

# Preservings

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"A people who have not the pride to record their own 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

## Happy Birthday - Hanover Steinbach - 1874-1999 125 Years Old



### The 1874 Trek

The wagon train reenacting the trek of the Steinbach settlers September 10-12, 1999, leaves the landing site at the confluence of the Rat and Red River, turning east off P.R. 200 onto Crown Valley Road, as they start their two day journey. This photograph by Carillon reporter Tim Plett (Carillon News, Sept 13/99, page A9), is evocative of the spirit of the pioneers. For an entire weekend the wagon train captured the hearts and minds of adults and children alike as it made its way across the R. M. of Hanover, stopping for a lunch in Niverville, supper in New Bothwell, a worship service in Chortitz, lunch in Mitchell, and finally a parade down Steinbach's Main Street escorted by Mounties, to be met and welcomed at the south end of Main Street, K. R. Barkman park (property once owned by the wealthy Franz Kroeker family), by a crowd of over a 1000 people. Riding in the lead wagon are Henry and Trina Unrau, the second are Harold and Betty Unger, third is Jake Braun and fourth is Jake Spenst.

Congratulations to Hanover Steinbach on the occasion of its 125th birthday, August 1, 1999, originally founded as the East Reserve in 1874. The first ship load of settlers arrived in Winnipeg (Fort Garry) on July 31, 1874, with 10 Old Kolony (OK) and 55 Kleine Gemeinde (KG) families on board. Within several weeks they were joined by a large Bergthaler contingent of 165 families so that by the end of August, 1874, all three founding denominations of the Mennonite community in Western Canada had arrived.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and *Preservings* is proud to have played a leading role in the celebration of the 125th anniversary of our community. In his editorial of September 13, 1999, *Carillon News* editor Peter Dyck wrote

that "residents of Hanover Steinbach have good reason to step back and to celebrate....It would be difficult to find another community in Western Canada which has achieved such prosperity and comfort in such a short time."

Editor Dyck's concluding words are a fitting tribute to the pioneers: "The first settlers toiled stubbornly in a harsh environment, anchored by an abiding faith and the belief that the fruits of labour were there to be found. They laid the foundations well: a pause to reflect on this milestone is in order."

Let us join together to "celebrate our heritage."

*Editor D. Plett Q.C.*



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# Introduction to Issue 15.

## Feature Story - The Pioneer Era

The feature articles for this issue of *Preservings* will again be the pioneer era of our history in Manitoba commencing in 1874. The feature story follows the theme of the 125th anniversary celebrations of the settlement of the East Reserve, Hanover Steinbach area.

The lead article is a history of the establishment of the first Mennonite settlement in Imperial Russia in 1789, by Johannes von der Smissen. The article is considered by Dr. Adolf Ens, C.M.B.C., Winnipeg, to be the best contemporary account of the early years of the Chortitza Colony, the direct spiritual antecedent of the Old Kolony (OK) and Bergthal Gemeinden, two of the founding denominations of the Mennonite community in Western Canada. The article reveals how under often trying and difficult conditions the Mennonite Church in Prussia stood by its co-religionists in Imperial Russia, focusing on several leaders who made great personal sacrifices.

The Krahn letters dating from 1870 to 1891 are among the oldest extant writings by women in the Chortitza/Old Colony tradition. Not only do these letters prove that women within conservative Mennonite culture were literate and articulate, they demonstrate that Low German/Plaut-Dietsch was commonly written in the 1870s, contrary to the allegations of some that it was not a written language.

The article "Poor and Simple" examines the economic circumstances of the 1874 emigrants and challenges the view held among Molotschna Pietist Triumphalist historians that the migration consisted of the "poor and landless". It seems that when one culture seeks to exercise domination over another these types of myths are propagated in pursuit of such strategies.

The Johann Wiebe (1837-1906) Old Kolony (OK) documents collected by Elaine Wiebe, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, illustrate the ethos of New Testament community and love practiced by conservative Mennonites. It is appropriate that we focus on the life and work of this great Christian leader as we approach July 27, 2000, the 125th anniversary of the arrival of Ohm Johann at Fort Dufferin on the Red River with his group of immigrants.

A Tale of Two Journals, the story of the account books of two prominent leaders of the East Reserve, Reeve Gerhard Kliewer, Schantzenburg, and Deacon Abraham R. Reimer, Blumenort, provides insight into the workings of 19th century rural agri-business in southern Manitoba.

The article on the Mennonite music tradition was originally written for the July 24, 1999, special feature section in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, but could not be included for lack of space. It is published here as part of our ongoing

program to provide balanced thumbnail sketches of various aspects of Mennonite life and culture to combat the negative and one-sided images often conveyed in our schools, churches and literature.

Unfortunately our art contest did not bring forth quite as much response as hoped. Nevertheless we appreciate the two submissions which were made: see page 145.

As our East Reserve historiography develops and more detailed information becomes available, future artists may well be able to take scenes from recent memory and/or photographs and recreate them within their original village context full of people and life, exuding the vibrancy, excitement and constant social activity of Strassendorf village life. Such work could follow along the lines of what H. P. Pauls has done for various village scenes from the Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia, see material culture section for the reproduction of two of his works.

It is unfortunate that we cannot publish works like these or the beautiful *Fraktur* art of our ancestors in colour. Perhaps this will be possible if a more extensive history of the Hanover Steinbach community is done at some future time.

The editorial comments of this issue will again enthuse some readers, speak for others, and enrage a few. Hopefully these humble meanderings will be stimulating, encouraging people to give some thought to their particular religious culture and its historical origins and evolution.

The Letters Section is again huge giving readers opportunity to dialogue with *Preservings*. The News stories are dominated by reports of 125 activities during 1999 and a tribute to the late John Dyck, our beloved Research Director who devoted a good part of the last ten years of his life to building the historiography of the Hanover Steinbach community.

The Articles Sections is led off by another astounding piece of research and historical writing by board member Ernest Braun, Part Two of the story of Gnadenfeld, a pioneer Strassendorf village just west of modern-day Grunthal. This work serves as a model of fu-

ture similar endeavours.

The Material Culture Section features an article on our Mennonite Low German/Plaut-Dietsch by Dr. Jack Thiessen, New Bothwell, a paper originally presented at Khortitza '99 in Zaporozhe, Ukraine in June, 1999.

We are also pleased to publish another instalment of the translated Council minutes of the R. M. of Hanover covering the years 1885 to '95, completing "Minute Book No. One". Hopefully the contents of Journals No. Two and Three covering 1896 to 1917 can also be translated and published soon. In 1917 Anglo-conformity hysteria forced Municipal leaders to cease the use of German for Council minutes thus effectively revoking the rights granted by the Dominion Government in 1873 to entice Mennonites to come to Manitoba.

This issue also initiates a creative writing section with the first article "Suaruh Suschkje Learns to Laugh" contributed by premier Kanadier writer, Armin Wiebe, with roots in the village of Eigenfeld, East Reserve. The second piece for the June 2000 issue will be by John Janzen Kooistra, author of *Shoo-fly Dyck*. Anyone interested in submitting a short story for this section should contact the editor. The articles should be evocative of traditional/conservative Mennonite values and spiritual tradition.

The Book Review Section informs the readers regarding a crop of new books relating to Hanover Steinbach.

With lots of shorter articles and storeys, Issue No. 15, represents another feast of history and culture. Enjoy!

### **Attention:** **Libraries and Researchers.**

Do you need back copies of  
*Preservings*?

We now have available a CD-ROM with Issue Nos 8 to 15 of *Preservings and 125th Anniversary Booklet* (Note: No pictures included for Issue 8, only the script). Each issue is saved as Acrobat PDF file for easy viewing on screen and the ability to do text searching. Adobe Acrobat Reader for Windows 3.1 and Windows 95/98 is included on the CD-ROM.

Cost is \$50.00 plus \$10.00 for shipping and handling. To order send cheque or money order to Scott Kroeker, Box 21306, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2T3.

### **Coming in the Next Issue:**

Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1906), Rosengard, W.R., Manitoba, wrestles Satan to the ground, fighting off American Revivalist infiltrators in the Reinländer Gemeinde. Read all about it in *Preservings*, No.16.

# The History of the Church in Chortitza

**The History of the Church in Chortitza: Towards an Understanding of the History of the Church in the Mennonite Colonies in South Russia, by Johannes von der Smissen, translated and edited by William Schroeder, 434 Sutton Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0T3.**

## Introduction.

The first Anabaptist settlement in Russia was the village of Vishenka located in the Chernigov district on the Desna River. Those Anabaptists were actually not Mennonites mainly because of their communal life style. Aside from that they had remained free from the fanaticism of the Münsterites and behaved like industrious, peaceful and proper citizens.

By 1531, under the leadership of Jacob Hutter (? - 1536) and Gabriel Scherding, they had their centre of activity in Moravia. When they were persecuted there, many of them fled to Carinthia and Tyrol after 1551. Hutter himself was captured in Klaussen and burned at the stake in Innsbruck. Later they gathered in Hungary and Transylvania only to be persecuted again. Finally some of them found refuge in the village of Vishenka where the Russian Count Peter Alexandrovich Rumiantsev (1725-96), owner of the estate on which the village was located, welcomed them (Note One).

Later these Hutterites were expelled from Vishenka. After they had wandered about for a period of time, Johann Cornies (1789-1848) settled them at Hutterthal near the Molotschna Colony where they are still living.

## The Invitation.

The settlement of Mennonites in the province of Ekaterinoslav is of greater interest to us than the Hutterite settlement. A communiqué written by the Russian Consul in Thorn to Aeltester Abraham Nickel in Nisheski set the entire emigration program in motion (Note Two). The hand-written chronicles in our Flemish Church in Danzig provide some information about that event.

On August 7, 1786, a document sent by the Russian Consul in Thorn, to the Aeltester was read during a regular church service. The document stated that by decree of her Majesty, all free land owners, especially the Mennonites in the Danzig area were officially informed that free land was available near the Turkish border in Russia. Anyone interested should apply at the Russian Embassy on Langgarten in Danzig. The visit to the embassy would be at the cost of the Crown. However, the Aeltesten in the church could not provide any further assistance to prospective emigrants because the City Council in Danzig objected to this procedure.

Accordingly when Jacob Hoeppner from Bohnsack and Jacob von Kampen appeared before the Aeltester of the Flemish Church on September 14, 1786 and declared that they were willing to travel to Russia to inspect the land provided that the Church was willing to send them as delegates, they were flatly refused. The same thing happened in the Frisian Church in Neugarten where that document had also been read.

Disregarding the objections of the City Council, Jacob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch travelled to the Black Sea area at the expense of the Russian

government. They wanted to see everything with their own eyes before they would be convinced. Hoeppner and Bartsch returned towards the end of 1787 in the company of a Russian commissioner, George Trappe (? - 1798) (Note Three). Trappe had the authority to provide emigrants with free transportation to Dubrovno, a city in Mohilev, where they would wait for further instructions. Each emigrant was to receive one quarter ruble per day for the duration of the trip.

In November of the same year, Mayor Pegalau summoned Aeltester Peter Epp (1725-89) to come to his office. Epp was told to see to it that no one would go to Russia without permission.

## George Trappe.

During the month of December Trappe asked the Aeltester if during a regular church service someone could read an invitation to emigrate to Russia. He even offered Epp substantial gifts, but the Aeltester felt obligated to decline both the request to read the invitation and the gifts (Note Four).

However, Mr. Trappe did not allow this to intimidate him. He had the invitation printed and



*The big oak, sometimes referred to as the 1000 year oak, in the village of Chortitza, Chortitza Colony. The 1000 year oak was a symbol of endurance and the faithfulness of God to generations of Mennonites as it had been to Ukrainian Cossacks for centuries previous. Photo courtesy of William Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, page 7.*

distributed as the people walked out of the church on January 13, 1788 (Note Five). Trappe's method of soliciting for potential emigrants annoyed the government officials in Danzig so that Peter Epp felt obligated to make a public statement about it in church the next Sunday. He explained that these actions had occurred without his consent and without his knowledge. Epp denied the statement in the invitation that the Church had sent official delegates to Russia. Now Trappe insisted that Epp's public statements contained insults against his Queen. The Aeltester defended his statements successfully before the Mayor.

Trappe's anger does not seem to have been too great or else it soon calmed down for on February 3, 1788, he attended a communion service in the Mennonite Church. After the service Trappe

walked up to the Aeltester, kissed him, praised the manner in which he conducted the service and gave him ten Taler for the poor.

Now preparations for emigrating increased. At first only four families from the Danzig Church announced that they wanted to leave and requested certificates from the church. The church leaders approached the Mayor about that and got permission to grant certificates only to persons who had first presented a valid passport to the government officials.

As the number of applicants increased, the Council did not want to issue that many passports and finally stated that anyone who wished to emigrate could leave. The emigrants from Danzig, however, were mostly people who did not have property such as milkmen, carpenters and labourers. If one of them had 4000 Danziger guilder which is equal to 1333.3 Prussian Taler he was considered to be well off. Two of those who already had passports were kept back because they were known to be drunkards (Note Six).

Mr. Trappe was active in the other churches in West Prussia also. But it seems that the government of West Prussia was even more difficult to deal with than the government in Danzig. At that time Danzig was still a semi-independent city-state in Poland. The families that requested passports from the government were only given verbal permission to emigrate. As a result they were forced to leave the country without attracting attention.

George Trappe's activities even extended to Amsterdam. That is why the Church in Danzig received a letter from the Church in Amsterdam stating that Trappe had been there and that the Russian authorities requested the Mennonite emigrants to form only one Church in their country (Note Seven). As a result the Flemish and the Frisian Churches were encouraged to unite (Note Eight).

## The Prussian Gemeinden.

Consequently a special meeting was held in Rosenort on the Marienburger Werder on July 10, 1788 (Note Nine). Twenty Aeltesten, ministers and deacons representing the four Flemish

**"The settlement of Mennonites in the province of Ekaterinoslav is of greater interest..."**

churches in West Prussia attended the meeting. When the delegates arrived at the church they found numerous prospective emigrants there already. The assembled brethren were singing songs that were usually sung at meetings where ministers were to be elected. They had assumed that the purpose of the meeting was to elect ministers for the United Mennonite Church.

The Aeltester of the church in Heubuden, Cornelius Regier, spoke to the emigrants and

admonished them to live God-fearing lives and to love their neighbours also when they dwelt in a distant land. He explained to them that it would not be practical to hold an election for a minister on that day because many of the prospective emigrants who resided on Prussian territory did not have the legal right to leave the country yet and in spite of all efforts many of them were unable to obtain such right. If they held an election now the person elected might be one of those who was not permitted to go in which case the election would have been an exercise in futility (Note Ten).

Then the assembled brethren requested the Aeltesten to assist them in obtaining the necessary papers to emigrate. Many of them had already sold whatever they owned and now did not know where to stay. Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1725-96) from the Elbing Church volunteered to intercede for them to the government authorities. He would also seek out two men from among the prospective emigrants who could serve as contact persons. The conference delegates assured the emigrants that a minister would be elected as soon as all the passes had been procured.

Finally the delegates drafted a letter in response to the letter they had received from the church in Amsterdam. They explained that in the past individuals had transferred their membership from one church to the other on the basis of a certificate only, which could be considered a union of sorts already.

#### Dubrovno.

Unfortunately Aeltester Wiebe was unable to

**“Jacob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch travelled to the Black Sea area at the expense of the Russian government.”**

obtain the passes and the emigrants were obliged to leave the country stealthily. Soon letters were received from the emigrants in Riga and Dubrovno in which they lamented over the fact that they were without a shepherd and ministers.

That is why the Flemish Church held another conference in Tiegerfeld in Grosswerder which was attended by fourteen Aeltesten, ministers and deacons. They discussed the emigrants' need for spiritual care. Obviously they could provide such care only by sending an Aeltester or a minister to Dubrovno. However political, geographical and economic circumstances would make it very difficult for any individual to travel that distance (Note Eleven).

Therefore they agreed to write a letter to the brethren in Dubrovno in which they suggested ways of dealing with their church leadership dilemma. They advised them not to be too hasty about electing a minister. Instead they could choose

competent men who could serve the group on an interim basis by conducting devotional services. Later these men might be suitable candidates when they were ready to elect a minister.

At the time of this conference 152 families from the Flemish Church were on the way to Russia (Note Twelve). The table shows where they came from on the Vistula Delta. This number had increased to 200 families by December 31, 1788.

Grosswerder Gemeinde: Tiegenhagen quadrant 41; Rosenort quadrant 41; Ladekopp quad-



*Gregory Potemkin (1739-91), Governor of Taurida, who sent George Trappe as immigration agent to Danzig. Courtesy of Virginia Cowles Romanov (London, 1971), page 106.*

rant 6; Barwälde quadrant 5; Heubuden Gemeinde 17; Elbing Gemeinde 20; and Danzig Gemeinde 22.

On January 27, 1789 there was another conference of the Flemish Church in Petershagen by Tiegenhof. Seventeen Aeltesten, ministers and deacons were present. Five letters written by Mennonites in Russia were read. The letters expressed the most anxious longing that an Aeltester and ministers should be appointed for them, because as things were, they had to be content with a Sunday church service that consisted of singing one song and a sermon that was read from a book of sermons written by Isaac Kroeker from Konigsberg.

#### Aeltester Peter Epp.

The emigrants also offered to pay for the travelling expenses for an Aeltester who would come to help them in Russia. The conference delegates tried to persuade Peter Epp from Danzig to go to Russia. They thought he would be the most suitable candidate. He had always been favourably disposed to the idea of emigrating and he did not have to provide for a wife and children or look after a farm. However, Epp insisted that he would

be prepared to go only if the three Aeltesten at the conference drew lots and the lot fell to him. But even the youngest Aeltester at the conference, Cornelius Regier, was reluctant to draw lots with Epp, and since the church in Danzig was hesitant to release their pastor the problem could not be resolved at that meeting.

Since Aeltester Peter Epp's appointment had to be ratified by his Gemeinde and Aeltester Cornelius Regier was expected to be in Danzig the following Sunday, they decided to have a meeting there on February 5, 1789 and present this matter to the Church Council. However, when Cornelius Regier did not show up they thought it necessary to proceed with this urgent matter without him.

They wrote to Gerhard Wiebe in Elbing and asked him, along with several others, to come to a meeting in Danzig. Wiebe explained that he was unable to come at the time because of a local election, but shortly thereafter he and two other Aeltesten arrived in Danzig. They discussed the problem of sending an Aeltester to help the emigrants. They had already written a letter to Russia in which they stated that Peter Epp would very likely go there.

Now, however, that seemed doubtful because Epp was not well. During the last communion service he had been very weak. They agreed to write a letter to Russia explaining that Peter Epp could not go there because of his health. They instructed the emigrants to organize an election among themselves. One man from each church was appointed to supervise the election: Jacob Hoeppner from the church on the Grosswerder, Jacob Wiens from the church in Danzig, Peter Albrecht from the church in Elbing and Martin Classen from the church in Heubuden.

This committee should forward a list of twelve to sixteen reputable men to Prussia where four ministers and two deacons would be chosen by lot. They also explained in the letter that the conference delegates were in favour of sending an Aeltester to Russia but at the present that was not possible.

#### Letters from Russia.

Another conference was held on March 27, 1789 which was attended by 19 Aeltesten, ministers and deacons. Four letters from Russia were read. The four men mentioned above had forwarded a slate of twenty candidates who had been elected by a total of 168 votes. Further, the emigrants requested that the following materials be sent to them: a wedding sermon (Note Thirteen), a sermon that would be suitable for a meeting at which church members were released or readmitted for disciplinary reasons, two concordances, several song books and several copies of their confession of faith. They also requested that an Aeltester be sent to them soon because they could not observe the Lord's Supper without him.



Peter Alexandrovich Rumiantsev (1725-96), General in the Russian Army during the Seven Years War and stationed in the Vistula Delta where he got to know the Mennonites. He recommended them to George Trappe as potential immigrants. Photo courtesy of William Schroeder, Berghthal Colony, page 4.

The second letter stated that if an Aeltester should decide to come to Russia they would provide 180 ducats for his travelling expenses, 60 would be paid in Danzig, 60 in Riga and 60 in Dubrovno. They also explained that two of the candidates were from the Frisian Church because many of their members had also emigrated to Russia. However the Frisians had already joined the Flemish and had promised to agree with them in all matters.

The third letter expressed concerns about the two Frisian candidates and the conference agreed not to give either of them a leadership position. They appointed the following three men as minis-

**“Peter Epp was so grieved by this dispute that he had to go outside to vent his emotions in tears.”**

ters without drawing lots: Jacob Wiens from Danzig who had 47 votes, Gerhard Neufeld from Danzig who had 27 votes and David Giesbrecht from Petershagen who had 18 votes.

Then lots were drawn to select three from the following five men: Peter van Dyck from Rehwald who had 12 votes, Peter van Dyck from Lakenwald who had 12 votes, Anton Klassen from Heubuden who had 9 votes, Cornelius von Riesen from Toepferdamm who had 6 votes and Bernhard Penner from Danzig who had 4 votes.

The delegates prayed about this matter and then proceeded to draw lots which fell to Peter van Dyck from Lakenwald, Cornelius von Riesen and Bernhard Penner. Finally it was determined by lot again that Bernhard Penner would be a minister and the remaining two men would be deacons. These results were forwarded to Russia with the instructions that the elected men be asked to re-



Maria Feodorovna (1759-1828), the second wife of Emperor Paul I, was instrumental in bringing the Mennonites to Russia. Photo courtesy of William Schroeder, Berghthal Colony, page 4.

spond to the following questions:

1. Are you in agreement with the Flemish Church in Prussia in matters of faith?
2. Do you accept your calling as from God?
- 3 Will you attend to your duties in a sincere and honest manner?

More letters arrived on the tenth of May in which the newly elected ministers and deacons pleaded for an Aeltester to be sent to Russia.

#### Discussions.

Finally Aeltester Peter Epp declared that he perceived this as very urgent and in the event that nobody else was willing to undertake this assignment he was willing and prepared to take on this difficult task. For this reason they decided to invite the other three Aeltesten to Danzig to discuss this matter at a brotherhood meeting. The meeting was held in Danzig on May 24, 1789. Two Aeltesten, Dirk Tiessen and Cornelius Regier, along with numerous other ministers were present.

A total of about 200 people attended. Cornelius Regier in his address asked the assembled brethren if they would allow Aeltester Peter Epp to go to Russia to put the brothers who had moved away in order. However, many opposed that idea. The visiting ministers did everything in their power to influence the assembly. Peter Epp was so grieved by this dispute that he had to go outside to vent his emotions in tears. After debating the topic back and forth they finally thought it advisable to ask the Aeltester for his opinion.

Epp was asked to come back inside and after he had regained his composure he explained that his mind was firmly made up to hurry to the aid of the brethren in Russia even if it cost him his life. That was a moving response and the audience was calmed down. Soon everything was arranged and the assembled wished Epp much success on his trip. Now that it was certain that Epp would go they wrote to Russia and requested the emigrants

to forward the 180 ducats for travelling expenses to Danzig as they had promised. They also asked them to pay for the Aeltester's return trip. This letter was signed by the visiting Aeltesters and ministers and four brethren.

The health of Peter Epp, who had frequently been bedridden during the previous two years, gradually deteriorated. He was able to conduct the baptism service on June 7th but he was too ill to officiate at the Lord's Supper which had been planned for the 28th of June. Cornelius Regier was invited to officiate as the church observed that sacrament the following Sunday.

Heedless of his poor health Peter Epp stuck with his resolve to travel. Preparations were made for the trip. He had two canvas covered wagons built and his two sons made plans to accompany their father. Heinrich (1757-1805) with his wife and children wanted to settle in Russia if they were satisfied with the conditions in Chortitzia. Jacob (1774 - ?) the youngest son, a youth of 15 years, wanted to go along just to be with his father. Four other families had postponed their departure so that they could make this journey in the company of the Aeltester. One of these was David Epp (1750-1802), the future Aeltester of the church in Chortitzia (Note Fourteen).

#### Death of Peter Epp.

A reply from Russia signed by the ministers Jacob Wiens and Gerhard Neufeld arrived in Danzig on July 12, 1789. They expressed their appreciation for the Aeltester's decision and informed them that most of the emigrants had already moved to Kremenchug, a city on the Dnieper in the province of Pultava, while the others were in the process of moving there. They also sent a cheque for 600 new rubles which could be cashed by the Russian Resident or in the office on Eliot Street in Danzig to pay for Epp's travelling expenses.

Since there was a slight improvement in Epp's health he prepared for the journey in all earnest. On July 16, 1789 the ministers and deacons ap-

**“The Aeltester’s condition continued to worsen till the 12th of November when the Lord called him on another journey.”**

pointed Jacob de Veer as interim Aeltester in the Danzig Church for the duration of Epp's absence. Epp announced that he wanted to have his farewell sermon on August 2. They provided him with essentials for the journey and with a letter of authority signed by the remaining three Aeltesten and several ministers.

Epp's health took a turn for the worse again during the week before August 2 so that he frequently had to stay in bed. The Russian Consul suggested that the Aeltester could postpone his trip for a few weeks since he was still waiting for some more mail from Russia.

However the farewell service for Peter Epp was held as planned on August 2, 1789. Epp based his farewell sermon on John 14:28; “I am going away and I am coming back to you.” Then Jacob

de Veer speaking for the Church and Cornelius Warkentin from Rosenort directed some words of farewell to the Aeltester. The service was concluded with a prayer and a song. The song had been written especially for that occasion by Minister Hans Momber (1742-1815).

The Aeltester's health worsened and his departure had to be postponed. The four families that had planned to accompany him along with two more families from the Werder set out on their long journey to Russia without Epp. Now the Aeltester realized that it would be impossible for him to undertake such a long trip and retired to the home of his brother, Minister Cornelius Epp (1728-1805), in Neunhuben in the Danziger Werder.

He had hoped to recover from his illness but instead he gradually became weaker. Epp realized that he could not make that journey in the near future and requested that the emigrants in Russia

"Aeltester Peter Epp (1725-89) was the great-grandfather of Jacob M. Barkman (1824-75), Steinbach's pioneer Minister."

should be informed about the change in his plans. On September 4th the unused portion of the funds in the form of bank drafts which had been advanced in instalments to pay for Epp's travelling expenses were cancelled.

The Aeltester's condition continued to worsen till the 12th of November when the Lord called him on another journey. On that day in Neunhuben a peaceful death ended his pious life. He was buried on the 18th in the cemetery in Nassenhuben (Note Fifteen).

On December 3, 1789 a letter was written to Russia to inform them of the beloved Aeltester's death. The hand-written chronicles on this subject end here. Incomplete details of the events that occurred in the following years are gleaned from letters written during the years 1792-1794. The letters are in a book in the archives of the Mennonite Church in Danzig.

#### Aeltester Bernhard Penner, 1791.

The emigrants' deepest desire that an Aeltester come and help them organize a church was not realized again. Their problem remained. They could not organize a church without the services of an Aeltester. According to church regulations deemed valid in their congregations, baptism and the Lord's Supper could be served only by an Aeltester. Only an Aeltester could ordain another Aeltester, and even an election for ministers and deacons that had not been conducted by an Aeltester would hardly be considered valid.

Since none of the other Aeltesten were able or willing to undertake the 2000 kilometre journey to Chortitza they improvised a way out of their dilemma. One of the ministers, Bernhard Penner (1756-91), was appointed as Aeltester, and a document signed by the four Aeltesten in Prussia was sent to Jacob Wiens, the oldest minister in Chortitza, authorizing him to ordain the Aeltester. With that it seemed that the problems of the church in the

colony had been solved, but not for long. The newly elected leader died on July 29, 1791 and new problems surfaced.

#### Johann Wiebe.

At the request of Bernhard Penner a second election for an Aeltester was held in Chortitza. Johann Wiebe (1766-1823) a man younger than Penner was elected. However, Wiebe hesitated to accept that assignment because he felt that he was too young and inexperienced for that office. In the mean time Aeltester Bernhard Penner died and the



*Catherine the Great (1729-76). Photo courtesy of They Seek a Country, page 22, and Saints and Sinners, page 186.*

colonists urgently requested Johann Wiebe to accept the calling.

Wiebe accepted the assignment on the condition that a co-Aeltester would be elected and that the two newly elected Aeltesten would then go back to Prussia for ordination. His conditions were accepted and David Epp (1750-1802) was elected as the second Aeltester.

Unfortunately various problems developed as they prepared for the trip to Prussia. The result was that first Johann Wiebe withdrew his candidacy for Aeltestership and a short time later David Epp followed his example. However, a group of men from the church in an organized way vigilantly and persistently implored the ex-candidates that at least one of them should accept the leadership.

Wiebe would not change his mind but David Epp was ordained by Jacob Wiens who did this on the basis of the authority he had received earlier to ordain Bernhard Penner. Many church members did not like this process. Two ministers and one deacon in particular had reservations about acknowledging Epp as Aeltester. One reason for that may have been the fact that Epp had emigrated to Russia without special permission from the church in Danzig. That situation had come about because David Epp had planned on travelling with Aeltester Peter Epp who could easily have filled out that certificate en-route.

They wrote a letter to Prussia to inform them about these new developments and asked for ad-

vice and assistance. At the same time David Epp asked the church in Danzig to send him his emigration certificate.

In response to this letter a conference which was attended by four Aeltesten, thirteen ministers and six deacons was held in Tiegerfeld in Grosswerder on May 14, 1792.

At the close of the conference Jacob de Veer from Danzig sent the resolutions they had made to Jacob Wiens in Chortitza (Note Sixteen). He also enclosed an emigration certificate for David Epp.

The resolutions read as follows:

"The excuses made by Johann Wiebe are commendable in so far as they reflect a spirit of humility, but that is not a valid excuse in view of the fact that he is called by God himself through the votes of the brethren. We must remind him of the examples in Jeremiah and Moses. For that reason we urge the brethren and fellow servants to admonish him to put aside all excuses and to yield to the will of God and accept his calling as Aeltester of the church."

"The office should be filled by a person with noble purposes. He should be prepared to fulfil the duties of an Aeltester faithfully and to the best of his understanding of the will of God and what is ultimately in the best interest of the church. For the most that can be expected from a servant in God's Kingdom is that he be found faithful."

"Aeltester David Epp who has been elected and has even been ordained already must stay in his office. There is no reason for him to step down from his position. The fact that his partner changed his mind about being a candidate for that office does not mean that he should step down too as some members of the church in Chortitza seem to think. The great distance from Prussia and the size of the colony are good reasons to have two Aeltesten."

"There were many tears and other evidence of the congregation's loyalty and devotion to their leader."

#### The Chortitza Colony.

At that time the colony consisted of seven villages. The largest village had 44 families and the smallest village had 16 families. The colony was located nine Meilen (50 km) from Ekaterinoslav on the west side of the Dnieper River near the rapids. Their produce could easily be transported by riverboat to Kherson. The Frisian congregation had built a church in Kronsweide and had elected Cornelius Froese (?-1794) as their Aeltester (Note Seventeen). The Flemish group had not built a chapel yet. They met in private homes in Chortitza and in Neuendorf which was a Kleine Meile (7 km) away.

The money which the colonists had sent to Danzig to pay for Aeltester Peter Epp's travelling expenses was refunded on February 12, 1793. This had not been done earlier because they first had to replace the money Epp had spent as he prepared for the trip.

**Aeltestership.**

During the meantime Johann Wiebe could still not make up his mind whether or not to accept the Aeltestership. Furthermore new problems were added to the old ones.

On October 26, 1793 the Aeltester in Danzig received a letter which had been signed by 19 members of the church in Chortitza. They made serious accusations against Aeltester David Epp. Epp had dealt very harshly with another minister

**"The true friend of people,  
Aeltester Cornelius Regier, is  
dead."**

during a dispute over money matters. They urgently requested that an Aeltester from Prussia should come and help them regulate their church matters in Russia. Before a conference could be arranged Johann Wiebe and Jacob Bargent arrived. They also urgently requested the help of an Aeltester for their church in Chortitza.

Consequently arrangements were made to have another conference to discuss church related problems in Chortitza. The Aeltesten, ministers and deacons met in Rosenort on November 15, 1793. The two men from the colony were very vocal and persistent at that meeting. They declared that they would not return home to Russia unless they were accompanied by an Aeltester.

The delegates suggested that Johann Wiebe be ordained in Prussia so that he could return to the colony as an Aeltester, but Wiebe turned that down. At that point the delegates realized that it was absolutely necessary for them to send an Aeltester and a minister to Russia. The Aeltester of the church in Elbing, Gerhard Wiebe, and the Aeltester of the church in Grosswerder, Dirk Tiessen, excused themselves on the basis of their age.

The Aeltester of the church in Heubuden, Cornelius Regier, indicated that he would be willing to cast lots for this assignment with Aeltester Jacob de Veer from Danzig. De Veer was not at the meeting but explained in a letter that he did not have the skills needed for that task and that he could not stay away from his church and his business for that long.

At the same time he wrote that in his opinion Cornelius Regier, who had the reputation of being a gifted man of God, was the ideal person for that job. At first Abraham Siemens, a minister from Grossmausdorf in Grosswerder was going to accompany Regier, but he broke his foot and got very sick. This along with other complications made it necessary to have three more conferences.

The first in this last set of three conferences was held on January 14, 1794. The result was that Aeltester Cornelius Regier (1743-94) and Minister Cornelius Warkentin (1740-1809) agreed to travel to Chortitza. Cornelius Regier wrote a letter to the Aeltester in Danzig in which he expressed his feelings about this assignment.

He closed the letter with this verse: "We venture forth in God's good grace and with his guidance go. Oh may he bring us to that place, where his own holy word: Forms Zion's firm foundation, stands as its cornerstone: And brings forth

peace and unity: On earth His will be done. Oh pray, oh pray in harmony! Our gracious God implore: That Jesus Christ may reign with pow'r, now and for evermore." (Translated by Sarah Klassen)

**The Commission.**

Regier and Warkentin requested the Mennonite Churches in Prussia to include them in their congregational prayers for the duration of their assignment in Russia. All four churches contrib-



*George Trappe (died 1798). Courtesy of the Mennonite Historian, Volume XXIV, No. 4, Dec 1998, page 1.*

uted towards their travelling expenses. The Danzig city church paid 100 Taler, the Danzig rural church paid 50 Taler in Prussian currency and the other churches contributed as circumstances permitted. The churches also gave Regier and Warkentin the following letter of authority.

"We, the Aeltesten, ministers and deacons of the Christian Church in Prussia known as Flemish Mennonites wish the Aeltesten, ministers and deacons of the church in Chortitza, Russia our dear brethren in Christ, much grace and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ his Son and the living power of the Holy Spirit. We pray that love may increase and abound among you! Amen."

"After that kind greeting we must inform you that a letter written in your area on September 3, 1793 signed by 19 brethren has come into our possession. We regret to read in this letter that a spirit of disunity is disturbing the peace among you and has created much trouble. In that letter they also urgently request that we should send an experienced Aeltester to you. A short time later two men from Chortitza arrived here. They were the Aeltester-elect Johann Wiebe and Jacob von Bargent. They too implored us to send an Aeltester to the colony so that the conflicts that had developed could be resolved and that the whole church could be set in good order."

"We took note of this repeated request and after careful deliberation we are sending two experienced men to you. They are Aeltester Cornelius Regier and Minister Cornelius Warkentin. These

men responded to those requests out of Christian love. They will make the trip to Chortitza where with the help of God, the assistance of the ministers and the cooperation of the members they will try to put an end to the disputes and create peace and harmony in the church."

"We send Aeltester Regier and Minister Warkentin to you our fellow believers in Chortitza. These men have experience and a good reputation. We authorize them to look carefully for the cause of the problems, to listen to complaints and to decide what should be done to improve the situation. They shall admonish everyone to live in peace and to practice Christian love. They shall strengthen those who live an upright Christian life. They shall encourage those who have become despondent and admonish the erring ones. However those that are quarrelsome and don't want to listen to the truth, those who blaspheme and those who love and do what is wrong they will remove from the church for their own correction."

"For this task we recommend these men to the church in Russia most emphatically. Accept them as your overseers. Obey them, cooperate with them and support them so that they can accomplish everything properly. And that when their task has been done they can come home with joy and report to us what God has done through them."

"To authenticate what has been written we have signed this document in our own hand in the name of all our churches in Prussia on March 1, 1794."

"Gerhard Wiebe Aeltester in Elbing and Ellerwalde, Franz von Riesen minister, Dirk Tiessen Aeltester of the church in Tiegenhagen, Martin Hamm minister, Jacob de Veer Aeltester of the church in Danzig, Hans Momber minister."

**Delegates Depart.**

Cornelius Regier had his farewell sermon in Heubuden on Sunday, February 23, 1794. There were many tears and other evidence of the congregation's loyalty and devotion to their leader.

The two men met in Koscelitzke and embarked on their journey on March 14, 1794. They made their way across Poland and arrived in Warsaw on March 20th. They reported to the Russian Resident who received them very warmly and provided them with passports and other essential documents for the trip (Note Eighteen).

The two men continued their journey and arrived in the colony on Good Friday, April 18, 1794 (Note Nineteen).

**Letter, 1794.**

However, we will let the men speak for themselves in a letter written by Cornelius Warkentin to Dirk Tiessen in Grosswerder.

*"Chortitza, Russia  
May 10, 1794"*

"To the honourable Aeltester and his beloved co-workers in the gospel of Jesus Christ."

"We the undersigned co-servants wish you, our dear brethren, much grace and peace from God our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ our Saviour and with the help of the Holy Spirit that your and our labours might continue, that God might be glorified and that souls might be edified."

"After these hearty words of greeting we want to inform you that by God's grace we have reached our destination safely. We arrived in the village of Neuendorf in the Chortitz Colony in the evening of Good Friday, April 18, 1794."

"It was a moving sight. As soon as they realized that we had arrived they rushed out of their homes and came towards us with heavy hearts and tears in their eyes. We were moved to tears ourselves when we noticed Abraham Wiebe (Note Twenty), a blind man, in the crowds that shoved and pushed to get near our wagon. We stayed in Neuendorf for the night and continued on to the village of Chortitz where we were billeted in the home of Minister Johann Wiebe (Note Twenty-one)."

"We are still in that home. The next morning was Easter and even though my travelling companion and I were unprepared we had to preach. Both of us spoke alternately in Chortitz and in Neuendorf. On Tuesday Regier spoke in Chortitz. His text was Acts 10:36-38 and his introduction was based on Acts 10:29. Many tears were shed during all these services and particularly during the last ones."

"The purpose of our trip was announced and our letter of authority was read. We wanted to begin with our task after the Easter holidays. First we asked the two deputies, Hoeppner and Bartsch, to appear before us. When we discovered that they were willing to accept our advice we were ready to proceed. We conducted several brotherhood meetings and were delighted to see the feuding parties iron out some of their differences."

"We pointed out very forcefully how cruel and heartless their charges against David Epp were and how inappropriate names such as 'Münsterites' were that they had used to describe their opponents (Note Twenty-two)."

"The group that wrote the letter acknowledged the fact that they had done wrong and that they did not have adequate proof for some of their accusations. However, there were also signs of misdemeanours in the attitude and the behaviour of individuals in the other camp. Both groups apologized, forgave each other and made peace."

"May God grant that this peace might last!"

"Now another matter came up which gave us much work and concern. The Frisian Church in Kronsweide lost their Aeltester, Cornelius Froese, who was buried on May 8, 1794. Since we also attended the funeral services they approached us after the burial and pleaded with us not to abandon them but that we might have pity on them. Their condition is very sad."

"Two men, J.C. and H.P., have imposed themselves on the church for a long time as ministers and caused much strife. Finally the church told

them not to preach any more. Now they are like sheep without a shepherd, and we can not resist their pleading. They have not had a baptism or observed the Lord's Supper for five years."

"Now we are constantly occupied with both spiritual and material concerns. People come running up to us daily so that we seldom have an hour for ourselves. Regier has promised to serve the Frisian Church as a guest with baptism and with the Lord's Supper. On Sunday I spoke in Kronsweide on our confession of faith. May the Lord add his blessing to all that we are doing."

provide rain for the land soon the crops will be poor. The villages that are located farther upstream are already suffering from a shortage of water for their cattle. However, the Lord can provide. He has never overlooked something in His domain. They will experience His help here too. I will close now, and commit all of you to God's care."

"We remain your co-servants and brothers in Christ. Pray for us!

"Cornelius Warkentin"  
"Cornelius Regier"

#### Return Journey.

One can see from the number of baptismal candidates that the Flemish Church, where Aeltester David Epp had already baptized some young people in June 1793, must have been considerably larger than the Frisian Church.

The trip back to Prussia did not happen as indicated in the letter. Before Pentecost God called Cornelius Regier on another journey. Cornelius Warkentin wrote a letter to his wife and described what happened.

"Ekaterinoslav  
July 12, 1794

"And now, O God, how shall I describe it to you? May God give you strength to listen to this sad news.

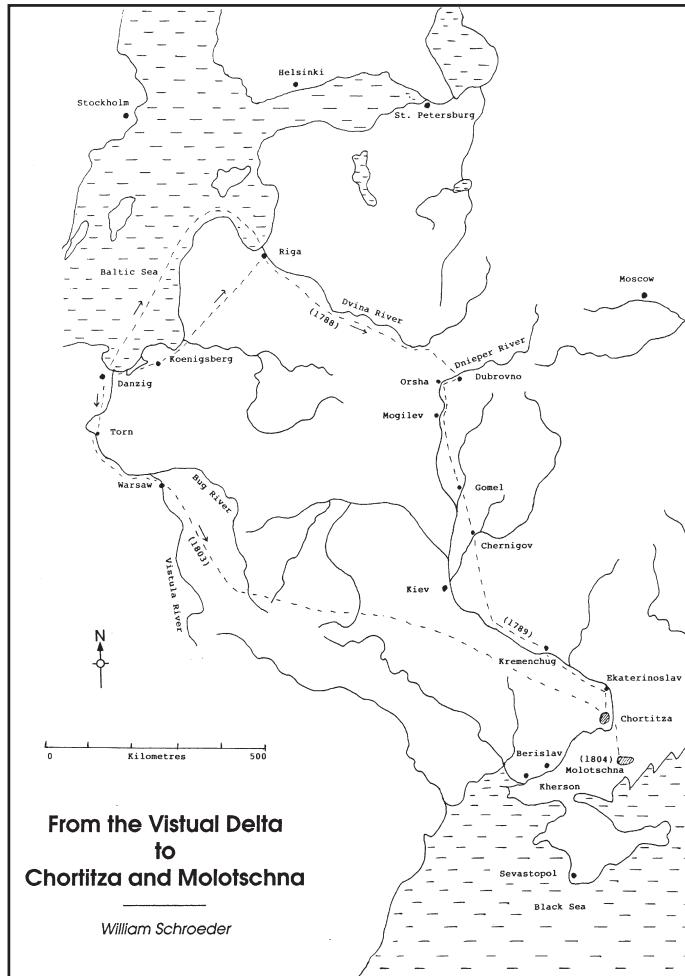
"My only, my bosom friend is no more. The true friend of people, Aeltester Cornelius Regier, is dead. We have laboured as a team with God's blessing in the local church for three weeks. He got sick during the night of May 11th."

"The following day at the request of the colony we drove to Ekaterinoslav. However, when we arrived at our destination I had to do all the transactions by myself because he was too ill. The ride back to Chortitz was very difficult for him, but true to his gentle character he was calm and at peace with God. His condition deteriorated. His dysentery worsened and in spite of all medical attention he advanced ever closer to the portals of death."

"I was frequently bedridden myself during the time of his illness. Because of his great love for me, he was more concerned about my recovery than about his own. I was seldom away from his bedside and had numerous discussions with him about the eternal love of God in Jesus Christ and about the blessed condition of the godly in life and in death. That is why he thought so much about heaven and was at peace with God. He died at eight in the evening on May 30, 1794 after twenty days of illness."

"Cornelius Regier's funeral was held in the village of Chortitz on June 3rd. Four hundred fifty-one people attended the funeral. Among those present was the director of the foreign colonies with his family and other officials" (Note Twenty-Four).

"I spoke at his funeral. My text was taken from



Map showing the two emigration routes from Danzig, Prussia (today Gdansk, Poland) to the new territories in Imperial Russia, 1788 and 1803. Map by William Schroeder, 434 Sutton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

"A union of the Flemish and Frisian Churches is not advisable at this time. There are various reasons for that which I will explain some other time. Thirteen young people from the Frisian Church and thirty-one from the Flemish Church have requested baptism. The Lord's day is not long enough to accomplish all these church activities. We frequently have church services and brotherhood meetings during the week."

"We are planning to begin our trip back to Prussia with God's blessing right after Pentecost (Note Twenty-Three)."

"There is much sickness in the colony particularly in Kronsweide. Some families are experiencing great poverty. May the Lord lead in a way that is best! It is very dry here. If the Lord does not

Romans 14:7 and 8, about the perfect happiness of the godly in life and also in death. I also conducted a short graveside service after the burial (Note Twenty-five). There were many tears. How I have suffered during the time of my friend's death and burial is known only to Him who is omniscient.

"Now I was alone and had to look after the social and spiritual concerns in both churches by myself. I cannot thank my heavenly Father enough that He blessed my efforts and that all the spiritual as well as physical aspects of my task have been accomplished."

"Now I can give you the good news that I am on my way back. My departure from the colony was very painful for my friends from both churches. It seemed that they could not adequately express their innermost feelings with tears and so they broke out in very loud weeping. A large crowd followed me for two Meilen and four wagons accompanied me for ten Meilen to Ekaterinoslav, where I will procure my return pass and with the help of God go back to Prussia."

#### Ordination.

"Warkentin out of modesty did not reveal the fact that a few days before his death Regier ordained him as Aeltester so that he could finish the work alone (Note Twenty-Six). Apparently Johann Wiebe was persuaded to accept the duties of an Aeltester and was ordained. Because from that time on he is listed as a co-Aeltester with David Epp. The minister who was removed from his office by David Epp was reinstated because his name appears again in lists of ministers.

Details about Warkentin's activities during his last few weeks in Russia and a description of his journey back to Prussia can be gleaned from a few pages of his diary (Note Twenty-Seven).

Unfortunately the portion of the diary that has survived begins only on June 15, 1794.

"On June 15th the Lord's Supper was served to 233 communicants in Chortitza. On the 19th the Lord's Supper was served in Neuendorf to 173 persons and on the 20th I delivered a preparatory sermon in the Frisian Church in Kronsweide. During the service the brethren were urgently reminded of the forthcoming election of ministers. A youth who had been quite ill when I was there earlier was baptized."

"On the 22nd the Lord's Supper was served to 107 communicants, and in the afternoon the Lord's Supper was served to four sick members in their homes. A brotherhood meeting was held in Chortitza on the 23rd. Among other items of business two men from the Frisian Church were accepted in the Flemish Church. On the 24th there was an election to the ministry in Chortitza. David Giesbrecht and Gerhard Ens were elected. After a communion service in Neuendorf, Peter Dyck who had not accepted the assignment yet, was unanimously elected to the ministry a second time. After the election two girls from the Frisian Church were accepted as members in the Flemish Church."

"On the 25th I conducted an election to the ministry in Kronsweide. Heinrich Arendt, Franz Banman and Cornelius von Riesen were called to the ministry and N. Adse was elected as dea-

con. On Sunday, June 29th, I gave my farewell address in Chortitza. The director of the colonies was present. The following week I preached two more times, once in Neuendorf and once in Schoenhorst."

"On July 8th I delivered a brief closing address after Johann Wiebe's sermon. Moving farewell scenes followed the service. On the morning of the 9th I bade farewell to the director and his wife. The farewell on the 10th from my host family and my many friends was very emotional."

"In Ekaterinoslav we had to see the Governor about some matters related to the colony. Some friends had been waiting for us for several days already, and upon their insistence I allowed myself to be persuaded to go with them to Novo-Moskovka, there to present the Word of God" (Note Twenty-Eight). I preached on Col. 3:12-14."

"On Sunday, together with Privy Councillor Lehn, I had gone to the director of the economy in order to discuss some matters pertaining to the colony with him in the presence of Johann Wiebe and David Epp."

"...[even though] most of the Hutterites were working on the fields, we were given a warm welcome."

"Thereupon we took our departure and headed in the direction of Kremenchug. I had the pleasure of travelling in the company of two men from the colony, David Epp and Gerhard Wilms."

"We arrived safely in Kremenchug and both men decided to accompany me up to Vishenka. Thus in the name of God we departed from Kremenchug and headed in the direction of Vichantz."

"After a few days we arrived in the German settlement which had been founded twenty-eight years ago. Vichantz consists of six villages, four Lutheran and two Catholic. We visited the Lutheran pastor in the morning. I had a long discussion with him. After I had coffee with him and visited his church I politely bade him farewell and went to visit Innocentius Walter, the Catholic priest. He was born in Prague and is a very upright man. The priest welcomed me with great courtesy and showed me his church and its utensils."

"When I took my leave from him after a lengthy discussion, he walked with me to my carriage and wished me much success on my journey. As we parted we were both convinced that we would meet again in that place of eternal bliss. In the afternoon, accompanied by Brother Elias, we drove to Baturin and arrived in Vishenka at noon on Saturday, July 26, 1794."

"Even though it was harvest time and most of the Hutterites were working on the fields, we were given a warm welcome. In the evening we attended a prayer meeting which they have every day at that time. On Sunday morning they asked me to preach."

"I based my sermon on Luke 13:23-24 concerning the necessity of a true conversion and how everyone must attain such a new birth. The

audience was very attentive."

"In the afternoon the countess came to see us. I talked with her and upon her request I had to promise to visit her the next day. We went there on Monday and were received politely by her. She showed us the interesting aspects of Rumiantsev's castle as well as the rare and expensive artifacts in the summer palace where the Empress (Catherine II, 1729-96) resides when she travels in the area."

"In the evening at the request of the congregation, I conducted the prayer meeting. I spoke on Romans 12:1-2 regarding the reasonable service of the Christian and how it should be right before God and rendered in spirit and in truth. A great stillness prevailed during the service and later I noticed that the brothers and sisters had been deeply moved."

"We took our leave from the Hutterites on Tuesday morning after having been with them for three days. Here too the farewell became very emotional especially for Aeltester David Epp and Gerhard Wilms who had to return to the Chortitza Colony. Johannes Waldner, pastor of the Hutterite Church in Vishenka and another man accompanied me for a distance of twelve Meilen."

"Because of the unrest in Poland I travelled through Vohilev, Polatzk on the Duna River, Duenburg and arrived safely in Riga on Thursday, August 21, 1794." "I inquired of the Governor regarding my further travels through Kurland to Memel. Here I found four families that wanted to move to Russia. They were glad to see me and made me preach to them in a large room in their hotel where people from various religious backgrounds attended. They all expressed their satisfaction to me, and a rich merchant invited me to have dinner with his family in his garden."

"A day later the Mayor and his secretary of commerce, von Brettschneider, came to my lodging and asked me to step into his beautiful coach and go with him to his home so that he and his family could visit with me. I accepted his invitation and we took a long detour so that I could see the magnificent fortifications of the city."

"When we arrived at his luxurious house, his wife welcomed us warmly and invited us for coffee. We discussed a wide range of topics, and in the evening he had his carriage take me back to my hotel."

"On Monday the 25th I went to see His Excellency, the Governor again. He was polite and promised to do everything possible to expedite my return journey. He invited me to a banquet and I had to promise to come at noon the next day." "On the 26th I made my way to the Governor's palace where I dined with fifteen other people. Many of the guests were of very high rank, among them was His Excellency von Meindorf, commander of the fortress. During the meal we discussed many topics and I was asked to tell them about the purpose of my trip and experiences I had along the way."

"After that visit I went to see the Governor almost daily, sometimes because of concerns regarding the colony and at times because of matters related to the emigrants who had just arrived. Finally all my business in Riga was accomplished. Upon the advice of the Governor in Riga I wrote a letter to Count von Zupov, the supervisor of the

foreign colonies and a letter to the Queen herself. Because of unrest in Kurland I decided to go to Memel by ship. The Governor provided me with a very nice vessel. After I had bade farewell to the Governor and the Commander, I boarded the ship in the name of God. Among the many people who had come to wish me a good voyage were two evangelical ministers, Senior Pastor Bernhard and Pastor Bergmann."

### Return Home.

Warkentin sailed from the port of Dunamunde on September 15th and arrived safely in Memel on October 9th. The love and respect he experienced during his receptions in the Prussian churches equalled the farewell he had been given in Chortitzia. After spending a few days visiting the churches in Lithuania, Konigsberg and Elbing he arrived at his home in Rosenort on Sunday, October 19, 1794. He closes his diary with the following words:

"Thank God for the grace he has shown me on this journey. I am not worthy of the mercy and faithfulness God has bestowed on me! Therefore, dear God, accept the gratitude of your servant which I bring to you in the name of Jesus.

"Thanks to you, Father of life's journey, My prayers to you were not in vain. You guarded me, you heard my yearning; In love you brought me home again. You are my refuge and my shield, All joy and praise to you I'll yield."

"Now with the loved ones I hold dear: In gratitude I raise my voice; To praise your goodness. Without fear: For evermore I will rejoice. My goal was achieved, O God, through thee.

You gave me joy, protected me. Eternal God on high I praise you: For bounty given full and free. And may my feeble words now please you, My thanks for having guided me. I trust you, Lord, for future days: And pray for help in all my ways. (Translated by Sarah Klassen)

### Cornelius Warkentin.

Cornelius Warkentin served his church in Rosenort as minister since 1775 and as co-Aeltester since 1794. He believed that the future of the Mennonite Church was not in Prussia but in Russia and promoted the emigration that led to the founding of the Molotschna Colony in 1803-4.

On May 4, 1804 the Russian Consul in Danzig, L. von Trefurt, presented Warkentin with a large gold medal struck in his honour. The medallion was a gift from Tsar Alexander I (1777-1825) in recognition of Warkentin's services to the Mennonite Church in Russia.

On one side of the medal was the Tsar's name, titles and a portrait in raised relief (Twenty-Nine). The other side had a picture of a sheaf of wheat and the following inscription; 'For that which is profitable. To Warkentin, the Aeltester of the Mennonites.'"

### Conclusion.

Cornelius Warkentin died on January 10, 1809 at the age of 68. Since that time the churches in Russia have grown and are thriving. They are still reaping the benefits from the labours of one Cornelius Regier and Cornelius Warkentin. May we never lack men who like Regier and Warkentin

are prepared to sacrifice their own comforts for the benefit of the entire church and who are capable of maintaining and when necessary reestablishing peace and order in the church.

### Endnotes:

Note One: Visheska is located on the west bank of the Desna River about 110 kilometres northeast of Kiev. The Hutterites settled there in 1770.

Note Two: This was the invitation which Gregory Potemkin had sent with George Trappe.

Note Three: Jacob Hoeppner 1748 - 1826 and Johann Bartsch 1757 - 1821 returned to Danzig on November 10, 1787 after an absence of one year and eleven days.

Note Four: The gifts were a fur cap, a fur coat and a box of Russian candles.

Note Five: The invitation was printed in *Mennonite Life*, April 1951 page 37.

Note Six: Jacob Wilms and Arend Fast.

Note Seven: The letter written in Amsterdam on May 15, 1788 is published in P. M. Friesen's, *Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia*, page 64.

Note Eight: The Flemish, as their name indicates, originated in Flanders. They were persecuted and fled to Friesland where they formed their own congregations. They had less influence from Menno Simons. Their church structure was less rigid. The congregation made decisions about church matters. They made less use of the ban. The Frisians originated in Friesland where Menno Simons lived. They were stricter in church discipline and made frequent use of the ban. The Aeltesten ruled the church. In Danzig the two groups joined in 1808.

Note Nine: A werder is an island in a delta.

Note Ten: David Epp in *Die Chortitzer Colonie* explains that none of the prospective migrants qualified for ordination. One reason for that may have been the fact that none of them owned property.

Note Eleven: Politically the area was in turmoil. Austria, Russia and Prussia partitioned Poland in 1772, 1793 and 1795. There were no roads and bridges on the 2000 kilometre route from Danzig to Chortitzia via Riga.

Note Twelve: One of the first groups left from Bohnssach, a village near Danzig on Easter Sunday, March 22, 1788. The group was under the leadership of Jacob Hoeppner.

Note Thirteen: There were twelve couples waiting to be married. First they had no minister who could perform the wedding, and when they finally got a minister they discovered that they had no wedding sermon.

Note Fourteen: Genealogists such as Henry Schapansky, New Westminister, B.C., and Margaret Kroeker, Mennonite Genealogy, Winnipeg, are now agreed that David Epp (1750-1802) was NOT a nephew of Aeltester Peter Epp (1725-89) as once believed. For more genealogical information on the Epp family see *Pioneers and Pilgrims* by Delbert Plett, pages 299-328.

Note Fifteen: Neunhuben is located seven kilometres southeast of Danzig and two kilometres south of Nassenhuben. Aeltester Peter Epp was the direct ancestor of many residents of the City of Steinbach, Manitoba, through his great-grandson Jakob M. Barkman (1824-75), the spiritual leader of the pioneer community.

Note Sixteen: Jacob de Veer had been elected as minister in 1774. He served as Aeltester from 1790-1804. He died in 1807.

Note Seventeen: Cornelius Froese was elected as minister in 1790 and as Aeltester in 1792.

Note Eighteen: Political conditions were such that they could take a much shorter route than the migrants were forced to take. They followed the water shed from Danzig to Chortitzia.

Note Nineteen: All the dates in this document are according to the Gregorian calendar. Subtract 11 days to get the corresponding Julian date.

Note Twenty: Abraham Wiebe was a blind widower with five children.

Note Twenty-One: Johann Wiebe (1766-1823) was the nephew of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1725-96) in Elbing. In 1794 Wiebe's family consisted of himself, his wife Agatha (aged 26), and their two year old daughter Anna. He was an ancestor of the Alt-Bergfeld, E.R., Wiebes.

Note Twenty-Two: Munsterites were a group of militant anabaptists who in 1529 wanted to usher in the New Kingdom by force.

Note Twenty-Three: Pentecost is seven weeks after Easter. Therefore they intend to begin their journey home during the week of June 8th.

Note Twenty-Four: Baron Johann von Brackel.

Note Twenty-five: In 1888 David Epp writes, "To this day a neat grave stone marks the site of the last resting place of this man."

Note Twenty-Six: He also prepared and signed a document of reconciliation. The date on that document is June 27, 1794. See David Epp, *Die Chortitzer Colonie*, page 91.

Note Twenty-Seven: Van der Smissen found Warkentin's diary after the first two instalments had been printed. The diary was published in the *Mennonitisch Rundschau*, November 4, 1897. P.M. Friesen used that article in his *Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia*, pages 160 - 165.

Note Twenty-Eight: Novo Moskovka is located twenty kilometres northeast of Ekaterinoslav.

Twenty-Nine: Warkentin's daughter, Mrs Dietrich Penner in Elbing inherited the medal in 1809. After her death his nephews gained custody of it. The Mennonite Churches in Heubuden, Rosenort, Ladekopp, Furstenwerder, Tiegenhagen and Ellerwald purchased the medal from Cornelius Warkentin's nephews on March 24, 1834 for 150 Taler. There is a picture of the medallion in "Mennonitische Blatter," November 1934, pages 93 - 95.

### About the author:

The author, Johannes van der Smissen (1808-79) was born in Altona-Hamburg. He served as pastor of the Mennonite Gemeinde in Danzig and as assistant editor of the *Mennonitische Blätter*. The article "Zur Geschichte der ersten Gemeindegliederung in den Mennoniten Colonien Sud-Russlands," by Candidat Johannes van der Smissen was published in the March, May and July 1856 issues of the *Mennonitische Blätter*. The material was translated and published by William Schroder, 434 Sutton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, in 1992, in a limited quantity private edition. We are pleased to have his permission to republish this valuable account of the emigration and first Mennonite settlements in Imperial Russia.

# The Krahn Letters 1870 to 1891

"The Krahn Letters" as collected by Agnes Ketler, Box 2474, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

## Introduction, by Agnes Ketler.

About 20 years ago I borrowed six letters from my aunt Agatha Ketler (1903-87). My aunt was an avid story teller, and enjoyed relating of the history of her family back in Russia. By this time my aunt had retired to Winnipeg. I was working in the City and visited them often. During these visits she told me stories of their experiences.

In actual fact, Agatha, was not even directly related to me, she had married my uncle Jakob Ketler (1901-68), my Father's younger brother. They had married in 1920. He was 19 and she was 17 years old. They lived in the village of Grünfeld, Schlachtin-Baratov, some 140 kilometres west of the Chortitza Colony on the Dneiper River. They came to Canada over Christmas in 1923. After one season in southern Saskatchewan they settled in Hochfeld, near Winkler, Manitoba.

Agatha had in her possession a number of letters which she had inherited from her mother, Maria Peter Klassen (b. 1874), Mrs. Franz Janzen. Her husband was a miller, and the family lived in various places including Grünfeld, Schlachtin-Baratov and Krivoy-Rog where he found work. Maria was the daughter of Agatha Krahn (1850-1905) and Peter Klassen (1849-91).

It was Agatha Krahn Klassen and her siblings and parents who wrote these delightful letters. From the stories my aunt had told me, I knew more-or-less who all these people were. But I was curious how they all fit together and so I started to write down information like birth and death dates, places of death, etc. I compiled the information into a family chart of the Krahn family, and the family of Agatha's maternal grandparents, the Peter Dyck family.

After the death of my uncle Heinrich Ketler, my aunt married for the second time to Johann J. Peters

As my aunt was getting older and was suffering from Alzheimers I was concerned that these precious letters might go lost. Accordingly I decided to borrow the letters and carefully photocopied them, returning the orginals to my aunt after I had done so. As I had feared, the originals did in fact go lost shortly thereafter.

## The Krahn Family.

Bernhard Krahn (1813-91) married Gertruda Dyck (1821-97) on November 9, 1839, in Neuenburg, Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia. Bernhard was the son of Gerhard Krahn and Agatha Friesen.

Gertruda was the daughter of Peter Dyck (1792-1872) and Gertruda Wall (1802-58). Peter was the son of another Peter Dyck who had emigrated from Goldberg, near Elbing in Prussia, to the village of Neuendorf, Imperial Russia. He married the widow Justina Giesbrecht Boschman and settled in Neuenburg. The funeral letter, Document Four, was written to invite relatives and friends to his funeral ("Abdankung").

Bernhard and Gertruda Krahn made their home in Neuenburg, Old Colony, where all nine of their



Margaretha Krahn Kehler Wiebe (1844-1909), Eigenfeld, E. R., Manitoba, photo courtesy of grandson George F. Kehler, Steinbach, Manitoba.



Abraham Wiebe (1848-1910), second husband of Margaretha Krahn. Wiebe was a well-to-do farmer owning up to six quarters of land in his day.

children were born. Gertruda Dyck Krahn was the author of Document One, the letter of September 23, 1870. Bernhard Krahn was an Anwohner, having no land of his own. He made his living as a miller. Consequently the children had to go to various places at quite a young age to work out.

The siblings and the sisters in particular were very close and wrote frequently to each other. I recall my aunt Agatha telling me that the sisters would sometimes have to walk at night to the villages where they were working, and that they were scared of the wolves.

## The Children.

Son Peter Krahn (1840-1908) married Katharina Dyck (b. 1842). The couple had eight children, four died in infancy.

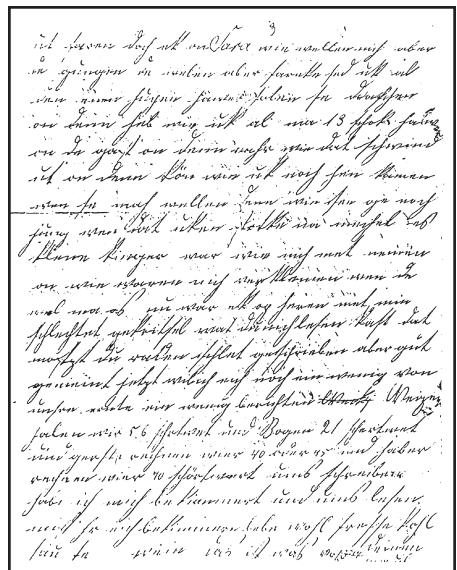
Daughter Agatha Krahn, died in infancy.

In August, 1870, daughter Margaretha Krahn (1844-1909) married the widower Peter Kehler (1836-76), of Schönfeld in the Bergthal Colony, Imperial Russia. In 1874 the family emigrated to America, Manitoba, where they settled in Blumengard, E.R.. After Peter's death in 1876 Margaretha married again to Abraham Wiebe (1848-1910), Eigenfeld, E.R. It is possible Margaretha Krahn Kehler was the author of Document One. She was certainly the writer of Document Three and together with her second husband Abraham Wiebe, the author of Document Five.

Daughter Katharina Krahn (b. 1847) married Johann Janzen. The family lived in Grünfeld, Barao Schlachtin-Baratov, Johann operated one of the windmills in Grünfeld. They had five chil-

dren. Katharina Krahn Janzen was the author of Document Six.

Daughter Agatha Krahn (1850-1905) married Peter Klassen (1849-91). They lived in Nickolayev. They had six children. Their daughter Maria Klassen (b. 1874) married Franz Janzen (b. 1875). Their daughter Agatha inherited her mother's let-



Sample of Low German/Plaut Dietsch writing of Margaretha Krahn Kehler Wiebe from the unsigned letter of September 3, 1870. Courtesy of Agnes Ketler, Steinbach, Manitoba.

ters and later allowed her step-niece Agatha Ketler to photocopy them, thereby preserving their precious contents for posterity.

Daughter Sarah Krahn died in infancy.

Helena Krahn came to Canada, date unknown.

Bernhard (b. 1859) married Anna Janzen. Moved to Neu-York, Bachment.

Gerhard Krahn (1864-1919) married Katharina Enns (1877-1930). They lived in Neu-Schonwiese, Neu-York, Ignatyev settlement, Bachmut, north of Bergthal on the rail line north. They had ten children. They experienced terrible poverty.

### Document One

Please pass [this letter] on to Agatha Krahn on  
Janzen's land.  
Heuboden, [Berghthal]  
September 23, 1870

Beloved niece;

Since such an excellant opportunity presently proffers itself, I cannot omit but to write you a few lines. I do not know much news to write other than that we are quite well, except the aged mother who has a servere case of gout in one leg. She has a hard time walking, and we do not have my brother Gerhard at home, he is at Kornelius Penners. He has to help there with the driving out [a primitive method of threshing].

And Sarah we also do not have at home, she has already been at Bernhard Wiebes for five and [a]-half weeks, and is supposed to remain there until Michael. For we have a Russian servant who will be here until then, after which he has completed his service. At that time Sarah will come back home.

If Justche had already been at home I would have had an interest in coming along with Kaelers, if they would have taken me along. But no, it is not possible.

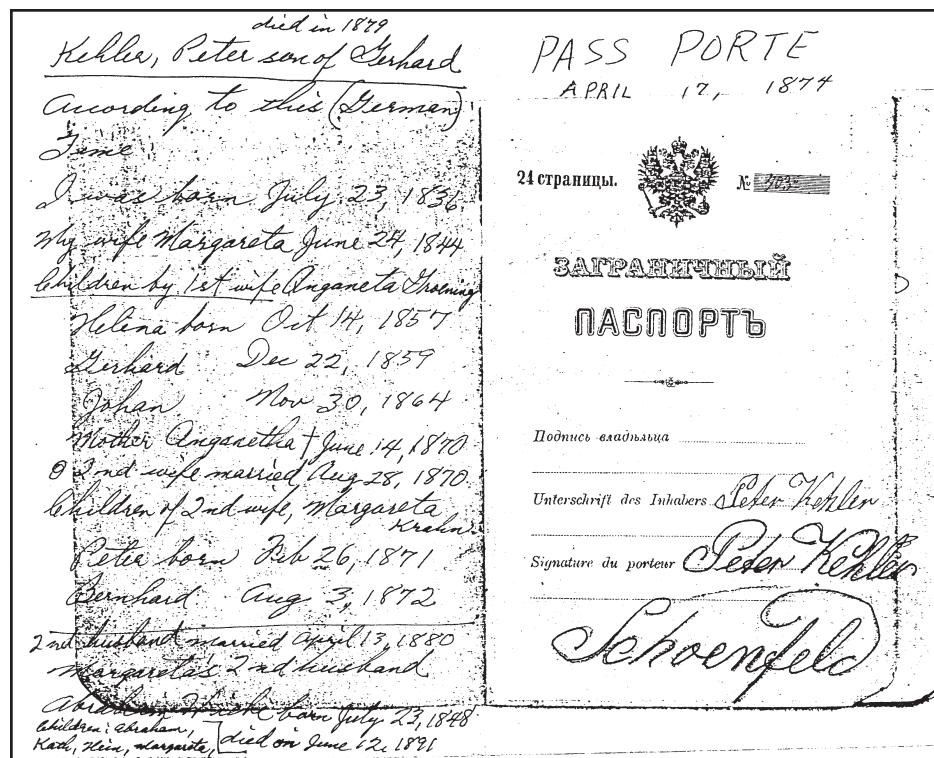
Mother is not well, but Sarah and I have a great desire to come there. However, Peter and the father, they have no desire and so I do not know if it will come to pass.

[Letter switches to Low German]

Geliebte nichte, wenn ek recht die warheit sagen sal denn sen ek met die nicht to fred, denn du segst die denkst nock an ons aber wir haben die al gans vergeten denn wenn wir nich mehr an yu dachten as ye an ons denn kannd wie ons noch nich. Denn wenn ju dat hier her faren so ernst wer as ons dat dort him faren denn wer yie al lang en mahl hier gewest, aber yie reknens ons nich so wehl dat yi yu den reis maken.

Nun doch du darfst nicht bese (boese) sein. Es ist ja ales zum besten denn wenn dat meglich es denn kam wie disen hafst noch hen, aber ek weth nich af ek on Sara so vehr waren beden Kenen dat Fareke ons wad sat vatig (wagon) gewen on dat Peter met ons hen fart, denn wenn die am so wied Krien denn kam wie noch henn, on dat ward so lath as dat wart. Noch hab wie dat getregt (grain) nicht aler ut den stroh. Noch got de helft hawer (oats) uk noch ale gast (gerste). On wie welen ales ut faren.

Doch eck on Sara. We wellen nich, aber de Junge de welen. Aber Fareke (vater) sed uk al den enen Kupen hawer (Oats) selen se draschen on denn heb wie uk al ma 13 schok hawer (oats) on de garst (rye). On denn fahr wie dat schwind ut,



Copy of Passport of Peter Kehler (1836-76) first husband of Margaretha Krahn. The family lived in Schönfeld, Berghthal Colony, Imperial Russia, emigrating to Canada in 1874. They settled in Blumengard, E.R., Manitoba, Canada. The Peter Gerhard Kehler Passport was found by John "Butcher" Kehler while breaking down the old farm house in the 1960s. Copy of Passport courtesy of Agnes Ketler, Steinbach, Manitoba.

on denn Kon wie uk nock hen kommen, wen se noch wellen. Denn wie sen ye noch jung wen dat uk en Potke no Meihel (Michael) es. Klenen kinger (children) war wie nich met nemen on wie waren nich verklemen (get chilled) when de wel (will) ma as.

Nu war ek upheren met mi schlechtet gekritsel. Wat du nich lesen kanst dat motzt du roden. Schlet geschrieben aber gut gemint. Jetzt will ich noch ein wenig von unsre ernte ein wenig herichten. Wiezen haben wir 56 schrtwet, und Rogen 21 schrtwet, und Gerste rechnen wier 40 ader 45 schrewet, und Haber (Hafer) rechnen wier 70 schörtwart.

Uns schriehen hab ich nich begimmert und ums lesen mist ihr eich bekimmern. Leke wohl, fresse Kohl, saufe Wein, das ist was vor deimem mo[\_\_\_].

[English Translation]

Beloved niece, if I truly shall speak the truth, then I am not really satisfied with you. You say, that you still think of us but that we have already completely forgotten about you.

But if we do not think any more about you than you do of us, then we do not even know you yet. For if the driving here frightened you as much as it does us to drive there, then you would have been here long ago already. But you do not appreciate us enough that you would undertake the journey. Now, you certainly do not need to be angry. For everything is for the best.

If things work out then we will come there yet this fall. But I do not know whether Sara and I will be able to plead enough that dear Father (Fareche)

will give us the vehicle, and that Peter will drive there with us. For if we can persuade him then we will come there, even if it gets as late as it does.

We still do not have all the grain out of the straw. [There remains] a good half of the oats as well as all the barley, and we want to drive it all out [with the threshing stone]. Indeed, I and Sara. We do not want to but the boys do. But dear Father, he already said, the one stack of oats, they should thresh.

This would leave only 13 stacks (Schok) of oats and the barley. And then we will quickly drive it out, and then we can also come there yet, if you still wish. For we are still young, even if it is a Potke (few days?) after Michael.

We will not take along small children and we will not get chilled. Where there's a will there's a way.

Now I will quit with my miserable scribbling. You can scratch what you cannot read. Poorly written but meant well.

Now I will report a little about our harvest. Wheat we have 65 schrwet and rye 21 schrwet,

Any reader who has additional information about the families of the Krahn siblings is asked to contact the editor. We would be particularly interested to hear from anyone who might have photographs and/or other writings by these individuals.

and barley we expect 40 or 45 schrwet, and oats we expect 70 schörtwart.

I have looked after our writing, but regarding the reading that is your problem. To you health-gobble cabbage and Guzzle wine, that is something for your stomach.

[Editor's Note: The letter of 1870 bears no signature. It may well have been written by Margaretha Krahn Kehler, as she had married Peter Kehler September 10, 1870, only two weeks prior to the date of the letter. Agnes Ketler had concluded that it was Margaretha's mother Gertrude Dyck Krahn, born in Neuenberg, Chortitz Colony, August 29, 1821, who authored this letter. The letter, though is clearly postmarked "Heuboden" and I am not aware of any other village of that name in existence in 1870 other than the Kleine Gemeinde village of Heuboden in Borosenko, which was obviously not its place of origin. It is confusing though that Peter Kehler lived in Schönfeld not Heuboden? The names referred to in the letter could all be members of Peter's family, except for the name "Gesht", which I assumed would refer to Justina, but Peter had no sister by that name?]

## Document Two

Please pass on to Agatha Krahn in Schönweise,  
Kronthal,  
February, 1871

Beloved sister:

You write us that we have already forgotten you, but we think that [it is] you that has already forgotton us. You have not sent any letter along for us, but we thank-you many times that you did not send any, as Heinrich and Wilhelm had already talked [between themselves] that they would quickly break it open and read it before they gave it to us, since ours [letter] which we have written you, they broke [the seal open] and read it.

Therefore we herewith inform you that you should not give any letter along with them that you do not wish to be read by them. Perhaps there is also reason that they read it as our Pruzak had informed them that there was something about Wilhelm in the letter. This was the reason that they were so curious and now they are so enthusiastic about the letter, and now they want to break every letter.

If you do not know who is referred to, [as] "Pruzak", I will tell you in German, [it is] our cook Katharina Stephen.

But we are now planning to send the letter along with Scholcshen who will not break it [the seal]. And you, should gladly seek for another [letter carrier] if you have not already done so. For this one you will certainly not receive, but he still has the memories of you, the beloved "Rings" he still holds in honour.

Otherwise I do not know too much news, other than that we are all quite well and that we now wish to make ourselves jackets. If you wish to know what kind of a pattern (zieg) we are using, then I will tell you, Komlesz.

I have had to be very fearful that the boys would come, but so far they have have not. The clock is eight, now it is time to quit.

Receive a heartfelt greeting from your sisters who love you dearly.

"Katharina and Anganetha Janzen" in Kronthal.

That we are in the month of February, but the exact date we do not know, I guess we forgot. We also bid for you to write us back if you can or want to. 1871.

## Document Three

To Agatha Krahn, Schoenwiese,  
at Gerhard Bocks;

Beloved Sister:

Since opportunity presently avails itself, I can-

### Editor's Note:

The Krahn letters dating from 1870 to 1891 are among the oldest writings by women in the Chortitz/Old Colony tradition. Not only do these letters prove beyond a doubt that women within conservative Mennonite culture were literate and articulate, they also demonstrate that Low German/Plaut-dietsch was always a written language. The preservation of these letters is quite a miracle given that it has often been stated that Low German was not used as a written language among the Mennonites.

These letters also provide a very evocative insight into the heart of Mennonite culture, a culture where those who worked as servants and maids enjoyed a happy life, teasing and pleasuring each other with their wit and humour. One senses in the letters the happy intimacy of siblings, and parents and children who were genuinely close to each other and loved each other.

The letters also provide an example of the close relationship between the residents of the Chortitz Colony and those in the Bergthal daughter colony. When Peter Kehler's first wife died in 1870, he opted to return to the Old Colony to find another bride. In the alternative it may be even more likely that Margaretha Krahn was working in the Bergthal Colony were she met and married the widower Peter Kehler.

For information on the family of Margaretha Krahn and Abraham Wiebe, see Peter D. Wiebe article in *Preservings*, No. 5, pages 6-7.

### Sources:

- Henry Schapansky, "Kehler/Kaehler Family Origins," in *Preservings*, No. 10, Part One, page 66.
- Randy Kehler, *Kehler 1808-1997* (Steinbach, 1997), 107 pages.
- Randy Kehler, "Peter Kehler (1836-76), Blumengard," *Preservings*, No. 9, Part Two, pages 30-31.
- Peter D. Wiebe, "The Wiebes of Eigenfeld," *Preservings*, No. 5, page 6.

not omit to write a few lines to you. I do not know much news to write, other than that we are still quite well, but our Johann has had sore eyes for some time, already since the time that the parents were at our place. And in the one eye, he is also presently still unable to see.

I had also written to you to purchase a bundle ["fell"] of wool. If you already have it, please send same along with our school teacher Knelsen. I will also send you a [some] fruit. You can take something from it also, and if Helena is in the City then also give her some of it, and bring the remainder to the parents.

We will not be able to come there this year as we still have much work with the grain [harvest]. But we will receive only little grain this year to work through [thresh], it will give much wheat-one for thirty, barley perhaps twenty, and of rye we have nine loads, and one to eight. We have already threshed out a little of it. But do please write us a little how it is with the grain at the parents.

Our son Peter is not very big but quite thick.

Many greetings to our parents and siblings, good night. "Margaretha Kehler" August 11, 1871. We have both written during the night.

## Document Four

Funeral Letter (*Begrabnis Brief*)  
Blumenfeld,  
February 22, 1872

Worthy treasured friends,

In accordance with the unfathomable edicts and will of God, after severe suffering, the hour of redemption of our beloved Father [Peter Dyck] has struck at three o'clock in the afternoon, today, Tuesday, the 22nd of February, after a serious five days sickness, and has taken him from this burden-filled world, and as we trust, has transplanted him into the kingdom of eternal peace.

The time of his mortal journey has been 75 years, six months.

And so also here, the Lord has struck a great wound, but we cannot do otherwise but to dispose ourselves thereto, as the Lord Jesus teaches us to pray, "Lord, thy will be done."

And since there is no better place for the beloved remains then to give them over unto the refuge of the earth, we therefore send forth our invitation to all our friends herein named, that they might appear in our house of grief, this forthcoming Sunday, on the 27th of this month, at 10 o'clock in the forenoon, in order that together with us, they might pay their last respects to the beloved remains, and to accompany them to the rest of the grave, and for which purpose the bereaved children in sympathy will likewise appear.

"Johann and Helena Harder" Blumenfeld, the 22nd of February, 1872.

Our beloved friends will [we trust] be glad to pass on this letter to each other, as the names appear on the reverse side--Neuenberg, Peter Harder; Schönwiese, Peter Dyck, Klas Dyck, Bernhard Krahn.

I will greet you from our Chutor [estate] from all [of us]. I remain you true brother unto the death. "Gerhard Krahn" Felsenthal, November 14, 1888

## Document Five

Written by Margareta's 2<sup>nd</sup> husband

Abraham Wiebe.

Eigenfeld Dec 10, 1888

Dear Parents, Siblings and In-Laws:

Since we have not had any letters from you except from the two brothers, Bernhard and Gerhard Krahn, we will take the advice given to us by Brother-in-law Klassen. Even if we don't write to each one of you separately, at least write to your old parents. We owe them that.

Now dear parents, brothers and sisters and in-laws, Brother Bernhard I will come to you first. We do not want to scold or say that your letter was not welcome or that it was not interesting. My wife does not want to write, she is too busy with the laundry. But these are not my excuses. Oh, no!

I will tell you, Brother-in-law. When you wrote, you did not mention one word about the parents and you sent no greeting from them either to her.

Now I will tell you. When I brought your letter from the Post Office she took the letter happily and read. Then she read it a second time and then laid it aside without saying a word.

So I asked her, "You seem so sad. What's in the letter?"

She answered me in tears, "He has come from our parents and they haven't even sent a greeting!"

That evening she read the letter again. Then she laid it down and repeated, "No greeting from Mother and Father."

Dear Brother-in-law. I will tell you a little about how to write to your sister. Write the way your brother Gerhard writes. He tells her all about how his dear mother (Mutterchen) scrubs the floors and cleans the doors. Then her heart is so full of joy that she tells stories about her father in Neuenberg. It is wonderful to hear and she is filled with happiness.

Now I will write about what the children Abram and Katherina are memorizing in school.

Dies ist der Tag der fröhlichkeit

Drum lasset uns Gott Loben.

Er kennet unsre seligkeit

Durch Seine Macht von oben

Die Neu-gebohrne Liebes Frucht

So, etc. (I can't read this part A.K.)

Now I want to tell you about Johan Krahn from Neuenberg. About their daughter Katherina in America. We heard that she is married to a Jacob Hepner. We hear that he has not been very good to her. We have heard that one of his children has died at his hands. Her ghost has come to him when he lay dying and told him that he would not get to Heaven where she is but we may have heard it wrong. We live 100 miles from where they live.

I have to tell you about our health and that thank God we are well except for a little bit of coughing. My father is well too. We did not harvest very much grain on this side of the Red River. Not as much as last year. But the price was so much higher that we got more than last year.

Now it is Janzen's turn. Well, Sister-in-law, you will be surprised that we now have more than one rooster. It will be about 7 years since I wrote



Agatha (Franz H.) Janzen (1903-87) and her first husband Jakob Heinrich Ketler (1901-69). They came to Canada from Grünfeld, Schlachting-Baratov, over Christman, 1923. Agatha had inherited the Krahn letters from her mother Maria Klassen Janzen. Photo courtesy of Agnes Ketler, Steinbach, Manitoba.

that we had 10 hens but no roosters. And you wrote back that if it weren't so very far you could have one from us. We were very happy to hear that. I could see the love in your words. I can't believe that it has cooled so quickly.

[Margareta takes pen and paper to continue the letter.]

Yes, sister, when I and Agatha worked in Chortitz and you worked in Kronstal, we all three walked home on foot. I remember clearly how the angry dogs attacked us. We were in great danger then, we three.

But now the dogs won't attack us all three together any more.

I remember when Peter [first husband?] worked in the District Office and accused us of not writing. Perhaps I should take you by the collar too (ankrangen). But because I do not have time to write perhaps you do not have time either. Dear brother, Peter am I right? My husband says you don't write because he once wrote to you that the Chortitzer are too proud to write. He wrote that to you, because I said it when he wondered why his brother-in-law never writes to him.

So he said "I'll tell him that. I'll hang the bundle (pingel) on him."

And now he doesn't write at all anymore. But if you want to, go ahead and write. The fault is all mine.

About Katharina Krahn, we didn't tell you everything. Someone came courting and she told him that she was not available yet and she told him this sad story about her husband Jacob Hepner, beating her little daughter to death and about him being haunted by her ghost when he lay dying. Because her years with her husband had been so hard she was in no hurry to marry again.

I will close now. My writing is poor but it is well meant. I say goodbye. Good Night! The clock is already, eleven. Everyone has gone to rest.

Greetings (Seit gegrest) from your loving children and grandchildren.

"Abraham and Margaretha Wiebe"

Brother Gerhard Krahn in Russian sends the letter to others so they can read it too.

(Viel Geliebte Freunde) Dearly beloved friends:

We received this letter from America on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January, 1889. I hope it won't annoy you if I sent it on so you can give it to our brothers and sister. I have made a copy for you. I will bring it to Chortitz tomorrow and sent it on from there to Johann Janzen with brother-in-law Scharz [?]. We are well and hope you are too. Greetings brother until death (Treu Liebende Bruder bis in den Todt) Good night! Be Well!

Felsental (Fölsentahl), the 21<sup>st</sup> January, 1889 "Gerhard Krahn"

## Document Six

Grunfeld, July 7, 1891

[Katherine writes to her sister  
Margareta in Canada.]

Dear Sister and Brother-in-law.

We received your letter, dear sister. I read that your husband is not well. That is hard for you, an even harder cross to bear than if one of your children needed help.

But dear sister, don't despair! Jesus disciplines those whom He loves. Try to find comfort in that.

Oh Sister! Why do we have to live so far apart from each other? We have become so scattered, we can't go to each other.

We went to the Chutor to visit the Parents, Father was very weak with hepatitis and diarrhoea. Our little Mother (Mutterchen) was very weak too. She can't eat or sleep. The food doesn't taste good. She gets so tired during the day she is glad when night comes but then she is glad when night has turned to day again. Yes, Sister, it is sad. What will happen when the time comes where they will need to be cared for in bed? Gerhard says he doesn't know how we'll manage with Mother so dissatisfied. Mother says she talks to him about getting ready. Mother wants him to be perfect to go the place where he will rest forever.

Brother Bernhard is planning to move. The place where he wants to go doesn't grow any grain (New York, Ignatiwo Settlement, north of Berghthal). The people there say they don't get enough for next year's seed. Peter Krahn and I told Bernhard to sell the land he bought in that settlement and stay.

Dear Sister, you ask how our crop was. It turned out quite well. We are busy harvesting the fruit. The children are bringing in the rye. But only five miles from here the farmers will harvest very little.

Dear Sister, there are people here, Peter Duecks who are getting ready to go to America in August. Mrs. Dueck has a brother there named Klaas Peters. They live only 20 miles from you (Margaretha and Abraham Wiebe) and he knows our brother-in-law quite well. If we didn't live so far apart so we could walk to visit each other and we could decide on a gift to send you. Now I must end my writing. Many greetings from us. I remain your sister unto death!

"Johann and Katharina Janzen"

Dear niece Maria and Agatha Klassen. I must tell you that we still have a lot of fruit in the garden. The cherries are ripe and we still have gooseberries. We keep hoping you will be coming over, but so far we have waited in vain.

"Gertrude Janzen"

## "Poor and Simple?"

**"Poor and Simple?": The Economic Background of the 1874 Russian Mennonite Emigration to Manitoba,"**  
by Delbert F. Plett Q.C., Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0.

### Introduction.

Only recently I read again the infamous words that the 1870s Mennonite immigrants to Manitoba "consisted primarily of Chortitza people, descendants of those poor and simple pioneers who in the previous century had left Prussia for Russia." This statement was originally made by historian Frank H. Epp in 1974 in *Mennonites in Canada*, Volume One, an official history commissioned by the Mennonite Historical Society of Canada.

The implication is almost racist in scope, implying that the dregs of Mennonite society emigrated from Prussia to Imperial Russia in 1788 and then perhaps to Bergthal or Fürstenlandt in the 1830s and '50s, and then again to Canada in the 1870s with resulting impoverishment of genetic, spiritual and socio-economic values.

**"This statement....by historian Frank H. Epp....is almost racist in scope,"**

Conventional historiography holds that the 1870s emigration was largely the flight of the landless and conservative, rigidly opposed to theological or social change, often derisively referred to as the "Kanadier". Simultaneously, it was claimed, those remaining in the homeland were the landowners, the educated and cultured, who embarked upon a golden era once the other elements were removed. The purpose of this paper is to present economic data pertaining to the groups who settled in Manitoba in 1874 and, thus, to provide an alternative interpretation of the socio-economic background of these immigrants. That revisionist interpretation suggests that the immigrants were not poorer than the Mennonites who remained in Imperial Russia, and arguably much more economically secure than the large percentage of those that remained landless in Russia after 1880.

### Russian Mennonite Society.

It will be helpful to refer to the economic structure of Russian-Mennonite society. It is documented that the mother colonies--the Chortitza Colony (founded in 1789) and the Molotschna Colony (founded in 1804)--moved quickly from full and egalitarian land ownership to the development of a large landless class.

By 1867 only 38 per cent of families in the Molotschna and 40 per cent in the Chortitza Colony belonged to the full-farmer, landowning class.

In spite of the emigration of one-third of the populace to North America and a great deal of land purchasing, the situation in Imperial Russia did not improve. P. M. Friesen provides a valuable sketch of the situation as of 1910, stating there were 4000 Vollwirten among a population of 80,000 to 100,000.

In 1886 8449 Mennonites in Hanover, Douglas and Rineland Municipalities occupied 1470

farm units with an average of 161 acres each in the West Reserve and 197 acres each in the East Reserve. Starting in the 1880s newspapers such as the *Rundschau* regularly contained appeals for help from impoverished Mennonites in Russia, pleas which were invariably responded to favourably by their co-religionists in Manitoba.

These figures simply do not support the thesis that the 1870s emigrants were of the landless class. Clearly further consideration is required to determine the socio-economic status of these emigrants. My intention is to deal specifically with the Kleine Gemeinde (KG), Bergthal and Fürstenlandt, the three founding denominations of the Mennonite community in Western Canada.

### Bergthaler.

In many ways the Bergthal were the most representative of the Kanadier as their emigration represented the exodus not only of an entire Gemeinde but of a complete territorial community.

In his study *Unsere Kolonien* Alexander Klaus provided data for 1867 that showed that with regard to average farm size and percentage of farmers who were landowners, Chortitz, Molotschna and Bergthal were very similar. For example, the number of landowning farmers was between 36 and 40 per cent for all three colonies.

As might be expected the Molotschna ranked first in terms of cultivated land per family, underscoring the predominance of its grain growing economy. At the same time these statistics are deceiving as allowance must be made for the 29,000 desjatien which were held in the land reserves of the Molotschna Colony and unavailable for settlement by the landless.

A greater percentage of Bergthal's land was in hay field and meadow indicating a degree of spe-

**"...the Bergthal were the most representative of the Kanadier..."**

cialization in the sheep, dairy and beef industries. This made the Bergthal ideal settlers for Manitoba where the primitive economy and climate at the time were not suitable for commercial wheat growing as was the case along the northern perimeter of the Black Sea.

### Kleine Gemeinde.

Compared to the Bergthal, the KG represented the emigration of a complete Gemeinde or Christian Community, which however, had been a minority of three per cent in the Molotschna Colony since its founding in 1812.

The KG had a reputation of possessing successful farmers and craftsmen, even as the model farmers of Johann Cornies. Peter M. Friesen, for example, the protagonist of conservative Mennonitism in Russia, granted that "The yards, fields, gardens, and cattle of the Kleine Gemeinde belonged to the best in the Colonies."

The Borosenko Colony was representative of the KG practice of purchasing or leasing of large blocks of land for resettlement purposes during the 1860s. The KG portion of Borosenko had been established in 1865 with the purchase of 6137 desjatien for 184,110 ruble. It has been reported that 120 KG families settled in the Borosenko area, an estimated 90 families in six Borosenko villages. Each family had an average of 68 desjatien, more than double the 20 to 25

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desjatien per family of the Molotschna and Chortitza Colonies.

Ironically some of the immigrants may have been considered "poor and simple" because they were victims of a "buyers market" once they announced plans of migrating to Canada in the 1870s. Although initially advantageous, the movement to new settlements outside of the mother colonies proved disastrous when the bottom fell out of the property market in 1874.

Heartlessly, all organized land purchases for the landless were suspended during the emigration period. This in spite of the fact that a number of choice properties such as the entire Bergthal Colony were sold at very low prices to non-Mennonites.

American newspaper reports indicate that many Russian Mennonite immigrants had been forced to dispose of properties normally worth from \$6,000.00 to \$7,000.00 for as little as \$2,000.00 and even as low as \$1,000.00. A farmer with a farm worth \$6,000.00 and \$1,000.00 of debt, for example, would have been considered well-to-do.

### Attention Readers:

"Poor and Simple" is a summarized, revised version of a paper entitled "Emigration for Principal or Profit? Socio-Economic Consideration of the 1870s Russian Mennonite Emigration to Manitoba," published in D. Plett, editor, *Pioneers and Pilgrims: The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba, Nebraska and Kansas in 1874 to 1882* (Steinbach, 1990), pages 261-268, and presented at "Khortitz'a'99," May 26-30, 1999, Zaporozhe, Ukraine, and again at a conference "1874 Revisited", October 1-2, 1999, University of Winnipeg, Manitoba. A more detailed footnoted version of this paper under the new title, "**Poor and Simple?": The Economic Background of the 1874 Russian Mennonite Emigration to Manitoba,**" is to be published in the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Volume 18, publication forthcoming, May, 2000.

Now such a farm was sold for \$2,000.00, with barely \$600.00 left over after paying the family debt of \$1,000.00 and the travelling expenses estimated at \$400.00 per family.

Clearly it is unfair to credit the financial difficulties faced by some of the immigrants to their “poor and simple” ancestry when falling land prices during the emigration years put many families in an economically vulnerable position.

**“The poor Anwohner were certainly not included among the immigrants....”**

#### Fürstenlandt/Reinländer.

The third and largest branch of the 1870s emigration movement were known as the Fürstenländer. This was a misnomer as only a third of this 3,200 member migration group came from Fürstenlandt, the majority were from the Chortitzia mother colony. They will be referred to as the Reinländer Gemeinde, the name chosen in Manitoba to denote the combined Fürstenländer and Chortitzia Colony denomination (in common parlance soon the “Old Colonists”).

The Fürstenlandt “....villages were located in a fertile region where plenty of fruit was growing, their holdings were only about 140-157 acres.” It was a leasehold settlement with a total of 11,413 desjatien divided into 154 full farms of 52 to 58 desjatien each.

Virtually the entire colony, some 200 families, emigrated in 1875. Accordingly the ratio of full farmers was in the range of 75 per cent, almost twice the average in the mother colonies. The average land holding per family was in the range of 54 desjatien per family compared to 24.5 desjatien in the Molotschna. The value of a leasehold farm would be less than a freehold, but the difference is not necessarily that great since the tenant farmer still owned his own buildings, equipment, livestock. Any differential in value would be at least partially offset by the fact that the average Fürstenlandt farm covered twice the amount of ground.

#### Emigration Data.

The poor Anwohner were certainly not included among the immigrants as a minimum of resources, estimated at between \$200.00 and \$400.00 per family, was required for transportation and shipping costs. This was beyond the means of most Anwohner and labourers unless they belonged to a denomination such as the Bergthalier or Kleine Gemeinde which had resources to assist the less fortunate.

This is confirmed in a article from the *Winnipeg Standard*, presumably from early 1877, stating as follows: “The emigrating class...,are neither the rich nor the poor, but are an intermediate body, who are, however, by no means destitute. Mr. Hespeler estimates that the sum brought into the province by the Mennonite immigration is \$500,000 dols,...”

A listing of the amounts of cash brought along by the various immigration parties sheds light on the economic status of the Reinländer. Some rough

mathematics quickly reveals that the cash brought by the Kleine Gemeinde per family was around \$1,000.00, that of the Bergthalier \$500.00 and that of the Reinländer, \$300.00.

By calculating backward, and estimating \$300 worth of tools and effects brought along, it appears that the average Old Colonist emigrant cleared \$1000.00 after paying the debt on their Wirtschaft, namely a pre-emigration net worth of over \$2000.00.

It has been established that the Bergthalier immigrants were of average and the KG of above average financial standing. A comparison of their wealth in Manitoba should define the relative position of the Reinländer people

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According to Peter Zacharias, author of the reknown *Reinland* history, no oral tradition of a differential between the Reinländer and Bergthalier existed to his knowledge.

#### Observations.

In concluding my presentation, I make several observations relative to the 1870s immigration.

1) It was Johann Wiebe and his Fürstenländer who had the foresight to select “the downs between the Red River and the Pembina Mountains....which turned out to be some of the best farmland in the whole Province of Manitoba” in the process establishing what was “really the first permanent agricultural settlement ever established in the open prairies of Western Canada....”

2) There is a commonality in that all three immigrant denominations had resettled within Imperial Russia in the decades prior to 1874. The resettlement process taught the emigrants valuable

**“...all three...denominations had resettled within Imperial Russia...Evidently it gave the conservative Mennonites a broader world view...”**

lessons in the science of establishing “frontier” communities and exposed them to a host of ethnic and cultural realities in “new” Russia. Evidently it gave the conservative Mennonites a broader world view than many of the so-called “progressive” pietist Mennonites in the mother colonies.

3) In the course of duties during some five years as editor of *Preservings* I have researched the economic background of at least two dozen families of Bergthalier and Old Colony background. These families invariably traced their ancestry to 1789 Chortitzia immigrants of the Vollwirt class,

not infrequently above average in terms of property. Although the topic is in need of focused research, the evidence gathered indicates that these immigrants typically were the descendants of well-to-do farmers in the Vollwirt tradition, with the resources and entrepreneurial ingenuity to pursue re-settlement and/or emigration as a strategy to perpetuate that tradition.

#### Conclusion.

The foregoing data raises serious questions regarding the view that the Kanadier who left Russia during the 1870s were in some way “poor and simple”. On the whole they were financially in the median range among the Russian Mennonites. Certainly they were not a lower socio-economic chaste, as the statement by historian Frank H. Epp has frequently been interpreted.

The unquestioned acceptance of Molotschna Pietist Triumphalism in our historiography and culture has seriously undermined the Mennonite community. It has influenced the way that reformed

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and/or liberal Mennonites (typically those that adopted Separatist Pietist and/or American Revivalist religious culture) have treated their conservative co-religionists, often with barely concealed disdain, and encouraged aggressor denominations in the pursuit of their shallow filio-pietistic agendas. Even worse, often times the descendants of the Kanadiers themselves have started believing these unsubstantiated characterizations, resulting in a negative view towards their faith and culture.

In a paper chiding descendants of the Kanadier for interpreting events with the benefit of hindsight and projecting later values and concerns back into history, James Urry concludes that “Explanations of the 1870s migrations must be multi-focal. There is no simple, single reason for the emigration although the reforms of the Russian State, especially in its military reforms, must be seen as the major catalyst which unleashed the pent-up tension and differences between Mennonites and the Russian State, and between Mennonites and Mennonites, which led to the great parting of ways of the Russian Mennonites.”

I conclude with a further quotation by Dr. Urry, “the real economic issue is the complex one of capitalizing/liquidising wealth in Russia, transferring it across the oceans and then reestablishing a self-sustaining community in Canada--Makes a car salesman look small, and I doubt if they needed a lawyer.”

In considering the remarkable achievement of the transplantation of the conservative Mennonite communities from Imperial Russia to Manitoba and their subsequent growth and prosperity within a few years, the 1870s immigrants should be regarded as anything but “poor and simple”.

# Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1906), Documents

Documents Regarding Johann Wiebe (1837-1906), Rosengart, Manitoba, Aeltester of the Gemeinde at Reinland (also known as the Old Kolony Church)," as Collected by Elaine Wiebe, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and translated by D. Plett Q.C., Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, A Supplement to the Biography of Johann Wiebe,  
by Peter D. Zacharias, published in *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 3-8.

## Editor's Foreword.

The Aeltesten of the Mennonite Gemeinden of the 19th century carried an immense work load and responsibility. They were responsible not only for the spiritual and physical welfare of their parishioners but also for many of their socio-economic circumstances. No leaders were ever under greater stress than the Aeltesten of the three conservative Gemeinden--the Kleine Gemeinde, the Bergthal and the Reinländer (Old Kolony)--who continued to practice the teachings of the Gospels, and consequently decided to emigrate to America, as entire communities in 1874 to 1875.

One of the major responsibilities of the Aeltesten of these embattled Christian communities was the conduct of extensive letter correspondence on behalf of their Gemeinden and in the furtherance of their personal networks required in order to manage and attend to the myriad of needs of up to 4000 parishioners, as in the case of the Old Koloniers. Letters were typically written and then recorded in what was called a "Brief Buch" or letter book.

Although much documentation was destroyed through a variety of means, enough has survived to provide historians with a reasonably good profile of the literary corpus of the three Aeltesten Johann Wiebe (1837-1906), Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) and Peter Toews (1841-1922) who led their people to America, Manitoba. The settlement here would needs be much more difficult than in the mid-western States, being essentially an undeveloped wilderness. Needless to say, the correspondence of these leaders ran into the hundreds of letters in addition to sermons, poetry and journals.

The writings of Aeltester Peter Toews of the

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Kleine Gemeinde were possibly the most fully preserved, at least in so far as known at the present time. This was ironic as in 1882 Toews chose to join the American Revivalist based Holdeman's Gemeinde, at which time his document gathering and historical writing seemed to have largely ceased.

Let us hope and pray that there are still components of the literary corpus of Johann and Gerhard Wiebe hidden away somewhere in the jungles of Latin America or the attics of Western Canada. Now that the writings of Johann Wiebe are coming to light, each letter is highly important and critical as we seek to define and sketch the life work of this great Christian leader and Bible ex-

positor.

The discovery of one of the letter books of Johann Wiebe by Bruce Wiebe, and the collection of his other writings, is important because it allows many important chapters of the story of the Old Kolony (OK) Gemeinde to be filled in. It is also significant as it enables comparisons and analysis to be made of the work and literary corpus of the leaders of the other conservative Gemeinden, Aeltester Wiebe and Toews; see "From the Bishop's Desk - the correspondence of Aeltester David Stoesz (1842-1903), Bergthal, E.R., Manitoba," in *Preservings*, No.14, pages 24-26.

From the documents and letters which are being assembled it is evident that Johann Wiebe was one of the most articulate and literate Mennonite leaders of the 19th century whether in Imperial Russia or North America. The fact that he led his own Fürstenlandt Gemeinde to Manitoba in 1875 and then called out an even larger group from amongst the Chortitza Gemeinde in Imperial Russia, gathered and formed them into a cohesive denomination, imprinting upon them in the process the teachings of genuine Biblicalism, speaks for itself.

Of particular interest is Wiebe's focus on the practice of the Gebietsamt, the Mennonite municipal arm of government, in the Chortitza and Molotschna mother colonies, of physically punishing unfaithful members in the Gemeinde a concern reminiscent of Klaas Reimer and his fellow Kleine Gemeinde reformers in 1812, possibly also explaining why the amalgamation of the two denominations was considered or suggested by some adherents later in Manitoba. It is interesting to note that such an amalgamation, in a manner of speaking, is to some extent now coming to pass in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, particularly Jagueyes, where Old Kolony and Kleine Gemeinde people have now happily lived, intermarried and worshipped together for some forty years.

It is comforting and inspirational to read Johann Wiebe's Biblical insights and observe how he put them into practice under most difficult circumstances. Wiebe's writings become even more evocative and prophetic when compared to the shallow parroting of Separatist Pietist religious culture found among many Mennonite leaders in Imperial Russia during the same period.

Johann Wiebe was remarkable as a man sure of conviction, charismatic in leadership and as one who sought out and was open to inspiration by the Spirit of God. He was a genuine servant leader who held himself as the least among the children of God.

Johann Wiebe was not one who focused his attention on judging others or instructing them, no matter how well intentioned that might be. Rather he acknowledged that he, of all human-beings, was imperfect and sought to look deeply into his own soul to deal with his imperfections and fail-

ings. Serving Christ often meant humbly waiting upon God to know His will and to serve his community, the Church of God, inspiring others by example, to delve further into their souls and thereby to live up to their full human potential as children of God. This mindset became one of the core values which has sustained the Old Kolony church over the past century.

## The Documents.

Document One, Johann Wiebe's "Record of our journey from Russia to America" is a concise statement not only of the emigration journey but also of the forces which articulated it. It is the English translation of a small booklet *Unsere Reise von Russland nach Amerika aufgezeichnet* (Hague, Saskatchewan, Im Druck gegeben und zu bezeichnen von: Heinrich Thiesen, Blumenthal, Hague, Saskatchewan, Eigentumer der Druckerei in Hague, Saskatchewan, n. date), 10 pages. Although the booklet bears no publishing date, presumably it was published in the years immediately following Aeltester Wiebe's death, although it would be interesting to document the story of its actual publication.

It is noted that Aeltester Johann Wiebe is using the older Julien calender for the dates he cites in *Unsere Reise*. According to the modern Gregorian calender his immigration party arrived in Quebec

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City on July 13, 1875. Presumably the arrival at Fort Dufferin cited as July 14, 1875, would have been 13 days later according to the Gregorian calender. The names and ages of the 103 families travelling in Aeltester Wiebe's party are listed in the Quebec Ship Lists published in the *Bergthal Gemeindebuch*, pages 291-295.

*Unsere Reise* was originally translated by Ingrid Lamp, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, with final translation by this writer. The original handwritten German manuscript was in the possession of Johann Wiebe, Swift Current, grandson of Jakob Wiebe, who in turn was the son of Aeltester Johann Wiebe. It was handed down to Jake Wiebe, Swift Current, who currently has possession of a photocopy of the document.

Document Two, the Epistle by Johann Wiebe of October 22, 1875, was written to those members of his Gemeinde remaining in Imperial Russia and manifests the love and concern which the pioneer Aeltester had for his flock seeking to spare them from the apostasy and alien beliefs which were running rampant in the Colonies. The letter is a beautiful and touching example of the Gospel-

centric teaching typical of conservative Mennonites, those who had remained true to the faith of the matriarchs and patriarchs.

Document Three, the letter by Johann Wiebe to brother Abraham in Imperial Russia was written sometime in fall of 1875, presumably around the time of the Epistle to the Gemeinde in Russia.

**"It was the love and unity which...Johann Wiebe taught...to remain living together in Christain village communities enabling them to survive and prosper."**

Document Four, the 1875 to 1878 extracts from the "Gemeindebücher der Dorfschaften..." manifests another important aspect of New Testament teaching, the commandment of Jesus for his disciples to love one another. The accounts of Aeltester Johann Wiebe illustrates the love of the New Testament Gemeinde at work on the untamed prairie land of southern Manitoba in 1875, assisting poor and wealthy alike as they adapted to life in a primitive wilderness. It was the love and unity which leaders such as Johann Wiebe taught their people which allowed them to remain living together in Christain village communities enabling them to survive and prosper.

Document Five, is a pastoral Letter by Aeltester Johann Wiebe to his cousin, Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), Chortitz, E.R., who encountered a serious spiritual struggle in the aftermath of his resignation as Aeltester of the Bergthal Gemeinde under some considerable disgrace, a fact which the enemies of the conservative Gemeinden cleverly exploited (*ad nauseam*) to heap scorn upon the beloved Ohm Gerhard and to bring into disrepute his life's work as one of the Father's of the Province of Manitoba, see *Preservings*, No. 6, pages 1-14. The letter shows that Aeltester Johann Wiebe had a heart of compassion even for those who had interfered with the shepherding of his flock and had subsequently fallen and been marginalized. The letter was included in a book of writings by Johann Wiebe, *Die Auswanderung von Russland nach Kanada 1875 in Form Einer Predigt* (Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, 1972), 72 pages, possibly an expanded version of the writing published earlier in Hague, see Document One.

Document Six, the letter of 1903 demonstrates that the ethos of love was still alive and well in the Old Kolony (OK) Gemeinde, as Johann Wiebe asked his people again to give of their abundance to assist someone less fortunate, especially for the mass of impoverished Mennonites in Imperial Russia around the turn-of-the-century.

The readers will notice an uneven quality to the translations of the Johann Wiebe writings. Documents One, Two, Four and Six were translated by and/or edited by the editor from original primary source documents and/or edited with line by line reference thereto. The other documents were translated by others and have to some extend missed the picturesque, pastoral imagery of Johann Wiebe. The elucidate translation of the Danziger High German requires not only a thorough knowledge of that dialect but also an extensive knowledge of English in order to be able to articulate

Wiebe's evocative prose. It may also help to have a degree in logic or law to translate Wiebe's writing as, according to the writing style of the time, his sentences and sentence structure were often complex, using allegory and imagery and the level of his comprehension and expression very deep, the mark of a brilliant thinker.

I must say, also, that it has been a great honour to have had the opportunity to translate Wiebe's writings, providing a window into the mind of a mighty servant of God. I would add that even though I am probably by now one of the experts on the Danziger High German dialect, I am not completely satisfied that I have been able to fully do justice to these writings.

The writings and documents of Johann Wiebe 1875 to 1903 are of great interest to those with a genuine love for the Church of God and who see in His leading hand in history the miracle of the resurrection.

#### **Letter Book.**

The story of the letters written by Johann Wiebe (1837-1906). Rosengart, W.R., Manitoba, Aeltester of the Reinländer or Old Kolony (OK) Mennonite Gemeinde, by Bruce Wiebe, R.R.#1, Box 79, Winkler, MB R6W 4A1.

These letters were rewritten by Rev. Peter Harms (1876-1952) in a ledger during the 1940s in Mexico. The ledger was taken to the Rio Verde Colony, Paraguay. Deacon Franz Wiebe of Rio Velde brought them to the attention of Bruce Wiebe, Winkler, who requested photo copies. The photo copies were made and were deposited at the Mennonite Heritage Centre for preservation.

Letters 1 to 40 covering the period from 1895 to 1904 are addressed to Rev. Peter Klassen of Neuanlage, Hague, Saskatchewan.

Letter No. 41 dated in 1875 was written to the Gemeinde remaining in Imperial Russia.

Letters 42 to 54 were written to Rev. Julius Wiebe in Saskatchewan, the nephew of Aeltester Johann Wiebe.

Pages 113 to 132 are written by others.

Page 133 is a letter by Aeltester Johann Wiebe to Johann Funk, Elkhart, Indiana.

Page 150 is Aeltester Johann Wiebe's farewell sermon preached in Imperial Russia.

Page 165 is the Leichenrede or eulogy at Aeltester Johann Wiebe's funeral.

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## **Document One**

### **A record of our journey from Russia to America**

May the saving grace of God and the peace of Jesus Christ increase in all believers through faith in Jesus Christ, his beloved Son, washed by His blood from all our sins so that we may henceforth gladly walk before Him in holiness and unblemished in His love, unto His praise and honour from now on into eternity. Amen.

Remembering our duty, because of certain reasons, whosoever reads this should pay heed thereto; he who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, Rev. 2, 11.

Thus, in 1875, June 3, we, I, Johann Wiebe, together with a fairly large number of brothers and sisters and also children, including the old, weak

and crippled, left Russia because of the military service or because we were to become subject to the secular law and worldly might, and preparing ourselves, emigrated or fled to America where we had been offered or promised liberty to live again according to the teachings of the Lord and the apostles, unto which we had been given strength from God, and we on our part shall exert diligence to come before God in heaven with prayer and supplication.

And we thought: thus it went with the dear ancient ones in whose footsteps and paths we continue to hold ourselves until the death shall lay us low into the scanty of the grave. We are also fully trusting in God that the Lord shall be our guide and companion as it also occurred during the time of Israel. But also in which many were filled with fear and anxious hope of entering into a primitive desert, where one would not know whether there would not be many wild beasts or hostile people who might impose [onerous] burdens upon us, wherewith those of our friends who had remained in Russia had tried to frighten us, or wondering whether in fact bread would be available for our necessities in order that we would not die of starvation.

Many thoughts or anxieties had come forth amongst us emigrants or refugees, each depending on how they had been strengthened by God. But in order not to be disloyal to the beloved God, rather to be ever more and more faithful, all of this did not frighten us, rather through His help and gracious assistance we could become more firmly rooted through all of this, well knowing that everything works for the good for those who love God, Rom. 8, 28. Yes, He would make everything well, and carry it out beneficially, and with hope we cast our cares upon the Lord. He will take good care of us (according to 1 Peter 5, 2).

Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters! Thus we boarded the ship, some with good courage and others with anxieties but also with hope, seeking our salvation with fear and trembling and, if possible, for the will of God and Jesus, to measure everything correctly, particularly also for the soul, as mentioned earlier, inwardly screaming and sighing towards God and with many tears, on the third of June [1875], I and a considerable number of brothers and sisters, in a Russian village called Lepeticha on the Dnieper, on a Tuesday morning, 10 o'clock (the last day of Pentecost) embarked upon the ship, which cost us many prayers and many sighs.

And many tears have been shed for which, however, God--Who is such a compassionate friend--Who so dearly wishes [to receive] tears from us, at least such tears that have been shed out of true composure, namely, through a hunger and yearning for His mercy and forgiveness of sins, hopefully to be sealed away in His eternal New Testament and to be duly rewarded in grace after persistent and overwhelming tribulation.

Tears were the sheaves which that sinful woman in the Gospel brought to the Saviour; tears manifest that the human heart has become convicted and desires that the Saviour take up residence therein, when the sinner takes the sanctified tongue of the Son [the Word, the Kingdom of Peace] which is sanctified and Who so gladly would want



*Jakob Wiebe, oldest son of Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1906), with five of his children. Photo courtesy of great-granddaughter Tina Braun, La Crete, Alberta.*

to scantly the heart, which can only happen through many tears, whereby the rebirth is born of the Seed of the Spirit; the situation of the sinner has become much improved by virtue of the tribulation.

Oh, wherefore we must also walk this difficult path in order to see whether we would accept all sorrows, which we shall encounter, as a fatherly admonishment. For we do not think of all chastening when experienced, as a joy, but as grievous. Nevertheless afterward it shall yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby, Hebrews 12, 11.

Therefore, when we truly and properly consider all this and how it went with the first Christians when it is stated: Some have suffered mockery and scourging, also fetters and prison. They were stoned, hacked into pieces, impaled, killed by the sword. They went about wearing sheep skins and goat fur, they suffered want and tribulations, with discomfort, not deeming the world of any worth, and in desperation they went into the wilderness, upon the mountains and into the caves and hollows of the earth, Hebrews 11, 36.

By comparison, our flight seems rather insignificant and comfortable to us, even though it may have cost us many trials and many a tear because many a one had to leave father and mother, or the parents left their children, and in addition thereto, so many related friends and dear relatives. I say, nevertheless, that it was a very comfortable journey compared to the flight of the early Christians. Since we also have such a host of witnesses around us, let us cast off the sin which always seeks to cling to us and make us slothful, and through patience let us join the battle which has been apportioned unto us and look up upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who--though He might well have wished for joy--suffered the cross and did not consider the shame.

And so, like the first Christians, His follow-

ers, who likewise did not shy from the cross of Christ, we also embarked upon the way, poor as we might be in things temporal and even more in the spiritual--the Lord will take care of us. Fully trusting that the Lord will not forsake his own, if only they do not forsake Him, I will document our journey from Russia up to the local and place where we arrived in America, Manitoba, because I consider it necessary to awaken and to remind you as long as the Lord gives me breath and I am still here. I shall also exert diligence so that you have the wherewithal to retain this in your memories, after my departure.

And so: at 10 in the morning, as mentioned before, we boarded the ship in Lepeticha. Our thoughts and prayers were: Lord, be with us. May Your Holy Will be done. Quietly and forsaken we left our fatherland and birthplace, which had become so dear to us, without much talk, lifting our thoughts up to heaven, and sighing: God, be merciful to us sinners. The ship went gently with us to Cherson. At 5:30 in the evening we had already arrived safely in Cherson with the help of God and through His gracious leading, and there already a child from amongst our midst died and was also buried there.

