

# 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

## 1874 Revisited

The celebrations of the 125th anniversaries of the East and West Reserves, Manitoba, Canada, during 1999 and 2000 are now history. Hopefully, most of our readers, particularly those in Manitoba, were able to take part in at least some of the festivities. The most important thing of course is that these events have imparted many good memories and positive impressions to our youngsters, as this will ensure that they will remain proud of their heritage in years to come and therefore more fulfilled and wholesome human beings.

All three of the founding groups of the Mennonite communities of southern Manitoba--the Kleine Gemeinde, the Bergthaler and Old Koloniers--had gone through the pioneering experience in Imperial Russia within the preceding decades, making them experienced in the art of resettlement and thus excellent settlers to spearhead the opening and development of the Canadian west.

The story of Erdmann Penner (1826-1907), a dynamic pioneer entrepreneur whose activities touched both East and West Reserves, provides a suitable focus to this issue of *Preservings*. Erdmann Penner's story illustrates the dramatic impact which the immigration of almost 7000 Mennonites from Imperial Russia had on Manitoba in 1874 to 1876, for a time doubling the population of the Province.

The Editor, D. Plett Q.C.



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#### Penner & Schulz, ca. 1880, Early Mennonite Entrepreneur recognized.

The official Manitoba's Diamond Jubilee of 1930 recognized the contributions of Erdmann Penner and Otto Schulz to the commercial development of Manitoba with a full page spread, including a photograph. Mr. Penner is seated in the buggy and Mr. Schulz is standing at his side at the corner of Main Street and McDermot, Winnipeg, where the Toronto-Dominion Bank stood in 1930. The photo dates from ca. 1880. Erdmann Penner (1826-1907), Tannenau, E.R., and later Gretna, W.R., was among the pioneer business leaders of Manitoba. Together with Otto Schulz he went into the flat boat business, supplying Mennonites with the necessities until the railway 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. "Penner & Schulz" shipped the first 10 car loads of grain for international export from Winnipeg. See *Preservings*, No. 15, page 130. Photograph courtesy of Dr. John Warkentin, York University, Toronto, Canada.

# Introduction to Issue 17

## Feature Story "1874 Revisited"

We are proud to feature as the lead article "1874 Revisited" by John Warkentin, Professor *emeritus*, York University, Toronto, internationally renown geographer.

Dr. Warkentin's paper provides an intriguing look at the 1874 to 1876 Mennonite settlements of southern Manitoba, focusing on how the land changed the pioneers of the 1870s and how they in turn altered the landscape. In his evocative style, Dr. Warkentin reviews the evolution of the settlements and the factors which gave Mennonite culture its tremendous staying power. He noted how writers in recent years have painted the Mennonite territorial enclaves of Manitoba onto the literary landscape of Canada.

There are numerous accounts of the Mennonite settlements in southern Russia during the 19th century which describe in some detail their dwellings, farms, forms of governance and theology. But there are only precious few descriptions of their personal lives, daily habits and apparel.

"A Sunday in 1840 on the Island of Chortitza" by Cornelius Hildebrand Sr., grandson of delegate Jakob Hoepfner, provides an evocative look at a traditional worship service which speaks for the piety and genuine spirituality of these sturdy pioneers. This account stands in sharp contrast to the combination of heathen practices and Hollywood dramatization which passes as worship in many so-called Evangelical churches of the modern-day.

Over the centuries Separatist-Pietists (and later Darbyite-Scofieldians), have heartlessly endeavoured to convince conservative Mennonites that their forebears were crude, illiterate and unsaved savages as a strategy of religious imperialism. Once people can be persuaded their faith and culture are inferior, they are sure to feel worthless and likely to be hapless victims of predator religious cultures.

In reality nothing could be further from the truth. Conservative Mennonites have a proud and sophisticated writing tradition and literary culture going back 500 years to the Netherlands in Reformation times.

Jakob Wiens (1816-88) was one of the 1876 pioneers in Manitoba who exemplified this tradition. A school teacher by profession, he taught in Kronsthal, Old Colony, Imperial Russia, and later in Manitoba. He settled in Hoffnungsfeld, West Reserve. A founding member of the Old Colony Mennonite Church, he was an articulate writer keeping an invaluable journal as well as serving as a West Reserve correspondent for the *Mennonitische Rundschau*.

Two years ago I was introduced to Jakob Wiens by chance when Rev. Ben Hoepfner, Winnipeg, long-time *Preservings* translator, sent me a copy of Wiens' *Diary en route Russia to Canada*, a 17-page booklet. Eventually my curiosity about this marvellous piece of writing

got the better of me, resulting in the present rather lengthy article.

In 1998 Professor Roy Loewen, Mennonite Chair, University of Winnipeg, sent me a 1922 newspaper clipping originating in Minneapolis, featuring an Abram Wolfe family en route to Mexico. Through this chance encounter I was introduced to Abram A. Wolfe, one of some 8,000 exiles from Manitoba and Saskatchewan in 1922. I became intrigued and determined to write his story, only to learn that four of my cousins in Mexico had married his granddaughters.

Abram A. Wolfe (1876-1945) was another man whose story flies in the face of the lies and mythologies propagated by the enemies of Gospel-centric faith. In 1900, Abram A. Wolfe was a printer in Gnadenfeld, W.R., printing literature and books for the Reinländer Gemeinde. Having medical training, "Dr." Wolfe practised among both the Old Koloniers and native Indians in Mexico demonstrating a heart of compassion for all.

Pentecostalism, a sub-specie of the religious culture known as Evangelicalism, is widely known for its aggressive and brassy posturing, devastating employment of modern psychological brain control techniques, and cheesy emotion-inducing rites and rituals. Too often Mennonites have stampeded to this religious culture in ignorance, not only of their own superior faith and heritage, but without considering some of its dangerous and less wholesome aspects.

The editorial considers some of the underside of a religious culture which takes itself very seriously. In fact, many Pentecostals would consider all Mennonites and most other Christians to be unsaved heathen.

No doubt these humble meanderings will infuriate some readers, as most individuals who have converted to Protestant Fundamentalism prefer not to be confused by the facts and stark lessons of history. Hopefully these comments will assist others, who still remember the genuine Gospel-centric faith of their ancestors to understand themselves better in today's wild and crazy religious market place.

The news section is dominated by reports of how the West Reserve celebrated its 125th anniversary.

The Articles Section includes the usual complement of biographies, anecdotes, and even a brief account of Andreasfeld, a community 12 Km north of modern-day Zaporozhe, Ukraine, founded by the Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia in 1863. We proudly feature several accounts relating to the experiences of Mennonites in the Soviet inferno.

C. T. Loewen (1882-1959), lumberman, would have to be included in any listing of the ten most influential people in the history of the City of Steinbach. Hopefully the short article by daughter Mary, Mrs. Ben Hoepfner, will be

a precursor to a book length study of this gifted and productive community man, a study well warranted by his enduring and lasting legacy.

The Material Culture Section is anchored by a major paper on Hutterian Education by Art Rempel, Steinbach, Manitoba, until recently Hutterian Education Liaison Officer for the Department of Education. He describes the Hutterian Educational tradition, the envy of Europe in the 17th century.

Over the centuries education, and, particularly, secondary and higher education has often been hijacked by predator religious cultures and used as a strategy to subvert conservative Mennonites and Hutterites from the Gospel-centric faith. As a result "higher" education came to have an unsavoury association for many conservatives. It is time that they took back and reclaimed this ground, so essential for the wholesome development and evolution of any religious confession.

Great things are happening in the educational sphere, from the Kleine Gemeinde curriculum publishing venture in Jagueyes, Mexico (Centro Escolar Evangelico), to the confessional schools of the Ontario Old Colony Mennonites. The Hutterian Brethren have structured their own teacher training program in partnership with Brandon University (see News Section) serving as a stellar example for others. Such measures will go a long way to stopping the haemorrhaging of members being seduced by alien religious cultures, provided that they focus on instilling a positive understanding of their faith and culture.

The book review section has been renamed simply "Books" reflecting its function of telling readers about the marvellous breath and scope of the ever burgeoning literature of the Mennonite people.

In an academic journal readers are typically familiar with the contents of books being reviewed and are mainly looking for an expert evaluation. The average *Preservings* reader has probably never heard of many of the books described. Of necessity, therefore, our reviews are both descriptive as well as evaluative. Hopefully they will familiarize our readership with many new books and also create an interest in tapping into this rich literature by buying and reading them.

**The Editor - D. Plett Q.C.**

**Attention Readers:** Readers responses, critical or otherwise, are welcome. The editor can be contacted at 1(204)326-6454 office, fax 1(204)326-6917, mail Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0, e-mail [delplett@mb.sympatico.ca](mailto:delplett@mb.sympatico.ca)

# Feature Articles

## 1874 Revisited

“The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba Revisited,” by John Warkentin, York University, Toronto, Canada, presented at the 125th anniversary symposium of the Mennonite Chair, University of Winnipeg, October 1, 1999, and again at the Annual Meeting of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, January 22, 2000.

### Introduction.

It is over 40 years since I did the fieldwork for my doctoral dissertation entitled “The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba.” Much, of course, has changed since then. Not only are there great transformations in southern Manitoba itself, but several generations of scholars have studied the Mennonite communities since my time, and their researches are readily available.

Since in terms of my own fresh research I had little new to say, I was extremely reluctant to give this talk when Royden Loewen telephoned me. Nevertheless, I allowed myself to be persuaded, if only to relive my earlier experiences by reading the new work that has been published. And I’m glad I did.

I proceeded by jotting down a few of the issues that have interested scholars in the humanities and social sciences since the 1950s when I did my research. Here are some of them: Space and Communications; Environmental History; Social History; Gender Studies; Native Studies; and the Role of the Creative Arts in the Social Sciences. As I read what had been written in the past 40 years on the Mennonite communities, it quickly became clear that significant work had been done on all of those issues — on some topics much more than on others.

I will consider a few of those themes in this talk, and since I will cover much ground very quickly, I will list what I intend to do so you won’t get lost: 1) Mennonites and Space; 2) The Mennonite *Darp* and Going on Foot; 3) The Mennonite Will and the Non-Mennonite Mind; 4) Creating a Culture Area and the Literary World of the Mennonites. I warn you to be ready to participate in this presentation by imagining in your mind’s eye a few maps and photographs that I will describe as I go along.

### Mennonites and Space

I start with the idea of “The Edge”. To introduce and emphasize this, here is an excerpt from a poem by Patrick Friesen, titled “backbone beat”, published in a recent volume of poems on Winnipeg, *St. Mary at Main*:

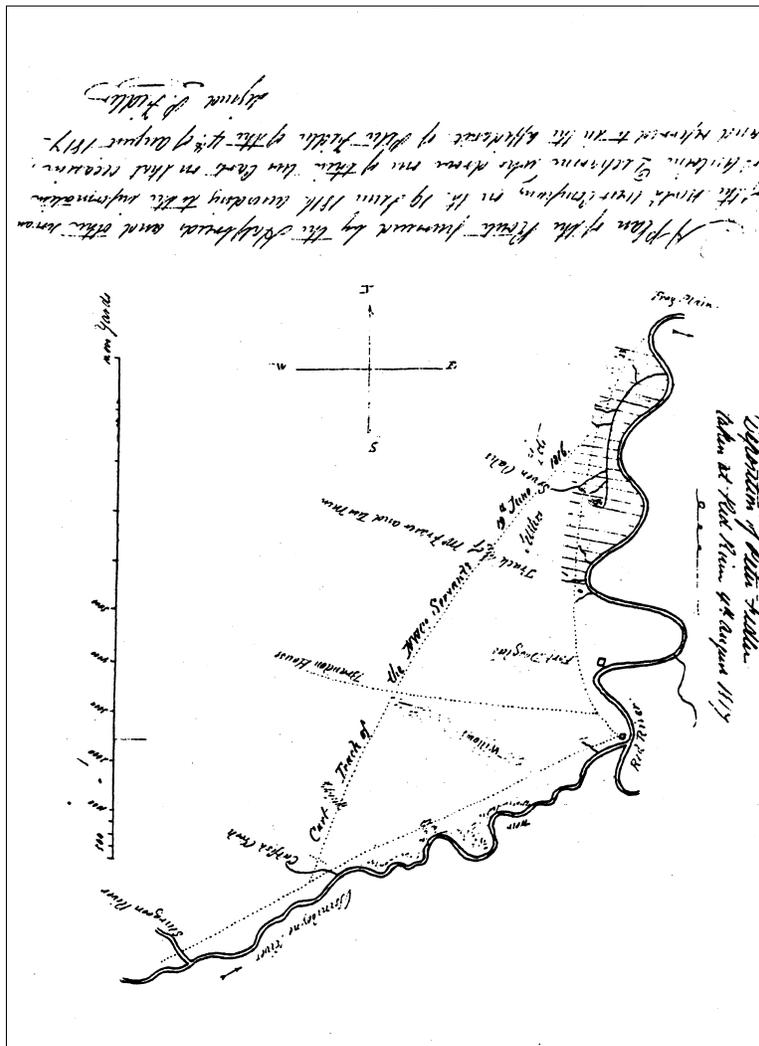
this is the city that should have given its  
keys  
to charlie watts  
that backbone beat  
upon which anything can happen

the edge of things here  
the shield butting at our shoulder  
the lake we live in  
this is all risk and sudden death  
we keep drumming  
so we won’t perish on the edge of the prairie  
our trains rumbling through the nights  
we keep drumming  
so the northern lights won’t overwhelm us  
we build our music against the sky  
that drumbeat  
and our improvisation at the edge  
(Friesen, 37)

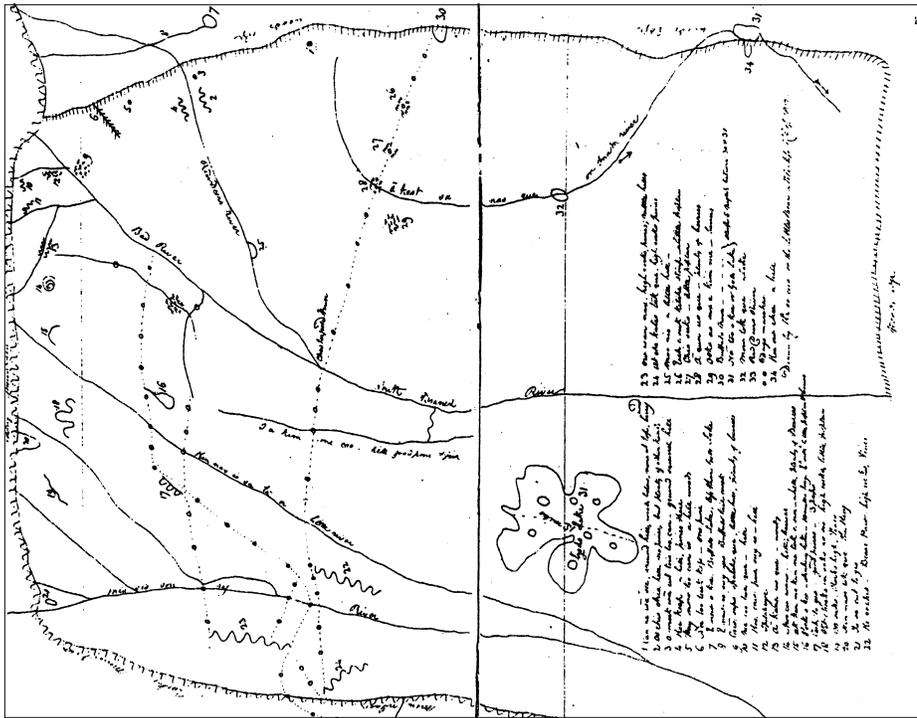
Friesen shows us how in Winnipeg, located in the prairies, we leave the Canadian Shield and enter a New World within Canada. The land which the Mennonites settled was at this Edge — a world of new spaces and (in some ways) new lives.

What was this land like, and how sharp, how recognizable is The Edge? To find out let us turn to David Bergen’s novel, *See the Child*, published last spring (1999). Paul Unger, a character in the novel, is driving from Furst [Steinbach] to La Broquerie, a route many of you know very well. “The straight strip of road, the rich farmland disappearing. The soil sandier, the trees scrubby and twisted, rocks growing out of the fields,” (Bergen, 16).

Bergen catches succinctly the landscape on the eastern side of the East Reserve, astride The Edge, on the margin of the forest and the grassland. Pioneers considered that transition zone an ideal place to settle. In the United States that is how people ventured onto the plains, staying close to the woods for shelter and fuel, but taking advantage of the good blackearth grasslands ready for immediate cultivation. In Manitoba it is in that kind of a transition zone that the Clearsprings settlement was situated, and, in part, that is why the East Reserve was located where it is: on The Edge.



Arrival of a new cultural group in the West. Peter Fidler’s map of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. Note the straight lines of the long lots north of Point Douglas. Surveyed in 1813, these land survey lines mark the arrival of a new agricultural society. (From Historical Atlas of Manitoba, edited by John Warkentin and Richard I. Ruggles. Original map in the HBC Archives, Public Archives of Manitoba.)



*The prairie region as seen by a First Nations Chief. Peter Fidler's transcription of a map drawn in 1802 by Ki oo cus, a Blackfoot Chief. The Rocky Mountains are on the left, and the Woods Edge at the top (North) is south of today's Edmonton and Saskatoon. This is the land where Arnold Dyck's four travelling struckfoarma ran out of gas. The present Alberta/Saskatchewan border runs almost through the site of Chesterfield House, located on the South Branch River (i.e. the South Saskatchewan River) which flows through the middle of the map, and Herbert, Saskatchewan, of today would be just to the southeast. The big lake in lower right is an inset enlargement of a lake in the northeast part of the map. (From Richard I. Ruggles, A Country so Interesting. Original map in the HBC Archives, Public Archives of Manitoba.)*

**Maps.**

Next, to learn more about life on this land before the Mennonites arrived, I want to draw to your attention two maps by Peter Fidler, the well known early fur trader and surveyor. Both maps are now in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg. The first is a map drawn by Fidler in 1817 to illustrate the encounter between the Métis and the Selkirk settlers that has been called the Massacre of Seven Oaks (Fidler, 1817).

Our own interest in the map are the inscrip-

“The land which the Mennonites settled was at this Edge — a world of new spaces and (in some ways) new lives.”

tions on the land by humans. The map shows only the area of present Winnipeg, with the sweeping curves of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers dominating the scene. But on this map Fidler has also sketched the sharp parallel lines of the long farm lots he had laid out in 1813 for the Selkirk settlers

on the west side of the Red, north of the Assiniboine. The lines he drew mark the first inscribing on a map of the new agricultural civilization beginning to occupy the land of The Edge. A revolution was beginning. And Mennonites were shortly to be a part of it.

The second map is a transcription Fidler had drafted 15 years earlier based on a sketch map drawn by a First Nations informant, Ki oo cus, of a large segment of the western part of the Great Plains (Fidler, 1802). This map shows an area extending roughly from present southwestern Saskatchewan through southern Alberta to the Rocky Mountains, and south to the Missouri River. Rivers aligned like streamers across the vast plain are predominant, but what struck me the first time I saw this map 30 years ago in the Hudson's Bay Company archives in London, England, where the maps were then located, was the clearly demarcated, curving border where knowledge abruptly ends.

Surely that margin was a magical defining line. My first impulsive impression was that right there before me on the Great Plains the “End of the Earth” was explicitly marked, where you would

fall off the earth's surface if you went too far and crossed the edge. That first impression has always remained with me. I'll come back to that feeling shortly.

You are just beginning your imaginative tasks. We move forward in time, and now you have to imagine one of the most important maps ever made in Canada. This is a map of 1877, a map produced by Sandford Fleming, Engineer-in-Chief of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), depicting the area from Lake Superior right across the prairies to the Pacific Ocean (Fleming, 1877).

In my view, this map is a geographical masterpiece because it so effectively shows two cultures meeting. It is a continuation, if you like, of the 1817 Fidler map. The background information on Fleming's map is from the famous Palliser map of the West published in 1865, which shows the land before agricultural settlement. This is the homeland of nomadic Native peoples, and the map shows hills and escarpments, rivers, lakes, the limits of grasslands and woodlands. These are all natural features, drawn in curving free flowing lines.

But there is, as it were, a second map superimposed on the one we are looking at. Harshly slashed on these gentle curves in hard, discordant, straight-as-a-ruler thick black lines is the proposed main line of the CPR piercing right across the prairies, with the proposed place names of imagined towns and villages sticking out like menacing little daggers in measured intervals along the length of the track. These places represent the future western Canadian urban system, which in all its many ramifications was to affect Mennonite settlement so greatly.

That is not all that there is to be seen on this magnificent map. South of present day Winnipeg another highly alien discordant feature of machine-man is shown. This is the rigid, unswerving geometrical gridiron of the regular section land survey, just beginning its rapid, uncompromising spread across the plains. It looks to all intents and purposes like a controlling, enclosing, cage.

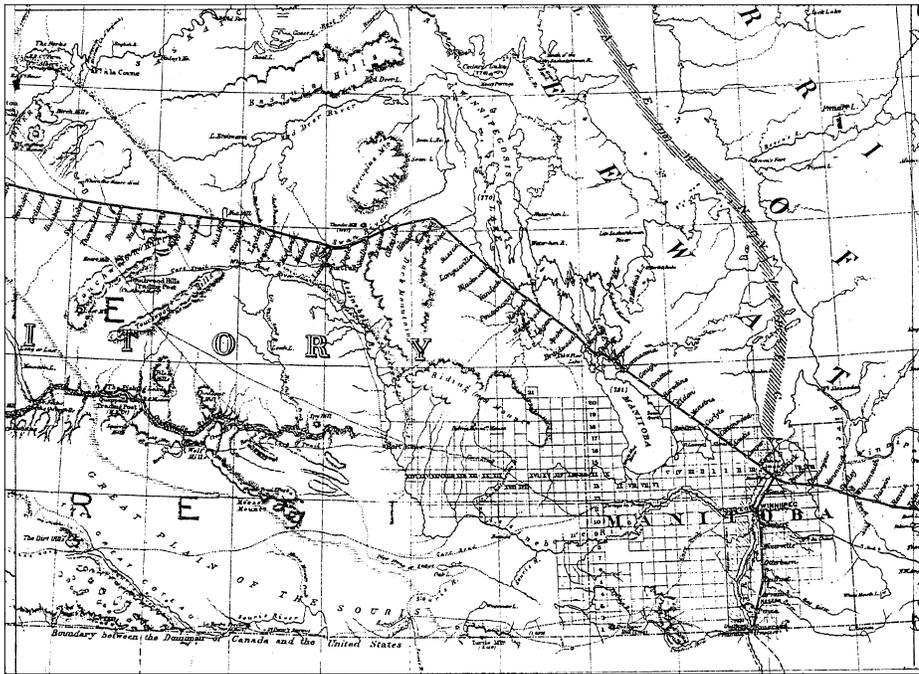
Here then on the map we see a new civilization coming in -- the one just hinted at in the 1817 Fidler map -- inexorably dispossessing the Native peoples. A life of free movement over the plains, chasing buffalo, and freely following cross country trails, is being replaced by a confined life based on property, where commodities, not people, move.

Mennonites were an integral part of this new civilization. In the 1870s they were in on the creation of a new Manitoba; part of a powerful agricultural civilization overriding the pre-existing, vulnerable hunting civilization. Awareness of the Mennonite-Native Peoples connection is increasing, and Professor Leo Driedger, Dora Dueck, and Sarah Hiebert, have discussed early Mennonite relations with Native peoples.

Before we leave the Fleming map, I want, as an important aside, to say something about the urban system it so vividly foreshadows. The ur-

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The editorial viewpoint of *Preservings* is conservative and orthodox with respect to the founding peoples of the Hanover Steinbach area, originally the East Reserve, Manitoba, Canada. The views and opinions expressed in the editorial and various articles and letters do not necessarily reflect those of the HSHS and/or its board of directors. Copyright remains with the writers and artists. Registration # 1524399.



**Two civilizations clash.** The ruler-straight segments of the proposed route of the CPR, and the square lines of the rectangular land survey, are thrust over the free flowing curves of nature, the home of First Nations peoples and buffalo. Sandford Fleming, Report on Surveys . . . "Map of the Country to be Traversed by the Canadian Pacific Railway to Accompany Progress Report on the Exploratory Surveys 1877".

ban system must be emphasized in any study of Mennonites because it is a vital element in the enormous pressure that the larger Canadian society was to exert in the future on the Mennonite communities. It can be considered an unconscious pressure; that is, the larger society made no deliberate effort to use the urban system as an instrument of change, or to even read it that way. Just by existing, by being there, the urban system represented a potent alternate society to Mennonite life in the farm villages.

Of course, Mennonites as commercial farmers were part of this system. Indeed, almost from the time that they came to Manitoba some Mennonites actively participated as entrepreneurs in that commercial society, as is increasingly shown by recent research. Let me give you an example. In Manitoba's official Diamond Jubilee publication of 1930 there is an intriguing photograph of about 1880, part of an important full-page spread devoted to discussing early shipping and commerce in the province. The photograph shows two substantial men on a street in Winnipeg: one is Erdmann Penner, the other Otto Schultz.

Let me read from the accompanying story: "He [Otto Schultz] and a Mr. Penner went into the flat boat business, supplying the Mennonites, etc., with necessities of life, and continued to do so until the steel arrived. They then have the distinction of building the first line of stores in Manitoba, stretching from Gretna to Morden. Later the business was confined to Winnipeg. Their store at Niverville was established in 1878. Schultz & Penner shipped the first carloads of grain for export from Winnipeg through the United States and to the markets of the world," (*Manitoba's Diamond Jubilee*, page 80).

John Dyck has written on Erdmann Penner, and his association with Schultz, a businessman of German descent (Dyck, 1994), and there are

errors in the above passage, but the important point here is that a few entrepreneurial Mennonites, directly upon their arrival in Manitoba, made use of that urban system - that alternate society - we saw forming on the Fleming map. And in Manitoba's Diamond Jubilee official monograph Mr. Penner was recognized for his contribution to the economic development of Manitoba.

But back to space and landscape. So far we have only examined the land of the East Reserve, though I have been laying the groundwork for a look at the West Reserve.

**Koop and Bua.**

Arnold Dyck in his novel *Koop en Bua opp Reise*, set in the 1930s, indirectly catches the spe-

cial challenge of settling the West Reserve. Dyck rarely describes the broad Manitoba landscape; instead, in the travels of his characters westward across the province there are vignettes of the local relief at the banks of the Red River or in the deep Pembina Valley, and, of course, the frustration these breaks in terrain caused our travellers.

We have to turn to Dyck's description of Saskatchewan to get the essential generic characteristics of the land just to the west of the Red. Driving on the plain west of Regina toward Herbert, Saskatchewan, the four travellers find nothing to see, there is nothing alive. Over-awed and deeply disturbed in this flat, treeless, empty land, they are frightened by the relentless space and loneliness. Dyck even terms the land "a wilderness".

Then they run out of gasoline. After due deliberation, one of the party, Wiens, goes off on foot, heading westward carrying an empty can, to find gas: "Dee dree opp'e Koa weare wada stell jeworde enn kjitje Wiense hinjarun. See sage, woo hee langsomm kjarta word. Eascht felua hee de Been, dann daut Meddelstetj, dann uck dän Kopp. Enn Stootje daunst siene Mets dann noch auleen bow'r'e Ead, oba mett eenmol duckt uck dee unja," (*Koop en Bua opp Reise*, Vol. II, 81-82).

You see, Wiens had reached the "end of the earth" -- that conceptual margin I described to you in the map Peter Fidler transcribed from Indian knowledge -- and suddenly he was gone. In my view, Dyck's description of the land, represents

"Over-awed and deeply disturbed in this flat, treeless, empty land, they are frightened by the relentless space and loneliness."

symbolically the stark, overwhelming environment that Mennonite colonists faced in the West Reserve. [In the discussion at the end of the talk, Professor Al Reimer, combining Dyck and Ki oocus, kindly explained to the audience where Wiens had gone. If you read *Koop en Bua* you will find that Wiens, who headed west and after some hours inexplicably returned from the east, must have



**On the threshold of the West Reserve in September, 1872.** The U.S. crew surveying the 49th parallel is camped at North Pembina, Manitoba, but the important thing to look at is the empty, treeless, sublime, challenging landscape in the far distance, which Mennonites began to enter about three years after this photograph was taken. This shows the emptiness that the Mennonites faced. Courtesy of Journal of Mennonite Studies, Volume 18, 2000, page 66.



**Map of 1875 Prepared by the Dominion Lands Branch.** The great significance to Canada of the new Mennonite communities on the Canadian prairies is evident, because the “Mennonite (their spelling) Lands” in the East Reserve are clearly outlined. Note that the row of townships along the International Border where the West Reserve was going to be established is shown as not surveyed. Indeed some of the land was just being surveyed as Mennonites moved in. Most of Manitoba is laid out in the familiar section (gridiron) land survey, but long narrow river lots were surveyed along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers. (from Walker and Miles-New Standard Atlas of the Dominion of Canada, Montreal and Toronto, 1875, pp. 92-93.

walked right around the world. Fortunately he now carried a full can of gas. Clearly, once you reach the “end of the earth” anything can happen.]

We have a wonderful opportunity to see the landscape Arnold Dyck described, that is, as it existed in Manitoba, in a photograph map taken in September, 1872, by a member of the International Boundary Commission Survey, shooting from a high vantage point at North Pembina, directly across the river from present Emerson. The photographer pointed his camera toward Rosenfeld

“...they intended to re-establish the culture they were bringing with them...”

of today. In the foreground is a sentry and the neatly composed square of the surveyors’ tents, but for us the important part of the scene is in the far distance: the absolutely bare, absolutely level plain — the difficult environment the Mennonites began to move into three years after this photograph was taken. It is the kind of land that the *Koop en Bua* sojourners experienced in Saskatchewan.

To sum up, these then are the contrasting *spaces* the Mennonites colonized in Manitoba in the 1870s: first, the Edge of the East Reserve, and second, the terrifying, sublime, plain of the West Reserve. How did they cope on these lands?

**The Mennonite Darp.**

Since 1960, a number of very fine histories of various Mennonite villages have been written, including books on Blumenort, Blumenfeld and Reinland. And I am sure there are others. More-

over, there is much source material in Hanover Steinbach Historical Society’s magazine *Preservings*, and documents series on the East and West Reserve have been published. These sources, many new to me, contain marvellous material, and I want to pick up a few of their themes. In particular, I have always wanted to know what life was like in the villages, and from these publications we can learn much of this.

Hold on a moment. I used that magical phrase the *New World* above. In one way, of course, the Mennonites were entering a New World by crossing the Atlantic to North America, as other millions of immigrants had done and were going to continue to do. In another sense it was **not** a New World that the Mennonites were heading toward. It was a land where they intended to re-establish the culture they were bringing with them, something their forebears had done before.

But every culture is dynamic; nor does it exist in isolation. Who knew what would develop? That lay in the future. In the meantime, when they arrived in Manitoba in the 1870s the Mennonites set about, insofar as possible, in creating their own communities in the traditional ways they had known.

Much organizing had to be done to establish the Mennonite village settlements. For the thousands of individual immigrants who applied for

“...the administrative complexity of arranging the new settlements in both land reserves boggles the mind.”

homesteads in the government’s regular rectangular survey, that had been so swiftly laid out across

the West, the homesteading procedures and pattern of dispersed settlement had been planned and fixed by the federal authorities and their land surveyors.

This was not so for the Mennonites. Apart from the size of the homestead, and the framework of the land survey, they laid out their settlements on their own plan. Their first months in the new lands were complicated: they had to organize villages, locate them, decide who would go where, lay out village streets, and measure out lots. In a few instances entire villages from South Russia settled as a complete village in Manitoba, though that was likely exceptional. Dozens of new communities were almost instantly created.

Just the administrative complexity of arranging the new settlements in both land reserves boggles the mind. Some of the details of how this

“To appreciate what a village is, and in small part grasp what it means to live there, you have to walk it...”

was done -- the arrangements made, including a few village agreements that were signed by all the farmers in a village -- have emerged in the new research. I’m sure as investigations continue more will be pieced together on this astonishing period when a novel kind of agricultural landscape for North America was imprinted on the land. And it was a pleasant landscape.

In any literature on pioneer life in North America, whether in Ontario, the United States, or elsewhere, a great deal is always made of planting orchards and gardens, once settlers get past the

initial hard toil of locating on the land. Orchards and gardens symbolize the creating of a home. Listen to this eloquent passage, quoted from Peter Zacharias's history of Reinland. It is from the reminiscences, written many years after the events described, of Jacob Fehr (1859-1952) who migrated in 1875 from Kronsthal, Chortitz, to Reinland in the West Reserve.

Note the precise, touching, memories of a 16-year old boy, saying good-bye: "When I had observed all these things and reflected on them I walked out of the garden and closed the gate. I remained standing at the gate and looked at the garden once more and said to myself, 'I will never again enjoy your fruit.' My eye filled with tears. Thereupon I left the garden, walked across the yard, and entered the house where they were busily packing different articles that were to be taken along to America." (Zacharias, 34).

Once in Manitoba young Jacob Fehr spent six weeks on the banks of the Red River, close to where that 1872 photograph of the boundary surveyors' camp and the Manitoba prairie was taken, presumably while the men were out selecting sites for villages and measuring out lots. He calls the banks of the Red a "place of mourning", of "sadness".

Why? "There was still a yearning for the true friends which had to be left behind, for the beautiful *Heimat* with its precious orchards. Here in contrast, we saw only a rolling prairie," (Zacharias, 35). That rolling prairie was the kind of terrifying landscape Arnold Dyck had described.

In Manitoba, Mennonite settlers soon planted seeds for gardens, and seedlings for trees: they were making homes. On each side of the village streets carefully placed trees quickly grew. A shelter was being created, a shield against the wilderness.

#### Going on foot.

To appreciate what a village is, and in small part grasp what it means to live there, you have to walk it, as you can still do today in the villages of the West Reserve. It is then that you begin to feel the village.

Let me, accordingly, turn to walking, going on foot, and after that continue on to consider relations between villages. You can learn much about

"....mid-wives [are] described in so many biographies of Mennonite women. They were intrepid community health workers,..."

these topics from the journals kept by ministers, since ministers in the nature of their responsibilities did a lot of travelling.

In August, 1874, Rev. David Stoesz walked 11 miles from his new home at Bergthal, East Reserve, near present Blumenort, to the immigration sheds, near today's Niverville, to deal with some problems. In 1877, he travelled 12 to 13 miles by oxen and sleigh to visit someone in another village; but shortly afterwards he began to use horses (Stoesz, 417, 419).

In the early years in the East Reserve it is often recorded that men walked 30 or so miles to Winnipeg for supplies. Royden Loewen describes in his book

on Blumenort how on January 5, 1875, 17 brethren walked to Grünfeld (near today's Kleefeld) for a brotherhood meeting, about nine miles and three hours from their home in newly founded Blumenort (Loewen, 1983, 46). Environment Canada has Winnipeg weather records for that day: the minimum temperature was -30.4°C and the maximum -3°C, and the sky was clear — weather in the East Reserve would have been very similar.

In my mind I see this cluster of men heading directly toward Grünfeld, the edge of the woods on their left, and surely the bare beginnings of shelters in some of the new villages were in sight as they trudged across the snow-swept prairie. In the West Reserve, in the history of Reinland, we learn that young people would walk from Schönfeld, north of present Winkler, to Reinland for baptismal instruction services — about 14 miles one way (Zacharias, 196). These examples suffice to indicate one way in which people got about in the early years.

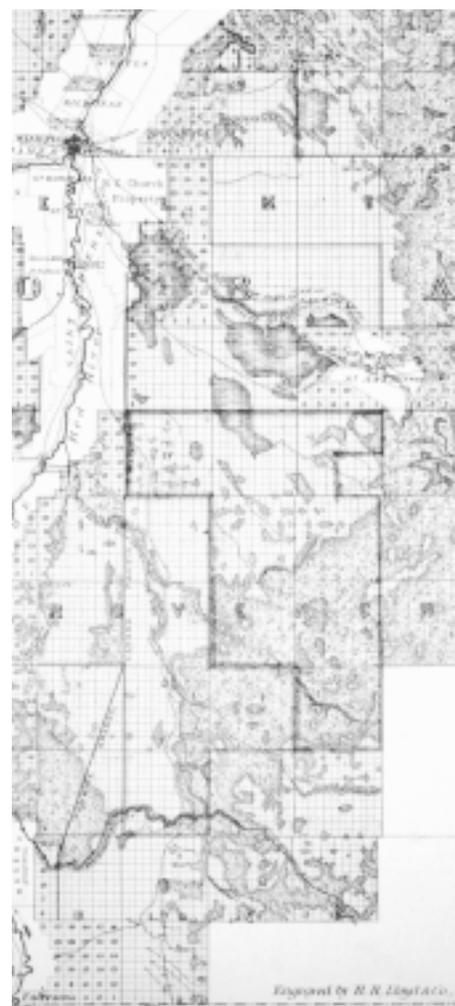
Royden Loewen reports four ways of conveying news in the villages — let's say it is an invitation to a wedding — walking down the street and telling folk the news; circulating one copy of a letter, with people passing it on from house to house along the village street; a courier system arranged amongst neighbouring villages; and later on by mail (Loewen, 1983, 93).

One of the best ways to appreciate the constant travelling within the Mennonite communities is by reading Rev. Heinrich Friesen's journal. He lived in Hochfeld, near Blumenort in the East Reserve, and always seems to have been off somewhere by buggy or sleigh. He made numerous trips to Bergfeld, a distance of 17 to 20 miles from Hochfeld, depending on which route he took, which was his longest journey, and to many other villages lying in between.

A typical trip was February 25th and 26th, 1905, on a Saturday and Sunday. He reached Rosengard, nine miles south from home, by Saturday noon; for *faspa* he was in Schöneberg two miles away; and he spent the night in Burwalde, another two miles on. Sunday morning he was in church in Burwalde, presumably participating in the church service; that afternoon he travelled back north seven miles to visit someone in Ebenfeld, and then continued on another four to five miles back home to Hochfeld (H. Friesen, 525). Rev. Friesen's son Abraham, often helped out doing farm work in villages close to Hochfeld, travelling back and forth from home.

Connections between villages were frequent, but it is also easy to exaggerate the social associations favoured by close proximity. Research is throwing much new light on the cultural aspects of these connections, analyzing marriage records for example, and it shows that despite close spacing of villages, social bonds within each village, and within religious denominations, remained strong.

Nowadays, of course, all this travelling continues. As you learn in Armin Wiebe's *Salvation of Yasch Siemens* young folk walk in the village, drive vehicles on the middle road and along the double dyke, and tool up and down the paved roads. In David Bergen's, *A Year of Lesser*, everyone seems to be constantly in motion, speeding somewhere along the highways, between town



**The Edge.** The East Reserve in 1875. Land surveyors were instructed to record vegetation in their survey notebooks. This map, based on land surveys of 1872, shows the very important landscape boundary between open prairie and woodland in the East Reserve. Note how Clearsprings Settlement is cut out of the Reserve, and how the land at Ste. Anne on the Seine River (divided into River lots) appears as if draped like a handkerchief on the gridiron survey. The "Pembina Branch Canada Pacific" railway route is optimistic: the line was not completed until 1878 and shortly Niverville was founded in the northeast corner of the Reserve. (from Walker and Miles, *New Standard Atlas of the Dominion of Canada, Montreal and Toronto, 1875*, pp. 92-93.)

and farm, town and rural residence, or heading to more distant places.

There were regular, even if not close, connections between the villages and the outside world, that is to Winnipeg and the trading towns. I don't have time to discuss the towns, important as they are, and that is why earlier on I at least introduced the urban system and the role of Erdman Penner. There were small stores in the villages, but the village streets did not become commercial streets except in Steinbach, and that special case is not our story tonight. Here our concern is the character of the farm villages, and what can still be seen of the old village landscapes in the West Reserve.

Not only the street, but the side ditches, fences, and trees, and also the buildings.

In Reinland, Peter Zacharias speaks of the villages as an expression of community, and with great insight considers the role of the recent buildings that have been put up amongst the old. He says that the modern bungalow “seems to be at ease with the village”, and “it is imperative that they [the bungalows] speak the language of the *darp*,” (Zacharias, 83)

In my interviews in the 1950s, time and time again, I learned about the reasons for the break-up of the land arrangements associated with the farm villages, but I did not obtain any clear information on the legal procedures that were involved, though I often wondered about it. Now documents are appearing on the legal process associated with the land changes, and we are learning how the land transfers were done. It was not easy; transferring property can be a very vexing task.

The numerous, old, long, narrow, farm strips (*koagel* in Low German), cultivated from the villages, are all long since gone, but farm villages remain in the West Reserve, and farmers go out from the villages remaining to work quarter sections. [It is only on this visit to Winnipeg that I learned about the work Parks Canada is doing to preserve Neuberghthal in the West Reserve as a National Heritage site. This is going ahead just in time. Peter Priess has kindly sent me copies of their reports. (Bruce, 1998, Klippenstein, 1997, Priess, 1998)]

In the recent books, essays and biographies that have been published I have learned much about village society, but I have time to make only two brief references to this life. Health care was provided for within the community. What particularly demonstrated and incisively personified this for me was the important local role of mid-wives described in so many biographies of Mennonite women. They were intrepid community health workers, and were kept extremely busy. Birth rates were high, and families large. That was entirely characteristic of this period in all parts of Canada, including, for example, Québec and Ontario.

Another thing that shines through in biographies is the vital role of the family in the community. In this hard working rural society, if a husband or wife died it was necessary to maintain the family structure. This is very evident from the accounts of second or even third marriages. If one unfortunately became a widow or widower and there were children, there was a tendency to marry quickly again so that life in complete households could continue. Another important element of life in the early Mennonite community is the relationship to the larger society, and I turn to that theme next.

### The Non-Mennonite Mind.

Anyone who lived in Steinbach in the 1950s and hung around Derksen Printers, as I did, soon got to know [reporter] Armour Mackay. Armour, as he insisted on being called, even by my five-year old daughter, was a good friend of [printer] Eugene Derksen's, indeed, of all Mennonites, and an indefatigable worker for the general good of Manitoba.

Armour Mackay was a deeply contemplative newspaperman. For some years he was the



*Altbergfeld, East Reserve in September, 1957(top), and January, 2000(bottom). The summer photograph shows a “Rein” i.e. the boundary between two “Koagels”. Koagels were the long narrow fields belonging to individual farmers in the village, here shown running toward the village street in the distance. On light soils, blowing dust gradually collected into a wide ridge on the rein between koagels. One of the few remaining house and barn homesteads (likely empty since 1923) stands on the village street. In the 1950s, Altbergfeld easily had the best example left in Manitoba of the old Mennonite village fields, and whenever I wandered within these koagels and reins you could feel strongly how village and land had formed an intimate close knit farm community. Today, some reins are still visible as shown in the winter photograph taken January 22, 2000, on the day this talk was given in*

Winnipeg Tribune's western Manitoba correspondent based in Brandon, and knew Manitoba well. In June, 1941, he published an article in *Saturday Night* magazine titled “Can Canada Assimilate the Ontario Mind” (Mackay, 1941). I have pilfered my heading from Armour Mackay, although I have modified it a little so the meaning is clearer. Mennonites in Manitoba, of course, associated with

“....Manitoba until the years between the World Wars was very much possessed by the Ontario Mind....”

the non-Mennonite society around them, and Manitoba until the years between the World Wars was very much possessed by the Ontario Mind referred to by Armour Mackay, to which I will return to later.

Before I look at the social context within which the Mennonites lived in Manitoba, I want to provide a broad historical Canadian framework, and briefly describe and categorize some very general attitudes that ethnic groups in Canada over time, have held toward one another. My generalizations are based in large part on ideas expressed by the

sociologist Nathan Keyfitz.

Until approximately the mid-nineteenth century there generally was a feeling of *indifference* and *tolerance* toward different ethnic groups, simply because settlements were isolated and there was limited contact between groups.

Then, after the time of Charles Darwin, there was a period of **racist** beliefs; that there were biologically inferior and superior human stocks, and that northern folk were of superior stock. You find this sort of thinking in books written at the turn of the nineteenth century.

The 1890s to the 1940s was a period of *assimilation*, with the larger British and French Canadian societies wanting to make good Canadians of the diverse immigrant population that was increasingly important in Canada.

After the 1940s there has been a period of *acculturation*, with a greater appreciation and respect for other ethnic groups than one's own. Of course, there is much overlap in the time periods, and at any given time all attitudes have co-existed, as indeed they do today, but the four categories provide a useful perspective on what has been most characteristic in given periods.

At all times there will inevitably be interaction between cultural groups, and from the research being done by Mennonite historians we are learn-



**Going on Foot.** Altbergfeld, East Reserve, September 1957(top), and Blumenfeld, West Reserve, October 1999(bottom). Already abandoned for a generation when the photograph was taken, the gracious tree-lined Altbergfeld village street in the 1950s still seemed to be waiting for a reawakening--for active village life to return. Today local historians are recovering and describing some of the earlier existence. Farm villages still exist in the West Reserve. As in the rest of Canadian society cars and trucks are important, but traces of "going on foot" remain as shown here in Blumenfeld.

ing more and more of the associations of Mennonites with other social groups. When Mennonites settled in Manitoba they experienced the first category in the framework above, i.e. considerable indifference and also tolerance, and then somewhat later the third category, i.e. strong attempts at assimilation into the larger society.

**Terms of Settlement.**

I want to approach the theme of Mennonite interrelationships with the larger society through asking whether there was any exceptionalism within Canada in the treatment of Mennonites as a collective group. That is, did Mennonites receive any special consideration that was not available to other Canadian citizens? To do this in the time I have available, let me just quickly identify particular issues, without going into any detail.

Mennonites were given large land reserves for their exclusive settlement, but that was not really exceptional treatment because the federal government which was in charge of natural resources in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta until 1930 made special land arrangements for many groups. As pacifists, Mennonites were given exemption from military service as part of the agreement in migrating to Canada, and had special, that is, exceptional, collective rights. Professor Adolf Ens has explained this exceptional treatment very clearly (Ens, 1994).

There was religious freedom in Canada, but because Mennonite churches were closely involved in internal community administration and education, complications arose in these matters in rela-

tionships with the state. Participation in local municipal administration was a problem for Mennonites because many believed in a fundamental separation of the Mennonite communities and the state, or at least as much as possible in a democracy.

This relationship has been studied by a number of scholars, and there will likely be considerable more research in the future on the issue. The presence of towns that were fully functioning constituent parts of the Canadian urban system was, of course, a very salient factor in the development of local government amongst the Mennonite communities. These are all important issues, but the only one that I have time to discuss in a little more detail is education.

**Education.**

Education was a vital meeting place of Mennonites and the larger society. Schools are so vitally important in all our lives, and generate so much heart-felt personal advocacy, because it is almost impossible to direct the course of cultural change except through schools. Children, parents, and the whole local community are all part of that process. Just imagine how today we are always up in arms about our schools, and then project the same feelings back into the Mennonite communities of over a hundred years ago.

Two school systems that profoundly affected the course of Mennonite education were introduced into Manitoba in the 1870s. Each was structured in part by an extremely formidable educational leader.

One was Johann Cornies, active in the 1840s

in reforming the Mennonite school system in Russia, and the other was Egerton Ryerson, instrumental in the 1840s to 1870s in creating the public school system in Ontario, on which numerous other provincial systems in English-speaking Canada were based.

“Two school systems that profoundly affected the course of Mennonite education were introduced into Manitoba in the 1870s.”

Let me summarize their respective positions. Cornies stressed and supported: teaching in German; basic literacy (because reading the bible was important so that all Mennonites could personally interpret holy scripture); schools financed by the community; the establishment of a model school; high standards of instruction; a system that was inward looking rather than exploratory with respect to the great world of learning. The last point has to be qualified because by the time of the 1870s migration to North America Mennonites in Russia were beginning to introduce more advanced forms of education.

“Education was a vital meeting place of Mennonites and the larger society.”

Ryerson stressed and supported: teaching in English; basic literacy; that education is a public good so the state is necessarily involved; that in a democracy every child must be educated because this benefits the whole community; “free” schools, that is, schools financed by local property taxes without special fees; a highly centralized curriculum and authorized textbooks to be used exclusively; normal schools to ensure high consistent teaching standards; and provision for higher education. There is some convergence of ideas in the two school systems, but clashes were inevitable, particularly over language.

“...the public schools were regarded as essential institutions for the desired Canadianization...”

On their arrival in Manitoba, Mennonites immediately established their own schools, but before long larger outside events forced changes that caused tremendous stress in the community. These external events have been thoroughly, even endlessly, discussed by Canadian historians, and I can only itemize them here. First, Franco-Manitobans and the English-speaking majority in the province battled over the use of French in the schools, and the issue of the compulsory use of the English language in schools was as traumatic for the Mennonites and their use of German as it was for the Franco-Manitobans and their use of French.

Second, the availability of public funds based on real property for the support of public schools

proved divisive amongst Mennonites, some of whom were tempted to forsake their self-financed confessional schools for the more broadly financed public schools.

Third, the continued migration of non-British folk to Manitoba engendered fear of a fragmented provincial social fabric in the larger society, and the public schools were regarded as essential institutions for the desired Canadianization, the assimilation of these newcomers.

Fourth, the flag issue of 1906, that is, compulsory flying of the Union Jack in Manitoba schools, raised concern amongst pacifist Mennonites.

Fifth, World War I unleashed anti-German feeling in Canada in which the German-speaking and pacifist Mennonites were collaterally caught.

Sixth, there was insistence by the Manitoba Department of Education on a uniform prescribed curriculum and authorized texts, a consequence of Ryerson's extreme views on standardization.

Seventh, provincial legislation was passed in 1916 that made English the sole language of instruction in all Manitoba schools, and made school attendance compulsory. Compulsory school attendance was an effective lever to enforce conformity to all provincial education regulations. It is worth noting that compulsory attendance had been long delayed in Manitoba compared to some other provinces. In Ontario compulsory attendance was legislated into law in 1871 and in Nova Scotia in 1882, although in Québec it was not legislated until 1943.

“...Mennonites felt that the Privilegium of 1873 had guaranteed Mennonites their own school system,.....”

In the Mennonite communities there were serious differences over these various provincial education regulations as they were introduced over their first half century of living in Manitoba. Some Mennonites were for public schools, and were willing to accommodate English instruction; others supported private schools and strongly resisted the English language. The existence of the urban system, and the outside society that it represented, was an important factor in affecting the thinking of those Mennonites who supported the public school system.

There was much contention amongst Mennonites, and an important point to bear in mind is that there were profound, deeply held convictions on both sides of the school issue. This made the cleavages within the Mennonite community all the more difficult and poignant. It did not help that some Mennonites felt that the Privilegium of 1873 had guaranteed Mennonites their own school system, which in fact in its final precise legal lan-



*Ridge Road and Koop enn Bua Country. This is the earliest federal government topographic map of the region: the information dates from 1920. The Ridge Road from Old Barkfield (Alberfeld) to Steinbach dominates the road system. Two farm villages still exist, Alberfeld and Schönsee, as shown by farm buildings closely lining each village street. Remnants of Old Grünthal are visible. The automobile had come to Canada, and “G” symbolizes a gas station (see Steinbach); “P” is a post office, a “cross” a church, and a “flag” a school. (from Canada: Office of the Surveyor General, Three-Mile Sectional Map Series, Map No. 23, Ottawa, 1922).*

guage it had not done.

In any event, education was a provincial not a federal responsibility, so the school issues were fought out within Manitoba. The upshot of the struggle was that conservative Mennonites felt that their educational entitlements in Manitoba and Canada were shattered, in the same way Franco-Manitobans felt that their entitlements were overridden. The school controversies set in motion the departure of about 7,700 Mennonites from Manitoba and Saskatchewan to Mexico and Paraguay in the 1920s. In 1921, just before the migrations began, there were 21,300 Mennonites in Manitoba and 20,500 in Saskatchewan; about 23% of Manitoba Mennonites left for Latin America, and 17% of Saskatchewan Mennonites.

#### The Ontario Mind.

Could this confrontation have been handled differently? Here I am most interested in basic attitudes, in underlying feelings. Let us turn back to Armour Mackay. He wrote in the article I referred

“The Manitoba government...did not...take into account what it was doing to the culture of a minority group....”

to earlier that he had observed a mind in Manitoba, bred in Ontario, that was closed, stiff, intolerant, resistant to examining new ideas, and unwilling to compromise. I would add that there was in this mind a fear of the new highly varied society that had been emerging since the 1870s as a conse-

quence of continued immigration to the Prairies, particularly from Eastern Europe.

Armour Mackay, wisely, says that not all the Manitobans stemming from Ontario had the difficult qualities he described. Of course, some Mennonites had similar characteristics — many folks do. There was rigidity on both sides, and as a result an incredible thing happened. Almost one quarter of Manitoba Mennonites left Canada.

The Manitoba government of the day did not sufficiently take into account what it was doing to the culture of a minority group through its school regulations. (We should not forget that the new school regulations of 1916 applied to all minority groups in Manitoba.) Sadly, that sort of consideration and respect has only become part of our value system since the 1950s. Value systems were different in the 1910s and 1920s. There was no general outrage in this province of 610,000 people as thousands of Mennonites departed. Much compromise and understanding would have been required from government authorities who held power, and that wisdom just wasn't there.

The recently introduced, and very widely thrown around, term “ethnic cleansing” has been used to describe what transpired when almost 8,000 Canadian Mennonites left Canada in the 1920s. It is inappropriate, because it is not a precise usage. The entire issue of the Mennonite migration is complex. The thinking of the provincial officials, and both the motives and procedures of the provincial cabinet and bu-

“Armour Mackay....observed a mind in Manitoba, bred in Ontario, that was closed, stiff, intolerant, resistant to examining new ideas, and unwilling to compromise.”

reaucrats have to be carefully studied before we know what lay behind their actions and inactions in that period. Clearly the whole background of provincial policy needs thorough investigation: perhaps some cabinet documents and personal correspondence are left that record the views of the government and the beliefs of its members as they were expressed and held at the time.

#### Assimilation.

There is no question that this was a period when the mind-set of Canada was assimilationist. Yet at the same time there was also considerable appreciation of Mennonites and other non-British groups by members of the larger society.

