".

Here I immediately took possession of my own land. I had made a trade deal with my cousin Jakob B. Toews: I took his land in Neuanlage and he took my land in Blumenort. I received the southeast quarter here on Section 16, which was also written over to my name.

I purchased myself a team of oxen for \$120 for breaking up the ground, and from my father, I received a pair of oxen calves. After 1 year I sold both of these pairs of oxen, the older ones for \$180 and the young ones for \$115. With these monies I bought myself a team of horses

for \$225 with which I worked my land for some time.

And then on December 25, 1883, we entered into the state of matrimony. My wife was born Helena Nickel from Waldheim, West Reserve.

After we had lived together in the village of Neuanlage for some 10 years, and after we had built a dwelling house and a barn, we came to the agreement that we might be better off if everyone would be on their own land. And consequently, everyone moved their buildings which they had onto their own land.

We also moved our dwelling house and barn in 1893 on the 30th of June onto our own land on SE16-7-6E. Here we have lived together for 28 years and have shared many joys and overcome many sorrows. Until May 13, 1921, when my wife suddenly became ill and died 2 days later.

Now I am again alone with 10 children and sometimes I am lonely. It is 8 months that I have been by myself as I am writing this.

The End "Jakob Koop"

Contents of Journal.

The Jakob B. Koop Journal also contains the following items: A poem regarding the immigration; another poem regarding the immigration; A song of thanks from Russia for aid

received from America; A poem about the patriarch Noah; A poem about contentedness; A petition for Franz Thiessen 1828; A poem by Maria Loewen, 1924; A poem for the 50 anniversary of the 1874 immigration; Refugees lament, composed in Siberia 1919; Forsake me not in my aged years; A poem about the immigration to Paraguay; A poem by the deceased Jakob Kehler; A poem of farewell from Paraguay; Another poem by Jak. Kehler; Poem of farewell for Paraguay; A poem of the tragedy of Jakob Barkman and Jakob Friesen who drowned 1875; A poem about Heinrich Wiebe who died in a blizzard in 1876; Another poem about the illness of Jakob Kehler; Another poem about Jakob Kehler, Ebenfeld.

Editor's Comments.

The Jakob B. Koop Journal is a good example of this genre of historical and biographical writing among the 1874-6 Mennonite Manitoba pioneers.

Jakob B. Koop (1858-1937): Twincreek Pioneer; recollections by grandson Gerhard S. Koop, Box 427, Belize City, Belize, Central America.

My grandfather Jacob B. Koop was slow in changing his way of farming. He never owned an automobile or a tractor. He used horses for transportation and for his field work. During harvest time, it was his job to operate the binder. Should the binder leave a sheaf open once in a while, he would stop the horses, they needed a



Mr. Jakob B. Koop standing on his porch in 1935. Photo courtesy of Peter S. Koop, Steinbach, Manitoba.



The Jakob B. Koop children 1930: Rear l. to r: Johann, Jakob, Cornelius, Peter, Abram, David and Isaac. Front, Helena, Margaretha and Katharina. Photo courtesy of Peter S. Koop, Steinbach, Manitoba.

little rest anyway, get off the binder and bind the open sheaf the old style way. He would take some stalks of grain and roll them into a thin rope and tie up his sheaf with it. I think he enjoyed doing things the old way, once in a while.

He had brought his old skates along from Russia and we boys sometimes borrowed them and tried our luck with them. The skates consisted of only the bottom steel part and had to be tied to our shoes with strings. I seldom could tie the strings fast enough, and after 5 minutes on the ice, I had to do it all over again.

Grandfather liked to tease me for my small size. He would say, "You are 2 pounds lighter than a Hup-pup" ('u' as in huh). Upon my question, "How much does a Hup-pup weigh", he would say, "nothing".

Grandfather taught me how to tie a bag of grain. He showed his concern about his grandchildren by asking me how my cousin C— could take it, when his girl friend had broken their relationship. As I had not been in intimate terms with my cousin, I could not give him the desired answer.

Grandfather enjoyed the companionship of two cats, one a yellow cat named "Klaas", and the other, a black and white cat named "Fritz". He would ask Klaas a question and Klaas would answer with a "Meow", and the two would walk into the living room for a quiet afternoon.

Grandfather could not enjoy singing. He would sometimes get sick when the neighbours would come over for an evening of singing and he would start to groan loudly and leave the room for his own bedroom. For that reason he didn't go to church very often. They said at that time that he would sometimes wait with going in until the singing was over and leave again after the sermon, before the closing song. At that time I would have thought getting sick from singing was imagination, but I have had an experience like that two times already. As soon as the congregation started to sing, my head

got dizzy and soon after my stomach started churning. I too, got up and left the room, before anything worse would happen.

by grandson Gerhard S. Koop

Jakob B. Koop (1858-1937): Twincreek Pioneer; recollections by grandson Peter S. Koop, Box 781, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Christmas, 1919.

My first recollection of my grandfather Jakob B. Koop was at Christmas in 1919 when I was five years old. My parents were celebrating Christmas with the other siblings at our grandparent's home and as was common in those days when a full dinner was done with and the dirty dishes washed, the members all gathered in the "Groti Sctoave" to hear the childrens' Christmas wishes. This appeared to me to be a formidable task.

However this year my parents had visited our neighbours, the John Schallas, just a few days earlier. Mr. Schalla had taught me a verse that was easy for me to remember and I still know it word for word as follows:

Wir kinder haben einen sinn,
 Das wir stets wuenshen hinn.
 Und glauben auch das ist gans fein'
 Wenn am Weinachten gewuenschet muss sein.

My mother was astonished to hear me say something else than what she taught me. But grandfather drew a hearty laugh and got up to get me a tutje.

Living near Grandparents.

Our parents moved from the farm to live close to the home of grandfather Koop who then assisted my parents with whatever needs arose, like borrowing dad a team of horses to go for



Mr. and Mrs. Johann Nickel of Waldheim, West Reserve, 1880 census, BGB 399-430, parents of Mrs. Jakob B. Koop, nee Helena Nickel. Photo courtesy of Peter S. Koop, Steinbach, Manitoba.

firewood to last us a year. We also got a pail of milk daily if our cow was dry and sometimes in fall he would also give us a hog to supply us with meat.

Some Sundays we would be offered a ride to church on his democrat and team of spry hackneys. A democrat was a heavy-duty buggy that was used for light freight when shopping in town. Three seats could be snapped into place when used to go to church, seating nine people—depending on size, sometimes only

two! Whenever we rode to church with grandfather we had to rush out of church quickly if we wanted a ride home, grandfather Koop was always the first one to leave the church yard and by the time the second buggy left the yard, he was 1/2 mile down the road.

Jacob, my brother, had only eight percent vision which was enough to keep him from colliding with most objects but not enough for school. After trying the local school for two years it was decided that more help was needed. A lady from the Department of Education, Mr. John D. Goossen and my grandfather, were able to arrange that Jacob could attend the School for the Blind in Brantford, Ontario with all costs covered by the blind institute.

Working for Grandfather.

When I turned twenty-one years, Grandfather asked me to come and stay at his place. If I had work somewhere that was fine, I could stay and help Isaac (my uncle) do the chores on weekends. He would feed me, the aunts would wash my laundry, and if no work was available, I could stay and help uncle Isaac on the farm, a very comfortable arrangement at that time.

Grandfather Koop was a very meticulous farmer. The first thing in spring on a warm and calm day all harnesses were spread out on the south side of the barn where it was warm and comfortable, every inch of harness was inspected, scraped to remove dried sweat and horse hair and oiled with neatfoot oil (a leather preservative). If he found buckles missing they were replaced. The lines for horse control received special attention. If a line was nearly broken, he would cut the line, shave the flat side to a nice taper, then sitting on a harness repair horse with clamping device in front of him, he would stitch the splice with strong

thread that he first pulled through a lump of pitch (solid tar) to protect the thread from fraying when sewing and also seal the thread from getting wet. These joints were so smooth they would not get stuck in the harness rings. These days were days of fun; we joked, reminisced and the togetherness was very bonding.

Another strong trait of Koops was fencing, every spring Isaac and I had to inspect about three miles of fencing, post by post. If a post was broken it had to be replaced. All wires had to be stapled and have the right tension, done with a wire stretcher. In no way would grandfather ever have any of his cattle get through his fence and feed on his neighbour's field of grain. At times when one of his animals got out of the fence, I was sent out to get the animal back where it belonged. With handful of staples and a hammer I was to find the hole where the animal got through.

Greasing day was also observed every spring, when all wheels on wagons and buggies were taken off and the axle and hub received a generous coating of grease, some farm machinery also received attention at this time.

Grandfather Koop was seventy years old when I had closer fellowship with him, and noticed there were two jobs on the farm that he alone was responsible for. One was feeding the hogs, that was his allotment. Another job of his was at seeding time. Uncle Isaac did the field work prior to seeding. But when it came to the actual seeding, it was grandfather operating the drill and horses. He made sure the rows of grain would come up straight and that no patch was left unseeded.

Land Purchases.

Grandfather Koop was very helpful in acquiring some land for his sons to start farming. My father Johann N. Koop received the



The Jakob B. Koop farmyard on SE16-7-6E view to the west. Photo courtesy of Peter S. Koop, Steinbach, Manitoba.

SW 23-6-5E, east of Kleefeld, then known as the Schoenfeld village district. After several years of farming with very little success, and us boys, ages 6 and 4, setting his barn on fire, so that it burned to the ground with all the winter feed, grandfather decided to pull us off the farm and have us settle closer to his farmyard.

A son Heinrich S. Koop born May 18, 1918, died here on December 3, 1918, and was buried in the Schoenfeld cemetery on Section 14-6-5E: see *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part One, page 17. This farm was later sold to John P. Friesen of Chortitz on October 6, 1923 for the sum of \$2,100.00.

On the 22nd of April 1919 Jakob B. Koop bought 240 acres of land from Herbert Henry Hayward of Pasadina, California, for \$4,560.00. The land was described as the SE19-8-6E and the South half of NE19-8-6E. This land was located in the Landmark district and I believe this was the land that C. N. Koop was farming.

Another parcel of land was acquired from Thomas Mooney on 21st day June, 1909, being the South half of SE18-8-6 for the sum of \$1,000.00 dollars, payable in four equal parts over four years. I believe Uncle Abram farmed on this land. Uncle David N. Koop farmed on the SW18-8-6, for this confirmation I have no record.

There is a record that Jacob B. Koop received Letters Patent for NE 34-7-6E. I don't think grandfather ever lived on this homestead and must have sold it. In his Journal, grandfather had written that he had taken out a homestead on NE34-7-6E and that he had traded with his cousin Jakob B. Toews who had taken out a Homestead on the SE16-7-6E. In this way, Jakob was near to his father who had two quarters on Section 17-7-6E.

Farming Practices.

Jakob B. Koop was cautious when it came to Government sponsorship or assistance programs. In the mid-30s some kind of dairy herd improvement plan came up; one pure-bred Holstein bull would be donated without charge to a group of three part-time dairy farmers. Each farmer had to build a pen and shelter according to specifications. Isaac F. Loewen, a neighbour, needed one more applicant to make up a group of three, and my grandfather did finally sign up. When the bull was rotated among the three farmers, I noticed grandpa did not take full advantage of this opportunity to improve his herd. In the end of this two-year period, grandpa raised only one heifer and his reluctance was definitely a loss to him. The home-base of another of these sponsored bulls was at Mr. Mooney's farm near Giroux.

An Agriculture Exhibition was held annually on the Kornelson school yard in Steinbach. Farmers were asked to bring anything of interest for this exhibition and prizes were given to the best product. I was asked to bring this huge bull to the show and reluctantly agreed after Mr. Loewen told me, "this bull is



The "Kjist" or dowry trunk of Johann M. Koop, father of Jakob. This is a photograph of a model of this chest made by grandson Peter S. Koop during the winter of 1936. Aunt Margaret had wanted Peter to build her a replica of the chest which he did. The original chest was sold at an auction of the Jakob B. Koop effects, after uncle Isaac N. Koop, was killed by a bull in 1965. Photo courtesy of Peter S. Koop, Steinbach, Manitoba.

very people friendly." I think I found this to be true.

With a light rope fastened to the bull's nose ring, we took off on our five-mile hike (one way). I did a lot of talking to the animal and he seemed to be listening. At the exhibition yard, there were numerous other animals but he never gave me trouble. This bull even won first prize in his category. When the judge came to pin the first prize ribbon to the animal, I held out my chest but Mr. Loewen said, "No Peter, you are not the bull." I thought I needed some recognition for leading it five miles there and five miles back.

With the dairy herds being enlarged, the problem of having enough grass acreage arose so the farmers were encouraged to grow sweet clover. The first kind was a white-blossom clover. The stems of this clover were quite coarse and had to be harvested early in blossom time. Grandpa Koop was encouraged to grow some clover for himself, but his answer was, "I will not infest my farm with Willow bushes," and never did.

Only after Uncle Isaac took over the farm was any sweet clover planted, but by then the yellow-blossom clover was used as a forage. This yellow Blossom clover was a much finer plant.

Jakob B. Koop enjoyed horticultural and had a large orchard: many choke cherry and plum trees of different varieties, apples, raspberries, gooseberries and red and yellow currants. There were also 4 special choke cherry trees that no one had permission to get close to.

[Sidebar story] The Koop Noise Disease:

Jakob's son Johann S. Koop married Peter W. Loewen's maid, Aganetha Siemens, daughter of Gerhard Siemens (1834-1908) at the time from Herbert, Saskatchewan. There was no work to be had in Saskatchewan and so Aganetha got a job in Neuanlage (Twincreek) working for Rev. Peter W. Loewen, formerly married to Jakob's aunt.

When Johann and Aganetha got married they lived with his parents as was the custom. One day Aganetha was singing to her-

self while she was making breakfast in the kitchen. Her father-in-law came in and was very upset.

"You can stop that crow shrieking," he had said, quite irritably.

Aganetha was shocked. Only later did she realize that her father-in-law found noise hard to bear. For this reason there was no singing at the Jakob B. Koop home, even during Christmas or Easter get-togethers.

Grandson Gerhard S. Koop, Spanish Lookout, Belize, also recalled that Jakob B. Koop would purposely get to church late so that he did not have to hear the opening songs in the worship services, which bothered his nerves.

Jakob B. Koop's father, Johann M. Koop (1831-97), also had the noise disease and was unable to stand the shutters banging at night or dishes clinking while they were being washed. Johann M. Koop would get sick if he was not busy from dawn to dusk, with his large farming enterprise.

I personally know of at least one Johann M. Koop descendant who also suffers from this "noise" disease. How about you?

Editor's Comments: A coffin photograph of Jakob B. Koop (1858-1937) was published in *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part Two, page 47. John Denver, the famous folk-singer who died on October 12, 1997, was a distant relative of Jakob B. Koop.



Johann N. Koop (1887-1963) and his young bride, Aganetha Siemens (1886-1950), circa 1911. At the time of their marriage, Aganetha was working as a maid for Johann's uncle, Rev. Peter W. Loewen. Johann and Aganetha Koop were the parents of Peter S. Koop and Gerhard S. Koop, authors of this article. Photo courtesy of Peter S. Koop, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Peter B. Koop (1870-1956)

Peter B. Koop (1870-1956): From fortune to misfortune; as told by great-nephew, Peter S. Koop, Box 781, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Jakob B. Koop (1858-1937) had a younger brother Peter B. Koop (1870-1965). Although Peter was 12 years younger he had done well financially. When he married to Margaretha Schellenberg in 1893 he acquired one of his father's quarter sections, NE17-7-6E, where he established his farmyard. Peter farmed very successfully and also had a firewood sawing outfit and steam engine and threshing outfit.

His wife died in 1900. In 1905 Peter married the family maid, Auguste Hemiger from Friedensfeld. But she already had a boyfriend by the name of Heier. Sometime after the marriage Auguste talked Peter into allowing Heier to operate the firewood sawing outfit. Peter agreed to this. During the wood sawing season Heier collected all the monies he received for custom sawing but never turned a penny over



Peter B. Koop (1870-1956) in mid-life. Photo courtesy of Maria Koop, Box 345, Blumenort, Manitoba.

to Koop. At the end of the season, Heier sold the outfit and kept that money as well.

But this was not the end of the story. Now Auguste talked her husband into allowing Heier to run the steam engine threshing company. When Heier had talked to Koop he had said, "And when we're all done threshing here, I'll take the outfit to Saskatchewan and then we'll thresh right until Christmas yet and bring in lots of money."

Well, Auguste must have had a good hold on Koop who agreed to the arrangement. Of course, Heier again kept all the money and at the end of the threshing season in Saskatchewan he sold the steam engine and threshing outfit and kept all that money as well.

To add spice to the story, Auguste now talked Peter into selling his beautiful farm in Neuanlage (Twincreek) and investing his money in a farm at Lanigan, Saskatchewan, which he did. The Neuanlage farm was sold to Bishop Peter P. Reimer, and the farmyard and buildings are presently owned by Reimer's grandson, Denver Reimer.

By the time the Koop family was settled in Saskatchewan, he was bankrupt. His wife left him and ran off with Mr. Heier. Koop himself



Peter B. Koop, youngest brother of Jakob, displays a prize stallion, circa 1900. Peter was a successful farmer. He originally had the farm where Bishop Peter P. Reimer later lived, NE17-7-6E. Photo courtesy of Maria S. Koop, Box 345, Blumenort, R0A 0C0.

fell victim to cancer. Indeed, Peter's situation was comparable to that of Job.

Peter's children were given foster homes among the relatives in Blumenhof and Neuanlage, where they grew up. The youngest daughters, Pauline and Auguste, often stayed at the home of Abraham L. Pletts.

It was in 1934 that Peter's two brothers, Jakob and Johann, and two brothers-in-law, Abraham L. Plett and David L. Plett left Blumenhof, Manitoba, for Saskatchewan in order to help him. David L. Plett was at the steering wheel of brother Abraham's brand-new Model A Ford, when the car swerved and overturned killing Abraham, but that's another story.



Peter B. Koop and nephew Abram K. Plett breaking sod with their steam engine. They did custom work for other people. The two men moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan, around 1906, and the steam engine was sold by Peter B. Koop before he moved. Photo courtesy of Maria S. Koop, Box 345, Blumenort, R0A 0C0.

The 1918 Influenza Epidemic

The 1918 Influenza Epidemic and the deaths of Maria Koop Plett (1868-1918) and daughter Maria Plett Friesen (1886-1918): from the journal of Maria Koop Plett and the remembrances of granddaughter Maria Friesen Peters.

Introduction, by D. Plett.

In Part Two, Issue 10, June 1997, *Preservings*, pages 38-40, Nettie Neufeld recounted the story of Aganetha "Agnes" Fast (1883-1977), the "Florence Nightingale of Steinbach". This article also told how the Steinbach community rallied to fight the scourge of the Spanish influenza epidemic which killed over 20 million people worldwide.

The other part of this story is the personal account of those many individuals who suffered and died of influenza. Some 30 people died in the Steinbach area alone within a period of little more than a month, including prominent local merchant Jakob W. Reimer, grandfather of Dr. Roy Vogt who died March 31, 1997.

What was it like? It must have been a time of incredible paranoia and fear. Daily there were reports of friends and neighbours who had died. Who would be next? Often only a handful of people in an entire village were strong enough to conduct a funeral and bury the body.

In most instances the tragedy and pathos of these events has long ago dissipated into the darkness of unrecorded history. But in a few special cases the memory has been kept alive in oral tradition and contemporary journals. The story of Maria Koop Plett and her daughter Maria Plett Friesen is one of these. Family pride and admiration for the accomplishments of a generation long since departed would not allow their memory, their voice and their story, to die. The story is important as it speaks for the hundreds of voiceless victims of this horrible epidemic in the Hanover Steinbach area.

The story is based on the journal of one of the victims, Maria Koop Plett, and the incredibly vivid and dramatic memory of granddaughter Maria Friesen Peters. The story opens with extracts from the journal of Maria Koop Plett highlighted by a family gathering on Sunday Sept. 22, 1918, when the entire Jakob L. Plett family were gathered—for the last time as history would reveal.

Maria's entries reveal the dynamics of a busy and active family. And then it all "stopped". It is ironic that Maria got so sick that she could not continue her own diary, but never recorded or mentioned her own illness or suffering in her journal.

By November 13, 1918, Maria was so ill that she was unable to continue making her daily entries. Her husband, Jakob L. Plett now took over keeping the family journal and provided a day-to-day record of the unfolding tragedy.

Journal of Maria Koop Plett.

On September 18, 1918, the threshing was finished. Sept. 22, 1918 the girls had gone to worship service in Steinbach. We had many visitors. Peter and Len came from Morris and also Klaas Friesens. Also Dav. and Cor. Si-



Historic Photograph, 1918. This historic photograph was taken in the summer of 1918 just before the onslaught of the influenza epidemic. The photograph is taken in the Jakob and Maria Plett yard, view to the east of the house, facing east. In the photograph are l. to r.: Young boy Frank P. Friesen (father of Patrick), his mother Mrs. Klaas K. Friesen, nee Maria K. Plett; Gertrude K. Plett, later Mrs. Gerhard W. Siemens; Margaretha K. Plett, later Mrs. Peter W. Siemens, holding her niece Margaret P. Friesen, and Mrs. Jakob L. Plett, nee Maria Barkman Koop. Little did any of the women taking their afternoon in leisure, strolling amongst the beautiful flower borders in the picturesque orchard, imagine that the dark sabre of death would so soon strike amongst them. Photo courtesy of Plett Picture Book, page 134, and Maria Friesen Peters.

emens. So we once again had all our family together and our joy was great.

Sunday, October 6, 1918, Martin K. Friesens were here. Gerd and Trud were digging out their potatoes. Corn went for oats. On the 9th Mrs. David L. Plett and Mrs. Isaac R. Reimer were here. The girls helped Tin. cleaning house. On the 11th they helped Sara clean rooms. The weather is very nice. Sunday, the 13th, in the morning we had baptismal service here. In the afternoon we again had worship service and Rev. John K. Friesen from Morris presented the Word. On the 14th school started and Peter P. Wohlgenuth and Peter Klassen are the teachers.

On the 19th Trud, Anna, Lies, Agnes, Minna and I drove to Klaas Friesens as they were threshing there. There is a funeral in Blumenort. They had buried the Elder Abram Penner. Sunday, October 20, there is a worship service in Steinbach. We were at Peter T. Wiebes together with Cor. K. Siemens. The 22nd, I was at David L. Pletts to visit grandmother [Mrs. John Koop Sr.]. Klaas came in the evening and got Gerd and Lies as they wanted to leave for Winnipeg on the 23rd. Sunday, the 24th, we had a wor-

ship service in the new church. We were at the sister Mrs. Peter Reimer. On the 28th they finished the threshing. We brought in cabbage.

On November 1 Sara and Cor. Siemens were here. On the 3rd there was a worship service in Steinbach and we were at Klaas Siemens. On the 4th the boys finished the plowing at the farm there. On the 5th father drove to Steinbach for Brethren meeting. Gerd and Trud were at Klaas Friesens. They wanted to bring their potatoes into the basement. On the 6th we slaughtered hogs. John B. Reimer was here. On the 8th Peter and Ann P. Wohlgenuth were here. On the 9th we were at Abr. L. Pletts at

This article is the third and final instalment of three articles about the Plett and Friesen families: see *Preservings*, Dec 1996, No. 9, Part Two, pages 62-63, and June 1997, No. 10, Part Two, pages 33-35.

grandmothers. On the 10th worship service was held here. None of us went. In the evening Klaas Friesens were here. On the 11th I had gone along with father to the sister Wohlgemuths. On the 12th father went to the sister Wohlgemuths. I was at David Siemens. The girls are washing.

On the 13th Father had gone to Steinbach for flour.....

My beloved wife has kept this book until now. As she is no longer able to do so I will try to continue this record in her place.

On the 14th Gertruda and Elizabeth drove to K. Friesens to wash and found that Maria was sick. On the 16th they returned and they both were also sick. However as Friesens were in great need of help mother and Anna drove there on the 17th. By the 18th Anna was also sick already. However as things had not improved with Maria, mother and I again went to Friesens and brought the little Gret home with us. We had the hope that things were improving with Maria. By the 19th Corn., Margaretha, Aganetha, and mother were also sick.

However as matters had again become more serious with Maria they phoned and we drove over and also had to return Gret to them. Maria did not expect to become well again. As mother already felt too sick to drive over, I and Mrs. Corn. Siemens went there and stayed overnight. During this night Maria was very troubled regarding her salvation. On the 20th I drove home. (Katharina stayed there another night). When I came home Jakob was also sick so that only I and Minna were not yet confined to a sick bed. Although Minna and I became sick it was not that serious. Gertruda was now somewhat better so that she could help us a little. (Later she was again completely confined to bed.) On the 21st Katharina also returned home and Margaretha Fast stayed there (at Friesens) for night. On the 22nd David Siemens drove there and stayed for night. Maria again had great concern over her salvation. During the night Margaretha was also in great anguish over her salvation. Corn. Siemens were here. Then also Joh. R. Toews, Klaas F. Penner, Cor. F. Unger and Jakob T. Wiebe were here.

On [Friday] the 23rd the wives of Cor. Siemens and Martin Friesen drove to K. K. Friesens and as Maria's condition was very serious, Cor. Siemens also went there for the night. During this night Maria died at 3 a.m. in the morning [of Sunday the 24th]. Joh. K. Klassens and Ab. L. Pletts were here for night. Sunday, the 25th, David L. Pletts also came here for dinner and also stayed overnight.

During the night, mother was seriously ill for a time. I do not know what occurred on the 26th. On Tuesday, the 27th, they, namely, Martin K. Friesen and David L. Plett brought Maria [to the window] in her coffin for viewing and she was buried after a small funeral. Margaretha Fast [who had been nursing Maria in her home] came and stayed for night on the 28th and [the next day] did the wash and cleaned the floors.

Comments.

Mrs. Jakob L. Plett (nee Maria B. Koop)



The Klaas K. Friesen house on SW31-6-7E where they lived after the first house burned down on June 29, 1920: see Preservings, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part Two, pages 62-63. View to the west across the present-day Herschfeld Road towards Steinbach. Son Jakob is on his bicycle in front of the door, with sister Maria standing in the doorway together with one of her Friesen aunts. Photo courtesy of Maria Friesen Peters, Steinbach, Manitoba.



Photo taken at Jakob L. Plett farm in Ekron in 1915. Maria P. Friesen (Mrs. Henry B. Peters), Aganetha J. K. Plett (Mrs. John F. Warkentin), Aganetha Unger (Mrs. Henry T. Wiens) and Minna J. K. Plett (Mrs. Henry M. Toews). Photo courtesy of Mrs. Maria Friesen Peters and Plett Picture Book, page 145.

died on the 13th day of December, 1918. It is recalled that the whole family had come to a momentous spiritual peace during this time of affliction. Jakob L. Plett made his last entry in Maria's journal on November 27, 1918, the day of daughter Maria's funeral. Jakob L. Plett was

completely devastated by his wife's death and was unable to continue the journal entries for a time.

Son Jakob J. K. Plett later described the situation as follows: "Sometime later, Father went to a funeral in the Morris area [presumably

Rosenort] where 3 people had died of the flue and were being buried at the same time. But in our view he should not have gone there as his own experiences and grief still lay too fresh in his emotions. At this time he suffered a complete nervous breakdown. Accompanied by son-in-law Peter Siemens he was brought back home. For a considerable time he lived in anxiety regarding his salvation and spent much time in prayer and supplication. From this time on, it seemed that he was very preoccupied with writing poetry and also frequently expressed his thoughts on paper by writing poems": Jakob J. K. Plett in *Plettentag am 2. Juli 1945*, page 47.

On Nov. 18, 1921, Jakob again started making entries in the journal which his wife had maintained for so many years and continued the record until April 25, 1925. On December 18, 1924, Jakob L. Plett also started writing a series of letters to his brother Cornelius, Satanta, Kansas, which continued until Feb. 18, 1929.

Memories of Maria Friesen Peters.

The experience of losing my mother, Maria Plett Friesen, and my grandmother, Maria Koop Plett, during the influenza epidemic of 1918 was a devastating one. I remember some things quite clearly.

My mother suffered from tuberculosis and was receiving medical treatment from Dr. Hiebert. But when the flue time came she was weakened and became very sick. My father, Klaas K. Friesen, also fell victim, and by late November was confined to the hospital in Steinbach. But my mother was already too sick and Margaretha Fast was hired to nurse her in our home.

I remember minister Peter B. Kroeker visiting at our place during this time while my mother was very sick. He sat in the summer kitchen rocking my younger sister Greta in her cradle and singing the song, "Kristi Blut und Gerechtigkeit." This song has always stayed in my memory.

My uncle Martin K. Friesen did the chores while my mother was sick and father was in the hospital.

Saturday night November 23, 1918, the boys were at aunt Klaas P. Reimers, Blumenort. The Peter R. Toews, our neighbours, were visiting at our home that day and took me and Greta along to their place for the night.

The doctor had been at our place that day but gave no hope for mother that she would live till morning.

Sunday morning, the phone rang at the Peter R. Toews home. Mrs. Toews answered the phone and started crying very hard. When she hung up the phone she came to me and said, "Now your mother is gone, she has passed away."

I remember that on Monday, November 25, the Peter R. Toews girls wanted to go to our place as they wanted to see my mother. They wanted me and Greta to come along which we did. But I refused to see my mother. I definitely did not want to see her. I could not countenance the thought that my mother was dead. My mother's body lay in the granary as there were no funeral homes in Steinbach at the time.

I refused to go along with the Toews girls to

see her. I stayed in the buggy for a while and then I went into our house to look around: everything looked so surreal and foreign, cold and grimy, and smelled smoky.

Then I went alone to the summer kitchen to look around and when I opened the door a small cat stood there. The cat knew me, I had played with it before. The cat was hungry and "meowed."

Just then my uncle Martin K. Friesen, who was doing the chores, came by. I told him he should kill the cat because there was no one at home to look after it. My uncle did so.



1950. Three brothers Friesen—Klaas K., Kornelius K., and Martin K. Friesen, standing on the south side of the Martin K. Friesen residence in Blumenhof. Photo by Gertrude Friesen Plett. Courtesy Blumenort, page 275

For night Greta and I went back to Peter R. Toews' place.

Tuesday, November 26, was the funeral. Margaretha Fast came by to Peter R. Toews' to pick me up to take me to the funeral.

Grandma herself was too sick to go to her daughter's funeral and so the coffin was brought to window of the Jakob L. Plett residence, prior to the funeral, so that grandma could see her daughter one last time. When she saw her daughter lying so peacefully in her coffin, Grandma lamented, "That if only she also could be at peace like that."

My brothers, Jakob, Cornelius and Frank, were staying at grandparents at the time, and Cornelius later told me he had personally witnessed this incident.

The funeral was at the Blumenhof school house which at that time was located on SE25-7-6E right beside the community cemetery. Only a few people attended the funeral as most people were too sick to come. I remember my uncle Martin K. Friesen was there.

The funeral was held outside in the yard, but I stayed inside.

My cousins the Cornelius Janzen girls and the Klaas P. Reimer girls came to me several times and pleaded with me that I should come outside with them to see my mother in the coffin. I refused as I could not stand the idea that she was dead. But finally I did agree after all. I went and stood beside the coffin and looked at my mother and I cried and cried. I was only 10 years old.

After the funeral I went along with grandfather, Jakob L. Plett, to his place, a 1/2 miles east of the cemetery. Greta stayed at the Peter R. Toews home for a few more days. But then

the Toews family also got sick with the flue and Greta had to leave there and also came and stayed at grandparents.

Grandma wanted both Greta and me to stay at their place. But because she was so sick, we were soon taken to my aunt Aganetha, Mrs. Cornelius Janzen, where we stayed until grandmother died. I went along to her funeral.

When my father returned from the hospital and after he was well enough he drove around and gathered his other children together. The boys were staying at aunt Klaas P. Reimers in Blumenort and Greta and I were at grandparents' place.

Grandparents always had delicious meals and I always enjoyed eating there.

When father came to grandfather's place to get me, he stood and begged for me to come along with him. But I held back and refused to go because I was scared of being at home in the house without my mother. Finally father persuaded me and I also went home with him. It took a long time for all of us, children as well as father, to get used to life without our mother.

Greta stayed as grandfather's place as she was so young—not even a year old, and father couldn't look after her. Greta became their foster daughter. She lived with grandfather until she was grown up and married, looked after by a host of aunts.

My father suffered from epilepsy, something I did not know until after my mother died.

One time, possibly about a year after my mother died, my father was making the fire in the morning. We children were all sitting on the schloape benk, watching. Father was lighting some shavings which caught nicely and flared up in flames.

Then, all-of-a-sudden, father fell over on his back. His arms and legs were jerking spasming and saliva started frothing from his mouth.

I was so scared I ran outside.

At that moment Abe P. Toews, the teacher in our local school came driving on our yard, as he picked me up every morning to give me a ride to school.

I told him, "My father is dead."

Mr. Toews rushed into the house and helped my father try to walk again, but he stumbled. He was completely dark around the eyes. I was horrified that my father would also die and then we children would have nothing.

On January 25, 1931, Klaas K. Friesen married for the second time to Helena Unger, daughter of Cornelius W. Unger, a Chortitzer family. Together they had a daughter, Helen, who married Dietrich Friesen. Later after my father remarried, he received medical treatment for his epilepsy and remained free of these terrible attacks.

Sources:

Maria Koop Plett, Journal, extracts as published in *Plett Picture Book*, pages 39, 44 and 147. Telephone interview Maria Peters January 15, 1997, personal interview July 29, 1997, and telephone interview August 1, 1997.

Aron Schwartz Friesen and Anna Loeppky Friesen

Aron Schwartz Friesen (1848-1923) and Anna Loeppky Friesen (1850-1927): Strassburg Pioneers, by grandson John K. Friesen, Box 303, Niverville, Manitoba, ROA IEO.

Introduction.

It is no easy task to write a biography about people whom you never knew. Such is my case as I write this article about my grandparents Aron Schwartz Friesen 1848-1923 and Anna Loeppky Friesen 1850-1927. They had both passed from their earthly home to their heavenly abode before I was born.

Friesen Family.

The first identification of Aron S. Friesen's ancestors is a Martin Dueck. I know nothing else about this man and to speculate about him at this time may not be of great significance. We know, however, that his daughter, Anna Dueck, married Abraham Friesen. There are no dates available.

In 1818 this couple with their two year-old son Abraham born August 13, 1816, and grandfather, Martin Dueck, emigrated from Prussia to Pastwa, Molotschna Colony, in Russia. The aforementioned Abraham Friesen became a teacher in the Molotschna colony, first in the village of Münsterberg, then Tiege and finally, in Pastwa where he died in 1825. His widow was poor and so her son Abraham was fostered to his aunt in Friedensdorf, to be nurtured into adulthood. In the meantime his foster parents, the Peter Friesens, had moved to Nieder-Chortitza in the Chortitza colony.

In 1835 Abraham Jr. was baptized and received into the Chortitza Gemeinde by Bishop Jacob Dueck. On December 8, 1838, Abraham and Katharina Schwartz were married by Bishop David Epp. Katharina was born June 18, 1819, daughter of Johann Schwartz. The following year they settled in Blumengard, Chortitza Colony where Abraham taught school for four years. In 1843 the couple moved to the Bergthal Colony where Abraham taught in the village of Schoenfeld for the next six years.

In his own words Abraham described himself as a man with few talents and in his weakness [little formal education] teaching the children to live their lives according to the teachings of the Holy Word. In January 1849, he became a landholder in Bergthal acquiring his own Wirtschaft something which only one in four Russian Mennonites were able to achieve at the time. On the tenth of March he was elected as a minister in the Bergthal Gemeinde and served his congregation continuously for twenty-two years until his death on April, 1871.

During his ministry, he preached 346 times, conducted 117 funerals and performed at 119 marriage ceremonies. His widow Katharina Schwartz Friesen emigrated to Canada with her family arriving in Quebec City on the S. S. Moravian on July 1, 1875. She died in Sommerfeld near Altona, Manitoba, on October 24, 1897, perhaps at the home of her son Abraham.



Aron Schwartz Friesen (1848-1923) and Anna Loeppky Friesen (1850-1927): Strassburg Pioneers. Photo courtesy Carillon News, October 23, 1985.

Loeppky Family.

Ancestor identification for Anna Loeppky Friesen starts with a non-Mennonite name. Her mother Eva Glockman Loeppky (1803-88) was of German origin. Her father perhaps was a farm machinery salesman in Russia.

Eva's husband, Johann Loeppky (1804-62) was born on the Island of Chortitza. Later Eva Glockman Loeppky remarried to Gerhard Wall (1802-70). She came to Manitoba as a widow, probably prior to 30 July 1876 when the last Bergthal migrants arrived. She died at the home of her daughter Anna, Mrs. Aron S. Friesen, presumably as a past resident of the Strassburg community. Thus far the ancestry of my grandparents, Aron Schwartz Friesen and Anna Loeppky Friesen.

Bergthal Colony, 1836-76.

The Bergthal colony in Russia came into existence in 1836. It was the first of many daughter colonies which split from the two original ones, Chortitza and Molotschna. Bergthal consisted of five villages. There were many hardships and trials during the first years. Within three decades, population pressure made it nearly impossible for the older generation to purchase farm land for their sons and daughters as they married and left home. This was a problem experienced by all the Mennonite Colonies in Russia. By the 1870s Bergthal had 500 families of whom one-third were owners of a full Wirtschaft, probably slightly above average compared to the two older colonies.

Through wise leaders such as Aeltester

Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) and Oberschulze Jakob Peters (1813-84), Bergthal was able to avoid most of the squabbling and religious disputation which marked this period in the history of the mother settlements.

Lack of available farm land in the area of the colonies, the government compelling them to teach Russian in their schools and termination of military exemptions were a few of the reasons why the Mennonites wanted to emigrate. Another reason was the aggressiveness of the Canadian government to lure colonists to their young country.

By 1873 emigration to America was considered as a viable option. After the delegates returned from Canada later that year, definite plans were made to emigrate. Starting in 1874 and over the next two years, all of the Bergthal colony, including my grandparents, emigrated to Canada.

Aron S. Friesen (1848-1923).

Aron S. Friesen was born February 19, 1848, in Schönfeld, Bergthal colony. Anna Loeppky was born April 10, 1850, also in Schönfeld. They were married December 1, 1868. Likely he worked on his father's Wirtschaft until his death in 1871. The young couple lived in the village of Schönfeld for six years where together with others they worshipped their spiritual Lord and heavenly Father. In 1870, their first child, Katharina was born.

This young family was among one of the first emigrant groups to leave for Canada. Their hope and prayer was to maintain and improve their spiritual and material way of life.

The passenger list of the S. S. Sarmation of the Allen Line which arrived in Quebec City from Liverpool 2 Aug. 1874 included the following: "Aron Friesen ... age 26, labourer, Anna Friesen ... age 24, wife, Katharina Friesen... age 4, child."

The final destination was reached by paddle-wheel steamer at the junction of the Rat and Red rivers on August 10, 1874. We can assume that the above mentioned three people, as well as many others trekked on foot in an easterly direction approximately six miles to the immigration sheds built by Schantz where they probably spent their first winter. Three miles south of the "Schantz Sheds" on SW5-7-4E is where this couple homesteaded.

Pioneering.

When the Mennonites settled in Manitoba they also transplanted their "Strassendorf" street villages from the Old Country. Although each farmer held title to an individual quarter section, the land was held in trust for the village which then granted each family a yardsite in the village as well as various parcels of farmland in the village plan, known as "Kogels". The homestead map, courtesy of the agricultural Crown Lands office shows SW5-7-4E as the Aron Friesen homestead and 31 Dec 1875 as the date of application for letters patent. It was not until Sept. 1882 that he applied for and was granted title to the SW5-7-4E on which they were to spend the rest of their life.

Most of the new settlers including my grandparents were diligent farmers. The first years they were breaking new soil on which to plant and harvest crops. Drainage systems and bridges had to be built to combat periodic floods. People had to adjust to the climate and fight a grasshopper plague. They also withstood flu and diphtheria epidemics. There were also good years as well. Proof of this are the land ownership maps, courtesy of the R.M. of Hanover. According to the tax rolls of 1886 and

as late as 1910 Aron Friesen owned both the SW5-7-4E and SE5-7-4E, 320 acres of the finest farmland in Manitoba.

Soon after the immigration a group of settlers staked out a village in the southwest corner of Township 7, Range 4 East, and gave it the name Strassburg. It comprised of Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and the south half of 18. The village itself, lay in a north and south direction on the western edge of the East half of Section 6. The R.M. of Hanover tax records 1883/1884 show the assets of Aron S. Friesen including land, buildings, machinery and cattle having an assessment value of \$678.00 dollars. The 9 farmers of Strassburg had a total assessment value of \$4906.00 dollars. The village was dominated by two clans, the Friesens and the Loeppkys. Of the 9 families resident in the village in 1881, there was only 1 family not related. Eva Glockman Loeppky Wall was the matriarch of the village, being the mother or grandmother to 4 of the families.