We stayed there over night. On Wednesday, June 4, at 8 o'clock in the evening we departed from there, and on the next day at 5 o'clock in the evening we arrived at Odessa. We lay there for two days. On June 7 at 10 o'clock in the morning we departed from there and arrived in Podwoltschinsk June 8, Sunday morning, at 8 o'clock, safe and sound; many thanks are due to the Lord for everything. There we worshipped our God with encouragement and song.

At quarter to eight we arrived in Mislawitz and at 6 o'clock in the morning we arrived in Berlin and at half-past-two in the morning we departed again. Wednesday at 11 o'clock we arrived in Hamburg, safe and sound. We rested there for two

days and conducted many a consultation. We gazed and looked up upon our Creator and Perfecter Jesus and strengthened one another with encouragement not to become weary. On Friday, June 13, at 9 o'clock in the evening we again departed from there and on Sunday, June 15, we arrived in England at 3 o'clock in the evening but we only got to our quarters in Hull for the night.

We stayed until noon and departed from there at 6 o'clock in the evening, June 16. On Monday we arrived in Liverpool, stayed there until Thursday at 6 o'clock in the morning. Then we went to the ship, embarked upon a small vessel and drove to the bigger one, which took until 5 o'clock in the evening, Thursday, June 19, when we had already departed and were on the big ocean. Yes, I say, the vast sea.

The thoughts were: Oh, that we might be across soon, etc. Oh gracious, merciful God and Father, if it be Your holy will, lead us all over safely, be merciful unto us, forgive us all our sins and trespasses for Jesus' sake and remember our sins no more! For life and death stand in your hand.

Friday, the 20th, the ship received a great blow so that the crew was placed into great anxiety whether the ship might have been damaged. They checked everywhere and after half an hour the journey continued, with strong wind and nice weather. On Friday, June 27th, the ship lay immobile for almost the entire day because it was so foggy that they could not proceed. On Saturday, the 28th, they went forward again. On that same day our assembly increased by one, namely, Jakob Neudorf's wife gave birth to a little baby boy.

God be praised above all. Lord, You almighty God and Father, Your ways are unsearchable, Your rule beyond comprehension; Your hand is almighty. Say unto God, How wonderful are You in your works! Come and behold the works of God: He is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of His praise widely to be heard. Which holds our soul in life, and suffers not our feet to be moved, Psalm 66. "God shall bless us and all the ends of the earth shall fear him," Psalm 67, 8.

At sunrise, on July first, we--with the miraculous help of God--had safely crossed the vast ocean and reached land, adjacent to Quebec [City].

With glad mind we sang a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, as follows:

"Nun danket alle Gott,  
Mit Herzen, Mund und Händen,  
Der Grosze Dinge that,  
An uns und allen Enden,  
Der uns von Mutterleib,  
Und Kindesbeinen an,  
Unzählich viel zu gut,  
Und noch jetztund gethan," and so forth  
[Gesangbuch, No. 353, verse one].

[English translation:  
"Now thank we all our God / With heart and hands and voices, / Who wondrous things has done, / In whom His world rejoices; / Who, from our mothers' arms / Hath blessed us on our way / With countless gifts of love, / And still is ours today" etc.]

After we had praised and thanked God, we ate

breakfast. Thus the trip had taken from June 19 at 5 o'clock in the evening until July 1, early in the morning. For 12 full days we were afloat on the water. At 6 o'clock in the evening we departed from there arriving in Montreal at 6 o'clock in the morning, where we had breakfast again--coffee, tea and fried potatoes with beef. We departed from there at 11 o'clock at noon for Toronto arriving there at 6 o'clock in the morning; we stayed there until the following day.

Friday, July 4, at 10 o'clock in the morning we left Toronto for Berlin [Kitchener] and from there to Sarnia. Here we boarded the ship at 9 o'clock in the evening, still the same day, July 4th. According to what people had told us, we still had 818 miles to go to Duluth on the ship, but the weather was nice. We arrived there on Tuesday at 7 o'clock in the evening. We over-nighted and departed from there, Wednesday at 2 o'clock in the afternoon to Moorhead, a distance of 253 miles as we were told, arriving there Thursday at 4 o'clock in the morning. At 10 o'clock in the evening we departed from there for Manitoba which according to what we were told was 150 miles.

On Monday, July 14, we arrived in Dufferin at the emigrants' houses, early in the morning. God be praised, where we saw many of our brothers and sisters in the faith who came to meet us and greeted us brotherly. They had travelled a week or even two weeks before us and were already singing a song of grieving.

We, however, were glad and thanked God and Jesus Christ, our Saviour, that we had all travelled so safely and that we--who loved each other so intimately--came to see one another again. Then the shaking of hands and throwing of arms around each other began, including the greeting and kiss of peace with the blessing and wish in our heart, the Lord be with us all. Indeed, hitherto our minds apparently were as one, that the Lord had aided and guided us so miraculously and in the hope that He would continue to help and stand by us and to bring us into His eternal realm. Amen.

May the merciful God and Father grant this unto all of us through His beloved Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen, Amen!

If other hearts were minded differently from that which has here been described; my own [rec-

ollection] has been portrayed pretty clearly, and I hope I have evoked [that of] many others.

And my prayer echoes the words of the poet:

"Der ewig reiche Gott  
Woll uns bei unserm Leben  
Ein immer fröhlich Herz  
Und edlen Frieden geben  
Und uns in seiner Gnad  
Erhalten fort und fort  
Und uns aus aller Noth  
Erlösen hier und dort."

[English translation, verse two.]

"O may this bounteous God / Through all our life be near us, / With ever joyful hearts / And blessed peace to cheer us; / And keep us in His grace, / And guide us when perplexed. / And free us from all ills / In this world and the next."

And I continue:

"Lob Ehr und Preis sei Gott  
Dem Vater und dem Sohne  
Und dem, der beiden gleich  
Im hohen Himmelsthrone,  
Dem dreieinigen Gott  
Als der in Anfang war  
Und ist und bleiben wird  
Jetzund und immer dar. Amen."

[English translation, verse three.]

"All praise and thanks to God, / The Father, now be given; / The Son, and Him who reigns / With Them in highest heaven; / The one eternal God, / Whom earth and heav'n adore; / For thus it was, is now, / And shall be evermore."

What is written so far, is only about our journey from Russia to America but what we still want to write, if the Lord grants His mercy thereto--may God so grant to us--unto our uplifting, to work unto our salvation with fear and trembling. Since we have had a difficult beginning, we wish to affirm that we keep the word of God as our rule and guide, to live according to the same, and so to act and walk. A large component of which went lost to us in Russia because we considered the carnal as our arm. Stated in other words: we did not want to allow ourselves to be chastised by the Spirit of Christ because we were carnal or lived in the flesh. To be carnally minded is death, and to be spiritually minded is life and peace, Roman 8, 6.

Therefore, also, we could not remain longer in

the liberty which Christ had procured for us because mankind had made itself subject to the law of the world and punished more the disobedient brethren with worldly might and held the carnal to be their arm, as the Lord says in Jeremiah 17, 5: "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord, as with the brotherly chastisement."

For which reason and also on the grounds that the Aeltesten and shepherds together with the Gemeinde did not remain faithful, the chastisement of the brethren always lessened more and more and the worldly power was applied in its place, which, however, was only appropriate for the worldly authority [government] and not the disciples of Jesus, as they have pledged unto God to manifest faithfulness and obedience unto death.

I say: therefore they could not remain standing in the freedom to which Christ has liberated us, and they again allowed themselves to be caught up in the yoke of slaves, Galatians 5. Wherefore Paul also says to his Galatians: Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Galatians 3,3. Now, however, that you have come to know God--indeed, much more so that you are known by God, how can you turn back again to the deficient and feeble laws which you now want to serve anew? How can a disciple of Jesus or a Gemeinde of the Lord carry out such punishments?

We, all of us who came to years [adulthood] in Russia, have often experienced that the [duly] appointed authorities have imprisoned the severely accused brethren, feeding them mainly with bread and water and, in addition, punished them with the blows of the whip, and they remained nonetheless as brethren and members of the Gemeinde. Others, by comparison, were punished with fines or were sentenced to cut wood and dig ditches.

Can God be pleased with such a people? Can he endow them with his Spirit? Oh no! For Jesus says unto his disciples: Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be amongst you, Math. 20, 25. And if this is not to be so among His followers, only among worldly kings and princes, then those Mennonites who exercise this rule and power amongst themselves can likewise not be His disciples and followers because Jesus says: "This is not how it shall be among you. For he says: My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me," John 10, 27.

But you do not believe for you are not my sheep as I have told you. Amen, Amen.

#### A Short Biography of our beloved Aeltester Johann Wiebe, Rosengart, Manitoba.

Our beloved Aeltester and faithful shepherd Johann Wiebe passed unto eternity on February 21, 1906, at 5 o'clock in the morning, where he shall now rest from all his labours.

He was born in 1837 on March 23 and reached the age of 68 years, 10 months and 28 days. He lived in wedlock for 48 years, 2 months and 17 days. He sired ten children of whom four have preceded him. He became grandfather over 48 children and great-grandfather of two. He served



Home of Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1906), Rosengard, W. R., Manitoba. Photo courtesy of 1880 Settlement Registers, page 132.

as minister for five years and as Aeltester of the Gemeinde for 34 years, 5 months and 8 days. During this time he baptized 2228 persons and married 294 couples. He delivered 1544 sermons and conducted 660 funeral services.

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End of Text

## Document Two

*October 22, 1875  
Rosengard  
Written to Russia*

Beloved Gemeinde in Christ;

Before I, as your Aeltester, to those who regard and acknowledge me as such, speak to you in weakness through my imperfect writing, I firstly wish you grace, love and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, and the comfort rich fellowship of the Holy Spirit here during our lives as well as in death, also from myself and my Gemeinde, Amen.

Beloved Gemeinde, indeed, beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, of whom I think so frequently, and also often talk about you: do receive these lines as if I would actually be standing before you, as you have previously been accustomed to from me.

For in spirit I am presently before you and gaze upon you and consider with pain what will eventually become of you in these last and troubled times. That is to say, regarding the service [aben?], which you are to assume there, and with your 'yes' have not held to 'yes' and so forth. Indeed, I also hold serious reservations regarding us here that we do not become complacent and slothful [page one] and not to walk the true path of Christ which truly leads and directs us heavenward, whereupon we are to walk and go with striving and firm resolution, yes, with pleading, supplication and earnest remorse.

With respect to which, when I place myself into your situation, or even think of my own while still there, how everything seemed to storm around me, and had to live amidst scorn and shame, and how a number would have banished me to Siberia rather than that I should step up behind the pulpit [Kanzel], which I however, do not want to think of them, and rather that I would bid the Father in heaven that their eyes might be opened and that they might receive forgiveness of all [their sins], your circumstances seem much more serious than ours.

For we have been promised the full religious freedom here in this land, America, respecting which we have no battles to conduct here like you do there. And we can also extend this invitation, which I firmly believe that you should follow, respecting which I have no doubts. For this reason it seems to me that matters with you there are more lamentable than with us here, for [over there] the disputation and factiousness in the Gemeinde could never be put away. For when a kingdom is not united within itself, [page two] how shall it stand?



A sketch of the interior of an early Mennonite dwelling. It is probably a scene from the West Reserve around Rosengart, drawn during the 1877 Vice-Regal visit of Governor-General Lord Dufferin (1828-1902). see explanation by Jake Doerksen, Preservings, No. 12, page 37. Photo courtesy of Hanover 100 Years, page 119.

Likewise also with a Gemeinde which has received one faith and one baptism, Ephesians 4. How shall it subsist if it lives in open strife and disputation and allows the unadulterated teachings of the Lord, whereupon it has been constituted, to fall away? When we consider the entire teaching of Christ it is completely different from that which you must now adopt there.

Oh, do pay heed, now my beloved, that which our so fully loving Lord says, Do not love nor follow that which is in the world, for whosoever shall love the world, in him is not the love of the Father, and he that taketh not his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me. For we have only one [concern] which we must earnestly prove, whether we love God above all else.

For I, inherently weak and from within myself sinful person, can hardly understand how, if we love God above everything else, or even if we only seek to so love Him, how shall we be able to assume the service which the Government is requiring of you? That is to say, [the Gemeinde] which is founded upon a true, voluntary, discipleship of Christ, baptised and in the Gemeinde, of which the Lord says, upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it [page three]. For Jesus did teach Peter to place the sword back into its sheath, and these are incidents relevant thereto, and which were entirely given over to [the Gemeinde] here on earth.

Oh my beloved. Everyone! Examine yourselves, earnestly and remorsefully, and not sparingly. I ask you in the name of Jesus Christ, what did you have when you covenanted before God and the Gemeinde? Did you not, indeed, all of us, together with Gemeinde, promise Him obedience and faithfulness for the entire time of your lives,

yes, to be true disciples of Christ, which we must always confess. But now listen further to what the Lord says with a repeated "verily": Joh. 14, 12, "Verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do he shall do also."

Has our Redeemer ever done any such works which aid in the waging of war?

Brothers and sisters, He has on all occasions conducted himself as the suffering Lamb and fled from dangerous situations and said to his disciples, that they should not conduct themselves as the kings and princes. He says, the kings of the world they rule, and they call them most gracious lord, but so shall it not be amongst you, nor shall it be so among all [page four] who are disciples of Christ, Luke 22:25, Matthew 20:25, Mark 10:42, and so on, and further in Joh. 14:15, "If ye love me keep my commandments," and further, "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me."

In this regard we find it necessary that we repeatedly prove ourselves, and to look within ourselves regarding our status. For when we shall come to the portals of death, how shall we not wish to have lived for the Lord. And verily, we shall all arrive at that place. But alas, if a person has not heeded all the warnings and in the meantime is ushered before the face of God, for man is appointed once to die and thereafter the judgement, Matthew and Joh. 12, "If any man shall serve me, let him follow me."

Therefore, if we consider the entire life of Christ, from His birth until His death on the cross, we shall certainly not find anything, other than that all humankind, or those that call themselves Christians, with earnestness of will seek to emulate the life of Christ and to walk in His footsteps.

*Preservings*

So far no war has come to pass among Christians, or among all those who call themselves Christians and also are or are becoming genuine disciples of Christ. And therefore all wars presently [page five] must fall away, yes, from that blink of an eye, henceforth, when the light of Jesus first fills them with conviction in that regard, and he is also willing to follow the same and not to strive against it any longer. I repeat it again, they [wars] shall fall away and such a person shall grieve that they have previously acted against the teachings of Christ.

This was also the experience of the Apostle Paul in his conversion. He had given himself upon the way to Damascus with threats and murders, when the light of Jesus appeared and the voice of the Lord spoke unto him, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" To which he replied with fear and trembling, "Lord what wouldest thou have that I do?" Acts 9.

This is also my belief, worthy Gemeinde, and for this reason I gave myself over to the flight [emigration], together with all those also who have understood the matter in like manner and to whom it was distasteful that those who call ourselves members and brothers should live in the midst of disputation.

For the one says we are free to take it on [military service], and the other says no. And even among those who have been placed as watchman over the Gemeinde of whom the Lord speaks, "For if they shall fall silent [page six] the very rocks shall cry out."

For how can the weak members experience anything different, if they do not wish to circumvent the weak ministers, and to look unto Jesus alone, but to fall into apostasy. Alas, my beloved, search in the Scriptures, in the Holy Scriptures, not after freedom but in order that the will of the Lord might also come to pass thereby. For then you shall also find that which will be for the best of your soul. Indeed how many destroyers are there not in the present time with Christendom, who in blindness live out their self-righteousness and pride as if they had made a covenant with the [spirit] of death, and do not wish to know anything about the true conversion.

Indeed, read the songs numbered 281 and 303, wherefrom you can perceive how things occurred in earlier times. Even the references above the songs give testimony of the great apostasy of the pharisees and those learned in the scripture. For we are seriously warned to take better heed of our lives and to be more earnest regarding our conduct if we wish to attain the heavenly kingdom.

Alas, my worthy Gemeinde, I now wish to close regarding this. I have again carried out my responsibility and obligation, of which I have been commanded by my weak spirit [page seven].

I had gone walking tonight in the neighbourhood, and then we had talked among ourselves about our journey to America. What great grace the Almighty God has bestowed upon us unworthy ones, that He had led us so safely. For this we certainly cannot give enough thanks and for which reason we also frequently need to remind ourselves about the journey and to praise and thank God, as David says, "Praise the Lord,

oh my soul, and forget not the great things he hath done," and so forth.

And then our discussion came around to you, which [occurs] often, and [which] fell so heavily upon my heart that I went home and sat down to write.

Oh, brothers and sisters, if only I could once again come into your midst, and if I would then feel like talking as much as I do now, I would talk until I was sated. But since it is not [possible], do please accept these insignificant lines in love, for I genuinely mean them well.

But I continue to rejoice that a number [of you] will follow us this forthcoming spring, and for which I have a true longing. It is as if the time

Johann Wiebe		Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec
Feb 21	Winkler May 20 30 25 3	9 35
Feb 21	Winkler May 20 30 25 3	13 80
Mar 1	H. Ball 20 30 40	14 40
		21 75
		28
		45
		57 95
		115
		59 40
		14 40
		12 80
		18
		115
		3
		9
		3
		20 80
		13 20
		5
		2 30
		2 30
		5
		3 20
		32 25
		2 80
		59 15
		5
		6
		6 30
		32 05
		7 10
		65 15
August 8	Winkler 20 30 40	59 15

Johann Wiebe's Page 3, from the account book of the villages of Rosengart, Grünfeld, Blumenfeld, Eigenfeld, Osterwick, Hochfeld. Illustrates how the Old Kolony people maintained careful records of mutual aid extended within the community, a practice typical of conservative Mennonites.

seems too long for me, but I do not know why it would be so [page eight]. Also further I have very little expectation as it is with brother Abraham.

Peace be with you and your house, yes, may the Lord strengthen you with your burdens and tribulations which may come upon you. You have written and [we have] read a good many letters. It is not that much better this year with the harvest than the one [last] year we were still there.

But, nevertheless, I believe that those who are in earnest will also be able to emigrate. But those who do not have it, or are not willing to submit themselves from darkness unto light, I will certainly not counsel to emigrate. For the emigration alone will certainly not make anyone saved.

Oh, woe, my beloved. We already have an example [of this] here but also those who mean it truthfully and sincerely. Take note of [those with] such a faith where [someone does] not know [the] Son as that sometimes results in a difficult proving.

But brothers and sisters, I do think you will not yet have forgotten us and in what a lamentable dilemma we stood and also that many did not believe that we would emigrate, at least the poor, until they saw that we were departing.

A number, on the other hand, had argued that it [page nine] was not feasible that the poor emigrants would be able to emigrate. And they were told that those who had more than they needed should share something with the poor. This, also, they refused to believe, all the while [they were] striving after their own betterment and eventually had to come into shame.

Others, in contrast, had said, why do you want to move to America, to go hungry? This caused me a great deal of sorrow at times, that there was not a greater faith and trust in our All-loving Provider, as if we can take our own lives or provide for ourselves [in any event].

I must shorten [my letter] my beloved, or else I will again write as much as the first time. And yet, I wish to relate this to you that we have no reason to complain, much more rather to give thanks. We have been provided with everything, with the beloved bread and seed grain, as well as for those who do not have money, each family--one cow, one ox, two together a wagon, two together a plow, that it was actually miraculous, if only we could have faith that God would help us. For He the living God sees us and continues to seek to bring the person from the paths of sin and to draw them unto Him and also hears [page ten] us and has also made to shame our little faith, for our own disturbance.

I have indicated above that I gave myself over to the flight together with all those who perceived the matter as I did. But I have already written this in my first letter, that not all of you who had approached me regarding your life and walk and made yourselves up [dedicated yourselves] in the true meaning, and that there have been many murmurers and still continue to be, which presently allow themselves to be heard. But [they do] not [murmur] against me, for anywhere I come, be it in the villages or somewhere else, when I ask how it is going, they say, "Good", "they are completely satisfied". For this reason I can not give thanks enough for the grace and peace which we have had here until now.

Now I will [direct] myself to you beloved brother Joh. Enns, Alexanderthal, you have requested of me, that I shall report to you in truth, whether the people would also improve themselves, for according to your understanding I shall experience much more here that I ever did there. What answer shall I give to you? But I will answer to you that how all the people stand in their relationship with God I do not know, that is only known to our beloved God.

Nor have I experienced [page eleven] any intimate knowledge, until now, [how] things [occurred] there, for the division of the land in our settlement went completely peacefully until now, so that in the beginning I could hardly imagine. I have nowhere yet been called upon to arbitrate unpeaceful matters, for which I cannot give enough praise and thanks to our Saviour.

But that is not to say that there are not many and important matters lacking in our Gemeinde;

no, you must not understand this in that way. Nonetheless, I hold it very dear that I do not hear of much strife, as frequently occurs on a new settlement. Of course, it may also have taken a longer time, so that we still [will] have this experience. May God grant that it will always become better and not worse. Indeed, that He might grant us strength and support, [so] that we [might] walk in His ways and [follow His] commandments during the time of our lives.

For on the average we are all full of misdeeds, so much so that one might actually become anxious. Even I must always battle with my evil flesh and blood, so that I frequently fall down [under its weight]. But with the help of God I can always stand up again, that is to say, I confess and grieve over my sins and ask God [page twelve] for forgiveness. My belief in this matter will certainly not alter until the body has lived out its time here on earth and passes over from this world unto the blessed eternity, either to the joyful saved eternity or to the place of suffering where there shall be knashing of teeth and crying.

Ah, [it will be] horrible to hear. But even more horrible for those who must personally experience it, for those who cast all warning into the wind and do not allow themselves to be counselled by God's hand of grace. But as of now the door of grace still stands open for whoever will go through in the right way, shall be helped [saved].

But all my beloved! I must end abruptly, for the paper is again running out and it is soon time to go to sleep. Please forgive me for my weak writing. And I commit you together with us unto the loving God and from the bottom of my heart I wish that if we should not see each other again here on this earth, that our all-compassionate God might grant us the grace that we might be declared there before the throne of God and see each other afresh where there shall never again be any parting, and for which our gracious God and Father will provide for all of us, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

From Aeltester Joh. Wiebe, Rosengart, Canada, Manitoba.

### Document Three

A Letter from Aeltester Johann Wiebe from America to Russia;

To my brother Abraham Wiebe and your dear wife and children who are so far away. First of all, I wish you grace, peace and love, from God our Lord Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit! Amen.

Beloved and deeply appreciated brother in Christ! I greet you and all of those who love our Lord Jesus with the kiss of love.

And now I am asking, dear brother, how are you? I am very curious about it because of all my activities, but when I am by myself then it seems at times as if there is a burden on my heart, some heaviness, and then I think of you.

And then I often think that you carry a heavier burden than I do and as if I feel something of your burden, but I don't know, perhaps it is different but tell me about it because I am often thinking of you and also of the dear congregation and all those who are thinking of me in love. I also often think of those who were my enemies, but I think they didn't have cause. And I think of them and how it



A double exposure photograph of the worship house of the Reinländer Gemeinde, built in Reinland, W.R., Manitoba, in 1876, the oldest Mennonite sanctuary in Western Canada. The double exposure shows the plaque which was dedicated at the time of the Reinland village centennial in 1975. Photo courtesy of P. Zacharias, Reinland, An Experience in Community (1976, Altona), page 186.

is going to be, for all of us want to be with the one Father someday, and here we can't agree. How is it going to be in eternity if man would be taken away quickly like those five foolish virgins.

Oh! On my part I wish all of them a true repentance from the heart and true conversion and the best of peace with God and man and the perseverance of children to the end and a peaceful death. Yes, brother, at times I wonder whether those will follow us who were such a burden to me at times, and I would wish they would if it is God's will, but that they would come with true contentment.

But to come and to create troubles, I am scared of that, but for my part I would love them if they also came, and I do love them now so that there would be no obstacle if they came in true peace. You will wonder, dear brother, how things are with me here. There is also toil here. Nor was the journey without troubles as you can also read about the children of Israel, but so far things are very well.

So far I don't have to carry a heavy burden regarding the congregation. What I struggle with most or the hardest is my own flesh and blood. I am anxious as to how we will fare but am always comforted by the thought that things will be well with us if we truly look to the Lord, his storehouse has bread in abundance and will never be empty. And I am not burdened by the question whether it was right for us to move here because we were given freedom of conscience. But God alone knows for how long. As far as temporal things are concerned, it seems good here.

We have a lot of grass for hay but our men broke the scythe twice so that I don't have enough hay but I think I'll get enough yet. We have settled along the Dakota boundary, up from the Red River to the left, about 45 "werst", but otherwise our land is closer only the woods are farther away, and close to the boundary there is wheat with such heads as I have never had before, and this is a dry year. But we don't now what it will be like in the future. But here there are people living around us.

Now about our building, we are already living in our house. I will tell how I did build - 15 ft. wide and 25 ft. long, half in the ground and half

above ground, and lined with boards inside and the roof covered with long hay. I am writing and it is already 10.30 and I am keeping the iron stove going, we do not have a floor as yet, and little Maria is not very well as yet. Most of us are living in villages here, about 16 farmers in one village (with a few exceptions), like we used to live in villages. Here in the village are PW. - JH. - JH. - JL. - HW. - JG. - JA W. - MKW. - JA N. - KW. - JB. - WP. - KW. - also Harms but B. Wiebe is living in Neuhorst, not far from us, 7 or 8 "werst". I haven't seen the Peter Wiebes as yet, he lives at a distance of about 130 "werst", our land is supposed to be better than theirs.

Dear brother, my page is getting full and thus I will close, and I say in closing. convey greetings to the church which I love from my heart, and remember me in prayer, and I will remember you in love. Yes, greet all who love our Lord Jesus, and I remain your loving brother and co-worker in the gospel of grace. Greetings also from my wife and children. Also to your children, written by "Johann Wiebe", Rosegart.  
(Received October 25, 1875)

Two Poems/hymns follow -  
"Liebster Vater, ich, dein Kind..." and  
"O du Liebe meiner Liebe..."

### Document Four

Gemeindebuch der Dorfschaften Rosengart, Grünfeld, Blumenfeld, Eigenfeld, Osterwick, Hochfeld, "Account Book for the Village Societies of Rosengart, Grünfeld, Blumenfeld, Eigenfeld, Osterwick, Hochfeld, Volume 4230, Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba. The account book appears to be a continuation of an earlier volume, as the account of Johann Wiebe opens with a balance owing of \$9.75.

Page 3

#### Johann Wiebe

May 25 [1876] debit 3 Kulle [a Kulle is a sack full weighing 220 pounds] flour balance \$9.75; July 25, 1 Kulle, 3.80; August 4, 4 kulle 14.40,

total 24.95; 30 bushel wheat \$30.00, paid credit \$45.00, money as requested 1.45, balance 14.40. 1 Kulle flour, 3.60; \$18.00; From Jakob Wiens, requisitioned, earned by his children, \$15.00, remains a balance of \$3.00.

1878 January 12, returned one bag of flour, credit \$3.00;

1877, transported wheat to "Killer", Emerson, credit \$20.80; transported wheat to "Killer", Emerson, \$13.20; April 19, returned 2 Kulle to Neuendorf \$5.00; 27th 1 Kulle to Blumstein. %5.00; May 1, 1 Kulle to Blumstein, \$2.50; 2 Kulle to Reinland, \$5.00; milk delivered to customs office \$3.25; total credit \$52.25; January 18, paid back 96 1/2 lb. flour \$2.89; total credit, \$55.15; paid back Hoffnungsfeld 5 bu. wheat \$5.00; June 20, paid back 6 bu. wheat Eichenfeld; July 29; credit 6 1/2 bu. wheat \$6; July 29, 6 1/2 bushel wheat returned \$6.50, credit \$72.65; Cre. 7 1/2 bushel for Neu Wiebe Joh. \$7.50; credit \$65.15; August 6, received money from [Oberschulz] Mueller \$50.00.

Page 4,

Carried forward, \$15.15, interest for 1878 \$1.68; for wood debit \$13.52 2/3; balance \$3.00; for wheat from "Killer" rec. add \$1.57; interest on same 0.10.; credit \$4.97; Feb 17, received credit, payment for wood (Wald) \$2.34.

Page 11

### **Johann Wiebe**

Remained indebted in 1877 for the years 1875 and '76, balance remaining, \$208.30;

For the year 1877 receivable and became indebted as follows: 1 Kulle from Winnipeg, from the above sum, transferred to Schantz [debited] to the community [account]; \$100.00; from the above sum transferred to the Waisenamt \$108.30 [and debited]; 111 lbs poor flour at 2 cents per lb. \$2.23 1/2; May 25, 4 Kulle at \$3.23 \$13.00; 1 Kulle \$3.23; August 4, 1 Kulle \$3.60; balance to date, \$25.08 1/2; A wagon provided to Cornylachi in Schönfeld, \$10.00; balance \$25.08 1/2; balance remaining \$15.08 1/2;

1878, interest debited for 1875 \$7.20; March, debit interest for 1876 \$8.61; debit interest for 1877, \$7.99; April 11, returned 4 bu. barley; delivered wheat to the customs office credit \$43.93; balance remaining credit \$38.89; and balance remaining debit \$45.93; net credit \$7.04; August, received for wheat \$30.00; credit \$22.96; interest for 1878 credit \$0.17; interest payable to Schantz \$6.00; balance remaining \$29.13; for wood (Wald) \$13.52 2/3; balance credit \$42.76;

## **Document Five**

### **Letter to Gerhard Wiebe, Chortitz, E.R.**

A letter to the dearly beloved but no longer serving as Aeltester of the Gemeinde in Bergthal, Gerhard Wiebe.

I wish you first of all much grace, peace and blessing in your miserable and fallen circumstances, a right-working remorse and repentance respecting God and man, the way you have often taught during that former time. And that is that during this time of grace, which has been granted unto you until now, you would let yourself be made free, through the grace and truth of Jesus Christ, which He carries after all sinners with love, if it were possible. Amen.

You have requested, as I have heard from Cornelius Fehrs, from me weak and so very lowly person in this most difficult time--I believe of you and also for me, as God knows, a writing directed to you in love.

Oh, beloved Wiebe! What then shall I write? What would be best for the circumstances of your soul? For what would your soul hunger the most?

Is it to become righteous through Christ and in grace to receive salvation? Then do submit yourself unto His grace, and confess and acknowledge your serious misdeed in true remorse and repentance. Firstly, towards our Almighty God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and secondly, also towards your Gemeinde which has loved you dearly, and which for so many years you did also teach this way, and also punished the sins.

Thirdly, also hear regarding the back sliding brethren, as I believe, if it is alright with you, or shall become alright with you, that you undoubtedly feel very responsible for their blood, and if it were possible, to bring them to another belief, that they also would repent, before the great and horrible day of the Lord shall come, and to compensate them, each and everyone according to what they have earned with their works.

And fourthly, I believe that you will also not be able to feel free with us here. Oh, my beloved Wiebe! Your own conscience and the good Holy Spirit will teach you everything, and lead you in all truth, if only you will submit yourself fully and completely unto Him, and if you remain true to His teaching and to His word and that you then teach the people completely freely according to God's word, without respect to what is pleasing to the people, as Paul teaches us, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ," Galatians 1, 10 and 1 Thess. 2,4

When I see this in my great sorrow and can hear about you, who has also caused me so much work and sorrow, that I have sometimes come almost to the point of succumbing, and that together with David in his fear I have been compelled to call out to God, "Forsake me not, my God, and strengthen me. Preserve my soul,... and so on. Wherefore I would experience heartfelt joy in that regard, and thank, praise and glorify God within my spirit after grace was granted to me.

Otherwise I have no intention to speak or to deal with you other than for the honour of God and for the well-being of our poor souls. May God grant that this poor writing may serve for the best, which is my wish and prayer.

Your [servant] who loves you, and [a] God-seeking poor crippled sinner, "Johann Wiebe."

## **Document Six**

### **Letter 1903.**

Rosenort,  
August 20th, 1903

Firstly, the greeting of peace of Jesus, may peace be with you.

Beloved brethren: Upon the plea or request for help from brother Franz Hiebert regarding his friend Daniel Friesen from Russia and travelling to America, Manitoba, and whom they had wanted to send back because his eyes were not really healthy, which he throughout had not wanted, an agent had shown

him a way which went through the State of Argentina, from which it is possible to come here to Manitoba and cheap, but regarding which it now sounds like the very opposite is the case.

He had permitted himself to go this way with his wife and children in order to come here to his friends. But how deceived he now feels. They were barely able to obtain shelter for their family. And even at that, it was among such bad people, the way he writes, that it seems sorrowful to live there. Murders and deaths are so common place there that he fears to remain there with his family.

What can he do? He has no escape, no means whereby he can help himself. Therefore he now pleads so earnestly for help to his friends and they plead in turn for help from the Gemeinde. For there they are in danger for their very lives, temporally as well as spiritually, if they must remain there.

If we reflect upon the matter for ourselves, if we were the ones in this dilemma and had been led on such a false way, and could only see need and desperation everywhere before our eyes, would we not wish, and indeed, also pray, that the beloved God would also have people with compassionate hearts, who would deliver us from this devastation, and who would succeed.

Oh indeed, this is what we would wish, and we would beg for people who would want to help and who were able to do so. Undoubtedly we would thank them, but what is more, [we would thank] God above everything else, from Whom all good things come, the Father of Light.

In this intention, I invite you to gather a friendly offering, and for the village chairmen to thoroughly make everyone aware, and to handover or forward that which is voluntarily given or contributed to our Gemeinde Vorsteher F. Froese, to transmit the same for the assistance of the ones who had requested it. For God loves a willing giver.

Together with a greeting, from your Aeltester and brother in the Reinländer Gemeinde who loves you dearly. "Johann Wiebe"

Whoever wants to give something for this collection can bring it to me this week. Rosenort the 25th August, 1903, "Isaak Friesen"

A brief biography of Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1906) by Peter D. Zacharias and a number of Wiebe's shorter writings have now been published. It is hoped that this will inspire residents of the West Reserve (Reinland Stanley) and particularly members of Wiebe's family to translate and publish in both English and German, Wiebe's entire literary corpus of which at least three sermons and one letter book are known to be extent at the present time.

Publishing such a "Complete Writings of Johann Wiebe" would be an appropriate recognition of Johann Wiebe, a great man of God and undoubtedly among the most significant Mennonite leaders of the 19th century. It would also seem appropriate to honour the Old Kolony (OK) people by erecting cairns in Johann Wiebe's honour at the landing site at Fort Dufferin, as well as in his home village of Rosengart and the village of Reinland where Wiebe ministered to his flock for three decades.

# "Mitteilungen"

"Mitteilungen," by Rev. Abram P. Isaac (1852-1938), Grünfeld, Manitoba.

## Introduction.

Rev. Abram P. Isaac (1852-1938), Grünfeld, Imperial Russia, and later Grünfeld, Manitoba, Canada, was a gifted folk historian and long-time minister of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite. Abram was also one of the first teacher examiners of the Mennonite Confessional school system in 1879. See Roger Penner, *Preservings*, No. 12, June 1998, pages 69-73, for a biography and photographs.

Rev. Abram P. Isaac made an oral presentation at the 60th anniversary celebrations of the 1874 emigration, held in Steinbach, Manitoba, in 1934, August. The contents of this presentation, seemingly, are lost. But subsequently he presented a written supplement to his remarks to the book committee which published same in the book *1874/60 1935: Das 60-jährige Jubiläum der mennonitische Ost-Reserve* (Steinbach, 1934), pages 8-9. The article by Abram P. Isaac was also recently republished in German by the *Mennonitische Post*, July 16, 1999, page 5.

Like his brother Peter P. Isaac, author of the famous "Stammbuch Meiner Voreltern," Abram P. Isaac was a literate and articulate man who was undoubtedly also quite a prolific writer, especially of historical and religious writings and sermons. Unfortunately his corpus of literary work has seemingly gone lost, see bibliography below.

I believe that with the publication of this article, that all the historical material in the "60 year Jubilee" book has now been translated and published in some English language source, either in previous issues of *Preservings* or in "The Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series."

## "Mitteilungen," by Rev. A. Isaac.

"I wish to supplement my speech with a number of anecdotes from the emigration years. I was 21 years old at the time when we came from Russia; now I am 81."

"I still recall how in the sevenths decade of the previous century the clouds of tribulation became more and more ominous as they positioned themselves over our people and how oppressed many went about."

"All peoples in the Russian Empire were to be subject to military conscription and the Mennonites were to be no exception. Consequently men with a petition were sent to the Czar in St. Petersburg. But notwithstanding all their labours, they could only negotiate it to the point that forestry work could be preformed instead of military service. But regardless, we were to serve the Czar in some way. Of course, we had the free choice to emigrate, the borders were open to us."

"Now, the forestry [service] in itself was not contrary to our faith, but still—to allow the young men to serve in the forestry? It would certainly not be an education in good works for them, much more to the contrary."

"And so we decided that we would emigrate and in fact, to Manitoba. The young generation here will never know what harassing adventures we

would have to experience."

"To Manitoba! It was said, they have winter 13 months of the year. A very well-trained and highly-educated man said, we would have to be armed to the teeth because of the Indians, etc. Nevertheless, we "uneducated ones" did not allow ourselves to be scared. Through auctions we disposed of all our possessions and emigrated. The Russian authorities up to that time were still well disposed towards us, we had no complaints. Most of our co-religionists had to be given over to their fate in Russia."

"On June 4 we embarked upon a steamship on the Dnieper River and departed, though with aching hearts. We went across land and over sea and after many a stop we arrived in Moorehead."

"This is where our pioneer life actually started. We boarded a barge on the Red River that was towed by a steam boat. All our travelling by ship and railway now came to an end. There was not a single mile of railway in Manitoba at the time."

"We entered into Manitoba [travelling] along the Red River. This river was only quite small up there and we passed between two wooded banks. We were not exposed to hardly even a gust of wind, instead there were many swarms of mosquitoes."

"Oh horror! How they tortured us there. We were not used to anything of the sort. If they were so severe in Egypt as well, it was no wonder that Pharaoh's heart was softened and that he wanted to let Israel go in order to be rid of the spirits of the plagues."

"In spite all of this we made our way down the river up to Winnipeg. Here we made the necessary purchases and then we went back upstream until we were adjacent to our reserve, where immigration houses had been erected for us. Here we disembarked. No Ford autos, [like the ones] in which we picked up our recent followers from Russia from our nearby train stations, were waiting for us."

"Indeed, no! There were Red Rivers carts with only two wheels and not a piece of iron on them. Nor were they powered by gasoline at 30 to 50 miles per hour. Far more frequently an ox was hitched in front and it went forwards at two miles an hour in steady progress. It must have been a majestic sight a few years later when the Indians hitched 12 oxen one behind the other in order to transport Lord Dufferin and his consort for a short distance. This was the highest honour which could be demonstrated to the eminent guests [by them]."

"But back to the matter at hand. In such carts the pregnant women and the children were brought to the immigration houses. We men and the stronger women and girls went by foot, some four or five miles."

"After we had recuperated from the journey, which took two months, less two days, we sought out homesteads, and registered them with the government as our own. Now we saw to it on our own Wirtschaften for dwellings and hay for winter. And so we lived for the first time into a Manitoba winter 1874 – 1875."

"When spring finally arrived, we seeded some

grain, and planted potatoes and vegetables. But, Alas! When it came up, the locusts ate it all, they left nothing out. Now what? The last year in Russia we had no crop and now here the first, also nothing."

"But the noble government was not only good hearted, it was good in deed as well. It helped us out with flour, meat and white beans. And so we were able to survive."

"Locusts we did not have later anymore, only the grasshoppers in the last two to three years. But they were not as aggressive as those ones."

"And so we lived one year after the other, through all the sixty. Among those years, there was also the year 1914, when the war broke out. We remained fully spared from the war and all its aspects, whereas a number of youths from the United States came here to find refuge; meanwhile, others who remained there were forced into military service. Our government had not done such things. We are here already 60 years in this country and have never found it that way, as we had been told before hand."

"Instead we found a healthy climate and a healthy government, the like of which could not be found anywhere else. Therefore honour this government and honour the men that represent it. I salute the government in Ottawa under which we have now been able to live undisturbed and in peace for 60 years."



Rev. Abram P. Isaac  
(1852-1938),  
Schoenau, E.R.,  
(later Kleefeld,  
Manitoba).  
Photograph courtesy  
of Irene Wiebe, High  
River, Alberta/  
*Preservings*, No. 12,  
page 69.

## Bibliography of Abram P. Isaac.

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A. Isaac, "Mitteilungen" in Klaas J. B. Reimer et.al., eds., *Das 60-jährige Gedenkfeier des ersten Einwanderung von Mennoniten in Manitoba, Canada, gefeiert am 1. August 1934 in Steinbach, Manitoba* (Steinbach, Manitoba, 1935), pages 8-9.

Abram P. Isaac, "Remembrances," extracts of which are quoted by Gerhard F. Wiebe, in "Economic Development of the East Reserve," in John C. Reimer, ed., *75 Gedenkfeier der Mennonitischen Einwanderung in Manitoba, Canada, abgehalten am 8. Juli 1949 in Steinbach, Manitoba* (Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1949), pages 107-110, translated and republished in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 225-234.

## A Tale of Two Journals

## A Tale of Two Journals: The Life Worlds of Reeve Gerhard Kliewer (1836-96), Schantzenberg, and Deacon Abraham R. Reimer (1841-91), Blumenort, as revealed by their Account Journals, by Delbert F. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba.

## Introduction.

One of the features of conservative/traditional Mennonite culture was the extensive practice of journal keeping. Although only a few journals are currently extant from the Prussian and early Russian experience, the "Schriftentum" becomes a verifiable flood by the end of the 19th century. By the early 20th century journal keeping had seemingly become the domain of women, reflecting perhaps the important role they had played in the operation of the household economy in Imperial Russia and earlier and the consequent necessity of record keeping.

By the 1930s and 40s, journal keeping had declined significantly both in quantity and quality, presumably because of the forcible closure of Mennonite confessional schools in 1916-27 which were replaced with a mediocre public school system. This combined with other factors resulted in a drastic decline in literacy within the Mennonite communities of southern Manitoba, two generations barely literate in either English or German.

The point has been made that journals, at least those of landowning, middle class Mennonite farmers, were typically devoid of emotional and/or religious expression. I believe this observation is generally true. On the other hand, I have found that feelings and emotional expression among our people were frequently expressed in letter correspondence which invariably delved into the spiritual lives of the writers and the recipients.

Dr. Royden Loewen, leading Canadian social historian, has written: "The study of Mennonite diaries is a new way of looking at history" (Note One).

While examining journals may be a new way of looking at history among Mennonites, the reality is that until 20 years ago, our historiography was dominated by the Molotschna Triumphalist Pietist school, which deemed the conservative Mennonites who emigrated to Canada in the 1870s to be illiterate and landless. Recent scholarship has shown that this view had no basis in fact and that these emigrant communities were literate and middle class, typically from the Vollwirt or landowning class.

Earlier historians, caught in this inter-galactic time warp, could not—or better said, did not, find such journals and letters because their interpretative framework did not allow for their existence, a self-professing prophecy if ever there was one. Those historians who accepted the revisionist view of their own history, namely, that the 1870s pioneers were decent, intelligent, soteriologic human beings, or those, who like me were too dumb and uneducated to know better, quickly started discovering and collecting journal writings as well as letter correspondence in rich abundance.

# **Gerhard Kliewer, Schantzenberg.**

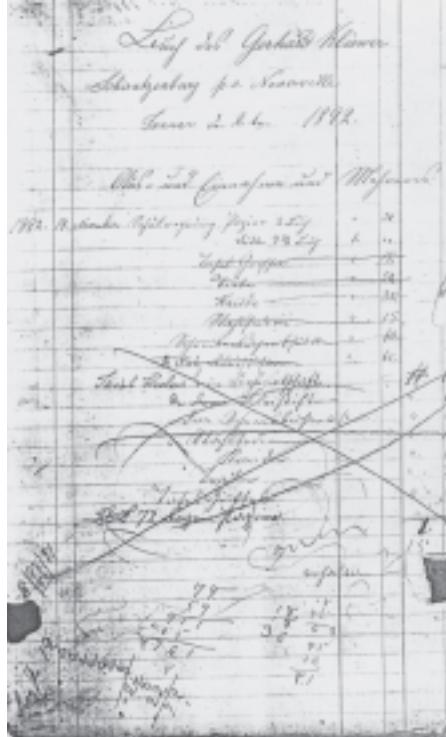
A short biography of both Gerhard Kliewer and Abraham R. Reimer will provide some context to understanding their journals and the significance of these documents to the historiography of the wider world around them. Of the two men, Gerhard Kliewer (1836-96) is the better known.

Gerhard was the son of Peter and Susanna Kliewer, Rudnerweide (Wirtschaft 35, 1835 census), Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia. In 1861 he married Helena Buhr from the Bergthal Colony where they made their home, BGB A 203a (Note Two). Gerhard was a successful entrepreneur and lived on a Chutor or landed estate, outside the colony.

In 1875 the Kliewer family immigrated to Manitoba settling one mile south of the present-day community of Niverville, in the village of Schantzenberg established by Helena's parents a year earlier. Gerhard filed a homestead application on NW 19-7-4E on October 1, 1875.

According to the 1881 census, there were 12 family units in Schantzenberg. The Gerhard Kliewer family is listed with two sons and three daughters. A Gerhard Sawatzky, age 20, was living with the family, probably a servant.

In 1881 Gerhard Kliewer became the first Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Hanover, serv-



Title page of Gerhard Kliewer's account book for 1892-96. Journal courtesy of Rev. Allan Kliewer, Steinbach. "Book of Gerhard Kliewer, Schantzenberg P.O., Niverville"

*Sample page from Gerhard Kliewer's account book for 1892-96, detailing expenditures for the steam threshing machine.*

Toews, Bergthal (later the second Reeve of Hanover) with 1700 (Brandordnung 1705), windmill owner Gerhard Schroeder, Eigenhof 1538 (later also Reeve) (Brandordnung 1600), Jakob Peters Jr., Vollwerk (son of the Oberschulz and later also Reeve) (Brandordnung 1780), and merchant Erdmann Penner, Tannenau, at 2275.

The insurance coverage of Gerhard Kliewer in the Bergthal Brandordnung 1875-83 was as follows: house 700, furniture 550, barn 350, ancillary house 45, new wagon 50, plow 15, mower 10, fanning mill 125, old wagon 30, grass mower 60, stubble plow 15, plow 15, buggy 10, barley and oats 150, total 2000.

It is clear from the 1883 assessment records that the men elected for the top leadership position as Reeve of the Municipality had typically demonstrated their competence in the operation and success of their own farming operations. Another unwritten convention was that the Kleine Gemeinde did not run for nor participate in Municipal politics, being content to leave this to their Bergthal neighbours.

Gerhard Kliewer was a prominent and respected citizen of his community even after he retired as Reeve.

In *Preservings*, No. 9, Dec 1996, Part Two, pages 66-67, Nettie Neufeld told the story of Gerhard Kliewer's, "Sermon Book", and in *Preservings*, Issue 11, pages 92-93, she added the story of his emigration account. I had always assumed that the "travelogue" came from one of Kliewer's journals. Imagine the excitement when Gerhard Kliewer's actual Passport or "Reisepass" turned up, and the German original of the travelogue was found recorded on its blank pages. The Passport was featured in *Preservings*, No. 13, page 111.

Recently family historians Ken and Claire Kliewer, Phoenix, Arizona, advised they had in their possession another devotional book once owned by Gerhard Kliewer, the *Drifaltige Schnur*, which included notations of important events and milestones of the Kliewer family. The readers will find this article in the material culture section of this issue of *Preservings*.

As was common practice among Völkert farmers, Gerhard Kliewer maintained records of his farming activities, expenses and sales. The journal for 1892 until his death is extant and provides considerable information regarding these activities and his life world (Note Three).

Slowly but surely the details of the life of Gerhard Kliewer, one of the most important pioneer leaders of Hanover Steinbach, are being teased out of the darkness of the past. At some point, all of this material should be gathered and a complete biography compiled, perhaps in a future Kliewer family history book.

Hopefully the family and community will eventually go the next step and also erect a cairn at the gravesite of this significant pioneer leader.

#### Descendants.

Gerhard Kliewer and Helena Buhr had 14 children of whom eight grew to adulthood, married and had families. Sons Gerhard B. (1867-1933), Peter B. (1872-1960) and Cornelius B. Kliewer (1884-1941) were farmers and well-known in the



*Gerhard Kliewer (1836-96) and his wife Helena Buhr (1840-1909). Gerhard Kliewer was the first Reeve of the R.M. of Hanover. The charcoal drawing is based on the photo published by Nettie Neufeld, Descendants of Peter Buhr 1816-1887 (Steinbach, 1984), page 18. Drawing courtesy of great-grandson Gary Penner, Steinbach, Manitoba.*

Niverville area. Son Gerhard took over the family homestead on NW19-7-4E.

Nephew Rev. Allan Kliewer recalls that when Gerhard B. Kliewer was 15 years old, his parents took him visiting at the Johann T. Loeppky home, NW6-7-4E, where a baby girl Anna had just been born. The story is told that Gerhard Jr. had immediately decided that this was the girl he would marry, which also came to pass 20 years later in 1902. Among the descendants of Gerhard B. Kliewer is grandson Peter K. Friesen, Niverville (see pages 71-9, *Loeppky* book).

Peter B. Kliewer married Anna T. Loeppky in 1896, the first of three siblings to marry Loeppkys. Their son George G. Kliewer was a school teacher who died in the teacherage in Blumenort, Manitoba in 1944 (see pages 359-65, *Loeppky* book)..

#### Account Books. - Editorial Note

Several types or forms of journals have been identified: the "daybook" or diary, a daily log of events, weather and/or activities; the "account book", a record of farm sales, purchases, wages and yields; the "family book" (*Familienbuch*), a genealogy usually going back to Prussia; and, the "anthology", a collection of poetry, devotional and historical writings which served as a private reference library at a time when the ownership of a Bible and a few books was an achievement (see *East Reserve 125*, page 32). Most journals consisted of some variation of the forgoing types and/or some combination of same.

The focus of this article are the account books of two prominent men in the East Reserve, Gerhard Kliewer and Abraham R. Reimer.

In 1900 daughter Sara B. Kliewer (1881-1926) married Johann H. Loeppky, Strassburg. Their daughter Elizabeth married Peter P. Toews, of Bergthal, former Councillor of the R. M. of Hanover. Sons Gerhard, Johann, Jakob, Cornelius and Peter were well-known in the Niverville Steinbach area (page 62, *Loeppky* book). Grandson Otto Kliewer, Steinbach teacher, compiled the "Johann T. Loeppky Section" of the new *Loeppky* book.

Cornelius B. Kliewer married Anna L. Friesen, daughter of Aron S. Friesen (1848-1923), Strassburg, see *Preservings*, No. 11, pages 51-53. A number of their children were resident in Steinbach, Manitoba, including former car dealer Henry F. Kliewer, Jac F. Kliewer, Rev. Allan Kliewer, Anna, Mrs. Ben H. W. Reimer, and Tina, Mrs. Joe Pennner. Her son Gary Penner is a well-known electrical contractor in Steinbach.

The story of the three Kliewer siblings who married Loeppkys is recounted in the *Loeppky* family history *Dit Sied Jant Sied*, see book review section.

Family historian Ken Kliewer, Peoria, Arizona, is a grandson of Katharina B. Kliewer (1885-1970), youngest daughter of Reeve Gerhard Kliewer. She is buried in Santa Ana, California.

#### Gerhard Kliewer's Journal.

As already mentioned, Gerhard Kliewer was a successful large scale farmer in Schantzenberg, post office Niverville. His journal opens with the entry, "January 2, 1892, income and expenses." The entry dated Nov 14, 1892, covers the purchase of a quantity of paper, ink, chalk, writing tablets, as well as a "Frohebotschaft", a German-language religious paper. This may have been a page left blank originally, and then used for this purpose later in the year.

The first entry is actually January 26, 1892, showing income of \$25.00 for the sale of a cow and \$20.00 for an ox. Feb 1, a pair of four-year-old oxen to be picked up Feb 16, \$80.00. On July 4 he sold Wilhelm Streich two cows for \$30.00. On Feb 18 he sold two oxen to Wolf for \$70.00 and one cow to Hugh Street for \$20.00.

Under expenses for 1892 is recorded the purchase of a cow calf from Peter Dück for \$2.00 and a yearling, and four calves from Peter Reimer, \$22.00.

On the next page Kliewer recorded his sales of rye:

In December with no specific dates itemized: 18 bags of feed milled, sales in Winnipeg, 9 @ 75 cents \$17.50, sold to Heinrich Gorzen 1 bag for 60 cents, to the Jew Kauen 10 bags \$10.34, and Klaas Reimer (presumably Steinbach) 15 bags \$20.23.

In February Kliewer had eight bags crushed or ground (malen) in "Tonlee" and 18 bags twice at Klaas Reimer. On March 18, he sold another bag to Kauen, a bag for free to the widow Heinrich Dueck and another bag for free to Gerh. Neufeld. On April 28, he shipped eight bags to Winnipeg, \$13.40.

Interspersed throughout the pages of the journal are running accounts with son Gerhard, presumably for wages paid, credits of payments made, charges to the account when Gerhard used feed and other supplies for his own operations. Credits were recorded when son Gerhard sold various produce and made payments on account.

Towards the rear of the journal an entry was recorded for Nov. 10, 1890, that son Gerhard was engaged (employed) for a year, with cash wages of \$125.00 plus clothes and tobacco. The opening entry for 1892, shows Gerhard with a credit of \$94.00. There is a further credit of \$2.50 "from the turkeys" and another 60 cents for "posting a letter." After various credits including "1 package of tobacco, 13 pieces of lumber, the purchase of a kerchief from Kauen, and Karison (presumably kerosene), the balance comes down to \$69.31.

The following page is a record for wheat and flax sales totalling \$657.67 with a sub-account for wheat sales of son Gerhard amounting to \$75.51, as well as a precise record of various amounts due to Gerhard. These transactions reflected a traditional arrangement among Mennonite "Vollwirt" farmers where adult sons would work for their father, receiving a crop share as wages or some combination thereof. The myriad of financial detail involved was always carefully and meticulously documented.

The next page covers purchases of farm machinery and supplies. Dec 8, 1891, a two-bottom plow from Massäy Co. Wpg, \$82.00; for [son] Gerhard, wagon and harness, \$118.00; bindegarn (binder twine) from Massäy Co. 300 lb. \$48.40, and from Isaac Rosen 50 lb. \$7.50.

Dec 11, to Jakob Doerksem, Schöntal, threshing money \$92.67; a sewing machine \$34.35, Dec 13 - Joh. Neufeld, Schöntal, oxen \$80.00, Dec 10 - for Gerhard at Peter Groening Schöntal, \$8.90, taxes in Schöntal \$11.20, Dec 18- Peter in Winnipeg for flour and many other things \$18.35,

a suit for Peter, Dec 20 - for Christmas \$7.40, Dec 25 - Anna for the bed,...Jan 1, New Year's present for the boys,...Jan 30 - Peter Groening, Schöntal, tobacco and much else \$21.12, Feb 2 - to the Jew for pen and much else \$7.00, 3 geese \$4.00, and calf leather \$1.00. Feb 1, firewood 2 Klaft (a mea-

alcohol, and a sausage machine. Son Gerhard receives \$2.00 for driving to Steinbach, where he purchases a load of lumber for his father paying out \$44.26, credited to his account.

On the next page Gerhard Kliewer Sr. details his Brandordnung (fire insurance) coverage as of 1894, \$500.00 for dwelling house, \$200.00 for the cattle barn, \$30.00 for "nebenhaus", a small cottage which larger farmers often had on their yard for use by married children and refugees, pig barn \$15.00, grainery \$250.00, a large wagon and a buggy for \$55.00 for a total coverage of \$1500.00.

When compared with 1883 assessments, it is evident that Gerhard has downsized his farming operations, presumably with a considerable portion having been passed over to son Gerhard.

What is also evident from the account book is that Gerhard Kliewer deals routinely with a wide variety of neighbours. This would also be consistent with earlier experience in Imperial Russia, where Bergthalers and Kleine Gemeinders (who by the 1860s were living outside the solid territorial enclaves of the mother colonies) had daily interactions with a wide range of ethnic and cultural groups: Jewish pedlars, Gypsies, Russian administrators, Ukrainian servants and maids, ethnic German and other Colonists, and various indigenous peoples.

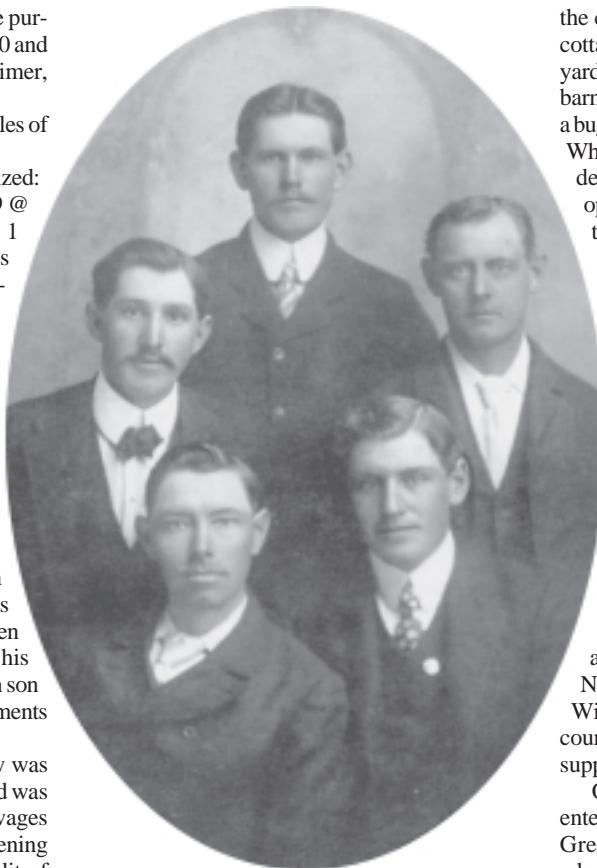
In May, for example, Gerhard Kliewer sells hay to English neighbours, Wallace and Grand and John Wittick, an ethnic German, all from Niverville. In September Gerhard employed Wilhelm Streich, and later Ludwig. Detailed accounts were maintained as servants took various supplies on account of their wages.

On September 12, 1892, Gerhard Kliewer entered into an arrangement with Jakob Friesen, Gretna, formerly a neighbour in Strassberg, whereby Kliewer agreed to sell flour for Friesen. Kliewer was to receive 23 cents per bag for his efforts and Friesen agreed to advertise on Kliewer's behalf in the Nordwesten. Gerhard's customers included Mennonites far away as Corn. Stoesz, Blumstein and Peter Krahn, Grünthal, and Kleine Gemeinders Jakob Dück, Grünfeld and Jakob Barkman and Abr. Kornelsen in Heuboden, and Abr. Friesen and Plett, Steinbach. But it also included Jewish neighbours such as farmer Moses Goldstein and Herka Bolcklaffig, Anglo-Canadians John Thursch, G. Defo, Smith, John Wiede, Marsh, Hugh Street, Schale Harrison and Jakob Armstrong, and ethnic Germans such as John Wittig and Wilh. Streich.

In July of 1892 Gerhard detailed the expenditures for "threshing machine", which included hiring a carpenter, Gerh. Sawatzky for building a "box". He paid \$19.00 freight for shipping the machine by rail and 35 cents for schnaps and a tip (schmear geld), presumably to workers assisting in the unloading.

On Oct 4, 1892, Gerhard Kliewer entered into a lease arrangement with Wilhelm Streich, whereby Streich rented "four places" for \$50.00 annually for three years, plus all taxes and statute labour.

On March 18, 1895 Gerhard sold his horse rake to Heinrich and Peter Wiebe, Chortitz for \$18.00 payable January 1896 without interest. He also sold a mare to Johann Friesen, Strassburg,



1900 Kliewer cousins: front, and then counter clockwise, Peter B. Kliewer; Cornelius B. Kliewer; Gerhard B. Kliewer, sons of Gerhard Kliewer, and cousins Peter and John Kliewer. Photo courtesy of Nettie Neufeld, Descendants of Peter Buhr, page 27.

surement like a cord) \$4.00, to Klaas Reimer for wares.

A curious item on Feb 9, which I cannot quite decipher, "for two students carrying, "den hängsten manren" resident in Morris. possibly a payment for some students, or possibly related to a "Hängst", or stud horse.

On March 6, purchase of garden seed, two pair of shoes, and two suits in Winnipeg. March 23, to Gerhard Neufeld blacksmithing \$7.00. On May 18, a pump from Peter Penner \$12.00. June 3, Peter Reimer, Grünfeld, for fixing a shoe \$5.40, June 1, for the Nordwesten \$2.00. August 6, at the Exhibition in Winnipeg, \$7.90, Nov 21, paid in insurance money at Aron Friesen \$8.50.

Gerhard Kliewer employed various servants. Nov 21 paid wages to Streich \$40.00, to Emanuel Wolf for work \$28.00. On Nov 19, he engaged Jakob Kroeker at \$3.00 per month.

Next follows another page detailing the running account with son Gerhard who now owes \$89.00. The two men have close relationship even trading items such as tobacco, wine and a bottle of

\$25.00 without interest for one year, "the stud must pay for himself from his preformance".

On September 10, 1893 Gerhard Kliewer recorded the details of the harvest, 1156 bushels of wheat, 742 bushels of oats, 174 bushels of barley, 136 bushels of rye, total 2208 bushels. Gerhard paid out \$90.10 in wages for the threshing including six labourers \$19.80, Jakob Krahm for two men \$6.60, Gerhard Sawatzky \$2.30, and \$61.66 for the threshing.

On Nov. 10, 1893, Gerhard Kliewer recorded the sale of a mare to Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe, Chortitz, for \$50.00 without foal and with foal 75.00. On October 30, 1894, Gerhard Wiebe paid the account with \$50.00 cash.

On January 15, he paid Stanislaus Bömer \$25.15.

In 1895 the harvest was as follows: wheat - at home 862 bu., by Wittick 584 bushel, oats 888 bu., and barley 268 bu.

In 1896 Gerhard Kliewer built a new residence, detailing expenditures in his journal totaling \$589.54. He purchased a considerable quantity of building materials from Klaas Reimer and Heinrich W. Reimer, Steinbach.

For those readers from the Niverville area interested in family history, it is noted that the journal also recorded dealings with most of Gerhard's Bergthal/Chortitzer neighbours in Schantzenburg.



*Gerhard's Kliewer's home built in 1896. Photo courtesy of Nettie Neufeld, Descendants of Peter Buhr 1816-1887, page 21. John K. Friesen, a great grandson of Gerhard Kliewer Jr, is currently living in this property, NW19-7-4E.*



*Gerhard's Kliewer's home built in 1896. Photo courtesy of Dit Sied Jant Sied, page 71. Another view.*

## Abraham R. Reimer, Blumenort.

Only little has been written or published about Abraham R. Reimer (1841-91), the author of the other account book (Note Four). Therefore his biography will be more detailed than that of Kliewer.

Abraham was born in Rosenort, Molotschna, Imperial Russia, son of Abraham F. Reimer and midwife Elisabeth Rempel Reimer. The family was poor and often in receipt of financial support from the Kleine Gemeinde, the reason being fairly obvious from his father's nickname, "Fuela" or lazy Reimer.

As young lads Abraham and older brother Klaas were apprenticed as blacksmiths, a trade both pursued with considerable success.

On June 11, 1860, Abraham married Helena Poetger (1841-66). Little is known about her family, but evidently her background was not from the Kleine Gemeinde. Helena died in August of 1866 and on October 14, Abraham married for the second time to Maria R. Reimer (1847-1916), daughter of Heinrich Reimer (1818-76), Muntau, Molotschna, and later Blumenhof, Manitoba.

Maria's mother, Heinrich Reimer's second wife, was Helena Friesen (1823-59), sister of Johann Friesen (1808-72), Neukirch, third

Aeltester of the Kleine Gemeinde. This meant that Abraham married for the second time to his second cousin through the von Riesen/Friesen side, the single most important family in the Kleine Gemeinde.

In 1857, Abraham, brother Klaas and parents moved to Kleefeld, Molotschna. Here Abraham, and also Klaas, started as Anwohner, opening their own blacksmith shops. In 1863 the two brothers and their parents moved to rented land at Markuslandt (Andreasfeld) near the Old Chortitz Colony. At this point, Abraham parted ways with his siblings and parents who soon moved again to Steinbach, Borosenko, while Abraham moved to Blumenhoff, Borosenko, where his wife's parents lived.

### Emigration, 1874.

In 1874 the Reimer family, including Abraham, immigrated to America, settling in Blumenort, Manitoba. His parents, Abraham "Fuela" Reimer and midwife Elisabeth Rempel Reimer settled on a small home on Abraham's yard.

By now he was a successful farmer and blacksmith. Abraham apparently purchased a blacksmith business from his step-father-in-law Johann L. Plett, Blumenhof, Manitoba, in 1879, possibly one of the first documented business transactions on the East Reserve. Abraham maintained an "Account Book" in which he recorded details of his blacksmith business in subsequent years.

An indication of the extent of Abraham Reimer's farming operations are found in his father's journals for 1879: Saturday, August 9, 1879, "Abraham Reimer hauled 30 loads of oats home" (page 107); Thursday, August 14, 1879, "Abraham Reimer measured out the hay. They went 52 times--all told about 43 loads of hay" (page 107); and Thursday, September 18, "From 35 acres he [Abraham R. Reimer] received 216 bushels wheat and from 7 acres barley it gave 100 bushels and from 11 acres of oats, seeded actually only from 6 acres, he received 146 bushels" (page 112), courtesy Loewen, *From the Inside Out*.

### Municipal Service, 1880-81.

According to his father's journals Abraham represented his village of Blumenort at Municipal meetings in Chortitz, probably indicating that he served as Schulz or village mayor.

On May 9, 1880, 8:30 a.m. Abraham Reimer went to Chortitz for a discussion. The Aeltester and all Bergthal ministers and the six elected for the land concerns were there. Abraham Reimer left a 3 p.m. for home. On Thursday, June 24, at 6 a.m. Abraham Reimer [left] with his spring buggy and one horse to Chortitz for a meeting regarding drainage ditches. On Wednesday, September 22, Abraham Reimer received word in the morning to come to Chortitz to attend a meeting. Thursday, September 23, Abraham Reimer went at 7 a.m. to Chortitz to the conference. Someone from the Gebietsamtglieder (Councillors) checked the villages, including our villages, to tax the land and the cattle and set a price. September 24, Abraham Reimer came here from Chortitz at 4:30 p.m.

On October 19, 1880, Abraham Reimer was to attend another meeting in Chortitz but was unable to as "he was lying down sick with the old ailment." He attended in Chortitz again on November 18 and December 24. On January 7, 1881, Abraham Reimer and "the Schulzes" (the village mayors) went to Chortitz for a meeting. Abraham Reimer attended these meetings through to the end of 1881.

## Farm Operation, 1883.

Abraham R. Reimer was a large-scale farmer. He owned three quarters of land in 1883, 480 acres. This had increased to 640 with 59 acres cultivated by 1889. 17 years later, Abraham's widow was still assessed at 1795, the fifth highest in the village, showing that Maria had successfully continued the farming operation together with her younger sons.

## Character.

According to grandson Rev. Abe Unger, "Abraham R. Reimer was a man of strong character, who was 'not carried about with divers and strange doctrines.' His yea was yea and his nay was nay. In this atmosphere of strictness and order their family was trained in the fear and admonition of the Lord" (Note Five).

Abraham R. Reimer was elected a deacon of the Kleine Gemeinde on January 21, 1883 in the aftermath of the Holdeman division the preceding year. Abe Unger writes, "He accepted this call as from the Lord and displayed the same thoroughness and order in the discharge of his duties as a deacon, as he did in his domestic duties. James 1:27 was strictly observed in that the fatherless and widows were regularly visited in their affliction and their needs attended to....In his church work as well as other duties he worked in close harmony with his brother Peter who was a minister and several years younger."

It is said that Abraham was "...a man of strong character and convictions but he was also a strong man physically. It is reported that he delivered a wagon to a customer living at the other end of the village, carrying the wagon on his back. The wagon weighed 600 pounds."

Perhaps one of the secrets of the financial success enjoyed by both Abraham and brother Klaas, was their intuitive understanding of human nature which they successfully applied in their entrepreneurial endeavours. The story is told that one of Abraham's employees was a "trustworthy and willing worker until one day in Abraham's absence he was placed at the head of the table for the noon meal. Occupying this place of honour affected the servant adversely and ...[Abraham] soon noticed that his loyalty and service were not as in former days....One day when both master and servant were working side by side in the blacksmith shop, Abraham was busy and bid his servant to place the anvil upon the workbench. The servant tried hard but the anvil was too heavy and he was unable to lift it. Whereupon,...[Abraham] with his one free hand, lifted the heavy anvil and placed it upon the bench. After this incident, the loyalty and respect of the servant towards his master were again restored."

Hundreds of entries regarding the life of

Abraham R. Reimer can be found in the journals of his father Abraham "Fuela" Reimer.

Letter, 1891.

A letter written to Aeltester Jakob M. Kroeker, Rosenhof, on May 6, 1891, shortly before Abraham R. Reimer's death illuminates his humble yet devout nature.

"Since I am presently unable to work much, because I have a sore leg--possibly arthritis, love inspires me to write you a short note. I hope that you will forgive me for my imperfect [writing], for I do not know that I have otherwise ever written you. Although my pain is not severe, I can nevertheless feel that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

"Indeed, this results in love towards God and one's neighbour. I feel the grace at the present time, but [I say so] not out of [self] reputation. When I come before God I feel I have nothing of myself to show, other and only that He might be gracious unto me, poor one, and even if I miserable wretch will only be accepted prostrated [before Him]. Indeed, Sirach writes, when we have done everything from our part we are still deficient by far.

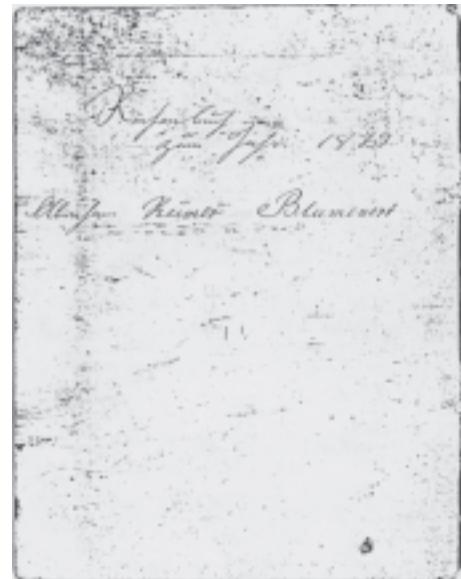
"How often our conscience reminds us, I should have done things differently, so that I must lament with the poet, "Allas, my sins a thousand fold, cause me pain and worry untold, which only Thy great faithfulness can erase."

"Indeed, I as the least significant one, but nevertheless, one who is to help in the work of the vineyard, although I can hardly regard myself as such a one, having received only so little from the Lord; nevertheless we are to remain faithful [even] with the little."

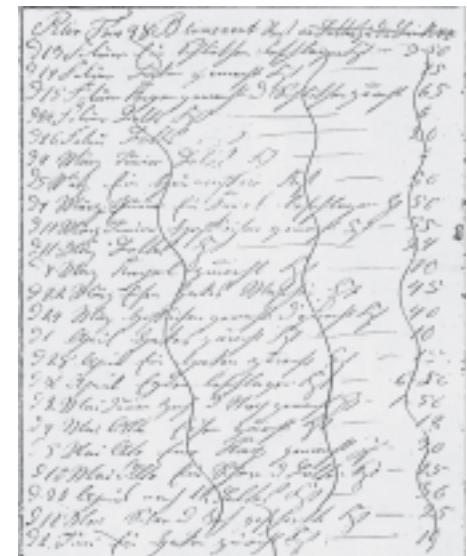
"Alas, for so often only nakedness and laziness comes in between, as is the case when I think about you. Any difficulty [matter] will come calling for you, for you are the one placed before the aperture, and the enemy is not otherwise minded than to tear everything apart, for Satan knows that he has only little time, and his intentions are that not one stone shall remain upon the other, and this even if it causes him much exertion. Indeed, I or we are among those who have not nearly sufficiently enough come to your aid, for once the work is completed the errors become more apparent. For then [your detractors say] it should have been done in a different way, and the other thing yet differently. And sometimes as well those not actually engaged in the work [think they] can see it more clearly. But I have the confidence in you that you have always sought what was best."

"I must also report to you that a certain Dalke wishes to join our Gemeinde, but since I do not know if anyone of the Ohms has written you about it, I will report thereon. It is Abraham Kornelsen's aged in-law. He, Kornelsen, has also asked with the Peters Gemeinde. Peters had only given him a poor testimony that he had engaged in questionable dealings which brought about indebtedness. This resulted in his being spoken to [by the Ohms], whereupon he renounced the Gemeinde."

"But according to the way he talks, he is sorry about everything, and when one observes him, he looks like a man of good intentions. But it is unfortunate, for forthwith after the request he had



*Title page from the Abraham R. Reimer Account Book "for the year". The journal is courtesy of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference Archives, 440 Main Street, Steinbach, Manitoba.*



*Sample page from the Abraham R. Reimer Account Book, showing his running account with Alte Peter W. Toews (1831-1922), also known as "Gross Fooda" Toews, the patriarch of the Greenland settlement.*

asked about marriage with the widow Thiessen. I have written you about this but you may already know everything in detail."

"Indeed, I wanted to also write you something, but as already mentioned above, [I have] done so out of love, and [hopefully] you will forgive me for that which you do not approve, for during the last while I have read many a letter which was not appealing to me and among which my own are also to be counted."

"I do not know for this time what to report to you further, other than our temporal circumstances. We in our family are in good health, our mother in only weak, and as far as I know, the rest of our friends and siblings are also well with the exception of the aged Schellenbergs, they are very sickly,



*Klaas P. Reimer (1864-1937), son of Abraham R. Reimer (1841-91), blacksmith and large-scale farmer, Blumenort. He was the father of Elizabeth K. Reimer, Mrs. Peter K. Penner, founder of "Penner International", Steinbach. Photo courtesy of Blumenort, page 303.*

he has arthritis. The seeding is almost finished. If it shall be the will of the Lord we are planning to come and visit you after the seeding time."

"Greet all the Ohms from us and also receive a heartfelt greeting from us," Abraham Reimers, Blumenort, May 8, 1891."

This letter was faithfully recorded by wife Maria who compiled a collection of family writings for her children (Note Six).

#### Death 1891.

Tragically Abraham died on May 25, only a little over two weeks after writing the forgoing letter. Father Abraham "Fuela" Reimer described his son's death in a letter written July 13, 1892:

"For three or four weeks before he died . . . he had a sore leg so that he could barely walk but it improved enough that he could walk . . . to the blacksmith shop and one Friday he drove along to Steinbach to bring a load of grain to the steam mill and he even climbed the stairs into the mill all by himself and also came home in good health."

"But after he went to sleep he got sick and the next day, Saturday, Johann Reimer sent his son-in-law for a doctor . . . who came and gave him some drops which did not help and maybe even made it worse. By now he could no longer get up, and during the night he got very sick . . . and Monday he was very sick so that there was no thought among any of the adults or children of going to bed. From 11 P.M. the sickness got worse and from around 11 until 12 o'clock he suffered great pain in his chest so that he hardly knew what to do

with himself. But at 12 midnight his soul departed from this world."

#### Descendants.

The descendants of Abraham R. Reimer numbered about 4000 in 1986. Oldest son Abraham P. Reimer moved to Steinbach where he was known as "Brandt" Reimer, see *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, pages 53-55. Son Klaas P. Reimer was a large-scale farmer in Blumenort and his daughter Elizabeth married Peter K. Penner, founder of "Penner International" a national trucking firm in Steinbach. Another son Heinrich R. Reimer was a teacher and minister of the Kleine Gemeinde in Landmark, Doris Penner, *Preservings*, No. 8, Part Two, page 58, and Hulda Plett, *Preservings*, No.



*Isaac R. Reimer (1884-1966) married Sarah K. Plett, daughter of David L. Plett, Blumenhof. Isaac and his family lived in Landmark. Sid Reimer of Lakeview Insurance is a grandson. Another well known descendant of deacon Abraham R. Reimer is grandson Emile Reimer, broiler farmer in Blumenort, son of Aron R. Reimer (1885-1953), youngest son of Abraham. Also well-known are Emile's nephews Reg and Gary Reimer of Reimer Farm Supplies, Steinbach. Photo courtesy of Plett Picture Book, page 119.*

13, page 117. Son Peter R. Reimer was the great-grandfather of Dwight Reimer, Steinbach City Councillor. Daughter Elisabeth married Johann F. Reimer, see *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 104-108.

Daughter Magaretha married Jakob G. Barkman (1882-1955) and lived in Blumenort where their sons Abraham, Jakob and Henry J. R. Barkman were well-known. Another daughter Katharina Reimer (1880-1941) married Peter F. Unger, Blumenhof, see David Unger article elsewhere in this issue for a photograph.

#### The Journal 1879.

The journal is titled, "Rechenbuch zum Jahr 1879 Abraham Reimer Blumenort" (Account book, for the year 1879 Abraham Reimer, Blumenort). A second journal covers a period from roughly 1886 to 1889. This article will refer mainly to the older document.

This first and most extensive portion of the journal is essentially a page by page record of Abraham Reimer's business dealings, mainly blacksmith work, performed for his neighbours in the villages of Blumenort, Blumenhof and Neuanlage.

His first customer was Johann L. Plett (1855-1900), Blumenhof, one of the most successful farmers in Hanover Steinbach for much of the 1880s and '90s. Plett was also Reimer's step-father-in-law since he had married Margaretha L. Warkentin (1841-1913) third wife and widow of Heinrich Reimer (1818-76), the father of Abraham's second wife.

Obviously gifted at organization, Reimer even included an index in the account book, listing some 40 customers, some with two pages of entries. Accordingly the account book, like that of Kiewer, serves as a source of information for those researching the history of families from the immediate area.

In other cases, the information found in Reimer's journals will allow family historians to track business developments such as in the C. S. Plett family. At a certain point, July 9, 1884 to be



*Mrs. Klaas F. Penner, nee Maria R. Reimer (1878-1950), daughter of Abraham R. Reimer. She and her family emigrated to Mexico in 1948, from where several of her children moved to Belize ten years later. Maria's descendants include numerous ministers and others active in the Church of God. Photo courtesy of Quellen Colony, page 27. See *Preservings*, No. 13, page 128, for review of Klaas F. and Maria Penner family book by Frieda Thiessen. The Menno Penner, recently kidnapped in Belize, is a grandson of Klaas F. and Maria Penner.*

exact, Reimer's journal reveals that Plett's sons David and Jakob L. Plett are charging repairs to their father's account, indicating that they are now farming in partnership with their father.

But the real interest, for the purpose of this article, is the back portion of Reimer's journal in which he recorded items of more miscellaneous interest, and which like the Kliewer journal, reflect the extent of Reimer's business dealings in the surrounding neighbourhood.

Of particular interest are the details of numerous loans which Reimer made to his various customers and family. Like Kliewer, Reimer recorded details of financial dealings between himself, his mother, siblings and children. Of some interest was Abraham's loan in 1884 to his mother, the indomitable Elisabeth Rempel Reimer, of \$17.00 which she repaid by April 1, 1886. The journal documents numerous loans to Reimer's children, and repayments made. On November 12, 1885, Abraham settled accounts with son Abraham (later known as "Brandt" Reimer), with a balance left owing of \$286.55

Even neighbour Johann Broeski, who singlehandedly took up half the agenda at Kleine Gemeinde brotherhood meetings during the 1880s because of what appeared to be a protracted situation of spousal abuse and marital problems, rated a loan of \$85.00 on July 18, 1885. As deacon Reimer also kept his eye on various monies owing to the widow Peter Penner, keeping track of loans owing by Isaac Loewen, Gnadenort, and the "old" Cornelius Friesen, Blumenort. On June 25, 1884, Reimer lent the "Alte" Peter Toews, Blumenort, the sum of \$25.00 and on the same day, he lent the village herdsman, Klassen, a Bergthaler, \$8.00.

But Reimer's dealings go far beyond family and customers in his home villages. He lent money to co-religionists in Rosenort or Scratching River as it was then called. On March 17, 1886, Reimer lent \$75.00 to Peter Kroeker, Scratching River. In April 1886, Reimer recorded a balance of 65 cents owing for coulters by Franz Froese, "Genseit" or Scratching River. On July 18, he made shingles for Siemens.

In 1884 Reimer lent \$87.00 to Peter Dück and an undisclosed sum to Rev. Peter Bärg, Grünfeld, and a \$100.00 to fellow deacon Abraham Kornelsen, Heuboden. On October 18, 1883, he repaired a grass mower for Heinrich Brandt, Steinbach, for 45 cents. Even "Alte" Cornelius Loewen, Steinbach, had some repairs done on June 3, 1884, for 25 cents. Other Steinbach names recorded are Jakob Barkman, Peter Barkman, Jakob Friesen, Johann Friesen, Johann Reimer, Holdeman minister Wilhelm Giesbrecht and even wealthy Vollwirt Franz Kroeker.

Even successful brother-in-law Abraham Friesen, Steinbach, comes for a loan of \$50.00 in February of 1885, as did another wealthy neighbour, the Alte Koop, Neuanlage, on March 28, 1885, borrowing \$20.00. Likewise benefiting was brother-in-law Abraham Penner, Blumenort, with a loan of \$8.00 on November 6, 1883.

Abraham R. Reimer was also a grain merchant of sorts, selling grain to his customers. He also provided loans in kind, such as various quantities

of grain and produce. On March 1, 1881, Reimer sold 51 bushels of wheat to Jakob Dück, Grünfeld.

Like Kliewer, Reimer had extensive dealings with his "English" neighbours. To the Mennonites the term English meant Anglo-Manitobans, including people of Scottish, Irish and English background. On February 2, 1883, he sold John Carlton, spike nails for 35 cents. Carlton was a frequent customer at the Reimer's blacksmithy over the years. On October 4, 1884, Reimer sharpened a plow share for Tomelsen for 40 cents and on September 14, for Slater for 20 cents. On February 4, 1886, Reimer made "streich" for Caho. On March 7 he sharpened hoes for Mackentier.

### Conclusion.

One might well ask, why an article about two account books? Isn't that about as boring as anything on earth? Dr. Royden Loewen has already illustrated the myriad of detail about pioneer life which can be gleaned from journals (Note Seven). Who did they hire and/or do business with? what type of goods or produce did they sell or purchase?

The two account books in question reveal much about the life world of the two men, their families, villages, and church communities. Of interest in all East Reserve journals is the way certain English and French loan words are adopted into the local lingua fauna, and the slight reconstruction necessary to fit them into the vernacular of the diarists. Sometimes these reconstructions are rooted in the common origins of the Low German and English language in Nether or Lower Saxony.

Some contrasts and comparisons emerge from the two journals in question. Both men originated from the Molotschna, although Gerhard Kliewer, became a member of the Bergthaler community, and Abraham R. Reimer, belonged to the

Kleine Gemeinde. The expanse of their lives is comparable--one born in 1836 the other 1841, Reimer died in 1891, Kliewer in 1896. Both men served in the public sphere, Kliewer in municipal politics and Reimer in ecclesiastical office. One lived on the western periphery of the Reserve, the other on the east. Kliewer's journal represents that of a successful farmer in the best of the Prussian "Musterwirt" tradition. Reimer's journal is that of a blacksmith and entrepreneur, a manifestation of the Dutch/Low German merchant mentality.

Of the two men, Kliewer seems to cross more cultural boundaries, possibly because he was born in the Molotschna and comfortable in dealing with Kleine Gemeinders such as Klaas Reimer and sons, Steinbach, who also originated in the Molotschna. On the other hand, two of Klaas Reimer's sons had married Bergthaler women, which may have helped to position the family to conduct business with the Bergthaler. While Abraham dealt with a similar range of cultural groups, merchants and suppliers, as can be demonstrated from the journals of his father "Fuela" Reima, his business trade was related more to the Kleine Gemeinde alibet, in places as far afield as Steinbach, Grünfeld and Rosenort, with the exception of Anglo-Canadians in the local Clearsprings settlement.

The tale of two journals by Gerhard Kliewer and Abraham R. Reimer speaks for the story of pioneer agri-business in southern Manitoba. The two journals are representative of Hanover Steinbach and its two founding peoples. As such they stand and can be studied as types or models of this genre of journaling.

### Endnotes:

Note One: Royden Loewen, "Chortitzer Diaries

## East to West Reserve Migration, 1879 to 1881

The following letter appeared in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* on May 15, 1881 concerning the migration of many Mennonites from the East Reserve in Manitoba to the West Reserve.

Edenburg, Manitoba  
P.O. Emerson,  
April 25th, 1881

As the *Rundschau* previously reported, a migration of Mennonites from the so-called East Reserve to the West Reserve has occurred and I feel obliged to explain the reason why.

After grasshoppers had completely destroyed the 1875 crop on the East Reserve, there was still some optimism for the next year since grasshoppers had not laid eggs. However, the following year excessive rainfall destroyed half the crop. Excessive rain reduced the 1877 crop to the point where many families did not harvest enough for their own requirements, and many observant individuals despaired of prospects for improved conditions. Rainfall in 1878 was even more severe than in any of the previous years, and several settlers decided to move to higher grounds in the West

Reserve while others strongly urged people to stay.

1879 was again extremely wet. Dikes were constructed and ditches dug, but the dikes broke and the ditches were far from adequate to carry off flood water. Now there was no stemming the determination to move. The urge to move was further intensified when the frozen pools of water and the 1879-1880 spring thaw left many fields a literal sea.

To date, 350 of 500 families have moved, a few going to the United States.

What 1881 holds in store for the East Reserve is hidden but the prospects are not at all promising.

This, dear reader, has been our fate but thanks to the giver of good things our Ontario brethren came to our aid. May God richly reward their acts of love.

Correspondent, W.B. (Translated from the original German by Wm. J. Kehler.)

Courtesy of Jake Peters and Elmer Heinrichs, editors, *Dit Sie Jant Sied: The Johann & Susana Leppky/Loeppy Family 1831-1998* (Rosenort, 1999), page 166.

of the East Reserve 1874-1930," *Preservings*, No. 12, pages 1-5.

Note Two: Nettie Neufeld, *Descendants of Peter Buhr 1816-1887* (Steinbach, 1984), pages 18-27. Note Three: Family members and readers are indebted to Rev. Allan Kliewer, Steinbach, who perserved the Gerhard Kliewer Account Journal for all these years.

Note Four: This account book is already referred to in Royden Loewen, *Blumenort* (Blumenort, 1983), pages 137-9.

Note Five: Abe Unger, "Biography of Abraham R. Reimer," in Abe C. R. Reimer, ed., *Abraham R. Reimer 1841-1891 Family Book* (Blumenort, 1986), page 3, reprinted from John C. Reimer, ed., *Familienregister...Klaas und Helena Reimer* (Steinbach, 1958), pages 113-116.

Note Six: Abraham R. Reimer, letter to Aeltester Jakob Kroeker, May 8, 1891, in Maria F. Reimer, "Journal," unpublished scribbler, 80 pages, courtesy of Mrs. Peter K. Penner, Steinbach, Manitoba, 1981.

Note Seven: Royden Loewen, *From the Inside Out: The Rural Worlds of Mennonite Diarists 1863 to 1929* (Winnipeg, 1999), 400 pages.

#### Errata

We welcome and encourage readers to take the time to draw errors and omissions to our attention. This can be done by a letter or fax to the editor (1-204-326-6917), or else a phone call to myself (1-204-326-6454). If you want to write but do not want your letter published, please so indicate. We will try to publish as many letters as we can. We appreciate any and all assistance with corrections and clarifications as this is critical to the process of documenting our history.

1) The date of birth and death for Johann P. Thiessen, Nebraska State Senator, *Preservings*, No. 14, page 82, were incorrectly given as 1852 to 1920. The correct dates are 1838 to 1926. Courtesy of a telephone call from Dick P. Loewen, Blumenort, Manitoba, September 13, 1999.

2) The caption with the photo of Abram Wolfe and his family in *Preservings*, No. 14, page 103, requested information about this family. David K. Reimer, Seymour, Texas, machinery dealer, advises that Abram Wolfe was the "doctor" among

the Old Kolony Mennonites in Mexico during the early years. He had only one arm. His son Isaak, standing at the right side of the photograph later moved to Jagueyes, Mexico, where he served as photographer for passport photos. Some of his daughters married into the Kleine Gemeinde: Tina Wolfe married Almon Plett, Mary Wolfe married Anton Plett, and Elizabeth Wolfe married David K. Reimer, and all three couples lived in Spanish Lookout, Belize. Hopefully Tina Plett can send us more information about her grandfather Abram Wolfe. I assume he is the one listed at 232-2 of the *Reinlander Gemeinde Buch*, page 266.



Abram Wolfe, 1922.  
From *Preservings*,  
No. 14, page 103.

#### Notice to Subscribers.

If you are no longer interested in receiving *Preservings*, or if you have moved and your mailing address has changed, please drop us a line.

#### Notice to Subscribers.

The annual HSHS membership/subscription fee for *Preservings* has been increased to \$20.00 effective January 1, 1998. This increase is made with the intention of bringing the subscription/membership fee into line with printing and mailing costs of our news-magazine.

#### Coming in Future Issues:

Our featured material culture article for our June, 2000, Issue 16, will be by Dr. Wesley Berg, University of Alberta, on the beautiful and historic "Singing tradition of Old Kolony Mennonites."

We are also looking forward to Peter Letkeman's article, "A Tale of Two Gesangbücher," the story of the Gesangbuch, hopefully our featured material culture article in the No. 17, December, 2000 issue.

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# The Mennonite Music Tradition

The Mennonite pioneers who came to Manitoba 125 years ago had a proud indigenous music tradition.

The songbook of the Russian Mennonites was the *Gesangbuch* compiled in Prussia in the 1780s, a collection of 220 songs taken from old Dutch Mennonite hymnals and translated into German and another 300 songs borrowed from the Lutheran Pietist tradition. Many of the old Dutch lyrics were written by the martyrs as they awaited execution.

For conservative Mennonites, music had a specific, evocative role in worship - to praise God and to edify the worshipers. Their Anabaptist tradition, dating back hundreds of years to Prussia and the Netherlands, consisted of a cappella congregational singing in unison.

Conservative Mennonites also sang Plautdietsch folk songs dealing with tragedy and humour as well as nursery rhymes which mothers sang to their children at bed time. Many of the songs in this important tradition were collected by Doreen Klassen in her book, *Singing Mennonites*.

In traditional communities, young people enjoyed dancing to jigs and polkas accompanied by folk bands using instruments such as the guitar, violin and accordian. Parents and children together enjoyed good fellowship, food and music at barn dances held to celebrate weddings and other events. A form of this folk music is undergoing a revival among modern Mennonites with groups such as "Heischraitje & Willa Honich" [Locusts and Wild Honey].

During the 1860s a new style of singing was introduced among the Mennonites in Russia using the Heinrich Frantz, *Coralbuch*, based on numbered melodys called "Ziffern". This caused controversy and when the Mennonites arrived in Manitoba some tried to set back the "musical" clock by reintroducing the "long note" - a slow, strident and embellished manner of singing. The long note singing style is still enjoyed by many conservative Mennonites in Manitoba, northern Alberta, Mexico, Belize, Paraguay and Bolivia.

In southern Manitoba the new style of singing and the introduction of choral singing was bought forward by men such as Jacob Hoeppner and H.H. Ewert., J.A. Kroeker and J.M. Elias.

The coming of new emigrants from Russia in the mid-1920s brought further cultural, religious and economic change. They brought with them a choral and instrumental tradition that had been flourishing in Russia since the late 1880s.

Prominant musical leaders among the new "Russlaender" who settled in Manitoba included Franz C.Thiessen, K.H. Neufeld and John Konrad - all of whom had received their musical training in Russia. Thiessen was the first to perform large-scale oratorios with Mennonite choirs, including Mendelssohn's "St. Paul" and

Romberg's "Das Lied von der Glocke". K.H. Neufeld traveled widely throughout Manitoba, leading choral workshops, and was instrumental in starting the Southern Manitoba Music Competition Festival in 1932. John Konrad taught violin for many years at the Bornoff School of Music in Winnipeg and eventually bought this established musical institution. He was also the first music teacher at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

However, the most influential musical leader among Mennonites in Manitoba was Ben Horch, who had come from Russia to Winnipeg as a young child in 1909. Ben Horch participated actively in the musical life of the Mennonite community as a teacher, conductor, and radio producer for over 60 years, and did more to determine the nature and direction of musical development within that community than any other individual.

One of Ben's most enduring legacies is the Mennonite Piano Concerto - which he commissioned from the prominent Manitoba (but non-Mennonite!) composer Victor Davies in the early 1970s. The work is based completely on well-known congregational hymns ["Kernlieder"] from the Mennonite tradition.

There is no doubt that music has been an important part of Mennonite congregational and

community life in this century.

At the local level dozens of Mennonite women and men are working as music teachers in schools, as private music instructors in their homes, or as choir directors in a variety of churches. Mennonites of all ages sing and play in a wide variety of religious and secular music ensembles, from the Mennonite Community Orchestra

In the past 50 years, Manitoba Mennonite choirs, conductors, singers, instrumentalists, and composers have gained a reputation for excellence in various fields of musical endeavour. The achievements of the Mennonite Oratorio Choir, the Winnipeg Mennonite Childrens' Choir; of conductors George Wiebe, Bill Baerg, Helen Litz, Henry Engbrecht and Howard Dyck; singers Henriette Schellenberg, John Martens, Mel Braun and Phil Ens Jr.; instrumentalists Irmgard Baerg, Karin Redekopp Edwards and Rennie Regehr; composers Esther Wiebe, Glen Buhr, Randolph Peters and Leonard Enns are recognized nationally and internationally.

*Preservings* is indebted to Peter Letkemann, Ph.d., Winnipeg, for the information for the Choral tradition portion of this sketch of Mennonites and music.



Margaret Penner Toews, an accomplished poet whose poetry books sell 10,000 copies. Margaret translated two songs from the *Gesangbuch*, No. 549 and 658, to be sung at the special worship service in the Chortitzer worship house in Chortitz, E.R. during the 1874 Wagon Ride Reenactment, see article in News Section. This photo was taken at the cemetery in Blumenhoff, Borosenko, Ukraine (formerly Imperial Russia) in May, 1998.



Secretary Marissa Wiebe holds *Gesangbuch* and case which is stamped with gold leaf, "Peter Funk - Bergthal". The *Gesangbuch* is an expensive leather-bound edition printed in Elkhart, Indiana, in 1884. Such devotional treasures were traditionally given by parents to their children as a gift in honour of their baptism. The only Peter Funk listed in the "Chortitzer Gemeindebuch" of appropriate age is Peter Funk born October 29, 1864, son of Jakob Funk and Agatha Thiessen, Gnadenfeld, BGB B250. Perhaps one of our readers can provide further clues as to whom this *Gesangbuch* might have belonged to. The *Gesangbuch* is from the personal collection of D. Plett, Steinbach.

# Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Annual Meeting- Jan. 22, 2000

Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and Banquet sponsored jointly with the "East Reserve 125 Anniversary Committee" to conclude the anniversary year.

**DATE: Saturday, January 22, 2000**

**PLACE: Steinbach Mennonite Church, 345 Loewen Blvd., Steinbach**

**4:30 p.m. 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. Attendance at the A.G.M. is free. All members are encouraged to attend.

**5:00 p.m. Recognition of Volunteers** - A special event to recognize the work of those who volunteered their time during various 125 events. The public is welcome.

## Banquet and Entertainment

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

**6:30 p.m. BANQUET** - Enjoy a traditional Mennonite meal.

### KEYNOTE SPEAKER -

Dr. John Warkentin, York University, Toronto, will present a paper "The Mennonite settlements of Southern Manitoba Reconsidered" an intriguing new look at the settlement of the East Reserve. Dr. Warkentin attended High School in Steinbach and completed his groundbreaking thesis, "The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba" University of Toronto, in 1959.



*Dr. John Warkentin,  
speaks on "1874  
Revisited".*

### ENTERTAINMENT PACKAGE

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- Details to be announced

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# President's Report

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

As the last days of November slowly fade into December we are all reminded that the century as well as the millennium is coming to a close. Many changes have taken place in the last 100 years, as I'm sure that many will take place in the future.

We have been busy here in the Southeast celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the settlement of the East Reserve. Many of our Board members as well as assigned members have made contributions in terms of organizing events, writing and narrating radio spots as well as newspaper articles.

On a personal note I would like to add that my experience during the "Trek" from the Landing Site to Steinbach was quite an adventure. Especially meaningful to me was the Sunday morning approach of the wagon train to the church at Chortitz, the oldest Mennonite church in the East Reserve. I felt that I was, in a sense, going into the past and experiencing something from the past.

I would also like to recognize the very significant contribution made by our HSHS Board member Delbert Plett. He has been our representative on the 125th Steering Committee and his



Orlando Hiebert, HSHS President.

presence and contributions have been very significant.

I would also want to pay tribute to our former research director John Dyck. John passed away this summer after a period of illness. John was a

tireless worker and some of the Society's books are the result of his work. Lacking a research director the Society has decided to temporarily close the office we had at the Mennonite Heritage Village.

Randy Kehler and Lois Loepky have resigned from the board to move on to other things but I am glad to welcome Irene Kroeker from Steinbach and Ernest Braun from Tourond to the board.

Our A.G.M. (annual meeting) is planned for January 22, 2000 where we are cooperating with the 125 Steering Committee. This will give the 125 Steering Committee the opportunity for a final windup and also give our Society some wider exposure.

We plan to have as our speaker Dr. John Warkentin, York University, a noted geographer. Further announcements will be elsewhere in this magazine.

March 4th, 2000, the Society will again sponsor a Family History Seminar and Day at the Museum. This year we plan to add some workshops on writing, style and content as well as interviewing techniques.

I hope that the Mennonite community and HSHS can carry this year's historical enthusiasm into the next millennium.

President Orlando Hiebert, Tourond



Seeding, near Berghal (República) May, 1994, a common scene. The equipment is typical for Soviet-era farm machinery, much of which is still in use in the Ukraine.



The village of Heuboden, Berghal Colony, May, 1994, viewed from the west. Heuboden was the village of residence of Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), who like Moses, led his people out of imperial Russia to a new homeland in America, Manitoba. Photos by Orlando Hiebert, Tourond, May, 1994.

## Mennonite Homesteaders on the Hague-Osler Reserve **1891-1999**

published by the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan in 1999 can be ordered from: Leonard Doell, Box 364, Aberdeen, SK S0K 0A0 or email from Victor Wiebe at: Wiebe@sklib.usask.ca

It sells for \$45.00 Hardcover.

The book contains 1500 homestead records from north of Saskatoon up to Rosthern, the east boundary being Aberdeen. The west boundary is Highway 12. It also contains the 1901 census records for the area, and a list of the officials from the rural municipalities of Aberdeen, Laird, Rosthern and Warman. It also contains 22 maps and 400 photographs of homesteaders. There are 536 pages.

# Editorial

## The 125 Celebrations.

Well, 1999 has come and gone. From the standpoint of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society it was a banner year, being the 125th anniversary of the settlement of our community, the East Reserve.

From some very humble shoulder tapping and announcements starting in 1997, the interest in the celebration grew and gained momentum. Special compliments are due to Reeve Aaron Friesen and the Council of the R. M. of Hanover who decided early in 1998 to play a leading role in the event. This support was given life with the appointment of a "East Reserve 125 Steering Committee" with representatives from the City of Steinbach, Museum, Historical Society, Landing Site Committee, and various other parties, with the mission of planning and organizing the events for 1999.

One of the early disappointments was the decision of the West Reserve, Altona Winkler, to celebrate the 125th, not on the anniversary of the arrival of their people in Manitoba, 1874, but on the anniversary of the first settlements in the West Reserve in 1875. To some extent I questioned the reasoning behind this decision: after all, the Bergthalers (later known as the Sommerfelders) first settled in the East Reserve, the majority in 1874. So what are they going to celebrate in 1875, certainly not their arrival in Manitoba, nor can they celebrate their resettlement on the West Reserve as that only happened in 1878 to 1880.

Although Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905) arrived in Manitoba on July 27, 1875 and organized the Reinländer Gemeinde (later known as the Old Kolony (OK) Gemeinde), 10 Old Kolony families already arrived in Manitoba with the International on August 1,

1874. So what do you finally celebrate, the date of the first ones to arrive, the date the Aeltester arrives, or what?

In any case the decision was made and we wish the West Reservers well as they plan their 125 celebrations.

Another disappointment was the negative response of the Prime Minister of Canada, Jean Chretian, to the invitation of the R. M. of Hanover and City of Steinbach to attend the August 1 celebrations. On reflection, I would say the loss was his and the Liberal party and not our community, a golden opportunity missed.

The City of Steinbach had decided at an early date to allow the R. M. of Hanover, as the senior municipal jurisdiction, the leading role. In the end, the City also gave some support, especially with the season closer, the 1874 wagon ride reenactment.

The Council of the R. M. of Hanover made an excellent choice when it appointed Karen Peters as chair of the 125 Steering Committee. With her experience as school board trustee, leadership abilities, meticulous dedication to detail and planning, Karen was perfect for the job. She took on a herculean task, and requited herself well. She chaired numerous meetings, worked tirelessly with individual committees and projects, and time and time again, took on demanding tasks personally, sometimes to cover for others less dedicated. Congratulations, Karen, on a job well done.

The special feature section in the July 24, 1999, Saturday *Free Press* was certainly one of the coups of the 125 celebrations. Special thanks are due to Publisher and C. E. O. Rudy Redekopp, project manager Ron Buck and layout coordinator Rob Noble for the fine job

they did. The end result was excellent in terms of content, layout and presentation. It was a tribute to the Mennonite community from the *Free Press*. Thank-you.

In 1974 a special feature edition of *The Mennonite Reporter* (Nov. 25, 1974) celebrated the centennial whereas in 1999 it was a special feature section of the *Winnipeg Free Press* (July 24, 1999). I am not quite sure if this means our churches have abandoned a sense of ownership of the 1874 emigration, which after all was articulated by the Gemeinden themselves. The Chortitzer Conference, to their credit, held a 125 commemorative service on October 15, 1999, (see "The Chronicle," Oct 1999, pages 2-3), while most of the E.M.C. (an offshoot of the Kleine Gemeinde) congregations held various commemorative events individually during the summer.

The event at the Forks, August 1, 1999, turned out tremendous, far beyond anyone's wildest dreams. Ken Reddig and the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society deserve a lot of credit for planning the event. Thank-you also to the Pan-Am Games Committee and the Forks Corporation for allowing Mennonites to intrude on their event to celebrate this important chapter in Manitoba's history.

When I arrived at the Forks Sunday morning, shortly before 8 a.m., I wondered what kind of a turn-out there would be. I was overwhelmed when I walked down to the dock and realized that almost every place where a lawnchair could possibly be squeezed in was filled. It was heart warming to see that the Winnipeg Mennonites had really adopted this as their 125 event including numerous Russländer and "48-ers". They joined many Steinbach, Altona and Winkler "Kanadiers" to



*The Steinbach parade July 30, 1999, featured the theme of the 125th anniversary of the City's founding in 1874. The parade is organized by the Chamber of Commerce, with the Steinbach Credit Union donating ten prizes of 125 loonies, for the best floats, etc. This photograph shows the "Banner" of the 125 Anniversary being paraded down Main Street followed by the East Reserve 125 float. Special thanks to Chamber President Heidi Banman Harms and Parade Marshall Gerald Klassen.*



*A close-up of the East Reserve 125 float constructed jointly by Lothar Dueck of Dueck Drug Stores in Vita and Deputy-Reeve Norm Plett of the R. M. of Hanover. It was a beautiful entry depicting the story of the Hanover Steinbach pioneers. Seated on the float is Crystal Peters, daughter of Karen, 125 Chair.*



The rear view of the East Reserve 125 float, showing the detailed map of the East Reserve with some 40 Strassendorf villages and two dozen later hamlets and place names. The flags displayed on the float added colour, and symbolized the various countries where the ancestors of the East Reserve pioneers had lived, e.g. Ukraine, Russia, Germany, Poland, Netherlands, etc. Missing was the Mennonite flag which Dr. Jack Thiessen, New Bothwell once said consisted of a Rabuz in the centre with a Rollkuchen at each end. Of course, it would have to be on a sky blue field, the so-called "Heavenly duse", once known in the Molotschna as "Kleingemeinsch blaewe."

take part in a moving ceremony (see report by Ralph Friesen elsewhere in this issue).

A special thank-you is due to Wilmer Penner, who wrote the scrip for the dialogue which portrayed the feelings and emotions of the "new" settlers. I did hear from one listener who objected to some of the dialogue being presented in broken English, thereby possibly implying that the original settlers were only semi-literate in Low German, something obviously not the case. I explained that this is an artistic devise sometimes used to try to convey the flavour of a different language. This is not to be taken as a criticism, only an explanation.

Henry Fast, Steinbach Bible College, with two set of his great-grandparents on the first ship that docked at the Forks on August 1, 1874, presented a thought provoking and most appropriate devotional. Professor Rudy Schellenberg, CMBC, planned the music and organized a singing troupe which rendered a great performance. Well done!

To this was added the unforgettable beauty of a Manitoba summer morning, the sun came out from behind the clouds (and the railway trestle) just in time for the service, basking the worshippers with its life-yielding resonance. I would guess there must have been 1200 people in attendance.

The August 1, 1999, 125 event at the Museum in Steinbach was also a success with Dr. Royden Loewen expanding on the life worlds of early immigrants, drawing on his research on pioneer journals, and Dr. Archie Penner speaking about the importance of parents passing their faith and history on to the next generation, under the theme "To this land has the Lord led us". Museum officials estimated that 1500 people took part in the morning worship service under the "Big" tent.

Special thanks are also due to Wilmer Penner and Anne Funk, our two beloved playwrights

of the East Reserve, one Kleine Gemeinde and one Berghaler/Chortitzer, who rose

to the challenge and wrote three inspired plays dramatically portraying the story of our pioneers and subsequent migrations in honour of the 125. These plays were performed at all the local community fairs in Hanover Steinbach and during "Pioneer Days" August 1 weekend in Steinbach, playing to thousands of appreciative people, yearning for a sense of their history.

What a wonderful legacy our two playwrights have left for their community and culture with their inspired work and genius. Hopefully we will see some similar work done in the English language as it was a shame that the Mennonite Heritage Village Museum in Steinbach had to resort to using a English drama "Sunshine Valley" with no connection to Mennonite faith and history, to entertain its visitors during the August 1, long weekend. It must be a considerable disappointment to our thriving and hardworking community of Mennonite playwrights and actors to see such an unfortunate act of "Anglo-conformity" by our local Museum, supposedly the guardian of our heri-



*Afghan for 125 Anniversary.* Jan Kuhl, who designed the souvenir Afghan of the East Reserve (Hanover Steinbach) settlement, and Karen Peters, chair of the East Reserve 125 Steering Committee, display the Afghan which commemorates the story of the Mennonite pioneers of 1874. Other 125 mementoes prepared for the 125 anniversary celebrations include pins, spoons, mugs, t-shirts, handbags, and an 80 page historical booklet by D. Plett. Photo by Doris Penner, Carillon News, July 5.

tage and culture.

The 1874 Wagon Reenactment on the weekend of September 10-12, 1999, by the "South-east Draft Horse Association" under trail boss Gordon Heckert, proved that live living drama can be successfully used to teach history to the wider community. I am sure our youngsters, some of whom are taught only negative things about their heritage at home and in their church, will always remember the wagon ride; for many it may well be their first positive impression of their heritage and culture.

It was unfortunate that the welcoming program at the park on Sunday, September 12, 1999, turned out the way it did. The original proposal of a parade down Steinbach's Main Street and a community party was approved by the City Council with the proviso that the Barkman family be allowed to piggy-back onto the event a brief opening ceremony for the new gazebo at "K.R. Barkman Park" for which they had contributed some \$30,000.00. As a member of the planning committee, I understood that the dedication of the gazebo was to be a 10

## 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 Gilbert G. Brandt at "Mennonite Books", 67 Flett Ave, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R2K 3N3. 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. Phone 204-668-7475; fax 204-661-8530; e-mail: [mennonitebooks@brandtfamily.com](mailto:mennonitebooks@brandtfamily.com)



Dr. Royden Loewen talks about Mennonite journals and his new book *From the Inside Out*, at the Village Museum, Steinbach, August 1, 1999. Photo courtesy of Elmer Heinrichs, Altona.

minute ad-on to the ceremony welcoming the wagon riders to Steinbach, who after all were reenacting the very founding of the community on or about September 15, 1874.

Unfortunately, unbeknownst to me or anyone on the 125 committee, by the time September 12 had rolled around, the dedication of the gazebo had become the main event with a series of three ten to fifteen minute speeches by Mayor Magnusson, Deputy-Mayor Reimer and Pastor Broesky, lauding the work of K. R. Barkman, in whose honour the park was named.

All the while, 30 horse teams and their riders and teamster waited patiently for some recognition and possibly even some mention of why they were there, not an unreasonable expectation given that they had just finished "schlepping" their wagons across southeastern Manitoba for two days--and camping out overnight, I might add--supposedly in honour of Steinbach's founding.

To add insult to injury, the speakers made references to K. R. Barkman as Steinbach's first mayor, a claim not only false, but an insult to the 1874 pioneers such Abraham S. Friesen (1848-1916), Steinbach's first real Mayor, and others, such as Mayor Johann G. Barkman (1858-1937), whose record of a quarter century of service is not likely to be surpassed by anyone soon. Such statements by our civic leaders show about as much insight as if Mayor Murray of Winnipeg called Mayor Steven Juba the first mayor because he was mayor at the time of incorporation of Metropolitan Winnipeg coupled with blocking out any earlier history of the community. Come on people, our community deserves better than that!



Dr. Royden Loewen, Mennonite Chair, U. of W., and Dr. John Warkentin, Professor Emeritus, York University, Toronto, chat during the break at the "1874 Revisited" Symposium at the University of Winnipeg, October 18, 1999. Photo by Priscilla B. Reimer, Woodmore, Manitoba, and courtesy of Carillon News, October 18, 1999.

All-in-all it was a slap in the face not only to the 150 members of the Southeast Draft Horse Association who had given their time to honour the community but also to the 1000 people who waited patiently in the park to greet them, none of whom had come to witness a dedication ceremony for a gazebo. It was an unfortunate adjunct to the City's laudable decision to support and host the event coupled with its contribution of \$4,000 towards expenses. After all, if a City does not want to celebrate its own founding, who else will?

In my view the hijacking of the 1874 reenactment welcoming ceremony at the park was in poor taste. I believe the City owes the Southeast Draft Horse Association an apology.

I am sure that there was no intent on the part of civic officials to create any disrespect to the 1874 reenactment or for our pioneers. I certainly do not want to hurt their feelings. But it is important to document the event as many people were very hurt and upset. Anyone doubting this need merely look at the half-dozen letters to the editor published in the *Carillon News* on September 13, and subsequent issues. Whether we like it or not, such occurrences become part of the historical record.

At the same time, all the people I spoke with were so enthused about how the earlier portions of the event had gone, that even this unfortunate ending could not dampen their genuine appreciation and enjoyment of the entire weekend. I personally wish to applaud the wagon riders who for two days in September captured the hearts and imaginations of thousands in Hanover Steinbach: see full report elsewhere in this issue.

I also congratulate Dr. Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg whose October 1-2 conference "1874 Revisited" was a great success. I enjoyed all the papers presented, but must report that Dr.

John Warkentin's presentation of the settlement of the East Reserve, combining a mixture of geography, history and literature, to elucidate his evocative portrayal was nothing short of genius; see Prescilla B. Reimer, *Carillon News*, October 18, 1999, page 5A, and Doreen Klassen, "History 'revised' at 1874 Symposium," *Canadian Mennonite*, Oct. 25, 1999, page 12, for reports on the "1874" Symposium. The HSHS and the 125 Committee are proud to bring Dr. Warkentin back to his roots in Steinbach to be the keynote speaker at our annual meeting and 125 wind-up to be held on Saturday, January 22, 2000.

In reflecting back to the centennial celebrations of Mennonites in Manitoba, it seems to me that more large, high profile events were held in 1974. But I think that in the 125 anniversary we have been more successful and creative in getting through to the grass roots of our community.

It was reassuring for all society directors and supporters to see that the various 125 events, for the most part, went very well.

A special thank-you to everyone involved in the 125 celebrations. It is certainly something our community can be proud of for many years.

#### Mennonite Headbashers.

In a stroke of genius during an August 6, 1999, meeting of the "Pickwick Club" held in Ste. Anne, Manitoba, Eugene Reimer, Winnipeg, coined the term "Mennonite headbashers". It is a very apt description for a variety of low-browed Neanderthals who have condemned their own culture, heritage and faith usually in order to advance their own filio-pietistic agendas, literary careers, or what have you.

The commonality these people typically share is that they have never taken five minutes to actually study their own culture, faith and/or heritage before condemning it, it being easier to join the braying crowd than to think for themselves. At the same time, by condemning their own ancestors and people, they are hurting themselves more than anyone else.

Hence the term "Headbashers" invoking the

#### Menno-Conformity.

A so-called Evangelical Mennonite was stranded on a island in the Pacific Ocean. Twenty years later he was rescued. When the rescuers came ashore they noticed that the man had erected three buildings. Naturally they were curious what that was all about. "What is this?" they asked, pointing to the nearest structure. "Oh," replied the shipwrecked man, "That's my house where I live." "Well, then what's that house over there?" the rescuers asked pointing to the next and largest structure. "Oh," he replied, "that's my church where I attend." By now the rescuers were nonplussed. "So, what's that next building over there?" they asked. "Oh, that's the church where I used to attend," was the rescued man's triumphant reply.

## *Preservings*

image of juveniles pounding their heads against a wall, in "Luddite-like" destruction of their own experiential embryos.

### **Oaknames.**

Eugene Reimer also rose to the challenge issued in *Preservings*, No. 14, page 28, regarding Oaknames or alias.

How's this one? "Zig Zag" Plett.

No, he was NOT called that because he used "Zig Zag" paper for his role-your-own cigarettes--in fact, Mr. Plett didn't even smoke!

Apparently this particular Plett family had many daughters. Several bolts of cloth had been purchased at a sale. Presently the girls all wore dresses made from the same "zig zag" pattered material, hence the name.

### **The Roses Blooming.**

Anglo-conformists, expatriate poets, so-called Evangelical preachers and militant feminists, have one thing in common - they have all tried to convince conservative and traditional Mennonites, often by lies and deceit, that their culture and heritage was insignificant, worthless, and possibly even evil.

In the face of such overt denigration it is surprising that the conservative Mennonite culture of southern Manitoba has not been totally eradicated and extinguished.

But it seems that the Mennonite Plautdietsch culture was stronger and more tenacious than even its most vociferous enemies imagined. At each turn, as I learn more about this amazing and resilient people, I marvel at every new discovery, the fascinating nuances and intricacies of our history, culture and faith.