For instance, A. G. Bradley, one of the finest observers to write on Canada at the turn of nineteenth century wrote in 1903: “The Mennonites

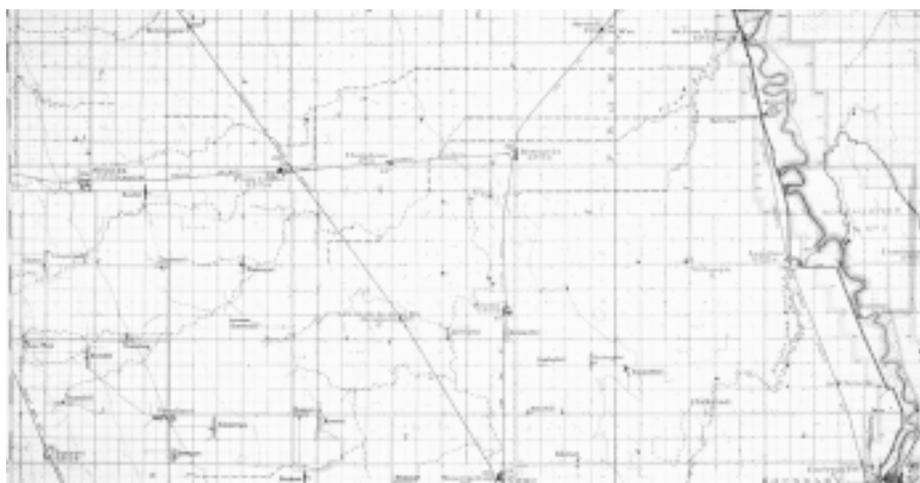
have been in the North-West more than a quarter of a century, and are only now beginning to give way in some sort to modern influences. Even if it takes another two generations to make Canadians of them, what matters it? In the meantime they are far better pioneers than a great many of those English-speaking emigrants that Canada is not unnaturally striving mainly to attract will eventually prove," (Bradley, 297).

And more particularly, there are some comments from an official government report of 1926, *Unused Lands of Manitoba*, requested by John Bracken, Premier of Manitoba from 1922 to 1943, that reveal the thinking of the time: "In the segregated communities [i.e. solid block settlements] the process of Canadianization is considerably slower....The Canadianization of these new settlers is a matter which must be considered, and in doing so it must not be forgotten that each of these nationalities has some contribution to make to our civilization. The process of Canadianization must not be one of repression, but a real assimilation in which their contribution shall not be left out....In order to understand the problem of Canadianizing the non-Anglo-Saxon, and to appreciate the contribution each type may make to our national life, it is necessary to study the history, customs, ideals and standards of living of each class. Only by so doing can the leaders of our national life lay plans for the complete assimilation of the many elements of our cosmopolitan population, and to encourage immigration from these countries whose people can make the best contributions to our national life," (Murchie and Grant, 53-4).

"...the larger society,...still did not appreciate that equality amongst ethnic groups is a fundamental and essential characteristic of a truly multicultural society."

There is a special note on Mennonites: "Let it not be imagined for one moment that the Mennonites have made no contribution to our development. Their methods may not always be the most up-to-date, but in the early days they showed the possibility of wheat growing and general farming; they demonstrated that a good living was obtainable and that money could be made farming on the plains. Long before the Manitoba Rural Credits Act was dreamed of Mennonites borrowed from their brethren at three and three and a half per cent when banks and loan companies would take only select risks at eight per cent. The Manitoba Settlers' Annual Purchase Act, popularly known as the Winkler Cow Scheme, was acknowledged by its originator to be an idea borrowed from the Mennonites," (Murchie and Grant, 56).

And comments on settlers of French origin follow: "Settlers of this type are apt to segregate and maintain their language, customs, and religious ideals. The language question has been worn threadbare by arguments, and it would seem the true solution of the problem of assimilating the French type lies in sympathetic and intelligent co-operation rather than in opposition or even in compromise," Murchie and Grant, 56).



*West Reserve Farm Villages c. 1920. At this time 24 farm villages still existed. However, changes in farm operations had occurred. "Koagels" had been given up; farmers from each village now drove out to till adjacent fields, to which they held title or rented, laid out in the quarter section survey. Urban centers had developed at intervals along railway lines through the Reserve; of these centers only Haskett has disappeared and others have flourished. (from Canada: Office of the Surveyor General, Three-Mile Sectional map Series, Map No. 23, Ottawa, 1922).*

You can see that the problem of relationships amongst ethnic groups is raised in both Bradley and in the official government document. Yet despite many tolerant expressive words, the larger society, as indicated in the sentiments expressed in *Unused Lands of Manitoba*, still did not appreciate that equality amongst ethnic groups is a fundamental and essential characteristic of a truly multicultural society. The underlying idea of assimilation was still dominant. On occasion, indeed all too often, such assimilationist ideas are evident in our society today, as a reading of the daily press reveals. Nowadays, Mennonites to a considerable extent are part of the larger Canadian society, and are not immune to such thinking.

Proceeding onward from how the Mennonite and non-Mennonite minds met in institutional situations, let us turn next to cultural expressions of the Mennonite community.

#### Creating a Cultural Area.

Few local regions are widely known in Canada. To indicate what I mean by a local region, the province of Alberta, for example, has two such regions that all here will recognize because they are so well known across the entire country, the Foothills and the Peace River Country. Both have very distinctive regional cultures, and descriptions by authors of those areas have been very important in helping to create those regions in our imaginations. But what about the Mennonite communities? How well are they known in the country?

The Mennonite Reserves were well known in Canada in the 1870s and '80s. Interest in the Reserves was widespread, because they represented successful endeavours in settling the Great Plains, lands recognized as difficult and essentially unknown to potential agriculturalists at the time of the Mennonites arrival. Then interest in the Reserves as a local region faded away in Canada as the urban system of the West developed, and the wheat staple of that great larger region -- the Prairies -- became the economic engine of Canadian development and caught the Canadian imagination.

Certainly the Red River Valley is well known on occasion in Canada, and the Valley is in part Mennonite country, that is, the Mennonite culture area. (I use Mennonite country because the word reserve is little used today.) The Red River Valley sometimes returns to Canadian public consciousness through catastrophes such as the great Manitoba Floods of 1950 and 1997. But those are episodic events, and represent only fleeting regional recognitions.

#### Mennonite Literary World.

During the 1960s to the '90s, however, there was a firmer, a more lasting, return of the Mennonite country to Canadian public consciousness through writing. In 1990, Professor Robert Kroetsch chaired and participated in a panel discussion on Mennonite writing at a conference in Waterloo, Ontario.

In what was the closing session of the conference he said: "Another genre that I noticed as I

"Professor Robert Kroetsch....`It seems to me that southern Manitoba might at this point be the most inscribed landscape in Canada.'"

listened was landscape itself. It seems to me that southern Manitoba might at this point be the most inscribed landscape in Canada. I remember touring in the dales of England and being oppressed after about two days. Every rock had been sat upon by a Wordsworth or a Dorothy at least. And all of this heavy inscription."

"And I now feel I could spend days touring southern Manitoba with a sense that everything had been inscribed, as I say, written down. I like that, that in Canada finally we have a landscape that is a literary text and *that* might be the greatest accomplishment of the Mennonite writer so far as that vast text that is southern Manitoba is con-

cerned,” (Kroetsch, 224).

I want to refer to two aspects of that writing in connection with the Mennonite communities.

First, the preservation of documents and the writing of histories are absolutely essential. What has been accomplished in this regard in the Mennonite communities is highly impressive. It is, of course, not unique because all groups in Canada are doing the same thing these days. People are inherently interested in their own community’s background. The Mennonite historical societies are compiling much valuable data on family matters, and collecting church records, personal diaries, and business records, copying government documents, and the like. And now we are getting more and more village histories and biographies. Family origins and experiences are being revealed through this work. As you will have noticed, and I am very grateful for this, much of my talk tonight is based on this new and rapidly growing material.

Second, culture areas are brought to life through creative artists. Novelists, poets, artists, and musicians are creating a more widely recognized perception of the Mennonite country. Their work is particularly important because though regions are based on the reality out there, that is, the chaos that is the surface of the earth, regions actually only exist in the mind. Writers, and I will stick with them in my discussion tonight, need outlets for their work. Therefore, in the process of inventing the modern conception of the Mennonite country newspapers and journals have been and remain very important — publications such as the *Steinbach Post*, *Carillon News*, *Altona Echo*, *Canadian Mennonite*, *Mennonite Mirror*, *Preservings*, and *Rhubarb*.

It is astonishing, as Kroetsch says, how much good creative writing is coming from the Manitoba Mennonite communities. The best writing comes out of the local and regional experience of the individual, and out of familiarity with geographical, historical, and other creative works. Out of this background talented writers bring to life and delineate the Mennonite culture region. I want to draw to your attention three kinds of writing, poetry, humour, and novels.

Poets give us the most concentrated and incisive ideas. Their thoughts spring out of deeply personal experiences, and cut to the heart of personal relationships; often those are of growing up and reflect rebellion against a restrictive environment. Poets are more historical in their reflections than novelists. They must be brave because they are exposing their angst; and their work is very often explosive and unsettling. Amongst important poets who tell us about the Mennonite communities through their own experiences are Di Brandt, Pat Friesen, and Audrey Poetker.

Much humour and wild comedy is being produced by Mennonites. These creative works convey deep cultural undertones, based on the human qualities of the region, emerging out of life in Low German, the background of long established church customs, and the myriad tensions and comic possibilities rising out of rural/urban and restrictive/more open contrasting ways. Of special note is the fact that the Mennonite humorous novels cut decisively across many social strata. Books or essays by Arnold Dyck, Paul Hiebert, Jack Thiessen, Miriam Toews, and Armin Wiebe preserve something very important: the essence of Low German culture, close to

soil, family, and kin.

More conventional narrative novels and short stories present either the full context of the Manitoba culture area, or of the places where the Mennonites came from in Russia. They provide virtually an anthropological portrayal: life in the *darpa*, the landscape, folkways, neighbouring, the importance or non-importance of the church, family tensions, associations with non-Mennonite cultures, a modern life of movement — almost a highway culture, and insight into social situations, including class distinctions. You can readily think of the books and essays by David Bergen, Delbert Plett, Al Reimer, and Armin Wiebe.

Many cultural changes have taken place in the Mennonite communities of southern Manitoba, including the arrival of new Mennonite immigrants from Russia (Rusländer) in the 1920s even as others left for Latin America. Another important change, characteristic of North American society generally, is that people move readily and are constantly in motion. Today in the old Mennonite culture area of southern Manitoba there are well established communities, very complete institutionally, and complex enough socially to be interesting in themselves, although the young often do not think so. But there is much movement within the communities and to distant parts, to Winnipeg and beyond.

Thus there are two contrasting Mennonite societies in Manitoba, a long-established culture area where Mennonite culture and institutions are still very apparent, and a remarkably different one of the city. This dichotomy, this tension between the local and the distant, delineates today’s Manitoba Mennonite world.

This dichotomous existence, too, is very much the world of artists, and is reflected in their work. Mennonite artists, convey in their work what is important to them in their community. And if they get it right, it speaks to the members of that community. The best artists let us see ourselves, and deepen our understanding of the Mennonite culture area. This may hurt. If the writing is first class, and gives an insight into human life in general, the work will have a universal resonance and be of interest to other communities. And that is what Robert Kroetsch means when he says that a new landscape -- or culture area in my geographical terms -- is being inscribed within Canada.

### The Mennonite Mind.

Very few material things in the world last. You well might say that the Pyramids and Stonehenge have. Perhaps. But it is spiritual ideas, good research, and literary works that truly last.

In Canada it is quite amazing for a regional cultural group concentrated in a relatively small area, such as the Mennonite communities, to retain its identity within an identifiable territory. There is great staying power in the Mennonite cultural group within its culture area. Why?

For one thing, many Mennonites remain in the area their forebears settled, despite the modern tendency to move to cities, because opportunities have been created to make a living. This cultural concentration gives the region a firm identity. Thus the long term success of the 1870s search for land in North America -- and a reserve -- is demonstrated by the Mennonite culture area of today. Certainly

there have been great changes, but the Mennonite communities in a living way -- a folk way -- are still amazingly distinctive.

There is a second powerful reason for this strong persisting distinctiveness. As I have just argued, Mennonites know themselves through their cre-

“There is great staying power in the Mennonite cultural group within its culture area.”

ative artists. And this recognition increasingly extends well beyond the Mennonite communities.

So, in some ways through writing history and literature we have come back to where we were in the 1870s and '80s, being well known in the land, despite being “die Stillen im Lande.”

Now the task will be to get people to visit the Mennonite culture area -- the actual landscape -- described in the burgeoning Mennonite creative literature. I myself have had very little opportunity to travel the side roads or visit the *darpa* for some time. Yet it is important to do so. It is on the side roads and in the *darpa* where we get a personal sense of what Mennonites created in the early years on the land.

“...the Mennonite communities in a living way -- a folk way -- are still amazingly distinctive.”

In the June, 1999, issue of *Preservings* I read how in 1912 a young man, Abraham Wiebe, later an honoured scientist, walked from Bergfeld to Steinbach along the ridge road to look for a job — *twelve miles*, barefoot (Vogt, 91). I don’t suggest you do that. But do stop your cars, get out, and follow the paths, not the sidewalks: the paths speak the language of the *darpa* and of the landscape of the *struckfoarma*.

In concluding, I want to express my particular appreciation to the non-academics who are working on local histories, gathering documents, and writing biographies. That represents great personal dedication, and personal fulfilment as well.

“It is on the side roads and in the *darpa* where we get a personal sense of what Mennonites created in the early years on the land.”

University persons such as myself are expected to do research (as well as teach) as part of our pay package. It is true that many university people have a special research interest in Mennonite studies because of their Mennonite background. But it is those persons who volunteer their free time who are truly at the heart of recovering the history of Mennonite settlement. All power to you.

### Reference:

The article by John Warkentin, “1874 Revisited,” is a slightly revised version of the same paper published in *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Volume 18, 2000, pages 59-81.

# Island of Chortitza: Sunday, 1840

A Sunday in 1840 on the Island of Chortitza ("Ein Sonntag von anno 1840 auf der Insel Chortitza"), by Kornelius Hildebrand, Sr. (Note One). Introduction by Professor Peter Pauls, 51 Rutgers Bay, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 3C9.

## Introduction.

This fascinating account of a Sunday morning worship service on the Island of Chortitza was written by Kornelius Hildebrand (1833-1920), son of Jacob Hildebrand (1795-1867), and grandson of Peter Hildebrand (1754-1849)(Note Two).

Peter Hildebrand was the author of *From Danzig to Russia*, a pamphlet written in 1836 and first published in Russia in 1888, approximately 100 years after the first Mennonite migration from Prussia to South Russia (Note Three). Kornelius Hildebrand wrote his recollection of a memorable Sunday much later, presumably as part of his family history which he entitled "Our Life Story." Both authors relied heavily on what they could remember about the events being described, Kornelius to an even greater extent than his grandfather (Note Four).

In 1965, Victor Peters published both documents under the title *Zwei Dokumente: Quellen zum Geschichtstudium der Mennoniten in Russland* as part of the original *Echo Verlag* series. In 2000, the two pieces were published in English as part of the new *Echo Historical Series*. Professor Adolf Ens and Walter E. Toews translated Peter Hildebrand's *From Danzig to Russia* for this latest edition. Professor Ens has added numerous helpful explanatory footnotes to those provided by Victor Peters in the 1965 edition.

Peter Hildebrand describes the difficult beginnings of the new settlement on the Dniepr River. There is little promise in his account of the prosperous times that still lay ahead. Kornelius, looking back several decades after 1840, is obviously describing the settlement in full bloom. There is nothing in Kornelius's account of the hardships and the disunity the first generation of settlers experienced. Victor Peters pays tribute to Kornelius Hildebrand in his "Foreword" to the 1965 edition:

"Kornelius Hildebrand was a diligent family chronicler whose interests were not limited to family data. He was a careful observer, whose unpublished 'Our Life Story' presents a graphic description of his times. In addition, like most other natives of 'The Kamp,' he had a deep love for and loyalty to his village and especially for the Island of Chortitza" (Note Five).

Peters also provides the reader with the necessary historical context:

"The Island of Chortitza, also known as 'The Kamp,' was located below the rapids of the Dniepr River. It was 12 verst (eight miles) long and three verst wide. 'Its shape,' writes Kornelius Hildebrand, 'resembled a fish bladder, narrower in the middle and wider at the ends.' Since 1789 the Island was in Mennonite hands. The only Mennonite village lay on the eastern side, near the large Dniepr, that is, the wider branch of the river split by the Island."

"Before Mennonite settlement, the Island was

## A Sunday in 1840 on the Island of Chortitza,

by Kornelius Hildebrand, Sr. Translated by Professor Peter Pauls, 51 Rutgers Bay, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 3C9.

It is a glorious May morning. The natural world is basking in the early spring sunshine. The hills and valleys of the island are glorious in their rich green hues. Joyful larks with trilling voices are announcing the news to all the world: "All of life has been renewed, the earth is in full blossom once again! Awake, O human child, from your mind-boggling sleep of apathy, from your indifference to all that is beautiful, marvellous and made manifest daily in God's wonderful creation!"

The smooth surface of the broad Dniepr sparkles like a brightly polished mirror as it reflects the light from the rising sun. Here and there, a frisky fish jumps up from beneath the surface in youthful exuberance and disturbs the otherwise perfectly smooth surface by creating gradually expanding concentric ripples. A seagull drifts across the river, occasionally dipping its breast in the cool water.

The houses of the little island village, separated here and there by shore rocks, stretch out along the island and down to the very riverbank. From the chimneys of these houses columns of wispy, blue smoke rise straight up into the perfectly calm air, creating an almost festive atmosphere, like prayer offerings from so many aromatic altars.

No vehicles can be seen on the street, no

known as one of the main centres of the Zaporozhian Cossacks. For centuries the entire surrounding area had been the boundary where the spheres of interest of the Tatars, Poles and Russians intersected. As long as these competing interests were there, all parties tolerated the Cossacks as a kind of buffer state. However, once Tsarina Catherine had defeated the Turks and proceeded to take possession of this fertile area, these wild, untamed, freedom-loving Cossacks became a source of turmoil. As a result, the Zaporozhian Cossacks were driven out (1775), and two decades later the beautiful villages of the Mennonites of the Old Colony rose in their place. The familiar and dreamy village on the Island, as described by Kornelius Hildebrand in 1840, was then already 51 years old. After World War I the village was dissolved and its inhabitants forced to vacate the Island" (Note Six).

Abridged versions of my translation of *Ein Sonntag von anno 1840 auf der Insel Chortitza* were published in *Mennonite Historian*, Vol. VII, No. 2, June, 1981 and *Mennonite Mirror*, Vol. XI, No. 3, November, 1981. What follows is my unabridged translation of Kornelius Hildebrand's description of the church service, as it appears in the Adolf Ens/Walter E. Toews publication. By Dr. Peter Pauls.

sign of everyday labour, no noise disturbs the solemn stillness--it's Sunday, a day of rest, and the peaceful, restful atmosphere seems to have taken over all of nature, even restless humankind, at least for a few hours.

Thanks be to God for this gift called Sunday!

The first ringing of the church bells on the other side of the river can now be heard, calling devout worshippers to the service at the consecrated place. The musical sound of the bells is in keeping with the solemn, Sunday-like atmosphere in nature. The islanders can't even imagine a Sunday without the sound of these bells. These sounds waft gently across the river and through the open window, waking the infant in its cradle as well as the boys and girls, announcing to all the joys associated with Sunday. These melodic sounds continue as the worshippers make their way to the service. Thus it has always been and thus it surely will continue in the future.

On this beautiful Sunday morning there is to be a worship service in the island schoolroom. The anticipation of this is enough to arouse an attitude of reverence in the hearts of these simple rural people. It is still early, but already the venerable village fathers are on their way to the schoolhouse. They walk in a slow, dignified manner, dressed in the obligatory, long coats made of blue fabric. These are the coats they first wore many years earlier on the day they were baptized. Since that time their bodies have expanded considerably; as a result the garments have lost much of their original fashionable appearance.

However, the whitish seams and the worn, faded fabric are part of the overall, questionable image of respectability. Each man carefully cradles under his arm a bulky hymnal, inherited from his grandfather. This hymnal, brought from Prussia, has wooden covers enclosed in pigskin and is decorated on each side with five round brass buttons and two leather straps.

Each of these men is accompanied by his honourable wife or Muhmke who is usually attired in a green or blue cotton dress and blue stockings made of the wool from their own sheep. The islanders themselves have shorn their own sheep, carded, spun, dyed and knitted their own wool. The Muhmke's shoes are made of sturdy leather of light cork. The hem of her skirt is just high enough so that it does not sweep up the dust on the street.

She wears a brown kerchief over her torso; the points of the kerchief pass under her arms and are tied behind her back. The head is adorned with a black cap that covers every-



A copy of a painting by Heinrich P. Pauls, showing the *Wirtschaft* of his parents on the Island of Chortitza. This farm originally belonged to his ancestor Jakob Hoepfner, the delegate who negotiated with Imperial Russian authorities for the immigration of Mennonites from Prussia to Russia in 1788. Spring 1976. Photo courtesy of G. Lorentz, *Damit es nich Vergessen Werde/Heritage Remembered*, page 47. See also East Reserve 125, page 7, for a drawing of the *Wirtschaft* of Hoepfner's grandson Jakob Hildebrand (1795-1867), Aeltester of the *Kronsweide Gemeinde* from 1826-67, by great-grandson Kornelius Hildebrand, author of "A Sunday, 1840".

thing--the long billowing brown hair of the younger woman, her ears and even part of her smooth forehead--but also the grey crown that comes with age. Right in front, stretching from ear to ear and framing the face like a black halo there is a headdress of stiffly starched ruffled lace. All this is fashioned under the chin with long broad ribbons.

The Muhmke also carries an antique hymn in her hand, covered with a plain, dark blue handkerchief. She carries a *Marienblatt* as well, a plant grown in her garden especially for these walks to the church--or a sweet-smelling rose--and if neither of these is available a small

sprig of wild thyme that her daughter brought her from the fields the day before.

After all, when one sits in church one's senses must be able to perceive a "Sunday fragrance." For this reason every house is decorated with a cluster of blue lilacs interspersed with long-stemmed tulips set in a vase or pitcher and placed on a table in the best room. This practice could be seen as a kind of altar offering, not unlike the practice followed by worshippers in the temple of ancient Jerusalem.

Attired thus in their Sunday best, father and mother walk to the church. The grown-up children accompany them. Sons who have

reached the age of 17 or 18 years, provided that they are the offspring of well-to-do parents, wear the coat of indeterminate grey known as a *Schirkassinrock*. The younger boys wear white shirts instead of the everyday blue.

The grown-up daughters resemble their mothers in their dress but they are different in that their blue eyes peep roguishly out from their loosely buttoned cotton kerchiefs as if they are about to break into laughter. But behaviour and dress must be modest, especially when one is on the way to church. (To come to church in a fiery red jacket would be seen as a serious violation of order and established custom, almost a desecration of a sacred place.) The very young boys and girls run along barefoot, since the first swallow was sighted long ago.

In this manner old and young proceed to church in a festive atmosphere and in a joyous mood. A mother may gently admonish her younger offspring for nodding off during the sermon which can go on for two hours. She would be embarrassed if the congregation were disturbed by loud snoring. At the same time such a youngster is warned not to be mischievous. Her very youngest has been left at home in the care of a Russian maid or an older sister. These littlest ones observe Sunday morning devotions by playing with shells in the clean white sand on the riverbank.

My parents were also of the opinion that children need much love and good examples but not very much formal "religion." Our Lord Jesus embraced and blessed the little ones but did not demand that they follow him. That will happen as a matter of course if the parents walk in His ways and bring their children to Him in their prayers.

The school is situated quite close to the mighty river. Only the street, actually a roadway, and a narrow stretch of riverbank lie be-



The "Harbour" at the Island of Chortitza. Mennonite *Wirtschaft* in the background. View to the west. The *Wirtschaften* were facing the City of Alexandrowsk (later Zaporozhe) on the east bank of the Dnieper. Painting by Is. P. Klassen, courtesy of Is. P. Klassen, *Die Insel Chortitza* (Winnipeg, 1979), page 57.

tween the building and the water. For the newcomer, the view of the majestic river from the windows of the schoolhouse is most delightful; the native islander, however, takes little notice of this unusual natural prospect, particularly on a Sunday when he focuses his attention entirely on the awaited worship service. Within half an hour, most of the inhabitants of the island are assembled at this place.

Differences of opinion on religious matters are still unknown among these people and the neglect of public worship services is simply unthinkable, especially since a minister can visit them only every third or fourth Sunday. Should someone who is in good health be absent from his usual place in the schoolroom on Sunday, this would create such a stir that there would be an immediate inquiry and, within an hour of the conclusion of the service, the entire village would know for what reason the person in question had not been there.

“Each man carefully cradles under his arm a bulky hymnal, inherited from his grandfather.”

The schoolroom is not large. The worshippers sit closely crowded together, the men to the right and the women to the left of the improvised pulpit.

A solemn quiet comes over the congregation. No one instigates conversation. A new arrival wishes his neighbour “Good Morning” but only in the softest whisper. Other than this, no word is spoken. The silence is reminiscent of a graveside ceremony. A hungry little bee, which has strayed into the sanctuary through one of the open windows, suddenly creates a loud humming noise. One can also hear the chirping of sparrows and warbling of a blackbird in the bushes outside.

One of the men sitting near the front finds the silence deafening and begins to cough awkwardly. This is followed by barely audible shuffling of feet. One of the young women, feeling a delicate sneeze coming on, cautiously takes her stiffly starched bag which contains the *Marienblatt* or spring of thyme, and wafts it back and forth a few times under her nose, releasing a veritable cloud of herbal perfume which drifts slowly over to her neighbour.

Once again, there is absolute quiet--silent, pious expectation. Even the more active people sit as if hypnotized. If one looks closely enough one can see on the white, otherwise smooth foreheads of the young maids, fashionable wrinkles of concentration and devotion.

The *Vorsänger* now emerges from the teacher's living quarters and proceeds with measured, ceremonious strides to take the place reserved for him next to the minister's still vacant chair.

The *Vorsänger* of this place is a man with a large, bony physique, a true islander. He is obviously well nourished, his face smoothly shaved, his handsome head covered with shiny black hair, parted in the middle, combed

smoothly back behind the ears and cut off straight at the neck. He wears his long, black ruffled coat with great dignity. Since there is no resident minister in the village, he is the leader of the congregation and hence a very important person, at least locally.

Solemnly he takes his place, turns a few pages in the hymnal as though searching for an appropriate hymn, coughs a few times, and then announces monotonically: “Rise up, rise up, my spirit to praise--Number 358.”

After a brief pause, he repeats: “Number 358!”

There is a brief moment of silence and then he begins to sing with stentorian voice. The others do not hold back either, as do so many today who are young in years but old at heart, who don't deserve the voices their Creator gave them. Here, however, 50 voices join in with enough energy and enthusiasm to bring down the walls of Jerico or put the Midianites to flight. The singing is full-throated and vigorous with many challenging high notes and low notes but these singers proceed, without faltering, to the conclusion.

There are a few minutes, finally, to allow all concerned to pause for breath. This brief respite is followed by the hymn which precedes the sermon: “Dearest Jesus, we are here! Number 86!”

The *Vorsänger* need not have announced the number of this hymn even once because every *Ohmke* and every *Muhmke* knows where “Dearest Jesus” is to be found. In fact, most of them have memorized that one from beginning to end.

“The *Muhmke* also...carries a *Marienblatt*....or a sweet-smelling rose...”

In these “good old days,” many simple, pious souls, especially mothers, go to the hymnal for spiritual nourishment and for this reason are better acquainted with this book than are most church members today. However, the *Vorsänger* knows his duty and calls out “Number 86” once again at the top of his voice. People living as far as three houses from the church could have heard him, had they been at home, for the windows facing Jerusalem are always open during the worship service as Daniel's were, according to the Bible.

And so all three verses of this song are sung. The beloved, elderly minister, who has entered during the singing, now stands up in front of his table upon which there is a lectern; he takes a blue envelope containing a handwritten sermon from the side pocket of his coat and salutes the congregation without looking at his papers with the apostolic greeting: “The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

With these words the congregation becomes as worshipful as those who long ago sat at the feet of Jesus. All that is earthly becomes silent.

Let us observe this minister more closely.

He is, of course, an unpretentious man, but he is conscious of the fact that he has the respect of the congregation before which he now stands. He is a man who is aware also of his outward appearance. He is obviously a man of some means as his shiny leather *korwonsche* boots testify. The trousers of this cleric are tucked neatly into this brightly polished, elegant footgear. Around his neck he wears a long black silk scarf, the corners of which hang down almost to his vest pockets. On each corner of the scarf, the initials of the wearer are embroidered in red cotton.

Ohm Jacob Dyck, who in his day was Aeltester of the Chortitza Church, always replaced the customary black scarf with a white one on special festive days such as baptism. Like many of our forefathers, he felt that on such solemn occasions one must come into the presence of the Almighty immaculate even in one's dress. A slovenly outward appearance was an indication that the inward state was in even greater disorder.

After a brief introduction and prayer, the text is announced: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

The minister then reads a deeply moving sermon written in a straightforward, unaffected style. There is something in his voice, however, which speaks of personal experience and profound commitment. This simplicity and humility appeal directly to the hearts of his listeners without the aid of rhetoric. The congregation, deeply stirred, sits in reverent silence. Now and then a mother wipes a tear from her cheek. After all, the words spoken here emanated originally from the sacred mouth of Jesus. It was He who commanded his disciples to convey this blessed invitation to all mankind, “Come unto me.”

How these words strike home, for it is the language forever associated with Canaan. It is the call of the beckoning Father. And who is not troubled and burdened? There is so much in life that one could regret, so much that weighs heavily upon the spirit. Yet, these troubles which we very often bring upon ourselves we can lay at His feet; the burdens which He places upon our shoulders are light in comparison.

The sermon concludes with the apostolic blessing. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God...” If I am protected by God's grace, then all Satan's accusations based on my sinfulness and imperfections are null and void, no matter how they may be argued. And so I am joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. “Amen.”

After this blessing the church members who have recently become engaged are announced. The names of the couples and the names of their families are made public. Those who might have objections to the marriages are asked to voice them in good time.

The minister then takes his seat, leans over to the *Vorsänger*, and whispers to him: I would like to have the congregation sing the hymn, “Follow me, our Saviour calls us!”



Panoramic photograph of Chortitza Island, right, with the City of Zaporozhe, to the left. View to the south. The Wirtschaften in the Mennonite village of Insel Chortitza were situated facing the Dnieper and the city beach on the other side. The farmyards sloped up from the river and included orchards and gardens.

The Vorsänger replies in an audible whisper: "I'm not sure I know the melody; let me think about it for a minute."

After a moment of reflection he regains his former confidence, calls out the words of the first line and immediately begins to sing in full voice. However, the melody does not seem quite right, and the congregation remains silent. Once more the Vorsänger sings a few bars softly to himself but loud enough for the audience to hear. All continue to wait silently for the music master to find the solution to the mystery. This Vorsänger is like the widow of

the gospels who managed to sway even the unjust judge with her persistent pleading. Like her he refuses to give up, but lets his voice grope up and down the scale, looking for familiar fragments of melody, his voice growing ever stronger as he, slowly but surely, finds the right notes.

An elderly grandmother with her trembling voice is the first to join him.

Now the Vorsänger's voice rises to its customary triumphant crescendo and carries all the other voices along with him by sheer force. If some of the verses don't quite scan, the extra

syllables are simply swallowed up. And so the singing goes on and on like the sound of clashing swords or crashing ocean billows, until the very window panes begin to rattle. Surely the Good Lord must take delight in such praise.

The service concludes with the benediction. Comforted and strengthened, the worshippers rise from the unpainted pews. The older fathers and mothers thank their beloved minister, and when the minister declines their invitations to stay for dinner they take their leave by shaking hands. The women, the weaker sex, are allowed to exit first. The men follow them in a stately manner.



There is only one Mennonite Wirschaft left on the Island of Chortitz, today known as Ostrov Khortitza. It has been converted into a four-plex. This unique shot was taken from a neighbour's backyard, view to the southeast; not normally recommended procedure. For a photograph of the same Housebarn from the street, see Rudy Friesen, *Into the Past*, page 80. This Wirschaft is located beside the cross road at the northwest end of the darp and according to the village plan (*Is. P. Klassen Insel Chortitza*, page viii), belonged to a G. Janzen.

"...the Vorsänger's voice rises to its customary triumphant crescendo and carries all the other voices along with him by sheer force."

Just as the last worshippers reach the street and the large crowd is about to disperse, a boy who has been out in the fields on this Sunday morning comes running, panic-stricken, and shouting, "A wolf has attacked Kasdorf's red mare's brown colt!"

Because he fled the scene immediately after the first assault, the boy doesn't know whether or not the colt has actually been killed. (No herdsman is assigned to guard the islanders' horses; they are allowed to roam freely on the steppes. Only a hedge which runs across the



Behind the Hauskagel was a field and then the kagels of the farmers. The Mennonite cemetery is situated on the middle right of the photo. Hoepfner was buried just south of the cemetery. Note the docked cruise ship. The large buildings are typical Soviet-style apartments. Photo by D. Plett, May, 2000.

island separates these open grasslands from the cultivated fields.)

The news runs through the crowd like an electric current. Gone, suddenly, is all thought of comfortable rest and pious contemplation. A wolf is a threat to all the cattle of the island and cattle are still the main source of income for these people....[The rest of the story is found in the booklet, *From Danzig to Russia*, by Peter Hildebrand, recently published by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, see book review section.]

#### Endnotes:

Note One: Cornelius Hildebrand, Sr., "Ein Sonntag von anno 1840 auf der Insel

Chortitza," was originally published in the Russian Mennonite *Mennonitisches Jahrbuch* 10 (1913): 55-70 and was reprinted in *Mennonitische Warte* 3 (Spring, 1937): 66-75." Portions of the English translation by Professor Peter Pauls were published in *Mennonite Mirror* (November 1981): 13-14; and (December 1981): 13-14. See *Mennonite Historian*, Vol. VII, No.2, June, 1981, 4-5.

Note Two: For the dates cited here see *Preservings*, No. 15, December, 1999, 103.

Note Three: See *from Danzig to Russia*, by Peter Hildebrand, tr. by Professor Adolf Ens and Walter E. Toews (Echo Historical Series, CMBC Publications, 2000).

Note Four: Cornelius Hildebrand was only

seven years old in 1840. It could be that he was indebted to his father for some of the detailed descriptions. According to Professor Victor Peters, Cornelius's father Jacob was well known as a diarist. The anecdotes Cornelius relates could also have been passed on to his generation by word of mouth.

Note Five: Victor Peters, "Foreword" to *Zwei Dokumente*, in *From Danzig to Russia*.

Note Six: Victor Peters. "Foreword." Readers may wish to consult Is. P. Klassen's, *Die Insel Chortitza* (Winnipeg, 1979), and Paul and Otto Klassen's, "Chortitza Revisited," in *Mennonite Life* (December, 1973), 119-120, for additional detailed historical information about this settlement.

## Molotchna: the Year 1833

"Molochna: the year 1833,"

by James Urry, Department of Anthropology, Box 600, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington, New Zealand.

In the June 2000 issue of *Preservings*, page 55, the geographer Professor H. Leonard Sawatzky claims that by 1833 the activities of conservative Mennonite farmers resulted in extensive environmental damage and "dust-bowl conditions" in southern Russia.

Twenty-five years ago Sawatzky made similar claims in a review in the *Mennonite Mirror* (February 1975) although then he suggested that the agricultural reforms of Johann Cornies and extensive Mennonite cultivation of grain in Molochna

caused the dust-bowl conditions.

This claim and others were refuted by the eminent Russian Mennonite historian, the late Dr David G. Rempel (*Mennonite Mirror* Summer 1975).

Sawatzky cites as his source J. J. Hildebrand's *Zeittafel*. Hildebrand, however, does not mention the term "dust bowl" or attribute blame. Instead he notes that in 1833 a large and prolonged dust storm (Erdsturm) in Molochna caused dunes to cover pasture and tree plantations and removed soil from fields cultivated for grain. A total crop failure fol-

lowed and although in later years Molochna suffered further dust storms, none were as large or severe as that of 1833.

A number of other sources, some contemporary, provide a more informed account than either Hildebrand or Sawatzky (see reference below). It is clear from these that the major dust storms occurred in 1832 not 1833.

During 1833, however, drought and dust storms resulted in crop failure across many areas of central Russia, southern Russia and the lower

Volga, producing the worst famine conditions during the 19th century until the disastrous famine of 1891-92 which was most severe in the Volga region.

The events of 1832/33 followed a period of poor rains, dust storms and low crop yields which began in 1830. In 1832 the summer harvest failed completely and dry winds began to blow. In the fall of 1832 the winter wheat was sown but the soil was so dry the seed failed to germinate. Then the winds, which usually brought winter snows, blew only dust in clouds so fine they looked like smoke. These continued through the winter with periods of severe frost which further loosened the soil but provided little moisture for the following season. Contemporary accounts report that during the storms houses just 35 to 40 steps away were obscured and fine dust entered houses through cracks and crevices covering floors and furniture.

Fences disappeared under dunes while earth was banked-up against the houses of neighbouring villages of Nogai Tatars and Molokan sectarians. The dust also caused atmospheric disturbances with strange lights visible in other parts of Europe.

In 1833 when it came time to sow the spring grain the soil resembled burnt ash but early spring rains promised relief as the seed germinated. Then the dry easterly winds returned and high summer temperatures removed the moisture from the soil so the early growth withered. Dust clouds returned but not as badly as in 1832. However, caterpillars removed the spring growth from trees and by the end of May the pasture began to disappear. The lack of fodder led to the slaughter of large numbers of livestock.

By 1834 the number of cattle in Molochna had fallen from 9032 in 1833 to 5611, the number of horses from 7346 to 4986 and the extensive sheep flocks, upon which the prosperity of the colony depended, also decreased.

As the crops failed, food prices rose and famine followed. No Mennonites starved, but in the surrounding villages peasants and Nogai Tatars began to die. The Russian government provided aid and local Mennonites organized relief, taking people into their villages. They also contributed money to assist the needy, help later officially acknowledged by the Russians. After the famine the government made communities build emergency granaries to insure against further crop failures.

As Delbert Plett points out in his reply to Sawatzky, extensive cultivation of grain crops had not begun in Molochna by 1833 as large areas of the colony were still in pasture. Over-pasturing undoubtedly contributed to local erosion but the dust storms of 1832/33 were not just a localized problem associated with sheep grazing as drought and dust storms were experienced across wide areas of Russia.

On the other hand, far from causing the dust storms as Sawatzky earlier claimed, Cornies' efforts at agricultural reform in subsequent years helped reduce the risk of soil erosion through extensive tree planting and more rigorous forms of land use. Following the events of 1832/33 Cornies' powers increased further enhanced by the creation of a new Ministry of State Domains established in 1836. The new Ministry aimed to reform the state peasants, colonists and

other groups under government control and improve agriculture.

What then was the real cause of the dust storms, crop failure and subsequent famine? If it was not due primarily to human activity, what wider environmental forces were involved?

Geographically both the Khortitsa and Molochna areas are located on the southern steppe regions of Ukraine although Khortitsa, situated close to the Dnieper, is more diverse in its physical features. However, conditions towards the Sea of Azov, close to where Molochna is located, and the Black Sea coast become increasingly arid. Here annual precipitation rates are low, between 500 and 400 mm or less.

Near parts of the coast salt was produced in ponds through evaporation and transported to central and northern Russia along ancient ox-tracks some of which crossed the Molochna colony. This entire region is prone to extreme weather conditions, including severe cold in winter and drought in spring and summer.

The prevailing winds are from the northwest but if the wind turns to the east and southeast and persists, the dry air quickly desiccates vegetation and exposes top soil to erosion. This wind is known in Russian as the *sukhovei* and has been long feared by the peoples of the region as the harbinger of drought and famine. *Sukhovei* winds accompanied by temperatures of 35-40 degrees Celsius reduce the humidity to less than 15% and drought quickly follows.

Therefore it was primarily climatic conditions associated with the *sukhovei* winds, not local human activity by Mennonites or their neighbours, which brought the dust storms and the subsequent crop failures and famine of 1832/33. Officials of the Ministry of State Domains, pioneers in climatic studies, argued in the 1840s that areas around Molochna were too arid and unsuitable for cultivation because of the *sukhovei* winds.

However, agriculture flourished and later agronomists changed their views in spite of marked seasonal variations in crop yields due to the climate. As a local Russian proverb noted "it is not the soil that bears fruit, but the year."

It is helpful, however, for Sawatzky to remind us that geographic features such as soils and climate can profoundly influence peoples' lives. The *sukhovei* is a natural feature of the geography of southern Russia which, along with other environmental factors, regularly influenced the prosperity of Mennonites settled there. As well as these recurring factors, however, other dramatic events effecting climate can also play a significant role in peoples' lives and destinies.

In 1815 the Tambora volcano on the island of Sumbawa in today's Indonesia erupted spewing dust and debris into the atmosphere. The eruption had a world-wide effect on the climate, the dust obscuring the sun and lowering temperatures in many regions which led to crop failures in the year following, 1816. In Europe resulting crop failures caused economic and political crises, famine and decreases in population.

In southern Germany and Switzerland the effects were particularly severe, and among some people heightened their belief that they were living in the end-times as predicted in the Bible and the

writings of people like Jung Stilling. Such millennialism encouraged large-scale emigration including to Russia.

Russia, lying in the east, was viewed by many as a place of refuge in the end times. Some emigrants from Württemberg sought refuge in the Caucasus but one group, stopped by the Russian government, was settled to the southeast of the Molochna Mennonite colony.

It was from associating with people in these settlements and their later minister Eduard Wüst, that some Mennonites derived pietistic and millennialist ideas which were incorporated into their religious beliefs and practices.

Thus extraordinary climatic conditions caused by a volcano at the other end of the world forcing the emigration of people, were one source of those pietistic and millennial ideas which Delbert Plett has argued were so detrimental to established Mennonite faith and practice.

Any proper understanding of the Mennonite past must extend beyond immediate concerns with genealogy and localized communities. It must include wider factors such as the political and economic conditions and, as I have suggested, the environment in which people are located. Such environments are not stable and are altered by human activity.

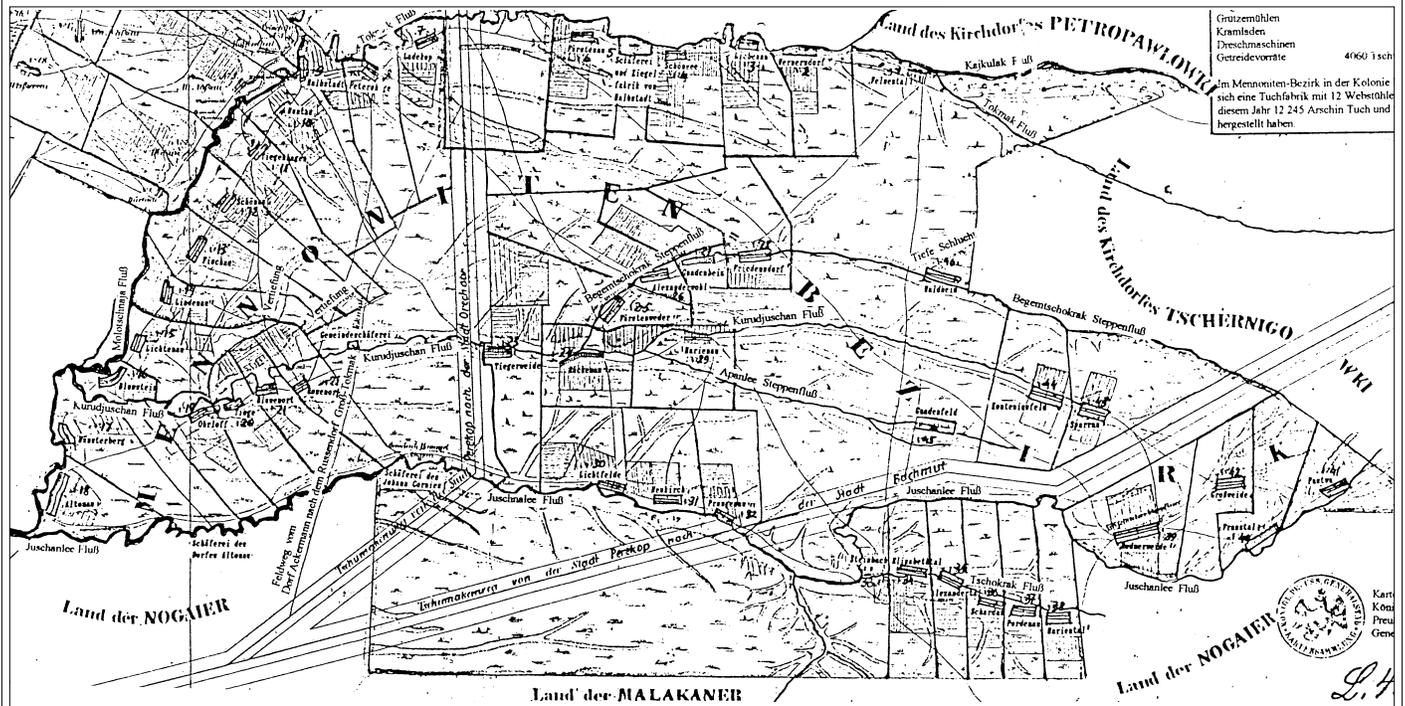
But the impact of human activity on environments in history can be overestimated as there are natural forces beyond human control which can influence events. The drought of the early 1830s in southern Russia and the volcanic eruption of 1815 illustrate just two examples of such forces.

#### Sources:

(A report on the crop failure and famine written in 1835 and attributed to Cornies was translated and published by John B. Toews, "The Good Old Days": a Russian Mennonite Document from 1835," *Mennonite Life*, 23 (1968), pp. 31-34. This had previously been published in the *Odessa Zeitung* in 1904, pp. 131-32, 133 (12/25 June-13-26 June; 17/30 June). I have corrected Toews' transcription of the numbers of livestock, using these earlier accounts. Other references to the famine include N. N. "Kurzer Beitrag zur Geschichte der Molotschnaer Mennoniten." *Krökers Christlicher Familienkalender*, 1900, pp.107-08 and Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten*. (Halbstadt 1904), pp.19-20. See also James Urry, "Immigration and Famine in Russia, 1833: Two letters by Johann Cornies," in *Mennonite Life*, Sept. 1991, pages 18-19.



# 1836 Molochna Map



**1836 topographical map of the Molochna.** From the map collection of the Prussian Army General Staff, 1836. The map shows amazing detail about the layouts of the villages settled by that time, such as koagels, location of Wirtschaften, etc. A slightly different configuration of the map was published in Mennonite Life 46(3) September 1991, 21. Anyone wishing to establish the field patterns and village layout for a particular village would be well advised to study both versions. The Molochna comes from the name of the local river Molochnaya, which comes from the Russian word for milk, due to the silt which in times of flood caused the river to run white. Old Colony people used to laugh at this designation - the Dnieper is a river, the Molochnaya is a stream which even can dry up in summer. The vast majority of Kleine Gemeinde ancestors were among well-off settlers who pioneered along the Molochnaya river in 1804 and 1805. The map illustrates the exposure the colonists had to a wide array of ethnic and native groups: on the southeast were the Nogaier, the south the Malakaner and Russians and Ukrainians to the north. Editor's Note: Molochna is the Russian spelling of the word, Molotschna the German. The Tschumakenweg (Chumak roads, Ukrainian "cart or cattle driver") crossing the Colony were the ancient trade routes used by teamsters to haul salt from the flats of the Sea of Azov to various locals in the Russian interior. To reproduce the map in a larger scale, the left and upper portions with the villages of the German Colonists and the boxed statistics, has been cropped out. "Statistics: Villages in which there were windmills in 1836 - Altona, west end, north side; Münsterberg, south end, east side; Lichtenau, south end, east side; Lindenau, north end, west side; Fischau, west side, middle; Schönau, south and north ends, west side; Tiegengagen, north end, east side; Muntau, north end, west side; Petershagen, west end, north side; Ladekopp, east end, south and north sides; Fürstenau, closer to east end, south side; Liebenau, east end, south side; Tiegerwiede, east end, middle; Ohrloff, east end, south side; Sparrau, east end (north side) and west end (south side); Rudnerwiede, east end, south side; Franzthal, north side, middle; Grossweide, west end, south side. Total area: 123,240 desjatten, each Mennonite Landwirt has 65 desjatten (165 acres), equals 4 Hufen; population - male 5099, female 4846; Church denominations 5; churches and houses of prayer 8; schools 44; houses - of stone 67, kilned bricks 22, of wood 106, of air dried bricks 874, of clay 362; water mills 5, windmills 37; linen looms 6; plows 1172; cattle 8913; horses 6693; sheep 144822; current year's income from sheep 537,541 ruble; fruit trees 179,710; vineyards, 1761; ministers 55; mulberry trees 116,999; planted forest trees 111,831; beehives 1761; brandy distilleries 1; beer breweries 1; vinegar breweries 5; paint factories 10; cloth mills; oil mills 18; blacksmith shops 54; brick kilns 3, oat-mills 19; stores 16; threshing machines 80; grain inventory 4060 Tschwert (1 Tschwert=5.7 bushel). A cloth factory is located in Neu-Halbstadt with 12 looms, where 80 workers in this year produced 12,245 arshin (equals 28 inches) of cloth and 931 arshin 'Beihergestellt haben'."

## Letter, October 1833.

Excerpt from an 1833 letter by Rev. Abraham Friesen (1782-1849), Ohrloff, Molotschna (later Kleine Gemeinde Aeltester) to brother Peter von Riesen, estate owner in Rosenort, Prussia.

"If none of the foregoing have created your aversion towards for Russia would it have been the small incomes that come in such times? Or would it be the periods of drought and the crop failures which you are opposed to?"

"Oh beloved brother, these are not things which frighten souls who are searching for God. But it is frightening for those who seek money and the world; for those who seek their well-being here in this world (Luke 16:25). A God-seeking soul is

not deterred by such, but humbles himself under the mighty hand of God and casts all his cares upon Him, because He careth for them (1 Peter 5:7).

"In your first and second letters you write about the times of plenty in Prussia and refer us to a man who has sold so many loads of grain from such a small field and that everything can be had there, fresh and beautiful potatoes and all manner of garden vegetables. Through these one can readily be tempted to start murmuring against Russia and like the children of Israel to think back to the time when they too were able to sit before their flesh pots and have their fill of bread (Exodus 16:3).

"Last year fodder and grain was expensive and in short supply here among us, as you know from your own experience. This year there is, so to say,

hardly any cutting of hay or grain in this area, only some kind of weed is available for fodder which is called Kurie [A prickly growth which grew everywhere and was used successfully for fodder as well as pasture].

"Rye and wheat screenings are already being bought for 30 ruble per tshwert. Barley and oatmeal are no longer available. Oats cost 12-15 ruble and potatoes 12-16 ruble. Whoever wants to buy hay has to travel 10- 15 verst. The horses are very weak and undernourished. Each one has only 2 or 3 horses at home. The rest of the horses in the village have been placed in board some 200 verst away at great expense, and likewise the sheep," *Leaders*, pages 262-4, courtesy Heinrich Reimer (1791-1884), *Familienbuch*.

# Peter and Jakob Wiens, A Teaching Tradition

“Peter Wiens (b. 1770), Czathka, West Prussia, and Jakob Wiens (1816-88), Kronsthal, Chortitz Colony, Imperial Russia, to Hoffnungsfeld, W.R., Manitoba, Canada, an Old Kolony Pedagogical and Writing Tradition,”  
by Delbert F. Plett Q.C., Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

## Introduction.

Mennonites have a long standing literary tradition going back to the Reformation and particularly Holland in the 16th century. Literacy was a fundamental requirement in the movement as all believers were to read and study the Bible for themselves.

The Mennonites interpreted the Bible around the Gospels. Flowing from this was a Christian vision which reformed all areas of life, bringing them under the Lordship of Christ. It reformed all social constructs and affected the rights of women, the plight of the poor and the hope of the dispossessed. The resulting religious culture could best be described as “Gospel-centric”.

The Biblical teachings of equality of all human beings permeated this culture resulting in its community and religious structures being grounded on the principles of democracy. As a result Mennonites were pioneers in the area of equality and grass roots democracy long before the concept was popularized by Thomas Paine (1737-1809) and 18th century European Enlightenment.

As demonstrated by this article on Peter Wiens (d. 1770) and nephew Jakob (1816-88), conservative Mennonites were also leaders in the field of universal education. The outstanding 1786 “Rechnenbuch” of Peter Wiens demonstrates that their confessional educational system was already well established by that time.

The foreword to the Confession of Faith and Catechism published by Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905) and the Reinländer Gemeinde in Manitoba in 1881 (see *Preservings*, No. 16, page 18) states that it was originally published in 1783 “upon the repeated requests of those who desired to have a booklet for their school children...” It also states that “nonetheless nothing new is being published hereby, only the old...”

It is likely that publications such as the 1783 Confession and Catechism and the compilation of the Peter Wiens “Rechnenbuch” represented the response of Prussian Mennonites to the language shift from Dutch to Danziger High German which was more or less complete by 1780 at least for the formal school and church language.

The production of such material was a strategy for survival of Gospel-centric faith which unfortunately was never replicated by conservatives in Manitoba in the late 19th century.

These sources indicate that the roots of Mennonite confessional education may well go back to the 17th century and probably before that to the Reformation and particu-

## Jakob Wiens (1767-1845).

### Family Background.

Jakob Wiens (1816-88) was the son of Jakob Wiens (1767-1845), Osterwick, Chortitz Colony, Imperial Russia.

In a letter of August 18, 2000, genealogist Henry Schapansky, has reviewed the available information regarding their family background:

“The ‘West Reserve’ book page 363, gives Jakob’s father as Peter Wiens (b. 2.6.1770, immigrated to Russia in 1792.... This is also indicated by Nettie Kroeker in *Far above Rubies*. There are also copies of the artwork of Peter Wiens in the material gathered and published by Nettie Kroeker.”

“The Mennonites...[had] a Christian vision which reformed all areas of life, bringing them under the Lordship of Christ.”

“In Irvin Kroeker’s book, the ‘family legend’ is noted that the ancestors of Jakob Wiens were all Jakobs.”...

“Later in the Mennonite Heritage Centre transcription there has been a revision, Peter Wiens (b. 1770) is now listed as the uncle of

larly to the Low Countries (Netherlands and Belgium).

The idea of universal public education as a service of the state, and often serving the state’s own ends, was not developed until the late 18th century. Prussia, one of the most progressive European states, only instituted compulsory elementary education in 1763. In practice this decree was only operative where there were actually church run schools. It is evident that Mennonites were pioneers in the field of education, just as they were in the area of grassroots democracy.

The story of Jakob Wiens shows how the confessional tradition was brought along to Imperial Russia in 1789 and from there to Manitoba in the 1870s. In Russia the church schools were reformed and brought under secular jurisdiction by Johann Cornies, a development following in Manitoba and Saskatchewan when the Provincial Governments instituted district schools in the aftermath of World War One.

A time of greater tolerance coupled with a recovery of knowledge (as in the Renaissance) regarding the classical period of the confessional school system could bring forth valuable possibilities for the strengthening of the Mennonite faith and culture.

Jakob (1816-88).”