Fire Insurance.

The Mennonite settlers from the Bergthal colony in Russia brought with them the mutual fire insurance system (Brandordnung) which they had operated successfully during the colony's forty years existence. The early records of the church-run fire insurance system have been preserved and provide information about the assets of the pioneers. One record shows Aron S. Friesen insured a house for \$150.00, furniture \$150.00, wagon \$60.00 and plow \$14.00 for a total of \$374.00 dollars. Records of insurance coverage by village shows Strassburg at \$3795.00 dollars in September 1879 and \$3055.00 dollars in December 1883. The reduction of insurance could be due to people moving unto their homesteads or moving to the West Reserve which started soon after the initial immigration to the East Reserve.

It is worthy to note that three generations of Aron S. Friesen descendants, son John L.

Friesen, grandson John K. Friesen, and great-grandson, Timothy John Friesen, were all employees of the Chortitzer Brandordnung or of Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company as the organization was known after its official incorporation in 1940.

Municipal Service.

The Friesens came from a tradition of community service. According to the records of the Municipality of Hanover, Aron Friesen of Strassburg served as Municipal Councillor for Ward One from 1891-92.

Family.

Children of Aron Schwartz Friesen and Anna Loeppky Friesen were two girls and six boys. They are Katharina, Mrs. Cor. F. Toews 20 May 1870-13 Apr. 1946; Jacob 29 Sept. 1876-12 Aug. 1951; Abram 19 Feb. 1879-22 Aug. 1952; Anna, Mrs. Cor. B. Kliewer 27 July 1881-30 May 1942; Johann 4 May 1885-6 May 1885; Aron 8 July 1886-4 Apr. 1971; Henry 31 Aug. 1889-10 July 1965; and John 18 Sept. 1894-2 Feb. 1959. For a 1903 photograph of the entire family; see Dr. Rhinehart Friesen, "Strassburg," in *Working Papers*, page 114.

They also fostered but probably not formally adopted a young girl by the name of Liese Schult who was left motherless at the age of three years. She later married Ben Dyck, a preacher of the Sommerfeld church.

Recollections.

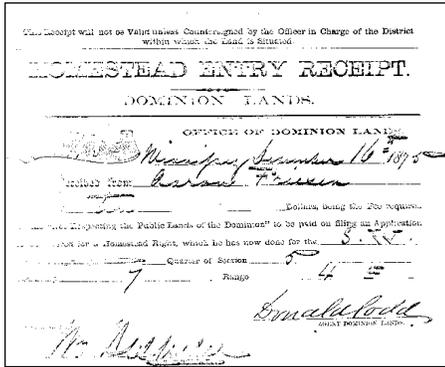
I asked several of my cousins about their recollections of our grandparents. This is what they told me.

I remember:

"..... my grandparents visiting us in Ebenfeld. They came all the way from Strassburg by horse and buggy. They would stay a few days and then return home. On one occasion my father hitched his horse to the buggy so he and grandfather could go to Steinbach to shop or visit. I was curious enough to stand and



Farmyard of Aron and Anna Friesen, Section 5-7-4E, circa. Photo courtesy of John K. Friesen, Box 303, Niverville, Manitoba, ROA IEO.



Homestead Entry Receipt for SW 5-7-4East, December 16, 1875. Courtesy of John K. Friesen, Box 303, Niverville, Manitoba, ROA IEO.

watch. At the right moment my grandfather lifted me and stuffed me under the seat and told me to stay very quiet. Shortly after leaving our farm yard for Steinbach my grandfather asked my father whether he left his daughter at home. He confirmed it with a "YES". At that moment grandfather reached underneath the seat and pulled me out saying, I do not think so. He explained to my father it had been his idea and not mine to hide underneath the seat and sneak a ride to Steinbach.

"... my grandmother sitting in a wheelchair. She had crippling arthritis. She endured much pain the last twelve years of her life.

"... my grandparents' garden, especially the plum trees. My grandfather would shake the trees so the ripe fruit would fall to the ground. We grandchildren were then allowed to pick them into a pail and eat as many as we preferred. Grandfather had very short fingers. We were happy to see uncle John instead of grandfather dole out peanuts at christmas. His hands were larger, so we knew we would get a bigger share.

"... little mounds of dirt overgrown with grass on the south side of my grandparent's house. My brother and I would play tag in this area and jump from one little hill to the other. Christmas was special to us. We would recite short poems and bible verses. Our reward would be a nice red apple, peanuts and candies. It seems I still can hear the beautiful sound of the latch on the outside door of the old house. Try hitting a hard piece of wood against a hollow pipe. You will know what I mean.

"... spending one week of holidays with my grandparents together with my cousin Ernie Friesen. It was an enjoyable week. I also recall that my grandmother was confined to a wheelchair for twelve years due to arthritis.

"... that my parents lived at my grandparent's place the first few years of their married life. In later years young people of the district would gather at their house for an evening of entertainment such as blind-man's buff. I recall the evenings in winter sitting around the old wood stove where it was nice and warm.

"... my grandmother due to arthritis confined to a wheelchair the last twelve years of her life. She used to say that God made her youngest son, John, grow taller and stronger than any of

her other children so that he could more easily carry and take care of her.

"... Grandfather acquired a considerable reputation as a horse breeder. Most of his horses were from pure stock. At his death he is said to have asked that they be sure to arrange his legs in a comfortable position in the coffin because they had given him so much pain.

"... staying overnight at my grandmother's place. During the night she would call her son John. He would go and change her position in bed so she could sleep more comfortably the rest of the night. Family members gathered at grandfather's death bed. Shortly before he died grandfather with outstretched hand touched the person closest to the bed and said, "Is this Jesus?" and his soul left his earthly body.

Conclusion.

To the Christian much of history is a fulfilment of God's will and of his judgement (New York Times). As we read this article, may the fulfilment of God's will become part of our history as it is part of the history of my grandparents, Aron Schwartz Friesen and Anna Loeppky Friesen.

Descendants.

Some of the descendants of Aron Schwartz Friesen and Anna Loeppky Friesen still well-known in the Niverville Steinbach area include the following: grandson Ernest A. Friesen, former mayor of Steinbach; Dr. Rhinehart Friesen, retired medical doctor in Winnipeg, Brain Kliewer, former Steinbach automobile dealer who was killed in an airplane accident in Thunderbay, Ontario, and Tim Friesen, former manager of Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Co. Steinbach. Jakob F. Kliewer, Steinbach, is another grandson.

Acknowledgements

Lawrence Klippenstein - Mennonite Heritage Centre
 John Dyck - Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc.
 My cousins: Mrs. Aganetha Doerksen, Mrs. Katherine Penner, Miss Margaret Friesen, Mrs. Anna Reimer, and Mr. Henry F. Kliewer, all of Steinbach, Mr. Erdman P. Friesen of Niverville, Mr. Henry F. Friesen and Dr. Rhinehart Friesen of Winnipeg.

Sources:

Dr. Rhinehart Friesen, "Strassburg," in John Dyck, editor, *Working Papers* (Steinbach, 1990), pages 109-114.
 John K. Friesen, "Friesen, Aaron," in F. Kaita, editor, *Niverville: A History* (Niverville, 1986), pages 105-6.
 John K. Friesen, "Friesen Cemetery, Strassburg," in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part Two, pages 51-52, and Carillon News article October 23, 1985.

Coming in the next issue: "Unregistered Chortitzer cemeteries in the Niverville area," by John K. Friesen.

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Purpose and Membership

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society was organized in 1988 to research and write the history and heritage of the R.M. of Hanover and the Town of Steinbach. The emphasis is on the period 1874-1910. Through public meetings, writings and publications it seeks to foster an understanding and respect for the rich heritage of the community.

Many volunteers from this community have contributed information, collected old diaries and letters, written articles, entered data on computer, proofread data, and helped in other ways to compile material for books. The financial support of the R.M. of Hanover, the Manitoba Heritage Federation, the office of the Secretary of State, together with donations from private individuals has made it possible for the society to publish three books. Two more are in stages of completion.

These efforts have rewarded participants with a greater appreciation for their heritage. Perhaps you would like to show your support for the work of the society by donating family records, old correspondence or diaries to the society. Any of our board members or John Dyck at the office would be glad to talk to you.

The society also requires your support financially in order to continue the above activities. Your donations will help to keep the society strong. All contributions of \$10 or more will be acknowledged with a charitable donation receipt for income tax purposes. We are presently levying for an annual membership fee of \$10 per annum but will appreciate you giving an additional amount of \$10 or \$20 to support the work of the society. Thank you for your participation.

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society
 Box 1960, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0

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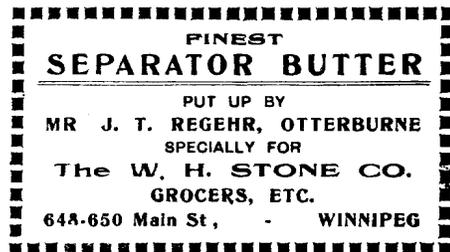
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Jacob and Elizabeth Hiebert Regehr

The Life and Times of Jacob E. Regehr (1885-1955) and Elizabeth Hiebert Regehr (1888-1977), Hochstadt-Winton-Dallas-Steinbach; by son Clifford S. Regehr, 3798 Laurel Drive, Royston, B. C. VOR 2V0

Introduction.

This article is not a biography of two people but rather a reflection on the life and times of Jacob Esau Regehr and his wife Elizabeth. It is written by the youngest of nine children born to these two people. Accordingly it must be remembered that when I was born my parents were already in their 40s and so I experienced a relatively short personal relationship with them. Much of the anecdotal history was learned from older siblings and from other writers of Mennonite history from the 1880s to the 1960s, and from records in the archives of the Mennonite Heritage Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba. A few personal memories about life in the Regehr family are included. Any inaccuracies are my fault.



Shipping label used by J. T. Regehr to merchandise his products to wholesalers in Winnipeg. Reproduction courtesy Edwin Regehr.

Paternal Genealogy of Jacob Esau Regehr

Jacob Esau Regehr (1885-1955) Manitoba
 Jacob T. Regehr (1861-1916) Molotschna-Manitoba
 Jacob G. Regehr (1832-1906) Molotschna-Manitoba-Kansas
 Isaac Regehr (1797-1840) Molotschna
 Isaac Regehr (1774- ?) West Prussia-Molotschna
 Peter Regehr (1740-1811) Prangenau, West Prussia

Paternal Genealogy of Elizabeth Hiebert Regehr

Elizabeth Hiebert Regehr (1888-1977) Nebraska-Manitoba
 David Hiebert (1853-1900) Manitoba-Nebraska
 Johann Hiebert (1816-90) Molotschna-Manitoba
 Abraham Hiebert (b. 1790) Molotschna
 Johann Hiebert (b. 1760) Halbstadt, Molotschna
 Jakob Hiebert Schönsee, West Prussia - 1776

Beginnings.

Jacob E. Regehr was born in Hochstadt, Manitoba on May 2, 1885. His father, Jacob T. Regehr had been a small farmer and store keeper in Hochstadt, Manitoba, East Reserve. He was also a businessman who specialized in cheese and butter manufacturing. These products were marketed under the family name and sold to Winnipeg wholesalers. It seemed a natural progression then that Jacob E. should start his working career in a Winnipeg cheese factory, in preparation for which he had attended the Manitoba Agricultural College. Jac had previ-



Class practicum at Manitoba Agricultural College. Jacob E. Regehr at second tub on left (circa 1908).

ously briefly worked for the Canadian Pacific Railroad and this had led to his taking a telegraphers' course at Des Moines, Iowa. (The abbreviation "Jac" is preferred to the Americanized "Jake" by some thus named).

Elizabeth Hiebert Regehr was born July 13, 1888 at Plymouth, Nebraska. Her father was a minister of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. The family subsequently moved to Kleefeld, Manitoba, where she completed her education at a Grade Eight Level. She spent some of her teenage years working as a hired maid.

Elizabeth has said that she and Jac met while attending the Jugendverein ("Young Peoples' Group") in the Kleefeld church (Holdeman). Their marriage in Winnipeg on May 6, 1909 was attended by a few close friends and they began their mutual journey in a humble apartment in downtown Winnipeg. Jac would walk or hitch rides to his work several miles away (street car service was spasmodic).

Elizabeth recalled the day when Jac did not arrive home at his usual time for supper. When her anxiety became unbearable she walked the several miles to the cheese factory which was by then in the process of closing for the night. She asked about her husband and the manager said he thought Jac had left several hours ago. Elizabeth

insisted on a search of the factory and, indeed, Jac had been inadvertently locked into the refrigeration room, where he might well have perished before morning. The jubilation of that discovery, and the prayers of thanks can only be imagined.

Steinbach, Manitoba.

Not too long after that harrowing experience Jac and Elizabeth decided to move to Steinbach, to be "among their own people". Jac obtained employment working as an enthusiastic salesman of McCormick-Deering farm equipment for J.R. Friesen (also recognised as the first Ford automobile dealer in Western Canada). His income was sufficient to provide a small house on Main Street and after their first daughter, Helen, was born in 1911 they moved to a better home on Hanover Street. Walter, the first son, was born in 1912 but died in infancy. Jacob Paul was born in 1914 and was destined to play a major role in the family enterprise in years to follow.

It will become apparent that Jacob E. had a predominant disposition to travel. Although working successfully with J. R. Friesen he had "an itch" to move to California where the weather was more to his liking and where he felt that the opportunity to have a business of his own would be advantageous. Elizabeth was reluctant to leave Steinbach with her growing family. (Frank had been born in 1916 and Amanda in 1918.) However in 1920 Elizabeth consented to a move to Winkler where Jac readily found employment selling automobiles. In December of 1920 son William (Bill) was born.

Winton, California.

Jac maintained his objective to relocate to California and in 1921 Elizabeth concurred. With their five children they arrived by train in Winton, CA where Jac acquired a service garage and began a new career as an independent businessman. Elizabeth seemed very happy working her garden which produced fruits and vegetables unavailable to her in Manitoba. She learned how to "pop" a large watermelon so that it split in several directions leaving the juicy core standing by itself. This delicacy was eaten and the rest fed to the neighbours' pigs. Grapes and other delicious fruits grew in abundance. Winton seemed to be like paradise.

But new problems arose. Jac and Elizabeth had both been baptized as evidence of their faith in Christ and both were members of the Brüderthaler Church in Steinbach. Two other Mennonite congregations in

Winton had welcomed them, but, in order to achieve membership a re-baptism was required. Elizabeth balked at this, saying, "I was baptized according to my faith once and since my faith has not changed I will not agree to rebaptism!" Jac admired the strong will of his wife and accordingly they continued attending church as non-members.

Understandably they missed the intimate warmth of the communion which was denied them. And so they struggled with their dedication to their faiths until they became aware of the Brüderthaler congregation at Dallas, Oregon. Their need for total acceptance by a congregation led to another upheaval, sale of business and home, etc. The move to Oregon proved to be a mistake. The congregational acceptance was illusory and as Jac said, "the rains were endless".

Six months later the family was back in Winton. Things went smoothly. Jac was back in business and the family grew once again with the birth of Linda in 1924. However, infant mortality was always a threat and Linda died at the age of nine months. When Frank died at age 10 in 1926 Elizabeth mourned, "Maybe God is punishing us for moving here". They remained in California for another year (Edwin Harold was born there in February, 1927) before deciding that their true home was in Manitoba.

Back to Manitoba.

Daughter Helen tells a moving story of how father again sold everything. He kept a Star touring car which he customized by affixing a large rack for food and utensils, and enclosing the "running boards" for clothing and other basic needs. Then with five children ranging in age from 16 years to 3 months (all in one car!) Jac and Elizabeth started a motoring trek that would lead them up the west coast, through the Rockies and into Alberta where they were able to rest up in the welcoming arms of several relative families.

Roads in western Canada were still mostly unsurfaced and often impassable in rainy weather but the family set out for Manitoba hoping for the best. After several occurrences of having to enlist help from farmers with horses or tractors to pull their car through mudholes Jac decided his family had suffered enough and so, in eastern Alberta, he put Elizabeth and the three youngest children on the train to Winnipeg. With daughter Helen and son Jacob Paul staying behind to help, he got the car into eastern Saskatchewan. There they finally surrendered to the rains, left the car, and also took the train. Weeks later when drier weather had made the roads driveable again Jac returned to bring the car home to Steinbach (surviving a head-on collision in the process).

They were glad to be back among old friends and resuming their relationship with the Brüderthaler congregation. They moved



Young Peoples' Group at Kleefeld, circa 1908. Left to right: First row Helen Bartel (Mrs. Is. Toews), Elisabeth Bartel (Mrs. John Toews), Nettie Toews (Mrs. Wiebe), Maria Isaac, Katharina Toews (Mrs. Frank Hiebert). Second row: Mrs. Jac. Bartel, Helen Bartel (Mrs. Is. Toews), Elizabeth Hiebert (Mrs. Jac Regehr). Third row: 1, 2, 3 Diedrich Dueck, 4 Jacob E. Regehr, 5. Fourth row: Rev. John I. Penner, Frank L. Isaac, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Can readers identify others? Photo identification courtesy of Helen Rieger, Box 3730, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.



Family group photo taken at Walt's Studio, 1947. Back row: Simon and Helen Rieger, Jakob Paul and Elizabeth Regehr, Lydia and Bill Regehr, Amanda and Ronald Reimer. Front row: Edwin (married Marie Kroeker 1951), Jakob E. and Elisabeth Regehr, Clifford (married Donalda MacLeod 1952).

into a house on Main Street (the later site of the Municipal Hall) where, in 1928, Elizabeth gave birth to Clifford Stanley.

Regehr Garage.

Almost immediately Jac was again selling tractors and cars for J.R.Friesen. The John Deere Company had brought new competition to the farm equipment business and Jac,



Middle Left: Jacob and Elizabeth on their 45th anniversary, 1954. All photographs for this article are courtesy of Cliff Regehr, Royston, B.C.



Jacob & Elizabeth (1943) at Renatta, B.C. visiting Elizabeth's sister. This community was closed down and flooded by the construction of the High Arrow Dam on the Columbia River in 1965.

enthusiastic as ever about the McCormick and Fordson tractors he was selling, would tell farmers that the John Deere tractors were inferior to the Fordson. The John Deere had a 2-cylinder engine and Jac would scoff at the strange puff-puffing of the machine. A few years later when Jac acquired the John Deere agency for himself the same farmers would mockingly ask how he liked the puff-puffing now. He would laughingly reply, "daut p'u'st nu Jelt enn miene Fup enenn" (Now it puffs money into my pocket).

Jac's decision to start his own family enterprise was brought about when he was laid off by J. R. Friesen because of lack of business at the start of the Great Depression in 1930. In addition to the John Deere franchise he obtained a sub-dealership from Breen Motors in Winnipeg to sell Chrysler and Plymouth cars, and a Bulk Dealership from Imperial Oil Limited. This new venture faced many difficult years but Jac was fortunate to have daughter Helen keeping

the accounts (she had learned bookkeeping in California), and son Jacob Paul to manage the Oil agency which included unloading railroad tanker cars into huge storage tanks at Giroux and from there hauling truckloads to supply numerous service stations and general stores selling gasoline throughout the municipality. As well, tractor fuel was delivered in 45-gallon drums to farmers. When Helen married Simon Rieger and had her first child, Simon took her place as bookkeeper and office manager.

By 1938 the business had outgrown its premises and a new garage and dealership were built (almost next door) on the former P. S. Guenther property (Several photographs of the garage were published in Ernie P. Toews, "Main Street Steinbach: Part Three," *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec. 1996, Part One, page 63.) The company was formally organized into J. E. Regehr & Sons Ltd. In 1939, in a display of patriotism (and business acumen) Jac arranged to have the Chrysler limousine used in the Royal Visit parade available for a one-day display for the school children and citizens of Steinbach. (Access to the rear seat was not allowed.) The new dealership meant that more people were hired to work in the service department and son Bill also joined in, becoming an efficient parts manager. A few years later Edwin, having completed High School, became the Company's accountant.

Community Activities.

During the Thirties Jac not only worried about his struggling business but took time to immerse himself in community affairs. He was a member of a Board of Trade committee that worked hard for the improvement of the main road between Steinbach and Winnipeg. He served many years on the School Board and then ran for the Chairmanship of the Village Council (mayor) for a 2-year term. His performance was deemed good enough to win two more terms of office by acclamation.

His involvement with local politics was a key factor in his being invited by the Hon. Edmond Prefontaine, the sitting Member of the Manitoba Legislature, to accept an appointment as Returning Officer for the Carillon constituency. Such an appointment would, of course, make Jac ineligible to run as a candidate in Provincial elections (if he had any such thoughts in mind) and Mr. Prefontaine astutely recognized Jac as a potential competitor. Jac accepted the appointment and supervised the electoral process in Carillon until his voluntary retirement many years later.

World War Two brought other functions for Jacob E. Regehr. He was appointed the local representative of the Wartime Prices Control Board which was formed to guard against undue profiteering because of shortages in consumer goods and services. He did not enjoy this appointment because he knew that certain laws were being broken

by a few individuals and he could not bring himself to act against the Mennonite tradition of not involving fellow Mennonites in legal actions. When asked if this was a dereliction of his duty he would say, "God knows what they are doing and He will deal with it." And Jac would return to yet another function as Commissioner for Oaths and accept 25 cents for certifying someone's signature on a legal document, when the Tariff Schedule for this service permitted a charge of several dollars.

A small item caught my attention when I visited the Steinbach Museum some years ago. (Note: During the pre-1940s the Village engaged a seasonally paid person who would collect cows along Main Street every morning - blowing a bugle as he cycled slowly - herd them to a communal pasture on the outskirts of town; and herd them back around supper time.) In one display case in the Museum was an open book of the minutes of a Village Council Meeting, J. E. Regehr, Chairman. The minutes quote the Secretary reporting a complaint received from a Main Street resident about the cowherd blowing his bugle at the unseemly time of 6 a.m. The minutes then quote: "Be it resolved that the cowherd be instructed immediately to refrain from blowing his bugle before 7 a.m. and furthermore, if these instructions are not complied with Constable Sobering shall be authorized to seize and impound said bugle forthwith." In the same display case just above the Minute Book lay a rusty old bugle!

Jacob E. Regehr was an active member of the Brüderthaler Church. He served as Sunday School superintendent for several years, and on other boards and committees. One favourite memory the writer has of his father was his repeating role as Auctioneer at the Brüderthaler Women's Sewing Circle annual missionary fund-raising sale in the Church. Everybody present was always impressed by the amounts bid for articles of clothing, aprons, embroidery work, and home cooking specials. The main item, however, was always the large quilt which the women had collectively worked on every Thursday afternoon for the past year. The quilt was beautifully displayed all evening and the tension would mount as the "lesser" articles were being sold off.

Some children attended these events and were allowed to sit up in the balcony of the church. To keep us quiet the program called for the early auctioning of an annual contribution from Mrs. Tarasenko - a 5-pound bag of specially roasted Knacksot ("sunflower seeds"). Most children were given a few cents for bid money and we pooled these pennies in order to acquire the treasured Knacksot. My father would allow the bidding to start at a penny and when it reached 15 cents he would bring down the hammer and declare the item "Sold" - to the children in the balcony!"

Homelife.

Jac and Elizabeth loved music, especially the simple gospel style, but musical instruments would not have been part of their growing up years (except for a Jews' harp or a harmonica maybe) but the six Regehr children living after 1930 all played one or more instruments and the parents loved it. One spectacular Sunday afternoon after we had all eaten our fill of mother's superb fried chicken my father asked us to play something together. Helen and Amanda formed a duo at the piano, Jacob Paul had a cornet, Bill had his clarinet, Edwin had his piano accordion and I played my trumpet. The ensemble would never have attracted a recording contract but for an hour that Sunday afternoon Jac and Elizabeth received an earful of joy!

An earlier reference was made to Jac's penchant for travelling with his wife. During the 40s and 50s they made many trips together to Alberta and to the United States. One travelling highlight for them was a train trip through the Rocky Mountains to the West Coast in the winter of 1943. Jac kept a daily journal of that trip and it makes fascinating reading today. He states that his pen cannot describe the beautiful scenery of British Columbia. During those years Elizabeth suffered constantly from rheumatism and therefore some of their travelling had destinations like Harrison Hot Springs, B. C. or Watrous Lake, Saskatchewan where Elizabeth would get temporary relief from her afflictions by bathing in the hot mineral waters.

Jac did all he could to seek assistance in relieving Elizabeth's aches and pains. During Jac's late retirement years travel became impossible and so Jac would frequently spread out his vast collections of roadmaps on the dining room table and proudly ask Elizabeth, "Na Liesje, wua wellst du noch fonndoag hanfoare?" (Well Elizabeth, where would you like to travel to today?) Then with heads close together they would pore over the maps and follow known routes they had taken before, and "revisit" their favourite places.

Jac died peacefully at home in his favourite living room chair while having a pleasant visit with an old friend on February 3, 1955.

Postscript

Jac Regehr was known for his forthrightness and this, at times, caused friction with those who disagreed with him. I remember that on occasion this hurt Elizabeth too. But underneath his boldness there was a sensitive man who wanted very much to make this a better world. Elizabeth believed this without any doubt. She outlived Jac by 22 years and I remember my wife asking her during her widowhood whether she had ever been invited to consider remarriage. "Several times", she said, "but I always gave the



Retirement party with family and employees. Christmas 1950. Back row: Standing to the left - Simon Rieger, Helen Rieger, Elizabeth Regehr, Joyce Kornelsen, George Dyck; standing to the right -Mrs. Helena Friesen, Henry C. Friesen, Lydia Regehr, Bill Regehr, Jacob G. Hiebert, Tina Hiebert. Seated away from table: Wilma Doerksen and Peter Doerksen. Seated at table: Edwin Regehr, Marie Regehr, Margaret Reimer, Henry K. Reimer, Elizabeth Regehr and Jacob E. Regehr, Tien Barkman, Fred Barkman, Mr. and Mrs. Reimer, Mrs. Harry Neufeld and Harry Neufeld. Photo identification courtesy of Helen Rieger, Box 3730, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.



Photograph of the countryside at Pregowo Züf (formerly Prangenau) in Poland, birthplace of Peter Regehr (1740-1811). Photo taken in 1993 by Cliff Regehr: see article by Ron & Wendy Dueck, "Prussian Roots," in Preservings, No. 9, Dec. 1996, Part Two, pages 57-61, for additional information about the Prussian roots of various Hanover Steinbach pioneers.

same answer, 'I have had the very best man in the world, why would I settle for anything less?'"

It was probably Elizabeth's sense of self-worth that made her an unsung feminist, long before this term was used in popular writing. She had found her personal faith and a profound sense of ethics by which she lived. She was, in all manner, her own person.

With the thoughtful care and attention from daughter Helen and son-in-law Simon Rieger Elizabeth lived comfortably for many years in the Ashwood Apartments in Steinbach until she had to be cared for in the Extended Care Unit of the Steinbach Hospital where she died peacefully on May 12, 1977.

Mennonite Books?

Are you looking for Mennonite Books? If you do not live near a large centre with a Mennonite Book Store, this can be a challenge. Solution: contact Gil Brandt at "Mennonite Books", 844-K Mcleod Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R2G 2T7. They offer a book club service with a **FREE** semi-annual catalogue mail-out listing many books currently available. This is also a good way of keeping up with new publications.

'Auswanderung! 1948

"Auswanderung! Paraguay 1948": Based on excerpts from the diaries of Bernhardt "Ben" S. Wiebe (1913-71), by daughter Anne Funk, Box 586, Grunthal, Manitoba, R0A 0R0.

Introduction.

As long as I can remember, I have known that my father, mother and older siblings took part in the 'Auswanderung' (emigration) of Mennonites from Manitoba to Paraguay in 1948. At the time they had a farm 3 1/2 miles south of Grunthal on SE4-5-5E.

As a child, I did not find this particularly significant and since both my parents died when I was still too young to even appreciate the story, there was little opportunity to learn it first hand from them. But, my interest and subsequent fascination grew when I began to hear details and anecdotes from my siblings of their experiences in the migration, and especially when, upon his death, I read my father's diaries.

It has been said: 'still waters run deep'. My quiet soft-spoken father had not only related essential information about the venture in his writings, but openly described the deep personal struggles he encountered during the 'Auswanderung'.

He writes why he and others felt the need to immigrate: "The time is just after World War II, and many feel that certain promised freedoms the Mennonite people had once received from the government of Canada, particularly, that no Mennonite need ever serve in the military, are in danger of being revoked."

He further wrote: "The government has already revoked the promised freedom of private, German education for our children, and replaced it with public schools, where-in lie all the inherent dangers of imposing upon impressionable young minds the fables and follies of this world; such a government could as easily revoke the military exemption."

"Because," he states emphatically, "no faithful Mennonite can serve the cause of an earthly king."

These, and others became the reasons for an 'Auswanderung'. And when the war was over delegates, elected from the East and West Reserves of Manitoba, were sent to Mexico and Paraguay, to determine which country would be best suited for an 'Enwanderung' (immigration). Upon completion of their searching out, Paraguay was chosen; whose government was found to be very receptive to the idea of an immigration by Mennonites, and very willing to guarantee those rights so important to the 'Auswanderer'. They were granted the freedom to practise their religion, educate their children, retain their "muttasproake", and most significantly, they were promised exemption from service in the Paraguayan military.

Emigration 1948.

The great "Auswanderung" began in ear-

nest. Those planning to take part in the emigration sold their farms, their cattle, and their machinery. Packing crates were built and filled with such goods as would be essential for be-



Bernhardt "Ben" S. Wiebe (1913-71) and Aganetha Braun Wiebe (1913-54), shortly before their immigration to Paraguay. All photographs for this article are courtesy of Ann Funk, Box 586, Grunthal, Manitoba, R0A 0R0.

ginning life in the new land; passports were ordered, and in homes and churches farewell services were held.

Land was purchased in Paraguay; 43,000 hectares for the cost of \$200,000.00.

The preparations for the massive undertaking of the 'Auswanderung' of '48 took approximately two years to complete.

"Now it is the night before departure," writes Father. "Everyone goes to bed, perhaps for the last time ever, in the homes of parents, or children."

"Everything that one holds dear, one is supposed to leave behind; parents, siblings, friends, and begin again in a strange wilderness."

"Many scarcely slept; but rather passed the dark night hours in silent supplication to the Comforter of all fears."

"The morning dawns grey and wet; downcast and gloomy, reflecting our spirits. But to-

day is the day, rain or shine, away!"

"We pack up the last belongings, eat a hasty breakfast, and drive to the railway station, where the train is already waiting. Also waiting are many friends to give us a last farewell. The time to leave comes all too quickly. The whistle blows. From those who stay behind we receive a soft, pain-filled blessing: "Live well; God keep you". A last kiss, a last embrace, a last look through bitter tears, and we are away."

"Slowly the wheels begin to turn. In the train we are looking out, committing to memory the faces of loved ones standing outside. Everyone is weeping. The strains of 'God be with you, till we meet again' become softer and softer till we can no longer hear it. Faster and faster turn the wheels. Away, away, we are away."

The train left Niverville, Manitoba on June 23, 1948, taking my parents and the other 'Auswanderer' east to the mighty St. Lawrence River. At Wolfes Cove, in Quebec City, on the 25th of June they embarked on the Holland-American steamship, Volendam. It would carry them across the Atlantic Ocean to their new home in South America. On board were 1700 'Auswanderer' and 300 ship's personnel: see article "Lawyer Advises Chortitzer 1948," in *Preservings*, No.7, Dec. 1995, pages 16-17.

"One experiences mixed and troubling emotions," writes Father, "as we enter this vast ocean. Few if any here have ever seen so much water at one time! One wonders what dangers lie ahead on this long journey; perhaps seasicknesses or great storms. Everyone has heard of ships sinking in such storms. We can only plead that God in His mercy will bring us safely through."

The view on the ship must at times have been somewhat tedious, for Father writes: "It did not matter whether one stood on A deck, B deck, C deck, D deck, Promenade Deck, or Boat deck, all one could see, was Mennonites and water!"

The tenth day of July, writes Father, "A wonderful 10 pound baby girl was born in the ship's infirmary, who answers to the name Helena."

Helena was the daughter to Ben and Neta Wiebe, my parents. (Helena was Father's second birth child. He had married his brother Jacob's widow three years previous, and had become an instant father to her five children.)

Villarica, Paraguay.

So, with seven children, the youngest only 9 days old, they arrived in Buenos Aires. on July 19th, 1948. They had successfully crossed the great Atlantic Ocean. They left Buenos Aires by train and came to Villarica, Paraguay.



A typical ox-drawn vehicle used by the Chortitzer immigrants to the East Paraguay in 1948. Ironically the 1948 Sommerfeld and Bergthal Colonies have turned out to be the wealthiest Mennonite Colonies in Paraguay because the land was much more fertile and the eastern part of Paraguay is more densely populated and highly developed, etc.

There, in an abandoned mill 428 people, including my parents and siblings, found refuge from the cold temperatures and winds of a South American winter.

The hardships of the journey, the overcrowded facilities in the mill, and the lack of proper nutrition, took a devastating toll. Dysentery sapped the health of children and adults alike, and in the aftermath nine children lay buried in the German section of the Spanish cemetery in Villarica, South America.

Our family was not spared; two of those nine were my siblings. Within forty-eight hours of each other, my father and mother buried their youngest children, five-week-old Helena and two-year-old Isaac. My father of few words takes five pages in his diary to com-



Ben S. Wiebe slaughtering a hog during the time in Villarica, Paraguay in 1948. In the background is the tent in which the family lived.

municate the emotions he experienced during this time of devastating sorrow. He writes that he had always hoped to father at least two children, a son and a daughter. And happily within three years of marriage to my mother, this wish was granted.

“Our measure of gladness was overflowing,” he writes. “What we had hoped for had come true. We were given two beautiful children, who in the short time we had them, gave us such happiness! But our joy was not to be for long. God desires them to return to Him; we must let Him have His way. He gave them to us, and now He has taken them back to Himself. To Him we give honour, praise and thanksgiving.”

My father then expresses his gratitude that he and mother still had “five wonderful children remaining”.

Settling the Land.

In October of 1948 my parents embarked on the final leg of their long journey. “We left Villarica by oxcart to claim the land we had come such a long way to farm,” writes Father. “The journey is incredibly hard, up-hill and down, through dense forests, and mud, and ravines and swollen rivers, all in a strange land where everything is unfamiliar.”

But the pioneer spirit so necessary to forge ahead in a new land was also present throughout the difficulties. Father’s last entry before they reached their destination was: “During a difficult, discouraging day such as we have just been through, when nothing comes right, in a land that is unfamiliar, on a road never before travelled, and night comes on, and one is still a long, long way from shelter, then one’s character is put to the test, and one quickly discovers the sincerity of brotherhood or how deep is one’s love for one’s neighbour.”

“So we felt that dreary, heartbreaking night. But when morning came, dawning as it did with a glorious sunrise, all was better again. And after some reflection, we simply

had to agree; it had not been so bad after all. Things could easily have been a lot worse. We were fortunate to have come through as well as we did.”

That was the last entry in Father’s diary for a year. Nothing is written of the time spent living on the land. I wondered why; there surely must have been experiences to write about.

Visit 1996.

And that brings this story to now, nearly fifty years later. My parents left Paraguay in October of ‘49, and returned to Canada, to Grunthal, Manitoba, to live again on the farm (SE4-5-5E) where they had lived before the ‘Auswanderung’ of ‘48. Since I was born two years after their return, my link with Paraguay was almost nonexistent. But as I grew older, it began to be important to me that I explore my South American ‘roots’.

My mother has two sisters living in Colony Bergthal East Paraguay, and in October of 1996, I was privileged to visit them. I was met by wonderful relatives, Jacob and Anna Funk, who picked me up from the airport in Asuncion, and took me the nearly 300 kilometers to Colony Bergthal. For two weeks I visited and had the unforgettable experience of meeting my aunts.

I was not quite three when my mother died,



The old abandoned sugar mill in Villarica. Here Ben S. Wiebe and some 428 others lived from early July until moving onto the land in October, 1948.

and becoming acquainted with her sisters was like opening the door to knowing her. My Taunte Lein is said to be the most like my mother. She is a warm, happy, spirited woman, 85 years old, and carries herself like someone half that age! She and my Taunte Tein revealed my mother to me by the stories they told of her life and childhood. We laughed and cried together, and when I said goodbye at the end of my visit, I felt both the joy of having found my ‘roots’ and the pain of that early loss.

My relatives in Colony Bergthal took me in and gave me a glimpse of life as they live it. They gave me of their best in hospitality and in fellowship, and I will never forget the time I spent with them. I found that we share a great many aspirations; making a living, raising a family, and cherishing our grandchildren. Like us, they too have their society, their church and their God.

I did ask my Taunte Lein if she could shed

light on why Father had not written at all of the year on the land. She was silent a while and then said: "I believe the reason must be that his life here was too difficult. He simply could not bring himself to even write about it."

And then she proceeded to tell how it was in the beginning, how strange and unfamiliar the 'Auswanderer' felt in their new country. There were homesteads to build where nothing had existed before, and the land had to be wrestled from the steaming, dark, impenetrable forests by sheer force of sweat and unrelenting labour. To this day one can see reflected in the faces and work-thickened hands of those early immigrants the tremendous hardships that go with the pioneering of a new land. Even now, years later, when the hard work is done by labour saving machinery, they sit in a stillness that attests to a bone-deep weariness that no amount of rest will ever fully cease.

Conclusion.

My respect and admiration grew apace, when I realised the full scope of the immense effort that has been expended to establish this well-ordered colony with its neat farm yards, its planted gardens, its sleek cattle, its vast hectares of golden wheat, its quiet, understated prosperity.

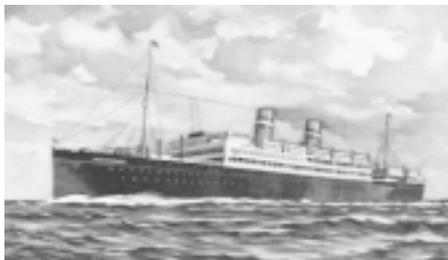
Canada is my home, a land that I love, but for two weeks one October, I was in a place that, had fate and circumstances been otherwise, might very well have been my home. How would my life be then, I wonder.

Descendants.

The descendants of Ben S. and Aganetha Wiebe include Aganetha's son Rev. Ed Wiebe (son of Jakob S. Wiebe), Steinbach, formerly chicken farmer in Grunthal, well-known as a director of the Steinbach Credit Union for many years. The extended Wiebe family includes Dr. Cornelius W. Wiebe, Winkler, and Dr. Bernie Wiebe, Menno Simons College, Winnipeg.

About the Author.

Anne Funk is married to Henry Funk, owner of Sandy Ridge Construction and President of the Grunthal Credit Union Ltd. Anne is a homemaker and writer-producer of Low German dramas. Her brilliant stage productions have been played in numerous venues in Southern Manitoba, Winnipeg and elsewhere and have been enjoyed by thousands.



The S. S. Volandam, the ship in which 1700 immigrants made the journey from Quebec, Canada, to Buenos Aires.



The railway station where the immigrants arrived in July 1948. The station is still used occasionally.

Historical Note.

Bernhardt S. Wiebe (1913-71) was the son of Jakob Wiebe (1886-1954) born in the Altona area. Jakob was married to Susanna Schellenberg, daughter of John Schellenberg and Elisabeth Warkentin. The family moved to the Grunthal area in 1930.

Jakob Wiebe was the son of Bernd Wiebe (1854-1916) and Katharina Friesen (1858-1938), daughter of Johann Friesen (1833-60) and Katharina Falk, who later married his cousin Abraham Friesen (b. 1831) BGB B137: Gnadefeld 1881, BGB 140, 369. Katharina Friesen (1858-1938) was a cousin to David W. Friesen (1879-1951) founder of the "D. W. Friesen" printing firm in Altona. David's sister, Helena (1884-1960) was the grandfather of John F., Cornelius F., and Diedrich F. Friesen, poultry farmers in the Grunthal area: see article by Henry Schapansky, "Bergthaler/Chortitzer Friesens," elsewhere in this newsletter.

Bernd Wiebe was the son of Bernd Wiebe (1821-97) BGBA137, who lived in Heuboden, Bergthal Colony, and came to Canada in 1876. The "Brot Schuld Registers" of the Bergthaler Gemeinde ER show a Bernd Wiebe son of Peter resident in Hochfeld, E.R., around 1876: *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part Two, page 42. Bernd Wiebe (1821-97) is listed in Wiedenfeld, WR, in the 1881 census, BGB 274,375. In his Journal for July 20, 1896, Chortitzer Aeltester David Stoesz has recorded that "uncle Bernhard Wiebe left here [Bergthal, ER] after a 3 day visit." On November 15, 1896, Stoesz noted that he "went to the Bernd Wiebes, Weidenfeld, for the night"—*Historical Sketches*, pages 454-5. David Stoesz was married to Maria Wiebe (b. 1842), daughter of Heinrich Wiebe (1806-65) BGB A 119. The wedding invitation letter for Maria and David Stoesz dated November 25,

1862, invited Bernhard Wiebe, Heuboden, also the village where the bride's parents lived—*Bergthal Colony*, page 42.