Low German/Plautdietsch words for example. In many traditional cultures, words for the female reproductive organs and system were words of shame, disrespect and denigration. Plautdietsch has all these words too, of course.

Imagine my surprise when I heard that the description for a woman having her periods was "De Ros de Bliecht", literally, the rose is blooming.

What a beautiful and respectful symbolism. As already mentioned, in most traditional cultures women during their periods were seen as people to be avoided, in some cultures they were shunned, as possibly being under Satanic influences.

In our Mennonite Plautdietsch culture, the blood gushing forth from a woman's womb was seen as a symbol of strength and fertility. It invoked the power of the woman's womb, the life bearing process, life and salvation, which would eventually place her at the pinnacle of her society, in her elderly days, as an honoured matriarch.

Roses blooming also invoke the image of the woman's beautiful Vorgarten (in the front yard of her traditional housebarn, of course), typically beaming with flowers of all hues, centered around the rose (red/crimson/cleansing), the Queen of Flowers.

I am told that in traditional Mennonite society (and this was possibly common to all ru-

ral conservative cultures), the advent of the roses blooming sometimes also resulted in rejoicing because it meant a reprieve from the almost nonstop pregnancies that 19th century women endured/enjoyed/and/or tolerated, during much of their adult lives.

And so, to Anglo-conformists, expatriate poets, so-called Evangelical preachers, militant feminists, and sundry other "Mennonite headbashers" here's the "finger." In the words of Crusty the Clown on the Simpsons, "Why don't you take a flying 'Schwitz'" and go try to exterminate some other culture.

### **The Prediger's Rock.**

One of the tragedies in the Mennonite story is the abandonment of the Prediger's Rock, the traditional vestment worn by ministers. The "Prediger's Rock", presumably, was an ancient vestment, dating back to renaissance and medieval times. Since traditional Mennonite clergymen were lay ministers who earned their bread by the sweat of their own brow, they did not wear their vestments in day-to-day life, but only during preaching and while actually engaged in pastoral duties.

I checked the "*Mennonite Encyclopedia*" to see if perhaps someone had done an article on the Prediger's Rock, but no.

According to Dr. Jack Thiessen, Plautdietsch lexicographer, the Mennonite Prediger's Rock was also known as a "Scheisrock", namely, an elegant swallow-tailed coat, used in 18th century Europe. It was also known as a "Zattuarock" being a frockcoat. According to Dr. Thiessen, some Molotschna ministers among the Russländer still wore the Prediger's Rock after coming to Canada in the 1920s but not the Old Colony ministers.

In a recent article in *Preservings* Linda Buhler discovered that the Mennonite Prediger's Rock was also referred to as a Prince Albert coat by Winnipeg tailors, see *Preservings*, No. 11, page 84.

I question why modern Mennonites discarded such a wonderful tradition? Next time you travel, take note when you see a Catholic or Orthodox priest or Rabbi in an airport somewhere. You will notice how people seem edified and uplifted merely to see a man of God, even if not of their own denomination.

On a recent TV documentary on Kosovo, an Orthodox priest was featured who had repeatedly risked his life to save people from both sides of the battle in the name of Christ. The priest was wearing his clerical coat not unlike the Mennonite Prediger's Rock. The instant respect that the Priest received from the soldiers and from people in both factions was obvious from the way they looked at him in awe.

Perhaps it is time for conservatives to reconsider how they want to relate to their ancient traditions such as ministerial vestments. Should our ministers not be proud to represent the Kingdom of God? Should those who labour in the Vineyard not lead their people through the sacred ceremonies and symbols which God has wrought by His leading over

the centuries? Would it not be appropriate for the Rock to be worn, at least on special occasions?

Who were these people in our midst who threw off these ancient sacred vestments like rotten tomatoes and who like Esau sold off their spiritual inheritance for a mess of potage? Quite frankly, I am saddened when I hear of the blatant disrespect manifested by those amongst us who adopted American Fundamentalist religious culture in the 1930s and 40s.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians encouraged them to "have their feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace," Ephesians 6:15. In German it says, "...an den Beinen gestiefelt" or literally "...with your legs shod with the Gospel of peace."

Conservative Mennonites chose knee-high leather boots to evoke this beautiful teaching of spiritual truth, symbolic of the importance of peace, integral to their faith and being, a symbol of enslavement to the Holy Word, and to spiritual empowerment bestowed upon the faithful.



Rev. and Mrs. Peter Wiebe, modeling the Prediger's Rock which belonged to former Aeltester Henry K. Schellenberg. Peter Wiebe, the Chortitzer minister from the Zion Congregation, Winkler, conducted the special worship service in Chortitz, E. R., on September 12, 1999, during the 1874 wagon ride reenactment. Rev. Wiebe delivered a beautiful and most fitting Gospel-centric sermon, typical of the conservative Mennonite pioneers of Hanover Steinbach. The overflow crowd of some 300 people was most appreciative of the efforts the Chortitzer Conference made to prepare and conduct the worship service in traditional form and content: including kneeling for prayer and singing from the Gesangbuch (in German and in English).

This symbolism was reminiscent of the oak trees, the image of God's permanence and strength, which traditional Mennonites had once chosen as markers for the places of burial of their saints.

The ministerial coat (Prediger's Rock) also counteracted the tendency of parishioners to direct their attention to the minister preaching and the extent of his dramatic and theatrical abilities, in other words the cult of personality as found in "pop" religious culture, and instead to focus on the teachings of Christ, God's fullest and final revelation.

Does anyone still own a Prediger's Rock?

### Poor and Simple.

In this issue *Preservings* challenges the mythology propagated by Molotschna Pietist Triumphalists that the 1874 Mennonite immigrants to Manitoba were "poor and simple"--see article in feature article section.

The "poor and simple" fallacy is based on two premises.

Firstly, Peter M. Friesen concluded that traditional/conservative Mennonite faith and spirituality was rotten, corrupted and inherently fallen and that the only salvation was to flock over to fanatical Separatist Pietist religious culture emanating from Germany.

Secondly, in order to advance the strategy of this newly adopted religious culture, the mythology was developed that those who had left Imperial Russia in the 1870s were the lower classes, illiterate, landless, uncultured, etc., in short, "the poor and simple," Frank Epp, *Menn in Can.*, Volume One, page 195.

Thus we have emerging an historical interpretation whereby the 1870s immigrants to Manitoba were seen as spiritually impoverished and economically destitute--a lower chaste, so to speak. This is known as "Molotschna Pietist Triumphalism", a view which would be regarded as bigoted and racist were it propounded by non-Mennonites against Mennonites, but seemingly okay when propagated by one group of Mennonites against another.

I believe it to be a wonderful 125th birthday present to the Kanadier people and their 150,000 descendants scattered across the Americas, to be able to debunk these untruths and to have played a small role in telling the real story of these brave and fully soteriologic pioneers.

### A Postmodern Church.

Modernism is defined as a deliberate philosophical and practical estrangement or divergence from the past in the arts and literature, occurring especially in the course of the 20th century and taking form in any of various innovative movements and styles: *Random House*

individual, independent and free of obligation, except to themselves."

The forces of modernism in the 20th century worked against conservatives within the Mennonite world as modernists adopted American Revivalist--and later Fundamentalist--religious culture as a strategy of breaking away from the past and tradition, reflecting "divergence" and "estrangement".

Postmodernism is partially a reversion to more traditional ways of understanding the human experience, possibly including some of the thinking of modernism. Postmodernism values "community, authenticity, experience, mystery, tolerance, process and team work." Postmodernism has been propounded as one of the most significant shifts in thinking in western civilization since the Reformation, *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, September 24, 1999, page 13.

Many of the values which articulated the traditional conservative Mennonites who immigrated to Imperial Russia in 1788, are common themes in postmodernism, such as community, authority, individuals needing a sense of belonging, as well as the necessity of living in harmony

with nature as well as neighbour. Accordingly, this shift in paradigm may well nurture a resurgence of conservative Mennonite culture and faith.

One of the major distinctions between the Russian and Swiss/Pennsylvania Mennonite streams is the relative strengths of their re-



Kiev, military museum, June 4, 1999. D. Plett with T-76 tank used by Soviet forces in Afghanistan, 1980s. Photo by Dr. Tatania Rezentziva, Kiev, Ukraine. This photo really has nothing much to do with anything other than that I like it. Until my early '30s my passion for history was focused on military history, particularly the war on the eastern front, WWII.

### Dictionary, page 1236.

From the perspective of so-called Evangelical religious culture, modernism is seen to be articulated by the belief that "human reason is the basis for all understanding; things can be studied and understood using the scientific method; life is cause and effect; people are in-



With the love of Christ shining from their faces, this group of Hutterite young people from the Oak Bluff Colony, north of Rosenort, Manitoba, sing for a full house under the tent on Canada Days, July 1, 1999, at the Mennonite Village Museum. Photo courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach, Manitoba, editor of the Museum's successful newsletter "Preservings our Heritage". Preservings features photographs such as these showing Hutterites and conservative Mennonites as the wonderful loving soteriologic human beings they are (just like you and me) in order to make it more difficult for so-called Evangelical ministers to denigrate and vilify them to their parishioners.

spective conservative wings. Within Old Mennonite culture the conservatives often retained or held control of the religious and cultural institutions, and also carried the critical mass in its devotional literature.

Among Russian Mennonites the agenda was seized by those who adopted foreign religious cultures such as Separatist Pietism, whose agenda included enshrining their own interpretations in historiography, thereby marginalizing their enemies, the conservatives. At the same time, conservatives were weakened with the emigration in the 1870s of the most devout and capable leaders to America where their energies were enslaved by the pioneering "frontier" experience.

Even organizations such as MCC, founded by "Kanadiers" in 1921 to extend aid to starving Mennonites in Soviet Russia, have seemingly fallen into the control of modern or reformed Mennonites.

The forthcoming integration of the General Conference Church, founded in 1862 as a Revivalist inspired break-away, and its former "old" Mennonite mother church, may well impact favourably upon the process of restoring conservatives to a position of respect, and possibly even dominance, a status they rightfully claim by virtue of both historical precedent and sheer numbers.

The greater influence of conservatives in the larger "old" Mennonite church (OM) will provide critical mass to the smaller body of conservatives in the General Conference with, I believe, positive results, at the very time when history seems poised to reward those not ashamed to profess who and what they are and where they came from.

### Scofield.

The concept of "Mennonite headbashing" is illustrated by the story of C. I. Scofield (1843-1921) whose fantasies and religious idiots were



*On September 3, 1999, researcher and writer Adina Reger, Neuwied, Germany, visited Steinbach, and paid a visit to the Crystal Springs Hutterian Brethren south of Niverville. Adina Reger who attends the Brüdergemeinde in Germany enjoyed discussing Anabaptist faith and practice with Hutterian writer Leo McAdams, and Bishop Jake Kleinsasser.*

adopted by certain "visionaries" in Hanover Steinbach in the 1930s and '40s.

For those fortunate enough to have missed out on this pathetic chapter in the history of North American religious culture, Scofield was the "famous" gurus of American Fundamentalism and the Bible School movement who expended half-a-page in his commentary (page 996) explaining that when Christ said "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," it "is never a positive affirmation that the person or thing said to be at hand will immediately appear."

In other words, black is white and white is black.

Yes, hu-hum, yes. I think I understand. Like sort of, up is down and down is up. Truly a marvel of Fundamentalist "psycho babble".

The story of Scofield and his religious mantras also proves the axiom, the bigger the lie, the more people will fall for it, a principal well proven by all the "isms" of the 20th century. Simply take the Gospels out of the Bible, postpone them to some mythical future time zone, and "presto", you have a perfect ready made-religion, suitable for young and old alike, for all those uncomfortable with actually following the teachings of Jesus.

Based on this tremendous Biblical insight and others of equally "deep" inspiration, certain self-styled ideologues ran around Hanover Steinbach during the 1930s and '40s condemning genuine local leaders such as Aeltester Peter P. Reimer of the Kleine Gemeinde and Aeltester Peter S. Wiebe of the Chortitzer Gemeinde, stating they were not saved and would not go to heaven unless they promptly joined the headbashing gang and "converted" themselves to American Fundamentalist religious culture and ideology, supposedly somehow superior.

Fortunately Messrs. Reimer and Wiebe were not the sort of men blown around by every puff of fanaticism gusting over the American border and were led of the Spirit of God to spurn such silliness. May God be thanked for He knows His own.

Many Mennonite children were sent to study at Bible schools propagating American Fundamentalist religious culture and often came home with a badly distorted Biblical exegesis, based mainly on Scofieldian religious culture



*The scene after the morning service at the Conestoga worship house of the Old Order Mennonite denomination near St. Jacobs, Ontario, Sunday, October 17, 1999. The entire service was in the so-called Pennsylvania Dutch (really a form of Schwitzer-Deutsch), I was able to understand a good part of it. The singing was similar to the beautiful traditional long-note chant still practiced by Old Colony congregations in the Russian Mennonite tradition. The sermon like that of the Old Coloniers was sound, Gospel-centric and inspiring.*



Another view of the Conestoga worship house, St. Jakob's, October 17, 1999, some 700 souls were packed into the worship house that morning. The worship house itself was practically identical to that built on Steinbach's Main Street in 1911 by the Kleine Gemeinde. The women enter and exit the door at the left hand side and wait there visiting until their men come driving around with their horse and buggy to pick them up, an act reminiscent of ancient chivalry.

and not on the Gospels. I am told by Dr. Archie Penner that the idicts of Scofeld (with only minor variations) were taught at Winnipeg Bible Seminary (later renamed to Providence College) when he and brother-in-law Ben D. Reimer attended there in 1937.

Those who will study this history will find that American Fundamentalist religious culture of the '30s and '40s was based on an enormous abberation, namely: those very ones who denied the Gospels, claimed to be the only "true" Christians. The time has come for historians to start documenting this scary and yet intriguing time on our history before all those who still remember are gone.

#### Missions, the tie that blinds?

In a *Messenger* editorial of August 16, 1999, page 2, entitled "Missions, Mistakes and Christ," editor Terry Smith makes the statement that the commitment to missions "is to remain central in our identity as part of the Christian church." Smith opens the editorial with a statement that "Missions is the 'jam' which holds the EMC together."

Certainly, outreach and support activities of various kinds are an important aspect of all Christian denominations.

Editor Smith refers to other voices saying that Christian missions are arrogant, or that mistakes have been made, such as "dismissive handling of religious practices, improper ties with colonial powers concerned about political dominance, cultural destruction, and more."

Editor Smith concludes that "The Christian Church has made mistakes in missions, but missions is no mistake." Editor Smith makes no effort to describe these acknowledged mistakes for his readers. It would be interesting to see what he regards as "mistakes". Would families suffering dysfunction for several generations because children and/or parents were alienated from their families and communities qualify as "mistakes"?

If the editorial by Terry Smith was intended to be an indirect response to my editorial in *Preservings*, No.14, pages 29-30, he is en-

tirely missing the point.

Nowhere in the Bible will he find Scripture to support the bizarre notion that one Christian community shall attack and endeavour to subvert another, Matthew 18:6. And yet, according to the reports of mission endeavours in the E.M.C. *Messenger*, these activities are sometimes directed against other Christian denominations which presumably do not meet the exacting threshold requirements and legalistic categorizations of so-called Evangelical religious culture.

Does anyone ever stop for a moment to think about how such activities and the consequences thereof are viewed by the victim community.

#### Oasis, Mexico.

The same issue of the *Messenger*, August 16, 1999, page 10, carried a story of how a group of Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites in Oasis, Mexico, had been turned away from their denomination, apparently changing their affiliation to E.M.C.

The article does not mention that the Oasis settlement was established by the Kleine Gemeinde church in Mexico to assist some 60 landless families to settle on land of their own. The endeavour involved a huge expenditure of money, time and energy, evocative of genuine Christian values to help others in need.

If there were people on the settlement who were unhappy, the sincere Christian response would have been to counsel them to make peace with their own community.

If this is the type of activity which Mr. Terry Smith holds forth as being the key to the future of the Christian Church, I think he should go back to the Bible for another look. Nowhere will he find any suggestion or scriptural foundation that such predator actions are endorsed or affirmed as appropriate.

If Oasis represents the tie that binds for the EMC there is trouble ahead. In my view this is "the tie that blinds, not the tie that binds."

This is the sort of conduct one expects from Rudnerwieders who, after all, rejected the Gos-

pel-centric faith of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde in favour of Schofieldian religious culture in a climactic burst of enthusiasm back in 1937. Although American Fundamentalist religious culture made deep inroads into the E.M.C. during the same period, the Gospels were never totally suppressed and displaced to the same extent. Therefore a higher code of moral conduct is expected.

I would encourage the EMC and EMC-ers to rather extend the hand of Christian peoplehood and unity, to fellowship with other Christians, and particulary, the Kleine Gemeinde, who after all are their own flesh and blood, as one in the house of the Lord.

When one observes most adherents of Fundamentalist and so-called Evangelical religious culture in the media and wider society, it becomes clear that they will have their hands full with saving themselves, never mind the world.

Here is an excellent opportunity for the EMC to grow in faith and charity and to learn about genuine Christian humility, piety and discipleship from such a partnership.

**Suggested Reading:** Robert J. Suderman, "The Reluctant Missionary," *Canadian Mennonite*, Oct. 25, 1999, pages 6-7. Suderman writes that, "Sharing the Gospel is a process of proclamation, conversation and conversion. In this process both parties can be changed."

#### "Pop" Religious Culture.

There are those within the so-called Evangelical religious culture who justify such predator actions on the grounds that Christianity is like some kind of a consumer "shell" game; there are thousands of denominations and the people will flock to whichever group best meets their needs. Those denominations which best meet these needs, i.e. the most popular, allegedly are the most blessed of God. Hence, the term "popular" or "pop" religious culture.

Proponents of this philosophy would argue that all the E.M.C. was doing in Oasis is giving the people another choice of religious expression, the flavour of the month, so to

speak.

If this philosophy is correct, I would suggest that the appropriate response for the Kleine Gemeinde in Mexico would be to start a congregation in Steinbach to join their growing and thriving congregations in the Interlake of Manitoba, where they have so far--out of courtesy to the E.M.C.--not used the name "Kleine Gemeinde". This is a mistake, obviously, if Oasis is to define the relationship between the two denominations in the future.

I have no doubt that the Kleine Gemeinde would quickly gather a congregation of 40 or 50 families, particularly from among those who have returned from Mexico over the past several decades. By now, many of these people must have some nostalgia for the solid Gospel-centric teaching they once took for granted in their former spiritual home. I would guess there must be a similar number of Yuppy-Muppy-Boomers, who would join such a congregation as a vehicle of resonating with their spiritual past.

Most of the families, undoubtedly, would come from out of E.M.C. congregations in the Steinbach and Rosenort areas, the Kleine Gemeinde's former heartland. All it would cost the Kleine Gemeinde would be to have a minister in the area and a few ads in the *Carillon News*.

Now there's a thought for the proponents of Scofieldian religious culture?

Such a congregation could have a very positive influence on our community and would also reestablish an important historical link for our community; after all, it was the Kleine Gemeinde which founded our beloved City back in 1874.

If this were to happen, I wonder how "blessed" members of the E.M.C. would feel if they were visiting their relatives in Mexico and read in the church bulletin there that teachers and ministers were being sought to target their congregations back home?

The suggestion is obviously tongue-in-cheek, but the idea may have merit.

The moral of the story is, those who live in glass houses, shouldn't throw stones.

#### Falwell, a Loose Cannon.

"In his videotape *A Christian's Guide to the Millennium Bug*, US televangelist Jerry Falwell reportedly says he plans to amass `food, sugar, gasoline and ammunition...Because I'm blessed with a little food and my family is inside the house with me, I've got to be sure I can persuade others not to mess with me'--*The Washington Post*, as quoted in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, Volume 38, No. 12, June 11, 1999, page 3.

The Rev. Falwell's newspaper has recently issued other bizarre decrees such as that "popular Teletubbies character is a gay role model," and that the "all-female Lilith Fair Concert tour is named for a demon," *Winnipeg Sun*, Sunday, June 20, 1999, page 2.

On October 20, 1999, the Rev. Falwell appeared on "Larry King Live" CNN, denigrating the President of the United States and glo-



*Jerry Falwell, one of the Guru's of so-called Evangelical religious culture.*  
Photo courtesy M.B. Herald, June 11, 1999.

rifying Kenneth Starr, the Special Prosecutor, who for two years subjected his country to an inquisition which makes his namesake, the infamous "Starr Chamber" in medieval England look like a Sunday School picnic.

Dear friend Falwell, give it a rest. Why don't you accept the fact that you will not get your enemy President Clinton this time around. Get a life. Maybe even spend some time reading the Gospels, it would do you a world of good.

On a positive note I refer to an article entitled "An End to the Hatred," *Time*, Nov. 1, 1999, page 65, in which Falwell reportedly reconciled with Mel White, a former pal who ghost wrote Falwell's autobiography. Falwell and White had parted company when White came out of the closet as a gay in 1991.

Falwell is quoted as saying, "We can have friendship with homosexuals,...We can have friendship with people we disagree with."

Now there's a mouthful.

#### Jack von Impe.

Nevertheless there are many in so-called Evangelical culture who continue to subsist in abject spiritual darkness. One of the most prominent must be Evangelist Jack von Impe, already referred to in previous editorials. In a program which aired October 30, 1999, Impe stated that European Common Market will be the Anti-Christ, or that the Anti-Christ will

come from within the European Union which Impe claims to be the reincarnation of the Roman Empire.

According to Impe's scenario, the E.U. will broker a peace in the Middle East and then Russia will move in and then China as a second wave.

All I can say is (albeit in farmer's language), what "Bull-shit!"

This man must be absolutely confounded in his labyrinth of errors and descended into total spiritual darkness, to come up with such foolishness.

The world-government conspiracy theory seem to be an all purpose favourite for some right-wing Evangelicals, a stretch of reason and intelligence if I ever heard of one. In actual fact, it is the Religious right which claims a divine destiny to world rule and domination, the only community on earth propounding such a fantasy at the present time.

#### Endtime Fantasies.

Jack von Impe is not the only one exploiting the paranoia and fear surrounding subjects such as life after death and the age old idea of a coming apocalypse.

A number of years ago, Hal Lindsey published *The Late Great Planet Earth*, over 3,000,000 copies of which were gobbled up by those eager for new fantasies about the end times. Recently I read that a scholar had reviewed the book and found numerous items of alleged prophecy which had turned out to be untruths and lies, Deuteronomy 18:20-22. In ancient cultures they at least had the good sense to exterminate prophets who spoke falsehoods.

In a new work of the genre, the *Left Behind* series, by co-authors Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, these apocryphal ideas have been turned into fictional form, something which

## "Sposz Mott Senne"

**"Sposz Mott Senne": The Yiddish Mennonite Connection,  
Mennonite Village Museum, November 6, 1999.**

A great evening was enjoyed by those attending the fall dinner theatre produced by Low German playwright Wilmer Penner with a play written by Playwright Anne Funk. The audience also enjoyed the Yiddish songs performed by Shayla and Kinsey Posen as well as a skit by "Dofft & Pippa".

The evening was opened with a presentation by Ted Friesen, sharing some of his personal recollections of friendships formed with Jewish neighbours and boyhood playmates, some of which lasted to the present day.

I though I would pass on some of the jokes which Ted shared with the audience. The first three relate to the trait of both Mennonites and Jewish people of being someone parsimonious.

- 1) What's the difference between a canoe and a Mennonite? Answer - The canoe "tips".
- 2) When does a Mennonite dance a jig? Answer - When confronted by a pay toilet.
- 3) Two men attending a tight horse race in Winkler. Comments one to the other, "I saw an even tighter race in Altona."
- 4) This joke has nothing particular to do with the Jewish Mennonite connection, but it was hilarious. Two men were sitting in the "Schenk" in Altona. After a few too many "bubbles" they decide to head home to the "hingya" darpa nestled in the brow of the Pembina Hills. This was back in the days before the back roads were gravelled and graded like today and soon after they got out of Town the road became very bumpy. After traversing several miles of washboard, the one man said to the other, "Don't drive so hard, say, where did you ever learn to drive anyway?" "Oh," replied the other man. "I'm driving rough? I thought you were driving."

must ring familiar to Mennonites of the Separatist-Pietist persuasion who in the 19th century gobbled up the fantasies of Jung-Stilling's as set forth in his novel *Heinweh*, which they read as their second Bible.

According to the *Left Behind* series, things look bad for planet earth. The "rapture" has taken place, a third of the population will be slaughtered and the evil forces of the Anti-Christ, a former United Nations Secretary-General, stand poised to take over the world. Left behind to fight all this evil with "hand-guns and encrypted e-mail" are the two heroes—duly certified and authenticated Evangelicals, no doubt: see Walter Kirn, "The End is Here, Pt.6," in *Time*, Sept. 13, 1999, page 39.

The six volumes in the *Left Behind* series to date have sold a total of some 8,000,000 copies, which speaks volumes about where the heart of this particular religious culture is at. The bigger the lie the more people fall for it.

**Suggested Reading:** "Waiting for the Millennium," *M.B. Herald*, June 11, 1999, a special issue dealing with the endtimes. The issue was really well done and the various articles provided a spectrum of balanced viewpoints on the subject.

#### Mennonite Post.

On a completely different topic, I want to congratulate the *Mennonite Post* and Editor Abe Warkentin for some of its recent issues which have featured stories and history about the brave pioneers who upon being "exiled" from their Homelands in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada, established new settlements in Latin America, often in the face of great adversity and danger.

I refer as examples to two articles: Conrad Stoesz, "Die Strasse mit die Pfosten in der Westreserve," *Men. Post*, June 18, 1999, page 3; and Abram Isaac, "Wie wir Rusland verliesen und in Kanada 1874," *Men. Post*, July 16, page 5.

I also enjoyed, "Unsere Reise nach Campeche, by David Dyck, Chatham, Ontario, *Men. Post*, August 6, 1999, pages 1-3, a well-done photo essay about one of the most interesting new Mennonite settlements in Latin America. The October 15, 1999, issue had an interesting and informative article about "Partners Bargain Store", the self-help store of the Old Kolony church in Leamington, Ontario, and serves as an example that articles about the OK denomination do not have to be negative to be interesting.

Over the years the "Post" has sometimes carried articles which were premised on the Molotschna Pietist Triumphalist understanding of Mennonite faith and culture, a viewpoint anathema to conservative Mennonites.

The conservative Mennonites in Latin America have their own indigenous faith tradition and deserve to be provided with some material written from that viewpoint. There is enough interesting material written from the conservative traditional viewpoint to fill thousands of issues of the Post. We applaud editor



*The scene on the parking lot of the Conestoga worship house of the Old Order Mennonites near St. Jacobs, Ontario, October 17, 1999. Some 200 horse and buggy outfits were parked in neat rows. The horses waited patiently during the two hour-long worship service. Amish and Old Order Mennonites have been romanticised and idealized within North American "pop" culture as evocative of genuine spirituality and living in unity with God's creation. By comparison "horse and buggy" orders within the Russian Mennonite community have been deprecated and denigrated by their so-called more "progressive" and assimilated co-religionists. The difference within the two cultures seems to be articulated by the fact that Separatist Pietism was a much stronger force among the Russian Mennonites.*

Warkentin and his staff for having the vision to use some of it.

#### Historial Conference, Mexico.

Report of a historical conference in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico:

"On September 2, 1999, the Gemeinde brethren of the Manitoba Colony assembled in the worship house in Gnadenfeld, in order to discuss matters in the congregation, particularly as related to the youths. Under the leadership of Aeltester Franz Banman, many ideas and opinions were put forward during the entire morning. The theme of the School-Committee also came forward. Even though it still has critics, the support for the Committee is stronger and still increasing further. It was decided that all villages shall have evening school, the way many already had last year. It was mentioned that there is a need for more teachers who will need to be supported. Experience has taught that the evening classes must be correctly conducted otherwise the interest will

dissipate and the school fail."

"The purpose of the evening classes is not only for learning but also to offer something for the young people. The importance of offering them something desirable was underlined."

"It was also decided to deal with the problems in the villages internally without calling out the police in so far as possible. The experiences with the police have typically not been positive."

"This historical brotherhood meeting is another confirmation of a readiness to tackle problems and to endeavour to solve them."

*Kurze Nachrichten* as quoted in the *Menn. Post*, September 17, 1999, page 1 and 19.

#### Amish Mennonites.

Perhaps we could all learn something about genuine Christian piety from the Amish Mennonites who are also interested in social and cultural developments among the Old Kolony (OK) Mennonites in Mexico, as is evident from the following story:

"Fifteen Amish families gathered in Marlin Schrock's home in Indiana on June 26, for further discussion respecting their aid program for the Campeche Mennonites. These married couples have already visited all the Mennonites in Mexico and frequently express their highest regard for them."

"They feel a very close affinity with the Old Koloniers and particularly love the respectful protocol of their church. 'We can certainly learn something from them,' was their conclusion. They also praise the beautiful and heartfelt singing in the worship services."

"All of them felt entirely welcome and highly cherished, while they were visiting and staying with the Old Kolony families."

"With respect to the policy of the 'Organization of the Old Kolony Mennonite Fund' it was decided that it would be used to support the making of wells in Campeche. The support for the livestock program in Reinland is completed. According to a report of a writer in Pennsylvania, who attended the session, the heifers are now calving."

"The Amish and other Old Mennonite Orders are of the view that these are exceptionally good examples of Christian charity, whereby the Amish manifest their concern for their Christian brethren in Mexico."

"The Amish wish to provide further aid to the Old Kolony people, but without [bringing] change to their lifestyle. They have the desire to continue to learn and help along in the future." According to a report by Lester Burkholder. As published by George Reimer, Strassburgo Plaza, *Kurze Nachrichten*, in *Men. Post*, July 16, page 21.

#### **Education, Mexico.**

Educators across North America decry the situation of public schools many of which graduate large percentages who are illiterate. Few people realize that in the "big" continental picture the situation of our Hanover School Division is a wonderful exception.

In Mexico as well, Mennonites are often ahead of their neighbours when it comes to education. The following articles as reprinted from the *Kurze Nachrichten aus Mexiko*, June 4, and published in the *Mennonitische Post*, June 18, 1999, may be of some interest in this regard.

#### **"Request for Language Study."**

"The day schools in the Kleine Gemeinde school system had no sooner finished than the English classes were already started, for which some 100 students in No. 106 took part. Because of a shortage of teachers no new students could be enrolled and those who had already taken the classes for five years could not attend either. The Amish teachers came from the various States of the U.S.A. Some had been here before and others were teaching in Mexico for the first time."

"In the previous issue of *KN* we reported of some 160 students who were learning English in Campo 2A. There as well it is so full that no new students can be accepted because of short-

age of additional teachers. In addition classes in German and Spanish were being offered by other teachers."

#### **"More Education is Desired."**

"Five students this year graduated from the secondary level in the day school of the Kleine Gemeinde in No. 106. They are enrolled in the Blumenau High School. In the subsequent days they travelled to Carlsbad."

"In No. 79 in the E.M.M.C. school there were 41 students with three teachers during the past year. One teacher teaches German, the teacher from the Spanish Mennonite church in Anahuac teaches Spanish and one teacher kindergarten. The space was somewhat tight."

"Many parents in the surrounding villages had also inquired whether their children could attend the school the next year. One church in Canada had already donated money for that purpose."

"There are always more parents who favour that their children would also learn some Spanish. But parents in No. 79 who would also gladly allow their children to learn Spanish, hold back because of the tuition costs as the wages of the village teacher is paid from the money received from renting out a parcel of land [owned by the village]. Therefore it does not cost them anything to send their children to the village school."

"In La Honda, Zachatecus, the Kleine Gemeinde is presently building a new school, as more space is required there. The walls of the 58 by 100 foot building are already erected. The next step is to cover the roof. In the previous year there were more than 90 students."

#### **New Mathematics Books.**

"For many years many schools in Mexico used their own mathematics books, but then mathematical tables became the fashion. For example, in the year 1950, a mathematics book, "Zum Gebrach in Deutsch-Mennonitischen Schulen in Mexico" was printed here. Now the schools will again have the opportunity to use a mathematics text. The School-Committee of the Manitoba Colony has ordered 300 copies of each of the seven steps to be printed, which will be available for use among the village schools." From "Kurze Nachrichten" as published in *Men. Post*, October 15, 1999.

#### **Notice to Subscribers.**

The annual HSHS membership/subscription fee for *Preservings* has been increased to \$20.00 effective January 1, 1998. This increase is made with the intention of bringing the subscription/membership fee into line with printing, production and mailing costs of our news-magazine, two issues annually, over 100 pages each.

#### **Volume Four.**

At its board meeting of November 18, 1999, the HSHS board of directors appointed Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg, Ernest Braun, Tourond, and Delbert Plett, Steinbach, as an editorial committee to review the material gathered for Volume Four of the East Reserve Historical Series, and to make some recommendations as to its completion.

#### **Notice to Readers**



Most readers in Manitoba will have received a copy of the July 24, 1999, *Free Press* insert, "In Celebration of the 125th Anniversary of Mennonites in Manitoba!" 12 pages, tabloid style. Over 200,000 copies were printed and distributed.

The *Winnipeg Free Press* was kind enough to provide us with several thousand extra copies of this valuable pictorial sketch of the story of Manitoba's Mennonites. These inserts include ten different articles written by some of Manitoba's leading scholars and historians including Dr. Adolf Ens, Dr. John J. Friesen, Dr. Royden K. Loewen, Lorilee Scharfenberg, Regina Neufeld and others. They are ideal handouts for any special anniversary occasion or gathering.

Copies are available at a nominal cost of \$1.00 per copy, mainly to cover shipping and handling cost. Minimum \$10.00 order. Special prices can be quoted on larger orders. Send cheque or money order to HSHS, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0.

# Guest Essay: Evangelicals Denigrate Conservatives

Evangelicals Denigrate Conservatives Mennonites - Understanding the Conservative Wing of the Mennonite Church, by Dr. David Schroeder, 745 Conventry Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3R 1B8, Retired Professor of History and Theology.

## Introduction.

We have not done well in understanding the more conservative wing of the Mennonite churches, such as the Sommerfelder, Reinländer, Chortitzer, Holdeman and Old Colony Churches.

These denominations have been branded as ultra conservative, traditional, backward, anti-educational, non-evangelical, unsure of their salvation, pessimistic, non-joyous, and generally looked down upon. But none of these things apply in the pejorative sense in which they are intended. In fact, when we see the success they have in retaining their family members for the faith, the other churches can well take a lesson from them.

It is painful for the members of the conservative churches to be regarded as non-believers by their more evangelical sisters and brothers. When persons came to our yard to evangelize us, my father would say, "If that is where you want to begin, you might as well leave now!" They left, but they did not know why my father had refused to talk to them. It was simple. They had refused to regard him as a Christian and that was an insult. But this happened time and again. When other churches accepted as members, persons that had been disciplined by these churches, without talking to their leadership, they were again saying that they did not regard them as Christians. Many similar incidents could be cited.

## Salvation.

One of the basic misunderstandings between the conservative and the more evangelical Mennonite churches is their understanding of salvation. In the evangelical churches it is customary to emphasize the past tense of salvation (I have been saved) whereas the conservative churches have in the past emphasized the future tense of salvation (I trust I will be saved). Both are biblical. In fact the Bible can speak of having been saved (past tense), being saved (present tense) and will be saved (Future tense).

**"It is painful for the members of the conservative churches to be regarded as non-believers by their more evangelical sisters and brothers."**

My mother would always speak in terms of hoping to be saved. What this emphasized was the keen awareness of the possibility of becoming unfaithful to Christ sometime in the future and of becoming an unbeliever even after having been committed to Christ. Her assurance was that if she remained faithful to Christ to the end of her life she would receive the crown of life as the Word of God indicated (Revelation 2:10). Her joy of salvation was in Christ, not in herself.

Untold damage has been done to the conser-

vative church members by the evangelical churches by branding them as unbelievers. Seldom, if ever, did the conservatives seek to defend themselves. They knew that they loved the Lord and were seeking to serve him. That was enough. They were willing to suffer any derision that this might bring. They *could* have defended themselves by referring to Revelation 2:26 and 3:21 as well as 1 Peter 1:3-5 but they were never asked. It was assumed that they were not Christians.

I have seldom found as deep, as simple and as trusting a faith as I have found amongst the members of these Conservative churches. The other churches and church members owe them an apology and need to respond to them as brothers and sisters. Only then can we learn from each other.

## Christian Formation.

What may have contributed to this misunderstanding is the conservative churches' emphasis on Christian formation rather than on conversion or education. In "formation" you are inducted into the world in which you live. You are made to see that this is the way the world is and it is not any other way. You are inducted into God's world and you need to learn to live a God-fearing life. The church is there to help you to know how to live in God's world. You are not converted into this world nor educated into it – it is now and will always be God's world. But we need the grace of God to live a life pleasing to God and this is where we need each other's help. This is where the church comes into its own.

**"Untold damage has been done to the conservative church members by the evangelical churches by branding them as unbelievers."**

By telling the story of God's people (both Old and New Testament) the church becomes a part of the People of God and becomes a part of the ongoing work of God in the world. In this view of the Church there is only one world, God's world. In the evangelical tradition it seems at times as if young people are seen to be in Satan's world until the time of conversion. In reality, however, even in their disobedience to God they are in God's world.

The Conservative churches (see endnote) have very successfully practiced Christian formation. An Amish Bishop asked one of the Old Colony Bishops in Mexico how many of their youth joined the church. He volunteered that in the last twenty years some 80% of the Amish youth had been retained by the church. The Old Colony Bishop thought a bit and said "I think we do better than that!" Which of the evangelical churches could say this?

Formation, in the sense in which the Conservative Churches practiced it, is difficult today even for them. So many things that do not come from the family or the church impact on our lives that it is difficult for persons to receive this unified view of the world. But if it were possible, formation is a much deeper and more permanent shaping of our lives than education.

## Character Formation.

In the conservative churches the emphasis is placed on character formation rather than on doctrines and ethical rules. Christians are expected to follow Christ (discipleship) and manifest the character of Christ in their lives. What you believe (doctrine) and what you do or do not do (ethics) has to be in harmony with your commitment to Christ.

In the conservative churches basic beliefs were recalled every year when the Catechism questions and the Articles of Faith were presented, recited, read and commented on every spring. The members of the church accepted these beliefs without question. Being Christian, however, was not determined by which precise doctrines you accepted or whether you attended a dance, went to a show or even had a smoke. You were judged on your Christian character.

**"....some 80% of the Amish youth had been retained by the church....Which of the evangelical churches could say this?"**

Christian character formation had to do with helping each other to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26) in your lives. The beatitudes of Jesus (Matthew 5:1-11) also were a guide for Christian character. To be a follower of Jesus meant to become Christ-like in your character.

The main instrument of character formation was the telling of stories. There were stories of exemplary behaviour and stories of human folly and failure. Through the stories you learned to know what it meant to love, to forgive, to be honest, kind and trustworthy. It was and still is a very effective way of helping people become Christian in character.

The focus was on who we are as followers of Christ - on *being* rather than on believing or doing. What was said and done was seen as coming from the same person, from the same being.

## The Community of Faith

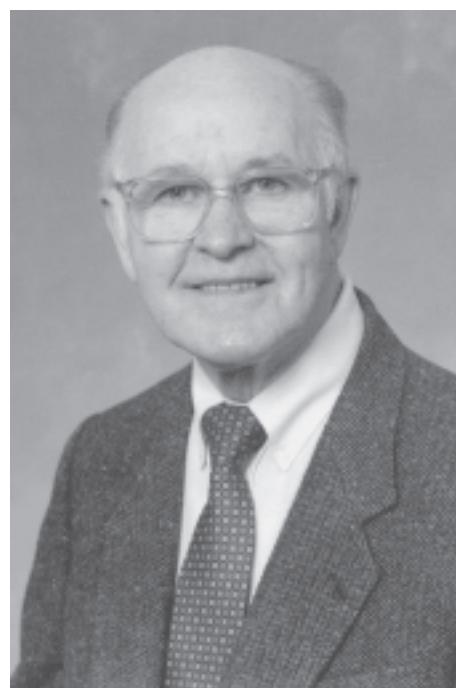
The conservative churches also give attention to the church as a community of faith. All who belonged to Christ belonged to the church. Since Christ is head of the church, decisions on how members of the church are to live in the world are made corporately as a church. The church is a

corporate community making decisions for all its members through the *Bruderschaft*.

The point is that it is the *church* that determines what it means to live in the world without being of the world. It is the church as a corporate body that determines the life-style of its members. Economic, educational and social decisions are made in essence by the church. This is in direct opposition to the individualistic view of salvation and practice in evidence in much of the evangelical world where every Christian does as he or she pleases.

People may differ on whether those decisions have always been the right ones. The church is not perfect. People may question whether it is really wrong to use rubber tires on farm tractors, refuse to use electricity or wear certain kinds of clothing, but the principle of the Church as a community of faith making corporate decisions on how to live in the world is commendable. All that is needed is for the Church to make the right decisions. To honour the church as church has yet to be learned by the evangelical churches.

Because the church as a corporate body speaks to issues that confront people daily, there is more of a reliance on the church and a dependence on the church in the conservative churches. Persons are socialized away from an individualistic approach to questions. It is this that the more evangelical, individualistically oriented churches and persons can hardly understand. They do not understand the loyalty of the members of the conservative churches to their church. They are the church as a corporate community. They do not stand alone.



David Schroeder, retired Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg, Manitoba

### **Education**

The Conservative Churches have not been against education as such, as is most often suggested. They have in fact valued education as so important that it needs to be under the governance of the church and in the language of the people. They have also objected to having education for its own sake. They have insisted that the educational level needs to be appropriate to the needs of the members of the church at any given time. Again persons may argue that that judgment is not always appropriately made, but the principle is appropriate and remains.

When Provincial Departments of Education insisted on educational requirements that the church did not judge to be appropriate and when it was required to be in the English language, the conservative churches objected. They sought to keep education under the guidance of the church or else tried to find another country that would allow them this freedom.

The Mennonite Churches that accepted the Governments' role in setting standards and requirements for education have been quick to point out what the conservative churches lost through what they have regarded as an inferior education. These critics, however, have paid little attention to what they themselves may have lost as a church through the educational system of the land. To what extent has the country in which they lived assimilated them?

### **Language**

The Conservative Churches have to a great extent kept to the Low German language. They have had their Sunday worship in High German but it has not become their conversational language. They have also learned English and Spanish in order to converse with people in the land, but neither is their language of choice. This is because the Low German language is so well suited to them as persons, their approach to things and their emphasis on formation.

The Low German language is a strong verb language. It can be used to describe any kind of *action* (count the number of ways in which you can say it is raining); it can be used to tell stories such as they use in character formation. High German and English are noun languages. In them you can describe *things* to your hearts content. In English and German you can philosophize and theologize with great precision, but the conservative churches have shown little interest in such theological hair-splitting.

The conservative churches would have benefited from having the Low German language as a written language. They would even now be helped by using the Low German language in their schools and in their worship. They would then be able to express themselves in their home language and they would be in a position to produce some excellent literature. Maybe this is why the United Bible Society has decided to publish a Bible in the Low German language spoken by the Old Colony people in Mexico. Language is important and the conservative churches knew this.

### **Humility**

What shall we say then about humility? Others have often made fun of it. But it is in perfect harmony with the conservative view of salvation as future and a person's place in the community of faith. The individualism and aggressiveness expressed by evangelical Christians is seen as

**"The Conservative Churches have.... valued education."**

hubris, or spiritual conceit. It is in their minds in conflict with the Gospel. It conflicts with the fruit of the Spirit as given in Galatians 5:22ff.

The Conservative sense of humility comes from their sense of being under the lordship of Christ exercised through the community of faith.

### **State and Society.**

The church takes precedence over the state. Ultimate allegiance belongs to Christ and the Church, and not to governments. Governments, when they fulfill their God-given task, keep order in society. The Church in the conservative churches speaks for the people to the powers that be. The church reserves the right to encourage its members to obey or disobey the governments, depending on what demands the government makes on them. Governments often seek to use the divide-and-conquer method against them because this is how they pit people against each other in the rest of society. But it has seldom worked.

The members of the conservative churches are prepared to suffer for the sake of Christ wherever the society or governments do not accept what they feel to be the right thing to do under God.

The conservative churches have seen it as their call to address issues of justice, morality, and spirituality in the church and in that way to make their witness to the larger society. It is in their community of faith that they seek to structure life in such a way that it represents the reign of God in the world. The *Waisenamt* is a good example.

### **Criticism.**

Those who have been critical of the conservative churches have been critical about the particular judgments made by the churches about how to live in society. But there is little reason to be critical about their theology. The evangelical churches also have a theology to which members are not true. It would be well if we ceased throwing stones in each other's direction. It would be much better if we would learn from each other and help each other to be more faithful.

**Endnote:** This is indicated in Aeltester Abraham Doerksen's list of sermons and sermon schedules. See "Sommerfelder Sermons and Literature" a paper delivered by David Schroeder at a conference sponsored by the Local History Committee of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, November 4, 1995.

# Letters

We welcome letters to the editor and appreciate feedback from our readers and suggestions as to how we can fulfil our function better. We welcome criticism of articles and editorial commentary. Traditional conservative Mennonite communities such as the Kleine Gemeinde, Chortitzer, Sommerfelder and Old Coloniers, were shaped by constant debate and adversarial dialogue. Contrary to those who decry and condemn vigorous critique and passionate debate which has characterized the Mennonite faith since the Reformation, we celebrate and applaud the same as evidence of genuine spirituality and personal integrity and as a process essential to the advancement of historical truth and true grass-roots democracy. We will assume that all letters can be published, unless a contrary intention is indicated. We reserve the right not to publish any particular letter and/or not to respond to a letter, particularly if it refers to an issue already previously dealt with. Please keep all letters short (under 300 words) and to the point. We reserve the right to return, discard, edit and/or shorten letters as deemed necessary.

4583 Trails Drive  
Sarasota, Florida 34232-3450  
June 4, 1999

Dear Mr. Plett:

Thank you so much for the complimentary copy of *Saints and Sinners*. I loved it. It is well written and interesting. I read and read until I finished it. You dealt with a herculean task but you sorted it out well and wrote so that it is very readable. I commend you for that.

It was so exciting to see my grandmother and great-grandmother's picture on the front cover. I could not help but wish my father could have seen that. He passed away five years ago but he would have been so proud and pleased. He had a great interest in the Russian Mennonite history and would have thoroughly enjoyed your book. Many of the names were familiar to me just from hearing my parents talk about them.

Thank you again for helping to preserve our heritage in this wonderful way.

Sincerely, "Elda Plank"

June 22/99  
Dept of Geography  
York University  
4700 Keele Street  
Toronto, Ont., M3J 1P3

Dear Delbert:

Thank-you very much for sending me "Saints and Sinners". It is new territory for me, and I learned a lot.

I am impressed by the balanced position taken by the KG on many issues in the Mennonite communities in Russia. Also by the respect shown to women and servants--in short individuals--that you have emphasized in your writing in *Preservings*.

I tend to take people and the religious beliefs they hold at a respectful face value, and am not surprised at the range of beliefs amongst people because humans are such individualists. A very Protestant assumption. Your account of some of the debates has prompted me to examine some of the writings of Menno Simons.

Very sincere congratulations on another highly worthwhile achievement. And it appreciate your thinking of me. Sincerely, "John (Warkentin)"

Crown Valley Farms Ltd.  
Box 102, New Bothwell  
ROA 1C0  
July 6/99

Dear Delbert,

I find, as usual, when I receive the latest issue

of "Preservings" that I cannot seem to put it down till I have pretty much finished it. Keep up the good work. On page 98 (No 14 June, 1999) you seek to identify some of the men in the photo "Goodbye in the rain". When this was first published in the "Hanover 100 years" book in 1982, I questioned my father-in-law David M. Friesen (Grandson to Waiseman C.T. Friesen) about the people in the photo and I wrote down the names at the time.

To the left of Minister Peter F. Wiebe is Jacob Goertzen (I believe the father to Leonard and Levi Goertzen) under the umbrella to the right of Rev Wiebe is Henry A. Hiebert (Niverville) son of Peter F. Hiebert (B. Sept. 29, 1867) grandson of Peter P. Hiebert (B. Aug. 2, 1841). ("Peter P. Hiebert Family Tree Book") The other three in the picture are correctly identified. As my father-in-law, since deceased, was present at this farewell (Hiebert was married to his half sister) I believe this is reliable. "Peter D. Wiebe"

Steinbach, Man  
July 23, 1999

Dear Delbert:

I enjoyed reading about Mary Ginter (the chiropractor) and Glenn Kehler (De Fieh Dokta)--very interesting Glenn! And I enjoy reading the whole paper. I am sending a cheque to keep it coming. Yours truly, "Katharina D. Koop"

Mennonite Central Committee  
134 Plaza Dr.  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 5K9  
July 9, 1999

Dear Delbert:

I read your June *Preservings* with interest, especially your observations about MCC.

You might be interested to know that on May 13th (Ascension Day) about 500 Mennonites met on Parliament Hill in Ottawa to publicly witness against Canada's involvement in the former Yugoslavia. This was not initiated by MCC but rather by Mennonites who thought their faith called them to publicly express their concerns about Canada's role in the bombings.

I highlight these actions to assure you that not all Canadian Mennonites are alienated by MCC's work and that not all Canadian Mennonites frequent Steinbach's coffee shops or listen to "Knakzoat" radio.

Recently, we also had two donations from conservative Mennonite colonies in Mexico for our work with victims of Hurricane Mitch.

Perhaps I'm misjudging things but I continue

to believe that MCC enjoys strong support from our constituency, despite occasional differences of opinion.

I also need to point out that MCC does not have, or sponsor, "Peacemaker Teams". In your reference to "Peacemaker Teams", you probably have the organization Christian Peacemaker Teams in mind, an organization with a limited connection to MCC. Sincerely, "Marvin Frey" Executive Director

**Editor's Note:** The point remains that MCC has a relatively consistant record of protesting war but seemingly only when the U.S.A. and its Allies act to thwart despots as they did in Kosovo. MCC activists do not seem to be around when people like Molosovic and Hussain are on the move, raping and exterminating complete cultures. According to traditional Mennonite theology "good" governments are instituted of God to implement order among humankind, and many Mennonties of this background resent an organization speaking in their name, especially when it is against those who make great sacrifices to establish peace.

July 10, 1999

Dear Mr. Plett:

I am sorry that I was not able to meet you when Henry and my brother Lee stopped by to see you. Thank you for the books you gave to Henry for me. I began reading on the way back to Kansas and look forward to finishing them.

You have handled some sensitive topics in a balanced and respectful manner, and I appreciate that in your writing. My father, Aeltester Jacob F. Isaac, was a leader in a very difficult period. A period when younger people were chomping on the bit to go a different direction and the older guard pulling on the reins to keep everything in check. On numerous occasions I would hear my father express concern about how to keep the message of God and the Gospel clear in a period of change. Frequently when I would leave the house, his last words to me were in low German "Don't forget the important."

Thanks again and if you are ever in the Hillsboro area, give me a call. My address is 304 S Kennedy, Hillsboro, KS 67063 ... Sincerely, "Al Isaac"

**Editor's Note:** I was sorry to have missed you during your visit to Steinbach, but was honoured to have the opportunity to meet your brother Lee. Somehow I felt as if I was visiting with Mennonite royalty, being the sons of the last serving Aeltester of the Nebraska/Kansas Kleine

## Preservings



Alvin (left) and Levi Isaac, sons of Jakob F. Isaac (1883-1970), the last Kleine Gemeinde Aeltester at Meade, Kansas. Alvin serves as Director of Fund Development, Sunshine Meadows Retirement Community, Buhler, Kansas, and Lee operates a feedlot with 10-15,000 head of cattle in Hooker, Oklahoma. Photo courtesy of Henry Fast, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Gemeinde. I cried inside when Lee told the story of how the Meade young people who had adopted the rites and rituals of American Fundamentalism, piled the pews in the south worship house to close off the lobby so that nobody could get in, and held a roller skating party inside. To me this is typical of the total disrespect which adherents of American Fundamentalism had for other cultures and people. The more I hear about your father and how he responded to such brainless arrogance with patience and Christian love--although heartbroken and devastated, the more I have a sense of what a great man of God he was.

205 Craig, Box 56  
Ellinwood, Kansas  
67526-0056  
July 21, 1999

Hello,

Your article on the "1922 Delegation to Mexico" is very interesting! It is exciting to be part of the puzzle in your research on this historical venture by the KG!

Your kind words about our family in the article were greatly appreciated! My parents would be very grateful for being able to support the preservation of important family and church activity.

Keep up the good work with your research and writing!

I have distributed about two dozen copies of "Saints & Sinners" at Meade. People seem to be interested to read about their heritage. It will be interesting to receive feedback as they move through the materials. The recipients really express appreciation for your generosity!

Until next time, "Merle Loewen"

Dept of Anthropology  
Victoria University  
Wellington, N.Z.  
July 16, 1999

Just got the latest *Preservings* and I have spent two days reading through it in between marking. I can tell you *Preservings* was much more interesting than anything the student's have written. You seem to have suffered some typesetting glitches here and there but perhaps these add to the fun!

I was interested to see that you videoed Harvey's talk [At the Jan 26/99 A.G.M.]. I could not make it out to Steinbach that night, so I would be interested in hearing him on the video tape rather than in the flesh - as it were. I am sending you money to cover the costs of a copy so look out for it.

My paper on borders and boundaries which includes reference to the E.R. is in press with MQR. You can access it ahead of time on the web: <http://www.goshen.edu/mqr/urry.html>.

It is very sad about John Dyck's passing. We had extensive interaction towards the end of his life and I admired him as a gentleman and fellow scholar. I assume you are carrying a tribute to him in the next edition. James Urry

July 10, 1999

Dear Sirs:

*Preservings* No. 14 just arrived in the mail yesterday. Thank you for sending it to me. Enclosed please find \$20.00 for this issue as well as the previous issue which you also sent to me since a family member was featured in it.

I must admit that there is tremendously interesting information in it and I thoroughly enjoy reading it. Sincerely, "Mrs. Lydia Schroeder", Box 426, Wawanesa, Manitoba, R0K 2G0

24-1605 7th St. E.,  
Saskatoon, SK S7H 0Z3

Re: *Preservings*, No. 14.

Aeltester Johann Wiebe's wife's name is Judith not Helena. His death date is shown in some places as 1906 not 1905. The Reinland Gemeindebuch has 1905 so we thought that was the Gospel truth. I appreciated your lightheartedness which showed through a bit more, made reading more enjoyable. The name game was a good idea. Yours truly "Elaine Wiebe"  
P.S. Don't judge a person by his relatives.

**Editor's Note:** The death date of February 21, 1906, is from *Unsere Reise*, see "Johann Wiebe Documents" article, feature article section. Perhaps Municipal or Vital Statistics death records can be examined to confirm this information.

We wish you well as you proceed in your quest to rediscover your Old Kolony roots, it will take some concerted research and probing to sift through a century of misrepresentations, untruths and lies which have been written and told about the Old Koloniers, often by fellow Mennonites in a pathetic attempt to advance their own filio-pietistic agendas.

GWP WEALTH MGMT  
10235-101 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 3G1  
July 29, 1999

Delbert Plett, Q.C.

Dear Mr. Plett:

Thank you very much for the copy of Saints and Sinners. I have not read it in its entirety yet, but, as I have read most of the Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series, I am finding it a good way to refresh my memory.

Your personal reflections in Appendix A have a familiar ring to me and I am pleased that you chose to write these books. Aside from their impact on me I know I will be using them many years from now to relate my history to my daughters. They, of course, are removed by geography from really experiencing Steinbach.

The timing of the receipt of your gift was also appropriate. I was in Steinbach for my grandmother's funeral. Mrs. Sarah (John K.) Barkman was ninety years old and her passing removed another living link to our past and highlights the importance of a written history.

Once again, thank you. Your efforts have been immense and I am sure I am not the only reader who appreciates them.

Yours truly "Douglas Penner" CFA

300 Sth Val Vista Dr. #31,  
Mesa, Az., 85204  
July 27, 1999

Dear Delbert,

Enclosed please find a cheque to cover my subscription to *Preservings*. I don't know what my subscription status is at present, and it really doesn't matter, as long as I keep getting the paper.

To say the least, I'm enjoying the paper thoroughly - you are doing an excellent job - where you find the time is amazing. There is no doubt in my mind that you are well "down the pipe" in being the top writer of H. S. history. Would be great to sit down with you again for a change - just to talk.....

Thanks again Delbert. I admire you and the "thoroughness" and writing ability. Keep up the good work. Very sincerely, "Ernie" E. A. Friesen P. S. Too bad Roy Vogt is no longer with us- he had so many great plans of really getting into research and writing, especially about his Reimer family & I'm sure he would have been in close touch with you frequently.

Editor's Note: It is an honour, indeed, to receive a note of encouragement from "our" friend. Ernie A. Friesen was one of the charter members and incorporators of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society in July 1988 when he was Mayor of the Town of Steinbach. We always appreciate the financial contribution. Unfortunately, we have no staff nor financial resources to send out actual reminders for the annual subscription fees and rely on the good will of our readers in that regard. I also remember fondly those days long ago "raiding" your crab apple tree on Lumber Ave. and then enjoying a good visit in the back veranda.

Box 720  
Altona, ROG OBO  
July 29, 1999

Dear Del,

Just finished reading "Preservings" No. 14, June 1999. Congratulations again on a very fine issue! I'm amazed at your personal input into this as well as previous copies.

A few comments:

(1) The Aeltester Johann Wiebe article by Peter D. Zacharias is excellent. It's a sympathetic portrayal of a great leader.

(2) Henry Schapansky's paper "From Russia to Prussia" I found very interesting. It presents some new insights into motivation for emigration.

(3) I remember Peter P. Epp vaguely. What I did hear and read about him was generally positive. His daughter was the wife of J.G. Neufeld, my high school teacher.

(4) Your editorials I find refreshing! I'm particularly appreciative of your efforts to rehabilitate the "Kanadier" people. That, to my mind has been particularly successful, thanks to the many fine articles in "Preservings". I had a few chuckles reading "Mennonite Conformity".

(5) An old friend of mine "Lou Erk", druggist in Altona (passed away in 1967), remembers John P. Friesen (p. 92) known as "Pinky". Unfortunately I haven't recorded these memories.

(6) Thanks for listing my plea for funding of a "History of Mennonite Women in Canada". (p. 136) Funds are trickling in.

(7) Your reference to Frank H. Epp (p. 139, col. 1) implies that he had a certain bias concerning Kanadier. Certain of his writings may imply that. However he also had an appreciation for the Kanadier. Here's one story that he told me, and that may in part substantiate what I have said. On a trip to Menno Colony in Paraguay, he interviewed an older unsophisticated Kanadier, who said: "I recently had a conversation with a Russlaender from Fernheim Colony. This man told of the great achievements of the Mennonites in Russia. But he did it in an uncomfortably boasting way. I listened for a while and then said: true, but it is an interesting fact of our history, that we hadn't been in Canada for long, till you decided to follow us. The same thing happened in Paraguay. And we hosted you both times." A perfect put-down!

I want to try and do an article on the Funk Bros. in Altona, and submit it for a future issue of "Preservings".

Again, Delbert my profound thanks for your tremendous and significant productions. Much appreciated.

With all best wishes, sincerely, "Theodore (Ted) E. Friesen"

Dr. John Hodges  
Loferefeld 16  
A-5730 Mittensill  
Austria  
27 July, 1999

Dear Delbert,

Here are three documents on Susie's family:

1. The family pedigree as far back as we can

go.

2. Some anecdotal facts from family records.
3. Recent letter from Alan Peters of the Mennonite Genealogy Project Committee, 563 East Salem Avenue, Fresno, Calif 93720-2117. He comments upon the same pedigree.

Susie's mother Maria Thiessen was born in Klippenfeld and grew up in Waldheim, Molotschna. She and her husband, Abram Jakob Friesen came to Canada in 1926 after living for a while in Einlage.....

If you are able to link this pedigree with your larger Molotschna pedigrees and village names we shall be very grateful, especially before we go on the Heritage cruise in September.

We are greatly enjoying your writings. You show all the attributes of a diligent bloodhound combined with honesty, humanity and literary skills. Congratulations – keep at it.

Kindest regards, "John"

Aug 4/99

Box 1641, Wandering  
B.C., V0J 3A0

Mr. Plett,

I received the June No. 14 copy of *Preservings* yesterday. Its what I phoned you about on July 26/99. Thank-you very much. I find it very interesting. I enclose a cheque for \$25.00 for that and the next one and \_\_\_\_ donation. Thanks-again, "J. B. Wiebe"

Aug. 9, 1999

Box 17, Altona  
Man. ROG OBO

Dear Editor,

I would like to commend you on the very interesting and informational "Preservings". They bring together a lot of historical facts and important interest in our heritage. I cherish my Christian heritage.

My heritage from Russia is Bergthal/Old Colony and by reading your editorials I assume yours is Kleine Gemeinde. This obviously has tinted the glasses differently for each of us by the way we see things. I have friends and a lot of relatives in the Old Colony, especially in Latin American countries, and know that the E.M.M.C./Rudnerweider involvement there is upon invitation.

I'm referring to remarks you made in #14, June, 1999, Editorial. If you would check with MC.C. workers in Manitoba and Ont. and listen to the plight of many of our people in these countries you might even consider joining us in helping them.

Yours truly, "Rose Hildebrand", Altona E.M.M.C.

**Editor's Note:** Actually the difference between our views has nothing to do with being of Kleine Gemeinde or Bergthalher heritage in Russia. In fact, the theology and faith of the Kleine Gemeinde, Bergthalher and Old Kolony (Reinländer) pioneers in the 1870s was practically identical.

The difference in our viewpoints stems from

the fact that in 1937 some Sommerfelder in the West Reserve decided to adopt American Fundamentalist religious culture and its filio-pietistic agenda and have made a "cottage industry" ever since of inducing other Mennonites to do likewise.

Regarding your assertion that the Rudnerweiders only proselytize in OK communities upon invitation, I believe this is a standard typology of aggressor or perpetrator cultures. The strategy is to find a few dissatisfied and alienated individuals in a community who issue an "invitation" and then use these people to identify others who are marginalized and possibly alienated, etc.

As far as listening "to the plight of many of our people in..." Latin America, there are thousands of suffering people right here in Manitoba, although possibly you never drive through North Main, Winnipeg. Why is it necessary to travel thousands of miles to Latin America to attack what are clearly loving and committed Christian communities? We have to learn to respect people of all cultures and faiths--though they are different, and such courtesy should extend even to our own.

I think those purporting to help people in trouble and holding themselves out as caregivers have an obligation to respect and understand the culture and spiritual values of those whom they serve. Caregivers should not come to their work with an underhanded filio-pietistic agenda, whereby every unfortunate wretch ministered to is seen mainly as an opportunity to manipulate someone into adopting American Fundamentalist or even so-called Evangelical religious culture. I was surprised recently to read that MCC had put such people in charge of some of their "Kanadier" programs, a little like putting the fox in charge of the chicken coop, see William Janzen, *Build Up One Another* (MCC, Kitchener, Ont., 1998), page 48; or the video, "Migration North," *Preservings*, No. 11, page 103.

I want to say also that although our viewpoints may differ, I feel that your letter was written in a spirit of genuine love and caring and I acknowledge it as such.

August 21/99

Dear Mr. Plett;

When I received the June "Preservings", I browsed through the magazine. I was touched by the pictures and article on pages 56-63, the "Mexican Mennonite Tour." There are no words to describe my appreciation that someone like you would take the time to tour Mexico, especially the Old Colony villages ("OK").

I am so glad you had the chance to see first hand that there are a lot of intelligent and hard working people there just like anywhere else. They are good human beings just like the Chortitzer, Bergthalher, Kleine Gemeinde, MBs, GCs, etc.

It really saddens me that there are so many people who don't want to talk about their culture. I understand where they are coming from, I once had the same attitude towards my background.

## Preservings

I am also very grateful for the "Preservings", there is so much to read. I especially enjoy all those pictures. I don't understand why so many people think so negatively about the Old Colony people. We all have different traditions but that doesn't mean one is better than the other. I believe that we all have the same Bible and that we all worship the same living God.

I grew up in the Old Colony school and church. That doesn't mean that I'm worth any less than anybody else. I had wonderful parents. The one thing I regretted is that I never asked my parents or grandparents any questions about Mennonite history. I wish I had known then what I know now, it would have made it a lot easier to understand what they believed.

If it would not have been for our great-grandparents we would not have the privilege to live in this wonderful country.

Thanks again for doing such an awesome job with the "Preservings". May God bless you. Thank-you.

Name and address withheld by request.

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August 17, 1999  
Box 175, Calvet  
SK, S0K 0Y0

Dear Mr. Plett

I just received a copy of the June '99 "Preservings" # 14. I'm enjoying it so much I can hardly put it down. You are to be commended. Thank you so much.

My family were Old Kolony. They came to Canada in 1874 and settled in Manitoba, but came to Saskatchewan in the early 1900's and in fact I've just found out that Alt. Johann Wiebe that you wrote about was my great, great uncle. I have read a lot of stuff in there that I did not know.

I also really enjoyed reading about your trip to Mexico. Most of my aunts and uncles migrated to Mexico in the '20's. I never even met them. How I would have liked to be on that trip.

I have written a book - "The Birds Kept Right On Singing," about my life in a Mennonite Village. I grew up in the village of Neuhorst in the Hague Osler Mennonite Reserve in Sask. How does one go on about advertising the book in your magazine? Is it possible?

I am enclosing a cheque for \$20.00. I would like to hear from you. Thank you again! Sincerely, "Mrs. Susan Yuzik"

Editor's Note: Thank-you for the book. You will find the family of Peter Wiebe, brother to your grandfather Jakob Wiebe listed in the book, *Discovering our Wiebe Heritage* by Elaine Wiebe and Gladys Wiebe, see *Preservings*, No. 13, page 66.

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August 19, 1999

To the Editor:

I read with interest your articles on the Old Colony people and their leaders. I was born and raised as an Old Colonist, was baptized there at age 20, was active with them for many years. But left them in later life, though my love for them remains. We have many friends and relatives

among these people in Mexico as well as Bolivia. And so we know that your article is stretched in many areas. The illiterate situation is much different than you claim and also the Ohms you refer to as preaching the best Evangelical message you have heard in a long time. Well I have heard them for over fifty years and I wish you would study the results.

My parents were both baptized by Aeltester Johan Wiebe, and my father always said, he was one of a kind. The Jews only had one Moses. Even Mr. Wiebe's son Peter, who succeeded him as Aeltester in Manitoba while Ohm Johann was still alive, and he said of his son, "My son Peter's little finger is heavier than my whole hand ever was" and Peter's death at an early age was also not without reason, and he influenced my father's brother that he too died very young leaving four young orphans.

It is good to write good things of people such as the Old Colony, but there is much to be desired, and many of the poor are the evidence of this. I well remember the Exodus from Canada to Mexico and it was not all very pretty. Enough said.

"A. G. Janzen" Box 9, Hague, SK S0K 1X0

**Editor's Note:** It is common knowledge that those who have left a culture and community are often its harshest critics as they need to justify their actions, emotionally and spiritually. Your letter speaks for this group. I could find thousands to write similar letters about Pentecostal or even the so-called Evangelical religious culture.

To state that "poor people...[show]...there is much to be desired" is a value judgement based on assumptions. After all, the Apostles were poor also, does that prove anything about their character?

As conservative Mennonites, the Old Kolony people believe it wrong to defend themselves, even against unfounded allegations.

It is okay and often even beneficial to criticize. I believe Old Kolony Mennonites deserve a voice, just as you do.

Abram G. Janzen is the father of Abe Janzen, MCC director to the Mennonites in Bolivia and William Janzen, MCC director in Ottawa.



Oct 18/99. A homeless person sleeping on the street in front of City Hall, Toronto, Ontario, one of the wealthiest cities in North America. This does NOT signify that Torontonians represent a lesser culture or chaste of people, only that poverty is everywhere; as Jesus said, "The poor have ye always." Some people even see poverty as conducive to an elevated spiritual state. Those who have acquired a great deal of wealth are not necessarily the ones who have always practiced the Sermon on the Mount.

803 Jessie Avenue,  
Winnipeg, MB R3M 0Z6  
August 16, 1999

Dear Del:

I am sending you a story called "Suaruh Suschkje Learns to Laugh". This is an excerpt from something longer I have been working on that grew out of the story "And Besides God Made Poison Ivy" which you may have seen in the anthology *Due West*. I hope this will interest at least some of your readers.

I did try to write a Yasch and Oata Go to Steinbach story but I couldn't get them to go past the Morris Stampede even though the Automobile City had a float in the Stampede parade. Then the story just got bucked off the bronco and even the rodeo clowns couldn't save it. I love Yasch and Oata but my imagination has nutzed them out I think. They belong to another time in my imagination and it's best that I leave them there. There has to be something deeper churning away in a story or even the light fluffy stuff doesn't want to work. I don't know if that makes sense.

I noticed that Shoo-Fly Dyck didn't waste any time putting my praises on the Internet. Hope it helps sell a few books.

I saved the story on disk in a few different versions. I trust one of them will work on your system.

Sincerely, "Armin"  
Armin Wiebe's Wiebe Site-. www.escape.ca/~armwiebe

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Box 1116, Steinbach,  
Man., R0A 2A0  
Aug 16/99

Delbert,

Thanks-again for your help in the Toews Reunion. People appreciated the Free Press inserts [July 24, Saturday paper] very much. Also a number signed up to receive your *Preservings*. You got a lot of "good publicity". We had a great week-end. Thanks again. "Elbert Toews"

Editor's Note: We look forward to hearing more about the Toews clan history and that of the Mapleton settlement.

8/16/99

H.S.H.S.

Enclosed is \$20.00 for 1999 membership. Thanks to Mr. Delbert Plett for *Preservings*. If refreshes a lost of memories of people I have known and still know.

"Mary Braun" 739 McPhillips Street,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2X 2J1.

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Toronto, ON M1M 2K2  
Aug 18/99

Delbert Plett,  
*Preservings*,  
Dear Delbert,

It was a real pleasure to spend some time with you in Ukraine. There seemed to be more than

one Gemeinde there, and I felt we belonged to the same one.

Thanks also for the latest issue of Preservings. Please put me down as a subscriber.

When you are in Toronto, my office number is (416)461-6888. My residence is....

Best regards, Paul Epp.

**Editor's Note:** I felt the same. Thanks.

Aug 24/99

Dear Mr. Plett,

I'm awfully sorry I've delayed my answer. I was busy. I was engaged in research at the archives of Krasnodar (It is important city in North Caucasus). Through this research I have found very interesting and important documents regarding the History of Mennonites in North Caucasus (in Russia).

Now I answer your questions and would ask my questions. There is Stavropol in North Caucasus in Russia. It was founded in 1777 as fortress. Now it is administrative centre of Stavropol Territory. There is my University in Stavropol.

About me. I'm Doctor of History (Russian History XIX-XX centuries). I have master's thesis: "German population of North Caucasus: socio-economic, religius life (end of XVIII – mid XX centuries)." I'm engaged in research German and Mennonite History in North Caucasus in 9 years. Now I'm working on Professor dissertation. My scientific theme is migration politics of Russian state.

Mr. Plett, please, help me to know, do any Caucasus Mennonites of Germans live in Canada? Is there a Caucasus Mennonite Gemeinde or another religous Gemeinde in Canada?

I have important and interesting information about Caucasus Mennonites, and Mennonites and Germans in Russia, for example, about Mennonites and Germans, who were repressed in North Caucasus. I think my contact with their relatives can be mutually beneficial.

I want to get copies of your Journals. You may send them to my address: 355003 Russia, Stavropol, UL. Morozowa 54A, kw.14. My new e-mail is: plotan@stavropol.net.

All the best, "Tatiana Plokhotnyuk"

**Editor's Note:** We will appreciate hearing more from you and about the results of your research. Perhaps you can send us some brief summaries to publish.

Sandra Morris  
32046 Scott Ave.  
Mission, B. C. V2V1C2  
August 29, 1999

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society  
Dear Delbert:

I would like to request a copy of Preservings, #12, June 1998, if this is still available, as well as a copy of "Celebrating Our Heritage", issued December 1998. Enclosed is a cheque for \$20.

In the June 1999 issue of Preservings, page 139, I was very interested in the book review on the Peter Hiebert family history. My father is a

descendant of Heinrich Hiebert's son Abraham (1828) and my mother is a descendant of Heinrich's son Johann (1819). When family history books such as these are reviewed in *Preservings*, are they usually available through Mennonite Books? If not, is it possible to list a contact person?

In the book review, you printed a picture of Margaretha Hiebert Froese with a request for information. I am sure other readers will have more information than I do, but I believe that Margaretha Hiebert (born 1862) first married Bernard Wiebe (Aug. 9, 1859 - Feb. 1, 1887) and in 1887 married Johann Froese (born Feb. 12, 1861).

Her mother, Sara Sawatsky, was widowed from Abram Hiebert in 1874, and in 1877 married Peter Wiebe (July 20, 1818 - June 8, 1881) who was the brother of Aeltester Johann Wiebe. Peter and Sara (Sawatsky) Wiebe are listed as living in Neuhorst in the 1881 census [page 381, BGB].

Thank you again for producing such an excellent magazine. I can hardly wait for the next issue!

Yours, "Sandra Morris"

**Editor's Note:** First of all, thank-you for the information regarding Margaretha Hiebert and Sarah Sawatzky. Unfortunately, we do not have back issues of *Preservings*. As a non-profit organization we have no resources, no money, no staff, no nothing--every issue produced is a miracle, a product of volunteer effort. We have a few copies left of the "125 Celebrating our Heritage", a copy was mailed to you. The contact person for the Peter Hiebert book is Abraham W. Hiebert, Loma Plata, Menno Colony, CdC 883, Paraguay, S.A., formerly Waisenman for the Khortitzer Komitee. His son Erdmann Hiebert can be reached at Box 323, Blumenort, Manitoba, R0A 0C0.

Box 363, N. Newton  
Ks, 67117-0363  
Sept 2, 1999

Dear Del:

Thanks for the copies of the Winnipeg Free Press insert "In celebration of the 125th anniversary of Mennonites in Manitoba." I've distributed these to various people in Hillsboro (Tabor College) and North Newton (Bethel), and a few others. Your legacy is ongoing! Sincerely, "Leland Harder"

Bethel College,  
Box 23, N. Newton  
Ks, 67117

Delbert Plett,

Tanks so much for the *Preservings* and *East Reserve* issues. I enjoyed them, even though I must say that I didn't have enough background in some of the subjects to truly appreciate some of the articles fully.

Last night I finished my rough draft (38pp) for my paper on the American Mennonite interpretation of the Russian Mennonite experience. I used information from the Conference in the

Ukraine. Well, my studies call. Thanks again and all the best. "Sarah Kratzer"

Neil Loewen  
29323 Sunvalley Cresc.  
Abbotsford, B.C., V4X 1J1  
September 24, 1999

HSHS,  
Dear Mr. Plett,

Enclosed is a cheque for my membership renewal. I have really appreciated receiving your publication "Preservings" in which I have learned a lot about Mennonite folk lore and family ties. Since I have lived all my life in B.C., the research that you have done and by your society has helped me stay in touch with my roots in southern Manitoba where my great-grandparents came in 1874. Thank-you, too for the genealogies, in particular, that of my great (x5) grandfathers Isaak Loewen (1735-97) and Cornelius Toews (1737-1800), in your books about the Kleine Gemeinde. Best regards, "Neil Loewen"

Sept. 15/99

Dear Mr. Plett:

In the *Preservings* #14 p. 82, your article on Johann P. Thiessen was of great interest to me. My husband and I recently visited in Jansen, Nebraska, with a granddaughter of the above Mr. Thiessen. Her name is Lucille Thiessen Knispel and she has a brother in Kansas City, Kansas. She agreed that I might sent you her address which is \_\_\_\_\_, Jansen, NE 68377.

According to your publication "Profile of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde 1874" on p. 103 Jacob Fast apparently is the J.J. Fast you refer to in the Thiessen article, paragraph 3. This J.J. Fast is my great-grandfather-see also p. 285 (3) Margaretha Friesen. My maiden name was Rempel, my grandparents are Gerhard and Margaretha Fast Rempel, p. 285.

Furthermore, in the paragraph on page 103 it states that Jacob Fast was a brother of Mrs. Peter Heidebrecht whose daughter Johann P. Thiessen married. What a tangled web, eh?

While my genealogy pursuits are rather dizzying, they're also very interesting. Thanks for all your publications.

In the heading of the Thiessen article you mention an Abraham von Riesen family history. If this publication is available, would you please let me know since that is part of my family tree.

Sincerely, Ruth Ratzlaff, 1914-37th Ave., N.W., Salem, OR 97304

283 Boyd St., Prince George,  
B.C., V2M 4X1  
Sept. 16th, 1999

HSHS;  
Dear Sir or Madam:

I am in receipt of "Preservings". Thank you very much! I am so tickled with the magazine I'm sending for next years membership now.

Searching through the pages for some familiar name or face I was delighted to come

across the article by Anne Funk of Grunthal portraying Mrs. Harder. Mrs. Harder and her two sons Peter and Frank are referenced on page 117 as are her two daughters, (Katharina, Mrs. Giesbrecht) and (Helena, Mrs. Krahn). Peter and Frank were school mates of mine at Lister West S. D. approximately five miles south of Grunthal. So too was Jacob Krahn, son of

Helena!

We were taught there by my father P. J. Unrau and Mr. Andrew Soobering of Steinbach during my years there.

I am enclosing also a copy each of my "Those were the days!" one with pictures and a later edition without. The quality of both the writing and the photos can not equal the splendid writ-

ings of your magazine, however, you may wish to document or file my booklets which cover a very small time slot of a particularly eventful time of my life. Let me know if it has any value for your purposes! By the way, Peter Harder appears in a much used photo on page 50. He is top row, third from left.

With kindest regards,"Norman Unrau"

Sept. 23/99

HSHS

Dear Friends,

I am writing to you for a couple of reasons. First, I want to apologize for being so awful about paying the membership fees. The reason I have not kept up my fees is I was laid off from work and things are a bit tight right now. I really appreciate you sending me my East Reserve instalments. I just love them. I promise to make my fees up as soon as I am able. Keep up all the great work you guys do.

The second thing I wanted to talk to you about is the Old Hochstadt Cemeteries out on Froese road, #216 south of Kleefeld and north of Grunthal, MB. There are the two burial places.

I found then a few years ago, thanks to the East Reserve 1874-1920 and East Reserve Village Histories, my little blue books. I think that my Great-Grandfather Hienrich Delesky Friesen (May 25, 1827-July 1, 1877) who died in the village of Hochstadt on July 1, 1877, may be buried there. I can't find any records, but it just makes sense.

I went for my yearly visit and was sad to see the fencing in such a bad state of disrepair. The grasses and weeds are waist high. I was upset and thought that I have to get something done. Even the sign with the name and date of the cemetery has been knocked down.

I came home and started to make some phone calls. I started with the town of Kleefeld, who told me to call the R.M. of Hanover 326-4488. I called and told them I was looking for ownership of the property. They gave me information from tax records. The Cemetery on the east side of Froese Rd. #216, is Tim & Brenda Penner, PO Box 93, Kleefeld, Manitoba, R0A 0Z0, NW 3-6-5E.

I called that number and spoke to Brenda, who said that an old man was taking care of them both, but that he had passed away. Nobody was doing anything now.....

The cemetery of the west side of the road, closest to the gravel pit of water is owned by Ted & Marie Isaac, Box 170, Kleefeld, Manitoba, R0A 0Z0, NW 3-6-5E.....

My query is then, is there anybody who is taking care of the upkeep of the old Cemeteries? I would like to do something, but I live in Winnipeg and do not have the tools to do it on my own. Is there a group who could give time to preserving some of these old burial places.

If you have any information on my query or pass my letter on to someone, I would be grateful.

Thank you for your time, Jeannie L. Hiebert, 110-1075 Henderson Hwy  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2K 2M2.



Hochstadt Cemetery, on the west side of Froese Road. Photo courtesy of Jeannie Hiebert, Winnipeg, Manitoba.



1998, second Hochstadt cemetery, looking east. The original village of Hochstadt would have been in the background. Photo courtesy of Jeannie Hiebert, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

**Editor's Note:** Most of the old Strassendorf village cemeteries are being looked after by *ad hoc* groups of descendants. The two founding church denominations, the Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde (E.M.C.) look after many as well. The R. M. of Hanover has also been extremely supportive where they can assist. Usually it takes one or two people to organize a group to look after a cemetery.

In a recent article in the *Mennonite Post*, Mr. Abe Warkentin, the editor, lamented about a cemetery in Mexico, I believe it was near Cuauthemoc, which was run down and used as a pasture. I would reiterate Mr. Warkentin's comments with the proviso that his concerns apply to Canada equally as well. Canadian Mennonites really should have more respect for themselves as a culture and should also respect their ancestors enough to keep their graves and burial sites neat and tidy.

I am always distraught when I see the millions of dollars that Canadian Mennonites expend to fund the expansion of so-called Evangelical reli-

gious empires and then see derelict cemeteries such as Hochstadt near Kleefeld, or Fischau, near Gdansk, Poland (Danzig, Prussia) or Ebenfeld near Nikopol, Ukraine. All I can say is that presumably the descendants of modern-day Mennonites will care even less about the current generation.



1998, inside the cemetery. Boulder in the middle of the cemetery. There are stones or markers on the ground. Photo courtesy of Jeannie Hiebert, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

P.S. If you do not see any use for my "Those were the days" can you offer them to the Village of Grunthal? Would that be in order?

24 1605 7th St. East,  
Saskatoon. SK. S7H 0/3  
September 8, 1999

MMHS  
Historic Sites Committee  
600 Shaftesbury Blvd,  
Winnipeg, MB R3P 0M4

Dear Sir or Madam:

During the August long weekend, I spent a very enjoyable time in Manitoba following the footsteps of my forefathers at Fort Dufferin and at Rosengart. As well as taking part in the Steinbach celebrations on Sunday. The heritage on my father's side is Old Colonist and on my mother's side is Kleine Gemeinde so I learned much more than I had anticipated.

As a result I am curious to know how MMHS is planning to celebrate 125 years next year. That could be a huge challenge! It appears the West Reserve people are more reserved and not inclined to celebrate very much, if any.

In our book *Discovering our Wiebe Heritage: Peter Wiebe 1861—1920* we have translations of two of Aeltester Johann Wiebe's sermons. Reading these sermons as well as his record of their trip to Manitoba has helped me to see more of the heart of this man. He must have had a relationship with God that was not only personal, but also practical. I am more and more convinced he was a visionary of his time in the sense that he had unusual wisdom in foreseeing what was going to happen. A vision provides direction, it requires unity, it will involve change, it needs motivation, it will cost, it includes evaluation, it is clear and understandable, it is always challenging, it is a mental picture, and it is futuristic.

The Aeltester evaluated and saw how his church was following the way of the world in the area of church discipline and he was able to motivate the people to a unity of spirit to form the Reinlander Gemeinde. The people were willing

to count the cost. They had a clear picture in their minds of what they believed God was asking of them. The Aeltester provided the direction for them. Most of the church was willing to be involved in changing back to the Biblical standard and accepted the challenge. To lead such a fast growing church in Canada for about thirty years is clearly a work of God.

In studying the spiritual life of the Old Colonists I came across this sentence, "The purpose of history is not to glory in the past, but to allow its rich experiences to inspire faith in the present and hope for the future". I realize the Old Colonist church is dying with more churches closing each year. Something happened over these past 100 years. Were they not able to allow the rich experiences of the past to inspire faith in the present and hope for the future? Did they lose sight of God in their severe testing of every day living? How can we again inspire faith and hope in God for today and tomorrow?

Would it be appropriate to have a monument put up in memory of the life of the Aeltester at Fort Dufferin or at Reinland? Showing how he reached out to God, depending on Him to meet the needs of the church and family, always thanking God for the many blessings they received. How can we best inspire faith and hope in God for today and tomorrow?

At present I am looking for more information on our Wiebe family, as we are planning a Peter Wiebe Reunion at Providence College on July 21-23. 2000. My forefather Heinrich Wiebe is an older brother of Aeltester Johann Wiebe both having homesteaded in Rosengart. Heinrich's son Peter is my great-grandfather who moved to the Hague-Osler Reserve around 1898. Now I am looking for the genealogy and history of Aeltester Wiebe. I have been in contact with descendants from La Crete, Alberta, Swift Current, SK.. Austin, MB. and Winkler, MB.

Hopefully there will be contacts from Mexico in the near future.

Looking forward to hearing from you.  
Sincerely. Elaine Wiebe  
Copies Adolf Ens, Otto Hamm, HSHS

**Editor's Note:** Whether the Old Kolony church is dying is something which the many vibrant OK communities in Mexico, Belize, Bolivia and even Canada would not indicate. The total OK population, in spite of constant interference from other Mennonites all with their own shallow filio-pietistic agenda, is still in the 50-100,000 range, one of the largest Mennonite denominations in the world. Truly a testimony to the legacy of a great Man of God.

Sept. 30/99

Box 3303

Steinbach, ROA 2A0

HSHS

Dear Mr. Plett:

I am writing to express my opinion regarding Delbert's report on the O.K. Menn. living in MX. The information was published in the June issue of the Preserving. My husband Abe and I lived among the O.K. Menn. in Cuauhtemoc, MX. for one year, namely June 98-99. We had the occasion to meet Delbert and his tour group as they visited the Cuauhtemoc area in March 99.

We believe Mr. Plett failed to give an accurate portrayal of the O.K. lifestyle. For incidence, Mr. Plett does not believe that the illiteracy rate is as serious as other observers indicate, otherwise the Rundschau, the local German printed newspaper would not sell as well. My question is how many purchase this paper only to glance at the pictures? It was very apparent to us that functional illiteracy is rampant amongst the O.K. and is only worsening with each succeeding generation. Since most of the teachers are elderly men, with no teachers training, the level of education is bound to deteriorate.

We visited a number of the schools to observe the teaching methods and encourage use of the BLATT, a german printed newsletter for children. Our MCC staff worker, who attended an O.K. school as a child, admitted she did not understand the meaning of the words, as they chanted their lessons in High German. I too, have the ability to sound out difficult German words, but that does not mean, I am able to comprehend the meaning of the word.

Thus, my reading becomes meaningless. In fact, I sat beside two young children, at our MCC centre, as we had a small teaching class for a few months. Yes, these children could read the Bible in High German, however had a very limited understanding. Therefore, I feel, we do not do the O.K. Menn. any favour by attempting to cover up their declining level of literacy.

This only leads to an increasing degree of isolation, associated with a seriously increasing use and abuse of drugs, alcohol, mental problems, sexual perversion, and so on. We chuckled when we heard of a certain O.K. gentleman denied that man has not been on the moon. Since he had not heard of this outstanding feat, it therefore has not happened!

In another instance, a more progressive O.K. Menn. listened to a teacher's mode and style of teaching, only to discover that this particular teacher was teaching the metric system incorrectly. Where does this leave the children of tomorrow.



Blanca (left) and Ruth Peters are busy preparing the "Children's Section" for the next issue of the Rundschau. This is no small matter as each issue features something new and interesting from which the children can learn richly. Blanca has worked for the Rundschau for seven and Ruth for six years, including radio announcing. Photo courtesy of Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau, 17 February 1999, page 12. The Rundschau has now been discontinued allowing Bram Siemens, Cuauhtemoc, Mexica, to focus on the Low German radio station.

## Preservings

Furthermore, Mr. Plett your observation regarding the visit to Durango is inaccurate. We too, have spent time living in an O.K. home for a few days. The O.K. were always most receptive and hospitable as we visited in their homes. The O.K. in Durango are living in abject poverty, brought on in most part, by not being allowed to change with the times, being enslaved and very restricted by the legalistic rules of the church.

Now, that the Altesta's have left the Durango colonies, and moved to Argentina, maybe the remaining can make the necessary changes to survive in this land. Installation of electricity is desperately needed so that the crops can be irrigated much less expensively compared to the expensive use of fuel oil and generators. MCC's biggest project was collecting and shipping 200,000 straw bales from the Cuauhtemoc area to the draught stricken area of Durango. This was a totally unforeseen project which mushroomed as the desperate need was brought to our attention.

I could go on and on, regarding our time of service in Mexico. We have no regrets about the time we spent in another culture. We learned much about ourselves and intend to serve and visit with the many friends we now have in Mexico.

Thank you for the effort you as a society put forth in producing the Preservings. However, we do wish your information would be more accurate and informative, as you seek to educate your readers.

Yours truly, Linda Martens,  
cc: Orlando Hiebert, President - HMHS

**Editor's Note:** Thank-you for your letter, it takes courage to write even when expressing the majority view.

My response is as follows: I was surprised when I heard from mutual friends who had visited in Mexico in 1998 that they had been shown only negative things about a community often touted as the model of agriculture in Northern Mexico. I suppose it would be the equivalent of taking friends from Germany or England on a tour of Hanover Steinbach and showing them Agape House, the Foodbank on Main Street (on the day people are picking up their supplies), an AA meeting, the MCC counselling centre, the lockup at the RCMP station and Frantz Motor Inn on a Saturday night, typically occupied mainly by Mennonites (or those of Mennonite background), etc. And then you could take them to Winnipeg and show the Detox Centre, the Remand Centre, a support group for abuse survivors, etc. But instead when we have visitors from afar we prefer to show them Loewen Windows, Braunsdale Dairies, Derksen Printers, etc. The point is that all communities have marginalized people and poverty, this does not prove they are lesser human beings.

I appreciate your comments about illiteracy, which are echoed relative to a large part of the North American public school system. Your critique of pedagogical methodology may be valid to a point but if the students can, as you say, sound out difficult German words, they are no

longer technically illiterate. The farmers, businessmen, ministers and others I have met and talked with in the Manitoba Plan, Cuauhtemoc, were certainly very literate and articulate. This does not mean that more could not be done, only to put the issue into perspective. Even our highly reputed School Board in Hanover is constantly striving to improve.

Anecdotes about individuals denying the moon landing as proof of illiteracy are meaningless. I very well remember people in Hanover Steinbach and in the media saying the same thing back when the first moon landing took place. A popular TV sit-com "Just Shoot Me" devoted an entire episode aired on Nov 2/99 to the story of a woman in her 30s who denied the moonlanding, indicating that some screen writer and television studio believes the topic is still evocative enough to warrant the production. These people were not necessarily stupid, but sceptical more than anything else.

You refer to my comments about Durango and that the problems there were brought on by the church. Does this reflect your own philosophy or that of your former employer MCC? Nor have you responded to my question about installing windmills, something consistent with the faith of the local congregations and much more environmentally friendly, I might add, instead of forcing the people to adopt electricity based on burning of environmentally harmful coal and oil.

As far as the 200,000 straw bales delivered to Durango, I was of the impression that these bales were from Old Kolony fields, and were loaded and transported by OK trucks (with the exception of some Kleine Gemeinders, of course). I did not see any trucks with MCC flags or drivers wearing MCC uniforms. I had understood that the relief effort consisted of Cuauhtemoc Mennonites helping Durango Mennonites. Or are you suggesting that whenever something good happens in Mexico, it is MCC, and everything else is caused by those "evil" Aeltesters?

Your general references to "...seriously increasing use and abuse of drugs, alcohol, mental problems, sexual perversion, and so on" are unnecessarily pejorative and inflammatory. These comments could be repeated with equal validity in regards to almost any community and culture in the world. Even in our Steinbach High Schools there is supposedly drug use, etc. As far as sexual perversions in Steinbach, well—that's anybody's guess. Such statements are meaningless unless supported by comparative, objective data gathered by social scientists who are not pursuing a filio-pietistic agenda.

The whole point of this editorial note is that there are obviously two sides to every community, including the Mennonites at Cuauhtemoc. As I discussed with several prominent scholars recently, there is little about the Old Kolony culture in need of redemption, what needs redemption is the perception which many so-called "progressive" Mennonites have of the Old Kolony people.

77 Division Street South  
Kingsville, Ontario  
N9Y 1P5  
24 October, 1999

Dear Mr. Plett:

I want to thank you for writing "Saints and Sinners", the story of the Kleine Gemeinde, 1812-1875, in Russia. You have made a great contribution to the Mennonite community in giving us this very readable and wonderful book. I am so glad I ordered it; I have enjoyed reading it.

The shipping envelope included a copy of Preservings, #14, which I found very interesting. I was delighted to see the guest essay by my good friend Rodney Sawatsky. I enclose a membership application to the HSHS, hoping that this will be in time to get the next issue of Preservings. Scanning the index, I realize that I will want to see earlier copies.

And now, a personal request. In "Saints and Sinners" you refer to various Warkentin families in the village of Blumstein, Molotschna. I have been trying to link my grandfather, who was born in 1865 in Blumstein, died in 1936 in Winnipeg, a member of the 1920 Russian Mennonite Studien Kommission, to earlier generations. His name was Cornelius Heinrich Warkentin; his father was a Heinrich Warkentin, his mother a Helena Warkentin. The Warkentins mentioned in your book most likely include his grandfather, I feel. Where might I get help in making necessary links?

Thank you in advance for any help you may be able to give me.

Sincerely, "Victor A. Dirks"

**Editor's Note:** First of all, having recently spoken with Dr. John Warkentin, York University, Toronto, I realize you must be cousins. I enclose a copy of pages 467-68 and 482-485 of *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, from the history of Martin Warkentin (1764-1853), Blumstein, Molotschna, which will likely be the family you are interested in. This family was very prominent in the history of the Kleine Gemeinde and by 1835 owned a good part of the village together with sons and sons-in-law. Many of his descendants settled in the Steinbach and Rosenort areas. Good luck in your research. (See book review section for review of John G. Warkentin Genealogy, a great-grandson.)

## Attention Writers of Family History

The HSHS is exploring the possibility of offering either a one-day workshop or a series of workshops on writing your family history. If you are interested in attending a writer's workshop early in the New Year, please contact Lynette Plett, HSHS Corporate Secretary, at (204) 772-0224 or e-mail [Lynett@escape.ca](mailto:Lynett@escape.ca)

# News

## The Forks August 1, 1999: 125 Years

**"Bis Hierher Hat Uns Gott Gebracht": Commemoration of the Arrival of the First Mennonite Immigrants to Manitoba 1874 to 1999, by Ralph Friesen, 306 Montgomery Ave., Winnnipeg, Manitoba, R3L 1T4.**

### Introduction.

Arriving at the Forks just before 8 a.m. on a slightly chilly August 1st morning, my wife Hannah and I were impressed by the number of people already gathered, waiting for something to happen. The "something," of course, was a commemoration of the arrival of the first Mennonite immigrants to Manitoba, 125 years before, on July 31, 1874.

We hurried along, lawn chairs in hand, hoping to locate a place not too distant from the stage near the river's edge. We were not late, except by Mennonite standards, which require you to be at least 15 minutes early if you're to be on time. It looked as though we would be relegated to a spot far off to the side, but Hannah, with her special, Winnipeg-Folk-Festival-developed talent for finding a place where none might be apparent to the untrained eye, located a small area right in front of the stage, with just enough room for our chairs.

### The Riverboat.

Promptly, at 8:01, the Showboat rounded a bend in the river and slid into view. Trying to ignore the obvious irony of a boat named "Showboat" representing the work-horse steamer that carried our humble an-



A view of the crowd at the Forks, Sunday, at 8:00 a.m., August 1, 1999. In the rear is visible the clock tower of the Forks complex. The stage which was already set up for the Pan-Am Games, and used for this event, is situated to the left hand side of the photograph.



Another view of the crowd taken from the stage, facing north. In the rear is visible the "Johnson Terminal Building. It is estimated that some 1000 people took part in the memorial service. Photograph courtesy Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

cestors, I found my imagination warmed by the sight of the small band of darkly clad folks on the boat's foredeck. With what anticipation did the passengers on the SS International set eyes on the little settlement at the Forks, where we now sat?

### The Dialogue.

George Born's Low-accented High German speech, once the actors



The singing group dressed in period costume arrived at the Forks on the "Paddlewheel Princess" reenacting the arrival of the S. S. International, 125 years earlier. The group paraded onto the stage and sang several songs especially prepared by director Rudy Schellenberg, second from the right. At the far left, front, is Henriette Schellenberg, left to right, from Rudy, , Val Peters, June Snider, Mary Anne Loewen, Rebecca Loewen, Miriam Schellenberg and Meagan Loewen. Rear, l.-r., Lyle Peters, Ed Peters, behing Ed Peters is Daniel Hildebrand and his friend Tysan Chambers, Royden Loewen, Ashley Fehr, Ed Hildebrand, Johanna Hildebrand, Christina Schellenberg. Photograph courtesy Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Basically the group was made up of several parents and their children and some friends.



Henry and Helen Fast, Steinbach. Henry Fast, who had two sets of great-grandparents on the S. S. International when it arrived 125 years ago, reflected on the meaning of commemoration for the people of God. Seated to the left behind Mrs. Helen Fast, is Dr. Ed F. Reimer, formerly of Steinbach. In the upper right hand corner of the photograph, wearing a flat Mennonite style cap is Ernest Braun, Niverville, a director of the HSHS. Photograph courtesy Ralph Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

playing the parts of the first settlers had assembled on stage, may not have differed much from what was actually said and heard 125 years ago. Many people would still have been casting their minds back, to South Russia, to the loved ones and the cherished land left behind. They would also certainly have praised God for guiding and keeping them on their great *Auswanderung*.

The playlet which followed, although presented as reader's theatre rather than conventional drama, was compellingly done. Its writer, Wilmer Penner, skillfully wove together elements of various actual travel accounts to create a vivid story of the epic journey from the old land to the new. Many in the audience may not have realized that our ancestors saw dolphins in the Black Sea, visited the zoo in Berlin, or compared the Manitoba mosquitoes to the plagues of Pharaoh. And I, for one, was surprised to learn that Johann Schroeder's sack of *twieback* kept him from drowning when he fell into the drink.

#### **Dialogue.**

The program of songs, speeches and greetings from dignitaries was well-balanced, and not too long. I admit to being puzzled by MLA Jack Reimer's references to the Mennonite audience as "you"—isn't he one of us? In any case, those responsible for the event, especially Ken Reddig of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, are to be congratulated for putting together a well-organized, educational, and moving commemoration.

#### **Conclusion.**

I asked my cousin Dolores' husband, Bill Block, for his impres-



*The dignatories who addressed the crowd, waiting their turn at the podium. Front centre, l.-r., David Ifody, who spoke in the name of the Prime Minister of Canada, reading greetings from the Governor-General of Canada, His Excellency the Right Honourable Romeo LaBlanc, as well as the Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Jean Chretian, and personal greetings from the Member for Provencher David Ifody; next is Master of Ceremonies Dr. John Friesen, C.M.B.C., the Honourable Jack Reimer, Minister of Urban Affairs and MLA for Niakwa, who spoke on behalf of the Premier and the Provincial Government. Greetings on behalf of the City of Winnipeg and the Forks Corporation were brought by Mrs. Janice Penner.*



*The 1874 reenactment itself concluded the commemoration service. Descendants of the 1874 immigrants moving onto the "Paddlewheel Princess" to have their photographs taken.*

sions. I wanted to know what the occasion would mean to a *Russlaender*. It had reminded him, he said, of his cousins lying in shallow graves back in Russia. Yet, he added, that which we have in common is greater than our differences.

#### **Media Reports.**

Other reports of the 1874 arrival reenactment at the Forks were published in *Heritage Posting*, No. 26, September 1999, page 1; and in *Mennonite Historian*, Vol XXV, No. 3, September, 1999, page 10.

### **Forks Video.**

A video of the Forks Reenactment produced by Mennonite film producer Otto Klassen for the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society is available from Ken Reddig, Director, Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3P 0M4, or telephone 1(204)888-6781.



*Another view of the singing group, as the actors perform the dialogue. Front centre, l. -t., Cindy Warkentin, Jaine Warkentin, George Born, and wife, Mrs. Margaret Born, the young girls standing in front are their great-granddaughters Hailey Neufeld and Kaitlyn Rempel. Photo courtesy of Lauren Friesen, Blumenort, Manitoba.*



*The drama group waits for their turn to perform, possibly something quite typical of emigrants waiting for ships and trains, and officials, etc. View down the Assiniboine River, to the west, with the railway bridge and new Marion Street bridge in the background. Photo courtesy of Lauren Friesen, Blumenort, Manitoba.*

# The Wagon Ride, 1874 Reenactment

The Wagon Ride, 1874 Reenactment September 10-12, 1999, by D. Plett

## Introduction.

The wagon ride by the Southeast Draft Horse Association which took place on the weekend of September 10-12, 1999, was a reenactment of the trek of the Steinbach pioneers somewhere around September 15, 1874.

The idea was probably inspired to some extent by the reenactment of the North West Mounted Police trail ride on the 125th anniversary of its trek westward in 1874. It also responded to the need for some 125 event which involved the City of Steinbach in a direct way. As fortunate coincidence had it, the original Steinbach settlers were the last ones to arrive in 1874, thus placing the time into Fall. This made it an appropriate season closer after all the local fairs and museum events were completed.

Admittedly the wagon ride was not completely historical, the original settlers travelled in smaller groups, and were in fact picked up by relatives from Blumenort and Grünfeld who had arrived earlier that summer and taken to their homes before heading on to their new place of residence. However, Klaas W. Reimer does write that they stayed in the immigration houses for about a week, by which time their fathers had arrived from Winnipeg with wagons and oxen whereupon they set off for the site of the new Steinbach, *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 128.

The one historical detail that I did not mention to anyone all weekend for fear of tempting fate was that it had rained steadily the entire night after the Steinbach pioneers arrived at the landing site. Peter W. "Schmidt" Toews recalled that "During one evening in Fall, the Steinbach men arrived, about 30 of them. There was a cold rain outside and they were soaking wet," *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 140.

In any case, fortune smiled and the wagon ride was largely completed without rain. Late Sunday afternoon, after the wagon ride proper was finished a heavy downpour soused everyone at the K.R. Barkman park, but more of that later.

## The Landing Site.

The members of the Southeast Draft Horse Association taking part in the reenactment started arriving at the landing site by noon on Friday. They set up their bivouacs, found places to tether and feed their horses. Others in the group made preparations for a large bonfire for the evening sing-along.

The Southeast Draft Horse Association does a trail ride every spring and another one every fall, a fact which was very evident from observing the practised and polished way in which they set up camp, or pulled out of camp in single file. Each one seemed to know their place, all the horses were well



*The singing around the evening campfire led by Peter B. Kehler. He was joined by singers l.-r.: Fern Dupuis seated, Paul Bell, Nancy Hildebrandt, Dale Barkman and Janet Kehler in front, Trail Boss Gordon Heckert, Irene Rush, Henry Klassen with song book and Harold Unger hidden behind him, Don Wiebe playing mandolin, Peter B. Kehler with the guitar, and Orlando Hiebert with mandolin. Photo identification courtesy of Frank Klassen, Steinbach.*

controlled and seemingly enjoying the event as much as their masters.

Members of the public came and went all afternoon, anxious to watch the wagon riders as horses were unloaded from trailers, and a camper and tent village sprang up from nowhere.

Frank Klassen, one of the participants, mentioned that most of the wagon riders made a point of going down to the point of disembarkment on the river bank and also of signing their names in the "Landing Site Registry" at the Cairn.

Trail boss Gordon Heckert kept things well organized, a trait which continued throughout the trek. He obviously held the respect of the entire group and also served as an eloquent spokesperson.

The singsong around the campfire was a delightful treat. The camaraderie of the wagon riders was manifested in the singing led by Peter B. Kehler, who did wonderful Wolf Carter/Hank Snow renditions of a number of favourite country tunes. He was joined by a medley of singers to render excellent renditions of many traditional Gospel songs. Peter Kehler did a good job of accompanying himself on the guitar, assisted by Orlando Hiebert and Don Wiebe, both expert mandolin players as well as Fern Dupuis playing spoons.

Although seemingly impromptu for the most part, the evening was well ordered and enjoyed by all. Those who did not join in the sing along, stood back a ways and visited.



*Two horses tethered behind the sign at the Mennonite Landing Site provide an appropriate symbol of the excitement at the confluence of the Rat and Red Rivers as some 150 wagon riders and many guests and visitors prepared to depart in the wagon train Saturday, September 11, 1999. All photographs for this article, except as noted, are courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach.*



*The beauty of a Manitoba morning on September 11, 1999, as the wagon riders prepare to pull out. The view from the east bank of the Red River near the actual spot where the original settlers would have disembarked in 1874. Many of the participants watched a beautiful sunset from this site, the previous evening.*

## Preservings

By midnight all the participants had retired for the night, some sleeping in their wagons, others in tents, and even some in sleeping bags in the open, under the beautiful starlit sky.

### Niverville.

The next morning the wagon riders were up at 6:00 a.m. After breakfast the men took their trucks and horse trailers to New Bothwell, and then returned to the landing site in a school bus provided courtesy of Hanover School Division.

At 9:00 the caravan was assembled and pulled onto PR 200, going north for a quarter mile and then turning east on Crown Valley Road, see front page photograph. The wagon train went east up to Wallace Road and then turned north to P.R. 311.



*Trail boss Gordon Heckert hands out the white ribbons (especially printed at the Museum print shop) which were worn by all members of the caravan, indicating that they were official participants. At the right side of the photograph is Terry Heckert, brother to Gordon, serving as Assistant trail boss.*



*The wagon train proceeds east down Crown Valley Road. Horse riders Leslie Braun and Tiffany Heidebrecht in the foreground. Coming in the rear are George and Val Heidebrecht with their four-seater buggy.*



*The wagon riders were joined by about 30 riders on horseback who wanted to take part in the excitement of the reenactment. The Neufeld brothers from Randolph, Ronald and Garry, on Crown Valley Road.*

From here they went east into Niverville where they paraded down Main Street and turned south on Second Avenue, pulling up to the Niverville Heritage Centre. Many people lined the streets to catch a glimpse of the caravan passing by.

The wagon riders were given a warm welcome by Niverville Mayor Claire Braun and then treated to a wonderful lunch, courtesy of the Town of Niverville. Many members of the wagon rides later remarked favourably on the sumptuous hospitality received in Niverville.

### New Bothwell.

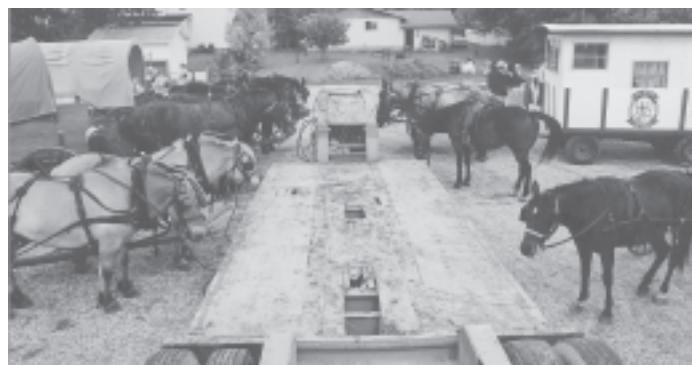
After lunch the caravan headed east on Second Avenue, and south on Fifth Street, to Crown Valley Road. On Crown Valley Road the caravan turned east again, crossing P.T.H. 59, and eastward to New Bothwell. The wagon train waited for some 30 minutes for the security detail to arrive before they could cross P.T.H. 59.

The wagon riders reported that people with video cameras were standing in most front yards and cars were parked at most driveways as people stopped to marvel at the passing wagon train.

The caravan arrived in New Bothwell on schedule at 4:30 and set up camp for the night at the New Bothwell Recreation Centre. The local committee led by Edna Vogt served a beautiful supper of corn-on-the-cob, potatoes and sausage. The sausage was done with a special cooker provided courtesy of Robert Penner, New Bothwell.

Soon a camp fire was crackling and people gathered around to enjoy the evening of singing and reminiscing.

Participant Frank Klassen reported that New Bothwell "had provided outstanding facilities for the overnight stay, especially for the horses." The Municipality of Hanover graciously provided a tanker fire truck and a huge tank with water so that the horses could be watered in the evening and Sunday morning.



*One of the challenges of the wagon ride was to have facilities to tie the horses. Hitching rails were removed from our communities decades ago and so this can be quite a dilemma. The innovative people in Niverville solved the problem by parking a series of flat deck semi-trailers which were ideal for the teams to be tied to. The flat-deck trailers were provided by Harry McKnight, L. McNaughton, Puratone Feeds and the Town of Niverville.*



*Some 150 wagon riders enjoyed a wonderful lunch held in their honour at the Niverville Heritage Centre for their lunch. Ernest Klassen, wearing black hat is standing at right. John and Briguette Banman, La Broquerie, with daughters and friends are seated at the table front centre.*



*Excitement and atmosphere for the wagon ride reenactment was provided by many who wore traditional clothing as their way of commemorating the settlers. Here a group of women are seen walking behind the wagon units on their way to the Niverville Heritage Centre for their lunch. Since the original pioneers had come as complete family units, the women and children were an integral part of the reenactment sharing leadership and organizational duties.*

#### **Chortitz.**

Early Sunday morning the men again took the horse trailers and vehicles to Steinbach where they were parked at the "U.K. Ranch", Hespeler Road. At 9:30 a.m. the caravan was off heading west down Crown Valley Road for two miles and then turning south to Chortitz Road and then east again. They arrived at the worship house in Chortitz shortly after 11:00 a.m. and in good time for the special memorial worship service which started at 11:30 a.m.: see article entitled "Chortitz Worship Service" following. Many of the teamsters missed the worship service because they had to stay with their horses.

#### **Mitchell.**

At 12:30 the caravan pulled out and headed east down Chortitz Road for three miles turning south on Centre Street. At the corner of Walnut and Centre Street the caravan turned west proceeding to Ash and then south to the arena parking lot where the outfits were parked while the riders enjoyed a scrumptious lunch in the beautiful Mitchell Park.

Special thanks are due to local Councillor Bruce Taggart, Mitchell, and his crew of efficient volunteers who served some 200 people with stew in the space of 30 minutes.

#### **Steinbach.**

At Mitchell the caravan was joined by RCMP Constable Dale Sonnenberg Schroeder wearing her red serge which added a wonderful element of tradition and colour to the wagon ride. Constable Schroeder joined wagon boss Gordon Heckert in leading the caravan as some 30 outfits pulled out of the arena parking lot, south down Ash to P.T.H. 52, where several RCMP cars blocked off traffic to allow the wagon train to turn onto the four-lane highway heading east towards Steinbach.



*The wagon caravan parades down Main Street, Niverville. This wagon is driven by Gilbert Therrien, La Broquerie.*

Hundreds of cars passed the caravan filled with excited onlookers waving and honking horns as they passed the wagon riders. I too had the privilege of riding with the wagon of Jake Braun for this last stretch into Steinbach. I must say it was a real thrill to be allowed to participate in this way.

At the intersection of P.T.H 12 and 52 in Steinbach the caravan stopped for a few minutes while the RCMP escort consisting of senior officers in three cars and including local Sergeant Ray Kolstadt stopped the traffic at Steinbach's busiest corner.

The caravan paraded down Steinbach's Main Street where the original 1874 pioneers had once had to hack down popular bush in order to drive. Many onlookers on the sidewalk and in vehicles gave the wagon riders a heroes welcome. At Kroeker Avenue the wagon train turned east and then onto the parking lot of the former E.M.C. Resthaven adjacent to K.R. Barkman park where they were welcomed by some 1000 enthusiastic well wishers.

#### **K.R. Barkman Park.**

The caravan had made good time from Mitchell and had arrived in Steinbach some 20-30 minutes ahead of schedule with the result that many spectators missed the sight of 30 horse-drawn wagons coming down Main Street. Unfortunately the welcoming ceremony planned was drowned out by a sudden heavy downpour. Most of the people ran for the safety of cars and unfortunately probably as many as half of them never returned.

The rain did quite after a while and the hot dogs and drinks were served. Those who had the fortitude to brave the rain and cold weather enjoyed the



*One of the most unique embellishments using the 125 logo was these saddle bags displayed by Ed Schroeder, Kleefeld, here seen entering New Bothwell. The people standing at the side of the road in the background were a typical scene along the entire route. Many sported video cameras to record the event. Visible at the right hand side, with video camera in hand, is Edna Vogt, member of the 125 Committee and one of active organizers of the 125 community events in New Bothwell.*

## Preservings

music of Ed Doerksen and his Country Playboys while they were eating, followed by the ever popular "Locusts and Wild Honey".

It was a cold and clammy ending to the event. However, considered from the perspective of the entire weekend and the fact that although it had rained heavily the entire previous week including Friday morning and again Sunday night and Monday morning, the weather had been far above expectations allowing the entire ride to be completed with only a sprinkle here and there.

### Reflections.

Trail boss and President of the Southeast Draft Horse Association Gor-



*Melvin Rush, Friedensfeld, is an active member of the Southeast Draft Horse Association. Here Melvin is feeding his team of beautiful dapple-greys at the park in New Bothwell. Dapple-greys are "Aupple-schemmels" in Plaut-Dietsch.*



*Mennonite film maker Otto Klassen, Winnipeg (left), personally attended the events at the New Bothwell Park to supervise the filming of the Wagon Ride Reenactment for the 125 video which he is making. Otto has volunteered his time and expertise to this important project. Standing at right is Ben Dyck, Niverville.*



*The wagon train in full formation as it heads south, having just turned off Crown Valley Road, two miles east of New Bothwell. Trail boss Gordon Heckert leads the pack followed by Henry Unruh.*

don Heckert described the reenactment as "fantastic." "Everything went smoothly and according to schedule."

"The weather was perfect and I never learned as much history in school as I did on the ride."

The "history lesson" began on the Friday evening as 150 wagon riders with 30 outfits gathered at the Landing Site, at the confluence of the Rat and Red Rivers, and set up camp.

"There were so many sad stories--some told by descendants of the first immigrants," said Heckert.

Frank Klassen's granddaughters Myla and Stephanie Klassen, who joined him for the ride, commented that "the only thing wrong with the reenactment was the it should have lasted 10 days and not three."

One of the very special features of the event was the number of enthusiastic participants from different backgrounds--French, English, Ukrainian and others--who were thrilled to take part in celebrating this important chapter of Manitoba's history.



*The scene around the evening camp fire, Saturday night, September 11 in New Bothwell. Again, the sing-along was enjoyed by all.*



*Supper in the New Bothwell Rec. Centre. In the foreground, a group of wagon riders enjoy their supper of sausage, corn and baked potatoe. L.-r.: Jake Braun, Harv Klassen and Helen Kehler.*

The 1874 wagon ride reenactment turned out to be a wonderful way to commemorate our heritage.

Thank-you too all involved in making it a smashing success.

**Sources:**

For additional coverage of the "1874 Wagon Ride Reenactment" see *Carillon News*, July 12, page 1A; September 7, page 1-3A; and September 13, pages 1A and 17A; September 20, etc.