“My own conclusions are as follows:

“1) Jakob Wiens (1767-1845) was a son of Hermann Wiens: Czathka 1776: 2 sons 3 daughters, 1 male servant. Jakob was baptised into the Rosenort Gemeinde in 1786. I believe he

“...conservative Mennonites were also leaders in the field of universal education.”

went to Russia in the years 1803-9 but possibly earlier. The reference in B. H. Unruh, page 356, No. 8, appears to refer to this Jakob. He apparently lived at Fuechswinkel in the southern area where many members of the Heuboden Gemeinde later moved.”

“...a recovery of knowledge....could bring forth valuable possibilities for the strengthening of the Mennonite faith and culture.”

“By 1814 he is listed as Osterwick, B. H. Unruh, page 283, No. 5. The only problem with the data here is regarding Margaretha/Aganetha born 1810. There may be a transcription error here. I think Aganetha is the correct name.”

“2) Jakob had a sister Agatha (1764-1839) who was baptised at Czatkau in 1783. She married Daniel Wiens (1762-1842) in 1789. Daniel was the son of Thomas Wiens of Ellerwald III. 1776: 5 sons, 3 daughters. Daniel and Agatha moved to Russia in 1803 and settled at Altona, Molotschna (1808 Revision), etc.”

“3) The information regarding Agatha is confirmed both by Jakob Wiens himself (1767-1845) and by Gerhard Ens, grandson of Gerhard Ens (1784-1846) who married Maria Wiens (1790-1850), a daughter of Daniel and Agatha. This information was made available to me by Helga Ens of Coquitlam, B.C., for which I am deeply grateful.”

“The only question is: who was Peter Wiens (b. 1770) and how did Jakob (1767-1845) get his book...I don’t know at this point since there would be several Peter Wiens’ born around this time.”

Thus far from Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack St., New Westminster, B. C., V3L 4V5, letter August 18, 2000.

**Jakob Wiens (1767-1845).**

Jakob Wiens Sr. was married for the first time to Sara Dicken. They had one daughter Maria born November 2, 1792.

Sara died January 7, 1795. The grieving young widower wrote in his "Familienbuch", "...my dearest treasure in life, my wedded wife, fell asleep in the Lord, and as we [firmly] believe, was transported into His Heavenly peaceable kingdom that very same night."

"Jakob Wiens (1767-1845) was a literate man who maintained a Familienbuch, a journal with genealogy and various farming accounts."

Jakob Wiens Sr. married for the second time to Sarah Brandt (1773-1861), daughter of Martin Brandt, born 1748.

Historian John Dyck has written that Jakob Wiens Sr. and his family emigrated from Prussia to Russia in 1792 (*1880 Village Census*, page 363).

Cornelius J. Funk, son-in-law of great-grandson Jakob Abram Kroeker, Winkler, has written that Jakob Wiens departed from Bohnsack, near Danzig, on March 22, 1788 (the first Easter Holiday) travelling by way of Riga, Dobrovna, Krementchung, to Alt-Chortitz, Russia, where they arrived in the beginning of July 1789."

The family is listed in the immigration records as "Before 1812" 8. Wiens, Jakob Fuchswinkel, Landwirt (landowning farmer), to, firstly Chortitza, 2 Neuosterwick, married Dyck, Sara, Fuchswinkel, geb. 1771, Neustädterwald,... Vollmacht 1816," Unruh, page 356.

October 17, 1797, the twins Harm [Hermann] and Jakob were born, both of whom died in infancy. January 15, 1800, daughter Sarah was born. April 20, 1803, daughter Martha was born. Sept. 10, 1806, daughter Helena was born. April 13, 1810, daughter Nede was born.

Jakob Wiens was a literate man who maintained a Familienbuch, a journal with genealogy and various farming accounts. The Familienbuch truly became a family book as his wife, son Jakob and granddaughter Aganetha Wiens Ens all recorded various records in this journal.

Jakob and Sarah Wiens had four daughters who survived and eight sons, seven of whom were named Jakob but all died in infancy except the youngest son Jakob born June 2, 1816.

**Wirtschaft.**

Jakob Wiens was a relatively wealthy farmer. According to the 1814 Revisions-Liste he owned Wirtschaft 5 in the village of Osterwick and his family was recorded as follows: Jakob Wiens 47, wife Sara 41, daughters Sara 14, Agata 11, Helena 8,

Margaretha 4 and servant Jakob...14. Property, 5 horses, 13 cattle, 9 sheep, 1 swine, 1 plow, 2 harrows, 2 wagons and 2 spinning wheels," Unruh, *Ostwanderungen*, page 283.

This confirms that most families in the 1874-6 emigration to Manitoba originated from the landowning Vollwirt class in Imperial Russia and even earlier.

Sheep raising for wool and mutton sales was among several important occupations for Mennonite farmers at the time.

In 1824 Jakob Wiens provided some details regarding his sheep farming referring to 23 mature rams, 4 young rams, 10 castrated lambs and 4 young lambs. Similar entries were made for 1826 and 1827.

In 1830 Jakob Wiens recorded that he had "...sold my Feuerstelle for 1259 ruble, receiving on account 402 ruble." The purchaser may have been Jakob Veer as he received a series of payments from him: Nov. 12, 25 ruble, 1831 172 ruble, June 1, 1832, 166 ruble and September 17, 100, 1833 100 ruble on April 11 and 160 ruble on June 7.

Jakob Wiens Sr. was sufficiently well-off that he was able to lend Peter Hildebrand 95 ruble in 1833 and "again 100 ruble on April 11." On June 10 he lent him 160 ruble: in August he gave Peter Hildebrand 150 ruble and before that 450."

Jakob's sister Aganetha died February 27, 1839, at the age of 74 years, 5 months and 11 days. Jakob Wiens Sr. spent a total of 13.45 ruble for her funeral including 4.25 for the coffin and 1.68 for brandy. This entry begs further explanation in light of Henry Schapansky's statement that Agatha and her family lived in Altona, Molotschna. Had Agatha for some reason come to live with her brother in the Old Colony?



Peter Classen, *Arithmetic text*, Danzig, Prussia, 1764. Photo courtesy of Ethel Abrahams, *Frakturmalen*, page 18.

**Death.**

Jakob Wiens Sr. died on December 31, 1845. This note was recorded by his wife Sarah.

In 1846 Jakob Wiens Jr. recorded settlements regarding 10 loans ranging from several rubles to 50 made to Cornelius Unrau, Wilhelm Friesen, Gerhard Sawatzky, Aron Peters, Suderman, Franz Funk, Striemert and Heinrich Funk (Rosengart). These entries appear to have been made by Jakob Wiens Jr. relating to monies owing to his father's estate. e.g. "January 22, 1846, the loan made in 1831 with Heinrich Funk from Rosengard, settled, balance owing 7.31 ruble."

Sarah Brandt Wiens died on September 14, 1861, at 3 p.m. at the age of 88 years and 8 months. She was the mother of eight sons and five daughters, grandmother to 52 children and great-grandmother to 40. This entry was made by son Jakob Wiens. The families of Jakob's four sisters have yet to be identified.

Jakob Wiens Jr. also recorded here the genealogy of his maternal grandparents, confirming the strong matriarchal component typically found in conservative Mennonite culture.

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Readers interested in the Kleine Gemeinde story can check out D. Plett's, *Saints and Sinners: The Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia 1812-1875* (Steinbach, 1999), 352 pages (Note photos from the book are not included in the web site) at [www.mts.net/~delplett](http://www.mts.net/~delplett)

# Peter Wiens (b. 1770), “Rechnenbuch”

## Introduction.

Jakob's younger brother Peter Wiens (b. 1770) was a school teacher in Czathkau, Prussia.

Peter Wiens maintained a *Rechnenbuch* (an arithmetic teacher's manual) illustrated with beautiful *Fraktur* art.

In the words of one educator, “The *Rechnenbuch* is not simply a mathematics text but a fine example of a man's artistic and creative genius. Its covers are detailed with multi-hued *Fraktur*, and various mathematical theories are expressed in verse form. Title pages/section headings are detailed with intricate calligraphy and art work,” *Preservings*, No. 6, page 26.

This characterization certainly applies to Peter Wiens' “*Rechnenbuch*”.

Apprenticed teachers typically started compiling a “*Rechnenbuch*” or teacher's manual as soon as they started teaching. The subject material progressed from the basic to the more sophisticated. A few of the title pages were usually dated, allowing historians to trace the chronological evolution of the work.

## The *Rechnenbuch*, 1787.

The earliest dated page in Peter Wiens' “*Rechnenbuch*” was page 3, dated 1787. This preliminary section, pages 1-9, consisted of general tables and definitions. Page 4 contained a chart with values and names of various currencies, an exposition of time (the calendar year, months, weeks), units of area, weights and measures, etc. It was presumably added after the primary section was completed in 1786.

The “*Rechnenbuch*” proper starts on page 10 with a beautifully illustrated title page, “Anno 1770 den 2ten Wnius uar vor mittag bin ich Peter Wiens Gebohren,” followed by the

“The *Rechnenbuch* is not simply a mathematics text but a fine example of a man's artistic and creative genius.”

elementary topics of addition (“*Addieren*”) (page 11), subtraction (page 19), multiplication page 25, and division, page 35.

Page 48 starts a multi-phase section on cubic measurements and weights, with sub-sections on adding, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

The elementary or first form of the “*Rechnenbuch*” was completed in 1786 when



In 1787 at the age of 17, Peter Wiens prepared a puzzle used for learning various calculations, the secret of which was encoded in the proverb underneath: “*Gleich wie man einen Tuhrm, Durch Staffeln musz ersteigen, So musz das Ein mal Eins. Denn weg zum Rechnen zeigen.*” Who can figure out the meaning of the riddle? At the bottom is a table used to learn Roman numerals, “*Rechnenbuch*, page 3. The “*Rechnenbuch*” is filled with beautiful multi-hued *Fraktur* art, revealing the love of colour and gaiety of conservative Mennonites, as did the treasured coloured art pieces typically displayed in the inside of the covers of the beautiful chests (*Kjisten*) that they later brought along to Russia, functioning as a private family shrine.

Peter Wiens was only 16, not an uncommon age for a novice teacher at the time.

With the section starting on page 78, “*Regeln mit ganzen zahlen*” (rules with whole numbers), the problems become more complex, reflecting a more advanced level of study or second form. This is followed by “*Addition with fractions*” page 94, and Subtraction with

“The use of Latin phrases....echoes Medieval times when Latin was the universal language of the educated....”

fractions”, page 100, “*Dividieren in Bruchen*”, page 111, and “*Addieren in Bruchen mit Kleinen Sorten*”, page 127.

These sections are dated January 3, 1787, indicating that teacher Wiens, now 18 years old, had moved on to the second level in his teaching career.

The final part of the book (page 152) reflects a third level of complexity with instruction on Prussian coinage, currency exchange (page 135), interest calculations (page 160), calculating for trade (page 165), etc.

Latin terms are used to describe the last two subject headings reflecting some classical education and knowledge--“*Regula Falso*” (page 170), and “*Regula Cecis ad [?] Verginim*” (page 175).

The use of Latin phrases used throughout the *Rechnenbuch* echoes medieval times when Latin was the universal language of the educated and learned class.

The same “*Rechnenbuch*” was used for all four levels or forms of study in the traditional Mennonite confessional school system. Presumably the various levels of complexity in the arithmetic curriculum corresponded with the four forms, namely, the *Fibeler* (the *Fibel*), *Geschichtler* (Bible stories), *Testamentler* (New Testament) and *Bibler* (Old Testament), each level being known by the reading text used. Graduates of this system were thus able to boast they had only completed Grade Four, really a complete misnomer.

## Scope.

But the “*Rechnenbuch*” was far more than a teacher's manual to be used solely for arithmetic. Each problem had multiple pedagogical objectives and was intended to provide instruction in moral values as well as history. The problems and

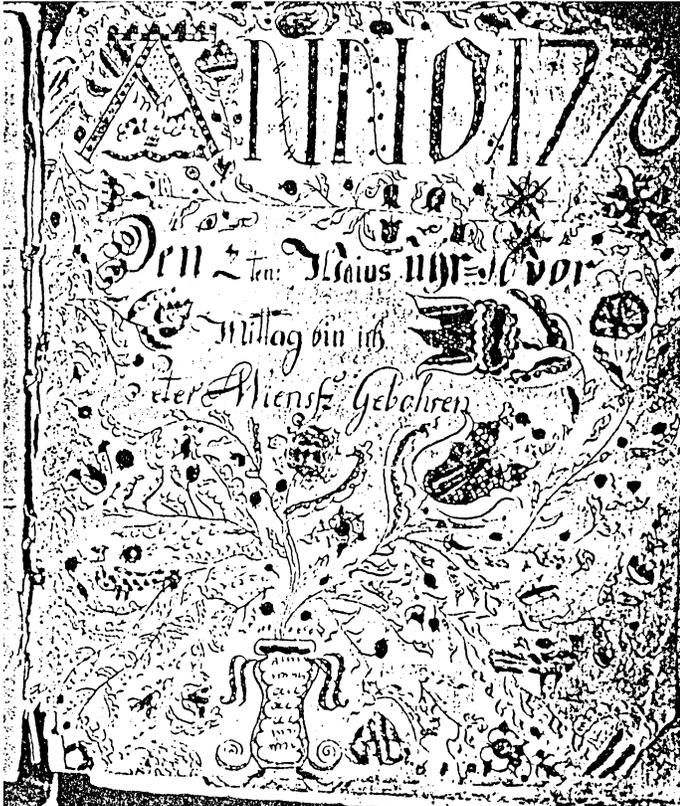
puzzles provided practice in calligraphy skills (embellished handwriting) and instilled a love of art and colour.

The “*Rechnenbuch*” also provided instruction in geography. Some of the problems were set in different cities. e.g. A problem on page

“Each problem had multiple pedagogical objectives and....provide[d] instruction in moral values as well as history.”

159 starts, “There are in Amsterdam from Danzig...,” or “Danzig to London...,” page 158. Presumably the reference to various European localities would lead to appropriate discussion on the geography of these places during the lesson.

Also of interest is the old rounded script or scroll used by Peter Wiens and typically found in Mennonite writings dating to 18th century



Title page of the Peter Wiens "Rechnenbuch". Although preceded by a short section of general charts, weights and measures, the mathematics text itself started on page 10, "Anno 1770 den 2ten Wnius uar vor mittag bin ich Peter Wiens Geboren." followed by "Addieren" (page 11). It is a shame that the beautiful Fraktur artwork of Peter Wiens and other Mennonite teachers cannot be reproduced in all its multi-hued beauty. A collection of these pieces would make a beautiful coffee table book on the Mennonite Fraktur art tradition.



A colourful work of Fraktur art illustrates the section heading for "Interest Calculations" (page 160) of Peter Wiens' "Rechnenbuch". Again a riddle introduces the material to the students inspiring wonderment and interest. The many multi-hued illustrations in this teacher's manual speak for a love of colour and art instilled in students already at the elementary level. The centuries' old tradition was ended or at least severely suppressed by social reformer Johann Cornies (1789-1848) in the 1840s, at least in part as a result of pietist influences among Russian Mennonites.

Prussia. By the latter part of the 19th century a more pointed vertically orientated script was commonly used among the Mennonites in Russia.

The presentation of the material from the "Rechnenbuch" was interspersed with proverbs and short poems which the teacher undoubtedly recited for the students by memory as occasion availed itself.

The following piece from page 129 serves as an example:

"....disproving the myth that teachers in Mennonite confessional schools were only from the lower socio-economic classes..."

"Was ein Fleisziger Hausz Vater adirt, Ein ungehorsamer Son Substrahirt, Ab schon ein Gott wird multiplierin, Segent es Gott nich; Wird es dividiert."

On page 69, the compiler has noted, "End of the multiplication in Muntz (coinage), Maasz (cubed) and Gewicht (weights). Peter Wiensz, Gattzau, d. 5 April Anno 1786."

This would confirm Henry Schapansky's identification of Peter as the son of Hermann

Wiens listed in the village of Czathka in the 1776 Konsignation or census. Hermann Wiens was a wealthy farmer with a servant, again disproving the myth that teachers in Mennonite confessional schools were only from the lower socio-economic classes with no other career options.

"...the Mennonite confessional school system....affirm[ed] the]...inherent goodness and wholesomeness of children created in God's own image."

The Fraktur artwork of Peter Wiens reflects a love of colour and gaiety intrinsic to the Mennonite confessional schools.

The Peter Wiens' "Rechnenbuch" is one of the better examples of this genre of Mennonite literary work. It is comparable or perhaps even superior to the extant "Rechnenbücher" of Gerhard Doerksen (1825-82), Fischau, and Jakob Isaak (1815-66), Schönau, in the Molotschna.

**Significance.**

Unfortunately Peter Wiens came to a tragic end. Cornelius J. Funk, son-in-law of great-grandson Jakob Abram Kroeker, Winkler, has written that at some point, Peter Wiens disappeared without a trace.

The scope of his "Rechnenbuch" dating back to 1786 in Prussia, was to provide a foundation in mathematical skills and other subjects in all facets which students might encounter during their adult lives. It provides evidence the Mennonite confessional school system was highly developed. It was a firmly entrenched pedagogical tradition, affirming the inherent goodness and wholesomeness of children created in God's own image.

Apparently conservative Mennonites in Prussia were pioneers in the field of universal education just as they were in the area of grass roots democracy.

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# Christopher Dock ca. 1700-71

## Christopher Dock.

Prussian Mennonite school teacher Peter Wiens was born about the same time as another great pedagogue, Christopher Dock (c. 1700-71), died in Colonial America.

Christopher Dock, Shippack, Pennsylvania, has been widely recognized in Swiss/South German Mennonite literature as well as in American popular culture as a Godly man who rewarded scholarship and good behaviour by presenting exquisite *Fraktur* gifts to his students.

“Winning love was the focal point of the teaching and instructing technique of Christopher Dock. This was an astounding idea back in a time when the stick ruled above all else. He drew pictures for his students and flowers as their reward, made little booklets for them whereby he tried to make tradition and the rules for conduct meaningful for the children,” *Weltweite Bruderschaft*, page 168. Most of this would have applied equally to the Russian Mennonite school teachers of Jakob Wiens’ generation. It was only later after the Johann Cornies reforms and the emigration of 1874 that they became known as harsh disciplinarians, where form superseded substance.

In stark contrast to his co-confessionists in the Russian Mennonite tradition, the writings and teaching materials of Christopher Dock are prized and sought after by educators, archives and libraries in Pennsylvania. His essay, “School-management” (*Schulordnung*), written in 1750 and published in 1770, “was the first American treatise on the art of school management.” It had a profound influence on the Mennonite confessional school tradition and colonial pedagogical methodology and Christopher Dock was considered the American Pestalozzi.

“Winning love was the focal point of the teaching and instructing technique of Christopher Dock.”

## Manitoba, 1875.

Of the three Mennonite denominations which came to Manitoba in the 1870s, the Reinländers (Old Kolony) were the only ones who brought with them a significant secondary (*Zentralschule*) education tradition.

The work of Peter Wiens and nephew Jakob compares favourably to that of Dock, something which the critics of the Russian Mennonite pedagogical tradition were presumably not aware of, hence demonstrating their own ignorance and hidden agenda.

In Manitoba, Anglo-conformity, brainless stampeding after alien religious cultures and bigoted stereotyping of conservatives have



Colonial schoolmaster, Christopher Dock (c. 1700-71), Telford, Pennsylvania, rode on horseback between the two schools which he served. Dock has been described as a godly man and legendary teacher: “Character and Godliness were the chief objectives in Dock’s school.” Illustration courtesy of Shippack School (*Herald Press*, 1999).

combined to rob Mennonites of their equally noble historical heritage.

Russian Mennonites (at least those who adopted Separatist-Pietist and so-called Evangelical religious cultures), by comparison, have tended to disparage the conservatives and their traditional confessional schools in particular.

This is a rather bizarre attitude considering the tens of thousands of successful patri-archs, farmers, entrepreneurs and church leaders the system has graduated over the centuries. Presumably these bigoted attitudes reflected something intrinsically insidious in Separatist-Pietist and Fundamentalist Protestant religious cultures.

## Aeltester Johann Funk.

Those involved in the Mennonite Educational Institute at Gretna in 1890, and after, such as Aeltester Johann Funk and Inspector Heinrich Ewert, must take a large part of the blame. They hijacked the Old Kolonier educational tradition spiking the agenda of higher education by tying it to Anglo-conformity and

“Presumably these bigoted attitudes reflected something intrinsically insidious in Separatist-Pietist and Fundamentalist Protestant religious cultures.”

the adoption of alien religious cultures such as American Revivalism and Separatist-Pietism.

There are those who point out that Aeltester Funk and Inspector Ewert did not support the proselytizers who had beset the pioneer Mennonite community in Manitoba by the 1880s and that the adoption of alien religious cul-

tures was not their agenda. They argue that Funk and Ewert merely sought to bring about reform by improvements in the educational system.

However, this argument is belied by the facts. Although they did not directly support either the Brüdergemeinde and/or General Conference missionaries, their language and methodology indicated they had their own version of Revivalism and/or Separatist Pietism which they promoted. One is mindful of the old maxim, “If it looks like a duck, quacks like a duck, and walks like a duck, it probably is a duck.”

“...Aeltester Johann Funk and Inspector Heinrich Ewert,... hijacked the Old Kolonier educational tradition spiking the agenda...”

Heinrich Ewert, for example, said of the conservative Mennonites in Manitoba that “they were in as much need of help as the heathen in Africa,” *Die Schule Must Sein*, pages 21-22. Such attitudes were evocative of teacher Tobias Voth in the Ohrloff Zentral Schule founded by Johann Cornies in 1822. Voth was a fanatical Separatist Pietist who used his position as teacher to advance his pathetic religious culture, an action of immense stupidity and crudeness typically unacceptable to parents.

## Bergthaler Revivalism.

Jakob Hoepfner (1850-1936) was one of the early leaders in the Bergthal “revivalist” movement. As a teacher in Hochfeld, he followed the methodology already modelled by

teachers in Russia such as Tobias Voth. He adopted the teachings of Separatist Pietism and employed the promotional motifs of Revivalism such as highly emotional oratory, Bible studies, Sunday Schools and new hymnals, to disseminate the same, (Klippenstein, "Heritage Postings, Sept. 2000, page 2).

The traditional Mennonite schools already used the Bible, Bible studies and the *Gesangbuch* as the only curriculum. The children who graduated from these schools were thoroughly indoctrinated in Biblical teachings and Christian values. Clearly the issue was



Winning love was the focus point of the teaching and instructing technique of Christopher Dock. Dock died in 1771. "He was found on his knees [in prayer] in the schoolroom, but his spirit had departed," Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. Two, page 77. Photo courtesy of Weltweite Bruderschaft, page 166.

not one of teaching biblical values and faith, the issue was over the type of religious culture which was to be taught—their own traditional Gospel-centric faith or that of Separatist Pietism/Revivalism which basically denied the Gospels.

The issue of education had already torn huge rifts in the Mennonite community in Imperial Russia. Preserving their own Gospel-centric faith and educational tradition was one

"....the issue was over the type of religious culture which was to be taught..."

of the main reasons why many conservatives had immigrated in 1874-76.

The fact that Hoepfner introduced the methodology of Revivalism and Pietist teachings, indicated he neither understood nor appreciated the Gospel-centric motifs of his own confessional tradition and instead sought to suppress and replace them. Nor was he sensitive to concerns of the conservative Mennonite community already deeply traumatized by a century of earlier attempts at using the schools as a way of introducing alien religious cultures and turning children against the faith of their fathers and alienating them

from their communities and extended family networks.

It is understandable that such measures would deeply concern parents who had great appreciation for their own Gospel-centric faith and who specifically wanted their children educated and instructed within that tradition.

Hoepfner was one of the early supporters of Mennonite Educational Institute at Gretna, presumably seeing it as another weapon in the fight against traditional Mennonite Gospel-centric faith and culture.

The history book of the Berghthaler church reconstituted under Aeltester Johann F. Funk, proudly trumpets the assertion that "A small minority thought in terms of spiritual renewal...[which] did not merely aim to preserve the past. It was a genuine, far-sighted and redeeming effort to rediscover the nature of the church and its mission in the world," *Adventure in Faith*, page 78.

Based on their own words and conduct it is obvious that these "loco-focos" did not waste any time studying the writings and teachings of the conservative faith tradition in seeking information about "the church and its mission in the world." Presumably they did not want to be confused by the facts.

At the very least their agenda was disassociative of the long standing educational tradition of the conservative Mennonites. There is no evidence that these self-styled reformers sought to gather information about

"...the time has come to consider the Mennonite pedagogical tradition based on its actual merits and not merely on prejudice and bigotry..."

that tradition and/or to renew or reconstitute the same. In that sense, they revealed a fundamental lack of understanding of their own faith and culture (perhaps ignorance is too strong a word).

**Conclusion.**

In the past, supporters of the Mennonite Educational Institute, Gretna, routinely promoted the myth that the traditional Mennonite educational system was worthless and without merit and that it could only be redeemed by the adoption of outside methodology and the public educational system.

Would it not be better to build on the proven paradigms of past centuries, to recognize its many strengths, and rather try to improve the system as was done in colonial Pennsylvania?

This adds to the importance of the stories of teachers such as Jakob Wiens and Peter Wiens under whose tutelage the system worked so well. Perhaps the time has come to consider the Mennonite pedagogical tradition based on its actual merits and not merely on prejudice and bigotry and to look for ways of improving the system instead of constantly

denigrating it.

The question is of great significance. In Latin America some 150,000 Mennonites still have the privilege of operating their own educational system with the opportunity, therefore, of immersing their children in the ways of genuine Gospel-centric faith and their own cultural motifs and traditions which God hath wrought.

Recognizing the Mennonite confessional schools as legitimate and then seeking even modest improvements, would have immense consequences for the Mennonite community over the next century. However, this would be far too radical an idea for many Canadian Mennonites (particularly those who have adopted the "Stompin' Tom" variety of religious culture) whose vision is restricted to destroying these communities and/or their culture, largely in the pathetic hope that they can add a few members to their particular denomination.

**For Further Reading:**

Plett, *Saints and Sinners*, pages 44-45, 158-168, and 99-101.

A. Ens, "Mennonite Education in Russia," in John Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg, 1989), pages 75-97.



Jakob van Campen, "Vorschrift," Altona, Germany, 1699, Photo courtesy Abrahams, Frakturmalen, page 33.

Protestant Fundamentalists have often mocked conservative Mennonites for their practice of silent prayer. One Reformation writer encouraged silent prayer on the grounds that the relationship between God and man was far too important for the believer's voice and that of the community to be appropriated and/or controlled by a worship leader. The Editor.

# Jakob Wiens (1816-88), Hoffnungsfeld, Manitoba

## Introduction.

Jakob Wiens was born in 1816 to Jakob Wiens and Sara Brandt, owners of Wirtschaft 5 in the village of Osterwick, Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia.

May 20, 1835, Jakob Wiens was baptised upon the confession of his faith.

September 8, 1836, Jakob Wiens married Katherina Klassen, born 1817. She was a sister to David Klassen whose son Jakob RGR 272-1 and daughter Katharina, Mrs. Ludwig Esau (S1A-237) later lived in Hoffnugsfeld, W.R.

Katharina's mother Katharina, nee Dyck, was married to a Klassen and later to a Pauls. She was born Oct. 15, 1776, and died on Jan. 3, 1852, at 10 a.m.

Katharina Klassen was baptised upon the confession of her faith May 20, 1836.

Jakob Wiens recorded that "On January 11, 1838, at 9 p.m. we experienced quite a strong earthquake, although we suffered no damage."

Jakob Wiens was a school teacher in Russia. In 1841 Jakob and Catherina Wiens moved from Osterwick to Kronsthal where he served as a teacher.

On page 24 of his uncle Peter's "Rechnenbuch" Jakob made a notation, "Jakob Wiens, Schullehrer in Kronsthal, May 21, 1841," preceded by "Peter Wiens, Gathzau, Anno 1786, Prussia."

In 1844 Jakob Wiens purchased a half Wirtschaft from Hermann Neufeld for 1000 ruble.

On November 8, 1844, Catharina became ill and was bedridden until the fall of 1849.

## Familienbuch.

Jakob Wiens Jr. continued the "Familienbuch" commenced by his parents, recording therein details of his marriage, children and grandchildren.

In 1868 Jakob Wiens recorded the following in the Familienbuch:

"I, Jakob Wiens, was born on June 2, 1816, at 1 p.m., the youngest of my siblings, and the only one of eight brothers who lived (past infancy) and am now 52 years of age. During this time I have experienced many happy days as well as sad times, actually years, so that I can say with Job--I have worked whole months for nothing and hard nights have been many, but our dear God has graciously helped until now and will continue to help so that when our goal is reached, He will provide a blessed end."

## Journals.

Like Christopher Dock (d. 1771) in Shippack, Pennsylvania, Jakob Wiens Jr. was a professional teacher whose journals and letters describe a Godly man. His story speaks for the Mennonite pedagogical tradition where the primary goal was the instilling of Godliness and moral character in young innocent hearts.

The fact that Jakob Wiens preserved and used the "Rechnenbuch" of his uncle Peter indicates the respect he had for his elders as well as the

confessional tradition within which he practised his profession. Evidently he thought so highly of his uncle's work that he did not see the need to compile his own "Rechnenbuch", traditionally the first task of a young teacher.

Jakob Wiens did something equally impor-



*Circa 1860. Jakob Wiens (1816-88) and Katherina Klassen (1817-85), Kronsthal, Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia. This is one of the older photographs found in the Russian Mennonite tradition. Jakob Wiens appears to be about 40-50 years old in the photograph. Photo courtesy of Grandfather's Diary: en route to Canada (Winnipeg, 1961), title page. The photo was also published in the Steinbach Post, June 21, 1950, page 6, submitted with a letter from Mrs. Jakob Enns.*

tant. He transcribed various historical and theological writings collecting these writings in a journal. Presumably they formed a resource of materials, paralleling the Rechnenbuch, which he used in the course of his teaching.

"Like Christopher Dock...Jakob Wiens Jr. was a professional teacher whose journals and letters describe a Godly man."

Record keeping and the gathering of writings in journals was a common practice among conservative Mennonites. In this regard Jakob Wiens was continuing an ancient tradition among his people.

March 20, circa 1840, Jakob Wiens Jr. bound the journal together with his uncle Peter's "Rechnenbuch".

The journal includes a compilation of various medical recipes, devotional items, short histori-

cal vignettes, poetry mostly written around 1840, and, of course, the immigration account which is published as part of this article.

It may well be that Jakob Wiens did most of the work of compiling the journal prior to 1840 at the start of his teaching career.

The medical prescriptions and ancient folk remedies recorded by Jakob Wiens indicate he served as a medical practitioner/advisor in addition to his teaching profession and farming (pages 35-57).

## Vignettes.

Many of the items collected by Jakob Wiens in his journal were short vignettes presumably used in the classroom.

The first item documents various deaths in the Chortitza Colony in the 1848 cholera epidemic: "At its peak, five people died in one day, 24 in total. Among these 13 were married through which seven became widowers and seven were widowed."

The next 34 pages consist of historical writings regarding the founding of the Mennonite settlements in Imperial Russia, including the official invitation, the Privilegium, and the agreement made by the delegates and government.

The next section (pages 35-57) consists mainly of medical prescriptions and remedies, although several items of moral literature are interspersed. The morality literature, pages 58-109, is described below.

Pages 83 to 116 consist of writings of a historical and theological nature.

On page 83 Jakob Wiens refers to a severe windstorm which hit the Chortitza Colony July 22, 1842, and details some of the damage caused.

Several pages dealing with millennial teachings are followed by a number of songs copied from the *Christenboten*, for encouragement under the Cross ("Zur aufmunterung unter dem Kreutze") (page 88), a 1873 letter to the Czar by Old Colony Aeltester Gerhard Dyck and other leaders outlining the Mennonite faith (pages 95-98), a letter by Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-92) regarding war from the *Friedensbote* (pages 98-101), and several songs.

Concluding this section is a letter from Johann Dyck, Osterwick, dated Dec. 15, 1876, discussing mutual friends. Dyck recalls how Wiens had been so downcast and sentimental the last time he had visited his place, saying goodbye.

Dyck also mentioned that in his last letter Jakob Wiens had written he was making a map of the entire colony and that he would send it.

This is followed by two devotional pieces: "Of the salvation of the believer in eternity" and "The longing of a soul for release" (pages 155).

Pages 115-116, contain a poem "Sittenregeln für Schulkinder" once memorized by every child in the Mennonite confessional educational system and recited in most schools every morning: "Das erste was du tust, Wenn du aufstehest fruh, Ist ein Gebet zu Gott; Kind dasz vergesse nie" (The first which shall be done, each morn' when

you arise, to give a prayer to God, Child forget this n`er).

The 28 stanzas of this poem portrayed the ideal deportment of a good child, reflecting the high view of creation and human worth underlying the Mennonite faith (see below).

The biggest single item in the journal is the emigration account, pages 117 to 151, published with this article.

### History.

The journal closes with two larger historical pieces, "The first emigration of Mennonites to Russia from the Danzig region, Part One, a short description of the first emigration from Danzig and the journey to Chortitz" (pages 154-167). This seemingly is a shortened version of the Peter Hildebrand account, published in English by the MMHS earlier this year.

Jakob Wiens did not copy the entire account presumably because he did not wish to affirm and validate Hildebrand's negative and pejorative portrayal of the 1789 Chortitza pioneers (see Henry Schapansky, "From Prussia to Russia," in *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 9-14, and available on the HSHS web site: "www.hshs.mb.ca").

The second piece (pages 168-174) is a short village history of Kronsthal, possibly the 1848 Gemeindebericht, which Jakob Wiens as the local teacher would have written himself.

Kronsthal was founded in 1809, one of later villages in the Chortitza Colony, started to alleviate overcrowding in the existing villages. Since most of the settlers came from Kronsweide and Rosenthal the name chosen was a combination, one syllable from each of the mother villages (page 169).

The monograph provides a short survey of the difficulties faced by the settlers in terms of droughts and other misfortunes as well as types of farming, etc.

Presumably both pieces were used by Jakob Wiens to teach students the history of their own village.

### Morality Literature.

By 1840 the canon of conservative Mennonite devotional literature was well defined and highly evolved. Although anchored firmly by the *Martyr Spiegel* and *Gesangbuch*, the canon included a surprising range of writings.

Closely associated with print culture was a category of devotional material I have described as "morality literature", and used extensively in the conservative Mennonite tradition as observed in the Ohrloff-Halbstadt, Petershagen-Lichtenau, and Kleine Gemeinden in the Molotschna, see *Saints and Sinners*, pages 146-147.

Morality literature consisted of short handwritten stories, biographies and/or anecdotes which generally brought forth a moral lesson.

The genre served as a secondary devotional literature. Being less regulated this allowed new material an avenue to enter the canon represented by the more defined print culture.

In accordance with ancient tradition these manuscript items were gathered and disseminated by handwritten transcriptions much like the monks of medieval times.



*The village of Osterwick (Dolinskoye), Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia, today Ukraine. The photograph was taken from the second floor of the Peter Schulz manor home, view to the east. Photo by Delbert Plett, May 2000. Schulz was the owner of the large factory founded by his father Dietrich Schulz in 1880.*

Morality literature was used in the classroom by teachers to instill moral, ethical and religious values.

The morality literature collected and used by Jakob Wiens constitute one of the most fascinating sections of his teacher's journal.

Some examples: Page 58, "Praise God, the winter is past," page 59, "My heart springs itself upward - Spring," page 61, "How magnificent is the Evening Glow - A Spring Evening," page 62, "Oh, how the world stands in the Evil - Good Friday," page 63, "Today Christ has risen, Easter," page 64, "Oh Father! Abyeance of Your Kindness? A nice rain after a long drought," page 67, "Lord I come to praise you.-On New Year's Day," page 73, "Praise God with Contentment - The Rainbow," page 75, "Praise God I want to Praise You - After a nice rain," page 77, "Praise God I want to Praise You - At the end of the year," page 80, "Oh God, who has maintained us - June 2, 1842."

The material used by Jakob Wiens would certainly be worthy of in depth analysis as to its origins and content. Perhaps it would be suitable to be used as curriculum material in modern-day Mennonite communities which still control their own educational systems.

"By 1840 the canon of conservative Mennonite devotional literature was well defined and highly evolved...[including] a surprising range of writings."

### Pedagogy.

The numerous devotional pieces which Jakob Wiens collected were presumably material used in the classroom. They clearly describe, therefore, important elements of the conservative Mennonite pedagogical tradition shortly after it was transplanted from Prussia to Imperial Russia in 1789.

The fundamental characteristic of the morality literature gathered by Jakob Wiens was its

inherently positive nature. It was evocative of the theology of conservative Mennonites that children were born into the world as wholesome, redeemed and fully soteriologic human beings. This in turn went back to Reformation times when Anabaptists in the Low Countries (Netherlands and Belgium) refused to follow simplistic Protestant creed focusing on the depravity of man, taking instead a high view of the human creation.

This was not merely an obscure theoretical

"...the morality literature...was evocative of the theology of conservative Mennonites that children were born into the world as wholesome, redeemed and fully soteriologic human beings."

doctrine, debated by Aeltesten over faspa, but truly the foundational teaching of an entire culture. This is clearly manifested as it was being taught in Mennonite confessional schools in Imperial Russia in 1840, three centuries after the beginning of the tradition.

The positive Mennonite view of the human condition as described in the teacher's manual of Jakob Wiens stands in sharp contrast to that of the Protestant Reformers, and particularly that of 19th century Separatist-Pietism and/or Protestant Revivalism, which held forth the notion that human beings were born as totally depraved, condemned and worthless creatures.

The latter notion, of course, was used as the foundation for a whole range of strategies instilling guilt and anxiety in young children, scarring many for life, and making them pliable subjects for the manipulations of their leaders. For example, a guest speaker at a local womens religious meeting in Steinbach this past summer boasted in her credentials that she had had a "conversion experience" at the age of three, something which would be regarded by many as evidence of child abuse.

It is evident that Jakob Wiens was a gifted educator, a rational and intellectual man. He had a vision of building God's community through



Peter Schulz manor home built in 1912 or 1914. West end of Osterwick. The sister Mennonite villages of Osterwick (Neuosterwick) and Kronsthal are now jointly referred to as Dolinskoye in Ukrainian. Photo by Delbert Plett, May 2000.

the instilling of Gospel-centric teachings coupled with a sound elementary education for all.

**For further reading:**

Sjouke Voolstra, “The colony of heaven’: The Anabaptist aspiration to be a church without spot or wrinkle in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” in Piet Visser, *et.al.*, editors, *From martyr to muppet: A historical introduction to cultural assimilation processes of a religious minority in the Netherlands: the Mennonites* (Amsterdam University Press, 1994), pages 23.

**Recollections.**

Daughter Helena Wiens Kroeker later described some of her experiences while living with her parents in Kronsthal, Imperial Russia.

“My childhood and youth in my father’s house, together with my six brothers and sisters, was a happy one. We lived in a four room house, with floors of yellow soil covered with white sand. The house was on a little plateau on a hill in Kronsthal, Russia. From the valley below, a winding road came past our house, then passed the windmill and went up to the top of the hill.

“Balmy breezes wafted sweet aromas all around from fragrant lilac blossoms and fruit trees, such as pear, cherry, plum, apple and “Krushki”, which surrounded our house.

“To water the trees was mostly my duty. Countless times I ran up and down that hill with pails of water. Our orchards and vegetable gardens with their sand-covered pathways presented a picturesque view.

“School was a source of great joy to me even though I missed many days because of frequent severe toothaches. How I loved my teacher. Learning was a delight.

“Christmas was always a time of special joy. We learned our “Wuenschke” well and then our parents came to the Christmas program. How the tree sparkled with its decorations of glittering

candles and “Zuchermarzipan”.

“Were our childhood years mainly characterized by play? No! We learned to work as well. At the age of six years I drove my father’s horses while he worked as a land surveyor. At the age of 12 I was housekeeper because my older sister helped at my brother’s place and mother was sick.

“Together with the other work, there was the caring for and breeding of silkworms. For this purpose three roosts were put up in the living room. Daily the worms had to be fed. The lovely silk which they produced was sold at a good price. We used part of the silk to knit fine gloves and stockings.”

From Irvin Kroeker, *Wiens Family Register*, page 36-7.

**Survey, 1860s.**

In a letter published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, October 26, 1887, Jakob Wiens relates an anecdote regarding surveying work he did in Russia.

“During the 1860s, after Czar Alexander II had abolished serfdom (or slavery) in Russia, each estate owner had to give his former serfs four desjation (almost 11 acres) of land per male soul. There were not nearly enough sworn-in [registered] surveyors in order to do all the necessary measuring and to divide the land among the farmers; the people at that time were still completely without education.”

“I had previously already occupied myself extensively with surveying among Russians and Germans and was already well known. Consequently I had to survey out and divide the land for the farmers of most of the estate owners in the region of the Old Colony. Thus, I also came to a Russian village, Rasumowka, not far from the German Colony Nieder-Chortitz on the Dnieper which was part of the huge estate belonging to the Russian General Miklatschewski.”

“It was in late summer and for a long time there had been a great drought. Because of lack of water, there was nothing to say, but the earth was hard as a stone. The farmers were supposed to plow furrows between their allotments but the plow could not be forced into the earth, rather it only scraped the weeds off on top.”

“At the beginning of the week I started and looked forward to Friday, that I would end [the project] on Saturday. But at midday, the Narrost (village mayor) advised that we could not survey on Saturday. They had united themselves that the next day they would pray to God for rain in the church at Bilenko, the main village of the estate.”

“I presented to them that they could wait with this until Monday, a few days would not matter. But they answered, ‘No! And even if we would want to postpone the praying, we still could not survey, for the administrator has summoned us to help with a wolf’s hunt and only released us because of the prayers.’”

“With this I was satisfied and drove home on Friday evening. Sunday morning it was already dark and by 10:00 o’clock it started to rain gently and rained the entire day.”

“When I returned again on Monday, it had rained even harder there than by us, for now they could not plow deep enough to find dry earth. They said they had been right in the middle of their prayers when it started to rain.”

“Now what shall we say hereto? The unbelievers will say, it is only coincidence.”

“But I say, the Lord carried out His promises here, which He has given in so many places in the Holy Scripture.”

**Millennialism, 1873.**

At the bottom of page 83 of the journal Jakob Wiens starts a section dealing with the millennial teachings in vogue among many of the Mennonites who remained in Russia.

Those who converted to Separatist-Pietist religious culture adopted the chiliastic teachings of Jung-Stilling that Russia (the east) would be the refuge of the Church in the endtimes and that the Russian Czar would be its Saviour.

Jakob Wiens refers to the publication of Claasz

“[Imperial Russia]...has harboured socialism and nihilism which always becomes more powerful in spite of sword, torture, prison and Siberia.”

Epp’s book setting forth the Separatist-Pietist understanding of the endtimes, writing, “It is amazing that exactly now as we come to the last emigration year, the booklet *Die entsiegelte Weissagung des Propheten Daniel und die Deutung der Offenbarung Johannis* has appeared and is restraining many from emigration. According to his admonitions and commands, he [the author] must be a very Christly person. But his prophesying goes too far, for he prescribes quite an exact time when everything shall come to pass, when in actuality the time and hour re-

mains hidden from mankind.”

Jakob Wiens quoted Deuteronomy 20, verse 18, “that those who prophesy falsely shall die.” His observations show a keen perception and understanding of scripture.

As a typical Old Kolonier, Jakob Wiens expresses himself in a kindly manner regarding Claasz Epp even though possibly tongue-in-cheek. In the view of conservative Mennonites, Claasz Epp, his father David Epp, and, indeed, most Separatist-Pietists, were in the words of Kleine Gemeinde theologian Heinrich Balzer “... seized of a perverse spirit,” *Golden Years*, pages 227-9.

Wiens thanked the gracious God for having compassion by allowing at least some of His people to depart from Russia. He noted the statement in Epp’s book that “Russia will not experience the coming tribulation since it was spared from the aforementioned Revolution.”

To this Wiens responded, “It [Russia] has in no way been spared, it has merely not yet come to such a universal eruption. For a long time already it has harboured socialism and nihilism which always becomes more powerful in spite of sword, torture, prison and Siberia. Indeed, one should flee the deserts of Samara and Bakkara...And is it possible that the beloved God has only one place of refuge prepared in middle Asia for His own, and where only few from America can flee? Truly he [Epp] has many followers here although only few among us.”

“Has He not likewise prepared for them the beautiful west, where no armies are urgently pressing? Yet, we want to submit this to Him who will govern all.”

Wiens’ astute analysis of the situation could well serve as an encouragement to many in the present day who are so busy stampeding after alien religious cultures they have forgotten about Christ and His gift of redemption for those who follow Him and His teachings.

On pages 86 and 87, Jakob Wiens copied an article by Johan Rohmer “The star of Bethlehem” revolving around the prediction of an American professor that a total eclipse of the sun and moon was to occur in 1887 and how this related to endtimes predictions of the Second Coming.

### Emigration, 1876.

In 1876 Jakob Wiens and family emigrated from Imperial Russia. Jakob Wiens served as co-leader of a contingent of Old Colony Mennonites crossing the Atlantic Ocean on the S. S. Sardinian arriving in Quebec City, Quebec, June 19, 1876. Travelling on the same vessel was grandson Jakob age 13 and daughter Helena age 20 and son-in-law Abraham Kroeker 22.

Jakob Wiens kept a careful record of the journey from Imperial Russia to Canada and the first few weeks in Manitoba. This account was translated and published in 1961 by great-granddaughter Nettie Kroeker, 85 Kelvin Street, Winnipeg 5, Manitoba. It is this published version which is reproduced here.

### Hoffnungsfeld.

Jakob Wiens and his family arrived at Fort Dufferin on June 19, 1876. Jakob and son Isaak

were entered in the listing of members of the 1875-1880 Reinländer (Old Kolony) Gemeindebuch, page 5, as No. 10 and 17, respectively.

Daughter Helena later recalled that Jakob had served as one of the surveyors for the infant settlement.

After several weeks of looking for a suitable site, Jakob Wiens and his family settled in the village of Hoffnungsfeld, West Reserve, Manitoba. The village included part of the area of the present-day City of Winkler.

### Recollections.

Daughter Aganetha Wiens Ens later described some of their experiences during the early pioneer years:

“Her father was leader of the group. After a long and hazardous journey they landed in Canada

of her married brothers and sisters with their children lived in it the first winter.

“In spring the land was prepared as good as possible. There were only two or three ploughs in the whole village. Seeding was done by hand and ripe grain was later cut with a scythe. Mother did her share of work in the fields and in the home.

“Food was very poor in the first years. It consisted mainly of flour and water, two ingredients which were fashioned into as many different dishes as possible. Many people died as a result of malnutrition. The loss was especially great among the children. Then a grim typhoid epidemic took many adults – mothers and fathers – leaving many orphans.”

From Irvin Kroeker, *Wiens Family Register*, page 39.



*The graveyard of the village of Kronsthal, Chortitza Colony, with the village street visible in the background in the valley of the middle Chortitza River. According the Rudy Friesen, Into the Past, page 106, the gravestone on the left is that of Jakob Zacharias (1827-88). The high escarpments contain the yellow clay used by the Mennonites for making their much sought after bricks and tiles. Photo by Delbert Plett, May 2000.*

in June 1876. In a small steamer they made their way down the Red River, often having to be towed from the banks, until they arrived in Emerson.

“There they bought a wagon, oxen and other provisions and made their way westward. In Reinland the men left their families and pushed still farther west in search of land with good water. When they came to a place about two miles southwest of the present town of Winkler they found water which was palatable.

“Mother, being the only unmarried child in the family, worked hard with them for their existence. At first they lived in sod huts dug into the ground up to the windows. The windows were grass sods piled one on top of the other for an opening, the roof was also made of sods. The floor inside slanted from the sides toward the middle and on rainy nights they had to take their turns draining water which streamed in from the roof of the hut. Many a night they made their beds in the wagons in the yards.

“Before winter came her father built a large house for which logs were hauled from the woods. The walls were all dove-tailed at the corners. There were no nails—just wooden pegs. All crevices were filled with mud, so they had a warm house for winter. She and her parents and three

### Letters.

Being a man of letters it was natural that Jakob Wiens would conduct an extensive letter correspondence. It was the custom in his time for copies of letters to be transcribed into a “letter book”. Several of his epistles are extant.

June 29, 1879, Jakob Wiens wrote to nephew David Klassen in Russia. He starts the epistle by wishing his nephew the “peace of God...Whoever has this peace need never fear, even if the very oceans shall pass away and the mountains sink in the sea.....For Jesus said, ‘Be of good cheer and fear ye not.’”

“Indeed, this peace is very necessary for us and doubly for you there in Russia.”

Jakob Wiens writes that the fields and gardens look excellent and that they are expecting a good crop. He has recently traded his oxen for a team of geldings.

He continues a debate with his nephew regarding the emigration and his fears of an impending nihilistic uprising in Russia. He expresses concern over the lack of freedom of the press. It might be decades before the shattering of society there will actually come to pass. (Nettie Kroeker is seemingly quoting from this letter in her introduction to the emigration journey, re-published in this issue).



A beautiful view of the village of Kronsthal, as it exists today. The scene is representative of the Strassendorf street villages of the Mennonites in Imperial Russia. Many Mennonite buildings dating to 1900 and earlier still stand in the village. It is interesting that Kronsthal and Osterwick were also laid out as sister villages in the East Reserve in 1874, as were Rosenthal and Chortitz. Photo by Delbert Plett, May 2000.

### Rundschau, 1885-88.

Jakob Wiens periodically wrote to the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, as the correspondent for the village of Hoffnungsfeld, W.R., Manitoba.

Through the assistance of Conrad Stoesz, Director, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, a number of letters written by Jakob Wiens are at hand. The same provide an interesting bird's eye view of Hoffnungsfeld and the West Reserve, but more importantly, of Jakob Wiens himself and his view of neighbours, church matters and religion.

The first four letters are datelined Schantzenfeld P.O. (Hoffnungsfeld).

In a letter dated August 31, 1885, published September 16, Jakob Wiens states it is over a month since he has last written. "The grain is as fine as it can even be...Indeed, much disparaged but highly fertile Manitoba. The Lord wishes to direct its residents to repentance through His endless goodness." With this letter is published an encouragement to school teachers with reference to the great importance of their work and also the complete text of the poem "Das erste, was du thüest," setting out the ideal operations of the Mennonite confessional school system.

In a letter published Nov. 11, 1885, Jakob Wiens details the suffering of brothers Heinrich (SGB1B-166) and Jakob Ensz (RGB-384-1) who died on Oct. 7 and 17th, respectively.

Wiens commented: "Indeed, the Lord speaks an earnest language with us, because we do not allow ourselves to be directed toward repentance through His goodness. For each and every one may certainly think, the like could also happen to him, and no one knows whether they will then have the mental ability or the grace for repentance; wherefore, 'Heut lebst du, heut bekehre dich, ob morgen kommt, kann's andern sich,' etc."

In a letter published January 27, 1886, Jakob Wiens acknowledges he has not reported for some time, "and you will discover in my further reports the reason for the torn-away pen for which I now again plan to grasp."

Further to the death of Heinrich and Jakob Ensz, he notes a third brother Johann Ensz, also

his son-in-law, fell sick shortly thereafter. Elisabeth, the daughter of Heinrich died Oct. 30, and shortly thereafter, David Driedgers' 17-year-old son David, fell sick. "He was anxious regarding his salvation, but finally also found peace in the blood of Jesus. Oh, that he would remain therein until his end."

In a letter published February 3, 1886, Jakob Wiens recounts the sad story alluded to in the earlier letter, the passing of his beloved wife of 50 years, Katherina nee Klassen. "After son-in-law Johann Ensz had lain sick for 3 1/2 weeks, so bad that the family on several occasions stood around his bed awaiting his death, my wife became sick, but not of typhus [Nervenfieber]; she was very sickly and weak already for a long

"This child also went over [to death] comforted, rejoicing that it would there meet the beloved Saviour and the beloved grandmother."

time, but was still up out of bed and doing some work. Her legs and feet were swollen, which sometimes caused her pain. But now however the infection also spread up her body and also internally, so that she had to lie in bed although her sickness in the beginning was not very severe."

"I immediately sought medical advice for my wife and obtained some medication but it was of no help and we could soon see what the outcome of this would be. It was extremely hard for me to tear myself from the one with whom I had been joined in love for almost 50 years....The sickness quickly gained strength and became very hard, so that all of us agreed with her innermost wish and prayed for her release. This prayer was also heard, for already on the 10th day of her sickness, at 5 o'clock in the morning, November 27, 1885, came the hour of her release."

By 1886 Jakob Wiens Sr. was teaching in Schönhorst, near Gretna (Jakob J. Wiens, letter to *Rundschau*, Dec. 22, 1886.)

In a letter published August 11, 1886, still

datelined July 15 Hoffnungsfeld, Jakob Wiens laments "as I am now old and as the writing, particularly the dictation, is becoming difficult for me, I have already decided to quit with my reports and to leave it for others."

Nonetheless "because the workers are also few" Wiens continued reporting. "The unmarried Peter Wiebe (at J. Bergmann's in Reinland), born in and from Neuendorf in the Old Kolony), died quietly on the preceding Sunday morning, without that anyone noticed, and therefore has gone home to the eternal rest, which he had already yearned after for a long time."

"On June 5, I...drove to Edenburg, first to Franz Ensz, farmer, where I met the Honourable Peter Giesbrecht from the East Reserve, the neighbours Peter Wienses and others...I stopped in Krongart at Heinrich Dycks....Gnadenfeld and visited the old acquaintance Cornelius Kroeker, who moved from Krongart, O.K., to Bergthal...in Schönhorst I had to ask for directions which occurred by a Abr. Wiens, son of Heinrich Wiens, whose wife is born Aganetha Schroeder...from here I got to Edenburg,...and drove up at the Honourable Heinrich Wiebe, whom--together with his family--I found hale and hearty...I visited also his aged mother who had the misfortune recently to have been run over by a horse, and was consequently prostrate in bed. I also met there a widow Harder, formerly the wife of Johann Wiebe, who was the school teacher in Neuosterwick for many years....the next morning I drove to Gretna, the store of David Peters (from Schönhorst, O.K., Rus.)...on the following Sunday,...Ohm Peter Giesbrecht from

"As a typical Old Kolonier, Jakob Wiens tended to see the members of his community in terms of their spiritual gestalt..."

the East Reserve visited us and brought a moving sermon."

"June 16, I made a trip to Rosenfeld together with my sister Mrs. Joh. Klassen, and visited an old friend of my youth, formerly a Mrs. Joh.

Neufeld (now a widow Friesen), born a Katharina Klippenstein, from Neuosterwick, O.K., Rus... from there we drove to [Alt]-Bergthal and visited the Church teacher [minister] the Honourable Abr. Schroeder...in the evening we drove back to Rosenfeld and drove up at friend David Wiebes. In the evening we visited the old acquaintance Peter Zacharias....the following day we drove to the beloved Brandaeltester Peter Epp in Schönthal who gave me papers to take along to our Brandaeltester J. Bergmann, Reinland...from here we drove to Bergthal and stopped in at the beloved Aeltester Joh. Funk...from there to Kronsthal visiting Joh. Buhlers."