Bernd Wiebe (1854-1916) is listed in the 1881 census in Gnadefeld, WR, BGB 154-370, the same village where his mother and step-father had settled. Bernd and Katharina Wiebe farmed all their lives in the Altona area and are buried on a farmyard near Rosenfeld, 1 miles west on the west side of Highway 14. Additional information about the Wiebe family is found in Herman Rempel, "Bernhard Wiebe and Descendants Book."

Bernhardt S. Wiebe (1913-71) married Aganetha Braun (1913-54), widow of his brother Jakob. Aganetha was the daughter of Jakob Braun (1885-1921) of the village of Gnadefeld, a cousin to Jakob Braun III, referred to in the article "The House of Jakob," by Ernest Braun elsewhere in this newsletter.

In a letter of October 10, 1997, Henry Schapansky writes, "Bernhard Wiebe (25.7.1821) m. 1844 Kornelia Wiebe (4.9.1824). This is probably a difficult family to trace. There doesn't appear to be any primary documents, as far as I know. My best guess would be:

Bernhard Wiebe (1821-96) was the son of Jakob Wiebe (b. 1784) and Maria Rempel? (b. 1788) of Mariendorf, Old Colony. Kornelia Wiebe (1824-95) was the daughter of Heinrich Wiebe (b. 1782) and Anna Hiebert? (b. 1783) of Rosenthal, Old Colony. All of this needs some kind of corroboration."

Coming in the next issue.

Article by Henry Schapansky on the Bergthaler/Chortitzer Wiebe families.

House of Jacobs 1787 - 1997

The House of Jacobs 1787-1997: The Gnadenfeld Brauns: Four Generations of the Braun Family: by Ernest Braun, Box 595, Niverville, Manitoba, ROA 1E0.

Jacob Braun I.

Oddly enough, in a Mennonite family, for no apparent reason Peter D. Braun (b. 1787 in Lackendorf, Poland) named his only son, born in 1826, Jacob. Neither his father or father-in-law, nor his grandfathers or even his great-grandfathers bore that name. Perhaps some obscure ancestor explains the choice. At any rate, the unusual name became a tradition in the Braun family to the present day, with the oldest son of the family bearing the venerable name.

Young Jacob's father died in Russia when the son was only 6 months old, and his mother left him orphaned completely in 1835 when he turned 9. Such an inauspicious start did not prevent Jacob



1926 - Jakob Braun II at Carey (St. Pierre), Manitoba, with bundles of goods being loaded on the train. With him, standing to his left, is Menno Doerksen, son of delegate Doerksen. All photos for this article are courtesy of Ernest Braun, Box 595, Niverville, Manitoba, ROA 1E0.

I from living a full and productive life, eventually establishing a family of descendants that runs into the thousands.

He grew up with relatives in Kronsthal and Rosenthal (among whom was the renowned Oberschulze Jacob Peters family), married a girl from Kronsthal and eventually settled in Friedrichsthal, Bergthall Colony when that village was established in the early 1850s. Here he and Katherina Funk pioneered and prospered.

Children arrived, the first a son named Peter in honour of his father, a son who tragically died just after turning 21 years of age. A daughter, Helena, was followed in 1853 by another son, this one named Jacob out of respect for his father. Other children followed, but Jacob was destined to be the one carrying on the "Jacob" tradition. Meanwhile, Jacob I took his place in the development of the village, representing his colony on the Agricultural Verein (*Oberschulze*, page 122), and increasing his holdings to provide for his sons.

Jacob Braun II.

Jacob II, born 1853, probably in the new settlement, became the embodiment of this new life and

continued all his life to personify the quest for new experience. He received more than usual education in Russia, worked hard to help develop the homestead, and emigrated to Canada with his parents and siblings in 1875. Jacob I and Jacob II both took out a patent for a homestead in Gnadenfeld, East Reserve, SW18-5-5E and SW 20-5-5E, respectively. Here Jacob I pioneered for the second time in his 50 years. Jacob II also pioneered for the second time, although the first time he was probably conscripted.

Father and son set up two parallel homesteads with house barns in adjacent lots on the south side of the village road, and farmed into retirement, but not before Jacob I became the largest and wealthiest landowner in the area. Meanwhile, in Russia his nephews, the Niebuhrs, established during these same decades one of the greatest industrial fortunes in Mennonite history up to that time. This point may well be the high-water mark of the family's economy for the next 5 generations.

Already in Russia, Jacob I had developed inflamed eyes as a result of cleaning grain and eventually by the turn of the century, he became totally blind. Although he spent the last 20 years in darkness, that did not diminish his energy nor cramp his lifestyle. Grandchildren remember him heaving himself up from his bed by grasping a knot on a long rope dangling from the ceiling, gathering his strength with a characteristic "harrauch" and hoisting himself erect with one great effort. He died suddenly in 1919 at the age of 93, a robust man until the end who strode confidently along the village street despite his handicap. His death certificate reads simply that he died of "senile debility", an ironic comment on a life full of strength and courage.

Jacob II, who homesteaded right beside his father, had been remarkably strong as a young man, with the double advantage of a good education obtained in Russia. He was appointed the Auditor of the newly-formed Hanover Municipality which at that time did most of its accounting in German. He married Maria Funk of Gnadenfeld and continued the tradition of naming the eldest son, Jacob. However, shortly after his marriage he developed a liver ailment which affected his health and diet for the rest of his life. However, that did not prevent him from becoming a prosperous, influential farmer in his own right, paralleling the success his brother Johann Braun of "Braun & Krahn" was making of his business in the neighbouring village of Grunthal.

For Jacob II, it was at retirement that things became interesting. Since he no longer needed to do the actual hands-on farm work, he had time for the two activities he enjoyed most, discussion and reading. He subscribed to the *Nordwesten*, and obtained the first telephone in the village. He could not wait to read the *Nordwesten* so he was the one who always went to the Post Office in Grunthal to fetch it, and would tie the reins to the front of the buggy and let the horse find its



Jakob Braun II and Maria Funk Braun, 1926 passport photograph.

way home, while he avidly read the paper. At home, he was loath to miss any news, so he parked his "Ruhbank" (sleeping bench or setee) right underneath the telephone and took his nap there; then when the phone rang he wouldn't even have to get up to answer it.

He was by far the most noted story teller in the village; in fact, he was most willing to give his opinion on anything. Some of those opinions have survived: he was of the mind that the Soviet Union's time was limited, and that things would again be as they had been in about fifty years (which placed the prediction into the mid to late 1980s, just about the time the USSR actually broke up). His voice can still be detected in his often repeated vow that "if Russia would ever get to be what it used to be, [he] would walk back there on foot." He often asserted that if one had the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other, one would be prepared for any eventuality.

Needless to say, he was also an influential voice in the matters surrounding the school question and the military service issue that arose as a consequence of WW I. He believed that the traditional privileges were at risk, especially the language, and that the best way to deal with the situation was to emigrate again, this time to South America. The contemporaneous situation in Russia which robbed his wealthy cousins of their factories and dachas, sending them penniless into exile in exactly these years must have produced a heightened urgency. Consequently, he placed the weight of his opinion behind the emigration movement, and sold his very considerable assets (he was the largest landowner in the village), and prevailed upon his sons (except Johann) to do likewise.

By this time he was 72 years old. It speaks of his strength of character that he and his wife Maria



1941. Jakob Braun III and Maria Klassen Braun, his second wife.



Jakob Braun IV and Cornelia Funk, wedding photo, 1941.

at their advanced age, undertook another emigration in the evening of their lives, an emigration that took them into a foreign climate as well as a different continent.

The picture of Jacob II shows him with the bundles of possessions at Carey, a man of stature, in many ways a man of profound influence and conviction, willing to abandon a life's work for a faith, language, culture and religious freedom. Several years in the tropics, where he lived in the Chaco village of Reinland helping his daughter and son-in-law establish themselves in a new homestead, did nothing to mellow him. An eyewitness described the moment he decided that some sacrifices are not worth making, for after sitting for days painstakingly separating the cotton from its seed, he threw down the last handful and said, "I'd rather plow 10 acres of wheat land by hand than do this!"

And true to form, he initiated the necessary maneuvers to return to Canada, taking his entire family with him again, to re-establish themselves in the scrub bush south of Grunthal, taking land that had remained in virgin bush because it was inferior crop land. Here the sons started over

again, demoralized somewhat and even broken.

Jacob II, however, continued on as talkative and self-confident as ever. His wife died a year after their return, leaving Jacob to move from son to son. He became the self-appointed agent for the sons, doing their buying as well as that of their neighbours so that the farmers would not need to leave their work. Grandchildren remember that he never wrote anything down for these trips to town, and yet he remembered to buy every single thing, a prodigious memory still envied today. He regaled the grandchildren with stories of Russia, of the blue water of the sea of Azov, which he mentioned often to the end of his life. When he was well into his eighties, he would go visiting on foot, often trudging 8 miles to visit his nephew who was by this time also retired.

An interesting aside to this man's life story is that shortly after he married Maria Funk (walking to Winnipeg from Grunthal to court her), he developed an abdominal condition that required him to be completely vegetarian, so that throughout a long life spent in various difficult circumstances, his food had to be cooked separately. Yet this did not prevent him from taking snuff, a habit he made into an artform which most people who knew him associate with him to this day. In the end, Jacob II died of heart failure at the age of 88 years of age in 1941, and was buried in the Grunthal cemetery. His adult life spanned the economic rise and fall of the family fortunes, the latter accelerated by the liquidation of assets necessary for emigration to Paraguay, the cost of the migration and the dissipation of those assets in the Chaco tent village.

Jacob Braun III.

Jacob III, born 1887, was the oldest surviving son of Jacob II. He grew up in Gnadenfeld on the home farm, married into the prominent Falk family of Bergfeld and settled in to a prosperous Mennonite village existence, with a farm clear of debt, a partnership in a steam threshing outfit and a young lad, Jacob IV, on the way to take over the homestead whenever Jacob wished to retire.

The events of 1924, however, changed all that as Jacob III, encouraged by Katherina his wife, reluctantly sold his farm and possessions to follow his father to Paraguay. There, in a tent and lean-to, the family stagnated for a few months waiting for the trackless Chaco to be surveyed. Meanwhile, Jacob was responsible for running the steam engine that supplied the camp with water, working occasionally in the Quebracho mills, until less than three months later, Katherina, his wife died suddenly, leaving Jacob III with six young children. The heat and the insects and the delay combined with the tragedy to intensify Jacob's opinion that the emigration was a mistake, at least for him, and he marked time until his father made up his mind to return to Canada. With characteristic enterprise, he together with his brother-in-law set up a small supply store along the narrow-gauge railway into the Chaco, and survived that way until 1929, when the whole family returned to Canada. (See article by Ernest Braun, "My Grandmother's Song" in *Preservings*, No 10, Dec. 1996, Part One, pages 43-46.)

However, for him it was too late, for his health was broken, and although he was known as "Groote" Bruhn before, he never fully recovered



Jakob Braun IV and Cornelia Funk Braun, 1954.

his health or his demeanour, dying in 1950 of cancer at the age of 63. An interesting footnote to this life story is that in the 21 years after returning to Canada and settling on undeveloped land, Jacob III never once mentioned the prosperous circumstances he had left, symbolized by his father's housebarn still standing just a few miles away. In fact, the younger children never knew it was there until a chance reference in 1990 brought it to their attention.

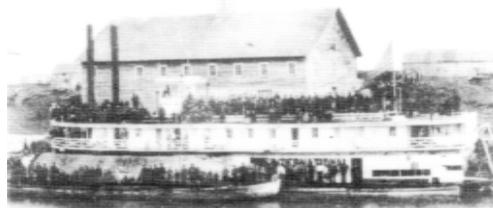
Jacob Braun IV.

Jacob IV was an 11 year-old boy when the prosperous farm in Bergfeld was sold and the trek to South America was begun. He enjoyed the sojourn in Puerto Casado, later regaling his wife with stories of his escapades, out-running the train on foot, walking on homemade stilts, and nearly drowning in the river at Casado. However, the return of the family to Canada coincided with the stock market crash of 1929, and Jacob entered his teen years just as the Great Depression of the thirties settled in for the decade. Jacob spent that decade cutting firewood to keep the larger family alive, walking from farmer to farmer hoping to work enough for a meal or even lodging. Despite this and despite his reputation as a noted backwoods wrestler, Jacob IV is remembered as smiling and as a ready conversationalist, specializing in flippant comebacks and an optimistic outlook, always giving the other the benefit of the doubt. Even today his nephews remember him as someone who could outwork anybody and enjoy it.

As things began looking up near the end of the thirties, Jacob's inherited entrepreneurial spirit manifested itself in the purchase of a steel-wheeled tractor and a breaking plow, which he and his brother Peter used to break much of the scrub land in the area as livestock culture began to give way to grain production in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

After marrying Cornelia Funk, his second cousin, he managed the home farm in Weidenfeld for a while and then pioneered himself on scrub land in the school district of Bergfeld now called

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Woolwich. Drainage problems ended that experiment, and Jacob went to work for other farmers, including his own father until again in the late forties, he built another yard on the same Bergfeld farm, hoping that he would be able to develop it into a viable livelihood.

A series of very unfortunate circumstances, such as the loss of 8 yearling heifers which would have doubled his dairy herd the next year, and then the loss of his entire dairy herd to TB just two years later, made survival there untenable, and after years of itinerant work as a carpenter, in the spring of 1955, Jacob IV became the first first-born to leave the farm for a regular city "job", a word hardly known in the family until then. He became a weekend father and husband, commuting back and forth to Winnipeg once a week.

What the consequences of that shift would have been for the family of Jacob IV will never be known. Jacob, knowing he would be turning 40 in a few weeks and that his term life insurance would expire on that day, did not make his final quarterly payment. On November 5, 1955, just 6 weeks after that decision, the last unfortunate circumstance occurred: Jacob's own tragic death on the way home from the city in a high-way accident near the Niverville corner, ironically right at a cemetery in the ditch, leaving his wife with 4 young children. He had just turned 40 years of age. Economically, the House of Jacobs had bottomed out after 80 years in Canada: Jacob IV's wife and four children were left on a quarter section of slough and bush, to the mercy of the Provincial welfare system.

Jacob V?

Is there a Jacob V? In a way, yes, despite the fact that Jacob IV and Cornelia his wife agreed (prophetically it would seem) that the life span of Jacobs was decreasing too rapidly for comfort, and maybe there were enough Jacob Brauns around, so the oldest son was given the Jacob only as a second name, despite the pleas of Jacob III. You might know him by his first name, Henry Jacob Braun, Secretary-Treasurer of Hanover School Division, and he has no male descendants at all. In the larger circle of descendants, there are many Jacob Brauns even today, and yet, in a way, this is the end of the House of Jacobs.

Descendants:

Jacob I - Al Hamm (Manager of Steinbach Credit Union), David Jacob Braun (Social worker in Steinbach), Michael Kroeker (Loewen Do-it Centre), Barb Leppky (formerly of Tourond);

Jacob II - Rev. Jacob Funk (Licht des Evangeliums, MBC), Rev. John Wiebe (Grunthal Bergthaler Church), Ed Wiebe (Steinbach Credit Union Board), Anne Funk (Low German playwright), Clare Braun (PC candidate for Provencher, 1997);

Jacob III - the late Rev. David Braun (Steinbach CMC), Werner Braun (former Mayor of Grunthal/businessman);

Jacob IV - Henry Jacob Braun (Secretary-Treasurer of Hanover S.D.), Ernest Braun (writer of the article).

Sources:

Abram B. Giesbrecht, "Gnadenfeld," in *Grunthal History*, pages 55-57.

Peter Neufeld (1821-1922): Centenarian

Peter D. Neufeld (1821-1922), Schönthal, Bergthal Colony, Imperial Russia, to Ebenfeld, Manitoba - Centenarian; by Audrey Toews, Box 991, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

Peter Neufeld was born to Jacob Neufeld (1792-1870) and wife Maria P. Doerksen (1798-1877) on February 16, 1821 in the Chortitza Colony, South Russia, BGB A 66. The Jakob Neufeld family first lived in Rosenthal, Chortitza Colony, and later in Schönwiese, before moving to the Bergthal Colony in 1837.

Peter had one older brother, Jacob born in 1818. Two more brothers and three sisters followed; Katarina in 1823, Abraham in 1830, Maria in 1833, Elisabeth in 1837, and Johann in 1840. It is interesting to note that at a time when so many women died in childbirth, both Peter's parents reached old age. In fact, Peter's mother, Maria, came to Canada as well, arriving in Quebec on the S.S. Peruvian on July 13, 1875. She travelled with her daughter Elisabeth, the Cornelius Neufeld family.

Bergthal Colony 1833-76.

According to The Bergthal Colony by Wm. Schroeder of Winnipeg, the Chortitza Colony in South Russia was becoming crowded by the early 1830s. The first group of Mennonite settlers having arrived there in 1788. With an increase in the population and a law that stated that lands could not be divided, it soon became necessary for the group to find new lands. In 1833 this became possible when the Chortitza Colony was able to purchase a parcel of land in an area 20 miles northwest of Mariupol.

The year 1833 resulted in the worst crop failure that the Chortitza Colony had experienced in Russia and therefore the people were in no rush to migrate. Also they did not want to make the same mistakes that had happened during the previous migration. Only families belonging to the Flemish congregation and not the Frisian were encouraged to go and they made sure that there was a minister to accompany them.

Peter was 16 at the time when his parents moved to the Bergthal colony in 1837. His parents were 44 and 39 and his youngest sibling, Maria, was almost 4. The group had moved into a beautiful area: the landscape was relatively level, but a high hill to the north and the Bodena Valley in which the first group settled, inspired them to call the new colony and its main village, Bergthal, literally "mountain valley". The people were industrious and by 1845, Johann Cornies reported that Bergthal had 401 apple trees, 400 pear trees, 197 plum trees, 295 cherry trees and 36 apricot trees besides numerous other shade trees—the village of Bergthal had a total of 3,982 trees.



Peter D. Neufeld age 78 with his second wife, Anna Hildebrand, age 63, circa 1899, first published by Klaas J. B. Reimer, "[Peter Neufeld] boxed article, no title," Steinbach Post, March 30, 1965. All photographs for this article except as indicated are courtesy of Audrey Toews, Box 991, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Peter Neufeld (1821-1922).

Peter D. Neufeld was baptized on the confession of his faith on May 31, 1843 at the age of 22.

He was the third child in the family to wed when he married Susanna N. Bergen on June 11, 1844. He was 23 and she was almost 19. Life was not without its hardships for this couple. Their first three children died at 6 months, 2 days, and 1 1/2 years respectively. The same year that their third child died, Peter's youngest brother, Johann, 8 years old, also died. Other children of Peter and Susanna Neufeld's were Jacob, born in 1851, Heinrich and his twin brother Peter

were born in 1853, Peter died at the age of 8 years. Abraham was born in 1856, Johann, born in 1859 did not live. Susanna was born in 1860, Maria in 1863. In the year 1866, Peter and Susanna again had a set of twin boys, Peter and Johann. Johann lived only 10 days. Katarina, the youngest, was born in 1869.

Peter D. Neufeld was known as a successful entrepreneur in Bergthal and "operated a store and inn (Schenke) and later owned a Wirtschaft in Schönthal. He evidently owned cattle since he had considerable knowledge of the treatment of cattle ailments common to herds in Russia"—John Dyck, "Kleefeld,"



Peter D. Neufeld in 1921 at age 100. Mr. Neufeld is walking across the yard at Gerhard Ungers with a sack of watermelon over his shoulder.



Peter Neufeld with his second wife Anna on the occasion of his 100th birthday. The photo is taken on the yard of Gerhard Ungers where the Peter Neufelds were living at the time. Photo courtesy of great-grandson Leonard Unger, Box 696, Steinbach, R0A 2A0.

Historical Sketches, page 150. Great-grandson Leo Unger, Felsenton, also recalled family tradition that Peter Neufeld was known as “Schencka Neufeld”, and that this came from his younger days. Although literally a bar, a “Schenk” in Russia would have been the equivalent of the modern-day roadside inn where travellers would stop to rest and feed their horses (Note One).

Emigration, 1874.

In 1874, less than 40 years later, the Bergthal colony was again ready to move, this time the destination was Manitoba. The S.S.

Nova Scotian No. 46 arriving in Quebec on July 27, 1874, carried Peter Neufeld 53 labourer; Susanna 49 wife; H (Heinrich) 21 child; A (Abraham) 18 child; P (Peter) 8 child; S (Susanne) 14 child; M (Maria) 11 child; K (Katarina) 5 child; J (Jacob) 15 child (should have read age 23).

Once in Manitoba the family settled in what became known as the Ebenfeld district, on Sections 4 and 5-7-6E, a mile northwest of Steinbach. The “Brot Schult Registers” recently published by Irene Kroeker, list 23 families in the village at the time. The teacher was Jakob Hiebert, who later moved to Schantzenfeld where his wife was a famous midwife and medical practitioner—see Regina Neufeld, “Katharina Hiebert (1855-1910),” in *Preservings*, No. 10, June 1997, Part Two, pages 14-16.

Also emigrating was Peter’s brother Jakob (b. 1818) and his family who left Russia in 1876. According to the “Brot Schult Registers” they originally settled in Ebenfeld. By 1881 they were living in the village of Rosengart, several miles south of Ebenfeld—“Seelenlisten 1882,” in *Working Papers*, page 156. Some of their descendants still live in the area to the present day.

Kleefeld/Ebenfeld, Manitoba.

The Peter D. Neufeld family was quite progressive and Peter together with sons Peter, Heinrich, and Jakob homesteaded and/or purchased a block of 800 acres of land along the north side of what is now P.T.H. 52 between Mitchell and Steinbach, consisting of all of Section 4-7-6E and the SW Section 5-7-6E. Obviously Peter was concerned that he would have enough land for all his sons and sons-in-law in years to come. According to the Homestead map (*Working Papers*, page 201), Peter took out his Homestead on NE 4-7-6E on October 5, 1874, one of the first settlers to do so.

The community formed by the four Neufeld families was referred to as “Kleefeld” in various early documents. But eventually it came to be considered part of Ebenfeld, the Bergthaler/Chortitzer settlement immediately to the west and north.

Son Jakob was the first to marry in 1877 at the age of 26, Abraham followed in 1878. Daughter Susan married Peter H. Penner in 1881 and died a year later in 1882. Maria married in 1885 and then, finally, Heinrich, the second oldest, married in 1888 at the age of 35. Peter and Katarina were the last to marry in 1890.

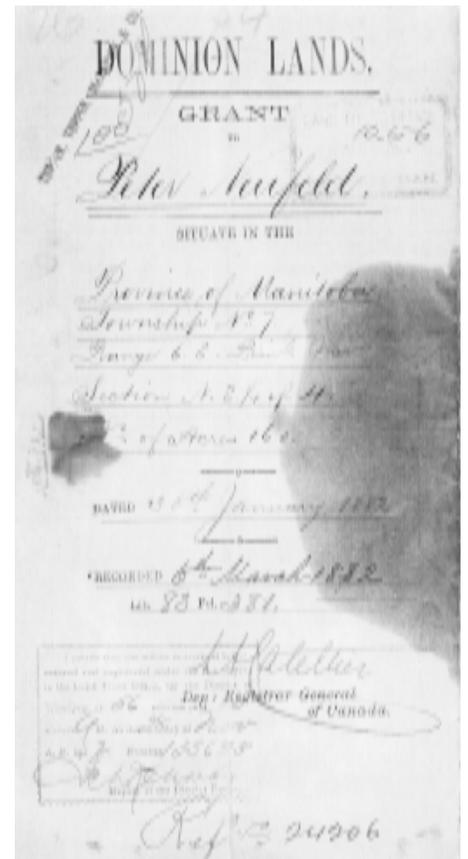
In 1882 Peter D. Neufeld received title to his 160 acres of land 4-7-6 E. Years later his grandson Peter K. Neufeld, lived on the farm. Today it is owned by Dr. Paul and Dorothy Peters. It is possible that the picture of the Heinrich B. Neufeld farm circa 1900 is this same farm. Peter D. Neufeld must have sold part of his land to Klaas W. Reimer because Garnet Reimer, son of John F. Reimer, has an identical “Homestead land grant” and says that is where his father grew up.

It appears that Peter Neufeld also served as a Councillor of the Municipality of Hanover in 1882—*Hanover 100 Years*, page 9.

According to the 1883 Assessment records of the R. M. of Hanover, Peter Neufeld’s total assessment was 1133. He was one of the wealthier farmers in the area with 320 acres of land, 80 acres cultivated, 2 horses, 4 oxen, 13 cattle, 6 calves, and a full line of farm machinery. Peter also owned a threshing machine together with Peter Wiebe of Neuendorf/Eigenfeld, something which only the more established farmers could afford.

The 1885 assessment records state that Peter Neufeld was farming a section of land, 640 acres, with 60 acres cultivated and an assessed value of \$870 land and \$581 for buildings. He had 17 head of cattle, 2 oxen and 6 horses. Son Jakob owned his own quarter section, NE 4-7-6E and had an additional 2 horses and 10 head of cattle. It appears that the homestead lands of sons Peter and Heinrich had been taxed under the father’s name. In 1887 Peter is listed with 570 acres (70 acres cultivated) and son Jakob with 320 acres (30 acres cultivated).

The Neufeld “chutor” was referred to as “Kleefeld” in the tax assessment rolls in 1889 in which Peter and Heinrich are assessed for two quarters each and Jakob for three quar-



Photocopy of land grant 135625 to Peter Neufeld January 30, 1882, NE4-7-6E.

ters of farmland. Peter is assessed at \$1191



Crown Patent for NE4-7-6E dated January 30, 1882, issued in the name of Peter Neufeld.

and Jakob and Heinrich at \$945 and \$975. The three farmers have between 11 and 18 cattle, Peter has 4 horses and an ox and 21 sheep.

In 1896 the following lands are assessed to the Neufeld family: Jakob NE4-7-6E, Heinrich SW4-7-6E, and Peter SE and SE 4-7-6E. Jakob is still farming in a big way with 5 horses, 2 oxen, 21 cattle and 41 sheep. Brother Heinrich seems to be concentrating in his dairy with 20 head of cattle. Peter seems to have retired and owns only 1 horse and 2 cows.

Susanna Bergen Neufeld (1825-87).

The journal of Maria Stoesz Klassen (1823-97) is a valuable source of information for various events in the Ebenfeld area. Her diary has also been identified as the earliest journal by a East Reserve women which is still extant today. Since two of her daughters married two of the Peter Neufeld sons, Heinrich and Peter, it was natural that she would refer to the Neufeld family from time to time.



Heinrich B. Neufeld and Sarah Klassen Neufeld and children, circa 1905. L. to r. children Peter, Henry and Sarah. Sarah Klassen Neufeld's mother, Maria Stoesz Klassen, kept the first known diary of an East Reserve women—see Preservings, No. 10, June 1997, Part One, page 11.

“At 5 o'clock Neufeld's Heinrich came and said we should go to their place, his dear Mother is dead. He went to Pastwa to Penners. We went there and found her lying in her bed dead. She had been sick for 2 hours....November - Tuesday the 1st of November 1887. On the first, Mrs. Neufeld was taken to her resting place at the cemetery. Mrs. H. Berg and I put the last dress attire on her”—*Historical Sketches*, pages 121-122.

Ebenfeld to Sommerfeld, 1905.

Peter D. Neufeld married for the second

time to Anna Hildebrandt (1836-1927), widow B. Friesen.

Klaas J. B. Reimer has written that Peter Neufeld moved to the West Reserve to live in the village of Sommerfeld in 1905. The move may have been inspired by the fact that Peter Bergen, Peter's one-time brother-in-law lived there.

Peter and Anna Neufeld lived here until 1915 at which time they moved back to the Steinbach area to live in a small house on the farm of his children, the Gerhard Ungers, Felsenton, south of Steinbach.



Heinrich B. Neufeld farm? Circa 1902. L. to r: Jakob B. Neufeld family; Heinrich B. Neufelds with Sarah, and Peter Neufeld, son of Jakob B. Neufeld holding the horses. The photo may have been taken on the farm of Heinrich B. Neufeld, 1 1/2 miles west of Steinbach on the present-day P.T.H. 52.



Peter K. Neufeld and first wife, Elizabeth R. Toews (son of Heinrich B. Neufeld). They were the parents of Harry Neufeld, well-known machinery dealer in Steinbach.



Henry K. & Helen (Funk) Neufeld (son of Heinrich B. Neufeld).



Sarah K. Neufeld & Aaron Toews (daughter of Heinrich B. Neufeld). They were the parents of Ernie Toews, Barkman Concrete, who is married to Audrey Toews, the author.

Klaas J. B. Reimer also pointed out that Peter Neufeld was known as a person who was never sick, a trait which has been handed down to a number of descendants.

Peter D. Neufeld passed away on Oct. 21, 1922 at the age of 101 years, 8 months, 5 days and is buried in the Pioneer Cemetery on Reimer Avenue, Steinbach.

A poem written by Jakob ("Berliner") Ketter Kehler for Peter Neufeld on the occasion of his 100th birthday was published in *Historical Sketches*, pages 119-120 (Note Two).

Children of Peter D. Neufeld.

The children of Peter D. Neufeld are listed in the Bergthal Gemeindebuch, BGB B 35. The following list has some dates and names of spouses added;

Jacob B. Neufeld born Jun 2, 1851, Bergthal Colony, Russia married Anna D. Unrau in Kleefeld Sept. 16, 1877 second marriage to Maria C. Unrau, died Nov. 11, 1921.

Heinrich B. Neufeld born Dec. 7, 1853, Bergthal, Russia, married Sarah S. Klassen Nov. 18, 1888, Steinbach, died Dec. 6, 1931 in Steinbach.

Abraham B. Neufeld born Sept. 1, 1856, Bergthal, Russia, married Anna T. Dyck Jan. 20, 1878, died 1921 in Manitoba.

Susanna B. Neufeld born Sept. 2, 1860, Bergthal, Russia, married Peter H. Penner Feb. 12, 1881, died Jan. 3, 1882.

Maria B. Neufeld born Nov. 22, 1866, Bergthal, Russia, married Dirk D. Penner April 12, 1885, died Aug. 15, 1945.

Peter B. Neufeld born Nov. 22, 1866, Bergthal, Russia, married Judith S. Klassen Apr. 23, 1890 in Manitoba, died Aug. 16, 1939.

Katarina B. Neufeld born Oct. 9, 1869, Bergthal, Russia, married Gerhard K. Unger, June 17, 1890.

Heinrich B. Neufeld (1853-1931).

While the Heinrich B. Neufeld family re-



Children of Peter B. Neufeld. Couples from left to right: In front, David and Maria Stoesz with daughter Katie standing in front of Maria; rear left, Cornie and Susanna Neufeld Stoesz; Jakob F. and Helen Wiebe Peters; Aron and Anna Neufeld Schulz, John K. and Elisabeth Schulz Neufeld; and Henry K. and Gertrude Friesen Neufeld with daughter Mary. Photo identification courtesy of Ben and Bertha Rempel, Steinbach.

mained in this area, others moved west as far as Alberta. I am not familiar enough with the families to know how many have remained in the Steinbach area besides the children of Heinrich B. Neufelds.

Heinrich B. Neufeld took out a Homestead on the SW 4-7-6E on August 10, 1877. In 1906 Heinrich B. Neufeld acquired the Feuerstatte (village lot) for Lot 11, east side of Main Street, Steinbach, from pioneer merchant Klaas R. Reimer or possibly from his estate. This property was a little southeast of where the Toronto Dominion Bank is located today. It is possible that there was some kind of a trade transaction involved as a land ownership map for 1910 shows that some of the Neufeld holdings on Section 4-7-6E were now owned by Reimer's son Klaas and son-

in-law Peter T. Barkman. The Neufeld family lived here until 1910 when the property was acquired by Steinbach merchandising tycoon, Heinrich W. Reimer, who built a spacious home on the site (see *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, page 56).

Son **Henry K. Neufeld** married Helena Funk and farmed in the New Bothwell area. He died in Steinbach in 1988 at the age of 91. His wife Helena presently resides in the PCH. Their two daughters Betty and Ellen live in Winnipeg.

Daughter **Sarah K. Neufeld** married Aaron F. Toews and lived in Steinbach operating "The Fruit Store" for a number of years. They had one son Ernie who resides in Steinbach.

Son **Peter K. Neufeld** married Elizabeth



Katherine, daughter of Abraham B. Neufeld.



Diedrich N. Penner and wife. He was the son of Susanna B. Neufeld and Diedrich Penner. His father died when he was quite young.

R. Toews and farmed on his grandfather's homestead near Steinbach. They had 6 children: Harry, Art, Bill, Loraine, Margaret and Wayne. Loraine and Wayne live in Steinbach as did Harry until his death a few years ago.

Peter B. Neufeld (1866-1939).

The Peter B. Neufeld lived in Ebenfeld and moved to Steinbach where they lived on



Katharina B. Neufeld and her husband, Gerhard Unger, on their Golden Wedding anniversary 1940. Photo courtesy of Leo Unger, Box 696, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

William Street. Peter B. Neufeld was cattle buyer and operated a butcher shop on Main Street. Sarah Klassen Neufeld also kept a diary of which the years 1918 to 1926 are extant.

Daughter **Maria Neufeld** married to Jakob F. Wiebe, was the Post Mistress in Niverville in the 1940s.

Daughter **Susanna Neufeld** married to Cornelius Stoesz moved to Bergthal Colony, Paraguay in 1948.

Son **John K. Neufeld** married Elisabeth Schulz. Her first husband Abram P. Hiebert was killed in a tractor mishap The John K. Neufeld family had a general store in Niverville.

Son **Jakob K. Neufeld** married Anna Schroeder and farmed in the Reinland district northeast of Niverville. Their children include Bertha married to Ben Rempel of Steinbach.

Son **Henry K. Neufeld** had a transfer business in New Bothwell. The family moved to Bergthal Colony, Paraguay in 1948.

Maria B. Neufeld 1866-1945.

Daughter Maria B. Neufeld married Dietrich "Dirk" Penner who died as a young married man age 36. Dirk Penner was a mail carrier and lived in Steinbach. In 1904 Maria married for the second time to Isaak Harder and lived in Giroux. Their daughter, Susan Penner, married Abram F. Rempel, and their daughter Maria Rempel married Henry K. Schellenberg, former Bishop of the Chortitzer church.

Katarina B. Neufeld 1869-1948.

Daughter Katharina B. Neufeld married

Gerhard Unger (1862-1942), son of Peter Unger (1812-88), founder of the "estate" Felsenton, NW23-6-6E, south of Steinbach, who received a gold watch from the Imperial Czar for his service during the Crimean War. The Gerhard Unger family lived on NE22-6-6E. Gerhard Unger served as a councillor of the R. M. of Hanover from 1901-1909. Gerhard Unger died in 1942 and his wife Katharina died 1948. The Gerhard Unger grandchildren include: Leo Unger, farmer NE21-6-6E, Abe Unger, Niverville village employee; and Jake Unger, Tourond.

Endnotes:

Note One: The Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch, BGB B35, lists Peter D. Neufeld as a Minister.

Note Two: Jakob Ketler Kehler, a.k.a. Berliner Kehler, was the grandfather of Professor Al Reimer, a well-known writer and novelist.

Sources:

John Dyck, "Kleefeld No. 1," in John Dyck, editor, *Historical Sketches*, pages 149-152.

Linda Buhler, "Ebenfeld, with references to Eigenfeld and Kleefeld No. 1," in John Dyck, ed., *Historical Sketches*, pages 104-124.

Stoesz Heritage, pages 6-7.

Klaas J. B. Reimer, "[Peter Neufeld] boxed article, no title," *Steinbach Post*, March 30, 1965.

Jakob B. Peters 1869-1942

Jakob B. Peters 1869-1942, Ebenfeld - A Heritage of Community Service; by granddaughter Elma Peters Plett, Box 116, Landmark, R0A 2A0.

Peter Peters 1777-1841, Kronsweide.

Our forefathers have left us a great heritage. They were not reluctant to except change, for the sake of religious freedom, leaving the comfort of their homeland and immigrating to a strange land, even though it meant pioneering. There was an exceptional quality of leadership in the Peters family as well as in many people in the times



Jakob Friesen Peters (1845-1922) and his wife Maria Buhr (1849-1919). Jakob F. Peters served as Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover from 1894-96. Photo courtesy of Elma Peters Plett. Jakob F. Peters was the son of the famous Oberschulz Jakob Peters (1813-84.

past.

When the threat of losing special privileges arose, and an offer was made by Catherine II to the people of Prussia, to immigrate to Russia, my great-great-great-grandfather Peter Peters (1771-1843) moved from Prussia to Russia and settled in the Chortitza Colony in the village of Kronsweide. He had to assume responsibility as head of the family household at the early age of eighteen. Later he married Katharina Siemens. The Peter Peters Wirtschaft in Kronsweide was a successful operation with 8 head of cattle, 2 wagons, etc.

Oberschulz Jakob Peters 1813-84, Bergthal.

My great-great-grandfather Jakob Peters was born in Kronsweide in 1813. In 1834 he married Elizabeth Friesen, daughter of Jakob Friesen. Her mother later remarried to Peter Hildebrandt, Aeltester of the Kronsweide Gemeinde. When the demand for more farmland arose, Jakob Peters, together with others, moved to the Bergthal

Colony founded in 1836, where they settled in the village of Heuboden. Many of these families were assisted by well-to-parents who had the vision and foresight to use this strategy to establish sons and daughters on Wirtschaften of their own, something which only 1 in 4 Russian Mennonite families could aspire to as the time.

This meant change and anticipation for a new start and an opportunity to be land owners, as land in the mother colony had become scarce and unattainable for all but the wealthiest families. Each move meant pioneering in a new district.

The leadership abilities of Jakob Peters were quickly recognized by his brethren and by 1845 he was serving as Beisitzer or Assistant Mayor of the entire Bergthal Colony "and before the decade was over" he was elected as Oberschulz or District Mayor. This meant that he was the most senior local official and his position was also approved or acknowledged by the Russian government. In the colony he was responsible for many tasks like hiring teachers, church attendance, settling disputes, roads, bridges and many other decisions.

In the 1870s the threat to religious freedoms became a concern to the Mennonites in Russia. In 1873 Oberschulz Peters was

did not approve of this move.

It was decided to move in three groups, and one reason was that there would always be a minister in each group, also good leadership. In the years 1874-75-76 these moves were made. In 1875 my great-grandfather Jacob Friesen Peters and brother Peter F. Peters came to Canada and established the village of Vollwerk/Reichenbach (now Mitchell).

In 1876 after all the land of the Bergthal Colony was sold and all the disputes settled, Oberschulz Jakob Peters, by now a widower together with his foster son Johann (known as the rejected child) immigrated to Canada and settled in the Vollwerk district. One year later Oberschulz Peters applied for titles to the land, and divided the land, and gave his land to his two sons— Jakob and Peter F. Peters.

Jakob F. Peters 1844-1922, Vollwerk.

My great-grandfather Jakob F. Peters (1844-1922) married for the first time to Katharina Wiebe, sister to the wives of Jakob, Cornelius and David Stoesz, all of whom held positions of considerable influence, BGB A119. After her death, Jakob married Maria Buhr (1850-1919), daughter of Erdman Buhr (b. 1824).



Early typical Mennonite housebarn owned by Jakob F. Peters (1845-1922) in Vollwerk ("country estate"), situated near the corner of the present-day Reichenbach Road and P.T.H. 52—75 Year Gedenkfeier, page 161. The Oberschulz's vision of a country estate as now been fulfilled more than a hundred fold, as the modern-day hamlet of Mitchell has grown from this dream and consists of hundreds of attractive acreages treed with oak and aspen attracting people from miles around to live there, and is now one of Manitoba's fastest growing communities.

one of the delegates to go to Canada in search of this land. When the delegates came back to Russia it was decided to immigrate to Canada. This move meant selling all the land and properties in Russia. This was a great task because the Russian government

Jakob F. Peters homesteaded on the NE 1/4 Section 31-6-6E, now known as the Oakenwald Drive subdivision. His housebarn was a good example of early Mennonite building construction in Manitoba and was photographed before being



Jakob Buhr Peters (1869-1942) and wife Anna Harder Peters (1868-1937). Jakob B. Peters served as Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover from 1917-18 continuing a family tradition of community leadership into the third generation. Jakob's brother Peter (1873-1932) owned the Tourist Hotel, Steinbach. Photo courtesy of Elma Peters Plett.



Heinrich Harder (1846-1934), BGB B297, father of Anna Harder Peters. On May 25, 1883, Heinrich Harder wrote an invitation inviting his neighbours and friends to help build a new house—published in *Mennonite Memories*, 1974, first edition, pages 313-314.

dismantled.