*The caravan pulls onto the designated parking yard made available by Herbsigwi Farms. In front, Tiffany Unrau, followed by Jake Braun with the only wagon in the group which had wooden wagon wheels. The Chortitz worship house built in 1897 is visible in the rear.*



*Karen Peters (right), chair of the 125 committee and resident of Chortitz, E.R., organized a light lunch of coffee and dainties which the wagon riders enjoyed after the worship service. Pouring himself a coffee in HSHS President Orlando Hiebert with Heide Plett, Blumenort, (left) looking on. Heide's husband Norm Plett is Deputy-Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover and also a member of the 125 Committee and one of the more enthusiastic promoters of these celebrations.*



*The horses and wagons were parked on the south side of Chortitz Road, just across the mile road from the Chortitz worship house, and immediately west of the cemetery where Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), one of the most important leaders of the Mennonite community in Western Canada is buried.*

A special thank-you and acknowledgement is extended to our local media, the *Carillon News* and radio station CHSM, for their coverage of 125 events such as the Wagon Ride Reenactment.

**Winners of Costume Prizes.**

Winners of the costume prizes awarded by the Steinbach Chamber of Commerce were as follows:

**Best outfit:**

first - Henry Unrau,  
second - Orlando Hiebert;  
third - Lorne Bell.

**Historical Dress:**

first - Dan Hildebrand;  
second - Mel Rush;  
third - Ed Schroeder.



*Jake Spenst coming south down Ash Street in Mitchell, ready to turn east onto the Mitchell Arena yard. Driving with Jake is 125 Chair Karen Peters (centre), and Jake's daughter Wilma Heckert. The rig following is driven by Derrek Reimer and Tara Reimer from Pansy.*



*Mitchell Councillor and store owner Bruce Taggart with his crew of volunteers did a wonderful job of serving a lunch of soup, bread and beans, serving some 300 people in the beautiful Mitchell Park. L.-r., Bruce Taggart, Marge Mclean, Gary Mclean, Carol Taggart, Ed Esau and Abe Hiebert.*



*A panoramic photograph showing some of the horse drawn outfits parked in front of the Mitchell arena. At the right, a teamster working on his outfit, a typical scene.*



*The wagon train coming east down P.T.H. 52, just west of the intersection of Twin creek Road. The row of cars passing the caravan on the inside lane continued uninterrupted during the entire three mile stretch of four lane highway into Steinbach. Vehicles with wellwishers were parked on practically every driveway on the 28 mile route from the Landing Site to Steinbach.*



*Another shot of the wagon train (from the rear) as it approaches Steinbach. This photo was taken between Bush Farm Road and Twin creek Road, just outside City limits. The horseback riders rode at the rear of the wagon train.*



*Another shot of the front of the caravan with RCMP Constable Dale Sonnenberg Schroeder and Trail Boss Gordon Heckert sharing the lead duties. In the background is visible the Evergreen Place development on the east side of Mitchell.*



*Wagon riders and teamsters enjoying the lunch at the Mitchell Park. L.-r., former Musuem manager Harv Klassen, Ross Klassen, Myla Klassen, Gerry Klassen, grandfather Frank Klassen and Jac T. Loepky (New Bothwell).*



*A close-up of wagon train leaders RCMP Constable Dale Sonnenberg Schroeder (left) and Trail Boss Gordon Heckert. Constable Schroeder's participation at a time when she was experiencing personal bereavement having lost her father only a week earlier, reflected personal courage and dedication. Her involvement was a tremendous encouragement to all the wagon riders and added a touch of heraldry and tradition, always highly regarded by the pioneers of Hanover Steinbach.*



*The wagon train stops in the outskirts of the City of Steinbach, waiting for RCMP to clear the intersection of P.T.H. 52 and 12, before proceeding down Main Street. Photo by Jackie Schroeder, Mitchell, Manitoba, from Jake Braun's wagon.*



*The wagon train pulls down Main Street with RCMP Constable Dale Sonnischen Schroeder and Trail Boss Gordon Heckert in the lead. Visible behind them is the Steinbach Credit Union. Photo courtesy of Art B. Rempel, Ash Street, Steinbach.*



*Another view of the wagon train coming down Steinbach's Main Street. It is Jake Braun's outfit. Photo courtesy of Art B. Rempel, Ash Street, Steinbach.*



*A view of the rear of the wagon train centre as it passes through the heart of Steinbach. This photograph taken from the Brookdale Mall parking lot shows the riders bringing up the rear. Jolly Miller Restaurant is visible across the street. Photo courtesy of Art B. Rempel, Ash Street, Steinbach.*



*The scene at K. R. Barkman park as the wagon units pull into place for the welcoming ceremony. The new gazebo graciously donated by the family of Steinbach's mayor K. R. Barkman stands proudly in the background. The wagon train had made good time from Mitchell and arrived in Steinbach some 30 minutes early. People were just staring to gather in the park as the horse and wagon units took their places around perimeter.*



*Another view of the gathering crowd coming out to mark the arrival of the wagon train at their destination. CHSM radio announcer Al Friesen, Master of Ceremonies for the welcoming ceremony estimated the crowd at over 1000.*

# Chortitz - The Worship Service

Members of the 1874 Wagon Ride Reenactment were favoured with a special memorial service organized by the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference on September 12, 1999, at the Chortitz worship house. The service was based on the original format as followed by the pioneer settlers of Hanover Steinbach, commencing with an opening song from the *Gesangbuch*, followed by a sermon which included kneeling for silent prayer, and a closing song from the *Gesangbuch*.

The presiding minister Rev. Peter Wiebe, Winkler, wore the Prediger's Rock or minister's coat, traditionally worn by Mennonite ministers in the pioneer times. The two songs sung from the *Gesangbuch* were sung half in English and half in German. These beautiful poetic works which had been selected by local deacon Jake Klassen were translated especially for this occasion by Margaret Penner Toews, Neilberg, Saskatchewan. The songs were sung according to the traditional melodies, although not in the famous "long note" style.

The members of the wagon ride reenactment



and other guests many of whom possibly knew only little about traditional Mennonite culture, really enjoyed the worship and singing these ancient songs.

We acknowledge deacon Jake Klassen and Vorsänger Abe Dueck who chose the songs and led the singing and Rev. Peter Wiebe, Winkler, who delivered the message. A sincere thank-you is also extended to Aeltester Dick Wiebe, New Bothwell, and the members of the local Chortitzer congregation for the special efforts they made to plan the worship service.

For another report, see Ben Rempel, *The Chronicle*, October 1999, pages 3-4.

*Rev. Peter Wiebe, Zion congregation, Winkler, wore the Prediger's Rock during the special worship service held during the 1874 Wagon Ride Reenactment September 12, 1999. Photo courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach.*



*Members of the wagon ride group and members of the local congregation in Chortitz, E.R. raise their voices in a song of thanks and praise as they sing once again the songs of the Gesangbuch. As many as 300 people attended the event, with overflow seating provided in the adjoining Sunday School building. Photo courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach.*



*Memorial worship services in the Chortitz worship house September 12, 1999, view towards the council. L.-r.: Vorsänger Abe Dueck, deacon Jake Klassen, Rev. Peter Wiebe behind the council, and Rev. C. J. Peters, Steinbach (right). Photo courtesy of Ben Rempel, Steinbach, Manitoba.*

## The Battle of the *Gesangbuch*.

During the latter part of the 18th century Mennonites in Prussia completed the difficult transition from the Dutch/Low German languages to the Danziger High German and Prussian Plaut-dietsch dialects. One of the dangers in such a language shift is that many cultural icons such as devotional writings and song lyrics may go lost if the will does not exist to transfer by translation to the new language.

Fortunately our forebears in Prussia did have the courage and fortitude to make the cross-cultural transition, translating many of the items in the canon of devotional literature. Many of the song lyrics from the old Dutch hymnals were also translated and republished in the new German language *Gesangbuch*, thereby retaining the Gospel-centric lyrics of those poetic works. The *Gesangbuch* soon became an icon of conservative Mennonite culture and its beautiful poetic works are still being enjoyed by thousands of Mennonites across North and South America.

In Manitoba the *Gesangbuch* often became one of the issues of battle between the conservatives, who wanted to retain the Gospel-centric teachings which it manifested, and the liberals who wanted to do away with these teachings in favour of what they regarded as more mainstream hymnals, often reflecting the edicts and mantras of Schofieldian religious culture.

But attacks on the *Gesangbuch* were seldom made on the grounds of the content of the lyrics. The battle was usually engaged on the issue of language, with rapid secularization and adoption of English invariably becoming a determining factor, resulting in victory to "reformers" wishing to abolish the "old".

The battle over the *Gesangbücher* often degenerated quickly into an all-or-nothing "shell game": retention of the German language for conservatives as one option and English and the adoption of new teachings for those opting for American Fundamentalist religious culture. The simple expedient of translating the works of the *Gesangbuch* to English was seemingly never explored.

*Preservings* is pleased to be able to publish the lyrics of these two numbers. We would encourage the readers to sing them in your churches. Those who are members of church worship committees could also try to introduce these songs (and others which could be translated) into their morning worship services. Make sure your grandchildren at least have the opportunity to hear and taste the beauty of these songs which your grandparents once treasured.

## Gesangbuch - # 549

(1) Willkommen, liebste Freunde hier, die jetzt zusammen kommen, aus Lieb' und herzlicher Begier seid von uns aufgenommen! Willkommen! mit dem Friedensgruß und wohlgemeinten Liebeskuß vereinigt und verbunden. (2) Die Liebe uns zusammen hält, d'r um wir, als Christi Glieder, Versammlung haben angestellt, uns zu erfreuen wieder in Liebe, Fried' und Einigkeit und mit einander diese Zeit uns geistlich zu erbauen.

(3) So wollen wir nach Christi Wort zum Eingang dies betrachten, was er befahlen, immerfort sehr hoch und werth zu achten; daß wir ihm folgen in der That, wie er uns vorgeganzen hat, mit heil' ger Lehr' und Leben. (4) Er spricht zum Trost der kleinen Heerd': Wo Zwei allhier auf Erden im Geist vereint ich sehen werd', warum sie bitten werden, das soll vom Vater auch geschehn; sie werden die Erhörung sehn zur Freude ihres Herzens.

### Number 549

A welcome, friends and kindred dear,  
Together all united  
With love and heartfelt caring here,  
We've gathered thus, delighted.  
Our proffered hand of kindliness,  
And, brotherly, the holy kiss,  
Accept as ties that bind us.

The love that binds our hearts in one  
As foll'wers of our Savior  
Inspired this meeting here in joy  
By sharing in His favor  
In love and peace and unity  
And by His word uplifted be  
And strengthened in believing.

So let us follow Jesus' Word,  
And enter in, consid'ring  
Commandments given by our Lord  
Where we should heed his bidding,  
And do what He has taught us to,  
And to His will and word be true,  
Our lives and teaching holy.

He speaks to comfort His small flock,  
"Where two on earth, agreeing,  
Are one in Spirit and in walk,  
And make request, believing,  
The Father will reward their plea,  
He'll hear." Fulfilled their hearts will be,  
With thanks and joy o'er-flowing.(Trans.  
Margaret Penner-Toews)

"Gesangbuch" Translator Margaret Penner-Toews Neilberg, Saskatchewan.

The *Gesangbuch* was the traditional Mennonite hymnal compiled in Prussia in the 1780s including many martyr songs taken from old Dutch Mennonite hymnals.

## Gesangbuch - # 658

(1) Laßt uns den Weg durch's Thal der Zeit gebeugt und betend gehn, und auf die Krone nach dem Streit mit Glaubensblicken sehn.

(2) Dann wird uns jede Bürde leicht, und jeder Tag bringt Heil; und ob uns Erd' und Himmel weicht, bleibt Gott doch unser Theil.

(3) Geht er mit uns, kämpft er voran, was zagt denn unser Herz? Sein Licht erleuchtet unsre Bahn, sein Trost vertreibt den Schmerz.

(4) Wird unser Fuß auch müd' und wund, und unser Auge feucht, doch steht sein ew' ger Friedensbund, ob Berg und Hügel weicht.

(5) Und täglich strömt uns neue Kraft aus seiner Fülle zu; sein Geist, der alles lehrt und schafft, bringt uns doch einst zur Ruh'.

(6) Nur unverzagt! wir haben's gut bei unserm lieben Herrn; und opfern Leben, Hab' und Blut, und dienen ihm so gern.

(7) Zwar ist uns bange, doch getrost! auf Dunkelheit folgt Licht; ist auch der Feinde Schaar erbost, sie schadet uns doch nicht.

(8) Wo bleibt die Furcht der Mitternacht, die unsre Seele schreckt? wenn uns mit ihrer Gottesmacht der Liebe Flügel deckt.

### Number 658

Let us this Vale of Time walk through / with  
prayerful step and meek,  
With eyes of faith see far beyond / our strife  
the crown we seek.

So will our burdens lighter be / and joy bless  
every day,  
For e'en if heav'n and earth should pass / the  
Lord will be our stay.

How speak our hearts? He leads the way; /  
ahead, He fights our foe,  
Gives light for every step we walk / and  
comfort in each woe.

Should feet grow weary, wounded sore, / tears  
fill our eyes withall,  
His covenant of peace remains / though hill and  
mountain fall.

Yet streams of strength shall from Him flow, /  
His fountain never cease,  
His Spirit teaching, leading us / will bring us  
rest and peace.

We are not vanquished. We are blest, / our Lord  
on our heart's throne;  
We gladly offer up our lives, / our blood, and  
all we own.

Though often anguished here, His light / the  
darkness follows still.  
Though hosts of Satan round us rage / they  
cannot wreak their ill.

Whence flee the fears that midnight hours /  
with terror oft would bring?  
The soul that trusts in God, secure / doth rest  
beneath His wing.

## Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Purpose and Membership

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc. (HSHS) was organized in 1988 to research and write the history and heritage of the Hanover and Steinbach area, originally known as the "East Reserve". The emphasis is on the period 1874-1910. Through public meetings, writings and publications the HSHS 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 Department of Heritage and Culture, 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 \$20 or more will be acknowledged with a charitable donation receipt for income tax purposes. We are presently levying for an annual membership fee of \$20 per annum but will appreciate you giving an additional amount of \$20 or \$40 to support the work of the society. Thank you for your participation.

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society  
Box 1960, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0

Enclosed is a cheque/cash in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for:

Donation to society for  
which please issue a receipt \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

# John Dyck 1928-99, Gentle Revolutionary

## Obituary.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society regrets to announce the passing of John Dyck, research director of the society since its incorporation in 1988. On June 22, 1999, after a lengthy battle with cancer, John Dyck passed away at the St. Boniface General Hospital to be with his Heavenly Father.

John Dyck was born August 10, 1928, to Peter J. and Katharina Wiebe Dyck in Neuhorst, near Gretna, Manitoba. His father was a teacher and so the family lived in several different villages. When he was almost five years old the family moved to Reinland, and later to Neu-Berghthal. He received his education from the Houston School in southern Manitoba.

Raised in a Christian home John experienced Christ as his personal Saviour at an early age. At the age of 20, after quiet contemplation, he professed his faith publicly by being baptised in Reinland, Manitoba where he spent a significant part of his youth.

When he was 19 years of age he spent a year working in a retail store in Steinbach convincing him he preferred retail to farming work. He worked in the Gnadenhalter store where he met Elma Penner. Elma and John were married May 22, 1952. A few years later they moved to Winkler where all four of their children were born.

John was involved with various enterprises, employed at Winkler Hardware, Winkler Motors, and his own insurance agency. He was also active in the Chamber of Commerce.

In 1960 John, Elma and family moved to Winnipeg where John worked in the farm machinery industry. For many years they lived on Coral Crescent. John first worked at Nu-way Distributors Ltd, serving as General Manager for ten years, and then at Ajax Equipment Ltd. Later he conducted public sales training classes. In the early 1980s when the agricultural industry underwent severe upheaval and turmoil, John became unemployed.

For some time already John had developed an interest in Mennonite history, and turned to writing. He began working as a researcher on several projects developing his writing and researching skills. Of Peter J. Dyck his father, John wrote, "he planted a seed, which others nurtured and which led me to an unexpected interest and involvement in history." He became the research director of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and served on the board of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. He was known for meticulously checking sources.

Since that time John became one of the most prolific writers on local history and Mennonite historical themes in Manitoba. He was involved in publishing several books and presented numerous papers at symposia and conferences. He wrote five books—*Oberschulz Jakob Peters*, 138 pages, *Crosstown Credit Union*, 174 pages, *Three Hundred Years Penner*, to name several. John edited five books, *Working Papers*, *Berghthal Gemeindebuch*, and *Historical Sketches*, being Volumes One, Two and Three of the East Reserve Historical Series, and (together with Will-

iam Harms) *Reinländer Gemeindebuch* and *West Reserve Settlement Registers*, being Volumes One and Two of the West Reserve Historical Series.

John also co-authored one book, and wrote chapters for two books edited by others. He wrote more than 20 articles for journals including *Mennonite Historian*, *Mennonite Family History* and *Preservings*. He has also served as a guide to numerous individuals in their personal searches for family and genealogical information.

In addition to his research, speaking and writing engagements, John and Elma have been heavily involved in church and community activities, initially with the Winkler Berghthal Church and later the Burrows-Bethel Mennonite Church in Winnipeg.

## From the Obituary.

"At a Father's Day service some years ago, John Dyck declared that the greatest gift a man can give his children is to love his wife, their mother. This has, indeed, been one of John's greatest gifts to his four children. But of all Dad's accomplishments, we will remember him most for his desire to follow his Saviour, a desire which has proved to be an enduring foundation for the family. It was visibly demonstrated in all parts of his life and in particular his great love for Mom. Written by the children, John, Garry, Darlene and Reginald"

## Meditation for John Dyck

**Meditation at Funeral services for Uncle John Dyck at Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Church, Winnipeg, Manitoba, June 26, 1999 at 1:00 p.m., by Rev. Peter D. Zacharias, Box 65, Gretna, Manitoba, R0G 0V0.**

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophecy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish things behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:8-13(NIV)

And we say yes to all the wonderful affirmations of love in 1 Corinthians 13. Rev. F.F. Sawatzky, who officiated at your wedding, spoke on the text from Psalm 118:24: This is the day which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it (NIV).

As we look back at the event today we can say: Yes, that's right. It was a day that the Lord had made. John's love for Elma, the children have observed, is indeed the greatest gift a man

can give to his children. And the days that followed when the children John and Darlene and Garry and Greg came into the family – those were days that God's blessing came upon you. And when Gina, Faith, Annie and Kerry joined the family. And the grandchildren – everyone. Those were all special days. And the countless days of love and friendship in between. But the Lord also made June 22, 1999, and he made today.

John and you together, Elma, have had your share of troubles and difficult times as well as days of rejoicing and happiness. But through all those times the word of God has remained faithful. Jesus Christ has remained the same yesterday, is the same today and will be so forever. He will never leave you nor forsake you. Your hope has not been misplaced.

In 1 Corinthians 13, a new Testament psalm, one could say, Paul addresses the question: When all else in life is stripped away; wealth, position, house and home, health, talents, the ability to communicate, to work, play, walk and to enjoy a meal, yes, when life itself ebbs away. When all



1934. John Dyck (right) with brother George, at teacherage in Reinland where their father was a teacher at the time.

that is gone. When all that seems so important to us, so necessary, and that we may take so much for granted, even, when all that is peeled away. THEN: What is it that remains?

You have reflected much during the past several days. There have been tears, I'm sure. There has been laughter. You have recalled jokes and family fun. You have done some pretty tough thinking, possibly without setting out to do so, nor even always necessarily aware of doing so. You have realized all over again how important family is to you. This time is so precious.

I have done some of that thinking too, thought about discussions with John, about faith issues, church concerns, family matters, personal matters. I've recollected John's accepting smile, things he said and did.

In 1946 our family, my parents, siblings and I made a move from Reinland in southern Manitoba to a farm east of Altona. Some of our moving equipment consisted of a BN Farmall tractor, and a four wheeled trailer, a trailer equipped with big Air force surplus tires (Work War II had just ended). John helped with the move. In fact he was the driver of the tractor.

He was, after all, in his later teens. I was the passenger, aged 10. The two of us set out. When we came to the east end of Reinland village, John stopped the tractor, jumped off, ran into the Sunrise Co-op Store. In a few minutes he was back with goodies – goodies for the journey – for both of us. Here, want some? And off we went. I was impressed.

It was not the last time I was encouraged by John.

No, it happened many times.

At our ordination, you Elma and John, were there for us. John stepped up publicly to speak words of encouragement as historian and uncle and friend. John told me that my great-grandfather Jacob Dyck had also been a school teacher

and had also become a minister.

And how often I have enjoyed your hospitality. Elma, yours and his, over the years, at Rosedale, at 48 Coral Crescent. The two of you were and are a gift to me. But not to me only. That's just it. That's the point. Our relationship was not unique in that sense. I'm speaking for many people. Many of us here could say similar things. The number of people who have come to this service attest to that fact.

Yes, John had an interest in history. That's a mild statement. Check out his computer room. Though he developed this interest later in life, he pursued it with a passion. Family history, genealogy, Mennonite history. He produced 10 books, one of which Elma kindly autographed for me shortly after his passing. It was, I suspect some of the most enjoyable work of his entire life. History to John was truth told. He recognized that truth sometimes hurts; that truth sometimes creates wounds, but he also believed that from truth told and accepted, healing and reconciliation could flow.

I came to appreciate deeply John's perspective on life, a perspective that grew and changed as he grew and changed, but that never lost its simplicity and its integrity. Yes, he grappled with what he perceived as failure, as I have done. I think that John was a great husband and a great father, but he did not always think so. He did not always think that he had been successful in being a good husband, a good father, or that good in his career. I understand.

But how you, Elma, and the rest of the family have helped him to put that one in perspective, too, is wonderful. In subtle and no subtle ways, you showed appreciation and caring. John appreciated you enormously. John had no illusions of grandeur. He considered himself human and never tried to cover that up. He made no claim to any perfection of his own. God was God. The

Scriptures were the Scriptures.

John learned, ultimately and deeply, not to despair, but to rest in the sovereignty and grace of God. For God's sovereignty was not something to be dreaded but to embrace. It was this God, who in Jesus Christ, said "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Romans 8:35 and 37-39 (NIV).

When my wife Valentine and I made our final visit to John in his St. Boniface Hospital room, he was so much aware that his body was being ravaged by cancer. No denial. But acceptance. Once more he became our teacher sharing willingly, calmly assuredly, his thoughts about life and death about what is important about what is not important and he simply turned to the quotation of Jesus in John 6:37 "...the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out." (NIV)

No resting on his merits nor despairing over what he personally may have considered to be demerits, but simply entrusting himself to the Lord who loved him, died for him, and who had become a loving friend and companion. I was reminded of the words of Isaiah: "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength," Isaiah 30:15 (NIV).

All else was slipping away. There remained faith, hope and love. Elma, children, friends: "Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ." Therein lies our courage to go on living.

(Singing of # 190: I know whom I have Believed)

## Tribute to John Dyck

**"Tribute to John Dyck," by Adolf Ens, Professor of History, Winnipeg, Manitoba, as presented at "1874 Revisited", a Symposium of the Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, October 1, 1999.**

It is difficult to imagine a symposium on this topic without the presence of John Dyck. In the decade of the 1990s, hardly anyone else has published as profusely on the Mennonites of the two reserves settled in 1874 and 1875 as John. This includes five substantial volumes, written or edited: Bergthal and Reinlaender Gemeinde Buch, (each including a host of other information in addition to the meticulously reproduced church registers); a volume of essays on the East Reserve and a second collection of documents of the West Reserve; a biography of Oberschulz Jakob Peters of the ER (and an unpublished one of Oberschulz Isaac Mueller of the WR). So we can be sure that John would have been here were he still alive and well.

I want to recognize John's contribution to three areas of Manitoba Mennonite life and history.

One: Family: At his funeral John's children testified eloquently to his role model as a husband and parent. He has been researching and pub-

lishing in genealogy and family history even longer than his more public work. Here he stressed the importance of going beyond family tree skeletons to telling the stories of the people and setting them in their church and community context. The published family histories of which he was a member of the editorial committee modeled this emphasis.

Two: Local and institutional history: In addition to the five volumes mentioned earlier, John has published numerous shorter studies as articles in periodicals or chapters in books. Still other studies have to date been presented publicly only in oral form. We hope to publish a few of them in a forthcoming volume shortly. His commissioned institutional studies include that of Crosstown Credit Union and the Mennonite Foundation.

Three: Midwifery: Having come to historical research and writing relatively late in life, after a career in the business world, John was wonderfully adept at coaxing others in similar situations to follow his example. Two historical societies

(HSHS and MMHS) have benefited from this aspect of John's work. Whether as contract staff person or as volunteer member of a committee or elected member of a board, he used those positions as a teacher and mentor, exciting others about the heritage of our people and assuring them they were capable of writing history. We will continue to benefit from that legacy, in addition to the material he himself left behind.

In all of that productivity, much of it quite public, John always remained unobtrusively in the background. And, as James Urry observed, when he was drawn to public attention for some much deserved praise, he just smiled in that gentle way of his. I am honored to have been a colleague of John and grateful for the opportunity of sharing this tribute to him.

by Adolf Ens

# John Dyck - Reflections,

by D. Plett, Q. C.

My memories of John Dyck are much more recent than for those such as Peter D. Zacharias whose roots go back to Winkler in the 1950s and earlier. My reflections about friend John Dyck really is the story of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society.

I first recall meeting John in about 1984 shortly after I became President of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society. It was mentioned to me that a certain John Dyck was available to do research. At the same time Steinbach car dealer, Harry Peters, my brother-in-law, and Eugene Derksen, printer, were willing to put up some money, if someone could or would do a little research on their family patriarch, Oberschulz Jakob Peters (1813-84), who had led the migration of Mennonites to Manitoba in the 1870s. When I talked to John about the project, he was very interested. He also had good ideas about applying for various grants, which would stretch the seed money, paying him probably close to minimum wage for researching the story of the Oberschulz.

But we immediately faced a problem. At that time some in the historical community felt that research about rural Mennonites in Manitoba, especially prior to the 1920s, was insignificant and beneath the dignity of scholars and not to be trifled with by a Provincial body such as the MMHS. The project was



*John in Steinbach, Manitoba, where he was briefly employed working at the restaurant counter at H. W. Reimers. He board with Joh. Wiebes.*

brought to a board meeting for approval January 18, 1986. The discussion was brisk, a number of the directors were opposed to getting involved in such activities. Finally it was approved on the basis that there would not be any direct cost to the society.

Energetically John set about the research. He came out to Steinbach and interviewed descendants of the Oberschulz. We have to remember that in the early years, he knew hardly anyone in Hanover Steinbach. We would meet regularly to discuss the progress of his research and I remember fondly the many lunches we had where he shared his excitement at new discoveries and disappointments when much effort had not born fruit.

Several times, for example, John interviewed Jakob H. "Reef" Peters, grandson of the Oberschulz, formerly Ebenfeld. I remember John mentioning how easy it would be to gather the material to do a book on "Reef Petasch" himself. How unfortunate now that I did not listen more to John's idea, when I think of all the incredibly valuable oral tradition that died with "Reef Petasch".

(On the other hand, I'm always glad we got as much information as we did. I think we have done well considering we have little or no funding, \$1,000 annually from the City (sometimes), and a more generous \$2500.00 from Hanover. For these small investments our Municipal Governments have received incredible dividends, considering the number of books published, etc. But so much more could be done.)

The MMHS had set up an editorial committee to review and edit the Oberschulz book. When John finished the manuscript, it took six months for it to be read and evaluated. The conclusion was negative, that the quality was not adequate for publication by the society. The project got "deep-sixed", probably with a sigh



*John on a date with Elma, 1949. At a park in Winnipeg.*

of relief by some, as there was visible discomfort as to what might happen if these upstart "Kanadier" would all-of-a-sudden start publishing books about their own history?

During the 1980s many historians were still enslaved by Pietist-Molotschna triumphalism which held that the Mennonites who came to Manitoba in the 1870s were illiterate and uncultured heathen, and so--as the theory went--there really were no primary source documents, in any event, and certainly nothing worth writing about.

Over and above this, we faced the forces of Anglo-conformity which also marginalized Canadians of non-Anglo background, even if they had been in Manitoba long before most Anglo-Saxons.

I am delighted to say that the pendulum has swung almost 100 per cent and today the MMHS is a leader in researching and documenting the story of the 1870s immigrants, and indeed of all Manitoba Mennonites. This is a process in which John played a vital role, but under the auspices of that organization, the MMHS.

I remember our many brisk discussions about historical interpretation and the roles which these forces played in keeping "Kanadiers" in the dark about their own rich and noble heritage. Coming from the West Reserve, John had in some respects what I call a "Berghaler/Johann F. Funk" interpretation of our history. I am proud to say that after having worked with "us" for several years, he became a dedicated advocate for historical lib-



*John Dyck, a portrait, 1953.*



John Dyck, 1964. As President of Neu-Way Distributors, Winnipeg.

eration for the "Kanadier".

By nature John was polite, decent and sensitive, never expressing his view forcefully. Rather he worked in a quiet methodical way, building connections and confidence in our community.

By this time it was 1987, the "Oberschulz Peters" manuscript was still dormant, and my term as President and Chair of the MMHS was over. John and me continued to meet regularly and we continued to discuss the importance of the Oberschulz project.

I am not quite sure how it came about but we decided that John would have another go at the manuscript. He had asked me to read it for him, and I made numerous notations literally on every page, mostly centered on the organization of his material, the content seemed fine. My recommendations were that if he reorganized the material more topically and chronologically, it might not be great literature, but what historical writings ever are? We decided that the manuscript was certainly worth publishing.

By this time, I was also actively considering the possibility of organizing our own little historical society in Hanover Steinbach. We wanted to be able to focus on the history of our community without having to apologize to anyone, and to write about our early pioneers from their own perspective and not from someone else's.

For the most part the hiving off of our little group was amiable and accomplished in a spirit of cooperation. Since the Oberschulz Peters story was foundational to the very existence of our community, we asked for and received the rights to the manuscript.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society was incorporated on July 18, 1988. At our first board meeting we adopted the Oberschulz



John Dyck, in more recent times. The photo was chosen by his family for his obituary. All photographs for this commemorative article are courtesy of Elma Dyck, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Jakob Peters book as our first project and John was commissioned to see the project through to publication. With some help with funding from our local MLA and Cabinet Minister Albert Driedger, the Oberschulz book was finally published in 1990.

Already prior to incorporation John had started researching and collecting information which was also published in 1990 as *Working Papers*, a collection of articles on village histories of the East Reserve and early settlement data such as tax records, homestead maps, etc.

These publications heralded not only a flood of new material but also a new way of understanding our history, an interpretation which recognized the right of all people to their own story and the importance to a community of having or at least recognizing their own historical ethos.

And so, in a very real sense, John was not only an avid researcher, he played an important role in a whole revisionist-interpretative revolution, a liberation movement, so to speak. In this sense John was a revolutionary, working for freedom of his people and people everywhere from enslavement to a history imposed from the outside by others and advancing alien agendas, often the last component in a predator culture's efforts to eradicate another, which it regarded as inferior and of lesser worth.

John's work as research director of the HSHS, of course, went much beyond his writing duties. For many years he held some office hours at the Steinbach Bible College and later at the Museum. He gave countless hours of his time to people who were anxious to discover their roots and heritage. Many times over

the years, people took John's time and expertise for granted, never even saying thank-you. Most people who met John and dealt with him during this time will remember him not only for his vast and extensive knowledge of our history, but, particularly, also for his gentle spirit and sharing nature. For these reasons, I can pay John no bigger tribute than to characterize him as "the gentle revolutionary."

As a historical society we recognize the value of the time John gave to our community. His efforts will have a lasting impact far beyond that of many people who have made millions of dollars but have never bothered to return anything to their own community. What was remarkable is that John contributed ten years of his life to Hanover Steinbach, not even his own community except in the general sense of being fellow Mennonites. For this reason, we owe him an even greater debt.

We applaud the legacy of dedication, determination and generosity which John left us. May we as a historical society and community be worthy of his efforts and continue the work, building upon the many foundation stones which he has laid.

It was Friday evening, June 19, 1999, that I visited John at the St. Boniface Hospital. He was clear, and considering the circumstances, in a positive frame of mind. Our conversation quickly turned to the legacy he left for his family and community, a legacy not consisting of money or great wealth, but something truly enduring.

And so, two comrades parted with a hug and a blessing.

Here are some lines from our ancient sacred *Gesangbuch* number 704 which John would have appreciated:

"Sing, sing the struggle past  
I have my Crown at last  
As Jesus has enjoined,  
I fall before God's throne  
dressed in silk, pure white  
enveloped by heav'n's delight."

**Rest in peace, John!**

### Notice to Members.

If you have not paid your 1999 or 2000 membership fee, this may be the last issue you will receive. To avoid being taken off our membership list, send your membership fee of \$20.00 to HSHS, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0. Members outside of Canada should pay in U. S. funds to cover the higher mailing costs. Please note that the membership/subscription fee was increased to \$20.00 effective January 1, 1998.

# Jeschaffsmaun Tours Paraguay

"Jeschaffsmaun Tours Paraguay", by Sheila Reid, Box 1305, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

## Introduction.

An opportunity to get inside the Mennonite colonies in Paraguay doesn't come along every day. So when it did, we grabbed it.

The project started off with local Low German Theatre Producer Wilmer Penner advertising in the "Mennonitsche Post" for a Paraguayan Playwright known as Waldy Hoffman. Penner had met Hoffman (a.k.a. Erdmann Harder) a few years ago when the playwright toured a play across Canada, but had no address other than Paraguay. In due time, the message got through to Harder on his ranch outside of Filadelfia. He happened to have a new play ready for a cast. Penner had no trouble finding people who loved the play, entitled "Jeschaffesmaun", who knew how to act in Low German, and who wanted to go to Paraguay.

A year ago the project was launched as The Manitoba-Paraguay Cultural Exchange under the sponsorship of the "Mennonite Heritage Museum" in Steinbach. With a special grant from the Manitoba Department of Cultural Affairs the venture got on the Manitoba part of the road with fall and spring runs through Steinbach, Altona, Winkler, Brandon, and Winnipeg. This part of the project was successful enough to send the troupe to Paraguay and off we went for a three-week ride of a lifetime to Paraguay, South America. A ride that was to give all of us some real family connections as well as fourteen audiences in colonies all over Paraguay.

The adventure was recorded in English in a daily diary which is herewith offered to "Preservings" subscribers all over the world. With an important reminder: The diary-keeper speaks not the Plaut nor the Hoch, nor the Spanish nor the Guarani. Living within the Southeast Mennonite reserve I can get away with this language handicap. But not, as I found out, in the Paraguay colonies. It is only due to the generous and patient translators with whom I shared this very rich adventure that I could keep up with what was going on. To these understanding friends I am indebted.

From time to time this account will be historically interjected by Wilmer Penner who happens to be married to the diary-keeper and is our resident Mennonite historian as well as producer. Now on to Paraguay.

## Asuncion.

Our touchdown on Paraguayan soil, four flights and 24 hours from Winnipeg. A quick bus trip through this automobile city to Menno Heim and we had a few hours to catch our collective breath. Edwin Hiebert and his very hospitable travel agency just across the street made it easy to change currency. With one loonie worth 8000 guarani, our pockets were loaded.

## Volendam Colony.

A long day's ride on and off Paraguay's one paved highway and we are each dropped off at



*The troupe assemblies at Mennoheim for a parting shot, from left to right: Back row: Erdmann Harder, Bill Krahn, Wilmer Penner, John Toews, John Neufeld, Helmut Harder with Brittany, Henry Epp. Front Row: Anne Funk, Mrs. Krahn, Sheila Reid, Hilde Toews, Anne Neufeld, Pauline Harder, Ellie Epp. Photographs for this article are courtesy of Sheila Reid, Box 1305, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.*

our billets as the "frindschaft" begins. The theatre here is part of a large open multi-purpose structure with a high steel roof and stadium lights for night volleyball and soccer. The stage is at one end.

"Where are the chairs?" I ask tall and jolly Koop (pronounced Kowp), the Recreation Director for the Colony who seems to be everywhere at once.

"They bring their own," is the answer.

"The set? Props? Tickets?"

"That's all arranged," he assures me.

And it is when the time comes. Sound system and remote mike checks over when we get our first taste of a Paraguayan audience. Koop in the front row centre laughs the loudest. The teenagers in jeans and t-shirts grab the back bleachers and keep their eyes and ears peeled to every word and move on the stage. The cast has to hold back lines to let the laughter flow. A great start on a balmy night.

The next day we are taken to see Volendam's resort on the mighty Rio Paraguay which is an impressively clean, clear and wide waterway. Women and men, young and old alike zoom by us on motorbikes and wave. They are the descendants of those who came from Russia directly to Paraguay on the "Volendam" ship in 1947 when the Canadian government refused them entry here. The population has dropped to about 700 from the original 1600 as land becomes scarce and young people choose other life styles than farming.

As we travel to our next stop in our tour bus, my diary fills up with some new sights: ox carts and orange trees; large, concrete-hard termite hills dotting every pasture; children everywhere playing soccer; telephone lines held up on poles that look more like trees than poles; new hydro poles



*Cast Member Bill Krahn reads the latest edition of "Preservings" on the tour bus between Colonies.*

made of concrete; the red laterite soil that has changed the colour of our shoes.

### Sommerfeld.

Lush sloped grazing land. Large sawmills and lumber yards. Giant eucalyptus trees with white-painted socks - not to protect them from termites as we discover, but to make them look nice. Beautiful flower gardens decorate large brick homes defined by fences that mean business. Our tour bus stops at what looks like - what is - a soccer field and we learn that our play is the main attraction here in this recreational area for theatre is, after all, a recreation.

For our comfort they have erected a portable platform with a tarp covering it; lights have been installed for this occasion, plus a backstage changing area that looks like - that is - a covered truck backed up against the makeshift stage. Permanent seating is already in place with the three-storey bleachers, grass area has been left in front for those who will bring their own chairs, and planks on trestles have been set up for those who come without chairs.

Suddenly its dark - it is their winter season - and the stadium lights go on. Cars come streaming in the gate, pay, park, unload and there is our audience, all 600 of them. Children swarm the soundman, climb up on the stage, peek into the dressing area, completely star-struck at this travelling Canadian troupe. Then it's show-time, but not ours. Nature's show of lightning and thunder threatens to upstage us and in a matter of minutes we have our first downpour of the evening. The seats empty and we think they've gone. The rain stops and they're back.

Until Nature strikes again. The seats empty once more. We look up and start to pack up.

"Wait!" say the colony chiefs who call the shots.

And the rain stops, the audience returns.

Half the mikes are dry enough to use, and the show goes on. One of us remarks that this explains the reason they have survived and thrived here. They just keep carrying on, no matter what.

What a troupe and what an audience. It is only when we shiver into the Willie Hildebrand's brightly lit home close to midnight do I realize that I still have my jeans, sweater and jacket on. The skirt I had been advised to wear to this colony is still in my suitcase. And somehow it didn't matter anymore.

When we collect ourselves together for the day's bus trip to the next stop, we compare notes. Cast members Anne Funk and John and Anne Neufeld have each stayed overnight with relatives in the Berghthal Colony who happen to be related. This gives them a relationship to each other.

Anne Funk's overnight stay with her aunt has been an important connection for this was her mother's sister, a mother Anne had lost to cancer when she was only three. Sadly, her mother's other sister, whom she had visited on a trip to Paraguay two years before, had died the day before our arrival. During this short visit sixteen relatives had come to meet their cousin from Canada. Among her many stories, Anne's aunt also shared her vivid memories of the Chaco-



*This historical photograph showing the initial meeting of the first Mennonite settlers with the Indians in the Chaco in 1931 caught the attention of our camera in Philadelphia's impressive Musuem.*

Bolivian war of 1935. In particular the sounds of the cannons which had kept her awake at night. We all enjoyed the home-made buns that this same 87-year-old aunt had made and sent along with Anne.

### Para Todo.

This was our introduction to the Chaco. I had heard tales of this "green hell" from some of the older members of the Penner clan. The lush green grass had turned out to be inedible for the original settlers' cattle resulting in starvation and death. Many of the area's unique bottle trees had been cut and scooped out for coffins during that time. Those who survived gradually replanted the pastures and started agam. But life continues to be a daily tug of war here. The people of Paratodo are still trying to recover from a spring flood that isolated them from the outside world for almost two months, left the poisonous snakes washed up in the town's yards, and caused a deep layer of salt to rise to the surface which has killed much of the natural vegetation and fruit trees that had been planted. Here there are no manicured gardens but no bars on the windows either.

Our bus was surrounded by greeters as soon as we arrived. The Neufeld's hosts showed up in a large North American pick-up with "Niverville, MB" on its side. It had been purchased from Anne's brother here and shipped to Paraguay all for considerably less cost than if they had purchased it locally. This same young couple turned out to be related to cast member Bill Krah and his mother who accompanied us to Paraguay for her 80th birthday. She kept up with all of us and was voted our No. 1 Fan except when she went AWOL to visit relatives along the way.

We are specially assigned to our hosts due to their ability to speak English. Jacob and Maria Wiens, like so many we met in Paraguay, have as many connections in Manitoba as they have in Paraguay. Jacob worked as a baker at Don's Bakery. Maria's mother now lives at Donwood Manor in Winnipeg. They have a daughter living in Winnipeg as well as their son and daughter-in-law and two grandchildren who live in Paratodo. Jacob trucks cattle and together they run the neighbourhood's pizzeria right on their covered veranda serving pizzas, burgers, beer and soft

drinks. They made us feel very much at home. I'll never forget sitting with them after the show rehashing some of the lines of the play and laughing together all over again.

"It is good to laugh," says Jacob, wiping the tears from his eyes.

Especially in the Chaco, I thought to myself.

### Loma Plata.

This was to be our home base for the next few days, in our own hotel rooms, and all of us together for the first time. Except for mother and son Krah who could always round up a relative or two. And the Harder brothers, Erdmann and Helmut, for whom Loma Plata is home-stomping grounds. This was an important point of the trip for cast member Helmut and his wife Pauline who had brought their small daughter Brittany to Paraguay to meet both sets of grandparents and a whole host of her Paraguayan cousins for the first time.

There were three shows booked in this well-equipped theatre and they were filled with people of all ages ready to whistle and laugh. Off-stage, as we walked around this modern bustling colony we were treated like movie stars, watched with considerable curiosity for our Canadian ways. The town's one-man tourist bureau, Abram Wiebe Wiebe toured us proudly around the huge Co-op store, the Chortizer Kommittee offices where we met the Manager who had spent a year with the Steinbach Credit Union learning the ropes. Other stops in the tour were the large milk processing plant with European machines that produce sealed containers of milk needing no refrigeration until they're opened; the very well-equipped hospital



*Jake and Louella Giesbrecht get warm greetings from their friends at Los Esperanza.*



*Louella Giesbrecht proudly introduces us to some of her former Indian students in Yalve Sanga who now play key roles in the community's hospital there.*



*Oscar Neufeld shows us one of the many prostheses he creates for the patients who come to the Mennonite Leper Clinic for treatment, cure and rehabilitation.*

where almost everyone knew someone back here including Dr. and Mrs. Paul Peters and Dr. Wilfried Kaethler. As we walked through the halls a patient hearing John Neufeld's voice from her hospital bed wheeled herself, intravenous and all, out to greet her former pastor. In the large Eldenheim we saw people reading "Die Mennonitsche Post", and Anne Funk met a woman from Grunthal who had gone to school with her mother. More personal connections.

From our base in Loma Plata we fish-tailed in convoy on rained-out mud-slick roads to a small but faithfull audience in Molino, and then fish-taded back. The three volunteer drivers who had driven us were given a round of applause when they dropped us off at our hotel. But they just shrugged and said they'd had lots of experience with those kinds of roads especially during the rainy season. To some in the troupe the roads were reminiscent of this area's gumbo roads during the 40s.

With the sun out again the next day our bus managed to take us to **Neuland** for our next show where we found a theatre that I wanted to pack up and bring home. A perfect little theatre that, along with its audience, seemed to welcome us there with warmth and intimacy.

#### **Filadelphia.**

Three sold-out shows in an elegant theatre. Here we were working with banks of theatre lights plus an operator, carefully crafted theatre

curtains and printed reserved tickets. As with all the other well-organized colonies, certain members of the community had been designated to set up the theatre, bring in the props, sell tickets at the door, and operate the food and drink concession during intermission. This theatre was part of an impressive residential high school and teacher training campus, a reminder of the importance that the Russlander colonies have always put on education and the arts. Hoch Deutsch is the instructional language here but many gave me an English greeting at the door and all of them loved the Low German comedy. This is the playwright's urban base away from his nearby ranch. It was here, working as a night clerk in the five-star Florida Hotel (named after the Spanish word for flower, not the American state) that he wrote "Jeschafftesmaun".

A day trip to Los Esperanza and Yalve Sanga from Loma Plata took us deep inside the Indian life of the Chaco. This was a special request of Producer Penner to see the results of his father, Abe F. Pemer, and uncle, Ben D. Reimer, who had been sent by the EMC Board of Missions to build a sustainable community for the Los Esperanza Indians back in the early 70s. Our tour leaders here were Jake and Luella Giesbrecht, long-time workers in the Indian communities, just recently returned from their wedding in Rosenort, Manitoba. Jake had known both Abe and Ben and had many stories to tell about them. He remembered well the day he broke his leg in the machine shop. He had managed to crawl and hop his way to Ben Reimer's house only to be told: "Yes, I think we've got some aspirin". But Jake hadn't been back to Los Esperanza for twenty years.

The community seemed to know the bus was coming long before it arrived for there they were, barefooted adults and children coming out of their lean-to-sheiters, offering us toothless smiles and handshakes. For Luella there were hugs and, for "Big Eye Jass" - they could not say Jasch - with the thick glasses, playful punches. For Wilmer Penner, there was a special moment as he was introduced to Sousa who had worked with his father there and remembered him well. But as we walked the pathways of his father and his uncle, we found very little of the work they had accomplished there. An empty shed attested to the quality of Abe Penner's cotton operation, but the fields, long left untended, had been all but reclaimed by the Chaco. The school was still standing but the children were not in it because there hadn't been a teacher for many years. The medical buildings were still intact but their contents had long since been taken by the Indians for their own purposes. The grapefruit trees, planted and tended by Ben and Margaret Reimer and others sent to help the community, stand as the only living memorial to a vision for these people created by the EMC. Grapefruit trees of great stature that bear fruit that is picked green and never allowed to ripen.

Only a few miles away is Yalve Sanga, a growing thriving community. Where Indians, under the supervision of Mennonites, are learning how to run the many parts of the hospital, as well as a tree-grafting operation, two Co-ops (the two tribes, the Lingua and the Chuluei, can work

amicably in every aspect other than business so they each have their own Co-op), construction of roads and brick houses, and a residential school that teaches girls life skills of reading, writing, healthy life styles, and how to grow their own food.

This was an extraordinary trip for our imaginations. Two settlements separated by only a few kilometres but as different as night and day. Within half a day we had gone from darkness to a great light in terms of possibilities for Indian settlements. And we could not get an answer as to our question "Why?"

#### **Ascuncion.**

Another side trip just outside of Asuncion provided us with a miracle. A Mennonite Leper Clinic, where people are treated, cured, rehabilitated, and sent home. Once again we were given a warm welcome by virtue of our Manitoba connection. Oscar Neufeld, who describes himself as "just a shoemaker", has parents living in Winnipeg. But as a shoemaker Oscar plays an essential role in the rehabilitation of leper patients. It is his creative footwear that sends them home on both feet, no matter how much of the foot or leg has been left intact by the leprosy bacillus.

With the asphalt stretching the next hundred kilometres to the Brazil border we agreed to "go tourist" and visit Igacu Falls and the bi-national Itaipo Hydro Dam. We looked on both of these wonders in awe, the one such convincing evidence of the power of Nature, the other the cooperative possibility of the human mind and spirit.

Then it was time to return to Asuncion for our final show. The small audience here reflected the dispersive nature of the city's Mennonite population for in this capital city there are many cultures. But there were still lots of connections made even here - even one for us this time as cousin Joanne Martens came forward to greet us. She works in a suburban mission in the city and had been on the lookout for the arrival of "Jeschafftsmaun". Thanks to Joanne, we too had our personal Paraguay connection.

For, as we bid farewell to Paraguay, that was the final word for each of us. The family connection. The real Manitoba-Paraguay connection that is there for so many Mennonites. Those who left Manitoba in the 1920s and in 1948 have made the trip both ways many times since then, some to visit, some to stay. Our trip provided a strong reminder that the blood and history between Manitoba and Paraguay Mennonites will always be there, for anyone who wants to reach out and get in touch with it.

Its a "frindschaft" worth exploring.

**Editorial Note:** The foregoing article "Jeschafftsmaun Tours Paraguay," by Shiela Reid, Berghal, E. R., Manitoba, is a slightly revised version of an earlier article entitled "Low German troupe makes Paraguay audiences laugh," published in the *Carillon News*, September 14, 1998, page 15A, and translated and published in German in the *Mennonitische Post*, September 14, 1999.

# A Tribute: Abram P. Dueck 1909-93

**A Tribute to Abram P. Dueck (1909-93): A Man of Many Talents,  
by William Schroeder, 434 Sutton Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0T3**

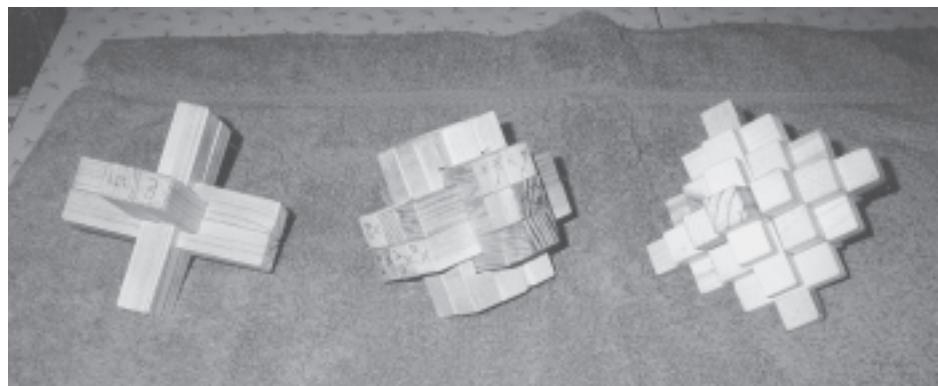
My father met A. P. Dueck in 1966 in Kronsweide near Lowe Farm at a funeral of a distant relative. My father was greatly impressed with this interesting man and suggested that I go and see him. He thought Mr. Dueck might have answers for some of the questions I had asked about our family history. I responded to my father's suggestion, and a very meaningful relationship developed. As it turned out, Abram Dueck not only provided the genealogical information I had been looking for, he also had a large collection of original materials which provided an invaluable resource as I researched and wrote *The Bergthal Colony*.

A. P. Dueck was born in 1909. His parents were Peter D. Dueck (1878-1951) and Anna Schroeder (1882-1935). His grandfather was Rev. Johann Schroeder (1870-1956), poet and minister of the Chortitzer Gemeinde. Abram's great-grandfather was Gerhard Schroeder (1848-1910) of Eigenhof, Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover from 1901 to 1907.

Abram married Maria Broesky in 1939. They had a farm approximately two-and-one-half miles south of Chortitz (Randolph).



*Abram and Maria Dueck. Abram was one of the unsung heroes of the Mennonite faith and the Hanover Steinbach community. His pioneering work and interest in gathering historical materials and artifacts regarding the Bergthal Chortitzer people was visionary and of far-reaching consequences for his people. On behalf of the Hanover Steinbach community we extend a belated recognition and thank-you to Abram Dueck.*



*Three puzzles invented by Abram P. Dueck, also known to some people as "Langa" Obrum Dueck. Creations such as these puzzles were only one small sample of his inventive and creative genius. Photos courtesy of Wm. Schroeder, 434 Sutton Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba. It is time that our culture starts to recognize individuals such as Abram P. Dueck, who have contributed so much.*

Abram Dueck had many interests and a wide range of skills. He loved music and could play the harmonica, the guitar, the organ and the violin. He was a skilled craftsman and made numerous toys and furniture for children. He designed and made at least three different intricate wooden puzzles. He had a large collection of stamps and an impressive coin collection. One of his coins was minted in Danzig in 1771 and had been carried by the Mennonites from Danzig to Chortitz, from Chortitz to Bergthal and from Bergthal to the East Reserve (Note One). A prized possession was a Russian ten ruble gold coin. He had a collection of Indian relics arrowheads, pemmican pounders and a large stone spearhead.

A. P. Dueck inherited the letters his grandfather Johann Schroeder had received from Peter Schroeder (1852-1920) in Rosenthal, Russia. Among them was the letter in which Peter Schroeder describes a visit to the former Bergthal Colony in 1909 (Note Two). Another letter was a desperate plea for help written by Peter's son Gerhard Schroeder in 1920 after the Revolution and the Makhno period (Note Three).

Stored in metal barrels in the hayloft were hundreds of back issues of the *Steinbach Post*. He paged through these old papers for me and found four articles that described the emigration from Russia to Manitoba (Note Four). During one visit we went to the village of Eigenhof where he could give me an on-site account of the 1877 visit of Lord Dufferin. He pointed out a beam in Jacob Wieler's barn with the date 1877 carved into it (Note Five). He also showed me two millstones that had belonged to Gerhard Schroeder's windmill (Note Six).

During the sixties when I began research on the former Bergthal Colony, the two Mennonite archives in Winnipeg did not exist, and A.P. Dueck's original materials were a

researcher's gold mine.

Abram P. Dueck passed away in 1993 and most of his belongings including his coins, stamps, puzzles and letters were dispersed at a public auction.

## Endnotes:

Note One: *Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg, 1986), p. 3.

Note Two: *Bergthal Colony*, p. 115.

Note Three: *Bergthal Colony*, p. 119.

Note Four: *Bergthal Colony*, p. 141.

Note Five: *Bergthal Colony*, p. 90.

Note Six: *Bergthal Colony*, p. 89.

## Editor's Note:

Abram P. Dueck was known as "Launga" Obrum Dueck, and his father Peter D. Dueck (1878-1951) had the same alias. Peter D. Dueck was the son of Abraham U. Dueck (1834-1922) BGB B263, a brother to Jakob Dyck (1846-1928) BGB 285, see *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 98-101. They were sons of Derk Dueck (1813), BGB A91, Rosengard, E.R.

Peter D. Dueck's mother was Justina Dyck (1845-1916), BGB A77. Peter D. Dueck's sister, Anna Dueck, married Abraham W. Dueck, son of Abraham N. Dueck (1859-1921) and Anna Wiebe (1862-1922), Schönsee, E.R., see article on Peter B. Penner, elsewhere in this issue. Abraham W. Dueck's daughter Anna married Wilhelm Dueck (1918-79), a great-grandson of Abraham U. Dueck (1834-1922).

Courtesy of Anna Dueck Reimer, Steinbach, Manitoba, cousin of Abram P. Dueck.

# The Old Homeland, Borosenko and Molotschna

The Old Homeland, Then and Now, Borosenko and Molotschna, Ukraine, formerly Imperial Russia, May 25 and 31, 1999,  
by D. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.



A beautiful vista, the welcome to Borosenko. On May 25, 1999, a visit to the Borosenko Colony, founded by the Kleine Gemeinde and Old Kolonists in 1865. L.-r. our driver, Harold Janz, Winnipeg, pastor Frank Dyck and Dr. Royden Loewen, stop at the crest of the hill on the south side of the river to gaze at the beautiful sight, view towards the northwest. To the rear are the fertile escarpments, fields once tilled by our Kleine Gemeinde and Old Kolony forebears.

## Introduction.

It was in April of 1995 that I first visited Ukraine, formerly Imperial Russia, once the Homeland of the Kleine Gemeinde, Bergthalers and Old Kolony (OK) Mennonites.

One of the things I was searching for at the time was the historical site of the original village of Steinbach from whence has sprung our modern City of the same name in Manitoba. I recall reflecting at the time, whether my quest compared to that of Albert Schweitzer who in his ground breaking study, wrote about his search for the historical Jesus.

This is a comparison, I believe, that all human beings at one time or another address, whether consciously or subconsciously, a sense of longing for the primordial being within us, both genetic and environmental, which shapes and defines us, our reason for being, our ethos, our id.

The difference is that some of us are always

too busy or too scared to allow such ambiguities to cloud the horizons of our experiential embryo, to discover that part of ourselves which transcends time and place, and the shallow but apparent reality of our every day lives.

Is the answer to the quest to be found solely in the rocks and gullies of ancient Israel, or the teachings of the Man from Galilee? I remember as a 15 year-old boy reading Schweitzer's, *In Search of the Historical Jesus*, and not fully understanding his proposition, and yet, in a very deep and genuine way sensing the yearning and searching that intelligent people--at least those half-way honest with themselves--are cursed with.

In a sense the quest to walk the ground of the original historical Steinbach, was a sacred one, finding a deeply rooted, subconscious connect-

edness to one's past, that goes far beyond genealogies and written histories.

## Borosenko.

This was my fourth time in the old Homeland. Borosenko, Molotschna, Chortitzia--the names sound comfortable and familiar, the air is warm and pleasant. I wake up, my first night. I hear the sounds of the City of Zaporozhe (referred to as "Zap" by veterans), rumbling outside my hotel window. The residents are cheerful and optimistic. It is May 25, 1999, and their first hothouse ripe tomatoes and crispy cucumbers are being sold in the street markets, cheap food and lots of it.

May 26, we are off to Borosenko, a settlement of 18,000 acres founded by our Kleine Gemeinde forebears in 1865. This was a journey



Rev. Harold Jantz, poses with the gravestone of Maria Teichroeb (1850-1911) in Ebenfeld.



A photograph of the Kulhusz barn in Ebenfeld where Mennonite gravestones were used as building materials.

that my travelling companion Dr. Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, and myself had planned prior to leaving sunny Manitoba, a few days previous. Roy had already made arrangements with Rev. Frank Dyck, who grew up in Borosenko, for transportation. Frank himself was kind enough to accompany us as our translator and guide.

We were in Zap to attend the Mennonite conference Khortitz '99 (see *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 65-68).

At the reception the first evening, I chatted with Rev. Harold Jantz, former editor of the *M.B. Herald*. When he found out we were planning to visit Borosenko and Friedensfeld the next day, he asked if he could join us. Friedensfeld was the ancestral home of his Jantz grandparents. Of course, I replied, how often does one have the chance to spend a day with someone who has a denominational magazine named for them?

At the outskirts of Nikopol, some 60 kilometers southwesterly along the Dneiper River, we must turn north, traversing around the south of several huge stacks of an iron ore processing plant. Not unusual for Ukraine, the turn is not marked by signage. It takes friend Rev. Frank Dyck, former pastor of the Zaporozhe Mennonite Church, some time to orientate.

Finally we are on the right road (no pun intended) and within a few minutes pass through what was once the Mennonite settlement of Nepluyevka, the villages of Steinau and Blumenfeld. This was the first time I made this connection.

Another 15 kilometers and we arrive at the Solenaya hills, an escarpment along the south side of the Solenaya River. From this premonitory we can see a good portion of the Borosenko plains lying below us, view to the northwest. I believe this route is the one used by our ancestors when they drove the 28 kilometers to the City of Nikopol where they did their business transactions and purchased supplies.

This must be the spot of which Johann W. Dueck wrote in *History and Events* (page 100), "...a high hill [Berg] could be seen from our village. We always had to drive over this hill..." This was probably also the spot from which my grandfather, Heinrich E. Plett, then a five-year-old boy, would have taken his last nostalgic look at his boyhood home as the wagons carrying his family and their possessions departed for the river port of Nikopol in 1875.

After taking some photos we proceed down the escarpment, and cross the Solenaya River passing through the village of Taspyeckoe on the other side.

Another three miles and we are at the site of the cemetery for the Kleine Gemeinde village of Heuboden, located on an old Gorgony, burial place of the ancient Sythians. Half-a-mile south of the cemetery is the village of Heuboden itself, lying perpendicular to the river road and river. The luscious hay growing in the kilometre wide river flats evokes the origins of the village name, "Heuboden" or hay bottom land.

Two miles later we stop in Blumenhoff, once the heart of Kleine Gemeinde life and culture in Borosenko. We notice that the Kolkhoz barn situ-



*The village street in Schöndorf, view to the west. A well preserved sample of a Mennonite housebarn, although the barn was no longer there. Most impressive was the beautiful Vorgarten, the front yard orchard, maintained with a sense of order and evoking a definite Mennonite aesthetic. How beautiful a typically Mennonite village must have looked when there were 20 or 40 such Wirtschaften, framed by rows of shade trees and front yards beaming with colourful flowers and fruit trees in bloom.*

ated at the west end of the village has been demolished since our last visit in 1998. At that time, Frank Dyck was told that the barn had been constructed from the bricks of another large building nearby, which I speculate may have been the remnants of the Kleine Gemeinde worship house built in 1872.

After we leave Blumenhoff, we travel several kilometers west, and turn north. A small village at the corner attracts my attention. I ask Frank if he knows anything about it.

"Oh," he replies, "That was a Jewish village."

"What happened to them?" I ask.

"They were all shot when the Nazis arrived in 1941," he replied.

Later I ask Olga Shmakina to write out the name of the village for me, "Khmelnitskoye".

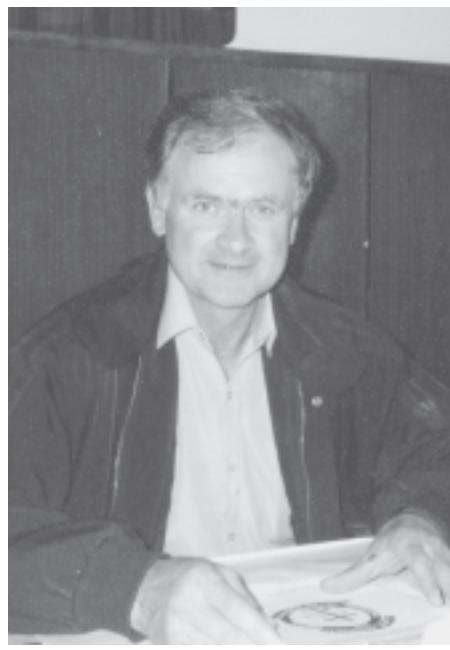
I didn't have much appetite all day, a rarity for me.

### Ebenfeld.

On our 1998 Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour we held a worship service at the cemetery in Ebenfeld. In 1919 the Machnov bandits raided the villages of Ebenfeld and Steinbach in the same tormented night of November 7, plundering, raping and killing, a total of 67 murdered in Ebenfeld, bodies hacked apart in the most indescribable way.

As we drove away along the street on the south side of the stream, we noticed the Kolkhoz barn standing at the corner of the dam was being demolished--parts of the wall had been bulldozed and spread out across the yard north towards the "drank".

To our horror we saw that among the debris were gravestones looted from the cemetery we had just left, used as building material by a Kolkhoz Chairman, who like some over zealous Fundamentalist, felt the compulsion to eradicate



*Kanoba Vadim Valentinovich, Chairman of the Collective Farm with offices in Nikolaithal.*



*Another original Mennonite house (the barn part has been dismantled) in Schöndorf, view towards the southwest. This one turned out to be the ancestral home of Cornelius Penner, grandfather to Harold Jantz, our travelling companion for the day.*

## Preservings

the culture of these people who had once lived and prospered here. Unfortunately we did not have time to stop, our destination was Steinbach where many of the group had genetic roots.

This time we were able to stop. A quick investigation of the remnant walls showed that our fears had been correct. One of the gravestones incorporated into the wall was perfectly preserved

(maroon granite stone), "Hier Ruht Maria Teichroeb, geb. 1850 Juli 12, gest. May 15, 1911."

In honour of her memory I took a photo of her gravestone with Harold Jantz standing beside it.

### Nikolaithal/Schöndorf.

We travel east of Ebenfeld and then north,

several kilometres, and arrive at Mironovka, the Russian village established on the east bank of the Bazavluk River, across from the village of Steinbach, founded on the west bank by the Kleine Gemeinde in 1865. From this vantage point we get a good look. After a quick bite, we are all the more united in our determination to get to the actual site.

We turn back, several kilometres past Ebenfeld we turn north. At the corner is another small village. As we make the turn, Frank indicated that this was also a Jewish village. The name was "Ordzomkidze". It is my impression that these Jewish villages were established here in Soviet times.

Over the years, the villages of Nikolaithal/Schöndorf have grown to become one. When the area around Borosenko was organized as a Volost (Municipality), Nikolaithal was designated as the county seat. Nikolaithal was also the name of the Volost in 1871.

Harold Jantz is anxious to spend some time in Schöndorf where his mother's parents, Cornelius Penners, lived. I had also hoped to



*We ask to see the inside of the former Penner home. An original Mennonite Ruhbank (settee) is still in use in the house. I take a photograph of Harold Jantz and the current owner of the home, sitting on the bench. What a discovery!*



*On the way to Steinbach, Ukraine. We pass a local farmer out with his son and traditional Ukrainian wagon, notice the flanged sides of the wagon box.*



*A scene from approximately the centre of the village of Steinbach, view to the east. Visible are some clumps of brush along the river bank where left over pieces of foundation and debris have been bulldozed, presumably to clear the former village site for pasture. In the rear, the village of Mironovka.*



*So here it is finally. At what was probably the south end of the village, a planted woodlot. Roy Loewen and myself, pose with a brick which must have found its way to this spot somehow. In the background, view to the west, across the Bazavluk River, the village of Mironovka, which has become the largest centre in the region, with a population of several thousand.*



*In the clumps of trees closer to the river we find bits of debris, several original Mennonite bricks dating probably to the 1890s, a slipper and a few bits of pottery. Here Delbert Plett poses with a brick discovered among the rubble. See article by Doris Penner, "Local Historian moved to visit original Steinbach," Carillon News, June 28, 1999.*

visit the Chairman or Manager of the local Collective Farm (Kolkhoz). We decide to stop here first before proceeding in our quest to find the site of Steinbach.

Schöndorf has several Mennonite buildings still standing, surprising considering the severity of WWII fighting in the area and the consequent destruction. For several years I had been hoping to be able to have my tour group visit a Collective Farm in Borosenko, to serve as a comparison to the "Schors Collective Farm" we usually visit in the Molotschna Colony (see *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, page 12).

After several tries we get lucky. Frank Dyck, translator, and myself, are granted a meeting with Kanoba Vadim Valentinovich, Chairman of the Collective Farm with headquarters in Nikolaithal. We are ushered into his private office, where we present our request. Our discussions take place under a photograph of Lenin looking down upon us from its place of honour on the wall behind him, possibly grimacing at the unorthodox discussion taking place below.

The Chairman is gracious and agrees to our request to allow our tour group of May, 2000 to visit the Collective Farm and have our supper there. I know from experience that these visits are always a highlight to tour members, both for the opportunity to meet and mingle with local farmers, as well as the opportunity to see how the land is being farmed upon which their grandparents once toiled. A good opportunity for Kleine Gemeinde and Old Kolony descendants alike to ask questions and learn about the way things are done today.

### **Steinbach, Imperial Russia.**

From Nikolaithal we turn back west, to the corner, and then north towards Felsenbach. We would have preferred to follow a river road along the Bazavluk in the hope of finding the remnants of Anafeld, but are told that the roads are not passable because of recent rain. In any case our priority this time is Steinbach. After several tries my dream is to finally walk the land where my great-grandparents once lived and where my paternal grandmother was born.

Felsenbach is another village with evidence of Mennonite civilization still extant. A fair sized Mennonite flour mill was located here and still standing.

Just north of Felsenbach is a paved secondary road running east and west, and we turn west and cross the Bazavluk. Just on the west side of the river is a village which must be the former Mennonite or German village of Friedensdorf, at least according to a map provided by Edward Golbeck, whose ancestors were among those purchased the farms in the former Kleine Gemeinde village of Anafeld.

Another five or six kilometers further west we come to a small village, site of a huge grain elevator visible from as far away as Mironovka. Here we turn south along a dirt road identified on our map (a recent Ukraine road map which turns out to be of excellent quality) only as a series of dots. We drive a distance I estimate to be 10 kilometres along this dirt road, with fields of grain on each side. Along the way we see local



Dr. Roy Loewen, Mennonite Chair, U. of W., poses beside a river crossing (awa foat) probably once used by our ancestors in days of old. Possibly this is the crossing referred to in the journal of Abraham F. (Fuela) Reimer (1808-92) ancestor of several thousand residents in Steinbach, Blumenort, and Landmark, Manitoba.



D. Plett stops besides the dirt trail leading onto the escarpment northwest of the village site, view towards the southeast. One marvels at the beauty of the region. It becomes easier to understand the nostalgia our people felt for their old homeland for several generations.



The village street in Grünfeld, view towards the southwest. Grünfeld was the home of KG stalwarts such as Rev. Gerhard P. Goossen, teacher Abram P. Isaac, Rev. Abraham Loewen and brother Cornelius.

farmers at work, including a brigade of workers hoeing beets.

As we approach the west bank of the Bazavluk, the area becomes wooded, and the road becomes a trail, of a pair of tracks. After passing through what probably used to be the village pasture, we come to a woodlot consisting of planted pine trees, and then see the river, half a kilometre ahead of us, and the buildings of Mironovka in the distance on the other side.

Pay dirt! So here it is. Finally, we are there! Steinbach, our historical roots. Both Roy and myself found it moving to walk the ground where

Mennonite legends such as Abraham "Fuela" Reima and his wife, the indomitable Elisabeth, our great-great grandparents had once walked.

From the woodlot we walked about three-quarters of a kilometre in a northwesterly direction, angling towards clumps of brush closer to the river bank. From examining these bushes we conclude that whatever had been left of the village, after the 1919 massacre and pillaging over the subsequent years had been bulldozed in small piles along the river, presumably to make the area more suitable for pasture.

After walking a distance west along the river



*What Kleine Gemeinder or Old Kolonier's heart would not quicken at this pastoral scene. From the escarpment along the southwest bank of the Bazavluk River, a kilometre or so northwest of the village of Steinbach. A few scattered buildings to the north of the village of Mironovka are visible to the rear. A herd of cattle grazing the lush bottom land, defined by escarpments overlooking a river crossing. View to the northeast in the direction of the former village of Anafeld, apparently located several kilometers away. Anafeld is one of several Kleine Gemeinde villages not yet physically identified. Hopefully next time.*

bank, I turned towards a small rise in the ground, approximately 150 metres south. I had already noticed this small disruption in the ground level from across the river during previous trips, my theory being that this might be the site of the Steinbach village cemetery where my great-grandmother Mrs. Peter R. Reimer, nee Elisabeth S. Friesen, as well as the victims of the 1919 massacre were buried. I did see what appeared to be a piece of granite such as commonly used for gravestones, possibly confirming this idea.

Walking another half-a-kilometre further northwest, we came to what may have been the approaches to the bridge or ford "Avafoat" (Roy and I are not quite in agreement as to which it was) referred to in the journals of Abraham "Fuela" Reima in the 1870s.

As we proceed further, the river bank rises

substantially. By now I was a good kilometre north of where the village itself must have stood with its 20 or so Wirtschaften. From the escarpment a beautiful view unfolds, the steppes of the southern Ukraine at their most pristine and pastoral. Down below a herd of Red German cattle are grazing and watering in the river, behind them what appears to be a dam and possibly another more modern "Avafoat".

By now the sun hangs suspended in the afternoon sky, its rays dancing across the valleys and hillocks towards the northeast where the village of Annafeld, not even shown on any maps, existed at least until after WWI. But that dream will remain an adventure for another day, another tour.

We are now north of the village site. Taking a calculated risk we take a dirt road due south, traversing fields of canola and wheat stretching

for several miles. Sure enough, my prairie boy, section line, directional mentality functions here as well: we arrive back at the field road along which we had come.



*Another photo taken during the conference sponsored tour on May 31. Hierschau. An emotional reunion. Dr. Gerhard and Julia Hildebrandt, Goettingen, Germany, meet Margaretha Kravetz, nee Plett, whom they have not seen since 1943. Margaretha and Gerhard's sisters were school children together in the village of Hierschau. With the Hildebrandts is another Plett relative, Dr. Royden Loewen, Steinbach, Canada. The background view is typical of the beautiful pastoral landscape of the Molotschna, former home of the Kleine Gemeinde.*



*The village street in Grünfeld, view towards the northeast.*

### **Grünfeld.**

We turn north again and are on our way back across the river, past Felsenbach. We have made a corporate decision to skip a tour of other Borosenko villages such as Eichengrund (also slaughtered out by Machno bandits in 1919) and Rosenthal.

We find the former KG village of Grünfeld, after missing the turnoff on the first try. Frank stops a farmer passing in his tractor and soon we are there. The Grünfeld area has several prominent hills and apparently was the scene of heavy fighting during WWII. The hills made excellent defensive positions for the Wehrmacht.

On our second "Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour" we were told that bodies, war casualties, were still being found in the village in the early 1950s.

### **Friedensfeld.**

From Grünfeld, we cut across country, sort of along one of the headwaters of the Solenaya River. I remember the road from 1996 and some 10 kilometres later we arrive in the village of Friedensfeld, the namesake for the district of Friedensfeld south of Steinbach, Canada, named in honour of the Kleine Gemeinde minister Jakob M. Barkman (1824-75), who drowned in the Red River in 1875, and who originated from this Friedensfeld.

Using the map published by Olga Rempel, we find the village cemetery. Harold Jantz is more familiar with Friedensfeld since his parents were both born here and he has heard many stories about life in the village. He points out what was formerly the M.B. worship house, now used as the village school. Frank Dyck and his driver decide that they will need to gas up. After some inquiries they find their way to the Kolkhoz worker who is in charge of the gas supplies. In a act of typical Ukrainian generosity he refuses payment.

We head home across country and arrive at our hotel before sun set.

### **Molotschna.**

June 2, 1999, I arranged another tour of the Molotschna with Adina Regehr as translator and a local Russian driver with vehicle. This was my first time in the Molotschna without a tour group, and so we were free to explore and try to find a few new things of interest to those of Kleine Gemeinde heritage.

We cross the bridge over the Molotschna River in Halbstadt, a good view of the meandering Milk River, and the adjacent hay meadows.

For the first time I visit the Petershagen cemetery where my great-great grandfather Klaas Reimer (1770-1837) is buried. Mennonite cemeteries were always located some distance away from the village proper but the Petershagen cemetery is further distant than most, almost a mile I would say.

In Ohrloff, at the southwest corner of the Molotschna, we visit the village graveyard where Abraham von Riesen (1756-1810) and Margaretha Wiebe (1854-1810) are presumably buried. They are the ancestors of most everybody in Steinbach, Blumenort, Rosenort,



The view from the bridge crossing the Molotschna River in Halbstadt, a good view of the meandering River, and adjacent hay meadows. View towards the south.



The Petershagen cemetery where my great-great grandfather Klaas Reimer (1770-1837) is buried. The row of trees in the background is planted along the cemetery road west back to Petershagen and the main north/south road along which the first Mennonite villages in the Molotschna were laid out in 1804.



The Ohrloff village cemetery where Abraham von Riesen (1756-1810) and Margaretha Wiebe (1854-1810) ancestors of most Kleine Gemeinders, are presumably buried. This photo was taken during the Conference sponsored tour on May 31. The members of the group are examining the headstones in the Mennonite portion of the cemetery. The farmyards in the village of Ohrloff are visible to the rear, view to the northeast from the cemetery.

Manitoba, and Meade, Kansas, etc.

At Rückenau we stopped to look at the cemetery. According to the journal of minister Johann Dueck (1801-66), Muntau, the second Kleine Gemeinde Aeltester Abraham Friesen (1782-1849), is buried in Rückenau. Evidently he was living with son Abraham W. Friesen (1812-89) in Rückenau when he died, and therefore was buried there.

Rückenau was also the ancestral home of the Kleine Gemeinde Barkmans, Martin J. being the father of minister Jakob M. Barkman (1826-75), spiritual leader of the infant community of Steinbach already referred to.

Very significant in the Kleine Gemeinde story is the village of Margenau, just further northeast along the Kuruschan River. Margenau had a strong KG community, some eight families during the 1850s. The village is now totally gone, only a cemetery and some rubble from an old Kolkhoz barn remain. Unlike most Molotschna villages, Margenau is not on a paved road and so tourists are never taken there.

Particularly significant in Margenau were the families of Peter W. "Grossvoda" Toews (1831-1922) and Peter "Five wives, two lives" Penner (1816-84). These families have made important contributions to southeastern Manitoba, particularly in Greenland and Steinbach, where many enterprises and farms are owned by their descendants.

#### Conclusion.

And so comes to a close another wonderful visit to Ukraine. After spending the last day sunning on the beach and swimming in the historic Dneiper River, it is time to return back to reality and home.

Did Schweitzer ever find his historical Jesus, did the crusaders ever find the holy grail? Probably not.

But we as human beings are always the better for the search, closer to truth, and to the essence of our beings.



*The village of Rückenau played an important role in the Kleine Gemeinde story. Here a view of Rückenau towards the northwest, from the dam on the Begim-Tschokrak River just south of the neighbouring village of Fürstenwerder. Rückenau was the home of the Barkman brothers, Martin J. (1796-1872) and Jakob J. Barkman (1794-1875) who walked to Russia on foot after the Napoleonic Wars. They soon became well-to-do Vollwirthen in Rückenau, where the Imperial Czar visited Martin's Wirtschaft and ate a meal there.*



*The Rückenau village cemetery, particularly important to the Kleine Gemeinde story as our second Aeltester Abraham Friesen (1787-1849) is buried there as well as other KG-ers such as Martin J. Barkman.*



*The cemetery at Margenau (Margenovka), home of the Peter Toews, and Peter Penner families. View towards the south. Today nothing is left of Margenau, other than a few stones in the cemetery and some rubble remaining from a Kuhlhusz barn. We were told that the few homes remaining in Margenau were dismantled in the 1980s and relocated elsewhere. It appears that the village of Margenau was located across the "dempel" and along the rise to the southeast of the cemetery.*



*Another view of the territory of the village of Margenau. View towards the northeast. In the foreground are visible the remains of a Kulhusz barn. Margenau was laid out along the upper branch of the Kuruschan River. The bushes visible in the photo follow the river bottom, dry at the time June 2.*

## Adolf Ens, Tribute to a Modest Man

Adolf Ens, Retirement, "Tribute to a Modest Man", from the *Canadian Mennonite*, June 21, 1999, Vol. 3, Number 13, page 4.

Words like modesty, integrity and simplicity describe the life and work of Adolf Ens, a Mennonite history professor who is retiring after 26 years at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC).

Colleagues and friends paid tribute to Ens at a banquet on May 15 at Bethel Mennonite Church here.

Ens models some important Christian characteristics, said colleague Harry Huebner. He cited Ens' quiet demeanour and his commitment to the community of faith, as well as "his interest in nurturing others into the church," and "his simple belief that Christians should follow Christ."

Gerald Gerbrandt, CMBC president, gave Ens a certificate which highlighted five characteristics: Christian integrity, dedicated professor, incisive administrative thinker, theologian with a third-world bias, and mentor to students and lay historians.

Ens had noted when Wayne Gretzky retired that the New York Rangers gave him a Mercedes Benz, hinting that this might be appropriate for a retiring professor.

"I found this a somewhat unusual comment coming from someone who considers the purchase of a new belt an extravagance," said Gerbrandt as he reached into his pocket and pulled out a toy Mercedes Benz for Ens.

"Biking, birds and books" were the words Marilyn Peters Kliewer, residence co-director, chose to describe Ens. He rides his bike to work "rain or shine, summer or winter, tornado or bliz-

zard," said Kliewer.

Ens turned to theology and church history after receiving a master's degree in chemistry. He joined the CMBC faculty in 1970, after teaching at the Mennonite seminary in Indonesia for four years. He took a leave to complete doctoral studies, which led to his book, *Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite experience in Canada, 1870-1925* (University of Ottawa Press, 1994). From 1982-84 he taught in Uganda.

He and Anna (Epp) Ens have been leaders at Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship since 1970.

Demonstrating the dry humour of his father, Jonathan Ens read from his father's book-about a dozen footnotes, including page numbers and abbreviations. "There are a few more here, but you get the idea," he said.

"I continue to learn from my father by watching him live what he teaches," said eldest son Martin. Daughter Anita said she valued advice from her father in dealing with people who carry different views.

"You can't change people's thinking. The first thing you have to do is listen and see where they are coming from, then share the information in a way they can hear it," she said.

Bill Janzen, Mennonite Central Committee Ottawa Office director, gave the keynote address at the banquet on the church and public policy (see page 6). He concluded: "If we are to find our way, if we are to work at discerning the word of the Lord, then we will need teachers--people like Adolf Ens. He opened parts of our background



Adolf Ens at his retirement dinner. Photo courtesy of Aiden Schlichting Enns, Canadian Mennonite, June 21, 1999, Vol.3, Number 13, page 4.

that others had not bothered with. He listened to small churches in other parts of the world... He taught theology in ways that gave life... And he did all this with joy and good humour."

Ens responded by unfolding a slip of paper and stating, "I find that for an occasion such as this, it's best to have my spontaneous responses written out." After quoting his mother who said, "I have it undeservedly well," he leaned into the microphone for a final work, "Keep me humble in retirement, will you?" - Report by Aiden Schlichting Enns, from the *Canadian Mennonite*, June 21, 1999, Vol.3, Number 13, page 4.

## Hunt for Mice! Harvey

An overflow crowd gathered on April 16, 1999, at the chapel of Steinbach Bible College in appreciation for Dr. Harvey Plett, who is retiring after 37 years of teaching at the institution.

SBC acting president Don Thiessen introduced the surprise master of ceremonies of the evening, Gordon Penner. Penner is Dr. Plett's colleague and good friend who travelled from B.C. for the celebration.

Penner calculated that Dr. Plett began teaching in 1962, before the master of ceremonies was born. When former students of Harvey were asked to stand, most of the people stood. Others stood as staff who had served with him during the Years.

The Chorale performed under Don Thiessen. A drama group performed. "Free Servant", a group using contemporary styling, invited Dr. Plett on stage to present him with copies of the lyrics. "New Creation" sang. The groups varied in style. A favourite of Dr. Plett's - a spiritual, "Amen!" - touched him deeply.

Henry Fast, a colleague of Harvey's for 31 years, reflected on their years together. He suggested, "I know you will continue to serve people but take a lesson from my neighbours's dog.

Every now and then take time out to hunt for mice."

Mike Plett, one of four children, and Roger Peters put together a video montage of Dr. Plett's years at SBI/SBC. Those gathered laughed at one staff photo showing him with long sideburns. The SBC Yearbook said, *Good-bye, Harvey. We will miss you. (It's a consensus.)*

Mike spoke of how the family recognized their dad "overextended" himself, respecting that he did it out of concern for people. Now they were looking forward to his help in raising his grandchildren, he said.

Dr. Plett became president in 1967. He has served as academic dean and dean of students. Penner said the music department was the only department Harvey had not directed.

Dr. and Mrs. Plett were invited onstage and presented with gifts. A briefcase replaced one Dr. Plett said he had used since 1974.

He and Pearl were puzzled by another gift until they read *Command Start*.

With Pearl at his side, Dr. Plett referred to Isaiah, "This is the way. Walk in it." He said that was their commitment since they became Christians and were married.

"And so this evening we stand before you



Dr. Harvey Plett. Harvey Plett is the author of *Seeking to be Faithful: The Story of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference (Steinbach, 1996)*, 188 pages.

with hearts filled with profound gratitude because of what God has done,” he said. “It has been a good life and it will continue to be a good life.”

We love the Lord and we enjoy what we have been able to do and have done. So this evening I want to give thanks first to God for his utter faithfulness.” The Lord provided the staff, students, and finances needed to operate the College, he said.

“And of course I am very thankful, and God has been very faithful, for the partner God has

given me,” Plett went on. “If it wouldn’t be for Pearl, we couldn’t have done what we did. This was a team effort... I said, ‘You’re coming to the platform with me’ and she said, ‘Do I have to?’ and I said ‘Yes’.

As he talked and she was silent, Harvey quipped, “You notice we are doing a team effort again!” People laughed.

Dr. Plett introduced his married children and grandchildren, and Pearl’s mother Margaret Dueck.. He expressed his thanks to colleagues and those present for joining in the celebration.

Ben Eidse, SBC’s chancellor, had the closing prayer: “We thank you, Lord, that the servant whose life we have been celebrating has experienced these truths from your Word. And Lord, we thank you for the influence he has been in our lives by your grace.”

Refreshments were served in the auditorium.

Dr. Plett’s retirement plans were not announced.

Report by Terry Smith, reprinted from *The Messenger*, May 5, 1999, page 7.

## The Ovent Lichta

“De Ovent Lichta”—the Church of God - Anderson Group.

The “Ovent Lichta” (literally “night lighters”) is a church movement which has made limited inroads among Mennonites over the past century.

The official name of the church was “Church of God” but because there were so many church denominations which already used the name, they added the phrase, “The Anderson group”. In German the church is known as “Die Gemeinde Gottes”.

The Church of God denomination is headquartered in Anderson, Indiana, hence the name. It had roots in the so-called holiness movement originating with John Wesley in 18th century England, which provided the theological platform for the “second experience” movement of the late 19th century.

The Anderson group was part of the second experience movement but did not adopt the so-called “speaking in tongues” manifestations. In fact, it was highly critical of these manifestations. One of the unique features of the religious culture of the Anderson group was that they did not believe in a membership roll.

The Gemeinde Gottes or German Church of God on Mackenzie Road, Steinbach, traces its history to the Anderson group. There is also an affiliated congregation of the Gemeinde Gottes on the Swift Mennonite Colony, Cuauhemoc, Mexico.

The English language Church of God under the leadership of Rev. David Kauenhowen, Friedensfeld, has similar origins but is not directly affiliated. The members of this group practice a dress code, simple but attractive apparel, evocative of the early pioneers.

The Low German term “Ovent Lichta” originates from the German Scripture passage, “In die

Abend wird es Licht Wirden” (In the evening it will become light). The reference was taken to confirm that humanity was living in the last days, during which time, salvation yielding knowledge

would be imparted to God’s people, an interpretation typical of the Holiness/Fundamentalist movement. This scripture was emphasized within the Anderson group, hence the name “Ovent Lichta”.



The English “Church of God”, Friedensfeld, with Pastor David Kauenhowen. The group sometimes sings at the corner of Main Street and Reimer Avenue, Steinbach, summer 1999. The proactive “witnessing” is reminiscent of the sidewalk preaching and singing groups of the “Immanuel Mission Church” (today the Immanuel Evangelical Free Church) during the 1950s and ‘60s.

### Siamandas Wins Award

Winnipeg filmmaker George Siamandas has won a Bronze Telly Award for his documentary, “Mennonites in Manitoba.”

The one-hour filmed was produced with Prairie Public Television of Fargo, North Dakota. Siamandas served as the producer, director and writer.

There was 11,000 entries for the awards in 146 categories.

### Two Low German terms of interest to students of religious history are:

(1) “Sabbata” the Low German term for Seventh-Day Adventists, a form of Chiliiasm originating from American Revivalism;

(2) “Russelleete” or Russellites, was the Low German term commonly used for Jehovah’s Witnesses, another radical form of 19th century Revivalism, overly focused on Millennial/Chiliastic prophecies. The movement was named for Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), founder and first leader of the movement.

# Lieutenant-Governor Jack Wiebe

John Edward Neil "Jack" Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

## Jack Wiebe.

A "son" of the Kleine Gemeinde, John Edward Neil "Jack" Wiebe, was sworn into office as Saskatchewan's eighteenth Lieutenant Governor on May 31, 1994.

Jack Wiebe was born on May 31, 1936, at Herbert, Saskatchewan, son of Herbert Wiebe and Olga Janhke.

Jack Wiebe received his education at Herbert Elementary and High Schools, Luther College, Regina, and the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon. In 1961 Mr. Wiebe married the former Ann Lewis of Estlin and from that time farmed in the Main Centre district until his appointment as Lieutenant Governor.

Jack was well-liked in his home community and had also stood for election as a Liberal candidate.

The Wiebe's have three daughters and four grandchildren.

Congratulations to Jack Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

## The Janhkes.

Jack Wiebe's mother was Olga Janhke (b. 1905), oldest daughter of Cornelius Janhke born 1879 in Blumenort, E.R., Manitoba, son of Gottlieb Janhke (1855-1936).

Gottlieb was employed by KG farmers in Borosenko, Imperial Russia, and came with them to Manitoba in 1875. Here he married Margaretha Friesen, daughter of veteran teacher and poet Cornelius Friesen (1810-93), Blumenort, Manitoba. After the death of his first wife, Gottlieb married her sister Helena (1858-1919). At this time the Janhkes joined the Chortitzer Gemeinde where they are entered as Family 347 in the 1878 Gemeindebuch and as Family 125 in the 1887 Gemeindebuch.

The Janhke family farmed in SW23-7-6E, where John U. Loewen, one-time Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover farmed for many years, always a model farm in the neighbourhood. In 1904 the Janhkes moved to Saskatchewan, where they homesteaded in Townhill, some 25 miles northwest of Herbert. Helena died in Main Centre on September 8, 1919. Gottlieb Sr. died in Herbert June 30, 1936.

The Friesen sisters were gifted and strong. Sister Maria (1844-1925) was the first woman school teacher among the Mennonites in Manitoba, licensed in 1879, see *Preservings*, No. 8, Part One, page 9. Helena herself compiled a Friesen family chronicle, probably one of the earliest prairie women to do so.

Brother Klaas B. Friesen, was one of the 1874 Steinbach pioneers and brother Abraham R. Friesen was a gifted teacher and diarist. Sister Anna was married to Johann Broesky (see



Jack Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. Photo courtesy of Government House, 4607 Dowdney Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan.



Johann D. F. Wiebe (1872-1941) and Mrs. Wiebe, grandparents of Lieutenant Governor Jack Wiebe. Photo courtesy of Groening-Wiebe genealogy, page 63.

famous evangelists.

## The Wiebes.

Jack Wiebe's great-grandfather was Aeltester Jakob A. Wiebe (1836-1921), who broke away from the Crimean Kleine Gemeinde in 1869 to form his own Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Gemeinde.

Jakob's wife was Justina Friesen (1833-1916), whose grandfather Daniel Friesen (1752-1826), was one of the pioneers in the village of Petershagen, Molotschna, birth place of the KG.

Through Jakob's mother Anna Wiens Groening Wiebe Peters Braun (1818-76), Jack Wiebe is related to another famous KG descendants, Matt Groening, originator of the popular TV cartoon show, "The Simpsons", see *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 53-54.

In 1874 Jakob A. Wiebe led his congregation to America where they settled the village of Gnadenau, two miles southeast of present-day Hillsboro, Kansas.

Jack's father Herbert was the son of Johann F. D. Wiebe, son of Aeltester Jakob A. Wiebe.

Herbert was a long-time mayor of Herbert, Saskatchewan. This is almost as bad as Harold Jantz, with a denominational magazine, the *M.B. Herald*, named after him.

In 1905 the Johann F. D. Wiebe family moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan, to homestead.

## Sources:

Communique from the office of the Lieutenant Governor, Government House, 4607 Dowdney Avenue, Regina, Saskatchewan.

Joel Wiebe, et.al., editors, *The Groening-Wiebe Family* (Hillsboro, 1974), 294 pages.

Telephone interview with Art Jahnke, Box 31, Herbert, Sask., SOH 2A0, September 18, 1999.

I am indebted to Elaine Wiebe, Saskatoon, Sask., whose suggestion and letter of August 30, 1999, inspired this article.



Gottlieb Janhke and his second wife, nee Helena Friesen. She was a sister to Maria Friesen (1844-1925), later Redinzel, the first Mennonite woman school teacher in Western Canada. Photo courtesy of Art Jahnke, Box 31, Herbert, Saskatchewan, SOH 2A0.

# 'Simpsons' and Religion: Doh!

**"Simpsons' and Religion: Doh!, The Gospel According to the Simpsons,"**  
**by Mark Pinsky, Knight Rider News Service, The Wichita Eagle, Saturday, August 28, 1999.**

The following are extracts from an article by Mark Pinsky, Knight Rider News Service in *The Wichita Eagle*, Saturday, August 28, 1999, which considers the view of many in the Religious Right that the *Simpsons'* is blasphemous and sacrilegious. The *Simpsons* is a popular TV cartoon created by Matt Groening, who has direct historical links to the Kleine Gemeinde, his great-grandfather Abraham Klassen was a Kleine Gemeinde minister, see *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 53-54.

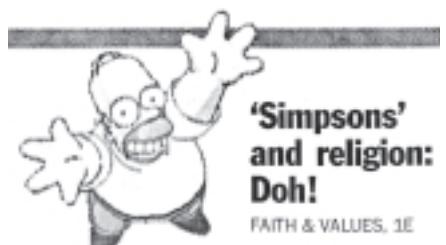
Pinsky argues that "both the initial denunciations and the recent controversy obscure the fact that God, Christianity and Christians are more a part of the *Simpsons'* daily lives than any other prime time network series, at least shows not specially devoted to religion, such as 'Touched by an Angel' and 'Seventh Heaven'".

"Right-wingers complain there's no God on TV," Groening said in a recent interview in Mother Jones magazine. "Not only do the *Simpsons* go to church every Sunday and pray, they actually speak to God from time to time."

"The *Simpsons* is consistently irreverent toward organized religion's failings and excesses—as it is with most other aspects of modern life."

Pinsky reports that these messages have been recognized by some in the religious world. "In 1992 the show was the subject of a favourable master's thesis at Pat Robertson's Regent University. While it may not completely resonate with the evangelical Judeo-Christian belief system," wrote Beth Keller, "The *Simpsons* does portray a family searching for moral and theological ideals."

"And in the Christian monthly PRISM, published by Evangelicals for Social Action, teacher Bill Dark wrote that the series is 'the most pro-



**'Simpsons' and Religion: Doh!'**

FAITH & VALUES, 1E

*'Simpsons' and Religion: Doh! Homer, man of contradictions. Photo courtesy of The Wichita Eagle, Saturday, August 28, 1999, page 1E.*

See Victor G. Wiebe, "The Simpson Cartoon and its Saskatchewan Connection," in the *Saskatchewan Mennonite Historian*, Vol. 3, No. 3, December 1998, page 13, 16 and 24. The article states that Homer Groening, father of Matt Groening, originator of "The Simpsons" was born in Main Centre, Saskatchewan, in 1919. I am indebted to Elaine Wiebe, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, for referring this article to my attention.

family, God-preoccupied, home based program on television. Statistically speaking there is more prayer on 'The Simpsons' than on any sitcom in broadcast history"....

"The *Simpsons* do function in a moral universe, and, while the show seems to make fun of moral standards, it often upholds those standards in a back-handed way," says Robert Knight, author of *The Age of Consent: The Rise of Relativism and The Corruption of Popular Culture*."

"No one would mistake Homer Simpson and his

family for saints. In many ways, in fact, they are quintessentially weak, good hearted sinners who rely on their faith—but only when absolutely necessary.

"They have captured a very common understanding of who God is," said Glodo of Reformed Theological Seminary. "It's a very functional view of religion."

*Preservings* is indebted to Peggy Goertzen, Archivist, Tabor College, Hillsboro, Kansas, for referring this article.

## Petermann's Mitteilungen, 1898

The following statistics on the Borosenko Colony were attached to an article compiled by H. van der Smissen, "Enwicklung und jetziger Stand der deutschen Mennonitenkolonien in Südrussland," in *Petermann's Mitteilungen*, 44(1898), page 175, by Paul Langhans reporting as of 1898, "Der heutige Stand der Siedlunsttätigkeit deutscher Mennoniten in Südrusland":

### "Vollost Nikolaitthal."

Bezirk Borosenko in the angle between the Busuluk and the Dneiper. 10 villages with 12,000 desjatines of land [Ed.Note: approximately 42,000 acres] and 1390 inhabitants, namely Nikolaitthal (Nowosofijewka) ([173] founded 1865, Schöndorf (Olgino) (144), founded 1865, Heuboden (Marjino) (212) founded 1865, Blumenhof (Alexandrovka) (108) founded 1866, Ebenfeld (Jagid\_\_\_\_?) (97), founded 1865, Rosenfeld (Jekaterinowka) (160) founded 1865, Felsenbach (Mariopol) (348) founded 1866, Eigengrund (Petrowka) (485) founded 1865, Neu-Hochstadt (Alexandropol) (567) founded in 1866, Neuanlage (Ivanovka) (81) founded 1867, Steinbach (Kusmitzkoje) (75), other side of the Busuluk. Heuboden and Ebenfeld send their children to school in the neighbouring villages which all possess their own schools. The so-called Seifertsland borders on Borosenko but belongs to the Vollost Tschertomlike (Province Ekatherinoslav).

### "Vollost Nataljew"

Includes the Mennonite villages of Neu-Schönwiese (Dmirowka) (117) founded 1867, Grünhoffenthal (29), Eigenfeld (49), Ebenberg and Andreasfeld (49). machine industry. The latter is the seat of the Einlage Mennoniten-Brüdergemeine (Note), together the five villages encompass 3800 desjatein land. Schönwiese, Neu-Schönwiese and Andreasfeld have their own village schools. Note: The members of the Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinen were usually referred to as the "Separatists". In existence since 1854, they have no church fellowship with the Mennonitengemeinen; they hold one covenant amongst themselves,

### "Vollost Laschkarew"

The village of Friedensfeld (Miropol) (116) belongs to the Vollost Laschkarew, founded in 1868, with 950 desjatein of land and village school with 55 students. The seat of the Friedensfeld Mennonten-Brüdergemeine.

## Hostage taking, Belize

Menno Penner, age 42, formerly from the Kleine Gemeinde Mennonite Settlement of Spanish Lookout, Belize was taken hostage on March 17, 1999, apparently by the guerrilla group known as "American Battalion for the Poor" or BAP for short. The guerrillas announced that they kidnapped Penner because he "is a Mennonite, a landowner, a businessman, and a professional colonizer."

Local officials believe that the guerrilla group has targeted the Mennonites because they do not arm themselves for self-defense as other people do.

The hostage takers have demanded \$1,000,000 U.S. in ransom. They have threatened to kill Penner if the sum is not paid. Penner was taken hostage along with some of his employees who were later released.

In a statement transmitted by tape on March 21, Penner stated that his "possessions were of no value to him and that his ransom should be paid."

It is believed that Penner may still be alive.

Penner and his wife Tina opened a room in their home for a newly founded outreach church in Belmopan in 1992.

Penner had renounced the Kleine Gemeinde church at Spanish Lookout, Belize, several years earlier to join a group known as the "Local Church", a Fundamentalist sect with roots in Taiwan or China. The group has very loud worship services with many people shouting and yelling at the same time, reminiscent, perhaps, of the Toronto airport revival church, reflecting the belief that God has poor hearing.

The Penners have four young children.

# "Big Bucks in our Colonies"

**"Big Bucks in our Colonies: Hutterites Major Part of Economic Power Plant," by Geoff Kirbyson, Free Press, August 28, 1999.**

Milltown Colony - They may be one of the best-kept secrets in the Manitoba economy.

When people gather around the province's water coolers to discuss Manitoba's growth in recent years, the talk often centres around the burgeoning manufacturing and high-tec sectors, or perhaps around such high profile operations as the McCain Foods potato-processing plant in Portage la Prairie or the Maple Leaf hog-processing plant in Brandon.

But rarely is anyone likely to mention perhaps the most under-rated economic driver of them all-the contribution of Manitoba's Hutterite colonies.

There are approximately 100 such farm-based communities in southern Manitoba. They employ some 10,000 people and, through their many business ventures, inject several hundred million dollars into the provincial economy each year.

One of the more prosperous is the Milltown colony, located just off the Trans-Canada Highway about 10 kilometres west of Elie. Its 74 people, comprising 16 families, generate annual revenue of approximately \$4 million from the sale of hogs, chickens and grain, and products such as pumps for the petroleum industry, which are made on site in the colony's metal shop.

With the exception of a few of the elderly, everybody works in the colony's patriarchal society. The men toil in the metal, electrical or carpentry shops, the colony's garages or in its three chicken barns. The women plant, hoe and pick vegetables in the garden, prepare the food, make the clothes and look after the children.

But no one receives a pay cheque or has money deposited directly into their bank accounts. Rather, they all share one chequing account at a Winnipeg bank. In return for their labour, they receive food, shelter and clothing-the same basic demands of all Manitobans, said Tom Waldner, the colony's metal shop manager.

"Whenever you're hungry, you can eat. Judging by the size of some of us, you can see there's lots of food", he said, patting his belly. "As a group, we provide for one another."

They also provide some \$500,00 annually to Elie businesses through the purchase of tractors, fuel and fertilizer. Waldner said virtually every dollar of revenue brought in by the colony is spent within the province or churned back into the colony in one form or other.

Much of what is produced goes to sustaining the colony year-round, so a percentage of the summer's corn, tomatoes, cantaloups, strawberries and raspberries is canned and stored until winter. The excess is either taken into Winnipeg and sold or is given away to local food banks.

But don't let the focus on farming mislead you. Technology has arrived in Milltown. computers sit on the desks of every shop manager, the most up-to-date combines churn through the fields, and machines, such as the ones that can pluck a chicken in a few seconds flat, are in constant use.

But despite their success, some Hutterites feel they are often looked upon as a circus sideshow when they venture into town on shopping or business trips.

"People stare at us. We're dressed differently," said 22-year-old Julia Kleinsasser, who during yesterday's visit to the colony was wearing a homemade purple dress with a black

kerchief on her head. (She admits her Birkenstock sandals were purchased in Winnipeg.)

"We're used to it though," she added. "Everybody asks weird questions."

Many inquire whether they pay taxes (they do), and about the blood lines of married couples (the vast majority are inter-colony).

One of the main reasons for the increased acceptance of Hutterites was their work during the Flood of the Century in 1997. Every colony sent out teams of workers to help farmers prepare for the devastation and to throw a few thousand sandbags around. They didn't even know most of those they helped.



Darryl Waldner (left) and Joseph Kleinsasser do some work in Milltown's metal shop. Photos by Fred Greenslade, Winnipeg Free Press.



Ivan Kleinsasser, age 12, cleans some eggs.



Susanna Waldner, Julie Kleinsasser and Cecelia Waldner ride Milltown's mule.

## Appointment of Director

At its meeting of November 18, 1999, Irene Kroeker, Steinbach, was officially received as a member of the board of directors to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Lois Loeppky, Steinbach. We thank Lois for her years of service to the board and wish her well in her future endeavours.

Irene Kroeker has previously served on the HSHS board from 1992 to 1997, and as the third President of the HSHS for the 1995 term. She was not only our first woman President but also the first of Chortitzer background, see *Preservings*, No. 12, page 18.

Irene has done extensive research on the village of Blumengard and pioneer diaries, writing a number of articles for *Preservings* and other journals. She resides in Steinbach with husband John Kroeker and has two children. She is a school teacher in Mitchell.



Irene Kroeker

### ATTENTION - Family Historians and Genealogists:

There is still room for a few more exhibitors at "Family History Day 2000." 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, Towner, Manitoba, R0A 2G0

### John Warkentin's Thesis, 1959.

At a board meeting held on November 18, 1999, the directors of the HSHS enacted a resolution to publish the "Mennonites in Southern Manitoba," doctoral thesis, of Dr. John Warkentin, Professor Emeritus, York University, Toronto, Ontario.

Dr. Royden K. Loewen was appointed as editor in charge of the publication which is expected to be completed early in the New Year.

The decision to publish Dr. Warkentin's thesis was intended as a special tribute in commemoration of the 125th anniversary of the settlement of the East Reserve, Hanover Steinbach, 1874-1999, as well as the founding of the Mennonite community of Western Canada.

## Shakespeare in Plaut-Dietsch

A treat for those who think Low-German/Plaut-Dietsch represented a culture and spirituality of lesser worth, Shakespeare in Plaut-Dietsch, by Rueben Epp, Chilliwack, B.C., one of our premier linguists.

"I think the publication of my Plautdietsch Shakespeare would enhance the image and credibility of Plautdietsch among its speakers. In many families and circles it needs such a lift. I have received unsolicited compliments on the work from three former Mennonite professors of languages in Canada, and from three scholars in Germany," Rueben Epp, e-mail September 25, 1999.

### William Shakespeare: Sonnet No. 116

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds Admit impediments, love is not love Which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove. O no, it is an ever-fixed mark That looks on tempests and is never shaken; It is the star to every wand'ring bark, Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken. Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks within his bending sickle's compass come, love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, but bears it out even to the edge of doom: If this be error and upon me proved, I never writ, nor no man ever loved."

William Shakespeare: Sonnet No. 116 (Opp Plautdietsch omjeschrawe von Reuben Epp – 1999)

"Lot mi nich de Eenigkjeit von true Seele  
met hindanisse ploage, Leew es nich Leew  
Dee andre deit wan se Andrungsvaafal fingt,  
Oda biebiggt wan een Nahma ahr waignahme well.

"O na, Leew blifft een fausta Teakjen  
Dee Stormwind aunkjikt, doc nie jescheddat woot;  
Leew es een Stearn fe'jeda Waundaschepp,  
Von onbekauda Weat, wan uk en Hecht bemäte.

"Leew lat sikj von Tiet nich noare, wan roode Leppe un Backe  
Uk en sien Sichelschwaut jenohme woare,  
Leew lat nich noh en siene korte Waakj un Stund,  
Oba halt aules ut bat aum eewje Enj.

"Wan me dit aus faulsch bewase woot,  
Hab ekj nich jeschrawe, un Mensch nie Leew erlawt."  
Aulet Baste "Rueben Epp"

### About the Author:

Rueben Epp lives in Kelowna, B.C.. He is the author of the best selling series, *The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch*, *The Spelling of Low German and Plautdietsch*, and now, the recently published *Dit un Jant*, see book review section for a review by Wilmer Penner.



The translator of Shakespeare's Sonnet 116, Rueben Epp, Kelowna, B.C.. Photo courtesy of The Story of Low German and Plautdietsch, back cover.

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society  
**Genealogy and Family History Day**  
**March 4, 2000**

The Annual Genealogy and Family History Day sponsored by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society

**DATE: Saturday, March 4, 2000**

**PLACE: Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach**

## **Agenda**

**10:00 a.m.:** Opening remarks and welcome, HSHS President Orlando Hiebert.

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

**12:00 a.m.:** - A traditional Mennonite lunch of soup and pastries available, served by the Auxiliary.

### **SYMPOSIUM**

- **Morning Session 11:00 a.m.** Richard Thiessen, "Genealogy, Computers and Internet"; Alf Redekopp, "Resources and Russian Archives"; and Ernest Braun, "Gnadenfeld, an example of village research";

- **Afternoon Session 1:00 p.m.** Randy Kehler, "Chortitzer CD-ROM, research made easy"; Henry Fast, "Pioneer Newspapers as primary sources; Edith Friesen, "Writing your grandparents biography"; Lynette Plett, "Interviewing".

**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.



Randy Kehler demonstrates the ease with which any Chortitzer family can be traced from 1874 to the 1930s using the new Chortitzer CD-ROM.



Alfred Redekopp (left) Interim Director, Mennonite Heritage Centre, and Richard Thiessen, Librarian Concord College, will again do their popular presentations covering computers, internet and Russian Archives. Photos from Preservings, No. 14, page 48.

# Articles

## Gnadenfeld - The Funk Clan

**Gnadenfeld, East Reserve, A Study of Two Families: Part Two - The Funk Clan**  
**by Ernest Braun, Box 595, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0.**

*Synopsis of Part One: Gnadenfeld was settled by two groups of pioneers, one from the Old Colony and one from the Bergthal Colony. The former consisted of four Esau sisters and their families; the latter of six Funk siblings and their extended families. Part One followed the fortunes of the four Esau sisters and their descendants, most of whom went to the West Reserve, a few to Paraguay. (See June, 1999 Preservings No. 14, pages 69-76.) Part Two will track the second group of pioneers, the Funks, who intermarried with the Brauns of the village, generating thousands of descendants both in the East Reserve and in Paraguay. My interest in this village derives from the fact that my father was a descendant of the Braun line, and my mother of the Funk line, both of this village.*

### Introduction to Part Two.

The East Reserve village of Gnadenfeld lay somewhat at an angle along the line between Sections 30 and 19 of Township 5 - Range 5 East, about two miles slightly northwest of Grunthal (see map published with Part One of Gnadenfeld article in *Preservings*, No. 14, page 69). The village street probably followed the south side of Sarto Creek, and the territory belonging to it included the south half of Section 31, all of Sections 30,19 and 20, and the west half and southeast quarter of Section 18. Several people still recall that "street" running south of the Peters, Sawatzky, and Toews yards although by the 1920s there was a newer municipal road drawn to the north of those farmsteads.

The life of Gnadenfeld, East Reserve, begins and ends with a specific date. Many of the major stakeholders in this community entered their intention to homestead in the Township General Register on August 11, 1875, and most canceled their fire insurance on December 20, 1926, in preparation for emigration. With that emigration, the cohesiveness that marked the village disappeared as Russian Mennonite refugees from many different colonies converged upon the area as the farms became available. The life of the original village spanned just over fifty-one years, within those years encompassing both pioneer privation and comfortable prosperity. Although one pre-emigration grain bin survives in the village today, the last major landmark, the huge Braun barn, was reduced to a pile of tamarack beams this summer.

Although the following material runs the risk of becoming a litany of "begats", it will present data useful to those personally interested in the families themselves or to others wishing to study objectively the demographics of a place over time. Gnadenfeld is also perhaps somewhat unusual in that its population falls into two eras that have almost no overlap at all, for in 1926 one left and another arrived.

### The Funks.

As is the case for the first "founding" family, Wilhelm and Elisabeth Esau, the other "founding" family never settled in Gnadenfeld at all. In fact, both the husband and the wife,

Peter and Helena (Schroeder) Funk, died in Russia without ever hearing about the place. However, six children of their children settled here, as did three grandchildren.

Various sources for a village roster exist: the Brotschuld records of the late 1870s, the fire insurance records, the 1881 Federal Cen-

photograph of the protagonists. For ease of reference, the order of families will be alphabetical.

*SW18-5-5E*

**Jacob (Dyck) Braun (1826-1919)**

**Katherina (Schroeder) Funk (1827-1920)**

Katherina Funk, daughter of Peter and Helena Funk of Kronthal, Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia, was the oldest of the six Funk siblings who pioneered in Gnadenfeld, E.R. Peter Funk's roots were in Kronsweide, his forbears, Johann and Anna Funk, having immigrated to Russia from Lithuania.

Jacob Braun was the only son of Peter and Anna Braun also of Kronthal. Peter Braun's family roots can be traced back to Khortitz, where his parents settled after emigrating from Lackendorf, West Prussia. Considerable background information about Jacob Braun (Sr) has already been published in *Preservings* No. 11, page 61-63; he was my great-great-grandfather on my father's side.

Jacob and Katherina Braun arrived in Quebec on July 27, 1875 aboard the "S. S. Manitoban" and took the usual Great Lakes/Duluth/Moorehead route to Manitoba, where they wintered in Schoensee, ER. They had already pioneered in Friedrichsthal, Bergthal Colony in 1853, but in 1876 homesteaded again in a new land, filing on SW 18-5-5 but building their farmyard right in the heart of Gnadenfeld at the northwest corner of NE 19.

The Homestead Files indicate that the Brauns built both the original house (24 x 38 feet) and the barn (28 x 37 feet) in the village in 1876, and that they took up residence by August of that year. By 1883, their estate was insured for \$1200, including a house valued at 640 dollars, furniture at 400, a shed at 100, in addition to various farm implements and a half-share in a threshing machine. From later information I have speculated that this "house" was a house barn, and that this house barn continued to play a role in the development of Gnadenfeld even after it was replaced by more modern buildings. The barn that most people remember as standing on that property was likely the one insured by Abram F. Braun in 1897 for \$300, built in the traditional post and beam fashion, with huge beams pegged into place and the date chiseled on the main ex-



*Jacob Sr. and Katherina (Funk) Braun, circa 1912. This is the only known photograph of this couple who started a family now numbering over 10,000 descendants. Photo courtesy of Peter N. Giesbrecht, Kleefeld. See also Grunthal History, page 40.*

sus list, the original Township General Register, and the 1882/3 Seelenliste compiled by the Municipality of Hanover. Generally the same names appear in each, with a gradual erosion of families during the early 1880s. By 1926, every family in the village was either a Braun or a Funk, or failing that, married to one.

For each family named in the earliest list available (the Brotschuld), I will provide information on ancestry, location of homestead and erection of buildings, subsequent changes of ownership of the land, and if possible a

posed beam in styled calligraphy. I have been unable to find a person who remembers that date with any certainty.

In a sense, Jacob Braun Sr. was the patriarch of the village, being the oldest and wealthiest, with a married daughter and three adult sons who each took a farmstead in the village within twelve years of his arrival. The central location of his yard was perhaps also symbolic of the place he held in the internal economy of Gnadenfeld. When Prediger Jacob Wiens from the West Reserve arrived in 1883 to minister to the area for a few days, it was at the Braun place that he stayed. Much of the correspondence involved in obtaining naturalization papers and homestead patents for the settlers in this village seems to be routed through his address in Hochstadt.

By the early 1880s he owned half shares in the first threshing machine in Gnadenfeld and farmed more land than anybody else in the village except his brother-in-law Peter Funk. His tax assessment was double the average for the region and fourth highest in the entire East Reserve in 1883. The Confessional German School stood on his property from 1883 to 1926 when it was purchased by Abram Giesbrecht and moved across the road to serve many years as a porch for the Wiens family later, and still later as a tool shed until about 1996.

Part of Jacob and Katherina's influence was, of course, due to the fact that their children married and settled in the same village, and in this way dominated the village demographically. By 1880 Jacob Jr. was married, building a house and barn to prove up on his homestead application, and in the 1890s both a large new barn and house (post and beam style) right next door to his father's place. By 1882 son Johan likely occupied a separate dwelling with his new family, and by 1887 son Abram was married as well and became independent, although whether that at first meant managing his retired father's operation or his own is not clear. The oldest daughter, Helena, who had married Jacob Harder in Russia, also lived in the village. A cluster of Brauns developed in the community over the next two generations (hence the term "Gnadenfeld Brauns") until by 1926 middle initials were mandatory when speaking about a Braun from this area.

The village itself also underwent change as conditions in the New World proved hostile to the open field system brought from Russia. According to the Abstract from the Land Titles Office, in the spring of 1886 the village system was sufficiently weakened to have the registered owner of NE 19, Johan Funk, deed the most westerly 53.3 acres to Jacob Braun Sr. at \$4.25 per acre, thereby creating an independent parcel of land to accommodate legally the presence of another homestead on the same quarter as the original title holder. This seems to be the first sign of the disintegration of the village, and was an attempt to deal with the awkwardness of having several farmyards situated on land belonging to another person.

In this way, the Hamlet Privilege, which permitted the Mennonites to live in villages



*Farmyard of Jacob Braun Sr. in the heart of Gnadenfeld, circa 1926. View from the east. The second barn in the background belongs to son J. F. Braun. The farm later belonged to Abram F. Braun, see Grunthal History, page 54. Photo courtesy of Eva Krause, Niverville.*



*Abraham B. Giesbrecht at the farmyard of Jacob Braun Jr. in Gnadenfeld in the 1980s. He was the author of the book Erste Mennonistischen Einwanderer in Paraguay. Photo courtesy Abram B. Giesbrecht, Paraguay.*

instead of on their homesteads, created problems for them in that transfer of ownership of buildings located in the village had no legal basis; hence the fragmentation of this quarter section into smaller pieces. In 1903 this smaller parcel was further subdivided to allow an eight-acre lot to be sold to Jacob's son Abram F. Braun and then broken into two parts, one for the old home place and one for a sliver of land (less than one acre) for Jacob's son, Jacob F. Braun (Jr.), who had built his yard immediately to the west of his father's. The remaining 45 1/3 acre plot was sold to him as well. By this time the land sold for \$18.50 per acre.