"On the following Sunday, June 26, 20 souls--10 male and 10 female--were united with the Gemeinde through the holy baptism, a beautiful baptism...On June 25, an aged boyhood friend, the Honourable Franz Dyck from the East Reserve visited me and on the day following I drove with him to behind Kleefeld...."

Jakob Wiens also writes they are experiencing "a drought such as they have not seen in all the years of being here". He reports the grain is poor, but the corn is quite good so that there will be enough feed. Wiens sees this as a warning from God to repent, "for our Heavenly Father will also receive us as children and instead of punishment [provide us] with blessing."

In the next letter, datelined Gretna P.O. (Schönhorst), published April 6, 1887, Jakob Wiens reported that Sunday he had driven to Edenburg to the church, "and after dinner I was at Heinrich Wiebes, who had been in Hoffnungsfeld for a ministerial election on Thursday, the 17th....the majority votes for minister fell on Franz Sawatzky, Hoffnungsfeld, and Jakob Heppner, Schantzenfeld, son of the deceased Jakob Heppner, Waldheim, and for deacon on Jakob Toews, near Reinland."

After reporting some family news about a child at Abraham Kroekers' and the remarriage of son David's widow, Jakob laments regarding the new alien religious cultures through which Satan was undermining the Gemeinden in the West Reserve, "And that which I have discovered in addition thereto I shall keep for myself, for it could constitute itself into a splinter, the beam in my own eye being too great, and the operation which the doctor must implement to

remove it too difficult, that I should take it upon myself to remove the splinter from another. I will say only so much, and in fact through the exchange of many facets of faith, in respect of which, there are many who consider they alone are right and disparage the others, which has been occasioned by appearances [outward rituals] and prophecies."

"[Therefore] all those who wish to be saved, let us watch and pray and to take the Holy Scrip-

partake of some of the proceedings but arrived too late, the roads were too bad. He drove up at Wilhelm Rempel's where he met many acquaintances who had come for the dedication service.

Rempel passed on a greeting from the Honourable Cornelius Pauls, Kronsthal, O.K., Russia, "which made me great joy." He asked for letters from his former neighbours, "and I will not remain indebted in answering of the same."

The work of Separatist-Pietists in the West

Reserve again comes painfully to Jakob Wiens attention. When he finally arrived at home he finds two children sick at Abraham Kroekers, "and also something more which caused me great pain, however, I will not hang it on the great chimes, rather will only say this much regarding same: If only each and everyone sought to remove the beam from their own eye, they will find out of what it consists, and shall no longer endeavour to tear with force the splinter or beam from their brother's eye (whereby it only becomes lodged more firmly), and rather will endeavour to remove the same thing with love and patience."

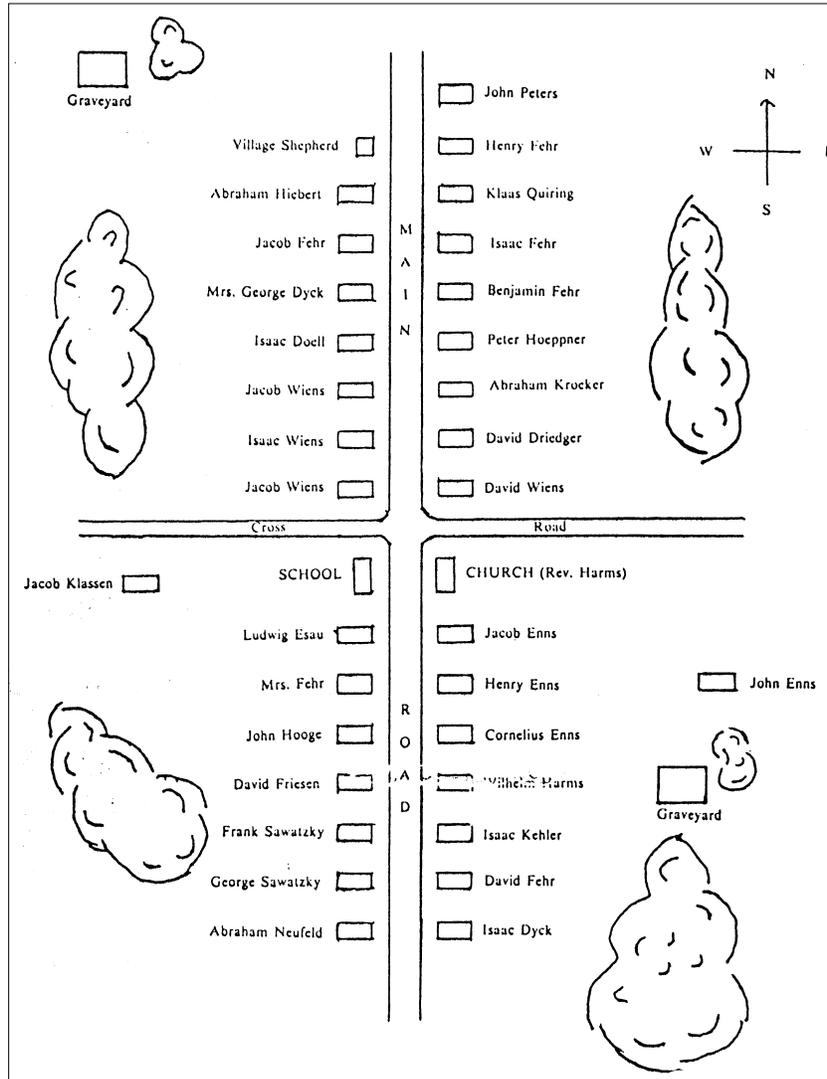
After reporting on the maiden sermons of the newly elected ministers, Jakob Wiens refers to the dedication of the new meeting house in Hoffnungsfeld on the Third Holiday: "Wilhelm Harms brought the introductory sermon and the beloved Aeltester Johann Funk, the dedicatory sermon on the text Nehemiah 5,19....when the worship service was over I received from Peter Heppner, Waldheim, a letter from Johann Hildebrand, Island of Chortitz, Russia, who also directed therein a greeting towards me,..."

The next letter, published June 15, 1887, is again datelined Schantzenfeld

P.O. (Hoffnungsfeld), Jakob Wiens reported that "within the space of eight days, three of his grandchildren have died."

"May 9, daughter Katharina died at Jakob Dycks, formerly Mrs. David Wiens, at the age of three years and five months. Shortly before her death she said to her mother, an angel had come to her and had taken her along to heaven, where she had also seen the Saviour, and where it was very beautiful and where she would gladly go, and for which they are all exceedingly glad."

"Behold, all you mothers! How wonderful it is, as soon as your children are first able to comprehend something, when you tell them some-



Map of Hoffnungsfeld, two miles southwest of modern-day Winkler.

ture alone as the only rule for our walk, for the time apparently is here of which the Lord in Matth. 24, 23-24, and Mark 13,22, has said, "...to seduce if it were possible even the very elect. In both references He draws it to our attention that He had made us aware of this. `Wie grosz wird uns're Freude sein, Wenn wir Ihm treu geblieben...'"

The next letter published May 4, 1887, again datelined Gretna P.O. (Schönhorst), opens with Jakob Wiens returning home April 7 to Hoffnungsfeld for the Easter Holidays. As he approached Reinland he discovered a new meeting house was being dedicated. He hurried to

thing about the loving Saviour and of the heavens, how you thereby take from them their natural fears of death, and simultaneously carry out the command of the Lord, which He gives through the prophet Isaiah (Chapter 45, 11), 'Show my children and the work of my hands to me,'"

"May 10, the oldest daughter at my children Johann Ensen died at the age of three years and ten months. This child also went over comforted, rejoicing that it would there meet the beloved Saviour and the beloved grandmother."

"...during these days Jakob Giesbrecht in Rosenort, born in Neuosterwick, O.K., and immigrated from Fürstenlandt, died..."

The forgoing reveals the wonderful difference when children are taught the loving goodness of God, instead of being scarred with hateful creed about being born condemned and worthless in the eyes of a wrathful judge and that innocent children must have some kind of phoney conversion experience to reconcile themselves with God. In most somewhat "enlightened" cultures the latter would be regarded as child abuse.

The incident reflects also so much of the educational philosophy of the Mennonite confessional school system as already seem in the curriculum materials of Jakob Wiens.

Wiens goes on the express again the deep spiritual concern typical of conservative Mennonites, "Oh beloved! Let us not delay these preparations [to repent], rather even today let us direct ourselves to our Saviour with genuine repentant prayer. And especially you parents and school teachers, let us certainly be mindful of the many commands of God, such as for example, Deuteronomy 11,18,19, Isaiah 45,11, Matth. 19,14, and in many other places more. How shall we feel at the Judgement Day, if someone who is condemned would come to greet us and say, 'You father or mother, you are the cause that I must go into Hell, for you have never told me about the need for conversion or of prayer, rather you only held me busy working.' Or, 'You school teacher, you did in fact teach me to read the Holy Scripture, but you have never or certainly only very seldom and then very imperfectly, instructed me regarding its contents, and I might have converted myself had you done so....Oh, brother, how horrible this would be! Wherefore let us pray daily to our beloved God, that He might want to arm us with the Holy Spirit, so that we are competent to truly direct His children, whom He has entrusted to us, unto Him, for of our own strength we are not capable."

On the 26th of May Jakob Wiens drove to Schönhorst to pick up his goods, "...to Jakob Schroeders, son of the deceased Johann Schroeder, where I stayed the entire winter, and organized my possessions." Presumably Wiens had been teaching in Schönhorst.

In his letter published July 27, 1887, Jakob Wiens reports, "in this rich work filled time I must be one of your most productive reporters for you, since I am no longer working any farmland," indicating that he has disposed of his property. "But," he writes, "I have little energy to write anything organized..."

"June 25, at 8 o'clock in the evening, Heinrich

Dyck in Kronsgart, son of Peter Dyck, Schönneberg, and later Michaelsburg, Fürstenlandt, died."

Again Jakob Wiens' thoughts quickly turn to the spiritual realm. "On June 27 I attended the funeral, which was very sad, the like of which I had seldom seen. The widow and all the children were grieving severely, but especially two of the adult daughters who at one time fell one over the other in distress, which was painful to observe."

As a typical Old Kolonier, Jakob Wiens



c. 1860. Jakob Wiens (1816-88) Kronsthal, Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia. An enlargement of the photo of Jakob Wiens and wife Katharina. Photo courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, The Wiens Family Register, page 4.

tended to see the members of his community in terms of their spiritual gestalt, "But, and this is the joyful news, I am told that during his sickness the beloved friend prayed almost continually and so childlike as a child, respecting which his mother requested for same, which he had very gladly done, until he too could finally say, the grace of God had enveloped him." What a wonderful testimony to the faith of the Old Kolony people.

Jakob Wiens provided the personal news: June 29, he and sister, Mrs. Joh. Klassen, drove to Rosenfeld. In Rudnerweide they went to Joh. Penners who was sick: "For a number of weeks her mother, a widow Krause, a daughter of Abraham Dyck, who had the Dnieper crossing at Einlage, stayed with them." According to Jakob Wiens' letter of January 25, 1888, he stayed at the Penner home while teaching in Rudnerweide.

In Rosenfeld they drove up at David Fehrs. Fehr gave him a letter to read from his brother, the Honourable Isaak Fehr from Schönhorst, Russia. In Rudnerweide Wiens had read a letter from Bernhard Klippenstein, Blumengart, Rus-

sia.

On the 30th they went to Joh. Klassens' in Rosenfeld, "this beloved friend is forsaking his beautiful garden and breaking down his fine buildings and is going on the land."

For the letter published August 24, 1887, see "East Reserve" following.

In the next letter published October 26, 1887, Jakob Wiens reports that every month Br. John G. Stauffer, Quakerton, Pa., sends him 50 copies of "Himmels Manna" (an Old Mennonite devotional paper) to distribute here, which task he shares with Bernhard Loewen, Schantzenfeld. On the 8th he drove northeasterly of Hoffnungsfeld to distribute among those living individually and scattered, with the intention of going to Rudnerweide after he had driven around there to conduct Sunday school there.

While he was having coffee at Wilhelm Loewens, formerly from Neuenburg, he experienced pain in the hernia which had afflicted him since coming to America. He departed on his wagon but soon the pain was so severe he stepped down attempting to force the rupture back. By now he decided to head for home instead of Rudnerweide hoping he would make it there before the worst pain struck. After great suffering which he describes in horrible detail he finally makes it home to Hoffnungsfeld, where his daughter Mrs. Johann Enns puts him to bed. The doctor is called and after three or four hours of applying towels heated in hot water the hernia popped back in.

During this incident Jakob Wiens reflects on dying and that "If it pleases the beloved Lord, he is quite willing to depart from here. Would only that through the redeeming blood of my Saviour He might help me over unto the eternal rest, in true faith and trust, where I will praise and thank Him in all eternity." Here Jakob Wiens manifests the peaceful "Gelassenheit" (submittedness) characteristic of Old Kolonier spirituality.

Jakob Wiens also addresses again the predator religious cultures which were attempting to alienate people against the Gemeinden in the West Reserve. He notes that he often hears the complaint, "Things are not good in the Gemeinde."

The advice Wiens had for these detractors could well be noted by those in the modern-day who are suffused with the message of separatism and tearing apart communities called forth by God, "Dearly beloved, your complaining is useless, but rather do everything possible that you yourselves can do for improvement in the Gemeinde. Unite yourselves often in faithful penitent prayer, and soon things will get better."

Another area in which predators were seeking to create divisiveness was by spreading the complaint, "The schools have deteriorated."

Again the response of Jakob Wiens is positive: "Indeed, but why don't you yourself direct more energy and earnestness towards same and unite yourselves often to a righteous prayer that the beloved God with His Spirit might everywhere convict and call forth school teachers and that through the same with love for God, and through them [instruct] the children entrusted unto them with wisdom and understanding and then matters with the schools will also soon im-

prove. Indeed 'The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much,' James 5, 16."

The next letter published January 25, 1888, is dated Rudnerweide, Gretna P.O.. Jakob Wiens misses his former homeland and laments he hears so little from his friends and relatives in Neuosterwick and Kronsthal, Russia.

Again he turns to an issue that is festering in the West Reserve, namely, the intrusion of predator religious cultures seeking to dismember and alienate its Christian communities.

"I wish," he writes, "that the Lord Jesus Christ might gain the influence in all our hearts, so that the call 'behold here is Christ' and 'The Lord has only one church which are we,' might cease. And rather that we might confess that there is certainly only one Gemeinde and that all those belong to this Gemeinde who have submitted themselves to Him through genuine repentance and faith, regardless of the Gemeinde or name by which they outwardly belong."

Here Jakob Wiens has provided an excellent description of the "true" Church of God as understood in conservative Mennonite theology. He affirms that the only biblical requirement for salvation is genuine repentance and faith.

It appears that those seeking to attack the Reinländer (Old Kolonier) and Bergthaler Gemeinden (later the Sommerfelder) and to turn people away from the Gospel-centric faith described by Jakob Wiens and to convert them to Separatist-Pietist and/or American Revivalist religious culture with all their legalistic rituals and unbiblical doctrines, will certainly have much to answer for on the coming Judgement Day.

#### East Reserve, 1887.

In a letter published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* August 24, 1887, Jakob Wiens reports on a trip he made to the East Reserve accompanying Rev. Johann Baer, from Pennsylvania, on a journey of spiritual visitation. The letter provides a unique look at a number of areas of interest for the Mennonite community in southern Manitoba: the relationship between the West and East Reserves, between Bergthaler and Old Koloniers, and their sense of spirituality and hospitality.

Although lengthy, the epistle is reproduced here in its totality because of its significance, especially to readers from the East Reserve who will be enchanted by Wiens' descriptions of their various ancestors. Publishing the complete letter also provides the reader with a feel for Jakob Wiens' evocative writing style, his way of thinking, his sense of morality and spirituality, and his impressive knowledge of his people and their interconnectedness and folklore.

The reader will note that Jakob Wiens is rather restrained regarding the religiosity of his people and their spiritual stature. This introspective modesty was typical of conservative Mennonites, who followed the biblical mandates to allow their Christian walk and discipleship to speak for itself. Fortunately their lives and conduct were such that they did not need to continually announce they were the followers of Christ as is common in certain other religious cultures whose constant verbalizing seems to demonstrate that

they had no genuine faith.

Schantzenfeld P.O. (Hoffnungsfeld)

August 12, 1887

I had promised the Prediger Johann Bär, already mentioned in my previous report, to drive with him to the East Reserve. We left, therefore, as promised, departing from home on Thursday, July 22, in order to seek him out in Edenburg.

After I had stopped for a while in Blumenhof by the copper smith Jakob Wiebe and finding him well, and had stopped in Gretna at the merchant David Peters, who previously lived in Schöneberg, Russia, I drove to Edenburg and stayed at the home of Peter Wiebes for night. I also visited a number of acquaintances, namely, Ohm Heinrich Wiebe [the delegate], Ohm Jakob Ham, who however was on the field, and Cornelius Sawatzki.

Friday, the 22nd we left Edenburg. We fed our horses in Dominion City, a small attractive city on the railway on the other side of the Red River. From here we turned eastward going inland, then again northward and traversed fine

"After dinner Ohm Gerhard Wiebe [Chortitz] drove with me to Rosenthal,..."

prairie with luxurious grass growth; also the grain stood beautifully, but there was only little as the land is not settled very much.

Finally we came to the Miquitor River, but the same was so swollen that we had ourselves brought over by a man with his boat upon which we loaded our possessions. His half-grown son then kneeled on our wagon seat and drove through the water, it reached almost the back of the pony. From here on there was very poor mostly stony way with much bush.

At 6 o'clock we arrived at Jakob Wiebes, brother to Peter Wiebe in Edenburg, where their mother, the aged widow Harder, had directed us. After the coffee we went to Peter Klassens, nephew to my son-in-law Abraham Kroeker, where also the mother, the half-sister of my son-in-law was present; we were heartily received here and had to promise to stop in on our return journey.

Presently we drove on after we had stopped in at Cornelius Toews in order to deliver a greeting from the widow Heinrich Toews, Krongart. But we arrived in Grünthal instead of Gnadenfeld, a poor bush-covered land. Finally we arrived in Gnadenfeld where we stayed overnight at the Honourable Peter Giesbrecht [Minister].

Saturday, the 23rd. - Today after breakfast I went to Jakob Braun, step-son of my neighbour Peter Dyck in Kronsthal, Russia, where I was heartily received and spent the entire day. Brother Bär and Peter Giesbrecht drove to Hochstadt to the Post Office, but came there later as well.

Sunday, the 24rd. - Today, before and after dinner, we were at the assembly in Grünthal. Before dinner the Honourable Aeltester David Stoesz made the introduction and Johann Bär the sermon on 1 Corinthians 9:24, 25. In the afternoon, Peter Giesbrecht gave the introduction and Johann Bär the sermon on Acts 16, 30.

Before dinner he showed us how we are to conform our Christian life so that we may be seized of the treasure and that in the battle against Satan, world and sin, we refrain from all shallow vanity and that we must therefore battle so that we might seize or take hold of the crown of eternal life. After church we went to Prieszen, brother-in-law to Peter Giesbrecht, and for night I went to Peter Giesbrechts. This dear friend is very weak and sickly.

Monday the 25th - In the morning we left Gnadenfeld. Because of business matters we stopped in at the widow Franz Dyck, Schönsee. From there we drove to Hochstadt, where we were at Peter Loewens for dinner; Mrs. Loewen is the former Mrs. Wilhelm Esau, Neuosterwick, Russia. Loewen is very sick. From there we drove to Chortitz to Ohm Gerhard Wiebe.

Tuesday the 26th - Today after breakfast, Br. Bär and I drove to the Honourable Aeltester David Stoesz [Bergthal]. We received a very friendly welcome and stayed there for dinner. After dinner we drove to Schönthal. Here we saw the overflowing wells; they produce so much water they can power mills.

We drove up [to the front door] at Ohm Cornelius Friesens but he was in the field. His wife asked us to wait a little, which we did not do. We drove on, for which we were later sorry: and I hereby ask for forgiveness.

Having arrived again in Chortitz, I went to Heinrich Wiebes for night. The wife is a daughter of the deceased Heinrich Dyck, Krongart.

Wednesday the 27th - Today until dinner, nothing. Today Br. Bär drove to Winnipeg. I stayed around at Ohm Gerhard Wiebes. After dinner I went to Peter Klippensteins for several hours to visit the aged school sister Agatha, nee Enns, who was at her children Peter Klippensteins. The sister is still quite active. I received a friendly greeting.

Thursday the 28th - Before dinner, nothing. After dinner Ohm Gerhard Wiebe drove with me to Rosenthal, where only two families, namely, Peter Friesens and their step-son Wilhelm Giesbrechts, are living, to visit the former, who together with his wife, nee Margaretha Bergen from Neuosterwick, Russia, are long-time acquaintances. The two aged ones are still quite active and healthy, though they are close to the seventies. We had a pleasant discourse there for a number of hours. For night we again drove to Chortitz.

Friday the 29th - The previous night we had strong thunder but here in Chortitz only little rain. Further south, especially by the Half-breeds, it apparently rained very heavily with hailstones from 4 to 6 inches in diameter, but only here and there. The grain here suffered no damage or only little.

Today we drove to Hochfeld where we visited the widow Krause who is a daughter of the Abraham Dyck who had the [river] crossing in Einlage, and her children Peter Krauses, with whom she is staying. I also walked over to Heinrich Friesen who is a teacher in the church [minister] but did not find the beloved friend at home.

I was able to have a fine visit with his wife.

She is concerned over her salvation. Oh that there could be many such as these! For Jesus calls all those that are weary and heavy laden, that he might give them rest (Matthew 11,28-29). Oh, but do come all who are weary and laden with sin. Together with me, your fellow companion, we wish to completely throw ourselves without reservations, into the arms of the beloved Saviour. He shall surely have nothing but goodness and love for us!

After dinner we found Br. Friesen at home. Towards evening I drove back again to Chortitz. When I arrived there, Br. Bär was again back from Winnipeg.

Sunday the 31st - Ohm D. Stoesz held the introductory [sermon] and J. Bär the sermon on Matthew 13, 29-30. He demonstrated from the text how the true disciples are known to God alone and that we may be eliminating as weeds much that is wheat stock, and likewise much may remain standing as wheat which are weeds, as man is not to judge. Further, how the weeds, the unbelievers, on the judgement day shall all be thrown in the fire-oven in Hell, and that man should certainly convert in time, in order that everyone would rather be gathered as a useful wheat kernel in the scouring of the eternal life.

After eating dinner we took a heartfelt leave of Ohm Gerhard Wiebe and his children expressing to him our thanks for the friendly and loving hospitable lodging for an entire week, and then drove back to Bergfeld. We stopped at Hochstadt at Loewens, where I received a letter and a greeting from Mrs. Loewen to her children.

In Gnadenfeld we took our leave of the beloved friend Jakob Braun. Peter Giesbrecht and Prieszen were waiting for us in Bergfeld, and we then drove up in Bergfeld at Peter Klassens.

There in the quite spacious school building we held an afternoon worship service. Ohm Peter Giesbrecht held the introduction [introductory sermon] and Johann Bär the sermon. It was a fine assembly, the school house was completely full. Oh, that the beloved God might bless all of these sermons, so that His word would not return empty, and rather bring forth fruits unto eternal life in many hearts.

After the worship service Peter Giesbrecht and Prieszen and many other friends, of whom I knew only few, came to Peter Klassens where we discoursed until the evening.

I feel obliged here to render a heartfelt thanks to all friends and acquaintances, and also to those not known to me, for the loving and friendly hospitality, which they allowed me to experience. Br. Bär also requested that I should extend a heartfelt thanks on his behalf for the loving reception of which he was able to partake.

Monday, August 1 - Today we took our leave from the beloved friend Peter Klassen and the aged mother and submitted ourselves on the return journey around 6:00 o'clock in the morning; the road manifested that it had rained heavily there. For this reason we again engaged a Half-breed in the vicinity of the Misqueto River, who brought us over; it cost a dollar. It was a good decision for now the water reached almost over the back of my pony.

We then drove to Edenburg where I went to

Peter Wiebes for night. In the evening I went also to Johann Wiebes, where an adult son, Jakob, lay very sick.

Tuesday the 2nd. - Johann Wiebes son Jakob died before midnight already. He was sick for five days. Age 21 years. An admonition for all, but particularly for the young people. Watch and be ready, for no man knowest the hour when our Lord will come. For also the youth are subjected to death.

After breakfast I took my leave from the beloved and drove home. [On the way] I stopped in Schönhorst, Gnadenfeld, Bergthal, Rudnerweide, Kronsgart and Rosenhof in order to requite myself of various requests and finally arrived at home around 6 o'clock in the evening where I found everything healthy and well. Praise and thanks be to the Lord for the gracious protection, for myself on the journey as well as mine at home.

And now also something of the noteworthy events which occurred at home during my absence. Twins, one son and one daughter, arrived at my children Jakob Wiens' on Sunday, July 31. In Kronsthal the aged Abraham Buller, old and tired with life, has fallen asleep with a living hope of eternal salvation, after a sickness of six

“...we wish to completely throw ourselves...into the arms of the beloved Saviour. He shall surely have nothing but goodness and love for us!”

weeks and five days. The date is not known to me.

During the night from the 28th to the 29th of July, a man in Rosengard by the name of Peter Wall was struck by lightning in the room surrounded by his family. Nothing happened to the rest of the family, nor did the house burn down. One can well imagine the horrible shock and pain of the family over the instantaneous death of spouse and father.

Again a call for all, “Watch and be ready, for you know not when your Lord cometh.”

On August 6 towards evening a heavy rain with hail stones went across here for quite a distance. The hail fell in large pieces but quite far apart so that it did only little damage; at a number of places it also fell so thick that everything was destroyed. All the grain of a farmer Johann Dyck, among others, who lives in the far northwest corner of the Reserve, was destroyed.

Everyone here is busily engaged with the harvest. Some are already almost finished. The harvest for the most part will bring rich returns, it is meagre only at a few places where the weeds took the upper hand.

In closing I wish also that the Lord of all grace might suppress the weeds in the spiritual fields within our Gemeinden so that it does not take the upper hand. The way it seems there is only little spiritual life in our Gemeinde.

But praise be to God there are still little sparks and flickers among the ashes. May the Lord ignite them with the wind of His teaching and His

Spirit, that they might shine as lights in the darkness, and that thereby a fire might be set ablaze and envelope the Gemeinde (Luke 12,49).

Alas, you teachers [ministers]! Prophecy to the many dead bones. Prophecy in peace, that the wind of the Holy Spirit in strength may commence to move over the plains of the dead and imbue them with new life (Ezekiel 37). “Ruft getrost, ihr Wächterstimmen! Ruft getrost und schönet nich; Christus will ein Zeugnis haben! Wenn’s, die Prediger vergraben, Ach, das ist ein grosz’ gericht! Ruft getrost, ihr Wächterstimmen! Rufet laut and schonet nich.”

And finally, receive all of you a heartfelt greeting from your loving and lowly friend, “Jakob Wiens Sr.”

### Hoffnungsfeld, 1888.

The last letter by Jakob Wiens was published in the *Rundschau* March 7, 1888, three months prior to his death in July. He was living and teaching in Rudnerweide.

Jakob Wiens' description of the village of Hoffnungsfeld is a monument to his sense of community and the inter-relatedness of his people.

The epistle serves as a fitting closing look at Jakob Wiens (1816-88), by now a 71 year-old man, widely respected and recognized as a gracious Ohm and senior elder within his community.

After an absence of six weeks he has returned to his home “darp” to visit his children. He had planned to return to Rudnerweide on Monday February 13, but because of a storm was unable to do so. Because the residents have many friends in Russia he decided to compile a survey of the village and sent the *Rundschau* the following report:

“The village of Hoffnungsfeld is laid out from south to north. We will start at the north end on the west side of the street. We meet first of all the “Wirth” [village farm owner] Abraham Hiebert. His father was a basket weaver in Blumengart, Russia. They are healthy and they are enjoying themselves, for they already have many children old enough to work, which are very necessary here for progressing materially.

The neighbour is Jakob Fehr, son of Benjamin Fehr from Rosenthal, Russia. They are well, but their oldest and only son is weak and somewhat lamed by arthritis (Gicht); nonetheless, he works. They also have three grown-up daughters.”

From here it goes to the widow Gerhard Dyck, she together with her children is also well. Gerhard married the daughter of Ludwig Esau, Helena, and is still living at home, and Peter is still unmarried. This in particular is information for the beloved friend Jakob Dyck, Steinau, Russia [Schlactin?]. With the same I express my thanks for the letter, and only wish that he might have written more about Kronsthal and Osterwick. His sister has also received his letter. I add another heartfelt greeting.

From here it goes further to neighbour Isaak Doell, born and from Neuenburg, Russia: things stand gloriously here. [They have] A multitude of children that I believe they themselves would have to count to know exactly how many there

are, and of every age. They are all well, overall things are going good for them.

From here it goes to my children Johann Ennszen, son of Cornelius Ensz, Neuosterwick, Russia. They live in my former Wirtschaft and I also have my lodging with them when I am in Hoffnungsfeld. They have two children, a daughter Elisabeth 2 1/2 years-old, and a little son, Jakob two months old, and they also have the daughter of his brother and her sister, who are both dead, as a foster child.

From here it goes to my children Isaak Wiens. These have four sons and four daughters (One daughter is married to David Esau, son of Ludwig Esau). Two sons who are twins are grown up and make all manner of furniture, sleighs and wagons in winter, on which their father then puts the runners. The other children, all the way to the youngest, are all old enough to work. Overall things are going very well for them. Isaak Wiens asks for news about his brother-in-law, I believe Jakob Hildebrand, Nieder-Chortitz, Baratow, Russia. If he himself or through another could report by letter or via the *Rundschau* about themselves and his exact address?

From here it goes to the Wirtschaft of my son Jakob Wiens. He however has moved five miles northeasterly onto another farm which he has beneficially purchased. He wishes to sell this Wirtschaft. Gerhard Ensz, son of the deceased Johann Ensz in Neuosterwick, Russia, currently lives in the house. He is only a young man but a good teacher. He also has a good wife, Isaak Loewen's daughter from Burwalde, Russia, but she is often sick.

From here we go to Jakob Klassens, son of my brother-in-law David Klassens, from Neuosterwick, who has moved here from Blumstein, for his farm is against our boundary and he is plagued by the "Fallsucht" and because of which they do not wish to live by themselves. He is now basically well physically.

From here it goes to Ludwig Esaus', a sister to Mrs. Klassen. They together with their children are also well.

In proceeding further we now meet Jakob Guenthers, son of the crippled Jakob Guenther from Neuosterwick. They in general are doing well, except that they have a sick daughter who is suffering from consumption.

From here it goes to Johann Hogen. He originates from the Molotschna and she is the sister to my daughter-in-law, Mrs. Isaak Wiens. They are enjoying themselves very much. They also have many children, mostly daughters.

Now we meet next David Friesens, son of David Friesen from here, originating in Neuenburg and later Schönhorst. They are well and happy.

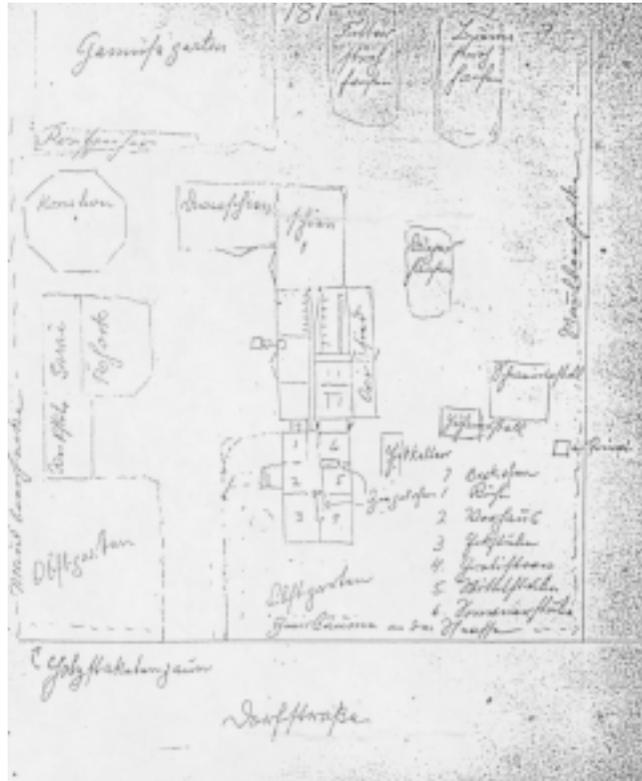
From Friesens we arrive at my nephews' Franz Sawatzky, who was elected as a deacon in

1885 and in 1887 as a minister. Since their children are only small and they are only of limited means, he has a fairly difficult situation. None-

"There are also threats to tear the village apart for there are those who wish to move on their farms."

theless, with his trust in the helping [hand] of God, he has decided to carry out the same according to his abilities. Living with them is also his mother, my sister. The same often suffers from severe heart murmur and is quite weak as a result.

Now we come to Gerhard Sawatzky, brother



A typical Old Kolonier Wirtschaft as drawn by Cornelius J. Funk, Winkler, in the Jakob Wiens journal, page 181. Presumably the sketch is based on one of the Wirtschaften in Hoffnungsfeld.

to the first. They have no children, but they do have a foster son who can already work. They are also both not very well, but things are going quite well for them.

Now we come to the last Wirth on the west side, right at the far south end of the village, Abraham Neufeld, originating from Burwalde, Russia. They have children for working and are also well. As I believe they also have done well in their material progress.

From here we must make a diversion to the approximately 1/4 miles distant school land. An Abraham Thiessen from Kansas has settled here and has also purchased the quarter on which he lives. His wife is a doctor and midwife. A Gerhard Kroeker from Kansas came to Thiessens during the last summer or fall, who was crippled, who

could neither walk nor stand, rather was confined to a chair with wheels, whereby he could articulate himself further. He had left his wife in Kansas. This Kroeker fell sick around Christmas of typhus and after lying sick for three weeks he died on the first holiday of Christmas. During his sickness he also started praying and continued so zealously, that one can hope that he was received in grace. He was buried in the Hoffnungsfelder cemetery on December 28th."

Now we return again to Hoffnungsfeld. First of all on the south end of the village and east side of the street, we meet the Wirth Isaak Dyck, son of the Hermann Dyck who already died in Reinland, and originating out of Schönneberg, Russia. His wife is Ludwig Esaus' daughter. His oldest children are not yet able to work. He has a steam threshing machine. It is going very well for them."

In proceeding further we next meet David Fehr, son of Benjamin Fehr; the wife is Jakob Neufeld's daughter (originating here from Osterwick), from Burwalde, Russia. They are well and happy."

Now we come to Isaak Kehlers', from the Fehr genealogy in the maternal side; his wife is Jakob Fehr's daughter and his niece. They enjoy good health and are doing well."

From here it goes to Wilhelm Harms. He was elected in 1883 as a minister, and therefore has a highly responsible office. But in the secular realm he has it easier than Franz Sawatzky, for they also have older children who can look after the Wirtschaft when he has to leave in the course of his duties."

From here we come to Martin Lemcke. He is a Bergthaler and married the widow of Heinrich Ensz. She is also a Ensz daughter; her father was Aron Ensz in Schönneberg, Russia. She still has siblings in Russia and would like to receive news from them and their addresses. Lemcke's address is: Martin Lemcke, (Hoffnungsfeld), Schantzenfeld, Manitoba. Naturally the address must be written with Latin letters."

"Now we come to Cornelius Ensz Sr. from Neuosterwick, Russia. The aged father is already weakly, but still healthy. The wife is more active. Their Margaretha is sickly as always, often also very sick. Beside Margaretha, there are also Peter and Wilhelm, both grown up, and a foster son (the grandson of Cornelius, Jakob Ennszen's son) at home. They are happy."

"Now we arrive at Abraham Froeses', originating from Neuhorst, Russia, who has married Jakob Ennsz's widow. Things are going quite well for them. They have recently received a daughter. Now we come to the house of assembly which was built last summer and in which a fine assembly is served with the Word of God every Sunday."

"Lastly, we meet Jakob Dyck, son of a Jakob Dyck, originating from Chortitz, Russia. Dyck

married my daughter-in-law, Mrs. David Wiens. They are all well, Also the aged mother of his wife is also well, although weak."

"Now we come to my children David Driedgers. They have two grown sons and two half-grown daughters. Thus they are not lacking in workers. They are also well with the exception of the wife, who often has severe headaches. Their oldest daughter has married to Jakob Dyck, son of the widower Gerhard Dyck."

"From here it goes to my other children, Abraham Kroekers, whose oldest children are still in their school years. Therefore they are still lacking in workers. But as they are healthy things are going reasonably well."

"Now follows the aged Benjamin Fehr who lives alone with his son Benjamin. His wife died in February 1886, approximately two years after my wife. He has also longed for a change but it has not yet been possible for him."

"Now it goes to Isaak Fehr, son of Benjamin Fehr. His wife is a sister to the wife of David Fehr; they are well and things are going quite good for them."

"Leaving here, we next meet Heinrich Fehr, Isaak Fehr's brother, and they are well and things are going quite well."

"We now come to the last Wirth, Johann Peters, Benjamin Fehr's son-in-law. Now, he was well known in Kronsthal, Russia, and he is still the same. They are also well and there is no need regarding the temporal."

"Now it also needs to be noted that in the planting [of trees] and regarding its school regime, Hoffnungsfeld is one of the best villages in the entire Reserve. Nonetheless, the wheat here is not without weeds either; but over all, the Lord here too has His own. There are also threats to tear the village apart for there are those who wish to move on their farms."

"On the 14th the snowstorm had acquiesced to warm weather, and although it was cold I brought myself on the way and also arrived hale and hearty at the place of my profession, namely in Rudnerweide, and again brought my school instruction forward on the 15th. This engagement is only with very weak strength and should in fact be applied in a much stronger way but the good school teachers are very rare here."

I thank the beloved friend Bernhard Klippenstein, Blumengard, Russia, for his greeting, and greet him together with his family and all friends and acquaintances. His aged sister is in Reinfeld at her son Johann Neufeld; I have not seen her for quite some time, but we have often exchanged greetings; she is well. Heinrich Harder's children are also well with their entire family.

In closing I bid the friends in Russia to also write to the "Rundschau". Receive everyone, here as well as in Russia, a heartfelt greeting from "Jakob Wiens Sr."

#### Poetry.

Jakob Wiens was also a poet. Most of his poetry dated back to 1843 during his early years as a school teacher in Kronsthal, Imperial Russia. A number of these poems have been collected and published by great-granddaughter

Nettie Kroeker in a booklet entitled *Gedichte aus der Alte and Neue Heimat*.

After arriving in Manitoba, Jakob Wiens wrote a poem about the village of Hoffnungsfeld, W.R. This poem is reproduced here as an example of his poetry work.

#### Hoffnungsfeld

- 1) O Hoffnungstern, zu Bethlehem geboren  
Den wir uns hier zu unserm Heil erkoren,  
Auf dich ruht unser Blick und nicht auf Geld;  
Drum sei mit uns auf unserm Hoffnungs-feld.
- 2) Die Reis' ist hin; die Reis voll Mueh and Sorgen,  
Gefahr, Angst, Noth, die drinnen lag verborgen;  
Du hast in allem stets an uns gedacht,  
Und gluecklich uns nach Hoffnungs-feld gebracht.
- 3) Wir haben nun die alte Welt verlaszen,  
Und sind gereizt nach vielen langen Straszzen;  
Bis ueber's Meer, tief in die neue Welt,  
Und uns gesitzt in unserm Hoffnungs-feld.
- 4) Da haben wir den Ruheort gefunden,  
Drum von der Last der Reise nun entbunden;  
Doch bleibet Mueh in dieser ganzen Welt,  
Und also auch in unserm Hoffnungs-feld.
- 5) Drum liebster Gott, der uns so treu gefuehret'  
Und deszen Heulf wir deutlich oft verspueret,  
Nimm ferner uns an diene Gnadenhand,  
Fuehr uns hinauf ins ew'ge Hoffnungs-feld.
- 6) Du bist, Herr Christ, fuer uns einst Mensch geboren  
Has uns zu deinem Gnadenlohn erkoren;  
Drum nimm uns hin, fuehr uns ins Himmelszelt,  
Hinauf zu dir ins rechte Hoffnungs-feld.
- 7) Doch wird es dann nicht Hoffnungs-feld mehr bleiben,  
Drum laszt's uns hier schon Ruhestadt umschreiben,  
Bis dasz wir einst vor deinem Throne dort,  
Dich preisen an dem rechten Ruheort.
- 8) Zu dieser Ruhe endlich zu gelangen,  
Laszt uns mit Ernst an Jesum Christum hangen,  
O fuehr uns Herr aus diesem Hoffnungs-feld,  
Einmal zu dir ins ew'ge Ruhezelt.

By Jakob Wiens (1816-88), Hoffnungsfeld.

#### Translation:

##### Field Of Hope

- 1) Oh Star of Hope in Bethlehem born  
Whom we on earth with faith adorn;  
To thee we cling (and not for gold);  
Abide in this our hope-filled fold.
- 2) The journey's done; 'twas filled with pain  
But now we know we feared in vain'  
Despite our dread you brought us through;  
To this land of hope anew.
- 3) We left behind our older world  
To find a new on paths unfurl'd;  
Across the sea to unknown plains-  
Thou gavest hope for spirit's gain.
- 4) At last we found a resting place  
Which freed us from our journey's pace;  
And yet the sorrows of the earth;  
Remain here at our humble hearth.
- 5) "Pray God, (from whom the way we learned,  
And still too oft his guidance spurned),

Lead on with Thy great hand of grace,  
To our eternal resting place.

(Translation by the Irvin Kroeker. The translation of the poem is interesting as its original point has almost totally been lost.)

#### Recollections.

Peter Wiens, Meadow Lake, Sask., later recalled that his grandfather Isaak Wiens had purchased his father's (Jakob Wiens') favourite horse at his auction sale:

"When great-grandfather's auction sale took place, grandfather bought his horse and buggy. Great-grandfather had always been such a good neighbour that whenever he met a friend on the road he would stop for a chat. Of course grandfather did not think of that when he bought the horse.

"When he made the purchase, a whip with a piece of tin at the end of it, came with the buggy. The tin was for making the right impression on the horse it was used on.

"Of course, uncle David, who was a small boy at the time, had to play with the whip. While he was doing so he suffered the misfortune of flipping the piece of tin into his nose, which of course was a good Wiens nose. He tells me that he really let the world know of his pain by the way he howled for pity.

"On their first trip with the newly purchased horse and buggy, grandfather and Uncle David met a neighbour. The horse stopped just as suddenly as he had always done. But grandfather and uncle David had not expected it so they landed on the ground between the horse and cart.

"Their blood pressure went up very quickly and grandfather promptly gave the beast a good lesson in horse training with the whip. The lesson was that the horse should only stop when commanded to do so.

"But knowing grandfather and his good nature, I am sure the horse got some extra oats later on to compensate for the training course."

From Irvin Kroeker, *Wiens Family Register*, page 33.

#### Tribute.

To the end, Jakob Wiens continued in his profession as an educator, teaching in Schönhorst and Rudnerweide. He was well read referring to the *Friedenstimme* and *Rundschau* in his journals.

Jakob Wiens obviously took pride and pleasure in his grandchildren. In his later years he faithfully recorded in his Familienbuch, the names of his children's spouses and all their children--45 in number, many of whom died in infancy.

January 8, 1887, Jakob Wiens, Schönhorst, wrote to his children, in-laws, and grandchildren encouraging them that "through the Holy Spirit they work for a genuine confession of sins whereupon a true penitence and repentance must follow and shall testify of the forgiveness of your sins."

As noted frequently in previous writings, Jakob Wiens referred to the eminent return of the Saviour and admonishes his family to be prepared for their death. In these letters Jakob Wiens articulates eloquently the faith and dedication of

the Old Kolony people, resonating harmoniously with the vision of Aeltester Johann Wiebe, founder of the Reinländer Gemeinde.

After Jakob's death, daughter Aganetha Wiens Ens seemingly received the "Familienbuch" and continued the literary legacy with the following notations, "1891, August 4, I, Aganetha Ens, have written this, possibly close to my end, but by the grace of God and the blood of Jesus, I will arrive in heaven. The Lord alone knows his way with

"This was not the phoney faith of the publicans braying forth their arrogance on the street corners..."

me. He will make all things well."

The testimonial speaks volumes for the genuine biblical faith which Jakob Wiens and Katharina Klassen Wiens had instilled into their children.

This was not the phoney faith of the publicans braying forth their arrogance on the street corners (nor of those rolling on the floor in Voodoo trances, spewing forth gibberish), rather the deep and abiding faith of those who actually knew their Lord and having committed themselves to Him, preceded with hands firmly fixed on the plow with His teachings as their only rule and inspiration.

#### Death, July 9, 1888

Jakob Wiens of Hoffnungsfeld, Manitoba, died on July 9, 1888, at 4 a.m. in the morning. He died from the bursting of a hernia after a time of suffering lasting for two days and three nights. He had achieved the age of 72 years and 25 days, fell asleep with the living hope of salvation in the Lord. The funeral took place the following Wednesday.

**Source:** Wm. Rempel, letter to the *Rundschau*, July 18, 1888, page 1.

#### Legacy.

The story of Jakob Wiens is also remarkable for the fact that his legacy can be claimed by all three of the major Gemeinden in the West Reserve. He grew up within the Old Colony and was a pioneer member of the Reinländer Gemeinde which founded and built the West Reserve. His spiritual ethos and orthodox religious conviction and social conservatism resonated harmoniously with the vision of Old Colony leaders such as Aeltester Johann Wiebe.

For some reason, possibly because of his children or that he was teaching in their schools, Jakob Wiens was fellowshipping with the Bergthaler Gemeinde by 1885. He was later entered in the Sommerfelder Gemeindebuch, indicating that his faith and beliefs conformed with those who sought to preserve the faith of the fathers. There is no hint in his writings of any dissatisfaction with Wiebe's Gemeinde, and therefore one concludes the change was not associated with theological issues.

It is unfortunate indeed that the West Reserve Bergthaler Gemeinde under Aeltester Johann F. Funk, Alt-Bergthal, and Inspector Ewert chose

to reject the strong pedagogical tradition which Old Coloniers had brought with them to Manitoba, as represented by capable individuals such as Wilhelm Rempel, Bernhard Toews, Jakob Fehr, and Jakob Wiens.

Instead of using the Old Kolonier tradition of secondary education and enhanced teacher training to strengthen and promote Orthodox Mennonite faith and culture, Aeltester Funk and Inspector Ewert chose to hijack the tradition by using education as a vehicle for renewal as they defined it and by spiking the agenda with a program of Anglo-conformity and the adoption of alien religious cultures as manifested by their religious language and the methodology of their reform program.

It is clear that Jakob Wiens was a conservative who capably advocated Mennonite orthodoxy in the West Reserve. He most certainly was not a separatist nor did he have any sympathy for

"It is unfortunate...[that] Aeltester Johann F. Funk... and Inspector Ewert chose to reject the strong pedagogical tradition which Old Coloniers had brought with them to Manitoba,..."

the alien religious cultures by which some in the West Reserve were being seduced, even amongst his own children.

The Sommerfelder Gemeinde evidently revered the memory of Jakob Wiens and entered him in the Sommerfelder "Gemeindebuch" (S1A-236). This must have been done posthumously as he died several years before the Sommerfelder Gemeinde was organized in 1892.

#### Conclusion.

The story of Jakob Wiens (1816-88) speaks for the proud literary tradition among conservative Mennonites and Old Coloniers in particular going back 500 years to the Reformation. It refutes the endeavours of many over the past century who have tried to denigrate the Old Kolony people as illiterate in order to make them more vulnerable to predator religious cultures.

The favourable financial position of the Wiens family also dispels the myth that teachers in the Mennonite confessional school system were only those who had no other employment opportunities. The reality, in many cases, was they were above average, intelligent young men who loved children and for whom teaching became either a career or an important stepping stone to ecclesiastical advancement.

The teaching career of Jakob Wiens compares favourably with that of Peter Klippenstein (1831-1904), in the Bergthaler/Sommerfelder tradition (*Preservings*, No. 13, pages 114-116), and Cornelius P. Friesen (1844-99) in the Kleine Gemeinde tradition (*Preservings*, No. 8, Part Two, pages 55-58).

The work of these teachers should be compared with other individuals in the 19th century who attended Separatist-Pietist Bible Schools in

Europe where they were brainwashed with apathy and false teachings and then returned to their home communities seeking to disparage the followers of Christ and to tear apart their communities and families.

In contrast teachers such as Peter Wiens and nephew Jakob exerted every effort to build up their communities, making immense contributions to their people and culture by instilling Gospel-centric teachings into several generations of students and by imparting to them wisdom and moral strength in preparation for successful living and committed Christian discipleship.

All too often it has been those who sought to

"The...financial position of the Wiens family also dispels the myth that teachers in the Mennonite confessional school system were only those who had no other employment opportunities."

disparage their own faith and culture who have been lauded in the history books of the Russian Mennonites. It is regrettable that eyes have been closed to the work of individuals such as Jakob Wiens (1816-88), whose understanding of biblical truth and literary abilities clearly rated second to none.

Christopher Dock (d. 1771) was credited with beautiful artwork as well as enshrining a proud pedagogical tradition in Colonial Pennsylvania. Among Russian Mennonites this honour must be divided between the artist Peter Wiens (b. 1770), whose beautiful colourful *Fraktur* combined with rhythms and riddles created wonderment and interest among his students, and his nephew Jakob Wiens (1816-88), whose collection of morality literature affirmed the conservative Mennonite belief in the intrinsic beauty, goodness and wholesomeness of the child, created in the image of God.



Dirck Bergmann, Arithmetic text, village near Heuboden, West Prussia, 1789. Photo courtesy Abrahams, *Frakturmalen*, page 19.

# Jakob Wiens Descendants

## Katharina Wiens Driedger

Daughter **Katharina Wiens** (1839-1906) married David Driedger (1839-1925) also from Kronsthal, Chortitza Colony, Russia. The



*Katharina Wiens Driedger (1839-1906), Greenfarm, Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, The Wiens Family Register, page 49.*

family immigrated to Manitoba in 1876 and settled in the village of Hoffnungsfeld with her parents and siblings.

Around 1886 the family moved to what later became the Greenfarm school district.

"Katharina was a lover of flowers. She was not one to complain or grumble. If something grievous would happen she would handle the situation with wisdom in her calm quiet way." A granddaughter remembered her carrot syrup.

The family later belonged to the Sommerfelder Gemeinde, S1A 244.

The information for this family sketch is courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register*, pages 30-31.

## Isaak Wiens 1842-1920.

Son **Isaak Wiens** (1842-1920) married Aganetha Peters (1843-1909), daughter of Jakob Peters and Aganetha Warkentin.

In Russia Isaak Wiens owned a blacksmith shop where he employed six men building wagons. His wife used to fry pancakes for them on a frying pan. Isaak made the iron parts while Ludwig Esau, married to his cousin Katharina Klassen, made the wooden parts.

Isaak Wiens was the original owner of SE4-3-4W, the quarter section where the Town of Winkler was later built. Isaak Wiens obtained the land by Grant from the Crown on September 6, 1883. In 1892 the C. P. R. wanted to build its railway across the land and lay out a railway siding and name it "Wiens".

The story is told that the Old Kolony church did not approve of such aggrandizement and "pressured him to disassociate himself from the site." As a result Isaac Wiens traded the land for another

quarter owned by Valentine Winkler, and the new siding was called "Winkler" instead. The Old Kolonier leaders were astute enough to know that building a railway through Hoffnungsfeld would certainly lead to its disintegration and dismemberment, which conflicted with its vision of strengthening the body of Christ, His community.

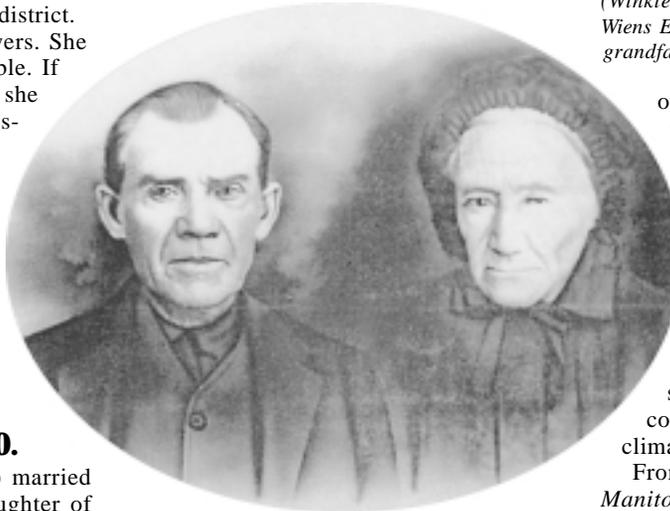
Isaak Wiens was a successful farmer with the highest assessment in Hoffnungsfeld in 1881, almost twice the village average. He owned the only threshing machine in the village.

The family later moved to Rosenbach (Rosebach).

In 1900 Isaak Wiens wrote the following report of his farming operations:

"Rosenbach, Nov. 29, 1900

"Dear Sir, I came to Manitoba in 1876 with my family. Had three children [six]. "They are all married now and have families of their



*Isaak Wiens (1842-1920) married Aganetha Peters (1843-1909), Hoffnungsfeld. They originally owned the SE4-3-4W where the modern-day Town of Winkler was founded. Photo courtesy of Winkler: A Proud Heritage (Winkler, 1982), page viii.*



*Isaak Wiens farmyard in Rosebach. Note the winter fuel drying. Photo courtesy of Winkler: A Proud Heritage (Winkler, 1982), page 25.*



*Isaak Wiens' daughter Anna married Wilhelm Enns and they were the parents of Peter W. Enns founder of Triple E Mobile Homes, Winkler, Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Winkler: A Proud Heritage (Winkler, 1982), page 68. Peter's mother Anna Wiens Enns evidently became the custodian of her grandfather's teaching journals.*

own and are prospering. Amongst us we have 50 horses and 50 head of cattle, and we have 1920 acres of land. We own three farms in the North-west Territories, and consider ourselves worth in all about \$45,000. The freedom we have in schools and religion could not be better. Manitoba and the North-west are good places for people to come to, because they can prosper. It is a little colder than southern Russia, but it is dry and the cold is not felt much, It is a very healthy climate here." "Isaac Wiens"

From J. F. Galbraith, *The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Morden, 1900), page 48.

After the death of Mrs. Aganetha Wiens on Oct. 2, 1909, Isaak married the widow Johann Peters, nee Agatha Neufeld (1840-1916).

After her death Isaak married for the third time to the widow Heinrich Heinrichs (1849-1940).