Jakob's brother Peter settled on NW 1/4 Section 31-6-6E, on the west side of Reichenbach Road. The Peters hamlet was known as the village of Vollwerk, literally meaning an estate or country plantation. This settlement has now grown to become the thriving community of Mitchell, one of the fastest growing in Manitoba.

Jakob F. Peters served as Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Hanover from 1894-6, continuing a family tradition of community service.

Jakob B. Peters 1869-1942, Ebenfeld.

My grandfather, Jacob Buhr Peters (1869-1942) married Anna Harder (1868-1937) daughter of Heinrich and Helena Harder on July 1, 1890, BGB B297. Rev. David Stoesz was the officiating minister.

In 1892 Jakob and Anna purchased the Johann Klassen farm, NW5-7-6E, in the Ebenfeld district located northeast of Vollwerk, now known as Mitchell. The property was located just west across the road from the present-day Centre Avenue, Mitchell, and a half mile north of P. T. H. 52.

They established a farm of 160 acres, with yard and buildings located towards the northeast corner on NW 5-7-6 E. "Living at first in the original Klassen home which still had earthen floors, Peters built a new house around the year 1910. A new barn built in 1919 was dismantled in 1975 and the lumber used in the skating shack at the Randolph rink. The Ebenfeld church private school was located at the west end of the Peters driveway"—Linda Buhler, "Ebenfeld," in *Historical Sketches*, page 110.

The Peters family of 5 sons and 3 daughters Jacob, Erdman, Henry, Peter, David, Marie, Anna and Helen grew up here. Helen passed away due to cancer in November of 1915 at the age of 24 years. David passed away in November of 1927, due to scarlet fever, at the age of 21 years. "The Peters sons were sometimes referred to as "paepa Kuaktjes Petasch" (ginger snaps Peters) to draw attention to their frail build but they outlived the friends who had good naturedly teased them"—Linda Buhler, page 110.

The leadership qualities of Jacob Buhr Peters were evident on his farm as well as in business. He served as Reeve of the R.M. of Hanover 1917-18 also as Aeltester or manager of the Chortitzer Brandordnung which later became the Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company.

The Farm

The farm, as was common in those years, was a mixed farm: grain, dairy, hogs, chickens, geese, ducks and maybe a few turkeys. The latter were mainly for food purposes. The dairy farm, consisting of 6 or 7 cows was the main source of cash income. Cream was separated from the milk and sold to the

Crescent Creamery in Steinbach whose building is still there today. Homemade butter was traded in for groceries at the "K.B. Reimer and Sons" grocery store. Cottage cheese made from the skim milk, which was mixed with dill or caraway seeds, formed cheese balls called "dwoy". The why, the leftovers after cream, butter and cottage cheese were taken out, was fed to the pigs.

The standard of a good farmer was gauged by how straight the rows of grain had been seeded and how straight a furrow he plowed, and even more so, how neat the yard was kept. The Jacob Peters yard was immaculately well kept. The grass was always short, and as I have been told, part of the yard was raked and swept on Saturdays.

The buildings were painted and the garden fence white-washed. The hip-roof barn was painted white. This was unusual, as barns in those days were painted red. Three artesian wells supplied good water, for every building. Since the pressure level was so high, the surplus water had to be led away from the buildings, so as not to create a flood in the buildings. As I have been told, the barn flooded from time to time. That meant picking a new trench to lead the water away from the buildings, no matter which part of the day or night this was necessary.



Heinrich and Helena Harder, parents of Anna Harder Peters. BGB B297. Harder was a wealthy farmer, one of the pioneers in the village of Berghthal (SW18-7-6E), north of present-day Mitchell. Photo courtesy of Elma Peters Plett.

The fieldwork was mainly done by horse drawn machinery, it took many manual hours.

Men and women worked on the fields when the demand was there. The saying goes, "Behind every successful man stands an am-

bitious woman”, and this was very true in this family. Grandfather Peters with his leadership qualities, and with the help of his aggressive wife, the farm progressed well.

The fields yielded lots of grain, and by fall, the farmers felt a sense of accomplishment to see rows of stacked hay and sweet clover enough to feed the cattle for winter. Late in fall this feed was cut to silage with a silage cutter. There were only a few threshing machines in this area, so all the cereal grain sheaves had to be stacked in large stacks, and the farmers had to wait his turn for the threshing machine to thresh the grain. Sometimes this was close to Christmas time. My grandfather bought his own threshing outfit, threshing machine and Titan tractor and started custom work.

The household and garden.

The garden yielded enough to fill the root cellar with potatoes, carrots, turnips, onions and more. There was a large supply of pickled watermelons, stone crocks of sauerkraut, fermented cucumbers, etc. The pantry was the storage place for pails of ripe beans, crocks of homemade jam made from wild fruit picked from the bush, and jars of beets, watermelon and carrot syrup. All these syrups were used for dunking buns in, and for baking, one way of cutting the cost of buying sugar.

There were pails of roasted barley, which when ground up, was brewed to a coffee like beverage, called “prips”. Then there were boxes of homemade potato starch, used to starch clothes. Yeast in those days was started from the fruit of a hop plant. After some special recipe was used the yeast was started. By adding various ingredients to the left-over yeast, there was enough to last all year. There was the art of making good lye-soap, which was used for laundry—the whiter the soap the better. This soap was always plentiful in this household. The luxury of face and hand soap, called “Castel soap” is not available anymore.

In the garden, Grandpa Peters built a bake oven of bricks and mortar. This oven was heated up with wood to a certain temperature and in summer Grandmother baked bread in this oven.

Late in fall, when the temperature dropped to freezing, there were hog butchering bees, neighbours and friends, worked together, helping each other out in this work. For winter there was a lot of fresh pork, smoked sausages, crackles and lots of lard for baking. Lots of prestige went to the household that had the most lard from one hog. The hams were saved for summer. During the winter this meat was cured in salt and then in early spring, this meat was thoroughly smoked in a smoke house. This preserved meat kept well even in the heat of summer. In summer there was always a supply of fresh chicken and other fowl. Even if there were no freezers people had good nourishing food.



The Jakob B. Peters farmyard NW5-7-6E. The farm originally belonged to Johann Klassen and Maria Stoesz. In the background, to the upper left, can be seen the buildings of the Ebenfeld cheese factory (1936-1955), approximately where the Steinbach lagoon is situated today. Photo courtesy of Elma Peters Plett.

Hospitality.

Hospitality was another exceptional good trait of Jacob and Anna Peters. My great-grandparents Heinrich and Helena Harder lived in a little house in my grandparents garden in their retirement years. Great-grandmother Harder was cared for in her own house until she passed away in 1925. Then Great-grandfather Harder moved in with grandparents, Peters, and was taken care of by them.

Special mention goes to my Aunt Marie Peters. To describe her simply, she was a second Florence Nightingale. She had a wonderful talent of caring for aged people.

Great-grandfather Harder passed away in 1934. Mary and the other children found loving care at Grandparents home.

During these years Grandfather Peters farmed together with son Peter. The other sons were on farms of their own. When Grandfather Peters reached retirement age, he sold his homestead of 160 acres to his son Peter. This transaction was only on paper. From then on my grandparents and Aunt Marie lived with Uncle Peter. Nothing else in the household changed. The land that grandfather Peters owned in the Clearspring area, known as the Stoesz farm, was sold to daughter Anna and her husband Cornelius Unger. My father bought the land grandfather owned in the Reichenbach area, called Britte Schettepe on Section 36.

Christmas.

Christmas at Grandparents house was always very special. After a delicious noon

meal, the uncles and aunts visited in the “Groti Schtoave” or living room. We cousins were allowed to play in one room upstairs. Here we could listen to some records, played on an antique gramophone. We had lots of fun playing.

We, girl cousins, I must admit, did sneak into Aunt Marie’s bedroom to peek into this neat room. This visit was only about as long as you could hold your breath, fearing we would be found out. Just before “faspas”, we grandchildren were called downstairs and one by one we had to come into the “groti Schtoave” and say our “Wensch”, a Christmas recital.

This was a major event of the day, but the reward was that Grandmother gave us a blank scribbler “Mole Buck” and a pencil. We got money from Great-Grandfather. The uncles were also generous and gave us money. If we would tell Uncle Jacob our name, he would decide if it was a nice name, and he would give us money. Without fail, we always had a nice name and we got money.

One particular Christmas Great-Grandfather Harder was carving something with his pocket knife. We cousins sat close by and watched what the outcome of this would be. It was a spinning top made from a wooden spool. He must have made quite a few, a number of us cousins got one. I had a special cousin, and when he watched how much longer my top turned, he asked me to trade. I gave my top to Henry. As a reward my father made one for me that was even better.



Erdman H. Peters showing horse Rosie, circa 1912. The Peter B. Peters residence in the background. Photo courtesy of Elma Peters Plett.

Grandma Anna Harder Peters.

Grandmother Peters was an outstanding and ambitious woman who took care of her household, but also of the farm as a whole. Grandmother would watch the weather and tell her sons which horse to take for this certain time of day. Her sons would teasingly smile when she would call after them to hitch "Old Daise" to the sleigh or buggy when they went visiting to the neighbours.

Grandmother Peters was a talented aggressive woman. She could skin wool, knit socks and mitts, also scarves, etc. When the doctor told her, that her illness was terminal, she knit socks and mittens for Grandfather Peters and as I have been told, there were more than he ever wore out.

Grandmother had a brave trait in her. She went to Steinbach with horse and buggy to sell butter, cream and eggs and in exchange bought groceries. One day a week she would do her bookkeeping. This was a rare thing for a woman to do in those days. She kept record of all the cream, butter and eggs she sold during the week. Grandmother loved flowers, and she had a lot of those. Flowers in those days were started from seed harvested the previous fall. Bulbs were stored over winter. Grandmother grew gladiolus, Jacob's flowers, phlox, petunias and many other kinds.

Rhubarb was one of her favourite foods and she grew a lot of it to make pie, moas, jam and many more dishes.

In fall of 1936 grandmother was diagnosed with cancer and after a short illness, passed away in February of 1937 at the age of 68 years, as a result of the cancer. During this time she was tenderly cared for by her daughter, my Aunt Marie.

Grandfather Peters, Memories.

Grandfather Peters was a quiet man but he had a character of discipline in him. After he reprimanded his grandson, he also praised

him for sitting quietly for five minutes. There was also an affectionate side in his personality. Grandfather paid his grandson 25 cents for the kiss he received from him. We cousins remember him as being kind, soft spoken, ambitious person. He was, as the saying goes "Early to bed and early to rise". Grandfather was on his field at an early hour and when he looked back at his straight plow furrow, it must have been rewarding.

Grandfather liked to dress up. On Sundays he would wear a tie, but Grandmother had to tie the knot for him. We remember him wearing a cap most of the time. His favourite place to sit or rest was the "Rhuhank". Here he would sit or nap and I remember him covering his face with his cap during his nap.

Grandfather Peters was a very quiet man, and I never really got to know him, but I will never forget the look of love in his eyes. We could only guess, the loneliness he felt after grandmother was gone. She was a very



No article about Jakob B. Peters would be complete without a photograph of his famous son, Jakob H. Peters (1893-1990), commonly known as "Reef" Pietas". Jakob H. Peters continued the family tradition of community service into the fourth generation, serving as Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Hanover from 1930-45. He also served for 40 years on the board of Manitoba Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company, for many years as President. During these years the company did very well. Photo courtesy of John Dyck, Oberschulze Jakob Peters, page 103.

lively person - the life of the home.

Grandfather took ill and his daughter Aunt Marie cared for him till he passed away in July of 1942 at the age of 73 years. After Uncle Peter H. Peters, who owned the family farm died in 1958, the farm was sold to Heinz Peters.

Legacy.

As of today there is no landmark of the Jakob F. Peters farmyard, but the land looks just as fertile as it did years ago. But the legacy of Jakob F. Peters lives on, a legacy of three generations of community service. It was continued by his son Jakob H. Peters who served as Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover and by many others in the family line, a monument more enduring than any other.

Erdmann H. Peters (1895-1987)

My father Erdman Harder Peters, second son of Jacob and Anna Peters, served as school teacher in the Ebenfeld district for five years. For two years he was a carpenter, then together with his older brother Jacob, they bought a farm from their uncle Erdman Buhr Peters, NW 11-8-5E. He had been a pioneer on this farm in the Halbstadt district, now Landmark. Later my father bought his brother's share of the farm. In 1922 my father married Katharina Toews of Strassburg (near Niverville) and together they farmed this land till retirement in 1965.

They sold their farm to their son Edwin Erdman Peters. To this day there is now Erdman Peters III on this farm.

Besides farming my father was a carpenter when the Shakespeare School No. 2069 was built. The change from Private of public schools was a major one. School boards were elected and my father was a trustee and also Secretary-treasurer of this school. He also served as fire insurance agent for the Mennonite Mutual Fire Insurance Co. and was a director of the Landmark Cheese Factory.

Farms by this time were well established, but still there was a lot of hard work involved. My parents experienced the dry thirties and also was time rations plus other hardships. There were changes that made farming easier. Tractors replaced horse power, combines eliminated threshing gangs and when electric power came in, electric lights replaced kerosene lamps, electric motors replaced the chore of pumping water by hand, farm buildings had running water, electric stoves replaced wood burning stoves, electric furnaces, deep freezers plus many other conveniences helped make life on the farm a lot easier. The world seemed to get a lot smaller when private phones were replaced by government phones. We are nearing the 2000 mark, how have we excepted change. What have we gained.

Conclusion.

We are blessed to have had forefathers who were courageous, who had a vision of progress, but most important of all we have an exceptional heritage of faith.

Sources:

John Dyck, *Oberschultz Jakob Peters 1813-1884: Manitoba Pioneer Leader* (Steinbach, 1990), 138 pages.

Linda Buhler, "Ebenfeld, with references to Eigenfeld and Kleefeld No. 1," in John Dyck, ed., *Historical Sketches*, pages 104-124

Abraham Doerksen (1827-1916): Schönthal

Abraham Doerksen (1827-1916): from Schönthal, Russia to Schönthal, Manitoba: By granddaughter, Regina Doerksen Neufeld, Box 1034, Niverville, MB R0A 1E0.

Family Background.

Abraham Doerksen was born in 1827, near Nikiloyofsky, S.Russia. He was the only son of Abraham Doerksen (1805-71) and Regina Hoepfner (1806-1831).

When Abraham was only three-years old his mother, Regina, died. Regina had been kidnapped as a baby by gypsies. She grew up with them, travelling from village to village, bartering and entertaining. When she was a youth she was rescued



Abraham Doerksen (1827-1916). "The man who never posed." Bernhard Doerksen, family historian and genealogist, has written that "We are extremely fortunate in having a picture of grandfather, and that, not because he was so willing, for he steadfastly refused to pose for a camera. We think it is the only picture of him in existence, and he never discovered it had been taken. The writer was instrumental in obtaining it, secretly of course, in June of 1915—Bernhard Doerksen, Family Tree of Abraham Doerksen, page 14.

from the gypsies by a young man, Peter Hoepfner. He took her on his horse to his parents' home. They graciously took her in as their own. Her race, parents' background, etc. have always remained a mystery.

Abraham Doerksen Sr. married for the second time to Helena Schmidt. They moved to the Bergthal Colony where young Abraham grew up. His father passed away in 1871.

Life in Russia.

Abraham Doerksen (1827-1916) married Katharina Friesen in 1851, BGB B80. According

to Henry Schapansky, she was distantly related to veteran Molotschna school teacher, Cornelius F. Friesen (1810-92) later of Blumenort, Manitoba. Abraham and Katharina had a family of twelve children but four died in early childhood.

Abraham Doerksen "had a machine shop in Schönthal where he manufactured farm machinery, such as plows, harrows, cultivators and wagons. He employed four carpenters and one blacksmith—Wm. Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony*, page 35.

A record of 1871 elections held in Bergthal states that Abraham Doerksen was elected as "Beisitzer" in Schönthal, meaning that he was the deputy mayor or assistant mayor (Schulz) of the village—John Dyck, *Oberschulz*, page 121.

In 1873 Abraham Doerksen and Johann Hoepfner were the two representatives of the Bergthal Colony responsible for working out the emigration passes. J. H. Doerksen has written that



Grandmother Aganetha Elias Wiebe Doerksen, on her 85th birthday. All photographs in this article are courtesy of Regina Doerksen Neufeld, Box 1034, Niverville, MB R0A 1E0.

"the great care was necessary in this regard to insure that no excitable Russian bureaucrat be offended in the process....The two men were given the run around, they had to go from Pontias to Pilate, in order to achieve their objective, and when they had finally overcome all the obstacles thrown in their way, the emigration began."

In 1874 A. Doerksen and the Oberschulz J. Peters again had to travel to Ekatherinoslav with the much delayed ordinance of the Gemeinde, regarding those families who lived in Bergthal but who were registered in the Chortitzer Vollost in the Revision (census)—J. H. Doerksen, *Wichtige Documente...*, page 41; see also Gerhard Wiebe,

Causes and History, page 40.

By this time Abraham Doerksen's oldest two sons were married: Abraham married to Maria Dueck and Heinrich married to Sara Neufeld.

The whole Bergthal Colony immigrated to Canada in 1874-1876. The Doerksens also left their beloved home in Russia and moved to Manitoba, Canada. On July 16, 1874 they boarded the steamship "Nova Scotian" in Liverpool, England and sailed for America.

The Doerksens, with many other families, landed in Quebec and travelled via Duluth to Moorhead. From here they sailed with a smaller steamboat to the landing site at the confluence of the Rat and Red Rivers. They were met by friends, their baggage was loaded on ox carts and taken to the Schantz immigration sheds on Section 17-7-4E. Many immigrants walked the seven miles to the sheds.

Schönthal, Manitoba.

Abraham Doerksen and his two married sons, Abraham and Heinrich, selected their homesteads on Section 21-7-5E. According to the Homestead applications, Abraham Doerksen applied for a Homestead on SW21-7-5E on August 5, 1874, and acquired the adjoining SE 1/4 from Jakob Friesen in 1885. Son Heinrich applied for a Homestead on the NE 21-7-5E and preemption purchase of NW21-7-5E on February 18, 1875. Son Abraham Doerksen applied for his Homestead SE20-7-5E on August 5, 1874, which he sold to Isaac Ginter in 1885, probably shortly after he had moved to the village of Sommerfeld, West Reserve (Note One).

Although these land holdings gave the Doerksen family a contiguous block of 800 acres of land, they built their homes close together in village style on NE 20-7-5E, approximately one mile east and southeast of the present-day New Bothwell, close to the easterly boundary of the section. The village was named Schönthal, meaning "beautiful valley", in honour of their village of origin in Russia. The "Brot Schult Registers" do not list the families of Schönfeld, which is unfortunate as they provide the earliest known record of place of residence for many Bergthaler settlers on the E. Reserve. Abraham Doerksen is referred to in a separate list of 4 villagers in Schönthal which may mean that he had not found it necessary to borrow money from the "Brot Schult" fund.

Other residents in the village included Abraham's daughter and son-in-law Johann Neufeld, sister Helena and brother-in-law Isaak Guenther, and Kornelius Epp, who served as the second Secretary-Treasurer of the R. M. of Hanover from 1884-95. The 1881 assessment records list 18 families living in Schönthal—published in *Bergthaler Mennoniten*, page 45..

The Settler.

Grandfather's first house was small, built of logs with a dirt floor. The finest piece of furniture



John E. Doerksen and Helena Hiebert Doerksen at their 50th wedding anniversary in 1956. They were the parents of author Regina Neufeld.

was a big cedar chest that grandfather had built in Russia to pack the family's wardrobe, bedding, some household items and tools for use in the primitive wilderness.

Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe has written that "...two men ...[were] elected at the outset to portion out the flour, namely, Abraham Doerksen and Johann Schwartz"—Gerhard Wiebe, *Causes and History*, page 52. No doubt Abraham's previous business experience in Russia was one of the reasons that he was chosen by the community to be their purchasing agent. He had to travel to Winnipeg by ox cart and purchase in large amounts such products as flour, sugar, oatmeal, seed, tools and household items. He often preferred to walk the thirty miles rather than go by ox cart. After he had finished the shopping the products were then loaded on the steam boat and shipped to the landing site at the Rat and Red Rivers. From here the pioneers loaded the goods on ox carts to distribute them to the different villages. Grandfather spent a week away from his family to do this duty.

Hardships and tragedies were the norm to all the pioneers. Clearing bush and breaking virgin soil without proper equipment was back-breaking to say the least. The land was flat with many swamps, so drainage was badly needed. The pioneers went to work with spades and dug a drainage ditch from Tourond creek to the Rat River near Otterborne.

Widowhood and Remarriage.

Abraham Doerksen had only been in this new land for two years when his wife Katherina died in 1876. His youngest child was six-years old. Of course he was heart-broken.... but life goes on.

Aganetha Wiebe, a young widowed bride, lived in Chortitz, near Schönthal. She and her husband had both had typhoid fever. Her husband, Isbrand Wiebe, had died while she was still unconscious. Heartbroken and very lonely she longed to go to

live with her family on the West Reserve. But travelling in winter was impossible and so she had remained in Chortitz over winter. Abraham Doerksen proposed to Aganetha and she accepted. They were married in June 1877. Another nine children were born to them. Altogether Abraham Doerksen had a family of twenty-one children, but only twelve lived to have descendants.

Tragedies and Disasters.

The Doerksens as did the other pioneers endured the grasshopper invasion in 1875, when all vegetation was destroyed. In 1878 son Heinrich Doerksen's wife was killed by lightning. Their house was not damaged except the window was completely removed without breaking and was leaning against the house. Grandfather Doerksen was so awed by this act of God he could not replace it for several days.

Another tragedy occurred when two of the sons of Abraham's cousin Jakob Doerksen, BGB B62, drowned in the Red River on June 25, 1879. According to the "Brot Schult Registers" it appears that Abraham's brother Jakob BGB B197 as well as his cousin Jakob BGB B62 had settled in the village of Schönberg, northeast of Grunthal.

The Doerksen family had decided to move to the West Reserve and had selected a new farmstead in Blumenhof, near Gretna. Jakob and his sons, Jakob and Peter, had been making preparation as the new site when they returned home on June 25. "When they reached the Rat River they saw that recent rains had transformed the usually placid river into a treacherous torrent. Jakob attempted to drive his team of oxen and his wagon through the swollen river. However, the current swept parts of the make-shift wagon box off its base. Peter, age seventeen, waded into the river in an attempt to retrieve the boards, but the current pulled him away too. When his older brother, Jakob, age twenty-six, saw what was happening, he made a desperate attempt to rescue Peter, but without success. Both the Doerksen brothers drowned"—

Wm. Schroeder, *Bergthal Colony*, page 112; see also Franz K. Goossen, *Reflections on our Heritage*, page 25,.

On July 1, 1881 a tornado struck the village of Schönthal wrecking nine homes and sweeping most of the dwellings into the marsh half a mile east of the village. My father, John E. Doerksen, son of Abraham Doerksen, told of how they marvelled at the act of God when the house was destroyed and there stood the table unharmed with the lamp standing under the table unbroken.

Bishop David Stoesz describes the situation as follows: "July 1st. It was a bad storm with lightning strikes in several places, though no damage was done here ... Some very strong gusts of wind hit Schönthal causing a lot of damage at the Heinrich Klippenstein place shifting a new building, which as yet did not have a finished roof on it, shifted about 4 ft. off its foundation. Today the whole village will be helping to repair the damage and I intend to go to Schoenthal to see what damage has been done. In Schönthal 2 utility buildings and 3 houses with attached barns and the school had their roofs badly damaged"—*Historical Sketches*, page 423.

The villagers rebuilt their homes with lumber cut from the dense pine forest of Tannenau (between Chortitz and Kleefeld). At this time most of the pioneers built right on their homesteads thus causing the village to disintegrate. A school house and store remained on the village spot. [Editor's comment: Randy Kehler has published a letter by son Heinrich Doerksen who wrote that the village broke up in 1896. Heinrich Doerksen evidently built the first house on the land outside of the village of Schönthal in 1896—*Preservings*, No. 7, Dec. 1995, pages 38-39.]

In 1884 a diphtheria epidemic claimed the lives of three of grandfather's children and a number of his grandchildren. Through all this tragedy the Doerksens and the other pioneers endured with patience and kept their faith. Bishop Stoesz has written as follows: "Drove to Schönthal to a



Jakob F. Doerksen and his school class, circa 1900. Can you identify your grandparents? The school was in Strassburg. The children were mostly Friesens and Loepkys. The little girls at the far left are sisters, Anna and Katharina Friesen....later married to Abraham and Jakob Hiebert. The boy sitting (on the left) was John L. Friesen and front row, standing next to the teacher, was his brother Henry L. Friesen, next to him is Henry Loepky. A picture of Jakob F. Doerksen and his family circa 1903 was published in *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec. 1995, page 42.

funeral for four children who had died there but before we got there a fifth child had died. Of those that were buried two were the children of Johann Neufeld and three the children of Abram Doerksen"—*Historical Sketches*, page 426.

Farming Operations.

Abraham Doerksen was a successful manufacturer of farm implements in Russia. In Manitoba he continued to build plows and tools like planes, saws hammers and spades, with some difficulty to help out his neighbours and not for gain.

The 1881 fire insurance records show that Abraham Doerksen Sr. had a modest house, furniture, wagon, plow, and half share in a threshing outfit as well as a fanning mill. The insurance coverage for the threshing outfit was cancelled in 1883. The same year he purchased a grain mower and a stubble plow. In 1883 he must have built or enlarged the barn and in 1884 he added a grass mower and a rake to his possessions.

It is evident that all the hard work was paying off and bringing fruit. Both Abraham Doerksen and son Heinrich were assessed with two quarters of land in the 1887 assessment rolls of the Municipality of Hanover. Abraham had 2 horses, 11 cattle and 2 oxen, for a total assessment \$1084. Heinrich has 2 horses, 4 oxen and 19 cattle, for a total assessment 1741. Of this amount 1028 was cancelled because he was a minister.

There were no gravelled or proper roads in those early years. Sometimes the dirt roads were quite impossible, especially in spring or after a heavy rainfall. My father remembered how they once hauled a load of grain. They got so hopelessly stuck in a mud hole that they unhitched the horses and led them to dry ground. Then they carried all the bags of grain to the dry spot. Now they had to disassemble the whole wagon taking the wheels off, and carry each out of the mud hole separately. After everything was on higher ground came the big job of assembling the wagon, reloading the grain, hitching the horses, and they were ready to continue their journey.

They often walked to church when roads were impassable. Bill Rempel has cited his grandfather's (Heinrich Doerksen) diary, that he and his father—which was Abraham Doerksen at age 73—walked 3 1/2 miles to Chortitz to church.

On June 4, 1909, Rev. Heinrich Doerksen, Blumengard, recorded in his journal that he had been in Schönthal during the day, "Abraham Doerksen's son Peter was buried after 1 1/2 years of sickness"—*Historical Sketches*, page 555.

Retirement, 1916.

My parents John and Helena (Hiebert) Doerksen had built a small house in Niverville, where they lived from 1910-16. Then they bought Helena's Father's homestead and moved there. Grandfather Abraham Doerksen then bought his son's house in Niverville, moved there and retired.

My grandfather Abraham Doerksen kept a daily diary but unfortunately it was burned in the early thirties. Much valuable information was lost. Abraham Doerksen also maintained a "Familienbuch" (Family Genealogy) in which he kept a record of his family, births, deaths, marriages, etc. This journal is still extant and shows his careful and precise handwriting indicating that

he was a capable writer.

The grandchildren who remember Abraham Doerksen, say he was a kind and gentle man always generously handing them "crow's eggs" a round white peppermint candy.

Abraham Doerksen lived long enough to see a railway constructed through Niverville and better roads and drainage built. He saw how stores and businesses prospered. Churches and schools were established. He realized that his children's children would have an easier life. He died on September 20, 1916.

The Spiritual Legacy.

The Doerksens were caring people. They were faithful in service to God and to people. Three sons were ministers of the gospel. Son Abraham served as Bishop of the Sommerfelder church near Altona for 36 years. He moved to Mexico in 1922 where he passed away. Son Heinrich ministered in the Chortitzer church for 46 years. Son David served in the ministerial of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde, Saskatchewan for 40 years, for many years as Bishop. Heinrich and Abraham played leading roles in various presentations and delegations to the

Canadian and Manitoba governments regarding the school and military issues, a story yet to be written.

Son Jacob was a very good teacher in Strassburg from 1885-1905. My father John E Doerksen was a teacher in Schanzenberg from 1905-10. Son-in-law Edward Dudman also served as a school teacher in Chortitz, Manitoba.

Endnotes:

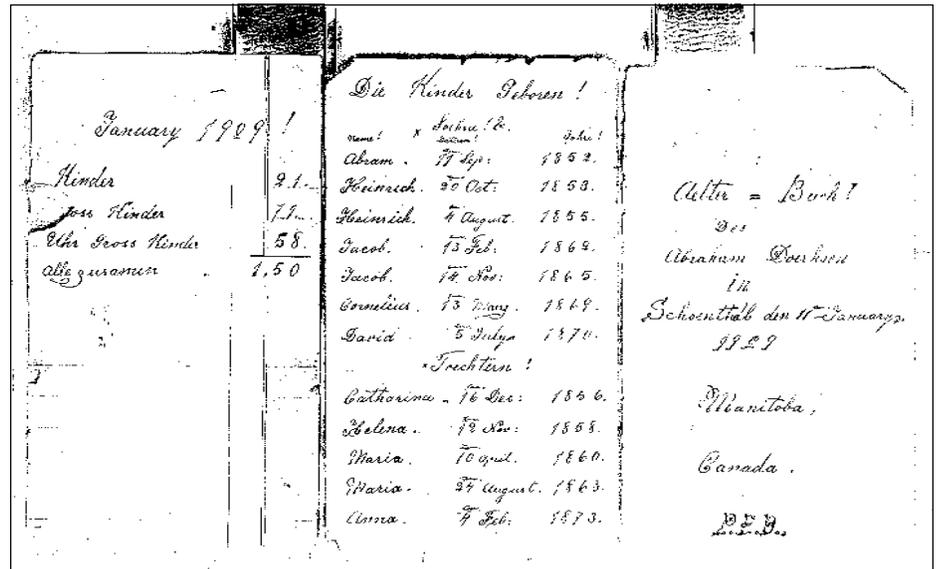
Note One: There is some confusion in the early sources as the 1881 assessment records of the R. M. of Hanover show Abraham Doerksen with SW16-5-7E, Heinrich with NW21-5-7E, and Abraham with NE20-5-7E.

Sources:

Regina Neufeld, "Abraham Doerksen," in Fred Kaita, editor, *Niverville* (Niverville, 1986), page 81.

Bernhard Doerksen, *Family Tree of Abraham Doerksen* (Regina, 1960). 102 pages.

William Schroeder, *The Berthel Colony* (Winnipeg, 1986), 141 pages.



Title page and two sample pages of the Familienbuch of Abraham Doerksen 1909.

Historical Annotation to the Abraham Doerksen story, by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack Street, New Westminster, B. C., V3L 4V5.

Abraham Dirksen (20.10.1805-4.10.1871) BGB A86 was a son of Jacob Dirksen (21.12.1767-2.2.1806). (See also John Dyck's note to BGB A 86, based on my Neuendorf article and references there.) Susanna Klassen was a daughter of Franz Klassen of Neuendorf, Russia (b.1744), in 1776: Tiegenhagen: 1 son, 2 daughters. Jacob Dirksen (1767-1806) was living with his in-laws in Neuendorf in 1795. B.H.U. p. 241, Neuendorf #24. After Jacob Dirksen died, his widow married Johann Neudorf (1.3.1783-15.4.1860), living at Neuendorf in 1808. This family moved to Osterwick by 1814 where they and the Dirksens are found in 1814. B.H.U. p. 283 #4. Abraham Dirksen (1805-71) was there as well.

Jacob Dirksen (1767-1806) was a son of David Dirksen (b.1740, died before 1802) of Ellerwald III, 1776: 4 sons, 5 daughters. They came to Russia in 1788 and settled at Neuendorf. Also B.H.U. p. 240, Neuendorf #4. His wife was a Maria (family name not yet known, b. 1736).

Many of the Old Colony Dirksens are descendants of David Dirksen b. 1740.

In reading the article by Regina Neufeld, Isaac Gunther of Schönthal, Manitoba, does not seem to be the brother-in-law of Abraham Dirksen (1827-1916). His sister Helena married Heinrich Görtzen, Chortitz, Manitoba, 1881.

Heinrich Abrams (1832-1910) and family

Heinrich Abrams (1832-1910) and Maria Heinrichs (1836-1909) and Family: from Grossweide to Grossweide; by great-great-granddaughter Cathy Friesen Barkman, Box 3284, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

It is unlikely that there is anyone living today who can remember Heinrich Abrams personally. As well, it appears that stories and anecdotes which might have been passed down through generations are scarce. Nonetheless, many of us are living proof of the life of Heinrich Abrams and Maria Heinrichs. Records, census' and newspaper articles shed some light on them and their family and from these sources I have put together a part of their story.

The Beginning.

Heinrich Abrams (or Abrahams) was born on March 27, 1832 in Grossweide, a village in the Molotschna Colony in southern Russia. His father was Jakob Abrams, born on March 16, 1799 in the village of Benhof, Prussia. His mother, Katherina Martens, was born on May 17, 1795 in the village of Ohrlofferfelde, Prussia.

Karl Stumpp, in his book *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763 to 1862*, includes a short section on the emigration of the Mennonites from Prussia to Russia. He lists a Jakob Abrahams from Gr. Scharndau/Stuhm who emigrated to Taurien (Molotschna) in 1818. If this is the same Jakob Abrams, born 1799, he would have been 19 and most likely single at the time of emigration. Jakob and Katherina Abrams appear in the 1835 Census for the Molotschna area in Russia in the village of Grossweide, Wirtschaft 25. The "Jakob Georg Abrahams" family is listed as "accepted in the home" of Peter Dirk Adrian. As of 1835 their children were: Jakob born 1821, Peter - 1823, Heinrich - 1832, Katherina - 1825, Helena - 1827 and Margaretha - 1831. It appears that Heinrich and Peter were the only children to come to Canada. The others probably died in Russia.

Heinrich's mother, Katherina Martens Abrams, died at the age of 71 in the village of Grossweide in Russia on May 6, 1866. Her husband, Jakob, lived on and continued to experience many adventures for his advanced age. He was one of our Mennonite forefathers who participated in the emigrations from Prussia to Russia and Russia to North America.

Marriage, 1856.

On November 1, 1856, at the age of 24, Heinrich married Maria Heinrichs, born March 5, 1836 in Marienthal, Russia. I do not know for sure who her parents were. In the 1835 Molotschna Census, there are two families living in Marienthal which may have been Maria's parents - Johann Johann Heinrichs and his wife Aganetha, Wirtschaft 12 or Johann Johann Heinrichs and his third and very young wife Maria, Wirtschaft 15. It could possibly be the second family considering Maria may have named her first daughter after her own name. Maria, being born in 1836, would not have shown up on the 1835 Molotschna Census.

Heinrich and Maria (Heinrichs) Abrams first years of married life were likely filled with joy along with sadness. Their first child, Heinrich -

born March 3, 1858, died the day he was born. The second son, also Heinrich, born March 2, 1859, died seventeen days later, leaving behind a once again grieving mother and father. Maria, born April 15, 1860, was the third child. Son Jacob was born December 31, 1861. Again, sorrow filled the



1904. Heinrich and Maria Heinrichs Abrams with two of their grandchildren. The girl, Susanna Abrams Friesen (1885-1969), is the granddaughter of Johann and Maria Friesen. She eventually married Abraham P. Friesen (1884-1969). The boy sitting on Heinrich's lap was Heinrich D. Klassen (1900-67) who married Mary Funk (1902-24). Photo courtesy of Mrs. Benj. D. Loeppky.

Abrams home when Jacob passed away five months later on May 5, 1862. Johann was born on October 30, 1864; Heinrich November 24, 1867; Jacob December 5, 1868; Peter February 6, 1871; Katharina December 20, 1872; Elisabeth January 2, 1875; Helena January 3, 1878; and Anna July 3, 1881.

Grossweide to Puchtin.

These must have been busy years for Heinrich and Maria. Between celebrating the births of some children and mourning the deaths of others, they managed to pack up and move a number of times.

A letter, by Korn. Heinrichs, dated December 11, 1908, published in the *Rundschau*, January 27, 1909, page 17, stated the following: "Ich mochte gerne erfahren wo mein Onkel Heinrich Abrams sich besidet, fruher in Grossweide, Russland; von Grossweide nach Wernersdorf, von Wernersdorf nach Klippenfeld, von Klippenfeld nach Puchtin und von dort nach Canada, Nordamerika gezogen."

At the end of his letter, Kornelius Heinrichs, Heinrich's nephew, mentions that the sister of his uncles, Katharina, was his stepmother. This appears to be Katharina (born 1825) who was the daughter of Jakob and Katharina (Martens) Abrams. Kornelius signs his letter from Chartsch,

Chasaw Turt, Terek, Russia. Chartsch was a village located in the Terek Colony, established in 1901 by the Molotschna Colony. It was located some 30 Kilometres from the Caspian Sea and approximately 1000 Kilometres east of the mother Molotschna Colony.

According to his nephew, the Heinrich Abrams family lived in as many as four villages in Russia. Grossweide, settled in 1820, was a Mennonite village in the Halbstadt district of the Molotschna. At one time it spread over 5,551 acres. Wernersdorf consisting of 5,640 acres was settled in 1824. Klippenfeld was founded in 1863 on the Tokmak, a small branch of the Molochnaya River. Grossweide was the furthest south with Klippenfeld being approximately 12 miles northwest of Grossweide. Wernersdorf was approximately 8 miles west of Klippenfeld.

Thanks to research done by John Dyck, we know that Puchtin was located north of the Molotschna Colony, closer to Schönfeld. Most of the settlers in Puchtin came from the Molotschna Colony. It was a convenient stop-over for Mennonites travelling from Chortitza to Bergthal. Marriages from the Puchtin area sometimes joined Molotschna and Bergthal families.

A further reference in the *Rundschau* confirms that the Abrams family came from Puchtin. A letter in the April 29th, 1903 issue written by Johann Klassen of Eigenhoff, Gretna, mentioned the marriage of David Klassen and Anna Abrams, a daughter of Heinrich Abrams, formerly of Puchtin. It is also interesting that the 1878 Chortitzer Church Register noting Heinrich's nephew, Peter Abrams (b 1850), has the word "Puchtin" scribbled on the top of the page. There are other families in the church register with this same notation. The *Rundschau* article, church registers and research done by John Dyck, all confirm that Heinrich Abrams, his father, Jakob, and brother, Peter, and their families emigrated from Puchtin to North America.

To Canada, 1875.

Heinrich and Maria Abrams made the decision to move their family to Canada. Heinrich and his brother Peter, their families and their father, Jakob, sailed July 10, 1875 on the Pacha which travelled from Hamburg to Hull. They sailed on the S. S. Manitoba, No. 36 from Liverpool which arrived at Quebec on July 27, 1875. Heinrich's widowed father, Jakob Abrams (1799-1884) travelled with them. Heinrich's brother Peter (1823-1911) and his family sailed along with 348 other Mennonites who represented the Bergthal, Chortitza and Molotschna Colonies. Johann Abrahams (1828-94), Daniel Blatz (born 1817) and Peter Abrahams (1823-1911) provided leadership for this group of Mennonite people. It would be interesting to know if Johann was related to Peter and Heinrich, perhaps cousins? Johann's father was Johann Abrahams (1794-1856) who may or may not have been a brother to Jakob Abrams (1799-1884).

The "Brot Schult Registers" recently published by Irene Kroeker in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part Two, pages 40-44, are the earliest record of Bergthaler settlement in Manitoba available at this time. These records reveal that the original settlement plans of the Bergthaler were for fewer but larger villages, a plan based on previous experience in Russia but unsuitable to the realities of the inhospitable wilderness of southern Manitoba. According to these records the extended Abrams family—including Peter Abrams Sr., Peter Abrams and Heinrich Abrams, originally settled in a village called Grossweide together with 12 other families, indicating that they played a leading role in its early development.

By the 1881 assessment of the Municipality of Hanover, the Abrams families are listed in the village of Schanzenberg, named after Jacob Y. Schantz, an Ontario Mennonite, who helped the immigrants during their beginnings in Manitoba. This may indicate that the majority of the Grossweide people had moved on to the West Reserve, leaving too few for a functioning village, with the result that they joined the Schanzenberg village.

1875 was a difficult year for Heinrich Abrams and the other immigrant families. On the one hand, they were happy to be greeted by friends and relatives who had come before them. On the other, this was the year that grasshoppers had come to destroy all the vegetation. The settlers were fortunate enough to be able to harvest a crop of hay due to the late summer rains. The settlers also had the added pressure of getting ready for the harsh winter. They were able to build semlins and other shelters or move in with relatives.

The pioneers had brought their Brandordnung, a fully functioning mutual fire insurance system, along with them when they came to Manitoba. The Brandordnung protected them from fire loss and damage. The Bergthal Brandordnung records 1874-85, show that Heinrich had placed insurance coverage on his house, furniture, wagon, and plow—*Working Papers*, page 142.