On a note of interest, the Gnadenfeld School (Mennonite) was also located just south and west of Abram Braun's buildings in downtown Gnadenfeld. This building had been constructed in 1883 (insured for \$400.00) and was used right up to the months preceding emigration. In 1926 the building was sold to Abram Giesbrecht, who attached it to his new house as a porch. Years later, the Wiens family detached it, refurbished it with a fourth wall and used it as a tool shed until about 1996.

Having left all his affairs in the hands of his various sons, in 1915 Jacob Sr. retired to live with his son Johan, a prominent businessman in Grunthal, where he died at the age of 94 in 1919. Katherina (Funk) Braun died there as well in 1920. Ironically, the Homestead Act notwithstanding, there is no evidence that Jacob Braun (Sr) ever built any buildings on his homestead SW 18 at all. In fact, there are no build-

ings there today. By the late 1880s, Jacob Braun's sons Jacob and Johan acquired most of Johann Loewen's NW 18 as well, a quarter which originally belonged to the village of Bergfeld where Johann Loewen lived. Again, no buildings were erected by either of the two owners.

Much later, just before the emigration, a farmstead of sorts was developed there by Jacob J. Braun, son of Jacob F. Braun. He had married into a Falk family of Bergfeld and established a prosperous farm in that village, just a few miles south of Gnadenfeld and across Joubert Creek. When in 1924 the entire village was sold, the Braun family moved to the "old Rempel place" (I am not certain which place is referred to here) for a few months, and then



*House barn on homestead SW 20. May have been moved here from Abram F. Braun, NE 19. This photograph is dated "June 22, 1935" and labeled, "Here we are busily engaged in the renovations, stuccoing." The house was rebuilt and enlarged by Ben W. Funk in 1935. Photo courtesy of Cornelia Braun, Steinbach.*



*Johan and Helena (Abrams) Braun, circa 1912. Johan was the premier entrepreneur of the larger Grunthal area at the turn of the century. The lady to the left is Helena's mother Maria Abrams. This photograph has previously been published in Reflections, page 326, and Preservings, No. 8, Part One, page 44, but never as a complete picture including Maria Abrams. Photo courtesy of Maria Dyck (Peter), Grunthal.*

returned to Gnadenfeld to build a new house and barn just south of the road allowance between SW 19 and NW 18 at the point where the road ended on the east escarpment of Joubert Creek, a lovely setting even today.

His father, Jacob F. Braun, owned most of NW 18 at that time and so the new yard was developed on property owned by the family in 1925. The new house was built for temporary use only. Accordingly, the walls consisted of uprights filled with poplar firewood and plastered with a clay. Family tradition has Katherina (Falk) Braun doing most of the plaster finishing while her husband handled the emigration matters. A barn of similar quality (basically a three-walled shed) housing a few animals and a large garden supplemented by the marketing of seneca roots provided for their survival, and so the family lived for over a year until the departure for South America on November 24, 1926. This farmstead was one of three such temporary yards created in Gnadenfeld as a result of the dislocation occasioned by the delay in the emigration process.

This house on NW 18 was then occupied by a Janzen family that emigrated from Russia, but since the mother was detained in Britain for health reasons, only the husband and the children lived here, putting in time until they could be reunited. Later, widow Heinrich Enns and her family lived here for a while after her husband was killed in a farm accident. There may have been other renters who lived here before the buildings were

eventually demolished by Peter A. Thiessen who purchased the land in 1932. The Thiessens sold both SW 19 and NW 18 to Peter Klassen in the mid 1950's. Since 1985 the farm has been operated by Fritz Reutter and his family who moved here from Germany.

The Braun's village assets changed hands in August of 1925 when both Abraham and



*Jacob and Agatha (Thiessen) Funk. Photo courtesy of House of Funks family Tree book, page 3.*

Jacob Braun (Jr.) retired as well, selling their respective parcels of land and buildings in the heart of Gnadenfeld to "Peter F. Braun et al" which seems to have included Johan F. Braun (the youngest two sons of Jacob Braun Jr.). Another flurry of activity occurred in the fall of 1926 when a series of transactions left the Intercontinental Company Ltd in possession

of the whole 53 acres, which they turned over to National Trust on the same day. The land had been exchanged for land owned by the same company in the Gran Chaco in Paraguay. The entire Jacob Braun family left for South America in November, 1926. The tenure of the Gnadenfeld Brauns had expired.

National Trust sold the Abram Braun yard (the old home place - about 7 acres) with its buildings to Wilhelm Sawatzky who had recently come from the village of Steinfeld in Russia. He also acquired the other parcels of land owned by Abram Braun. From the 104 acres across the creek (SE 30) he moved the last bin from what may have been the Jacob J. R. Funk place. It seems that the Funk house had been sold and moved off the property before the new wave of immigrants settled in. At that time, the Sawatzky family cleaned up the remaining foundation stones that were still in evidence.

Later, son Willie Sawatzky took over the farm until he moved to B. C., when the yard stood empty for a while until Jacob N. Friesen acquired it in 1966. He demolished the barn in 1973, carefully saving the beam with the traditional inscription carved into it: Bauherr - J. Braun; Baumeister - J. Funk and the date. When he sold the farm yard, he left the engraved board there as a permanent memento, but the next owners unfortunately disposed of it as having no value to them. Since that time the place has changed hands many times, and suffered fire and foreclosure. Today no original building remains of the once proud Braun homestead, although a few old maple trees survive. The present owner is Roger Friesen.

#### SW20-5-5E

*Jacob (Jr.) (Funk) Braun (1853-1941)*

**Maria (Krahn) Funk(1859-1930)**

Both Jacob and Maria were single when they arrived in Manitoba and would have known each other even in Russia, for they were first cousins. Maria Funk arrived with her parents, Peter and Maria Funk with the first Bergthaler group in July of 1874, a full year before Jacob came with his parents (Jacob Sr) on the "Manitoban" in July of 1875. Family lore has it that in the very early years, Maria worked as a maid in Winnipeg (incidentally learning to speak English) and here Jacob came to court her, commuting on foot.

In 1878 they married, and lived with Jacob's parents until May of 1880, when he entered the Township Register as homesteading on SW20-5-5E. The information on the Application for Homestead Patent which he filed on Hallowe'en 1884 claims that he began living in Gnadenfeld in March, 1876, which is five months earlier than his parents who arrived in the village in August. An interpretation could be that as a single man, he would have been

free to live in more primitive circumstances on site while the first buildings were being erected.

Although there is no evidence that Jacob Braun Jr. ever lived on his home quarter, memory of the yard of SW 20 does recall a house barn of the old style, with heavy broad-axed beams, a thatched roof, and the house and barn as one continuous unit situated there. The barn was somewhat small, accommodating only a couple of horses and half a dozen cows, and the house likewise sturdy but old and cramped. According to Anna (Falk) Harder, that building had originally stood on the south part of Abram F. Braun's yard where it was referred to as the sheep shed, a status it was probably relegated to after the construction of a newer barn in the 1890s. This house barn may well have been one of the original buildings erected by Jacob Braun Sr. in 1876.

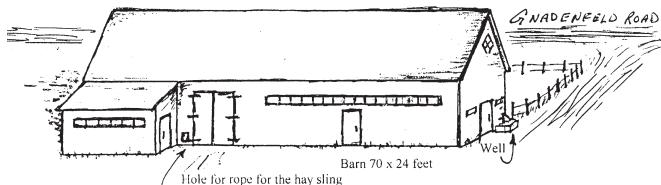
In the early 1920s during the school crisis, it was renovated to house the Peter A. Falk family who had moved back to the parents-in-law before establishing their own temporary farmstead at the extreme west end of the village on NW 19. A year or so later the building was dragged southeast through the bush to SW20-5-5E by son-in-law Cornelius R. Funk who had married Maria D. Braun. At that point there was no yard on that quarter, but since the intent was merely to live there until emigration to South America, a clearing was hacked out of the brush in a low lying area next to the Johan R. Funk yard on SE 19 and a new yard established. This was the third such provisional farmstead created between 1924 and 1926.

Although the land to which the farmstead belonged was assessed to Jacob Braun Jr. right up to 1926, the buildings were occupied at least in 1925-6 by Cornelius R. Funk, grandson of Peter S. Funk of Gnadenfeld. In a classic and perhaps representative blending of Gnadenfeld families, Cornelius had married Maria Braun, daughter of Abram Braun (NE 19). In the years before the emigration, Cornelius was the teacher in the Gnadenfeld Mennonite school.

After the departure of the Funks for South America in January of 1927, this farm was occupied by Ludwig Schoeppel and family, emigrants from Prussia, who were directed to the place by Peter A. Braun, land agent for Colonization Board. Local lore claims that the Schoeppel family wanted to purchase the place, but the Board would not allow it, so they moved to western Manitoba in 1929 and then later to Fleming, Saskatchewan. By 1935 when Ben W. Funk purchased it for \$800 and enlarged the house, the buildings were dilapidated, requiring wholesale retrofitting. Ben Funk, who moved back from Main Centre, Saskatchewan, was a grandson of Peter S. Funk and a cousin once removed to Jacob Braun who originally homesteaded this quarter. In Saskatchewan Ben Funk had been a regular correspondent to the *Steinbach Post*, and continued writing when he moved here, always

heading his column "Gnadenfeld bei Grunthal".

Upon his death in 1943, his wife, Katherina Funk, sold the south eighty acres and yard to Jacob Fehr, whereupon she moved to Grunthal. The north eighty acres she sold to her son-in-



*Sketch of the old barn on Bruno Hamm yard by Walter F. Braun, Sinclair. This barn was reputedly moved here from Grunthal where it was built by Johan Braun in 1896 and burned down from lightning in 1937?*

law Otto Hamm and that parcel became part of his farm on NW 20. In 1950 the yard with the south eighty acres were purchased by Heinrich Voth, who lived there with his family until the fall of 1959, when his son-in-law Peter (and Tina) Wiebe took over. Sometime in the mid-1960s Bill Braun acquired the place, leveled the old house-barn and cleared the remaining bush on the eighty to reveal some excellent land, vindicating Jacob Braun's judgement almost one hundred years earlier.

For a photograph of Jakob F. Braun Jr. and Maria Braun, see *Grunthal History*, page 55, and *Preservings*, No. 11, page 61. The story of Jakob Braun Sr. (1826-1919) is told in *Braun: A Gnadenfeld Heritage* (Steinbach, 1999), 436 pages.

#### *SW19-5-5E - later Grunthal*

**Johann (Funk) Braun (1857-1927)**

**Helena (Sawatzky) Abrams (1861-1919)**

Johan arrived with his parents as an eighteen-year-old in 1875, living with them until perhaps a year after marrying Helena Abrams in 1880. Helena (born May 18, 1861) was the daughter of Johan and Maria (Sawatzky) Abrams of Friedrichsthal, near present-day Kleefeld. Johan Abrams, who arrived in 1875 on the same ship as the Brauns, had been a school teacher in Schoenfeld, Bergthal Colony (BGB p. 33), and is listed in the Bergthal Census of 1850 as resident there (*Preservings* No. 13, p. 57).

The earliest land registered in Johan Braun's name is SW 19 which he purchased directly



*House built by Kornelius S. Martens in 1911 on what later became the Peter K. Toews farm. Date of photo, 1960. Photo courtesy of Frank N. Wiens.*

from Wilhelm Hiebert in June of 1881 for \$190.00, although there is no evidence that he ever established a farmstead there. Since by 1882 several of the original pioneers had left the village, there will have been other homes available for the new couple to occupy. By 1889 his name appears in partnership with his brothers and his father on three more quarters of land, and in 1892 he moved to Grunthal, having purchased the store from "Dr." Peters. In July 1892 he mortgaged SW 19 for \$800, and in September for another \$1150.00, presumably to finance the purchase of the business. This story has been recorded in *Grunthal History*, pages 34-35, *Reflections on Our Heritage*, page 326, and in *Preservings*, No. 8, Part One, pages 44-45, and No. 10, Part One, page 53, and does not have to be rehearsed here. In 1896 Johan homesteaded NW 22 as well.

In October of 1909 Johan Braun sold SW 19 to his son Jacob A. Braun for \$1200.00, and upon the latter's death in 1925, the farm came under his wife's name, Aganetha Braun.



*Peter S. Funk and Maria (Krahn) Funk. Composite photo of the late 19th century. Photo courtesy of Peter N. Giesbrecht, Kleefeld. Also published in Grunthal History, page 57, although incorrectly labeled as "the John Funks." Peter and Maria were the parents of Peter K. "Berliner" Funk, see Preservings, No. 12, pages 84-86.*



*Peter K. ("Berliner") and Helena (Wiebe) Funk with unknown grandchild. This family moved away from Gnadenfeld in 1884, but his son Ben W. Funk returned to SW20 in the 1930s. Photo courtesy of Ernest Braun, Niverville.*



Jacob and Helena (Braun) Harder, circa 1925. This family later moved to Bergthal in 1889. Photo courtesy of Ernest Braun, Niverville.

She married widower Peter Harder who then sold the land to the Intercontinental Company Ltd. (See *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 75-76, **Wilhelm Hiebert**.) This is the quarter later occupied by Heinrich Enns (?) and then his son-in-law, Jacob Rempel, before being purchased by Peter A. Thiessen in 1932.

By 1911 the store (later Gerstein's) had been sold, and various other enterprises, including the cheese factory and post office, begun on his farmstead just south of the old Chortitzer church along the former main street. In 1911 the Grunthal Milling Company was established with Johan Braun as a major shareholder and Bruno Hamm, a recent immigrant from Germany, hired as miller. In 1912 Bruno Hamm

married Katherina, the daughter of his employer, Johan Braun, and built a house barn in Grunthal near the new mill. A unique feature of this house was that the walls were built of 2 x 6's nailed one on the other. In 1915, Johan Braun traded properties with his new son-in-law, and Bruno Hamm had the house with attached post office (and the barn?) moved from Grunthal to a yard at the extreme east end of Gnadenfeld on NW 20, but north of the creek. See details of that farmstead under **Jacob Funk, NW 20**.

A well-known scion of Johan and Helena Braun is Peter A. Braun, widely remembered for his cartage business and later other enterprises, see *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 83-85. Although he and his sister Anna (Jacob Funk) did not leave for South America, his brother Abram A. Braun was a moving spirit behind the emigration to Paraguay.

**Franz Ens (May 28, 1845 - 1901) (der Grosse?)  
Justina Unger (June 3, 1847 - ?)**

There are only three Franz Ens's listed in the *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch*, and all three appear in the Gnadenfeld Brotschuld list. One is Franz the husband of Maria Esau (designated as "kleine"?), another is Franz the son of Peter Ens, husband of Maria Harder, and the third is Franz the husband of Justina Unger. The first Franz is discussed in detail in Part I of the article (June 1999); the name of the second Franz is stroked out in the Gnadenfeld list without any itemizing of debts incurred, suggesting that his sojourn there was of short duration. Yet the family does connect to the grid of kinship, for his wife Maria Harder was the sister to Peter Harder also of Gnadenfeld, whose wife, Margaretha Krahn, was in turn the sister to Maria Krahn, the wife of Peter Funk Jr. However, by 1880 this Franz Ens appears in Kronsgard, having homesteaded on SE10-5-SE.

The entry in the Brotschuld for the remaining Franz Ens is problematic, for although the ship lists clearly document his arrival in summer of 1876, the Brotschuld entries have him incurring various debts for cloth and flour etc. in Manitoba as early as April 1, 1875. His is also the only family with no apparent kinship ties to Gnadenfeld, and does not appear to have entered the Township Register for the East Reserve at all, certainly not for this area. Where exactly the family lived during the short time on the East Reserve can no longer be ascertained. Not surprisingly, by 1880 the family has already moved to the West Reserve. Perhaps the fact that the family emigrated from Osterwick, Khortitzia serves as a plausible connection to Gnadenfeld, for the Esau sisters came from there as well. In the 1880 Federal Census, the Ens family is listed in Eichenfeld, a village south of Morden and about three miles from the International Boundary. They lived there until some time after 1901, when Franz died. Later, according to John Dyck, they moved "west". (See John Dyck's *1880 Village Census of the West Reserve*, p. 171.)

SE19-5-SE

**Abraham (Schroeder) Funk (Jan. 21, 1844-Oct. 1, 1916)**

**Anganetha (Kroeker) Klassen (July 27, 1849 - )**

Abraham S. Funk, the youngest of the four sons of Peter and Helena Funk of Schoenfeld, arrived in Quebec aboard the "S. S. Sarmatian" on July 6, 1875, the same vessel as his mother-in-law. His wife, Anganetha Klassen, was the daughter of Jacob Klassen and his second wife, widow Herman Peters, nee Justina Kroeker. It appears that the Klassen family emigrated from the village of Heuboden, where Jacob Klassen, ("son of Erhard") is listed in the 1858 Bergthal Census. Justina Kroeker is listed in the **BGB** as coming from Neuhorst, a younger village in the Old Colony. I have not been able to trace Herman Peters, Justina's first husband, although presumably his background is Old Colony, since the **BGB** does not even give his first name.

Abraham and Anganetha Funk were one of the six entries in the Township General Register dated August 11, 1875, filing on SE19-5-SE. The first permanent house (20 x 27 feet) was built in the summer of 1877, and the first barn (22 x 32 feet) was erected in 1882 according to the Application for Homestead Patent affirmed in February of 1885, which allows no other interpretation other than that these buildings stood in the village proper. In April, 1885 Abraham insured a new barn for \$100 and in July of 1888 a new house for \$300. These latter two buildings were probably likewise situated on the village lot, for another new barn is insured in fall of 1896 for \$200 (and the old one canceled completely).

The "new" barn may well have been the one on the home quarter (SE 19). All policies in the name of Abraham Funk were canceled in 1910. By 1912 Hanover Assessment Rolls list nephew Jacob K. Funk as owner. Jacob K. Funk died on January 30, 1916, leaving his



Jacob and Helena (Kehler) Klassen, a composite first published in Grunthal History, page 58. Touchup by Rudolf Klassen Photography, Niverville, a great, great grandson.

son John R. Funk (the teacher in the Gnadenfeld school) to take over the farm. By 1926 he and his brother Franz R. Funk each owned eighty acres of the quarter. All insurance was canceled as of December 20, 1926 when the Funks emigrated to South America, having sold their land in trust to the Intercontinental Company. No record of the occupants during next two years has survived.

In the spring of 1929, Johan F. Warkentin, son of Franz Warkentin who emigrated from Steinfeld after the famine in Russia, bought the farm from National Trust through agent Jacob Rempel. Although over 100 acres were cleared and arable, the buildings were in dilapidated condition. On site were a single storey house of three rooms and a similarly sorry structure that served as a barn. The road was barely passable and the entire establishment neglected and rundown. In February of 1933 a buzz saw accident deprived him of the use of his left hand, and the land was sold again. During that year Johan Warkentin opened a second-hand store (on old Main Street in Gerstein's store) in Grunthal and worked in the Post Office. Later he became Postmaster and became an institution in that capacity.

The farm was later acquired by Heinrich Unger Sr. (originally from Orenburg), who rented it out to a series of recent immigrants: Cornelius Falk (1936 or 7 or 8 — at least one winter) who emigrated from Schoeneberg in the Khortitza region in 1928, and who moved to Rosengard later, David Bartels (from Grigorievka, earlier Kronsweide), and the owner's son, Cornelius Unger. Eventually Jacob Neufeld, manager of the Grunthal Coop, acquired both yard and land in 1946, demolishing the house in 1947 to erect a new one. Some time after the mid-1960s, the H. Wiebe family of Gnadenfeld purchased the land. Charles and Doris Wiens now reside on the old yard, having just built a new house.

*NW20-5-5E  
Jacob (Schroeder) Funk  
(Apr.30,1841-Jan.14,1906)  
Agatha (Rempel) Thiessen  
(Apr.11,1843 - )*

Jacob S. Funk, the third of four sons of Peter Funk of Schoenfeld, Bergthal Colony married Agatha Thiessen, daughter of Jacob Thiessen also of Bergthal, although originally of Schoenhorst and Osterwick, Khortitza Colony.

The settlers of Gnadenfeld seem to have arrived in seven-day increments. Jacob and Agatha Funk landed in Quebec on July 20, 1875, together with the families of his brother John and sister Anganetha Krahn with the third increment. Af-



*Farmstead of Jacob Klassen, 1965. For another older photograph of the Jakob Klassen yard on the road to St. Pierre, see Grunthal History, page 57. The buildings were demolished in 1973. Photo courtesy of George/Katie Rempel, Steinbach.*

ter taking the usual route by water, rail and river boat to the confluence of the Rat and the Red Rivers, Jacob and Agatha entered the Township Register for NW20-5-5E just two

actual residence in the village.

By 1879 a house was insured for \$100.00, with furniture valued at \$115.00. Although one can no longer be sure at this point, it seems

likely that these first buildings were built on the home quarter right from the start, since that would have been a natural continuation of the village. In June of 1882 they built a new house (\$150.00) and presumably relegated the old one to "Neben Haus" (summer kitchen?), still insured for \$100.00. No evidence of an insurable barn arises until October 1889 when a new barn is insured for \$100.00, and the house coverage increased to \$250.00. In 1902 another new house (\$350) was erected, and the old house canceled a year later.

Jacob S. Funk died in January of 1906, and in June of that year title to the farm was transferred to Agatha Funk (and her son Peter T. Funk) who sold it to son-in-law, Cornelius H. Wiebe, (who had married Anganetha Funk) in April of 1907 for \$1000.00. Just five years later, in January of 1915, the estate was sold to a recent immigrant, Bruno Hamm, for \$1405. The place had much to recommend it: it sat high on a knoll, with an artesian well and natural springs all around it as well as the creek winding through the south-west corner. The quality of the land compared favourably with that surrounding it.

Bruno Hamm (born 1886) had come to Canada in 1911 from Droeessen, Germany, becoming the miller in the new Grunthal Milling Company. He married Katherina A. Braun of Grunthal, and built a new house barn in the new part of town. At this point (1915), family tradition has Bruno Hamm exchanging



*1887. Johann and Anganetha (Funk) Krahn. Son Wilhelm on the photograph was born in 1878. This is one of our older East Reserve portraits. Grandson John Krahn, Grunthal, passed away in October of 1999. Photo courtesy of Katherina Krahn, Niverville. Also published in Grunthal History, page 39.*

weeks later on August 11, 1875. Other documentation suggests March 1876 as date of entry, although it is more likely to be the date of

his new house-barn in Grunthal with property owned by his father-in-law, Johan Braun, and moving the Braun house (and barn?) to



*Ben W. and Katherina (Funk) Funk, taken 1936. After over 30 years in Saskatchewan, this family returned to Gnadenfeld in 1935, ending up just over half a mile from the original homestead of his grandfather, Peter S. Funk. Photo courtesy of Ernest Braun, Niverville.*

Gnadenfeld. Since, according to the fire insurance records, a substantial house (built new in 1902 and valued at \$500 by the previous owner until 1914) was situated on the yard he purchased, this information cannot easily be reconciled: was existing house sold to a third party and moved? Johan Braun had built a new barn (on his yard on the east side of the old Main Street) in Grunthal in 1896. Might this one have been dragged to the farm in Gnadenfeld when they exchanged properties?

Among other things, Bruno Hamm is notable also as being the first in the village to own an automobile, a fact that prompted a snide remark in the *Steinbach Post* in 1916. He is one of only two Gnadenfeld families that did not emigrate in the 1920s. On a visit to his aging parents during WWII, he was trapped in Germany and spent seven years in Europe, working as forced labour until the end of the war when he fled through war-torn Poland eastward to Odessa, from where, in stages, he made his way home to Gnadenfeld: see *The Carillon News*, December 8, 1961.)

Son Otto Hamm formally acquired the quarter from his father in 1946, also purchasing an additional eighty acres on SW 20 from his mother-in-law in 1943, and eventually selling to Frank N. Wiens, whose son Frank lives



*Photo of the beam with calligraphic initials (SE 20 - 5 - 5 East) from Johann Krahn's barn. Beam in the possession of Dennis Krahn in Niverville, see Braun: A Gnadenfeld Heritage, page 27, for photograph showing how the beams on these pioneer barns were notched and pegged.*



*Closeup photo of the inscription of the builders, from Johann Krahn's barn. Top - a crown, middle - initials of the builders ("JR"), middle, and bottom - the year "1880". These inscriptions are reminiscent of inscriptions recently found on the beams of an abandoned windmill dating to 1792 in Neuhuben, Prussia (now Poland), a mark of ancient Mennonite traditions, see Preservings, no. 12, page 48. Photo by Ernest Braun, Niverville.*

there today. A well-known descendant of the Hamm family is Al Hamm of Steinbach, assistant manager of the Steinbach Credit Union.

*NE19-5-5E  
Johann (Schroeder) Funk (Sep. 12, 1839-Mar. 13, 1898)*

*Elisabeth (Penner) Funk (Oct. 12, 1839-Nov. 1, 1929)*

Johann and Elisabeth Funk arrived in Quebec on July 20, 1875, fittingly, aboard the "S.S. Quebec", with five children, two others having died in Russia. This family is one of the few in Gnadenfeld registered in the Brotschuld records as owing money for the Hamburg-Quebec passage.

Johann was the second son of Peter and Helena (Schroeder) Funk of Schoenfeld, Berghthal Colony, and Elisabeth Funk was the daughter of Johan Funk (gardener in Rosenthal) and his third wife Margaretha Penner.

The first mention of Johann Funk is the entry in the Brotschuld dated in Gnadenfeld before April 1, 1876, establishing his presence in the village. The first building (32 x 18 feet and insured for \$50.00) on record for the Funks, erected in the village in 1880, was relegated to a barn in the summer of 1883 when a new house (32 x 22 feet), insured for \$300.00, replaced it. Johann registered his intent to homestead NE 19 on May 20, 1880, and applied for a patent on October 23, 1884. By this time he had 22 acres under cultivation.

This family seems to have built all their first

buildings on their home quarter, since the land homesteaded was part of the original village. Johann Funk died on March 13, 1898 while still living there. His wife married Friedrich Wall on January 25, 1900, and the Hanover Assessment Rolls registered 107 acres of NE 19 in his name, but he died on June 4, 1901.

The youngest daughter Elizabeth Funk born May 21, 1883 married Cornelius S. Martens on July 22, 1906. By December 1906 Cornelius had insured furniture and equipment but no buildings until 1911 when a new house was insured and a barn and "scheune" (hay mow) were insured as well. The fact that Hanover Rolls register Cornelius Martens as owner by 1910 suggests that Cornelius and Elisabeth lived with widow Wall until 1911 when she (Elisabeth Nee Funk) married Cornelius Friesen of Schoenthal, who died on September 11, 1922, leaving her a widow again. She died November 1, 1929.

Kornelius Martens canceled all his insurance on July 28, 1913 and moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan. On August 25, 1913 the farmstead came to Peter K. Toews of Alt-Bergfeld, who in 1894 had married one of the older Funk daughters, Katherina (b. 1873). Mrs. Katherina Toews, a very strong woman physically, was known to do blacksmithing.

Her husband, Peter K. Toews, son of Chortitzer Aeltester Peter Toews (1846-1915) of Alt-Bergfeld, was also an aggressive and successful farmer. The big post and beam building presently on the Frank N. Wiens yard was originally built as a bin in 1918, the biggest of its kind in Gnadenfeld in its time. He owned a threshing outfit and spent a good part of the season on the road threshing for others. He was the second person in the village to own a car, insuring it for \$200.00 in 1923. Sometime prior to 1918 the farm was expanded to include part of NW 31-5-5E as well.

The farm passed to son, Jacob F. Toews, who ran the operation till 1957. In 1947, the barn, probably built before 1911, burned down with all the animals in it. Although another barn of a newer style was built to replace the one lost, this was a serious blow to the Toews family. Jacob F. Funk became a Jehovah's Witness. In the meantime, a small retirement home near the road served as the residence for Peter K.



*A 1999 photo of the same barn of Johan Krahn (SE 20) from which the beam with the inscription has been taken. This photo taken from west looking east. This is the remnant of the south end of the photograph taken in 1977, the summer side. Photo courtesy of Ernest Braun. Also published in Braun: A Gnadenfeld Heritage, page 353.*

Toews who, after the death of his wife, had married a Mrs. Klippenstein (West Reserve). He passed away in 1949. The house was sold to Jacob Ginter, who later rented it out. Among those who occupied the small house were Pete and Elsie Janzen, Johan Schroeder, David H. Fehr and Wm. Froese (West Reserve). The whole farm was acquired by Frank N. Wiens who effected an equal trade for a new house in Winnipeg in 1957. The old farm house (1911) remained functional until Frank N. Wiens built a new one in 1972, eventually demolishing the old one about ten years ago.

NE20-5-5E

*Peter (Schroeder) Funk (Nov. 25, 1833-Oct. 12, 1903)*

*Maria (Penner) Krahn (Mar. 6, 1835-Mar. 1, 1907)*

Peter and Maria Funk left Schoenfeld, a village in the Bergthal Colony near Mariupol, on June 28, 1874 (or June 16 by the Russian calendar) as part of the very first contingent of Bergthalers to leave Russia. On July 14 they boarded the **S. S. Peruvian** in Liverpool, made landfall at Halifax and then on July 27, they arrived at Quebec. They continued by water and rail to Moorehead and by river boat to the confluence of the Red and the Rat Rivers, landing at eight in the evening, wet and chilled, to spend the first night on the river bank in whatever shelter they could erect on short notice (sources: family history compiled by John F. W. Funk, and *The Bergthal Colony* by William Schroeder). No other family information of that first year has survived to my knowledge.

Peter (born November 25, 1833) was the oldest son of Peter and Helena (Schroeder) Funk, and Maria (born March 6, 1835) was the daughter of Klaas and Anna (Penner) Krahn of the Rosenthal Krahns. This family arrived over a year before any other member of what was to become the Gnadenfeld community, and may well have homesteaded briefly somewhere else, for only in January of 1876, after four of his siblings settled there, did Peter Funk register for a homestead in Gnadenfeld. Eventually, of the nine offspring of Peter and Helena (Schroeder) Funk, six settled in the village of Gnadenfeld, two died in Russia and one, the youngest homesteaded just five miles north in Blumstein E.R. with her husband Johann Reimer.

The Township Register indicates that on January 20, 1876, Peter and Maria (Krahn) Funk registered their intention to homestead NE 20-5-5, but the Homestead Files clearly describes their first residence (35 x 22 feet) built in 1876 as an improvement "in the Village" of Gnadenfeld. Also mentioned is the "stable" (70 x 29 feet) built in 1877, the largest building in the village, and part of an assessment second only to that of Jacob Braun Sr., his brother-in-law. The Application for Patent states that in April, 1877, Peter Funk began to cultivate the land for the first time. By the fall of 1884, he had raised crops on 30 acres for three consecutive years, and received his patent on December 13, 1884.



A composite representation of the barn of Johan Krahn on SE 20 built in 1880 from which the beam with the inscription has been taken. The composite consists of two photographs being combined, one a winter shot and the other, a summer shot. This photo taken from east looking west. Photo courtesy of Jac. Bestvater, Grunthal, Manitoba.



Present-day NW 20, the Bruno Hamm farm now owned by Frank N. Wiens. Photo courtesy of Ernest Braun, Niverville, Manitoba.

The Funk family continued to live in the village at least until the early 1890s. The Brandordnung lists a new entry for a house in 1892 valued at \$200, which may well be the house that living memory associates with the yard on SE 20? and therefore may indicate the year this family moved out of the village onto their own quarter section. Abe Klassen remembers that the house was demolished in 1943 and the barn in 1948. The date of construction was carved into a beam in the barn, but no reliable information about it survives.

Family tradition has Peter as a tailor by training, for he did all the sewing for his family. He seldom deigned to use a pair of scissors, preferring to rip cloth along its natural lines. After the death of Peter Funk in October 1903 the farm devolved to his son-in-law, Peter F. Toews, who had in 1899 married the Funks' youngest daughter, Anganetha. Probably it was here that Maria (Krahn) Funk lived with her youngest daughter till she passed away on March 1, 1907. On June 15 of the same year all insurance policies in Peter Funk's name are canceled. By 1910 ownership is invested in the name of Peter F. Toews.

In January 1919 Peter Toews died suddenly in Marchand while loading timber, leaving a large family. Widow Toews married widower Cornelius H. Sawatzky on July 23, 1922, in



Part of the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Confessional School on what is now the yard of Wiens Dairy. The shingles are evidence of the original exterior of the old school, built in 1883. Posing with the building is the author Ernest Braun. Photo by Ernest Braun in 1993.

whose name the farm is registered in 1926. The blended Sawatzky family emigrated to Paraguay in January 1927. Shortly thereafter, this farm, consisting at that time of a separate house and barn with a driveway leading south from the east-west road, was purchased by Nicolai Thiessen (immigrant from Russia) who later moved to Alberta, then by Jacob Klassen,

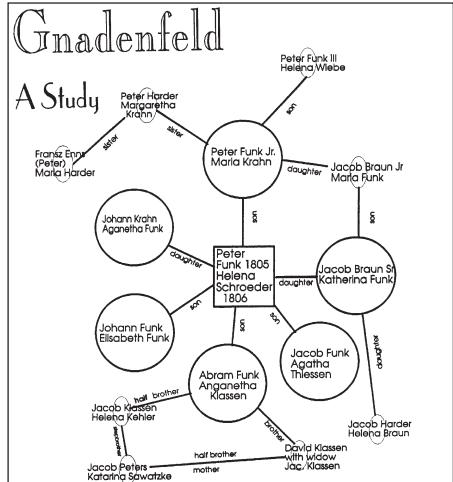
## Preservings

and finally by Peter H. Froese (today Peter Froese Jr.).

Peter and Maria's son, Peter K. Funk, also known as "Berliner Funk", married Helena Wiebe in October of 1880, and may well have lived with his parents in the village until April 1883. In 1881 Peter Sr. had insured a house for \$50.00, which may coincide with the house (also insured for \$50.00) that Peter Jr. canceled in 1883, when he moved Kronsgard, and from there to the West Reserve. After 1891 the family returned to Kronsgard and then Grunthal before moving to Saskatchewan in 1903: see



Massive poplar tree planted by Helena Klassen on SE 31. Photo taken in 1999. Size of the tree can be gauged by comparing it to Al Hamm beside it.



Gnadenfeld Genogram showing the inter-connections of the family of Peter Funk and Helena Schroeder to many of the village pioneers. Genogram by Ernest Braun.

*Preservings*, No. 12, pages 84-86. It was Peter K. Funk who, according to family tradition, sold his appellation (Berliner) to Jacob Kehler some time before 1900.

From a family rumour that the St. Pierre road ran over the graves of some of the Funk children who died in infancy, one can speculate that a family burial plot lay at the eastern edge of the homestead later usurped by the road allowance for the PTH 216.

**Jacob (Hoeppner) Harder (Jan. 16, 1849-Sep. 17, 1937)**

**Helena (Funk) Braun (Dec. 29, 1850-Aug. 3, 1926)**

Jacob and Helena Harder were chosen to be part of the first group to leave the village of Friedrichsthal in spring of 1875. Their connection to Gnadenfeld arises from the fact that Helena is the granddaughter of Peter and Helena Funk, and the daughter of Katherina Funk who had married Jacob Braun.

The Harders duly arrived in Quebec on Dominion Day, 1875 and presumably made their way to the Schanzenberg sheds in the usual way. The arrangements with the steamship agent included passage for the Harders and two children, Peter and Katherina; however, tragically, little Katherina died en route on June 12 (Russian calendar) and was likely buried at sea. By August 11, 1875 Jacob had entered the Township Register as homesteading SE18-5-5E with a Preemption on SW 18 as well.

The first buildings consisted of a substantial house (25 x 37 feet) insured for \$200.00 and both a "stable" (16 x 25 feet) and a "barn" (16 x 18 feet). The Application for Homestead Patent makes it clear that the farmyard was part of the village and not on the quarter section of land. Jacob applied for his patent two days after his naturalization on May 16, 1883. In October of that same year, he erected a new barn and hay mow, insuring them for \$200.00. Although there is no way of telling where these buildings stood, one possibility is the yard that used to exist on the southeast corner of SW 30, just east of the Giesbrecht yard. Frank N. Wiens remembers cleaning up the foundations stones of buildings there in the late 1920s. The fact that Jacob Harder acquired SE 30 just a hundred yards east of the place may support

such speculation.

By that time Jacob Peters, who homesteaded SE 30, had moved away to the West Reserve and his quarter appears under Jacob Harder's name in the Hanover Assessment Rolls. In the spring of 1889, the Harders sold everything both village property and land, moving to Berghal where they acquired a substantial operation and farmed until retirement. Helena Harder died in the summer of 1926, just before the move to Paraguay, and the elderly widower, Jacob Harder, age 78, became the oldest man to emigrate to a new frontier, helping his son Johann and family pioneer in another Gnadenfeld, a village in the Chaco. Here he lived for more than ten years.

Family tradition has it that the grandchildren often asked why "an old man like Grandpa" had ventured to Paraguay at all since there was not much he could do, the standard response had been that "such man who has already pioneered in Russia can provide much guidance, and can pray much for the church". (Courtesy of Peter M. Hiebert, Winnipeg). Jacob has the distinction of being the only person from Gnadenfeld to pioneer on three continents, first in Friedrichsthal in Russia, then in Gnadenfeld on the East Reserve in Manitoba and finally in the Gran Chaco of Paraguay.

**Peter (Abrams) Harder (Oct. 28, 1847 - )**  
**Margaretha (Pennner) Krahm (1843 - )**

The 1876 Brotschuld list has a page of transactions attributed to Peter (and Margaretha) Harder, the son of Jacob and Maria (Abrams) Harder. The last entry is dated 1878. Like Franz Ens (der Grosser), Peter Harder is not mentioned in the fire insurance records for Gnadenfeld, suggesting that by 1879 the family had relocated. The Harders arrived aboard the "S. S. Quebec" in July of 1875 with several of the Funk brothers.

The relationship to the village was that Margaretha Krahm was the sister to Maria Krahm who had married the oldest of the Funk brothers, Peter. There is no evidence that this family constituted more than a transitory part of the village, apparently at its very inception. Certainly by the spring of 1880 Peter Harder had homesteaded in Kronsgard, E.R.



Winter view of the landmark of Gnadenfeld, Jacob Braun Jr.'s barn built in 1890s and broken down this last summer. Photo 1994 courtesy of Ernest Braun, Niverville.

**David (Kroeker) Klassen** (Aug. 17, 1855 - )  
**Helena (Rempel) Schwarz** (Mar. 6, 1858 - )

David Klassen does not appear in the Brotschuld records, but is included in the 1881 Census. He arrived in Quebec with his mother, widow Justina Klassen (Jacob Sr) aboard the "S. S. Sarmatian" on July 6, 1875 as a 19 year old. The village of origin is probably Heuboden. Helena Schwarz was the daughter of Johann and Agatha Schwarz formerly of Nieder Khortitz.

David seems to have been an enterprising fellow, for on August 11, 1875 despite being a minor, he entered the Township General Register as homesteading NE18-5-5E as well as filing a preemption on NW 18. Apparently he relinquished both, for in August of 1878, still as a single man, he filed for a homestead on NE 30. His Application for Homestead Patent late in 1884 lists a house (24 x 36 feet) and a stable (25 x 25 feet) both built in 1878, buildings clearly erected in the village of Gnadenfeld (for his prospective bride) and not on his home quarter.

As early as 1880 David Klassen had thirty acres under cultivation. Although in November of 1884 he "affirms" that he has never left his establishment in the village for any length of time, he certainly seems to have left shortly thereafter, for by 1887 his quarter section is assessed to Jacob Harder. Sometime in the mid 1880s the Klassens seem to have followed the Schwarz family to the West Reserve, where they are both listed in the 1891 Census.

When Jacob Harder left for Bergthal in 1889, he sold the farm to Abram F. Braun who held the land with various partners till the sale to National Trust in 1926. Today half of the quarter is owned by Hannelore Wiebe and half by Jacob Bestvater. There is no evidence that any kind of farmstead ever existed on this quarter, much of which is native bush to this day.

## SW31-5-5E

**Jacob (Dyck) Klassen** (Aug. 6, 1836-Dec., 1907)

**Helena (Peters) Kehler** (Sep., 1837 - )

This family arrived in Quebec on July 30, 1876 on the "S. S. Sardinian" with nine children, the youngest just over one year old. Jacob's mother and brothers had arrived a year earlier (See **Justina Klassen** below). The Brotschuld lists indicate that the Klassen family lived in Gnadenfeld from the very beginning, although homestead maps indicate that Jacob filed for a homestead on SW 31-5-5 only on May 20, 1880. The Quebec ship manifest lists all nine children, whereas later records show that both Katherina (7) and Philip (5) died in 1876, the year of their arrival, a testimony to the trauma of emigration. In 1877 another son, David, was born in Gnadenfeld.

The first buildings erected by the Klassens stood in the village itself: a stable 18 x 40 feet built in 1877 and a new house 25 x 40 feet built

in the summer of 1880 (source: Homestead Files). These likely replaced the first provisional shelter built upon arrival (insured for \$50 when the new house was built). The same sources indicate that Jacob Klassen had twenty acres under cultivation as early as 1879, and that he

west corner of the quarter near the present day St. Pierre road, PTH 205. The brightly painted house, complete with standard shutters and trim, included an attached barn, together constituting a fine example of its type. Frank T. Friesen who dismantled the house barn in 1973

remembers a date chiseled into a beam in the barn but is unable to remember it exactly.

It appears on two accounts that renovations were carried out after 1896: issues of that year's *Rundschau* were discovered under the floorboards of the house when it was dismantled in 1973, and insurance coverage was increased in 1899 by \$50. The beams and joists of both the house and the barn were huge broad-axed timbers pegged in the traditional way (post and beam style), and the sills stood on field stone foundations, both evidence that these buildings were raised on location. In January, 1927, having sold the property, David

K. Klassen with most of his siblings emigrated to Paraguay.

From August 1926 this place was occupied by Peter Enns and his family from Arnaud (originally from the Arkadak Colony in Russia). Like the Klassens, they continued farming with sheep until they moved to Lena, Manitoba in 1927-8.

In 1927 the farm was purchased by David Enns who moved there from Dominion City where his family had lived since arriving from Taschenack, a "khuta" in South Russia, in 1924. This family acquired both SE and SW quarters of section 31, and farmed there (part of that time with a brother Johan Enns) until 1937 when they retired to a small acreage east off the Kleefeld road. Even at this point the land on the south half-section 31 was so poor "that people often wondered how anyone could make survive on such stony land" [Katie (Enns) Rempel].

After 1937 the house was occupied by a series of renters until Gerhard and Katie Rempel purchased it in 1940, living in the old house barn until 1947, when they purchased SE 20-5-5 just west of Grunthal. Later owners were Ben Reimer and Peter Froese. The house that succeeded the old house barn has just been replaced in 1999 by a new residence built by Ron Froese.

One of the three cemeteries in Gnadenfeld is located just east of the field road running north from the 205 between the two quarters near the present day house. At least two school-age sons of David K. Klassen are buried there, according to Lena (Braun) Krahn of East Paraguay whose classmates they were. Although in living memory there have been no grave markers, probably many of the Schoensee Klassens are buried there as well, for the evidence of the graves survived till the 1940s when cultivation eventually erased them. There is a tradition that the gigantic cottonwood, which



Early trail to Bergthal still visible on the land formerly known as the Grunthal Game Farm. 1994 photo by Ernest Braun.

applied for his Homestead Patent on November 21, 1884, at which point he was still living in the village proper, although the exact location has been lost. No information exists about the site of the new barn (insured at \$250) built in 1886, although the new house (\$350) built in 1892 is certainly the one most people remember as "daut yeeli Hus" (the yellow house with green shutters) situated on the St. Pierre road beside the giant cottonwood on SE 31.

Fire insurance records of the early 1880's indicate that there was a main residence as well as "a nearby house" on the Jacob Klassen farm. By 1889 a note in the tax assessment records indicates that part of SE 31 belonged to him also, sharing the rest of the quarter with Jacob Pries. In 1910 the holdings remain the same, but title is given under David K. Klassen, Jacob's son. According to a note in *Grunthal History*, David paid his dues by herding sheep until he was about 25 years of age. By 1923 David owned all of SW 31, SE 31 and forty acres of NW 31-5-5 as well, all of which was registered under National Trust by 1928 after the Klassens emigrated to Paraguay in 1927. Only two daughters of the Klassen family did not emigrate to Paraguay: Helena whose husband Peter Friesen had already passed away, and Anna who married widower David Friesen of Schoensee (whose son D. W. Friesen became the founder of Friesens Printing of Altona).

There is no memory of any original buildings on SW 31, for nobody can recall a yard on that quarter, although living memory ascribes one wooden bin to it in the mid 1920s.

On December 5, 1908 all insurance in his name was canceled and the entire estate transferred to his son David K. Klassen on that date. The Klassens raised sheep in the early years and most likely used this quarter for pasture. In 1927, the buildings, a house barn of the pioneer style, a large sheep shed, and miscellaneous wooden bins, stood at the south



*Post WWI drive-in grainery built by Peter K. Toews in 1918, largest grain storage building in Gnadenfeld in its day. It is still on site on NE 19, being the Frank N. Wiens farm. It is the last identifiable surviving building of the pre-emigration days.*

is possibly the largest one of its kind in southern Manitoba, marks the place where several Klassens are buried. According to a family tradition, the tree was planted by Helena (Kehler) Klassen, wife of Jacob Klassen (source: David F. Hiebert, Grunthal).

**Justina Kroeker** (Jul.23,1816-Oct.12, 1878)(widow)  
*1st m. Herman Peters (Ca. 1815-1847)*  
**2nd m. Jacob Klassen (Jan.2,1809-Oct.18,1862)**

Although Justina Klassen, widow of Jacob Klassen Sr., never did enter the Township General Register, she is listed in the Brotschuld records and has separate property insured under the Brandordnung. Justina nee Kroeker seems to have originated in the Old Colony, for at the point of remarriage to Jacob Klassen she is registered as having come from Neuhorst. The fact that her first husband's given name is omitted in the *Bergthal Gemeinde Buch* also strongly suggests that the Peters were not Bergthaler, and that the children are entered at all can be attributed to the second marriage.

There is evidence in the 1858 Bergthal Census to suggest that Jacob Klassen Sr., the second husband of Justina Kroeker, lived in the village of Heuboden prior to his death. He is listed there as "Jacob son of Erhard" [Gerhard?]. It is likely from here that the blended family emigrated in 1875.

Justina Klassen arrived in Quebec with her sons David and Johann aboard the "S. S. Sarmatian" on July 6, 1875. The Brotschuld list places her in Gnadenfeld in 1876. The fire insurance records indicate that the insurance for David Klassen and widow Jacob Klassen are identical in value and canceled in April 1882, more than three years after she died. One could speculate that in fact only one property existed, that David lived in the same house

as his mother, and that the insurance was registered sometimes in one name and sometimes in the other. No evidence of where the David Klassen/Justina Klassen house stood in the village has survived.



*The post and beam house of Jacob Braun Jr. as it looked before it was demolished. Foundation stones are now in a rock garden at the house of great-grandson Ernest Braun, Niverville.*

**SE20-5-5E**  
**Johann (Rempel) Krahn (Jun.3, 1836)**  
**Anganetha (Schroeder) Funk (Feb.28,1836-Mar.4, 1921)**

The Bergthal Gemeinde Buch lists have Johann and Anganetha Krahn arriving in Quebec aboard the "S. S. Quebec" on July 20, 1875 (same ship as their neighbours, Jacob and Johann Funk). Accompanying them was Johann's mother, Katherine Rempel Schwarz, who however went to live with Johann's younger brother Wilhelm Krahn who shortly thereafter moved to the West Reserve. The Schwarz and Rempel families can be found in Nieder Chortitzia in 1814, but I have not yet been able to discover from which area in Russia the Krahn family

stems. The connection to this village is clear in that Anganetha is one of the Funk siblings, daughter of Peter and Helena (Schroeder) Funk of Schoenfeld, Bergfeld Colony.

According to the Township General Register, Johann Krahn accompanied at least six other family heads from Gnadenfeld to Winnipeg on May 20, 1880 to apply officially for homestead status for their quarter sections. In the case of Johann Krahn, this consisted of registering SE20-5-5E, for Peter S. Funk had already filed a preemption on that quarter in June of 1876.

Although the Homestead declaration indicates that Johann Krahn "lived continuously in the village of Gnadenfeld since May 1880", the Brotschuld Records clearly place him in Gnadenfeld by the time that register was opened in 1876. Incidentally, his liabilities are the second lowest of the village, next only to Jacob Braun Sr. The first buildings insured by the Brandordnung for Johan Krahn was a house valued at \$115. The Homestead Files contain two sources of information about this place, one the Application for the Homestead Patent in 1889 and one an Inspector's report of the same year. The first indicates that Johan Krahn built a house (24 x 34 feet) in the summer of 1878, valued at \$125, and mentions as an improvement a large "stable" (28 x 50 feet) valued at \$300, but fails to mention a construction date. The affidavit further indicates the Johan Krahn "lived in village of Gnadenfeld on which said homestead is appurtenant to my portion of the land belonging to the said village". The Inspector's report, on the other hand, lists a "log house" (18 x 30 feet) valued at \$200 with a cement floor, thatched roof and plastered walls; and a "log stable" (28 x 50) valued at \$200.

One explanation for this discrepancy may be that Johan's information combines the improvements made in the village earlier with those made on the homestead, whereas the Inspector's information, taken some months later, is based on a visit to the homestead only, hence the difference in size of houses. The unusual dimensions of the barn suggest that it is definitely the same building, and since the date of construction, 1885, is clearly inscribed on a beam salvaged from the barn, it seems that the site visited by the Inspector was the new yard on SE 20, and not the village lot, for the massive size of the barn argues strongly for its construction on site even at this early date. This conclusion would mean that the Krahns were likely the first family to leave Gnadenfeld to establish a new yard on their own land. An interesting note entered in the Inspector's handwriting reads, "husband gone but wife home--very little English" and then the conclusion: "he is a bonafide settler".

Also inscribed, somewhat ornately, in a support beam from that barn are the letters B[JK]H (probably meaning Johann Krahn, Bau Herr) and below them B/JR/M (probably signifying the name of the carpenter, Bau Meister, identified merely as JR). The beam is in the possession of Dennis Krahn of Niverville.

A sworn statement carefully "affirmed" by

son Peter F. Krahn indicates that he moved to SE 20 some time before or in 1893, for in March of 1908 he stated that he had "lived on the SE1/4 20-5-5E for the last 15 years continuously... living with [his] father". The "15 years" is somewhat enigmatic since that places the Krahns on the new quarter much later than the construction date of the barn allows. However, the new house that Johan Krahn insured for \$300 in December of 1896 is almost certainly the substantial two-story house described by son Peter as worth \$600 in 1908 and alive in memory as the house occupied by a succession of owners after the Krahns emigrated to Paraguay in November of 1926.

Evidently, the Krahn family is somehow connected to the Esaus, for Helena, the orphan daughter of Peter Hiebert Sr., was taken in as a "Phlege tochter" (foster daughter). Although all the other Hieberts moved away from the village, Helena stayed with the Krahns and eventually married Jacob Pries of Gnadenfeld.

Son Peter F. Krahn bought the farm from his father in June of 1906, running a cattle and horse operation on it and also on SW 33 which he homesteaded in 1908 and turned into pasture. The large two-storey "granary" on the yard he converted into a shop in which he built coffins.

In late 1926 the farm came to be occupied by Johan Warkentin, a Mennonite refugee from the holocaust in Russia, who took over from the Krahns and then later in the Thirties sold the farm but moved the two-storey shop to Grunthal where it still serves as a residence on Main Street.

There may have been some temporary occupants of the farm after the Warkentins but before Heinrich Unger Jr., from whom Gerhard and Katie Rempel of Gnadenfeld purchased it in 1947 (see **Jacob Klassen** above). The Rempels built a new house in the fall of 1954, and then, in 1957, sold the farm to Abram Bestvater whose son Jacob owns the farm today. The Krahn house (1896) was sold and moved to Ste. Anne where it may well be in use today.

#### SE30-5-5E

*Jacob (Kroeker) Peters (Sep.11,1842- )*

*Katherina (Penner) Sawatzky (Jul.22,1839- )*

This last family arrived in Quebec on July 13, 1875 on the same ship as the Peter Hieberts (above). Jacob was the son of Herman Peters who died in Russia some time before 1848, in January of which year his widowed mother Justina (Kroeker) Peters married Jacob Klassen (See **Jacob Klassen** above). Justina Kroeker Klassen is described in the *BGB* as coming from Neuhorst, a later village in the Khortitz Colony, suggesting that the Peters had moved there from one of the older Khortitz villages. Jacob Peters would have become part of the Berghthal Colony when his mother married Jacob Klassen after the death of her first husband, Herman Peters. Jacob's wife, Katherina Sawatzky, was the daughter of Cornelius Sawatzky of the village of Berghthal in Imperial Russia.



*The yard of Johan Krahn, SE 20, with the original barn on the left, the house and the shop (later moved to Grunthal). The teepee in the centre is a device (called a "serai") for air drying lumber. Photo courtesy of Lena Krahn, Paraguay. Also published in Braun: A Gnadenfeld Heritage, page 353.*

The Township General Register indicates that Jacob and Katherina Peters entered for SE 30-5-5 on May 20, 1880. No records remain to indicate where the Peters lived, although there were foundation stones on the south west corner of the quarter in the mid-twenties, remains of a farm yard probably occupied by Jacob J. R. Funk just prior to emigration, a farmyard that may have dated from an earlier time. By 1930 only a small grain bin was vis-



*Turn of the century building of unknown antecedents, situated on SE 20. Part of it has been finished for human occupation at some point. Could this building have been moved from the village of Gnadenfeld to its present location? Courtesy of Jac Bestvater, Grunthal. Also published in Braun: A Gnadenfeld Heritage, page 353.*

ible on the yard, and that was moved off by Wilhelm Sawatzky to his own yard. The fire insurance records indicate that on March 21, 1881 Peters canceled his insurance and moved away, interestingly on the same day as Peter and Wilhelm Hiebert. By census time in 1881 the Peters family appears in Schoenhorst, a village in the West Reserve near Altona.

The connection to Gnadenfeld seems to be through the Klassens, for Jacob Peters was the son of widow Jacob (Justina) Klassen, from her first marriage. She appears to have homesteaded with her son David Klassen. Justina (Peters) Klassen's daughter Anganetha was married to Abram Funk, brother to all the other Funks in Gnadenfeld.

The title to the Peters homestead moved to Jacob Harder, and then to the latter's brothers-in-law Jacob, Johan Braun and Abram in 1889.

In the next few years, smaller parcels of land must have been surveyed and sold, for by 1900 odd sized titles are registered under the Brauns and also under Jacob and Abram Funk, who by then hold title to the eastern half section of the land. By 1926, the northern parts of the half-section are listed under Peter K. Toews and Maria Pries (Gerhard), and part of the southern half under Jacob and Abram Braun. In 1926-27 the section came into the hands of National Trust, but by 1936, the south quarter appears under Wilhelm Sawatzky and Heinrich J. Unger, who built a new house on the eastern 53 acres of the quarter.

A small creek cuts off the south west corner of this quarter and on a slight rise just north of that corner lies the cemetery, one of three in the community. Today most of the quarter is owned by Frank N. Wiens, whose grandmother Margaretha (Braun) Wiens died on the first night that the Wiens family lived in Gnadenfeld, and was buried in the cemetery



*Cornelius R. and Maria (Braun) Funk, ca. 1926, former school teacher in the Gnadenfeld Private School. Photo courtesy of Lena Krahn, Paraguay.*

(December, 1926). Her's is the only headstone there, although it is known that Margaretha (Braun) Funk and Helena Braun were buried there in 1918 as well. It is reasonable to assume that many of the Braun and Funk children who died, especially in the 1880s, are also buried here.

### **Early Trails**

In the beginning the Mennonites paid little attention to section lines and road allowances, for it was simpler to make trails along the high ridges. In the south part of the reserve, particularly, the municipality did little to create either roads or drainage until well into this century. Consequently, the old trails still live in memory, and I have been able to reconstruct with a degree of reliability the main thoroughfares that serviced the Gnadenfeld community in the early years.

The main road that dominated the southern part of the East Reserve was the so-called Ridge Road that angled from north of Steinbach southwest through Schoensee to Old Grunthal and then continued through to Bergfeld. Although all the chief trails as given on Warkentin's map (p. 152) bypass Gnadenfeld, our village was connected to Grunthal, Bergfeld and St. Pierre.

The trail that led from Bergfeld to Gnadenfeld was really a continuation of the main street of Bergfeld leading north through SE 18 to Joubert Creek, where on each side the Mennonites had built up the embankment by hand, and placed a wooden bridge across the stream. After Bergfeld was sold in 1924, the bridge was neglected, the ramps washed out and eventually such traffic as there was simply forded the creek beside the bridge. Just north of where it used to be is the swimming hole that many Grunthal men will remember from the 1950s: it is an idyllic place to the present time.

Once across the bridge, the road forked, one branch being the continuation of Ridge Road, turning north east to Grunthal along the ridge just south of the Game Farm and then north onto the main street of Old Grunthal. The other branch wound its way somewhat northwest along the escarpment of the creek diagonally across NE 18 past what would have been the strips of cultivated land there (belonging to the Bergfelders) into a corner of NW 18 where it turned north to Gnadenfeld, meeting the village street just west of the yard of Jacob Braun Jr, roughly at the Gnadenfeld corner. Incidentally, still another trail led southeast from the fork along the escarpment of Joubert Creek to service the villages further east (source: John Driedger).

In later years as the configuration of the village changed, another trail led from the bridge straight north across the eastern part of NE 18 and then along the section line between 19 and 20 until it reached the Sarto Creek at which point it swung west to enter Gnadenfeld from the east. Eventually a bridge was built across the creek near the section line between NW 20 and NE 19 to accommodate those few farmsteads on the north side of the creek such as the Bruno Hamm place. One narrow embankment remains on the east side of the creek just north west of the Grunthal lagoon. It appears to have been man-made and designed for hosting a bridge, a bridge that would have connected the two sides of the village. Unfortunately, living memory provides no proof beyond remembered traffic along that trail, even

as late as 1943, when the funeral procession of Ben W. Funk passed over that way.

The northern part of Gnadenfeld was serviced by a trail of the same vintage that left Ridge Road at the north end of the gravel ridge near the cemetery in Grunthal, and ran across what is now gravel pit, heading north east. This part just north of Grunthal was still used as a shortcut by Gnadenfeld children on their way to school in Grunthal in the 1950s (Al Hamm). It crossed the northeast corner of NE 20, and then angled northwest across the school section (29) in the middle of which a smaller trail branched off straight west across NE 30 to the Pries farm on NW 30 (part of this trail is still visible today). The main trail veered north, coming out of NE 30 onto what is now the PTH 205 about a quarter mile east of the Klassen sheep farm (big cottonwood) and from there followed a northwest track to St. Pierre. One can only speculate at what point the villagers would have built a bridge over the creek to connect the two parts of the village and of course the two roads.

J. H. Warkentin's map of early roads and trails on page 152 of his doctoral thesis confirms what is still visible in parts of the scrub bush standing on NE 17, NE 18 (Ridge Road) and NE 30 (St. Pierre trail).

### **Conclusion**

The connection between the two families that settled in Gnadenfeld remains a mystery. Why would the Funks from Schoenfeld, Bergthal Colony, choose to pioneer in tandem with a Defehr/Esau family from Osterwick (Khortitz Colony)? I would appreciate hearing from anybody who can shed light on this question.

Now one hundred and twenty-four years have passed since the establishment of the village of Gnadenfeld. The descendants of the original pioneers number in the tens of thousands, many of whom would not recognize the name of the place. Yet Gnadenfeld served as a point of entry to Canada for two entire peoples--once in 1875-6 and again in 1926/7--a narrow passage like the neck of an hourglass into the vast opportunity offered by the New World.

What was an original 1870s Mennonite village has become almost exclusively a 1920s Russian Mennonite preserve, with memories that stop at 1926. Moreover, Municipal decisions have created straight roads, and assimilation by the dominant culture has resulted in the dissolution of the village concept in all its aspects. Modern equipment has drained the land and rooted out stones, cleared trees and introduced infrastructure that has enabled this area with its mixed farming economy to become an unusually prosperous agricultural community, vindicating the choice made so long ago by homesteaders who had no scientific gauge for assessing their new land. This is manifestly a good place.

For me it holds special significance, since four generations of my paternal forbears and three generations of my maternal forbears lived here. Although my father as a boy lived little more than a mile southwest of the Gnadenfeld

corner and attended the Gnadenfeld school, he never spoke of it to his wife or his children. Something of the reluctance to enter that world of lost opportunity, that world of the irretrievable past must have communicated itself to me, and made me erect my own flaming sword. Now that I have defied it, I find a place that, although not an Eden, is one that has lived up to its name, "field of grace", not once but twice, and rightly deserves to be remembered, at least as a road sign.

### **Sources**

#### **Interviews:**

Jacob Bestvater, Grunthal; Stephen Brandt, Blumenort; Walter Braun, Sinclair; John B. Doerksen, late of Steinbach; John Driedger, Grunthal; Frank Enns, Winnipeg; Peter Froese, Gnadenfeld; Abram B. Giesbrecht, Loma Plata, Paraguay; Peter N. Giesbrecht, Kleefeld; Al Hamm, Steinbach; Anna F. Harder, Steinbach; David F. Hiebert, Grunthal; Nick Janz, Grunthal; Abe Klassen, Winnipeg; Helena Krahn, Bergthal, Paraguay; Johan F. Krahn, Grunthal; Maria Falk Lodge, Winnipeg; Werner Neufeld, Winnipeg; Katie and George Rempel, Steinbach; Dr. Jack Thiessen, New Bothwell; Albert Toews, Winnipeg; Rudy Warkentin, Steinbach; Frank N. Wiens, Gnadenfeld.

#### **Archival Resources:**

Brotschuld records made available to me by Irene Kroeker  
Township General Register (Manitoba Provincial Archives)  
Homestead Files - Reel 77 (Manitoba Provincial Archives)  
Brandordnung Records (Mennonite Heritage Centre, Wpg)  
Land Titles Office (Woodsworth Building) Winnipeg  
Hanover Assessment Records (Hanover Municipality Archives)

#### **Published works:**

*1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve* ed. Dyck and Harms [MMHS 1998]  
*The Bergthal Colony* Wm. Schroeder [CMBC 1986]  
*Bergthal Gemeinde Buch* ed. John Dyck [HSHS 1993]  
*Braun - A Gnadenfeld Heritage* ed. Ernest Braun [Braun Reunion Cte. 1999]  
*Grunthal History* [Derksen Printers 1974]  
*The Peter Hiebert Genealogy* ed. Peter Dyck et al.  
*Profile of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde 1874* by Delbert Plett [DFP Publ 1987]  
J. H. Warkentin's Ph.D. The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba," [Univ. of Toronto, 1955]  
*Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories 1874 - 1910* ed. John Dyck [HSHS 1990]

#### **Dedication:**

This article is dedicated to the memory of John Dyck who steadfastly encouraged me to write the history of Gnadenfeld. "Ernest Braun"

# Old Colony/Bergthal Hildebrands

Old Kolony/Bergthal Hildebrands, by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack, New Westminster, B.C., V3L 4V5.

## Introduction.

This article differs from my previous articles in Preservings, in that I have focussed on a group of families in the Old Colony, rather than in the Bergthal Colony. But the purpose of the article is the same, in that I have attempted to outline the movement of a group of Mennonite families from the West Prussian census of 1776 to the Manitoba census of 1881, where possible.

The focus here is on the Old Colony Hildebrands (many of whom did not have descendants who participated in the 1870s emigration to Manitoba), and gives a brief profile of the immigration to Russia, during the early period, in general.

There do not appear to be many Hildebrands in Mennonite communities at the time of the Russian immigrations. This leads to the story, mentioned by J. J. Hildebrandt ("Zeittafel" Hildebrandt), that all Russian Mennonite Hildebrands were descendants of three or four brothers who came to Russia in 1803-1806. While not correct, there does appear to be some basis for this story, in that a great many Hildebrands are descendants of three Hildebrandt brothers, sons of Heinrich Hildebrandt of Rosenort. One well known line of Hildebrands were of Lutheran origins, some other lines were later immigrants.

The name Hildebrandt is incidentally one of the oldest Germanic names, used as both a first, and later, last name. It is a common name in German speaking areas of Europe.

## 1. Peter Hildebrandt of Bröske (1754-1849)

Peter Hildebrandt (3.3.1754-27.3.1849) was the son of Michael Hildebrandt (1730-1874) and Maria Behrends (1732-1780), a Lutheran family living near Broske in the Grosses Werder. He had a brother Michael who served in the Prussian Black Hussards. As a young man he was employed by Jacob Höppner (later the Deputy Höppner) who ran a shop in Bohnsack, Danziger Nehprung, part of which was an eating establishment. Jacob Höppner was an outgoing and enterprising individual, and was approached by Russian land agent Georg. v. Trappe to promote the immigration to Russia.

Peter Hildebrand moved to Russia in 1788 with Jacob Höppner and later in 1793 married his daughter Helena Höppner (11.5.1775-18.7.1833). [The records of Heinrich Hildebrand (1872-1920) made available by Alvin Friesen, Rosenort, Manitoba, included a story about Peter Hildebrand (1754-1849) that during the trek to Russia some of the travellers had asked the young Peter Hildebrand,

"Peter, when are you going to find a wife?" Peter Hildebrand who just happened to be carrying Höppner's small daughter Helena in his arms, answered, "I will wait until this girl is ready." This is also what later occurred.]

The Peter Hildebrandt (and Jacob Höppner) family settled at Insel Chortitz, B.H.U. p 239, No 6. Helena Höppner is reported to have died under mysterious circumstances in 1833, pos-

and was the basis for many of the later Russian Mennonite histories.

## Children:

Peter Hildebrandt's children included:

1. 1. Helena (1794-94)
  - 1.2. Jacob (1795-1867) married Katherina Friesen (1806-1860). Jacob Hildebrandt was Aeltester of the Kronsweide Gemeinde from 1826 to 1867. He was an avid fisherman and a hunter as well. His children include:
    - 1.2.1. Peter (1824-24);
    - 1.2.2. Peter (1825-1900);
    - 1.2.3. Jacob (1827-83) married Katherina Schellenberg;
    - 1.2.4. Johann (1828-1905) married (1) Sara Peters then (2) Katherina Schellenberg, widow of his brother. Johann was Oberschultz of the Old Colony from 1881 to 1887;
    - 1.2.5. Cornelius (1833-1920) married Anna Epp. Cornelius was the founder of the firm Hildebrand & Pries, (together with his son-in-law Peter Pries), a large manufacture of agricultural machinery. Cornelius was also an amateur historian, writer and artist. He was responsible for publishing his grandfather's memoirs and published some material of his own;
    - 1.2.6. Katherina (1836-1908) married Peter Unrau;
    - 1.2.7. Aganetha (1838-1907) married Julius Heinrichs;
    - 1.2.8. Bernhard (1840-1910) married (1) Anna Peters and (2) Katherina Martens. Bernhard was a minister in the Kronsweide Gemeinde;
    - 1.2.9. Helena (1842-98) married Heinrich Plenert;
    - 1.2.10. Maria (1845-1920) married Heinrich Pauls;
    - 1.3. Helena (1798-1888) married Johann Neudorf (1783-1860) of Osterwick;
    - 1.4. Justina (1800-85) married Abraham Klassen (1802-68) of Insel Chortitz;
    - 1.5. Maria (1804-13);
    - 1.6. Katherina (1807-13);
    - 1.7. Anna (1810-67);
    - 1.8. Katherina (1814-96) married Jacob Wiebe of Insel Chortitz;
    - 1.9. Sara (b. 1817).
  2. Jobann Hildebrandt of Stolzenberg (1740-77)
- Johann Hildebrandt (1740-77) was listed in the 1776 census at Stolzenberg near Danzig with three sons and was a tailor by trade. He was a member of the Danzig Gemeinde (or the Neunhuben Gemeinde, a branch of the Danzig Gemeinde). His wife, whom he married in 1764



*Kornelius Hildebrand (1838-1920) and Mrs. Hildebrand, nee Anna Epp (1833-1919). He was the founder of the firm "Hildebrand & Pries" which operated a large factory in the village of Chortitz, Chortitz Colony, Imperial Russia. Photo courtesy of In The Fullness of Time, page 36; see also H. Dyck, The Diaries of Jakob D. Epp, photo pages 308/9; see Pioneers and Pilgrims, page 317, for a listing of their children. Ed Hildebrand, music teacher, and Werner Pries, math teacher, at the SRSS, Steinbach, are descendants of Kornelius Hildebrand.*

sibly suicide (for a account of this event by Cornelius Hildebrand (1833-1920), see *Sask. Men. Historian*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Sept. 1999, page 15.) After her death he married Aganetha Braun (9.7.1781-17.8.1851), the widow of Jacob Friesen of Kronsweide.

In 1810 Peter Hildebrandt was elected as a minister in the Kronsweide Gemeinde. He and his father-in-law had joined the Kronsweide Gemeinde after Jacob Höppner's release from prison in 1801 (Höppner had been convicted of certain financial irregularities in 1800). Peter Hildebrandt was the author of the only eyewitness account of the immigration to Russia in 1788-89 and the early period settlement. The manuscript he left behind was published through the efforts of his grandson Cornelius,

was a Maria Reimer (b. 1738). After her first husband's death, she married the widower Peter Neufeld (b. 1751) in 1778. This family moved to Russia in 1789 and settled at Rosenthal. B.H.U. 238 No 1. Peter Neufeld died before 1802.

Johann Hildebrandt's sons were:

2.1. Johann (b. 1765, d. 22.4.1788)

2.2. Franz (b. 1772)

2.3. Peter (b. 1773). This is probably the father of the Peter Hildebrandt listed at Chortitzia in 1802 and 1803 who received the homestead of Peter Klassen. B.H.U. 247 No 13

### 3. Bernhard Hildebrandt of Lackendorf

Bernhard Hildebrandt was listed at Lackendorf in 1776 with one son and one daughter. We know very little regarding this Bernhard, but he may have been a son of the Bernhard Hildebrandt who was listed as a land-owner at Krebsfeld in 1727. This family likely belonged to the Rosenort Gemeinde. Bernhard's children may have included:

3.1. Katherina (b. 1759) married 1785 Peter Gortzen (b. 1761). This family moved to Montau, Molotschna in 1803.

3.2. Bernhard (probably born circa 1760) married Sara Harder (b. 1767). Bernhard appears to have died prior to 1817 when his widow and two sons immigrated to Russia. Sara (nee Harder) Hildebrandt and her son David settled at Sparrau, Mol., where

they are found in the 1835 census under No 17. Bernhard's children include:

3.2.1. Bernhard (1795-1874) married Susanna Krahm (1796-1875). They settled in the Old Colony in 1817-18 at Neuenburg. B.H.U. 218

No 12. Bernhard's children include:

3.2.1.1. Bernhard (1818-40) married Aganetha Krahn. After Bernhard's early death, his widow married Franz Lowen (1813-65) and Gerhard Penner (1819-95). Bernhard had only one child, a son Bernhard.

3.2.1.1.1. Bernhard (1840-1910) married Katherina Krahn. This family came to Canada in the 1870s and settled at Rosenthal, West Reserve, 1881 Manitoba census. Their son Heinrich was a minister in the Bergthal church. Bernhard's children include:

3.2.1.1.1.1. Maria (1862-63);

3.2.1.1.1.2. Bernhard (1863-63);

3.2.1.1.1.3. Bernhard (1864-1923) married Helena Peters, then Katherina Peters;

3.2.1.1.1.4. Heinrich (1866-1940) married Helena Dyck;

3.2.1.1.1.5. Abraham (b. 1868);

3.2.1.1.1.6. Isaac (1870-1949);

3.2.1.1.1.7. Jacob (1871-1922);

3.2.1.1.1.8. Daniel (1873-1951);

3.2.1.1.1.9. Gerhard (1875-1926) married Elisabeth Reimer

3.2.1.1.1.10. Katherina (1877-1951);



*Isaac Hildebrand (1828-1913) and Katharina Bergen (1834-93) immigrated from Neuendorf, Chortitzia Colony, Imperial Russia, to Waldheim, West Reserve, Manitoba in 1878. Children, left to right: Katharina 1864-86, Helena (1866-1925), Isaak (1869-92), Jakob ?, Cornelius (1873-1948), and Anna (1877-1934). Photo courtesy of T. Sawatzky, Steinbach, Manitoba; see also 1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve, page 226, see also 126. Hank Hildebrand, Manager, Morden Credit Union is from this line.*

3.2.1.1.1.11. David (1879-1948);

3.2.1.1.1.12. Peter (1881-1946);

3.2.1.2. Peter (1819-27);

3.2.1.3. David (1822-1904);

3.2.1.4. Daniel (1824-1903);

3.2.1.5. Gerhard (1826-28);

3.2.1.6. Aganetha (1828-1901) married Jacob Martens;

3.2.1.7. Sara (b. 1830) appears to have married an Isebrandt Peters;

3.2.1.8. Peter (no dates available);

3.2.1.9. Gerhard (1834-1902);

3.2.1.10. Susanna (b. 1837);

3.2.1.11. Katherina (1837-37);

3.2.1.12. Katherina (b. 1839) married Abraham Dyck;

3.2.2. David (b. 1796 or 1798) married Kornelia (b. 1792, family name currently unknown). This family lived at Sparrau, Molotschna. Their children include:

3.2.2.1. David (1821-1868) married Katherina Olfert;

3.2.2.2. Bernhard (b. 1823);

3.2.2.3. Jacob (b. 1828);

3.2.2.4. Kornelia (b. 1830);

Note: Some of the information on this family is from notes which Bruce Wiebe of Winkler, Manitoba, kindly shared with me.

### 4. Peter Hildebrandt of Neuteicherwald

This Peter Hildebrandt is listed, without a first name, at Neuteicherwald in 1776. He was a tailor by trade. No children are listed in 1776, but it does appear he had a son Johann (b. 1765). Peter died before 1790.

4.1. Johann (b. 1765). We know little regarding this Johann Hildebrandt, except that in 1817 he married Helena Neufeld (b. 1771), widow of Peter Schierling and soon thereafter, moved to Russia, where he lived for a time at Neuendorf, BHU p 218 No 13. All of the children listed at Neuendorf in 1818 are his step-children, children of Peter Schierling. The Schierling children include Katherina who married Abraham Hamm of Bergthal.

### 5. Peter Hildebrandt of Einlage.

5 A Peter Hildebrandt is listed in 1776 at Einlage with one daughter and no wife. It would seem that his wife had died just prior to the census, and that he later remarried. Peter's children may have included:

5.1. Agatha (b. 1759) married Phillip Dyck (b. 1763) in 1785. They later moved to Russia in 1796 and settled at Neuenburg, Old Colony.

5.2. Peter (No dates available) married Helena Dyck. It would seem this is the family who came to Russia in



*Mexico, circa 1931. Cornelius Hildebrand (1873-1948), with wife Margaretha Giesbrecht (1898-1939), in front with daughter Nelenora (b. 1929). Cornelius Hildebrand is apparently holding up a bag full of Mexica pesos received in exchange for their Canadian dollars. Can anyone identify the other couple in the photograph? Photo courtesy of T. Sawatzky, Steinbach, Manitoba.*

1803 and settled at Einlage, Old Colony. BHU p 341 No 93 and p 214, VII No 5. No additional details are currently available, and it is possible Peter died young or moved away.

## 6. Heinrich Hildebrandt of Rosenort

Most of the Russian Hildebrands appear to be descended from Heinrich Hildebrandt, who is listed as a landowner in 1772, and was a member of the Rosenort Gemeinde. It seems he retired from farming prior to 1776, and likely moved in with his oldest son Isaac. Heinrich was probably married at least twice, and his children include:

6.1. Isaac (No dates available). Isaac is listed in 1776 at Rosenort with three sons, two daughters and one male person (likely his father). The sons and daughters could possibly have included some of his siblings, but this is not certain. Isaac's children may have included:

6.1.1. Margaretha (b. 1760) married Wilhelm Peters (b. 1761) of Blumenort, G.W. This family moved to Russia in 1803 and settled at Niederchortitz.

6.1.2. Dietrich (No dates available). He married a certain Maria (b. 1768) and moved to Russia in 1803. He died before 1808 and his widow married Peter Dyck (b. 1784), later of Burwald, Old Colony. BHU p 275 No 12. Some of this information following is based on circumstantial evidence and may require revision as new information becomes available. Dietrich's children may have included

6.1.2.1. Dietrich (b. 1792) married Gertruda Martens (b. 1791). Dietrich's children may include:

6.1.2.1.1. Maria (1817-59) married Johann Neudorf (1812-77) of Osterwick;

6.1.2.1.2. Peter (No dates) married Elisabeth Wolf;

6.1.2.1.3. Anna (1823-1906) married Abraham Hiebert;

6.1.2.1.4. Dietrich (1824-1902) married Aganetha Klassen. This Dietrich was known as "Doctor" Hildebrandt, and he was probably a "Trachtmoaka", that is a chiropractor, bone-setter and naturopathic doctor. Several descendants of this family pursued this calling, including son Gerhard (b. 1859) and grandson Dietrich (1878-1961);

6.1.2.1.5. Gertruda (no dates) married Johann Thiessen;

6.1.2.2. Heinrich (b. 1793) married Margaretha Epp (1799-1873);

6.1.2.3. Isaac (b. 1796) married Sara Funk. His children may have included:

6.1.2.3.1. Peter (1814-41) married Maria Wiebe (b. 1816). She later married Peter Esau (1820-80). Some sources appear to indicate

Peter's birthdate was 1811, but the above seems more probable. Peter's children included:

- 6.1.2.3.1.1. Peter (1837-67) married Elisabeth Peters (1838-71) who later married Peter Dyck (b. 1844). Peter's children include:
- 6.1.2.3.1.1.1. Elisabeth (1861-1921) married

Molotschna, along with his Neumann stepchildren. Heinrich's children include:

- 6.2.1. Heinrich (b. 1794) married Maria (b. 1804, family name currently unknown);
- 6.2.2. Isaac (b. 1796) married Helena (b. 1796, family name currently unknown);

- 6.2.3. Dietrich (b. 1798) married Elisabeth (b. 1797, family name currently unknown);

6.3. Peter Hildebrand (9.10.1762-10.2.1825) married (1788) Helena Albrecht (1769-1828), daughter of Peter Albrecht of Schwartzdam (Ellerwald Gem.), who also came to Russia in 1788-89. Peter and Helena came to Russia in 1788-89 and settled at Neuendorf, Old Colony. They are listed on the Revisions-Liste for 1795 as the owners of Wirtschaft 19 (BHU p 241) and as the owners of Wirtschaft 44 in the Revision of 1802 (BHU p 256). In 1802 Peter Hildebrand owned 4 horses, 12 cattle, 55 sheep, 3 swine, 1/2 plow, 1 harrows, 1 wagon and 1 spinning wheel. According to the Revisions-Buch for 1808, the Peter Hildebrand family was well-to-do owning Wirtschaft No. 33 and the following property: 7 horses, 23 cattle, 13 sheep, 9 swine, 1 plow, 2 harrows, 2 wagons, and a spinning wheel (BHU, p 270). The age in the 1795 list for Peter appears to be incorrectly transcribed.

Another source indicates that the parents of Peter Hildebrandt were Dietrich Hildebrandt and Anna Brunner (Braun?). I do not believe this to be correct. If this claim is based on an original source document, it may be that the names have been incorrectly read.

[According to the family records of Heinrich Hildebrand (1872-1920) "Our Progenitors of the Past" supplied by Alvin Friesen, Rosenort, Helena Albrecht and Peter Hildebrand met during the trek to Russia and married "Enroute, on

Russian territory, near Bubrowna, Weissrussland, where the emigrants had their winter billets. They celebrated their wedding on November 11, 1789.]

Peter Hildebrandt's children include:

- 6.3.1. Peter (b. 1790);
- 6.3.2. Heinrich (b. 1792) married Helena Neustädter (b. 1796). This family moved to Einlage where Heinrich took over the homestead of his father-in-law Peter Neustädter. Their children include:

- 6.3.2.1. Peter Hildebrand (1815-1900) married 1835 Agatha Hiebert (1816-1906). Peter's children include:

- 6.3.2.1.1. Johann (b. 1836);
- 6.3.2.1.2. Peter (b. 1836) died young;
- 6.3.2.1.3. Heinrich (1840-1917) married Maria Schellenberg (1845-1914). [Heinrich was the father of Heinrich (1872-1920) whose son



*Peter Hildebrand (1831-1903) and Katharina Neufeld (1832-1904) with their son Isaac Hildebrand (1865-1952). The Peter Hildebrand family moved to Sommerfeld W.R. Photo courtesy of Katharina Schroeder, Karl Hildebrand 1859-1982) (Winnipeg, 1982), page 8. See Preservings, No. 14, page 138, for a book review. Great-grandson Henry D. Hildebrand, Gretna, served as Reeve of the R.M. of Reinland during the 1980s. Elmer Hildebrand, owner CHSM, Altona, is a grandson of Isaac.*

Johann Friesen;

6.1.2.3.1.1.2. Maria (1864-97) married Heinrich Penner;

6.1.2.3.1.2. Isaac (b. 1841) married Maria Bergen, then Anna Klassen. This family came to Canada in the 1870s and are found at Blumenhoff, Manitoba, West Reserve, at the time of the 1881 census;

6.1.2.4. Anna (b. 1797);

6.1.2.5. Daniel (b. 1798);

6.1.2.6. Peter (b. 1803);

6.1.2.7. Johann (b. 1806);

6.2. Heinrich (1752-1816) may have been living with his brother Isaac at the time of the 1776 census. We do not know if he had a previous wife, but in the 1790s he married Kornelia Hiebert (b. 1757), the widow of Peter Neumann of Stutthoff (Ellerwald Gem.). He moved to Russia in 1803 and settled at Münsterberg,



Jakob G. Hildebrand (b. 1871) son of Isaac Hildebrand (1838-1929), Kronthal, E. R. Jakob married Helena Harder. They were the grandparents of Bishop Bill Hildebrand, Steinbach, who died in 1999. Photo courtesy of Heritage Collections 1919 1994 New Bothwell, page 283.

Abram lived in Andreasfeld during the Revolution. During the 1920s he immigrated to Canada and lived first in the Crystal City area and later in Steinbach where his son Vern Hildebrand (1941-99) served as Assistant Superintendent of the Hanover School Division];

6.3.2.1.4. Peter (?) (b. 1844) married Anna Ens (1846-1930), daughter of Jakob Enns, *Profile*, page 102. This family moved to America in 1874 and settled near Jansen, Nebraska, where they belonged to the Kleine Gemeinde. [According to the records of the family of brother Heinrich, Peter Hildebrand and wife Anna "became a rich uncle in America....During the years after the First World War, while the Revolution and famine engulfed Russia, this uncle sent his relatives relief supplies." According to Henry Fast in *Profile*, page 107, the family had moved to the Markuslandt settlement, village of Andreasfeld, founded by the Kleine Gemeinde in 1864. It is possible that the couple met here given the proximity to the Old Colony and the fact that Abram Hildebrand (1905-98), son of brother Heinrich lived in Andreasfeld during the Revolutionary times.]

6.3.2.1.5. Agatha (b. 1849) married 1870 Abraham Rempel (b. 1832);

6.3.2.1.6. Dietrich (b. 1852);

6.3.2.1.7. Kornelius (1856-1919) married 1874 Ida Klassen (1870-1942). Kornelius was murdered in 1919 in Einlage. Their daughter Sara Hildebrandt (b. 1908) married Heinrich Pauls (1904-95), the gifted artist, two of whose paintings are featured in the article on Mennonite Low German by Dr. Jack Thiessen, see Material Culture Section;

6.3.2.1.8. Isaac (b. 1859) married Maria Siemens;

6.3.2.1.9. Anna (1863-1917) married 1886 Peter Pätkau (1851-1913);

6.3.2.2. (?) Heinrich Hildebrand (1817-55) married 1840 Maria Hamm (1816-55);

Note: Some of the material for this section is from notes of Alvin Friesen, Rosenort, Manitoba.

- 6.3.3. Susanna (b. 1793, died young);
- 6.3.4. Dietrich (b. 1797) married Anna Berg;
- 6.3.5. Isaac (b. 1799) married ? Katherina Patkau. Isaac's children include:
- 6.3.5.1. ?Helena (1823-81) married Johann Wall;
- 6.3.5.2. Isaac (1828-1913) married Katherina Bergen, then Katherina Froese. This family came to Canada in the 1870s and settled at Waldheim, West Reserve, 1881 Manitoba census;

- 6.3.6. Jacob (1802-47) married Anna Dirksen. [They lived in Neuendorf.] Anna later married Dirk Gerbrandt. This family later moved to Berghthal. BGB A 72. Jacob's children included:
- 6.3.6.1. Helena (b. 1826) married Heinrich Thiessen;
- 6.3.6.2. Jacob (1828-47);
- 6.3.6.3. Peter (1831-1903) married Katherina Neufeld. BGB 119, Kronthal, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;
- 6.3.6.4. Katherina (1833-58);
- 6.3.6.5. Heinrich (1834-1910) married Helena Martens. Neuendorf, West Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;
- 6.3.6.6. Dirk (1835-1844);
- 6.3.6.7. Anna (1836-1927) married Bernhard Friesen, then Peter Neufeld;
- 6.3.6.8. Isaac (1838-1929) married Katherina Giesbrecht, then Margaretha (b. 1841, maiden name unknown) BGB B 293, Kronthal, East Reserve, Manitoba 1881 census;
- 6.3.6.9. Elisabeth (b. 1841) married Martin Wiebe;
- 6.3.6.10. Gerhard (1843-63);
- 6.3.6.11. Maria (1844-47);
- 6.3.6.12. Dirk (1846-46);
- 6.3.7. Helena (b. 1806);
- 6.4. Katherina (b. circa 1768);

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Klassen, I. P. 1979. *Die Insel Chortitz*. Steinbach.  
Neudorf, J. *He Leadeth Me* (no date or place of publication).  
Unruh, B. H. 1955. *Die Niederländischen Hintergründe der Mennonitischen Ostwanderungen*. Karlsruhe.

*Preservings* is looking for information regarding the ancestors of Jakob Johann Hildebrandt (1844-1909), the great-grandfather of Margaret, Mrs. George Born, Blumenort, E.R., Manitoba, whose descendants are listed in the family book, *Stammbaum von Jakob Johann Hildebrandt* compiled by Jacob Hildebrandt, Box 491, Winkler, Manitoba, R6W 4A7.

#### Notice to Members.

If you have not paid your 1999 or 2000 membership fee, this may be the last issue you will receive. To avoid being taken off our membership list, send your membership fee of \$20.00 to HSHS, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0. Members outside of Canada should pay in U. S. funds to cover the higher mailing costs. Please note that the membership/subscription fee was increased to \$20.00 effective January 1, 2000.

## Berghthal Gemeindebuch

We regret to advise our readers that the *Berghthal Gemeindebuch*, Volume Two of the East Reserve Historical Series is out of print.

This work, which includes the 1874-80 ship records and 1881 census of Mennonites in Manitoba, has proved to be an extremely useful and popular reference book. The 1000 copies printed in 1993 have sold out in six years. We desperately need to reprint the book, since there are continued requests from researchers and family historians for copies.

Would you be prepared to help by making a lump sum donation enabling a reprint? The HSHS can issue you a tax deductible receipt. Five thousand dollars would enable us to proceed with this important project. Any gift of this nature would be acknowledged in the reprinted second edition. Leave a legacy that your children and grandchildren can cherish and treasure.

Warning: the culture and heritage you save, will be your own.

# Peter B. Penner (1846-1922)

**Peter B. Penner (1846-1922) and Maria Dyck (1850-1920), Berghthal, Imperial Russia, to Bärwalde, E.R., Manitoba, A Migrating Family, compiled by great-granddaughter Leona Penner Banman, Box 6, New Bothwell, Manitoba, R0A 1C0.**

## Family Background.

Peter B. Penner (1846-1922) was the son of Johann Penner and Maria Loepki, BGB A94. Johann Penner was born in Imperial Russia, May 22, 1807. On May 22, 1828, he married Maria Leopki, born June 12, 1807. Johann Penner died August 29, 1852. Maria died February 25, 1855.

Maria was the sister of Johann Leopki (1804-62) BGB A52 and Katharina Loepki (b. 1803), Mrs. Wilhelm Giesbrecht, BGB A124 and hence related to all the Loeppkys in the Strassberg/Schentzenberg area, near Niverville, see *Dit Sie Jant Sied: Johann Loeppky Family* (Rosenort, 1999), 379 pages.

Henry Schapansky has provided the information that Johann Penner (1804/7-52) was the son of Abraham Penner (b. 1778) and Dorthea Löppky (b. 1778) of Burwalde, Chortitz Colony, Imperial Russia. Schapansky goes on to state that Abraham Penner was probably the son of Johann Penner, Ellerwald I, listed in the 1776 Konsignation, Prussia with 1 son, 1 adult male, 1 adult female, and belonging to the Ellerwald Gemeinde. "It seems that Johann Penner came to Russia 1788-89 and died in the early years. Johann Penner married his cousin."

According to the 1808 Revisions-Buch (census), Abraham Penner was a wealthy farmer listed as follows: "Abraham Penner, age 30, from Elbing, village Ellerwald, landowner, wife Dorothea, 38, children Abraham 6, Johann 4, Elisabeth 2, Magdalena 1/2; property: 7 horses, 28 cattle, 5 swine, 1/2 plow, 1 wagon, 1 spinning wheel," *Unruh*, page 276.

## Peter B. Penner (1846-1922).

Peter Leopki Penner was born January 5, 1846 in the Berghthal Colony, Imperial Russia, BGB B332. He was baptised on June 5, 1867. Peter was only six years-old when his father died at age 45. His mother died two-and-a-half years later, at age 48.

So Peter was left without parents at the age of nine, youngest of six siblings. He was raised by an aunt until he was old enough to go to work for Erdman Buhr. The Buhrs were very good to him, in fact so good he later used the middle initial "B" for Buhr. This may have been prompted by the fact that there were six Peter Penners in the East Reserve in the early years.

On September 26, 1869, Peter married



1901. Peter B. Penner, seated right, son David D. Penner standing in the middle, and grandmother Maria Dyck Penner, seated to the left. Photo courtesy of Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize, a granddaughter of Susanna Penner Kornelsen (1879-1969).

Maria Dyck (1850-1920), daughter of David and Katharina Neufeld Dyck, BGB A154.

found in the 1881 Federal census nor in the 1881 assessment roll. In the 1883 assessment

Three children were born to Peter and Maria in Russia: Peter, David and Johann.

## Emigration, 1875.

In 1875 Peter and Maria Penner emigrated to Canada. They crossed the ocean on the S.S. Quebec, arriving in Quebec City, on July, 1875. From Duluth they travelled by train to Moorehead from where they came up the Red River by a river boat.

## Burwalde.

Peter and Maria Penner settled in the village of Burwalde (Bärwalde), northeast of Grünthal. He filed for a homestead on the NE32-5-6E on May 20, 1880. The Brotschuld registers Book One and Two, list the Peter Penner family in Rosengart, but clearly identify Peter Penner as son of Johann with Burwalde behind the name in brackets. David Dyck and Abram Froese, two other Burwalde families are listed in Neuenburch, while Franz Giesbrecht is listed in Blumengart.

Peter Penner worked on the Lord Dufferin railroad for a time. He had a reputation of a job well done.

It is interesting that the Peter Penner family and Burwalde are not found in the 1881 Federal census nor in the 1881 assessment roll. In the 1883 assessment

Gen Name	Birth	Marriage	Death
2 Peter B. Penner	Jan 5, 1846		Aug 11, 1922
m Maria N. Dyck	Dec 24, 1849	Sep 26, 1869	May 2, 1920
3 Peter D. Penner	Aug 8, 1870		Aug 1, 1935
m Katharina Giesbrecht	Apr 8, 1872	Jul 29, 1890	Sep, 1937
3 David D. Penner	Feb 9, 1872		Feb 23, 1872
3 Johann D. Penner	May 8, 1873		Jul 8, 1926
m Sarah Reimer	Nov 8, 1869	Jan 10, 1893	Mar 27, 1956
3 Maria D. Penner	May 28, 1875	Nov 15, 1892	Feb 6, 1959
m Peter R. Froese	Feb 1, 1870		Sep 16, 1949
3 David D. Penner	Dec 14, 1876		Dec 19, 1876
3 Katherine Penner	Nov 7, 1877		Feb 14, 1969
m Johann D. Siemens	Sep 28, 1871	Jun 25, 1896	Jul 20, 1956
3 Susanna D. Penner	Nov 12, 1879	Oct 2, 1898	Apr 28, 1969
m Abr. W. Kornelsen	Jun 6, 1879		Jun 9, 1950
3 Elizabeth D. Penner	Jan 10, 1881		Sep 16, 1970
m Peter U. Neufeld	Jun 11, 1879	Jul 19, 1900	
3 Anna D. Penner	Mar 20, 1882		May 22, 1882
3 Abram D. Penner	May 6, 1883		May 22, 1887
3 David D. Penner	Aug 3, 1884		Mar 5, 1958
m Margareta Hiebert	Mar 4, 1890	Jun 1, 1909	Feb 2, 1919
3 Jacob D. Penner	Nov 10, 1885		Mar 2, 1886
3 Jacob D. Penner	May 23, 1887		Sep 1887

roll the Peter Penner family is listed under Schönneberg, the village situated immediately to the west of Burwalde. The young couple is listed as owning a modest farming operation, a quarter section of land with 5 acres cultivated, 2 oxen and 2 cows.

The 1882/83 "Seelenlisten" list the Peter Penner family as resident in Schönneberg (*Working Papers*, page 156). The Berghal fire insurance records do not include a village of Burwalde, and list the Peter Penner family in Schönneberg.

The 1884 Municipal assessment rolls, however, include the village of Burwalde, with eight landowners: Abraham Froese, David Dyck (probably the brother-in-law to Peter Penner), Peter Penner, Hein. Hübter, Jakob Froese, Abraham Froese, Aron Schroeder and Franz Giesbrecht. Peter Penner now has a house assessed at \$100 and inventory of \$150, with 3 oxen, 2 cows, and some equipment for a total assessment of 427, the second highest in the village, second only to Abraham Froese with 683. It is clear that the villages of Schönneberg and Burwalde existed simultaneously as they are both listed in the 1884 assessments. The Peter Penner family is listed in the 1891 census, family # 192.

#### Recollections.

Granddaughter Helen Froese Esau recalled that Peter Penner had lived at one end of Burwalde and the village Schulz (mayor) at the other. Peter was a bit of a story teller and enjoyed attending the Schultebut, the meeting of the village assembly, to be the first with some news. Apparently the Schulz was known to ask him if he had his facts straight and if they were accurate.



1920, Daughter-in-law Mrs. Peter D. Penner, nee Katharina Giesbrecht, with daughter Sara, and grandson Jakob P. Neufeld. Photo courtesy of Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.

Helen was told that when her mother Maria was to be married, it was apparently kept quiet as long as possible. But when the Penners whitewashed their chimney the neighbours in the village had started "fuschling", "Panna's Mitch well sich befriejhe" (Penner's Maria wants to get married), and it was true. Helen also recalls seeing the grandparents at Heinrich and Tina (Froese) Klassen's wedding which took place on April 5, 1901. They were sitting there both dressed in black. Grandmother was wearing her fancy traditional black hat, a "Haube".

#### Saskatchewan, 1905.

In 1905 the land around Herbert,

Saskatchewan, was opened for homesteading. The opportunities of recreating the frontier experience appealed to a number of members of the extended Penner family including sons Johann and Peter.

Daughter Susanna and her husband Abraham W. Kornelsen moved at this time as well, departing Niverville by train for Herbert on May 3, 1905 (see section on Susanna's journal). Travelling together on the same train were her brothers Johann and Peter, and the Dietrich Penners and Jakob Penners, the latter possibly being her uncle. After a time, Susanna became very ill and the Kornelsen family was forced to return to Manitoba.

Sons Johann and Peter had moved to



1918. Peter B. and Maria Penners visiting at the home of their daughter, Mrs. Peter U. Neufeld, Alberta. Photo courtesy of Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.

## Johann Penner Family:

The family of Johann Penner immigrated to Manitoba:

Oldest son Johann Penner died in Russia in 1873, BGB B143. His widow married for the second time to Cornelius Siemens (1819-1905), Schönfeld, E.R., August 22, 1876, BGB A183.

According to the Brotschuld Registers, son Abraham Penner settled in the village of Rosenthal, north of Ebenfeld. Sons Jakob and Peter Penner are listed in Rosengart.

Abraham Penner was resident in the village of Kronthal at the time of the 1881 census where he is also listed in the Brandordnung. His wife Justina Dyck was a sister to Maria Dyck (1840-1900), third wife of Johann Schroeder, see *Preservings*, No. 8, Part Two, pages 44-47.

The Jakob Penner family moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan, in 1905. Granddaughter Susanna Penner Kornelsen has recorded that aunt Mrs. Jakob Penner died in Herbert on November 5, 1927. She was a sister to the wife of Peter B. Penner.

<b>Gen Name</b>	<b>Birth</b>	<b>Marriage</b>	<b>Death</b>
1 Johann Penner	May 22,1807		Aug 29,1852
m Maria Loepki	Jun 12,1807		Feb 25,1855
2 Johann Penner	Feb 17,1829		Apr 22,1873
m Margaretha Wall	Mar 20,1837		
2 Dorothe Penner	May 22,1833		Jul 10,1850
2 Katarina Penner	Oct 6,1836		
2 Abraham Penner	Dec 18,1837		Sep 1,1914
m Justina Dyck	Apr 19,1837		
2 Maria Penner	Mar 1,1839		Jun 11,1841
2 Jakob Penner	Feb 8,1841		
m Katarina N. Dyck	Feb 19,1844		Nov 5,1927
2 Peter Penner	Jan 5,1846		Aug 11,1922
m Maria N. Dyck	Dec 24,1849	Sep 26,1869	May 2,1920

Herbert, Sask., and established their families there and so the parents decided to move there as well. This must have been sometime after 1907, as Susanna mentions staying with her parents during her illness in that year.

Around 1910 Peter and Maria decided to move back to Manitoba, settling in Heuboden, near Niverville, SE35-4-7E. They built a big new house in Heuboden (This house is now standing east of Landmark). Apparently Peter

wanted all his married children to live at home.

Later they built a new house in Grunthal where they lived for a short time.

The Penners enjoyed company while living in Grunthal, including their children and siblings living in Saskatchewan.

Daughter Susanna Kornelsen recorded that on February 18, 1914, Peter Penners came to David Penners. On the 20th they went to Grunthal to visit the parents."

## David Dyck Family:

David Dyck married Katarina Neufeld, a sister to Peter Neufeld (1821-1922), the centenarian, who settled in Ebenfeld, west of Steinbach in 1874, BGB A66, see *Preservings*, No. 11, pages 64-68.

Son Jakob Dyck was buried on April 9, 1922.

Daughter Susanna Dyck (Dueck) married Cornelius Wiebe, son of Cornelius Wiebe, Eigenfeld, E.R., Manitoba, see *Preservings*, No. 13, page 63. Cornelius Wiebe Jr. moved to Lowe Farm in 1900 where they farmed successfully until the Depression. Their daughter Susanna married Abraham T. Funk, the grandparents of Peter Funk, Funk's Toyota, Steinbach.

Abraham Dyck married Anna Wiebe, sister to Cornelius Wiebe, who had married his older sister Susanna. The Abraham Dyck family was resident in Kronthal at the time of the 1882 Seelenlisten. Abraham died on November 8, 1921, in Schönsee, E. R., 1887 CBGB20. He was buried on the 12th. His daughter Maria Dueck (1894-1978) married Abraham Broesky (1885-1967) and they were the parents of John F. Broesky (b. 1915), one-time Reeve of the R. M. of Hanover. Another daughter Aganetha Dueck (1883-1965) married Dirk "D.N." Dueck, Rosengard, E.R., well-known chiropractor and auctioneer. Son Abraham W. Dueck lived in the Burwalde-Rosengard area and his daughter married Wilhelm Dueck and for the second time to David P. Reimer.

Son David Dyck was buried on November 5, 1921. According to the 1887 Chortitzer Gemeindebuch, A155, the David Dyck (Dueck) family moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan.

Dirk, the youngest son of David Dyck was only 10 years old when they left Russia in 1874. They remained in the east over winter and Diedrich worked there for a wealthy man who wanted to keep the boy. They also had the grandmother along on the journey from Russia. Then the wealthy man claimed that Dietrich was gone and then he disappeared as well. The train was ready to leave, but they searched for him. Finally the train had to leave and the boy was nowhere to be found. This was very difficult for my mother and for my grandmother as well, who took this very hard and became sick. It grieved her severely. The grandmother died soon after they had arrived in Canada. Later when Diedrich would have been 20 years old, my parents received notice that he had died. Then my parents and their siblings held a funeral service. At this time the people in Ontario sent his kist with his personal possession and writings, that he had died. From the journal of Susanna Penner Kornelsen (1879-1969).

For more information on the family of David Dyck (1820-69), see forthcoming article by Henry Schapansky, "Berghaler Dyck/Duecks", to be published in *Preservings*, No. 16, June 2000.

Gen Name	Birth	Marriage	Death
1 David Dyck	Aug 5,1820		1869
m Katarina Neufeld	Feb 14,1823	Jan 19,1843	Dec 31,1877
2 Katarina N. Dyck	Feb 19,1844		Nov 5,1927
m Jakob Penner	Feb 8,1841		
2 Jakob N. Dyck	Dec 31,1847		Apr 9,1922
m Sarah Hoeppner	May 24,1847		
2 Maria N. Dyck	Dec 24,1849	Sep 26,1869	May 2,1920
m Peter Penner	Jan 5,1846		Aug 11,1922
2 David N. Dyck	Jun 9,1852	Nov 24,1874	Nov 5,1921
m Maria Thiessen	Jun 10,1855		
2 Elisabeth N. Dyck	Oct 25,1853		
2 Susanna N. Dyck	Aug 22,1856		Dec 7,1935
m Cornelius Wiebe	Mar 13,1853		May 25,1875
2 Abraham N. Dyck	May 17,1859	Sep 11,1881	Nov 8,1921
m Anna Wiebe	Sep 11,1862		Dec 2,1922
2 Peter N. Dyck	Sep 22,1861		
2 Dirk N. Dyck	Jul 19,1864		Circa 1883

On December 15, 1915, son Johann Penners, Herbert, came to visit their parents and siblings. On January 21, 1916, David Dycks, were visiting in the East Reserve, on the 25th they went to Schönneberg to visit brother Abraham Dycks.

On June 18, 1916, Mrs. Jakob Penner, nee Katharina N. Dyck, visited her sister Maria and brother-in-law Peter B. Penner, Grunthal.

Daughter Susanna recorded that "On April 4, 1917, my parents held their auction sale in Grunthal."

### Trip, 1917-18.

Susanna Penner Kornelsen has recorded that her parents Peter B. and Maria Penner went on an extended trip to Saskatchewan in 1918.

April 4, 1917: "For night they came along with us to our place. On the 6th Abram took them to David Penners. On May 2, the parents departed for Herbert. We were together with them in Winnipeg. On May 23, they travelled to Alberta. On September 15 they travelled to Herbert and returned to Johann Penners where they plan to remain for the winter."

"On April 3, 1918, my parents came from Herbert, to David Penners. On the 9th of April they were visiting at our place. On July 10th they again came to David Penner."

From January 1 to February 20, 1918, while the parents were on their trip to Alberta and Saskatchewan. Peter D. Penners, from Herbert, were visiting siblings in Manitoba.

### Social Life.

After returning from the trip to Saskatchewan, Peter and Maria Penner lived with various of their children in turn. They continued an active social life and visiting family and friends.

Daughter Susanna Kornelsen recorded the following visits: "On May 20, 1918, daughter Maria D. Penner, Mrs. Peter Froese, and her family moved to Lowe Farm. On July 4, sister Susanna, Mrs. Abram Kornelsen, and her parents went visiting to Morris, first at uncle Jakob Dycks, and then at Peter Froeses." Susanna lists a total of 14 places where they visited over the next few days, returning home on the 9th."

On June 18, 1918, Maria's sister and Peter's sister-in-law Mrs. Jakob Penner came for a visit.

On June 21, brother-in-law David Dycks came visiting at Abram Kornelsens and on the 22nd, they took them to David Penners. On the 25th they drove with them to Schönneberg, to uncle Abram Dycks.

"On January 29, 1920, Peter R. Penners from Main Center came here. On the 31st, they went along with us to the grandparents and David Penners."

### The Golden Years.

Presently deteriorating health made them move in with daughter Susanna, Mrs. Abraham W. Kornelsen, in Heuboden, where Maria died on May 2, 1920, at 11:30 p.m.

Maria Penner's funeral took place at her daughter Susanna's (Mrs. A.W. Kornelsen) place in Heuboden on May 6.

Shortly thereafter, Peter moved in with daughter Katherina (Mrs. Johann D. Siemens), Rosengart.

Granddaughter Helen (Siemens) Doerksen remembers grandfather living at their home in Rosengart for the last year or two of his life. She recalled that he was always very friendly and good company. Her sister Margaret was a two to four year-old girl at the time and loved to wait on her grandfather. She would bring him water or bring his pillow when he moved from place to place.

Peter Penner's feet were very swollen during this time and as a result he was not very active.

Having heard a noise at night, Katharina and Johann Siemens investigated and found grandfather Peter B. Penner dead on the floor, August 11, 1922.

The funeral was held at the Johann Siemens home in Schönfeld on August 14.

In the evening after the funeral, father's possessions that he still had, were sold by auction. Johann M. Penner, Herbert, was the auctioneer. The auction brought in \$19.00. On August 25, daughter Susanna received her parental inheritances, the sum of \$38.18.

#### Peter B. Penner Family:

Daughter Susanna Penner Kornelsen has recorded a few details about her siblings. Susanna also compiled a list of most of her nephews and nieces.

In 1890 brother Peter D. Penner married Katharina Giesbrecht. They were wedded by Isaac Bergen, West Reserve, on his birthday. Their son Peter R. Penner moved to Mexico in 1922, and returned to Saskatchewan in 1925. He was born in Plum Coulee in 1894 and died in the Swift Current Hospital of stomach cancer on October 11, 1932.

In 1893, brother Johann Penner married Sarah Reimer at Plum Coulee. Johann D. Penner died in Mexico. Mrs. Penner died in Main Centre, Saskatchewan, in 1956.

Sister Katarina D. Penner was baptised by Bishop David Stoesz in spring of 1896. On June 25, she married Johann, son of Cornelius Siemens (1819-1905), Schönfeld. The couple made their home in Schönfeld, E.R. Two of their sons, Cornelius and David died during the influenza epidemic in November 1918.

Sister Maria D. Penner was baptised by Bishop David Stoesz in Spring of 1892.

Sister Elisabeth D. Penner married Peter U. Neufeld. They moved to Alberta. In March of 1910 they returned to Manitoba to visit sister Susanna. On March 7, 1917, the Neufelds came to Manitoba again, visiting at the Kornelsen home, the David Penners and the parents in Grunthal. Brother Johann Penner from Herbert joined them on March 9.

Susanna D. Penner and her fiancee Abraham Kornelsen were both baptised in Steinbach by Aeltester Abraham L. Dueck, Grünfeld, on July 17, 1898.

#### David Dyck Penner 1884-1958.

David Dyck Penner was born in Canada on August 3, 1884. He grew up in Burwalde area. He was baptised on the confession of his faith in 1904 and became a member of the Chortitzer Gemeinde.

On June 1, 1909, David D. Penner was married to Margareta Loewen Hiebert (1890-1919) in the worship house in Chortitz. Margareta was the daughter of Heinrich Hiebert (1855-1924) and Helena Loewen (1850-1921), Chortitz, BGB A 159. For a photograph of Helena Loewen Hiebert, see *Heritage Collections, New Bothwell*, page 262.

Heinrich Hiebert (1855-1924) is listed in the village of Bergfeld in the 1883 tax records, the Berghaler Brandordnung, and the 1882 Seelenliste. Evidently they moved to Chortitz some time later where they settled on SE17-7-5E, where Wayne Penner, a great-grandson is residing today.

David and Margareta lived on a farm in the Niverville area, SE22-7-4E, where son Peter E. Penner was born. David D. Penner built a large two-story house here in approximately 1917. The house had a south and north, double story veranda, running water, steam heating and hardwood floors.

Four children were born to them. Margareta became very sick. She died on February 2, 1919, leaving behind a widowed husband and three young bewildered children. Maria (Mrs. Abraham Driedger), the oldest was only seven years old. Helena (Mrs. David D. Peters, Vollwerk), the second oldest, had just turned three, see *Preservings*, No. 13, page 78.

On July 13, 1919, David D. Penner remarried to Maria Falk Pe-



1910. David D. Penner and his first wife, Margaret Hiebert. Photo courtesy of Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.



Son Johann M. Penners and family in Mexico, 1924. He was the brother of Susanna, Mrs. Abram W. Kornelsen. She has listed Johann's children as Peter (1894-1932), Katie (b. 1901), and Maria (1906-57), Mrs. Diedrich Gerbrandt. Photo courtesy of Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize. If anyone can help locate descendants of this family branch, please contact the author.



1924. The Johann Siemens family of Rosengard, SE24-6-5E. This photograph was originally published with an article regarding the family of Kornelius Siemens (b. 1819), but is republished here because we now have a better original. See Preservings, No. 9, Part Two, page 24-25. L.-r.: Elisabeth (1911-92), Mrs. Jakob Dueck; Katharina (1902-28), Mrs. Isaak Doerksen; Maria (1897-1986), Mrs. Dirk D. Ginter; mother Katharina Siemens (1877-1968) with son Dietrich (b. 1922) standing in front, married Anna Giesbrecht; Margaretha (b. 1922), Mrs. Abraham Giesbrecht; father Johann D. Siemens (1871-1956); son Peter (1904-79) married Susanna Froese; Johann (1908-83) married Katarina Unrau, and Heinrich (b. 1915) married Olga Wiebe. Photo courtesy of Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.



Circa 1924. Peter P. Siemens (May 21, 1904-79), son of Johann D. Siemens and Helena Penner Siemens. Photo courtesy of Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.



Children of Diedrich Gerbrandt and Maria R. Penner, 1947, Gouldtown, Saskatchewan, (l/-r.) Helena b. 1929, Sara, 1929, Willie 1927, Annie 1925, Lydia P. Gerbrandt 1932. Photo courtesy of Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.

ters, daughter of John and Katherina (Falk) Peters. Sister-in-law Susanna Penner Kornelsen has written on the back of a photograph that David's second wife Maria Falk Peters was from "Das Vorstosene Kind" the baby which was thrown into a pig pen by its Russian mother and whose life was saved by Jakob Peters (1813-88), Oberschulz of the Bergthal Colony.

At the beginning of May, 1920, David and Maria moved from Niverville to Lowe Farm where daughter Margaret (later Mrs. Edward Maier) was born three months later and daughter Susanna (Mrs. Jakob Toews) the following year.

Maria died on February 2, 1923.

According to daughter Margaret, her father

settled on half-a-section of virgin prairie. Apparently he also rented an additional half-section of farmland north of his property. All farming was done with horses until he got a Fordson tractor and later a John Deere tractor with large implements. Grain was threshed until after the Depression when some of it was swathed and combined. In the early years, roads in the Lowe Farm area were mostly ruts and roads had to be built. With a team of horses and a scoop. David Penner worked for the Municipality in lieu of taxes, a practice known as statute labour or Scharwerk in Plautdietsch. He also had some fine heavy weight stallions at stud.

David D. Penner was keen on Model T cars owning a total of seven in the years after the buggy gave way to the horseless carriage.

As was customary at the time, daughter Margaret stayed with her aunt Susanna, Mrs. Abr. W. Kornelsen in Heuboden while her father was a widower.

Needing a companion and mother for his children, David D. Penner married for the third time to Katherine Hamm, on January 13, 1924. She was the daughter of Jacob and Katherine (Sawatsky) Hamm from Edenthal, near Gretna.

Four daughters were born to them. Johanna died in infancy. This union was also not to be for long. Katherine died six years later on May 2, 1930. Edna was four years old, Elma almost 3 years, Sarah Sally was only a 1 year old. A lot of responsibility of caring for the younger siblings must have fallen to Mary and Helen, then 18 and 17 years old.

On September 25, 1933, David D. Penner married again for the fourth and last time to Maria Dyck, daughter of Peter and Katherina (Rempel) Dyck, Rosefarm. This marriage lasted 23 years. Two sons were born to them, Edward and Robert (Bob).

David and Mary moved from Lowe Farm to a farm in the New Bothwell area (then Heuboden area) in 1948, SE6-7-4E.

David also served as a school trustee in the Heuboden, Seaton school district.

#### Recollections.

Daughter Margaret Maier writes that "The farm between Morris and Lowe Farm was far away from neighbours, and our daily social contacts were with members of our family. When I was 9 3/4 we lost another mother, and we had three more sisters. Mary being the oldest, came home from maid service in Winnipeg to care for our young family. She may have been 17 or 18. Farm life at our home was a drudgery; times were tough especially during the years of the Great Depression. When Mary



*Photograph of bridal couple (middle) and friends with their horse teams and buggys. Daughter Doris Toews believes that it may have been the wedding of David D. Penner and Mary Peters, her parents.*



*The David D. Penner farm SE6-7-4E, Heuboden, view to the northwest. The farm was purchased from Cornelius W. Kornelsens in 1948 when they moved to Mexico with the Kleine Gemeinde. The house was built in 1914 and the barn in the early 1930s. To the east of the barn is a carriage shed and garage. Along the path to the southeast through the bush was an Anwohner yard where the family of son-in-law C. D. Koop lived. The path through the bush apparently was part of the original road to Grunfeld (Kleefeld) to the village of Heuboden, situated in later years approximately a quarter mile west and a little north of the house and barn. Heuboden and Grünfeld were both Kleine Gemeinde villages, although all the Kleine Gemeinde left Heuboden for Mexico in 1948. Photo courtesy of daughter Elma Penner Warkentin, Steinbach. For additional information of the C. W. Kornelsen farm and family, see New Bothwell Heritage, page 214.*

went back to the city for periods of time, Helen was the oldest at home."