The Isaak Wiens family later belonged to the Sommerfelder Gemeinde, S1B-164.

Isaac's son Isaac Wiens (1867-1933) married Tina Fehr (1870-1949). They belonged to the Sommerfelder Gemeinde. Their granddaughter Ann Wiens Plett, Giroux, is currently on the board of the Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba.

### Jakob Wiens b. 1840

Jakob Wiens (b. 1840) was well educated. It is believed that he attended the Zentral Schule, the secondary school in Chortitza, Russia.

Following in the footsteps of his father and great-uncle, he served as a school teacher. He also compiled a teachers' manual dealing with German grammar, the family record and collected songs and hymns.

In 1860 he married Margaretha Wiebe, whose father operated an oil seeds press. She died in 1869 with only one son surviving.

In 1870 Jakob Wiens married Sarah Nickel, daughter of Johann Nickel (1826-1902) and Margaretha Fehr, Waldheim, W.R., formerly Schöonneberg, Chortitza Colony, Russia. Her sister Helena Nickel married Jakob B. Koop (1858-1937), Neuanlage, E.R., see *Preservings*, No. 11, pages 43-46.

In 1878 Jakob Wiens immigrated and settled



Jakob Wiens (b. 1840), Hoffnungsfeld, Manitoba, and Herbert, Saskatchewan. Photo courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register*, page 49.

in Hoffnungsfeld, W.R. In a letter to the *Rundschau*, January 19, 1887, he reported that he had formerly been the school teacher in Edenburg. Later he taught in what became the Greenfarm school district.

He took over as local correspondent to the *Rundschau* after his father, using the initial "J". In a report datelined "Plum Coulee, published May 15, 1901, he reported that Isaak Wiens, Rosenbach, formerly Kronsthal, Russia, Jakob Funk, Schantzenfeld, from Kronsweide, Russia, Peter and Wm. Peters, Winkler, formerly Neuendorf, Russia, and Jakob Toews, Winkler, formerly from Nieder-Chortitz, Russia, were departing the same date for a visit to the old homeland in Russia, among the first Manitoba Mennonites to make such a journey. In the *Rundschau*, Aug. 14, 1901, Jakob J. Wiens provided a report of the actual trip.

In 1902 the Jakob J. Wiens family moved to Rosthern, Sask., from where he wrote the *Rundschau* December 24, 1902, reporting the death of his father-in-law Johann Nickel at the home of his children Cornelius J. Nickels in North Dakota. Jakob Wiens also reports that he is again teaching school (wages \$30 per month) and also farming. In 1904 the Jakob J. Wiens family moved to Herbert.

Jakob Wiens was remembered as a kindly man who always "gave rich presents and fine



Rev. Jakob M. Wiens (1863-1933), Herbert, Saskatchewan. Photo courtesy of Remember Our Leaders, page 25. After raising a fine crop in 1928, he chose to donate \$700 to the Leprosy Mission rather than buying a new car. See "Jakob M. Wiens Family," in *Excelsior Echos*, pages 1173-5.

treats to the children." He had an old violin which he played very well accompanying himself with a bass voice.

He also owned a shotgun which he used very well. "One day when he was quite old and shaking with palsy, a prairie chicken flew across his yard. He reached for his gun and shot at it." He missed; presumably one of his last hunting ventures.

The information for this family sketch is courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register*, pages 31-32.

Jakob's son Jakob M. Wiens (1863-1933) was called to the ministry in Winkler in 1905. He moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan in 1906 where he served until his death.

### David Wiens 1850-86.

Son David Wiens married Katharina Wiebe, daughter of Johann Wiebe. They immigrated to Manitoba in 1876. They settled in Hoffnungsfeld where David Wiens died in 1886. His widow remarried to J. J. Dyck. The family moved to Rosthern in 1899. Only two children--David and Isaac--were born of the first marriage. Isaac (b. 1885) remembered attending school in Hoffnungsfeld where his teacher in 1892 was C. B. Fast, presumably the son of Cornelius Fast (1840-1927), teacher in Waldheim, W.R., in 1881. In 1963 Isaac lived in Sardis, B.C. Brother David Wiens (1877-1936) took out a homestead near Laird, Saskatchewan.

The information for this family sketch is courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register*, pages 34-35.

### Sarah Wiens Ens 1854-78.

Daughter Sarah Wiens married Jakob Enns (1850-85), son of Knels. In 1876 the couple crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the S. S. Sardinian together with her parents, nephew Jakob (age 13), sister Aganetha, sister Helena and her husband Abraham Kroeker.

Sarah and her husband had two children, Catharina (b. 1876) and Cornelius (1877-1954). Sarah Wiens Enns died shortly after the birth of her son. Jakob Enns remarried in 1879. After his death his widow married for the third time to Abram Froese, see RGB 384-1.

Daughter Catharina Enns married Carl Hintz. Son Cornelius Enns was a teacher for three years in Manitoba and then moved onto a homestead in Saskatchewan. Later he sold the farm and operated a hardware store in Laird, Saskatchewan. From 1915 to 1936 he farmed at Borden, and then retired in Hepburn.

The information for this family sketch is courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register*, pages 34-35.

### Helena Wiens Kroeker 1856-1946.

Daughter Helena Wiens married Abraham Kroeker (1854-1906), from Neu-Osterwick, Chortitza Colony, in 1875.

Helena Wiens Kroeker later described her courtship and wedding.

"...One night Abram Kroeker escorted me home and came into our house. Father's concern was real. What kind of youth was Abram. To court his daughter he must be a man of honesty, hard labor, thrift, integrity and noble ambition."

"The next morning father went to Neuosterwick to investigate. The information he received from Abram's employer was satisfactory. After that Abram was frequently seen at our house."

"On a beautiful December day the wedding took place (1875). How my heart thrilled as I walked to the wedding altar beside the man of my ideals and love. It was a fine wedding with a meal of `Zweiback, Kringel and Kuchen.'"



Helena Wiens Kroeker (1856-1946), Winkler, Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register*, page 49.

## Aganetha Wiens Ens (1860-1926)



A. A. Kroeker, teacher, businessman, farmer and pastor, who founded the well-known "Kroeker Farms", Winkler. Photo courtesy of Winkler: A Proud Heritage, page 140.

The following year they immigrated to Manitoba with her parents and settled in Hoffnungsfeld, West Reserve.

In 1892 Helena and her husband converted themselves to Separatist-Pietist religious culture and joined the Winkler Brüdergemeinde.

Her children were involved with the early growth of Winkler. Son-in-law Johann Dyck (1874-1937) owned the Winkler flour mill. Together with brother-in-law Jakob Kroeker, he operated the Dyck and Kroeker general store. Jakob, together with younger brothers Abram and Peter owned Kroeker Brothers, operating a general store and General Motors franchise.

When the partnership dissolved in 1928, son Abram took over the farming operation which became the well-known Kroeker Farms, operated today by son Donald Kroeker.

The story of Abram A. Kroeker's financial success, richly peppered with condescending and incorrect observations about his Old Colony roots, was written by Wally Kroeker, "Abe Kroeker Whole-Life Entrepreneur," in Redekopp and Redekopp, editors, *Entrepreneurs in the Faith Community* (Waterloo, Ont., 1996), pages 37-58.

Another son-in-law Heinrich Neufeld (1876-1947) founded a printing business later sold to Peter T. Friesen, Steinbach, and today known as "Triangle Printing".

After the death of Jakob A. Kroeker, son-in-law Cornelius J. Funk, Winkler, received custody of the Jakob Wiens journal.

The information for this family sketch is courtesy of Bert Friesen, *The Kroeker Family Genealogy* (Winkler, 1998), 93 pages, courtesy of Donald Kroeker, Box 1450, Winkler, Manitoba, R6W 4B4.

Nettie Kroeker who published the Jakob Wiens travelogue, poetry book, and *Far Above Rubies*, was the daughter of Jakob A. Kroeker and Irvin Kroeker was her nephew, son of Peter.

Daughter Aganetha Wiens married Johann Ens on March 30, 1880.

For the first year after their marriage they lived and worked with her aging parents. The next year they rented the farm.

Being the youngest and still at home, Aganetha became custodian of her parents' Familienbuch.

They lived in Hoffnungsfeld and later Winkler.



Aganetha Wiens Enns (1860-1926), Winkler, Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register*, page 49.

The Johann Ens family converted to Separatist-Pietist religious culture and joined the Winkler Brüdergemeinde in 1892.

Aganetha later recorded some of her memories for her children extracts of which were published by Irvin Kroeker, *Wiens Family Register*.

Aganetha's daughter married J. L. Dyck, Winkler.

### Sources:

Jakob Wiens, "Wiens Family Record 1824-1903" ("Familienbuch"), unpublished family records, translated by Ed Enns, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, 1997, 10 pages.

Jakob Wiens, Journal, unpublished diary commencing with notations by uncle Peter Wiens, approximately 400 pages, most recently in the possession of Grace Schellenberg, Winkler, and currently on deposit at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Irvin Kroeker, *The Wiens Family Register* (Winnipeg, 1963), 49 pages.

Nettie Kroeker, editor and translator, *Grandfather Wiens' Diary: en route Russia to Canada* (Winnipeg, 1961), 17 pages, courtesy of Rev. Ben Hoepfner, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Nettie Kroeker, *Far above Rubies* (Winnipeg, 1976), 268 pages.

Nettie Kroeker, *Gedichte aus der Alte und Neuen Heimat* (Winnipeg, n.d.), 14 pages.

John C. Reimer, "Our Schools," in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 235-247.

Ethel Abrahams, *Frakturmalen und Schoenschreiben The Fraktur art and penmanship of the Dutch German Mennonites while in Europe 1700-1900* (North Newton, Kansas, 1980), 158 pages.

Plett, "Education in the East Reserve 1874-1920," in *Preservings*, No. 8, Part One, pages 1-30.

John Dyck, "Hoffnungsfeld, Community and Phenomenon," in A. Ens and J. Peters, editors, *Volume Three of the West Reserve Historical Series*, publication forthcoming.

Telephone interviews with Phil Ens, Winkler, and Andrew Enns, Winkler, September, 2000.

Membership list of Reinländer Gemeindebuch, 1875-1880, courtesy of Bruce Wiebe, R.R.1, Box 79, Manitoba, R6W 4A1.



Coloured drawing of homestead of Wilhelm Rempel (1820-1901), Blumenort, W. R., Manitoba, father of Wilhelm Rempel (1846-1931), Reinland, W.R., first teacher of the "Mennonite Teachers' College," Gretna, Manitoba, 1888-89. Drawing by grandson Johann Rempel (1899-1990), Blumenort, W.R., Manitoba. Photo courtesy of George E. Rempel, *Rempel Family Book* (Altona, 2000), 506 pages, front cover. To order send \$33.00 plus postage to 804-325 6th Street, Winkler, Manitoba, R6W 1G5.

# Grandfather Wiens' Diary en route Russia to Canada

Publisher's Foreword to "Grandfather Wiens' Diary: en route Russia to Canada" (Winnipeg, 1961), 17 pages.

".....Faith of our Fathers, living faith, We will be true to thee till death."

This booklet is lovingly dedicated to my brothers and sisters, their children and grandchildren who have greatly enriched my life.

Our grandfather--and great-grandfather--Mr. Jakob Wiens, was born in Kronsthal, South Russia, in 1816. In 1876 he and his family, together with a group of other Mennonite families, migrated to Canada. To leave relatives, friends, and a comfortable home, and go to a distant country, to him hitherto unknown, was not without many difficulties and obstacles. Friends warned them, relatives blamed them, but they remained firm and determined.

Why then did they leave? The purpose is stated in a letter which grandfather Wiens wrote after his arrival in Canada, in answer to a letter received from Russia. Among other things he says:

".....What you wrote about the difficulties in regard to our migration to Canada is partly true. It is painful to sever friendship ties. But what if a man will have to leave his wife and children and take up arms? This will certainly happen. What if the nihilists shall gain power and overthrow all government?"

"In the near future Russia is facing a time of horror. A powerful revolution will break out in which these terrorists will take part. The close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century will witness a "schauderdrama" in comparison to which the French Revolution at the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was mild.

"These horrors, however, will end. But when we will stand before God on the Day of Judgment, we will give account of ourselves. What if He will say: 'I gave you a way to escape the giving up of your faith, but you treasured your earthly joys, possessions, and friends more than Me--you are therefore not worthy of Me.'

"To keep the true faith in Russia, to my judgment, is impossible."

During the voyage to Canada, and in the beginning while settling here, grandfather wrote a diary. The following pages of this pamphlet are a translation of what he wrote. Care has been exercised to keep the emotional atmosphere as much as possible, true to the original. Facts and incidents, are kept as he wrote them.

Grateful acknowledgement is herein given to the friends who assisted in the preparation of this booklet and especially to Miss Kay Martens for her untiring effort in the typing of the manuscript.

This translation has been made with thankfulness to God, who led our forefathers to Canada, where we have freedom and liberty to worship God. May the integrity, thrift, fear of God, and trust in Christ as Saviour and Lord, found in our grandfather, manifest itself in us, his descendants.

The Publisher [Nettie Kroeker], 85 Kelvin Street, Winnipeg 5, Manitoba, n.d. [1961].

## Diary of Jakob Wiens

**May 12, 1876** - Early in the morning, Peter Brauns, with whom we had peacefully lived together for several months, took us to the harbour. Here the steamer, owned by Jacob Tieszen, Cherson, awaited us. A large crowd had gathered. Some came out of curiosity, others because of strong friendship ties between them and those departing.

The leave taking was stirring indeed. Many of those departing had no hope of ever again seeing their loved ones in this life. The Rev. Gerhard Dyck gave an appropriate farewell message, several songs were sung, last adieus were said, and we set sail. The steamer left at 7:53 a.m.

At 10:30 a.m. we passed Teeresowki, and at 12:49 a.m. Nikopol. Here too, many friends and acquaintances stood on the shore to wave their last farewells. Soon after the setting of the sun we passed Chakowna and came to Cherson during the night. We remained in the steamer for the latter part of the night.

**May 13** - In the morning our goods were loaded onto another steamer. At 8:45 a.m. our vessel left Cherson. It was a cloudy morning and some rain fell. The strong Southwest wind increased into a violent storm. Our boat was thrown up and down, back and forth--like a little nutshell. The waves of water seemed to cover us. Passengers and sailors screamed and panicked. Still, through the gracious help of God we landed safely in the harbour of Odessa. Upon arriving we went to the railroad station where we spent the night.

**May 14** - At 10:00 a.m. we left Odessa. The crops do not look very promising--worse than those we left behind. Yesterday, however, a drenching rain watered the thirsty land. The scenery is mountainous. Toward evening the panorama becomes more and more romantic. Oak and linden trees are abundant. Motto for today: "Go in peace and the God of Israel grant thee they petition that thou has asked of him," 1 Sam. 1:17.

**May 15** - Saturday - During the night we passed Balta. We are now sailing alongside a beautiful valley. It is a wooded area, increasingly it looks more like our own country. The grain fields are lovely.

Arrived in Podwolotjihiska, Galatia, at 9:00 a.m. Mr. Spienne [Spiro] of Hamburg, agent for our steamer, arrived at noon. Motto for today: "... Knowing that tribulation worketh patience." Romans 5:3.

**May 16** - Motto: "I will be base in mine own sight," 2 Sam 6:22. The people of Fürstenlandt have arrived and together we continue.

**May 17** - Motto: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be not afraid, I have overcome the world," John 16:33.

Passed Lemberg at 5:00 a.m. and Peremiol at 9:00 a.m. The scenic valley is surrounded with high wooded mountains. The broad valley clothed with a velvety green not known in our country, the linden, birch and evergreen trees on either side of the train, and other natural picturesque sights cause us to marvel at natural beauty hitherto unknown. We have lived in a country comparatively poor in natural scenery.

The beauty beheld here, however, is only that of nature. We do not as yet realize what problems may confront us in our new home. Still, with thankful hearts we look up to God, trusting Him to give us a

home comparable to the one we've left behind--and after this life eternal joy. Amen.

Passed Krakau at 4:00 p.m. and arrived at the boundary Oseigim, where we remained for the night.

**May 18** - Motto: "Do you love me?" John 21:17.

Left Sowizim and passed Mislowski and Kalowiz. The blue lilacs and the apple trees are in full bloom--at home they were finished blooming long before we left. Arrived at Beslau at 12:00 a.m., and left again at 5:00 p.m. At Liegnit we stopped for half an hour to repair some machinery.

**May 19** - Motto: "Teaching others, dost thou not teach thyself?"

Arrived at Berlin at 6:00 a.m. and left again at 9:00 a.m. after a tour through the town. The next two stops were Hagenau and Buether. Apple trees, lilacs and tulips have begun to bloom. Rye and other grain fields are still in the early stages of growth. On our way to Hamburg, we passed through wooded areas of evergreens, birch and "Aulenwaelder". At Hamburg we were conducted to the immigration stations. Here we were served a tasty "Rindsuppe". For sleeping quarters we received a room with a table and six beds--a bed for every two people.

**May 20** - Motto: "O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him," Psalm 34:8.

Money exchanged and payment to ship taken care of.

**May 21** - Friday: Little David Wiens was born to the David Wienses this morning, 8:00 a.m. Motto for

"The close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century will witness a "schauderdrama" in comparison to which the French Revolution at the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was mild."

the Wienses: "The Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee nor forsake thee," Deut. 31:6. The promise fulfilled. My motto: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Phil. 3:14.

Exchange of money: a rubel equals 63 cents in gold. Boarded the ship at 6:00 p.m. Mrs. Wiens is taken into a first class cabin. She is doing fairly well. Left Hamburg at 11:00 p.m.

**May 22** - Motto: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," John 1:29

Quiet and calm in the morning, wind started in the afternoon and increased much towards evening. Many are sea sick.

**May 23** - Pentecost: Motto: "Forget me not," Isaiah 44:21

Storm during night--strong winds today. The ship rolls back and forth because of contrary winds. As we near the shore the wind subsides more and more. **May 24** - Motto: "The Lord, thy God, He it is that doth go with thee; He will not leave thee nor forsake thee," Deut. 3:6

Landed in the harbour in the morning where we unloaded. The customs officers were quite rude--this seemed to be rather typical of the people in England. After everything was loaded into the freight train, we left Hull at 1:00 p.m. Mountains, valleys, timberlands and grain fields are picturesque to be-

hold as we ride along. Large bean fields come to view--summer wheat has not yet come up.

We pass through tunnels--there is a darkness for a few minutes. Mountains are numerous, but these are not wooded. Rather, they are covered with grain fields. We passed through a longer tunnel... crossed steep huge mountains... went over tall bridge... tunnel again... tunnel... tunnel... At 8:00 p.m. we arrived at Liverpool and were conducted into the immigration halls.

It seems to me that in the whole country of Russia we do not have as many factories as we've seen during this one trip from Hull to Liverpool. The large cities are mainly composed of factories, the smoke of which causes a dense and dark atmosphere. The people we have seen on this journey are more brutal than any we met with previously.

**May 25** - Motto: "Follow peace will all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," Hebrews 12:14.

On this day John Friesen brought us the Pentecost message from God's word.

This afternoon five families have been set apart for the purpose of staying behind. The Driedgers are among them.

**May 26** - Wednesday - Motto: "A true Christian presses toward the mark," Phil. 1:3

Jacob, son of David Wienses, is very sick.

We've been to the railroad station. What a tumult and noise! There is screaming, whistling, switching of trains, people running back and forth, etc., etc. One is reminded of the coming judgement. There is a deep desire to be back on the quiet land, where instead of the tumult and noise, we hear the song of the lark.

The railroad station consists of a very long, broad building covered with glass. Horses here in England are from five-and-a-half to six-and-a-half feet high, with very strong legs and large hips. We have seen that more than 200 "pud" is loaded onto one horse. The streets are paved and the houses are made of square bricks one-and-a-half feet in diameter.

The David Wienses and Isaac Wienses have been registered to stay behind.

**May 27** - Motto: "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me," Isaiah 49:16.

At 10:00 a.m. we all left for the harbour. The tumult is indescribable. At 11:50 a.m. we boarded the little ship which took us to the big ship, which we boarded shortly thereafter.

The harbour opens up into a wide river on the other side of which is a large factory city. The density and smoke of this city is worse that what we've seen before. At 8:45 p.m. we left anchor and sailed. "Lord Jesus, go with us and be Thou also with those of our children staying behind."

**May 28** - Motto: "Christ, my all in all."

Early in the morning we sighted the shore of Ireland. Soon we sailed alongside it. This island is very mountainous--the mountains towered from 300-400 feet in height. These are covered with grain fields.

As we sailed along, the wind again increases and there is considerable rocking of the ship. At 6:30 p.m. we sailed into the harbour. Some passengers disembark while others board the ship. At the setting of the sun, 9:30, we have sailed 190 miles.

**May 29** - Saturday - Motto: "He hath sent me to heal the broken hearted..." Luke 4:18.

The shoreline of Ireland had disappeared--thus we have lost complete sight of Europe. We are now

completely severed. The wind is as strong as yesterday, but the physical atmosphere is cleared. Sailed about 220 miles today, or a total of 410 miles.

**May 30** - Sunday - Motto: "Jesus knew what was in man," John 2:25.

The night was stormy--the storm continues today. The water billows surge up to 20 feet in height or even more. The waves dash up and down, but in the distance the sun is smiling through, bringing a picturesque view. It reminds us of the city of God about which we read in Revelation: "O God, how great and wonderful is Thy power! How glorious Thy majesty! How unspeakably great Thy grace and kindness! We poor, weak and sinful human beings are kept on the ocean in a nutshell by Thy power--and Thou dost even remove all fear from us."

Our ship, the Sardinian, is 450 feet long and 40 feet broad. The water is mostly calm, but through the crash of the waves high crested ridges of water are formed, frequently higher than the ship. A sight, terrible and beautiful to behold presents itself, when in the clear sunlight one views the storm-tossed ocean. Looking at the top of the masts, 100 feet in height, as they rock back and forth, first towering above all else, then lowering again, the omnipotence and majesty of God is beheld and marvelled at. The storm increases and it is very cold. Latitude, 54 degrees 51' N. Longitude, 121 degrees 35' W. Have sailed 220 miles--720 miles in all.

**May 31** - Motto: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." Psalm 55:22.

The storm has increased and the wind has turned northwest. During the night the water surged onto the ship, and even today there is hardly a dry place on deck. The ship thrusts back and forth--even more than yesterday.

Latitude 53 degrees 57' N. Longitude 25 degrees 19' W. Have sailed 243 miles today--945 in all.

**June - 1876**

**June 1** - Tuesday - Motto: "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them," Mark 11:24.

The storm has increased, billows surge to 40 and 50 feet in height, covering the masts, the sky is dark and the whole sea clothed in mist. "But though the waves dash and roar, and the mountains cave in, we shall not fear; the Lord is with us, and His right hand will hold us."

Latitude 52 degrees 51' N. Longitude 351/2 degrees W. Have sailed 255 miles, or 1200 in all.

**June 2** - Motto: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thine house," Acts 16:31.

The storm has subsided and it is comparatively calm. All on board are encouraged--yesterday nearly all were seasick, but I was again spared. At 8:00 a.m. a sailing vessel passed us in the distance.

This is my birthday--I am 60 years of age. In the midst of the ocean, the Lord, in his grace, permits me to reach this age and have this birthday. "O Lord, guide our ship into a safe port in the near future, and keep the ship of our life, as long as we sail, close to the wounds of Jesus. Then guide it into the safe haven of eternal blessedness. Amen"

It has been a good day, though somewhat misty. Now, toward the evening, it is clearing and we see the blue sky above.

**June 3** - Thursday - Motto: "Our conversation is in heaven," Phil. 3:20.

A heavy fog engulfs us this morning. At noon death again enters our ship. A child of Hermann Kehlens of Kronsweide died as a result of measles.

Katherina, daughter of the Jacob Ennses, also had the measles.

**June 4** - Friday - Motto: "Remember the Lord Jesus Christ... continuing instant in prayer;" Romans 12:12

Yesterday the deceased child was placed in a coffin and lowered into the ocean. Last night another child died--that of the Jacob Walls, Neuendorf.

The foggy weather continues. At 8:00 a.m. we passed an iceberg approximately 26 feet high. The wind decreased and the ocean is calming down.

By the grace of God we have escaped a tremendous danger. At noon, Johann Peters and I were standing on the front part of the deck, looking out into the distance, trying to spy something on the ocean. Periodically, a whistle was given from the ship which was answered with a whistle from the right. Two sailors were standing on the front part of the deck looking out into the mist.

Suddenly one of them turned to the captain and screamed. With both hands the captain immediately grabbed the telegraph wheel, causing the ship to sail backwards.

We looked forward to what Mr. Peters thought was a ship coming toward us.

But what was that?

A high towering white cliff rose up right before us.

"AN ICEBERG," I screamed.

The sailors beckoned us to come, and ran toward the middle of the deck. Not far from the center of the deck I remained standing--waiting for the things that were about to come to pass.

Slowly and more slowly the ship moved.

Higher and closer the iceberg came until it drew up along the left side of the vessel.

The highest peak, somewhat over 100 feet in height, bent over the masts. Suddenly the collision came.

CRASH!

It was intensive, but not to the degree I had expected it would be.

Massive pieces of ice fell on the deck--but only from the side of the iceberg and not the tip. The vessel, already sailing backwards, was hastened on in this backward direction through the impact of the collision.

Everyone now hurried to help clear away the ice. After about half an hour, the deck was cleared. Mainly the forefront of the deck had been covered.

The metal railing was broken down. The heavy bars, 1 1/2 inches in diameter, were bent like thin wire while the wooden parts were completely shattered. The main body of the ship was unharmed. The noon meal we were about to partake of before all this happened was just about cold by now.

The collision must have been terrible. The iron shaft of the big anchor, standing out several feet above the left "Schiffsband", almost one foot in diameter and eight inches in thickness, was broken off. This anchor was the tool in God's hand which He used to save us. As the iceberg neared the ship, this shaft rubbed against it till the anchor broke off, thus lessening the power of the collision.

**June 5** - Motto: "Give me, my son, thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways," Prov. 23:26

Direction - northwest. Fog on the ocean--higher up it is clear.

Death again entered--this time it is a child of the Isaac Reimers, Adelsheim. At 4:00 p.m. we spied the shore of Newfoundland. Sea mammals are seen. The peaks of the high mountains are covered with

much snow. Toward evening the velocity of the wind increases and our vessel rocks back and forth. During the day it was calm. Latitude 46 degrees 57" longitude 57 degrees 40". Sailed 200 miles today or a total of 2180.

**June 6** - Motto: "Fear thou not, for I am with thee;...., Isaiah 41:10.

At 7:00 a.m. the shoreline of America is in sight. At 8:00 a.m. several whales are seen, spouting water into the air. At 9:30 a.m. we greet America by hoisting the flag of the ship. The coast we are nearing now has a long outstretched fishing village on its shore. Shoreline and mountains are covered with trees. At places the ocean seems to go way inland, and the shore into the ocean. Mountainous cliffs, several hundred feet in height, stand out majestically. Evergreens and other trees partly cover the mountains, while fishing villages are seen along the shore below. The coastline is more or less the same as we continue our journey. Further inland we pass higher snow-capped mountains.

**June 7** - Motto: "And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind," Romans 12:2.

Land is seen on either side of the ship, indicating that we are in the gulf of the St. Lawrence. To our right the land resembles that which we passed through yesterday. To our left we see villages, grain fields and trees. Huge fish are seen in the water. At noon a thunderstorm is followed by rain. A safe landing is reached at Quebec at 3:00 p.m.

In the immigration hall we are served with a tasty beef soup.

The scenic city of Quebec is partly situated on the side of a wooded mountain, and extended in the narrow valley of the river down below. The grandeur is enhanced by the fragrance and beauty of the blue lilacs, now in full bloom. At 8:00 p.m. we boarded the train.

**June 8** - Motto: "Whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not," 1 John 3:6

We now continue our journey in America. The woodlands we pass through are plentiful and exquisite in beauty. Level country, grain fields, trees, houses, hills and also smaller mountains are viewed in rapid succession. The grain is still in its early stages of growth. A variety of wild flowers adds to the romantic scenery. Roses and lilacs are in abundance. What refreshing sights we behold!

At 11:00 a.m. we enjoy a delicious breakfast at an immigration hall in Ontario--we had brought the cheese and bread from Quebec.

The speed of Canadian trains surpasses any we have known. Why, in 48 seconds we travel one mile--or, five miles in four minutes. As we continue through the day, we notice that the scenery is about the same. Travelled 300 miles today.

**June 9** - Motto: "I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him," Ps. 91:15.

7:00 a.m. Toronto--had a good breakfast. While we were eating Mr. Fehonz dropped in.

Toronto is a large city and judging from German and English cities, a fine city--compares well with Russian cities.

I travelled five miles inland today--my purpose was the exchange of money. I realized, however, that I'd have long to wait.

Merchandise is cheap. I bought a pair of rubber boots for \$2.50, an axe for \$1.00, little axes for 50 cents up to \$1.25 a piece. In quality these exceed those in Russia.

**June 10** - Motto: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not," Luke 22:29.

My High priest, do not stop to pray for me,

My Teacher, grant my life be saved through Thee;

My King, O that as overcomer I before Thy throne may stand."

Before leaving Toronto, we had a service at the station. An American Methodist city missionary gave the message through an interpreter. It was a good message, but would have been appreciated more if we could have understood the English language.

At 10:00 a.m. we left Toronto and one hour before sunset we boarded the ship at Colingwood.

**June 11** - Friday - Motto: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth," Luke 2:14.

At 6:00 we stopped at Montreal [transcription error?] to take wood. Toward evening we sailed into Lake Huron southwestwardly over the lake and then northward. The shoreline is steep, high and covered with evergreens and pinewood. Woodlands are very dense in America--at least from what we've seen so far. We had no conception of this in Russia.

**June 12** - Saturday - Motto: "Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter 1:13.

At midnight we stopped to take in more wood. Towards morning the river, along which we sailed during the night, broadened out into a sea. We continued: at times sailing northward, at times southward, sometimes in narrow waters which again broadened out. Now and then we passed a little hamlet or town but mostly wooded areas. After sunset we passed through the gates--I could not observe them well, however, for Jacob Enns was quite sick with cholera.

**June 13** - Sunday - Motto: "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine," Isaiah 43:1.

Mr. Enns had a good night and is much better today. The morning is beautiful, the water calm and smooth like a mirror. We are sailing northwest. It is cold and misty. We notice high mountains in the distance. At 11:30 a.m. we again take in wood. Sailed on the open sea all afternoon. Direction northwest.

**June 14** - Monday - Motto: "...if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," John 12:32

It rained during the night. At daybreak we sighted land. Soon after sunrise we stopped at a little town to take in wood. From 8:45 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. we stopped at Findore. Almost throughout the day a heavy fog surrounded us.

**June 15** - Tuesday - Motto: "O taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusteth in Him," Psalm 34:8

The gulf near Duluth, where we arrived at noon, was largely covered with ice. The shoreline, however, is arrayed with the loveliest green trees and other luxurious growth. At 1:30 p.m. we arrived at Duluth. It was 4:00 p.m. by the time we had unloaded all our baggage from the ship and transferred it to the train which we were to board.

What a contrast in the weather, comparing that of the water with that of the land! Here we have a warm June day, while just a little way off the shore the atmosphere was cold and we were surrounded with ice.

A pleasant experience was ours as we--Jacob Wall and I--climbed a mountain. The house, garden and waterfall gave a very friendly appearance. Lovely blue lilacs enhanced the scenery. As we neared the house, a lady came out to meet us. In a friendly manner she conducted us through her apple orchard

and garden. The apple trees had finished blooming. There were strawberries, red currants, vegetables, and many other plants to me hitherto unknown.

We continued our mountain climbing, but did not scale its peak--it was too high, and the distance too far. When about 500 feet above the town, we stopped. To escape a swamp, we had to jump from one stone to another. The waterfall gushing forth its water and flowing all the way down is majestic. With the aid of a telescope we viewed the scenery down below. The water, ice, town and wooded areas around, present a pleasant sight.

Again sadness entered our group--a child of the John Harders died.

**June 16** - Motto: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Luke 18:41.

Left Duluth at 12:00 noon. Alongside the railroad, to the one side we see the river with its swift rapids and currents, while the other side is closed in with mountains, from which innumerable waterfalls gush forth. Evergreens, birch trees, poplars, spruce, hazelbushes, and various other trees, shrubs and greenery cover the mountain sides. To our right we see high towering mountains, to our left ravines and deep gorges with roaring waters tearing through the railroad bridges, at places having torn away the shoreline. Deep down in the ravines the tops of evergreens beckon us. In short: while still in Russia, we read much about the 'wild-romantic' country of America--still, reality exceeded our most visionary dreams.

At 5:00 p.m. we see plains, while wooded areas decrease more and more. Meadows come to our view. Several hundred miles away from the shoreline of Lake Superior we disembark and spend the night at Brainard.

**June 17** - Thursday - Motto: "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and to such as be of a humble spirit," Psalm 34:19.

Left Brainard at 5:00 a.m. ...passed the Mississippi ....meadows ....grain fields ....woods....grain....potato fields. Houses look neat and attractive. The grass looks similar to our grass at home.

**June 18** - Friday - Motto: "Thou therefore, which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" Romans 2:21.

Arrived at the Red River during the night, where our baggage was unloaded and transferred to a ship. At 5:00 a.m. we boarded the ship and again resumed our journey. The river is from 60 to 70 feet wide and flows along a drastic zig-zag fashion. In rapid succession we sail east, then west, again north and then south. At noon we enter into another river, broader than this one wider than the other--approximately 80 to 90 feet wide. Both shorelines are thickly wooded, but the river bends are not as extreme as the former.

**June 19** - Saturday - Motto: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink," John 7:37

Today the shoreline is wooded again. At 10:00 a.m. we made our next terminal at a house. Here we took in wood. We also had the opportunity here of viewing farmlands. The barley is beginning to ear. Corn, potatoes and vegetables all show vigorous healthy growth.

Between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. we stopped at Pembina River. At 3:00 p.m. we arrived at David Klassens. At 4:00 p.m., through the gracious help of God, we landed at Dufferin. Here we were escorted to the immigration halls.

It was shortly after our arrival that I was saved from what could have been a fatal injury. Together

with the David Klassens I drove to a town beyond the Red River to buy flour. On our way back, going down the steep shore of the river, the harness tore, with the result that the wagon upset, giving me a heavy blow. My left hand was badly injured and for awhile I was threatened with unconsciousness because of a severe blow to my neck. This was all that happened. Had the wagon struck me from another angle, which could have easily happened, I would have been killed instantly--another visible evidence of God's protection.

**June 20** - Sunday - Motto: "The Lord thy God will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy," Zeph. 3:17.

This was a day of rest. Have seen barley, like we never saw in Russia, not even during the best years. Also saw a gopher, somewhat darker than those in Russia--otherwise nearly the same.

**June 21** - Monday - Motto: "...continuing instant in prayer," Romans 12:12.

Bought the following: a cow with its calf for \$39.00, an iron stove with equipment for \$28.50, a shovel for \$1.00, two pails for 65 cents, a coffee mill for 50 cents, soap for 25 cents, matches for 30 cents and two plates for 20 cents.

**June 22** - Tuesday - Motto: "Walk in the way of holiness," Isaiah 35:8.

Bought a pair of oxen for \$139.00.

**June 23** - Wednesday - Motto: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye," Matthew 7:5.

Purchased the following today: a wagon for \$64.00, a kettle for \$1.70, a grindstone for \$1.64, a wrench for 80 cents, wagon grease for 50 cents, and wood for the wagon for \$2.00.

At 2:00 p.m. I went along to Reinland together with Peter Wiens, Wilhelm Esau and Jacob Wiens. Stayed in a wayside inn overnight. The meadows are a lovely green.

**June 24** - Thursday - Motto: "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble," 1 Peter 5:5.

Arrived at Jacob Wienses in Reinland at 11:00 a.m.

**June 25** - Friday - Motto: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest," Matthew 11:28.

Repaired implements today.

**June 26** - Saturday - Motto: "Our conversation is in heaven," Phil. 3:20.

Fetches a load of wood and brought lots of strawberries with us.

**June 27** - Sunday - Motto: "Jehovah said: I am with thee; fear thou not," Isaiah 41:10.

The first time we attended church in America--Jacob Wiens gave the message.

**June 28** - Monday - Motto: "Tribulation worketh patience," Romans 5:3.

Went out to look at some land today. Went as far as David Fehr's place, Rosenfeld. Here we met with our friends from Russia and heard that Jacob, son of David Wienses, has died. Stayed here overnight.

**June 29** - Tuesday - Motto: "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him," 1 Sam. 1:17.

Went to Emerson to do some shopping. Purchased the following: a plow for \$24.00, wood for \$12.00, four bags of flour for \$12.50, ten lbs of coffee for \$3.35, seven lbs of sugar for \$1.00, two pails for 70 cents, a pitchfork for \$1.25, one lb. "Licht" for 30 cents, 40 lbs lard for \$9.00, 11 lbs nails for 77 cents, 60 lbs beans for \$3.00.

Left Emerson and spent the night under the blue

sky.

**June 30** - Wednesday - Motto: "Let us love one another, for love is of God," 1 John 4:7.

Arrived in Reinland at 4:00 p.m. and left again for Ebenfeld to look at some land. It is quite good, but there is a shortage of water.

**July - 1876**

**July 1** - Thursday - Motto: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thine house," Acts 16:31

Attended an auction sale in No. 1, where cattle and wagon were sold.

**July 2** - Friday - Motto: "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace," Hebrews 13:9

Have again gone to various places to look at more land sites. Stayed at John Ennses at Rosenort for the night.

**July 3** - Saturday - Motto: "Our conversation is in heaven," Phil. 3:20.

After viewing some land today, we decided to move there and establish a home. In the afternoon we bought wood, a sack of wheat for \$2.32 and a sack of barley for \$3.32.

**July 4** - Sunday - Motto: Read a message on the text, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart," Psalm 37:4.

Took Abram Kroeker to the Red River to fetch the children.

**July 5** - Monday - Motto: "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth," 1 Tim. 2:4.

Took the sons of Benjamin Fehr and Mrs. Gerhard Dyck to the chosen site to dig a well.

**July 6** - Tuesday - Motto: "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled," Matth. 7:6.

Abram Kroeker came home without the children.

**July 7** - Wednesday - Motto: "Who provideth for the raven his food, when his young ones cry to God, they wander for lack of meat," Job 38:41.

A fierce storm raged during the night. This morning we had rain, hail and a thunderstorm. The hail pieces exceed a walnut in size. Two houses are torn down, in Schoenwiese a cow and in Neuenburg two oxen were killed by lightning. In Rosenort Mrs. Cornelius Peters was struck by lightning--but not killed.

**July 8** - Thursday - Motto: "...but rather rejoice that your names are written in heaven," Luke 10:20

Went out today to search of water--so far we have been unsuccessful.

**July 9** - Friday - Motto: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee," Jer. 31:3

Tried five different places for water today--after that we returned.

**July 10** - Saturday - Motto: "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways," Prov. 23:26.

The children had gone to view another site closer to the woods--however, they do not like it.

**July 11** - Sunday - Motto: "Without me ye can do nothing," John 15:5.

Had company today--Jacob Ennses, Abraham Zachariases and David Fehrs were here. During the evening the Isaac Wienses arrived--they landed safely here at Dufferin during the night.

**July 12** - Monday - Abraham Kroekers and Isaac Wienses went to get the other children today.

**July 13** - Tuesday - Motto: "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son," John 5:22.

Have viewed the site near the woods--liked it fairly well.

**July 14** - Wednesday - Motto: "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Luke 18:41.

With God's help, all our children have now arrived safely.

**July 15** - Thursday - Motto: "Christ is all, and in all," Col. 3:11.

Again went out to seek water but without results.

**July 16** - Friday - Motto: "Come near to me, I pray you," Genesis 45:4.

Have come to a decision to settle in Reinland.

**July 17** - Saturday - Again, there are contentions regarding the site that has been chosen.

**July 18** - Sunday - Motto: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," 1 John 2:15.

The Aeltester Johann Wiebe preached the sermon here today.

**July 19** - Monday - Again we viewed two sites--found water on the latter and decided to settle there. The place is to be named "Hoffnungsfeld".

**July 20** - Tuesday - Took our families and possessions to Chortitz.

**July 21** - Wednesday - "Follow thou me," John 21:22.

Hauled wood out of the woods and started to build.

**July 22** - Thursday - Together with Isaac Wiens I went to the Pembina Mountains as far as Dakota where we bought nine head of cattle: a yoke of oxen for \$72.50, for Jacob Enns another yoke of oxen for \$60.00, for David Wiens a cow and calf for \$35.00, for Isaac Wienses a pair of oxen for slaughtering for \$40.00, for Aaron Neustaetter one cow and calf for \$35.00. Returned that night. Took very sick.

**July 24** - Saturday - Rainy throughout the day. I spent the day in bed.

**July 25** - Sunday - Attended the church service today. Johann Wiebe gave the message and spoke on the text: "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you," 1 Peter 5:7.

Took Isaac Wienses and Jacob Ennses to Schanzenfeld, to transfer the things that were ordered.

**July 26** - Monday - Mowed grass for the roof and began building the barn.

**July 27** - Tuesday - Began building the well basin.

**July 28** - Wednesday - Placed the well basin in the well and started cleaning out the well. Toward evening we had much rain and a thunderstorm.

**July 29** - Thursday - Finished the cleaning of the well. The children from the Red River area have come home.

**July 30** - Friday - Hauled two loads of wood from the forest.

**July 31** - Saturday - Continued building the barn.

**August 1** - Sunday - Cool weather.

**August 2** - Monday - Took Isaac Wiens to Reinland. Isaac Wiens has a sore finger. The rest of us continued building the barn.

**August 3** - Tuesday - Finished building of the barn. A rainy day.

**August 4** - Wednesday - Moved from Chortitz here to our new site, Hoffnungsfeld. Moved into the barn. Hauled some more wood.

# The Mennonites and World War One

World War One, 1914-18, and its effect on the Mennonites of the East Reserve,  
by Rev. William Rempel, Box 367, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0.

## Religious Background.

The Mennonite people have taught and followed the way of peace and nonresistance since the time of the Reformation. Seminal Anabaptist leaders spoke out strongly against war and taking up of arms as the following will testify:

Conrad Grebel wrote in 1524: "True believing Christians are as sheep in the midst of wolves ... they use neither the worldly sword, nor engage in war, since among them taking of human life has ceased entirely, for we are no longer under the old covenant." (Note One).

Felix Manz wrote: "No Christian smites with the sword, or resists evil," (Note Two).

Dirk Phillips wrote: "The people of God arm themselves not with carnal weapons ... but with the armour of God, with the weapons of righteousness and with Christian patience, with which to possess their souls, and overcome their enemies," (Note Three).

Menno Simons wrote: "The regenerated do not go to war, nor engage in strife. They are children of peace and know of no war," (Note Four).

Our forefathers based their teaching of non-resistance on their understanding of the Scriptures, and considered it their duty to stand up and resist the taking up of arms. They believed the Scriptures when it told them that He, Jesus, would "guide our feet into the way of peace," (Luke 1:39). The words of Jesus Himself spoke to them very clearly that, "blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the sons of God," (Matthew 5:9).

The history of the Mennonites is filled with accounts of people resisting the bearing of arms, as well as accounts of compromise, and of mass migrations because of it.

## The Privilegium, Russia.

The Mennonite people left Prussia in 1788, emigrating to Czarist Russia, where they had received a Privilegium guaranteeing the freedom from military service. The Privilegium was honoured until 1870. At this time the Imperial Government implemented a series of modernization reforms. This included a major policy change in the area of service in the military--compulsory universal military conscription was to be implemented.

The Mennonites saw this as a threat to their faith. The events which followed led the people of the Bergthal Colony to consider emigration. They firmly believed that as Christ's followers they should not participate in armed conflict. For the Bergthaler as well as other conservative Mennonites, the time had again arrived when they needed to seek a country where they would have the freedom to practice their faith.

When the Russian government realized that the Mennonites were serious about immigrating to America they relented somewhat. They changed the policy in that the Mennonites could serve in

other capacities, such as forestry service. This, however, did not alter the plans of the Bergthaler to emigrate.

## Manitoba, 1914.

The terms of the Order in Council granted by the Canadian Government to the Mennonite delegates in 1873 guaranteed the freedom from military service.

These rights were severely tested about 42 years later, during the First World War. As the war dragged on, Mennonites started receiving conflicting reports as well as letters from men in authority indicating their privileges were not being honoured.

Additional concern arose from the view of many Canadians that the Mennonites were German, and as such, aliens or possibly even enemies. Ironically the Mennonites had been in Manitoba longer than most Anglo-Canadians and, historically, had never had any connection and/or association with the modern German nation-state.

Chortitzer minister Heinrich Doerksen (1855-1933), Schönthal, Manitoba, my great-grandfather, was one of the Mennonite leaders concerned about these developments.

The issue became serious when the Canadian military started patrolling the countryside in search of eligible men for military service. In September, 1918, a military patrol descended upon Steinbach arresting citizens who could not produce "Military Registration Cards". The army patrols picked up eligible men and took them to Winnipeg for induction into the armed forces.

One incident was recalled years later by Franz Funk, Grünthal. Gerhard Wiebe of Chortitz was a young man of military age (Note Five). On Sunday he came home from a worship service. He changed from dress clothing to more casual clothes. In his hurry he forgot to remove his certificate of church membership from his dress clothes and left the house without it.

Later that afternoon he walked down the road to a friend's house. To his horror he was stopped by a military patrol looking for recruits for the armed forces. The soldiers turned a deaf ear to Gerhard's claim for exemption on the grounds that he was a Mennonite. Since he could not back up his plea with a written certificate signed by a minister, the soldiers forced him to come along as they patrolled the countryside picking up other young men.

At Sarto, the patrol came upon a wedding in progress. This did not stop the soldiers. They picked up the bridegroom and took him along. The bridegroom was a young man of Ukrainian descent.

The following week, Rev. Heinrich Doerksen went to Winnipeg, and successfully negotiated a release for Gerhard Wiebe (Note Six).

## The Delegation.

Things came to a head, as it were, when the

government sent out notices to the Mennonite people instructing all males between the ages of 16 to 65 years, to register with the authorities by the first week of January 1917.

The Mennonite people took this seriously. A meeting was called in which the ministerial of several denominations took part. The meeting was held on December 28, 1916 in Altona, Manitoba.

The discussion centred around two questions that the Mennonites were asking due to recent events.

1. Why was the present government ignoring the special privileges that they had received by Order in Council of 1873?

2. Was the agreement between the Dominion Government and the Mennonite people now void?

After lengthy discussion "held in a Christian manner", they decided to select and send delegates to Ottawa immediately. The delegates would present a petition to the authorities personally, asking them to honour the "Privilegium" which had been granted. The election of delegates took place right after these discussions. They decided to select one delegate from each of the East Reserve churches and two delegates from the West Reserve.

Present at the meeting were 63 ministers. They took part in the election with prayer and singing. Four candidates were nominated from the East Reserve: Bishop Peter Dueck of the Kleine Gemeinde; Bishop Peter Schmidt of the Brüderthaler Church; and Bishop Johann K. Dueck and Rev. Heinrich Doerksen for the Chortitzer Gemeinde.

The result of the election was very decisive with Rev. Heinrich Doerksen receiving 57 votes and Bishop Schmidt receiving 6 votes. The delegates selected from the candidates of the West Reserve were Bishop Abraham Doerksen of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde (older brother to Heinrich) and Rev. Benjamin Ewert.

Meanwhile the Mennonite leaders in Saskatchewan had also met to select two delegates to accompany the Manitoba delegation. The men selected were: Bishop David Toews of Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and Klaas Peters of Waldeck, Saskatchewan.

## Heinrich Doerksen Journal.

The diary of Rev. Heinrich Doerksen, provides some information about the journey of the delegation to Ottawa:

January 2, 1917, After the meeting the delegates from the West Reserve and Saskatchewan in Winnipeg, we were ready for our journey, leaving Winnipeg at 5 p.m. for Ottawa, Ontario via Minneapolis, Chicago and Toronto.

January 3, via Minneapolis to Chicago.

January 4, We arrived in Chicago at 2 a.m. in the morning

January 5, Arrived in Toronto at 9 a.m. in the morning, arrived in Ottawa at 6 p.m. tonight.

January 6, In Ottawa, staying at the Windsor Hotel

January 7, In Ottawa

January 8, In Ottawa before the High Government.

(While in Ottawa the delegates presented a petition published here in its entirety.)

Left Ottawa that night at 12 o'clock midnight

January 9, Arrived in Toronto in the morning.

Went to see Niagara Falls. Arrive back in Toronto at 6 p.m.

January 10, Left Toronto for Chicago at 11:50 in the morning.

January 11, Arrived in Chicago at 12 o'clock midnight

January 12, Arrived in St. Paul, Minnesota 9 p.m. in evening

January 13, Arrived in Niverville at 10 a.m. in the morning

January 14, Meet with the Ministerial of the East Reserve in the church at Chortitz.

January 15, Brotherhood meeting at Chortitz.

January 16, Brotherhood meeting at Grünthal (Note Seven).

### Report.

The report of the delegates' mission was first given to the ministerial of the East Reserve on January 14, 1917, the day after they arrived home. Two days of general brotherhood meetings at the church in Chortitz and Grünthal followed. The Chortitzer people were informed that the Dominion Government had reaffirmed the Mennonites' privilege not to serve in the military.

It is evident that the Mennonites during this period stood firm in their conviction against the bearing of arms.

A mere 21 years later, they were again confronted with the same issue, during Second World War which started in September 1939. During this conflict they were not forced to take up arms but were required to render alternative service as conscientious objectors.

### Endnotes:

Endnote One: Quoted in J.C. Wenger, ed., *The Doctrines of the Mennonites* (Scottsdale, Pa: Mennonite Publishing House, 1952), page 35.

Endnote Two: *Ibid.*

Endnote Three: *Ibid.*

Endnote Four: *Ibid.*

Endnote Five: This author interviewed the late Franz Funk of Grünthal, Manitoba. Funk served as a deacon in the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference for many years. During the interview he related the incident accounted here. He was 14 years-old at the time.

Endnote Six: The Gerhard Wiebe in this incident was a cousin to Peter F. Wiebe of Niverville, minister in the Chortitzer Gemeinde.

Endnote Seven: This author has interviewed scores of senior citizens who knew and remembered Rev. Heinrich Doerksen. Several of these shared that Rev. H. Doerksen was the author of the petition, letters and documents that were sent or presented to the federal government as well as the provincial government of Manitoba. The Chortitzer Mennonite Church called on him to do this because of the education he received while

still in Russia. This author was told that he had been well educated but there is no written evidence as to which schools he attended. Oral accounts however, relate that he worked in a bank before moving to Canada.

### Sources:

David P. Reimer, ed., *Experiences of the Mennonites of Canada during the Second World War 1939-1945* (Altona, 1946), 177 pages.

Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens: The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870-1925* (University of Ottawa, 1994), 266 pages.

J. H. Doerksen, *Geschichte und Wichtige Documente der Mennoniten von Russland, Canada, Paraguay und Mexico* (1923, Niverville), 152 pages.

*Wichtige Documente betreffs der Wehrfreiheit der Mennoniten in Canada* (Gretna, 1917), 16 pages.

The petition presented to the Dominion government by the Mennonite delegates:

### A Petition of the Mennonite Delegation to the Government of Ottawa

As our people, the Mennonites of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, are somewhat uncertain regarding our relation to military service we were requested at different meetings to go to Ottawa in order to get definite information relating to questions that agitate the mind of our people. We were induced to take this step by the fact that conflicting letters and reports reached us from men in authority. Also through registration cards that we received. We are not quite clear as to their real significance. Our people would like to get clear on these points that have always been so very important to them.

The Honourable Gentlemen will kindly pardon us if we very briefly refer to the history of our people in order to show how much in earnest they have always been regarding the question of rendering military service.

The Gospel as we understand it does not allow us to shed blood, nor to participate in war. The Mennonites always took a very decided stand regarding this question and we now take the same stand as our fathers did before us.

It was under pressure of this question that our ancestors migrated from Holland to Germany in the sixteenth century. They were promised free exercise of the religion in the latter country. In the latter part of the eighteenth century, however, this privilege was revoked and the Mennonites were to be compelled to do military service. Russia then offered freedom from service in the army and our people without hesitation left home in Germany and went to this foreign land and joyfully did their share in helping to transform the wilderness of the Russian steppes into habitable abodes. They did everything in their power for the country which offered them a home and the free exercise of their religion.

After about a hundred years Russia also revoked the privilege given to the Mennonites. Again they were called upon to serve in the army and again they looked around for a country where they might serve God according to the dictates of their own conscience. They looked to America this land of liberty. Some also thought of Asia and afterwards migrated to the inviting plains of Russian Asia.

It was during these critical times when a delegate from the Canadian Government, Mr. Wm. Hespeler came to Russia inviting our

fathers to make their homes on the virgin plains of western Canada. A deputation was sent out in the year 1873. And when they came back and gave their report a great number of our people resolved to emigrate to America. Many went to the United States because of the more favourable climatic conditions. Thinking the system prevailing there offered a sufficient guarantee for freedom from military service. A good percentage went to Canada. What made them decide for Canada was the definite promise that we would never be drawn into military service.

The following sentences are taken out of the written document dated July 23, 1873 and signed by the Minister of Agriculture as an inducement to come to Canada.

1. "An entire exemption from Military Service is by law and order-in-council granted to the denomination of Christians, called Mennonites."

10. The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites without any kind of molestation or restriction whatsoever, and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools."

A portion of a report of a committee of the Honourable Privy Council approved by His Excellency, the Governor General in Council on the 25th of September 1872, reads as follows: 'That the Mennonites are absolutely free and exempted by the law of Canada from military duty or service either in time of peace or war.'

That the Governor General in Council cannot prescribe any conditions or regulations under which under any circumstances, the persons referred to in the 'above quoted section can be compelled to render any military service...'

It was in 1877 on the 21st of August when His Excellency, Governor General Lord Dufferin, paid a visit to these pioneers of the Red River Valley. Our people had under very discouraging conditions worked hard to cultivate the soil. They were more than once on the very verge of starvation. Attempts were being made to induce our people to leave for the United States. In the memorable address of Lord Dufferin to these settlers the following passage will always live in their memory.

'You can come to a country where the people



Heinrich Doerksen (1855-1933) and Mrs. Doerksen, nee Katharina Dueck (1860-1943), Schönthal, E.R. Together with brothers, Abraham, Aeltester of the Sommerfelder in the West Reserve, and David, Aeltester of the Bergthaler in Saskatchewan, Heinrich worked tirelessly for his people, making various journeys on their behalf, including Ottawa. Photo courtesy of grandson Rev. William Rempel, Niverville/East Reserve 125, page 52.

with whom you are associated, are engaged in a great battle...the enemies in this battle are not human beings: . . . The battle to which we invite you is the battle against the wilderness... You will not be required to shed human blood... You have come seeking for peace and peace at least we can promise you...'