Heinrich and his family are listed in the 1881 Federal Census as living in the northern part of the R.M. of Hanover in the village of Schanzenberg. Father Jakob Abrams applied for a Homestead on NE 30-7-4E July 17, 1875. Son Heinrich applied for a Homestead, SE 30-7-4E on July 17, 1877. These properties were located north of the Schanzenberg village, the main street of which ran north and south. Heinrich lived in Schanzenberg until the spring of 1882. He cancelled his fire insurance on April 21, 1882, when the family moved on to the West Reserve settling in the Halbstadt area.

Heinrich's brother Peter.

After moving to the West Reserve, Heinrich now lived closer to his brother, Peter (1823-1911) who farmed with his wife Elisabeth, nee Loewen, (born 1826) and their family.

After immigrating to Canada, Peter did not stay on the East Reserve for very long. They moved to Neuanlage on the West Reserve where they settled on SE 4-1-1W. They had eight children, five of whom survived to adulthood. Elisabeth (born 1848) married Jacob Dyck. Justina (born 1854) married Heinrich Kaethler. Peter (born 1850) married Katharina Enz. Helena (born 1858) married Ber-

nard Friesen. Maria (born 1862) married Heinrich Wiebe. Peter's son, Peter and his wife, Katharina Enz, farmed the NE4-1-1W just north of his father's place. Like Heinrich's family, these families were members of the Bergthaler Gemeinde (later known as the Chortitzer) on the E. Reserve and then the Sommerfelder Church on the W. Reserve.

Heinrich Abrams, Educator.

Heinrich Abrams was a school teacher as well as a farmer. The Molotschna 1861-1862 school records list Heinrich Abrams as the teacher for Wernersdorf in that school year. It has been established that the Abrams family lived in Wernersdorf at approximately this time and therefore he is assumed to be the same person. This would also indicate that Heinrich Abrams was a well-educated individual with an interest in learning and teaching.

Heinrich continued his teaching career after he came to Canada. He was one of the first groups of Mennonite teachers to receive a Provincial teaching certificate in 1879—Manitoba Legislative Journals 1879 & 1880. Since he lived in Schanzenberg it is assumed that he served as the teacher for that village until they moved to the West Reserve—Jake Doerksen, "Chortitzer School Teachers 1879-81," in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, page 4.

The Family Heinrich and Maria (Heinrichs) Abrams.

Although records indicate there were many deaths in the Heinrich and Maria Abrams family, there were six children who lived to adulthood, married and raised families of their own. Another child died as a teenager. Children of Heinrich and Maria (Heinrichs) Abrams:

1. **Maria Abrams** (1860-1925) married Johann Friesen (1957-1944), son of Martin Friesen (1820-59) and Susanna Suderman (1834-58). They originally settled in Neuanlage on the West Reserve in Manitoba and eventually moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan. The Sommerfelder Church records that they had 14 children. Their 11th child was my "grosspappa", Abraham A. Friesen (1894-1987) who married Agatha Schultz (1898-1971)—see "The Hochfeld Schulzs," in *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part Two, pages 25-27.
2. **Anganetha Abrams** (1863-1950) married Peter Buhr (1862-1914), son of Peter Buhr and Helena Friesen. 10 children were born to this union. They lived in Blumenhof on the W. Reserve and belonged to the Sommerfelder Church. Their granddaughter Lenora Friesen married A. J. Thiessen, Rosenfeld, founder of "Thiessen Bus Lines"—Nettie Neufeld, *Descendants of Peter Buhr 1816-1887*, pages 70-94.
3. **Johann Abrams** (1864-91) died at the age of 17.
4. **Heinrich Abrams** (b.1867) married Katharina Martens (b.1867), daughter of Peter Martens. They had 13 children. According to the Sommerfelder Church records they moved to Mexico.
5. **Jacob Abrams** (1868-1932) married Justina Harder (1866-1954), daughter of Abram Harder and Anna Ens. They lived on the W.Reserve in the Halbstadt area and are buried in the village cemetery. The Sommerfelder church record that they had three foster children: Peter Goertz (born 1899), Elisabeth Schellenberg (born 1903) and Jakob

Schellenberg (1904).

6. **Katarina Abrams** (b.1872) married Jakob Sawatzky (b.1869), son of Heinrich Sawatzky and Anganetha Martens. They were members of the Sommerfelder Church.

7. **Anna Abrams** (1881-1943) married David Klassen (1876-1965), son of Martin Klassen and Maria Schellenberg. They had 10 children and made their home in the Halbstadt area. Irene Klassen Rempel, Mrs. Wally Rempel, is a descendant of this family—*The Family History of David and Ama Klassen 1773-1988* has extensive information on this family.

The Retirement Years.

The February 24, 1909 issue of the *Rundschau* (p. 15/col. 2) contains a letter written by Peter Abrams who was surprisingly no relation. This Peter Abrams was from the Reinlander Gemeinde, who lived in Reinland on the West Reserve and then moved on to Rosthern, Sask. He writes that his past school chum, Kornelius Heinrichs, from Chartsch, Terek, asks about his uncles in America.

Peter writes: "Now my old friend, your uncle Heinrich Abrams and also the aunt from Grossweide are both living with their children in Halbstadt, Manitoba, Canada. Uncle is 77 years old. I don't know how old auntie is. They are suffering from senility (old age diseases). 2 years [ago?] I was there to look them up and they were fine. We live about 600 miles from each other. Your second uncle, Peter Abrams, is still living. He is almost 86 years old. For his age he is quite vigorous and alert. But his eyesight is gone. The loving mother died 2 years ago on the 10th of July... I am your school chum, Peter Abrams from Grossweide."

Conclusion.

Heinrich and Maria (Heinrichs) Abrams both lived to see their children grow up and were able to take pleasure from their many grandchildren.

The name, Abrahams appears in West Prussia as early as 1609. Today the Abrahams (Abrams) descendants are spread all over the world. The name Abraham means "Father of multitude" (Genesis 17:5). As we look at the many descendants we know this surname is a fitting legacy for their families.

Sources:

"Bergthal Gemeinde Buch" (church records, ship lists and census records).

"Mennonite Historical Atlas" by William Schroeder and Helmut T. Huebert.

The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Yews 1763 to 1862" by Karl Stumpp.

Article "Puchtin" by John Dyck - from "Documents of the East Reserve 1874-1910" Volume 4 in the East Reserve Historical Series, publication forthcoming.

1878, 1887 and 1907 Chortitzer Church Registers.

West Reserve Sommerfelder Church Registers 1861-1862 Molotschna School Records

"Atlas of original Mennonite Villages and Homesteaders of the East Reserve, Manitoba," by John Rempel and Williams Harms

"Atlas of original Mennonite Villages and Homesteaders and some burial plots of the Mennonite West Reserve, Manitoba," by John Rempel and William Harms.

Gottlieb and Karoline Krentz

Pioneering Days of Gottlieb and Karoline Krentz: by Art and Evelyn Krentz, Box 823, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

Family Background.

Our grandparents Gottlieb and Karoline Krentz came to Canada from Russia in August 1891. A few years later our great-grandparents, Michael and Justina Krentz followed them to Canada. They lived with them several years until they passed away.

Gottlieb and Karoline had three children at the time they came to Canada, Emilie, Gottlieb and Juliana. Shortly after they arrived, Juliana passed away at the age of seven. They later had three more children, Christof, Leo and Emil.

Establishing the Homestead.

While herding cattle in the pastures, Grandmother Karoline would tell us of those early pioneering days when they first came to Canada. She said they settled down some three miles south of Steinbach, located on SE10-6-6E. They purchased 160 acres of land for ten dollars and after living there for three years, the land would then be theirs.

Grandfather Gottlieb built a little log house which they shared with two other families for the first winter. The families were the Modrow's and Schmidke's and each had a few children. Grandma said the winter nights were so cold that the men would take turns staying up at night to keep the fires going. That first Christmas Eve our Dad Christof was born in that little log house. The other families built their own homes that first summer, and eventually bought farms of their own and then moved their houses on them.

During the harvest and threshing time Grandma went to work at Peter H. Wiebe's farm which was about one mile south of Steinbach. Since our Dad Christof was only a few months old she had to carry him all the way while the other children followed. She was paid fifty cents a day and they gave her food for herself and the children. After a long hard day of work, she came home at night to still more household chores before her days work was done. The evenings were also spent spinning wool and knitting for the family.

Grandma said at one time they were fortunate enough to own a cow so they could have milk for the children. She also made butter to exchange for coffee and sugar at the H.W. Reimer's Store in Steinbach.

During this time Grandpa worked very hard clearing bush land with the use of a grub axe, which was only a hand tool. Finally after many hours of back-breaking work he had cleared enough land on which to build a house and a barn.

Establishing the Church.

The early pioneers gathered in various homes to take part in reading services. At Friedensfeld, these were conducted by Gottlieb Staerk, Adolf Kihn, Julius Holme and Karl

Hollander.

In 1896 Pastor Berthold assumed the ministry in this part of Manitoba and was particularly remembered for a missionary festival which he organized in the district. A missionary from New York was the guest speaker for this special event which took place in Grandpa's newly erected barn. Grandma remembered



Gottlieb and Julianna Schmidke Krentz. They were the parents of Reinhold S. Krentz, Ida Krentz Thompson, William S. Krentz, and Emil S. Krentz, well-known and respected residents in the Steinbach area.

serving the pastor his dinner in the dishes which she had brought along from Russia. She also mentioned how pleased she was when the pastor was able to stay overnight.

All of the pioneers, for many years afterward, treasured the memory of Missionary Kohlrusch of New York, who remained in the district for three months to the great spiritual benefit of every family.

The first Lutheran pastor to visit the settlement was Rev. Ludwig Streich. On his first visit, June 14, 1898, he baptized four youngsters. Also, thirty people received communion, among them were Michael and Justina Krentz and Gottlieb and Karoline Krentz.

About this time, Grandpa decided to move his family to Dominion City in hopes of finding better farm land. So they dismantled the log house, log by log, numbering each piece and moved it to Dominion City. However, after only one year, they found the land to be too wet without proper drainage and the soil was too heavy for the horses to be able to work it. So they returned to their original farm outside of Steinbach, bringing along the again dismantled log house and having to set it up once again.

By this time the Friedensfeld settlement consisted of more than twenty farms. Unfortunately, the settlement did not yet have a church or a school, but that did not stop Pastor Berthold from serving the people with the Word of God. He also encouraged the people to build a school in which the children would be able to receive instruction necessary to become faithful members of the church and useful citizens to our land Canada.

Pastor F. Beer of Winnipeg commented that in spite of the fact that the land in the Friedensfeld area had more stones and far more sand than the farmers would like, there were still some thirty to forty families here of German descent and of the Lutheran Confession. He also stated that a few years earlier a "Wanderfieber" attacked the settlement and it was in danger of disappearing. The chances of building a church or a school then seemed to be quite impossible. But the many settlers that decided to stay and face whatever would come, were very happy they did. Because they persisted, they now found that the hardships they went through were worth the reward they received. They now had a very bright future for



Christof (1891-1970) and Emily Borosky Krentz (1892-1956). They were the parents of Matilda (Mrs. Ferdinand Mehling), Ida (Mrs. Emmanuel Fender), Rudolph Krentz, Art Krentz and Elsa (Mrs. Ed Biedler), all well-known in the Steinbach/Friedensfeld area.

their families.

In the summer of the year 1900, the settlers of that area, at their own expense, erected a handsome and spacious building which would serve as a church as well as a school. On November 15, of that same year, Pastor Beer dedi-

cated the church.

The church was located on NE16-6-6, the Schinkel homestead. The congregation at that time from the statistics given by Pastor Beer, stated that from July 1898 until June 15, 1900, a period of only two years, he had baptized 18 persons, confirmed 8 and had given communion to 262 persons. The congregation then totalled 150.

The congregation continued to grow so rapidly that within three years the original building was too small to serve as a church. So in 1903 a second building was erected on the same yard. It had seating for some 250 persons. The

name of the congregation was then changed from Peace to St. Pauls. On November 8, 1903 the dedication of the new St. Pauls Lutheran Church took place. The old church continued to serve as a school.

The original church council consisted of Stanislaus Schielke, Gottlieb Wiesner and Gottlieb Krentz, and Gottlieb Staerk was the assistant carpenter for the building of the church.

The Krentz Family.

Eventually all of Gottlieb and Karoline's children married. Emilie married George

Goritz. Gottlieb married Juliana Schmidke. Christof married Emilie Borowski. Leo married Olga Laeckelt. Emil married Olga Weiss, however she passed away during childbirth of a son who also died. Emil then remarried to Francis Wonnek a few years later.

In 1920, their son Christof took over the farm and lived there till 1954. Christof's son Arthur then took over and is still living there today.

Sources:

Genealogy of Michael Krentz 1828-1985 (Steinbach, Manitoba, 1985), 20 pages.

Clearsprings Pioneers: The First Five Years 1869-1874

Clearsprings Pioneers: The First Five Years 1869-1874; by Ed & Alice Laing, Box 1088, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, "Clearsprings history buffs".

Introduction.

Clearsprings - where did the name come from? Why was it used to name a road, why was it used to name a large shopping centre in the city of Steinbach?

To make an old story come to life, let us tell you that the name "Clearsprings" goes back many years, back to 1869. The first settlers of Clearsprings were born in Scotland in the early 1840s. By mid 1860s these adventurous young men and women were crossing the ocean, arriving in Ontario to begin farming.

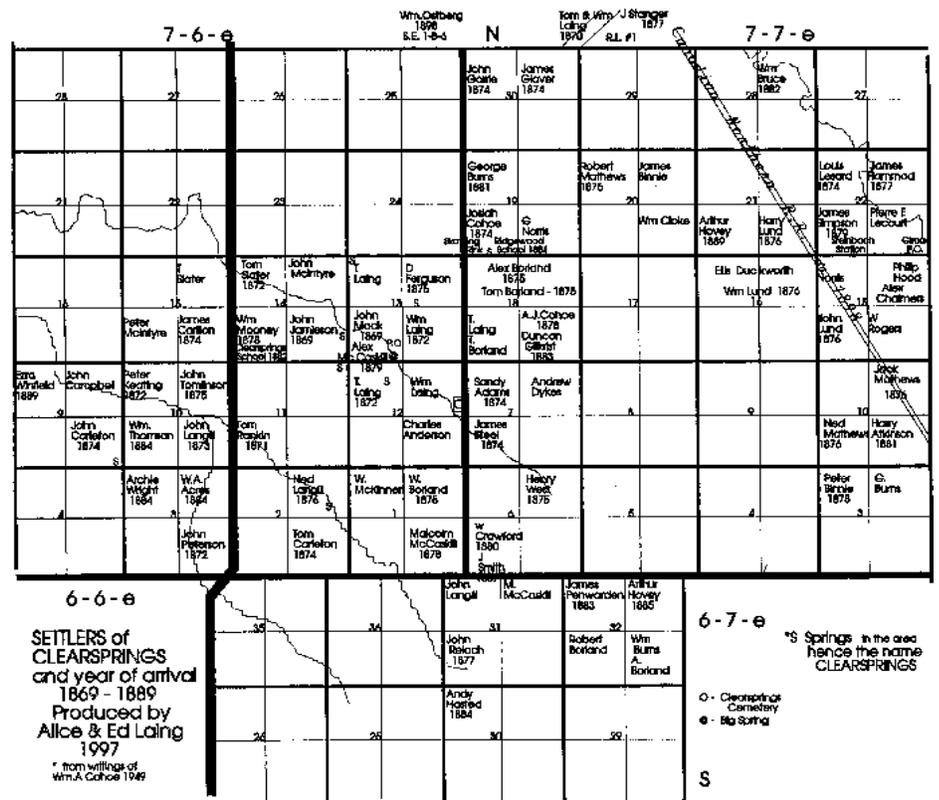
Life was exciting in Ontario. Some of these young men and women soon married. Land was becoming expensive and when these young men heard that there was plenty of fine land of the best quality for a reasonable price out west they decided that is where they should go. Before long these young pioneers sold their land in Ontario, gathered up their belongings and started west to Manitoba by train.

At this time the nearest Rail Road terminal to the Red River Region was St. Cloud, Minnesota, 400 miles south of Fort Garry, now Winnipeg, which at that time had a population of 250. There are many stories written about how the pioneers made the trip from St. Cloud by horse and covered-wagon. One story tells of meeting Louis Riel with his two aides on the trail as they were fleeing Manitoba after the Riel Rebellion was quashed by Colonel Wolseley and his military expedition.

The First Settlers, 1869.

In 1869, before the land was surveyed, the nearest Post Office was Hudson Bay Company, Fort Garry, a three-day trip for the mail.

John and Mary Mack from Hensall, Ontario, are recorded to be the first settlers to pioneer the area later called Clearsprings in 1869, located on SW13-7-6E. The Macks were closely followed by others from Hensall: Thomas Rankin located on SW11-7-6E, the



Map of the Clearsprings district showing the locations of early homesteads and the date of establishment of each. This map was prepared by Ed and Alice Laing based on the writings of pioneer Wm. Cohoe, 1949. The Clearspring settlement covering the south half of Township 7, Range 6E, was not originally included in the R. M. of Hanover.

site of today's Mennonite Heritage Village; John Jamieson located on SE14-7-6E; and Thomas Slater, located on NW14-7-6. Obviously they were drawn to the area by the many springs of crystal clear flowing water, therefore calling this new area "Clearsprings".

Feeling the need for family life, John Jamieson and Thomas Rankinson went back east to marry the young ladies they left be-

hind and then returned to Clearsprings. Thomas Slater came in 1871 and never married. Sad to say, with no living descendants in the area, that the only place to find these names in the community today are in the "Historical Clearsprings Cemetery".

Glowing reports of the opportunities in the postage stamp province of Manitoba were sent by mail to families and friends back east. The pioneering spirit soon inspired them to

gather their belongings to begin the long trek west. Before the survey in 1872 many others arrived.

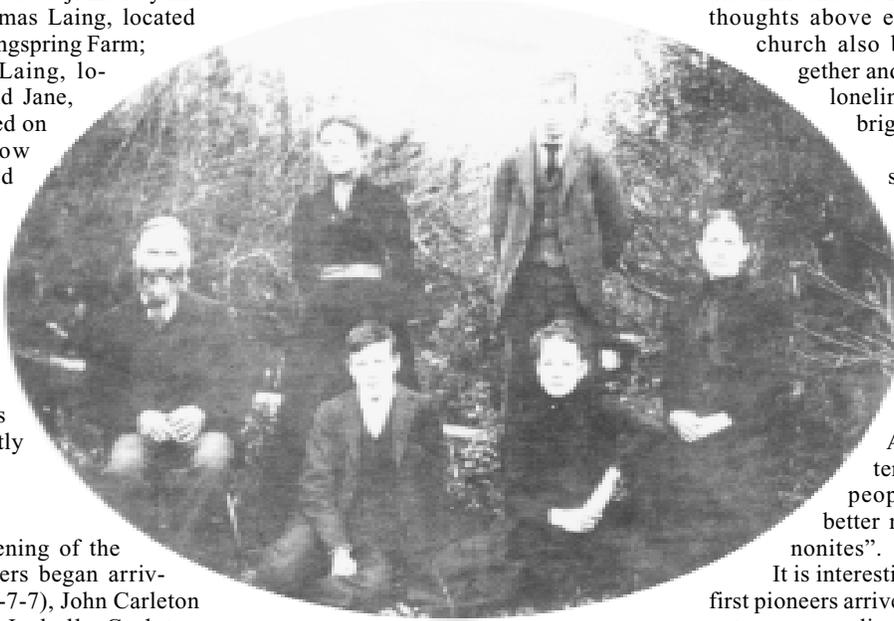
John Mack was soon to be joined by his sisters; Mary, Mrs. Thomas Laing, located on NW12-7-6E, now Laingspring Farm; Rachel, Mrs. William Laing, located on SE13-7-6E; and Jane, Mrs. John Langill, located on SE10-7-6E, now Clearspring Mall and Brookdale Pontiac Dealership. Also arriving to settle due west of the present-day Clearsprings Mall was Peter Keating located on NW10-7-6E, and John Peterson, located on SE3-7-6E, where Edgar's Dinner House is presently located.

New Arrivals, 1874.

In 1874 with the opening of the Dawson Trail many others began arriving - Alex Adams (NW7-7-7), John Carleton (SE9-7-6), James and Isabelle Carleton (SE15-7-6), Thomas Carleton, son of James (SE2-7-6, Old Tom Road), Josiah and Mary Ann Cohoe (SW19-7-7, Cohoe Road), James and Mary Glover (NE30-7-7E), John and Jannet Gorrie (NW30-7-7E, now Sunny Glade Farm) and James and Isabelle Steel (SW7-7-7E) appeared in the community.

Many stories can be told, for example John Peterson took James Steel and Alex Adams to look at a piece of land that was available. They both wanted the same quarter, SW7-7-7E. To settle the problem Mr. Peterson took two matches making one shorter than the other - the one choosing the longer match got the quarter he wanted. The winner was Mr. Steel. Later Mr. Adams who took NW7-7-7E, who also did not have a wife, became lonely so he wrote to his fiancée Jane Stuart,

both originally from Aberdeenshire, Scotland, to come west and marry him - she did and arrived.



The Langill family - left father John Peter Langill, standing Mary, Dave, sitting - Joe, Dolly, Jane Mack Langill, mother. Photo courtesy of Ed and Alice Laing.

they lived together for 37 years. Since they had no children they took into their home an 8 year-old boy, Duncan Sproat and a 2-year old girl, Mary Hasted.

Josiah Cohoe is recorded as being a Steam Boat Engineer on the Lake of the Woods before he came to Clearsprings to farm. James Carleton was the first farmer reported to ship wheat outside of the settlement to Steel Briggs Seed Co., Ontario.

Community Life.

The settlement grew, the need to socialize grew. The Presbyterian faith was very strong among these early settlers. Soon Rev

James Robertson, a Presbyterian teacher, minister and missionary was serving in Clearsprings. The church was found to be the best influence to raise the level of people's thoughts above every day problems. The church also brought the pioneers together and encouraged them in their loneliness and gave them a much brighter outlook on life.

Now, in 1874 the area surrounding Clearsprings was being settled by Mennonite people. These early Clearsprings settlers very much appreciated the coming of the Mennonites who in contrast to the Clearsprings settlers came in large groups. A common expression often used by the Clearsprings people was, "You can't find better neighbours than the Mennonites".

It is interesting to note that when these first pioneers arrived in Clearsprings in 1869, not one person lived on section 35-6-6 where Steinbach began its village in 1874. Today the City of Steinbach, with a population of 10,000 has expanded to cover the whole section as well as a good part of the Clearsprings' original settlement and has every service and convenience their customers could wish for and more.

Descendants.

Only a few of the early Clearsprings settlers have descendants in the area today.



John and Mary Ann Cohoe, standing rear. Josiah was a steam boat operator before he began farming in Clearsprings in 1874. The couple in front are Mr. and Mrs. Borland. Photo courtesy of Ed and Alice Laing, Box 1088, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.



The John Peterson family who pioneered in Clearsprings. Photo courtesy of Ed and Alice Laing.

Names such as Keating, Steel, Cohoe and Laing are still in the phone book and make a living in the community.

The naming of Clearspring Mall and Clearsprings Road is a compliment to the early pioneers and their descendants as they preserve the history of the area. The Macks, Rankins and Jamiesons, to name a few, would be grateful to today's people in keeping the name "Clearsprings" on the map.

May the success of the past continue in the future!



Peter Keating and his mother-in-law Mrs. Anderson in the buggy. The Keatings arrived in 1872 and homesteaded on NW12-7-6E, 2 miles north of Steinbach along the present-day Keating Road. Photo courtesy of Wes Keating.

Coming in the next issue:

"Clearsprings: 1874-84: The next ten years" by Ed and Alice Laing will survey the settlers who came in 1874 to 1884 and the establishment of a vibrant and successful community.

Minister Franz Dÿck (1822-87): Pioneer Recorder

Franz Dÿck (1822-87), Schönsee, Manitoba - Pioneer Minister, Assistant-Aeltester and Church Recorder; by John Dyck, 48 Coral Crescent, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2J 1V7.

Introduction.

The story of the Bergthal Colony in Imperial Russia and that of the old-world society transplanted to Manitoba in 1874, to a large degree, is the story of the men and women, the family units, of that pioneering community whose dedication to a vision inspired them to do the impossible. The story of Franz Dÿck (1822-87), BGB B54 is the story of one such family and one such individual.

His Family.

Franz Dÿck was the son of Jacob Dyck (1787-1847) and Helena Wall (1792-1874). Jacob and Helena Dyck lived in Rosenthal in 1808 and in Osterwick in 1814 before moving to Bergthal with their teenage son, Franz.

Franz's paternal grandfather was Jacob Dyck (b. 1754) of Nieder-Chortitz whose other son, Gerhard (1789-1867), has a number of signifi-

cant children: Aeltester Jacob Dyck of Chortitz (1813-55); Rev. Gerhard Dyck (1821-89); and Judith (1830-1906), second wife of minister Jacob Epp of Judenplan and Neu-Chortitz (Note One).

Franz' maternal grandparents were Johann Wall (b. 1768) and Getruda Wall (b. 1769) whose daughter Judith (1836-1910) married Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905) of Fürstenland, founding Aeltester of the



1910. A group of Schönsee families many of whom later emigrated to Paraguay in 1926. From left to right - back row: Abram Klassen, Jac. Thiessen, A. D. Friesen, John Klassen, D. W. Friesen (founder of Friesen Printers, Altona), Bishop Johann K. Dyck, son of Franz Dÿck (wearing the dark shirt), Gerh. Klassen, Abram Friesen, Jakob Klassen and David Klassen. Presumably the Klassen men are the cousins or some other relations of Bishop Johann K. Dyck. This photograph seems to represent the upper and middle class Chortitzer society of 1910. As such it demonstrates dress and personal attire of the time. The people appear to be self-confident, satisfied with their place in life, and prosperous. Photo courtesy of Grunthal History, page 59. Mrs. Johann K. Dueck emigrated to Paraguay with her children in 1926.



Mr. and Mrs. Jakob K. Dueck (b. 1873) and family and the mother to Mr Jakob K. Dueck, Mrs. Franz Dueck, nee Justina Klassen (b. 1834). Photo courtesy of Grunthal History, page 60.

Reinlander Gemeinde in Manitoba.

Marriage, 1846.

In 1846 Franz Dÿck married Margaretha Buhr (1828-53), daughter of Kornelius Buhr (1797-1868) and Maria Driedger. They had no children. Among Margaretha's relatives was Anna Buhr, wife of businessman Erdman Penner.

A year after Franz and Margaretha were married, his father, Jacob Dyck, sold his Feuerstelle (farmyard) in Schönthal to Wilhelm Janzen and started construction of a Trittmuehle (treadmill). However, before the mill was completed, Jacob Dyck died. Probably the sale of the property was rescinded when Jacob died because Wilhelm Janzen does not appear in any Bergthal Colony records. His widow contemplated returning to the Chortitsa Colony but she appears to have remained in Bergthal.

A year after the death of his first wife, Franz married Justina Klassen (b.1834) daughter of Martin Klassen (b. 1800) and Helena Martens (1809-66). They had 12 children of whom eight died in infancy or childhood. Franz Dÿck is listed as the teacher in Schönthal in 1848.

Call to Ministry, 1854.

At the age of 32 years, Franz Dÿck was called to the ministry in Bergthal on November 25, 1854. As has already been mentioned, his family was well connected in ministerial circles.

Other ministers elected in the Bergthal Colony in Russia after this time included the following: Gerhard Wiebe elected deacon in the same year, 1854, and possibly at the same meeting, but he was only elected as a minister on November 23, 1861; Cornelius Stoesz was elected April 23, 1864; Heinrich Wiebe, February 28, 1865; David Stoesz November 3, 1869; Abraham Bergen November 20, 1869; and Cornelius Friesen November 26, 1871.

Gerhard Wiebe was elected Aeltester on March 29, 1866, the most senior office in the Mennonite Church. Nevertheless Dÿck was the senior minister of the seven ministers serving the church in Bergthal in 1874. In 1873 Franz Dÿck drafted the controversial petition to the

Imperial Czar "because he had God-given talents." -Gerhard Wiebe, page 30.

Immigration 1874.

On June 16, 1874 minister Franz Dÿck joined other Bergthal residents at the Nikolaiowsky train station where Bergthal emigrants were boarding for the first lap of their journey to Canada. Minister David Stoesz recorded that Franz found goodbyes difficult and that he would much rather have emigrated with the first contingent.

Among the emigrants that year were ministers Heinrich Wiebe, Cornelius Stoesz, David Stoesz and Cornelius Friesen, leaving only three in Bergthal. The following year Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe and minister Abraham Bergen followed them. From spring of 1875 until summer of 1876 Franz Dÿck was alone to serve the church in the Bergthal Colony and to represent her in discussions with leaders of various church communities and many other matters, a considerable responsibility.

Gerhard Wiebe emigrated to America in 1875 and it appears that he appointed Franz Dÿck as Vice-Aeltester, leaving him in charge of the group remaining in Bergthal (Note Two). Franz Dÿck was the first person in the Bergthal Colony to hold the office. In his capacity as Vice-Aeltester, he attended to certain formal functions on behalf of the Aeltester. On May 14, 1876, he signed an attest for Johann Stoesz, a member of the church emigrating to Minnesota. Later he signed another attest for Cornelius Penner (Note Three).

Emigration, 1876.

Franz Dÿck left Russia with the last contingent of Bergthaler emigrants in 1876 landing in Quebec on the S.S. Sardinian on July 30. With him were his wife Justina, four sons and one daughter: Franz age 19, Johann 9, Helena 6, Jacob 2, Martin 1 and Helena 6.

Schönsee, Manitoba.

The Franz Dÿck family settled in the village of Schönsee, somewhat north of present day Grunthal, where he filed for a Homestead on SW35-5-5E on February 7, 1878. According to the "Brot Schult Registers" 19 families settled in Schönsee. By the time the Brandordnung was officially organized the number had dropped to fourteen and by 1882 only nine families remained.

Four Schönsee families had come to Manitoba in 1875 on board the S.S. Manitoban and one on the Peruvian. Franz and Justina Dÿck and Peter and Susanna Buhr arrived in 1876 on the Sardinian. Several of the families were related to Justina Klassen, daughter of Martin Klassen BGB A178, including Mrs. Kornelius Wiebe Sr., Mrs. Kornelius Wiebe Jr., and Mrs. Peter Wiens. In addition, Mrs. David Friesen, the mother of D.W. Friesen of Altona, was a niece through marriage to Justina Klassen Dyck.

Minister Franz Dyck, Recorder.

Presumably Franz Dÿck served as Vice-Aeltester until 1879 when David Stoesz of Bergthal was appointed. Perhaps he felt that it

was a task requiring the energy of a younger man. This still left Franz Dÿck with the busy schedule of pastoral work, preaching, counselling young people as they made their commitment to join the Gemeinde, serving at weddings, funerals, etc.

But the church also called upon him to exercise other gifts. It was probably Franz Dÿck's penchant for neatness and accuracy and a genius for organization, that got him involved in establishing the second set of Chortitzer Church family registers. A first set had been started immediately on arrival of the first settlers in 1874. However, since some fifty families had gone to Minnesota and some others to Dakota, there was a need to start a fresh list of all the families who settled on the East Reserve.

His registers read on the title page: *Litter A - Kirchenbuch der Gemeinde zu Chortitz Angefangen im Jahr 1878 Im Monat Januar Vom Kirchenlehrer Franz Dyck* [y with Umlaut].

Minister David Stoesz wrote in his journal, "In January [1881] Ehrs. Frank Dueck travelled through the congregation, with the church books to survey how many families on this Reserve plan to stay here, and how many families moved to Pembina, and how many still intend to go. It has been established, that 268 families think of staying here, and 315 families have gone or are contemplating the move, so 47 more plan to move than stay."

Later in 1881 Franz Dÿck went to the West Reserve to start a church family record there. He titled it *Kirchenbuch A fuer der Gemeinde bei West Linne*, naming the church after the town of West Lynn, near present-day Emerson. This register in time became the property of the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church who still have possession of it.

Aeltester David Stoesz recorded that the Minister Franz Dÿck accompanied him when he went to the West Reserve on Good Friday, April 7, 1882 to ordain Johann Funk as Aeltester: "On Good Friday April 7th I and Ehrs: Franz Dueck drove to the West Reserve to confirm Johann Funk as Elder (Note Eleven) there, which we did, with Gods help and in the midst of a great gathering, on the last day of Easter."

During the early years church services were held occasionally in private homes in East Reserve villages, including Schönsee. On June 17, 1883, a communion service for 21 people in the home of Franz Dÿck was the last such event there (Note Four).

After a large number of families had relocated to the West Reserve it became evident that it would be easier to start a new register than to cull the old one of the names of all those who had left. As a result in 1887 Franz Dÿck started a new set of registers, which read on the title pages:

Litter A - Kirchenbuch der Gemeinde zu Chortitz Im Jahr 1887.... Ist umgeschrieben worden Vom Kirchenlehrer Frans Dÿck in Schoensee

Litter B Kirchenbuch der Gemeinde zu Chortitz Im Jahr 1887... Ist aufs neue umgeschrieben von den Kirchenlehrer Frans Dÿck in Schoensee. The indexes to these registers were published in the *Bergthal Gemeinde*

Buch, pages 203-222, and are immensely helpful to anyone doing any kind of family research on the Chortitzer.

Waisenamnt Regulations.

Mutual aid organizations in the Mennonite community were designed to serve as vehicles by which the church cared for its members. They were an extension of the work of the church. Ministers of the church were routinely active in the planning of such organizations. In this capacity Franz Dÿck wrote up a new edition of the Waisenamnt regulations in 1880. He also signed new Brandordnung regulations in 1883 as well as another set which are undated. His important role in these institutional reorganizations has only recently been recognized and is in need of further study.

Death 1887.

Minister Franz Dÿck died on June, 1887. His funeral was held on the 10th. He had reached the age of almost 65 years and had served the church as a minister for half of his lifetime. During those years he had preached 918 sermons, officiated at 287 funerals and 107 weddings, in addition to instructing youths in preparation for baptism. That is an average of twenty-six sermons, eight funerals and three

weddings each year for 35 years by a layminister who received no remuneration for these services and still had to earn his living on the farm.

Franz Dÿck's obituary in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, written by minister Peter Giesbrecht of Gnadenfeld, noted that just prior to his death he had still been active in instructing youths in preparation for their baptism (Note Four). His widow continued to live in Schönsee.

Legacy.

Minister Franz Dÿck (1822-87) played a significant role in the church in the Bergthal Colony in Russia and also in the Chortitzer Mennonite Church in Manitoba. He worked diligently as the first Assistant-Aeltester, and took on the arduous task of organizing and compiling the records of the Gemeinde, a function normally carried out by the Aeltester. He was also active in making changes necessary to institutions such as the Waisenamnt and Brandordnung, which had been transplanted to Canada from Imperial Russia, and in the restructuring necessary to their proper and efficient operation in a new land.

Descendants.

Rev. Franz Dÿck also left a legacy to the community through his children:

Son Johann K. Dueck (1866-1923) also of Schönsee, served as Aeltester of the Chortitzer Gemeinde from 1915 until his death in 1923—Johann S. Rempel, *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1966, Part One, page 43.

Spelling.

On the early documents Franz Dÿck spelled his name, "Dyck" with a "ÿ" umlaut. But in later years the family seems to have adopted the more common "Dueck" spelling.

Endnotes:

Note One: The diaries of Judith and Jakob Epp are at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. Excerpts of Jakob Epp's diary which have been published by Harvey Dyck.

Note Two: Johann S. Rempel, Chortitz, referred to Franz Dyck as Vice-Aeltester—, "Memoirs," in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1966, Part One, page 43..

Note Three: Dennis E. Stoesz, "A History of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church of Manitoba 1874-1914", Thesis, 1987, page 49.

Note Four: Dennis E. Stoesz, "Chortitzer Church, page 88.

Note Five: *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 20 July, 1887.

Prediger Johann W. Sawatzky 1872-1949

Prediger Johann W. Sawatzky (1872-1949), Kronsart, Manitoba to Gnadenfeld, Paraguay—Servant of the People, by Linda Buhler, Box 2895, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

Moving from Russia to Canada as a small child, Johann W. Sawatzky lived most of his life in Canada only to again forsake the new homeland as he and his family sought a better future in yet another continent. It was in this new country, Paraguay, sometimes referred to as the "Green Hell of the Chaco" that Johann spent the remainder of his life. It was during this time that he made his biggest impact on the people of the Chortitzer Church. His contribution, like that of the many other ministers in the church, was not a monetary or entrepreneurial one but rather one of faithful dedication and service in a time fraught with economic difficulties, physical hardships and suffering.

Family Background.

Johann W. Sawatzky was born in the Bergthal Colony on December 17, 1872. He was the first born son of Johann Sawatzky (b. October 22, 1841) and Sara Wiebe (b. February 20, 1848) whose two infant daughters, Elizabeth and Sara, died in November and September respectively in 1872 just prior to Johann's birth.

Johann was not quite two years old when he and his ten-month-old brother, Cornelius, accompanied their parents in their emigration to Canada, arriving in Quebec on the S. S. Nova Scotian on October 22, 1874. The family stayed in Ontario for some time as their next child, Katharina was born there on September 22, 1875, which was

incidentally the same day as son Comelius died. The family then journeyed on to Manitoba where they settled in Bergfeld, East Reserve and later moved to the Neu-hoffnung/Kronsart area.

Marriage.

Baptized by Aeltester David Stoesz into the Chortitzer Church on May 22, 1893, he later



1926 Rev. Johann W. Sawatzky (1872-1949) and Mrs. Sawatzky, nee Barbara Penner. Photo courtesy of Linda Buhler.

married Barbara Penner of Blumenthal, W. Reserve. Their wedding took place on January 11, 1898 at the home of her parents, Abram Penner and Maria (nee Heinrichs). After their marriage, Johann and Barbara resided with Johann's parents in Neu-hoffnung until 1903 when they built their own house.

Johann was called to the Ministry in the Chortitzer Church on November 23, 1915 under the leading of Aeltester Johann Dueck. He was

ordained as a minister on December 19 of that same year and delivered his first sermon on January 30, 1916 in his home church in Grunthal. His second sermon was given at Chortitz on February 20, 1916. Johann took this new responsibility seriously and went on his annual visitation circuit with Rev. Peter K. Toews from Gnadenfeld, visiting homes from Gnadenfeld to Neu-Bergfeld.

According to the records that he kept, he preached 123 sermons during his first five years in the ministry (from 1916 to 1921) and officiated at eleven funerals. Family members recall that one of his least favourite ministerial tasks was visiting the sick. However, his absence from his home due to his ministry meant more work for his wife and children.

His wife, Barbara, was already suffering from a blood disorder and had a family of eight children to tend, the youngest being only four months old when Johann was called to the ministry. The added work load was shifted onto his children, the oldest, Sarah, being 15 years old at the time. Barbara passed away at the age of 45 on August 27, 1925 after a lengthy battle against her blood disease which the blood transfusions that she underwent could not cure.

Emigration, 1926.

Johann was actively involved in the many meetings that were held as the Chortitzer people prepared to migrate in mass to Paraguay in the 1920s. All but one of Johann's children emigrated



December 31, 1926. The first group of immigrants has arrived in Puerto Casado and are disembarking. L. to r. Rev. A. E. Giesbrecht, Johann G. Klippenstein, group leader P. F. Krahn and Rev. Johann W. Sawatzky. Photo courtesy of Martin W. Friesen, *Kanadische Mennoniten Bezwingen eine Wildnis*, page 58.

to Paraguay. The oldest daughter, Sarah, remained in Canada and was never to see her father again.

Leaving the Carey train station on November 24, 1926, the Sawatzky family was a part of the first emigration group that left for South America traveling by Canadian Pacific train to Crookston, Minnesota where they met up with the group from the West Reserve who had arrived on the Canadian National train. From here they journeyed together by train to New York. On November 28 they sailed from New York on the "Vasari" arriving in Buenos Aires on December 23. They boarded the river boat "Apipe" on Christmas Eve 1926 and arrived at Puerto Casado on New Years Eve. This group consisted of 51 families or a total of 309 people (196 from the East Reserve and 113 were from the West Reserve).

Writing from Puerto Casado to Aeltester Martin C. Friesen on January 5, 1927, Johann describes their accommodations and states in his letter that they arrived safely. He writes that in his opinion, with God's blessing, this region held a great future for them. He also relates that they had received a good rainfall and they had seen the rainbow, the glorious promise that God gave Noah and Johann, himself, was reminded of God's continued mercies. Johann states that the weather was indeed warm and that they had been told that this was the hottest season but that they were able to sleep well. A German doctor made twice daily rounds to see them as some were suffering from diarrhea although not severe. But he does state that some children have died. (Johann's two grandchildren were buried at Puerto Casado within the first week of arrival, one child having died on ship and the other when they reached the port.)