"The Depression years were very hard on us with the land drying up, and grasshoppers finishing off what little grain and grass was left. We used chemicals on seed grain to prevent a rust disease and to kill grasshoppers in the fields. Some of our horses that got into the grain died or became exceedingly stiff forever. Doris and I spent another year at Kornelsens. Income was often nonexistent and one winter I think we ate nothing but fish and bread for a month. By this time a housekeeper had replaced both Mary and Helen, and Doris and I spent another year at Kornelsens." From the writings of daughter Margaret Maier.

#### **Death.**

David D. Penner sold the farm to son Peter



*David D. Penner with son Peter E. Penner, circa 1918. Photo courtesy of Peter E. Penner, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*



*Elisabeth Penner Neufeld, daughter of Peter B. Penner, with her husband Peter Neufeld. Photo courtesy of Peter E. Penner, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*



*David D. Penner leading stud horse. Photo courtesy of Peter E. Penner, Winnipeg, Manitoba.*

E. Penner in the summer of 1957 and retired to Steinbach, a property with 20 acres. Peter's daughter Erna and her husband Ed Dueck now own the family farm, SE36-74E.

David D. Penner passed away on March 5, 1958, at 10:50 p.m. His last nine days were of great suffering.

**Source:**

For further information on the family of Peter E. Penner, see *Heritage Collections, New Bothwell*, pages 326-9.

The new "Chortitzer CD-ROM is still available by special order for \$100.00 a copy. Contact the editor at Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0.

## Journal, 1905 by Susanna Kornelsen.

The journal of Susanna Kornelsen, daughter of Peter B. Penner (1846-1922), represents an interesting adaptation of the Kleine Gemeinde writing tradition by a Bergthaler woman.

In her one journal, Susanna writes, "From father's book of Abraham E. Kornelsen..." indicating that she borrowed the idea of documenting her family records from her father-in-law. Through her youngest daughter, Susanna, married to Kleine Gemeinde Aeltester Cornelius R. E. Reimer (1902-59), Mexico, Susanna Sr. became the matriarch of a powerful Kleine Gemeinde dynasty.

Susanna's journals provide information regarding the history of the Penner family, shedding light particularly on the migration to Saskatchewan in 1905 and subsequent interactions among the siblings and parents.

The following is a translation of pages 51 to 53, regarding the journey to Saskatchewan and subsequent experiences of the Kornelsen family.

"On March 20, 1905, my husband [Abraham W. Kornelsen] left for Herbert [Saskatchewan] to take up a homestead and to transfer title. He was there for a week and started to build a barn."

"On May 3rd we departed from Niverville to Winnipeg. We were there until evening. Then the train departed for Herbert. We had two tractors, four head of livestock, equipment and all the household furnishings. I and the children were in a passenger car. We had Maria, Tien and Abram along. Travelling together with us were Diedrich Penners and Jakob Penners, my [brothers] Peter, Johann Penners, Dietrich Hieberts, my niece, Johann Hieberts [?] and Abram Goerskens."

"We arrived in Herbert on the 7th at 11 p.m. in the evening. We had 22 head of cattle and 2 horses. We unloaded on the 8th, and the goods on the 9th."

"On the 10th we were off to the land, it snowed very hard. When we arrived on our land, the walls of the barn were already standing. Until the 12th we nailed boards, also on the roof. Johann Rempel helped. He helped to drive the cattle up to our land. The sun shone on the 12th, then we were able to dry [move ?] goods, which was much better, but still hard. We were not able to heat, as we did not have an oven which could be set up."

"After we had been there for two months I became very sick and had to lie in bed for a few days. And so it was the entire summer, and it was difficult for me to work. On April 17, 1906, Susanna was born, and I could no longer work at all."

"In January, 1907, Jakob Kornelsen came here to us, since he was going home..... [bottom line of page undecipherable, but possibly refers to Susanna's children and that]...after they were home they were at my parents for one month."

"On February 7, 1909, we departed from Herbert. Wilhelm Toews brought us to the train [station]. On the 8th we arrived in Winnipeg. I went into the General Hospital. On the 16th I was operated on by Dr. Gerhard Hiebert. I was going down."

"On the 7th, my husband and the three children departed by train for Niverville. They were picked up there and taken to the parents [presumably Susanna's parents as Abraham's father died in 1893 after which his mother remarried and moved to Meade County, Kansas, in 1906]."

"From there the little children were brought further, they were two weeks at Barmans [Barkmans?], then to Steinbach to the widow Johann Dueck, where Susanna stayed until August, and the other three were at my parents."

"On March 12th I came out of the hospital to my parents. I was to remain mainly in bed for a month. After a few days, Gerhard Schellenbergs, Rosenfeld, came over and took Maria with them. She was there for four months."

"In May my husband travelled to Herbert to our Wirtschaft, he was there for four months after which he returned with some goods."

"During this time I was mainly at Jakob K. and by the widow J. Dueck together with the two children Tien and Abram. These were difficult days for me. When I retired to bed in the evenings I often cried myself to sleep, why we had to be scattered so far apart. And yet, I was glad that we were looked after...."

"When he [Abr. K.] arrived in Niverville on the train with the goods, I was at Peter Froesen. We stayed there for night. Jakob Kornelsen picked up a load from the train. The next day we drove to Jakob Kornelsens. The goods were piled in the Scheune. We remained there for a few weeks. Then we moved into Peter Barmans' house, we lived there for a year after which we bought the land from Jakob W. Reimer, Steinbach. He took our land in Herbert in trade, and we received Peter Barmans'. We gave \$200.00 to boot. Thus the deal was made and we had land, 2 horses, 3 beef cattle. We had 1 cow at Jakob Kornelsens. The beginning was hard, the first year that we had geese and hens. After that things started to go easier."



Susanna Penner Kornelsen (1879-1969), passport photo, 1948. Photo courtesy of Quellen Colony, page 26.

**Source:** Susanna Penner Kornelsen, Journals, courtesy of granddaughter Tina Reimer Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.

# Johann J. Loewen (1871-1937?), Friedensfeld

Johann J. Loewen (1871-1937?), Friedensfeld, Ukraine, Orchardist, poet, choral leader and teacher,  
by Harry Loewen, 4835 Parkridge Road, Kelowna, B.C., V1W 3A1.

## Background.

While a student at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in the early 1950s, I received the gift of a life-time, and that from one of my beloved teachers, Abram H. Unruh. One day Unruh handed me a book with the words, "Brother Loewen, take this. This book will be of greater value to you than it is to me." It was a copy of my grandfather's poems I had not seen before. *Herzenstöne für schlichte Christenherzen* (Heart-tunes for simple Christians) was published in Halbstadt, South Russia, in 1899.

The book of 346 pages is a collection of poems for many occasions, including birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and school events. There are also poems of friendship, love, and reflections on faith, prayer and the Christian life. Opposite the title page there appear in my grandfather's beautiful hand the words: "Heinrich Unruh zum Andenken von dem treuen Freunde Johann Loewen." The copy was evidently a gift to his friend Heinrich Unruh, a brother to Abram H. Unruh. Heinrich Unruh was later a missionary to India. (A brother, Benjamin H. Unruh, is well known among Mennonites for his work in the Mennonite emigration.)

## Youth and Marriage.

Johann Loewen, born in 1871, came originally from the Yasykovo settlement, just north of the Chortitza colony. At age 15 he moved with his parents to Friedensfeld in the province of Yekaterinoslav. Following baptism, he became a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church. At age 21 he entered alternative state service, spending four years in the Anadol forestry (Forstei), a place he thoroughly disliked.

In several poems he complains about the unchristian behaviour of his fellow-Mennonites, he laments the absence of true friends, and he expresses a longing for home. In one poem, "Last farewell from Anadol! (1896)," he writes, "...I will avoid you gladly, I hasten away with joy...."

His separation from the woman he loved and hoped to marry, no doubt contributed to his misery and loneliness at Anadol.

After his return to Friedensfeld, Loewen married a neighbour's daughter, Helene Friesen, a niece of the historian P.M. Friesen. The young couple moved to the Nepluyevka settlement, which was located south of Friedensfeld, some 16 kilometres from Nikopol. In Blumenfeld, a village of the settlement, they leased a farm. Their four children, including the youngest, Kolja, my father, were born here.

In Blumenfeld Loewen founded a church choir which he led as conductor for some 20. Together with Bernhard Dück (Editor's Note), a gifted choral leader and composer, Loewen arranged and led conductors' courses, seeking



*Helene (Friesen) Loewen and Johann J. Loewen, with children (l.-r.) Heinrich, Johann (Wanja), Anna and Nikolai (Kolja) c. 1918. Nikolai was the father of Dr. Harry Loewen, former Mennonite Chair, University of Winnipeg.*

to raise the quality of singing and music in the Mennonite colonies. According to one of Loewen's reports in the Mennonite paper *Zionsbote*, written around the turn of the century, Friedensfeld developed a tradition of good music-making and contributed to greater appreciation of choral singing among Mennonites.

## Revolution, 1917.

During the Civil War after the Revolution of 1917, the Loewens lost their farm in Nepluyevka and suffered attacks from bandits and anarchists.

I remember Grandmother telling me how Grandfather was almost killed. A bandit confronted him and demanded money and valuables. When Grandfather told him that he had nothing of value left, the angry bandit raised his sabre and brought it down upon Grandfather's head.

Grandfather would have been a dead man, had the bandit not changed his mind in the last minute about killing his victim. As the blade came down, the bandit turned it in mid-air so that its blunt edge hit Grandfather's upper arm. My grandfather cried out in pain and sank to his knees. The bandit walked away and Grandfather's life was spared.

## Friedensfeld.

Having lost their material existence in Blumenfeld, the Loewens moved back to Friedensfeld. Here Grandfather continued to serve as choir conductor and choral instructor. He also worked with young people and taught Sunday School. During the 1920s emigration to Canada, my grandfather helped Mennonites to procure exit visas for them. When he and

his family in 1929 also decided to leave for Canada, it was no longer possible. The Soviets no longer issued exit visas and Canada closed its doors to European immigrants. The Great Depression with its unemployment and difficult times had begun.

## Menno-Lied.

The musical collaboration between my grandfather and Bernhard Dück resulted in a song written specifically for the 400th anniversary celebration of the founding of Anabaptist-Mennonitism (1525).

The text for the "Menno-Lied" (Menno song) was written by Loewen while Dück composed the melody. The song celebrates the Mennonites as a wandering people, a people who were driven from place to place because of their faith.

According to the song, throughout their history Mennonites have been in search of a homeland:

Sie lieszen nicht vom Glauben, gegründet auf das Wort,

sie lieszen still sich hetzen vom Feind von Ort zu Ort.

Sprach man in einem Lande die Glaubensfreiheit ab,

dann griffen sie entschlossen bald nach dem Wunderstab.

(They did not renounce their faith, based on the Word; they were driven by the enemy from place to place. If their religious freedom was denied in one country, they soon left in search of another country.)

This song, as the authors suggest in a note at the bottom of the song, was a gift of the Russian Mennonites to the world-wide Mennonite community. Sadly, no Russian

Mennonite delegation was allowed to participate in the anniversary celebration held in 1925 in Switzerland.

### Kolkhoz.

When the state farms (collectives) were established during the Stalin era, my grandfather got a position as an orchardist in Friedensfeld. He planted various orchards and vineyards.

I still remember eating the delicious sweet white grapes from the vines Grandfather had planted. I also remember our own orchard and the great variety of fruits, including apples, cherries, plums and other fruits, all carefully cultivated by my grandfather.

When the so-called *kulaks* (persons who owned property and were considered rich by the Soviets) were exiled, my grandfather was one of the last to remain at his post in the state collective. But a party man in the village, who hated my grandfather for some reason, saw to it that Grandfather too was sent to prison. Three time he was arrested and jailed in a Nikopol prison, but every time he was set free by the courts because he was considered useful to the state. The orchards he had planted brought in thousands of rubles for the collective.

When Grandfather returned from prison after his second incarceration, he confided to Helene, his wife, "Now I understand the expression 'Oh hell, oh hell, now I know you'."

He referred no doubt to the torture and pain he was subjected to in prison.

### Arrest, 1937.

In 1937, when nearly all men in Friedensfeld were taken and exiled, Grandfather was again arrested and sent to prison in Nikopol--this time he did not return.

The trumped-up charge against my grandfather was that he had wilfully destroyed state orchards in the Friedensfeld area. When asked to sign the false charges, Grandfather refused. He then was physically tortured until he signed the incriminating document.

I heard from my grandmother and mother that one of the tortures he suffered was standing in a narrow enclosure for hours under bright lights with cold water dripping steadily on his balding head. When my mother and father visited Grandfather in prison, taking food and clothes to him, he looked very pale and exhausted. The interrogations and tortures had taken their toll. A few months later in 1937 his son Nikolai, my father, joined Grandfather in the Nikopol prison.

In his last letter from prison Grandfather wrote to his wife, "My dear Lena, my faithful life's partner: Why did such a hard blow as never before have to strike us? I have accepted my lot and have just one request of you, my dearest, and of you children. Don't take it too hard. Accept everything as coming from God and comfort yourself with the thought that we shall see each other again in heaven, to where I'm going in steadfast faith."

To my mother, Grandfather addressed the following words, "Dear Anna, look after mother when she is sick and weak. God will

reward you." He added, "Dear, poor Anna, how I have prayed for you and for you all. Do not despair. God will surely help." His last words were, "I am in good spirits."

My grandmother received this letter in a wondrous way. When my mother saw Grandfather and Father for the last time in prison, Grandfather had given Mother a piece of loaf to take home. He told her that they had enough to eat in prison. The guards, fortunately, did not detect anything suspicious when Mother

The title page of the song "Mennolied" features musical notation for two voices: Soprano (marked "Marliert majestatisch.") and Bass (marked "B. B. Dück."). The lyrics are in German and describe a journey or pilgrimage, mentioning "Ge - te - net zu - be - men - ge! Ge - brau - se fest - ge -" and "1. Er - 7. Doch, al - ses soll nicht trü - ben den feo - den Zu - bel -". The music consists of two staves of notes with corresponding lyrics below them.

Title page of the song "Mennolied" written by Johann J. Loewen and set to music by Bernhard B. Dueck, Friedensfeld, Ukraine.

left. Upon examining the piece of bread at home my mother and grandmother found the note tucked into a cut in the bread.

### Death.

Shortly after writing this letter, Grandfather and his son were removed from the Nikopol prison and exiled to Siberia, no doubt condemned to many years of hard labour. They may even have been shot, as happened to many.

Grandmother was convinced that her husband did not live long after his imprisonment. He was already 66 years-old when arrested and with the harsh treatment he had to endure, he could not have survived for long. This conviction gave my grandmother peace, believing that her husband did not suffer for very long.

### Recollections.

I was only six years old when Grandfather was taken, but I remember him vividly. I remember him as one who had much time for me. Often I would sit on his knees and listen to the stories he told me. He also painted pictures for me and taught me how to mix water colours. He had a beautiful handwriting and his calligraphy was exceptional. I remember him using

gold colour to illuminate capital letters at the beginning of verses he wrote.

He was good at making toys, painting them with bright colours. He made me a rocking horse for one Christmas and skates a year later. I don't remember Grandfather ever scolding or punishing me, but he taught us well.

In 1998 an elderly lady in Kelowna, Anna Wiebe of Neuendorf, Chortitza, told me that she had sung in Grandfather's choir when she was a young girl. Touring the Mennonite colonies, Grandfather had also come to Neuendorf to conduct at a choral festival there. Another lady from Neuendorf, Kay Krahm, remembers how Grandfather conducted a large choir in their large barn (Scheune). According to these women, Johann Loewen's conducting skills and choral reputation were known throughout the Mennonite colonies in South Russia. Not only was Grandfather respected as a choir conductor, the two ladies told me, but he was also loved by his many young singers.

From time to time I take down my grandfather's book of poems from my library shelf, hold it reverently in my hands, and read here and there some of the poems. The poems are not great literary masterpieces, as Grandfather explains in the Introduction, and he had not intended them for publication. But friends and the publisher urged him to publish them, to which he reluctantly agreed in the hope that they would "not harm anyone" but be of use and blessing to some.

The poems are outpourings of a heart that loved not only his family and friends, but also the Mennonite people and their faith.

### Sources:

Helene Friesen Loewen, "Johann J. Loewen" in A.A. Toews, *Mennonitische Maertyrer*, Vol. 2 (1954), pp. 121-23; P.M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)*, translated from the German (Fresno, 1978, 1980), p. 834; my own recollections and what my grandmother and mother told me. HL

See also article by Harry Loewen, "Anna Wiebe Loewen Kran (1910-1988)," in *Preservings*, No. 12, page 74-76, the story of his mother who was able to escape to the West with her children.

**Editor's Note:** The Bernhard Dück referred to is likely Bernhard B. Dueck (1869-1936), son of Bernhard L. Dueck (1837-96), brother to Abraham L. Dueck (1841-99), Grünfeld, Manitoba, Aeltester of the East Reserve Kleine Gemeinde. Since Friedensfeld was founded in Imperial Russia by the Kleine Gemeinde in 1867, stories of their descendants who remained there and suffered during the Soviet Inferno are of interest to our readership.

According to Henry Schapansky, P. M. Friesen, Sparrau, MB historian, was a nephew to Bergthaler minister Abram Friesen (1816-71), whose descendants pioneered in Strassberg, E.R., near Niverville, in 1874. Abram's descendants include Helen, Mrs. Eugene Derksen, Steinbach, see *Preservings*, No. 11, page 38.

# David P. Rempel's Secluded Living

The Secluded Living of David P. Rempel (1905-49), Chortitz, Manitoba,  
by niece Helen R. Wiebe, 104-2487 Countess St., Abbotsford, B. C., V2T 5L9.

## Introduction.

David P. Rempel was the handicapped son of Johann S. Rempel (1853-1928) and Margaretha Peters Rempel (1870-1934), Chortitz, Manitoba, see *Preservings*, No. 7, pages 30-31; No. 8, Part One, pages 43-44; and No. 12, page 55.

David P. Rempel was born August 17, 1905, in Chortitz, Manitoba. He died February 1, 1949.

## Handicap.

Uncle Dave as I will call him was the fourth youngest of 16 children. As a young child he became severely handicapped. This was hard for the family through the years.

Uncle David lived a very reclusive life. He feverishly avoided people. He would get very agitated when children would show up. He often would throw stones at them wherever he could. He must have been too distraught to have pictures taken of him, at least I could not find any.

In uncle Dave's bedroom Grandma had drawn the drapes so he could have complete privacy. She helped to arrange everything she could for him so he could sleep in comfort in his own room. It looked to me like his bed was especially made up for him too. In the winter

he very much kept to his own room which was next to grandma's bedroom.

Uncle Dave would spend his time sitting on the veranda watching the traffic go by, especially on Sunday when people were going to the church next door.

## Proceeds Slowly.

Often my mother would ask me to go on an errand to grandma's which was only three houses up. As I approached, I would watch uncle Dave slowly maneuvering across their yard, usually on his way to the summer kitchen or to the henhouse. I would never let him know I was coming up from behind, or else he would completely loose his control altogether, which we could not allow to happen. The only means he had of getting around was by throwing and twitching his whole body, arms and legs, up and down and sideways in every direction plus his feet's sudden motion. Very slowly he would manoeuvre toward the destination he was heading for. It was a pitiful sight to watch his crippled movements. He always seemed to be very conscious about himself.

We didn't have wheelchairs like we have nowadays. The original medical people in earlier days were self educated through their own experiences. My mother used to tell me that



Wheel chair used by David P. Rempel, Chortitz.  
Drawing by niece Helen Unger, Abbotsford, B.C.

Dr. Peters and Dr. Guenther from the district of Rosengard about six miles south of Chortitz served the people of the area. They also visited their homes on horse and buggy or by sleigh in winter. They also had their own homemade remedies. Even lard was sometimes being used



**Chortitz Orchestra, 1931.**

This original Chortitz musical group were invited out to perform at many a wedding and also at some other occasions to about a 50 mile radius. David G. Hiebert and his wife Aganetha Rempel continued to enjoy their musical talents with a couple of other musicians until she passed away on January 10, 1996. The names and instrument played were verified by uncle David G. Hiebert. Front, l.to r.: Helen Wiebe, unknown, unknown, Justina Wiebe Bergman--guitar, unknown, Margaret Rempel Bartel--guitar, Susan G. Hiebert (partially hidden behind Margaret)--violin, Anna P. Rempel Heinrichs--guitar, Johann ("Hans") A. Wiebe with fiddle, Nettie Rempel Hiebert--Banjo and Franz P. Rempel mandolin. Katya Wiebe Bergman (missing)--guitar. Rear: Jakob G. Hiebert, unknown, Peter K. Bartel, unknown, David F. Rempel, Jasch Wiebe, unknown, Ben P. Rempel wearing light jacket, unknown. The male musicians in the group were Nickalei Wiebe--mandolin, David G. Hiebert--cello, base fiddle, Frank Rempel--mandolin, Yash Wiebe--violin, Ben Rempel--accordion. In the early days it was customary for conservative Mennonites such as the Chortitzer to have wedding dances where the entire family would attend together for an evening of food, socializing and fun. Photo courtesy of David G. Hiebert, Steinbach.

and saved money by it

### Uncle Dave Singing.

After both my grandparents were gone already (1934), my two aunts Helena and Anna, and uncles Frank and David were still living in the Homestead.

They were as usual on a regular basis invited out as part of their musical group, this time to a wedding some 80 miles out, except uncle Dave of course. My sister Margaret and myself were asked if we would stay overnight with uncle Dave, because he didn't like the thunderstorms.

The evening we got there, we first herded in the cows for milking. Suddenly we heard a beautiful male voice singing. We wondered who that could be. We never heard that uncle Dave could sing, so that couldn't be him. It must be someone else.

We decided to go out of the barn and listen. We could hear it come from the veranda. We decided to quietly sneak up and find out. We stood there awhile and listened.

Then Margaret whispered, "that can't be uncle Dave, can it?"



**The New House, 1919.**

New house built by Johann S. Rempel in 1919 which also we grandchildren grew up with. There are many precious memories left behind to reminisce on, like when our grandparents birthdays were celebrated or when some of our aunts and uncles had their weddings at the grandparents' house or in the machine shed, or when our aunt and uncle, the Henry Penners and family moved to Chaco, Paraguay, S.A. I also remember the small things in our everyday life, like going on errands to grandma's or stopping in to see grandpa in his blacksmith shop, etc. It is said that son Cornelius P. Rempel was the construction foreman when they built it.



**Johann S. Rempel Family.**

Sitting in front on chairs are second wife Margaretha Peters Rempel 1870-1934 and Johann Sawatsky Rempel 1853-1928, circa 1928, left to right: First row: children from Mr. Rempel's first marriage to Katherina Peters 1852-1890: Johann P. and Maria Rempel, Maria Rempel, Henry Klippenstein, Jacob and Margaret Rempel Funk and little Mary Funk. Second row: children from second marriage to Margaretha Peters. Johann S. Rempel's first and second wives were sisters. Gerhard and Elizabeth Rempel Wiebe, Peter P. and Katherine Rempel, Anna P. Rempel, Nettie P. Rempel, Helena P. Rempel. Top row; Bernhard P. Rempel, Cornelius P. Rempel, Jacob P. Rempel, Frank P. Rempel. Missing from picture are their oldest daughter Katherina Rempel and Heinrich Penner who moved to the Chaco, Paraguay, in 1925. The Penners front page picture and write-up can be found in Preservings, No. 4, July 1994. Missing from the photograph is son David Rempel because of his serious disability, see attached article.



A photograph taken on the steps of the Johann S. Rempel home in Chortitz on the occasion of the "Felafnisz" of son Peter P. Rempel (1893-1927). The bride was a daughter of Erdmann Penner, Niverville. A number of the guests in the photograph were from the bride's family and hence unidentified. The Felafnisz was a betrothal party traditionally celebrated at the home of the bride and so this may have been a subsequent event. The guests, l.-r., rear: unknown, unknown, Cornelius P. Rempel, unknown, Aganetha P. Rempel Hiebert, Helen P. Rempel looking sideways, unknown, unknown, unknown, Anna P. Rempel. Middle row: Lady with hat unknown, man with glasses unknown. The bridal couple are standing in front and the couple behind them is probably also from the Penner side of the family. Photo courtesy of David G. Hiebert, Steinbach, Manitoba. Can anyone assist with identifying more people on these photographs?

"No of course not," I said.

We pulled the ivy leaves aside and Uncle Dave jumped up and hobbled into the house. He was really singing evangelistic songs. I figured being all alone, undisturbed and completely relaxed, he could sing like that.

We went into the room next to uncle Dave's room. We could hear him jabbering and laughing to himself, while we looked through photo albums.

#### Not Come Too Close

Uncle Dave was always trying to keep his distance from people. Whenever visitors would come to visit aunt Helen she would take them into uncle Dave's room to say Hi to him.

I myself had never spoken to him in my life. I never even attempted to, because just by looking at him he became very agitated and nervous. If I would ever come too close, he started to stare at me frightfully, shaking all over until I backed up into the other room, which made him feel more at ease. Although he knew me very well throughout the years, I just didn't have the nerve to intrude, not knowing how he would take it, or act upon it.

I've never noticed uncle Dave and Collie the dog ever having anything in common with each other. They each kept their distance. I presumed that Collie didn't dare get entangled into uncle Dave's twitching and faltering steps.

#### Uncle Dave's First and Last Ride

The time came when uncle Frank Rempel and aunt Anna Rempel (now Anna Heinrichs) were going to get married. Aunt Helen decided to take over as caretaker for uncle Dave, and move into a smaller house in the town of Steinbach. "Yes but" came the question, "how will we transfer uncle Dave?"

David had never had a ride on a vehicle of

any kind yet in his whole life.

Uncles Peter, Frank and Cornelius Rempel held a little conference and decided to see if they could work out something. They explained it to uncle Dave and hoped it would work.

They bedded him in the back of the truck where also uncles Frank and Cornelius sat down on each side of him. David had been quite manageable while driving. He didn't seem to mind the move as long as aunt Helen would be with him in their new home.



*Canadian National Bank, Chortitz.*

*This was the first bank in the Chortitz area, called the "Canadian National Bank". It was located on Johann S. Rempel's yard which he had built. It was a little branch bank. In front of it is the hitching post and the old cars beside it. Grandfather Rempel loved having friends drop in to reminisce and chat as I have been told by the late Rev. Henry P. Fast. This little bank building was later moved off the premises to about a block east of Randolph school. Rempel's youngest daughter Nettie, the David G. Hieberts moved in after they had a partition built on. I sometimes wonder if it is still there. For more information regarding Chortitz and the Chortitz bank, see Orlando Hiebert, "Chortitz," in John Dyck, ed., Working Papers, pages 45-52.*

It was about in 1948 when uncle Dave became very ill. His doctor Murry Hodgson came to visit him regularly at their house till he passed away on Feb. 1, 1949.

It was hard to believe, to see uncle David so motionless and peaceful at ease at last while viewing him at his funeral.

**About the author:** Helen Wiebe Unger is the daughter of Gerhard F. Wiebe. She married John Unger, Blumenort, who was involved in the furniture business in the Blumenort and Steinbach area for many years. In 1965 Helen and her family moved to Abbotsford, B. C. where John founded "Unger Furniture" which soon owned five stores in the Lower Mainland. John Unger died in 1973. Their son Eldon Unger is a land developer in Abbotsford, B.C..

Helen enjoys writing and has contributed several articles to *Preservings*, including, "Johann S. Rempel," No. 7, page 30; "Chortitz - Randolph - School days," No. 8, June 1996, Part One, pages 22-24; "The Coming of the Russländer," No. 7, December 1995, pages 14-15; and "Trip to Steinbach 1925," No. 9, December 1996, page 54; "Inside a Writer's Private Life: the story of Gerhard F. Wiebe, Chortitz," *Preservings*, No. 12, pages 54-56.

"I remember quite well my grandfather Johann S. Rempel sitting on the right hand porch and viewing the surroundings with his binoculars, or picking up his mail at our Post Office, or driving his new Model T car around our neighbourhood. It was a big shock when he suddenly passed away at his home, May 28, 1928." Helen Unger, Abbotsford, B.C.

## Journey to Paraguay, December, 1926

**Journey to Paraguay, December, 1926, by Anna (Falk) Harder, Box 2347, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, translation to English by Ernest Braun, Box 595, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0.**

#### Introduction.

This article was written by Anna Falk Harder, daughter of Margaretha Braun and Peter Falk. Margaretha Braun was born the daughter of Abram Braun on the original homestead of her grandfather Jakob Braun, Gnadenfeld, E.R. in 1888. She grew up there and married Peter A. Falk (b. 1885), of Alt-Bergfeld, E.R., on November 16, 1909. Peter Falk was the son of Peter T. Falk and Anna Abrams. The couple settled in Gnadenfeld and Spencer where they farmed until they emigrated to Paraguay in December, 1926 with the second group (the Saskatchewan group) aboard the S. S. Western World, arriving in Puerto Casado on January 16, 1927 after exactly one month and one day en route.

After a period of time in the tent settlement in Puerto Casado, the Falks and their four children moved inland to the village of Bergthal, which was predominantly a Saskatchewan group, having chosen as a family to associate with this group.

In Bergthal their allotment of land was low and clayey, so after about a year, they relocated to a new village, Neuanlage, where they farmed, raising peanuts, beans and cotton until Peter died on June 28, 1950. Margaretha Braun Falk moved off the farm, even coming to Canada in 1966 for one year, and then lived with her children in Paraguay until she died on August 20, 1980, in Loma Plata at the age of 92.

Introduction by Ernest Braun, Niverville, excerpted from the forthcoming *Braun* family book.

#### Journey, 1926.

"When our parents first spoke of moving to South America, they pointed out that banana and orange trees grew down there and that the weather was always nice. Oh, then we would be able to go barefoot all the time, which we liked so much, whereas here in Canada that was only possible for short periods of time. And, of course, we would certainly eat bananas and oranges to our hearts'

content, or so we thought, or at least I did. However, what the first thing we actually would see--well, I'll come to that later.

We drove to the train station at Carey (I think) with horses and sleigh, and from there by train to New York. It was a long train of which our cars were the last, and when the train rounded a bend we could see the locomotive, which was far away.

It was in winter just before Christmas. When we arrived in New York, we disembarked, and off in the direction of the harbour buildings we went. We kept close to our father, and he never was or stood behind anybody, and when it did not suit him to have us around him, then he had us stand there and wait until he would fetch us again. A few times we wondered, "Has he forgotten us?" All the people passed by us but no, he came and got us.

Aboard the ship, called *Western World*, we found the weather to be cold and windy at first, and then we stayed inside but soon the weather

got nicer, so then we were on the open deck much of the time. When it really began to get hot, we slept outside on lounge chairs during the nights, for the air was damp and cool.

One day a little girl died, not yet two years old. Her name was Margaretha, daughter of Abram Penner (I believe from Saskatchewan). After the funeral service was held, she was lowered into the sea from the stern of the ship, and I really wanted to see that but the church leader, Aaron Zacharias, did not permit it. And later a baby girl, also named Margaretha, daughter of Johann and Maria Penner (I believe also from Saskatchewan), was born and that brought us back to full count.

For 15 days we saw only the great ocean and our ship, which also was large. We saw one or two ships afar off, and then one day our ship rocked from one side to the other. That made many people seasick. Our mother also lay in bed for a few days for that reason.

We also celebrated Christmas at sea on the ship. There was more candy than we were accustomed to from home. Especially we children had a grand time on the great ship. I would've liked to have stayed on it. Our food was first-class -- very good food the Mennonite way.

#### Buenos Aires.

And one day we saw something white emerge right down on the horizon. The crew told us that was Buenos Aires. It took so long until we finally actually got there that we could hardly stand it. When we did arrive, we saw blacks for the first time. At first we were scared, but they did not do anything to us, so we became bold. They came onto the ship to work the machines on the loading deck. We stayed several days in the harbour at Buenos Aires. During these days an old crippled Mrs. Abram Penner took sick and needed to be brought to the hospital in Buenos Aires, and died there and had to be buried there. She was the Grandmother to the little Margaretha who found her grave in the sea.

Because we could not travel further with the big ship, we had to transfer to a small boat (probably the "Alto Parana" Ed.). Here the mother to that same little girl, Mrs. Abram Penner had to stay in the hospital in Buenos Aires because the doctors believed they had a contagious eye infection. Her husband, Abram Penner, was hard pressed to adjust to leaving her in a completely strange land, but after a few weeks they came accompanied by someone who had promised not to leave her until she was placed in the arms of her husband, who had been wandering about quite despondently. At this, a stone was rolled from that man's heart.

We traveled to Asuncion with the second ship, but the food on it did not taste good to us. It consisted of noodles mixed with old cheese, and the meat may once have been fresh, and the bread consisted of rock-hard cookies or biscuits, and the coffee was very strong--we sweetened it with sugar (we had enough of that) and dipped our bread into it to soften it up. Hunger crept in and yet in this way we prevented its staying for long.

Upon our arrival in Asuncion, we must needs transfer again, this time to an even smaller boat (probably the "Guarani" Ed.) which then took us



*Peter A. and Margaretha (Braun) Falk ca. 1937. Photograph taken in front of the family home in Neuanlage, Menno Colony, Paraguay. Standing (l - r): Anna, Katherina (Harder) Falk, and her husband, Peter B. Falk, and standing behind them is Katharina Falk Toews, to the right of Peter is sister Margaretha. Front: Mrs. Margaretha Braun Falk, son Abram, and father Peter A. Falk. The photographs for this article are courtesy of author Anna Falk Harder, Box 2347, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2AO.*

to Puerto Casado. The boat was so full that it touched the bottom of the river at times. Taking soundings on both sides of the boat, the crew was very careful to go where the water was deepest. There they would turn or they would run aground.

#### Puerto Casado.

By the time we reached Puerto Casado, we had been travelling exactly one month. As we left, it was perhaps 30 degrees below zero, and where we made landfall, it was probably 30 degrees above zero or maybe even more.

At the place that we disembarked, quite near the harbour was a light post, and there father bid us stay. It was 12 o'clock at night. He wanted to find out where to go and what to do. And what we saw first were not banana or orange trees; it was an electric light standard with hundreds of kinds of insects and bugs flying around the bulb, which was hot and whatever flew against it fell to the ground, and underneath there were almost as many frogs, from large to small. These were at it with their long red tongues--not a single bug was lost; all were licked up. While we observed this, time passed quickly and we forgot all about bananas

and oranges. And father came to fetch us again and we went towards the immigration sheds for the night.

These buildings, five I think, had already been erected, as well as an open kitchen which was really only a roof with an iron stove set up specifically for baking bread. When we baked bread, by the next day it sometimes was red or green already and rancid on the inside so that it was not even good for toasting. The water had a foul taste and was unhealthy. At each immigration shed there were filters in place to purify the water, but it was not long before they did not work anymore, for there were too many hands at it. The reason the water tasted so bad was that it came from the river which was also the place where the tannin factories dumped all their effluent. Also, cattle were slaughtered right near the river and the water washed over the entrails. My father and Mr. Isaak Fehr once went up river to see this.

#### Death.

Later Mr. Casado placed the water intake further into the current, where the water was cleaner and tasted better. However, even up to that point



1909. Peter A. Falk (1885-1950) and Margaretha Braun Falk (1888-1980). Wedding photograph or shortly thereafter. She came from Gnadenfeld, E. R., and he from Alt-Bergfeld, E. R. After moving to Paraguay, they lived in Neuauflage.

not all the emigrants boiled the water before they drank it, and because it was so hot, they drank a great deal of water. Inevitably, what followed was diarrhea and fever, and then people began to die - up to three burials in one day.

Mr. Jose Casado had once told my father that his plan had been quite different, not that the Mennonites should come all at once: his plan had been that twenty families should come ahead of the others. For these he had built houses, not far from the river and constructed of baked brick, shaded by trees and serviced by better water. There they were to move in and the men were to have gone to the Chaco and first prepare everything so that when the groups of emigrants came they would be able to move directly onto their land. I think had that plan been followed, not as many would have perished. Mr. Casado really was not ready for a swarm of Mennonites. More houses were still being built while we were already there. And the water lines were also not ready.

Yes, there are 121 people, adults and children, who lie there in that cemetery. There was an Italian (he was the boss of the tannin factory), who had said to my father that when the Doctor rode to the Mennonite settlement, then the Mennonites soon began to sing again. He meant that the doctor helped in such a way that the sick died sooner, but the settlers did not share that opinion. When the people sang, he sat at the tracks which were not far away and listened. Yes, the Spanish people had imagined the Mennonites to be like angels, only without wings. I believe that they discovered soon enough that there was more missing than just wings.

Death did not intrude upon our family. I had the "whooping cough" as they called it and then my younger sister and I had scarlet fever. That, however, was not so bad, only about like the flu. Also, we did not drink the water from the river. Further west of us were buildings into which the church leader Aaron Zacharias moved with his children, and it was the well there from which we fetched water to drink. My father also set up our tent further west from the settlement.

People started to move back to Canada. My father also had a hard time deciding, but one evening he sat till late at night and reflected on what he should do. He was not a steady smoker, but this cost him a few packs of cigarettes. It occurred to him that the Bible said the the sow returns to the mud after a bath, and a dog returns to his own vomit, and such a one he did not want to be. So he decided to stay.

### Katharina Falk Braun.

The Jacob Braun family, my father's sister Katharina, had already come in the first group (we were in the second group). One day Aunt Katharina came to where we lived with her children around her, but she did not stay long. She was restless and depressed, sad. Maybe she came for encouragement. I don't know what she said to my parents.

She was pregnant and added to that, she had a hernia and it had shifted during the voyage. At home she had always corrected it but during the trip that had not been possible, and probably got increasingly worse until it got infected and congested. That woman had to endure much. The last day she had such great pain that she simply screamed. Anna (13) and Jacob (11), her children, sat together a ways off from the tent wherein she lay. That image of how they sat and wept bitterly is still so clear to me. I felt sorry for the two of them.

My father and Uncle Jacob were at her bed and tried to help her. Certainly they must have prayed a great deal. She really didn't want to die. She found it hard to leave the children, but the pain eventually subsided and then she said, "Wann jie daut so habe velle, dann vell ejt stauve." (If you want it that way, then I want to die"), and her voice became weak, tired from the tremendous pain and so she began to say goodbye to the children, from the first to the last, and for each she had a special message. Anna, the oldest, said that she had understood everything she had said. The youngest, John, was three years old.

And then she gave her hand to Uncle Jacob, and spoke to him and departed. And that was almost unbearable to see and hear. How that woman had to endure and how the children had to give up their mother at such a young age.

At the cemetery, when the dirt began to roll over the coffin, then Anna just could not contain herself any longer. She went a ways to a fence post, put her arms upon it, laid her head on her arms and wept bitterly. Then my father went to her and spoke to her, and she quieted again.

Anna said later that her mother had often sung the song, *Welt, ade, ich bin dein muede/Ich will nach dem Himmel zu ...* ["Farewell world, I am tired of thee/ I want to go to Heaven . . ."] (Gesangbuch No. 247) There was a doctor at Casado; however, they had called him too late. He reprimanded Uncle Jacob severely that he did not have him come sooner: see Ernest Braun, "Katharina Falk Braun, 'My grandmother's song,'" in *Presevings*, No. 10, Part One, pages 43-46.

### David Falk.

And there too, one of Father's family, his brother David Falk, died of fever, and was torn from his family through death. He left behind his wife and six sons, the oldest 19 and the youngest 7 years old. That was a hard blow for Aunt Elisabeth, his wife: the bread provider was gone. She turned to the wall of the tent and wept aloud. At the age of 40 years, Uncle David had to give up his life, and leave his wife behind with six children. On such a voyage, many a husband or wife or both had to leave their family. Death was not a respecter of persons -- it could be father or mother or children.



Anna Falk Harder (b. 1917), the author of these memoirs. Photograph taken in Steinbach, Manitoba, in 1980. She returned to the East Reserve in 1976 with husband and family. Mr. Harder was the one who desired to return to Canada.

That was a hard test for them all, but the majority kept their courage and went slowly into the Chaco. When the land had been surveyed, but still not quite ready for homesteading, they settled along the way, and planted something so that they could finally eat something out of the garden, and there people died as well. My husband's two sisters of 17 and 12 years of age died in Pozo Azul.

### The Chaco.

We stayed in Puerto Casado for a couple of years. My father even obtained employment there. Mr. Casado wanted him to tear down the immigration buildings, since he had no use for them, and father could earn something towards the new start in the Chaco, for he had loaned a considerable sum of money to the church so that the poor could emigrate as well. And when he finished this, we moved into the Chaco as well, and on the way aboard the train my youngest sister got sick with typhus. It was hot and she had a high fever. My parents made every possible effort to cool her down, and in the end she recovered and so we traveled further into the Chaco, to the village of Berghal.

There we lived for a short time. Later we moved to Neuauflage where we children grew up amid the long awaited banana and orange trees, which, however, we had planted ourselves." Source: Anna (Falk) Harder

**Publishing Note:** This article was first published in German in the *Mennonitische Post*, May 21, 1999, pages 1, 3 and 21.

# Murder in Chortitz 1934

**"Murder in Chortitz: The Shooting of Abraham F. Giesbrecht (1886-1934), in Chortitz, Menno Colony, Paraguay," in Service To The Community Kolonie Menno Chaco/Paraguay - Nr. 2 - February - 1974. Thinking of Bygone Days Psalm 32:7.**

## Disaster at Chortitz - Feb. 1-2, 1934.

The Menno-Blatt of February 1934 brings us the following concerning that night: Murder in Chortitz, Kolonie Menno, Paraguay, S.A.

The Mennonite Colonies have not had to suffer any casualties up to this point in the war that has been going on in the Chaco for almost two years. However on February 1 of this year the following very grave incident happened in the village of Chortitz in the Canadian Colony.

During the evening of the aforementioned date, a group of soldiers seized the daughter of Mr. Abr. F. Giesbrecht on the village street. She was able to free herself temporarily as she screamed for help. Once again she was captured as many of the citizens of the village responded to her cries of help. The father of the young maiden was among this group of rescuers (The father was 47 years old). He considered it as his holy responsibility to protect his child from their rough hands. This however resulted in his demise. For as soon as these fiends saw that they were surrounded, they started to fire their weapons, so that the bullets whistled past the rescuers' ears.

The young maiden escaped again, fortunately, and all of the rescuers scattered. At this point the community noticed that the father of the young girl was missing. They retraced their steps along the street and found his body lying in a pool of blood. The murderers' bullets had entered his back and re-emerged in the front, completely tearing away his chin.

The colony committee reported this to the military authorities, who then took immediate steps to apprehend the murderers the very next day and held them for a military tribunal. Our government will undertake serious steps so that further excesses of this type will be prevented in order that peaceful citizens will not be shot down on the streets of our villages.

Military doctors appeared at the scene during that tragic night to examine the body. The body was buried February 3, 1934. The children of this home regrettably are now orphans. The mother of the home was carried to her grave just a few months prior to this day. The murdered man was a school teacher for several years. It seems that he had a foreboding of his death. Repeatedly he expressed to acquaintances that though he had seeded the crop, yet he would not harvest it.

May God console the poor orphans. From the Menno-Blatt

When we transplant or re-orient ourselves back to that evening and consider eye witness accounts of that night, we are jolted even more by this incident. Young people from the Johann W. Froese and Abraham F. Giesbrecht families made a pleasure trip to Strasburg on the above mentioned evening, returning at about 11:00 p.m. It was a bright moonlit night and some of them had to walk a short distance down a street that was bordered by dense bush. Suddenly four or

five soldiers sprang out and hurled themselves upon the young girl who, however, broke away and started calling for help. Those accompanying her also called for help.

Our brother, Cornelius W. Froese, who today is elderly, heard (as did others) these cries, but thought at first that some boys full of high spirits were letting themselves go again. But directly he noticed that these were distress cries, calling for help.

Quickly he proceeded to dress himself, after which he ran out into the street, running towards the place from which the cries for help were coming. The soldiers at this time had again captured the girl and were carrying her away. These soldiers came from the camp located at Km 216. Uncle Froese was the only one who was on the heels of them at this point. He felt all alone and called on those behind him to come quickly. The soldiers fired shot after another over the heads of the charging rescuers. Uncle Froese caught up with the horde and laid his hands on the girl. Together with the girl, who herself did all that was possible, they succeeded in freeing her from the soldiers' grasp. The soldiers hit Uncle Froese with the butt-end of their weapons, but he did not let go.

The father of the girl and other Chortitzers came upon the scene at this time and the father called out to his daughter "run fast." This was followed by another loud gunshot and then it became very quiet. After this they retraced their steps to their homes and again laid down to sleep. Although shaken by the incident, they were very grateful for their marvelous preservation during this time of danger that they had been in. Yet they did not realize that this was not the end of it.

Shortly after this the Giesbrecht children came to ask about their father, who had not come home. This new information was quickly dispatched throughout the whole village. Some thought that the soldiers had taken him with them, although no one had seen this, for all had been running for their lives as soon as the young girl was free. They backtracked down the street to the place where they had finally separated themselves from the soldiers.

Here they found the corpse of the missing father lying in a pool of blood, the face torn by the bullet. This then was what everybody had thought could have happened to them during the rescue, especially C.W. Froese who so directly proceeded to free the girl from these brutes. He felt that he had been marvelously preserved by the hand of God from this angry band who could have simply finished him off. Except for the blows he had received, he came away unhurt.

Uncle Froese was thirty-seven years old and the father of his own family at the time. The young girl in danger was not his child. She was not even a relative of his, yet he hurled himself into this and set his life on the line by stepping between these greedy fellows and the frightened young girl. Brother Froese never related this incident as if he had done something out of the ordinary. We, however, underline this and say that his was an heroic act, putting his life in danger to protect the honor of another.

Translated for Mrs. Helen Sawatsky, Box 293, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0, by Rev. William Rempel, Box 367, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0. Helen Sawatsky was seven years-old at the time of her father's death by the hand of the soldiers.

## The Story of Abraham F. Giesbrecht

**The Story of Abraham F. Giesbrecht (1886-1934),  
from Schönsee, E.R., Manitoba, to Chortitz, Menno Colony, Paraguay,  
by Delbert F. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.**

### Family Background.

Abraham F. Giesbrecht was the son of Franz Giesbrecht (1851-1921) and Anna Froese (b. May 15, 1859), Schönsee, E.R., Manitoba, who were married on August 6, 1879.

Although listed in the Chortitzer Gemeindebücher CGB 1878 B213, 1887 A161 and 1907 A 79, the family history is illusive and this writer was unable to identify them in the ship records as published in the *Bergthal Gemeindebuch*. One possibility is that Franz Giesbrecht came as a step-son, orphan with another family, but this remains to be determined.

The family is listed in 1881 assessment records in the village of Schönsee, with the SW31-5-6E as the homestead. They are also listed in the Bergthal Brandordnung, with insurance cancelled on April 18, 1882, typically denoting a move to

the West Reserve. The family is listed in the 1881 Federal census resident in Schönsee, #112. The family is again in the 1891 census, #193.

A Homestead cancellation is recorded for SW27-6-5E, showing a homestead registered by Franz Giesbrecht previously cancelled by Jakob Gerbrandt on September 10, 1900. The Homestead was immediately transferred to a Elisabeth Giesbrecht whose name is shown in the Municipal land ownership map as owner of the SW33-5-6E, land typically associated with the village of Burwalde.

### Emigration, 1927.

Franz Giesbrecht died September 10, 1921. His widow Anna Froese married for the second time to Abraham Kauenhowen (1853-1934), Grünfeld, E.R. and moved with him to Paraguay

in the fourth emigration group which departed Manitoba on January 26, 1927.

Traveling in the same emigration company was Anna's son Abraham F. Giesbrecht (1886-1934), together with his second wife Aganetha Klassen and eight children ranging in age from 18 year-old Johann to baby daughter Helena born on April 24, 1926. Daughter Helena recalls that her parents had lived in the village of Schönsee, E.R. According to historian Ernest Braun the house where the Giesbrecht children were born was still standing in 1980.

The Abraham F. Giesbrecht family settled in the village of Chortitz, Menno Colony, Paraguay, where they experienced all the hardships of "frontier" life in the "Green Hell of the Chaco". Mother nee Aganetha Klassen died here in September 1933. She was a sister to Johann D. Klassen, deceased, of Steinbach, whose son John D. Klassen sings in the Spencer Quartet.

Aganetha's parents were Jakob Klassens, Grunthal. Mrs. Klassen died in Manitoba, after which her husband remarried with widow Dueck, whose husband had been the brother of his first wife.

Abraham F. Giesbrecht's oldest son Johann was already married to Susanna Unger, who died in childbirth with twins in December, 1933. Both boys died at birth.

#### Funeral.

Abraham F. Giesbrecht was murdered February 1, 1934. The funeral was held on the family home in Chortitz on February 2, 1934. Daughter Helena, who was seven years-old at the time, recalls that the funeral was attended by hundreds of mourners. The officiating minister was Abraham E. Giesbrecht, and possibly Aeltester Martin C. Friesen, Osterwick, spoke as well.

Helena recalls that her father's body was put into the grave over night after the funeral as some



Photograph of Abraham F. Giesbrecht children taken in circa 1972 when sister Maria Unruh came to Paraguay from Niverville for a visit. Rear - l.-r.: Jakob, Abram Froese, Andreas; front - Maria Unruh, Neta Giesbrecht Froese, the young girl that the soldiers had abducted, and Mrs. Andreas Giesbrecht nee Margaretha Thiessen, and Mrs. Jakob Giesbrecht nee Helena Froese.



*Abraham F. Giesbrecht family photograph taken in front of their family home in the village of Chortitz, Menno Colony, Paraguay. The photograph was taken circa 1928, by Mr. Langa, immigration promoter from the United States. The family had moved from the landing site in Puerto Casado into the villages only about a year earlier. L.-r.: Neta, Anna, Maria, Mother nee Aganetha Klassen, Lena and Martin, standing in front, father Abraham F. Giesbrecht, Abraham Jr. and Jakob. Note that the family is well dressed, their faces reflecting the satisfaction of pioneers who have overcome the ravages of killer diseases and "the Green Hell of the Chaco" to hack out their first primitive but serviceable homes. Photo courtesy of Helena Giesbrecht Sawatzky, Box 293, Niverville, Manitoba.*

of his siblings who lived a distance away wanted to see him before he was buried.

The Giesbrecht children were now orphans. In accordance with Mennonite tradition and protocol, they were given four Vormünder, two from the maternal side and two from the paternal side. The older siblings--Abram, Jakob, Aganetha and Anna--stayed home in the village until the harvest was completed. The youngest two children were adopted--Helena by Abram Wiebes in Osterwick, brother Martin by uncle and aunt Jakob Thiessens, Kleinstadt, brother Andreas by his step-grand-

mother Mrs. Jakob Klassen, Maria by Johann Sawatzkys. The older children were given foster homes.

#### Descendants.

Aganetha Giesbrecht, the daughter for whom Abraham Giesbrecht gave his life, married Abraham Froese, and lived in Chortitz, Menno Colony.

Daughter Helena Giesbrecht married Abraham Sawatzky. In 1965 they moved back to Manitoba where they settled in Niverville.

Daughter Maria Giesbrecht married Jakob Unrau, and they moved to Niverville in 1969.

Son Martin Giesbrecht married Gertruda Friesen, daughter of Aeltester Martin C. Friesen. He moved back to Canada in 1967, with his family. A number of his children live in the East Reserve area including sons Edward, Niverville, Rueben, Ille des Chense and Jakob, St. Annes, and daughter Liese, Mrs. John Funk, Niverville.

Levi, another son of Martin Giesbrecht, is a well-known entrepreneur in the lumber industry in British Columbia, currently resident in Surrey: see B. J. Redekop, "Levi Giesbrecht: The Mennonite Ethic and the Spirit of Family," in Calvin Redekop and B. J. Redekop, editors, *Profiles of Mennonites in Business* (Waterloo, Ont., 1996), pages 196-216. Although interesting, the author of the article obviously had only limited knowledge and understanding of the history of conservative Mennonites managing within a few paragraphs to make a number of incorrect and derogatory "put-down" comments about Levi's background.

## Abraham Giesbrechts of Menno Colony

According to the book *Ersten mennonitischen Einwanderer in Paraguay*, by Abraham B. Giesbrecht (Loma Plata, Paraguay, 1995), page 80 (see *Preservings*, No. 7, page 55, there were five Abraham Giesbrechts household heads among the 1926/27 exiles from Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

Abraham E. Giesbrecht (1882-1971), was the son of Peter Giesbrecht and Anna Esau Giesbrecht, Gnadenfeld, E.R., *Preservings*, No. 14, page 75. Abraham E. Giesbrecht was a minister of the Chortitzer Gemeinde (His son Peter Giesbrecht is now retired and living in Winnipeg).

Abraham F. Giesbrecht (1886-1934), Schönsee, E.R., was the son of Franz Giesbrecht, see above. Abraham F. Giesbrecht was a small man by stature and hence the family was known as the "Kleine" or small Giesbrechts.

Abraham L. Giesbrecht (1878-1957), Strassberg, E. R., lived in Gnadenfeld, Menno Colony, Paraguay. He was the son of Wilhelm Giesbrecht (b. 1843) BGB B291, Rosenthal, E.R. His son Jake Giesbrecht (b. 1910) currently lives on William Avenue, Steinbach: see Abraham H. and Helena Giesbrecht, editors, *Stammbaum der Familie des Abraham und Margaretha Giesbrecht* (Loma Plata, 1999), 109 pages, book review section.

Abraham J. Giesbrecht (1885-1936), immigrated to Canada together with Bruno Hamm in 1911. Both married into the Gnadenfeld Braun family. Abraham J. Giesbrecht was known as "Russche" (or Russian) Abraham Giesbrecht, because he was a more recent immigrant. He was the father of Steinbach realtor Margaret Reimer, as well as Mary, Mrs. George F. Kehler (CHSM), and Helena, Mrs. Peter F. Kehler (Pete's Inn), Steinbach.

A fifth Abraham Giesbrecht, Abraham S. Giesbrecht (b. 1904) immigrated to Paraguay in 1935. He was the son of Jakob L. Giesbrecht (1868-1923), the brother of Abraham L. Giesbrecht referred to above.

In terms of overview, 171 of the 1926/7 victims of "exile" by the Manitoba and Saskatchewan Governments had died in Paraguay by January 1, 1929, roughly ten (10) per cent of the total of 1745 souls. This compared to a death rate of about thirty per cent of Mennonites who died of unnatural causes in the Soviet Inferno in Russia during the entire period from the Revolution until the dismemberment of the Gulag labour camp system in the 1950s.

# David Unger (1830-1906)

**David Unger (1830-1906), Nikolaithal, Kherson, Imperial Russia, to Heuboden, Manitoba,  
by Delbert F. Plett Q.C., Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.**

## Family Background.

From his extensive research, historian Henry Fast, Steinbach, Manitoba, has concluded that David Unger (1830-1906) was the son of Abraham Peter Unger, owner of Wirtschaft 32, Fürstenwerder, Molotschna, Imperial Russia. The family is listed as follows in the 1835 Revisions-Liste (census): Abraham Peter Unger, age 44, 1817 to Russia, from Franzthal 1834, son Abraham 11, Heinrich 7, David 5, all to Chortitz 1843, wife Eva 50, daughters by first wife, Katerina 20, Margareta 16, Elisabeth 13, daughters of second wife, Anna 9, Maria 10, step-son to Russia 1819 Wilhelm Abend 10, step-daughters Sara Abend 19, Helena Abend 6. Original owner of Wirtschaft 21, Wilhelm Bernhard Abend, 1823 from Schardau.

Historian Henry Fast has further concluded that Abraham Peter Unger (b. 1791) was the brother to Peter Peter Unger (b. 1792) listed on Wirtschaft 21, Fürstenwerder. Peter Peter Unger's family is listed as follows: Peter P. Unger age 43, arrived in Russia in 1821, from Franztal, son Peter 20, Franz 16, David 10, Henrich 3, wife Sarah age 44, and daughter Sarah age 19, Helena 6.

The immigration records published by B. H. Unruh, page 365, have the following information: item 125, Unger, Abraham, Krebsfelde, born Neuteicherwald, to Franzthal, source--letter from 1824; item 126, Unger, Peter, Lakendorf, born Neuteicherwald, to Franzthal, married Froese, Sarah, Lakendorf, Franzthal, children Peter 3, Sara 1, brother to No. 125--source letter from 1824.

This information corresponds with the conclusion of Edward R. Brandt in *Peter H. Unger 1841-1896...Family Record* (Steinbach, 1984), page 20. Accordingly Henry Fast has concluded that Peter H. Unger (1831-96), Blumenhof, E.R., and David Unger (1830-1906), Hochstadt, E.R., were first cousins.

In a letter dated Didsbury, Alberta, 1903 (*Mennonitische Rundschau*, February 25, 1903),

David Unger inquired about the children of uncle Jakob Unger near Volga and asked about the children of brother Abraham Unger, and about "Schwager Peter Esau, whose wife was a sister to David Unger." In a letter of 1888 (*M.R.*, March 14, 1888), David Unger wanted information of uncle Jakob Unger, Hansau, in Volga.

In a letter of 1912 (*M.R.* March 6, 1912), datelined Chortitz, Orenburg, Abram and Susanna Peters wrote that his mother was a Katharina Unger, daughter of Abraham Unger, a brother to David Unger of Oregon. He was also a brother to Heinrich Unger. The letter also stated that "the children of David Unger are David who is in Manitoba and Jakob and Ida."

Information regarding correspondance in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* is courtesy of historian Henry Fast, Box 367, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

## David Unger (1830-1906).

According to the "Genealogy Register" of Aeltester Peter Toews, David Unger (1830-1906) lived in Nikolaithal, Imperial Russia: *Profile 1874*, page 25. Historian Henry Fast, Steinbach, Manitoba, is of the view that this was in the "Fürstenland" colony located south of Nikopol, being the settlement from which Johann Wiebe (1837-1906), Rosengadt, W. R., Aeltester of the Old Kolony (OK) Gemeinde originated.

According to family historian Lilly Wiebe, Morden, David Unger was married for the first time to a widow Mrs. Aron Wiebe who died on February 27, 1857. One son Abraham was born from this marriage.

David Unger was baptised in 1857 the same year that he married for the second time to Maria Warkentin (1825-1885). The timing of the baptism may indicate that Unger was baptised and joined the Kleine Gemeinde prior to the second marriage, although the marriage is not mentioned

in the ministerial journal of Johann Dueck. Five children were born to the second marriage: Judith "Ida" Unger (b. 1858), David Unger (1860-60), David W. Unger (1861-1935), Jakob (1863-1931), and Heinrich (1866-66) who died in infancy.

On January 20, 1873, David Unger received one vote at a ministerial election held in the Kleine Gemeinde worship house in Blumenhoff, Borosenko, Imperial Russia, *History and Events*, pages 65.

## Manitoba, 1874.

David Unger and family emigrated to America in 1874 departing their homes in Imperial Russia on May 29. They came with the first contingent of Mennonites to arrive at the Forks in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on July 31, 1874, consisting of 55 Kleine Gemeinde and 10 Old Colony families.

Historian Henry Fast, Steinbach has written that David Unger "was one of the first Mennonites to apply for a homestead in Manitoba," Henry Fast, "Hochstadt," in John Dyck, *Historical Sketches*, pages 140-1. Unger settled in Heuboden, apparently the first village to be settled.

In his memoirs, Peter W. "Schmidt" Toews (1866-1935), recalled that when the Grünfeld settlers made their way to their proposed village site, "it happened to be a few miles from David Ungers, who had already settled on their land" *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 140.

According to the 1881 Assessment records, David Unger lived in Heuboden, E.R. He had filed for a homestead on NE1-7-4E on August 27, 1874, and son David Unger Jr. filed on the adjoining NW1-7-4E, on September 25, 1877.

David Unger evidently was a man of some means. In a letter of April 30, 1875, Peter L. Dueck reported that David Unger and Gerhard Schellenberg each had two horses, apparently the only ones among the Kleine Gemeinde on the East Reserve who already had two horses at the time:



Circa 1910. David Unger (1862-1935), Hochstadt, E.R., steam engine and threshing outfit. Standing behind the steam engine, left to right, son Henry R. Unger (1890-1967), David R. Unger (b. 1888), and father David W. Unger. Sons Abram (b. 1903) and Jakob R. Unger (b. 1904) are standing on the sheave pile. Someone with a sulky is bringing the threshing gang vaspas or lunch. Photo courtesy of grandson Henry R. Unger, Box 21743, Steinbach, Manitoba, R5G 1B4.

letter of Peter Wiebe, *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 73.

### Church, 1875.

David Unger did not always have a harmonious relationship with the Gemeinde. On January 6, 1875, Peter Wiebe, Blumenort, wrote "We were in Grünfeld at a brotherhood meeting. The matter of David Unger was dealt with and after considerable discussion, and admonition to all of us, he was expelled, which was very painful, to separate one of our members," letter of Peter Wiebe, *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 57. Apparently David Unger made some sort of a claim as Aeltester Peter Toews recorded, "On the 24th [October, 1875] we decided that the collection on two Sundays would be held for David Unger in order to satisfy him in the required return of his sacrifice," *Profile 1874*, page 167.

On October 24, 1875, son Abraham Unger was baptised and accepted as a member of the Kleine Gemeinde.

According to family historian Lilly Wiebe, son Abraham Unger died on March 10, 1881.

David Unger was insured in the Bergthaler/Chortitzer Brandordnung with coverage of \$300 house, furniture \$100, granery \$25, wagon \$50, plow \$10, house \$100, barn \$25, stubble plow \$10, total \$300. However, there is no record in the Chortitz Gemeindebuch that David Unger Sr. ever joined the Chortitzers.

David Unger eventually joined the Holdemans Gemeinde.

### Hochstadt, 1881.

Historian Henry Fast, Steinbach has written that David Unger "sold his land and moved to Hochstadt in 1881." Fast also advised that various sources show David Unger exchanged land with Heinrich Friesen, Hochstadt. The Brandordnung records show that the widow Heinrich Friesen cancelled her fire insurance in Hochstadt on April 25, 1881.

By the 1883 Municipal tax records, David Unger



1958. Henry R. Unger (1890-1967) and Mrs. Susanna Dueck Unger (1896-1960). She was the daughter of Abraham Dueck (1859-1921), Schönsee, E. R., see article on Peter B. Penner elsewhere in this journal. Photo courtesy of son Henry R. Unger, Box 21743, Steinbach, Manitoba, R5G 1B4.

**Editor's Note:** Further information about the family of David Unger will be found in the history of the Grünfeld, Heuboden, Hochstadt area being written by historian Henry N. Fast, Steinbach, Manitoba, publication forthcoming.

was farming in Hochstadt (Gnadenort), as a moderately well-to-do farmer with the third highest assessment in the village. By 1884 his land holding had increased to 320 acres with 45 cultivated, and an assessment of 904, again the third highest.

On January 10, 1884, Abraham F. Reimer, Blumenort, noted in his journal that "Old Unger from Hochstadt was here regarding an old fur coat." Reimer's wife was a seamstress and probably made a new coat for Unger.

David Unger's second wife, nee Maria Warkentin died in 1885.

The homestead cancellations show that the NE6-6-5E, was originally filed for by Abraham Loewen, transferred to Jakob Sawatzky, then to Jakob Unger in 1882, and then to David Unger who claimed the homestead on October 22, 1890.

### Imperial Russia, 1889.

Henry Fast has written that "In 1889 [David

Unger] made a trip to Fürstenlandt, Russia, to visit friends and relatives." This would tend to confirm the presumption that David Unger had lived in Nikolaithal, Fürstenlandt, south of Nikopol. The fact that his father had moved to the Chortitz Colony in 1843 would also explain the connection with this Old Colony settlement. Unger was among the first Mennonites in Manitoba to make such a trip back to the old Homeland.

### Oregon, 1890.

Henry Fast has written that in 1890, David Unger moved to Oregon where he married Barbara Graber Schrag. She was the widow of Joseph Schrag who had died at 40 years of age. According to the "Genealogy Register" of Peter Toews, David Unger was resident in Oregon in 1896, as was son Jakob.

Evidently David Unger's church relationships had not completely reformed after his departure

## Adrian Unger Family Tree

Adrian Unger Family Tree,  
by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack Street, New Westminster, B. C., V3L 4V5.

The families of cousins David Unger (1830-1906) and Peter Unger (1841-96) are descended from Adrian Unger (died before 1777).

1.0 Adrian Unger is listed in the village of Orloffsfelder in the 1776 Konsignations (census), West Prussia, with three sons, one daughter. He is listed as a landowner farmer of medium wealth. The designation of medium wealth was held by only one in four Mennonite families in the Gross-Werder area and meant they had their own farm property and were quite wealthy. The family belonged to the Frisian Gemeinde.

Adrian Unger had three sons:

1.1 Peter Unger (1767-1830) married Elisabeth Janzen. They had a son Abraham Unger (born 1790, baptized 1806).

1.11 Abraham Unger (b. 1790) married Katharina Klippenstein (b. 1779); second marriage Maria Block; third marriage widow Eva Nickel (b. 1787) who was married for the first time to Wilhelm Abend. All these Ungers moved to Russia circa 1818. The senior Abraham Unger also probably moved to the Old Colony in 1843;

Abraham Unger (b. 1790) and Maria Block had four children:

1.111 Abraham Unger (1823-87) moved to Schönhorst, Old Colony in 1843;

1.112 Heinrich Unger (b. 1828) married Justina Teichroeb, and second marriage Helena Bergen. The family emigrated to Canada, Blumstein, W.R., BGB 1881 census, page 406, #588.

1.113 David Unger (1830-1906), see David Unger article.

1.12 Jakob Unger, "Uncle" Jakob of David, was born 1827;

1.13 Peter Unger, "Uncle" Peter of David, who married Sara Fröse, moved to Russia in 1818, settled in Fürstenwerder, Molotschna (1835 census). Peter Unger (1841-96) would appear to be the son of Peter Unger (born Nov. 11, 1814), the son of "uncle" Peter Unger (b. 1792) and married to Sara Fröse.



Peter H. Unger (1841-96) settled in Blumenhof, E.R., Manitoba, where son Peter F. Unger was born in 1875. In this photograph are Peter F. Unger (1875-1951) and Mrs. Unger, nee Katharina Reimer (1880-1941), she was the daughter of Abraham R. Reimer, see article "Tale of Two Journals," in the feature article section of this issue. Photo courtesy of Royden Loewen, Blumenort, page 318. Peter F. Unger was a nephew to Helena Friesen Janke, Herbert, Saskatchewan, see Lieutenant-Governor Jack Wiebe article elsewhere in this issue.

from the Kleine Gemeinde. In 1904 Johann W. Dueck, Rosenhoff, Manitoba, wrote in his "Historie und Begebenheiten" that "David Unger is again a member of the Holdemans' Gemeinde after a number of incorrect starts," *History and Events*, page 80.

Historian Henry Fast, Steinbach, provided reference to a letter in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* March, 1906, datelined Sunnyslope, Alberta, that "the old David Unger died February 13, age 75 years and 3 months. He spent the last two years at Samuel Boeses'." According to the obituary notice in the *Messenger of Truth*, April, 1906, page 4, Rev. Peter Baerg preached the funeral sermon on the text, Rev. 22:12-21. Unger was survived by two sons, one daughter and eight grandchildren.

#### David W. Unger Jr.

Son David W. Unger (1862-1935) married Katharina Reimer (1866-1917), daughter of Heinrich Reimer (1845-1900), Blumenort and later Grunfeld, E.R., Manitoba, and his second cousin Katharina Sawatzky (1846-69), daughter of Abraham Sawatzky (1807-82), see *Profile 1874*, pages 274-5. Heinrich Reimer was elected as a minister of the Kleine Gemeinde in 1876 but joined with Johannes Holdeman in 1882.

In 1896 David W. Unger was resident in Hochstadt, E. R., Manitoba, farming on Section 6-6-5E, presumably having purchased or taken over his father's Wirtschaft. David Unger Jr. visited his father in Oregon but never lived there.

David Unger was an ambitious farmer owning a large threshing outfit.

According to the obituary in the *Botschafter der Wahrheit*, David Unger lived the last years on the yard at Jakob Bartels, Rosenfeld, E.R..

David Unger is remembered as a medium-sized man, about 5'8" with a full beard. Sons David, Abraham and Henry R. Unger belonged to the Chortitzer Gemeinde. Sons Jakob R., and Ben R. Unger belonged to the Kleine Gemeinde.

#### Jakob Unger (1863-1931).

Son Jakob Unger married Helena Schellenberg (1888-1934), daughter of Abraham Schellenberg (1839-1924) and Margaretha Esau (1844-85), of Grunfeld, Manitoba, see *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 333.

Jakob Unger moved with his father to Oregon, where he was resident in 1896. The family may have lived in Duck Lake, Saskatchewan. In the later years, during the 1930s the family lived in Giroux, Manitoba. The Jakob Unger family may have belonged to the Chortitzer Gemeinde as Waisenman Cornelius T. Friesen noted in his journal on November 23, 1927, "The request of Jakob Unger, Giroux, who wants financial assistance."

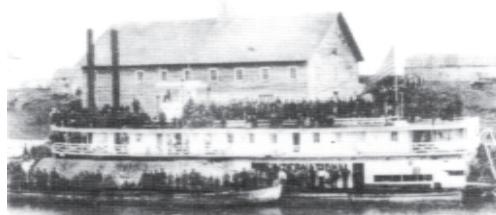
According to family historian Lilly Wiebe, Jakob was buried Blumenort and his wife in Steinbach. They had two daughters, Alvina Unger Indridson, resident in B.C., and Kay Unger Wall, deceased in Winnipeg circa 1991.

#### Sources:

Lilly Wiebe, 634 Stephan St., Morden, Manitoba, R6M 1R7, daughter of Abraham R. Unger, son of David W. Unger.

Mildred Schrock, *For His Sake* (Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1972), contains the history of the Schrag family.

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# Post Ginter (1900-83), Huchricken

Diedrich D. "Post Gjinta" Ginter (1900-83), "Huchricken", Rosengard, E.R.,  
by daughter Helen Dyck, Box 20192, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2T1.

Diedrich D. Ginter was born January 22, 1900 to Jacob and Anna (Dueck) Ginter in their home on NW17-6-6E. They lived on the gravel ridge between Barwalde (Bristol) and Rosengard where Diedrich spent his childhood years. He went to school two miles away on the land where Brian Esau now lives, NW13-6-5E. Diedrich was baptized on May 20, 1918, by Aeltester Johann K. Dueck in the Grunthal Church.

On July 7, 1918 Diedrich married Maria Siemens, daughter Johann and Katharina Siemens from Schönfeld. They were married in the Grunthal Church by Rev. Peter K. Toews on a Sunday morning. They went there with horse and buggy. They lived with his parents for two years in the same house. Their brother Jacob was born.

In 1920 Diedrich built a log cabin a quarter mile away on his parents farm. The walls were covered with clay and straw that you had to mix with water and white wash. The first year his wife only had a dirt floor. All the children were born in that house except Cornie and Lisa, the two youngest. The well was about half-a-mile away. We had to carry water from there and also take the cows there to drink. This was very hard in winter. The well was for all the neighbors.

One day Diedrich told the children to go outside and get the sheep skin from the cutter so we did and there was the dog with a nest full of puppies.

Diedrich had a small store in Rosengard. He sold tobacco and cigarette paper. He grew his own tobacco plants. He also trapped for furs and cutting wood for others to earn extra money.

In August, 1937 Diedrich bought 160 acres of land about 1 mile west from his parents' place, NE19-6-5E. They tried to move the house with horses but they could not do it, so they got Fred



1918. Dirk Ginter (1900-83) at age 18 just before he got married. Photo taken at his parental home in Rosengard, Jakob Ginters.



1916, Maria Siemens (1897-1986) as a young single woman with an old fashioned wash tub and wash board. Photo taken at her uncle's place, David D. Penners in Heuboden, or at her grandparents' place in Burwalde, see Peter B. Penner article.

Schalla with his tractor and he pulled it the rest of the way.

Diedrich made a hole for the potatoes under the house. The hole was filled with potatoes and a barrel of cucumbers, one of watermelons. Another barrel was filled with sauerkraut which was kept in the summer kitchen.

There were 12 children at the table so they needed a lot. Two or three hogs and a steer were slaughtered in Fall after the first good frost, and the meat was also kept in the summer kitchen.

Diedrich bought a 3 H.P. engine and started sawing wood for the neighbors. He was gone most of the day. One winter he did about 400 loads, he made his living that way. He did it for 23 years.

Diedrich also wrote for the *Steinbach Post* for 30 years writing the news report for Rosengard called "Hochrucken Neuigkeiten". In fact, many people came to know him as "Post Gjinta".

In summer Diedrich went to help with the threshing at his sister's place in Lowe Farm and for others in Saskatchewan. One time he came home with lice, so his wife worked hard to get rid of them.

In October 1946 Derk Ginter went to Chicago by bus to see his brother Cornelius. When he got there his brother told him to take the taxis which he did. Two men got in the car and they started driving around for a long time until they got there. He had to pay \$26.00 for a trip that should have been no more than \$5.00. They went to the police but could not find out who the scoundrels had been. So uncle Cornelius gave his

brother back the \$26 dollars. When Derk Ginter came home he bought a wool carding machine as a remembrance of this episode. It still belongs to daughter Helen Dyck and is still in use.

In 1946 or '47 Dad bought his first car, a 1927 Model T Ford. He was so proud to drive that car around. The children were proud they could drive to church in a car and also to Steinbach. Diedrich and his wife went to Lowe Farm with that car. He always said if you have string, wire, plier and a screw driver, you'll be fine, it was easy to fix.

Diedrich bought several different cars and trucks thereafter. In winter he could put his trailer behind the truck and go to saw wood for someone. One day he had the horse behind the truck and the horse slipped and broke his leg, so he came to our place and my husband Wilhelm Dyck had to go and shoot it.

Dad and Mom worked hard all their lives. In 1968 they sold the farm where they had lived for 31 years and moved about two miles west of Steinbach on Keating Road. Here they lived for 14 years. Then Mom went to the Grunthal Mennonite Home and Dad moved in with us for 4 months.

In March 1983 – Dad moved to a small apartment in town. There he stayed till July 13 – when he had an accident behind the Royal Bank and died July 29, 1983. He is buried in Bothwell Cemetery. Mother died in 1986.



1940, Dirk Gjinta (1900-83) with one-cylinder engine with wood sawing rig. He went from farm to farm doing custom wood sawing to earn extra income, charging 50 cents per sleigh



1926, Dirk Gjinta (1900-83) with son Jakob (born 1919). Dirk Ginter was also a trapper on the side. In this photograph he displays some of his pelts. He trapped coyotes, weasels, skunks and wolves.



Dirk Gjinta (1900-83) and Mrs. Ginter, nee Maria Siemens (1897-1986), photo from circa 1928. All photographs for this article are courtesy of daughter Helen Dyck, Box 20192, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2T1.

# The Posted Link on the West Reserve

**"The Post Road: The Posted Link on the West Reserve," by Conrad Stoesz, 44 Ranpart Bay, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 0N3.**

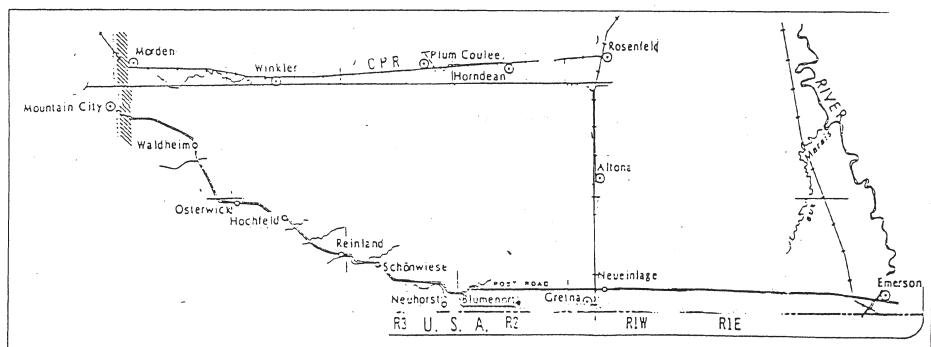
When Mennonites arrived in Manitoba, there was no road system. The most common method of travel was by boat, but where they were to settle and farm, there were no major waterways. The few native trails in the area were not very significant to the new settlers either.

Two expeditions passed through the West Reserve area just prior to the Mennonites arrival. The Boundary Trails Commission headed west from Fort Dufferin, three miles north of the American border on the Red River, in 1873. The following year the newly created North West Mounted Police began their inaugural ride to Edmonton and Fort Carleton from Fort Dufferin. These trails also were not of much significance to the Mennonites in their daily lives.

Travelling along the open, treeless prairies was no easy task - especially in winter. If someone was caught in a snowstorm it was next to impossible to find shelter or their way home. The civic leader of the West Reserve, Isaak Mueller, understood this hazard and devised a way to help travellers. In the spring of 1878 he initiated a plan to erect posts along the most used path. Each settler was to provide posts and labour to help with the project. The posts were to be ten feet long, six inches in diameter, and 250 feet apart. This post-marked road stretched a total of forty miles, hence the name Post Road.

The road began at the most important economic centre of the time – the towns of Emerson and West Lynn, on opposite sides of the Red River, at the Canadian and American border. In 1882, at the height of Emerson's prosperity, it boasted 58 businesses. If anyone in the area needed to buy or sell anything, Emerson was the place to go. It was the biggest and most important commercial hub of the time. The population of Emerson is hard to determine. Reports state that the floating population was anywhere from 5000 to 8000 people.

From Emerson the Post Road ran straight west along the road allowance to what was known as the twelve-mile stop - the village of Neuanlage. The



Karte mit dem „Pfostenweg“ aus dem Jahre 1892.  
Map showing the "Post Road" from the year 1892.

well-known David Schellenberg family frequently provided lodging to travellers. The road then continued straight west, just north of Gretna and Blumenort, until it dipped south close to the village of Neuhorst. Here William Brown established a livery barn and hotel for weary travellers. It was considered to have the best accommodations anywhere in the west, according to an article in the April 25, 1881 issue of the *Southern Manitoba Times*.

From the north side of Neuhorst the road continued in a slightly north-westerly direction to pass through the south end of Schoenwiese and then on to Reinland. At Reinland the Jacob Giesbrecht home was also hospitable to the travellers of the Post Road. From Reinland, the road continued in a north-westerly direction, meandering its way across the prairie, paying no attention to the road allowances. It made its way through Hochfeld, Osterwick, Waldheim and ended at Mountain City, south of present day Morden.

After the Post Road became a well-marked road, its importance as a trade route grew rapidly. A reporter of the *Southern Manitoba Times*, wrote in 1883 "behind one of Shortreeds's fast nags we were soon bowling along at a lively gait along the famous Post Road." The road served people from

the Mennonite villages as well as non-Mennonites from outside the reserve that travelled the road to Emerson. Stagecoaches travelled the road, saw mills and hotels sprung up. The Post Road quickly became the preferred route of mail carriers. It is marked on an 1882 federal postal map.

The concept of using posts to guide travellers was not a new idea. In Russia there were also road markers along some roads as early as the 1700s. A post road existed connecting the two main Mennonite communities Chortitza and Molotschna, and then continuing on to the Crimea.

The western portion of the Post Road disappeared around the turn of the century. By 1930 aerial photographs of the area show virtually no signs of the once busy road. The eastern portion that followed the road allowances is still in use today and locals continue to call it the Post Road. Growing up in the area, and asking for directions, I found that people would tell me, for example, that a certain farm is one mile north of the Post Road.

Over a hundred years after its founding, the Post Road is still an important part of the Mennonite experience on the old West Reserve.

**About the Author:** Conrad Stoesz is a researcher who is on staff for the summer at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg.



The artist of this sketch, Richard N. Lea, emigrated from Birmingham, England in 1880. He settled in the Pembina Crossing area. He owned a business in Emerson, and was a member of the Masonic Lodge there. He traveled back and forth from his home to Emerson many times. He enjoyed sketching and would draw whatever met his fancy. He made this sketch depicting the village of Reinland and a post from the Post Road in 1883. It is the only known picture of a post from the Post Road. Reinland was the heartland of the Old Colony Mennonite Church originally known as the Reinlander Gemeinde.

# The Ingenious Funk Brothers of Altona

The Ingenious Funk Brothers of Altona, by Ted Friesen, Box 720, Altona, Manitoba, R0G 0B0.

## Introduction.

The renown of the Funk brothers, Jacob, John and Henry of Altona was legendary. The stories about their mental exploits were legion. A short article in the *Red River Valley Echo* April 3, 1963 on Jacob described his accomplishments, most of the stories about them were oral, i.e. not written down.

I had heard many of these stories from people who knew the brothers personally. That included my sister Anne Loewen, who accompanied them on the piano when they played their string instruments, cello, guitar and violin.

My interest was rekindled when in June 1999, Cecil Rosner in his Chess column in the *Free Press* wrote that he had received a handmade, hand-printed book by an Altona farmer named Jacob Funk which contained "incredible, original problems" composed by Jacob since the early decades of this century. I concluded that the story of these three brothers, detailing their feats and accomplishments simply had to be recorded.

## Family Background.

John, Jacob and Henry were sons of Peter S. Funk (1855-1935) and Maria Ewert Funk (1863-1948) (BGB A201) who emigrated from the Bergthal Colony in Russia in 1875.

Peter S. Funk was the son of Peter Funk (b. 1831) BGB B113. After settling in a village on the East Reserve [believed to have been Reinfeld], they resettled in the district of Hochstadt, just east of the present town of Altona [where they are listed in the 1881 census]. They farmed there throughout their life together. Of their eight children, three died in infancy or childhood.

The three brothers that are the subject of this article came from a family of eight. Henry born in 1892, John 1887, and Jacob 1889. Their father died in 1935, and in 1939 they moved from the farm at Hochstadt and built a modest house in the Town of Altona, where they lived with their widowed mother.

Hochstadt (also known as Kleinstadt) was a typical Mennonite village. It did not retain that characteristic very long. People moved onto their own property after the revision of land holdings.

## Education.

Thus the village became a district; it had a church, and in its early history both a private and a public school. The latter gradually won out and the private school was closed. The school was fortunate to have a number of excellent teachers. To mention but a few who went on to become prominent in Mennonite society:

- John M. Friesen, one of the men who formed the group that created the Conference of Mennonites in Canada.

- Abram Buhr, who became one of the first Mennonite lawyers.

- Peter J. Dyck, the father of John Dyck, the historian.

- Peter D. Reimer, one of the founders of the Rhineland Agricultural Society.

An illustrious roster for a small one-room district school. Education was always a concern of the Mennonite people. To have attracted teachers of this calibre speaks very highly of the vision of the people in the district.

The Funk brothers attended this school. We have no record that their formal education extended beyond grade school. There is one mention of Jacob assisting a high school teacher in music. All three were therefore self-taught. Their niece Leona Haddock (daughter of their sister Mary) writes "that Jacob taught himself algebra, geometry and trigonometry. All of them developed their mental faculties in this way."

## Carpentry.

To earn a living they took up carpentry, and frequently in partnership with David Kehler, they built many of the houses in the 1930s, 40s and 50s in the town of Altona and the surrounding communities. Leona writes: "they were meticulous in their measurements and the houses they constructed were sturdy and well built. It was said they would start at opposite corners when building a house, but their measurements were so accurate they would meet perfectly in the middle, without having to consult one another."

When the contractor in charge of building the new Bergthal church in Altona was having difficulty figuring out the positioning of the arches, he called on Jake to help him out. With a few quick calculations the problem was solved. In one of the houses they built in Altona, the



Chess problem of Jakob Funk as published in the Winnipeg Free Press, June 19, 1999, page 3A.

owner in consultation with the lumber yard manager made some changes in the stairs. He forever regretted doing this on his own, without consulting the Funks. Every time he went into his basement he had to watch that he didn't bump his head. The result of his own doing.

Their knowledge of the mathematical sciences made them master builders. They usually worked only long enough in a given year to earn \$1000.00, which they considered adequate to live on, then retired for the balance of the year to devote time to their various interests and hobbies.

## Music.

They were also very musical, again self-taught. Henry played the cello and Jake the gui-



Jakob Funk at age 30. Photos for this article except as noted are courtesy of Ted Friesen, Box 720, Altona, Manitoba.



John Funk at age 30.



Henry Funk and sister Mary. Mary Funk Klassen was the mother of Leona Haddock and Larry Klassen.

tar and John the violin. Their primary interest was classical music. Leona recalls her mother singing in harmony with Jake many an evening in their home in Altona. They gathered many a Saturday evening at the home of Al and Anne Loewen (my sister) in Altona. She accompanied them on the piano.

They did not play in public very often. Leona writes, "They played primarily for their own enjoyment, but frequently performed at dances and church gatherings, and we are told even as background music in silent movie theatres." I do remember Henry playing at the Jugendverein in church. All the brothers had a natural musical ability, even though none of them ever took lessons.

#### Mathematics.

Leona writes, "Jake was indeed a genius far ahead of his time (and his contemporaries) in that small rural community." He loved mental challenges. He joined the Advanced Mathematical Circle (an American society) and quit only because of the paper shortage in World War I. He solved not only mathematical problems but had to find the best solutions and short cuts to the answers.

He won so many math contests that a number of sponsoring groups barred him from re-entering in order to give other competitors a chance at the prizes. His sister tells the story where he was sent a mathematical problem by one of the professors from the "Advanced Mathematical Circle", along with the solution arrived at over several pages from start to finish. Jake worked out the problem from a different perspective, and came up with the same solution only with less than half the calculations to reach it. It was said that Jake's method was adopted.



The leaning tower of Pisa constructed by Henry Funk.

In his later years he occasionally tutored local high school students in mathematics. Another story of Jake's mental abilities tells of him standing and watching a freight train slowly moving through Altona and adding up the four digit figures appearing on the box cars, and coming up with the right total.

His interest in science and mathematics led him to attend the Chicago World's Fair in 1933, where he was fascinated, and no doubt stimulated by all the scientific and technological marvels on display.

#### Puzzles.

He also devised a kind of mathematical crossword puzzle which he called "cross-sums". That hobby which he sold to the Dell Publishing Co., netted him about \$2000.00. A considerable sum in those days--about double his annual income from carpentry. He also designed crossword puzzles for magazines appearing in various countries. One was found in a paper published in Spain. He loved the challenge of a puzzle.

"There was another marvellous creation built by Jake which when put together, was a wooden ball, but which consisted of many notched rods of wood. He called it a "Burr" puzzle because it looked like a giant burr. When taken apart it was but a pile of wooden rods, and there was only one way to put it together in its final form. It defied the imagination, and one can only marvel at the intricacy of it, both in the invention and construction." (Leona)

It looks like a forerunner of the Rubic Cube, which became a popular fad a short time ago.

#### Chess.

Chess was one of the ways he exercised his mind working out solutions and strategies. His first published problem appeared April 14, 1918 in the *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times*. For more than 40 years his problems were printed in newspapers and magazines around the world including the *Christian Science Monitor*, the *London Observer* and the *Australian Chess Magazine*.

He was a member of the Amateur Chess Club, the International Good Companion Chess



The parents Peter S. Funk and Maria Evert Funk. Photo courtesy of Leona Haddock, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Club, the British Chess Problem Society in which he had membership from 1923 to 1963. Jake's books on chess were donated to that Society.

"Jake was also interested in Astronomy and could plot the paths of heavenly bodies with his telescope, by his analytical mind and his endless thirst for knowledge. Another of his talents was land surveying with a transit, which he did for many years as a sideline." (Leona)

Jake donated a number of his books to the W.C. Miller Collegiate Library. An examination of these verifies his familiarity with the significant books of that day. The listing of a few titles will simply indicate this: *An elementary Treatise on the Integral Calculus* (Trinity College, Dublin 1980); *Triumph of Mathematics, 100 famous problems taken from 2000 years of mathematical culture*; "A collection of mathematical problems and solutions constructed," by Jake E. Funk; and *Geometric Constructions*. These works provide ample evidence that Jake lived in the rarefied atmosphere of advanced mathematics.

#### John and Henry Funk.

John had the same interests as his brothers. "He was extremely interested in chess and check-

According to the article by Cecil Rosner, the chess problems of Jakob Funk were first published by the *Pittsburgh Gazette-Times* on April 14, 1918. "For more than 40 years his problems were published in newspapers and magazines around the world, from the *Christian Science Monitor* to the *London Observer* to the *Australian Chess Magazine*....Funk even had some of his problems published in this newspaper [the *Free Press*] as early as 1920"--*Free Press*, June 19/99.



The five Funk siblings, from left: John, Jakob, Henry, Peter and Mary.

ers and competed in many matches, both by mail and in person. It was told he once played a chess game against the winner of the North American Chess Championship which was held in Winnipeg, and managed to play him to a draw.” (Leona) One of his chess partners lived in Australia. Since each letter contained only one move, and since mail was very slow, it sometimes took years to complete a single game.

The last four years of his life he lived in the Ebenezer Home. I remember reading the Low German stories of Arnold Dyck “Koop en Bua” to him. He enjoyed them very much, and always asked me to come back and read more.

“Henry enjoyed chess too and won prizes in this field. His interests were also mechanical and he built the most intricate moving toys and gizmos. In an old scribbler of his, I came across a schematic drawing for one of his gadgets illustrating pulleys and wheels.” (Leona)

The illustration shows a model he built of the Leaning Tower of Pizza. “One gadget I remember is a small house with two tiny carpenters, one sitting on the roof and the other pushing a ladder up: the top one would push it down again, and so forth: Henry’s inventions were not only toys, but many useful shortcuts around the house. He rigged up an ‘automatic’ washing machine with a motor, as an example, long before this was a common household appliance.” (Leona)

#### Reflections.

“All of the brothers were somewhat ambidextrous. If it wasn’t convenient to do something with one hand they simply switched to the other. Henry excelled at this talent. He was able to ‘mirror sign’ his name--forward with the left hand, and backward with the right--simultaneously.” (Leona)

They loved children, including their nephew and niece, Leona and Larry. Their yard was a baseball field for the neighborhood children. They purchased Altona’s first T.V. set and invited children from all over town to come and watch. They even supplied popcorn.

“Because of their many interests and unconventional outlook they were looked upon as somewhat eccentric.” Certainly theirs’ was a

of our early years and we always looked forward to a visit with them. Our lives were certainly enriched by these marvellous intelligent, kind and humorous men.” That was true of all that associated with them. It certainly was for myself. (Ted)

Looking back at the Funk brothers raises interesting thoughts and questions. What motivation caused the brothers with little more than an elementary education, to explore the world of thought and knowledge around them? Curiosity? The idea that knowledge is power? The desire to explore the wonderful world of science, music and thought around them? They had the innate knack of going after that which had enduring value. They were able to correlate different fields of knowledge... mathematics, physics, astronomy and music. They worked only enough to provide the necessities that would enable them to live the life they did. Their leisure time was spent in challenging enjoyments and through creative activities that exercised the mind, and broadened their horizons.

They had an amazing capacity to explore the world of ideas, and to express them in puzzles, and problems that tested human ingenuity.

They had a good relationship with people especially children. Their world was not bounded by limitations. Their natural desire for knowledge transcended those. It re-



John and Henry Funk going for a load of coal. Watching are mother and sister Mary.

world much wider and richer than the average person’s.

Leona writes “they were one of the most magical aspects

sulted in a self fulfilment, that enriched their simple lives. Theirs was a life that was naturally ordered, and that was designed to contribute to their development of mind, body and soul.

These brothers have something to teach us today.

I count it a privilege to have known them, “Ted Friesen”.

#### Sources:

Cecil Rosner, “Jakob Funk’s puzzles resurface,” in *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 19, 1999, Page A3.

“His hobbies Keep Life Interesting,” in *Red River Valley Echo*, April 3, 1963, page 5B.

Esther Epp-Tiessen, *Altona: The Story of a Prairie Town* (Altona, 1982), pages 224-226.

Leona Haddock, “The family of Peter S. Funk and Maria Evert,” unpublished paper, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1999, 5 pages.



#### Pioneer Entrepreneur.

Erdmann Penner (1826-1907), Tannenau, E.R., later Gretna, was among the pioneering businessmen in Manitoba. Together with partner Otto Schulz, he went into the flat boat business, supplying Mennonites with the necessities until steel arrived in 1878. They had the distinction of building the first line of stores in Manitoba, stretching from Gretna to Morden. Later that business was confined to Winnipeg. Their store in Niverville was established in 1878. “Schulz & Penner” shipped the first ten car loads of grain for international export from Winnipeg. In this photograph we see Mr. Erdmann Penner in the buggy and Mr. Schulz standing at his side at the corner of Main Street and McDermott Ave., where the Toronto-Dominion Bank stood in 1930. Source: Manitoba’s Diamond Jubilee 1870-1930 (Winnipeg, 1930), page 80. Courtesy of Dr. John Warkentin, York University, Toronto. See also Carillon News, October 25/99 page 12C.

# Material Culture

## The Mennonite Low German Dictionary A Mirror of the Mortal Soul

The Mennonite Low German Dictionary: A Mirror of the Mortal Soul,  
by Jack Thiessen, Box 135, New Bothwell, Manitoba, R0A 1C0, (copyrighted).

### Introduction.

Mennonite Low German, *Plautdietsch*, is at the heart of the Prussian-Russian Mennonite experience and culture in a way that High German never was and English can never be. Thus, what is central to the understanding of *Plautdietsch* is that it is more than a means of communication, it is, in fact, a way of life. Analogous to Yiddish (see endnote) it is a direct, spirited, and spiritually alert language that is a thousand years old and more--centuries older than Chaucerian English, but, like the robust speech of Chaucer's pilgrims, expressively rooted in the quotidian lives of ordinary folk.

And yet, though the Mennonite civilization has eaten, slept, wept, laughed, borne babies, and earned its bread or failed to, and had, in fact, made the dialect their way of life for two hundred years and more, it was held in contempt as a literary vehicle.

### Arnold Dyck.

In the nineteen forties--effectively overnight--this contemptuous view of Low German was reversed, and by a single powerful hand writing in Low German. This pen belonged to Arnold Dyck. He is our one indisputably major writer in *Plautdietsch*. Singlehandedly he established a literary style and idiom that subsequent writers have adopted and imitated to some degree or another. Primarily a humorist, Arnold Dyck was so successful with his *Koop enn Bua* series that, more than anyone else, he is probably responsible for the notion that *Plautdietsch* is more suited to comic than to serious writing. Dyck himself tried to dispense that notion with his somber, elegiac short story *Twee Breew*. His enormous influence may also account, at least in part, for the fact that Mennonite Low German writing generally is to a surprising degree uncharacteristically secular and cultural in both content and treatment rather than religious and spiritual.

With his deep and abiding love for Mennonite *Bauernkultur*, Arnold Dyck regarded *Plautdietsch* as the very soul and sinew of that traditional way of life, as the very essence of the Mennonite ethnic identity. From first to last his Low German works contain moving references to *Plautdietsch* as the one vital source that holds Mennonites together as a people and subculture.

### The Dictionary.

While re-reading Arnold Dyck in Germany

more than forty years ago, I discovered what I had lost and immediately attempted to make amends for having neglected the mortal dimension of my soul, namely my mother tongue, by recording the entirety of Dyck's vocabulary into a concordance. Next followed whatever else the limited world of *Plautdietsch* had produced in recent time and space spanning four continents. This process has never ended and the dictionary is the tangible result.



Dr. Jack Thiessen publishes Low-German/*Plautdietsch* dictionary, his magnum opus and life's work.

### Ole Juhaun.

There were three other defining moments which led to the encapsulation of the vocabulary. The first involved our neighbour in *Gnadenfeld*, southern Manitoba, one Oole Jehaun (Kühne) Wiens, the next, the leading Low German dialectologist in his day, Professor Walter Mitzka, and finally the scholar, Professor Harvey Dyck of Toronto.

Jehaun Wiens had joined the Whites under General Wrangel when the political future of Russia appeared up for grabs, some eighty years ago. His division fought gamely but suddenly found themselves in retreat all the way across the Black Sea and then on to Constantinople.

There, the commanding officers had informed Wiens and his cohorts, they would rest a while, re-group and then surprise Reds and all with a fierce attack.

The next morning Wiens encountered these

self-same officers having breakfast at an open grill, munching on cumin flavored lamb burgers. Wiens reflected, "Na, nü jintj mie een Lijcht opp, enn etj ritjt mett eemol meea aus Kotlette. Wie habe aulatoop de Betjse voll enn tjeen Papiea." (Well, suddenly it dawned on me and I started sniffing more than burgers. I concluded that we had our pants full and no paper.)

Since I was then much into the Mozart stage, I asked Wiens whether he had seen the Seraglio, the theme of the opera "The Abduction from the Seraglio" (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) in Constantinople. Wiens was not eager to get into that harem chapter; he was a Mennonite prepared to discuss war but not love and the making thereof. He hid a passing smile and answered: "Na joh, doa word von eene Serai jerädt, oba etj weet uck nich meea." (Well, yes, there was some talk about a serai but I no longer remember clearly). The fact remains: the Turkish Seraglio is an architectural masterpiece while a *Serai* is a lean-to or dilapidated shack, or even an outdoor biffy in Mennonite Low German, as recorded on page 516.

### Olbassem.

The next defining moment occurred nine years later in the university town of Marburg in Germany. Professor Walter Mitzka, was an East Prussian and one of the first who had noticed that there was a peculiar element to the Mennonite Low German dialect. This element was the Dutch: Dutch remnants which had been retained by the Mennonites in their otherwise flawless West Prussian vernacular.

Mitzka was unconventional if he was anything else. He called to me across the street one day: "Heea, waut meent Olbassem enn wua tjemmt daut Wuat häa?" (Listen, what does *olbassem* mean and where does the word come from?) Since Mitzka had lost a leg to the

The new Low German/*Plautdietsch* dictionary by Dr. Jack Thiessen, *Mennonitische-Plautdeitsches Wörterbuch* (Rosenort, 1999), 518 pages, can be purchased from the author at Box 135, New Bothwell, Manitoba, R0A 1C0, or by e-mail [janda@ccco.net](mailto:janda@ccco.net); or phone 1(204)388-5233. The price per copy is \$25.00, plus \$3.00 shipping and handling.

First World War, I crossed the street to tell him that *Olbassem* meant *Johannisbeere* in German and currants, both red and black, in English.

"And the word has roots, but where?"

I replied that I did not know.

"Then I will tell you," he said. "Mennonites always lived close to open water and so fishing was important to them. To catch eels, they baited currant bushes with carrion and then left them in the water overnight. Next morning they jerked the bushes out of the water and the eels, intertwined, were caught. So *Olbassem* means an eel broom."

Intuition and my usual candor compelled me to do the impossible. I contradicted a German professor and said, "I am not convinced."

"Send See besope?" ("Are you drunk?") he yelled.

Then he said, "I'll tell you what, you prove me wrong, and I will arrange a scholarship for you as long as it takes you to complete a Ph. D. if you are interested."

I hiked over to the library and made for the dictionary of the Nederlandse Taal. And sure enough, my intuition had proved me right. *Ol* in Middle Dutch or Nederlands means ale and *bessie* means berry. Thus *Olbassem* means an ale-berry and is recorded on page 386 in the dictionary.

### Leppstock.

The last defining moment was an interaction with Professor Harvey Dyck. In his book "A Mennonite in Russia: The Diaries of Jacob D. Epp, 1851 - 1880; translated and edited by Harvey Dyck, U. of T. Press 1991," Dyck chanced upon the medicinal herb variously termed *Loefstock* but was at a loss to explain the term.

I turned to page 330 of my manuscript and sent the following printout to him: "*Loefstock, Lövstock, Leppstock - m. Liebstöckel, auch Maggikraut; wird als Gewürzblätter, aber auch als Arznei gezogen. Bei den Mennoniten in Rußland als Medikament beliebt. Loveage, mengl. loveache; altered (after love ache) from afrz./ofr. Levesche, luvesche; levisticum from L. ligusticum, loveage plant native to Liguria from Ligusticus. Ligurian from Liguria (country in Cisalpine Gaul), a European herb of the carrot family, formerly cultivated for use as a home medicine by Mennonites in Russia, more recently as a flavoring agent or potherb.*"

### Lexicography.

When examining the vocabulary of any language in a dictionary, strict discipline better be observed for otherwise the inquisitive mind will soon be lost in a labyrinth of words leading ever on and on, and the word, meant to be located, is hidden by numerous intrusions of vocabulary, all highly engaging and interesting, but useless to the initial endeavor.

So it is with this lecture. The temptation is to bamboozle you with a maze and a thicket of vocabulary. No one is better at this than the Germans; they can analyze and explain and

*Lehnwort*. Vocabulary that has resisted total amalgamation and is identifiable to the trained ear as foreign is termed a foreign word, or *Fremdwort*.

Examples of the first rubric are *Fenster* in German having been derived from the Latin *fenestra*. Gimmick might serve as a good English test case having come from the German *Gemache*, meaning an ostentatious but artificial display, or much to do about nothing. An even more obvious example is *Nachbar* or neighbor which means the next Bauer or boor or farmer in English.

The most amusing loan word that comes to mind is the German *Fisimatanten* which translates as pretenses or subterfuges. Various erudite explanations for this term are offered but I prefer to believe that it entered the language via the Napoleonic presence.

French soldiers asked German girls to *visite ma tente* to visit my tent. The Germans girls knew what was intended but they did not understand the French and so they said, "Der will mit mir *Fisimatanten machen*." (he wants to make *Fisimatanten* with me.)

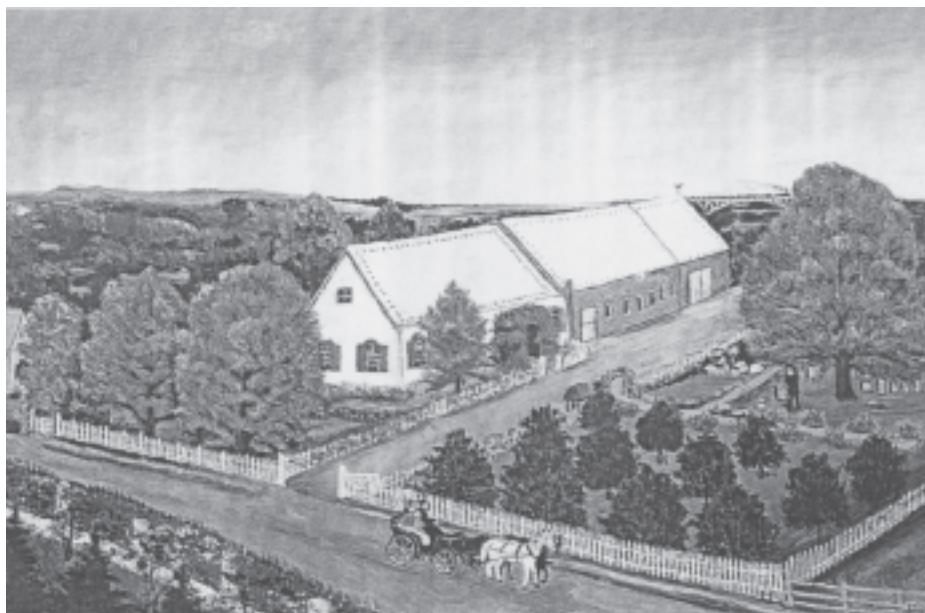
Incidentally,

German girls still use this term for unrequited overtures, as I was to find out, in the post-Napoleonic era, even without a tent.

Aside from the obvious inherent difficulty in translation, anyone who has ever dabbled in interpreting knows from personal experience how bedeviling it is to turn any word around and around before replicating it with closest possible accuracy in the language to be comprehended. At times the conversion of the word borders on the impossible, or to put it more colloquially convincing, "translating is like kissing through a handkerchief" as the Jews say.

And yet translating machines are ever among us, ever failing just after raising ultimate hopes. Consider: the Russians showed off a computer translator to Americans thirty five years ago. The machine, as big as a locomotive, could master anything Russian-English-Russian, claimed the Russians. The Americans were invited to try it by offering up a text which one of them from the Bible Belt did, namely "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." The response was quicker than convincing. It read, "The vodka is o. k. but the meat is rotten." One might conclude that herein lies the difference between the letter and the spirit of that word.

To again re-connect to loan and foreign



The beautiful paintings of H. P. Pauls like no other artist evoke the beauty of the Chortitza landscape and its lingua fauna. This drawing is of the Wirtschaft (a village farm) belonging to his wife's parents Cornelius and Ida Hildebrand in Einlage, Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia (as it then was). Photo courtesy of H. P. Pauls, A Sunday Afternoon: Paintings (St. Jakobs, Ontario, 1991), Plate No. 17. Courtesy of Institute of Anabaptist Studies, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario.

deduce every form of vocabulary blood group, but they rarely, if ever, discuss the heart of the matter, namely the purpose language, and above all, dialects serve. The reason is simple: they rarely know them. Linguistic and dialect blood groups are categorized and tabled, but the life sustaining heart is never charged into life. Over many years I have found this true of all the *Niederdeutsche Tagungen* I have attended. Therefore, I shall endeavor to strike out on a different course.

For this reason, among others, the wordsmith and the lexicographer are invariably alone in their endeavors. It cannot be otherwise and that is why this dictionary was influenced by thousands, but written by one.

### Loan Words.

The Germans have handy but effective, indeed persuasive terms, for classifying vocabulary into etymological rubrics. Vocabulary, that is no longer recognizable in its source, meaning that it has so thoroughly been incorporated into the language that it is not identifiable as a foreign word, is called a loan word, *ein*

words as they constitute a language: A common term that has shed itself of all recognizable provenance is robot, and is German, English, Russian, French etc. and means to work in Russian but originally comes from the German *Arbeit*.

### Word Origins.

As stated, much vocabulary has been so thoroughly incorporated that it's etymology is not immediately recognizable. Then there is the other kind which resisted total amalgamation and which always stuck out, even to the untrained ear. *Katastrophe*, catastrophe is an example which comes from the Greek and has remained unchanged except in pronunciation. In Greek it is pronounced catastrophe'. Diarrhea, Diarrhoea is another example of a word that is so common that it flows through life and times in its many forms. The Germans call it *Diarrhöe* but every form runs back to the Greek diarrhoea dia-, through + rheein, to flow.

### Dutch.

These, then, are some examples of loan words and foreign words as they contribute to the making of a language. Obviously, analogous patterns apply to the Mennonite Low German vocabulary. No native speaker has ever given thought to the fact that *Japs*, meaning a measure of two cupped handfuls, is Dutch, as is *drock*, to be busy; *foaken*, often; *Vondoag*, today; and *pienich*, diligent, while *Tjliere*, glands, come from the Frisian. *Tjliere* was a term used at the *Schwienstjast*, meaning a communal meal held after a pig slaughtering bee, together with neighbors who assisted in the butchering. The root of *-Tjast* is *Kost*, meaning snack or feast. During the pig slaughtering bee the term *Heispodem* was invariably used. A *Heispodem* is the lower jaw of a pig with teeth intact. Up to the middle of this century it was used to cut and or to saw frozen straw or hay in winter and was commonly called a hay spade. *Heispodem* is also used to describe heavy- or lantern-jowled males. The list of Dutch word remnants in *Plautdietsch* goes on into the hundreds of words.

A single word entered the Mennonite Low German from Scandinavia; an astonishing phenomenon. The forked tree of a cutter as well as of a buggy is called *Feebastang* and comes from the Swedish from whom Mennonites pur-

chased cutters when initially settling in Ukraine.

### Russian Influences.

Then came the Russian and Ukrainian vocabulary, practically en masse, since a new way of life, products and plants, fruits and vegetables, hitherto unknown to Mennonites, were incorporated into their new lives and into their vocabulary. *Bulka* became *Bultje* with even the gender changing to the neuter because of the diminutive suffix ascribed and affixed to the term, namely -tje. *Verenetje*, plural, are cottage cheese filled dough pockets but the term is

name and purpose.

While on the farm with its many related activities and chores, the word *Pauslocka* from the Polish poslac deserves mention; a *Pauslocka* is a factotum, somebody who runs errands. Mennonite farmers like to keep their own youngsters scurrying about doing their bidding but they keep anyone on the trot as well who is prepared to execute all manner of errands for them. *Pauslocka* and the verb *pauslocke* is, in fact, a very widely employed term. Also, a *Pauslocka* is meant to carry the *Schemedaun*, his master's suitcase if the need arises. *Jamadan* came into Russia from the Persian. *Schemedauntje* is the diminutive form of the valise and a common term for a beer belly.

A relative, the nephew, is now a *Plemenitj* and the Russian form of address became ours, meaning Mennonite. A suitor is still often called an *Uchazhor*, from the Russian, and a *Molodjets* was the term loaned from the Russian to describe a male who had distinguished himself by an exceptional performance in sports, in the performing arts, or in school. Then there is the term *Tschudack*, used to describe a comical fellow, a joker, from the Russian.

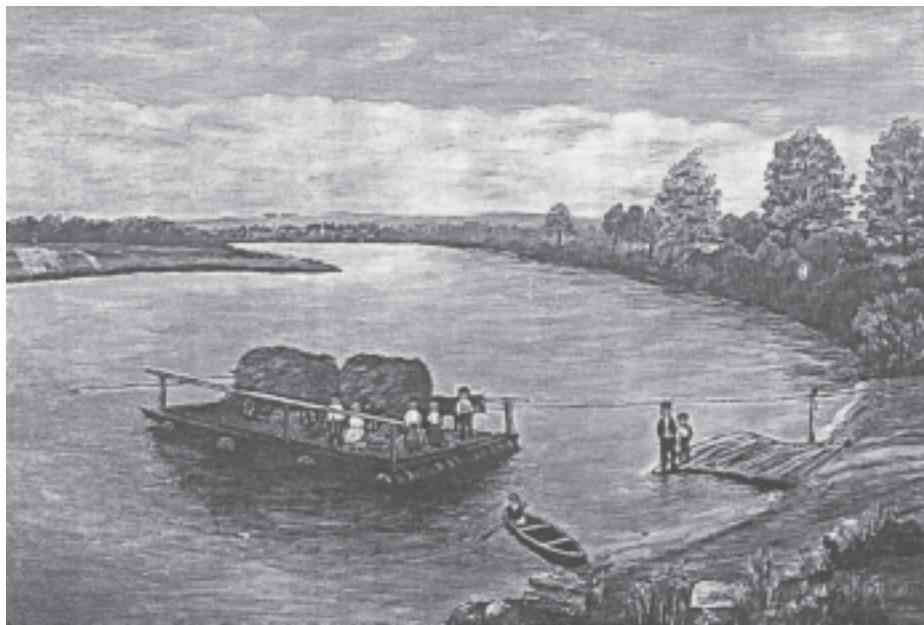
When a friend becomes a comrade, the Russian *swat* is used to describe more intimate friendship; then a *Frind* becomes a *Swaut*.

When hunting with a *Swaut* and the success of the venture calls for a break, a piece of *Schisnickworscht*, meaning garlic sausage, from Russian *Tschasnoch*, is shared; this piece is called a *Schmatock*, which is downed with a hefty drink called *Sturrack*, and if it is homebrew, the term *Semah(g)on* is applied. The body may be in Canada but the spirits are in our previous Russian home which continues to bevel us.

My mother was referred to *Ljolja Wasilovna*, while my father is called *Petro Abramovitsch* by his cohorts to this day; he is still alive.

### The Dnieper.

One word which flowed into the Mennonite Low German vocabulary, like none other, was the Dnieper River, where the oldest Mennonite settlement, the Old Colony, was founded. This term has become so prevalent and so established in the Mennonite dialect



*The Dnieper River made its way into the hearts and minds of the courageous Mennonite pioneers who settled the Chortitzia steppes in 1789. The river subsequently became firmly entrenched in our Mennonite folklore and tradition. Dr. Jack Thiessen tells the ancient fable that when God created the earth in six days He lay down on the Insel Chortitzia to rest on the seventh, hence explaining the incredible beauty and significance of the place. In this beautiful painting by gifted Mennonite painter H. P. Pauls, the Nippa-enja are bringing the ferry to shore. Photo courtesy of H. P. Pauls, Paintings, Plate No. 27. Courtesy of Institute of Anabaptist Studies, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ontario.*

Russian, *Verenj*, and means jam. Cottage cheese was also adopted and now becomes *Gloms* from the Polish and or Russian. *Kollodets*, *Kollodez* came to mean gelatine as part of head cheese; its provenance was the Russian *cholodec*.

Outside, a length of rope became a *Knaut* from the Russian *kanat*. A boat was henceforth a *Lomm*, while a *Prohm* became the new term for a ferry boat. A *Petklatje* was now the term for a washer between a bolt and a nut and finds its origin in the Russian *podkladka*. A drum in many forms and sizes came to be known as a *baraban*, while a pocket lighter was a *Bensientje*, from the Russian *Benzinka*. A winter coat is a *Pulltoo* since the Ukraine sojourn, but it is not Russian, rather the French term for a coat which Napoleon left behind. *Burnus* was a lighter coat from the Russian and *Schlubb*, for a winter cap, was also adopted from the Russian *schlubka*. No self-respecting Mennonite to this day calls his belt of many uses other than *Pojas* from the Russian of same

that it is frequently used as a synonym for river in general. It is even used as a verb like in *Daut Tjind haft sich enjenippat* meaning the child has dniepered, or wet itself.

The Dnieper River assumed mythological proportions. Came *Vaspa* time, four o'clock coffee of the day, the Dnieper River was present a hundred years later, almost. Older Russian Mennonites looked upon those who had never savored coffee made from Dnieper River water pitifully. Their knowledge of the excellence was such that they turned their eyes upwards and away, dropped their hands into their laps and had nothing to say to those who further questioned their expertise.

Then there were the *Nippa'enja*. These were mainly landless Mennonites who plied the trade of water transporters (*Lomm*), rowing passengers across the Dnieper River or to the Island of Chortitzza according to necessity or request. *Nippa'enja* resided in close proximity to the Dnieper in modest accommodations. In late summer they transported huge amounts of watermelons (*Arbüse*), mainly grown in Niederchortitzza, across the river which were bartered by local melon mongers (*Kuppelwiewa*), who sold them in the wider neighborhood.

Regular customers for Mennonite watermelons were to be found along the Dnieper River, then by reloading, to points further north; even Moscovites and people in St. Petersburg awaited these annual shipments. As well as ferrying freight and passengers, these *Nippa'enja* engaged in commercial fishing. In addition to ice fishing in winter, they repaired their fishing gear including *Bolleries*, a sort of fish net used in shallow waters. Not infrequently the *Nippa'enja* were known to be uncouth, just waiting for the question, "Wua tjemmst Dü häa?" (where do you come from?) to which their ready and rehearsed reply was in the classic genitive case "*Von Vodaspetz enn Muttaretz*" (from father's tip and mother's rip) although it should be noted that such vulgarisms were already known in the Prussian area.

I shall not enter into the vocabulary borrowed from the Russian by the Mennonites for swearing but an older half-brother frequently told me that my father could swear in Russian for fifteen minutes without repeating himself. I asked my father about this one and he claimed he had recently timed himself and managed only thirteen minutes, try as he might.

### **Yiddisch.**

A chapter needs to be devoted to the so-called *Jüdeplon* or *Judenplan*, the name given by Chortitzer Mennonites to Jewish settlements. The *Judenplan* was an attempt by the Russian government in the Kherson province in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to provide Jewish settlers with training in agriculture by model Mennonite farmers. Inter-human relationships on this enterprise were good, sometimes exemplary, with many Jews learning the Mennonite dialect to perfection while many Mennonites learned Yiddish and spoke it until recently. This undertaking was terminated sud-

denly and brutally by the Nazis in 1942-1943, thereby drastically changing Mennonites attitudes to things German.