We have conscientiously tried to help to cultivate the plains of southern Manitoba and we did our share in cultivating the soil of Saskatchewan and Alberta. We have tried to fulfil our part of the contract and we sincerely trust that what we were so generously promised will not be taken away from us.

A further consideration that leads us to petition you honourable gentlemen, is the circumstances that many of our brethren in Russia will be looking for new homes after the war is over. Many private letters tell us this. We earnestly petition you also on their behalf to continue to allow us the free exercise of our religious principles. On our part we will do all we can to help them when the time comes. Preliminary steps have already been taken to help them, when we will be permitted to do so.

In conclusion we would assure you of our unflinching loyalty to the land that we love as our home. We wish to express our gratitude for the consideration which we were shown up to

the present and we sincerely trust that also in the future we will be free from military service.

If you honourable gentlemen would kindly consent to give us a clear statement assuring us of the continued exemption from military service you would ever oblige your humble petitioners, the Mennonites of Canada.

(Signed) Bishop Abraham Doerksen, Altona, Manitoba; Bishop David Toews, Rosthern, Saskatchewan; Rev. Heinrich Doerksen, Niverville, Manitoba; Mr. Klaas Peters, Waldeck, Saskatchewan.

### The Reply

The reply by R.B. Bennet, Director General to the Representatives of the Mennonite Settlers of Western Canada is as follows:

Ottawa,

January 8, 1917

Dear Sirs:

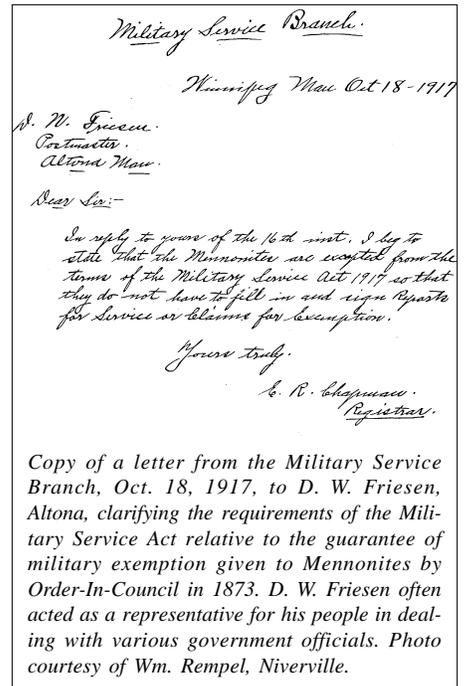
Referring to your interview this morning with the Honourable Robert Rogers, and Colonel Clark, Under Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, representing the Federal Government, and myself I now have to confirm in writing the statements that were then verbally made to you.

(1) The terms of the Order-in-Council under which the Mennonites settled in Canada, guarantee their freedom from Military Service. Canada will respect to the utmost its obligations under that Order-in-Council.

(2) Members of the Mennonite communion are requested to fill in correctly and return promptly National Service Cards, and it is suggested that they should write across the face of each card the word "Mennonite" as indicating their religious faith. It is unnecessary to explain in detail why these cards should be returned. In general it is sufficient to observe that it is important that the State should have the fullest possible information as to the number of men between the ages of 16 and 65, who, by reason of their religious obligations, are available only for agricultural and industrial work.

(3) Every member of the Mennonite communion is expected, in fact, it is his duty, to devote his energies to the utmost of his ability, in increasing the production of the agricultural products in Western Canada during the present year. In that way he can render National Service, which whilst not as essential to the success of our cause, is as important as military service for the reason that armies cannot exist without food.

(4) In the event of any member of the Mennonite communion having joined an Overseas battalion under his apprehension or otherwise, and desiring to be released, if he will make an application to the Colonel of his battalion, stating that he is a Mennonite and desires to be discharged, immediate action will be taken to that end. The application must be made in writing, and signed by the applicant himself. Application on his behalf by another person will not be sufficient. While Mennonites are free from Military service, there is, of course, nothing to prevent any member of the communion from becoming a volunteer if he so desires.



I think I have covered the question submitted. Yours faithfully, (signed) R.B. Bennett, Director-General

[To:] Rev. Abraham Doerksen; Rev. Heinrich Doerksen; Rev. Benjamin Ewert; Rev. David Toews; Mr. Klaas Peters; Representation of Mennonite Settlers, Western Canada.

### Aelt. Peter R. Dueck (1862-1919), Journal

A number of Kleine Gemeinde brotherhood meetings considered the delegation of Heinrich Doerksen to Ottawa as the East Reserve representative, as recorded in the ministerial journal of Aeltester Peter R. Dueck (1862-1919), Steinbach, Manitoba.

January 17, 1917: "...also discussed regarding helping pay for the travel expenses of Heinrich Doerksen, and also we wish to publish the petition which the delegates presented to the Government and also its answer and have ordered 500 copies."

October 16, 1918: "We Ohms had a meeting here at the church in Steinbach regarding [the issue] of military service in order to discuss our obligations, and whether we must subscribe to the documents which have been sent to us by the Government. It was decided that I and H. R. Reimer, and Ohm H. Doerksen and Johann Rempel, Chortitz, and Jakob T. Wiebe and P. Schmidt are to go to Winnipeg and to inquire as to what we Mennonites are obliged to do. And so we drove to Winnipeg on the 17th of October..."

The ministerial journal of Aeltester Peter R. Dueck (1862-1919), Steinbach, for the years 1910 to 1913, has been published in Royden Loewen, *from the Inside Out: The Rural Worlds of Mennonite Diarists 1863-1929* (Winnipeg, 1999), 210-236.

See also Royden Loewen, "Challenges of Peter R. Dueck 1862-1919," in *Pres.*, No. 9, Part One, pages 29-30.

## Abraham A. Wolfe 1876-1945

Abraham Wolfe (1876-1945), Gnadentel/Reinfeld, West Reserve, Manitoba, Canada, to Gnadentel/Waldheim Manitoba Plan, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, to Reinthal/Chortitz, West Reserve, Manitoba, compiled by Delbert F. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada.

### Family Background.

Genealogist Henry Schapansky has written that the patriarch of the Wolfe family was "Jakob Wolfe (b. circa 1759). He came to Russia circa 1788-89 with the first Mennonite pioneers. On July 21, 1776, he married Justina Harder (b. 1758). After his death she remarried first to David Giesbrecht (b. 1750), later of Schönhorst, Chortitz Colony, and again to Johann Epp (n. 1774).

"His son Johann Wolfe (born June 6, 1778) married Anna Peters (b. 1782). He was the father of Johann Wolfe (1804-70)," (Note One).

According to records in B. J. Unruh, *Mennonitischen Ostwanderungen*, pages 215, 242, 248 and 303, the Wolfe family settled in the village of Schönhorst, Chortitz Colony, Imperial Russia. They owned Wirtschaft 28 in the village of Schönhorst, Chortitz Colony, Imperial Russia, where they are listed as follows in the Revision (census) of 1795: Johann Wolfe age 17, brothers David 11, Peter 9, Jakob 6, and sister Christina 15.

On the "Feuerstellen Liste" of 1802 the family is listed as follows: "Jakob Wolf has died, currently his son Jakob Wolfe." Another record of individuals prior to 1803 simply notes, "Wolff, Johann, to Schönhorst, married..."

Johann Wolfe is listed as the owner of Wirtschaft Seven in Schönhorst in the Verzeichnes of 1803.

### Johann Wolfe 1804-70.

Abraham A. Wolfe (1876-1945) was the son of Abraham Wolfe (1847-1912) and Eva Klassen (1843-1911), R231-1.

Abraham Wolfe was the son of Johann Wolfe (1804-70) and Elisabeth Friesen (1810-74). Abraham had three brothers Peter (b. 1835) R209-1, Johann (b. 1838) R300-3 and Jakob (b. 1853) R401-2 who also came to Canada in 1875.

The brothers had four sisters who married: Anna (1830-74) married to Peter Klassen, Elisabeth (b. 1832) married to Aron Dueck, Maria (1841-75) married to Herman Neufelt, Susanna (1844-1918) married to Jakob Redekopp RGB 371-2, and sister Helena (1851-66) who never married.

### Abraham Wolfe 1847-1912.

In 1869 Abraham Wolfe married Eva Klassen (1843-1911). In his family record, Abram has written a blessing following the marriage entry, "May the Lord be gracious unto us, may he direct and lead us upon the narrow path, and that our feet would not depart from the way, and may he grant us the eternal life and a blessed death" (Note Two).

Abraham Wolfe Sr. came to Canada in 1875 crossing the Atlantic Ocean on the S.S. Canadian together with brothers Jakob and Johann and sisters Elisabeth (Mrs. Aron Dyck) and Susanna (Mrs. Jakob Redekopp) and their families. The vessel arrived in Quebec City on July 19, 1875 four days after another group whose leader Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905) later compiled an account of the journey, see *Preservings*, No. 15, pages 18-20.

The Abraham Wolfe family settled in the village of Osterwick, West Reserve, in Manitoba, where they are listed in the 1881 census: "#294 Abram Wolf 34, Elisabet 37, Abram 5, Peter 2," BGB 393.

Four children Johann (1870-70), Elisabet (1872-72) and Anna (1873-73) were born to Abraham and Eva Wolfe in Russia but all had died prior to the time of emigration. Son Peter born January 27, 1875 died the next day.

Abram born in 1876 was the first child to remain alive. Four other children were born after him



Photograph labelled "Abram A. Wolfe". Since Abram A. Wolfe lost his arm in 1895 this photograph must predate the accident, possibly summer of 1895. Photo courtesy of grandson Jakob W. Klassen, Blue Creek, Belize, C.A.

but only brother Johann did not die in childhood. Johann Wolfe (b. 1881) grew up to marry Maria Mueller (b. 1881), daughter of Isaak ("Kaiser") Mueller, Obervorsteher of the Reinland Colony.

Abraham's wife Eva, nee Klassen, died September 19, 1911, and was buried on September 19. The funeral sermon was given by Aeltester Peter Wiebe (Note Three).

Abram Wolfe Sr. died on December 17, 1912, survived only by sons Abram and Johann and their families.

### Youth and Marriage.

Son Abram A. Wolfe had a joyous youth. When the young people were dancing in a house, he gladly stood and watched through the window.

As a young man Abram worked a lot with steam

engines. Tragically he lost his left arm on September 14, 1895, while working on a steam engine threshing outfit. He pushed the drive belt from the steam engine with his shoulder to stop the threshing machine. The drive belt flipped off and ripped his arm off.

On July 23, 1898, Abram A. Wolfe and Sara Fehr (born July 14, 1880) celebrated their betrothal. Sara was the daughter of Isaak Fehr (b. 1848) and Sara Neufeld (1851-1910), Wirtschaft 26, Hoffnungsfeld, West Reserve, RGB 381-2. Abram Wolfe and Sara Fehr were married on July 31, 1899. Aeltester Johann Wiebe, Rosengart, officiated at the wedding (Note Four).

April 19, 1899, a daughter Sara was born at 3 a.m. but died two hours later.

### Teaching.

As a young man Abram A. Wolfe served as a Vorsänger (Chorister) and teacher. He served in these position for quite some time.

In 1900 he lived in Gnadentel, W.R. The various tax and OK Gemeinde records published in John J. Friesen, "Gnadentel 1880-1824," in J. P. Redekopp, Chair, *Gnadentel 1880-1980* (Altona, 11982), pages 1-26, do not refer to Abr. A. Wolfe. A Gerhard Enns is listed as the school teacher in 1903.

The birth places of the children provide information regarding the different villages where he may have taught: son Isaak - Blumenort in 1909; daughter Katharina - Osterwick 1912, Elisabeth - Osterwick 1913, Johann - Rosengart 1917 and Abram - died Reinfeld 1919. There was another Abram Wolfe family living in Reinfeld RGB 295-2.

### Printery.

Abram A. Wolfe had a printery and on the side while teaching school he printed school materials, books and other printing work.

Historian Bruce Wiebe, Winkler, has gathered three samples of his printing work.

The first item was the "Erster Brief vom Ehrw. Aeltesten Jakob Dyck vom Jahre 1846. Anno 1900 von mir, Jakob Thiessen abgeschrieben in Amerika." The printer is identified as "Buchdruckerei A. A. Wolf, Gnadentel, Plum Coulee P.D., Man."

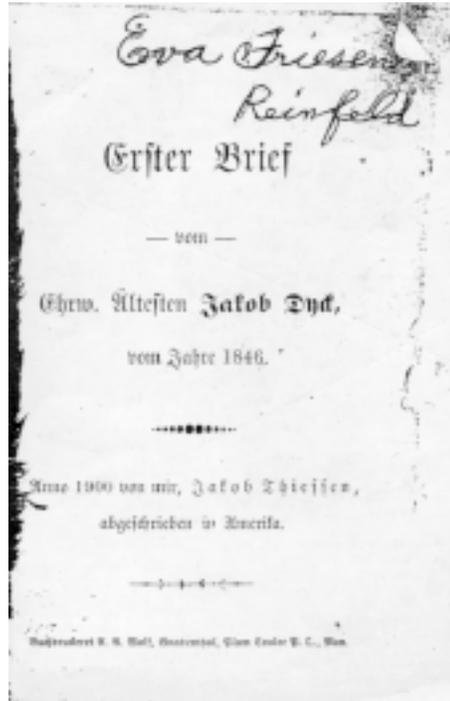
The second sample of A. A. Wolfe's printing work is "Der Balzer-Brief oder eine Geschichte und Gedicht wie und warum Lehr. Heinrich Balzer ist ausgegangen." The publication was dated 1903 and was printed by "Abraham A. Wolfe (Gnadentel), P.D. Plum Coulee, Man."

The third sample of Abram A. Wolfe's printing work is "Ein Abschied und Bericht wie es in der Molotschnerkolonie un d. früh, Jahre zugegangen ist, und wie die Vorgesetzten den ehr. Aeltesten Heinrich Wiens von Gnadentel aus dem Lande verwiesen haben. Seine Rückkehr nebst Beschreibung der ganzen Reise."

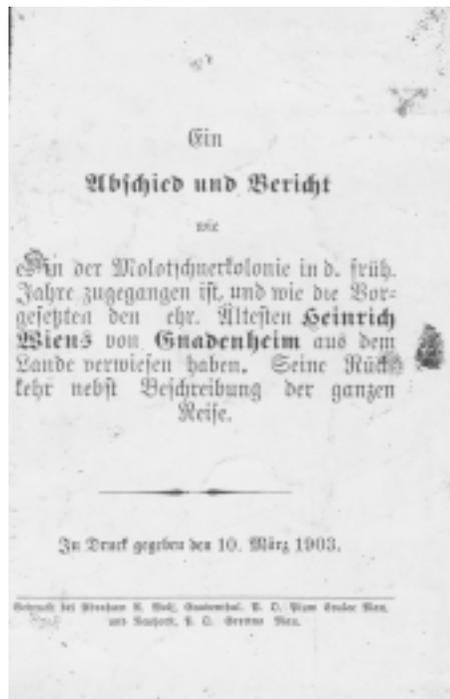
The booklet was printed on March 10, 1903.

The printer is identified as "Abraham A. Wolfe, Gnadenthal, P.O. Plum Coulee, Man. und Neuhorst, P.O. Gretna, Man."

All of the booklets were part of the canon of devotional literature among the conservative Mennonites. Presumably other books printed by the



Title page of *Erster Brief* von Ehrw. Aeltester Jakob Dyck, presumably printed by A. A. Wolfe in 1900 or shortly thereafter. Courtesy of Bruce Wiebe, R. R. 1., Box 79, Winkler, Manitoba, R6W 4A1.



Title page of *Ein Abschied und Bericht*...Aeltester Heinrich Wiens, printed by Abram A. Wolfe, 1903, Gnadenthal, P.O. Plum Coulee, Manitoba. Courtesy of Bruce Wiebe, R. R. 1., Box 79, Winkler, Manitoba, R6W 4A1.

Wolfe printery can be added to the above as more material comes to light.

### Charity.

In the generous spirit typical of the Old Kolony people, Abram Wolfe Sr. had adopted an old English bachelor who died in April, 1914. For the last 11 years he had lived at the home of son Abram A. Wolfe. He had achieved the age of 91 years, 10 months and some days. Granddaughter Tina Wolfe Plett recalls that his name was Tabiga and that he was a soldier who had come along with the family from Russia.

The senior Wolfes had also taken in a foster daughter Agatha who also died at the home of son Abram A. Wolfe in August 1919.

### Medical School.

Several of the grandchildren recall that Abram A. Wolfe received medical training at the same time as the well-known Dr. Cornelius Wiebe, Winkler, and Hugo McGavin. Grandson Isaak Wolfe, Winkler, recalls that Abram A. Wolfe studied in Minneapolis, New York and Chicago. Dr. Wiebe practised in Winkler, and Dr. McGavin in Plum Coulee.

### Emigration, 1922.

When the Mennonites emigrated from Manitoba in 1922, Abram A. Wolfe served as a group leader of one the trainloads of exiles leaving Canada. He was interviewed and photographed by a newspa-

per reporter in Minneapolis, see *Preservings*, No. 14, page 103.

When they arrived in Mexico, Abram A. Wolfe deposited a large sum of money in a bank in Cuauhtemoc. Shortly thereafter the bank went bankrupt and he lost all his money.

### Mexico, 1922-35.

In Mexico the Abram A. Wolfe family settled in Gnadenthal, Manitoba Plan, Cuauhtemoc. Later he had a medical clinic on the yard of son Isaak A. Wolfe in Reinland. Mrs. Abram A. Wolfe also practised here but she had never studied as a doctor. Son Isaak moved to Waldheim where Dr. Abram A. Wolfe delivered his grandson Isaak Wolfe. Granddaughter Sara Wolfe Penner remembered that "lots of people came for doctoring and we would hear little snatches of the conversation."

Abram Wolfe also served as a doctor for many Mexican people, travelling through the mountains, as he was concerned that the natives there should have medical care.

For this reason the family moved to a time to Namiquipa. They took the sick people into their home and nursed them until they recovered or died. They always had many people in their home who had to be fed and looked after.

### Manitoba, 1935.

In June 1935, Abram A. Wolfes and their three married children returned to Canada, "because of the unrest, murder of the Peter Schellenberg family,



Abram A. Wolfe (1876-1945) and family in Minneapolis in 1922 during exodus to Mexico. L.-r.: Daughters Maria, Mrs. Julius Klassen, Eva, Mrs. Isaak Klassen, and Elisabeth, Mrs. Jakob Goertzen, Abram A. Wolfe (note missing arm), and son Isaak A. Wolfe. Although dressed simply and tastefully the faces of the expatriates show the character and determination of those who have chosen to leave a country they had built in order to preserve their faith and culture which was being stolen from them. The Minneapolis newspaper which carried the story referred to the farms of the OK-ers as the "...richest farming districts of Manitoba," stating that "The Mennonite farmers sold their lands at a sacrifice...which under normal conditions brought from \$90 to \$150 an acre going a-begging for \$10 to \$30." Photo courtesy of Dr. Royden Loewen, Chair Men. Studies, University of Winnipeg, see *Preservings*, No. 14, page 103, for the original newspaper article.

etc.” The immigration party included Abram A. and Sara Wolfe, single daughter Katerina, daughter Elisabeth and husband Jakob Goertzen, daughter Eva and husband Isaak Klassen, son Isaak A. Wolfe, and their families. Mrs. Isaak Wolfe’s brother Abe Unrau also came along. The Jakob Klassens had one son but that became two as Mrs. Klassen gave birth in the U.S.A. during the trip.

The entourage was on the road for a month travelling on an old bus. Julius Klassens drove in an old car which, however, broke down along the way. They traded the car for a trailer which was hitched behind the bus and everybody piled on for the rest of the journey, a total of some 30 people (shades of “East of Eden”, except in this case it was a cynical government which had reduced prosperous God-fearing citizens to poverty and not a dustbowl/Depression).

Abram A. Wolfe again had a printery in Manitoba. Son Isaak took a mechanic’s course and operated his own garage.

**Death.**

After Mrs. Wolfe had arthritis so bad that she was crippled, Abram shut down his printery and they moved into a house on the yard of son Isaak.

Granddaughter Sara Wolfe Penner remembered “the night being awakened by aunt Treen knocking at the window and waking Dad to tell him that grandpa had fallen and could not get up. I was very scared. It was the night grandpa had a heart attack or stroke, whatever they called it. He was taken to the Winkler Hospital. I remember when we as children were all taken once to visit him. I was scared I guess to see him, lying in bed so sick. [It was sad]...to hear that the nurses would not listen to his calls at the end.”

Abram A. Wolfe died in the hospital. During the night he had called out repeatedly. Finally a German man in a different room had come to him. He later reported that Abram A. Wolfe had said, “Jesus is now coming to get me and soon all the others will come also.”

Abram A. Wolfe died March 4, 1945. The funeral sermon was brought by Aeltester Jakob J. Froese.

Abram’s wife Sara Fehr Wolfe died on her birthday, July 14, 1946, at 12 p.m. midnight, at the Old Folk’s Home, Bethania, Winnipeg. The funeral was held in Chortitz, West Reserve, with Aeltester Jakob J. Froese officiating.

**Recollections.**

Abram A. Wolfe is remembered as a man of compassion. He had much concern and generosity for others. “He always remained a loyal Old Kolonier.”

Granddaughter Tina Wolfe Plett, recalls being held in her grandfather’s arms as a two-year-old. Her parents Isaak Wolfes had gone to Winnipeg and grandfather had stood with her at the window that evening looking to see if the lights of her parent’s car were visible already.

Tina also recalls visiting her grandmother in the Old Folks Home in Winnipeg, that she lay in her bed and that another woman was on the other side in the same room.

Granddaughter Sara Wolfe Penner, Abbotsford, B.C., recalls “feeling loved by both him and grand-



*Friends relaxing on a Sunday in 1935 before the Wolfes returned to Manitoba. Abram A. Wolfe and Mrs. Sarah Wolfe are the couple in the centre. Who can identify the others? Photo courtesy of granddaughter Helena, Mrs. Cornelius B. Reimer, Jagueyes, Mexico.*

mother Wolfe.” She remembered “the trees rustling in the wind which we did not hear at our house.”

“There was a hitching post around the worship house on which we balanced and walked on until sister Helena fell and got badly hurt. After this we were not allowed to do this any more.”

Sara remembered her “grandpa always smiling and singing lots of hymns around the home and discussion of scripture.”

Abram A. Wolfe loved to build things and granddaughter Sara remembered “being excited at Christmas time when he built some chest of drawers for Helena and me. He made us doll buggies (carriages) with wooden beds. I remember him pushing grandmother in her wheelchair. Earlier when we stayed there during summer holidays it was special to be allowed to follow him around as he took care of the Chortitz worship house for some years. (This was the same church building which

was later donated to the Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach).”

Granddaughter Helena Wolfe Reimer recalled that “Sarah Wolfe was crippled by arthritis. So she had to be in bed most of the time but she never complained. She liked to watch the kittens play, she even laughed at their antics. We also had to sing for her or open a song book and tuck it between her thumb and forefinger so she could read.

Two of Abram A. Wolfe’s daughters, Mrs. Julius Klassen and Mrs. Jakob Goertzen, who stayed in Mexico, were midwives and also chiropractors (“traichmokasch”). They helped many people. Sarah Wolfe also served as a midwife in Mexico before she had arthritis.

**J.W. Klassen Recollections.**

Grandson Jakob W. Klassen, Blue Creek, Belize recalled that as a five-year-old boy he always wanted to be a doctor just like his grandpa for “then he and grandpa would never have to die. But then 10 years later, the 4th of May, exactly on his birthday, grandfather died after all, and consequently I gave up the idea of being a doctor.”

Jakob Klassen reflected, “In the meantime we lived in Canada where it would easily have been possible. We and the grandparents lived together in one house, southeast of Plum Coulee in a village



*Abram A. Wolfe, as an older man, presumably taken after his return to Manitoba in 1935. Photo courtesy of Anton and Maria Wolfe Plett, Belize, C.A.*



*Johann Wolfe, brother of Dr. Abram A. Wolfe and wife Maria. It was said the two brothers resembled each other quite a bit. Daughter Maria, Mrs. Aron Wolfe, now lives at 230 Ave. T North, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.*

called Reinthal. One time Isaak Wolfen came to our place and then my parents, namely Julius Klassens, and Isaak Wolfen, drove to Eichenfeld visiting at Gerhard Elias', who was my grandmother's sister."

"We four boys, I and my brother Abram, and Wolfen's Isaak and Abram had to remain at home with the grandparents. This was in Fall. But in the meantime it snowed and they were unable to come home for four weeks."

"During this time we boys had much fun with the grandparents. Grandmother got quite angry with us, but we were not able to get grandfather to get mad. To describe everything we did would take too long. But suffice it to say that in the end grandmother gave in and we boys and grandfather also laughed ourselves silly."

"Later we and the grandparents again lived together in one house, this time in Chortitz by the worship house on the yard. I must confess that here I was a terrible brat, teasing the grandparents unmercifully but I never saw them angry...."

"In this wise I could relate many things more of my grandparents. I have never had another friend whom I loved so much as this grandfather. I often regret that he no longer lives for now I would no longer tease him, rather I would show him my love as much as I only could."

"At the time he [Abram A. Wolfe] made washing machines which were much easier to articulate than the so-called "Stuckmaschinen" and they were much sought after. As a 10 year-old boy I have often wondered how he was able to build these with only one hand. I know that another person with two hands could not have done it better nor faster. Often times he related to us about his childhood and years of youth, but, unfortunately, I cannot recount anything about it. I do know that I had often wished at the time that I could also have experienced such things."

Jakob W. Klassen concluded by stating, "I have loved both of them [grandma and grandpa] very much....We lived in Neuenburg, Mexico, when grandpa died, and the grandparents were in Canada. I was very happy that day as it was my birthday....Then the telegram came that grandfather had died. This cut me down as I always had the hope that I would see him again and to ask him for forgiveness....Therefore I would advise everyone who has something to make right with someone, to do it in a timely season, for once it is too late, it is too late forever."

"One thing more. We boys always looked forward to Christmas, for good gifts which made us a joy. But grandfather was much more concerned about something which would be a little fun for him also. We knew this and looked forward the most for the gifts from grandfather.

"...[the gifts we received] the last Christmas which we were still in Canada, therefore the last gifts from him, are a good example. We boys re-



1946. Coffin photograph of Mrs. Sara Fehr Wolfe. Photo courtesy of Anton and Maria Wolfe Plett, Belize, C.A.

ceived a dog made out of hard paper. It was hollow and one could remove the head and look inside. Inside we discovered something which had the appearance of chocolate, only it was white. I did not trust it to taste it. But Wolfen Isaak, my cousin, immediately took a bite. He made horrible grimaces. Again grandfather had his joy. It was no chocolate, it was dog food."

#### Son Isaak A. Wolfe.

Son Isaak A. Wolfe married Helena Unruh from Neuenberg.

When the Mennonites moved to Mexico in 1922 Isaak A. Wolfe quickly learned the Spanish language. There was a rich Mexican Luis Laras who got to know the Abram A. Wolfes and their son Isaak. Laras had an automobile but could not drive it himself and so Isaak A. Wolfe often drove it as his chauffeur, far and wide, all over the State of Chi-



Tina Wolfe Plett, Almon Plett, and son Kenneth, Spanish Lookout, Belize, visit the house in which Tina's grandparents Abram A. Wolfes lived in Waldheim, Manitoba Plan, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, from 1925 to 1935. Photo courtesy of Tina Wolfe Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.

huahua.

Whenever he was needed a message was sent to Wolfe that he was supposed to come to Chihuahua where Senior Laras lived.

When Isaak received the notice he walked to the railway track about a half-a-mile away with one or two roosters. When the train came he held up the roosters and the engineer slowed down so that he could get on while it was still moving--this way it didn't cost him anything. He did not drive along in

a passenger car, but in the locomotive.

On one occasion Senior Laras sent him to a particular place where the automobile was parked in a large coral or compound, presumably to be safe from thieves. There was an office where a young woman was in charge of the keys. Here Isaak was to pick up the car. The owner had phoned the young woman that a Mennonite would come for the car and that she was to give him the keys.

When Isaac A. Wolfe arrived at the compound the woman refused to give him the keys. During the ensuing argument Isaak asked the woman to phone Senior Laras which she did.

She told him, "here is a fellow asking for the keys but he is not a Mennonite like you said."

The owner asked, "Well, what does the man look like?"

"Well so and so," she replied.

"Then give him the keys," Senior Laras ordered.

"But, he is not Mennonite, he speaks better Spanish than I," she remonstrated.

"Yes," said Laras, "He speaks better Spanish than I also. But he is the man. Give him the keys."

Isaak A. Wolfe and family returned to Manitoba with his parents in 1935 and lived in Plum Coulee. He was a gifted man with his hands. He was able to make a fine bus out of an old truck which served to take a large load of people to Manitoba.

In Manitoba Isaak had a garage and filling station and his father worked in the office.

In 1948 they returned to Mexico at which time his father's medical books and certificates were left in Manitoba and lost.

When the Isaak A. Wolfe family settled in Mexico, he provided a lot of help to the entire colony, with emigration papers because he knew the language so well. Often he drove to Mexico City, the capital, and had many dealings with the Federal Government. He was also a photographer and made all the passport photographs for the Quellen Colony.

Sister Maria Wolfe married Julius Klassen in 1928 in Mexico. Daughter Elisabeth Wolfe married Jakob Goertzen from Waldheim in 1931. Daughter Eva Wolfe married Isaak Klassen.

#### Endnotes:

Note One: Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack St., New Westminster, B. C., V3L 4V5, letter to Preservings, Sept. 11, 2000,

Note Two: "Abram Wolfe/Sara Fehr are not listed in the First Mexican Mennonite OK Church Register which was recorded by village in 1931. They are listed in the Second Volume as Family No. 792 immediately preceding the marriage of their daughter Elisabeth No. 793. Perhaps....indeed, they were outside the Colony in 1931." Courtesy of Bruce Wiebe, R.R.1, Box 79, Winkler, Manitoba, R6W 4A1.

Note Three: Family records of Abraham Wolfe (1847-1912), unpublished record, courtesy of Tina

Wolfe Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.  
Note Four: Family records of Abraham Wolfe (1876-1945), unpublished record, courtesy of Tina Wolfe



Helena, Mrs. Cornelius B. Reimer, Jagueyes, Mexico, and Tina, Mrs. Almen Plett, Belize, tour the insides of their grandparents house in Waldheim, Mexico. They are looking at a baby carriage similar to the one built by their grandfather Abram A. Wolfe. The door behind them was also built by Abram A. Wolfe. Photo courtesy of Tina Wolfe Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.

Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize.

**Sources:**

Tina Wolfe Plett, Spanish Lookout, Belize, Recollections, March 21, 2000, unpublished, 4 pages.

Sara Wolfe Penner, Abbotsford, B.C., "Recollections, unpublished, 2 pages.

Jakob W. Klassen, Blue Creek, Belize, "Recollections," March 5, 2000, unpublished, 3 pages.

## A Child's Story

by Peter D. Zacharias

It happened some 50 years ago, perhaps in the Fall of 1949. My two sisters, my brother and I were playing upstairs by kerosene lamplight at our farmhouse some 1 1/2 miles northwest of Osterwick near Winkler, Manitoba. We ranged in age from 3 to 13 - I was the 13 year-old. Our parents, David and Laura Zacharias, were hosting special guests downstairs - relatives all the way from Neuanlage, north of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

Such a visit was of great family significance. One could feel the importance of the occasion in the very walls of the old house.

But in one sense the visit was not ours - that is, not the children's. Ours was to play upstairs and not too loudly while the sound of lively talk and laughter emanated from the Grootte Schtowe downstairs. Soon we were absorbed in a world of our own.

Then it happened.

Footsteps - no mistake! On the stairway! Not our parents' footsteps - those we recognized. Our eyes and ears were glued to the head of the stairway.

And there he was! None other than Rev. Peter Neudorf, Dad's first cousin, Old Colony minister from Saskatchewan. Ah, he had come to visit the children. Our beating hearts were calmed by a kind face and a reassuring voice. And by a man interested in the affairs of children. Yes, he had come to visit us.

Even though now shrouded by the mist of years, an enduring memory was created that evening.

Note: Peter Neudorf was born on April 28, 1904. He married Katharina Loewen. He was chosen as a minister by the Old Colony Church in the Hague-Osler settlement north of Saskatoon. Rev. Peter Neudorf went to his eternal home on November 29, 1955. May his memory remain a blessing to many.

## OK-KG Connections

Over the years a number of Kleine Gemeinde/Old Kolony interactions took place reflecting the close theological and historical resonance between the two Gemeinden.

Johann W. Dueck (1865-1932), Rosenort, Manitoba, makes reference to ministerial visits to Rosenort, including preaching at a KG worship service, by Old Kolony leaders:

"August 6, 1911: "There were two couples from the Old Kolony church here, and one of the men Julius Loewen, had a very good sermon on mercy and charity. They stayed also for the brotherhood meeting which concerned..... We visited with the two Old Kolony ministers at David Friesens Sr., who is related to them (one is a Friesen). I had a very blessed discussion with Julius Loewen."

July 7, 1912: "There were also guests in church--Peter P. Friesens and a Mrs. Wall from the Old Kolony. Mr. Friesen and his brother-in-law David K. Friesen from here were my guests in the evening. He also owns a bookstore and wanted to know where I had always ordered my Bibles. The Old Kolony people cling firmly to old traditions and do not accept the newly revised Bibles for use in their schools. Friesen claimed that the meaning has been changed. I tried to convince him otherwise since I believed that God would not permit His Word to be drastically changed. To this he quoted...."

David K. Friesen was a brother to Rev. Johann K. Friesen, Rosenort.

From *Johann W. Dueck: Prairie Pioneer*, page 119 and 135.

Two further incidents are recorded in the ministerial journal of KG Aeltester Peter R. Dueck (1862-1919), Steinbach, Manitoba:

July 20, 1917: "...I and Johann K. Friesen [Rosenort] drove to Winkler to the Old Kolony Aeltester Johann Friesen, Neuenburg and returned on July 21."

February 23, 1918: "Ohm Johann K. Friesen [Rosenort] came here [Steinbach] in the evening with the Old Kolony Aeltester Johann Friesen and deacon Abraham Friesen, Neuenburg.

February 24, 1918: "...[We] also asked the brethren for advice whether we wished to allow this Aeltester [Johann Friesen, Neuenburg] to teach [preach]. Subsequently worship services were held in the evening and this Aeltester did teach."

As recorded by Johann W. Dueck (1865-1932), Rosenort, Manitoba, an immigration meeting was held in Altona, Manitoba, April 11, 1922, where H. H. Ewert and A. R. Friesen, a delegate from Russia spoke.

"...Next arose a very important question: where to leave the Mennonites [the proposed immigrants from Russia] once they are here? Mr. Ewert suggested that we Mennonites should all mortgage our properties and buy the lands of the Old Kolony Mennonites where 600 quarters are to be sold for three million dollars, implements, and buildings included. This suggestion was rejected however, indicating that he was on unfamiliar ground. This could turn out so that they and we could go bankrupt."

April 20, 1922: "In the *Nordwesten* a correspondent by the name of A. Wolfe living in Chihuahua, Mexico, writes something worthwhile and I am going to paste it into my scrap album."

May 20, 1922: "The Old Kolony Mennonites are still persistent in their emigration, next week a large number of them will leave for Mexico. They are now selling their land, seed and everything for \$20 dollars per acre."

From *Johann W. Dueck: Prairie Pioneer*, page 191-2, 195 and 200.

# 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 call the editor at 1-204-326-6454/ e-mail delplett@mb.sympatico.ca. 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 really appreciate any and all assistance with corrections and clarifications as this is critical to the process of documenting our history.

- 1) Box 555, Niverville  
Manitoba, R0A 1E0  
HSHS;

In the last *Preservings*, No. 15, page 162, there is a picture of couple with the names Wilhelm Giesbrecht (1843-1924) and Elisabeth Lempke (1844-1910). I



Franz Sawatzky (1842-1918) and his wife Helena Sawatzky (1840-1916), BGB C15. Photos of Franz and Helena Sawatzky are courtesy of Esther Giesbrecht, Niverville, Manitoba.

think the names and dates are incorrect. They are my great-great-grandparents Franz Sawatzky (1842-1918) and his wife Helena Sawatzky (1840-1916), BGB C15. They were also first cousins, see Henry Schapansky, "The Bergthaler Sawatzkys," *Preservings*, No. 9, Part Two, pages 14-6. Franz and Helena Sawatzky lived in Reichenbach, East Reserve. They later moved to Reinland (Niverville area) to live with their daughter Margaret and husband Aron Schultz. When they passed away they were buried in the garden as was the custom in those days. This cemetery is beside the P.T.H. 52 Highway. Sincerely, "Esther Hiebert Giesbrecht"

- 2) Box 2474, Steinbach,  
Manitoba  
July 6,2000

Re: *Preservings*, No. 16 – June 2000, the article on Baratow-Schlachten – 1918 page 91, story sent in by Jac Nikkel, RR #1, Ste. Anne, Manitoba, author

unknown?

I, Agnes Ketler, am the author.

Jac Nikkel and I are third cousins. Our great-grandfathers were brothers. Cornelius Ketler lived in Steinfeld and Heinrich Ketler lived in Grünfeld, Baratow-Schlachten, Imperial Russia.

The names in this story came from our neighbour, Jacob J. Martens. I corresponded with him until his death in 1978 in Paraguay. He sent me his diaries before he died and I translated them.

I'll lend the manuscript to you to read if you're interested but I cannot verify anything since we lived in Canada and he spent many years in the Siberian slave labour camps. Jakob J. Martens also mentioned that Schönwiese teacher A. A. Vogt took his pupils on a train trip to St. Petersburg in 1914. The trip was a reward for high marks (Jakob Martens, *So wie es war*, page 58). Teacher Vogt (later



Jakob Martens (1897-1978), born in Grünfeld, Schlachten-Baratow, Imperial Russia and died in Filedelphia, Paraguay. Photo courtesy of Jakob J. Martens, *Ein langer Weg in die Freiheit* (Filadelphia, 2000), title page.

133 pages. These memoirs with some additional sections added for the first time were again published in Filedelphia, Paraguay in 2000 under the title *Ein langer Weg in die Freiheit: Jakob J. Martens, Gefangener der UdSSR* (Ascuncion-Filadelphia, 2000), 360 pages, see *Der Bote*, July 12, 2000, page 30, for a book review.

- 3) 13-27th Ave., S.E.  
Minneapolis, Mn 55414-3101  
August 23, 2000

Editor;  
RE: Cornelius E. Reimer (1872-1942), article, *Preservings*, No. 16, pages 94-96.

Enclosed is a copy of the correct photo of my grandmother...[Mrs. Cornelius E. Reimer, nee Helena D. Reimer (1884-1937)]."

Best Regards, "Ed Brandt"



Mrs. Cornelius E. Reimer, nee Helena D. Reimer (1884-1937), daughter of large-scale farmer Klaas P. Reimer (1864-1937), Blumenort, Manitoba. The lady identified as Mrs. Cornelius E. Reimer in the article was his second wife. Photo courtesy of Ed Brandt, Minneapolis, Mn.

Steinbach, Manitoba) got the students started writing diaries which Jacob Martens continued all the rest of his life.

Mr. Jul. Block knew all our relatives and helped me understand genealogy.

I have our trip to Canada in 1923 written up. I'll lend it to you if you want to read it but I don't want to re-write anything. I'm simply too old to start again.

Yours, "Agnes Ketler"

**Editor's Note:** Again we appreciate these types of corrections and supplementary information arising out of articles published. Interested readers with roots in the Baratow-Schlachten Colonies are encouraged to read the community history by John Friesen, *Against the Wind*. The memoirs of Jakob J. Martens were published in 1961 by siblings Katharina, Mrs. John Froese, Niverville, and Gerhard Martens, Kildonan, Winnipeg, under the title, *So wie es war: Erinnerungen eines Verbannter*,

4) Re: *Preservings*, No. 16, June 2000, pages 30-37.

The delegate and teacher Bernhard Toews (1863-1927), Weidefeld, W.R., was related to Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905), Rosengart, W.R., his mother being a first cousin to Wiebe's mother.

Bernhard's mother Anna Wiebe (1822-1904), who married Jakob Toews and later Johann Bergmann, Reinland, W.R., was the daughter of Peter Wiebe (1795-1865) and Gertrude Wall (1800-30). Peter was the son of Jakob Wiebe (1760-1804) whose son Bernhard Wiebe (1796-1852) was the father of Aeltester Johann Wiebe, see P. Zacharias, "Aeltester Johann Wiebe," in *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 3-8.

This information is from extracts regarding the Kroecker family of the Chortitza Gemeindebuch, Imperial Russia, from Bernhard Neufeld, Winnipeg, and courtesy of Mennonite Genealogy Inc., Box 393, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 2H6. (654) Folio 6.

Regards, "Bruce Wiebe" R.R.1, Box 79, Winkler, Manitoba, R6W 4A1.

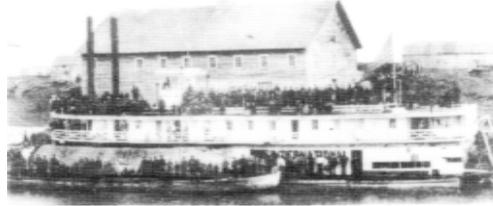


*Bernhard Toews (1862-1927), Sommerfelder teacher and delegate, Weidefeld, W.R. His mother nee Anna Wiebe (1822-1904) was a cousin to Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905). Photo courtesy of Pres., No. 16, page 30. It was very typical that conservative Mennonite leaders came from the upper middle class in Russian Mennonite society.*

### 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. Unfortunately we do not have the resources to keep track of each reader's account and to send out invoices. We rely completely on the honour system. Please send in your \$20.00 annual fee on a regular basis or else simply send it when you get the next issue using the handy blue insert form.

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# Annual Meeting- Jan. 20, 2001

## Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) and Banquet of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society.

DATE: Saturday, January 20, 2001

PLACE: "Golden Friendship Centre", 118 Second Ave. South, Niverville

**5:00 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.

### Banquet and Entertainment



Jack and Margaret Stott, after dinner speakers.

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

**6:30 p.m. BANQUET** - Enjoy a traditional Mennonite meal of ham, farmer sausage, Verenike, fried potatoes.

**AFTER DINNER SPEAKERS** - Margaret and Jack Stott reminisce about the early English, Jewish and German pioneers of the Niverville district.

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER** - Keynote address (read by Ernest Braun) "William Hespeler, Ethnicity Employed," by Dr. Angelika Sauer, former Chair German Studies, University of Winnipeg, from *Journal Mennonite Studies*, No. 18, pages 82-94.

**9:00 ENTERTAINMENT** - Anne Funk's English drama, "This Veil of Tears," with veteran actors Hilde Toews, Bill Krahn and Ed Esau.



William Hespeler (1830-1921), Canadian immigration agent and founder of Niverville. Photo courtesy of Altona, page 10.



Grunthal playwright Anne Funk and actor Hilde Toews in a scene from the English drama, "This Veil of Tears," the featured entertainment at the HSHS A.G.M. January 20, 2001.

## Tickets \$20.00

Come out, meet your friends, and enjoy a fabulous evening. Tickets available from HSHS board members Orlando Hiebert 388-4195, Ernest Braun 388-6146, and D. Plett 326-6454

**BOOK EARLY - SEATING IS LIMITED TO 150 PLACES**

# President's Report

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

The year 2000 is almost over. It will hold different memories for each of us. For those in agriculture who make their living off the land it will be a year we would like to forget but can't.

One event which I think caught the attention of a lot of people, Mennonite and non-Mennonite was the tragic fire in the windmill at the Mennonite Heritage Village.

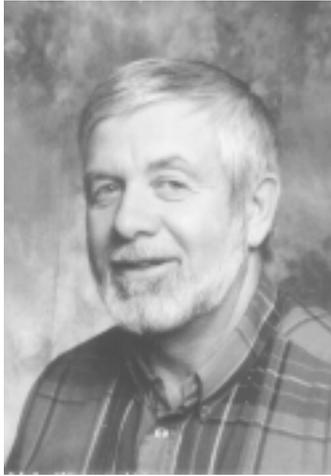
The reaction I heard expressed was one of loss—even that it was a senseless loss. Who could be deprived enough to destroy such a cultural icon and symbol that had graced the skyline of Steinbach for so many years? But we will move on and rebuild this monument to our pioneer forefathers.

At the time of this fire I was reminded of another windmill that was being destroyed only this one more slowly. It is at the end of the village of Alexanderkrone in what we know as the Molotschna region, Ukraine.

For us here in southeastern Manitoba the windmill at the Mennonite Heritage Village was a symbol of our heritage and of earlier times. But for the inhabitants of this Ukrainian village, the mill at Alexanderkrone is a symbol of an earlier time and another people.

The worsening of their economic circumstances has driven them to slowly tear down this structure in order to scavenge the bricks and other building materials from it.

This mill does have its constituency because the old Ukrainian woman sitting beside me



Orlando Hiebert, HSHS President.

who was born of Mennonite parents watches for cars that drive by and then stop at the mill. She then comes to the bench in front of her yard and hopes that these Mennonite pilgrims will stop in front of her house and come to talk to her. Speaking in High German, she and I share some precious moments as she poured out her heart to me. She is poor and she is lonely.

Having decided to step down as President of HSHS this will be my last President's Report. I would like to thank you for your inter-

est, kind words and encouragements. The work of the Society has gone forward because of committed board members, and people who took the time to research and write for our News Magazine, others got involved in activities and because of community leaders with a vision who lent us a hand.

It has been a pleasure to work with my fellow board members and an honour to represent the Society at various events over the last five years. I will cherish the many contacts I have made in my time as President. I would also like to express special thanks to Delbert Plett, for the countless hours he spends as editor of *Preservings*, and for his assistance and all the information he has directed my way and for his continuing personal friendship.

The new and very capable president is Ralph Friesen of Winnipeg, formerly of Steinbach. I am also happy to announce that Irene Kroeker of Steinbach is now Vice-president and Ernest Braun of Tourond is our new secretary. Delbert is treasurer and editor. I have every confidence in the new executive of H.S.H.S. and I wish them well.



Orlando Hiebert, HSHS President visits Mrs. Pankratz in Alexanderkrone, in the former Molotschna Colony, Ukraine, pictured here with her granddaughter and granddaughter's husband, April 2000. Mrs. Pankratz lives just down the street from the Alexanderkrone windmill which is deteriorating rapidly, and which may soon disappear.



April 2000. Orlando Hiebert inspects the Alexanderkrone windmill, an important icon of Mennonite culture in the Ukraine. Alexanderkrone was once the home of Johann Toews (1826-95), later of Grünfeld, E.R., Manitoba, whose son Johann "Cluck'ke" Toews later lived in Greenland, Manitoba, see Articles Section, pages 86-90.

# Editorial

By Delbert F. Plett Q.C., Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0.  
(e-mail delplett@mb.sympatico.ca). Web Sites: www.mts.net/~delplett and hshs.mb.ca - phone 1(204)326-6454.

## Introduction.

From my earliest childhood and youth, I have always been a keen observer of religious culture and practice. My upbringing was such that I was exposed to both the exuberant enthusiasm of Pentecostalism and the sober realism of conservative Mennonite faith.

From some perspectives Pentecostalism is an attractive religious culture. It's emotion-inducing rituals appear to warm the soul, and the lively physical interactions during worship services may well replace the Saturday night barn dances once practised by conservative Mennonites--although they cannot be compared in the sense that they are not family focused as the barn dances were.

Pentecostalism as a religious culture can claim considerable success in consolidating its share of the North American religious market place. The movement has gone international with adherents in most countries. There are a certain percentage of human beings who crave the emotive manifestations intrinsic to this religious culture.

In reality, the emotional excesses and focus--the very thing which draws many, particularly young people--is the dark underbelly of Pentecostal religious culture, as it becomes the crutch whereby wholesome emotional development is stunted and the real problems of initiates are suppressed.

It is important, therefore, for conservative Mennonites to be familiar with Pentecostalism and its teachings as well as some of its less

wholesome characteristics.

Too many conservative Mennonite young people are being seduced away from genuine Gospel-centric faith because of lack of information about other religious cultures and their rites and rituals. Once they are won over they are often lost for good as predator denominations quickly indoctrinate new adherents and turn them against their family networks and traditional faith communities.

## Pentecostalism.

Pentecostalism is an important sub-specie of Protestant Fundamentalism. It came out of American Revivalism around 1900 when certain camp ministers adopted the practice of tongue worship and added it to the religious rites of American Revivalism.

The ritual of speaking in tongues is referred to within the Pentecostal movement as "the second baptism of tongues". The concept originated with the teaching of a second

"Losing oneself in religious ecstasy through such means as speaking in tongues appears to be a way of expressing a powerful possibly joyful emotion. And maybe it is. But I think that ironically it is also a way of *escaping* one's true emotions, especially difficult ones like sadness and shame." Ralph Friesen, Graduate Student, Interfaith Marriage and Family Therapy Program, Winnipeg. December 1, 2000.

experience developed during the Holiness Movement with John Wesley (1703-91), holding "...the belief in a second experience called sanctification whereby a person became sinless."

This occurred during the Great Awakening in England when the necessity of a radical dramatic conversion experience was also taught for the first time in history.

The rite of speaking in tongues essentially involves the ability to rattle off a staccato of sounds, typically induced by a myriad of subtle and overt psycho-centric worship rituals and suggestive procedures. Those who do not understand that these characteristics are induced as psychosomatic emotive responses, can find attending such ceremonies a rather overwhelming and even frightening experience.

## Biblical Exegesis.

Biblical exegesis in the Protestant Reformation and later in Protestant Fundamentalism has never been characterized by a great deal of logic, consistency or intellectual elevation. The tradition of plucking verses out of context and then interpreting the rest of the Bible to suit has a proud record traceable all the way back to John Calvin (1509-64) in the Reformation. Most Protestants hold to a "flat Bible" approach, whereby all parts of the Bible have equal authority so that it can be understood as "a series of unrelated propositions and timeless allegories".

Under Darby and Scofield this methodol-



*Parade showing typical manifestations of Pentecostal religious culture. The marchers are waving sheaves of grain presumably reminiscent of ancient Hebrew culture as depicted in Hollywood movies such as "Ben Hur" or "The Robe". The young women proudly march, dance and sing like cheer leaders displaying the superiority of their religious culture.*

ogy degenerated into what could be described as the “ping-pong” interpretation. Namely, pick a verse out of one of the obscure Old Testament Prophetic books to establish a defining paradigm and then let it bounce through the Bible, plucking verses which resonate with that artificially created regime. Any religious culture which can successfully excise the Gospels from its teachings (postponing same to a future age) and actually convince itself of the truth of such science-fiction scenarios, and then with a straight face refer to same as “literal inerrancy”, should have little difficulty resonating with such a deception.

The Biblical foundation for “speaking in tongues,” the signature manifestation of Pentecostalism, is no exception. The practice is justified by Acts, chapter 2, verse 4, which described the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. But this verse is essentially descriptive and not prescriptive, namely, it does not say that the followers of Christ are to behave in the manner described.

In his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul refers to the pagan practice of tongue worship which had been adopted by the Corinthian church. In I Corinthians 14:1-19, Paul discouraged the practice, concluding that five words spoken intelligently are much better than 10,000 words spoken in tongue worship.

Nonetheless, Pentecostals have adopted tongue speaking as a categorical requirement for all Christians and have developed a myriad of legalistic rites and rituals to foster and promote it. Ironically, the church at Corinth was



A scene from Pentecostal religious culture as manifested by a troupe in a community parade. The marchers parade down the street, proudly displaying banners with Hebraic slogans, which they propagate as part of their religious rites and rituals. Marching groups have been successfully used by many social and political movements to display proactive behaviour, presumably intended to intimidate competitors.

#### Pentecostal Biblicism

“I dearly love all Pentecostals and I thank the Lord for whatever God can do through them. However, they have not understood the Scriptures with respect to the Holy Spirit and His manifestations.”

“It has been proven over and over again that the claims of Pentecostals regarding miracle healing are not authenticated.” Dr. Archie Penner, Kola, Manitoba, Dec 1, 2000.

#### Pagan Tongue Worshippers

“In many societies states of ‘possession’ occur either among ordinary people or priests, shamans, etc. During such states, the person possessed or in a trance may speak using what appears to be another language which is attributed to spirits or other sacred beings who use the person possessed as a medium to convey a message. There are also “special” languages known only to priests or experts (think of Latin, for instance, or Church Slavonic and Sanskrit). There are also special ritual languages known only to initiates. An interesting example of this is found among the Aborigines of Central Australia, where the sacred language consists of a reversal of normal words and phrases.” Dr. James Urry, Cultural Anthropologist, University of Wellington, New Zealand. November 30, 2000.

a community whose excesses have in many ways been replicated by the modern-day Charismatic movement.

Pentecostals seemingly never bother to read the latter part of Acts, chapter 2, verse 44, which states, “And all that believed were together, and had all things in common...” This was the fulfilment of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, namely, community of property as practised by the Gemeinde at Jerusalem. The teaching marks the Hutterian Brethren as the only true Pentecostals and the only ones who can rightfully claim that name as characterizing their religious faith.

Conservatives Mennonites incorporated Acts Chapter 2, verse 44, in their theology as the teaching of “Community of Sharing”, see *Saints and Sinners*, pages 267-270.

#### For Further Reading:

George E. Gardiner, *The Corinthian Catastrophe* (Kregal Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1974), 62 pages.

Rev. Alfred H. Pohl, *17 Reasons why I left the Tongues Movement* (Box 643, ‘Station A’, Kelowna, B. C., V1Y 7P2, 1982), 118 pages.

#### Religious Rituals.

Pentecostals are known for their exuberant religious rites and cheesy worship rituals. In some of their assemblies, hypnotized followers dance and shout or roll on the floor in Vodoodoo trances, spouting gibberish.

Drums, twanging guitars and dancing feature prominently in these ceremonies. Presumably adherents of this religious culture believe they will get to heaven if only they can shout loud enough and agitate their limbs

violently enough.

Single stanza songs are repeated endlessly to establish the degree of mind control (zombieism) necessary for people to forsake their senses. Anyone not already suffering from emotional disorder will be sure to become dysfunctional or addicted to these rituals after repeated exposure.

Also noteworthy is the amount of Pre-Christian culture which some Pentecostals are adopting as motifs and structures for their religious ceremonies. This does not reflect a clear understanding that Jesus offered mankind a new covenant superceding the old. The ambiguity results from the dispensationalist teachings of Darby and Scofield who proclaimed that the Gospels were only to be applicable in some mythical future 1000-year reign.

Accordingly Pentecostals look to ancient Hebraic and Roman customs (presumably as portrayed by Hollywood in movies such as “Ben Hur” and “The Robe”) for motifs in developing the new rites and rituals necessary to feed the sensual urges as the threshold of the experiential envelope of worshippers is pushed out ever further.