Much hardship awaited them as they eventually moved onto their own land in the Chaco and the rosy view with which they had viewed their new homeland soon became tarnished. Feeling the responsibility of staying with his people who were also suffering from the harsh conditions, Johann remained in Paraguay.

Gnadenfeld, Paraguay.

Settling in the village of Gnadenfeld in the Colony Menno, Johann once again planted an orchard on his new property. Being an avid gar-

dener, he had left a well established orchard on his farm on the East Reserve in Manitoba so it is not surprising that he continued this hobby in Paraguay. In the last few years of his life, he moved with his married daughter and family to their new home in the village of Rudnerweide. Here again he carefully tended a variety of fruit trees. Date palms that he planted over a half-a-century ago are still growing there today.

In the early years in the new Kolonie Menno, Johann walked long distances going from church to church. At times having to hack a path as he made his way through the jungle, he would journey up to 10 kilometers by foot. On one occasion in 1932 when Paraguay was at war with Bolivia over the ownership of the Chaco, he was traveling by horse and sulky when armed Bolivian soldiers stopped him for the purpose of taking away his horse. Neither could speak the other's language but when Johann got down from the sulky and the soldiers saw his long black *Prediger Ruk* no words were necessary (Note One).

The soldiers recognized Johann as a minister and gave him the same respect that they would have given their own Catholic priests. Johann was left unharmed and still in possession of his transportation.

This respect shown to him was in extreme contrast to the prank that occurred while Johann still resided in Canada. Someone from Johann's home church had deliberately smeared fresh cow dung on the gate post at the end of Johann's driveway. When Johann returned home late one evening from a church visit and reached his arms around the post to open the gate for his horse and buggy, his frock was covered with dung.

Johann continued his work in the ministry until the end of 1938 when it is said that he withdrew for a period of time due to a controversy within the church. During this time, changes swept through the colony as some of the newer ministers were more liberal-minded and not as traditional in their ways as some would have wanted. One of the more visible changes concerned the *Ruk* which they chose not to wear on occasion because of the hot climate. This became an issue with some of the more conservative in the group.

However, we do know that Johann did con-

tinue preaching after a time as each of his sermons had a detailed record giving the date and place of each church in which he had delivered that message. From the sermons that have been preserved, it is clear that he continued to preach in the 1940s. His last known sermon was given at the church in Rudnerweide on July 17, 1949, just one month prior to his death.

Conclusion.

Living with his married children, Johann was there to watch his grandchildren grow up. Very fond of his grandchildren, Johann would give each child a handful of candies for Christmas which was considered an extravagance. He also wrote to each of his grandchildren in Canada ever concerned about the religious instruction that they were receiving and that they were continuing to learn the German language.

Johann Sawatzky never remarried. He lived with his daughter, Anna (Mrs. David Klassen) until his death. He died at the age of 76 on August 22, 1949 and was buried in the Rudnerweide Cemetery.

Over eighty of his sermons written in hand-sewn booklets were kept in the family after his death, however the whereabouts of only a few of these are known today. Despite his lack of formal Biblical training, his sermons were said to be well-prepared and profound in depth. He is remembered as being a man who stuck quietly to his principles and never complained even when his health was failing.

Descendants.

Daughter Mrs. Katharina Harder (married first to Abraham Kauenhowen) is still living today in Paraguay. Another daughter, Mrs. Sarah (Peter R.) Funk of Grunthal, Manitoba, passed away November 12, 1997: see Linda Buhler, "Sarah Sawatzky Funk: Matriarch of Kronsgart," in *Perservings*, No. 10, June 1997, Part Two, pages 40-42.

Endnotes:

Note One: The "Ruk" was a long, black tuxedo style coat traditionally worn by ministers in the Chortitzer Church (as well as in the Sommerfelder Church) when they were preaching or taking part in official church visits or meetings. It was also referred to as a "scheeskjeruk" as the "scheeskje" referred to the tails or flaps of the coat. "Sitooa ruk" was another term that was commonly used by Mennonites seemingly from both 1870 and 1920 immigrations. The word "Sitooa" is a Germanized Russian word stemming from the Russian word "Curtuk" meaning a frock coat. Ministers were able to have their ministerial garb custom-tailored in Winnipeg where the style was referred to as a Prince Albert frock.

Sources:

Neue Heimat in der Chaco Wildnis by Martin W. Friesen.

Kanadische Mennoniten Bezwingen eine Wildnis, by Martin W. Friesen.

Die Ersten Mennonitischen Einwanderer in Paraguay compiled and edited by Abram B. Giesbrecht.

Rev. Martin Penner (1849-1928), Greenland

Martin Penner (1849-1928) and Aganetha Toews (1854-1928), Greenland, Manitoba: Pioneer Minister, by grandson John G. Penner, Box 92, St. Annes, Manitoba.

Introduction.

When the Russian Mennonites discovered, in the 1870s, that their privilege of military exemption was about to be terminated, there was great consternation, especially among the Kleine Gemeinde. It was an assault, after all, against a basic doctrine, non-resistance; under no circumstances would they take a human life. As negotiations brought no definite concessions, they began to seriously consider emigration, with Canada as their chosen destination. Among them was my grandfather, Martin Penner.

Martin Rempel Penner was born in 1849 in Margenau, Molotschna colony, Ukraine, to Peter Penner (1818-84) and Katherina Rempel (1828-56).

Childhood in Russia.

The home in which young Martin grew up was one of nearly constant change—births as well as deaths. His father had five wives in succession and fathered 25 children, of whom 12 grew to adulthood. Martin's mother was his father's second wife, but when the boy was six, his mother died. Seven weeks later he had a brand new step-mother, 23 year old Elizabeth Harder. Later, two other stepmothers became part of his life.

By the time young Martin left home to marry his bride, his father's family consisted of the following: his father, his father's fourth wife, three children of the first marriage, five (including himself) of the second marriage, four of the third, and a four-day old infant of the fourth union, a total of 15 persons. He had seen his father bury four children and two wives.

On December 11, 1871, at the age of 22, he married a very personable woman, Aganetha B. Toews, daughter of Peter W. Toews "Groti Toews" (1831-1922) and Aganetha K. Barkman (1831-99). She was born in Prangenau, Molotschna Colony, in 1854 but two years later her parents moved to Margenau, where they were neighbours to the Peter Penner family. During the late 1860s both families moved to the village of Rosenfeld, Borosenko, about 20 miles northwest of Nikopol.

Martin and Aganetha farmed their "Wirtschaft" in Rosenfeld for three years. A daughter, Aganetha, was born in 1872, but died in June of the next year. In 1874 they emigrated to Canada together with the rest of the Kleine Gemeinde. Both Martin and Aganetha's fathers, Peter Penner and Peter W. Toews, were designated to look after the arrangements regarding the sale of the village farms in Rosenfeld.

Blumenort, 1874.

Grandfather arrived at Blumenort, Manitoba with the second wave of Kleine Gemeinde immigrants some time in August, 1874. Marten Penner filed a Homestead on NW 34-7-6E on

May 3, 1874, and SW34-7-6E on February 1, 1878, but like all the other villagers they lived on their Wirtschaft in the village. According to contemporary maps they lived on the south side of the street, in the middle, directly across from the school and worship house.



Circa 1926. Mrs. Martin Penner, nee Aganetha B. Toews (1854-1928), Blumenort and later Greenland. Photo courtesy of great-granddaughter Linda Martens, Steinbach.

Besides farming there, he was one of the only two Blumenort farmers who did custom sawing. He lost his forefinger while sawing lumber. As his father owned a steam engine, he may have used this machine to power his sawmill. Father-in-law Peter W. Toews also owned a steam engine, a Watrus.

The early years must have been lonely sometimes as various family members choose to settle elsewhere. On August 12, 1874, Aganetha, Mrs. Martin Penner wrote a letter to her sister-in-law Mrs. Johann Janzen, nee Margaretha Penner, living in Rosenort at the time. In this letter she sends some news from the family in Blumenort but also expresses her heartfelt longing and desire to "have you in our midst"—*Blumenort*, page 55.

A number of journals are extant from the Blumenort area which refer to Martin and Aganetha Penner. The following are some extracts from the journal of Abram F. "Fule" Reimer which refer to the grandparents:

Oct. 18, 1879 - "... Jakob and Martin Penner

returned from Winnipeg at 8 a.m. yesterday morning. They had sold some 20 sheep, young and old, for \$5 each, for a total of \$100."

Jan. 14, 1880 - "Yesterday Kl. Reimer went to Winnipeg and today seven went, the old and young P. Friesen, J. Reimer and Martin Penner and Peter Toews Sr. They were going to get a steam engine." Jan. 19, 1880 - Martin Penner and brother Peter went to Winnipeg."

Feb. 8, 1880 - Sunday. Yesterday Cor. Penner and Martin Penner each gave a speech." Mar. 21, 1880 - In the afternoon Martin Penner went to Winnipeg with 2 oxen." April 1, 1880 - Yesterday Abr. Penner sold a young ox to Martin Penner."

Martin Penner was also a community man and served on the Blumenort school board in 1888 together with Abraham M. Friesen and Jakob S. Friesen, later known as "Drekka" Friesen.

Greenland, 1891.

In 1891 the family moved from Blumenort to the Greenland area, near Ste. Anne, where Martin had acquired 400 acres on Section 6-8-6. For winter, however, they returned to the relative security of the village, and here son John was born. In the spring of '92 they moved to Greenland to stay. They built a house and barn, attached to each other, in the southeast corner of the northeast quarter and here they lived till they died.

He was an excellent, systematic manager, and I think I have evidence to support my opinion. In his barn and in his "Schmaed" (shop) everything was in perfect order. He developed his homestead into one of the larger farms of the area. On January 1, 1908 someone reported in the *Rundschau* that Martin Penner "has a large farm of 1600 acres of debt-free land, a quarter section for each child, and his own threshing machine"—Loewen, *Family, Church and Market*, page 317.

While perhaps not wealthy, they certainly had no lack. In starting spring fieldwork, Grandfather set the pace for the community. When he started, neighbours knew it was time for them to start.

He was methodical. Even in harvest time, quitting time was quitting time, threatening clouds or not. He said horses needed their rest as well as humans. "What God wants me to have, He will give me. There's no need to worry."

He was generous. In those days farmers from southeastern Manitoba herded their cattle to Winnipeg for slaughter. Grandfather offered, "If you arrive here in the evening, chase your animals into my cattle pen near the barn. Leave them there for night and sleep in our house." As the pen was by the roadside, this was a convenience utilized by some cattlemen.

Their Characters.

Grandfather is remembered as being decisive. He liked order and liked to do things right. These qualities made him a good manager; there was an aura of good husbandry about the farm. There's another aspect to this quality. He expected his grandchildren to be obedient and orderly—to be sent home was not unheard of.

I remember a really pretty field of oats with not a single weed that I could see. After the threshing crew had harvested the field, he thought it might be worthwhile to glean what they had missed. As grandson Johnny was not old enough for the threshing crew, he asked me to do it. But then he saw it wasn't worthwhile and dropped the idea. He wasn't dogmatic. His character was large enough that he could change his mind.

Grandmother was different, but well-suited to be a helpmeet for a leader. She was methodical and exuded an aura of control. Yet a relaxed personality gave her a softness which endeared her to her grandchildren.

This gentle compassion is a quality mentioned now by every grandchild who knew her personally. What else made her popular? Why, the candy dish, of course, always well-stocked! And there might be dimes for them at Christmas! Linden Penner recalls that Grandmother's practice on Sunday mornings was to adorn the table with a bouquet of flowers.

Archie Penner relates that one day his mother (a daughter-in-law) exclaimed, "If there's any person in the world closest to being an angel, that's Mother!" Archie, too, was very fond of her; even on Grandmother's deathbed she greeted the 10 year-old with genuine interest.

Unlike angels, however, Grandmother did make mistakes. One night, related Henry Penner, her rheumatism was so painful that she couldn't sleep. Getting her liniment from the cupboard, she rubbed it into her aching joints. The treatment was so effective she slept till morning. Next morning her colourful body showed that she had massaged herself with orange dye used for colouring butter, not with liniment!

Like most Mennonite women, she was a good cook, and always cost-conscious. Grandfather, however, also appreciated good tasty food, and these philosophies occasionally conflicted. Once when she mixed old porridge with fresh porridge for breakfast, he threw the mixture out. Grandfather bought hams at the packers while Grandmother would have preferred home-grown hams, but she gave in to Grandfather and to guests like me and served them food they liked. So if good cooking has brought me to the present age of 86, Grandmother must get some credit.

Grandparents complemented each other very well, both providing strengths the other lacked. Occasionally, when Grandfather became a little emotional, Grandmother provided stability.

I remember one occasion when their children from North Dakota were visiting. When they got on the topic of Christian living, the atmosphere became decidedly tense, and apparently Grandfather decided to say nothing more lest he say too much. Then in one sentence, without rancour, Grandmother said what needed to be said. The

situation was neatly defused.

Grandchildren's Memories.

I remember a row of massive cottonwoods west of the yard, probably planted soon after their arrival in Greenland. In the shelter of these trees were planted trees bearing luscious, tasty plums. (I doubt that plums have improved in taste since my childhood). Their garden produced raspberries to superb taste.

As a child I visited Grandparent's house. I recall its window shutters which kept hot sunshine out, or even hailstones (which can get to be egg-sized in Greenland!) For us children a



Martin Penner sons, circa 1918. Left to right, back row: Jakob M., Cornelius M., John M. and Aaron M.; Sitting: Abram M., Peter M. and Martin M. The photograph may have been taken by Abram Eidse, married to the sister of the Penner brothers. The photograph is courtesy of niece, Mrs. Cornelius P. Doerksen, 1982, Steinbach.

wooden swing stood on a cement pad. And it got used! A great holiday was "schwien-schlacht" (hog-butchering bee).

Grandfather loved horses; his fine distinctively-coloured team showed that care had been lavished on them.

Daughter Agnes with her husband, Cornelius W. Toews, lived in the middle of the section half a mile west of Grandparents. One evening after dark their son Adolph, just a young boy, was sent to tell Grandfather to get the midwife, Mrs. Peter B. "Groti" Toews. Grandfather had a top-buggy and willing horses which always required a tight rein. He was off immediately, and before Adolph was home, Grandfather was already there.

As it was considered improper for young children to occupy the house during birthing, Adolph and his young siblings were sent to Grandparents for night.

The Next Generation.

Grandfather raised seven sons, collectively known as the "M Penners" because they all used a middle initial of "M" after their father's first name. This was a matter of convenience as it

ran counter to prevailing Mennonite custom. Each of his sons became a well-known member of the community, and in his own way bore the stamp of his father.

The sons were: Peter M. Penner—farmer, foster parent; Martin M. Penner—entrepreneur: 1. lumber yard in Steinbach, 2. provided electric power for Steinbach, 3. sawmill (Colenso Lumber), 4. farmer, 5. established sugar factory at Winnipeg; Abram M. Penner—farmer, lumber yard, sash & door factory at Prairie Rose (Landmark); Jacob M. Penner—farmer, share in threshing outfit with his brothers, deacon in Holdemann church; Aron M. Penner—farmer, share in threshing outfit; John M. Penner—carpenter (including lumber sales), farmer, repair shop, minister in the Holdemann church, author and writer; Cornelius M. Penner—farmer, share in threshing outfit, custom brushbreaking, cheese-factory manager, transfer service to Winnipeg, well-known for his generosity towards the needy, spiritual leader.

There were also three daughters: Agnes, wife of Cornelius W. Toews; Katherina, wife of Abram Eidse. Anna, the youngest, married Johann Barkman.

For each of his children, Grandfather bought a quarter of land, but I don't know if it was sold or given to them. When the farm on Section 7-8-6 became available for one of the older sons, Abram and Peter were in Alberta, so Aron, who became my father, got it. Grandfather paid the first tax bill on this farm in 1899. This farm on which I grew up is now owned by his great-granddaughter (our daughter Joyce) and her husband Larry Goossen and has remained in the family for 98 years.

Uncle Cornelius, the youngest son, got the home place on Section 6-8-6E. Grandparents built a new house while the younger family moved into the old house. Years later, this old house was moved to Kleefeld when C.M. Penners built their own new house which stands there today.

Each of the children was able to borrow \$900 from Grandparents and the interest from these loans provided a living for them. Loan principal up to \$900 which was outstanding when Grandparents died would be forgiven. Any amount over \$900 was to be repaid to the estate.

Grandfather owned a threshing outfit with a Case steam engine and wooden threshing machine until he was nearly 70 years old. One night in the early 20s the outfit came home late and was parked on the road overnight. When Grandfather woke the next morning, the thresher was gone, leaving only a smoking black hulk on the road. I remember seeing it from our house a mile away. A spark may have slipped through the spark screen on the steam engine and landed on the thresher. Whatever the cause of the fire, Grandfather's threshing days were over.

His Devotion.

Grandfather was a devout man and in his youth a member of the Kleine Gemeinde. But in 1874, when his orderly nature first encountered the primitive conditions of Manitoba's open prairie, his faith in God's leading was severely tested.

He remarked later, "If it wasn't for my faith, I would have turned back the next day."

After about six years in Canada, Bishop Peter Toews invited John Holdemann to conduct revival meetings among the Kleine Gemeinde. These meetings were conducted in various homes. During this time Grandfather had a conversion experience and on December 18, 1881 was baptized into the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite by Bishop John Holdemann. After this period of revival, Grandfather's brother-in-law, John B. Toews, wrote about the fervency of the working of the Spirit among them. The group experienced what Jesus commanded: "By this shall all men know what ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). In the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite they had gained what they longed for, an organic unity.

The new church had a vote for leadership, and on January 10, 1882, only weeks after his baptism, Grandfather was ordained to the ministry.

It was a working church. Ministers would customarily travel and visit the congregations. There they would preach, visit members' homes, encourage, admonish, and generally oversee church affairs. In all this Grandfather was active. His obituary stated, years later, that he served "in frailty" and "with no lack of trials and unpleasant experiences" but "God gave him the victory".

What He Believed.

Though not a prolific writer, he brought his concerns in articles published in the church organ, the "Botschafter der Wahrheit". It's evident he had insight into human nature. He neither excuses himself nor does he gloss over the problems. Two articles were found (there may be more) in the "Botschafter".

In a 1921 article Grandfather writes about the need for responsibility, both financially and spiritually. He writes: "In my youth the Holy Spirit reminded me that when I wasn't faithful there was no promise of salvation. Later, when one got into difficulty and had to borrow money, there was always that admonishing voice, that we should be faithful in the smallest things. 'If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?'"

Continuing in the same vein, he addresses the spiritual sphere: "It takes an earnest struggle and conflict to be fruitful with the pound entrusted to us...We are no longer under the schoolmaster (Galatians 3)...Now the Holy Spirit disciplines God's children and leads them into all truth. This grace does not come automatically, but requires a violent effort...It pleases the devil to cause schisms, so that each one can go to whatever pleases him...Faithfulness—this holds water and this has value with God and with people." Here we see the themes of self-denial, of obedience to rules being supplanted by following the Spirit's leading, and of actively seeking the Lord's will.

"God's Wonders" is an article written in 1928, in which the life of John the Baptist is discussed. Various aspects of his life are listed

as "wonders". Then follows the baptism of Jesus, which, he writes, was only a preparation, for the church was only established on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given.

He writes: "All born-again children of God must be baptized as members of the body of Christ. 'He that believeth not shall be damned.' His thought was that salvation is attained not by baptism but by the indwelling Holy Spirit. After baptism the church disciplines those within, though not those without. He pleads, "Shouldn't we take the faith more seriously?"



Mr. and Mrs. Peter M. Penner (nee Maria Friesen) with son David F. Penner in 1904. They were the parents and grandparents of many of the Landmark Penners such as Wilmer, the famous Low German dramatist and Wes, founder of Powerland Computers. The Peter M. Penner family was one of the first to settle in the Prairie Rose/Landmark district. Maria Friesen was the niece to the well-known Jakob S. "Drekka" Friesen, Steinbach. Photo courtesy of Reflections on our Heritage, page 343.

Old Age.

As always Grandfather planned ahead, even in his prayers. He knew that the death of one of a couple always creates difficulties for the surviving spouse, and he wanted to spare his wife this hardship. Martin Barkman, then a lad of nine, recalls that frequently in family prayers he implored His Lord that she would go before he did. This bold prayer was uttered although Grandmother was spryly bustling around, while Grandfather was so sickly he spoke only in whispers and could barely walk, merely shuffling his feet.

In early 1928, however, Grandmother's health began to fail, and she needed heavy care. Several sons, including my father, took turns staying at their home for night. There were, in fact, a few private nursing homes in Winnipeg which could have helped her, but none nearby. Actually, placing her in a nursing home, though almost standard practice today, was not even considered then. She breathed her last on June 26, 1928, reaching the age of 74, Grandfather's selfless prayer had been answered.

They had been married for the remarkable

period of 57 years. But now Grandfather needed a home and a caregiver. As my parents had a brand new house with ample room, they volunteered to take him in.

In summer Grandfather had an auction sale. The summer of '28 was a rainy one, and the auction day was a showery one. When the fourth shower of the day hit, the auction got soaked.

The weeks went by. In July one day as I stood on the landing of the stairway I saw Grandfather leave his upstairs room. He walked through the door too close to the doorframe, and stumbled and fell. That fall and more falls in following weeks caused him great suffering.

One evening, after Grandfather visited his son Martin, the latter remarked, "Father is worn out." The day after, August 6, 1928, he went to meet his Lord, having outlived his wife by only 38 days.

Their Legacy.

Grandfather had frequently expressed a concern that too much money was being spent on expensive tombstones. Accordingly, the couple was buried side by side in the Greenland Church cemetery (present church location) with a simple concrete pad marking each grave. Around the two graves a chain was hung from short steel posts.

In those graves lie two stalwarts of the faith. Their influence has been far-reaching—in the church, in the neighbourhood, and in their posterity.

Grandfather spoke for himself of these events in words penned not long before he died: "We, my wife and I, have nearly completed our pilgrimage, and are old and weak-physically, that is. Spiritually we rejoice in God's grace, by which we have become His inheritance in the faith" (Botschafter, Feb. 15, 1928).

Descendants:

Aganetha and Martin Penner have many well-known descendants in the Steinbach area in the present-day. Children: 1) Agnes Toews Penner—Randy Wohlgenuth, Landmark Agro; 2) Peter M. Penner—Dr. Archie Penner, formerly Steinbach Bible School; Doris Penner, *Carillon News*; 3) Martin M. Penner—George T. Penner, formerly Penner Insurance and Travel, Steinbach; Linden Penner; 5) Jakob M. Penner—Rennie Wiebe, farmer, Greenland; Kathryn, Mrs. Jonas Toews; 6) Aron M. Penner—John G. Penner, the author, Bob Schinkel, Steinbach real estate broker; Ray Friesen, hog farmer; Jac G. Penner, formerly "Jac G. Penner gravel"; 7) John M. Penner—Margaret Penner Toews, widely published poet, Nielburg, Saskatchewan; 8) Cornelius M. Penner—Ed P. Penner, Whitemouth; 9) Anna Penner, Mrs. Johann Barkman—son Alfred P. Barkman was the pastor of the Steinbach Church of God in Christ, Mennonite for many years.

Sources:

Roy Loewen, *Blumenort*, 669 pages.
C. W. Friesen, *Peter Penner Genealogy*, 284 pages.
Abr. F. Reimer, "Journal".

Jakob Rempel (1852-1926) Bergthal

Jakob Rempel (1852-1926), Bergthal, Manitoba, by grandson Bernard "Ben" Rempel, Box 1367, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

Grandfather Jakob Rempel immigrated to North America from Russia with his mother, Anna Penner Rempel, and his step-father Cornelius Enns in 1874. Cornelius and Anna Rempel Enns settled near Butterfield, Minnesota. The large monument in the Bergthal cemetery nearby is the site of great-grandmother's and her husband's remains.

Minnesota.

Only sons Peter and Jakob Rempel settled in Manitoba. Four of great-grandmother's sons and three of her daughters also settled in the St. James, Butterfield and Mountain Lake area of Minnesota.

My great-grandparents settled north of Butterfield, as did also their oldest child, Maria, and her husband, Peter Falk. Another daughter, Anna, and her husband, Johann Sawatzky, also had a farm in that vicinity.

Son William and wife, Katharina, owned a grain elevator and sold farm machinery in St. James. They were in partnership with brother Bernhard, a bachelor, and also owned an elevator in Butterfield. In 1904 the elevator was sold by W. P. Rempel and Bernard continued his own elevator business in Butterfield. Bernard also owned farmland in the United States, as well as in Canada. The William Rempels also owned quite a bit of farmland and just recently the last parcel near Grand Forks was sold. According to old newspaper clippings and family sources, they were also instrumental in starting a bank in St. James.

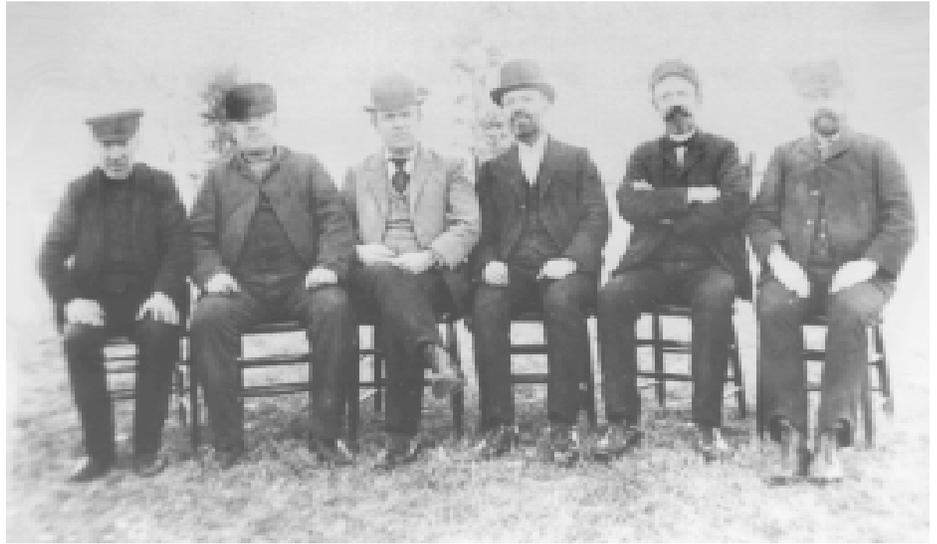
The W. P. Rempels were a charitable family having made contributions to a library and Watonwan Memorial Hospital, as well as to Bethel College, Kansas. In 1917 they moved to Los Angeles, California.

Another brother, Johann Rempel and his wife Maria owned a store in Butterfield. Sister Katharina Rempel and her husband Franz Schroeder ran an elevator in Mountain Lake. David Rempel, married to Maria, was the accountant for his brother W. P. Rempel and later owned a store in Mountain Lake. One nephew of my grandfather's, Herbert S. Rempel, is still residing in Los Angeles (Pasadena). He is 96 years old. His sister, Sarah S. Rempel, passed away in 1989 at the age of 95.

Jakob Rempel (1852-1926).

My grandfather, Jakob Rempel, was born in Bergthal, Imperial Russia, on April 15, 1852. He immigrated to North America with his mother and step-father in 1874. His mother and most of his siblings remained in Minnesota where they settled in the Mountain Lake area.

Jakob Rempel came to Manitoba with the rest of the Bergthaler. Since his brother Peter was five years older, Jakob Rempel may have come to Manitoba with him and lived with Pe-



The Rempel Brothers. Photographed sometime prior to May, 1917 when brother, David Rempel, the youngest passed away. Left to right: Peter Rempel, Manitoba and Mexico; Jakob, Manitoba; William, Minnesota and California; Bernard, Minnesota; John, Minnesota; David, Minnesota. Three sisters also lived in Minnesota: Maria Falk, Anna Sawatzky and Katharina Schroeder. Photo courtesy of Ben Rempel, grandson of Jakob.

ter and worked for him in Bergthal, a village located approximately 2 3/4 miles north of the present-day Mitchell.

In 1878 Jakob married Maria Loewen, born January 7, 1859. After their marriage Jakob and Maria Rempel made their home in Bergthal. On August 17, 1878, Jakob took out a homestead on the NW17-7-6E.

According to the 1883 tax records, Jakob Rempel was a substantial farmer with 2 horses, 4 oxen, 6 cows and 3 yearlings, 7 calves, and assorted farm machinery, with a total assessment of 932. His brother Peter Rempel was one of the wealthier men in the village owning a threshing machine valued at \$225 and a total assessment of 1487. The highest assessed farmer in Bergthal was Peter Toews who became Reeve of the Municipality in 1883 with an assessment of 1700.

It is interesting that Jakob Rempel was not a party to the village agreement for Bergthal dated March 4, 1890 nor is he listed as one of

the farmers in the village in a map published in 1990 (*Working Papers*, page 26). The village was dissolved in 1909, but it appears that Jakob Rempel may have withdrawn his lands from the village prior to the date of the formal agreement.

Bereavement and remarriage, 1888.

Grandfather's first wife, Maria Loewen Rempel, passed away December 31, 1888. Jakob Rempel married for the second time to Justina Funk on March 20, 1889. She was born October 9 1869, and passed away March 23, 1935.

The Rempel family continued to farm in Bergthal. Their farm had grown to 320 acres of land. When machinery became available they purchased a Fordson tractor to help with the farm work. In 1917 they purchased their first car, a new model T Ford. In either the year 1919 or 1920 a new two-storey house was erected. After a few years a hip-roof barn was built with



Grandparents Jakob and Justina Funk Rempel's farmyard at Bergthal (Twin Creek), Manitoba, NW17-7-6E. The house and hip-roof barn were built in the 1920s. The house is still standing to this day. Photo courtesy of Ben Rempel, Box 1367, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

clear fir at a cost of \$600. The house is still standing on the farm property.

Death.

Grandfather Jakob Rempel died at his farm in Bergthal (Twincreek), 2 3/4 miles north of Mitchell, Manitoba, on April 5, 1926.

In 1935 grandmother passed away and the farm was sold and the family members that had been involved in the farm together with mother moved to Steinbach.

Children:

Anna Rempel (1880-1962) married 1901 Jakob Stoesz (1872-1939). They were farmers in the Prefontaine along P.T.H. 59.

Helena Rempel (1882-1963) married 1902 to Peter B. Peters (1872-1932). They owned the Tourist Hotel in Steinbach. Peter was the brother to Jakob B. Peters who served as Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover. Peter's son Jake R. Peters was a barber in Steinbach.

Maria Rempel (1884-1935) married 1905 Cornelius Krause (1886-1968). He was a farmer, cattle buyer and owned a transfer business in the Silberfeld/Landmark area. They were the grandparents of Jake K. Doerksen, Ile des Chenes, HSHS board member.

Jakob L. Rempel (1886-1974) married 1906 Katharina Krause (1888-1909) and second marriage 1910 Elisabeth Krause (1890-1975). They were farmers in the Silberfeld/Landmark area. They were the grandparents of Art Rempel, City of Steinbach Councillor and Rev. Wm. Rempel, Niverville.

Katharina Rempel (1888-1937) married 1913 Johann Loewen (1892-1966). They were farmers in Mexico.

Aganetha Rempel (1890-1984) married 1912 Abram B. Peters (1885-1971). They were farmers in the Ebenfeld area near Mitchell.

Justina Rempel (1891-1985) married 1914

Peter W. Peters (1889-1970). They were farmers in Mitchell. They were the parents of mail carrier Jake R. Peters and the grandparents of Wayne, Larry, and Peter Peters of Mitchell.

Abraham F. Rempel (1892-1981) married Susanna Penner (1898-1926). Abram was a railway worker at Giroux. Later they lived on a farm in Silberfeld. After the death of his wife, they moved back to Bergthal and lived with his mother who had been widowed in 1926. In 1935 when the farm was sold, the Abram Rempel family moved to Steinbach where he was a trucker and labourer. He was the father of Mary Rempel who married Henry K. Schellenberg, long-time Bishop of the Chortitzer Church.

Agatha Rempel (1893-96).

Margaretha Rempel (1896-1972) married 1930 Cornelius P. Hiebert (1895-1986). They moved to Winkler. He was a barber and tailor. Later they settled in Steinbach where they owned a livery barn and a clothing store on Main Street. Two big trees stood in their front yard and so they were sometimes called "Hieberts unga dem Boum", or "Hieberts under the tree". Their daughter, Doris, and son-in-law, Dave Friesen, owned this property for many years operating "Steinbach Fabric Shop." Another daughter Helen is married to Jack Loewen owner of "Loewen Auto Electric."

Agatha Rempel (1898-1989) married David P. Hiebert (1897-1982). They were farmers in Silberfeld, near the Manning Canal. They were the parents of Bill R. Hiebert, carpenter, Steinbach, and Nettie, Mrs. John M. Wiebe.

Peter F. Rempel (1900-86) married Aganetha P. Hiebert (1907-89). He was a trucker and labourer. They owned farmland in Silberfeld. Moved to Steinbach in 1935. They were the parents of Ben Rempel, the author, Dora, married to Bill Dyck, manager of Loewen Funeral Home, Steinbach, and Jake Rempel, transport driver for Penner International.



Monument for Cornelius and Anna Rempel Enns in the Butterfield Cemetery with the Mennonite Church in the background. Standing by the monument are great-great grandchildren Bob and Lucy Reimer of Mitchell, Manitoba, and their children Garreth and Dana Rempel.

Wilhelm Rempel (1902-94) moved to Steinbach 1935. He was a trucker and labourer. He spent some time on the farm living with his sister and brother-in-law David and Agatha Hiebert.

Sarah Rempel (1905-09).

David Rempel (1909-85) married 1937 Agatha Unrau (1916-95). They lived in Hochfeld after they got married and then moved to Steinbach. David lived in Steinbach for two years prior to his marriage. He was a trucker and labourer.

Sources:

Jake Doerksen, "Bergthal," in *Working Papers*, pages 13-32.

Henry K. Schellenberg, "Family Record of Jakob Rempel, Bergthal, Manitoba," unpublished photocopies, 16 pages.

Office Hours Tuesdays 10-12 a.m.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society is pleased to announce that Research Director John Dyck will again have regular office hours at the HSHS offices at the Heritage Mennonite Village. Phone John at 256-1627 for an appointment.

OFFICE HOURS: Tuesdays, 10:00 to 12:00 A.M.
PLACE: Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach

John Dyck will have some time available to assist people who are researching their family histories.



John Dyck, HSHS Research Director.

David Stoesz (1842-1903) Pioneer Bishop

Memories of David Stoesz (1842-1903), Bergthal, Manitoba, Pioneer Bishop; by granddaughter-in-law Katharine Wiebe, Box 60, R.R. 1, Ste. Annes, Manitoba, R0A 1R0.

Introduction.

David Stoesz was born in Schönthal, Bergthal Colony, Imperial Russia, youngest of the Jacob and Barbara (Wiens) Stoesz family; see Henry Schapansky, "The Family Stoesz," *Preservings*, No. 7, Dec 1995, page 34-35. David was baptized at the age of 19 into the Bergthaler Gemeinde. In the same year he married Maria Wiebe who was also 19 years of age, BGB B235.



Bishop David Stoesz housebarn built in 1878. These buildings were moved from the village of Bergthal to the SW18-7-6E when the village disbanded in 1909.

On November 13, 1869, David Stoesz was elected as a teacher ("Lehrer") or minister of the Bergthal Gemeinde in Russia. On April 4, 1879, he was elected as Vice or Assistant-Aeltester in Manitoba serving under Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900). When Gerhard Wiebe withdrew from the ministry in 1882, David Stoesz became the Aeltester of the Bergthaler Gemeinde or Chortitzer Church as it came to be known. He served this office until his death in 1903.

After David Stoesz's death in 1903 he was replaced as Aeltester by Peter T. Toews. The membership of the Chortitzer Gemeinde had grown to 650 souls with eight ministers: Heinrich

Doerksen, Johann Dueck, Cornelius Friesen, Heinrich Friesen, Johann Neufeld, Johann Wiebe, Peter Wiebe, and Peter T. Toews. The story of David Stoesz's ministry was told by Dennis Stoesz, "Aeltester David Stoesz," in *Historical Sketches*, page 322-328. David Stoesz's, "Journal 1872-96," and his "Ordination Sermon on 1 Peter 5:2-5," were also published in *Historical Sketches*, pages 404-455.

David Stoesz, the Pioneer.

In 1874 David Stoesz settled in the village of Bergthal, 3 miles north of the present-day Mitchell. Bergthal was one of the largest Chortitzer villages with 22 families listed in 1881. It was a wealthy village. By 1881 8 farmers already had houses insured for over \$500.

David Stoesz filed for a homestead on SW18-7-6E, July 3, 1878. Since he was a minister his assets are not listed in the early tax records as ministers were exempted from Municipal tax in Hanover in those days.

A village map published by Jake Doerksen in 1990 shows that David Stoesz lived in the village of Bergthal but that he was the only one on the north side of the street, the same side as the village school. In 1890 the Bergthal villagers entered into a formal village agreement. David Stoesz was the first to sign the agreement, indicating that he had a prominent role in that development. The Bergthal village was disbanded in 1909 and presumably his buildings were relocated to the SW18-7-6E at that time.

The House of David and Maria Stoesz.

Little has been written and published about the family of David and Maria Stoesz. They had 7 children of which 5 grew to adulthood: 2



House and barn which David Stoesz built on SW18-7-6W. These buildings are still being used. Photo by Katherine Wiebe, Fall 1997.

girls—Anganetha and Maria, and 3 boys David, Jacob and Cornelius.

Son **Heinrich Stoesz** was the oldest born Aug. 22, 1863 and died the same day.

Daughter **Anganetha Stoesz** was born Sep. 1, 1866, and died Oct. 19, 1951. She married Johann Funk and lived in the village of Blumengart. David Stoesz made several references to them in his diary: "Yesterday Oct. 14, 1890 we went by sleigh to Blumengart to visit the children and it snowed without interruption all day." In Aug. 1893 Stoesz together with



David M. Stoesz (1870-1934), in the fall of 1894 with his class at the Gnadenfeld school, West Reserve. Can anyone identify any of the children? Photo courtesy of Wm. and Trudy Harms, Altona.



Aganetha Stoesz (1866-1951) with her husband, Johann Funk. Photo courtesy of Dick F. Wiebe, Greenland.

son-in-law Funk bought a self-binder for themselves in Winnipeg and he helped his children cut their crops in 1893, 1894 and 1895.

Son **David Stoesz** born Aug. 28, 1870 married Agatha Kehler on Dec. 30, 1890 and moved to the West Reserve in 1891. They bought 80 acres of land in the Gnadenfeld district. David Stoesz's diary reads as follows, "March 17, Jacob Kehlert together with our children David and Agatha moved to the West Reserve. They had bought 80 acres with buildings in Gnadenfeld for \$1,600.00. This is going to be a very hard knot, and will need much luck and blessing to overcome." They are both buried in the Kronsthal cemetery, West Reserve.

Son **Jacob Stoesz** born Nov. 8, 1872 married Anna Rempel Nov. 19, 1901 and settled in the Rhineland district between Niverville and Isle Des Chenes Hwy 59. Jacob like his father was a prosperous farmer and built a big two-story house circa 1920. They had 5 children of which 4 died in the diphtheria epidemic. Only the youngest son Jacob grew up to take over the farm when his father passed away in July 29, 1939.

Son **Peter Stoesz** born Feb. 24, 1878 and died Mar. 18, 1884.

Daughter **Maria Stoesz** born July 28, 1881 and died Feb. 19, 1951. She first married Peter Schroeder in April 2, 1901, who died five years later leaving Maria with 4 young daughters. One of these daughters, Maria, married Cornelius W. Friesen, later a minister in the Chortitzer Church, and whose son, Aron C. S. Friesen, is currently Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover. In 1908, April 2, she married Cornelius C. Friesen who had one son from his

first marriage. Counting the children from both of their first marriages, Maria and Cornelius had 11 children who all grew up to adulthood. They farmed in the Osterwick area, later designated as the Arran School District by the Provincial Government. One of the grandsons of the second marriage is Albert Friesen, owner of Auto City Insurance, Steinbach.

Son **Cornelius Stoesz** was born Jan. 21, 1885, and died Nov. 21, 1948. He married Anganetha Kehler and farmed south of Landmark. They raised 4 children 2 boys and 2 girls who grew up to adulthood. A son died in his childhood years. The two married daughters moved to Paraguay to be with her daughters.

Tribute to Maria Wiebe Stoesz.

Much has been written about Aeltester David Stoesz, albeit we must not fall short to give Maria Wiebe Stoesz some credit too. Maria played an important role, being the wife of an Elder and Bishop as David Stoesz was. As we all know, there was nothing that came easy or instant in those early days; everything was laborious and hard going.

Besides his ministerial work, David also was a well-established farmer. Maria must have been a very busy farm manager and housewife. Besides all that, she had the duties expected of her as an Aeltester's wife such as always being ready for unexpected company and overnight guests.