This segment of history considerably enriched the Mennonite Low German vocabulary. Consider: *Wann Dü eenen Jüd bedroage wesst, motst Dü verrem Freestitj oppstohne; wann Dü eenen Mennoniet bedroage wesst, doafst Dü eascht goanich schlöpe gohne* (if you want to get the better of a Jew, you have to get up before breakfast; if you want to get the better of a Mennonite, you shouldn't go to bed at all).

Then there are terms like *jüde*, meaning to haggle or bargain, *Jüdeboat*, the three-flowed avon, *Jüde'haundel*, Jews' business at which shrewd calculations are made, *Jüdehoap*, the Jews' harp, *Judentum* meaning Judaism, *Jüdesäjen*, the act of observing kosher, *Jüdeschool*, the Jewish school, generally associated with great din or unruly behavior, *Jüdetjoasche*, meaning ground cherries, and *jüdschet Dentje*, meaning higher thinking or learning, which gives rise to, "*de Jüd binjt sich de Schooh opp Jiddisch too, oba den Schlips laicht hee sich opp Hebräisch omm*," meaning: a Jew ties his shoes in Yiddish, but he ties his cravat in Hebrew.

*Zigga* means watch or clock in Yiddish and in Mennonite Low German. *Bochat*, frequently used in the Mennonite vernacular, is a small boy or lad or also a smart aleck while its origin describes a young man, student of the Talmud, student of the rabbi. *Plautdietsch* and Yiddish share a highly descriptive term *prost*. To be *prost*, or feel *prost*, means vulgar, low class, simple of behavior, less than average, not up to snuff. It comes from the Polish *prosty* and/or the Russian *prostoy* but it describes so much in one commonly understood adjectival and adverbial handy term that Mennonites and Jews both picked it up and never dropped it. The list goes on.

A fascinating practice adopted from the Jews by the occasional Mennonite on the *Jüdeplon* was *af kapore* or *toom kapore* *gohne*. This meant to inflict a deliberate loss on an endeavor or to present an offering to achieve forgiveness from God, generally by butchering a kappore chicken and swinging it by the head in an arc several times. This is a loan word from the Hebrew/Yiddish *kapporoth* or *Yom Kippur*, meaning to make atonement.

### **Forbidden Words.**

Then there is the realm of taboo vocabulary, common to every language. The Germans did not call the dreaded wolf, *lupus*, in his day because to call him by his name was to summon or invite him and so they spoke of him in vocabulary foreign to him, like the *Jriesa*, the dirty or grey one. Terms of endearment were employed, so as to supplicate, assuage, appease, or mollify the dreaded bear. The Latin term *ursus* is long lost for the bear; he is now called a bruin, or a honey eater in Russian, Mennonite Low German and in English.

Likewise, the original term for milk, *Maltj*, has long been lost. Reason being that milk in

the pantry tended to go sour very rapidly during a thunderstorm. No one knew the reason why and so malignant spirits were thought to be responsible for souring the milk. The only way to disperse these spirits was to re-name the object of their vulnerability to curse and call it by a different name. The power of the word is demonstrated in "In the beginning was the word..."

When a person of either sex has a stomach ache, or merely a momentary jab or pang of pain in the gut, the term used is "*Ejj hab Buckwehdoag*," meaning "I have days of stomach ache." No doubt, *Buckwehdoag* was originally a euphemism for menstrual pains but its meaning has long been lost and now men are prone to the affliction as well, by their own admission.

There are terms regarded as vulgar but only when attention is drawn to them. One example is "*Ejj hab Schizz*" indicating "I am afraid" but meaning quite literally "I have shit." A further example is "*Ejj jintj áwaroasch*" which states "I went backwards" but literally it means "I walked over my arse."

A further example of an expression used by children and ladies alike, but totally unmindful of its real meaning, is *Plümedeffat*. It is used often in a mildly pejorative sense to describe a write-off, a person not to be taken seriously, a joker. Its real meaning is to be found in the sexual-taboo realm since a *plüm* is a vagina and a *deffat* is a cock pigeon strutting his stuff.

No doubt the North American, who is generally more religious than his European counterpart but to whom little or nothing is holy, invented the showing of the longest or middle finger which is a silent imperative for somebody to beat it, remove him or herself from the scene with immediate dispatch. If the finger dispatcher is intent on adding a cute touch to the vulgar gesture, he might raise his little finger and call it metric for the same intent.

Our Russian-Mennonites were more refined in that the *Dul* or *Dulja*, which meant the same thing and while being an insulting gesture, was done by forming a fist with the thumb sticking out between the middle and index finger. No self-respecting Mennonite would ever use *Zaracko*, the most vulgar term for the human posterior, but I heard it often enough to remember it, as I do *Zuck* or *Tsuck* which is from the Russian *zucka* and means bitch, meaning a particularly offensive or lewd woman. The other term I was never meant to hear but did practically daily was *Zuck enn Sien* which was the literal Russian forerunner of the English son of a bitch.

### **Venereal Disease.**

Mennonites are not as moral as they like to appear but because appearances count, they were reluctant to answer the question posed by the scrutineers employed by the Prussian Dictionary Archives in their day. The question was "What do you call venereal disease in your dialect?" Most Mennonites stated that the term, disease and all vocabulary relating thereto were

totally foreign to them. "Shame on you," they responded.

But there was one who rose to the occasion and volunteered to be counted in the name of a silent majority. He replied, "*Hee haft sich de Jeetkaun veboage*," meaning "he has bent his watering spout."

Permit me to linger a minute longer in the nether or earthy realm. The following verses describe jocund folk wisdoms which predate America and it's attendant puritanism:

Jesunde Tähn enn kaun nich bieten,  
Jesunde Moazh enn kaun nich schieten,  
Jesunda Hohn dee nich meeä steiht,  
*ENN dann frajchst Dü mie noch woo't mie jeiht?*

Or a piece of advice on how to get through life in healthy fettle:

Holt jünt den Buck enn Kopp scheen woarm,  
En fellt jünt emma rund de Doarm,  
Loht daut Oaschloch ope stohne  
*Dann bruck jie nich nohm Dokta gohne.*

### Deity.

It would not dawn on a Mennonite to ever take the name of the Lord, or hold characters from the Scriptures, in vain. And yet a whole list of abbreviated euphemisms spike their everyday need for surprise or mild curses. *Herr Jee, Harre Jeen, Harrejee, Oh Jeeminee* mean Lord Jesus and Oh Jesus; *Harre Gutt, Halle Goms, Gutt etj saj* are all short for Lord God, Holy God and God, I say; *Halle Moss* and *Harre Moss* mean Holy Moses and Lord Moses; *Hallelwata* is obviously Holy Weather. *Diewelstinja*, Children of the Devil, is what the pious Mennonite Brethren frequently called Mennonites of other church memberships.

### Striking.

While the following verbs may not belong to the taboo realm, their great frequency is revealing about the conscientious objectors and their resolution of conflicts through love or lack thereof. The verb is to hit or strike and has the following synonyms: *schlohne, barschte, däwere, resse, schwäle, knuffe, tjiele, backse, heiwe, husche, donnre, priejle, veschmäare, duje, veduje, prietze, schachte, opptalle, veschwäle, veducke, vedatje, uahfieje, waultje*, and *senje* readily come to mind.

### Animals.

People today rarely think beyond the general when viewing the agricultural scene. And yet, the vocabulary describing animals, or simply categorizing the various varieties and breeds in Mennonite Low German, is almost legendary: A horse is a *Pead*, but a stallion is a *Hinjst*, while a castrated *Hinjst* is a *Kunta*. A horse of questionable colour and breeding potential is a *Schrugg*, while a mare is a *Kobbel* and her young a *Falm*; foaling, or the birthing process, is *falme*. To be in heat of a *Kobbel*, or an overly eager girl, is called *hinjisch*. While still in the equestrian realm, there is a term for a horse's mane hanging over it's forehead, like-

wise it is used to describe the bangs of a girl's coiffure; both are called *Schebrientje* and come from the Polish *czupryna* or *szupryna*.

A cow is a *Koo(h)* while a bull is a *Boll*. The young is either a *Bollkaulf* or a *Tjieskaulf*, while giving birth of a cow is called *kaulwe*. To be in heat of a cow is *bollschen*. A half grown cow is a *Stoatj* while a slightly younger *Stoatj* is termed a *Hocklantj*. A castrated bull is an *Oss*, which, of course, is also a term for a slow, ponderous or lazy person of masculine gender.

A pig is a *Schwien* while a young one is termed *Foatjel*; therefore birthing of pigs is termed *foatjle*. A male pig, or boar, is a *Kujel* (an old Prussian term), a sow is called *Säaj*, while a castrated *Kujel* is a *Borjch*. To be in heat of pigs is to be *burrsch*. An *Üabää* is a ridgeling, meaning a boar with only one testicle. Any wimp or wuss is likewise called an *Üabää* in Mennonite Low German. A synonym for a ridgeling is *Hollkujel* in Low German.

To be in heat of animals, or occasionally also of an overly forward girl, has been described above, but *rannsch* and *lopsch* are additional adjectives or adverbs for the same phenomenon in dogs, cats and rabbits.

There are terms relating to home and stable that have resisted etymological tracing or research. Some that readily come to mind are *Tjieskaulf*(female calf) and *Wrungel*, a pie like dish made from *Beest* or the beestings, the first milk of a cow after calving.

With reference to a loose women: a floozy is termed a *Hoadsmejall*, a pejorative term, meaning a girl who would even get involved with the roving shepherd. The German *Schäferstündchen* is it's counterpart.

Not surprisingly, there are numerous terms for a scare-crow in the dialect, no doubt harking back to the day when scare-crows were necessary to disperse predatory birds from the gardens, crops and melon patches. *Heazgrüll*, millet-scare, is the most common term but it is also applied to homely women; a further term is *Berstaundeschiesaul*, melon-patch monster, related to the German *Scheusal*, a fright or a monster, *Goadeschejcha*, garden fright, but the list goes on.

### The Farm.

Let us set out, a bit farther afield. The allocated plot of land to the Mennonite was and is a *Koagel* in *Plautdietsch* and when using the term, Tacitus emerges; he called the plot *coerls* in his writings of the Germans, two thousand years ago. Even the surrounding village farms lands were divided into strips of open fields, each of which was called *Koagel*. In time, the collective larger plot was termed *Koagel* and sub-divisions were called *Stap*, or *Stape*, plural, from the Russian steppe, while a further sub-division of land remained a *Fletj*. A plot of land with attendant buildings large enough to start or sustain a family was formerly called *eene Fiastäd* or *Feuerstelle*, or a place of permanent fire in the hearth or oven in a dwelling, thereby denoting termination of nomadic ways.

Then came the crops accompanied by the

decay, due to economy of effort, in naming them. *Weit* is Weizen, *Howa* is Hafer or oats, *Joascht* is Gerste or barley. The fruit of oats is called *Wopp* or panacle in English, while the barbed ear of barley is an *Eil*. *Kuckeruzz* is corn or maize, and *Heazh* millet. There are dozens of words for weeds, we had them all from *Schwenskrüt*, pig-weed, to *Kurrei*, tumble weed.

### Home and Garden.

So much for the fields and the crops. Let us turn briefly to the garden to be fascinated by the names our forebears gave or incorporated by way of describing the products. The water-melon deserves a special chapter, but let us concentrate on *Kuckeruzz* meaning maize or corn as mentioned. The product is either of Indo-European or Ugrian origin, or possibly both, we do not know. The term *Olbassem* has already been explained, it comes from the Dutch. Then there are the beans, called *Schauble*, the word coming from the Polish *szabla*, or the Russian *sablja*; Letvian *schablis*, and Lithuanian *szoble* and all word birth mother to the German *Säbel*, English sickle, obviously because of the shape of the bean.

*Bocklezhan* is Osmanian/Turkish and means tomato. Mennonites grow *Komst*, cabbage, for *Komstbortsch*, meaning the famous Russian cabbage soup. And, finally, there is the modern panacea, already always known to people of the earth, namely *Schisnick*, Russian *Tschesnok* and all meaning garlic.

In Ukraine, Mennonite melon patches were of a size only Texas can rival. These patches were termed *Berstaund*, from the Osmanian/Arabic *baschtan*, with the same meaning. *Arbiis* is as old as time and Mennonite historians claim that Noah grew some on the quarter deck of his craft. The prospect of a rounded red slice of this *fructus universalis* kept up his spirits and maintained a steady hand at the helm.

Dividing partitions in the fields to keep out neighbors and stray animals as well as serving the purpose of demarcations were called *Tün* or *Tien* in the plural. The word town owes its etymology to the lowly fence, the *Tün*.

Still in the agricultural realm, every Mennonite, indeed all Anabaptists know the Martyrs' Mirror or know of it. Fervent believers were burned at the stake, am *Scheiterhaufen*. The word *Scheit* is in the heap but never used to describe a piece of wood with which people burn or are burned. And yet, we have the term as in *Oatscheat* (*scheit*), meaning a single tree, the sturdy piece of oak attached to the load and to which, in turn, the traces of a horse are attached.

Further, there is a term in *Plautdietsch* called *Owesied* which is any side-room, or extension to a main building, like a granary or annex, in which fire-wood, chaff or even implements were stored. *Owesied* goes back to the semi-circular addition to the side of the church. Since it is an architectural appendix, it is also used to describe a hefty posterior generally of the feminine gender.

A nail is *Nagel* in German and *Noagel* in

*Plautdietsch*, hail is *Hagel* in German and *Hoagel* in Mennonite Low German. And then there is tail which still existed in Middle Low German as *Zagel* and which is used daily in *Plautdietsch* as *Zoagel* for a tail of an animal or the penis of man. But the predictable *Zagel* in High German is gone.

A *Kopp* is a head like in *Kopf*. However, *Plautdietsch* has a more refined term for the human head, namely *Heeft*. It is invariably used in *Komstheeft*, a head of cabbage but there are such who call a headache "*Mie ritt de Heeft*."

Mennonites are not particularly reflective people, nor are they prone to dispensing or receiving the gentle touch or even admitting to it. Therefore it is all the more surprising that they have an infinite number of tender, indeed loving verses for the reflective realm after the setting of the sun. When playing with children, *Schockel*, *Schockel Scheia*, or *Süzhe*, *Petrižhe* come to mind but there are literally hundreds of others and the dictionary has them all.

#### Folklore.

Folklore never played much of a role in Mennonite life, neither did tradition. Yet there are exceptions, the most notable being the *Brommtopp* which is an old Mennonite tradition. A group of young people superficially disguised went from house to house on New Year's Eve, singing a New Year's song. The song was accompanied on a special drum made of calf hide with horsehair attached to its centre. When fingers were pulled along the moistened horsehair, an eerie harshly discordant sound resulted. This was fun time. The hosts would respond with treats of deep fried New Years' fritters, called *Porzelje*, and frequently a *Sturak*, meaning a shot of brandy.

*Bauernkultur* was mentioned and that is as descriptive as the compound can convey. When Mennonite men sat together, cracking sunflower seeds or, more commonly, smoking and they overheard women stating with the straightest of faces that while they ate nothing, or practically nothing at all and yet were of a size, seven or eight to a dozen, some of the male representatives would invariably remark, "*De Wind bloft den Kurrei toop, oba nich soon Hinjarenj*," meaning "The wind blows Russian thistle into a rounded heap but not such a posterior," also meaning "Whom do think you're kidding?" about your religious adherence to a diet.

#### The Outside View.

The above has been an attempt to sojourn in the everyday life of things Mennonite, as they lived and loved and used *Plautdietsch*, coming to them as naturally as breathing. It might be useful to briefly explore how "we" were historically regarded by those around us, our neighbors, friends and detractors. The Prussian Dictionary Archives has the following to offer: It states a Mennonite is a member of a free-religious, evangelistic religious community, who practice adult baptism and reject military service as well as the swearing of the

oath, and which people settled mainly in the Vistula Triangle, further up the Vistula River and the Elch Lowland.

A sampling of West Prussian observations regarding Mennonite reads as follows: "Many still cast a furtive eye on the Mennonite." Or, "he was as rich as a Mennonite." Or, "where the brook thrush can stand, a Mennonite can live;" this turn of phrase describing Mennonite resourcefulness, enabling them to eke out a respectable living even on modest soil, on the lowlands.

Further; "there are only two kinds of Mennonites in the Werder Valley, the refined and the coarse Mennonites. The refined are called *Flemish* or *Klahrken* or the Pure-and Fine-stuff (ones). However, the Mennonites of the village of Nickelswalde, who seeded the rich willow soil to wheat and were dependent on the Catholic mill, were of greater refinement and had buttons, button holes and proper pockets which were sewn to hold material goods. Only the fisherman and small farmer Simon Biester was a genuine hook and eyes Mennonite, coarse dress, without pockets; for this reason he hung on his boat house a painted wood sign with a fancy scrawl: (in translation) Mennonites with hooks and eyes,  
Are pleasing to the Holy Guise;  
But Mennonites with buttons and pockets,  
Are choice trinkets for the Devil's lockets. (Günter Grass).

There are a dozen and more entries; however, the famed Mennonite farmer sausage deserves mention. This sausage was produced, obviously, in the Danzig area, up to the beginning of the Second World War, and was sent by train to Berlin two or three times a week and was so popular that it sold out within the hour. This sausage known for its long shelf life is made from pork and smoked with peat smoke; it was produced only by Mennonites. The loin is removed, states the recipe, with one half reserved for pork chops while the other half is for Mennonite sausage. The specific ingredients for the smoking process, aside from the peat smoke, was and remains a secret.

*Plautdietsch* has a surprising number of terms for flatulence and not all are attributable to onomatopoeia. Some are like *fortjse* or *püpe*, but *jlieme* and *glidere* are variations of similar flatulent melody. This activity should best be conducted in the outhouse which is known in *Plautdietsch* as *Taunte Meia, Aufrett, Serrai, Betjhüs, Schiethüs* etc.

The sexual realm is both colorful and descriptive but also explicit. We shall leave it at that; the dictionary will reveal this rubric if called upon.

#### Conclusion.

In conclusion the question emerges: why would any dialect, the mother of all languages, be allowed to go to ruin by neglect? The answer is simple: urbanization and the attendant mass media accessibility levels all things and makes plain the hidden valleys of rural linguistic retreat. Further, Mennonites have always been utilitarian in the extreme; in short

they are pragmatic and materialistic. Financial success is their ultimate standard of success. This was always the case. However, in Europe a head full of learning and culture was also a determining factor in the evaluation of a person, and so the retention of a language or mastering one or two in addition to one's own *Muttersprache* were contributing factors in assessing the total person.

The North American scene, church and all, has little time and less appreciation for such fineries and therefore such concerns as *Plautdietsch*, the mortal soul of Mennonitism, is doomed and damned as the modern Mennonite more and more ties his shoes and his cravat in English only.

**Endnote:** Cynthia Ozick's article on Yiddish and Sholem Aleichem in *The New Yorker*, August, 1988.

## Coming in Issue No. 17, December 2000:

The story of our beloved Mennonite *Gesangbuch*, the article, "A Tale of Two Gesangbücher: the story of the *Gesangbuch*," by Dr. Peter Letkeman, the featured material culture essay in the December, 2000 issue No. 17. The *Gesangbuch* originated in Prussia in the 18th century and is still in use by thousands of conservative Mennonites to the present day.

## Coming in the Next Issue:

Our featured material culture article for our June, 2000, Issue 16, will be by Dr. Wesley Berg, University of Alberta, on the beautiful and historic "Singing tradition of Old Kolony Mennonites." Dr. Berg is the first scholar to have studied the amazing singing tradition of the conservative Mennonites and has concluded it to be a beautiful and sophisticated form of song expression with ancient roots and deep spiritual meaning and significance to our people.

# Peter K. Barkman (1826-1917), A Photograph, 1914

Peter K. Barkman (1826-1917), A Pioneer Photograph, 1914,  
as recalled by great-grandson Frank F. Reimer, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

## Introduction.

Once in a while a call for information in *Preservings* receives an immediate response. In doing an article in the last *Preservings* (No. 14, pages 130-131) regarding the 1870 Johan Funk *Martyrs Spiegel* owned by Peter K. Barkman (1826-1917), I noticed that the photograph of him used in the family book was cropped out of a group picture. Since the photograph dated from the early part of the 20th century I was immediately interested to see and/or republish the entire photograph.

Two people responded to my call for information, Lillian Loewen, who had a copy of the photograph and Mrs. Tina Heckert, both great-granddaughters of Peter K. Barkman. Tina Heckert also had the idea that the couple at the right hand side of the photograph were Mr. and Mrs. Peter B. (Butcha) Reimers, so that their son Frank F. Reimer was the logical person to ask for information regarding who was in the picture.

Tina's sister Lynda volunteered to talk to Mr. Frank Reimer, relatively easy as they attend the same church in Winnipeg and live in the same area. Together they recorded the names of the people in the picture.

## Giroux/Steinbach Station.

The photograph was taken at the home of Frank's grandparents, Abraham W. Reimers, who lived at the south end of Giroux. When the railway was built through Giroux in 1892, Giroux became the siding where all of Steinbach's merchandise was shipped to by rail, in fact Giroux became known as "Steinbach Station".

## Giroux

Giroux was named after Father Louis-Raymond Giroux, a pioneer priest in southeastern Manitoba. He was born in 1841 in Quebec. Ordained on May 24, 1868, he arrived in St. Boniface on July 7th of the same year. He was named director of St. Boniface College in 1869 and was chaplain to the Metis garrison at Fort Garry. In the fall of 1870, he was named resident pastor of Ste-Anne-des-Chenes where he spent the rest of his days. He was also in charge of surrounding missions in the region and as far away as Fort Frances, Ontario. He died on November 11, 1911. Courtesy of Alfred Fortier, Le Centre du patrimoine, 340 boulevard Provencher, Saint Boniface, MB, R2H 0G7. Submitted for publication by Marilyn Hornan, Giroux, Manitoba.



Seated in front is Frank F. Reimer, who at age 91 still clearly remembers the photograph being taken at the home of his grandparents, Abraham W. Reimers, at the south end of Giroux. Standing at rear, l. -r.: Margaret Reimer and her husband Jakob A. Reimer (she was the daughter of Isaak K. Reimer), Katharina A. Reimer (later Mrs. Peter Toews), John R. Barkman (still living in Henderson, Nebraska), Aganetha A. Reimer (never married), Johann A. Reimer, Anna, Mrs. Jakob Barkman, Ben W. Reimer (uncle to the "A" Reimers, lived in Chicago for many years), and Mr. and Mrs. Peter B. Reimer; she was Helena Friesen, daughter of Johann I. Friesen, the Steinbach miller. Standing to the left of Peter K. Barkman is Katharina Reimer (later Mrs. Martin Reimer, daughter of P.B. Reimer). Standing to the right of Peter K. Barkman is Anna, Mrs. Cornelius E. Giesbrecht.

Steinbach teamsters such as Klaas I. Friesen and son Paul now hauled goods to and from Giroux instead of Winnipeg. Each would go with a team. Jakob T. Loewen had a big Case steam tractor and would pulled many wagons at a time. Peter K. Penner (sometimes known as Pistel Pete) was the first teamster to start hauling freight with a truck.

Several Steinbach businessmen took advan-

tage of this opportunity and opened businesses in Giroux.

One of these was Abraham W. Reimer who had a residence at the south end of Giroux and a store nearby. He also owned a packing house at the north end of Giroux. The Reimers also operated a restaurant. They had a standing arrangement with the train crews going by that when the engineer would blow the whistle, they would



Intriguing view of Steinbach, circa 1915. This photograph was taken from on top of the second Steinbach flour mill situated on Mill Street (later renamed First Street, for some bizarre reason), just east of where the new Stone Creek Condominium is being constructed. The photograph must have been taken prior to 1920 when the flour mill burned down. In the foreground behind where Solomon's Furniture now stands is the house of Peter K. Funk with the lumber stacks of "Steinbach Lumber Yards" immediately behind it. In the middle right hand side of the photo is visible the Centre Store owned by Jakob W. Reimer; across the street on the west side is the Peter T. Barkman house and garage, the famous H. W. Reimer General Store. Over the tops of these buildings are visible the peaks of the housebarns on the east side of Main Street, from the current post office to Fairway Ford, which were owned by Johann R. Reimer (one time mayor), Mrs. Peter P. Toews and Abraham S. Friesen (the City's first mayor). This photograph may well be a match for the photo taken from the same mill roof around 1915 in a northwesterly direction, featured in *Preservings*, No. 9, Part Two, page 35. This photograph was evidently taken by Peter T. Toews, better known as "Central" Toews because he owned the telephone central at one time. Unfortunately the original of this invaluable photograph has recently gone lost. Does anyone have a copy? Courtesy Marvin Toews, Steinbach.

know how many men were coming for dinner.

A hotel and restaurant was located at the corner of what is now PR 311 and PR 210.

J. P. Langill owned another store. Later Johann Wiebe from Hochfeld owned a livery stable. Their was also a Post Office owned by Rauchauds and the train station. There were two grain elevators, Lake-of-the-Woods and Purity Mills.

#### **Recollections.**

Frank F. Reimer recalls that his father Peter B. Reimer purchased a Model T truck in 1914 for \$490.00 borrowing the money from his fa-

ther-in-law Maula (Miller) Johann I. Friesen.

Frank F. also recalled an interesting story of his grandmother Mrs. Abraham W. Reimer, nee Aganetha T. Barkman (1859-1955), one of Steinbach's early matriarchs. Being in the lumber business son Peter B. Reimer often had to calculate the number of board feet in a load of lumber. Grandson Frank recollects that his father would count off the load, calling out, so many 2 by 4s, so many 2 by 6s, etc. while it was being loaded. While he was counting, his mother, Mrs. Abrhaam W. Reimer, mentally calculated the number of board feet in each item and added it all up.

When Peter B. was done, his mother would announce the total board feet which was then accepted as the correct calculation for the transaction at hand, all without the benefit of an adding machine.

Frank F. Reimer also recalled attending school in Giroux. During WWI he was teased because he was of German background. Even the son of Starfield, whose mother was a cousin to Frank's mother, ganged up against him. But Frank was a good wrestler and managed to wrestle the other boys.

## **Well-Driller Friesen**

**"Borum Schtita Fries/Well Driller Friesen" Cornelius Klassen Friesen (1877-1953) and Katharina Penner Friesen (1890-1971), Steinbach, Manitoba, by grandson-in-law Glenn Kehler, Box 280, Oakbank, Manitoba, Canada, R0E 1J0.**

#### **Background.**

C.K. Friesen was a man who "marched to his own drummer", and to describe him one would have used adjectives like non-judgemental, determined (possibly stubborn), broad-minded, curious, innovative, caring, generous, with a very dry sense of humour.

Cornelius was born in the family home in the village of Blumenort, and could be deemed a true pioneer for his contribution to the Mennonite community and beyond. His father was a school teacher in Russia, and carried on with his profession as the first school teacher to be hired in the Blumenort area. Since getting established in a new country was top priority, teachers pay was rather low and the Friesen children had to find employment wherever they could, to help with the upkeep of the home.

#### **Daring-do.**

As a young man Cornelius bought a bicycle, and being curious and adventurous he asked some friends to join him to go harvesting in Kansas. This was great experience to see the world for a couple of young farm hands from Blumenort. I am sure by the time they arrived in Kansas, they were in top physical form, peddling the 1890s version of the bicycle. One can visualize them peddling over dirt roads, through the wild west Dakota Territories to the more settled areas of Nebraska and Kansas.

When the adventurers came back they had to face the "Brudaschuf" who revoked his church membership for such a daring feat, I guess the bicycle was too modern a vehicle, but he was later reinstated.

We are told that Cornelius had a rather dry sense of humour. When he was a young lad, the Friesens and Klassens were neighbours. Mr. Klassen, like most Mennonites had a nickname. He walked with his head tilted up (possibly because he was short in stature) and was called "Schtern kjikja Klosse", but only behind his back, which Cornelius supposedly did not know. Being young and "uschuldich" he met Mr. Klassen and greeted him with "Gouden dach Ohmche, Schtern kjikja Kloose" (Good day Mr. star gazer Klassen).

Mr. Klassen was so offended that he told

Cornelius' father about his disrespectful son, and was told to promptly go over and apologize to Ohmje Klosse. Cornelius went over and said, "Papa said I should apologize for calling you Shtern kjikja Klosse, and if you forgive me for calling you Shtern kjika Klosse, I will never call you Shtern kjika Klosse again." We assume he was reluctantly forgiven.

#### **Well Drilling 1892.**

In 1892 as a young man Cornelius started his lifelong career providing potable water for the farms, towns and villages. According to oral tradition, he started working on well-drilling for others at the age of 15.

This was no easy task, and required skill as well as muscle and stamina, lifting heavy pipe, drill chisels, and screw pipe together with a four-foot-long pipe-wrench all day, this built strong character too. During the early years of his career there was no machinery available and wells were dug with pick and shovel, or pipe driven into the sand or gravel with rather large sledge hammers.

Eventually Cornelius designed and built his own drilling rig when much of the structure was made of wood, including the large cable reels and the rocker arm that lifted and dropped the heavy chisel ever deeper into the rock. The mechanized energy was provided by a water-cooled single-cylinder stationary engine.

#### **Inventions.**

C. K. Friesen grandsons, the present owners of Friesen Drillers managed to salvage some very interesting documents. One being a bill of sale dated January 13, 1926, from "His Majesty the King in the Right of Manitoba represented herein by the Honourable Minister of Public Works" for the purchase of two "Austin Well Drilling Machines" numbers 11 and 17 for the sum of \$40.00, \$10.00 down and the balance to paid by April 1, 1926. The agreement was signed and sealed by the Deputy Minister of Public Works and two witnesses.

They have the original Patent 4240701 - issued by The DOMINION OF CANADA dated June 10 1924 and Patent number 1555918 issued by THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA dated October 6, 1925. These patents covered

"The Artesian Well Tool", a device Cornelius invented and manufactured in his workshop, which he used in his wells as well as selling them to competition.

The tool is very simple and yet an ingenious device. Cornelius had very little formal education, but had the ability to figure out why some wells with ample water supply and ample pressure, would not push the water up. He then reasoned that some wells would lose their pressure higher up in fractured rock or gravel. Once he



*The picture depicts a prosperous era, one with the Schmade with living quarters on the second floor, sons John and Albert sitting on top of the drilling rig. Photographs for this article are courtesy of Glenn Kehler, Box 280, Lot Two, Hillside Road, Oakbank, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R0E 1J0.*

had figured out what was happening down there, he went to work on a device to plug the lower high pressure aquifer, thus directing the water under pressure to rise only through the pipe, and it worked.

Since the patent officer must be assured that

no similar device existed in North America, we also can be assured that he was the first individual to understand what was really happening down there in the unknown and devised a way to overcome the situation.

Because there was no way to monitor or control the use of the patent information, it was exploited throughout North America and still being manufactured and used today. Every plumber carries various sizes of test plugs in their tool truck, which are based on the exact same principle as Cornelius' well tool.

#### Marriage.

Going back to his younger years, would find Cornelius still living in his parental home [in the village of Blumenort, even though his parents had both died in 1899 and 1900. His siblings were all married before he was. Until 1894] one of the neighbours in the village was cousin Klaas I. Friesens [son of Abraham M. Friesen], who's first born daughter Katharina, was destined to become Cornelius' bride. Cornelius as a 14-year-old lad (so they say) had been seen pushing his future bride in a baby carriage or wagon, oblivious to the path destiny would lead them.

We assume with a family of pretty girls so near, he was content to wait for another 19 years to take a wife. Other like-wise suitors were C. T. Loewen, Jac. T. Loewen, John R. Barkman, Peter D. Reimer, and Henry D. Reimer.

We can see from many pictures that they had a long courtship, which included a rather active young peoples' group from Steinbach and area. Some of the group played musical instruments which initiated much singing and was always enjoyed by all. [One such photograph from 1904 is published in the *Plett Picture Book*, page 136 and the *Blumenort* book, page 208, *Preservings*, No. 8, Part Two, page 58, and shows Cornelius with a group of young people including his two brothers Martin and Klaas and their future brides. Cornelius and Klaas are sitting in front, Cornelius with a trumpet and Klaas with an accordian. Another photograph of this nature from 1914 is published in *Reflections*, page 89, and shows Katharina, Mrs. C. K. Friesen, and her sister Mrs. C. T. Loewen, with a group of Steinbach young people.]

Katharina told her granddaughter that there were times when they had joined the Chortitzer group of young people, and had even joined them at dances at Diedrich Ungers. She recalled dancing with Andreas Blatz (the local Fred Astair) with his handlebar waxed mustache, bowler hat, spats on his shoes, cut quite the figure. However this was before the ministerial banned all such behaviour including the owning and playing of musical instruments.

When Cornelius and Katharina were finally married in 1910, he already had his drilling business well under way.

#### Steinbach.

Cornelius also had a property in Steinbach were they would live together for most of their lives, a rather large lot now occupied by the Victoria Square. Cornelius had built a two-storey "Schmade", a well equipped blacksmith and ma-



Another photo - circa 1929, before the depression, shows Cornelius and Katharina in front of their new Chevy with Children (Left to Right) Albert, Cornelius holding Wellington Cornelius Leroy better known as Tony, Katharina, Anna (Mrs. C. Froese), Ema (Mrs. John P. Thiessen), Margaret (Mrs Isaac P. Penner), John, Walter, Virginia (Mrs J. Woodard) would be born in 1933. The new car is standing at the back door of their house.

chine shop, with living quarters upstairs, where they lived for a few years, when Cornelius bought a house which had to be moved from out in the country. Unfortunately, during the move the house caught fire, possibly from the steam engine pulling it and was destroyed.

In 1914 they built a new house on the premises, which was a two-story structure with a full basement, a fine spacious building for the times. Cornelius being rather innovative, installed a hot water furnace, circulating hot water through registers throughout the house, but first it went through a large food wanner in the dinning room, another one of Cornelius' good ideas. I guess he liked his food hot.



Still another picture shows the drilling rig in action beside a new barn under construction, on the Peter B. Thiessen farm in the Ekron district, three miles west of Steinbach, with Albert and Walter helping. A note of interest, that although The Peter B. Thiessens and the C.K. Friesens were at opposite ends of the spectrum, as far as the Kleine Gemeinde doctrine goes, they would later have one thing in common, a granddaughter

There was also modern plumbing on both floors, with water supplied by his artesian well and driven up by a "Ram", a devise as close to perpetual motion as I've ever seen. The cold water entering the house was piped through a rather large steel refrigerator which Cornelius built.

The water ran continuously keeping the contents at a constant cool 42 degrees Fahrenheit summer and winter, except for the times during the winter, when there was a fire in town, and the pumper tank was filled with a rather large hand pump from a well that Cornelius drilled, tapping into the same underground aquifer as his own well. This lowered the water pressure and consequently froze up the Friesen refrigeration piping, which Cornelius would have to unthaw.

The house was well-built and one of the first to include modern plumbing in Steinbach. However the house was eventually sold and moved to the Friedensfeld district, and has since been destroyed by fire.

Cornelius was well acquainted with the use of dynamite and used it on a regular basis to get rid of underground boulders in the way of the drilling chisel. He found other uses for it as well.

Daughter Erna recalled the following incident:

Cornelius had a habit of getting up early and making fire in the kitchen stove. He would go to work in the machine shop until Katharina would call him in for breakfast. He would often put a few thin slices of dynamite (made up of sawdust, wax, and nitroglycerin) to put under the kindling, to start the fire which worked real well.

One such morning Katharina was startled by a series of loud explosions coming from the kitchen. She jumped out of bed, ran to the kitchen where she saw the stick of dynamite, which Cornelius had forgotten, on the edge of the upper

shelf of the stove. The heat had melted the nitroglycerine laden wax, which had slowly dripped onto the stove and each drop caused a small but loud explosion shaking the house. Cornelius quickly removed the dynamite and went back to work, and no doubt Katharina was rather shaken up for the rest of the day.

#### Local Foods.

The well drilling business expanded to the neighbouring towns and outlying areas, which allowed Cornelius to associate with and make many good friends of various nationalities and religious backgrounds. When further away from home the people would offer room and board as part of the well drilling deal.

This further introduced him to ethnic food and customs from various cultures which he really enjoyed. He would bring home samples and encourage his family to also enjoy the new food. Some was not appreciated, but Cornelius was always ready to try something new at least once. No matter how humble the host's accommodations, or how different the meals were, he never complained or was critical of these people, and thus enjoyed lasting friendships.

The first grandchild Kathie remembers many times when Grampa would come home with strange food, and wanted his family to join him in a snack. When they all declined and ran for cover, he would pay Kathie 25 cents to try a piece of blood sausage, which she would chew, take the money, and run to spit it out. Grampa liked her courage and never asked for the quarter back.

The Friesens enjoyed having friends over for visit and a good meal. On one of these occasions, he brought home a (supposed) pork roast which Katharina prepared for the expected company. Cornelius sensed that everyone had enjoyed the dinner, and asked how they liked the pork roast. They all agreed that it had been very good, and Cornelius informed them that it had in fact been bear meat they had eaten.

There were some very shocked diners who must have given him a strange look, but nothing like the reaction he got from his wife, she threw the roaster into the garbage, never to use it again.

Being half-a-century ahead of the times Katharina had not eaten any of the bear meat because she was a vegetarian, but she felt put out for her friends sake. Katharina had probably never read a book on the benefits of being a vegetarian. She just did not like meat and the fat associated with meat, and stuck to her simple diet of fruit and vegetables and whole wheat bread, cheese and tea.

Katharina gave birth to 10 children which included two sets of twins (the first twins did not survive) yet she never exceeded 95 pounds. They raised their eight surviving children in their large house and life was good.

#### Social Life.

The oldest daughter Erna recalled that in 1929 her father drilled a well for the Grunthal Cheese Factory. The job had gone very well and upon completion he had made enough to buy a new



C.K. Friesen at the helm of his rig, possibly one he built early in his career, circa 1910.

Chevrolet four-door sedan with a trunk and spare tire on the back. He ordered the car from the P.T. Loewen Garage, Steinbach, and paid cash in advance for a factory order.

Shortly after getting married, he had purchased a new touring car, which he then converted into a truck by cutting off the back half and adding a box to be used for hauling pipe and other essentials.

During the winter evenings Cornelius would make a skating rink for his children and the young people in town. His was the first outdoor rink with lights, placing large coal oil lamps around the periphery which did the job and charged a small fee to offset expenses.

Other evening recreation during the winter months was playing checkers, which Cornelius was very good at and took very serious. Daughter Erna remembers times when the playing disks were lost or misplaced, she saw her father play with raisins and the opponent played with prunes, but play they did, and when he went to call on friends, the checker board would be tucked under his arm, ready for a challenge.

To supplement his income, Cornelius had built a saw rig to saw logs into stove length fire wood. This would keep him and his boys busy during the winter when all of the repairs and upgrading was completed on the drilling rigs.

#### Bible School 1937.

In 1937 after the children were grown up Katharina fulfilled a lifelong dream of going back to school, and enrolled in the Bible School, which held classes in the MB church. She attended full time for two years, with the full backing of her husband and children. This was very fulfilling for her, and helped her in her every day life as well as teaching Sunday school which she enjoyed and kept up for much of her adult life. She loved teenagers, and her Sunday school students, consisting of teenage girls, loved her. Katharina would often invite the girls over to her house, and they would have devotions, and then make candies or bake cakes or other activities which

they all loved.

There were those that took exception to Cornelius allowing his wife to follow her own ambitions. Since he was not a domineering person who wanted to control every aspect of his family's lives, of which there were many, he encouraged his wife and children to explore and follow their dreams.

During the winter of 1938 the Friesens went to visit a Mr. G. Siemens from Rosenort, who spent his winters at a bush camp in Vassar owned by H.E. Plett and later his sons Jacob and George. When Mr. Siemens found out that Mrs. Friesen went to school, he wrote a letter to the Steinbach Post, publicly admonishing Cornelius for not having proper control of his wife and not able to keep her in the house where women belonged.

The following is Cornelius' reply:

Steinbach Post  
December 28 1938

"Not long ago, G. Siemens wrote that we had visited him in Vassar, and then added the comment that I sent my beloved wife to Bible school in order to maintain peace in the household. Although this does not contain truth, yet it will be understood completely false by many people; they will believe that we live in such discord wrong, by far.

"But the Bible school does bring us joy and peace, and I believe that many would do well if they would follow our example. After my wife has returned from the school, has looked after the house, caught up with the domestic duties, and the evening meal is cleared away, then we seat ourselves peacefully and comfortably, and she relates what she has learned during the day."

"We talk about many things, and many [verses] are re-read, and the evening passes by in the most pleasant peace.

"As I understood during my visit, Siemens wants to spend the winter in the woods. I don't know, doesn't the farm bring him enough any more, that he can feed his family, for he says he wants to nourish himself this winter from oak

kittens (squirrels). Either he only wants to play trapper and sell the pelts, or actually eat the flesh, I do not know. Otherwise I wish him peace and good fortune in the bush". "C.K. Friesen"

### Leisure.

The C.K. Friesens were possibly the first local family to go on frequent fishing holidays. A couple of times during the summer, Cornelius would load up the car with tent, fishing gear, and Katharina loaded plenty of food and pails for berry picking, and off they went to Whitemouth Lake or Whitemouth River and have a wonderful time. But first they had to fill the pails with berries, and Cornelius went off by himself with most of the pails. It usually did not take too long, before he was back with his pails full. He did not want to waste precious time looking for berries when there were fish waiting to be caught, and he had waited all winter for a shore lunch of fresh jack fish.

What one of the older children suspected was that he knew where the professional pickers would be, and bought up all of their berries with their promise not to mention a word of it to his family.

With the picking out of the way, it was time for fishing and leisure activities.

One could surmise that the Friesens were a family that were taught that the world was much larger than the Mennonite community that surrounded them and were encouraged to explore it.

### World War Two.

When in 1939, W.W.II got under way and their sons talked about joining the army, they like most parents must have agonized over the matter, and hoped and prayed that the boys would decide against it, but when Walter and John and later Tony had made there decision, Cornelius stood by his sons, and that was the way it was for all of the children, once they had decided on careers etc. he backed them up.

Although Cornelius' work was tough and his fists might have been strong as steel, I'm told they were lined with velvet. As a young single man, still living as a bachelor in his parents' Wirtschaft in the Blumenort village, it was Cornelius who would make sure the widows in the village had enough fire wood to heat their homes during a blizzard. He would also check on the elderly during snow storms.

In the drilling business, there were many people who could not afford a well, but desperately needed one. Cornelius would drill a well with the understanding that when they had surplus eggs, chickens or other produce, he would accept this as payment. In once instance he took a piano in trade for a well. It was this piano that directed their youngest daughter Virginia's future. Many wells were never paid for and Cornelius refused to make an issue of, or discuss these rather generous acts, and it was the recipients of these deeds who would tell of them, never Cornelius.

Cornelius lived his life the way he saw fit. Some people would label him a bit worldly and that was fine with him. He was not bothered by public opinion as he knew full well that in the

final analysis, their opinion would count for nothing.

### Death, 1953.

In 1946 Cornelius suffered a debilitating stroke, and the company was taken over by his sons John and Tony. Cornelius died in 1953.

Cornelius K. Friesen left an ongoing legacy to his children and grandchildren, the most visible being Friesen Drillers.

In 1971 John's sons James and John joined the company, takeing over ownership in 1987. The fourth generation--three great-grandsons--are now very actively involved in the business. And by all accounts they will take over the reins in a few years and guide the company into the new millennium and enter a third century of Friesen Drillers.

Cornelius worked his machine for about 50 years and drilled possibly 700 to 900 wells (an educated guess by the grandsons). Since 1962 the rotary drills replaced the cable drills, and they could drill that many per year.

They have drilled 3-10" diameter by 230 feet deep wells for the City of Steinbach, the water is good and adequate, with reserves for many years. The first well was drilled during the 50s and the other two during the 80s.

In 1980 Friesen Drillers got into the oil patch, in Kansas, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. When the oil industry experienced a downturn, they got out of it for a while and are back in again, and going strong. Their motto still is "We go in the hole for you".

### Sources:

Royden Loewen, *Blumenort*, pages 208 and 274.

D. Plett, "Cornelius P. Friesen, Irrgarten," in



Patent number 1555918 issued by THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA dated October 6, 1925. These patents covered "The Artesian Well Tool", a device Cornelius invented and manufactured in his workshop, which he used in his wells as well as selling them to competition.

### Preservings, No. 8, Part Two, pages 55-58.

Glen Kehler, "The Kjist and the Prush of Cornelius P. Friesen (1844-99)," in *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 120-121, includes a beautiful rare photo of C. K. Friesen and his bride with his new 1910 Reo automobile.

### Editor's Note - C. K. Friesen.

There was considerable travelling back and forth between the Kleine Gemeinde settlements in Manitoba and Nebraska and Kansas and thus the journey of C. K. Friesen and his brother during the 1890s would not have been that unusual, except that the travelling was done by train. It was somewhat different, however, as the brothers were rumoured to have spent some of their time shooting out milk cans along the road with their pistols in order to drink their fill of milk and even raiding milk houses along the way for supplies: see Roy Loewen, *Blumenort*, page 207. Upon their return the brothers were disciplined by the Kleine Gemeinde, the Mennonite denomination to which they belonged, with excommunication, a punishment usually revoked after a week or two, if contrite remorse was demonstrated.

I have sometimes wondered why it was that Cornelius K. Friesen took up the business of well-drilling, considering that his father was a teacher, cabinet maker and only moderately successful farmer. Certainly "C. K." would not have learned about well-drilling at home. One possible answer to this speculation is found in the extensive journals of his uncle Abraham M. Friesen (1834-1906) (and grandfather of his future wife) who refers to well-drilling in entries dated April 12, 1890, June 24 and 25, 1890, and in May, 1895. These entries and others would have to be studied carefully to determine whether Abraham M. Friesen was himself already involved in the well-drilling business. These entries certainly demonstrate that he had knowledge and familiarity with well-drilling. Of course, Cornelius did not marry until 1910 but might have learned about well-drilling from Abraham M. Friesen as his uncle, see article on Abraham M. Friesen, *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, page 48-49.

Cornelius K. Friesen could be quite curt and gruff. He was also not above teasing people on occasion. At the same, he also had a heart of gold for those in need. He was invariably referred to as "Cea Kau Friese" and also, as already mentioned, as "Borum Schteta Friese".

A tragic accident occurred on C. K. Friesen's drilling rig on June 25, 1922. One of his long-time employees, Peter X. Friesen (1877-1922) was operating the drilling rig when a coupling fell from a high derrick that hoisted the pipes and hit him on the head. He was fatalling injured and died two days later, all this time being unconscious; see *Cornelius P. Toews* family book, page 75. Peter X. Friesen was the son of Johann S. "Asel" Friesen (1853-1917), one of the original 1874 Steinbach pioneers, see *Preservings*, No. 14, page 99.

# Jacob Denner's Life and Writings

**Jacob Denner's Life and Writings, by William Schroeder, 434 Sutton Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0T3.**

## Background.

Jacob Denner was born on September 20, 1659 in Altona, a village on the right bank of the Elbe River about two kilometres west of Hamburg. His father Balthasar Denner (1624-1681) was a stocking weaver and served as a deacon in the Dompelaar Mennonite Church. Balthasar Denner was one of a group of 17 who had separated from the Flemish Mennonite Church in 1656 and formed a new congregation.

Jakob's grandfather Hippolytus Denner, a Catholic from Swabia, had moved to Altona where he had joined the Flemish Mennonite Church. There was a Mennonite Church in Altona since 1601. The first members were refugees from various provinces in the Netherlands.

Early in his life Jacob was apprenticed in a textile plant where he learnt the dyeing trade. He became a Blaufärber—one who dyes yarn in blue. Denner had very little formal education, however, he was an avid reader. In his youth he preferred to read books on astronomy and mathematics while as an adult he read the entire Bible more than 50 times.

Then as now, Hamburg had one of the biggest and best harbours in Europe, and numerous shipping companies located there. Several Mennonite families, van der Smissen, Roosen and Goverts also owned ships. Jacob Denner found employment as a personal secretary to the captain of a ship and in that capacity travelled to Portugal, Spain, Italy and Archangel. He also spent some time in Moscow where he opened an office for the shipping firm he was employed with.

Jacob Denner's life of travel and adventure came to an abrupt end when his father died on December 15, 1681 at the age of 57. Jacob, who was now 22 years-old, felt that it was his duty to return to his family in Altona.

In the 17th century schools were rare in Hamburg. Denner being a very gifted man had gained a reputation for the unusual quality of his hand writing. Consequently, Denner opened his own school in Altona where he taught calligraphy and lectured on mathematics and astronomy.

## Marriage.

In 1684 Jacob Denner married Catharina Wiebe (1663-1743) from Lübeck. Her parents were Comelius Wiebe and Magdalena Wynand. They had seven children, six daughters and one son.

Jacob and Catharina raised a family of very gifted and talented children and grandchildren. Their son Balthasar (1685-1749) and their son-in-law Dominicus van der Smissen (1704-60) gained international renown as portrait artists. Many of their paintings are exhibited in art museums in northern Europe.

## Minister, 1684.

The Dompelaar Mennonite Church was not doing well when Denner returned home to Altona. They had no ministers in their group so they were obligated to invite ministers from a Lutheran Separatist Church to preach in their services. In time some of their members drifted back to the Flemish Mennonite Church. They saw in Jacob Denner a



*Jakob Denner (1659-1746). This copper engraving was made by G. C. Pingeling in 1731. It was used as a frontispiece in all the posthumous editions of Denner's *Betrachtungen*. Engraving of Jakob Denner as published in William Schroeder, "Jakob Denner's Life and Writings," in Mennonite Historian, Volume XVIII, No. 4, December, 1992, page 1.*

potential leader and consequently approached him to become their pastor. Jacob Denner was ordained as a minister in the Dompelaar Mennonite Church on Saint Michael's Day, September 29, 1684. During the first three years of his ministry he continued to teach in his school and to preach on Sundays and holidays.

Jacob Denner had a long and active life of service as a minister. He proclaimed the Gospel of Christ with great zeal and joy for almost 62 years.



*This rare copy of Denner's *Betrachtungen* was purchased for two dollars at the annual Children's Hospital Book Sale in Winnipeg, in 1977.*

Denner's sermons were widely acclaimed and his services were attended by people of all faiths represented in the area; Mennonites, Lutherans, Reformed, Catholics, Quakers and Separatists. His presentation was captivating. His oratory was hearty. His messages were gleaned from the depth of the scriptures and very edifying. The nobility of Holstein and Denmark as well as the crown prince of Sweden, Adolf Friedrich, frequently attended his services.

Since 1670 the Dompelaars had used a basement room on the Reichenstrasse for their church services. The room was too small, too dark and badly in need of repair. On April 28, 1708, Ernst Goverts, a rich merchant and deacon in the Flemish Mennonite Church, obtained permission from Christian V, King of Denmark to build a proper church for Denner. A suitable site was found on the east side of the Grossesfreiheit. Goverts paid 600 Thaler towards the construction of the church and promised to pay Denner an annual Salary of 500 Thaler. The new church could seat 300 people.

## Invasion, 1713.

The Mennonite community experienced severe hardships when Swedish forces commanded by Count Magnus Gustafsson Stenbock (1665-1717) invaded Holstein in 1713. During the night of January 8-9 the Swedes burned 853 out of 1546 homes in Altona. The Flemish Mennonite Church which had been built in 1674, was also destroyed. Denner's friendship with the Crown Prince of Sweden paid off. The Dompelaar Church was spared. The Flemish Mennonites used Denner's Church for two years while they rebuilt their own.

The plundered city had to be rebuilt. In March 1713 King Frederick IV appointed Christian Detlev von Reventlow (1671-1738) as president of Altona. His task was to supervise the reconstruction program. The rebuilding program progressed very well. However, during this time Denner and his Church



*The Denner family lived about a half a kilometre west of the Dompelaar Church in Hamburg. Before World War Two the street was called Dennerstrasse in honour of Jakob Denner. After the war the street was renamed Bathasarweg in honour of his son, the famous portrait artist. A map on page nine of the Mennonite Historical Atlas shows the location of the Flemish Church, and Dompelaar Church and the Mennonite cemetery in Hamburg.*

got involved in prolonged court proceedings with Countess Benedikte Margarethe Reventlow (1678-1739). The Countess had made a substantial contribution towards the construction of the Dompelaar Church in 1707.

When Ernst Goverts died on May 8, 1728 the Countess seized the title to the church property and her husband demanded that all church records should be turned over to him. The Church Council refused to comply with this demand. The dispute was finally resolved when Balthasar Denner promised to paint a portrait of the Countess once a year. In return Jacob Denner was allowed to preach in her church. In 1732 Count Reventlow resigned from his position in Altona and moved back to Denmark. When an opportunity presented itself Denner purchased the church and asked his congregation to provide the funds for the annual mortgage payments.

### Opposition.

Denner's unprecedented fame, popularity and influence caused the Lutheran clergy to hate him. They did everything in their power to dissuade their parishioners from attending Denner's services and from reading his books. When Denner's first book was published in 1706 the Lutheran minister Daniel Severin Scultetus from Hamburg responded with his own book, *Wohlgemeinte Warnung an die Evangelischen in Hamburg vor der Gemeinschaft des Gottesdienstes der Mennoniten*. Scultetus (or Schulze in German) was particularly annoyed that so many Lutherans who could listen to sermons prepared by educated ministers in Hamburg should go to Altona where they listened to a Blaufärber's sermons to learn "the way of life" from him.

After the publication of Denner's second book in 1707, Dr. George Heinrich Gotze superintendent of the St. Marienkirche in Lübeck attacked the Mennonites in general and the two ministers Gerrit Roosen (1612-1711) and Jacob Denner in particular in a series of eight lectures which he held in his church during the month of September, 1707.

Finally in 1731 after the first German edition was published, Erdmann Neumeister pastor of the St. Jakobi Lutheran Church in Hamburg warned his people in a book, *Anmerkungen über Jakob Denner's Postelle betreffend, Einfältige und christliche Betrachtungen über die Jährlichen und Heiligen Evangelia, nebst treumeynder Warnung für derselben*.

Despite all this criticism Denner continued to preach. More people came to listen to his messages and many more read his books.

### Death.

On December 23, 1743 Jacob Denner's wife Catharina died. They had been married 59 years. Eight months later on August 26, 1744 his granddaughter Catharina Denner died at the age of 29. She was an accomplished vocal soloist, violinist and pianist, and well on the way to fame in the field of art. Her untimely death was a great loss to the

Denner family.

Jacob Denner preached his last sermon on December 27, 1745. The topic he had chosen was "The Good Shepherd". He died two months later on February 17, 1746 at the age of 86. Jacob Denner was buried in the Mennonite Cemetery on the Grosse Roosen Strasse in Altona.

### Betrachtungen.

Mennonites of the 18th and 19th century were very fortunate that competent individuals in Denner's congregation recorded, translated and published many



Display of two copies of Jakob Denner's *Betrachtungen* from the library of editor Delbert Plett. The copy on the left was printed in Frankenthal am Rhein in 1792 and acquired from Dr. Cornelius Krahn, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. It consists of 1502 pages and has been rebound with some of the title pages photocopied. The volume on the right is a copy of the first American edition printed in 1860 with 1252 pages. The leather binding is still in good shape as are the bronz metal clasps which were used to close the book. The first illustration in the title pages is of Jesus ministering to the young wives and their children with the Scripture verse, Luke 18, 16, "Let the little children come to me." The sermons were organized on the ecclesiastical calendar commonly followed by traditional/conservative Mennonites. The rear of the book includes a register of Scripture references for each sermon and a concordance of topics considered.

of his sermons. There were at least nine published editions of his book of sermons, four in the Dutch language and five in German. The first edition, a set of 18 sermons, was published in Amsterdam and Danzig in 1706, and the last edition was published in Philadelphia in 1860.

Denner's writings exerted a significant influence in and beyond the Mennonite Church. His sermons served both as devotional reading and as material to be read from the pulpit. For several centuries Denner's writings served as models that other ministers could use as they prepared their own sermons.

Jakob Denner's sermons had a direct influence on the East Reserve, Manitoba through the Kleine Gemeinde, who treasured these writings and considered them doctrinally sound and authoritative. Kleine Gemeinde Aeltester Abraham Friesen (1782-1849), Ohrloff, Molotschna, specially mentioned the sermons of Jakob Denner, together with the *Martyrs' Mirror* and the writings of George Hansen and Menno Simons, as the writings through which he had been able to grow in the faith and to realize "that the beloved Saviour wishes to receive the sinners if only we turn unto Him," Abraham Friesen, "An Epistle to the Brothers and Sisters," in *Leaders*, page 239.

The *Betrachtungen* were also published and made

available in a most miraculous way among the Amish and Old Mennonites in Pennsylvania. This is described in the book by J. C. Wenger, *History of the Franconia Mennonites* (1937), page 323 as follows: "One other publication venture of two Franconia laymen, John Herstein and John Schmutz, should be mentioned.... In 1792 Herstein and Schmutz arranged for the publication of a reprint of Denner's book at Frankenthal-am-Rhein, Germany. Their edition consisted of five hundred books. According to tradition Herstein and Schmutz went over to Germany and brought their 500 books of

Denner's sermons to America. They also brought along 500 Basel Bibles. "They divided the books between them each taking 250 copies of the Bible and 250 copies of the sermons and started to sell them.... Denner's sermons were reprinted at Philadelphia in 1860. An ambitious attempt by Joseph Steiner, a Mennonite of Doylestown, Pa., in 1901 to publish an English edition of Denner's sermons failed for lack of support."

In 1985 the Amish republished Denner's *Betrachtungen*. The new edition was printed by Jakob A. Hershberger in Dukee, Ohio. It is an exact photo reproduction of the 1860 edition. In good Amish tradition it has no new date or imprint. However, the book is easily distinguished from its 1860 predecessor in that it stands one inch taller and has a black cover with a title in front. In 1995 the new book could be obtained from Raber's Bookstore, 2467 Cr 600, Baltic, Ohio, 43804.

### Sources:

William Schroeder, "Jakob Denner's Life and Writings," in *Mennonite Historian*, Volume XVIII, No. 4, December, 1992, pages 1-2.

Robert Friedmann, "Jakob Denner (1659-1746)," in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Volume Two, pages 36-37.

Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries* (Sugarcreek, Ohio, 1980), pages 150-151.

John C. Wenger, *History of the Mennonites of the Franconia Conference* (Scottdale, 1938), this is the history of the oldest Mennonite settlement in North America, dating to the 1600s.

Would anyone reading this possibly have any idea whether the English translation by Joseph Steiner was ever completed and/or if a copy of the translation of these inspired writings might be available somewhere? Editor

### Coming in the next issue:

William Schroeder, 434 Sutton Avenue, Winnipeg, writes the story of Jakob Denner's son, Balthasar Denner (1685-1749), world famous portrait artist.

# Eine Drifaltige Schnur: A “Treasure” Book

## Gerhard Kliewer (1836-96)

*Eine Drifaltige Schnur: A “Treasure” Book belonging to Gerhard Kliewer (1836-96), by Claire Kliever, 88th Dr., Peoria, Arizona, 85382, USA, wife of Rev. Kenneth Kliever, a great-grandson of Reeve Gerhard Kliewer, Schantzenberg, Manitoba.*

### Introduction.

It was with great delight in 1989 when I discovered a small, very fragile book among the belongings of my father-in-law Reverend Otto Kliever. At that time my husband Kenneth and I had begun a serious quest to learn more about his Kliewer heritage. This newly found “treasure” added another dimension to our research.

The title of this book states that it is a three-fold guide with a lesson, a prophecy, and a prayer from the Holy Scriptures for each day of the year. Several translators have helped me learn much about this heirloom that makes it a significant “treasure” and resource for Kliewer history.

### Family Record/Familienbuch.

Part of the book’s uniqueness is that in addition to the printed readings, Gerhard Kliewer used it to note special occasions. On the blank entry pages across from the dated texts he entered births, deaths, and marriages in the life of his family. While it is commonly referred to as a “birthday” book, it is much more.

From the book we learned about the person, Gerhard Kliewer, the first Reeve of the Hanover and Hespeler Rural Municipalities of Manitoba, Canada. First, it speaks of his concern for daily spiritual input for himself. Secondly, it conveys his concern for keeping detailed records.

Thirdly, it shows him to be a man of deep affection for his family. For example when he entered his mother’s date of birth, he wrote:

*“My little mother “anna” was born on the 19th of April 1811.”*

For the death of his father he wrote:  
*“My [Fatherschen] dear father died May 8th 1860.”*

With the births of his children he would include name, birth hour, and sometimes the place.



Title page of the Dreifaltige Schnur (Three fold devotional guide) belonging to Gerhard Kliewer (1836-96), Schantzenberg/Niverville, Manitoba.



*Gerhard Kliewer (1836-96), Schantzenberg, Manitoba. All photographs and illustrations used in this article are courtesy of Rev. Kenneth Kliever, 18918 N. 88 Drive, Peoria, Arizona, 85383. Used by permission only.*

Across the page from the 17th of October, he entered:

*“October 17th 1881 to us a daughter Saara is born. One—half of 8:00 in the evening.”*

The entry for July 01 reads:  
*“I myself married Helena Buhr 1861”.*

An interesting notation is made on the 28th of June:



*The memorial page of the Dreifaltige Schnur showing the inscription of owner ownership by Gerhard Kliewer which reads, “Dieses Buch gehört mich Gerhard Kliewer, uh {?} Felsenbach, 1871 des Isten Januari.” The book is being held by Rev. Kenneth Kliever, a great-grandson.*

*“1907 June 28 is to us a daughter born. Her name is Anna”.*

This entry is signed by C. P. Kliewer, Gerhard and Helena’s youngest son, Cornelius. This reference is to the birth of Mrs. Anna (Kliewer) Reimer, who at 92, still lives in Steinbach.

### The Book’s Journey.

*Eine Dreifaltige Schnur: Lehre, Verheissung, Gebet, in Sprachen der heiligen Schrift auf Alle Tage im Jahre* was printed in Hamburg for T.G. Onden, by T.T.W. Rohner & Comp. Gerhard, as noted on the fly leaf penned his name in 1871 along with his place of residence.

This little guide book measuring 3.2 x 7.4 CM (3 x 4-1/2 inches) was acquired in Russia before he and his family immigrated to Canada in 1875. It could have been easily lost. So, I wonder, “Did Gerhard carry this book in his pocket, or did it travel in the family trunk on its long journey to Manitoba?”

Following Gerhard’s death in 1896, it was probably kept in the home by his wife, Helena (Buhr), but has since passed on through several generations. First, their youngest daughter Katherine Kliewer (1885-1970) was in possession of it. She is remembered by the Kliewer clan around Steinbach as the lively “Tante Teen”. She was married to her first cousin, John Kliever. They homesteaded in Sunnyslope, Alberta in 1905, later moving to Oregon and then to Southern California, prior to 1930.

In Covina, California, grandmother Katherine and John lived just a block from their daughter, Goldie. It is apparent that Goldie began to add family data to the Gerhard book, as well as noting her relationship to the people. Also, grand-



*Sample page of the Dreifaltige Schnur showing the personal family entries on the left hand side and the devotional text on the right hand side. These types of family vital statistics were usually kept in a family journal referred to as a “Familienbuch”.*



*Katharina Kliewer Kliewer, daughter of Gerhard, who received the Dreifaltige Schnur as part of her inheritance. She was the youngest child of Gerhard and Helena Buhr Kliewer, Schantzenberg/Niverville, Manitoba.*

mother Katherine translated some of her father's entries from German into English.

When she died in 1970, this prized possession came to her son, Rev. Otto Kliewer (1907-89). He too, began to make entries and notations in the book. For more than 60 years he was a Baptist minister. Toward the end of his life, he took time to do family research and to write a brief story of his life. It was obvious that he had used information from his grandfather's book.

#### The White Envelope.

This extraordinary small book had been placed by Otto in an ordinary white envelope. Now we were to be the caretakers of this nearly 130 year-old "treasure". Because of its fragile condition, and to avoid further handling while having access to the information, I made copies of each entry page.

Since 1993, we have made four separate trips to Canada to participate in Kliewer reunions and have come to a greater appreciation of the family heritage. We also realize that this three-fold devotional guide and "occasion book" is a precious gift that belonged to, and was used by Gerhard Kliewer, a very important person to the early Mennonite history of Manitoba. To us, it has become a living history of the Kliewer/Kliever family.

See article regarding the Account book of Gerhard Kliewer (1836-96), in the feature article section elsewhere in this issue.

#### Gerhard Kliewer Memorial

In the summer of 1998 there was some discussion about a joint project for a memorial on the Gerhard Kliewer burial site in Niverville. I am pleased to report that Peter and John Friesen, great-grandsons of Gerhard have already started such a project. John and his wife Barbara own and live on the home-  
stead site.

The Town of Niverville has purchased five acres from the Friesens on which to expand the community cemetery. One part of that five acres includes the Gerhard Kliewer burial site. Work is to begin in fall of 1999 by the Cemetery Committee in preparing the land, removing trees, and building an entry road into the new cemetery.

Peter Friesen has already laid a cement pad on which a memorial will sit. They have ordered a rock, sliced off a place for a commemorative wording and/or a plaque, but it has not been installed, nor wording for a plaque determined.

So, it appears that between the Kliewer family and Niverville Cemetery Committee concerns regarding a memorial are already in good hands. Perhaps a story is in the making. Yours truly, "Kenneth Kliever"

## Art Contest



*Entry One: The entry by Peter von Kampen, Winnipeg, is a watercolour painting entitled "Mennonite Heritage". The artist writes that "The building shown is a typical early Mennonite Homestead. Until 1979 it stood at the outskirts of Grunthal, Manitoba. It was built by Abraham Kauenhoven in the late 1870s. Halloween 1979 some evil characters set it on fire and burnt it to the ground. The size of the actual painting is 16" by 20".*



*Entry Two: The entry by Mary Martens, Campbell Street, Winnipeg, is a painting of the home of her parents. It is a "Copy of the old painting [of] the farm residence of Cornelius H. & Helena Friesen from 1936-1964."*

Our art contest brought forth two entries, both paintings featuring derelict and abandoned house-barns.

We thank the artists for painting these scenes and submitting them to *Preservings*. The prize was awarded to both entries and the prize money of \$50.00 was split equally between the two.

We regret that we are unable to publish these paintings in colour as black and white really does not do them justice. Nevertheless we are pleased to be able to publish them. Thank-you.

# R.M. of Hanover Council Minutes 1885-1895

Translated from the German original minute books in the possession of the Rural Municipality of Hanover by Rev. Ben Hoeppner, Valhalla Dr., Winnipeg, Manitoba, and edited by Delbert F. Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba.

[The Municipal minutes from the first sitting on May 8, 1880, to December 27, the last meeting of 1884, were published in *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 112-113.]

## Book One - May, 1880 - Jan., 1896, 91 pages.

(Page 1).

1885

P.12

1885 on the first day of January the first sitting was held. All the Councillors were present. The financial statement was submitted (read) to the Schulzen (village mayors). There was also discussion regarding many other circumstances (6-2).

The second sitting [of council] took place on January 7, 1885. The Vorsteher (Reeve) and the Councillors were present. Johann Unger and Jacob Hiebert from Kronsgart had been summoned and were brought to an understanding regarding their differences (2-2).

The third sitting took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March. The Brandaeltester (manager of the Chortitzer Mennonite Mutual Insurance System) was also present. It was decided and enacted that if anyone cancels their coverage in the Brandordnung other than for the normal expiry date, they must pay the premiums for the cancelled term until the expiry date for which the changes were submitted to them. Buildings which are in the process of being built may be insured during the interim. Secondly, it was decided that a general health fund be established in which a certain sum shall be levied annually for every hundred, and that in case of loss through fire, losses (percentage) shall be paid from the fire insurance money. (6-2).

The fourth sitting was held on March 17. The Vorsteher and Councillors and the Waisenamt (directors of the Orphans' Trust Office) was present. Hein Thiessen, Schoenthal regarding the payment of his

P. 13

1885, April 14, the fifth sitting took place. The entire Council was together. It was decided that for every homestead there should be one day and for every person between the ages of 18 and 60 there should be two days of road work (statute labor) provided. Many other matters were also discussed.

The sixth meeting was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1885. The Vorsteher, the Councillors and the Waisenamt were together. The following was enacted: that Cornelius Siemens give his land for the mutual benefit of the Schoenfeld village Gemeinde for a period of one year commencing today, and after the expiration of this time, however, he shall receive it to use for his own benefit. The buildings of the aged Hein. Dyck shall also remain standing on Siemens' land as long as one of the two elderly people is alive and the land comprising the farm yard shall also remain for their use for the same period. The buildings of Derk Reimer shall also remain another two years on Siemens' land and the property and yard shall be occupied by the aforementioned Derk Reimer. After the expiration of two years it shall be according to Siemens' wishes and Reimer is obligated to move the buildings away according to Siemens' request. Siemens' promises to pay his debt to the Gemeinde within a year in respect of which he

has signed a [Promissory] Note (6-1).  
P. 14

1885, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, on today's date, on the advise of the Municipal [Department?] the following was enacted, the Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present: for every person between the ages of 18 and 60 years, two days shall be given for road work and one day for every quarter section, and whoever cannot work is to pay \$1.40 for every day of work. Secondly, the relative rate of assessment for 1885 is set forth and decreed as follows: for cultivated land per acre \$1.25; for unimproved land per acre \$1.00; for 1 horse 50; for an ox 35; for 1 cow 20; for 1 heifer 10; for a sheep 1; for a hog 1; Implements according to half their value; Dwellings and inventory are to be one-half of the amount in the fire insurance (7-2).

P. 15

1885, the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, the seventh sitting. The entire Council was present. The assessment roll for 1885 was presented and the decision was made to improve the canal where necessary. (5-2).

1885, the 26<sup>th</sup> of September is the eighth sitting. The Vorsteher and four Councillors were together. It was decided to levy 1/7 cent from every dollar of assessment, and to give Ludwig Strohkorff permission to establish in Niverville a business with beer and brandy (5-2), to collect the taxes in arrears through sale by auction of the subject property.

1885, the 7<sup>th</sup> of November, the ninth sitting. The Vorsteher and four Councillors and also the Brandaeltester were present. It was decided that the debts which still remained from the money borrowed from the government [be rewritten] with new [Promissory] Notes to be signed and that the aforementioned debts by collected through the Waisenamt before April first; it was also discussed that the fire (insurance premiums) be collected only once a year but no decision was made (8-1-6-1).

P. 16

1885, the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, the tenth sitting. The entire Council was together. The lists for the election were submitted and the election was immediately held (5-2).

1886

1886, the 4<sup>th</sup> of January, the first sitting. The Vorsteher, two members and those of the auditors elected by the Gemeinde were present and the accounts for 1885 were reviewed and [approved] signed. It was decided to hold this assembly every last Saturday in every month of this forthcoming year, 1886 and to commence at 9 o'clock in the morning (7-2).

1886, the 5<sup>th</sup> of January, the second sitting. The entire Council was together, and the accounts of the village mayors were read to the Council.

1886, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, is the third sitting. The Vorsteher and five Councillors were present. The road bosses for the year 1886 were appointed, and it was further decided to build a bridge; also across the canal at Stassberg. Cor. Siemens was summoned to appear regarding payment of his bread debt (6-2).

P. 17

1886, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March is the fourth sitting and the following was decided: that each homestead

provide one day of work and each male person between 18 and 60 provide two days of work for the roads, and that the following bridges be built: one between Chortitz and Rosenthal, one in Strasburg over the canal, one in Schoensee, in Gnadenfeld a floor (flor), one in Steinbach and one in Neuanlage. The Vorsteher and five Council members were present (6-2).

1886 on April 24, the fifth sitting. It was decided that roads and bridges be inspected and to improve them where necessary and on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May the Council shall again convene to implement the work on the roads (7-1).

1886 on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April (May?) is the sixth sitting. The Vorsteher and all six Councillors were present and the road work was assigned where each one was to work. From each four Wirthen [village farm owners] one beam 10 feet long and two posts 5 feet long shall be provided for the improvement of the road to Winnipeg (7-2).

1886, on June 26<sup>th</sup> is the seventh sitting. It was decided that Cor. Banman, the son of Cor. Banman's, Blumengart, be brought to Winnipeg because of mental sickness and bad intentions. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. There was also discussion regarding the building of bridges and road work. (7-2).

P. 18

1886, July 31, was the eighth meeting. It was decided that residents of the Colony of Gruenthal be summoned for the next sitting on August 28 regarding the road work on the road to Winnipeg, namely, Peter Friesen and the two Rempels: Peter and Jacob and likewise Peter Sawatsky, Kronsgart and Abram Ginter, Blumenort, regarding a land transaction, and to write to the Schulzenamt in Gruenthal, and that Johann Unger from Kronsgart is to be reminded to send his man in service again. (6-1).

1886, August 28. On the current date it was decided that half a cent for every dollar in the assessment be levied for the defraying of expenses for 1886, and that the Gruenthaler be summoned to appear because they had not worked on the road to Winnipeg during the past spring. (6-2)

P. 19

1886, on September 25, was the ninth sitting. The Vorsteher and five Councillors were together. It was decided to collect the arrears in taxes and sell the subject property by public auction sale. (6-2)

1886, on October 30, was the tenth setting. The Vorsteher and five Councillors were present. It was decided to hold the next sitting on the second of December. It was also enacted that the two Gruenthaler, Franz Rempel and Peter Friesen, who did not work on the road to Winnipeg last spring, shall next week repair the bridge which was burned by prairie fire, and if they do not carry out what is enacted, they shall each pay \$1.50. (6-2)

1886, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, the eleventh sitting. The Vorsteher, two Councillors and the Waisenamt were together and the following was enacted regarding David Defehr, that he not be permitted to sell any of cattle he currently owns to anyone or to relocate them elsewhere or to \_\_\_\_\_ place in a bank rather \_\_\_\_\_.

1886, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, the twelfth meet-

ing. The Vorsteher and all six Councillors were present and the following persons were elected as members of the Municipality: as Vorsteher: Peter Toews, Bergthal; as Councillors: 7-4 Peter Dyck; 7-5 Jacob Wall; 7-6 Peter Rempel; 6-6 Abr. Wiebe; 6-5 Abr. Dyck; 5-5 Peter Krahn; That this election was properly conducted I hereby certify with my signature, "Corn. Epp" (7-2).

1886, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December, the thirteenth sitting. The Vorsteher and the Councillors, Jacob Wall and Peter Rempel, and the Gemeinde-elected auditors: Jacob Wiebe and H. Derksen were present. All the accounts for 1886 were received and found to be correct and were personally signed by those mentioned, "Corn. Epp" (5-2).

P. 21  
1887

1886, the 30<sup>th</sup> day of December, the first sitting was held for the year 1887. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The Secretary was engaged for the year 1887 for 125 dollars and it was enacted to hold the sittings as in the previous year, namely, on the last Saturday of each month, and the accounts of the Schulzen (village mayors) for the year 1886 were read to the Council, and also other current matters were discussed (6-2).

The second sitting was held January 4, 1887. The Vorsteher, three Councillors and the bread debtors had been summoned to appear regarding payment of their debts.

The third sitting was held on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1887. Peter Toews and the Councillors Jacob Wall, Ab. Dyck, Peter Rempel, Peter Dyck and Abr. Wiebe were present. Cor Epp was appointed as treasurer for the year 1887, and that the names and addresses of the Vorsteher, of the secretary and that of the treasurer be sent in to the Municipal Commission. (6-2)

P. 22

1887, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of February, the fourth sitting was held. The Vorsteher and four Councillors were present. The following persons were appointed as road inspectors for the year 1887: Peter Dyck, Township 7 Range 4; Jacob Wall, T 7 R 5; Peter Rempel, T 7 R 6; Abr. Wiebe, T 6 R 6; Abr. Dyck, T 6 R 5; and Peter Krahn, T 5 R 5; Secondly all the taxation for the year 1887 shall be (levied) as follows: Unimproved land \$1.00 per acre; Cultivated land \$1.25 per acre; Horse 50; Mature oxen 35; 3-year old oxen 25-20; Cows and 2-year old oxen 20-15; Year old oxen 7-5; Sheep 2-2; Hogs 1-1; Inventory and dwelling according to the fire insurance the half, machinery and farm implements the same. The Brandordnung value is half the fair market value (5-2).

P. 23

1887, at 10 o'clock in the morning, was the fifth sitting. The Vorsteher and all six Councillors were in attendance and it was decided that every male person between the ages of 18 to 60 years shall devote two days of work for the roads and for each quarter section of land one day. And after dinner at one o'clock all the Schulzen were present and the decision of the Council was presented to them and accepted; further it was decided to improve the bridges and the dams where essential, and to build new; thirdly, to buy six new earth scrapers for the road work; fourthly, whoever pays for the road work with money, 1.25 cents per day if they do so before or during the work but those who only pay for their work through taxes, 150 cents; fifthly, if cattle or wagons and earth scrapers are used for the work, for each wagon shall receive 30 cents, for 1 plow 50 cents and for a scoop 20 cents per day and if workers are hired they receive \$1.25 per day. (7-2)

1887, on April 30, the sixth sitting. The Vorsteher and five Councillors were present [it was decided] to purchaser 1200 [one] foot boards from Abr. Friesen in Steinbach and 11 feet at Johann Krause, Hochfeld, to [be] used for flooring on bridges. Other issues were also discussed. (6-2)

P. 24

1887, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May, the seventh sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The assessment roll for the current 1887 year was presented to them and examined. Since no complaints had been received, they were deemed to be correct. The road work was divided so that each village could do its own road work. Thirdly, the bridge near John Peterson was [deemed] worthless [and] to be built, namely, to [be paid] to John Carleton and John Camzhek a sum of Sixty Dollars of which a deposit of 25 Dollars was paid to them, the bridge is to be 20 feet long, 16 feet wide and 4 feet high, with a railing on both sides. (7-2).

1887, June 25, the eighth sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were together. The accounting for the road work was done and payments made, and the present assessment of S.F. Glass was lowered from 2160 to 1500. Many other issues were discussed. (7-1)

P. 25

1887, on July 30<sup>th</sup>, the ninth sitting. The Vorsteher and the Councillors were all present. Dr. Ludwig was introduced to the Council and an announcement was read that he has the permission from the Medical Society of Manitoba to practice well among the Mennonites here as a doctor, etc.

1887, the 27<sup>th</sup> of August, the tenth sitting. The Vorsteher and four Councillors were present. It was decided that business permits for a public house (Schenk) would not be issued for less than 75 dollars. (5-1)

1887, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, the eleventh sitting. The Vorsteher and one Councillor were present. It was decided to levy a tax of 50 cents for every hundred dollars in the assessment, and Johann Broesky was invited to appear in order to discuss with him the disciplining and rearing of his still minor children. (2-1).

1887, on the \_\_\_\_ of October, the twelfth sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. The minutes of the sitting of the 24<sup>th</sup> of September were read and approved by all the Councillors. Fehrsoer, Niverville was given permission to open a liquor outlet in Niverville a year from today. (7-1)

1887, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November was the thirteenth sitting. The Vorsteher and the Waisenamt and the Councillors J.K., A.S.[?] D. and P.K. were present and all the bread debtors were summoned to appear. (6-2)

1887, the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, the fourteenth sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The following persons were declared to be elected, namely, as Vorsteher (Reeve) for the 1887 year, Peter Toews, Bergthal, and as Councillors: Johann Leppky, Strasburg; Jacob Wall, Tannenau; Peter Rempel, Bergthal; Jacob Peters, Vollwerk; Abr. Dyck, Chortitz, and Peter Krahn, Schoensee. (7-2)

1887 on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, the fifteenth sitting. The Vorsteher and the Councillors: Jacob Wall and Peter Rempel, and the Colony accountant, were present and the annual financial statement for the year 1887 was adopted and subscribed to. (5-2)

1888

P. 27

1888, on January 3<sup>rd</sup> the first sitting. The Vorsteher

and all the Councillors were present. The secretary was appointed for the year 1888 for \$135.00, and secondly, it was decided to continue to hold the sittings on the last Saturday of every month here in Schoenthal, and thirdly, with the consent of the Schulzen, it was decided to make no new Assessment Roll for the year 1888, but instead to levy the tax according to the assessment roll for the year 1887, and fourthly, a day and a place shall be appointed by the Council where Council will be together, to review the assessment where it is too high and to hear [presentations] where they are too low. (7-2)

1888, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, the second sitting. It was decided to divide the school districts in the municipality, so that each school district consists of 1/4 township, and those farmers [of other confessions] who have settled here amongst us are to be received in the Brandordnung, only the town of Niverville shall remain excluded therefrom. (7-2).

P. 28

1888, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, it was decided at the municipal assembly that the Councillors for the current year 1888 have the oversight of the roads and shall become supervisors for the extermination of the weeds in the grain fields, namely from Township 7 R 4 Johann Leppky, in Township 7 R 5 by Jacob Wall, Township 7 R 6 Peter Rempel, for Township 6 R 6 Jacob Peters, for Township 6 R 5 Abram Dyck, and for Township 5 R 5 Peter Krahn. (6-2).

1888 on the 7<sup>th</sup> of April, it was decided at today's Municipal assembly, the Vorsteher and five Councillors were present, that for this year every male person between 18 and 60 years shall provide 2 days of work and each quarter section of land 1 day [of work] for the roads where it is deemed necessary to work.

1888 on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, it was decided at the municipal assembly that on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month the road to Winnipeg shall be improved where necessary, for which the villages of Schoenthal, Kronthal, Osterwick, Heubuden, Gruenfeld, Schoenwiese, Chortitz, Reichenbach, Bergthal, Blumengart, Blumenort and Blumenhoff are designated. The road work shall on the 28 May \_\_\_\_\_, and for P. 29

each male person from 18 to 60 shall work two days and whoever does not want to work shall immediately pay \$1.25 per day to the road supervisor.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> of June was the sixth sitting and the road work was organized.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June was the seventh sitting. The Vorsteher and 4 Councillors were present. It was discussed regarding the land of Jacob Hiebert and Johann Leppky. But because Hiebert could not be present because of sickness, it was postponed until the 5<sup>th</sup> of July. 2ndly, John Harrison, Jacob Schanz and Gerhard Kliever were present and complained regarding the road which runs through their homesteads from Niverville to \_\_\_\_\_ [jwby?]. 3rdly, Gerhard Kliever presented a complaint regarding disputes between a certain person who are summoned to appear on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July.

1888, on 5<sup>th</sup> of July was the sitting. The Vorsteher and 4 Councillors were present. Gerhard Kliever and Jacob Hiebert were invited to come forth and the dispute between them was settled, and the land question between Jacob Hiebert and Johann Leppke was resolved in that Hiebert shall pay Johann Leppky 30 dollars.

P. 30

1888 on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July was the sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. A petition was submitted to the office [of the Municipality]

## Preservings

and accepted from a number of residents of Township 7 Range 4 regarding the old "trail" which angles across their farms. 2ndly, John Harrison was granted the authority commencing forthwith to open a pound barn. (7-2)

1888 on the 25<sup>th</sup> of August was the sitting. [Present] were the Vorsteher and four Councillors. The requests of the Municipal Commission and from the Niverville and Clearspring Schools were presented and received. It was also presented to them that the government had designated one hundred and fifty-three dollars for the assistance of the Municipality and it was decided to accept it. (6-1)

1888, the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, was the tenth sitting. The Vorsteher and five Councillors were present. It was decided to levy a  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent tax for every dollar in total in the Assessment Roll for the year 1888, for the support of every school, and also that a definitive inquiry be made regarding the old "trail" on Township 7 Range 4.

P. 31

1888, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December, the eleventh sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The following persons were elected as Vorsteher and Councillors for the year 1889, namely as Vorsteher; Peter Toews, Bergthal; and as Councillors; Jacob Hiebert, Jacob Wall, Jacob Peters, Abram Dyck, Peter Hiebert, Peter Krahn. (6-2)

1888 on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December was the twelfth sitting. The Vorsteher, the Councillors and those persons elected by the Gemeinde to audit the accounts for the year 1888 were present. All accounts were audited and declared to be correct by the Council and by the aforementioned as witnessed by their personal signatures.

1889

1889 on January 5<sup>th</sup> was the first sitting, with Vorsteher and all the Councillors present. It was decided as follows: 1) the Secretary was engaged for \$160.00; 2) to buy a water closet; 3) to pay to the senior Cornelius Friesen, Blumenort, 25 dollars for the care of Mrs. Joh. Broeski; fourthly, that on the 26 of t.m [this month] a tax shall be levied, and in the afternoon the Schulzen were gathered and everything as above was presented to them and each one [was] agreeable. (7-2)

P. 32

1889, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January was the second sitting. Wilhem Hiebert was appointed as tax assessor for one summer for 24.00; secondly, it was decided to buy a fire proof safe for the Municipality; thirdly, a request was submitted by Jacob Loewen, Hochstadt, to try to buy a well augur, but this was not accepted by the entire Council; and fourthly, it was decided for the year 1889 with respect to the circumstances relative to taxation, to levy taxes as follows: for cultivated land \$1.25 per acre; for unimproved land \$1.00; for a horse 50; for an ox over 3 years 35; for 3-year old oxen 20; cows and 2-year olds 15; for 1 year old cattle 5; for sheep 2 a piece; for hogs 1; for calves and lambs no taxes were payable; and for yearlings from 1 year and older \$25.00.

1889, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, the third sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The road inspectors were appointed for 1889, as follows: for Ward No. 1 Jacob Hiebert for T7, R4; for Ward No. 2 Jacob Wall for T7, R5; for Ward No. 3 Peter Hiebert T7, R6; for Ward No. 4 Jacob Peters for T6, R6; for Ward No. 5 Abram Dyck for T6, R5; and for Ward No. 6 Peter Krahn T4, R6/T5, R5.

P. 33

Secondly, it was decided that before the road work was started, the places where the road work

was to be done shall be inspected by the office [council] so that the work could be done correctly.

1889, the 30<sup>th</sup> of March, the 4<sup>th</sup> sitting took place. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present, and all the Schulzen were also assembled, and it was decided that for this year each male persons devote 2 days and for every quarter section of land 1 day for road work shall be given, and bridges where necessary shall be upgraded and to make new bridges where needed; and thirdly, it was suggested by Vorsteher Toews that the Municipality donate \$50.00 to the Winnipeg Hospital from the funds of the Municipality. This was unanimously accepted and supported by everyone (7-2).

1889, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, the 5<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. It was decided that the road and bridges shall be inspected by the office [council] in order to decide where improvements are the most necessary; secondly, Isaac Rosen attended regarding the papers for the public house (Schank). The Council decided to provide him with the necessary papers for one year for 50 dollars. P. 34

1889, on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, the sixth sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The Vorsteher and 5Councillors were present. The work on the roads was allocated as to where everyone was to work and during what time they were to provide their labour (7-2).

1889, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, was the seventh sitting. The Vorsteher and 4 Councillors were present. The Assessment Roll for the year 1889 was examined and accepted, after some changes were made; 2ndly, John Harrison was given the authority to open a pound barn for the entire municipality for the current year 1889.

1889, the 27<sup>th</sup> of July , the 8<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and 5 Councillors were present. The voter's list for the year 1889 was presented to them [the council] and it was decided to have it printed; secondly, the work on the road which is behind schedule was discussed and it was enacted that those who had not worked [must] pay \$1.25 per day if they do so immediately, and when it is left until [the time] the taxes are collected, \$1.50 per day, except in cases when the work could not be done because of sickness, the work can be provided the following year (6-1).

P. 35

1889, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, the ninth sitting. It was decided to levy a  $\frac{1}{4}$  cent tax for every dollar in the assessment accounts. (6-2)

1889, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December, the tenth sitting. The following persons were declared elected for the year 1890 for Municipal office: for Reeve, Peter Toews, Bergthal; and for Councillors, Peter Dyck, Niverville; Jacob Wall, Tannenau; Peter Hiebert, Hochfeld; Jacob Dyck, Rosengart; Peter Krahn, Schoensee. Secondly, Johann Dyck and Derk Penner were summoned to appear because of disputation and brought to reconciliation; thirdly, Gerhard Kliever presented to Council the plan for the alteration of the school district for Niverville, but no decision was made regarding same. (7-2)

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1889, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, the eleventh sitting. The accounts of Municipalities of Hespeler and of Hanover for the year 1889 were audited by the Council of the Municipality and the auditors elected by the Gemeinde and declared to be correct and thereafter subscribed to with the signatures of the Council members and elected auditors. (9-3)

1890

1890, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, the first sitting. The Vorsteher and four Councillors were present. Cor. Epp was elected as Secretary (Schriftsführer) for the year 1890 for an income of \$160.00 and \$30 for the room for meetings; secondly, it was decided that the Vorsteher and Councillors be paid one dollar per day for attending meetings or [when they] otherwise must travel on any other municipal duties and 10 cents per mile; thirdly, it was decided that henceforth from May 1 to October 1 everyone must have their cattle fenced in or under watch, so that they would not wander about on grain fields or in gardens; fourthly, at one o'clock on the same date the Schulzen were gathered and the above were presented to them and approved by everyone; and the financial statements of the Municipality for the year 1889 were read in the presence of all the Schulzen and deemed to be correct; and it was presented to them that the Winnipeg Hospital had received \$50.00 from the funds of the Municipality in support of nursing the sick and [this] was approved by everyone; fifthly, it was moved that a new assessment of the total property be made in this year or whether the tax should be levied according to the previous assessment, and after a brief discussion it was decided that no new assessment was necessary and that the tax should be levied according to the previous assessment. (6-2)

1890 on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January was the second sitting. The Vorsteher and one Councillor were present. Since all the other Councillors could not attend the meeting was cancelled. (2-2)

1890 on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February was the third sitting. The Vorsteher and four Councillors were present. The road supervisors for the current 1890 year were appointed as follows: firstly for T7, R4, Peter Dyck, PO. Niverville; secondly for T7, R5, Jacob Wall, Chortitz; thirdly for T7, R6, Peter Hiebert, Chortitz; fourthly for T7, R6, Jacob Dyck, Steinbach; fifthly for T6, R5, Abr. Dyck, Chortitz; sixthly for T5, R5 and T4, R6, Peter Krahn, Hochstadt. Secondly, it was moved by Councillor Abr. Dyck that before the spring road work is commenced, to purchase a number of stone plows and earth scrapers, which was supported by all Councillors in attendance and the Vorsteher, and therefore [so] decided.

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1890 on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March, the fourth sitting, and the Vorsteher and four Councillors were present. The taxes in arrears were read to the Council and it was decided to go to Niverville and to speak with the debtors before the arrears be given over to a collector for collection. It was also decided to send a circular writing to the Schulzen that the roads and bridges, where necessary, be improved before the seeding time, so that the roads will be passable (6-2).

1890, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April, the fifth sitting. The Vorsteher and four Councillors were present. It was decided to buy 2 stone plows and a half-a-dozen earth scrapers before the road work begins (6-2).

1890, on the 31<sup>st</sup> day of May, the sixth sitting. The Vorsteher and the Councillors were present, and the Schulzen were also assembled at one o'clock in the afternoon, and it was decided where new bridges should be built in this year and the road work was allotted and determined where and when everyone shall work and when the road work should begin; secondly, John Harrison was appointed to be the pound keeper for the Municipality for the current year of 1890 (7-2).

P. 41

1890, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of June, the seventh sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. [Reports of] the road work were submitted and the eradication

of weeds within the grain fields was discussed. The council sent 2 sick horses to the pound barn (7-2).

1890 on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, the eighth sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were in attendance. It was decided to send a petition to the government regarding the division of the Municipality, and to wait until the end of this year regarding the outstanding taxes before the interest levied is decided (7-1).

1890, the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, the ninth sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. It was decided to send a Petition to the Provincial Government regarding the division of the Municipalities and to have the petition subscribed to by the residents of the Municipality; secondly, it was decided that if necessary the interest on the tax arrears from the property of John Maxana be waived and that he shall pay the rest; thirdly, the financial statements from the Municipal Commission and from the schools in Clearspring and Niverville were presented to the Council and the same were accepted (7-1).

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1890 on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, it was decided at the Municipal meetings of Hespeler and Hanover to levy a tax of ¼ cent for every dollar in the assessment amounts; secondly, Council approved \$5.00 five dollars for Abram Harder as assistance (6-1).

1890 on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, the eleventh meeting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. The Vorsteher advised that the accusation by Jolys Fendenand L against Peter Toews and Cor. Toews, Bergfeld, demanded that the accused pay him the sum of \$14 dollars [upon payment] for which he would be satisfied. After some discussion this way and that it was decided that the aforesaid sum of money should not be paid out but that the matter be submitted to the County Court for a determination (6-2).

1890, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, the twelfth sitting. The Vorsteher and four Councillors were present. The nomination for Vorsteher and Councillors for the new Municipality of Hanover for the forthcoming year 1891 were submitted by various persons and the following persons were declared as elected: for Vorsteher Peter Toews, Bergthal; and as Councillors: Aron Friesen, Strasburg, for T7, R4; Gerhard Kehler for T7, R5; Peter Hiebert for T7, R6; Jacob Dyck, Rosengart, for T6, R6; Johann Unrau for T7, R5; and Peter Krahn for T5, R5 (6-2).

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1890 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December the thirteenth sitting. The Vorsteher and the Councillors Peter Krahn and Peter Dyck, Peter Hiebert and Abram Dyck were present and the church elected auditors, namely, Peter Friesen, Osterwick and Peter Funk, Schoenwiese, audited all the accounts of the Municipalities of Hespeler and of Hanover for the year 1890 and declared them to be correct, and were subscribed by both auditors as well as by [the members of] the Council. End 1890.

1891

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1891, on January 7<sup>th</sup>, the first sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were gathered and everyone made the necessary declaration that they accepted the duties for which they had been elected in the presence of the Vorsteher and Secretary and personally subscribed thereto; secondly, Cornelius Epp was hired as Secretary for the year 1891 for \$175.00; thirdly, at one o'clock the Schulzen were assembled and the financial statements of the Municipality were read to the gathering; fourthly it was decided that the Winnipeg Hospital be given \$75.00 and Cor. Friesen, Blumenort, be given \$10.00 for Mrs. Broeske. Reeve

Peter Toews, Clerk Cor Epp.  
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1891 on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, the second sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were gathered and the Vorsteher advised that the government intended to change [the location of] the post office and after receiving various counsel it was decided that the following places be suggested to the government: Bergthal, Chortitz, Steinbach, and Schoenthal; it was decided to submit a petition requesting the division [boundaries] of the new Municipality to the Lieutenant Governor and to the Legislative Assembly. Heinrich Cornelsen, Lichtenau, was appointed as assessor for the Municipality of Hanover for the year 1891 for \$39.00. The foregoing enactments were then read to the Councillors at the sitting and accepted and then signed by the Vorsteher and Secretary, "Vorsteher Peter Toews" and "Secretary Epp".

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1891 on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February was the third sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present and the road supervisors for this year 1891 were appointed as follows: for Ward 1, T7, R4, Aron Friesen, Niverville P.O.; for Ward 2, T7, R5, Gerhard Kehler, Chortitz P.O.; for Ward 3, T7, R6, Peter Hiebert, Chortitz P.O.; for Ward 4, T6, R6, Jacob Dyck, Steinbach P.O; for Ward 5, T6, R5, Johann Unrau, Steinbach, P.O; for Ward 6, T5, R5, Peter Krahn, Hochstadt, P.O. T5, R6 belongs to the jurisdiction of the road supervisor for T6, R6 and the settlers in T4 R6 under the supervision of the road supervisor for T5, R5 East.

The above proposals were read once more to the Council at the sitting and accepted by everyone and then subscribed to by the Vorsteher and Secretary, "Vorsteher Peter Toews" and "Secretary Epp".

1891 on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March was the fourth sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. An unsigned writing was read to the Council by the Vorsteher which was addressed to the Vorsteher and the Waisenamt and torn to pieces by Cor. Wiebe and the decision was made by the Council to give the matter to the Gemeinde for examination.

Secondly, Diedrich Penner and Cor. Wiebe were summoned because of a dispute between them and a reconciliation effected.

Thirdly, there was discussion regarding the Clearspring's debt and their acceptance into this Mu[nicipality], also regarding the outstanding taxes, and decided that the Vorsteher and the Secretary should go to Winnipeg in this respect. "Vorsteher P. Toews", "Secretary Cor. Epp".

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1891, the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, the fourth sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. It was decided to invite the Schulzen for the next [meeting], namely, in the afternoon in Schoenthal to discuss the road work and to decide where and how many new bridges should be built;

2, The Schulzen shall endeavor to notify their [village] communities that if anyone has earth scrapers that the same be brought to the Councillor in each Township before May 20;

3, It was decided that the Niverville Hotel keeper may have the license as in the past for \$50.00 "Reeve" and "Secretary".

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1891 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, the fifth sitting. The Vorsteher and Councillors were present. Firstly, the Procedural By-law [Ueben gestez] of the Municipality of LaBroquerie was reviewed and a motion was signed and sent to them;

Secondly, it was decided to assess Clearsprings

according to the same principles as it is in the other parts in the Municipality. Heinrich Cornelsen was appointed to do the assessment;

Thirdly, the Municipality was divided into road districts and road supervisors were appointed for each district as follows: No. 1 Road District Strasberg – Road Master Aron Friesen; No. 2 Niverville John Wittich; No. 3 Kronthal Peter Friesen; No. 4 Bergthal Peter Toews; No. 5 Blumengart Peter Hiebert; No. 6 Blumenort Joh. Janzen; No. 7 Clearspring John Peterson; No. 8 Steinbach Klaas Reimer; No. 9 Neuendorf Jacob Dyck; No. 10 Rosengart Jak. Unrau; No. 11 Neuanlage Peter Klassen; No. 12 Chortitz Peter Klassen; No. 13 Gruenfeld Gerhard Kehler, No. 14 Blumstein Joh. Reimer, No. 15 Schoensee Peter Krahn, No. 16 Neuhoffnung Franz Ens, No. 17 Landskrone Heinrich Harder; and for one o'clock the Schulzen were assembled and it was reported where and how many new bridges were necessary to be built or improved in this year. Also with the approval of the Schulzen.

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it was decided in this year that 1 day of road work for each ¼ section of land and 2 days for each male person from 18 to 60 years be devoted for work on the roads. "Vorsteher Toews". Store [stoorz] Harder was given the permission to sue the Ungers through the law. "Vorsteher" and "Secretary"

1891, the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, the sixth sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. The road work was submitted; and secondly, the following persons were appointed as Pound Keepers for the Municipality of Hanover, namely: for Township 7 Range 4 and 5, Harrison, Niverville, for Township 7 and 6 Range 6 Wm. Mooney; and for Townships 5 and 6 Range 5 and Township 4 Range 6, David Loewen, Hochstadt. Signed "Vorsteher" "Secretary". P. 50

1891, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, the seventh sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. As David Loewen does not want to be Pound keeper, Abr. Friesen was appointed in his place for that district.

1891, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September, the eighth sitting took place. The Vorsteher and 5 Councillors were present. It was decided to levy a ½ cent for each dollar of all moveable and immovable property in accordance with the current year's assessment roll for this year. "Vorsteher".

1891, the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, ninth sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. The election lists for the new office holders for the year 1892 were submitted and the following persons were declared as elected, namely: as Vorsteher – Peter Toews, Bergthal; as Councillors – Aron Friesen, Strasberg; Gerhard Kehler, Bergthal; Peter Hiebert, Hochfeld; Jacob Dyck, Rosengart; Johann Unrau, Rosengart; and Peter Krahn, Schoensee.

1891, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of December, the tenth sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were gathered and it was decided that all lands upon which there are taxes outstanding from the previous year shall be sold for the arrears, interest and costs of selling, which motion was personally subscribed to by all; and the Jew, Moses Goldstein, handed in a complaint that he had suffered damage four years ago as he was crossing over a bridge on the way to Niverville, as the wagon had over turned and he demanded \$12 dollars in damages, but this was not accepted by the Council. "Vorsteher" "Secretary".

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1892, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, the first sitting took place. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. The financial statements for the year 1891 were read

to the Council and accepted as correct.

Secondly, the Secretary was engaged for the year 1892 for a salary of \$200.00 and 50 dollars for the room and the meals of the officials during the sittings; thirdly, the Schulzen were assembled for one o'clock and the Statements were also read to them and deemed as correct. Fourthly, it was enacted that the Reeve as well as the Councillors shall receive one dollar per day and 10 cents per mile for the vehicle on the sitting days as well as on other days when they are engaged in Council business. Fifthly, it was enacted that for the [service of] papers 5 cents per mile and when money or other matters are taken further, 10 cents per mile shall be paid as recompense. "Vorsteher Toews" "Secretary Epp".

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1892, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January was the second sitting and firstly, the decisions on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January were read for the entire Council and approved and subscribed to by the Vorsteher and Secretary; secondly, the decision of the entire Council attested to by signature to advertise the selling of land property in this Municipality through the Manitoba Free Press and Manitoba Gazette; thirdly, the following persons were appointed road supervisors for the year 1892 in the Municipality as follows: Ward No. 1, Aron Friesen, Niverville; No. 2, Gerhard Kehler, Chortitz; No. 3, Peter Hiebert, Chortitz; No. 4, Jacob Dyck, Steinbach; No. 5, Johann Unrau, Steinbach; No. 6, Peter Krahn, Hochstadt. Fourthly, the following persons were appointed as Pound Keepers for the year 1892: for T7, R4 and 5, John Harrison, Niverville, T7, R6 and T6 R6, Wm. Mooney, Clearspring; and for T6 R5, T5 R 5, T4 R6, Peter Martens, Bergfeld. P. 53

1892, February, the third sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. It was decided that the entire Council shall be present during the land auction on March 14 in Niverville. It was decided that the next meeting shall take place on the last Saturday in the forthcoming month, March.

1892, the 26<sup>th</sup> of March, the fourth sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. The circular from the Winnipeg General Hospital was presented, and after some discussion, it was unanimously decided that the Municipality contribute some levy to the construction of a new building on the grounds which is to be used for the Hospital, but first it is to be presented to the Schulzen during the next meeting; secondly, a Petition of the Municipality of Langford to the Manitoba Legislature was not accepted after some discussion; thirdly, it was proposed by the Vorsteher that the Schulzen be written that when repairs on any bridges or dams become essential, that the Schulzen attend to same at the costs of the Municipality and submit the account for such expenses; fourthly, it was decided that the next meeting shall take place on the last Saturday in the month of May. P. 54

1892 on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May, the fifth sitting. The assessment roll for the year 1892 was reviewed and revised, and secondly, the Schulzen were assembled for one o'clock in the afternoon and the [topic of] bridges was taken up, as to where new ones were required or where they needed repairs. Thirdly, it was decided to buy 30 new earth scrapers. "Vorsteher" "Secretary".

1892 on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June the sixth sitting was held. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present, and among other [matters] the accounts for the road work were submitted by the road masters and reviewed; and secondly it was decided to reconstruct the construction deficient bridge on the road from

Berghthal to Neuanlage and to improve the roads and dams on the Winnipeg Road and to give it over to persons for payment. "Vorsteher" "Secretary"

1892 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July the seventh sitting.. The Vorsteher and five Councillors were present. No particular business was transacted. "Vorsteher" "Secretary".

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1892 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September, the eighth sitting. The Brandaeltester (fire insurance manager) [Brandaeltester] Jacob Stoesz, Vorsteher Peter Toews, Gerhard Kehler and Peter Hiebert were in attendance and the persons who own the steam engine threshing machines and it was discussed with them: firstly, when farmers do not have their grain sheaves at the required 100 yards distance from all flammable materials as is stipulated by the Brandordnung, and damage thereby occurs during threshing, the thresher as well as the farmer shall be held responsible for same and shall not receive reimbursement for any loss. Secondly, it is prohibited to thresh with the steam engines in the villages when the grain sheaves are not situated the lawfully required 100 yards away from all flammable materials. Thirdly, the thresher shall completely prohibit their workers from smoking during threshing. "Vorsteher" "Secretary".

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1892, the 24<sup>th</sup> of September, the ninth sitting. The Vorsteher and the Councillors Peter Hiebert, Peter Krahn, Jakob Dyck and Johann Unrau were present. It was decided [as follows]: firstly, for the year 1892 for each dollar in the assessment to levy a tax of half a cent; secondly, it was proposed by Peter Krahn that the road from Blumstein to the township line be graded this fall and that for remuneration. A number of other matters were decided and Krahn was instructed that if anyone there would be willing to do this for some hundred dollars per half-mile, that Krahn should proceed with same.

1892, the 6<sup>th</sup> day of December, was the tenth sitting. The entire Council was present. The following persons were named as candidates for service in Municipal office for the year 1893: for Reeve – Jacob Peters, Peter Toews and Gerhard Kliever; as Councillors – for Ward No. 1 Aron Friesen, Hugh Street and Martin Friesen; for Ward No. 2, Gerhard Kehler; for Ward No. 3, Peter Hiebert; for Ward No. 4, Jacob Dyck; for Ward No. 5, Johann Unrau; and for Ward No. 6, Cornelius Wiebe. "Vorsteher" "Secretary" P. 57

1892 on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December, the eleventh sitting. The Vorsteher and five Councillors were present and the following persons were declared as candidates for the election for Municipal Office to be held on December 20<sup>th</sup>: for Ward No. 1, Cor. Epp; for Ward No. 2, Gerhard Kehler' for Ward No. 3, Peter Hiebert; for Ward No. 4, Jacob Dyck; for Ward No. 5, Peter Krahn. Each of the above mentioned was given a ballot box and also the essential documents for that purpose. "Vorsteher" "Secretary".

1892 on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December, the twelfth sitting. The entire Municipal Council was gathered. The ballots from the election held on December 20 were handed in from which it was manifested that the following persons [were elected] for service in the Municipality for the year 1893; for Vorsteher – Peter Toews in Berghthal; and as Councillor in Ward No. 1 Hugh Street, Niverville. The election book of each electoral candidate was declared to be valid and the certificate for the appropriate book was accordingly duly signed and subscribed to by each of them. "Vorsteher" "Secretary".

1893

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Sitting of January 3<sup>rd</sup> of the Municipality of Hanover. Firstly, the newly elected Reeve and Councillors accepted the office for which they had been elected and personally signed the declarations; secondly, the financial statements for the year 1892 were read to them; thirdly, Cornelius Epp was appointed as Secretary for the year 1893 and receives \$200 dollars as Secretary and \$50 for the accommodation during meetings; fourthly it was decided that the Reeve and the Councillors shall receive an indemnity of one dollar per day and 10 cents per mile both for meetings as well as for travelling for such travelling made regarding the business of the Municipality; fifthly, the 27<sup>th</sup> of January was declared for the next meeting. An assessor shall be appointed [at that meeting]; sixthly, \$57 was approved for the Winnipeg Hospital; seventhly it was decided that when a night watch is necessary when there has been a fire loss, they shall receive \$1.00 per man per night. Likewise also for clean up of fire damage, every worker shall receive \$1.00 per day. "Vorsteher" "Secretary" P. 59

Sitting of January 27, 1893. Present were the Vorsteher and Councillors: Gerhard Kehler, Jacob Dyck, Joh. Unrau and Cornelius Wiebe. Hugh Street was not at the sitting. Firstly, Dietrich Friesen from Hochstadt, was appointed as assessor and shall receive \$40.00 upon completion of the work; secondly, the following persons were appointed as road commissioners: for Ward No. 1, Hugh Street, Niverville; Ward No. 2, Gerhard Kehler, Berghthal; Ward No. 3, Peter Hiebert, Hochstadt; Ward No. 4, Jacob Dyck, Rosengart; Ward No. 5, Joh. Unrau, Rosengart; and Ward No. 6, Cor. Wiebe, Schoensee. Thirdly, appointed as Pound Keepers were: Ward Nos. 1 and 2, John Harrison, Niverville; for Ward Nos. 3 and 4, Wm. Mooney, Clearsprings; for Ward Nos. 5 and 6, Peter Martens, Berghthal. Fourthly, the following values were enacted by Council for the requisite circumstances for the year 1893: cultivated land, \$1.25 per acre; unimproved land and woods, \$1.00 per acre; for a horse two years old and over 50; for a yearling 25; an ox over 3 years 30; a three year old ox \$15.00; a cow \$15.00; 2 year-old cows and oxen 10; one year old livestock 5; one sheep, 2; a hog, 1; young calves and colts were not assessed.

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Fifthly, Cornelius Toews was appointed as inoculator for the entire Municipality and \$10.00 was approved from the Municipal treasury to start, but otherwise he shall receive 25 cent for each child he inoculates which everyone who has a child inoculated by him shall pay themselves. "Vorsteher".

The third sitting was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, a special meeting. The Vorsteher and the Councillors Gerhard Kehler, Peter Hiebert, Johann Unrau and Jakob Dyck were present and the Waisenvorsteher Cornelius Friesen and Joh. Funk, and a number of individuals had been summoned to appear regarding their payment of their "bread" debt, their account was read to them and they were admonished to pay. "Vorsteher" "Secretary" P. 61

1893 on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April, the 4<sup>th</sup> sitting, a special meeting. The Vorsteher and the Councillors Gerhard Kehler, Peter Hiebert and Johann Unrau were present, Peter Falk, Burwalde, and Heinrich Siemens had been summoned to appear because of disputation and because Peter Falk did not appear, it was decided that Councillors Joh. Unrau and Jakob Dyck go with H. Siemens to Falk and, if possible, seek to bring about a reconciliation. "Vorsteher" "Secretary"

1893, the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, the fifth sitting, a regular [meeting]. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The assessment roll was reviewed and accepted. Secondly, the road work was regulated; for each male person between the ages of 21 to 60 years 2 days of labor and for each ¼ Section of land, 1 day. Thirdly, it was moved by Councillor Street to buy a road machine [grader?]. It was decided that the tax levy for that purpose be decided by a vote. Fourthly, it was decided to write the Schulzen that they should discuss the road work, where and when they would be required by the road master.

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1893, July 1, the sixth sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. The road work [reports] were submitted and paid and it was decided by Council to buy a road machine [grader] and an order for Mr. Werbrook, a machinery dealer in Winnipeg, was signed.

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1893 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September, was the seventh regular sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. A writing from Alex McCasKall was read to them dealing with a road through his farm and it was decided that Councillor Peter Hiebert shall go to inspect and investigate the matter. Secondly, Jacob Dyck [accepted] the task of getting the road maintainer from Niverville. Thirdly, On Wednesday October 4<sup>th</sup>, the road machine shall be tested here in Schoenthal, and then if suitable, begin this fall already to improve the roads in a number places. Fourthly, the Council decided for the year 1893 to levy a tax of ½ a cent for every dollar in the assessment.

1893, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of October, the eighth sitting. All the Councillors and the Vorsteher were present and it was decided that the next meeting shall take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

1893 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, the ninth sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were together and the candidates for the next election in the year 1894 were nominated.

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1893 on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December, the tenth sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were gathered. The ballots for the newly elected official were submitted. Hugh Street filed a protest against the election because Cor. and Peter Friesen that they were not qualified to cast a ballot. Jacob Dyck was delegated to look into this matter.

-End 1893-

1894

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1894 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January. The sitting was called to order at 10½ o'clock. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were gathered. The necessary declarations were deposited to by everyone and signed. Secondly it was decided that the Councillors shall receive 1 dollar per day for every sitting and for travelling 10 cents a mile. Thirdly, the Secretary was engaged for \$200.00 and \$50.00 for the accommodation and meals during meetings. Fourthly, it was decided to invite the Schulzen to the meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup>, and to publicize that those who would like to take on the assessment for the year 1894 should notify the Municipality in writing prior to January 27, at the same time stating for how much they would be able to do so. "Vorsteher" "Schriftfuhrer"

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1894, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January, was the second sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present and it was decided [that]: firstly, that the Brandoeltester [fire insurance manager] keep record

of their mileage and shall be paid out of the Brandordnung [fire insurance] treasury. Likewise also the Waiseneltesten when they travel in the interest of the Waisenamt shall be paid from the treasury of the Waisenamt. But if they are sending out papers regarding the advertising of auction sales or the collection of debts they can be paid out of the Municipal Treasury. Secondly, it was decided that in the year 1894 the assessments shall be made as follows: 1. Plowed land per acre \$1.25; 2. Meadow and forest \$1.00; 3. For a horse 2 years and older \$50; 4. A horse 1 year old \$5.5. And ox over 3 years \$30; 6. An ox 3 years old \$15; 7. A cow over 2 years \$15; 8. A cow and ox 2 years old \$10; 9. Heifer \$5; 10. for a sheep \$2; 11. A hog \$1; 12. Young colts, calves and lambs were not taken into the assessment.

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13. Stud stallions, regardless whether they are used on the road or at home, shall be assessed by the assessor at one-half of their actual value; 14. Dwelling and furniture shall be assessed at one-half of the amount for which they are entered in the fire insurance; 15. Farm implements and machine shall be assessed at one-half of the amount for which they are appraised by the assessor. "Vorsteher Jacob Peters" "Schriftsfuhrer Cornelius Epp"

1894, the 31<sup>st</sup> of March the third sitting took place. The Vorsteher and five Councillors were gathered, only Jacob Braun was absent. And it was decided:

1. To pay out Wm. Borland 15 dollars for road work;
2. That the Reeve and Councillor Peter Hiebert shall go to Kronthal and deal with Jacob Gerbrandt and Abr. Hamm regarding the road to Winnipeg;
3. That the Council shall inspect the road near Alex McKaskill in Clearspring, how it has been graded;
4. The Assessment roll was handed in by Johann Rempel who also resigned his position;
5. That next meeting be held on May 26 \_\_\_\_\_. P. 68

1894 on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May was the fourth sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. It was decided:

1. That the road work in this year shall be done as prescribed in the Ordnungen [minutes] namely, according to assessments;
2. Secondly, the road work was allotted and the road supervisors appointed:

(a) On the road from G. Kliever to Niverville and from Niverville to Osterwick - Road Master Gerhard Kliever;

(b) From Strasberg and Schanzenberg, S.W.T7, R4 - Road Master Peter Penner;

(c) From Kronthal and Osterwich and on the road from Rohr Creek to Kronthal - Road Master Cornelius Friesen;

(d) For Schoenwiese, Reinfeld and Tannenau, on the road from Schoenthal to Gruenfeld - Road Master Peter Hiebert;

(e) Chortitz shall work on the line from Chortitz to Eigenhoff and shall begin between Schoenwiese and Chortitz by the bridge - Road Master Jakob Wiebe;

(f) Gruenfeld and Heuboden shall work on the line from Blumstein to Gruenfeld and from Gruenfeld up to the bridge, inclusive of the farmers Jakob Toews and Abraham Froese - Road Master Jakob Barkman; P. 69

(g) Schoensee and Hochstadt on the line by Hochstadt - Road Master Jakob Regehr;

(h) Gruenthal, Gnadenfelld and Bergfeld where it is necessary there - Road Master Jakob Braun;

(i) Landskrone, Neubergfeld and Kronsgart from

Kronsgart to David Doerksen - Road Master Jac Wiebe;

(k) Schoenfeld and Rosengard including the farmers Ab. Dyck, Andreas Blatz and Ab. Schellenberg - Road Master Joh. Unrau;

(l) Burwalde and Friedensfeld on the lines where it is necessary there - Road Master Jacob Dyck;

(m) Steinbach and on the line from Steinbach to Gruenfeld, where work was stopped the previous year - Road Master Jakob Friesen;

(n) Felsenent, namely, the Ungers, Cor. Toews, Wm. Vogt, Martin Barkman, Joh. Klassen and Cornelius Barkman, on the line passing Gerhard Unger - Road Master Gerhard Unger;

(o) The Wiebes, all Topnicks, Jakob Funk and Peter Peters on the old line where work was stopped the previous year - Road Master Cor. Wiebe;

(p) Reichenbach, Eigenhoff, Kleefeld and Rosenthal, on the line passing Gerhard Schro. - Road Master Jakob Peters;

(q) Hochfeld and Blumengart on the road where it is necessary there - Road Master Pet. H. ?;

r Blumenort and Blumenhoff on the N.E. ¼ Township where it is necessary there - Road Master the Schulzen [Mayors];

(s) Bergthal and Schoenthal on the line from Schoenthal to Bergthal - Road Master Gerhard Kehler.