The latest craze is the “laughing disease” where adherents lie in the floor in a zombie-like state, shaking with uncontrollable laughter. These ceremonies are comparable to the “raves” of popular culture and actually resemble the heathen festivities of ancient Rome and Greece.

What a stark contrast to the reverent *a cappella* singing of psalms and the earnest admonition and sober teaching of the early Christians, who met quietly in caves, barns

and forest glades, seeking to escape persecution and oppression.

### Aggression.

Pentecostals share the belief of other American Evangelicals that **THEY** are **THE** chosen people and that they have a divine destiny to rule the world. This is currently impacting in the civil sphere where Protestant Fundamentalists are now engaged in a mighty battle to establish dominance over the political process.

A key trademark of Pentecostalism is the claim that all other Christians who have not successfully completed their legalistic steps or plan of salvation are unsaved heathen. They even condemn their fellow Evangelicals as unsaved, frantically proselytizing amongst them. Presumably there is no hope at all for conservative Mennonites, Orthodox and Catholic Christians.

These beliefs result in extremely aggressive predator conduct. Every opportunity is sought out to display their rites and rituals.

Critics point out that genuine faith usually speaks for itself and that high levels of self-aggrandizement, in fact, often raise questions about the genuineness of such faith. Do these people actually believe what they profess? Do they constantly repeat their mantras as a psycho-centric strategy to convince themselves?

Long-time Kleine Gemeinde Aeltester, Peter Toews (1841-1922), Grünfeld, E.R., Manitoba, once wrote, "When deeds are speaking, words fall silent."

### Parade.

Over the past years, spectators have witnessed an interesting display of Pentecostal religious culture as they enjoyed the Pioneer Days Parade, kicking off the annual August 1 long-weekend in Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada.

A group in the parade presented a curious cobbling together of football cheerleaders, a dose of ancient Greek and Roman motifs, a scent of Canadian Nationalism, topped off with signs proclaiming "JEHOVAH MKADDESH."

Marching in military formation, one of the groups was led by a colour party displaying a banner with the Hebrew words, "JEHOVAH JIREH", symbolising the Pre-Christian motifs which this religious culture cherishes.

The colour party was followed by a sound truck with loudspeakers blaring out repetitive and sometimes irritating music. Presumably the repetition of single stanza lyrics 20 and 30 times over is supposed to help in establishing mind control over initiates, a process known in psychotherapy as "positive cognitive conditioning".

The *piece de resistance* was a troupe of women, marching in formation, dancing (swaying) to the beat of the drums.

### Whipping.

A related incident occurred in Fort McMurray, Alberta, where a reenactment of Jesus' crucifixion during a Canada Day Parade upset at least six local residents who complained to city hall about the violent portrayal. One man was quoted, "We went to see fire trucks, not someone being tortured on the cross."

Pastor Glen Forsberg of the Gospel Assembly said his church's portrayal was "intended to explain the attainment of peace through the suffering of Jesus," from *Christianweek*, July 25, 2000.

The point, evidently, is to demonstrate to spectators the superiority of Pentecostalism, notwithstanding more church splits than a fractured iceberg.

These types of entries certainly add a tacky, cheesy flavour to any parade and make many spectators feel uncomfortable.

### Corruption.

Although Pentecostals may claim to be the only true Christians, there is probably no other religious culture on earth so marked by corruption and scandal. Some 10 years ago the sexual exploits of Evangelist Jim Bakker and the financial corruption of his "Praise the Lord Club" (not to mention the tacky cosmetics of Tammy Faye), shocked his followers.

Recently another large-scale Evangelical TV ministry has come under fire. According to a special report by James Polk, CNN, a Pentecostal-type ministry "Greater Minis-

tries" may have received as much as \$500,000,000.00 in donations from gullible believers of which \$100-250,000,000.00 may be unaccounted for.

The ministry headed by evangelist Gerald Paine preaches financial success, a theology relatively common in modern Evangelical circles.

One individual was induced to mortgage his home and business for \$40,000.00. Travelling evangelists sent on the road to meet with potential contributors supposedly received five per cent for travel expenses.

Ministry leaders invested money looking for gold and diamonds, preaching that you "must invest money to make money." They bragged to their followers that they had found billions of dollars worth of gold in African countries such as Liberia.

For some years the ministry paid interest to its investors/contributors using new donations. Regulators have determined that this was basically a pyramid scheme also known as a "Ponzie Scheme".

The report stated that Evangelist Gerald Paine was indicted for conspiracy in 1999. The remaining church assets were seized by U. S. Federal Court in 2000.

### Source:

James Polk, "Breach of Faith," CNN-Time report, aired August 6, 2000.

Wally Kroeker, "Pushover for Ponzie," in *M.B. Herald*, August 11, 2000, page 13.

## Humour is the spice of life.

A man dies and goes to heaven. He is met at the Pearly Gates by St. Peter who takes him on an orientation tour.

They go past a large hall, where a large group of children are congregated around a saintly looking woman. The man inquires as to what's going on.

"Oh," replies St. Peter, "that's Mother Theresa with some of the children she saved from starvation."

The two proceeded further down the endless corridor. They come past another large hall from which was emanating the most beautiful music, men singing in harmony, a sorrowful Slavic lament.

"Oh," explained St. Peter, "Those are Orthodox priests who had been imprisoned in the Soviet Gulag, cruelly tortured to death for their faith. They are rejoicing for their deliverance."

The two men proceed further. They come past another large hall where clusters of dark clad men, women with bonnets, and sparkling children were happily clustered around tables loaded with food.

"Oh," explained St. Peter. "Those are the Mexican Mennonites and Orthodox Jews from New York enjoying a potluck supper. Jesus himself likes to spend time here as these people have learned about true humility and persecution."

Interesting place, the new arrival thought to himself.

Presently they come past another large hall, resounding with the sounds of banging drums and amplified guitars. People were swaying and dancing to the music as if in a trance, others rolling on the floor in hysterical laughter. At the front of the hall a furious looking man was screaming in a hypnotic staccato, "Secret rapture, secret rapture".

St. Peter nudged his guest, crossing his lips with his finger, motioning for him to remain silent as they slipped past the door.

After they has gone by, the new arrival was curious what this was all about.

"Oh," replied St. Peter, "Those are the Evangelicals, they still think they're going to heaven yet some day."

### Snake Handlers.

Sometimes the people at the fringes of a particular religious culture speak volumes about the heart of its main stream. This is also the case with the so-called Religious Right, whose snake handlers, laughing Pentecostals, militant Orangemen, murdering anti-abortionists, fanatical creationists, and militia survivalists actually act out some of the harsh rhetoric and polemics emanating from the Gurus at the core of the movement.

August 7, 2000, "City Confidential" aired a program on the A. & E. T.V. network, "The snake handling Pentecostals of Sand Mountain, Alabama."

The City of Scottsboro is situated in north-eastern Alabama between the poverty-stricken "hills people" of the Appalachian Mountains and the booming economy of the "new" south with its strip-malls and franchising economy.

The religious conservatism of residents of the City is starkly contrasted with the energetic zeal of the hills people, particularly the snake handlers of nearby Sand Mountain.

The story centers on 18-year-old Glen Summerfeld who in 1962 was convicted of second degree burglary. In 1972 Glen "found the Lord."

According to the City Confidential report, "For Glen getting right with the Lord meant taking up snake handling."

Snake handlers are a radical branch of the Pentecostal movement. The Biblical justification for snake handling is Mark 16, 18, "They shall take up serpents."

Glen Summerfeld quickly built a substantial following. In 1980 he started his own church, "The Church of Jesus, with Signs Following." In 1991 Rev. Glen's congregation relocated their

worship services to downtown Scottsboro, to the embarrassment of its more restrained Baptist congregations.

In the meantime Glen had met and married young Darlene. She became his co-worker and a highly revered snake handler.

The relationship became unholy when the marriage unravelled.

One night Glen got drunk. It was alleged he forced Darlene to put her hand into a box containing their largest and meanest snake. She was severely bitten and poisoned. Darlene almost died.

The next day, Glen was charged with attempted murder. The bizarre culture of the snake-handling Pentecostals was now exposed in open court by a ravenous national media. Glen was found guilty and sentenced to 99 years. Although the "Church of Jesus, with Signs Following" disintegrated, his followers shunned Darlene.

## Blue Ribbon Faith



**Blue Ribbon Faith.** The blue ribbons around the neck and wrists of departed saints signified that the commandments of Christ were inscribed in their hearts, Numbers 15: 37-40. This is illustrated in the funeral of Gerhard Hoepfner (1846-1916), who settled in Waldheim, W.R., Manitoba, in 1876, a charter member of the Old Kolony Mennonite Church. According to ancient custom he was buried with blue ribbons around his neck and wrists. Several years ago, a gravel contractor dug up the graveyard of the village of Schönfeld, E.R., just east of Kleefeld, Manitoba, home of the wealthy Groening family, Carillon News, May 3, 1995, page 1A, and May 31, 1995, page 18A. RCMP officers and anthropologists were puzzled by the ribbons around the necks of the skeletons. Conservative Mennonites were traditionally buried in a white shroud with a blue ribbon around their neck. The white shroud was easy. It was the adornment of the saints, symbolizing purity, the bride prepared to meet her bridegroom in eternity, Matthew 22:1-14. But what about the blue ribbons? The answer came recently while re-reading J. C. Wenger's Separated Unto God, page 16. In a discussion of Old Testament teaching on the topic, Wenger referred to Numbers 15, 37-40: "...put upon the fringe of each border a chord of blue; ...that ye may remember and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God." This allegory prefigured the New Testament teaching that the words of Jesus would be inscribed in the hearts of His followers. It is amazing how closely much of conservative Mennonite religious culture was based upon and articulated by the teachings of the Gospels. Gerhard Hoepfner was a grandson of Delegate Jakob Hoepfner (1748-1826), Insel Chortitza, who led the Mennonites to Imperial Russia in 1788 and Johann Warkentin (1760-1825), Blumenort, Molotschna, Imperial Russia, making him a distant relative of American folk singer John Denver (1943-97), see Dynasties, page 690. Photo courtesy of Heppners' in Prussia, Russia and America, page 204.

# Guest Essay:

## Proselytizing in Ukraine: Positive or Negative?

*“Proselytizing in Ukraine: Positive or Negative?”*, by Tatiana Riazantseva, Ph.D., T. Shevchenko Institute of Literature, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kiev, Ukraine. *Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth, (Romans 14:22).*

### Introduction.

It's always hard to write on religious matters for the fear of hurting somebody's feelings. But I think that some inside commentary on the present situation with the so-called “new confessions” or “non-traditional” Christian churches, introduced to Ukrainian believers by U.S., German and other foreign missionaries, would be of a certain interest for the readers of “Preservings”.

The first thing to say about the religious life in Ukraine is that it is manifold and vigorous. The freedom of conscience is guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine (Chapter II, article 35)—and this time not only on paper as it had been during the Soviet period. For many people, old and young, the *perestroika* and the further development towards democracy in the independent Ukraine has become a period of real spiritual renaissance.

The growing interest, care and respect for religion became the modern reality and even the matter of fashion. The regular visits to church and proper observation of the popular traditions which used to be the objects of scorn during the atheistic Soviet era now are regarded as the tokens of progress and necessity of the modern Ukrainian life.

Looking for the road to salvation and the inner evolution of their own, our people turn not only to the traditional Orthodox, Roman Catholic or Greek Catholic Christianity as their forefathers did, but welcome every new way of worshipping which they consider to speak more directly to their hearts.

According to the yearly statistic account provided by the State Board for Religious Affairs, at the beginning of 1999 there were more than 20309 active communities, 232 monasteries, 94 religious schools (with more than 13078 students), 19312 priests (578 out of them foreigners), about 6400 Sunday schools, 13051 active temples and 1850 temples still in construction.

Special attention is currently being paid to the restoration of churches and cathedrals ruined during the Soviet period. Thus in Kiev alone—the capital of Ukraine—at least two Orthodox temples are fully resurrected in their historical forms by now, one is under the reconstruction and there are plans to rebuild at least two more.

### “New” Religions.

The foundation of the new communities is also very much in progress. “New” seems to me the best word to describe them in many ways, for they represent mainly non-traditional versions of Christianity for Ukraine. They suggest some models of worshipping which look closely to the present-day life, which are led by “progressive” foreigners and are largely attended by the youth.

All that at first sight seems bright, original, attractive, unusual, and yes, NEW—like a first rate show promising joy, happiness and pleasant surprises. Exactly the thing which our people after some 70 years of atheism and anti-religious propaganda could never have expected from any religious activity!

All things bright and new attract the young generation first. Still the foreign proselytizers found some rather promising audiences in the senior citizens of Ukraine as well. This phenomenon could be easily understood if we take into consideration the fact that both the young and the old need care, attention and understanding which they often lack in the present day Ukrainian reality. The young and middle-aged people sometimes are toiling too hard for the family's daily bread to care for their children's and/or elder parents' spiritual needs. This is usually explained by the serious material problems which our society suffers on its way to developing a market economy, but it couldn't be ever quite excused.

And both the young and the old need ideals which now just can not be found, because of the special nature of time we live in; the time of changes when many (not to say all) “main directions” have been altered, the old Soviet era values are gone while the new aims and ideals are still being developed.



*Dr. Tatiana Riazantseva, proudly poses in front of the newly rebuilt St. Michael's Cathedral, Kyiv, June 1999. St. Michael's Golden Dome Cathedral and Monastery was built in the 12th century. It was dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, the Holy Patron of our city. It was destroyed and rebuilt several times in its history. The current restoration was completed in 1997 to 2000.*

### Religious Options.

The religion then seems the most obvious option to many. “A holy place won't stay vacant” an old proverb states. But not everybody is ready to follow the path of the Orthodox or Catholic Christianity for they seem rather bramblestrewn for the modern people, so to say, too rigid, too traditional and outdated in their views (formed during the Soviet era when getting a sample of the Bible or the Gospel was a great problem and when many historical temples were converted into barns and storehouses or in best cases became cinemas, museums or concert halls). So the people want their religion to be up-to-date: easy, understandable, possibly not very demanding and interesting.

It's not a secret that many of our people coming to the meetings with the foreign proselytizers seek not the God directly, but some escape, some entertainment, some remedy against loneliness and indifference, that is to say, they only need the brotherly love and friendly support.

This is especially true with our senior citizens, who in many cases obviously treat their “new” churches as certain clubs. Many of them, like my 85-year-old neighbour, are perfectly happy just to be able to get together somewhere once or twice a week for a common prayer, Bible reading and singing followed by the community dinner and an occasional excursion, organized by their pastor and free for the community members. The last is very important, since many of them are simply poor getting pension equal to approximately 20 USD a month.

### The Youth.

The young Ukrainian parish of the Western proselytizers looks mainly for the same. Still like in any other part of the world, the kids are eager to learn, they welcome any new experience be it the Old Testament and Gospel studies, choir singing, English classes or just making new friends.

If charity is the main form of activities provided by the Western churches for the senior citizens of Ukraine, education is their basic way with the youth (Though charity is not, of course, excluded. There are some special programs for disabled children, orphans and young delinquents, for example).

Many representatives of the U.S.A. and U.K. Protestant churches successfully combine their parish work with teaching English at different language training courses in Kiev and around the Ukraine. Some teach at universities and



*St. Sophia's Cathedral, Kyiv, dedicated to the Holy Wisdom of Our Lord. St. Sophia's Cathedral served as the heart of the nation during the times of Kievan Rus. It was completed around 1037. St. Sophia's is famous for its mosaics and frescos. Photos courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach, Manitoba, September, 2000.*

maintain different research programs. And many young people of Ukraine, attending the services of foreign proselytizers or taking the language and other courses like those above, hope this might make their way to some US or Canadian university much easier.

#### **Mennonites.**

I am especially pleased to mention the fruitful activities of the Mennonites in this sphere. The members of this community are now well known in our country, above all in their once native region of Zaporozhye, for their deeds of charity and educational efforts. (To my knowledge, there are also some Mennonite professors teaching geography, English language/literature and history in Lithuanian universities). Many schools are thankful for the humanitarian aid coming every year, brought by the participants of The Mennonite Heritage Cruises.

The local Society for the Preservation of Monuments in co-operation with the Mennonite community of Zaporozhye, largely supported by the brothers and sisters from Canada and USA, has started a big project aimed to restore the places connected with the Mennonite history in the region: temples, schools, etc. The international conference on the grounds of the Zaporozhye University, collecting Ukrainian, Russian, US, Canadian and German academicians involving Mennonite studies of all trends was considered to be one of the most interesting scientific events of the 1999.

All in all it could be said that the activities of the Mennonite communities in Ukraine demonstrate their lively interest to the country which once used to be their home. Their care to find their own roots, to restore their own history by bringing back any possible recollection or displaying every treasured possession, by examining every discovered text and making it interesting and useful for the present generation sets a good example for everybody. All these efforts finally help us, the native Ukrainians, to make the big picture of the Ukrainian history complete, adding there some important and very interesting details.

#### **The Negative.**

Much could be added about the positive aspects of the Western proselytizers activities in Ukraine. Many of them are really dedicated, sincere people, wishing to help those in need. Still, not everything is so ideal. In the Ukrainian newspapers recently a number of stories appeared informing about the negative cases within non-traditional communities like certain illegal manipulations with the real estate and other property of the community members, using the people's money for some private dealings of the leaders, even escaping with the community's money, etc.

For many Ukrainian families joining one of the couple to some "new church" often means divorce. A proselyte husband or wife might become too absorbed by their new relationships and stop paying usual attention to their



*The Golden Gate, Kyiv, was built at the beginning of the second millennium and served as the main entrance to the city. It was demolished during the Tatar invasion of 1241. The current replica was constructed in 1982.*



*An Orthodox priest leads a group of the devout to worship. Like Mennonites, Orthodox believers and particularly the clergy suffered immense persecution under 70 years of Soviet suppression of religious belief and thought. Evangelicals are currently attacking this noble Christian tradition seeking to subvert them from their faith. Presumably American tribal religion is still too obsessed with its newly founded power and too driven by ancient hatreds to enter into dialogue and Christian fellowship with the Ukrainian Orthodox and Catholic Churches.*

family or instead start trying to persuade them to follow this new way of life which leads to frustration and other problems if all such efforts fail. The proselyte children might start ignoring their parents' opinions and care, taking into consideration only their leaders' and community mates' views and instructions: this may lead as far as leaving the home and the school in some cases.

The name of the church does not play any great role here, I think. It's just a matter of a personal preference, things like that well may happen in perfectly traditional communities. What seems the most offending to many Ukrainians, religious or not, is the fact that the leaders of some Western churches coming

recently to Ukraine obviously treat this country as the one without any Christian culture of its own, or even worse, like a "new market" for their so to say "spiritual product".

But the Ukrainians were baptized as early as in 988 A.D., and even earlier at the beginning of the 1st century A.D. our land was visited by St. Andrew the Apostle, who according to the legends, made a prophecy about the foundation of the great Christian city, Kiev.

### Conclusion.

The above mentioned mistake makes me recall that nothing is new under the sun. The situations like this happened to Ukraine before. For the first time I guess it occurred in 16th century, when the so-called United Church (known now as the Greek-Catholic) was first introduced to Ukraine by Poland and the Vatican as the result of the Union of Brest. (There was much politics within those seemingly religious matters because the Ukrainian lands were then the much desired prize of the Catholic Poland and the Orthodox Russia).

In that time the emissaries of Rome were much persistent in convincing

their "ignorant Eastern brothers" that the Orthodox way of believing and worshipping hadn't been "quite right" so far and the new proselytizers "knew better" how to pray and what to believe in. Still our forefathers' spiritual leaders had found enough strength to defend their parish and to fight against the alien ideology by means of skilled polemics with their Catholic opponents as we may find in the numerous works by Lazarz Baranowicz (Archbishop of Chernihiv), Ioannikiy Haliatovskiy, Innokentiy Gizel, Ivan Vyshenskiy and many other prominent Ukrainian Orthodox writers of the period.

Thus the eastern and the central parts of Ukraine entering the Russian state remained Orthodox till nowadays. The Western Ukraine which then finally formed part of the Polish kingdom, however, became Greek Catholic and has been so from that time on. The new Christian confession had found its way to the people's hearts and souls, and became the natural part of their life and culture.

Isn't it a good test for the wise words of St. Paul quoted at the beginning of this article: *Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth*, Romans, 14:22.

Let us all find our own way to God.

## Mennonitische Post.

The *Mennonitische Post* is a German-language bi-monthly newspaper published at Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, under the auspices of Mennonite Central Committee.

*Preservings* is pleased with the amount of conservative Mennonite material the *Post* has been publishing in the last year or so. I was thrilled, for example, to see the April 20, 2000, issue with the biography of Sommerfelder Aeltester Abraham Doerksen by Jake E. Peters as well as an article on Kroeger clocks or Peter Zacharias' article on the Arrival of Mennonites in Fort Dufferin in 1875 (Sep 1/00), and E. Wiebe's, "Die Reinländer Mennonitengemeinde ist 125 Jahre Alt," (Nov. 17/00), just to name a few.

Too often in the past the *Post* has published articles written from the standpoint of Separatist-Pietist and/or American Fundamentalist or even so-called Evangelical religious cultures. Much of such material is anathema to conservative Mennonites. Some readers may interpret such articles as indicating that the editor does not understand the spiritual ethos and historical paradigm of his targeted readership.

Many so-called "progressive" Mennonites in Canada (including possibly the editor of the *Post*) are unaware of the fact that conservative Mennonites have their own genuine Gospel-centric faith and canon of devotional literature going all the way back to the Reformation and earlier to the Apostolic Church.

At other times the editor has lashed out at conservative Mennonites, such as in the editorial of July 21, 2000, when he lambasted Mexican Mennonites because one individual from that background allegedly had been involved in drug smuggling and had been charged with an offense.

If the editor would write in this manner everytime someone from M.B., E.M.M.C. or E.M.C. background allegedly did something criminal, the pages of the *Post* would have room for little else.

Such tirades by the editor raise questions in the minds of some readers as to whether these views possibly represent something more than a plain garden variety lack of understanding. It is certainly understandable that some conservative

Mennonites in Latin America find it difficult to support the *Post* because of this editorial outlook.

In his editorial of September 1, 2000, the editor complains that if the *Post* was a private business it would have been closed years ago because the subscriptions do not cover the costs, implying that conservatives are so inferior, they have to be subsidized. Perhaps the editor should also consider that in a private business every effort would be made to understand the ethos and culture of the customers so as to serve them better. Any manager in a private business denigrating his customers would be promptly terminated.

Perhaps the editor should also look around and note that no newspapers or magazines can make a profit from subscriptions alone. Newspapers survive only by selling advertising. e.g. If the content of *Die Post* would resonate with the beliefs of conservative Mennonites, even the Mexican businesses in Cuauhtemoc would surely advertise in it to reach their business clientele.

In fact, the editor specifically makes the point that the *Post* is subsidized by MCC. But, when I look around at the annual MCC relief sale in Morris, I see mainly conservative Mennonites who support these ventures. Perhaps the editor should also recognize the immense contribution MCC receives from this constituency instead of constantly complaining about lack of support.

Perhaps the money raised at Morris and numerous other auction sales should all be cycled back into building up the conservative community instead of being returned to MCC headquarters to fund the more *avant garde* programs and projects of liberal Mennonites. To add insult to injury, in the past some of these funds have been used to hire Rudnerweiders as mental health workers and community resource personal, giving them the aura of caregiver as a platform from which to proselytize among conservative Mennonites.

The problem already alluded to is an apparent lack of clarity in the intended function of the *Post*.

Is it to be an adjunct for the Alphabet churches (E.M.M.C., E.M.C., and M.B.) in their drive to expand denominational territories in the south?

Is it to be an agent of Canadian Mennonites wishing to denigrate the faith of those in Latin

America and to convert them to alien religious cultures?

Or is the *Post* supposed to be an avenue of communication amongst conservative Mennonites in Latin America, building up "THEIR" faith and culture, and in the process providing a medium whereby literacy and reading can be affirmed and exercised?

If the latter is the case, the *Post* should provide reading material (both spiritual, educational and historical) which is wholesome, informative and uplifting. There are tens of thousands of pages of good reading material from their own canon of literature which deserves to be reprinted. There is no need to reprint books and materials which have nothing at all to do with the conservative Mennonite experience and faith and which may in fact denigrate that spiritual tradition.

The *Post* should be used as a vehicle to propagate, affirm and strengthen the spiritual ethos of conservative Mennonites, its targeted audience.

The *Post* should NOT be used as a platform to propagate alien religious cultures. Nor should it propound views which unfairly malign their culture and spirituality in ways which would not be acceptable were they directed at any other religious-cultural community.

The conservative Mennonites of North and South American represent the largest and most energetic source of future growth of the Mennonite Church and para-church organizations such as M.C.C. and M.E.D.A.

These people should NOT be alienated.

A hearty thank-you to the *Post* editor, Mr. Abe Warkentin, for the good material being published and for his demonstrated efforts in trying to better understand and serve his readership.

I know it is appreciated by thousands of readers.

### Notice to Readers:

If you have not paid your 2000 or 2001 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.

# 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.

*Box 181, Crystal City  
Man., R0K 0N0  
May 1, 2000*

Dear Delbert:

Some time ago my wife, Betty, talked to you on the phone about Mennonite artifacts, etc....

The Adrian Unger Family Tree article p. 124, 1999 December publication was helpful in that it helped me to discover a connection with the Steinbach Ungers. The article mentions that Adrian Unger had three sons, Jacob, Adrian and Peter. The Ungers in the article are descendants of Peter while my family is descended from Adrian. There was actually a 4th child, a daughter Anna - information courtesy of Henry Schapansky-LSD film No 555793. I am grateful for this article because it encouraged me to discover more family information.

Adrian Unger's son Jacob (My g g grandfather) moved to the Molotschna Colony in 1835 but didn't stay here. His son Heinrich went from Chortitz to Bergthal to marry Maria Wiens. Heinrich and Maria ended up in Furstenland before emigrating to the West Reserve in 1876.

Looking forward to the next edition of the *Preservings*.

Yours truly, "Henry Unger"

*Mrs. Helen Rempel  
3880 Evergreen Ave.  
Aurora, CO 80011*

Del,

We received your books [*Saints and Sinners*], thanks very much.

I often wondered where the KG started. I was raised in Meade, Ks., and in the KG church. J. F. Isaac baptized me when I was in my teens. Of course, I was not immersed in water as you know.

Then I married my husband Isaac Rempel and we joined the Bruderthaler [EMB].

I'm 91 1/2 years old and not too well. I go on the strength of the Lord.

Yours truly, Mrs. Helen Rempel.

P.S. Then later we joined up with the Assembly of God.

*May 17, 2000  
3867 Hunt Clubb Road  
Raymond, Wa 98517*

Mr. Plett:

Again, our sincere thanks for the wealth of information gleaned from "Preservings". This learning from your magazine has been one of the highlights of my life. A whole new vista has been opened for me. I study and study and feel I know individuals and places.

Thank you. "The Bracketts--Nancy Mae"

*Dr. John Wiebe  
19 Ambergate Drive  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R2P 2PM  
June 1, 2000*

Dear Delbert Plett:

Please send me the December 1999 and June 2000 issues of *Preservings*. If you have any back issues on the 1870s migration from Russia, send me 2 different issues on this topic. Thank you.

I have enclosed a cheque for \$40.00. "John Wiebe"

*Loma Plata, C.d.C 883  
Asuncion, Paraguay  
May 18, 2000*

Dear Mr. Plett:

I just finished reading or looking through "Preservings" No. 15. At first I gave it to my father. He still likes to look through this magazine, but isn't reading or writing very much any more. He still is in good mind at his age - 87.

One of his "Pfleger", Oskar Neufeld, got to know about this magazine and wanted me to order for him and also he would like to have all the back copies. If so, please send it to: Oskar Neufeld, C.d.C. Loma Plata, Asuncion, Paraguay. He will pay you for it.

I'm wondering who is sending me this magazine "Preservings" - anyway, thanks a lot!

With all best wishes sincerely, "Maria Friesen"

*Theodore (Ted) E. Friesen  
Box 720, Altona.  
Manitoba, Can., R0G OBO  
June 27, 2000*

Delbert Plett

I am always looking forward to receiving *Preservings* and No. 16, 2000 arrived at the beginning of this week. I put aside all my reading then, light and serious, and delved into the Journal of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society. Inc.

This current Journal is as fascinating as the others. What a wealth of historical material and the choice to focus on the O K Mennonites was a timely and an appropriate one. Timely I say, because they are an integral part of the 125 Celebration of the coming of the Russian Mennonites to Manitoba. Appropriate because their restitution is long overdue. Adolf Ens says it so well in the article which you reprinted which he wrote for the Centennial in 1974.

All of the Old Kolony articles are interesting. But especially so are the ones on Aeltester Johann Wiebe. What an amazing man of integrity and vision. And what able followers he had in Franz Froese, and especially Jacob J. Froese. I remember the latter well. Besides the many worthy things he inaugurated, he was a supporter of the Relief Program from the very start. As Secretary of the Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee, I had close ties to the various churches. The Old Kolony Church was a strong supporter of this organization which later merged with MCC. Although Froese was a man of principle, he was also pragmatic. Perhaps that is why his son Jake had the okay to go into politics. That in itself is an amazing story. For 14 years he was able to represent this constituency for Social Credit against the main parties.

The debate between Leonard Sawatzky and yourself aroused interest as it will I suspect in many readers. Leonard's argument is that it is the religious authorities and the wealthy landowners that result in maintaining the status quo. You counter that by saying that both the religious and civil authorities were concerned in maintaining a tried and tested way of life based on community values rooted in a biblical basis. There may be an element of truth in both. I am inclined to be with you on this.

Interesting also are Leonard's comments on a detrimental effect on the environment that the settlers had. Here again, OK farming methods tend to favour conservation. All of these issues are not simple, but I think very timely. I am looking forward to more articles from others.

Of particular interest to me was the article on John C. Reimer. I considered him a valuable friend. He was such an unassuming person, but what a positive outlook on life. And what a man of integrity. He almost single-handedly started the Museum in Steinbach in 1967. He had the innate sense of history that can connect the past to the present.

In many ways he reminded me of my Father. Both were quiet, but concerned people.

The choice of books for review is excellent, as is the quality of the reviews. Of particular interest to me was the book on Neuberghal and Ted Regehr's piece on Order and Good Government.

All-in all a great issue, Delbert. What impresses me most is the design, *successful* I would say, of restoring the integrity of the conservative groups. I believe that a certain analogy can be drawn to what you are doing and what Harold Bender was doing in the 1940s with the publication of his "Anabaptist Vision". Both of you have had a great impact in changing perceptions that were wrong.

And my support to you for that.

With all best wishes. Sincerely, "Ted Friesen"  
TEF:pki

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Box 333, Steinbach  
Manitoba, ROA 2A0  
June 22, 2000

Hi! Mr. Plett:

We were going through some papers here and realized that this Preservings magazine we received this week must be the fourth one dating back to Dec/98, so I'm sending you a cheque for \$40.00. I know Alvin really enjoyed reading them, but I grew up in Saskatchewan and my folks were both born in the States, like Minnesota and South Dakota, so I really don't know any of these old timers.

We have a lot in the Ensz family too.

Thank you for cancelling this for me. We appreciate it.

"Laura Reimer", for Alvin Reimer

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janda@MBnet.MB.CA

Delbert:

The etymology of Altona is 1) Volksetymologie: aul too noh, meaning aul too dichtbei, meaning Hamburg since Altona is a suburb. 2) Wissenschaftliche Etymologie: alte Aue, meaning the old pasture, meadow, aulso de oole Weid ooda Waes.

Neu weetst! "Jack", Regards, "Jack & Audrey Thiessen"

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P.O. Box 183  
Altona, Manitoba  
ROG OBO

Dear Sir:

I read with great interest the "Debate-Mexican Mennonites". That brought me to the end of page 57 in the June issue of *Preservings*. I found it disappointing that up to this point in the magazine whenever reference is made to the R.M. of Rhineland it is misspelled.

Respectfully yours, "Reinhard Schwartz"

**Editor's Note:** Actually all the primary source documents I have read refer to Reinland as Reinland. This is also consistent with how the word was used in the history of the conservative Mennonites, e.g. the when the Flemish Gemeinde in the Molotschna split in 1824, the conservative group referred to themselves as "Rein-Flämische", Urry, *None but Saints*, page 103. In the split between the Flemish and the Frisians going back to the first decades of the Anabaptist movement in the 1550s and '60s, the Flemish were referred to as the "Reine" as compared to the Frisians who were known as the "Grobe": Plett, *Saints and Sinners*, page 25. The concept resonated with Aeltester Johann Wiebe's restitutionary vision of a renewed Gemeinde conformed to the teachings of the apostolic church and presumably explains the name choice. It is interesting that when the Municipality was named, the name chosen sounded out like "Reinland" but was spelled "Rhineland", seemingly based on the word "Rhine" as in the Rhine River or perhaps it simply reflected

some bureaucrats attempt to Anglicize "Reinland", as in the spelling of words like "Rhinoceros", "rhinestone", etc. See Gerhard John Ens, *The Rural Municipality of Rheinland: Volost & Municipality*, pages ix-x, for a further discussion of the topic. You are correct, however, in pointing that whatever the cause for the seemingly intentional deviation from tradition going back four centuries, the legal name of the Municipality is now "R. M. of Rhineland" and it should be referred to as such. The unfortunate reality is that by changing local place names, the Provincial Government was wiping (cleansing) the history of the pioneers from the local landscape.

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423-125 Bonis Ave.  
Scarborough, Ontario  
MIT 3R8  
June 28, 2000

Dear Delbert:

Please accept my sincere thanks for the June copy of "Preservings" which I received today. I'm also grateful to you for putting me on the mailing list. I'm enclosing the sum of \$20.00 to cover this year's subscription.

Having just browsed through this edition, I find so many interesting articles, and some that I can't relate to with ease.

I do have some thoughts concerning Mennonite beliefs, or maybe even policy, with which I have a great deal of concern. This has to do with the idea that it's against God's Word for any of us to 'bear arms', even in defense of one's country. I may or may not have mentioned to you previously, that I spent 32 years in the Canadian military, having enlisted in the RCAF during World War 2. To me, and to my parents this seemed the right thing to do, since we were beneficiaries of all the best that this country could ever provide for us. If nobody had stood up to the evil forces of those days, can you imagine what kind of a world would have been the result? I'm not saying for one minute that war is the only way to solve the world's problems, but when a loose cannon is intent on conquering the world by any means, what is the alternative to war until he's defeated?

Using choice verses of scripture to avoid involvement in such activities is not being honest with ourselves or others. Why did the children of Israel get themselves into so many scrapes with their enemies? Why did they have enemies? And why did God intervene on their behalf over and over again? You see, man has not changed in his greedy and immoral attitudes. And when the forces of evil, to-day as in the Bible times, threaten the very freedom of democracy and freedom to worship God, how are we to respond, by saying that we're pacifists and don't believe in war?

Personally, I'm justifiably proud of having volunteered my services for the continuation of the freedoms that I've mentioned, and I'm just as proud of all those who were with me, including, I might say, a fairly large number of those with names that come from a Mennonite background like mine. You might have gathered from this screed that I'm not a Mennonite, but my testimony is that of a truly born again Christian.

Thanks for letting me get this off my chest,

Delbert, and please continue the good work that you're doing. We all appreciate your commitment and dedication to the variety of tasks that keep you thoroughly occupied.

Sincerely, Peter E. Warkentin

**Editor's Note:** First of all, it needs to be said that no one should be embarrassed to hold to a peace position. It is a view shared by many great thinkers and philosophers over the centuries among whom are Menno Simons, Count Leo Tolstoy, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Mohandas Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa and Bishop Tutu. Not bad company, I might suggest.

In a genuine democracy (one that is not characterized by the tyranny of the majority imposing its will on all others) there are many who are not pacifists but who are nonetheless prepared to defend one of the basic premises of such a society, namely, the rights of minorities.

It is clear that the Dominion Government in 1873 induced our ancestors to come to Canada with promises of freedom from bearing arms, as well as other guaranteed cultural and education rights.

In my mind there is absolutely no question that Jesus taught non-violence, e.g. Luke 3, 14, when the soldiers asked Jesus, "What shall we do?" he replied, "Do violence to no man."

Throughout history Christians of different persuasions have found ways of avoiding and/or circumventing the obvious meaning of passages such as this by various devices. For Catholics and traditional Protestants such as Anglicans and Lutherans it was the "just war" doctrine.

Later Protestant fanatics such as Darby and Scofield went one step further and simply decreed that the Gospels and teachings of Jesus did not apply in what they called the present "Church age". Problem solved. Then the Fundamentalists created a regime of some 200 Bible Schools and countless missionary endeavours to propagate their newly invented creed.

I have no problem accepting people as Christians even though they are not pacifists, but they should not lay claim to being Biblical literalists when that is a patent deception.

Personally I am proud that none of my ancestors (with the exception of great-great-grandfather Johann Plett (1765-1833) who served in the Prussian Hussars or calvary) wasted their time and blood serving in an army so some fat-assed king in Europe could gain an extra township of land somewhere or oppress some more peasants.

The argument that a monster like Hitler had to be stopped is countered by the proposition that if Christians in all countries actually followed Christ's teachings, they would cancel each other out. Someone has to start the process. And then there's the real clincher, "what if everyone started doing it? or not doing it?"

In post-modern times some of the power of the "isms" of the 20th century (nationalism, communism, fundamentalism, etc.--at the root of many of these horrors) have weakened and people are more open to consider the real important things in life.

I appreciate your comment that you are "a truly born again Christian" but hope you recognize the reality that there were probably 10 or 20 million

Separatist Pietists in Nazi Germany who made the same claim (see also the results of the Barna study quoted in the "News" section of this journal which shows that levels of morality among so-called "born again" Christians does not vary significantly from that of the general population.)

What a difference it could have made if they would have actually accepted and lived out the teachings of Jesus instead of simply parroting the prevailing culture. Even Nazi Germany could not have handled that many Bonhoffers?

What advice, for example, would you have given Peter Sawatzky, a 19 year-old Kirchliche Mennonite minister from Felsenbach, Borosenko Colony, USSR in 1941, who was condemned to death by the S.S. for speaking out against the Nazi extermination of the Jews (and for refusing to bear arms for the Nazis). And then a few years later Sawatzky was sentenced to death again, this time by the Soviets, for refusing to give up his faith. Miraculously Sawatzky survived years in labour camps and prisons in the "Hell" of the Gulag.

I have no problem being proud of all who served in the military with noble intentions, whether to stop the beast Hitler or to fight the hordes of Godless communism. The annals of military history reveal that when compared to the Eastern front, the Allies in the west hardly knew what war was.

It bears noting that the Cold War was won not by arms but by the power of ideas.

Obviously these humble comments will not change the minds of any readers. This is a debate which started when the Emperor Gratian made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in 380 A.D., something being replicated in more modern times with the evolution of Protestant Fundamentalism as the civil religion of the U.S.A.--a frightening prospect for Christians of other confessions.

Thank-you for your thoughtful and insightful comments which you express simply and with passion. Hopefully you can still be proud of your Mennonite roots and heritage. The Editor.

**For further reading:**

Arden Thiessen, "Is War the Way to Peace?" in *Messenger*, Nov. 1, 2000, pages 3-4.

Box 239  
Osler, Saskatchewan  
S0K 3A0  
July 15, 2000

Dear Sir:

A friend lent me a copy of *Preservings* Dec. 15, 1999 issue. I enjoyed it very much.

I am enclosing a cheque for \$40.00--a one year subscription--for myself and also for my mother. Thank you kindly.

Sincerely, "Annie Braun"

782 Wright Avenue  
Port Coquitlam, B.C.  
V3B 5M7

Dear Mr. Delbert Plett:

You will find enclosed a cheque for \$30.00. This is to cover a copy of the June 2000 publication and then a years subscription/membership.

I have heard a great deal about not only the publication but also about all of the work that you are doing from Joanne Zwaagstra (Fehr). I have been trying for the last few years to put together some sort of book but for now I am concentrating on collecting names for the database. This in itself has become a huge task. There is so much good info available that it could take me another year or so just to complete the inputting. My criteria for now is that the person must be either a descendent of the oldest Fehr I have found or a relative of mine. My database now has around 5,300 names in it with about 2800 blood related to me.

If you wish to discuss things by phone let me know and I can give you a call some evening or you can call myself some evening. My E-mail address in [don\\_fehr@telus.net](mailto:don_fehr@telus.net) and my telephone number is 604-942-5546. Also I have a web site (still somewhat under construction) at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.co/~fehr/>

Hope to hear from you soon. "Don Fehr"

Cheque for \$30.00 enclosed

405-246 Roslyn Rd.  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3L 0H2

Thank you for the June, 2000 copy of *Preservings*.

I am glad someone is preserving so many of the stories of our people.

How do you manage to obtain so many pictures and articles? "Miss Margaret Bergen"

Springhill Dr. N.W.,  
Albany, Oregon, 97321  
July 11, 2000

Dear Mr. Plett:

Hi, I'm back and hoping that with my belated cheque, to still be a subscriber to *Preservings*. Thanks for the June issue and your confidence.

Graduations, weddings and reunions commonly occur in springtime and summer here and invite family gatherings to celebrate.

Sometimes I view *Preservings* as a big "family gathering". Maybe I enjoy it as such, because all Mennonites are related "church family"--following the same basic teachings and beliefs, and history--wherever they happen to live.

In Mennonite Weekly Review, a column has recently been added, giving readers an update into Hutterite thought and input. I like that.

Regards, "C. Buerge"

Leslie Ave, Winnipeg  
July 17, 2000

Dear Mr. Plett:

Thank you so much for sending me the Birthday edition of *Preservings* 1875-2000. I am enjoying it immensely. The more we know about one another the less judgmental we become. I found it particularly interesting because so many of the articles speak right out of the time my Grandfather began his diary in 1880 in Russia, which has just been printed in English.

On page 33 of *Preservings* June, 2000, Bernhard Toews talks of his education in the old

country. His teacher, the Honourable Heinrich Epp was my great-grandfather's brother. My grandfather taught with him at the Central school in Chortitza as well as the teacher Wm. Penner who instructed the Russian language. I found that very interesting.

Also the name Zacharias is mentioned numerous times. My birth mother's name was Anna Isaac Zacharias. In our Zacharias genealogy there is an Aaron Zacharias who left Russia with the early Mennonites. There must be a connection there, as well as my husband's family--the Koop clan.

The name Wm. Hespeler is another name that is of interest to us, Leslie Ave is right next to Hespeler Ave in Elmwood. At one time three city councillors decided to have streets renamed in their honour and Leslie Ave was to become Rebchuck Dr. One of my daughters did some research on Leslie Ave and found that all the land in our area had belonged to Wm. Hespeler. When it was subdivided he had named three streets after his three daughters. Leslie, Sylvia and Beatrice. We were able to keep the name and Mr. Rebchuck got the Salter St Bridge named in his honour. Is there any information available in what way he was helpful to the Mennonites?

2 Thanks again for sending me all this information and I am enclosing \$20.00.

Hoping to hear from you about the Koop book soon, Thanks.

Sincerely, "Erika A. Koop"

**Editor's Note:** For more information regarding William Hespeler, see Angelika Sauer, "Ethnicity employed: William Hespeler and the Mennonites," in *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Volume 18, 2000, pages 82-94. What you refer to as the "Koop Book" has been published as a chapter 12, "Koop families in the Molotschna," in my new book, *Dynasties of the Kleine Gemeinde*, pages 301-337. Your husband's family is found at page 311. Erika Koop is the mother of artist Wanda Koop.

652 Boyd Ave  
Winnipeg, R2W 1R3  
July 19, 2000

Thank-you so much for the latest issue of *Preservings*. What a wonderful tribute for the West Reserve's 125th birthday. I was so impressed with the tributes, photographs and historical information. I read your editorial describing your trip to the Ukraine with special interest.

Thank-you so much for your efforts. I feel proud and honoured to have the June, 2000 issue.

Enclosed is a small contribution to help cover the cost of printing and mailing. Best wishes in your endeavours. "Marina Plett-Lyle"

Received Aug. 2, 2000  
69 Bourkewood Place  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3J 1B3

Dear Mr. Plett:

I'm a recent subscriber to *Preservings*. Have read several copies of *Preservings* at my relatives and enjoyed them so it was time to get my own copies.

I have done a lot of genealogical research...I met Henry Schapansky about four years ago at the seminar at CMBC, Winnipeg and read many of his articles.

Received No. 16 June 2000 issue of *Preservings*....

On page 83 of *Preservings* I see a picture of Johann K. Dueck (1866-1923), died in Grunthal, Manitoba, son of Franz and Justina (Klassen) Dueck. Johann was elected as a minister of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church in 1907 and as Aeltester in 1915 by 127 votes.

My mother and father Heinrich and Aganetha (Hiebert) Dyck went to Johann K. Dueck's funeral in June 1923 before I was born (1925). My parents stayed overnight at the Abram Hieberts. Their daughter Margareta Ginter from Loma Plata, Paraguay, wrote and told me that was the only time she met my parents.....

I also have an article "Im Dienste der Gemeinde" published in March 1991 about the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the "Chacoexpedition Kanadischer Mennoniten mit Fred Engen-1921". Johann K. Dueck was one of the ministers on that journey....

Sincerely, "Abram Dyck"

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Received Aug 2/00  
29 Galt Street  
Saskatoon, S7L 4P1

HSHS, Dear Sirs:

I ask you not to send me any more "Preservings" magazines, not because I don't like them, I find them very interesting but I haven't had time to read much in any of them. I have been through a very stressful year and am now in the process of moving. My husband was a great-grandson of Johann Wiebe (Aeltester). From what I have read I get the impression that Delbert Plett is biased and intolerant. My parents were Old Kolony and I know from 70 years ago many of them in the Hague-Osler area would have looked at him and the Kleine Gemeinde with as much suspicion as you do with Evangelicals. I am enclosing money for past *Preservings*. Thank you. I may re-order later but please don't send any more now.

"Anne Wiebe"

**Editor's Note:** Thank-you for your courtesy in advising us about removing your name from our mailing list. Regarding the charge of bias, I admit there are Gospel-centric Christians, there are Darbyite-Scofieldians, and many hues in between. I confess that I support the former position. Adherents of Gospel-centric faith are just as entitled as anyone else to bring forward and affirm their own spiritual ethos and historical heritage. It is a historical fact that over the past century Darbyite-Scofieldians (and before that Separatist-Pietists) have frequently endeavoured to denigrate the faith and heritage of conservative Mennonites by less than honourable means. To allege that those now seeking to tell their story are biased is comparable to accusing crime victims of ill will when they recount their experiences.

300 Sth Val Vista Dr #31  
Mesa, AZ  
85204  
July 23, 2000

H.S.H.S. Inc.

Dear Delbert:

Well, you've gone and done it again--No. 16, June 2000. Believe it or not, but I've read it cover to cover. "Tops"--good interesting material!

Only miss one thing about the West Reserve coverage--no mention of the MCI (Gretna) and MEI (Altona) Schools.

Know nothing really, but I know there was much "competition" between the two factions. Someone like Herman Rempel (Morden) or Ted Friesen (Altona) may know of, or how to get info about it. Could be that many records were lost as result of MCI fire.

Also the Bergthaler Church history of Aeltester Hoepfner's time. Have been told that he and H.H. Ewert had worked very closely together.

Wish I could be of some help but am too far away now to do anything other than ask people like you and "wonder".

Enclosed cheque for \$40.00--to renew my membership and send me 10 copies of the July 24, 1999 Free Press inserts. Trust the above is ample to cover costs--if not please advise.

Again, Delbert, my hat off to you--"Hanover Steinbach Father of Mennonite History".

Very sincerely, "Ernie A. Friesen"  
P.S. Neta Dyck's article was well done.

**Editor's Note:** Thank-you for your encouragement. The reason we focused on the Old Kolony Gemeinde is that they always seem to get overlooked when local and regional history books are written. It needs to be recognized that the OK-ers were the only inhabitants of the West Reserve prior to 1879 and continued thereafter to be the dominant majority group until they were exiled (or whatever you want to call it) in 1922. The MCI story has already been told several times in the Altona and Gretna history books as well as in the well written history "*Die Schule Must Sein*" by Gerhard J. Ens. Ernie, as the former mayor of the City of Steinbach and one of the charter members of the HSHS in 1988 it is always wonderful to hear from you.

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July 26, 2000  
115 N. Circle Dr.  
Colorado Springs  
Colorado, 80909

HSHS: Dear Del,

Thank you for your kind note to me. It is you who needs to be thanked regarding all the work you've put into "Dynasties". I look forward to receiving the book and reading further.

Please find enclosed the money for the book...and the balance for HSHS membership. If possible, could you sign the book before having it sent out?

You certainly have been an inspiration to me in digging deeper into my roots. You've pointed me in the direction of some other clues, which I will continue to follow.

In the recent *Preservings*, I found the article on Helena Doerksen Koop so interesting as she is also a distant relative. There again were some leads that I need to follow up regarding her family. I'm sure you find great pleasure in seeing families come together. In the interior design and floor covering business here in Colorado Springs, we work with a contractor by the name of Loewen. I passed on the story of Isaak E. Loewen from *Preservings* [#16] and found that he is indeed a relative. Small world.

My family and I want to thank you again for digging into the Doerksen family line and seeing it published will be a thrill. I also appreciated seeing Paul Harvey's, A Truth of Grain.

Best wishes to you and may the Lord bless you. "Jim Doerksen"

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12 Baldock Street  
West St. Paul, MB  
R4A 1A1  
July 29, 2000

*Preservings*, HSHS

Dear Mr. Plett:

I always enjoy checking out/reading *Preservings*, and thank you for this excellent preservation of our heritage!

In issue #16, June 2000, *Preservings* timely mentioned my publication *John Warkentin and His Descendants 1820-1990*. My dad, Isaak K. Warkentin passed away on May 10, 2000 (1908-2000).

I mentioned the daily diary of Katharina Hildebrandt. This could be a story in itself. Katharina was the fiancée of my uncle Johann (my dad's oldest brother) who was murdered by the infamous Nester Mahknow and his bandits, on October 26, 1919 in Eichenfeld.

Katharina as you can tell from the diary nursed those sick with typhus. Katharina died of typhus. Her last entry into the diary was January 19, 1920, as follows:

"January 19, 1920. It is a bitterly cold Sunday. We have begun a new year--what will it bring? In the past two months many people have died of typhus. Now my Mother has been sick in bed for eight days and is delirious. I hope that she will make it through."

"Today Susanna also became sick. Mathilda and Anna are still full of sores and very restless but Anna may be near recovery. Mrs. Rempel, too, has been very ill, although it appears she will survive. Now Mary and Agatha Rempel are in bed. Including the Rempels, six of us are ill. Teacher Neufeld is also sick with spotted typhus."

"All around is misery and distress. I don't know why I feel so miserable today. I can't think clearly. We are far away from being strong. We have so little faith. We almost sink in despair."

"Oh God, the sun continues to shine warmly upon us while our sick grow even worse. God, come very soon and bring an end to this misery. Reward our benefactors for all of their kind efforts and the care they have given us. Support us and let there be peace among us at last. Amen."

"Katherina Hildebrandt"

P.S. Katherina Hildebrandt died of typhus in Nicolaipol. Her sister, Anna (Mr. Peter Schroeder),

emigrated to Canada and now resides in Abbotsford, B.C.

My uncle, Daniel Warkentin (formerly Landmark, now Steinbach) smuggled a copy of Katharina's diary in a "Singvoeglein" book, when they emigrated to Canada in 1924. Had the communists found this diary on uncle Dan the family might never have seen the "steppes of our free Canada!"

As we went to press with this genealogy book we found that Katharina's youngest sister Anna survived the typhus. She married a Mr. Peter Schroeder, emigrated to Canada (Abbotsford, B.C. i.e. as in 1990). I was also able to get a photocopy of the "original" diary.

The Daniel Warkentins farmed in Landmark and the Isaak Warkentins farmed in the Silberfeld/New Bothwell area for 44 years (1931-75), when they retired and moved to Steinbach. Alfred and Daniel Warkentin are well known accomplished farmers in the Landmark area. On Sunday, July 23, 2000, we celebrated Rev. Dan Warkentin's 60th birthday at the Landmark E.M.C. Church, with thanksgiving and a delicious dinner.

While working on project management in the Russian Far East in 1995, I read a book by Gorbichov where he refers to Nester Mahknow as an "Anarchist". I was told by some local Russians that Nester Mahknow was shot to death in France in 1933. I don't know if this can be confirmed....

I have 15 hard copy books left to sell at \$50.00 including postage, if anyone is interested in, *John Warkentin and his Descendants 1820-1990*.

Yours truly, "I.H. (Ike) Warkentin"

**Editor's Note:** The story of Nestor Machno has been told by Victor Peters in his book, *Nestor Machno: Das Leben eines Anarchisten* (Altona, 1960), 139 pages.

Liebe Freunde,

Sicherlich gibt es in einigen Regalen in den Häusern der Älteren Generation Bücher in deutscher Sprache über die Mennoniten (Geschichte, Lebenserinnerungen, und andere) die sie nicht mehr brauchen und die Nachkommen vielleicht nicht die deutsche Sprache beherrschen.

Wenn Sie diese Bücher nicht gerade vernichten möchten und an einen sicheren Ort bringen möchten, dann würde ich diese Bücher bei Ihnen gerne abnehmen oder abkaufen.

Bitte schicken Sie diese Bücher an: Adina Reger, Tulpenstr. 14, 56575, Weisenthurm, Germany

August 20, 2000  
610 Hoskin Ave., Winnipeg  
Man, R2K 1Z8

I have just finished reading your series of articles on the West Reserve (No. 16 June, 2000).

I find the outlook of the "Conservative Mennonites" seriously worth consideration, especially the appreciation of one's own religious heritage.

Having come from Irish Catholic roots on my father's side, and English socialist, Salvation Army and United Church influences on my mother's, I was brought up in a Christian and Missionary

Alliance mission, being taught the very "Scofieldian Dispensationalism" justly criticized by Conservative Mennonites.

In 1965 I married into a Bergthaler Mennonite family which had lived in the West Reserve since 1879. Aeltester Johann Funk was my wife's great-great uncle. In the past we have attended EMMC "Rudnerweider" and EMB churches, but in the last 20 years we have belonged to the Baptists Union of Western Canada: I like their freedom, inclusiveness and self-criticism. In my beliefs, I have experienced tension and flexibility.

I had always thought of Conservative Mennonites as exclusive and rigid, but it seems that we have things in common.

Last year I wrote a brief family history for a reunion: I enclose a copy for your files. Thank you, "Dan Spurrill"

4835 Parkridge Dr.,  
Kelowna, BC, V1W 3A1

Dear Delbert,

I have just received a copy of your "Dynasties" volume. Thank you so much. I have already read extensively in it, particularly Chapter 20 which deals with the Thielmanns and Wiebes, my grandparents on Mother's side.