David and Maria Stoesz' oldest daughter Anganetha (married to Johann Funk) was the



Maria Stoesz (1881-1951) second husband Cornelius C. Friesen (1882-1966). Photo courtesy of Dick F. Wiebe.

maternal grandmother to my husband (D. F. Wiebe). I remember grandmother as being neat and punctual. She used to tell me many details of her growing up years in the David Stoesz home and how she had helped bake, do general cleaning, gardening and spring house-cleaning.

Anganetha went into detail of how they had done the spring house-cleaning with homemade

soaps as the only cleaning agent they had. Cleaning the whole house had taken a long time. First they cleaned the white-washed walls and then painted some parts where it needed after which it took a while for the paint to dry. When all was done, put in place, and arranged in shinning order, they were ready for visitors.

We can take it from this that her mother Maria Stoesz had taught her daughter well in maintaining a well-kept household; this was of utmost importance to them.

It was usually in summertime when most of the visiting was done, which was also a time when the woman's virtuous talents would display their art in breadmaking, noodle-making, blanket making, sewing and cooking. They always tried to make a lot from what little they had. One thing they all had in common in that era was to wash and bleach their flour and sugar bags to make sheets, comforter covers and some clothes for young children. They would neatly embroider pillows cases and tea towels were sewn up pretty.

The house cleaning was usually done in spring. In May 1891, David Stoesz mentioned in his diary "It is house cleaning time here in the house, everything is being cleaned and refurbished." When the house was all cleaned from top to bottom, it gave them a content feeling of pride and they looked forward with pleasant anticipation to host the visitors and overnight guests that always showed up.

Mennonite women had to be ready for guests at any time without notice or warning. To have extra bedding was essential in those days with all the people who stayed for the night. This was especially so for Maria Stoesz as she never knew who their next night guest might be: it could have been Andres Lilje from Edmonton, Alberta or J.Y. Shantz from Ontario, or else ministers from near and far.

Conclusion.

Some time ago I and my husband D. F. Wiebe were in Alberta at the celebration of the Moravian Brethren's 100th year in Canada. During the lunch break there was lots of reminiscing going on. A dear elderly lady came up to shake our hand and told us the story of how her grandfather and Pastor Andreas Lilje had been to Manitoba looking for aid from the Mennonites. While staying at Bishop Stoesz's for night he had insisted that her grandfather sleep in his bed. "You see, they not only gave them aid but also had them sleep in the best bed they had. If it had not been for the Mennonites our people would have starved to death." she said with tears in her eyes.

That reminds me of 1 Timothy 5:17 "Let the Elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honours especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."

Sources:

David Stoesz and the Bergthal Story: Some diary notes," by Lawrence Klippenstein, *Mennonite Life* (April 1976), 14-19.

Bill and Trudy Harms Altona, Manitoba, "House of David and Maria Wiebe Stoesz record."

Material Culture

Gerhard Kliever (1836-96): Emigration Journal

Gerhard Kliever (1836-96): Emigration Journal; by Nettie Neufeld, 1410-70 Plaz Drive, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 5S1.

Gerhard Kliever 1836-96.

Gerhard Kliever was born May 11, 1836 in Molotschna, Russia. His parents were Peter Peter Kliever (1786-1860) and Susanna Kroeker (1811-62) of Rudnerweide (Wirtschaft 35, 1835 census).

Gerhard was Susana's third child but Peter's eighth since this was his second marriage. Not much information about Gerhard's youth or background is available. In 1861 Gerhard married Helena Buhr from the Bergthal Colony, Imperial Russia. They made their home in Bergthal and were members of the Bergthal Gemeinde where she had been baptised on June 1, 1859.

An interesting story has been related to me regarding this couple. Apparently in 1869 in Russia, their horse bolted and went over the railing into the Dnieper River dumping Helena and her three children into the water. Gerhard jumped in, not wanting to be the sole survivor, but an observant gypsy rescued all five of them. The children were 5, 4 and 2-years old. I personally wonder whether this was really the Dnieper River or what were they doing in Chortitz, a sizable distance from Bergthal. Just one of the many puzzles. Presumably they were visiting relatives?

On June 21, 1875 Gerhard and Helena emigrated to Manitoba with 5 children: Helen, Susanna, Gerhard, Anna and Peter. Two children had died in Russia. They had 4 more children in Canada who also died in childhood. Then 3 children were born and grew to adulthood: Sarah, Cornelius and Katharina. In all, Helena had borne 14 children of which 8 grew to adulthood and further begat many descendants.

Manitoba 1875.

Gerhard Kliever arrived in Niverville on August 17, 1875, a year later than his parents-in-law Peter and Helena Buhr. They settled in the village of Schantzenberg, one mile south of the present-day town of Niverville. Schantzenberg was the village founded by Kliwever's in-laws in 1874: parents-in-law Peter and Helena Buhr; brother-in-law Cornelius (aged 22) and wife Sarah Buhr (22); brother-in-law Abram Buhr (24) single, who lived with Cornelius; and Abram and Aganetha (30) Buhr Leppke with 3 children.

The records in the Archives of the Hanover Municipality reveal that in 1881, Peter Buhr, Cornelius Buhr and Gerhard Kliever owned Section 19-7-4E. Gerhard and Helena remained in the East Reserve but the other Buhrs all moved to the West Reserve circa 1881.

Franz Kliever (1845-98).

Gerhard Kliever had at least one brother in Manitoba, Franz Kliever (1845-98), who moved to the Gretna area. His signature as town clerk appears on Peter Buhr's death certificate dated May 6, 1887 who had moved to Grünthal,



Gerhard Kliever (1836-96), first Reeve of Hanover. Photo courtesy of Lydia Penner, Hanover 100 Years, page 163.

West Reserve.

"Franz Kliever came to Manitoba in 1878 and served as a teacher among the Chortitzer. He then moved to Neuanlage on the West Reserve and finally to Oregon. He together with Erdmann Penner, Peter Abrams, David Peters and Gerhard Rempel were the first elected members of the committee of the Mennonite Educational Society who were responsible for building the "Fortbildungsschule" in Gretna which opened in the fall of 1889"—Jakob Doerksen, "Chortitzer School Teachers 1879-81," in *Preservings*, No. 8, June 1996, Part One, page 4.

Reeve Gerhard Kliever, 1880-82.

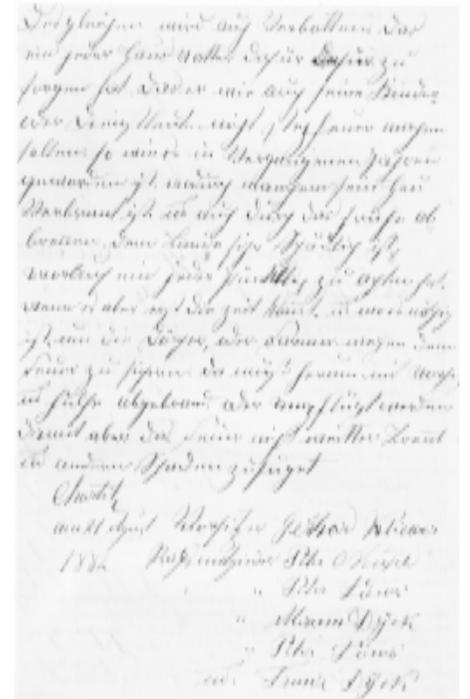
Gerhard Kliever has become renowned for his position as first Reeve of the R.M. of Hanover, originally known as Hespeller, formed in 1880. Only six meetings were held in 1881 and another six in 1882. Peter Klippenstein, Chortitz, was the first Secretary. The tradition became that the meetings were held at the Secretary's home, and therefore, it is assumed that Gerhard Kliever travelled to Chortitz for the council meetings.

Peter Toews, Bergthal, becoming the second Reeve of the Municipality in 1883. In 1893 Gerhard Kliever made another run for the office of Reeve but was defeated in a three-way

race by the incumbent Peter Toews. The third candidate was Jakob F. Peters who became the third Reeve of the Municipality in 1894.

Gerhard Kliever was also known as a community leader and served on the school board.

The following incident illustrates his sense of community and helping his fellow human beings. Heinrich Rempel (1853-1926), later resident of Steinbach, arrived in Niverville, Manitoba, on June 2, 1886, having immigrated from Russia. The Rempel family was poor and without means to travel further to their destination. In his journal Rempel described their experience: "From here we went to Peter Duecks, who lived only a 1/4 mile from the station. After we had eaten fasma and spoken a little, the aged Kliever, who lived 1 and 1/2 miles from the station, brought us to his farm. Here we received the best of hospitality and



A letter from the council of Hespeller and Hanover to the village mayors, August 1882, illustrates the old Gothic script used by the founding peoples of Hanover Steinbach and the handwriting of the Reeve and his council. The Peter Neufeld appears to be the centenarian (1820-1921) from Ebenfeld (Kleefeld No. 1); one of the Peter Toewses is probably from the Alt-Barkfield Toewses and the other Peter Toews is likely the Peter Toews, Bergthal, who became Reeve in 1883; the Franz Dyck is probably the Franz Dyck, Schönsee, formerly Assistant-Aeltester of the Bergthal Gemeinde, because he was one of the few to write his name with the *ÿ*. Photo courtesy of Lydia Penner, Hanover 100 Years, page 8.

were given accommodations for the night. In the morning, the next day, Gerhard Kliewer took us with the large freight wagon to our siblings in Grünfeld.”

Kliewer died an early death at age 60 on Sept. 9, 1896.

Conclusion.

Gerhard Kliewer was one of many from the Molotschna who settled in Bergthal and who assumed positions of leadership. His in-laws, the Buhrs were aggressive and forward-looking people, and he must have felt comfortable with them. Most of his immediate descendants were Bergthaler and Chortitzer.

Emigration Journal:

June 21 - August 17, 1875

“June 21 - 1:00 pm My parents Gerhard Kliewers moved from S. Russia to America with five children: Helena, Susanna, Gerhard, Anna and Peter. Peter was four years old;

June 21 - 7:00 pm arrived in Karkov;

June 23 - 4:00 am arrived in Elizabethgard;

June 23 - 4:30 pm arrived Besoulaw;

June 23 - 5:30 pm arrived Melotchie;

June 24 - 6:00 am arrived Wolocevak - tickets checked- baggage examined - Austrian border - stayed 11 hours;

June 24 - 5:00 pm left Wolocevak and arrived at Kaskow June 25 - remained 14 hours. Slept under blue sky on the ground;

June 26 - 7:00 am left Kaskow - crossed German border 9:00 am - arrived Wisslewitch - waited 8 hours. Arrived Berlin 5:00 pm;

June 27 - 9:00 am left by cart for Rail Station - arrived Hamburg 8:00 pm. Stayed in Hamburg one day and one night - money changed - baggage checked;

June 28 - 7:00 pm Boarded ship during heavy rain. Ship stopped at 11:00 pm because of heavy storm till next morning. 6:00 am sailed to Hull, England in 3 1/2 days and 2 nights. Arrived July 2, 5:00 am. There was much sea sickness.; July 2 - 11:00 am left by train for Liverpool. Arrived July 3. Stayed July 3rd and 4th; July 5 - 11:00 am Boarded ship S.S. Manitoban (a king's post ship) mail carrier. Saw Scotland 4 pm. Saw Ireland 8 pm. On ocean 6-11 and on the 12th we stopped because of icebergs. Our stop was 5 hours;

July 12 - 3:00 pm On right-hand side saw snowy Iceland. Also lighthouse 4:00 pm; Saw Newfoundland-also some land. Later same day stopped because of fog and icebergs;

July 13 - 4:00 pm Are on St. Lawrence River (Larenzstrom). We see Canada. See whales (Wahlfish);

July 14 and 15 Stop because of fog;

July 15 - 5:00 pm Arrived at Quebec. We thank God he has brought us so far. Had good supper in Quebec at 10:00 pm;

July 16 - 11:00 am Left for Ontario - then into Montreal. Saw a large bridge.

July 17 - noon Arrived Toronto harbor;

July 18 - 10:00 am Left for Toronto Railway Station. 9:00 pm back to harbor and ship. Stopped at 5 little towns on 19, 20, 21st;

July 22 - 1:00 pm Sunday - arrived Duluth - stayed 23rd and part of 24th.

July 24 - Left by train, crossed Missouri River. Arrived in Moorhead 25th 3:00 pm.

July 25 - Waited in Moorhead;

July 27 - 3:00 pm Left by riverboat on Red River (Rothen Fluss). Raining very hard. Arrived in Dufferin, July 31, 10:00 am;

Aug. 1-15 - Stayed in Dufferin (Canada Cus-

toms & N.W. Mtd. Police Station); Aug. 15 - Sailed by boat to Reservation (Niverville). Arrived Aug. 17, 7:00 am. Getting to end of our journey;

Started June 21, 1875, arrived August 17, 1875. Captain: Bittenhause, Ship: Manitoban, Rudders-Pilot: Karl Painter.”

Translated from German into English by his youngest daughter, Tina Kliewer. We are indebted to Elsie Kliewer, Steinbach, Manitoba, who had this extract of Gerhard Kliewer's journal in her possession and passed it on to *Preservings*.

Editor's Comments.

Like many men of his generation Gerhard Kliewer maintained a diary in which he recorded events, some significant and others mundane. His journals are lost, at least in so far as is known at the present time. But the reader is fortunate that his youngest daughter Tina Kliewer, at some point decided to extract the record of the immigration journey from his journals and translated same to English thereby preserving at least a small portion of this record. Is it too unrealistic to dream that possibly some other fragments of Gerhard Kliewer's journals and writings have survived?

Sources:

“Kliewer Genealogical notes”, 2 pages, by grandson Jakob K. Loeppky, courtesy of Elsie Kliewer, Box 20,999, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2T2.

Nettie Neufeld, “Sermon Book of Gerhard Kliewer,” in *Preservings*, No. 9, dec 1996m Part Two, pages 66-67.

Cornelius and Anna Banman Travel Chest

The “Kjist” of great-great grandfather Cornelius Banman (1839-1892), Pioneer of Blumengart, by Sheryl Banman Kornelson, Box 3413, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

In 1995 I inherited what I thought was an old storage chest from my Grandfather Jacob K. Banman. My great aunt informed me that it had come from Russia when her grandparents emigrated to Canada. I realized then that this was more than just a keepsake from my grandparents. I became interested in leaving more about the history of this chest and the Cornelius Banman family.

There is no record of the experiences, thoughts or stories available to me about Cornelius Banman. Even grandchildren have no recollection of him since he died before many of them were even born. Factual information exists in church records, ship lists and some books published by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society. My great aunt Anna K. Banman (granddaughter to Cornelius Banman) was able to give me some information about her grandparents and her recollections about her grandparents and her recollections of the chest of Cornelius and Anna Banman.

Family Background.

Cornelius Banman was born on September 30, 1839 to Franz and Anna (Vogt, nee Toews) Banman, BGB B206. Cornelius was baptized on June 1, 1859. On October 16, 1860 he married Anna Gerbrand, daughter of Johann and Anna Gerbrand, BGB B32.

A funeral invitation brought to Canada by Cornelius Banman, dated 1862, has a list of names of the people invited written on the back. The names are listed under the headings of the 5 villages that made up the Bergthal Settlement in Russia. Franz Ballman and Cornelius Ballman (as it was spelled) are listed under the village of Heuboden, so we believe that is where they lived.

Cornelius and Anna Banman with their 5 children came to Canada as part of the large Mennonite migration from Russia. They were among the first group of 283 Bergthal Mennonites to arrive in Quebec City on July 27, 1874, aboard the S.S. Nova Scotian. Julius and Anna Banman (Julius was a brother to Cornelius) also arrived in Quebec aboard the same ship. From Quebec these two families

made their way to Manitoba and settled in what became known as the village of Blumengart.

On October 29, 1874 Cornelius obtained a homestead on SE35-7-5E. Julius Banman obtained a homestead on the NW36-7-5E the same date. Anna K. Banman says her grandparents were the original settlers of Blumengart. This seems to be confirmed as Cornelius Banman's homestead placed him in the centre of the village. One year later Franz and Anna Banman (parents of Cornelius and Julius) came to Canada aboard the Peruvian of July 13, 1875.

At the same time Peter and Anganetha (Banman) Enns (a sister to Cornelius) and 5 children also came to Canada. These two families made their way to Blumengart to join the other Banmans. It seems Franz Banman lived on the same property as his son Julius. According to the Homestead maps for Township 7, Range 5 East (*Working Papers*, page 198), Peter and Anganetha Enns obtained a homestead on the quarter section north of Cornelius Banman. This was the start of the village of Blumenort. The Julius Banman and the Peter Enns



Peter G. and Maria Banman with their mother Anna (Cornelius) Banman in the middle. All photos for this article are courtesy of Sheryl Banman Kornelsen, Box 3413, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

families later moved to the West Reserve.

In 1880 Cornelius obtained another quarter section of land just south of his homestead, NE26-7-5E. This later became the homestead of his son Peter G. Banman (my great-grandfather). This was also where my grandfather Jacob K. Banman and great-aunt Anna K. Banman grew up.

Cornelius Banman died on November 23, 1892 at the age of 53 and was buried in the Blumengart cemetery. After his death his widow Anna Banman



Corner view of the Cornelius Banman "Kjist" showing the metal handles. A five pedestal stand has been constructed to replace the original stand.

went to live with her daughters Anna (Mrs. Peter Schultz) and Aganetha (Mrs. Peter Neufeld) in Saskatchewan for about one year. She then returned to Blumengart and asked to live with her son Peter and wife Maria. They had a small home, so Peter built on a room for her.

The original homestead of Cornelius and Anna Banman became his son Johann's. Johann died in 1908. Eventually his widow remarried to Diedrich Harder and it became the Harder home.

Cornelius Banman "Kjist".

Mrs. Cornelius Banman lived with her son Peter until she died in 1922 at the age of 82. Her granddaughter Anna K. Banman remembers seeing the chest in her grandmother's room. As children they would enjoy looking at the pictures from Russia pasted on the inside lid. She no longer remembers what the pictures were about.

Her grandmother would also show the children some of her dishes, her *Gesangbuch* and other books. After Mrs. Cornelius Banman died her son Peter and his wife Maria inherited the chest. Maria remained living on the farm with her children after her husband Peter G. Banman died of cancer in 1938. Their son Peter K. Banman purchased the farm as such and their son Jacob K. Banman (my grandfather) started his own farm on the same quarter section just south of Peter's farm. This left each

with eighty acres. Eventually Maria and her daughter Anna moved to Steinbach.

My grandparents Jacob and Sara (Penner) Banman were next to inherit the chest. I remember seeing it in the attic of their farm home as a child and later in the basement of their Steinbach home. My grandmother died on April 2, 1991. Before my grandfather moved to an apartment we divided many of his belongings between my parents and us four grandchildren. The chest was one of the items I chose.

I had no idea of its historical value until I found out it came from Russia with my great-great grandparents. By the time the chest came into my possession it was in need of some restoration. The pedestal base and a few mouldings were missing. The pictures that were once pasted on the inside lid are gone. The key has also been lost along the way. The chest has been repainted at some point as well. The basic chest is still in good solid condition.

The chest is constructed of solid lumber. The corners interlock and wooden pegs were used to hold mouldings in place. It has long narrow iron hinges securing the lid. The inside of the chest has never been painted. Inside it has a small compartment with a lid on one side and a narrow shelf along the back. I was told by my great Aunt that the missing pedestal base had been like that of the Heinrich Fast Kjist. She saw a picture of it in the Preservings Issue No. 10 June 1997. I am in the process of restoring the Cornelius Banman chest

and plan to preserve it for future generations.

Conclusion.

The Banman name remained a part of Blumengart for over one hundred and ten years. The quarter section Cornelius Banman obtained in 1880 was separately owned and operated by two of his grandsons into the 1980s. My grandparents Jacob K. and Sara Banman moved to Steinbach in 1984. A year later Peter K. and Nettie Banman also sold their farmland and moved to Steinbach for their retirement.

I am grateful to my great aunt Anna K. Banman for pointing out the historical importance of the "Kjist" to me. It caused me to dig deeper into my ancestry. I am also thankful to the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society for publishing historical information on the East Reserve and the Bergthal Gemeinde. It was a great source of information.

Sources:

Irene Enns Kroeker, "Blumengart," in John Dyck, editor, *Historical Sketches*, pages 63-103.

Visits with Great-Aunt Anna K. Banman.

Old documents and papers of Cornelius Banman.

Peter G. Banman Genealogy - unpublished.



Front view of the Cornelius Banman "Kjist" with the lid open, showing the compartment for storing valuables.

Children of Cornelius and Anna Banman

<u>Name Birth</u>	<u>Marriage</u>	<u>Death</u>	
Corn. G. Banman	Oct 23,1861		Sep 7,1953
Franz G. Banman	Aug 27,1863	Feb 16,1886	1908
m. Helena Penner	Sep 4,1865		
Johann G. Banman	Mar 29,1866	Nov 28,1893	Oct 15,1908
m. Susanna Schultz	Jun 16,1872		Nov 29,1948
Julius G. Banman	Feb 1,1868		Feb 6,1868
Anna G. Banman	May 18,1870	Oct 22,1889	Sep 10,1951
m. Peter Schultz	Jan 1,1869		
Julius G. Banman	Mar 22,1872		Mar 22,1872
Julius G. Banman	Apr 16,1873		May 6,1875
Peter G. Banman	Jun 2,1876	Jul 15,1900	Jan 2,1938
m. Maria Kehler	Sep 21,1879		Jun 10,1959
Jacob G. Banman	Mar 24,1878	?	1923
m. Sara ?			
Aganetha G. Banman	Dec 1,1880	?	Dec 1,1986
m. Peter Neufeld			
Diedrich G. Banman	Dec 1,1886	Dec. 1, 1886	

The Gerhard Doerksen Kjist

The Gerhard Doerksen (1825-82) Kjist, by Henry Fast, Box 387, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

I first saw the Doerksen travel chest five years ago in the home of Abe and Lorna Penner of Steinbach. As most of the other chests I have seen this one too is in very good condition, signifying the care and skill that a master craftsman has put into his work. Even I, with few carpenter skills, can recognise that the corner dove-tail joints fit precisely and that the sides and the top lid look as if they have been cut from a single



A copy of the New Year's Wish written by Gerhard Doerksen (1825-82) for his parents. The "Wunsch" appears to have been copied onto a printed sheet with flowers at the bottom. Could this possibly have been done at a later date? Photos for this article are courtesy of Henry Fast, Box 387, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

slab of lumber.

The only metal visible are the two elongated hinges for the lid, the two carrying handles on the side and the sturdy locking system in front. On the right, in the inside of the chest, is a mini-chest with its lid secured by two small hinges. Presumably this compartment was used to store important family treasures and documents when travelling. The chest sits on a sturdy stand supported by six short scrolled legs. It is likely that this base was dismantled during its voyage to Canada.

Gerhard Doerksen (1825-82).

The Kjist was the property of Gerhard Doerksen (1825-82), one-time teacher and

farmer of Fischau, Molotschna. He was also a gifted *Fraktur* artist: see *Preservings*, No.



Corner view of the Gerhard Doerksen "Kjist" still in its original condition. The traditional 5 pedestal base is clearly visible.

5, Jan. 1995, page 13, No. 6, June 1995, page 28, for samples of his art work. In 1874 the Gerhard Doerksen family settled in Hochstädt, near Kleefeld, Manitoba.

Gerhard immigrated from Russia, but a piece of art work glued to the inside of the lid suggests that the chest may have had its origin in Prussia. As an eleven year-old boy, Gerhard wrote a New Years Wish to his parents, the Bernard Doerksens of Fischau, Molotschna Colony. If this New Years wish was attached to the lid in 1837 than obviously Gerhard was not the owner of the chest at that time. It is reasonable to assume that the chest was brought to Russia by his grandparents, Gerhard Gerhard Doerksens, who immigrated to Russia in 1819 (1835 Molotschna census).

In the great migration of the 1870s the chest was once more packed with blankets,



Front view of the Kjist with the lid open showing the artwork and pictures which traditionally decorated the inside of the lid. Clearly visible to the left is the January 1, 1837, "New Year's Wish. This chest is very significant as not many are found today in such original condition. Often times people in ignorance tore away the artwork not realizing the incredible significance it could have in terms of family and community history. Others replaced finely-crafted furniture such as this with cheap store-bought items in the early part of the 20th century.

linens, clothes, tools, a few books and house-

hold goods and accompanied the Gerhard Doerksens across Russia, Germany, England, Canada and the U.S.A. Finally it was loaded on a river boat at Moorhead and arrived at the junction of the Red and Rat Rivers on June 17, 1875.

Daughter, Anna, twice makes mention of the chest in her diary in which she recorded some of the events of the journey: *Preservings*, No. 10, June, 1997, Part Two, pages 1-6. On May 19, she writes that a number of chests were opened and searched at Hull, England. Then in an entry of July 11, nine days after settling in Steinreich, Manitoba, she writes that they unpacked the big chest.

Ownership of the Kjist.

Abe and Lorna Penner received the chest from Lorna's parents, the Henry F. Reimers, of Blumenort. Presumably, Henry F. Reimer inherited the chest from his father Klaas P. Reimer. Klaas P. Reimer's first wife was Helena Doerksen, daughter of Gerhard Doerksen (1825-82).



Mr. Gerhard Doerksen (1865-1949) and wife, nee Sarah E. Plett (1871-1948). Gerhard was the son of Gerhard Doerksen Sr. (1825-82), who brought the Kjist to Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Blumenort, page 269.

"Jeff Gundy...longs for Mennonite literature where the artist is not seeking freedom from an authoritative community but where the community provides release for the alienating individualism characteristic of North America"—Rodney Sawatzky, "Mennonite Ethnicity: Medium, Message and Mission," *JMS*, Vol. 9, 1991, page 116.

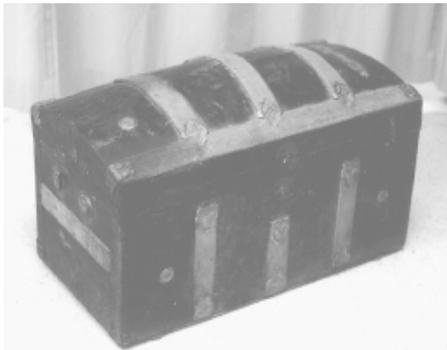
David Klassen (1813-1900) 'Kjist'

The story of the David Klassen (1813-1900) 'Kjist' as told by Harv Klassen, Manager of the Mennonite Heritage Village, Box 1136, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, and great-great grandson of David Klassen.

Description.

The David Klassen chest or "kjist" is a very important acquisition for the Mennonite Heritage Village. The exterior of the chest is of wood, metal and leather. Inside the chest is lined with paper. The chest measures 80 cm. long x 40.5 cm. wide x 51 cm. high. The chest is basically made completely of metal.

The lid is curve-shaped (humped), and is on hinges so it can open and close. Running across the lid are 3 wooden straps. The front and back edges (trim area) of the lid are wooden as well. The right side handle is leather and



Photograph of the David Klassen chest showing the exterior finish. Photo courtesy of Harv Klassen, Steinbach, Manitoba.



Photograph of the David Klassen chest with the lid opened to show the interior construction, and the German newspaper comics which were used to decorate the inside of the lid. This was another unusual feature about the "kjist" as usually the lid interior served as a sort of shrine where pictures of Kings and Queens or sometimes Biblical illustrations would be prominently displayed. Photo courtesy of Harv Klassen, Steinbach, Manitoba.

the left side handle is missing.

The chest is decorated at various locations from the outside with brassy-copper looking designed pieces. The lock and key are missing from the front of the chest where the lid joins

the base. The inside of the base of chest is lined with a peachy coloured paper. The inside of the lid is lined with a German comic newspaper. The entire inside of the chest and lid behind the paper lining is wood. The paper is worn and torn in some areas. The chest is in relatively good condition. The chest is believed to have originated in Russia from the 1860s era.

This old trunk, with its brass fittings, its insides lined with German comic papers, and its missing handle recall a different world. The chest is unique as it is not of Mennonite design or manufacture. It is interesting to speculate why David Klassen would have purchased a chest such as this, as opposed to one made according to the furniture tradition of his own culture. Did he simply get a good deal? or was this something in his character, that he was interested in the new and unusual?

Family Background.

An artifact without a history is merely an old item, lucky not to be discarded into the dustbins of history. It is the story of the artifact which gives it value and makes it a treasure, giving it a pedigree, as it were.

This old wooden chest has a story to tell of the first group of Mennonite immigrants who came to Manitoba from Russia. It belonged to David Klassen (1813-1900) who led his people of the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) Mennonites to Manitoba in 1874. He was already 61 years old and a respected leader in the community when he undertook this venture. To come to a new land to start afresh must have seemed both an opportunity and a challenge. He was equal to that challenge.

David Klassen was the son of Abraham Klassen (1766-1813), of Tiegerweide, Prussia, where David was born 8 months after his father died. His paternal grandfather was Abraham Klassen (1739-1817) listed in Tiegenghen in the 1776 census.

But it was on his mother's side that David Klassen was related to the KG. His mother Maria Klassen was the daughter of David Klassen (1740-1804) listed in Petershagen, Prussia in 1776 and for whom he was named. David's great-grandfather was David Klassen (1700-80), listed as a wealthy farmer with a male servant and a female servant, in Fürstenwerder, Prussia, in 1776. Fürstenwerder in 1776 was also the home of Hans Plett, another well-to-do "Groutbua", ancestor to all Mennonite Pletts in the world.

Maria had 2 brothers who had emigrated to Russia, namely, Peter Klassen (1789-1862) who acquired a Wirtschaft in Rückenau, Molotschna—whose granddaughter, Margaretha Klassen was the third wife of Steinbach pioneer merchant Klaas R. Reimer, and brother Jakob Klassen (1792-1869) who acquired a Wirtschaft in Pordenau, Molotschna—

from whom are descended the KG Classens in Jansen, Nebraska, and later Meade, Kansas. Carl Doerksen, Commercial Loans Manager, Steinbach Credit Union Ltd is a great-great-grandson of Jakob Klassen.



Mr. and Mrs. David B. Klassen, in Beaver Flats, Saskatchewan, 1918. David B. Klassen was the son of delegate David Klassen. Photo courtesy of Furrows in the Valley, page 446.

Another brother Dirk Klassen (1765-1843) was a minister in Fürstenwerder, Prussia, whose daughter Margaretha married Klaas Epp, a fanatical Separatist-Pietist. Her son Klaas Epp Jr. (1838-1913) was the infamous leader of a group of radical separatist-pietists who went on the famous trek to East Asia in 1880 pursuant to the "eastward" millennial teachings in vogue among the Russian Mennonites at the



1902. Jakob R. Klassen, grandson of delegate David Klaasen, at the age of 20. Jakob R. Klassen was a farmer, minister and an inventor at heart. Photo courtesy of Furrows in the Valley, page 446.

time (Note One).

David Klassen (1813-1900).

But there was no religious fanaticism in David Klassen. He was a quiet, hard-working, sober-thinking, and humble man but he was also determined and could make difficult decisions. He was quite tall being 6 feet in height. The story goes that he rode a stallion to Russia when he emigrated from Prussian in 1833 leading a group of immigrants. The story creates an image of a take-charge, man of action.

The influence of his mother's family is evident by the fact that he first settled in Rückenau, Molotschna, the village where his uncle Peter had already established himself. In 1825 David married Aganetha S. Brandt, daughter of Peter Brandt (1770-1819) a well-to-do Molotschna pioneer of Blumenort and later Tiege.

By 1850 David Klassen had acquired a Wirtschaft in Margenau, Molotschna, where he was known as a successful farmer. By the late 1860s he had moved to the village of Heuboden, Borosenko, 30 kilometres northwest of Nikopol, where he established a new Wirtschaft and planted a beautiful orchard.

In 1873 David Klassen was elected by the Heuboden branch of the KG as a delegate to scout for new settlement opportunities in America. In 1874 he served as co-leader of the first group of 65 Mennonite families who arrived at their new homes in Manitoba on August 1. He convinced his Heuboden group and some others to settle in the Scratching River settlement, now known as Rosenort, causing considerable controversy at the time.

Together with his immediate family and

some others, David established the village of Rosenhof, 2 miles south of Rosenort. He served as Brandaeltester or manager of the local branch of the KG mutual insurance system from 1875 until 1881 when his son-in-law Heinrich L. Friesen took over the position. David also served his community as a facilitator with various government officials.

David Klassen was an articulate man who could express himself well. Some of his writings are extant and have been translated and published in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 105-113.

David and his wife, Aganetha, had 10 children, 5 of whom died before they left Russia. They farmed their homestead at Scratching River steadily until his retirement. Then they went to live with their son, Jacob who farmed nearby, while another son, Abraham took over his father's original homestead. David lived until 1900 and his wife survived him by four years. Today their descendants number in the thousands and are scattered all over the world.

David Klassen was a leader when his people most needed someone whose judgement they could trust. He typified those qualities which distinguish the Mennonite people - co-operation, hard work, democracy, service to others and, above all, the values of their religion.

Donors.

Now the chest, or "kjist" in David's Plaut-Dietsch mother tongue, has been rescued from obscurity and donated to the museum by Betty Klassen Sawatzky. Her mother, Gertrude Klassen, a famous Kleefeld chiropractor during the 1940s and 50s, had inherited the "kjist"

from her father, Peter B. Klassen, another son of David. Peter B. Klassen lived in Neuanlage or Twincreek just 2 miles northwest of the Heritage Village.

David Klassen's "kjist" is a lasting memento of his life and accomplishments. It came from Russia and was used during the emigration to Manitoba in 1874. It is a very important addition to the Mennonite Heritage Village collection because it came from the first group of Mennonites to arrive in Manitoba on July 31, 1874.

Sources:

Plett, "David Klassen 1700-1780," unpublished paper, Steinbach, 1995, 39 pages.

Endnotes:

Note One: For the story of this ill-advised but adventurous journey, full of visions and end-times fables to delight the heart of even the most myopic American Fundamentalist: see Richard Belk, *The Great Trek of the Russian Mennonites to Central Asia 1880-1884* (Scottsdale, Pa., 1976), 241 pages.

Editor's Note: Historian Lori Scharfenberg, Rosenort, Manitoba, is working on a full-length biography of her great-great-great-grandparents, David Klassen (1813-1900) and Aganetha Brandt (1816-1904). Anyone with information about these important Manitoba pioneer leaders is asked to contact Lori at Box 10, Group 1, R.R.1, Morris, Manitoba, R0A 1K0.

Franz Froese' Menno Simons Book

1833 Menno Simons', "Foundation of Christain Doctrine," and Franz Froese (1825-1913), Rudnerwiede, Molotschna Colony, South Russia, and later Rosenort, Manitoba by Delbert F. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Introduction.

I was delighted recently when I discovered among the holdings of our local Mennonite Heritage Village Museum, an original copy of Volume Three of Menno Simons' "The Foundation of Christian Doctrine" published by the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) in 1833. This historical treasure contains two stories: firstly, the story of the publication of the book itself, and secondly, the story of Franz Froese, the man who owned the book and brought it from Russia to Manitoba.

The Foundation Book, 1833.

The formal title of the book is *Die Fundamente der seligmachenden Lehre unsers Herrn Jesu Christi, aus Gottes Wort kurz zusammengefasst von M.S.* ("The Fundamentals of the Salvation Yielding Doctrines of our Lord Jesus Christ, briefly composed from the Word of God by M.S." (Danzig, 1833). In Dutch and Low German the book was referred to as the "Fundamentabuch". The work was originally published in Dutch by Menno Simons in 1539 (Note One).

The Franz Froese "Fundamentabuch" was part of a three volume set (Vol. I, 335 pages; Vol. II,

278 pages; Vol. III, 414 pages) published by the KG in 1833. Selections of Menno's writings had been published in 1758, in the so-called Deknatel edition. It was also known as "Der Kleine Menno" and consisted of pietistical selections of Menno's writings (Note Two). Notwithstanding that the Prussian Mennonites had completed the changeover from Dutch to German by the end of the 18th century, the main core of Menno's writings were only available in Dutch.

The KG was restitutional in its theological disposition—their vision was to reestablish the Apostolic Church of the New Testament as seen through the eyes of Reformation leaders such as Menno Simons. Although the early KG-ers read Menno in the Dutch editions, they saw it as a travesty that these writings were not available in German as most Mennonites no longer read Dutch.

And so the decision was made to publish the Foundation book which contained the core of Menno's teachings. In Russia the publication work was sponsored by brothers, Abraham Friesen (1782-1849), Ohrloff and Klaas Friesen (1793-1870), Altona, both ministers of the KG.

The actual translation of the Foundation book from Dutch to German was completed by another brother, Peter von Riesen (1779-1847), a wealthy estate owner in Rosenort, Prussia. Peter was also in charge of having the books printed in Germany in 1833 as there were no German printers available in southern Russia at the time: see *Preservings*, No. 10, June 1996, Part One, page 20, and Part Two, page 72, for information about Peter's daughter Helena (1822-97).

Distribution.

Unfortunately the publication of the first German edition of the Foundation book did not meet with approval among the Prussian Mennonites. They were scared that these writings would create hostile feelings among other religious confessions against the Mennonites, many of whom were desperately trying to shed their theological distinctives and mainstream into Prussian society by adopting Separatist Pietist beliefs.

As a result the Prussian Council of Mennonite Bishops had the newly printed Menno Simons books confiscated. Peter von Riesen was summoned twice before the Council and threatened



Left Page: Copy of fly leaf page of Franz Froese, Menno Simon's *Fundamentabueck*. Shows the inscription of its first owner, "Maria Penner, Prangenaus, 1848." Photo courtesy of Heritage Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Middle Page: Title page of Franz Froese, Menno Simon's *Fundamentabueck*. It is interesting that the date of publication is stated as being in the first one-third part of the 19th century. Photo courtesy of Heritage Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Right Page: Copy of fly leaf page of Franz Froese, Menno Simon's *Fundamentabueck*. Again shows the inscription of its first owner, "Maria Penner, Prangenaus" and then in a different handwriting, "1863 Franz Rudnerweide." The last inscription is "Peter B. Froese Rosenort, Manitoba, 1911." Photo courtesy of Heritage Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba.

with excommunication if he did not immediately surrender the books. After an intense personal struggle and out of concern for his family Peter finally agreed to deliver up the books which were stored in the attic of the Tegenhagen Mennonite church where they were exposed to great damage from moisture, mold and mice.

After further lobbying the Prussian Bishops finally allowed some of the books to be released for shipment to Russia. Here they were distributed by the KG and from whence some of them, such as Franz Froese's copy, found their way to America.

Unfortunately, the reading of the "Foundation" books and their contents were not supported among the wider Mennonite brotherhood in Russia, either. At a meeting between KG leaders and the Bishops of the Gemeinden in the Molotschna Colony, Jakob Warkentin, Aeltester of the Grosse Gemeinde, "expressed his dissatisfaction regarding the Menno Simons books in the presence of four other Aeltesten at the home of Klaas Reimer. He went on to say that he had never read the books and that he would also make sure that he would not do so in the future"—(*Golden Years*, page 277).

This view was also echoed among pietist Mennonites, although for different reasons. In 1910, Peter M. Friesen, the leading historian among pietist Mennonites in Russia, wrote, "On the whole, Menno's polemical writings do not belong to those that one reads with spiritual pleasure, indeed one cannot read them without a feeling of spiritual uneasiness"—(P.M.Friesen, page 18).

Instead P. M. Friesen, and most leading clergymen, endorsed and propagated the premillennial teachings of Heinrich Jung-Stilling which held that the Second Coming would occur in the East (Russia) which would also be the refuge of the "true" church during the coming

tribulation, and that the Czar would be the saviour of the church during the end times. The date for the second coming was initially set for 1881. This explained why so many pietist Mennonites did not emigrate in 1874 when they had the chance and why they ridiculed those who did depart for America (Note Three).

Eine Seltsame Begebenheit, 1911.

The story was not quite finished. A response to Peter M. Friesen's comment was published in 1911 by Bishop Peter Toews, formerly of the KG and by now leader of the Canadian Holdemans. The response came in the form of a small booklet entitled *Eine Seltsame Begebenheit* and was written to answer an inquiry by Professor Mannhardt of Danzig and with the encouragement of Nebraska State Senator Peter Jansen and Steinbach flour mill owner Johann I. Friesen, grandsons of Peter von Riesen and Klaas Friesen, respectively, two of the principals involved. In the little booklet, Peter Toews tells the story of the publication of the Menno Simons "Foundation Book" and how the despised little KG had defied the Mennonite establishment of the day, to bring to light some of the finest Christian literature of all time.

Froese Family Background.

What was especially exciting about the "Menno Simons Book" are the endorsements on the title pages which identify it as the property of Franz Froese of Rudnerweide, Molotschna, in 1863, having previously been owned by Maria Penner in Prangenaus in 1848. The identity of Maria Penner is not certain at this time, although she may be Maria Penner (b. 1828), daughter of KG minister Peter Penner of Prangenaus: see *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part One, pages 26-29.