Thirdly, it was decided that the Reeve and Councillor Gerhard Kehler would go to Niverville or Schanzenfeld to inspect the roads and water drainage there, where it is the best, and that Councillor Peter Hiebert shall go to Clearspring and arrange for the road work there and transfer the road work there from Mr. Korkill to Jamieson, and that Councillor Jacob Dyck, and Schr. [Secretary] Cor. Epp shall go to Winnipeg regarding the road concerns from Kronthal and Blumengart to Oak Island. "Reeve" "Clerk"

P. 71

1894 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, the fifth sitting. The Reeve and all the Councillors were present. The road work lists were handed in and examined. Secondly, it was decided in view of the current shortness of money that we borrow from Peter Groening four hundred dollars for the purposes of the Municipality. "Reeve" "Clerk"

1894 on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July, the sixth sitting. The Vorsteher and four of the Councillors were present, both of the Councillors Jakob Dyck and Johann Unrau had not come, and the matter regarding the road from Strasberg to Niverville was taken into consideration, and a writing from the Municipal Commission was read. It was decided to write the Municipal Commission that this Municipality at this time is unable to open the subject road since it is now the harvest time and all the people, therefore, extremely busy. Possibly in late fall some work could be done on that road and some more next spring, for there is too much work required on said road that it cannot all be done in one year. "Reeve" "Clerk"

1894 on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, the 7<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were gathered. An act of the Provincial Health Bureau was read regarding the appointing of Dr. Dennis von Stetna as the health official for the Municipality and after some discussion this way and that it was decided that the Reeve and the Secretary should go to Winnipeg in order to have revocation discussions with the Health Department regarding this concern.

Secondly, it was decided that some work should be done on the road from Strasberg to Niverville this fall and Councillor Peter Penner shall inspect the line,

where it is the best there, and also when and for what price workers can be obtained there;

3rdly, it was decided that the bridge near Gruenfeld was to be rebuilt this fall, if possible. Johann Unrau was asked to look at the bridge and oversee the work;

4thly, it was presented to Council that certain of the residents of Niverville and the English farmers in the immediate area would like to purchase [land] at Niverville from the Council for a burial place or cemetery and this was also approved for them although the price for same was as yet not determined, only that they would be able to have it for the same price for which the other lots were being sold.

P. 73

1894 on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, was the 8<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were assembled and it was decided to work on the road from Strasberg to Niverville and to hire the workers for that purpose, the price is one Dollar per day, and eight hours of diligent work shall be rendered;

2ndly, it was decided for the year 1894 to levy a tax of ¼ cent for each dollar in the assessment;

3rdly, it was decided that the Reeve and Councillor Jacob Dyck shall drive to Winnipeg to discuss concerns regarding the health officials in this Municipality with the Health Department.

1894 on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October the 9<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were in attendance. A writing from the Provincial Health Department was read to Council regarding the health official for Clearspring and also the offer of same [services] from Dr. Demers in Ste Anne who is asking \$75 Dollars per month for such services. After much discussion to and fro it was decided to offer the aforesaid Doctor \$10.00 per month, but only from October.

P.74

1894 on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November was the 10<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were in attendance. It was decided that the next sitting shall take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of December for the Reeve and the candidates for Council to be named. And for 2 o'clock after dinner the Burwalders Heinrich Hiebert, and Peter Penner were to be summoned regarding disputation. "Vorsteher" "Schriftfuhrer"

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of December the 11<sup>th</sup> sitting. It was an assembly of nominators of the Municipality of Hanover in order to nominate candidates for the service as Reeve and Councillors for the year 1895, and the following persons were named as candidates: firstly, for Reeve-Jacob Peters, Vollwerk; 2ndly, for Councillors – Ward No. 1 Peter Penner, Osterwick; Ward No. 2 – Gerhard Kehler, Bergthal; Ward No. 3 – Peter Hiebert, Hochfeld; Ward No. 4 – Johann Unrau, Rosengart; Ward No. 5 – Jacob Dyck, Rosengart; and Ward No. 6 – Jacob Braun, Gnadenfeld.

2ndly, Heinrich Hiebert and Peter Penner from Burwalde were summoned before Council regarding disputation arising from shepherding their cattle. Penner had accepted the shepherding of the cattle in Burwalde for the summer of 1894, that is to say, as long as it could go on pasture there for which the village congregation agreed to pay him one dollar for each head. But when Penner failed to keep up with his duty as shepherd and the village Gemeinde (society) had to do it themselves, they did not want to pay him the full sum. Instead of one dollar for each head they only wanted to pay him 80 cents. Penner, however, demanded that he be paid out in full. But as he himself acknowledged that he had not fulfilled his duty and often had not brought the cattle home in the evening, the Council sought to act as a facilitator

between the parties. Since it was not possible to bring the two parties together it was decided by the Council that the village congregation should pay Penner 90 cents instead of a dollar and that if Penner did not want to accept this he could seek his remedy elsewhere.

1894 on the 29<sup>th</sup> of December, the 12<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. Many matters of disputation were dealt with. Also each Councillor as well as the Reeve were paid their indemnity for their service in office. And finally it was decided that the first sitting in the year 1895 shall take place on the 3rd of January at the Secretary's home in Schoenthal.

1895

P.76

1895 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January, was the first sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The meeting was called to order at 12 o'clock noon by the Reeve and after all the members of Council had executed the necessary Declarations the [meeting] moved on to the following matters:

1, Councillor Epp was retained as Secretary for an income of 200 dollars per year;

2, it was decided that the meetings shall be held in the home of the Secretary for which he shall receive an indemnity of 50 dollars;

3, it was decided that the Council members when they travel in the interests of the Municipality shall receive an indemnity of one dollar per day and 10 cents for each mile;

4, it was decided that Councillors Gerhard Kehler and Peter Hiebert go to Blumengart to settle matters with Abr. Ens and Gerhard Kehler regarding the road crossing their land from B.

5, it was decided was that the next sitting shall take place on January 26 at the home of Cor. Epp in Schoenthal.

P. 77

1895 on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January, was the 2<sup>nd</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and all the Councillors were present. The meeting was called to order at 10 o'clock in the morning and the following were concluded:

1, that no new assessment was necessary for the year 1895 and that the taxes shall be levied based on the previous year's assessment;

2, the meeting was adjourned until 1 o'clock after dinner at which time the Schulzen were also present and proceeded to consider the following matters:

1, the financial statements of the Municipality were read to the assembly by the Secretary;

2, the decisions of the previous sitting were read to the Schulzen including the income of the Secretary and Council members, and found to be acceptable;

3, it was proposed to the Schulzen whether a universal By-law should be worked out which would tax all property, which was accepted unanimously. In which regard the Reeve and the Secretary shall go to Winnipeg and present it to the Government;

4, a complaint was filed by the local businessmen regarding the tenant peddlers, that they shall be obligated to obtain a license from the Municipality before they can conduct business in this Municipality

P. 78

1895 on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March was the 4<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Vorsteher and all Councillors were present. The meeting was called to order by Reeve Jakob Peters at 10 o'clock. 1stly, the minutes of the previous sitting were read and acknowledged by everyone as correct and accepted.

2ndly, it was decided that a new assessment for the year 1895 was not necessary, and therefore, that

the taxes shall be levied according to the 1894 assessments;

3rdly, Peter Harder, Reinfeld, was appointed as the road inspector for the bridges from Gruenfeld to Eichbusch for the year 1895;

4thly, the village Schulzen shall be written that if bridges or dams anywhere are damaged by water so that they are not passable that same shall be repaired yet before seeding time, and that the accounting for same be charged so that same can be deducted later on from the road work;

5thly, Wm. Mooney, Clearspring, was appointed as road supervisor for Clearspring;

6thly, Councillor Peter Hiebert was delegated to upgrade the road from Blumengart to Eichbusch where necessary and as soon as it can be done. Reeve "Jakob Peters" "Cor Epp" Schreiber P. 79 [Duplicates Jan 3, 1893 sitting] P. 81 [NB. P. 80 blank]

May 25<sup>th</sup> was the 5<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Reeve and all the Councillors were present. It was decided to do the road work according to assessment as in the previous year.

1rstly, it was decided that in T7, R4 work shall be done for three miles south of Willick. - Road Master is Gerh. Satawzky.

2ndly, it was decided that work is to continue were the first party stopped, ½ mile east, and then up to the canal road -Road Master Peter Penner.

3rdly, it was decided that Osterwick is to work from Osterwick to the Rohr Creek, and if possible, above all the most necessary places - Road Master Cor. Friesen.

4thly, that Kronsthal shall improve the road from Kronsthal to Osterwick - Road Master Isaak Ginter.

5thly, that Schoenthal and Bergthal all improve the road from Schoenthal up to Bergthal as required. - Road Master Gerhard Kehler.

6thly, that Blumengart is to do the work from Blumengart up to Joh. Krause and Hochfeld from Hochfeld to Neuangular - Master P. Hiebert.

7thly, Neuangular shall work on the bridge adjacent to Westfield - Master Cor. Penner, Blat.

8thly, that Chortitz and Tannenau, Eignhoff and Vollwerk and Reichenbach shall work on the line from Eignhoff to Steinbach, (also Ebenfeld and Kleefeld) [No. 1] - Master Jak. Peters

9thly, that Steinbach shall start work on the same where they stopped last year, and work westward - Road Master Schulz Joh. G. Barkman.

10thly, that Felsenton shall work on the line from Steinbach toward Gerhard Unger - Road Master Gerhard Unger.

11th, that Neuendorf shall start work on the same line toward the north from where they stopped last year - Road Master Cor. Wiebe.

12th, Burwalde and Friedensfeld shall work: Burwalde from where they stopped last year towards the north, and Friedensfeld the line north toward Steinbach - Road Master Jac. Dueck.

13th, that Schoenfeld and Rosengart shall work on the same line as last year, northward - Road Master Joh. Unrau.

14th, that Hochstadt and Schoensee shall work on the same line as last year. - Road Master Joh. Funk, Schoensee.

15th, that Rosenfeld, Blumstein, Gruenfeld and Heuboden shall work on the road between Blumstein and Gruenfeld in the south - Road Master Jac. Dyck.

16th, that the appropriate lists for road work shall be sent to Jacob Braun, Gnadenfeld and he shall appoint Road Masters as necessary - Jac. Braun.

17th, that the bread debtors are to be notified to

appear in the Municipal Office;

18<sup>th</sup>, it was decided that the next meeting shall take place in the home of J.H.

"Jacob Peters" (Reeve) and "Jac. Hiebert" Schrieber

1895, the 6<sup>th</sup> of June, was the 6<sup>th</sup> sitting. Reeve and 5 Councillors were present and the following decision were enacted:

1stly, to answer Dr. Demer's letter in the negative, and to decline his wages as Health Inspector;

2ndly, to inform the farmers near Niverville regarding the school situation that one of the officials will personally investigate the situation among them;

3rdly, to write to Jacob S. Friesen, Steinbach, to appear at the sitting June 29 with his taxation statement but to discuss without any payment. "Jakob Peters" Reeve "Jacob Hiebert" Schrieber

1895 on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, was the 7<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Reeve and all Councillors were present. And the meeting was called to order at 10 o'clock and;

1stly, the lists regarding the roads were handed in, examined and paid;

2ndly, the tax concern of J. S. Friesen was presented and found to be legitimate.

3rdly, the meeting was adjourned until 1 o'clock after dinner;

4thly, it was decided that Maniy [Mayors?] to be written that two men shall be elected in order to organize [represent] in the Council to deliberate regarding the current year's assessment;

5thly, to write to the Municipality of De Salabury regarding the bridge across the canal between 5-6E and to provide to them the bill;

P. 84

6thly, to write the North of Scotland Mortgage Co. regarding the recalcitrant dwellers in how far the law dealing with landless dwellers applies, whether they can be forced to do road work or not;

7thly, it was decided that P. Penner, Pastwa, shall deal with Franz Dueck in order to open the canal between Jakob Hiebert and Franz Dueck or if Dueck does not take on this matter, then Penner is to [have it done] do it for remuneration;

8thly, the present meeting was adjourned and the next meeting was set for July 27.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of July the 8<sup>th</sup> sitting took place. The Reeve and all the Councillors were present and the meeting was called to order at 10 o'clock and the following matters were submitted and dealt with:

1stly, Peter Penner, Pastwa, handed in the statement for opening the canal and was paid;

2ndly, Councillor J. Braun filed a report regarding the land deal between Jac. Pries and Jac. Klassen, Gnadenfeld, and that the two had not yet come to an agreement, and that Jac. K broke down the fence of Pries;

3rdly, Pries and Klassen shall be informed about their land dealing that the Council has concluded and decided to consider their transaction (p.85) as finalized and settled the way the lot has fallen, and that Pries shall retain his access from Klassen. Should they not be in agreement with this, then each one has the full right to resort to the law. But until such time, Klassen has no right to tear up fences or to judge disputes and instead shall freely allow Pries the liberty to allow his cattle out. Pries on the other hand is obligated to put his fences into proper order, so that Klassen in no respect need suffer damage.

4thly, it was concluded that the Reeve and the Secretary go to Winnipeg to obtain more information regarding the Pound Keepers.

5thly, it was reported by Councillor P. Penner that Joh. Broesky and Rodinsky had fallen into disputation. It was decided in that regard to write the two

that they are to achieve a reconciliation before August 3<sup>rd</sup>, and if reconciled, they are to notify the Secretary, failing which the matter shall be given over to the police [Friedens Gerecht]. Also Broesky is to be completely prohibited that he has no right to leave his well water on the line [road].

P. 86

6thly, the sitting was adjourned until the 28<sup>th</sup> of September. Should it be necessary to come together in between, then the Secretary will notify the Council members.

"Jac. Peters" Reeve "Jac. Hiebert" Schriftsführer

On September 9, 1895, the 9<sup>th</sup> sitting. The Reeve and all the Councillors were present. 10 o'clock before midday. The following matters were discussed and decided as follows:

1stly, it was presented to Council that the Reeve and Secretary had signed a petition requesting changes on the collecting of tax monies. It was approved by the Council;

2ndly, it was decided for 1895 to collect \$3810.92, to levy 5 mills on the dollar in order to cover the expenses and defray the obligations, and that everyone who pays his taxes before December 31 shall receive a rebate of 10% and those [at par] who pay by March 1 and [after] March 1 10% will be added to each one;

3rdly, the sitting was closed and adjourned until the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, 1895.

P. 87

The 10<sup>th</sup> sitting of the Municipality of Hanover took place on October 26. The Reeve and six councillors were present. The meeting was called to order before 10 o'clock midday:

1stly, a letter from the Commissioner was read to Council regarding the appointment of fire watchmen and the lighting of prairie fires and that the same is to be watched and reported;

2ndly, the petition of the Waisenvorsteher was read, he requested that he be released from his office because of sickness;

3rdly, it was presented to Council that M. Jeromy was willing to look after the concerns of Clearsprings to be separated from the Municipal of Hanover. It was also presented to the Council whether it might not be better to enact a By-Law for the Municipality of Hanover regarding taxation and to submit it to the House [Legislature];

4thly, that Secretary shall announce that the candidates for municipal office for 1896 shall be nominated and to submit the election lists for same to the Councillor without incurring obligations for statute labour. At the same time a new Waisenvorsteher for the years 1896 and 1897 is to be elected in the place of Cor. Friesen, to be elected in the same process. However Cor. Friesen Sr. may not be re-elected. The lists are to be handed in to the Councillors by November 25<sup>th</sup>.

P. 88

5thly, that the Secretary shall summon Johan Broesky and Rudolph Rodinsky to appear at the next sitting at 1 o'clock in the afternoon regarding disputation;

6thly, the election lists for Brandaetester [fire insurance president] were reviewed and the result was that Heinrich Harder, Bergthal, was declared elected for three years with one hundred and three votes;

7thly, it was decided that the Secretary was to inform officially the newly elected Brandaetester regarding his confirmation as Brandaetester for the years 1896-97-98.

8thly, it was decided to improve the unusable bridges this fall yet and to pay for same, which was

given over to the Road Masters.

9thly, the sitting was closed and adjourned until November 30.

"Jacob Hiebert" Secretary-Treasurer "Jacob Peters" Reeve.

P. 89

December 3<sup>rd</sup>, the 11<sup>th</sup> sitting of the Councillors of the Municipality of Hanover. The Reeve and all Councillors were present. The sitting was called to order at 10 o'clock morning.

Firstly, the [minutes] of the previous meeting were read and [accepted] signed. Thereafter the meeting was adjourned until 1 o'clock after dinner;

Secondly, after the Reeve had again taken the chair, nominations for Reeve and Councillors were received between 1 and 2 o'clock and the following persons were nominated: for Reeve--Jacob Peters, Vollwerk, P.O. Chortitz; for Councillors – Ward No. 1, Peter Penner, Pastwa, P.O. Niverville; Ward No. 2, Gerhard Kehler, Bergthal, P.O. Chortitz; Ward No. 3, Peter Hiebert, Hochfeld, P.O. Chortitz; Ward No. 4, Jacob Dyck, Rosengart, P.O. Steinbach; Ward No. 5, Johan Unrau, Rosengart, P.O. Steinbach; and Ward No. 6, Jacob Braun, Gnadenfeld, P.O. Hochstadt.

As no election is essential, the named candidates were immediately declared to be elected.

3rdly, the election lists for a Waisenvorsteher were inspected and the result was that Cor. T. Friesen, Osterwick, was elected with a majority of 45 votes for a term of two years.

P. 90

4thly, after the election matters were completed, the Reeve raised the question how to make the assessment for the next year, whether it might not be better to only take the land into the assessment, how to set the price of the land? The Council, however, could not reach agreement herein (P.90), and consequently the further consideration of the matter was adjourned until December 28.

5thly, December 23<sup>rd</sup> was set as the date for the auditing of the Municipal financial statements of 1895 and Jacob Wiebe, Bergthal, P.O. Hochstadt, and Peter Friesen, Osterwick, P.O. Chortitz were appointed to do the audit.

-End 1895-

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Decided at the sitting of the Municipal Council Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1891

Municipality of Hespeler and Hanover  
Office of Secretary Treasurer  
Schoenthal, P.O. Chortitz, Man.  
Dec 3, 1891

Whereas the Jew Herske Plononveky accused the Mennonite Jakob Derksen here in the Municipal Office regarding his threshing; namely, that the said Derksen has not threshed his grain; and that both of them were summoned to this meeting for today's date; and Herske, however, did not appear; but the Jew had made an offer presented to the Municipal Council on Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> that Derksen should provide another machine, although it was more expensive than Derksen charged, and that Derksen should pay for the difference. The Council decided that the Jew Herske shall be able to deduct the three dollars or whatever amount he owes to Derksen's father Abr. Derksen, as a set off for damages and that he does not [need to] pay the money to him.

Enacted by the Municipality of Hanover on Dec. 3, 1891. Vorsteher Peter Toews, Councillors Aaron Friesen and Gerhard Kehler.

# Creative Writing

## Suaruh Suschkje Learns to Laugh

Fiction by Armin Wiebe

YOU KNOW KOADEL, WHEN you were born, when I saw you the first time in your mother's arms at the hospital, I thought I was looking at your grandfather, Kjrayel Kehler, the way I always dreamed he must have looked when he was born. Your father didn't look like his father at all, he likened with the other Kehlers, but not with Kjrayel. But you, you could have passed for him any day of the week—even now when you are sitting my bed beside I have to watch myself that I don't call you Kjrayel and talk you on like you are my man instead of my grandson. You almost are as old as he was when his heart stopped twievelling. Ach, who would have thought that I would live so long, even after your father and your mother and even your own wife have left this world and we are sitting here still breathing and talking and remembering. You say you want to write this down. Who would anyways want to read it?

Oh but sure, if somebody is going to write down an old woman's yeschwieta it should be you. I think your grandfather Kjrayel Kehler would have liked that. He liked to tell stories, schnette riete we called it, tearing slices, in English you would maybe say he liked to pull a person's leg, and if my father or maybe Preacher Funk sometimes complained that his stories weren't altogether true, that he was overdriving things when he told stories, Kjrayel would get this schmuista look in his eyes, and he would say, "But you wonder yourself over it anyway."

One Sunday Preacher Funk put some Flat German into his sermon and told the people to be careful not to talk through the flower too much with each other. "Derjch'e bloom raede for sure!" Kjrayel said as we were going home. "You should have heard Funk when we were in boarding school. Fuschkje Funk he was called. A person would need a whole garden full of flowers to filter the jokes that he would tell after the lights went out. The old ones sure knew what they were doing when they voted him to be the preacher. And to think that you were almost Fuschkje Funk's wife!"

I didn't believe him at first that this somber eaboa man who came home for dinner after church to our place could have been anything like a Fuschkje Funk that Kjrayel was talking about. Your grandfather was pulling me by the big toe, I thought, and I didn't even say nothing to argue with him I just let it go and let myself feel good that my father's plan and Preacher Funk's plan didn't work out.

I can still remember how it was. Even by our place where my father held that the dinner table was mostly for biting and chewing and swallowing and reaching for more it had never

been quite so quiet as that Sunday dinner when this young man all dressed in black, even his shirt and his long preacher vaumst, sat there at one end of the table across from my father and from the prayer before the eating till the prayer after the eating each bite and swallow rummeled through the kitchen like thunder on a summer night. Even my mother didn't say anything, and usually it was Mamuh who would try to have some conversation at the table, even if Papuh never wanted to say anything. It often seemed to me that Mamuh was like a tea kettle that wanted to whistle and Papuh was like a cold lid that wouldn't quite let the water boil. Not that Papuh would get angry if Mamuh talked to him or the rest of us but at the dinner table talking to Papuh was like trying to bounce a windball that was only half full with air. And with Preacher Funk at the table yet the air was so heavy it was hard to even suck it up a person's nose. I think I was scared to breathe because I might sneeze.

Ach, Koadel, you have to understand that in those days it was the men that decided everything and some men would have liked it better if they could have been turtles who hid their heads under their shells. My father was like that I think, especially with visitors in the house and his whole family all around. He wasn't like that outside in the yard or on the field. I have seen him neighboring a long strip, a loud strip even, leaning against a buggy or a threshing machine, or if he was hitzing us to work harder when we were breaking corn or picking up potatoes from the ground, he for sure wasn't shy, but inside the house it was like the cat got his tongue. Mamuh used to say that I must have got my personality from Papuh, that I was my father's daughter, and for sure I don't remember ever laughing so that it made me feel better when I was a child. Laughing was one of those things that didn't quite make sense to me when I was small. It was one of those things that people try to make you do, like eating fried onions or fresh liverwurst.

Mamuh used to tell me that I was born on the day my grandmother was buried. She said that my face looked like a schwoikj cloud darkening a summer sky and that I was three years old before I even frintled my face at her. She said that I never really laughed until your grandfather Kjrayel Kehler schuckeled me on the lawn swing.

It isn't easy to believe that I never laughed when I was a child. For sure with all the laugh lines around my eyes now nobody would willingly believe such a thing. Ach, a person can't remember everything from such a long time ago and ganz geviss I can't remember my

grandmother's funeral — only if I close my eyes, even now I can see her lying in the long black coffin on two benches in the sitting room. I can see her face with the deep wrinkles. Her eyes are closed and she is wearing the black old grandmotherly hat and a black dress and I don't know why I can see it so clearly in my head when I never even saw it. It must be because my mother told me about it so often and maybe that is why I never laughed much when I was a child because from the day I was born I had been given to see where living in this world was leading to, and my mother told me, too, that I always reached for black things first.

Suaruh Suschkje, the school children called me. Sour Sarah Suderman. That's who I still was that Sunday when I sat around the table corner with Preacher Funk. From so close he looked too young to be a preacher, he was hardly older than I was, and for a preacher he seemed very nervous. Lenakje, my sister, was laughering herself a little behind her hand, and Mamuh looked like she was biting her tongue. I think Preacher Funk must have been waiting for my father to start neighbouring, for sure in the rest of his life that Funk always had plenty to say, but that day he waited for Papuh, and Papuh said nothing, just passed the meat plate to Pete and nodded his head a little in the preacher's direction. I thought maybe Mamuh would at least ask him if he wanted more carrots or potatoes with peel but it was as if she had decided to let the men play this game.

I, of course, was too shy to say anything and I wished the eating would finish so the preacher could get up from the table and go away. Still out of the corner of my eye I was watching Preacher Funk's hands cutting up the meat and peeling young skin off a potato. A patch of stubble beard grew under his jaw that made me think of the weeds in the corner of the garden that I didn't finish hoeing on Saturday. That's what his face looked like, a freshly weeded garden, with some patches of weeds left standing. That night I had a dream where I was hoeing in the garden, hoeing forever from everlasting to everlasting and there was this patch of fat hen between the carrots and the cabbages that just wouldn't go away no matter how many weeds I hacked off and flipped over to go wilted in the burning sun.

But there at the table my eyes were watching Preacher Funk's hands, which still had grease in the cracks and the rims of some of his fingernails were black and one thumb had a blood blister under the nail. Fuschkje Funk was a farmer after all. His forefinger along the butter knife had a dark brown wart beside the middle knuckle. He stuck the knife into the

middle of a twee-back bun and broke it open, even like Jesus I thought, and I wondered me if Jesus had used a knife to break the bread with his disciples. I watched him cut a sliver of butter from the dish in the middle of the table and smear it over half of the bun. Then before he lifted the bun to his mouth he reached his knife over the table again to the wild plum jam and he skinned half a knife-full off the top and reached his bun closer so that the jam on the knife dripped onto the bun and not onto the table cloth. He saw me watching him and one of his eyes closed very slowly and I got this grizzlich feeling in my stomach.

"By us we don't smear double," my father said.

Everybody at the table stopped breathing. Preacher Funk's face got red all the way down to his collar so that the patch of stubble beard looked like a black checker on a red square. He didn't say anything, but he looked at the two halves of his bun, and then he scraped the jam off the butter onto the dry half-bun lying beside his plate.

I think I held my breath until after Papuh and the preacher got up from the table to sit in the sitting room. I hardly had time to tie on my apron so I could clean up the dinner table when Papuh came back into the kitchen. His face looked as white as the sofa dust cover he was holding as he motioned me to hang up my apron and come sit down in the sitting room.

For the second time that Sunday the kitchen was quieter than a funeral. I could hear the footsteps of the flies walking on the table cloth. I had never sat alone with Papuh in the sitting room, leave alone with the preacher yet. What could they want with me? Only if I was going to be learning the catechism so I could get baptized would a preacher want to talk with me and spring baptism was long past already and besides I wasn't marrying myself yet so what was the hurry?

But in those days a daughter obeyed her father and I went into the sitting room without even running upstairs to look in the mirror to see if my hair was still good. I didn't breathe but I could see my heart bumping against the front of my dress as I sat down on the first hard chair I came to.

Papuh had taken the white cover off the soft sofa chair and he had pulled open the curtain on the south window. Sitting in the soft sofa chair with his back to the light Preacher Funk was a shadow that reached across the floor to my Sunday shoes. My Sunday shoes were tied so tightly that I wished I could take them off and let my feet breathe already, but on Sundays we had to wear our shoes inside the house. I could feel his eyes looking at me out of the shadow and I was wondering what he was thinking and I wondered if my hair was all fixed into place.

And so it went. Papuh came into the room after me and he sat down on one end of the soft sofa like it was a hard chair and he had his knees together with his hands lying on his legs.

I waited for somebody to say something to me, but for many minutes nobody said a

word. My mother and sister whispered as they washed up in the other room, and the pendulum clicked back and forth on the grandfather clock on the wall beside the cold Booker stove. Then when the clock struck half-two, my father said to Preacher Funk, "And so, how many acres are you renting yourself?"

"Eighty from Friesen and forty from Nickel," Preacher Funk said.

"Nickel's yard, too?"

"Not this year, but I can have the barn for the winter, if I need it."

"And the house? Is somebody living in the house?"

"Only Nickel's brother-in-law, Driedger, but I heard he is moving to Pracha Darp to work by Pracha Platt for the winter. Anyways, Nickel's house is too small for him with all those children."

"Must be close to a dozen, anyways."

"Yoh, eleven, I think."

"So you have cattle for the barn?"

"Three cows now, and one strong that's been with the bull already."

"There is no water hole on the Nickel place."

"No, but there is a good well, twenty-five feet deep."

"Lots of water to pump every day."

"For sure, lots of pumping. But the water has a good taste. And the pump is new. Nickel put in a new pump last year. A child can pump water with it."

"Still, for a woman alone with the cattle, and for sure you'll get pigs and chickens, too, it's lots to pump for when you have to go preaching away."

"My brother will help out when I go away."

"Of course, and I could send Pete over after he finishes his chores at home. I have to keep him busy so he doesn't stick his nose into that story book all the time that he got from the teacher for Christmas. That Russlenda teacher lends him too many books and some say he has been making the older children sing with four voices. Next thing we know he will want yet to have a piano in the school. At first he wasn't even making the children learn the catechism off by heart, he was just bringing it by to the children what it meant, he said, but then the board hurry showed him the right way and now the children know the questions and the answers uetwendig every week or they feel leather on their hands. So sure, Pete can easy help with your chores when you are away. Nickel's house will be big enough for you at first."

"For sure I don't have eleven children...yet."

"And you are buying your own land, too?"

"I bought the other forty from Nickel already, and if it is the Lord's will and Nickel doesn't want everything all at once, I figure the home forty will be mine after another harvest."

"The Nickel place is close for both families. Such things are important. It is easier to hold things together then."

"Yoh, yoh," Preacher Funk said, "we

must hold things together. Things have gotten too loose. Too many have lost the way."

"Again last week," my father said, "a sudden wedding in Pracha Darp."

"Yes, too sudden for baptism...and still they want a wedding in the church, even after a dance at the felaffniss."

"And after the wedding, too. Where is the church in all this?" My father's hands gripped his knees like rooster claws on a fence pole. "And now I hear there will be casting of lots by the mission sale."

"Well, yes, I heard. But maybe a raffle isn't such a bad thing," Preacher Funk said, "if it helps people to give more to God."

"Is it giving to God if you are thinking about winning a prize?"

"For sure, some people will buy a ticket without thinking about the Lord's work. Still, that same money could maybe go for tobacco..."

"But I don't think we should be casting lots like the Romans by the cross. We aren't Catholics yet, with bingo and selling candles in the church. But the worst thing," my father said, "is that a thing like a raffle makes people yankah themselves for something they don't have and then they won't be satisfied with what God has given them for their hard work."

"Yes things are getting too loose," Preacher Funk said. "Maybe Fuchtig Froese's grandfather is right when he says that a raffle is like communism in Russia because everybody is sharing the cost of something that only one person gets some use out of."

"Well yeah, Fuchtig Froese is against fire insurance, too..."

"And some fuschel behind their hands that Froese has never actually put any money into a collect on Sunday morning, just uses his long fingers to rattle the silver that is already there."

I saw my father's head jerk just a little when he heard that and the two lines at the top of his nose were deeper than a freshly ploughed furrow. A talking preacher is scarier than a preacher that smears double, I thought. And it got even scarier when the preacher said again, "Yes, things are getting too loose. The time has come to separate the wheat from the chaff." For a minute there was only breathing. I heard the outside kitchen door open and close. My mother and Lenakje walked past outside the window. Then Preacher Funk asked a question about my father's crop.

So it went then, from half-two till half-four. Never once did they talk me on or ask me what I thought or even say clearly what I thought they were saying. And this grizzlich feeling I had in my stomach got grizzlicher and grizzlicher as I listened and stared at my tight shoes having a dream with my eyes open where I was looking at this stubble patch along that jawbone and I all of a sudden thought of Schallembrochs' Tien's cousins from Herbert in Saskatchewan who had talked about having a flat tire by Moose Jaw and I suddenly wished I was outside alone some place so I could laugh. So Mamuh wasn't altogether right when she said it was Kjrayel and the lawn swing that

first made me want to laugh. It was Preacher Fuschkje Funk's moose jaw.

But of course, even Suaruh Suschkje had felt Papuh's willow switch and that patch of stubble was really scarier than it was funny so that laugh just stayed a little itch down inside some place by the blind intestine, but it was always there every time I saw Preacher Funk for the next forty years, even after he learned how to shave himself and married my sister Lenakje. But on that Sunday Lenakje was walking in the garden with my mother and I was in the sitting room listening to my father and Preacher Funk talking about how easy it would be for a woman to pump water for the cattle from a twenty-five foot deep well. For the first time in my life I prayed without eating something after or going to bed and I prayed that Preacher Funk would not stay for faspa and smear double again.

Well, sometimes there is somebody listening at the other end of a prayer, because when the clock struck half-four Preacher Funk got up from the soft sofa chair and said that he had to go visit the old Schallembeych woman who was sick at the other end of the village.

The sick woman was Schallembeych's Tien's grandmother. Tien was my best friend, the only one in school that didn't call me Suaruh Suschkje. She was the only person that I had ever shared any secrets with. For me a heavenly Sunday afternoon would have been to finish washing the dishes and then walk through the darp to Tien's place and sit with her on her bed and tell each other things. So my heart felt like it wanted to bumps in two different directions when Papuh stood up from the sofa and said that I should walk along with Preacher Funk and bring Schallembeych's Tien's grandmother one of those rhubarb pies we had baked on Saturday afternoon.

Well, you have to remember that we lived in the village, almost everybody still did in those days, and there was no way to walk from one end of the village to the other on a Sunday afternoon without being seen. There were the little boys with their slingshots shooting stones at sparrows, and the big boys out of school already riding bicycles with their Sunday pants clipped to their legs, or rolled up almost to the knee. Men leaned against machinery or sat on chairs brought outside into the shade where they spat out knackzoat shells and rolled themselves smokes with brown fingers. Women walked around the edges of gardens showing where the cutworms had been busy and how high the stick roses had grown. Big girls looked out of upstairs windows and some we met walking along the gauss, the village street.

It was almost like a blizzard that day as we walked, Preacher Funk and me, because the poplar trees on both sides of the street were shedding their little balls of wool. I felt some fall on my hair, but I couldn't brush them away because I had the heavy glass pie plate in my hands. The plate was wrapped in a dish towel and I was afraid that it would slip out if I let go to brush the cotton from my hair.

Preacher Funk didn't say anything as

we walked, at least not through the first half of the village. I just felt his black shoes stepping on the earth beside me even with mine, though his legs were longer than mine so every few steps he held one foot in the air a little bit longer so he could get into step with me again. More cotton balls fell on my hair and I wished I had tied on a kerchief but it was hot and I have to say even without a kerchief my head was sweating and I could feel something sticking to my forehead only I didn't know if it was hair or poplar wool. Close by the school house we passed three Giesbrecht sisters, who looked at me stonewashed, but then started laughing when they had passed. Preacher Funk beside me didn't seem to notice, and when I sneaked a glance at him sideways I noticed a funny thing. I would have thought that with his black clothes the white cotton balls would have been sticking to him like snowflakes the way they were sticking to my dress and the dish towel covering the pie, but not even on the brim of his black hat had any of the cotton stuck. This made me shiver with that grizzlich feeling again. What kind of man could walk through such a cottonwood snow and not even have one seed stick to his black preacher clothes? What kind of a woman would want to walk beside such a man?

And then we were walking past the Nickel place, past the house that was too small for eleven Driedger children. The older ones were playing anti-over around the house bouncing the ball on the roof and Dora Driedger came out of the door with a broom in her hand and shelled those kids out good and loud and they ran away across the yard to the barn, and I saw one of the boys jump up on the well and start to pump while one of the girls held her face under the spout so she could drink.

That's when Preacher Funk spoke with his face turned away from me.

"En Praedja mott ne eaboare Frue habe. Doawaens ha ejk die uetjelaesed. Gott sei dank." A preacher needs to have a sombre wife. That's why I have picked you out. God be thanked.

That grizzlich feeling ran up and down my backstring again and I blinked because a cotton fluff ball had fallen on my eye. Out of the watery dark of my eyelid I saw my grandmother sit up in her black trough coffin. Her eyes looked at me from out of the wrinkled face. She looked me straight in the eyes. And then she laughed, her old thin shoulders shaking up and down inside her loose black dress. She laughed so hard her black grandmother cap slipped off the top of her hair and hung over one ear. My feet stumbled in the ruts where a wagon got stuck in the road the last time it rained and for an eyeblink I thought I would fall and I could even see the rhubarb pie flying through the air to my grandmother laughing in her coffin. I almost screamed out, but I was so gruelich scared no scream could get past my throat.

I got my feet back onto even ground again with the pie plate still in my hands, the dish towel still wrapped tight. Beside me Preacher

Funk still walked looking the other way. He was still talking and he hadn't noticed me wreck my ankle in those ruts. And still those poplar fluffs weren't sticking to his black clothes.

Each step beside Preacher Funk made my wrecked ankle shoot pain up my leg. I couldn't see my laughing grandmother any more, but I could hear her, as if she was part of the pain from my ankle. As we got closer to Schallembeych's Tien's place the pain seemed to change from a hurting to a tickling that crept up my leg to the place somewhere in the belly where it seems that the laughing nerves live.

Oh but no, I wasn't laughing yet. Suaruh Suschkje Suderman wasn't that easy a nut to crack. But with my grandmother still laughing in my ears as I walked beside black Preacher Funk who had picked me out to be his eaboa wife, I wished that I could laugh, and my backstring shuddered colder than it ever did sitting on a frosted beckhouse seat in January as I thought that if I became Preacher Funk's eaboa wife I would never ever be able to laugh, for sure not sitting up in my coffin, and a cottonwood fluff stuck to my wet eye and wouldn't let me blink it away.

Schallembeych's Tien yaupsed up a mouthful of air when she opened the door for us. Then she looked from my face to Preacher Funk's face and she almost thought the wrong thing, but Tien was never one to wait long to find something out so she hurry said to Preacher Funk that her grandmother was in the sitting room and then she told me to bring the pie into the kitchen. But before I could set the pie on the kitchen table Tien had gripped me by the sleeve and pulled me out the back door into the garden.

"Suschkje," Tien said, "waut gruel die?" What frightens you?

"I don't want to be the preacher's eaboa wife," I said.

"Oh but no," Tien said, "what makes you think such a thing?"

"Well, Papuh and Preacher Funk ..." Tears sipped down my cheek and I told her about the pump and the twenty-five foot well and the eleven children and the raffle that was so evil and the cotton fluffs that wouldn't stick to the preacher's black clothes and I couldn't help myself I even told Tien about my laughing grandmother sitting up in the black coffin. I frightened myself when I told her about that, because I had never even told her about how I could sometimes see my grandmother Glootkje Susch under the crab apple trees in the garden, ever since I had heard Willa Wiebe talk about her as he quaulemmed our sitting room full with his tobacco smoke. I even told Schallembeych's Tien that if Papuh and Preacher Funk had their way I would never be able to laugh, and what was a raffle anyways?

\* \* \*

OH KOADEL, IT IS GOOD that you have come back again. Last time I think I went to sleep while I was talking. I told the nurse not to give me my pills again until after you had finished with visiting. It is good to have pills to keep a person alive, but not so good if a

person just sleeps most of the time then. And a person doesn't remember so good after taking pills and sometimes the pills give me dreams that maybe aren't right for an old woman. When I woke up after you left last time I had dreamed something about Russia. It had to be Russia because the people were talking mostly in Flat German but behind the dream some voices were talking a different language, but it wasn't English like it would have been here in Canada. And it was a long ago dream because there were only horses and oil lamps, no cars or even any trains, and I saw a basket on the back step of a house in a village I had never been to. And there was a baby crying in that basket.

Funny thing, when I woke up I thought I smelled tobacco smoke, only nowadays they don't allow people with their cigarettes into the hospital, not like the olden days when a doctor would walk right into a sick room with his pipe or even a cigar. Your grandfather Kjrayel Kehler never smoked while we were married and my father didn't believe in it either, even if most of his neighbours had brown fingers. But this smoke I smelled maybe had something to do with that baby crying in the basket in the dream because all of a sudden in my head I was a little girl again looking down into our sitting room on a Sunday afternoon when Willa Wiebes were spatsearing by our place and I was frightened of all those Willa Wiebe children who were so wild and noisy as they ran all over the yard and so I schlicked myself into the house and crept the stairs up into the girls' room and crawled under the bed and looked down through the heating grate.

Willa Wiebe was sitting in the big sofa chair rolling himself a cigarette even when he already had one burning between his lips with the smoke kjriezelng up to my nose. My father was sitting in the hard armchair across the corner from him and Mumchi Willa was sitting at the far end of the sofa and my mother was sitting at the end close to my father so that my parents were sitting the Willa Wiebes in between. It seemed like Willa Wiebe was talking most of the talk himself, that my father was sitting there just listening and waving the smoke away and trying not to cough and I could see that my mother wanted to stand up from her chair and get out of that smoky room, but it was almost like Willa Wiebe and his wife were like two oxes hitched to the same yoke and every time my mother moved to stand up Willa Wiebe would haustig be quiet and Mumchi Willa Wiebe would start talking loud and my parents would have to listen to her. It seemed like the whole afternoon my mother and father never even said a word and that Willa and his wife took turns talking at each other past my parents through the smoke and the flying sunflower seeds and I could see that my parents were wishing there was a way they could make these yahst go away, just like I wished the Willa Wiebe children so noisy outside would febeizel themselves and leave our family alone, quiet, but how could a person do that?

Then my eyes started watering from the smoke coming up through the heating grate

and I turned myself sideways so my ear was pressed down on the iron holes and I started listening to what Willa Wiebe was talking about and it soon fell me by that he was faydeming out frindschoft all the way backwards to Russia and he was talking about Suschke Suderman, a tsejon gypsy baby who grew up into a woman who could walk through burning ashes in her bare feet. Gloatkje Susch, the people called her and she was somebody from long ago in my family.

Later I figured out that this Gloatkje Susch was my grandmother, the grandmother who was buried on the day that I was born. I figured, too, that maybe I had been given my grandmother's feet, because I was the only one in our family who could hold her foot still against a tickling feather. Until I married myself with Kjrayel Kehler I never once texed my foot away when somebody tried to tickle. I never tried to walk through burning ashes barefoot though, but I sometimes wondered how come my grandmother, Gloatkje Susch, had had to do such a thing. This, Willa Wiebe didn't fit into his storytelling that day I had my ear to the heating grate trying not to sneeze from the smoke that was kjrieseling up to my nose. No, he didn't get a chance to tell about anything like that because my father argued back that Gloatkje Susch, his mother, hadn't been a tsejon baby at all, not a gypsy baby, that the gypsy baby story had been made up by those dark Penners who had lived in the next village and then Willa Wiebe right away blew out a big quawlem of smoke and said that there were lots who said that the dark Penners had really been gypsies themselves before they mixed themselves in with the Flat Germans way back in the Danzig days already, and then Mumchi Willa Wiebe jumped into the story and said that her father had always figured that Gloatkje Susch had really been a dark Penner baby, that one of the dark Penner daughters had left the basket on the doorstop.

Before Papuh could argue back about that, before he could tell Willa Wiebes to take their dirty talk out of his house, Willa Wiebe said, "And yeah, there were those who said that the gypsy father the dark Penners talked about had really been one of the dark Penner sons. Everybody in the village knew that they all slept in the same bed by the dark Penners."

Papuh stood up from his chair then and said, "Such a blood shame there isn't in our family. A Christlijch person doesn't talk such a schvienarie in a neighbour's house." Papuh talked straight and even like the straightest furrow he ever ploughed on his fields. I learned over the years that when Papuh spoke like that he was close to a bull seeing red. I think Willa Wiebe must have figured this out, too, because he stopped with his tongue sticking out ready to lick the cigarette that he had just finished rolling. Then from outside we all heard a gruelijch katzenjammer and Mariekje Wiebe ran into the house. "Muttachi come. Dei Hein haft Jake sien kopp auf yehackt!" Henry has Jake's head chopped off.

Long after that, long after Willa Wiebes

had taken their smoke and their tongues and their bleeding boy home, I asked my mother about Gloatkje Susch. We were in the garden picking raspberries. I was barefoot and I stepped on a stone that was hot from the sun. "Mamuh," I said, "is it true that Grandmother Susch could walk barefoot through hot ashes?" Mamuh stopped picking and said, "Meyall, wherever did you get such a thing from? Why would any woman want to try such a thing? Don't you ever say such a thing about your father's mother again!"

Now Koadel, when I tell you this next thing you will think I am an old woman who is febeizeling her brain, but I am too old to try to hide anything. I didn't say anything back to Mamuh. I just picked more raspberries and didn't even eat any more, I dropped them all into the pail. I didn't even chew the berry that was already in my mouth, I just let it soak in my spit like a candy. But when I got to the last raspberry bush at the end of the row I saw by the oak trees on the end of the garden an old woman, standing barefoot, looking at me with eyes that maybe could have been full of burning light. I only saw her for an eyblink, then she was gone, there was nobody there. After Mamuh had taken her bowl of raspberries to the pump to wash off I schlicked myself over to the end of the garden and looked at the ground where my grandmother had stood. There were two footprints in the soft garden earth. The first little toes stuck out past the big toes just like mine.

What does a child do with knowing that nobody will believe? What does a child do with questions that are not allowed to be asked? Are a child's eyes like a child's ears that separate a mother's voice and language out from all the other sounds in the world, separate them out so far that those ears hardly even hear another language, leave alone understand any of the words? Does a child only see what her mother sees, or at least only remark on what the mother remarks on too? Could it be that the eyes are maybe not really windows, but like televisions that only let you see what particular stations want you to see? I don't know what you will make out of this but I lived almost forty-three years with your grandfather Kjrayel Kehler and if I don't allow myself to lie I would have to say that at least half the time we were living in completely different worlds, even when we were very close together, maybe that's when we were even the farthest apart. One of the things that kept us together and loving each other for forty-three years was laughing together, only sometimes I would feel a toch of chill air at the cross of my back and I would wonder if we were laughing about the same thing.

I felt that chill the first time I saw Kjrayel Kehler. I saw him as soon as I schlicked into Yelttausch Yeatze's machine shop after Schallemboychs' Tien. I saw him even before I saw the lawn swing half painted red and white. He was wearing bib overalls and no shirt and he was bent over and twisted backwards painting the underside of a board blood red. His

tongue was sticking out from his lips like boloney between pieces of bread and his eyes followed the paint flowing out of the brush almost like he was squeezing tears out of sore eyes. That's when I felt the touch of chill air at the cross of my back.

I wanted to turn away. I wanted to run out of that machine shop.

Then a drop of red paint leaked onto the tip of Kjrayel Kehler's nose. Schallembeych's Tien started to laugh, then closed her mouth and her cheeks puffed out with air. I felt a tickle in my blind intestine too, but Kjrayel Kehler kept moving that brush without stopping even though the drop of paint slowly ran down between his upturned noseholes to the little trough that leads to the lips. My breath stopped while I watched to see if the paint would get to his sticking out tongue before his brush reached the end of the board. I felt the chill again at the cross of my back, a chill of wondering what would frighten me more, his finishing the board first or the red paint seeping onto his tongue. For an eyeblink I saw a bare foot stepping on a glowing ember and then Kjrayel Kehler's brush reached the end of the board and he straightened himself up and wiped the paint from under his nose with the back of his brush hand and at the same time he smeared a red streak from his reddish eyebrow across his forehead up into his thick reddish hair.

Then my grandmother sat up in her coffin again and laughed. At the same time Tien's mouth burst open and her whole body shook with laughter. That tickling spot beside my blind intestine split into three pieces and tickled its way down both legs and round and round up my belly into my throat and I was laughing, really laughing for the first time in my whole life I was laughing, all the time my eyes stretched open wide like rolled up stockings ready for feet to be shoved in, open wide even though they were spilling over with salt water. I couldn't blink. I just had to look at this freckle-faced sommamolijch little man, hardly taller than I was in my Sunday shoes with the thick heels, who was glutzing me on with eyes the color of robins' eggs in a nest, red paint on his nose and mixed in with the fuzz over his lip, the paintbrush still in his raised hand, the bristles leaning against the widow's peak that already then was starting to show on the left side of his face. At first his tongue was still sticking out through his lips like boloney between pieces of bread, his eyes making me forget everything except that I was laughing and that I couldn't look away, if I did the laughing maybe would stop and I didn't want the laughing to stop, even when my side began to ache and I wondered how long my legs would be able to hold me up, and a shiver went up and down my backstring and then Kjrayel Kehler's face broke into pieces and his laughing joined in with ours like a third voice in a trio in church after three and four-voiced singing were allowed.

Later, at least it seemed like a trio to me, or maybe even a quartet or a five-voiced song

because Schallembeych Tien's brother, Jake, was there and Yeltausch Yeeatze's daughter, Hilda, was sitting by an old sewing machine on the other side of the lawn swing, but right then I only heard my voice laughing with Kjrayel Kehler's voice, his eyes swimming in salt water like pickled robins' eggs.

Then out of the corner of my eye I saw the lawn swing bench moving just enough to make me feel the world was tipping and I stepped sideways and I felt the glass pie plate still in my hand tipping, and Kjrayel Kehler ducked forward to grab the pie before it could fall and the paintbrush in his hand brushed a sticky red smear across my knuckles.

"Een Engelmaakje haft mie en Pei yebrocht," he said. An angel maiden has brought me a pie.

I had to blink my eyes then and press the salt tears down to cool cheeks that were red as scarlet fever. Kjrayel Kehler lifted the tea towel from the pie and reached it to me so I could wipe my eyes. His red fingerprints stayed on the cloth and far away in my head some place I thought I heard my mother complaining about paint stains on the tea towel. At the same time I saw myself folding it carefully and hiding it in a drawer. In another part of my head my grandmother sat up in her coffin and laughed. I wiped my eyes and when I looked at him again Kjrayel had bent his red nose down to sniff the pie.

"Ruboaba Pei," he said and without lifting his nose he looked at me with those robins' egg eyes. "Ekj maaj dit maajlichet Maakje." Rhubarb pie. I like this likeable lady.

He held his breath to see if I could follow his word play, then he said, "Een maalijchet Maakje woat maakje em Maaradikj." A likeable lady will fuss in the horse radish. "En Maakje vom Maa en ne Maarjche rit een Maaschwien." A maiden from the sea in a fairy tale rides a porpoise. "Best du een Maamaakje?" Are you a mermaid?

"Best du een Engel Bengel?" I said. Are you an angel boy? Then I almost fuhschluckt myself, my ears were so surprised at what I'd said, surprised that I had even said something at all.

Kjrayel Kehler lifted his red nose up from the pie, then he went down on one knee with the pie held up like a gift, the red paint brush sticking up from his hand like a feather from an Indian's head in a school book picture.

"She is a poet and doesn't even know it," he said in such an eaboa voice that the tickle spot beside my blind intestine wriggled through my body again and I was laughing so hard the salt water spilled out from my eyes again so the whole machine shop looked like it was underwater and I had to bend my knees to shteepa myself against the earth that was moving under my feet. Then while my knees were still soft your grandfather stood back up and with the pie and paint brush in one hand he took my arm with his other hand and he swept me across the ground and led me onto the swing and he sat me down on the bench that hadn't been painted yet and I couldn't help myself I



Author Armin Wiebe, nationally recognized novelist. Armin is a descendant of the Wiebes of Eigenfeld, E. R., and has thousands of relatives in Hanover Steinbach. Photo courtesy of The Second Coming of Yeeat Shpanst, back page.

was laughing so hard it was like I was that lady in Tante Esther's Children's Party song that swallowed a spider that wriggled and jiggled and tickled inside her.

Later in the night when I was trying to sleep I couldn't believe it that I had been sitting on a moving lawn swing in my Sunday dress beside a sommamolijch freckle-faced man without a shirt on, a man I had called Engel Bengel yet. I couldn't believe it that such a thing had happened only when I held up my hand in the moonshine from the upstairs window I could see the red paint still on my knuckles even after I had tried to wash it off with lye soap. Maybe I forgot to use the little wooden scrub brush beside the washbasin behind the summer kitchen. In the dresser drawer folded inside the tea towel with the red fingerprints were two raffle tickets that Kjrayel Kehler traded me for that rhubarb pie.

Armin Wiebe    "Suaruh Suschkje"

This article by Armin Wiebe, "Suaruh Suschkje Learns to Laugh," initiates a creative writing section, something new for *Preservings*. The second piece for the June 2000 issue will be by John Janzen Kooistra, author of *Shoo-fly Dyck*.

Anyone interested in submitting a short story for this section should contact the editor. The stories should be 6-8000 words in length and have some historical content and should also be evocative of traditional/conservative Mennonite values and spiritual tradition.

Most of so-called Mennonite fictional writing during the second half of the 20th century was written from a modernist, libertarian standpoint from which perspective traditional/conservative Mennonites were typically negatively portrayed. The purpose of a creative writing section in *Preservings* is to demonstrate that good fiction in a post-modern era can also be written evoking communitarian and traditional values.

# 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. It is customary for publishers to provide a free copy of a book to the publication, this copy is provided to the person selected to do the review as a reward for doing the work.

Royden Loewen, *From the Inside Out: The Rural Worlds of Mennonite Diarists 1863 to 1929* (University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 350 pages.

In reviewing Royden's second book, *Family Church and Market for Preservings* (No. 2, page 6) in 1993, I wrote "that a prophet is not known in his own land," and that the publishing of his doctoral thesis would soon change that.

Since that time, Royden has moved on to become Chair of Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, a position he is filling with enthusiasm and energy. Royden has gained wide recognition as a premier rural social historian, where his intimate knowledge of primary source documentation in the East Reserve has stood him in good stead.

Indeed, Royden has become something of an icon in Hanover Steinbach, and the Mennonite community in general, serving regularly as guest speaker for annual meetings of the Museum, Historical Society, etc. In 1999 he spoke eloquently at various major events celebrating the 125th anniversary of Mennonites in Manitoba, including the worship service at the museum on August 1, making him feel in his own words, something "like a Rieseprediger".

Royden's pioneering work on the journals and diaries of our Hanover Steinbach settlers has special significance. He has published various academic articles on the topic. On January 17, 1998, he served as the after dinner speaker at the HSHS A.G.M. in Vollwerk (Mitchell), on the topic of "Chortitzer Diaries of the East Reserve 1874-1930," see *Preservings*, No. 12, pages 1-5.

With the publication of *From the Inside Out*, a sample of the vast and extensive world of Mennonite journals, which Royden has harvested for these lectures, is made available to the general public and lay historians for the first time. The work also reflects the widening scope of Royden's historical interest, from the Kleine Gemeinde, to the East Reserve, and now also "Old" Mennonites in Ontario.

The book consists of 21 journals of diarists of various ages and stations in life, seven by women. The work gains depth and strength by including the diaries of eight writers of Swiss or Old Mennonite background, basically from Waterloo County, Ontario, thus allowing even the casual reader to make comparisons to the remaining journals which originate in the East Reserve, Manitoba.

The value of the work is further enhanced by the fact that five of the Manitoba journals were written by Bergthaler/Chortitzers, with the remainder originating from the Kleine Gemeinde. Although Margaretha Jansen, whose diary was written in Berlin, Ontario, was not a member of the Kleine Gemeinde, she was none-

theless closely related to the community.

Each journal is preceded by a brief but carefully compiled biography of the author, sometimes accompanied by a photograph. These biographies in themselves are an important contribution to our history as they will resurrect, so to speak, for the first time, many personages of considerable significance to our community.

The earliest journal by a woman is that of Maria Stoesz Klassen, Ebenfeld, from 1887. A very interesting journal is that of Margaretha Plett Kroeker, one of the Steinbach pioneers, written in 1892. Those readers who have been following the on-going debate about the role of women and their influence within traditional Mennonite society will find this journal substantiates most if not all of the recent revisionist writing recognizing the position of relative security and strength held by women within that culture (page 16).

Of particular interest will be the extract from the journal of "Fuels" Abraham F. Reimer (1808-92), Blumenort. By now, most readers of *Preservings* will be familiar with this man and his evocative writing. Since his journals provide such wealth of detail of the early days, they are frequently being used and referred to by local historians. Now all readers can use and enjoy his intimate observations.

The ministerial journal of Aeltester Peter R. Dueck (1862-1919), Steinbach, is of interest, focusing on the brotherhood meetings of the Kleine Gemeinde from 1901 until his death in 1919. They reveal a church community genuinely seeking to build their community on the New Testament model in the face of onslaught by the outside world.

The journal of Chortitzer minister Heinrich Friesen (1842-1921), provides the perspective of that community, although he restricts his observation mainly to family and village life. The extant journals of Heinrich Friesen, covering most of 1893 to 1919, translated by Irene Enns Kroeker and Marie Enns, had previously been published in *Historical Sketches*, pages 465-593.

The journal by Cornelius T. Friesen, Osterwick, Chortitzer Waisenman, covers the all important 1926/27 period when conservative Mennonites were being "exiled" from Manitoba.

A carefully written and documented introduction to this wealth of new primary material is the most significant aspect of this work. In this section, Royden reviews each of the journals explaining some of their salient features.

Royden also provides several important reasons for studying journals often known as the "poor stuff" of history (page 1). Firstly, the daily diary "turns the hidden contours of household and community 'inside out'" (page 1). Secondly,

it offers "a window on the writer's mindset and world view" (page 3).

Thirdly, a study of such journals probes the very origin and evolution of literacy among Mennonites which is traced historically to the Reformation Anabaptists and continued thereafter out of necessity. Mennonites used literacy "to create a literary corpus that served to energize and direct a highly self-conscious, migrating people" (pages 5-6). Presumably when many Mennonites were turned away from this literary legacy in favour of the religious culture of American Fundamentalism in the 1930s and 40s, it signalled a departure from "the faith of the fathers" and the truths of the Gospels.

Fourthly, like other rural, middle-class, "household producers", Mennonites wrote journals to order their lives. "They wrote to record their everyday lives, quotidian drudgery to some, miracles of life and community for others" (page 7).

Rural household journals were not the individualistic, introspective, self-absorbed acclamations of the pietist. Rather they carefully documented activities of the kinship circle, village and Gemeinde, the three paradigms of the happy, carefree world of these rural communitarians, documenting the constants in their life world.

These journals were documents about groups and communities, recording the common "economic strength of the household" (page 9), yields, prices, costs, and "offering records of those patterns of life that were most important to the domestic unit: weather, seasonal changes, community networks, work routine, and most important, household relationships" (page 11).

Finally, the diary offered "its authors to secure a measure of control over their lives by recording the events of the household and noting its social links with the wider community" (page 13). "To know what they chose to record is also to know something of their culture, that is, the symbols and systems of meaning constructed by ordinary people in their everyday lives to make sense of life, and particularly to make sense of changes and inconsistencies of life" (page 20).

Obviously a work of the magnitude of *From the Inside Out* will have some errors, which I mention here only with great hesitation. Cornelius Loewen (1827-93) married Katharina Thiessen Barkman, Steinbach, not Katharina Rempel Barkman (page 22). Gerhard Willms, Minnesota, was the husband of Klaas R. Reimer's (1837-1906), mother's sister, and not the uncle of his first wife (page 135). Cornelius L. Plett lived in Steinbach/Friedensfeld by the time of the Peter R. Dueck diary extracts from 1910 and not Blumenhof, having moved circa 1906. Thus, in fact, he was a neighbour, living

a mile east of the Peter R. Dueck farm. Chortitzer Waisenman Cornelius T. Friesen (1860-1929) was the father of Aeltester Martin C. Friesen, not his associate, an important connection critical to understanding the journal references. All things considered these are not serious considering the hundreds of personages and relationships which need to be tracked and ordered for a true understanding of the significance of these diaries to their authors and communities.

Unfortunately there were numerous journals and diaries of the East Reserve which could not be included in *From the Inside Out*. Hopefully Royden will be able to publish them in another volume but restricted to the East Reserve. *From the Inside Out* will help local historians to recognize the value of many journals as yet undiscovered and to realize and mine their great intrinsic worth.

Not only is *From the Inside Out* of immense importance to the history and culture of Hanover Steinbach, but it can proudly take its place amongst similar works such as *The Diary of Jakob D. Epp* edited and published by historian Harvey Dyck, signalling that Mennonites are finally realizing the great literary legacy left to them by their ancestors, a legacy which has lain dormant for far too long.

I recall only too well, twenty some years ago when I started my historical research, how historians with a filio-pietistic agenda endeavoured to promote the mythology that conservative Mennonites were illiterate and impoverished by virtue of their genetic and spiritual heritage. How ironic, that books such as *From the Inside Out* are now proving that the very opposite is true.

Dr. Loewen is to be congratulated for another important and significant contribution to our culture and historical ethos. This is a book which all local churches, schools and family historians need to have in their libraries.

Ben S. Martens, *A Genealogy of John S. and Katherina Martens 1909 - 1990* (630 Campbell St., Winnipeg, Man., R3N 1C3, 1990), 120 pages.

The Martens genealogy and family history was the inspiration of the late Mrs. Jessie (Martens) Friesen. Ben Martens, the son of John S. and Katherina and sister to Jessie, is solely responsible for the profile writing of my grandparents, their family and neighbours. The writings are interspersed with poems written by Chrisy Martens, granddaughter of Ben Martens.

The book traces the history of John S. and Katherina Martens back to Imperial Russia and lists the family with accompanying pictures to the present.

Ben Martens is able to capture with that earthy touch of his the experiences of the forbears so that the reader can vicariously comprehend living in the past. At times he is ruthlessly honest and candid about incidents that are "troublesome and painful." He focuses chiefly on the John S. and Katharina Martens profiles, but pays homage to other individuals, relatives and neighbours, who played an important role in their lives.

The genealogy, by the author's own admission, is not a well researched biography. It is based partly on the oral tradition; much of the writing is from his own memory and his perception of that time period.

The dauntless spirit of this courageous couple, John S. and Katherina, shines through the book. It demonstrates their work ethic and their faith in the God of their fathers.

This genealogy is of particular interest to the family and I'm sure will be for the coming generations. Review by Frieda Martens, Winnipeg.

See also Ben Martens, "Profile of Jakob and Katharina Martens," *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 106-9.

Jake Peters and Elmer Heinrichs, editors, *Dit Sie Jant Sied: The Johann & Susana Loeppky/Loeppky Family 1831-1998* (Rosenort, 1999), 379 pages.

The book essentially describes the Canadian experience of the house of Johann Loeppky. However, in the first chapter we acknowledge that our roots go back to Russia, Prussia, the Netherlands, and other countries, and that our Christian faith story was shaped by the Anabaptist movements of the 16th century, and subsequent persecution. Many family stories acknowledge a strong faith in God, and the support of the church community.

The earliest Loeppky ancestor listed is Johann Loeppky (b. 1745) who came to Russia from Prussia in 1788-89 to the Chortitz Colony.

There is some speculation about earlier ancestors, but more research is needed to verify this information. Of special significance is the name Johann. We found that John Michael Loeppky (b. 1974), the son of John and Linda Loeppky, is Johann IX. This means that for the past nine generations a direct descendant Johann Loeppky family has had a son named Johann. Talk about a family legacy!

After spending some 40 years in the Chortitz Colony, the house of Johann moved to the Berghthal Colony, a new daughter colony, and settled in the village of Schönfeld. Forty years later, the Loeppky family joined the exodus to Canada, BGB A52.

The Canadian story begins with five Loeppky siblings, the children of the Johann and Eva Glockman Loeppky: Jacob, Johann, Heinrich, Abraham and Anna. Their elderly mother Eva, now Gerhard Wall's widow, also joined the family. All settled in the Strassberg/Shantzenberg area, south of Niverville, on the East Reserve. Later, Jacob, Heinrich and Abraham and their families moved to the West Reserve.

Our book picks up the story of one Loeppky sibling, Johann G. Loeppky and his wife Susana, nee Toews, and their ten children, BGB B126.

## *From the Inside Out*



***The Rural Worlds  
of Mennonite Diarists, 1863 to 1929***  
by Royden Loewen

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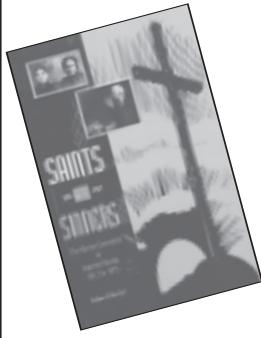
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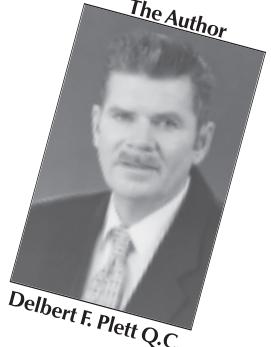
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*Johann T. Loepky (1857-1913), Strassburg, E.R.*  
Photo courtesy of Dit Sied Jant Sied, page 61.

[Susanna was a sister to Peter Toews (1839-1914), Berghal, E.R., second Reeve of the R.M. of Hanover, see *Preservings*, Part Two, page 69. This is helpful in explaining the relative prominence of the Loepky clan in Hanover Steinbach.]

The story unfolds in three areas as the children marry and start their own households. Six remain in the East Reserve: Helena, Johann, Susanna, Abram, Peter, and Anna; three go to the West Reserve: Jacob, Diedrich, and Maria; and Eva moved to Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

The book is organized by family chapters, one for each of Johann and Susanna's children. Each chapter begins with an attractive title page featuring an oval-framed picture of the family member, a Scripture verse as a motto, and a listing of his or her children and their spouses. You will immediately be drawn in by the pictures. Seven hundred pictures were used to create a multi-generational portrait of the clan.

We were pleased to find and publish some rare pictures. I have heard responses to the pictures such as, "Oh, I didn't know we were related. He was my teacher." "I have never seen that picture before." "Why are some of the pictures so dark?" I would like to publicly thank all descendants who shared their pictures. It is a wonderful picture book.

After looking at the pictures, readers will discover fascinating life-stories about family members. The plan was to feature older generations (2, 3, 4), and to provide shorter notes for generation five families. There are stories about motherly love, sacrificial births, unexpected death, bitter disappointment, deserving achievements, and many others. The stories will refresh memories, arouse curiosity, generate pride, and create anxiety. They will do all that, and more. We are pleased that so many family members shared their life-stories.

Let me share a few excerpts from the life-



*Anna Dueck Loepky (1882-1971), Strassburg, E.R.*  
Photo courtesy of Dit Sied Jant Sied, page 62.

stories to give you a sample of family experiences.

1. p. 12 --- Jacob L. Friesen, as a youth, remembers his grandfather, Johann, as a good story teller.

2. p. 31 --- Jacob L. Kehler moved to Paraguay in 1948. His wife passed away while enroute to the Berghal Colony. Son Peter describes his father's circumstances.

3. p. 71 --- Elizabeth (Kliewer) Peters recalls how her mother, nee Anna D. Loepky, handled childcare in her day.

4. p. 188--Anne Penner was a long time missionary in India. Her niece describes her character as follows.

5. p. 251--Eva Loepky, as a young widow, wished to marry Jacob J. Friesen from Mt. Lake, Minnesota. She wanted Jacob to obtain consent from his parents and siblings. Here is part of that letter (translated into English).

6. p. 337--Barbara (Hiebert) Simmons, a descendant of Peter T. Leppky, characterizes the essence of being a Leppky with a few key points.

Low German rhymes and traditional Mennonite food recipes are scattered throughout the book as "quality" fillers. Vereniki, portselkje, and borscht are just some of the family favourites.

My aunt compared reading and looking at this book to eating sunflower seeds. Once you get started it is difficult to quit. It is, indeed, a great story book!

As noted in the preface, our hope is that this heritage book will enable us to take pride in our family roots, and to cherish the stories nurtured by faith and practice. We dedicated *Dit Sied Yant Sied* to our ancestors who have left us a rich legacy. It is our responsibility, as descendants, to be faithful stewards of the past and the future.

**By Dr. Jake L. Peters, Winnipeg, Manitoba**

#### Editor's Note:

According to the 1802 Feuerstellen Listen (B. H. Unruh, page 248), Feuerstelle 91 (Wirtschaft) of Martien Wiebe in Schönhorst, Chortitz Colony, was first given over to Peter Siemens who in turn gave it over to Johann Lüpke. According to the 1802 Feuerstellen Listen (B. H. Unruh, page 251), Johann Lüpke died on Feuerstelle 231 in the village of Insel Chortitz, possibly at the home of son Johann Loepky. This type of information combats the mythology which historians of the Pietist Molotschna triumphalist school have attempted to create that the Bergthalers and other 1870s Manitoba immigrants were from the landless classes.

Clint Toews, *In Search of My Father* (Horizon Books: Camp Hill, Pennsylvania, 1999), softcover, 195 pages, \$17.95.

For a so-called "conservative" church which was highly suspicious of individualist art, the Steinbach Kleine Gemeinde has in recent decades produced an extraordinary number of accomplished poets and novelists. They include Patrick, the son of Frank and Margaret Friesen; Al, son of P. J. B. and Elisabeth Reimer; the sisters Marj and Miriam, daughters of Melvin and Elvira Toews; Grant, the son of Ed and Anne Loewen; Faith, the daughter of Ben and Helen Eidse; Lynette D'anna (Dueck), daughter of teacher Ben D. Dueck, and probably more young writers who are not known to me. Nor should the editor of this journal, Delbert Plett, writer of *Sarah's Prairie*, be omitted.

It was not entirely a surprise, therefore, to learn that Clint Toews, the son of Ben P. and Peggy Toews (and a cousin, on his mother's side, to Patrick Friesen), has come out with a book, entitled *In Search of My Father*. Clint's book is neither fiction nor poetry, though it contains both. It is, rather, a spiritual autobiography, in which the author, now in his mid-50s, gives an account of his tortuous life's journey, and tries to inspire his readers to a deeper faith.

This confessional form of writing enjoys great popularity now, with Oprah Winfrey promoting such books in the secular realm, and a variety of Christian TV hosts doing the same in their sphere of influence. According to the *Carillon News*, Clint and his son Burke appeared on *It's A New Day* to talk about the book.

It was fascinating to read about Clint's growing-up years in Steinbach in the 1950s. For me, as probably for many others, he was something of a legend. A year or so my senior, he amazed me with his athletic ability, flashing wit, and explosive energy. As a teenager he had an uncanny ability to recite Bible verses at unexpected moments. A boy in one of our pick-up football games one Sunday afternoon was knocked to the ground, the grey lining of his new jacket torn. He became tearful. "And he wept in sackcloth and ashes," Clint

declaimed. We all laughed, rather cruelly. Clint was taking liberties with the text, but it sounded Biblical.

In *In Search of My Father* there are still traces of Clint's crazy humour. As a young boy he tried to convince his widowed mother not to give money to a missionary to the lepers in Africa. "Is a leper like a leprechaun?" Clint asked his mom. And then wanted to know if "Mr. Reamer," a carpenter who had accidentally sawed some of his fingers off, was a leper. Anyone who knows Clint will recognize his playful, creative irreverence.

Unfortunately, Clint tones down that old irreverence in his book, declaring that his wit has served to isolate him from honest and caring communication with those around him. That may be true, but it would be a shame if he renounced this talent entirely. Whatever harm it may have done, it served the vital function of revealing pretentiousness in a community tempted to take itself far too seriously. Surely today's ever-smiling *It's A New Day*-style of Christian can benefit from pretense-puncturing every bit as much as the earnest Mennonites of 1950s Steinbach.

It is sad, too, that Clint also turns his back on his Mennonite origins. It is only when telling of his grandfather Sawatzky that he mentions Mennonites at all, and then only to illustrate their hypocrisy and legalism. (He tells a chilling story about a local storekeeper's refusal to give Mr. Sawatzky oranges on credit when his wife was sick.) Although he uses the real names of his family members, other characters are given names like "Barkwell," or "Hill," or "Parson." Steinbach readers will recognize that "Simon Lafont" is based on "Gumshoe Jake" Reimer. It is understandable that some names are changed to protect the innocent, but why mask their Mennonite-ness?

And how do you find your father if you ignore his ethnicity and faith tradition? Clint is actually known as a singer at Mennonite commemorative events, including, if I'm not mistaken, the unveiling of the monument honouring Steinbach's original pioneers. There are many individuals to whom he gives honour in this book; why not his father's antecedents?

*In Search of My Father* takes the form of a series of turning-point stories in Clint's life, from the death of his beloved father when he was six, to the hard-won harmony with his wife and children in later life. When he leaves his compelling narrative and moves into commentary, as he often does, he tends to get tangled up in self-castigation: "My heart was so selfish, so deceived, that all others became a blur as I passed them in my reckless rush to save myself." He takes the responsibility for damaging the relationship with his mother when he was a teen-ager, and then takes it again as an adult when there is a rift between himself and his son. He can't win. Sometimes it seems as if he doubts whether the theology of unconditional love which undergirds his book really applies to himself.

The dominant image in this book is that of the "father-heart" of God, reflected in the faith-

ful, nurturing energy that ideal fathers pass on to their sons. That is very good, and right for our time of absentee fathers. Too bad there wasn't more room, though, for talking about God's mother-heart. God may be ever the same, but our understanding of him changes, and there is a crying need today for that understanding to include his "female" dimension.

Like the man himself, Clint's prose is athletic, charged up, entertaining. It is to be hoped that he will follow up with another book, soon. Personally, I would welcome more irreverent story-telling and less spiritual instruction. Except that I do hope to find out, one day, whether a leper is like a leprechaun, after all.

#### Review by Ralph Friesen

Abraham H. and Helena Giesbrecht, editors, *Stammbaum der Familie des Abraham und Margaretha Giesbrecht* (Loma Plata, 1999), 109 pages,

I was pleased recently when Jake Giesbrecht, William Avenue, Steinbach, Manitoba, lent me his copy of this book. It is similar in scope to the *Abraham F. Hiebert* book reviewed in the last issue of *Preservings*, No. 14, page 139, namely, spiral bound, one photograph for each section and no history beyond dates. Nevertheless, books such as these and the *Reise-Tagebuch* of delegate Bernhard Toews, *Preservings*, No. 13, 133-4, do manifest the beginning of a serious literary corpus, which if the Manitoba experience can serve as any guide, will grow, as a relatively recent settlement such as Menno Colony, established in 1927, evolves beyond the strictures of the frontier (pioneering) experience, into full bloom, as a spiritual and cultural mecca for conservative Mennonitism.

Although the title of the book traces the family ancestry to Abraham Giesbrecht (1803-58) and Margaretha Bergen (1813-67), Heuboden, Berghthal Colony, Imperial Russia, in actual fact it lists the descendants of their son Wilhelm Giesbrecht (1843-1924) and Elisabeth Lempke (1844-1919), Rosenthal, E.R., Manitoba, BGB B291. It appears that most of their children emigrated to Paraguay from Hanover Steinbach in 1926/7.

The family is well documented in the *Berghthal Gemeindebuch* and *Working Papers*. Wilhelm Giesbrecht (1843-1924) was the son of Abraham Giesbrecht (1803-58), BGB A110, who was a brother to Wilhelm BGB A124, Jakob BGB A109 and Franz Giesbrecht BGB A117a. These brothers are all listed in Heuboden, Berghthal Colony in the 1858 census. They were the sons of Wilhelm Giesbrecht (b. 1767) and Maria (b. 1767), who had lived in Schönhorst and later Nieder-Chortitz.

The Wilhelm Giesbrecht family is listed as owning Wirtschaft 12, Schönhorst, Chortitz, together with brother Jakob (1764), age 30, while another brother David Giesbrecht (b. 1750) is listed as owning Wirtschaft 4, in the 1795 Revisions-Liste (census), B. H. Unruh, page 241. Henry Schapansky has written that they may be the sons of another Wilhelm



Wilhelm Giesbrecht (1843-1924) and Elisabeth Lempke (1844-1910). She was the daughter of Abram Lempke and Elisabeth Dyck. Photo courtesy of Stammbaum.... Giesbrecht, page 2.

Giesbrecht, but provides no further detail.

Henry Schapansky has noted that according to the 1802 list David's widow married Johann Epp, who also got the Wirtschaft (Unruh, page 241), and Wilhelm got his Wirtschaft from his brother Jakob (Unruh, page 248) who then moved to Nieder-Chortitz. Jakob had received a second Wirtschaft, the homestead of Daniel Fast who had died prior to 1795. Actually it seems that "Jakob gave the Daniel Fast Wirtschaft to Wilhelm, not his original one," Henry Schapansky to Plett, September 20, 1999.

Wilhelm Giesbrecht is listed in 1814 Revisions as the owner of Wirtschaft 10, with 4 horses, 6 cattle, 3 swine, 1 wagon and 1 spinning wheel (Unruh, page 281).

According to the emigration records published in B. H. Unruh, page 295, Jakob Giesbrecht, Neuteicherwald, Prussia, with five children and David Giesbrecht, born 1750, Neuteich, Prussia, with one daughter, emigrated to Schönhorst, Chortitz Colony, in 1788. The family was quite prominent as David was elected as a minister in 1789.

Some of the family I recognized that are living in the Steinbach area included Willie G. Friesen, builder/contractor, Mitchell.

The family history committee is to be congratulated for a well done genealogy book. It will serve as a bridge for later generations, when they will want to compile a through interpretative family history.

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Bergen, David. *See the Child* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1999) 234 pp.

In his latest novel, David Bergen continues to explore the ambiguities and strange contradictions of love and longing. The narrative line of the novel traces some half-decade in the life of Paul Unger, a middle-aged merchant and beekeeper in Southeastern Manitoba. His story is told as the story of his relationships: with his son, wife, daughter, grandson, grandson's mother, his friends and neighbours.

We experience his life as a fabric woven of these various threads, experiencing with him the fabric's tensions, tears and serendipitous beauty. It is not a facile beauty. We are permitted to know his pain from his son's betrayal, his father-guilt for his son's and his own errors, his estrangement and isolation from his wife of many years, his finding and losing of a

grandson's presence, the ache that arises from his love for his daughter and his insight that her choice of husband is not wise, his bewilderment at some of the turns his life takes. In all of this, however, Bergen gives us the grace to love this imperfect man who knows the holowness of grief, the "jumble of midnight thoughts", the "slipperiness of love".

Reading can yield such diverse harvests. Sometimes one reads for the simple relief of distraction, amusement. Other reading is focussed on the acquisition of specific information or insight. Bergen's novel had me stopping often to contemplate something one of his characters said or experienced and to reflect on my own life, remembering scenes with my children, my grandchild, from my (former) marriage, from other relationships with family and friends. A wonderful thing about fiction such as *See the Child* is that it permits us in imagination to explore new feelings, experiences and perspectives, and through such imagination to uncover in our own lives corners we had not known, layers only dimly seen. While that is my dominant experience of his novel, along the way it also entertained me and provided information, for example on beekeeping and bees, that was in itself fascinating.

One other thing pleases me about the novel. For my entire childhood and adolescence, I encountered very little fiction set in the Southern Manitoba locale in which I was born and raised. The books of Scott Young about high school hockey in Winnipeg were as close as any came. It continues to be a fresh pleasure to me each time I encounter a novel set in this southern Manitoba world, to find its towns and countryside revealed on the page. I'm amused by this reaction on my part. It seems somewhat ironic to look to fiction to give a locality greater reality and substance, and one can hardly help but give a nodding acknowledgement to the sense of inferiority that seeks such confirmation. Nevertheless, it is a joy that will not be entirely dismissed. So, I delight in finding La Broquerie, St. Pierre and Furst (surely a fictional version of Steinbach) in this novel and place it fondly on my shelf with Bergen's other works and those of Armin Wiebe, Sandra Birdsell, David Elias and others in whose writing this Southern Manitoba world now appears.

*See the Child* is David Bergen's third book after a collection of short stories, *Sitting Opposite My Brother*, 1993, and an earlier novel, *A Year of Lesser*, 1996. Bergen's earlier works were well-regarded, and I expect this novel will only enhance his reputation for insightful, sensually-rich and engaging writing.

Reviewed by Edgar H. Schmidt, Ottawa. He is a lawyer, whose primary occupation presently is drafting legislation. His roots are from Arnaud, Manitoba.

## "Road to Freedom" book to be published in 2000

"Road to Freedom": by Harry Loewen, 4835 Parkridge Drive, Kelowna, B. C., Canada, V1W 3A1.

In 1998 post-Second World War Mennonite immigrants celebrated their 50th anniversary in Canada. For the many that joined in the celebrations in Steinbach and Winnipeg, it was a time of reflection and remembrance of a pivotal period in the lives of Russian Mennonites: see Wanda Friesen Andres and Nettie Loewen Dueck, "50 Year Freedom Jubilee Celebration," in *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 47-48.

The organizing committee of the "50 Year Freedom Jubilee," as it was called, commissioned the production of a book to commemorate this unique chapter in Mennonite history. Entitled, "Road to Freedom: Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering," the book will chronicle in story form many of the experiences endured by individuals and families in this group of immigrants. It will deal with the Stalinist terror, the arrests and exiles in the early Communist period, the trek to the West in 1943, the repatriation of some 23,000 Mennonites to the Soviet Union, and the work of MCC in assisting refugees in their search for a new homeland in Canada, South America and Germany.

People responded enthusiastically to our call for stories and photos. A trip to Germany last September to interview Mennonites from Russia contributed stories to the collection as well. In the end we received more stories than we could use. As we announced earlier, the material we cannot use will be deposited in the Winnipeg archives.

The manuscript is now completed and includes the following ten chapters: Mennonites in Imperial Russia and in the Soviet Union; Escape from the land of terror; "We don't want to go back to Russia"; Mennonites who served in the army; From the Red Star to the Southern Cross; Polish and West-Prussian Mennonites; "Umsiedler" in Germany tell their stories; Opportunities in the new country; Essays and reflections. Epilogue: Reflections on Mennonite suffering.

The book committee in Winnipeg, consisting of Ken Reddig, Abe Dueck, Jake Wiebe, Nettie Dueck and Wanda Andres, hoped to release the book in time for Christmas 1999. It is now scheduled to appear in early spring 2000. We hope this will not inconvenience the many who look forward to the publication of this book.

The committee plans a book launch to be held in Winnipeg. Watch for announcement of details. Many have already taken advantage of the pre-publication price of \$35.00 per book, a saving of five dollars. Readers still wishing to avail themselves of this price, may write to Jakob R. Wiebe, 302-1820 Henderson Hwy., Winnipeg, MB R2G 1PZ.

The production of "Road to Freedom" is a labour of love on the part of all concerned. We believe that the Mennonite story of suffering and journey to freedom must not be forgotten. Our children and grandchildren need to know what their elders have experienced in difficult times and how God has led them to a new land of opportunities.



Some of the temporary documents refugees after the Second World War needed to enter Canada. One is the "Temporary Travel Document in lieu of passport for stateless persons and persons of undetermined nationality," belonging to Harry Loewen and Gertrude Penner. The other is an "Embarcation Card." Loewen sailed to Canada on May 5, 1948, and Penner in September of the same year. Courtesy of H. Loewen.

Edith Warkentin, compiler, *John G. Warkentin Family* (Box 422, Cartwright, Manitoba, R0K 0L0, 1999), 76 pages. \$7.00 plus \$3.00 postage and handling, available from the compiler.

This book is mainly a genealogy of the descendants of Johann G. Warkentin (1867-1947) and Helena Dueck (1875-1908) and Aganetha Penner Dueck (1882-1934), second marriage, who farmed in Greenland, Manitoba, pages 1-63. The famous pioneer doctor Isaac L. Warkentin was an uncle to Johann G.

"Memories" are included for their children, pages 64-74, and obituaries of the parents, page 75. A sketch of a farmyard--presumably belonging the Johann G. Warkentin, although this is not stated, enlivens the presentation.

An ancestor chart, on the title page, summarizes the genealogy of family patriarch Johann G. Warkentin, tracing the family back to the well-to-do Vollwirt, Martin Warkentin (1764-1853), one of the pioneers in Blumstein, Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia.

The descendants of the Greenland Warkentins have since spread and can now be found in various parts of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia.

Family histories and identities, like most human endeavours, often have modest beginnings. This compilation by Edith Warkentin represents a brave beginning in documenting the history of one of the more significant pioneer families of southeastern Manitoba.

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Stoesz, Edgar and Stackley, Muriel T., *Garden in the Wilderness, Mennonite Communities in the Paraguayan Chaco, 1927-1997* (Winnipeg, Man.: CMBC Publications, 1999), i-xiii + 219 pages. \$32.00 plus postage. The book can be ordered from CMBC, (204)888-8761.

What motivated two authors, Edgar Stoesz, long-time MCC director in Paraguay, and Muriel Stackley, pastor and former editor of *The Mennonite* to write this book? For Stoesz it was the need for an update of the earlier account by J. Winfield Fretz, *Pilgrims in Paraguay*. For Stackley it was the endeavour to answer the question of change in the Paraguayan Chaco in the last 70 years. Add to that the desire to honour the refugees whose story is being told here.

Divided into three main parts, the first section begins the story with a brief history of the country of Paraguay. Part II introduces the reader to the main groups of the Chaco, telling the story around some of the important characters on the stage. Thus in chapter 2 it is the role of the Paraguayan foreign minister Eusebio Ayala, who readies his country and the parliament for the coming of the Canadian Mennonites. In chapter 3 we meet Aeltester Martin C. Friesen, the man who guided the Canadian Mennonites to Paraguay and then shepherded them through untold hardships, persuading his people "that with God's grace the Chaco could become 'home'" (p. 36). Chapter 4 identifies Heinrich Duerksen, the long-time very capable

Oberschultze in the colony of Fernheim, He came with the major migration from Russia prior to WW II, a journey that led through Germany and lasted six months

Chapter 5 tells the story of the Lengua Indians, and the beginning of a cordial growing relationship with the Mennonite immigrants, an interchange and cooperative existence which has not been equalled anywhere else in the world. The significant person in this chapter is Sepe Lhama, one of the first baptismal candidates who became a long-time leader in the Lengua Mennonite Church in Paraguay. Chapter 8 identifies two further aboriginal, Esther and Andreas Loewen, second generation Nivacli (Chulupi) Mennonite Christians, who gave their lives teaching and parenting the young women attending the boarding school in Yalva Sanga, the Indian settlement patterned after the Mennonite colonies.

In chapter 6 the authors identify Maria

Wiens Eitzen, a young girl with the group from Siberia who escaped the Russian terror by crossing the frozen Amur River into China. That started a journey which lasted 17 months, till they arrived in Fernheim, and established the villages of Blumenort, Orloff, Karlsruhe, and Schoenau. Married to Jakob Eitzen in China while en route, Maria and her husband lived together for 63 years, raising 10 children and proving to be a model for the community.

The remaining person to be identified in Part II is Peter Derksen, long-time community leader and Oberschultze of Neuland Colony, who came to Paraguay with his family after WW II had ended. His family's sojourn saw them leaving the Ukraine with the retreating German Army. Peter had to serve in the German army when they arrived in Germany. Many were the harried experiences through which they went, escaping from the refugee camp in Germany, finally leaving Muenchen

Leslie R. Plett, *Family Register of the descendants of Our grandparents Abraham L. and Gertrude (Koop) Plett - #14* (923 Midridge Dr. S.E., Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2X 1H5, 1999), 738 pages.

The publishing of the Abraham L. Plett book, including a little less than 6000 descendants, is a remarkable accomplishment by Mr. Leslie R. Plett of Calgary.

This 738 page book includes notes from the 1945 Plett reunion and Mr. Del Plett's 60 page article on Abraham and Gertrude Plett. This articles is filled with delightful and informative stories. The A.L. Plett's farmyard pages 57-60 is vividly described and a highlight of this book. When reading the description of the farmyard one is transported back in time and can almost hear children laughing, the stomping of the horses hooves, smell the ripening fruit and taste the tangy pickles. The map of the farmyard is a superb visual aid.

The genealogy that follows in the book is interspersed with short biographies on the A.L. Plett children as well as some short write-ups of a few other families that contributed.

606 pages of Plett genealogy and yet an amazing number of non-Mennonite last names show up such as Arstill, Dheilly, Ferguson, Skjaerlund, Whitney only to name a few. The family tree has branched out from Landmark and Blumenort to places such as California, Nevada, Oregon, Mexico, Belize and Jerusalem. I found a variety of occupations listed such as gold-miners, florists, psychologists, computer programmers, doctors and pilots.

Tidbits of information such as letters, poems and a crossword puzzle are tucked away between family lines. The article on Plett health history by Judy Heynsbroek was fascinating. 38 pages of genealogical indexing with a chart to help you discover how closely related you are to someone you locate in the book can make for an interesting evening with your immediate family. The family name game is one that Mennonites love to play so don't miss out.

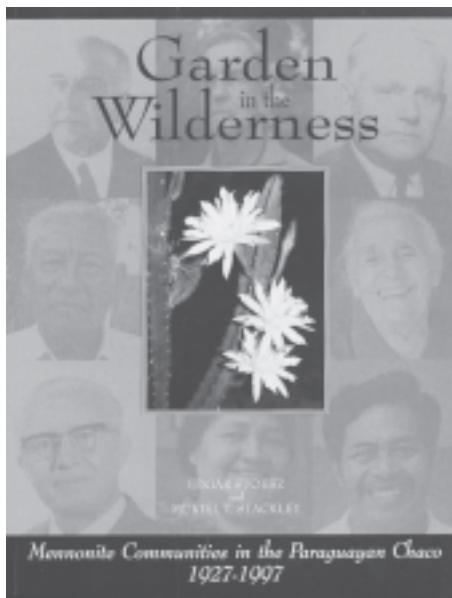
I would encourage anyone who has Plett roots to buy the book and peruse it through the winter. You might be amazed at who your *frindschaft* is - I was!

**Reviewed by Lorilee Scharfenberg, married to Arlin Leroy Plett Scharfenberg, Rosenort, Manitoba, 14.2.5.4.1.**

A limited number of copies of the Abraham L. Plett book are still available from the author at \$39.00 each.



Sketch of Abraham L. Plett (1859-1934), large-scale Blumenhof, Farmer. Drawing by artist Henry P. Fehr, Steinbach, Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Plett Picture Book, page 97. For those interested in the Plett family the Plett Picture Book is available from Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, at \$10.00 plus \$3.00 postage and handling. Either one of these Plett books would be an ideal Christmas book which your children would always treasure.



The cover of *Garden in the Wilderness* with background photographs of key figures in the Paraguayan Mennonite story framed by a coloured photograph of a cactus in bloom, evocative of the community's history.

for Bremerhaven to join the large group of 2303, which sailed for Paraguay on the "Vollendam". Settling in Neuland was difficult, as were most of the Paraguayan beginnings, but in the end Derksen would say: "I am deeply grateful for how God has led us. I am not saddened that it was necessary for us to leave our old community. What saddens me deeply is the hardships many had to endure. The sacrifices of our small Mennonite community will be revealed only in eternity." (p. 78).

Part III, entitled "Building Community in the Wilderness", tells the story of the economic development, the endeavors to introduce health care and education and the outstanding successes achieved. The infrastructure--transportation and communication has progressed well, and religiously, the churches have not only ministered to their own needs, but have reached out to their Indian neighbours and established joint mission ventures with them. And the governance within the colonies has grown into an acceptable rapprochement between church and the secular colony structure, with the church serving as the colony conscience, but being expected not to interfere in the civic affairs.

The story of Mennonites in Russia saw its beginnings from very difficult pioneer years to the development of communities which became outstanding models for others to follow as the generations went by. In Paraguay that change also came about: from want to plenty, from almost unbearable conditions to economic prosperity, to state-of-the-art infrastructure, education given highest priority, and health needs met in the best of hospitals. But whereas in Russia this development took several generations, in Paraguay it happened in one generation.

The story told is enhanced by many very

appropriate photos, maps and charts. A commendable feature is the side-bars on many of the pages, which either highlight something in the text, or summarize the item discussed with a quote (serving almost as a footnote).

A bibliography gives the reader the sources which can be consulted for further information, and an index makes the book a ready reference for the inquisitive mind.

Finally, a most exciting feature is the front cover. Portraying a beautiful cactus, surrounded by the recessed portraits of the main characters of Section II, it introduces the reader to the subject matter, and illustrates the title at the same time. Writers, publishers and artists deserve a very sincere word of appreciation for a superb book!

Pick up the book and enjoy many hours of wholesome and fascinating adventure!

**Book Review** by Henry Poettcker, Winnipeg, Manitoba, former President of Canadian Mennonite Bible College (1959-78) and President of Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana (1978-90).

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Reuben Epp, *Dit Un Jant opp Plautdietsch* (The Reader's Press, Hillsboro, Kansas, 1999), 64 pages, US \$9.95. Illustrations by Mike Unger.

This is the third book on Plautdietsch by Reuben Epp to be published by The Reader's Press. Our Low German readership owes this publisher a vote of thanks.

The first books dealt with the language itself. This new volume gives Epp a chance to show that the orthography he proposed in *The Spelling of Low German & Plautdietsch* will make the reading of our dialect easier. It is important that we encourage a standard spelling if we wish speakers of *Plautdietsch* to become readers as well. Because most of us *Plautdietsche* are familiar with written High German, his use of that orthography as base for his Low German writing seems to make the readings more accessible.

The collection includes short stories, proverbial sayings, and poems. Some were originally in Plautdietsch, mostly from Epp himself; others are translated from High German or even English. This is an interesting step in widening the literature available to *Plautdietsche* readers. Hopefully it will encourage others to translate work into the language, so that our readership becomes more deeply entrenched.

There does not seem to be a connecting theme in the choice of short stories. Mostly they are humorous. There is the broad irony that is so basic to our Mennonite sense of humour: "I can't explain vacuum to you, but I've got it right here--in my head". Or what about the politician who was elected when he rose to ask about his opponent: "Kjan ji dan nich een jraatra Oss?" (Can't you think of a bigger ox for such a position?) - and so they elected him! Some of us are now hoping to see Epp publish more stories that go beyond that broad humour that people seem to expect from *Plautdietsch* to

show us a deeper emotional experience. His previous *Merjalles, stallt dee Laump em Fensta* comes to mind. It is hard to tell if the longest story, "Saria" by Irmgard Epp, with its strange echoes of *Arsenic and Old Lace*, meets this need.

The proverbial sayings are to me the most interesting feature of this collection. It is these sayings that produce our idioms, and differentiate us from the English literary milieu in which most of us move and our intellectual being. Nothing better encapsulates our distilled experience than these sayings which pass on old wisdom to new generations. Who needs "spare the rod and spoil the child" when you have "Lat de leew Gott Junges wausse, lat hee uk Kjneppels wausse." (Where the good God permits boys to flourish, he also provides cudgels.) Though what a pale translation "cudgel" is for "Kjneppel" - but that is what gives our *Muttasproak* its inimitable resonance!

The poetry section brings us a wide spectrum of translated writers as well as Epp's own verse. Much of his work had previously been published in *Plautdietsche Schriftsteckja*, and I'm not sure why he chose to repeat them here. To me the most interesting poem is "De Brügg" written by Hein Deir in "oldenburgschet Plaut". Epp says about this poem that as it did not translate well, and its deep thought is not hard for us to understand in the dialect, so he left it in the original. He is right, and I can only hope that much more of this will be done in his future books. It will widen our scope, and deepen our appreciation of the immense treasure we have in all the Low German forms of expression.

The credits speak of this as a "First Edition" which suggest there are more to come. I hope so. Epp is preserving our particular way of seeing this world of ours.

**Book Review** by Wilmer Penner, Box 1305, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0

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Ernest Braun, *Braun: A Gnadenfeld Heritage* (Steinbach, 1999), 436 pages. \$93.00.

Congratulations to Ernest Braun upon the completion of this monumental volume, detailing the origin and descendants of Jacob Braun (b. 1826) and Katherina Funk (b. 1827). While this book complements the two earlier editions, the first compiled by brothers A. A. Braun and P. A. Braun in 1971, and the second compiled by H. J. Braun in 1995, it is nevertheless a work on its own in that it provides more information and over 400 photographs.

The hardcover volume features an attractive design in gold foil providing title, a tree emblem, and the names of the patriarchal couple as well as the logo of the East Reserve 125th Celebration Committee. In place of an index, the Table of Contents has been expanded to provide easier access to the data in this somewhat intimidating compilation.

In addition to the historical background provided for the ancestral names Braun and Funk, the book includes four original articles. The first three detail the migrations of the family in

1874-5, the emigration to Paraguay in 1926 and the second emigration to East Paraguay in 1948 (this one written by Anne Funk, the Low German playwright). The fourth article is an abbreviated and personalized version of the Gnadenfeld articles appearing in Preservings in 1999. Several other articles authored by various members of the family about the voyages to Paraguay both in 1926 and 1948 are included as well as translations of memorabilia: e.g. early school routine and a funeral circular. A series of maps of places/countries of origin completes the work.

The book provides names, birthplace and dates, marriage dates and, where applicable, death dates for well over 10,000 descendants of Jacob and Katherina Braun from Friedrichsthal, Bergthal Colony, Imperial Russia. This family consisted of five children: three sons (Braun), and two daughters, one marrying Jacob Harder, and the other marrying Johan Krahn. For this reason those three are the names that dominate the book, although hundreds of other names surface as well. Of the total 436 pages, 208 are data pages with another 40 plus family group sheets for easier reference. To provide continuity, the numbering system, often problematic in books such as this, has been carried over from the earlier system developed by P. A. Braun in the first edition in 1971.

Each of the five branches of the family comes complete with biography, photograph and family group sheet. These five second-generation families are followed by 39 third-generation families, each also complete with biography, photograph, family group sheet and data about descendants current to 1997. Photographs of a large proportion of fourth generation descendants are included, as are some five and sixth generation pictures. Many families in Grunthal, Steinbach and Niverville will find themselves in this book.

Included in this family tree are several colourful characters, one of which was the eldest son of the Patriarch, Jacob F. Braun, who encouraged his entire family (children and grandchildren) to emigrate to Paraguay in 1926 but after three years in that climate decided to bring his entire family back to Manitoba. He was a raconteur in his own right, having developed a ritual out of taking snuff before embarking on a tale. Another outstanding member of this family was another son of the Patriarch, Johan F. Braun, who almost singlehandedly changed the geography of Grunthal by building the Grunthal Milling Company to the east of the old Main Street to create a new business section. The entrepreneurial spirit that inhabited the father also showed up in his son Peter A. Braun, who is still remembered today for his numerous innovative business ventures, from a trucking concern to pure-bred swine to a cheese factory, all and more in the Grunthal area. Others are notable for their incredible courage, like Jacob H. Harder who as a 78-year-old man pioneered once more in the Chaco of Paraguay, where he could "pray much for the family and the church".

This family history will be a precious keepsake and source of invaluable information for years to come to descendants scattered over much of the Americas. Copies are available at \$93.00 from Henry J. Braun, Box 1192, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, or from the editor Ernest Braun, Box 595, Niverville, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 1E0 or phone 1-(204)-326-4732.

**Reviewed by Walter F. Braun, Sinclair, Manitoba.**

Lucille Friesen, Marlene Fast, Ron Dueck, compilers, "*Great is God's Faithfulness*": A Pictorial History Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the Evangelical Mennonite Church, Kleefeld, Manitoba 1874-1999 (Kleefeld, Manitoba, 1999), 60 pages.

Available from the Kleefeld E.M.C., Box 129, Kleefeld, Manitoba, R0A 0V0, \$12.00 plus postage and handling.

An Historical Sketch briefly introduces the reader to the path that has brought the Kleefeld E.M.C. from its roots in the 16th century Anabaptist movement through the conflict, persecutions and progressive ideas that have been responsible for its development over the years. A time-line also places the various changes and events in the church in relation to those taking place both nationally and globally.

Although primarily a picture book, historical documents, letters and brief anecdotes also help to give the reader an excellent view of the life of the congregation through the decades. Church and family history are blended together in a collection that is both educational and enjoyable.

**Reviewed by Patricia Moule, Kleefeld, Manitoba**

#### New Books on German Settlers in Siberia Including Mennonites

Petr P. Wiebe, editor and compiler, *HEMUbl POCCNR CNENPb ("Germans in Russian Siberia")* (Omsk State Local Historical Museum, 1997), 241 pages.

P. P. Wiebe, editor, *KATAnor 3THOrpa0NHeCKON KONNEkUNN pOCCNNCKNX HeMUeB CO6paHNN OMCKOrO rOCYAApCBeHHOrO NY3eR ("Catalogue of the Ethnographic Collection of the Germans in the Omsk State Local Historical Museum")* (Omsk Museum, 1997), history and index 98 pages, and illustrated list of 495 artifacts with description.

Here are two very recent books on German settlement in West-Siberia. Both books were published by the Omsk Museum.

The first book deals with German settlement in West-Siberia. It was compiled and edited by P. P. Wiebe and consists of 7 chapters by different authors:

Ch. 1. "Formation and Establishment of German Colonies at the End of the 19th and beginning of the 20th Centuries" by P. P. Wiebe; Ch. 2. "German Settlements in the Yenesey



No. 466. A German/Mennonite cradle, as found in the Omsk Museum.

Province" by V.A. Dyatlova; Ch. 3. "German Merchants in the Omsk Priirtish at the Beginning of the 20th Century" by E.L. Zashibina and A.G. Kiselev; Ch. 4. "Religious Communities of Mennonites and Baptists in West-Siberia" by I.V. Cherkazyanova; Ch. 5. "German Pre-Revolutionary Schools in Siberia: Origin and Problem of the Development" by I.V. Cherkazyanova; Ch. 6. "Siberian Germans Under the Conditions of the First World War and the Revolution" by I. V. Nam; and Ch. 7. "German and Austrian Prisoners in Siberia (1914-1917)" by N.V. Grekov.

The settlement of Germans (including Mennonites) in Siberia was rather different than the settlement of Mennonites in Ukraine (New-Russia) at the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries. There it was the result of the invitation of settlers from abroad and was organized under leadership after negotiation of conditions of settlement. Here in Siberia the settlement was connected with the voluntary re-settlement of millions of Russian peasants to Siberia. The privileges negotiated for the settlement in Ukraine did not apply here.

It were generally small groups that ventured out from the crowded areas in Ukraine to look for better settling conditions in Siberia. Some met with disappointment and some even returned "home", back to Ukraine. Others moved on in search of better land. Separate ethnic settlements were not encouraged by the government and settling Russians among German settlers in 1896 resulted in hostile relationships.

To mention just some of the historical detail in the book. The resettlement of Germans in Siberia started in 1890. The first Mennonites appeared in the Omsk and Tyukalinsk regions toward the end of the 1890s and the beginning of the 20th century. According to P. Ran, P. Wiens was establishing himself in Omsk by selling agricultural machinery. One of the Mennonite settlements founded in 1900 by a religious group from Rückenau, Molotschna, Berdyansk region, district Tavrichesk, was Chunayevka (p. 87).

The history of the Germans in Siberia after the Revolution does not seem to be discussed in this book. These settlements were not affected in the same way as those in the Ukraine, which were totally uprooted. Here the settle-



No. 442. A wall panel with verse, reminiscent of German/Mennonite Fraktur art, as found in the Omsk Museum.

ments have remained to this day. Only in the last decades has there been a noticeable emigration, and then again, the emigrants were mostly those who had been forcefully brought to the area from the west during and after the war.

The catalogue contains a history of German settlement in West-Siberia, a history of the Omsk museum and a illustrated catalogue of 494 artifacts in the museum with description.

It would be worthwhile to have these books translated.

**Reviewed by Victor Janzen, Steinbach, Manitoba.**

Jack Thiessen, *Mennonitisches Wörterbuch: Mennonite Low German Dictionary* (Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc., 1999). 518 pages. Price 25.00.

Samuel Johnson, the first great English dictionary maker, defined a lexicographer as "a dictionary writer, a harmless drudge."

I don't know about the latter part, but Dr. Jack Thiessen can certainly lay claim to the first part of that definition. This new Low German dictionary is a must for those who still use Plautdietsch as an everyday language or value it as a literary language.

It should take its place as the definitive dictionary for Mennonite Low German for a long time to come. In fact, this is not only a fine word book but also includes a rich compilation of "adages, aphorisms, children's rhymes, ditties, moralisms, and peasant wisdoms," in Thiessen's words, and he might have added that it also includes useful and interesting bits of Mennonite social history and folklore.

Let me begin with some of the dictionary's strongest points. There is, first of all, the compiler himself. Thiessen has all the skills needed for the daunting task of compiling a LG dictionary. He is a trained linguistic scholar who not only knows Plautdietsch like a native, but knows High German and English equally well. He is also a witty raconteur with a wide knowledge of Russian-Mennonite culture and traditions. To include all this additional material in a dialect dictionary in order "to embody a time and culture, and a way of life that is rapidly disappearing" was a wise decision. This book is a cultural compendium in which the reader

can spend many delightful hours.

The best way to illustrate the considerable strengths (and a few inevitable weaknesses) of Thiessen's dictionary is to compare it with the only other LG dictionary we have, namely Herman Rempel's *Kjenn Jie Noch Plautdietsch*?

Where Rempel's dictionary (at a rough count) contains somewhere around 10,000 word entries, Thiessen's is closer to 15,000, not counting the many pages of encyclopedic information. Rempel's dictionary (by intention) focuses largely on the Plautdietsch used by the 1870s Mennonites in Canada. Thiessen's is clearly designed to appeal to a wider readership and includes many Spanish loan words used by Mennonites in South America as well as many Russian and Ukrainian loan words brought over by the 1920s Mennonites. Thiessen generally gives fuller definitions than Rempel and boldly includes four-letter LG words and other vulgar words not to be found in Rempel's dictionary.

On the negative side, comparing these two dictionaries reveals once again that written Plautdietsch is crippled by the lack of a standardized orthography. Not only do Thiessen and Rempel employ different spelling systems, but two other prominent writers of LG--Reuben Epp and Jacob Loewen have also devised their own systems in recent years. While these various systems have enough in common to make them intelligible to most readers, when it comes to dictionaries even slight spelling differences can make for inconvenience in using them.

For example, Rempel has no entries under "Z" and to find the LG word for "quarrel" you have to look for "Ssank" in Rempel and "Zank" in Thiessen. If you want to look up "watermelon" you will find it under "Arbus" in Thiessen and "Orbus" in Rempel. Similarly, for "lawyer" it's "Afkot" in Thiessen and "Offkot" in Rempel.

The most annoying difference, at least to this reviewer, is the purely artificial spelling difference between "tj" and "kj" in words like "Kjoakj" Tjoatj" (church) or "Kjaaksche" - Tjaatsche" (cook).

It has often been alleged that this is an Old Colony--Molotschna pronunciation difference. I say this is nonsense. No matter where your Mennonite ancestors originated you will make this sound in exactly the same way when you speak. Try it in front of a mirror and you'll see. The difference is completely orthographic and the one symbol serves as well as the other. To ascribe these two conventional signs to social and linguistic differences is pure hokum. In the meantime this pretended difference creates all kinds of difficulties in consulting words in a LG dictionary.

Rempel's dictionary does have one important advantage over Thiessen's and that is that it contains an English to LG section, which means, of course, that users who know English better than LG can look up the English word to find its LG equivalent. Thiessen's dictionary, while very extensive in LG, contains

neither an English to LG section nor a High German to LG section. And it's easy to guess why: the book already contains well over 500 pages and it would simply have been too expensive and impractical to increase its size by roughly two-thirds.

All the same, the absence of these sections--especially the English to LG one--is to be deplored because in the coming years more and more Mennonites, at least in North America, will be at a disadvantage in using this new dictionary because their first language will be English and not Low German.

Thiessen's added material--the ditties, verses, sayings, folklore and bits of history--gives this collection a fascinating added dimension that readers quickly appreciate. He has a gift for translating verses so that they rhyme as neatly in English and HG as they do in LG without losing any of their meaning. Here is one delightful example.

Under the definition for "Schnetje", Mennonite soda biscuits, we find the following LG verse and the English translation provided by Thiessen:

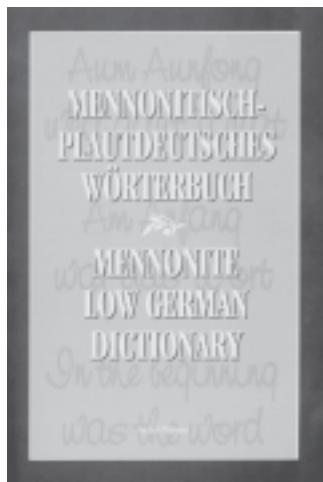
Wie send tjliene Schnetje-  
Ma haft ons jebackt;  
Sure Maltj enn Sooda  
Haft see toop jereat;  
Sat ons en den Owe,  
Nemmt ons wada rut-  
Kost en bestje Oabeit,  
Qba schmatjt uck goot.

We are little biscuits-  
Ma has done the baking,  
Buttermilk and soda  
Then mixing and shaking;  
Set us in the oven,  
Took us from the grate-  
Takes a bit of doing,  
But it's worth the wait.

Good lexicographers are not afraid to reveal their own biases in a humorous way, and Thiessen is no exception. Here is his definition of "Bethaus": "church which was termed...House of Prayer by the Mennonite Brethren to emphasize their superior piety as compared to other Mennonite churches."

He illustrates "Boll" -bull- with the saying: "beware of preachers' sons and angry bulls." He even includes "Hungawaadie" with three definitions, the last one being: "the poorest part of a town, explicitly the area east of Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada." (Reviewer's note: that area is now a comfortable suburb of Steinbach). Thiessen copies Rempel's entry for "Bromtopp" word for word--its a good one--but redeems himself by including the entire traditional mummer's song which went with it.

Users of Thiessen's dictionary will be hard put, I think, to come up with LG words that are not included. I looked up some of my own favourites like "Schintjeschwoaga" (bigamist or adulterer), "Schmaundjoop" (a shapeless or tatty dress), "Julbassem" (vacuum cleaner),



Jack Thiessen's Mennonistische Wörterbuch, an attractive cover marks a important book on Low-German Mennonite culture.

"Blitzowe" (microwave), etc. and found them all there.

Thiessen is particularly strong in Russian-Mennonite words, which will come in handy for readers of Arnold Dyck--words like "Chelodne" (prison), "Schmatock" (bite or snack), "Plemmenitj" (nephew), "Kotlett" (hamburger), and many others.

He also includes informative, often amusing little essays like the one on "Nippaenja" (the tough boat operators who fished and plied their boats between Chortitz Island and the mainland in the Old Colony in Russia).

Under "nofadme" (to trace) we find this humorous entry: "threading the genealogical needle, tracing relatives; a typical Mennonite indulgence of which they never tire, namely to determine who is related to whom and how closely. Nothing gives Mennonites more satisfaction than to ferret out relatives all over the Mennonite globe and to draft plans to visit them."

There is also a fine little essay on "Tjraajasch Klocke" (Kroeger clocks), and others on "Jiddisch" and the "Judeplon" in pre-revolutionary Russia.

To sum up, users and lovers of Mennonite Plautdietsch will find everything they need or want in this new dictionary.

Arnold Dyck claimed that Plautdietsch was the only true "homeland" Mennonites ever had. If that is so, then this dictionary succeeds in preserving that homeland in a lasting form that Mennonite readers will want to visit again and again.

Reviewed by Dr. Al Reimer, Mesa, Arizona.

Edna Vogt, editor and compiler, *Heritage Collection Cookbook Continues* (Winnipeg: New Bothwell & District Chamber of Commerce, 1999), 183 pages (plus index, etc.), soft cover, \$10.00. Phone 1(204)388-4573.

Though cookbooks are prolific in today's society, this particular collection catches one's attention. It was created in celebration of the

125th Anniversary of the East Reserve settlement, hence the subtitle *New Bothwell Celebrating East Reserve 125*.

In June of 1999, New Bothwell celebrated the anniversary of the Mennonite immigration in grand style. The word "Continues" indicates that this is a second cookbook. This particular rendition follows *Heritage Collections* (Recipes from the New Bothwell Homecoming and Reunion in 1994). The effort for the sequel was headed up by Edna Vogt, New Bothwell & District Chamber of Commerce secretary. Esther (Banman) Doerksen worked hard to prepare the pages for the publisher's camera.

The book begins with "11 Commandments For an Enthusiastic Team." A Table of Contents lists nine categories, and each one begins with a blue title page containing useful information for cooks of every generation. The book also contains poems and quotes tucked between its pages. A chronological index follows the recipes. The spiral binding is practical for cooks who prefer to lay the book flat on the counter.

The final pages contain a local flavour as they leave the sequential reader with some hints, quotes and a poem. Most recipes have been submitted by local folk. A unique feature is the page of protection for the front cover. This can be removed after the book is purchased, a great feature for gifts.

Seventeen pages of "Breakfast & Muffins" offer a medley of menus. The category "Breads & Cinnamon Rolls" presents one's choice of butter horns and scones. A variety of recipes make for interesting reading in the "Soups & Salads & Vegetables" portion.

Check out the recipe for Elephant Stew as well as Roast Skunk on the final page of "Meats & Casseroles". Kielke, perogies, perishky, rollkuchen, pizza buns, and lasagna highlight the "Pasta & Pizza" division. A great "Recipe for Friendship" lies embedded in "Pies & Desserts". "Cakes & Squares", the largest part, contains many standard recipes.

Do you enjoy making "Cookies"? You can find a variety of recipes to try, many of which contain chocolate. To conclude, a miscellaneous category entitled "Kids-Beverages-Party-Preserves" includes submissions ranging from play dough to ice cream and from beverages to salsa.

The East Reserve 125 Steering Committee encouraged area communities to incorporate

the anniversary theme into their existing fairs and festivals in 1999. Some communities (such as New Bothwell) chose to initiate additional projects. I was disappointed that an explanation did not appear between the covers. The selected logo could have been included on the cover. Strangely, the publisher's name could not be located anywhere in the cookbook.

Most recipes were submitted by local folk and span generations -- from children's recipes to "Favorite from Grandma...". Several recipes acknowledged their sources. I found many of the recipes called for ingredients contained in the average kitchen. A selling feature for today's health conscious society is the listing of the nutrients beneath each recipe (per serving).

These attractive cookbooks are available, of course, in New Bothwell!

There is a dedicatory prayer prefacing the recipes. "May the Lord Bless these Recipes to the Hands that Prepare them and to the Nourishment of our Bodies. In Jesus Name, Amen."

The writer adds her invocation to this practical collection of recipes which make for interesting reading and "continues" our heritage!

**Reviewed by Karen S. Peters (East Reserve 125 Steering Committee Chairperson and Hanover School Division Representative), Box 29, Randolph, Manitoba, R0A 1L0.**