Franz Froese, the owner of the book was born in 1825, possibly in Prussia. He was the son of Johann Johann Froese who settled on Wirtschaft 17 in Rudnerweide in 1826. Shortly thereafter, Franz' father died and his mother married for the second time to Georg Adrian. The family is listed in the 1835 census as follows: step-son Franz Froese born 1825 and a step-daughter Elisabeth born 1820.

The father of Franz Froese died when he was relatively young. As a result no information was available regarding his parents. Some information, however, has recently come to light regarding Elisabeth, Franz' only sibling. In 1916 Peter P. Isaac of Swalwell, Alberta, wrote in his "Stammbuch Meiner Voreltern" that the children of Franz Froese were cousins to Johann Regehr of Kansas (Note Four). Johann was the son of Abraham Regehr (1813-72) and Elisabeth Froese (1820-96), whose daughter, Marie Regehr (1854-1935), Mrs. Johann A. Fast, lived in Goessel, Marion County, Kansas (Note Five).

Franz Froese (1825-1913).

Franz Froese was baptized in 1844.

On March 4, 1851, Franz Froese was presented for membership in the KG at a brotherhood meeting held after worship services in Neukirch. On March 18, Franz was accepted as a



Son Peter B. Froese (1883-1952) and Mrs. Froese, nee Maria P. Penner (1879-1934). In a note written January 22, 1935, Peter B. Froese wrote that his teacher "during his first term" was Heinrich Enns from Rosenort, his second teacher was Peter W. Toews and his last teacher, Johann W. Dueck. He wrote how clearly he remembered coming home from school one day where his mother was busy at the bake oven and how excitedly he went to her and told her about the beautiful picture he had just received from his teacher. Photo courtesy of grandson Brent Froese, Steinbach, Manitoba.

member of the KG. It appears that marriage may have been his motivation in joining the KG as on March 28, "Froese got married. Joh. Friesen officiated."

The name of Franz Froeses' first wife is not known at the present time. But "soon after their marriage he became very sick, nigh unto death. At this time, his young devoted wife hung unto his spirit with such strength, not letting his die. He recovered and remained in good health ever since. But his young wife was taken from him through death a year or so later"—Froese book, page 276. There were no descendants of this marriage (Note Six).

In 1854 the Franz Froese family adopted a foster daughter Margaretha Friesen, a 2 1/2 year-old orphan whose parents had died within a year of each other. She was the daughter of Klaas Friesen (1813-56), a brother to pedagogue Cornelius Friesen (1810-92) later Blumenort, Manitoba.

In 1862 Franz Froese married for the second time to Anna Braun, daughter of Isaac and Margaretha Loewen Braun of Mariawohl (see *Leaders*, 514-5). The wedding ceremony was officiated by KG Bishop Johann Friesen. Anna's mother was a sister to Cornelius Loewen, later of Steinbach. Anna's father was the son of Isaak Braun (1795-1831) and Elisabeth Toews (1796-1861) of Lindenau, Molotschna. Elisabeth Toews was the aunt of KG Aeltester Peter Toews.

Franz Froese had an interest in spiritual matters and in 1863 he acquired the Menno Simons book. He may well have purchased the entire 3 volume set, but Volume Three is the only volume currently available. In 1872 Franz also purchased a *Martyr Spiegel* for 5 rubles when Peter Toews ordered a shipment of books from John Funk, Elkhart, Indiana. In December of 1872, Franz also ordered 2 copies of *Hoffart und Demut*, a devotional book also published by John Funk.

Franz Froese must have been a well-established farmer as Abram P. Isaac, later minister in Kleefeld, Manitoba, was employed with him for a year, and came to regard him fondly as a surrogate father (Note Six).

Sometime in the mid-1860s Franz moved to the village of Heuboden in the Borosenko settlement northwest of Nikopol, a new KG settlement of 18,000 acres. On January 20, 1873, Franz received 1 vote in a ministerial election held in Blumenhof. In 1873 foster daughter Margaretha Friesen married David K. Hiebert.

By 1874 preparations were being made for the emigration. On January 24, 1874, Abraham F. Reimer, Steinbach, Borosenko, wrote that "10 colonists with 9 children have moved in with Franz Froeses, Heuboden. Franz Froeses have moved to _____ [name undecipherable]."

In 1874 Franz Froese emigrated from Russia. The family travelled with the first contingent of Mennonite settlers in arrive in Canada. Daughter Katharina born April 22, 1874, died during the ocean journey on June 12, and was buried at sea.

Franz must have had a solid constitution as he did not succumb to sickness as did the others in the group when they received their first meal in Quebec. People were able to run outside "and [where they were] relieved to do what was necessary." In fact, Franz and colleague Gerhard Schellenberg cleaned up the mess all around their

quarters.

Upon arrival in Manitoba the issue arose where to settle. Cornelius Toews and most of the Blumenhof group had selected the East Reserve, being the present-day R. M. of Hanover. But David Klassen and the Heuboden people were not satisfied with this choice and wanted a parcel of land on the Scratching River near present-day Morris. Franz Froese belonged to the latter group and stayed in Winnipeg together with 16 other families. A few days later Froese was one of 5 men delegated as scouts to go to investigate the land which later became Rosenort. Franz Froese and his family settled in Rosenort, Manitoba where he and his descendants farmed. Franz Froese and brother-in-law, Rev. Peter M. Kroeker, were very close neighbours. They lived about 3/4



The Holland-style windmill at Rosenort, originally built in Steinbach in 1877. Franz Froese was one of the three owners who purchased the windmill in 1879 and moved it to Rosenort where they operated until 1890. Photo courtesy of Furrows in the Valley, page 339.

miles south of the present day village of Rosenort and the Kroekers lived just south of the Froeses.

Franz must have been an enterprising individual as he became one of the partners in a syndicate which purchased the Steinbach windmill in 1879 and moved it to Rosenort. The partners were Jakob Toews, Isaac Loewen and Franz Froese and the purchase price was \$1550. They did a good business until 1890 when the mill was sold to Peter Toews (not the Bishop) (Note Seven).

Franz Froese is listed as owner of the SE32-5-1E in the 1887 tax records of the R. M. of Morris.

In 1904, neighbour Johann W. Dueck described Franz Froese as "an old but still erect man, living in Rosenort." Foster-daughter, Margaretha Friesen Hiebert, died on March 13, 1909, and Franz Froese, "...nearing his 84th birthday and a widower since August, 1908, also came by sleigh the 33 miles to attend her funeral in Hochstadt, Manitoba."

In his later years, Franz Froese lived with his children, the Peter Braun Froeses, around 1910. It was during this time, in 1911, that Franz gave the Menno Simons' book to his son Peter.

Bishop Peter Toews has written of his friend Franz Froese that he "... died of weakness of old age and was buried on January 25, 1913." Franz

Froese is remembered as "a man of smaller (medium) stature, a man of sound decisions."

"The ... Franz Froese house was being used for years after they were gone, several years as a private school and later as a temporary home for families that came to Canada from Russia after WWI."

Conclusion.

Those fortunate enough to be able to finger the moldy, somewhat crumpling paper and decaying spine of the 3/4 leather-bound, Menno Simons book, Volume Three, should not judge the artifact by its deteriorating physical condition. Rather they should reflect on the miraculous story of the book, a treasure of immense worth. Although the book itself is worn and tattered, it stands as evidence of the heroic struggle of the KG people, including Franz Froese, in the pursuit of their vision of God's community on earth and speaks of their noble courage and tenacity in preserving and living out the teachings of their faith.

The story of Franz Froese and his Menno Simons book also illustrates what can happen when people lose the knowledge and understanding of their own faith and history. Many of the Mennonites who departed from their faith and adopted the "Waco" endtimes teachings and legalistic "salvation plans" of Separatist Pietism, paid the ultimate sacrifice for their degression.

Endnotes:

Note One: For the story of the Kleine Gemeinde publication program of devotional books in Russia see the chapter 17, Books and Publications, in *The Golden Years*, pages 318-335.

Note Two: Robert Friedmann, *Menonite Piety through the Centuries* (Goshen, Indiana, 1949), page 126.

Note Three: James Urry, *None but Saints* (Winnipeg, 1989), page 227; see also Erica Janzen, "Mennonite Utopian Dreamers: Will there be more?" in *Mennonite Historian*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, Sep. 1997, page 5.

Note Four: Peter P. Isaac, "Stammbuch Meiner Voreltern," in *Pioneers and Pilgrims* 209.

Note Five: Letter of Alice Fast Kuenstig, 3001 Don Ray Dr., Jefferson City, Mo., 65109, April 30, 1991.

Note Six: His first wife may have been Maria Penner (b. 1828), the first owner of the Menno Simons book who probably received it as a baptismal gift. Franz Froese would have kept the book as a personal memento of his first wife after her death. Of course, this proposition is speculative as this time. It would, however, also explain how Franz Froese got connected with the KG in the first place.

Note Seven: *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 171.

Note Eight: Lenore Eidse, ed., *Furrows in the Valley* (Morris, 1980), page 339.

Sources:

Goossen, David. *Franz Froese (1825-1913) and Anna Braun (1844-1908) Family Register* (Rosenort, Manitoba, 1994), 320 pp.

Peter P. Toews, *Eine Seltsame Begebenheit* (Hochstadt, 1911), 22 pages.

Book Reviews

Please forward review copies of books of relevance to the history and culture of the Hanover Steinbach area to the Editor, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0, phone Steinbach 1(204)-326-06454 or Winnipeg 1(204) 474-5031.

Ernie P. Toews, chair, Ernest A. Friesen, Wendi Friesen, Margaret Magnusson and Doris Penner - Volunteer committee, *Steinbach 1946-1996: So Much to Celebrate* (Box 1090, Steinbach, 1997), 156 pages, \$10.00 softcover.

Presumably the Town Council's objective in the production of this book was to have available a brief but broadly based synopsis of Steinbach, suitable to be handed out by the Chamber of Commerce to people interested in investing or relocating to the community. As such one would expect the book to be self-congratulatory and laudatory as opposed to analytical and detailed. If this was the purpose, the objective has been met.

Steinbach 1946-1996: So Much to Celebrate is well suited for this purpose. The 8" by 11" format is attractively packaged with a pleasing cover design. It provides a listing of all the Councillors and Mayors since incorporation, short blurbs on each church, various social organizations, arts groups, health services, service clubs, protective services, recreational facilities, with appropriate photographs, of course, many of which are uncaptioned.

The book closes with a time-chart listing important events in the town (from Council's perspective) since incorporation, and a pictorial of celebration events which took place in the 50th year. Ironically the fact that the incorporation of the Town was effective January 1, 1947, which would make 1997 the 50th year since incorporation, is never explained.

Frankly, one of the best parts of the book is the commerce section which contains brief histories of each of the 21 local businesses who were willing to shell out \$1,000 a page for the privilege. It goes without saying that these histories are self-serving and uncritical, and yet, a number of them provide some of the historical nitty-gritty, of origins and vision, so woefully lacking in the book overall. In fact, several of these articles are quite elegant with colourful artwork, graphics and company logos.

A slightly wider readers committee would have avoided some errors as well as the perpetuation of certain old myths and the creation of a few new ones. In the introduction (pages 2-3), called "Humble Beginnings" mention is made that the "settlers...wanted no part of..." the Province's capital city to the north. This statement overlooks current scholarship which indicates that the East Reserve site was chosen specifically because the settlers' experience in Imperial Russia made them cognizant of the importance of being close to a commercial centre. Although they borrowed "from those around them the methods and skills that could make their lives easier" this was within the context of settlers with extensive experience in resettlement and commercial agriculture, perhaps the

most sophisticated in all of western Canada.

In fact, the biggest lesson the new settlers had to learn was how to downscale their farming strategies for the much more primitive Manitoba economy.

The section on health services traces the beginnings to Maria Vogt's Krankenhaus (page 56), not mentioning the first medical doctor to practice in Steinbach, Dr. Graham, who opened his offices on Main Street in 1895 where the P. B. Reimer store was later located. This statement also overlooks the fact that the first health care facility in Steinbach was operated by the Kleine Gemeinde church in 1916 in the former Franz M. Kroeker housebarn, followed by the hospital operated in the Kornelsen school during the 1918 flu epidemic.

On page 137 reference is made to Mr. Beauchemin, a Metis, who took Jakob M. Barkman's body back to Steinbach for burial in 1875, but what is not mentioned is that Beauchemin was hired for the job and fully paid for his services.

The editorial committee's decision not to put their bylines on individual articles does not relieve them of responsibility for such statements.

Overall this is not a book very many people will pay for and those that do will not learn much new about their community. This is unfortunate as our Town is full of exciting women, entrepreneurs and community leaders whose stories have not yet been told and which could have made this book a best seller. And all this is said with due respect to the volunteers who no doubt worked extremely hard on this project.

It is a perspective of our current civic leadership that professionals are retained to advise the City on all matters great and small, e.g. prior

to building a gravel road in Steinbach one must first hire an engineer to design it and then supervise its construction. And yet, when it comes to a history book, which could and should define the very soul of the community, as opposed to being a Chamber of Commerce handout, the task is left in the hands of a volunteer committee.

In any case the Town of Steinbach (City) has already shown a profit on the book, even without any sales. Let's hope the money is put to good use. Anybody building any gravel roads? Reviewed by Delbert F. Plett

Melvin J. Loewen, *The Descendants of Klaas I. Friesen (1868-1927) And Katharina Penner (1871-1952)* (Box 20,839, Steinbach, Manitoba, 1997), 165 pages.

As the title indicates this family book provides a listing of the descendants of Klaas I. Friesen and Katharina Penner who lived at various times in the communities of Blumenort, Steinbach and Landmark: see article by Mary Anne Loewen, "Katharina Penner Friesen 1871-1952," in *Preservings*, No. 10, June 1997, Part Two, pages 55-56. As such it continues the genealogical listing found in the 1966 *Von Riesen Friesen Genealogy*, but only with respect to Klaas I. Friesen, named after his grandfather Klaas Friesen (1793-1870), of Rosenort, Molotschna, a minister of the Kleine Gemeinde.

By listing the family to the present day and by providing places of residences, occupations, etc. the work fulfils an important role in documenting the continuing story of this gifted and significant family clan.

Unfortunately a number of criticism of this work do appear. The limited historical background given amounts to little more than a piecemeal excerpting from sources such as the Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series and Royden Loewen's book on Blumenort. The material is not always quoted correctly nor are quotations indicated or reference sources properly cited. This makes it difficult for readers to be discerning as to which is reliable information, etc.

The 8" by 11" format of the book would have been ideal for featuring numerous photographs which are found in rich numbers amongst this family but only one photograph is included, a poor reproduction at that. Space in the book is used very inefficiently and the layout is crude and unprofessional.

The editor and publisher Melvin Loewen is a capable and educated man and it is unfortunate that he did not use some of his immense energy to gather the rich folk lore and family history of Klaas I. and Katherina Penner Friesen, who together with their children and in-laws have made a lasting and beneficial im-



Attractive and artistically designed cover of the new Steinbach history book.

pact upon Steinbach.

Perhaps Mr. Loewen will see fit to remedy this with a second improved volume which will contain the stories, folk lore and history which the members of this family such as Helena Friesen, Mrs. C. T. Loewen, and Katharina Friesen, Mrs. C. K. Friesen—to name a few, so richly deserve.

Maryanne Wiebe, *The Jakob L. Toews Family* (Crooked Creek, Alberta, 1996), 77 pages.

Jakob L. Toews was the son of Jakob B. Toews (1853-1938), one-time school teacher from Hochstadt, E. Reserve, who moved to Swalwell, Alberta shortly after the turn of the century: *Profile 1874*, pages 52-3. Two family books have already been published about the Jakob B. Toews family, and so this volume covering the family of son Jakob L. Toews is an extension of this work. The book includes a family listing as well as a limited amount of historical information.

Marian and Les Plett, *Family Register of Peter F. Plett 1884-1990* (923 Midgidge Dr. S.E., Calgary, AB T2X 1H5 1990), 123 pages.

This book traces the family of Peter F. Plett (1884-1970) and Sara B. Koop (1885-1963) two pioneers of the East Reserve who lived in the Neuanlage, Hochstadt, and Prairie Rose (Landmark) areas during their long and productive lives. The format of the book consists of brief biographical comments for each individual, some photographs, and a listing of descendants.

Unfortunately the quality of the reproduction of photographs in my copy of the book were quite poor, with some faces totally blacked out. Hopefully this was only in my copy—given the hard work that obviously went into compiling all the information, it would be unfortunate to spoil an otherwise laudible endeavour.

I must confess quite frankly, also, that the layout of the material utilizing only one side of the page seems wasteful of the space when there are so many exciting stories and family anecdotes which would have filled up the other side. A few dollars more spent on a professional typesetting, photo reproduction and layout would have been money well spent.

Notwithstanding these comments this is a worthy project which will be treasured by family members for the generations to come. Some well-known descendants of this family in the Steinbach area are Brenda and Curt Loewen, and Verda and Abe Toews.

Anna Heinrichs-Friesen-Thiessen, *Pioneer Nursing in Paraguay* (Winkler, Manitoba, 1996), 29 pages.

Pioneer Nursing in Paraguay is the story of an extraordinary woman, Anna, whose nursing career began in a time when it was not usual for a Mennonite girl's life to go beyond the boundaries of marriage and motherhood.

Anna was raised in Manitoba, Canada. She took her training in Winnipeg, and graduated

with honors in January of 1948; just six months before joining the great migration of Manitoba Mennonites to Paraguay, South America.

On the ship 'Volandam' (which transported the 1800 immigrants from North America to Paraguay) Anna, as assistant to the ship's medical doctor, began what was to become her life's calling; care of the sick and hurting.

Anna married John Friesen, a fellow immigrant and teacher in August 1948, just one month after her arrival in Paraguay, first in a civil ceremony with Paraguayan officials presiding and then two days later in the traditional Mennonite fashion of an open church service and a meal of 'pluma mousse', borscht and ham. In November of that year Anna and her husband of three months moved by ox-cart from Colony Independencia to Colony Sommerfeld, where she lived and worked for the next 45 years.

Much of the narrative is taken up with short stories and anecdotes of her experiences as a nurse in the fledgling colonies of Sommerfeld and Bergthal and are told with humor and sensitivity.

Anna recounts that many times she dealt with diseases, illnesses, childbirth and accidents, situations where she would be the sole medical caregiver, often lacking even the bare minimum of supplies, and sometimes in the face of family and religious opposition.

The dauntless spirit of this courageous woman shines throughout the book; a spirit of adventure, of steadfast commitment to her calling, and of a deep abiding faith in God.

Anna Heinrichs-Friesen-Thiessen's *Pioneer Nursing in Paraguay* is a book of quiet heroism, and of a woman ahead of her times.

Book review by Anne Funk.

In Her Own Voice: Childbirth Stories from Mennonite Women, collected and edited by Katherine Martens and Heidi Harms. Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 1997.

This book would have been unthinkable a generation ago. Childbirth was not a subject for public story telling in Canada, and even less so among Mennonites. Much as Mennonites have welcomed children into the world, the subject of pregnancy and birth has been off-limits, as if there was something shameful about such a basic bodily function. Even women themselves did not think to talk to each other about their experiences of giving birth.

And now, for anyone to read and hear, there is this plenitude of childbirth stories. Like 19th century explorers, Katherine Martens and Heidi Harms have ventured where no one before them had dared to go, and have come away with a great treasure. Ms. Martens interviewed 26 Mennonite women of three generations, while Ms. Harms assisted with transcriptions and translations. Whether farm women at ease in Plautdietsch or university professionals, the story tellers are by turns brave and frightened, critical and accepting.

Of particular interest to historians of the pioneer Mennonite experience in southern Manitoba is the interview with Sara Kroeker,

who tells of her mother Aganetha Barkman, the daughter of Reverend Jakob Barkman who drowned in the Red River in 1875. Aganetha, who became the wife of the widower John R. Reimer of Steinbach, delivered more than 600 babies in the first decades of the 20th century. Mrs. Reimer must have been wonderfully skilled at her work: of all these births, only two mothers died.

Often Mrs. Reimer would be nursing one of her own babies when the call would come, and she would take the child along, not knowing if she would be gone for a few hours or a few days. Sometimes she baked *Schnettje* in the homes she entered, or brought chicken noodle soup. Once she delivered a child just three days after having her own baby. Mrs. Reimer's activity slowed after a hospital was opened in Steinbach in 1938—see Harvey Kroeker, "Aganetha Barkman Reimer 1863-1938," in *Preservings*, No. 6, June 1995, pages 23-4.

Elizabeth Krahn, of today's generation, tells of her two home births, observing that she felt a connection with women of the past, who prepared themselves for home birthing as a matter of course, and were more involved and more in control as a result. Having children, she says, caused her to take a greater interest in her roots, and brought her to the question that intrigues every good family historian: "What do we carry in our lives that may have begun in the hearts of our parents or our grandparents?"

A number of the story tellers relate the frustrations of having to go along with hospital rules and being alienated from their own bodies and birth-giving. Some, like Susanna Klassen, also found that the church was not supportive, almost as though the fact of birth and new motherhood was so demonstrative of a natural state that it was seen as a threat to the spiritual. I think the church was not in touch with the natural relationship between a mother and child," says Klassen, pointing out that breast-feeding in church was frowned upon.

Varied as the experiences of the story tellers are, all, in every generation, attest to the joy brought to them by their children and even by their pregnancies.

While some husbands are very much involved in their spouses' birth experiences, the majority are on the periphery of these stories. One respondent, born at the turn of the century, makes a very insightful comment about gender differences:

"But what can you expect from a man who has never been pregnant? I sometimes feel a woman should not expect too much from a man. if she feels she has to pour out her heart, she has to do that with another woman."

In this non-judgemental observation lies a challenge for men of today, who have the advantage of being much more likely to be brought into the birthing experience than were their fathers.

In Her Own Voice is a practical book with a lot of teaching in it. Women readers, Mennonite or not, will find that this book makes them feel part of a shared community of experience

as they read other women's accounts of what they did during their pregnancies and births, or what they might have done. Prospective parents will find it is a valuable source of information on what to expect and plan for. Those who have had their children may be prompted to re-think their own experiences and put them into perspective. Men will have opened to them a world they have traditionally avoided or been excluded from, and will be the richer for having the adventure.

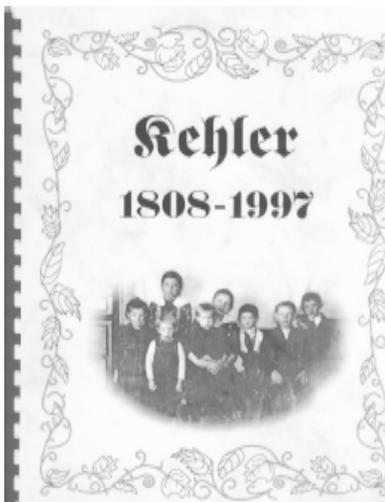
Katherine Martens and Heidi Harms have done a great service in allowing us to hear these female voices. In western civilization, it is the men who have done the public speaking; *In Her Own Voice* helps to redress that imbalance.

Reviewed by Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg

Randy Kehler, *Kehler 1808-1997* (Box 20737, Steinbach, R0A 2T2, Manitoba, 1997), 107 pages. Private edition. A limited number of copies are available from the author at \$35.00.

What do you do, and where do you start when you want to write a family history where both the patriarch, Peter Kehler (1836-76), and his father, Gerhard Kehler (1808-77), died within two years of arriving in Canada. These were the questions which HSHS board member, Randy Kehler, asked himself several years ago before he started the research for this book.

The answer, obviously, was dig, research and then dig some more. The result, Randy has traced the family back to Michael Kähler (b. 1732) and has developed biographical profiles—albeit brief—of both Peter Kehler and his father. Some of the treasures which he unearthed include the 1870 “No. 5 Thielungs Kontrak” of the Berghthaler Waisenamt covering the estate settlement made for the children at the death of Peter's first wife, Aganetha Groening Kehler. Another find was the original Russian passport of Peter Kehler. Copies of both of these documents have been reproduced in the book.



Title page of *Kehler 1808-1997*. The children of Johann and Maria Kehler.

The rest of the book consists of a section for each of the five children of Peter Kehler (1836-76) with a listing of their descendants and short historical annotations. Short biographies of each of the children were published by Randy Kehler, “Peter Kehler (1836-76), Blumengard,” in *Preservings*, No. 9, December 1996, pages 30-31.

Randy Kehler deserves much credit for the time and effort he spent researching this book and also publishing it from his own resources. I know that young writers sometimes wonder if their efforts are truly worthwhile and appreciated. I hope that members of the Kehler family, who were fortunate that Randy took up the call to complete this book for them, will find ways to express their gratitude.

The book will certainly be a valuable addition to the growing literature about the Kehler family and the village of Blumengard where Peter Kehler (1836-76) established his young family in 1875. Only little did Peter realize how soon he would find his rest in the soil which he had newly broken.

Reviewed by Delbert Plett

Reuben Epp, *The Spelling of Low German & Plautdietsch* (The Reader's Press, Hillsboro, Kansas, 1996). 167 pp. US\$ 12.95 ISBN 1-9638494-1-7

Plautdietsch once seemed doomed to the dustbin of history, but now Lawrence Klippenstein in his cover comment on *The Spelling of Low German* can boldly proclaim it as “solidly undergird(ing) the Low German/Plautdietsch renaissance which is underway now in North America and in other parts of the world.” This renaissance is evident in the dramatic rise in *Plautdietsche Owents* in our Steinbach area, from none twenty years ago, to at least five a year in 1997. Over two thousand attended the run of *Jeschafismaun*, the Plaut-play of Paraguayan writer Erdmann Harder, in its tour of southern Manitoba this fall. Do not write off Plautdietsch prematurely.

This new book by a respected scholar of our language is therefore very timely, because those of us working with literary forms in Plautdietsch desperately need a consensus on its spelling. In *The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch*, Epp renewed our pride in a venerable language that was the dominant speech of northern Europe in the Hanseatic period of medieval times; in this book he tackles the thorny problem of the principles best used in its spelling.

Jack Thiessen's 1977 *Mennonitische Wörterbuch* had the very spiritual goal “of promoting a unique sense of Gemeinschaft...(with) a world which I experienced and of which one could say: it still had a semblance of happy order.” He is therefore content to describe his orthographic principle as a necessary compromise between the phonetic and the phonemic. At a meeting of Mennonite linguists and writers at the University of Winnipeg in 1982, we attempted to standard-

ize the spelling of Plautdietsch following basic principles of High German. The success of this was demonstrated in *A Sackful of Plautdietsch*, where easy recognition of word images made the stories easy to read. This was enhanced when Herman Rempel's 1984 edition of *Kjenn Jie Noch Plautdietsch* used this orthography with only minor exceptions. (However, the Arnold Dyck family did object to the substitution of this standard for the original Dyck spellings.

Rueben Epp's *The Spelling of Low German and Plautdietsch* explores the problems others had struggled with, and advances the cause of standard spelling significantly. He differentiates between those writers who see Low German as a separate language, and those who see it as a dialect. He believes that if we present it as a separate language, we will make idiosyncratic choices of spelling that will be radically different from other writing, and so separate us from the mainstream of Low German. Writers in English have faced the same problem. So Hardy presents his Dorset, and Twain his Southern Negro dialect, in a non-standard English orthography that makes it hard to read. If, on the other hand, we see Plautdietsch as a dialect of Low German, the 300,000 users of Plaut can be in audible and visible harmony with the phonetic structures of the millions who write in Low German. Then it becomes possible to achieve the modestly stated aim of this book—“to investigate and advance the possibility of establishing a uniform Plautdietsch orthography”.

To this end, Epp proposes acceptance of the guidelines formulated in 1956 by Johannes Sass. Within this framework, a consistent spelling would provide easy word recognition. At the same time, regional variations would be accommodated as they are in every written language. Prince Philip can still say ‘pleazha’ where ordinary Canadians read ‘pleasure’ (9.) But our *Kjleeda* would be in visible harmony with Low German forms such as Kleeder, Kleddasch, Kleeder, or Kleeda. Using ‘Tj’ may be more satisfying to some Molochnaya ears, but it is visually confusing.

The greatest usefulness of this book will come in the collection of 30,000 Plautdietsche words that form the last section, and which exemplify the Sass principles Epp proposes we use. We may disagree with some details— I see ‘Jch’ as essential in many words such as ‘sajcht’— here rendered ‘sagt’. Perhaps a cultural event of the magnitude of Luther's or of the King James translations of the Bible, which established the precedence of High German and of London English may come along for Plautdietsch. But till then we need to set personal preferences aside for the sake of uniformity, or our potential readers will find the reading of our language too difficult to attempt regularly.

Reviewed by Wilmer Penner.

Peter Rempel, Franz Rempel, George Rempel, Herman Neufeld, and Aganetha Neufeld, *75 Jahre Mennoniten in Mexiko: 1922-1997* (Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein, Km.14, Carr.A Rubio, Apdo.755, Cd. Cuauthemoc, Chih., Mexico, C.P.31500, 1997), 309 pages.

An immense toll is exacted from pioneers whenever a new settlement is established in wilderness conditions. The proverb in Plaut Deutsch roughly translated goes, "The first generation has the death, the second the grief, and the third the bread."

This saying can also be applied to the historical documentation of a community. As long as the main concern of a people is to garner in their daily bread, there will not be much energy left to write history books. This was also the situation with the Mennonite community established at Cuauthemoc and Durango, Mexico, in 1922.

However, the Old Coloniers were fortunate in that their gentle, existential Christianity won the heart of Walter Schmiedehaus, the German Counsel to Cuauthemoc. In 1948 Schmiedehaus wrote his famous monograph about the Mexican Mennonites under the title *Ein' Feste Berg ist unser Gott: Der Wanderweg eines christlichen Siedlervolken*, 307 pages. This book has become the classic work on the topic.

Some academic work has also been done in the field, mostly characterized by modernization typology, and often with limited understanding of the significant role which ethnocultural communities have played within many societies since time immemorial. Of particular value is the work of Leonard Sawatzky, *The Sought a Country: Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkley, 1971), 387 pages, which provides a helpful survey of these communities and their development.

In more recent years, Mennonite Central Committee coordinated a picture book project edited by Abe Warkentin and published in 1987 under the title, *Gäste und Fremdlinge* ("Strangers and Pilgrims"), 361 pages, containing a wealth of well-reproduced photographs. The book was done in journalistic style, at least in the Mexican Mennonite section, where people are sometimes referred to generically and not specifically. This tends to have a dehumanizing effect and is not in keeping with current historical methodology. e.g. On page 14 none of the people in the five photographs are identified. Nonetheless, *Strangers and Pilgrims* was a significant addition to the historical literature available about these people.

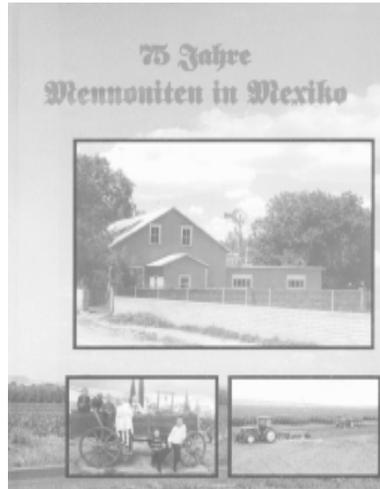
But it is not enough nor is it satisfactory for any people to have its history written only by others. This would be true even if the writing about the group would be reasonably unbiased which has not generally been the case with the Mexican Mennonites. The historiography of any culture is not complete until its own tribal legends and folklore has been compiled and reproduced in written form.

In light of these developments, the present work represents a great coming of age for the

65,000 Mennonites in Mexico and the 30,000 who have returned to Canada. For the first time they will read about themselves and see their community and spiritual ethos described from their own perspective and historical experience.

To some degree *75 Jahre Mennoniten in Mexiko* looks like its MCC sponsored-forerunner, *Strangers and Pilgrims*. A short introductory essay, written by Peter Rempel, a Cuauthemoc apple producer and business tycoon, sets the stage. The remainder of the book consists of possibly as many as a thousand photographs organized into various topical sections, such as sawmills, adobe bricks, tractors replace horses, into the Bustillos valley, Sommerfelder, Ruszländer, and many others. It is slightly larger than the standard 8" by 11" picture book and printed on superior quality paper which will last and last.

As a "Kleine Gemeinder" myself I particularly appreciated the section on the "Kansas Dorfer" covering the villages of Hoffnungsau and Heuboden settled by six Kleine Gemeinde families from Kansas in 1926. I have in my possession a collection of some 50 letters written to my great-grandparents Cornelius L. Plett and Katharina F. Reimer, Satanta, Kansas, by her brother, Jakob F. Reimer, and various family members in Mexico covering the years 1925 to 1934. I am sure there are many collections like it among the Old Colonier who remained



Attractive cover design of the book *75 Jahre Mennoniten in Mexiko: 1922-1997* with several cover photographs portraying typical scenes against the background of the "Tara Humara" mountains which define the daily horizon of the Cuauthemoc Mennonites.

Mexican Mennonite Archives.

The Mexican Mennonite Historical Society has established an archives of historical documents. Anyone with documents or information regarding the history of the Mexican Mennonites is asked to contact Mr. George Rempel, 804-325 6th St., Winkler, Winkler, Manitoba, Canada, R6W 1G5; phone 1(204)324-0934, or contact Mr. Peter Rempel, Km.14, Carr. A Rubio, Apdo. 755, Cd. Cuauthemoc, Chih., Mexico, C.P.31500.

in Canada. Such writings will become valuable primary sources as the Old Coloniers continue the task of documenting their own past.

The Mennonite Historical Society at Cuauthemoc is to be commended for producing this much needed book. *75 Jahre Mennoniten in Mexiko* is a valuable work which will spark the interests of many—Mennonites as well as Non-Mennonites—in this fascinating chapter of North American history. Hopefully it will be followed by many more.

Reviewed by Delbert Plett

Mexican Mennonite Video

A review essay of the Mexican Mennonite video, *Kanadische Mennoniten Kolonisieren im Mexiko*, "Canadian Mennonites Colonize in Mexico", producer Otto Klassen, Winnipeg, Manitoba, reviewed by Delbert Plett, editor *Preservings*.

Some 10,000 Canadian Mennonite snowbirds head south each winter to destinations such as Arizona and California. Imagine that someone wanted to make a movie or video called "Migration South" to introduce these people, their culture and history, to their winter hosts.

Imagine further that the producer of the video went to Stony Mountain penitentiary and interviewed the inmates there with Mennonite surnames such as Peters who murdered a young girl at a rock concert in Miami and Reimer who led a police chase down Portage Avenue killing 6 teenagers, and then went to the City of Winnipeg and interviewed the single mothers on the welfare roles—some of whom are prostituting themselves to make ends meet, and then went to the bar at the Frantz Motor Inn in Steinbach to discover that almost all patrons were Mennonites many unemployed or else working at menial jobs, then quoted a recent Winnipeg study which alleged that there was wife abuse in 60 per cent of Mennonite homes, and then interviewed a well-known Mennonite pastor and counsellor who had allegedly had inappropriate relationships with a number of his female patients, etc. etc.

I think even the dumbest person can get the point. This is the type of information about the Mexican Mennonites presented in the video *Migration North: Mennonites from Mexico* produced in 1995 by Mennonite Central Committee. Although the purpose of the video ostensibly was to familiarize social service agencies in Canada about those Mexican Mennonites who are returning to Canada, often as impoverished immigrants, the total picture was more or less as accurate about its subjects as the theoretical video above referred to would be if based upon the suggested material.

What *Migration North: Mennonites from Mexico* does prove, beyond any reasonable doubt, is the depth of the racial bias through which many Canadian Mennonites view their conservative co-religionists in Mexico, Paraguay and elsewhere in Latin America. Even MCC, with an envied international reputation

for sensitivity in dealing with different cultures around the world, appears to be enslaved to modernization typology in defining its dealings with these people, even though their numbers now almost equal those of the entire Canadian Mennonite community. Why would any organization risk offending its largest potential support constituency?

Unfortunately the rest of the Canadian Mennonite media slavishly follows the same mantra in any coverage about these people, leaving a large information gap, especially for the faith community in question. Into this void comes a Winnipeg man, Otto Klassen, born in Schöneberg, Chortitza Colony, Ukraine, in 1927, to make a video about the Mexican Mennonites with the purpose of presenting their history and culture, fairly, truthfully and objectively.

Otto is a well-known but little recognized film-producer with some 20 credits to his name. In time he will be renowned as a pioneer within the Mennonite community using celluloid as a medium to communicate to Mennonites about themselves. Admittedly, *Mexican Mennonites* does not have the technical sophistication evident in "And when they shall ask", another ground-breaking Mennonite video. But David Dueck, its producer, was fortunate to have tax shelters and a bevy of institutional investors eager to shell out big dollars for some "Forever Summer, Forever Sunday" fare—the video never did mention that 80 per cent of Mennonites in Russia in 1910 were landless, that many were desperately poor and recipients of a steady stream of financial assistance from Manitoba Mennonites as early as the 1880s. And I say this with all due respect to David Dueck, another visionary communicator who will probably never get fair recognition for his brilliant work not only in producing the video but also in exuding the vision which made it happen.

But what *Mexican Mennonites* lacks in technical glitz is made up for by Otto's obvious love of his subjects, their culture and spiritual ethos, which rings as true today as it did in 1875-6 when they forsook hearth and home in Russia seeking to reestablish a renewed Christian Gemeinde based on the model of the New Testament church in the Manitoba wilderness and again in 1916 when they stoically endured ethnic cleansing measures imposed by the Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments.

The first video quite appropriately goes back to 16th century Reformation times and 17th century Prussia to pick up the threads of the story. It moves along rapidly providing the viewers, some of whom may not be familiar with these earlier developments, with enough information to get the gist, and follows the pilgrims to Manitoba in 1875-6, and briefly outlines their experiences here.

In 1922, almost 50 years later, the Old Coloniers took the pilgrim's staff again and together with Holstein cattle, horses, tractors, barbed wire and bank deposits, boarded 36 chartered trains with 30-40 wagons which took them to Cuauthemoc, Chihuahua State, Mexico. Here in the Bustillos Valley the Old Colonier delegates had earlier purchased a huge tract of arable land which was to become their new

home. Most of the emigrants were land owners and well-to-do, some of Canada's best and most progressive farmers.

The second video focuses on the movement of the Manitoba and Saskatchewan exiles to Mexico and the settlement and subsequent evolution in their new Homeland. In any new settlement there are years of pain and learning by trial and error. The video explores some of these trials and tribulations. Eventually, the Cuauthemoc settlement prospered and the video



Otto Klassen hard at work editing Video Three of the "75 years of Mennonites in Mexico" series. Otto has devoted the last 30 years of his life documenting the history and culture of Mennonites all over the world through the medium of film.

introduces the viewer to the modern Mexican Mennonite world. Some statistics—the Cuauthemoc area alone produces the equivalent of 30 per cent of Manitoba's total annual milk production. Corn is the second major farm commodity, followed by apple orchards: see article on the "75th anniversary celebrations" elsewhere in this newsletter for additional details.

I understand that the total work when completed will consist of 4 videos, each to be produced in 4 languages—High German, Low German, Spanish and English. The third video will be the story of the 75th anniversary cel-

ebrations held at Cuauthemoc, Mexico, August 14-16, 1997, and the fourth one hour video will focus on the cultural and social life of the Mexican Colonies. These videos will empower many from that community to take pride in who they are. For some it may well be the first time they have been given anything to feel proud about.

Otto Klassen is to be congratulated for his inspired labour of love, a work of genius. It takes a lot of courage to tell the truth about a story, to give voice to the voiceless and to affirm the vision and inspiration of a people, when it is not the politically correct thing to do. Truly an admirable accomplishment.

These videos will also help to overcome the misrepresentations and half-truths found in productions like *Migration North* and in the Canadian Mennonite media in general. Through Otto's works thousands of Canadians will be introduced for the first time to the truth about the Mexican Mennonite community and its very real and significant accomplishments. Many will be as shocked as I was when I visited the Cuauthemoc area in August, 1997, to find that under constant bombardment of prejudiced media reporting my eyes had been so negatively influenced with respect to these people.

I hope a time will come when I do not have to travel to Cancun, Mexico, as a tourist, to hear from Mexicans from Mexico City, the truth about my own people living in that country. But then, when I consider that we are dealing here with a three centuries-old "psychosis", I would not get my hopes up.

Perhaps MCC should appoint a "Concerns Committee" to examine why these prejudices are so deeply imbedded in the Canadian Mennonite psyche. And perhaps such a "Concerns Committee" could bring forth some recommendations as to how the community can start to foster and promote fraternal relations with the Mexican Mennonite people based on mutual respect and understanding.

MERRY CHRISTMAS and HAPPY NEW YEAR

Merry Christmas from the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society board of directors.

From Orlando Hiebert, President, Lynette Plett, Corporate Secretary, Doris Penner, Lois Loeppky, Paul Loewen, Randy Kehler, Delbert Plett, Jake Doerksen, Rev. Cornie Martens, Dr. Royden Loewen, Henry Fast and John Dyck, HSHS Research Director.

May the blessing of the season be with you!