Congratulations again on a work well done—especially your dedication to rehabilitating the formerly much maligned Kleine Gemeinde. After your KG historical series no serious historian will ever again speak disparagingly of this faithful Mennonite community.

My sister Helen and husband Art Dick will travel to Ukraine next month, intending to visit especially Friedensfeld, where we Loewens were born, and Kudaschewka, the former Thielmann/Wiebe estate where we lived for about a year and a half in 1942-43 before leaving Ukraine with the retreating German armies. I am looking forward to what they will find and experience in our former homeland.

I might add that my "Road to Freedom" book is about to be released by Pandora Press/Herald Press September 1. You might ask the publisher to send you a review copy for Preservings. It is a hard-cover coffee-table book of over 300 pages and many pictures. Some 500 people have already ordered the book.

Now that your historical series has come to an end, what will you do in your spare-time? Just kidding! I still marvel at your incredible "Schaffensdrang."

Sincerely, Harry Loewen (Aug. 28/00)

16 Alexandria Bay,  
Morden, MB., R6M 1R3

I enjoyed the "Preservings" received to date and enjoyed speaking on Aug. 6 in the "Old Colony" church at Heritage Days. Keep up the good work and God Bless. Enclosed is my donation. "Rev. John I. Peters"

Box 1354, Morden  
Manitoba, R6M 1B2  
August 29, 2000

Dear Delbert:

Again, it was a pleasure to have met you in person on the historical Post Road Tour. My husband and I have thoroughly enjoyed reading "Preservings", that you have sent as complimentary copies. Enclosed find membership fee of \$20.00.

There are many thought provoking articles which provide information from more than one angle. Our favourite reading are the biographies and historical sketches.

The reason I'm writing today is also to order the book written by Dr. John Warkentin which was introduced to us on the bus tour.

Apparently Dr. Warkentin made many visits to the Julius Dyck farm at Waldheim, Manitoba, and spoke to John U. Dyck re: local history.

We are planning a local history workshop in the West Reserve this fall that will feature Waldheim, Chortitz and a few other villages. Any information to enhance our presentation is much appreciated.

Sincerely grateful, "George & Mavis Dyck"

Box 363, North Newton  
Kansas, 67117  
August 30, 2000

Dear Delbert,

The publication of the 766 page *Dynasties* is another stupendous achievement, and I congratulate you. Naturally, my attention was drawn to Chapters 8, 9, and 18. You might like to know, re. page 239, note 85, that our paper on the Martens land swindle was published as Chapter Ten in *Anabaptist/Mennonite Faith and Economics*, ed., Calvin Redekopp et al. (Inst. of Anabaptist/Mennonite Studies, Conrad Grebel College, Waterloo, Ont., N2L 3G6).....Sincerely, "Leland Harder"

2504 Adelaide Street  
Abbotsford, BC V2T 3J2  
September 6, 2000

Editor Dear Mr. Plett:

I appreciate your work with publishing Preservings. As soon as it comes to our house I start reading it and, I must confess, it is hard to put down until I have read it all. Keep up the good work.

I was born near Lowe Farm and lived there till I was 13. During those years there was enough exposure to Old Colony Mennonites to know of their existence; consequently, I really appreciated your June issue which provided some very interesting information.

My great-grandfather, Peter Esau, came with his family, from Sparrau in Molotschna, on the first ship that brought the Mennonites to Canada in 1874. After first settling on the E.R. he moved to the W.R.: there my grandfather, Jacob Esau, married Anna Wiebe from the Bergthaler people. This means that in the Canadian mosaic I can classify myself as an ethnic Mennonite. Since religiously I am not a Conservative Mennonite but an Evangelical, I chafe a little under the constant denigrating in your writings of Evangelicals. I am still a descendant of the Mennonite group whose history you are trying to preserve. I appreciated the article by Dr. Adolf Ens, and agree that it is not right to denigrate the Conservative Mennonites.

Maybe it is also wrong to repeatedly denigrate a caricature of Evangelicals.

I was quite interested in reading the short biography of Aeltester Jacob J. Froese. One sentence really caught my attention: "He emphasized that a person needed to experience a rebirth, as well as the atonement of Jesus Christ on the cross from the sins of the world," (p.42). Maybe this statement shows that some Conservative Mennonites and Evangelicals have much in common; after all, in spite of all the many expressions of Evangelical Christianity, the above statement distills the essence of what it means to be Evangelical.

Thanks again, "Henry B. Esau"

**Editor's Note:** Firstly, the historical record. Together with brother-in-law Is. Braun (1844-1901), Peter Esau (1832-97), was one of the founders of the village of Chortitz, E.R. (*Working Papers*, page 45), where he is listed in the 1881 census together with mother-in-law Katharina Harms Braun (1796-1883) (*BGB*, page 352), a sister to Anna Harms Dueck Ratzlaff (1808-74), the first adult to die in Manitoba among the KG only 25 days after arrival (see "Harms Genealogy"; *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pp. 387-413). A brother Isaac Harms (1811-91), became renown as the instigator of the KG program to provide land for its young landless families in the 1860s, see *Saints and Sinners*, pp. 130-1. Through the Harms and Esau families you have hundreds of relatives in the E.R. including the family of Abr. K. Esau (1865-1950), *Dynasties*, page 275, whose daughter Helena married Abr. R. Toews (1874-1966), Steinbach.

Another brother Peter Braun (1840-1904) moved to Jansen, Neb., and in 1885 to Glenn Elder, Kansas. In 1886 he wrote the *Men. Rundschau* asking about his siblings in Manitoba to which a former school teacher in Edenburg, Jakob J. Wiens (b. 1840), Hoffnungsfeld, W.R., replied in a letter published January 19, 1887: "In No. 51 of this paper, Peter Braun, Kansas, asks about Isaak Braun and Peter Esau. Since I was in Edenburg...and am familiar with these two,... and [stand] in friendly association with them, I can report that they are currently all well there, and that otherwise things are going good for them. Peter Esau is presently living on the farm [presumably having moved out of the village], married with a former widow Harder in a blessed marital relationship."

It is certainly good to note the commonalities between conservative Mennonite (Gospel-centric) faith and so-called Evangelical religious culture. Both espouse being born again but a sharp distinction becomes immediately evident. For conservative Mennonites, the rebirth leads them to discipleship and an ethos of love and community. For so-called Evangelicals the rebirth leads to a focus on an emotional internalized experience and the ongoing affirmation thereof, with appropriate rites and rituals designed to massage the individual's emotive state in the appropriate fashion, as if believing and faith in Christ alone is not sufficient. At the same time, the majority of so-called Evangelicals (and this is why they can only be considered as "so-called") actually reject the Gospels by postponing their application to some mythical future millennial reign in direct contravention of the plain and obvious interpretation of scripture passages such as Matthew 5,17, and Luke 10,11, where Jesus says "the King-

dom of God is at hand."

Hopefully you will find grace to become proud of your heritage, after all its the only one God gave you. Maybe you can even learn something about genuine biblicism as you pursue your study into your own past. Good luck and God bless.

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*Aussiedler-Betreuungsdienst (ABD)*  
*Mennonitischer Gemeinden in*  
*Deutschland*  
*Buchenweg 12, 56579 Rengsdorf*  
*12.09.00*

Herrn Delbert Plett,

Sehr geehrter Herr Plett, vor einigen Wochen erhielt ich "Preservings" vom 16. Juni 2000 mit dem ausführlichen und mit Bildern versehenen Bericht aus der Besiedlung der Westreserve 1875-2000.

Leider kann ich mit meinen geringen Englischkenntnissen nicht alles so verstehen, wie diese 125 Jahre geleisteter Pionierarbeit von Fachkennern dargestellt werden. Doch ich habe ja hier die Möglichkeit, dasz man mir die Stellen übersetzt, die ich nicht verstehen kann, aber unbedingt wissen möchte. Nach meiner Beurteilung ist es eine ausgesprochen gute Information über die Entwicklung während dieser Zeit im gemeindlichen, schulischen und auch wirtschaftlichen System der mennonitischen Gruppierungen.

Als dieser Bericht bei mir eintraf, hielt sich für etwa zwei Wochen Prof. Roy Loewen in meinem Hause mit Familie auf, der hier unter Umsiedlern Befragungen für seine Studien machte. Ihn fragte ich, woher und wieso ich diesen Bericht erhalte, ohne von ihm zu wissen und ihn auch bestellt zu haben. Er kennt Dich und erklärte mir, dasz Du im Erstellen und Verbreiten solcher Literatur von Deinem Interesse und auch von Deinen Möglichkeiten her einen Auftrag siehst. Es hat mich gefreut und auch beeindruckt.

Herzlich danke ich Dir für dieses Geschichtswerk.

Wäre der Bericht in Deutsch, würde ich ihn unter den Umsiedlern verbreiten, wo jetzt viel Interesse an der Geschichte unserer Glaubensgemeinschaft festzustellen ist.

Seit 1972 betreue ich mit vielen Mitarbeitern Menschen mit mennonitischem Hintergrund, die als Aussiedler/Spätaussiedler in einer Zahl von mehr als 100.000 aus Ruszland (UdSSR) in die Bundesrepublik gekommen sind. Aus ihnen haben sich hier mehr als 100 neue und selbständige Mennonitische Gemeinden gebildet.

Mit Segenswünschen und herzlichen Gruszen, "Hans von Niessen"

**Editor's Note:** Danke-Schon für ihren Brief und Information. Vielleicht können sie in die zukunft uns einen Bericht schicken über die Umsiedler und wo sie sich zurecht finden in Deutschland.

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*59 Richardson Cres.*  
*Regina, Sask., S4S 4J2*  
*Sept. 11, 2000*

Dear Mr. Plett.

Re p.50, Preservings, #16.

For the last 10 years I have been occupied,

among other things with Isaak I. Reimer's "Einlage" manuscript. Because I grew up in Einlage/Kitschkas I am somewhat sensitive to information about the area, which included, right across the river the village Markusova/Pawlo-Kitschkas.

When Einlage was founded in 1789 the nobleman Markusov was of invaluable assistance to our pioneers. Mr. I. Reimer writing from the early 20th century perspective was still in admiration of the Markusovs.

In your forthcoming December 2000 article could you please consider:

1. spelling of the name. Not: Pawlokischash,
2. mennonite villages might have been renamed in 1945, but even before WW II all German villages were ordered to be officially listed under new, Russian names

...I wish to thank you for your Jasykova book review. Especially for making us aware of the tragedy of that mother. I think her suffering should be retold to all our children in Sunday School stories. You might be aware that her story is in *Mennonitischer Martyrer*, 1954, pages 74-77.

We met at the Memorial '98 [in Winnipeg] although, regretfully I was unable to elicit any enthusiasm [Begeisterung], from you for my proposal, except possibly \$100.

Thank you again for your work, and for the copy of Preservings. "Heinrich Bergen"

**Editor's Note:** Thank-you for the clarification regarding the village of Markusova, situated across the Dnieper from Einlage.

Thank-you also for referring to the tragic incident of the mother from Chortitza sentenced to hard labour by the Soviets for picking up a few cobs of corn for her family. May the Mennonite people never forget the suffering and tragedy of this woman which speaks for countless others. Thank-you for pointing out that she was the widow Susanna Hildebrandt, nee Neufeld (b. 1890), from Neuhorst, Old Colony, and that her story is told in the Toews, Märtyrerbuch.

The suggestion of putting up another cairn at the gravesite of delegate Jakob Hoepfner (1757-1826) on Insel Chortitza, is a good one. Such a project should also involve Hoepfner's descendants, very numerous among the conservative Mennonites.

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*Sept. 22, 2000*  
*Box 20917, Steinbach*  
*Manitoba, R0A 2T2*

Dear Mr. Plett,

I would like to commend you on a wonderful magazine....I had originally purchased it for my mother and it was quite a pleasure to see a tear of joy in her eyes at the sight of a familiar photo from the past...It is indeed interesting reading, we find it both enlightening and inspirational....We thank you for the monumental effort that goes into a publication such as this and look forward to future editions....

Yours truly, Eva and Shirley Peters  
P.S. ....I also just noticed page 34 of Issue 16, middle photo. The man standing on the right is my grandfather, Abram Wiebe III. For many years Abram was the caretaker of the Old Colony Church at Chortitz which was relocated to the Mennonite Heritage Village site in Steinbach.

# News

## Neubergthal Commemoration, July 1, 2000

“Neubergthal Commemoration, July 1, 2000,” by Delbert Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

### Introduction.

The day was calm and serene, the sun shone warmly. A perfect day for a national cultural celebration.

July 1, 2000, the Neubergthal street village, four miles southeast of Altona, was commemorated with the unveiling of an official plaque by “The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada.”

A crowd of several hundred turned out to witness the occasion and to share in the festivities which included the Neubergthal homecoming celebrations.

This event follows the designation of the entire village of Neubergthal as a national historical site in 1989.

The unveiling of the plaque took place in the middle of the village adjacent to the cemetery.

### Proceedings.

William Neville, Manitoba Representative of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, chaired the proceedings. He stated that Neubergthal was an excellent example of the 100 street villages which once existed in southern Manitoba. He noted that “so many of the structures in the village had retained their original form.”

Neville referred to Neubergthal as a “jewel of national and historical importance.”

On hand to extend his best wishes was 84 year-old Jake P. Hamm, born and raised in the village, and resident there until four months ago.

Professor Adolf Ens, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, provided a brief historical sketch of the village and the Mennonite settlement in Manitoba. He referred to the book *Picturesque Canada* published in 1882 which already referred to the new settlements there.

Jack Penner, MLA for Emerson, referred to the long standing democratic traditions of the Mennonite people and the legacy of its leaders “who were always involved in community, education and leadership in the church.” He noted, for example, that the first four leaders of the Sommerfelder Gemeinde



Dignitaries prepare to start the proceedings at the Neubergthal national historical site unveiling July 1, 2000. L.-r.: Jack Penner, Emerson M.L.A., William Neville, Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, Dr. Adolf Ens, Canadian Mennonite University, and Alf Redekopp, bring greetings on behalf of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society.



The podium with dignitaries and the crowd, view to the southwest. The Anne Friesen housebarn situated at the intersection of P.R. 421 and the Neubergthal village street is visible in the rear.



Another view of the podium with dignitaries, L.-r.: John Falk -Reeve R. M. of Rhineland, Dawn Bronson - Parks Canada, Ray Hamm -Neubergthal, Jack Penner MLA, Terry Wiebe - Deputy Mayor Altona, William Neville - Parks Canada, Dr. Adolf Ens at the podium, Alf Redekopp, and Jake P. Hamm, village resident, at extreme right.



Residents of Neubergthal proudly pose with Parks Canada plaque, an honour bestowed on other Manitoba historical sites such as the Forks in Winnipeg. L.-r.: Ray Hamm, Kirsten Hamm, Mrs. Helena Klippenstein, and behind her, Jake P. Hamm, 84 year-old former resident of Neubergthal.

(Aeltesten) had first served as Municipal Councilors.

He also noted, jokingly, that "Mennonites and Natives were the only people in Manitoba placed on Reserves."

Terry Wiebe, Deputy Mayor of Altona, reflected on his community's sense of pride that "the Government of Canada had selected Neuberghthal as Canada's historical Mennonite village."

John Falk, Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland, was a great-grandson of Isaak Mueller, the first Obervorsteher of the Reinländer/Old Colony settlement.

Falk thanked Parks Canada for recognizing the historical importance of the traditional Mennonite Strassendorf village. The designation will help preserve the area and make it more widely known.

Alf Redekopp, representing the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society referred to the various programs of his Society. His society encourages events such as the Neuberghthal village homecoming. He congratulated the villagers on the unveiling of the plaque and their homecoming weekend.

### Parks Canada Address.

Ms. Dawn Bronson, field Superintendent, made the address on behalf of Parks Canada.

"The village tells the story of Canada's past," she said. "It is a history made up of the fabric of the past."

"Neuberghthal joins a small group of places within Manitoba recognized in this way--Lower Fort Garry, Inglis Grain Elevators and the Forks."

Bronson noted some of features of the Strassendorf village: "The village connected the settlers to each other...in a tightly bound village pattern." Through the medium of the village they succeeded in reestablishing their life and culture in a new land.

"There is still a strong projection of the past...The existence of villages such as Neuberghthal tells us there was something very powerful here."

"Our lives are enriched when we preserve key elements of our heritage," concluded Ms. Bronson.

### The Plaque.

The Parks Canada plaque was unveiled by several inhabitants of Neuberghthal representing both genders and a cross section of ages. The plaque was unique in that it is inscribed in three languages, English, French and Low German/Plaut-Dietsch, the lingua fauna of the settlers themselves.

The Low German/Plaut-Dietsch text of the plaque is as follows:  
"Niebarjchtol ess een utjetatjendet Biespell von eenem mennonitischen Strassendorf, eene besondre Oat von Prarie Aunsiedlung em wastlichen Kanada. Typisch doafaa ess eene eensje Gauss mett Beem beplaut; doahinja steiht eene Reaj Hiesa aune Stalinj aunjebut enn mett schmaule Haw. De Stappe enn Fletcja lidje rundomm daut Darp. Dit Mosta entstund derch hundate Joahre von mennonitische Jeschichte enn ut eene kulturelle Tradition em oostlichen Europa. Tweschen 1874 enn 1900 lade de Mennoniete meea aus hundat soone Darpa ooste enn waste vom Red River enn Siedmanitoba aun. Derjch Frindschaft, Relijoon enn Kultua oabeide de niee Siedla jemeenschaftlich toop enn beweese doamett, daut laundwirtschaftliche Aunsiedlung oppe opne Prarie, enn wiet wajch vonne Riwalaaacht, maajlich send. Daut Jewauss, enn de Loof, dee architektonische Traditione, enn de Eenzelgauss Oat von Niebarjchtol bestohne bett dem vondoagschen Dach. Aules toop vewertjiliche se daut Strassendorf-Lawe enn vemeddle eenen eenzeloaaten Senn fe Aun-enn To-jehearijchtjeit."

This is the first time that an official government plaque has been represented



The tent in which Parks Canada served a sumptuous luncheon following the Mennonite style.

in Plaut-Dietsch, a language officially scanted by the Dominion Government Order-in-Council of 1873. Such language recognition has previously been granted to various First Nations, Ukrainians and others.

### Conclusion.

It was evident to those in attendance that Parks Canada had made an exceptional effort to organize the ceremony and present the historical sites designation in a way which resonated harmoniously with local culture and heritage.

A good number of representatives from Parks Canada, including Peter Pries, retired archaeologist, and Frieda Esau Klippenstein, author of the Neuberghthal Book, see *Preservings*, No. 16, pages 136-137, were on hand for the occasion.

A four page pamphlet, "Neuberghthal Street Village," with a ceremony program insert was handed out--a lovely keepsake for many guests in attendance.

Parks Canada hosted a luncheon for the guests, followed by an afternoon of visiting and walking the village. Several walking tours were conducted for those interested in a more indepth look at the functioning and operation of such a pioneer community. An eight page tour manual helped tour participants to better understand the significance of the many historical sights and cultural treasures still extant.

Those interested in the preservation of the Mennonite faith and culture and the early history of Manitoba are grate-

ful indeed to the work of Parks Canada and its local officials in establishing the historical designation of Neuberghthal. Only those who know how government bureaucracies function will understand what an achievement this really is.

On behalf of *Preservings* readers everywhere, a hearty thank-you!

### Sources:

Pamphlets, "Neuberghthal Street Village," The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, July 1, 2000, 4 pages, with "Ceremony Program," insert.

"Neuberghthal housebarns in the village."

"Neuberghthal patterns in a village."

"Tour 1: The Street Village Pattern and Village life."

"Tour 2: The Architecture of Neuberghthal."

Frieda Esau Klippenstein, *Neuberghthal National Historic Site: A Cultural Landscape History* (Western Canada Service Centre, Parks Canada, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1997), 199 pages.

### For Further Reading:

Elmer Heinrichs, "Neuberghthal designated historic site at homecoming," in *Heritage Postings*, No. 30, Sept. 2000, page 4.



One of the finishing touches of the day's events was a special cake in the shape of a traditional Mennonite housebarn held here by Bev Klassen, Neuberghthal, left, and Jackie Schroeder, right, great-great granddaughter of Abraham Schroeder a pioneer and Sommerfelder minister of Altberghthal, BGB B269.

# Fort Dufferin Reenactment, July 16, 2000

“Fort Dufferin Reenactment, July 16, 2000: Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the founding of the Mennonite West Reserve Settlement by the Reinländer (Old Kolonier) Gemeinde,” by Priscilla Reimer, Box 57, Woodmore, Manitoba, R0A 2M0.

## Background.

In mid-July, 1875 a Red River steamer docked on the west bank at Fort Dufferin just north of Emerson/West Lynne. Hundreds of weary men, women and children disembarked after a journey of six weeks by boat, train and ship from south Russia to a new homeland in Manitoba's Pembina Reserve, later known as the Mennonite West Reserve.

More than a 1500 people gathered at historic Fort Dufferin on Sunday, July 15th to mark the 125th anniversary of their arrival.

## Opening.

In a show-of-hands survey, chairperson John Friesen established that a majority of the assembly were descendants of those first settlers, while a smaller segment were members or descendants of the 1920s influx and an even smaller group belonged to the 1940s and early 50s Mennonite immigrations. By comparison, only a few raised their hand to the question: How many of you are visiting from the East Reserve?

Friesen's final question in *plautdietsch*, “How many of you still speak Low German?” drew enough laughter to confirm his conclusion that the celebrations could easily continue in Low German.

## Greetings.

The commemoration took the form of a worship service which included greetings from host organizations, the various levels of government and fraternal societies. A number of recurring themes emerged from these comments.

The first was raised by Emerson MLA Jack Penner, himself a descendant of these immigrants and one of the first Canadian Mennonites to enter public life as a politician. He expressed gratitude to his forbearers for seeking out a country in which “we would be able to worship freely,” a country which was willing to negotiate the Mennonite's exemption from military service.”

“Many of us,” Penner said, “forget how im-

portant that was for our people.”

A second recurring theme was hinted at by Penner and stated concretely by Peter G. Dyck, MLA for Pembina. “Canada,” he said, “is a wonderful country. It has been rated the best place in the world to live, by the United Nations.”

David Iftody, MP for Provencher, concurred but also raised another issue: The courage of these 1870s immigrants.



A view of the crowd beginning to assemble under the tent. By the time the program started the listeners were seated all around outside the tent, some 1,500 in number.

“Their courage came from their faith,” he said, comparing it to the similar courage of his own Romanian ancestors. He went on to attribute the current economic prosperity experienced by residents of the “historic riding of Provencher” to the fact that “all of us have participated in that faith journey.”

## Thanksgiving.

The foundations for economic success laid down by the early immigrants and the subsequent prosperity realized by their descendants became another theme for the afternoon. The folks who got off the boat on that mid-July day in 1875 couldn't possibly have guessed “how far they would come,” Friesen suggested.

It has become a truism that Manitoba's Mennonites have contributed to the economic health of the province to such an extent over the years, that the words of Deuteronomy 8:10-18, which were read in German and English by pastors Henry G. Rempel and Dave Dyck respectively, might very well have been written expressly for the people present. “When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the

good land he has given you. Be careful that you do not forget . . . Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt . . . But remember . . . it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth. . . .”

## Drama.

The road to prosperity was never a simple or an easy one, however, especially for those first West Reservers. Written by Wilmer Penner of Landmark and directed by Henry G. Enns of



Manitoba Mennonites gathered in a tent at the site of Fort Dufferin on July 16, 2000, to remember the forebears who landed here in 1875, 125 years ago. Photos for this article except as indicated are courtesy of Priscilla Reimer, Box 57, Woodmore, Manitoba, R0A 2M0.

Rhineland, the drama “Their Tears, Our Sheaves,” captured the mixed emotion and the dilemmas that were their early experience.

Set in the immigration sheds at Fort Dufferin where the first families waited for several weeks while surveys were completed and other arrangements were finalized, the dialogue moved back and forth between two immigrant families. The historic character Jacob Fehr (1837-1916), was played by John Martens of Rosengard and Henry Penner of Rhineland performed the opposing voice of fictional character Petta Braun.

“This Manitoba,” Fehr declared, “will be a new Garden of Eden.”

But Braun, wasn’t so sure. He had already encountered the snake in the tall grass of this prairie at a stop-over in Fishers Landing where a delegation of Mennonite brethren from Kansas tempted him to leave the group for the better land of the mid-western states and it’s more hospitable climate.

“They came and tried to persuade us not to go to Manitoba. They said that two settlements had been made there before and these settlers had to turn back. They could not survive there because of the cold, raw, long winter” (from the journals of Jacob Fehr 1859-1952).

“And why not go to Kansas? In this new Eden there wasn’t a tree in sight. Not even one in the centre of the garden by which to orient themselves. In winter you could freeze your breath and your bones and in summer . . . the mosquitos. And this garden, while it produced cherries, they were so *striif*, so tart that they left your mouth puckered for days. Had they really given up their orchards for these . . . these choke cherries?”

Braun was convinced that Ohm Johann Wiebe was misleading them all. With a few simple compromises to please the Czar, he was sure they could have stayed in Russia, comfortably.

But what about the promises and privileges that the Queen, their Queen, had given them, Johann Fehr countered. Petta should just stay loyal. Wait and see, and everything would work out.

These were the emotional crosscurrents of their uprooted lives—tears of farewell and the

anticipation of welcome in a new land; new opportunities and homesick-nostalgia for what had been left behind—and their inescapable doubts. Should they remain loyal to the group or cut their losses and pursue what looked like more promising opportunities elsewhere?

**Conclusion.**

By the end of 1875, the ones that stayed and those who joined them—almost 300 Mennonite families—had settled in 18 new villages and went on to turn what appeared to be dubious opportunity and the 500,000 acres allotted to them, into the thriving communities of what are today’s Rural Municipalities of Stanley and Rhineland.

“They were people of vision and children with a new future,” Rev. Peter D. Zacharias commented.

Afternoon celebrations ended with a brief presentation by Ruth Swan and elders of the Metis Federation. They asked for support of their project to preserve an ancestral cemetery, the first Christian burial place in North Dakota. Swan expressed confidence that Mennonites would share their concerns and presented the gathering with a braid

of sweet grass.

A *vaspa* break was followed by an evening concert of music in the spirit of the theme: *Nun Danket alle Gott*. The program included a variety of singing and instrumental groups from Altona, Gnadenthal, Rosenort, and Steinbach.

**Other Reports.**

Elmer Heinrichs, “Gathering marks 125th anniversary of West Reserve,” in *Canadian Mennonite*, August 21, 2000, page 30.

Elmer Heinrichs, “1,500 attend to see West Reserve mark 125,” in *Heritage Postings*, No. 30, Sept. 2000, page 1.

Elmer Heinrichs, “125jährige Jubiläumsfeier der Westreserve,” in *Mennonitische Post*, July 21, 2000, pages 1 and 3.

Priscilla Reimer, “Fort Dufferin event celebrates West Reserve anniversary,” in *The Red River Valley Echo*, July 24, 2000, page 1.

Doris Penner, “Praise rings in service marking settlers’ arrival,” in *Carillon News*, July 24, 2000, page 3.



A view of the actual spot on the Red River where the Mennonite settlers disembarked from the river boats. From here they ventured west by wagons to the sites of their new villages.



Professor John J. Friesen, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, chaired the program at Fort Dufferin. Vorsänger Wes Hamm, Morden, leads the singing.



From “Their Tears, Our Sheaves,” the drama by Wilmer Penner captured the spirit of sacrifice and equality which made the Old Colony settlement of the West Reserve so successful. Joakob Fehr (John Martens) and his son Joakab (Henry Giesbrecht)—followed by Fehrsche (Marlene Ens)—bring up the trunk into the immigration shed in the re-enactment of the Fort Dufferin landing. Photo by Doris Penner and courtesy of Carillon News, July 24, 2000.

# Johann Wiebe, Memorial Dedication, July 22, 2000

“Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905), Rosengard, Manitoba, Memorial Dedication, July 22, 2000,”

by Elaine Wiebe, 24-1605-7<sup>th</sup> Street East, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7H 0Z3.

## Introduction.

July 22, 2000, some 200 people gathered at the Reinland Community Centre, Reinland, to dedicate a memorial in honour of Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905), Rosengard, Manitoba.

The event was planned by Corny Rempel, Reinland, C.E. Thiessen, Rosengart, Henry Ens, Winkler and Bruce Wiebe, Winkler. Corny Rempel chaired the proceedings.

## Speaker.

Rev. Peter D. Zacharias, author of the well-known *Reinland* book, spoke in Low German and English.

Johann Wiebe was 33 years-old when he was ordained as Aeltester in the Fürstenland Colony, Imperial Russia. The decision to leave Russia was difficult for many; the separation from other church leaders and members, as well as the many family and friends were a strong emotional tug.

Aeltester Wiebe challenged his parishioners to be willing to pay the price. He heard the voice of God similar to one made to Abraham in Genesis 12:1 “Get out of your country and from your family, and from your father’s house to a land that I will show you.”

Wiebe was convinced of the rightness of this decision. As a leader he saw the church slipping away. He wanted to re-establish the church – not dominated by personal ambition or materialism but following the principles laid out in the Gospels.

Johann Wiebe was a thinker. He wanted to follow the example of the Anabaptists who did not want to re-establish the old church but wanted a renewal, a new start. He believed moving to Canada was God’s path to renewal.

The settlers came from various colonies and



*Jake and Mary (Klassen) Wiebe, Swift Current, Sask., a descendant of Aeltester Wiebe, unveiled the cairn beside the Rosengart cemetery. Jake retired from general construction in 1993. Now they volunteer at nursing homes presenting musical programs. Photo by Elmer Heinrichs, Altona.*

villages. To get them together as one Gemeinde attests to his tremendous love, administrative skills and sense of conviction. Within the first year the worship house (now the community centre at Reinland) was built and became the centre of spiritual life of the community.

Worship was not to take place only on Sunday mornings but everyday, all week long. It was walking in obedience to Jesus Christ as well as healthy relationships with other human beings.

A story coming out of the Hague-Osler Reserve goes like this. An Old Colony minister was asked, “Are you a Christian?” The response was “Go and ask my neighbour.” This was the

attitude that Johann Wiebe wanted portrayed.

Living in villages was seen as part of church teaching. He stressed the Christian day by day living as exemplified with love, making sure everyone’s needs were met including the widows and orphans. The rich did not have more and the poor did not have less. Equality meant sharing; this was their aim although sometimes it fell short. All families had some good land and some poor land, they all had property in the village, they all had pasture land.

## Unveiling.

This was followed by the unveiling of a plaque placed on the outside wall of the Community Centre. Corny and Mary Wiebe from La Crete, Alberta, a great grandson of Johann and Judith, did the unveiling.

The plaque reads, “*Johann Wiebe 1837-1905 served as Aeltester of the Fürstenland Colony of Ukraine and as the first Aeltester of the Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde in Manitoba. In 1876 he officiated at the dedication of this building. He lies buried in the Rosengart cemetery.*”

## Rosengard Cairn.

The crowd drove two miles south to the village of Rosengart. Village mayor John Mar-



*Rev. Peter D. Zacharias, minister of the Blumenort Mennonite Church, speaking from the original pitcher-shaped pulpit in Western Canada’s oldest Mennonite church building. An original collection box now sitting on the table was usually up on the wall near the door to collect the tithes and offerings of members.*



*The Reinland Community Centre as seen today in Reinland, Manitoba, view to the west. This building was the Reinland Mennonite Church from 1876 to 1922 when many emigrated to Mexico. As of 1923 the Blumenort Mennonite Church used it until 1968. The church building became the Community Centre in 1970 when a kitchen was added. The memorial plaque is located at the front right side of the building, just beside the pine tree.*

tens welcomed everyone. He reflected on how they started the upkeep of the cemetery in 1992. It had been said that "someday they would be glad they did."

A memorial stone was placed near the village cemetery on the west side of highway P.R. 243. Jake and Mary Wiebe from Swift Current, Sask., a great-great grandson of Johann and Judith unveiled the cairn.

The cairn reads, "Johann Wiebe 1837-1905 Aeltester der Gemeinde zu Reinland. In this Rosengart cemetery lies buried Aeltester Johann Wiebe, his wife Judith Wall 1836-1910 and many of the pioneer congregation he served."

The following is the prayer of dedication by Rev Zacharias. "We thank You for Johann and Judith Wiebe, for the way they have given themselves to You and for the legacy and inheritance they have left You. They did not point to themselves but pointed simply to You, Lord. May that be a lesson, an epistle to us in our own lives."

**Faspa.**

Everyone was invited back to the Community Centre for faspa – delicious home made buns, cheese, jam, (the plum jam was the best) and dainties! *Nu woa daut spat'searen aufangen!*

The Reinland ladies accomplished a remarkable feat – they had no idea how many people were coming and yet they had enough for every one!

After dinner speaker, Elaine Wiebe, Saskatoon, Sask., read portions from Aeltester Wiebe's sermon "The Immigration from Russia to Canada 1875."

She referred to how at a critical moment Aeltester Wiebe's *Gesangbuch* had fallen open to song number 346, "Great is the Lord; very great is Your faithfulness and Your goodness." He wrote, "Each word of this song was powerful and meant a lot to me, and helped me through these difficult moments of trying to decide the right."

Aeltester Wiebe concluded, "We decided in faith to go ahead, trusting that God would overrule for the best. God will have mercy on us poor sinners and give grace and strength to live according to His will and to become

strengthened in His Holy Spirit,...Amen."

**Freiwilliges.**

Evelyn Friesen from Steinbach (her great-

one is writing about the Old Colony people with respect." There was heartfelt agreement throughout the group!

Jake Wiebe, Swift Current, Sask. shared his interest in genealogy and seeing where his forefathers had homesteaded.

Others spoke as well with words of appreciation and gratitude to all involved in making this day so successful.

**Conclusion.**

Rev. Gerhard Ens reminded those gathered not to let "things" spoil the taste of God in our hearts and lives.

A few years ago he had visited a group of Mennonites who moved from Russia to Germany in the 1970s-80s. He noticed their catechism. On opening it he found it to be a reprint of the one Aeltester Wiebe had printed in the 1881. When he inquired about this, they replied, "That's the way we want to know the catechism".

People who have experienced war, revolution and persecution want to go back to the very beginnings. Looking around he noticed no TV in the room. His host's observation was, "A funny thing happens every time I watch TV, I lose my taste for the Bible".

In the 1870s some Mennonites saw the way they were going, it was not just civil service, or military service, it was the greed of so many. Some thought God was punishing them and taking away what they had.

Coming to Canada was giving them an opportunity to plow anew, to make a new beginning, to be separated from the world.

The challenge Rev. Ens left was to "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

A closing prayer ended this commemorative service.

**Further Reading:**

Elmer Heinrichs, "Gedenktafel soll an Aeltester Johann Wiebe erinnern," in *Mennonitische Post*, August 4, 2000, pages

1-2.

Elmer Heinrichs, "Plaque, cairn unveiling honours early church leader," in *Heritage Postings*, No. 30, Sept. 2000, page 7.



Cornelius and Mary (Martens) Wiebe, La Crete, Alberta, a descendant of Aeltester Wiebe, unveiled the plaque on the outside front wall of the Community Centre. Corny and Mary are retired farmers who enjoy gardening and restoring old cars and tractors. Photo by Elmer Heinrichs, Altona.



Full house at the Commemorative Service. Evelyn Friesen is visible at the front right. Photo by D. Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba.

great-grandmother was Maria (Wiebe) Wall, sister of Aeltester Johann Wiebe) commented that while on holidays in Sask, she saw the *Preservings* magazine in many homes.

One lady had commented "Finally some-

# Post Road Inauguration, August 19, 2000

“Post Road Inauguration, August 19, 2000,” by Conrad Stoesz, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

## Introduction.

One hundred people received a new appreciation for the 1875 pioneers of the West Reserve, Manitoba, on August 26 as the Post Road Memorial Trail had its inaugural opening.

## Fort Dufferin.

Two buses left the north legislative grounds at 8:30 am with about 20 people on board. The buses arrived at Fort Dufferin (north of Emerson) where another 80 people eagerly anticipated the Post Road tour. Many of the people were from the Altona, Winkler, and Morden areas, but others came from Steinbach, Winnipeg, and Nebraska. The people came for their own interest but also represented organisations such as the Winkler Heritage Society, Winkler Chamber of Commerce, the Rural Municipality of Rhineland, the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, and other groups. MLA Harry Schellenberg and MP Jake Hoepfner were also in attendance.

After a short introduction by Historic Sites and Monuments Committee member Martha Martens, the first post in the memorial trail was erected by Rev. Abe Rempel representing the Old Colony Mennonite church, John Falk representing the R.M. of Rhineland, and Conrad Stoesz representing the Historical Society.

Following this everyone boarded the buses where bus hosts Lawrence Klippenstein and Adolf Ens welcomed them aboard and provided commentary along the way. Twelve points of interest had been marked by replica posts and a data packed, informational lectern, along the Post Road from Dufferin to Mountain City (south of Morden). A large format brochure has also been developed and it available to anyone interested.

## Highway 75.

The next stop was at the junction of Highway 75 and the Post Road (Provincial Road # 243). Here Wayne Arseny, Mayor of Emerson, and Ray Klippenstein of the Historical Society, unveiled the Post Road sign, which was painted by Olga Krahn of Altona. The sign depicts a family in a sleigh struggling through the snow, following the posts of the Post Road. On the reverse side of the sign is a collage of different images important to the pioneers.

From this point people boarded the buses and travelled along the historic route. To save



*Rev. Abram E. Rempel, Reinland, representing the Old Kolony Mennonite Church, holds the ceremonial post while Conrad Stoesz, on behalf of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and tour organizer (right), and John Falk, Reeve of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland (left), fill the hole to mount the post in the earth at Fort Dufferin. From here the Post Road extended for some 40 kilometers west through the West Reserve to Mountain City, southwest of present day Morden.*

time volunteers read the lectern texts on the bus. Some of them had roots in the various communities. Local experts who had grown up in the areas augmented the bus host's informative comments.

## Reinland.

Soon it was time for lunch. The buses stopped in the village of Reinland where many people took in an informal tour of the historic Heritage Homestead Museum, now owned by Ens Farms Limited. Others took in the sites and monuments around the Reinland community centre, which included a plaque to commemorate Aeltester Johann Wiebe of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church, a monument to the North West Mounted Police ride, and a plaque designating the building as the oldest Mennonite church in Western Canada.

The participants of the tour then were called into the old church where prayer was said and a feast was laid out by the Reinland community

centre's ladies group. Mashed potatoes, farmer sausage, cucumbers, and platz were enjoyed by all.

After the meal we once again boarded the buses and took off down the Post Road. In Hochfeld we were shown where some original ruts from the Post Road still existed in a pasture. Touring the various villages and seeing the different modern houses and old house barns was an interesting juxtaposition of new and old.

## Mountain City.

Our last stop on the tour was at the former Mountain City site. Now a cairn is all that marks the location. Nearby is the one-room school, which has been incorporated into a factory. Reverend Abe Rempel from the Old Colony Mennonite Church in Manitoba gave a quick overview of the Old Colony church today and then remarked how biblical it was to erect monuments to remind people of how God's hand had been at work in their lives. He read a text from 1 Samuel, which emphasised that God had helped His people this far, and will continue to be a source of strength.

Rev. Rempel noted how the posts in the Post Road guided travellers safely to their destination. Life is also a journey. For the Christian our guideposts are prayer and God's Word that guide people to Christ. Many people later commented that the message had struck a meaningful chord within them.

## Conclusion.

From Mountain City the buses found their way back to Fort Dufferin where a snack of drinks and home baked cookies awaited them. Here people began to part company. The buses with about 20 people began their trip back to Winnipeg.

The event went very well. People seemed to have had a good time and enjoyed visiting with one another. There was a lot of information given out, which in part helps us better understand the early pioneers and the importance of the Post Road to these people and the larger community.

## For Further Reading:

Elmer Heinrichs and Conrad Stoesz, "Grand opening, inaugural tour of Post Road Memorial Trail," in *Heritage Postings*, No. 30, Sept. 2000, pages 8 and 4.

Ellie Reimer, "Rediscovering the old Post Road," in *Carillon News*, Sept. 18, 2000, page 5A and *Red River Valley Echo*, Sept. 25, 2000, page 22.

# Warkentin Book Launch, August 6, 2000

John Warkentin, Book Launch, August 6, 2000, presentation by Royden Loewen, Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg, Manitoba, editor of *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba* (Steinbach, 2000), 409 pages.

## Introduction.

In 1955 a young University of Toronto geography student spent a summer crisscrossing the vast prairie and extensive parklands that constitute the Mennonite settlements of Southern Manitoba.

John H. Warkentin who had spent his boyhood in Plum Coulee and his teen-aged years in Steinbach had come back home. His purpose was to use the skills he had learned as a doctoral student of geography to understand and interpret the cultural landscape of his people.

## The Thesis, 1960.

Five years later, in 1960, the study resulted in a doctoral dissertation entitled, "The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba." It was an historical geography that began before the arrival of the Mennonites in the 1870s and continued through the modernizing 1890s, the wheat boom of the 1910s, the depression in the 1930s, farm specialization in the 1940s and spirited town building in the 1950s. It told the story of Mennonite people changing within the physical environment of Southern Manitoba.

It was a soundly researched, exquisitely written and oftentimes provocative work. Still, as Warkentin moved on to build a nationally recognized career at York University, he also moved from the subject of Mennonites to wider regional and national themes. Out of this wider interest came numerous publications, including articles, books and atlases. His research on the Manitoba Mennonites yielded a single published article. True, it became "a classic in its own right," a seminal essay on the "genealogy of an ethnic landscape," (Note One). But the dissertation itself was not published and had a limited readership. Forty years later the 611-page 1960 dissertation is in your hands in the form of a book.

## Classic Work.

As a classic work it reflects the spirit of the time in which it was written. In 1960 the author's intent, no doubt, was to advance the field of historical geography. Since the early part of the 20th century this discipline largely had been a description of the physical features and land patterns of a particular time and place. Such descriptions were based on the assumptions of environmental determinism. This meant that the environment was worthy of description because it was unshakable and unchangeable, and because it had a forceful affect on human life.

Warkentin was amongst a young and energetic corps of scholars in North America who helped discredit this school of thought by add-

ing a dynamic dimension to historical geography. These scholars focused on the origins of contemporary landscapes, and hence, had a spe-

knowledge could be misused to reinforce staid community structures (Note Four).



Dr. Royden Loewen, hands copies of the newly published *Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba*, to sisters Winnifred Warkentin (middle) and Helen Rempel (left), representing their brother John, who was unable to attend the August 6, 2000, book launch in person.

cial interest in frontier settlements and land use patterns.

## Influences.

Warkentin would be influenced by one of the pioneers of this approach in Canada, the venerated Manitoba native Andrew Hill Clark. Clark was especially interested in the way in which people transformed the environment and he became known as a champion of thorough and precise field research that would record the extent of that transformation (Note Two).

The objective of historical geography in the 1950s soon was discovered to have its own limits. As environmental determinism fell out of fashion and human agency became the focus of study scholars wondered whether the focus had become too much of a celebration.

Sometimes the followers of Clark were criticized for ignoring potentially harmful "human impacts upon the natural environment" or for overlooking "European-Indian contacts" and seeing only western "progress." Sometimes, too, they were also criticized for failing to appreciate the "intellectual contexts out of which patterns and landscapes were created." (Note Three). Perhaps it is true the students were too eager to see signs of progress amongst conservative rural people and too laudatory of the immigrants' increasing integration, even assimilation, into the modern world.

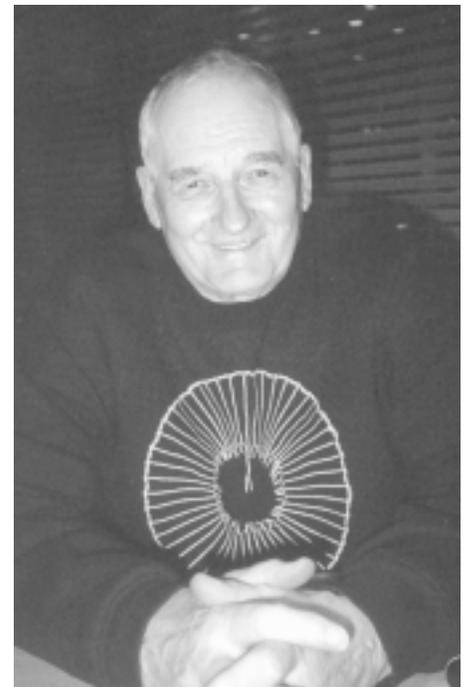
Certainly by the year 2000 the mid-century approaches had been subsumed in their turn by post-modern analyses. This new approach criticized the penchant to "celebrate achievement" and it identified the way in which geographical

## Shaping Landscape.

Despite these trends Warkentin's study has much to offer current readers. Indeed, the 1960 treatise is an important work for both Mennonite and non-Mennonite audiences. And foremost amongst those reasons is that it depicted both the distinctive qualities of the Mennonite settlements and the universal themes of environmental adaptation. The story of the "Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba" was part of a wider account in which human beings shape their landscape.

The Mennonite houses, gardens, roads, fences, ditches, hedges, fields, and towns spoke of adaptation to the prairie's soils and climate. They signalled a determination by their inhabitants to build cohesive communities in the new environment. It was an interest in this phenomenon that drew Warkentin to revisit the R.M.s of Hanover,

Stanley and Rhineland in the 1950s and this interest too that propelled him to undertake broader studies in the succeeding decades.



Dr. John H. Warkentin, October 5, 2000, Toronto, reflects on the Mennonite experience on the prairies. John is a direct descendant of Johann Warkentin (1760-1825) who in 1804 joined *Kleine Gemeinde* founder *Klaas Reimer* in negotiating for the 1,000,000 ruble *Volenko* estate, in "New Russia," see *Dynasties*, page 700.

**Wider Interests.**

There were early signs that Warkentin would not be contained by the "Mennonite Settlements." His Master of Arts thesis had been a geography of Dauphin (Manitoba) and his 1960 work on the Mennonites was set in the broad historical geography of Canada.

This wider interest was further reflected in his first book, the 1964 *A Western Interior of Canada: A Record of Geographical Discovery, 1812-1917* and it can be found in his most recent work, the 1999 *A Regional Geography of Canada: Life, Land and Space*.

In the intervening years his diverse interests were displayed by articles in numerous geographical journals and chapters in several books. Although the subjects were usually rooted in Western Canada, their specific focus ranged widely: from dry land farming to water usage; from pre-historic Lake Agassiz to the rise of modern urban trade centres; from provincial, regional and national land use patterns to the sense of time and landscape imagination; from the notations of explorers Henry Kelsey and David Thompson to the land-use strategies of early Manitoba farmers.

A sign of Warkentin's contribution to historical geography came in 1993 when James R. Gibson edited the book, *Canada: Geographical Interpretations*, bearing the subtitle, *Essays in Honour of John Warkentin*.

**Exposure.**

If the 1960 doctoral dissertation honed the

skills of a rising historical geographer, the work itself had limited exposure. The work was photocopied by Manitoba universities and Mennonite college libraries. But these were copies of

other copies, and not only was the print itself fuzzy, the maps were poor reproductions and the photographs were non-existent.

Still, over the years the dissertation was read

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## Canadian Mennonite University Opened

**Canadian Mennonite University Opened, April 12, 2000.**

Canadian Mennonite University was officially opened April 12, 2000. Manitoba. Some 300 people attended the opening ceremonies at its campus located at the corner of Shaftesbury Blvd. and Grant Avenue, Winnipeg.

Canadian Mennonite University is the new name of an institution which combines three institutions.

The university began conducting classes under the name "Mennonite College Federation" in September of 1999. With a new name and a permanent location, the university is hoping to attract students from across Canada and other countries.

Concord College (founded in 1944), Canadian Mennonite Bible College (founded in 1947) and Menno Simons College (founded in 1988) were amalgamated in the new university.

Canadian Mennonite University is Manitoba's fourth University, three are found in Winnipeg, and one in Brandon. The Mennonite Chair, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, continues to operate as a separate entity.

Anyone interested in attending the Canadian Mennonite University can call for information 1-204-888-8761 or write to Canadian Mennonite University, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R3P 2N2.

See also "Mennonite University Finds Home," *Preservings*, No. 14, page 64.



*Canadian Mennonite University is the new name of an institution which combines three Mennonite educational institutions. It was officially opened on April 12, 2000, at its new location on Grant Ave., Winnipeg, the former location of the "Normal School", well-known to many older Mennonite teachers.*

by diehard researchers and few Mennonite local histories were written without extensive dependence on Warkentin's work. Occasionally whole sections of local Manitoba histories and national Mennonite accounts seemed to be paraphrases of Warkentin's study.

Historians of communities and students of Mennonites in Canada seemed especially interested in Warkentin's careful and comprehensive description of the early open field system with its *Strassendörfer* and *Gewanne*. They also were drawn to his frank and open discussion of the recent histories of urban places.

### Publishing.

In October 1999 John Warkentin gave the keynote address at the "1874 Revisited: 125th Anniversary Conference" hosted by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and the Chair in Mennonite Studies, University of Winnipeg. His talk helped guide the deliberations on the meaning of the 1870s Mennonite migration to Western Canada. This book publication project grew out of a desire to further

commemorate this migration. The effort was truly an inter-community effort.

A secretary at the University of Toronto, Department of Geography, kindly retrieved the original copy from basement storage at the university and sent it to us. A generous grant from the "Plett Foundation" in Steinbach allowed us to hire graduate student Myron Dyck, formerly of Altona, to undertake the painstaking work of turning the massive text and its tables into computer format.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society which had become a leader in reminding Manitoba Mennonites of their 125th anniversary, fortuitously chose the publication of this manuscript as one of its main ways to celebrate the anniversary. The staff at Country Graphics in Rosenort ensured that the 150 photographs and 50 maps were reproduced with quality.

The aim of the project was simple: reproduce as a classic work the 1960 dissertation. Except for a few corrections to the text, selected alterations to the maps, an index, and an up-

dated bibliography no changes were made. The thorough field research, frank discussion and well-chosen prose are the marks of a text worthy of publication in its original form. True, the conclusions and language reflect the culture of the 1950s when "great men" were given special notice and ethnic groups were more deliberately compared one to another than is common today.

The cartography in turn reveals the technology of the 1950s, but the maps by Warkentin's hand reveal a pioneering work in historical geography. The photographs were small and repetitive, but they were a precise, perceptive, and comprehensive record of southern Manitoba, and they were given meaning by accompanying informal field notes.

### Significance.

For the current reader Warkentin's study is significant for several reasons. First, it remains a detailed narrative of a unique transplantation; Warkentin's observation in 1960 was that "perhaps nowhere in North America has a peasant

## Christianweek

### Introduction.

The following are a few articles taken from the July 4, 2000, issue of *Christianweek* which will be of interest to the readers of *Preservings*. The statistics reported by Barna Research that so-called "born again" Christians, do not rate significantly different from the general population in terms of 70 moral behaviours actually confirms something which many have always suspected.

Accordingly one could conclude that if for some bizarre reason, end-times soothsayers such as Jack von Impe and Hal Lindsey and their cohorts were ever in fact "beamed up" out of earth by some alien force, the moral and religious character of the Christian church remaining would presumably be significantly improved.

The problem for the so-called Evangelical movement centres around the bizarre teaching of dispensationalism which holds that the Gospels do not apply in this current age, and that their efficacy is postponed to some mythical future epoch. It is not surprising, therefore, that those so-called Christians who do not believe in the life and work of Jesus Christ, and his teachings such as the Sermon on the Mount, will be weak in moral values.

The third article reprinted deals with the allegation that some of the preaching and demonizing of other Christians and religious cultures found in some so-called Evangelical churches contributes to hate crimes and racism. The question is raised, do these practices lead to schoolyard bullying, or even to the type of racist comments surfacing in the recent Canadian Federal Election?

-The Editor

### Pollster sticks by divorce numbers

VENTURA, Calif.- The Barna Research Group is standing by its controversial report which

showed that born-again Christians are slightly more likely to divorce than nonbelievers. The study found that 27 percent of born-again Christians had experienced divorce, compared with 24 percent of others.

Pollster George Barna said 90 percent of the Christian divorces had taken place after conversion, so the figures can not be attributed to couples "unequally yoked" to non-believers. A spokesperson for the Barna Research Group said that while God makes a tremendous difference in individual lives, broadscale research finds little "substantial difference" between the attitudes and actions of believers and non-believers. (EP News) *Christianweek*--July 4, 2000, page 10.

### CW on the record - No discernible difference

The lifestyles of North Americans who say Jesus Christ is important in their life are virtually indistinguishable from those who make no such claim. This disturbing news is clearly demonstrated in research by George Barna, an evangelical who studies cultural trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours.

Barna's studies indicate, for example, that divorce levels are actually higher among Christians in North America (27%) than among non-Christians (25%). He also recently observed that Christian adults spend an average of seven times more hours each week watching television than they do participating in spiritual pursuits such as Bible reading, prayer and worship. Further, they spend roughly twice as much money on entertainment as they donate to their church and more time surfing the Internet than they do conversing with God in prayer.

Indeed, says Barna, "of more than 70 moral behaviours we study, when we compare Christians to non-Christians we rarely find substantial differences."

What a change from the early days of the church, when the lifestyles of those who claimed to follow Christ so contradicted the spirit of their

age and they were accused of "turning the world upside down." Right now we're functioning on top of the world. Jesus urged his followers to be "salt" and "light" (Matthew 5:13-16), but Barna's data suggests that the salt is losing its preserving power and the light is hiding under a basket.

*Christianweek*--July 4, 2000, page 11.

### Evangelicals assert right to evangelize--EP News- Chicago, Illinois

Responding to accusations that gospel preaching contributes to hate crimes, some of America's most prominent Christian leaders have reasserted the constitutional right to evangelize.

A group of 84 scholars, theologians and church leaders endorsed a document called "The Chicago Declaration on Religious Freedom: Sharing Jesus Christ in a Pluralistic Society."

Participants include Charles Colson of Prison Fellowship, theologians Carl F.H. Henry, J.I. Packer, and R.C. Sproul, Campus Crusade for Christ founder Bill Bright, David Neff of *Christianity Today*, Janet Parshall of the Family Research Council, Jay Sekulow of the American Center for Law and Justice and evangelist Franklin Graham.

The June 2 document rejects the accusation that evangelism undermines "a peaceful, pluralistic society and may lead to intolerance, bigotry, end even violence." Instead, it argues that only a society that permits free discourse can safeguard the true liberty, freedom, and human dignity we all pursue."

The declaration admits "with shame" that some Christian churches have not respected the rights of others, and rejects evangelism by means of "coercive techniques, dishonest appeals, or any form of deception."

But the statement also declares, "Misguided or false notions of pluralism must not be allowed to jeopardize anyone's constitutional right to evangelize or promote one's faith."

*Christianweek*--July 4, 2000.

culture from Europe been so thoroughly re-established."

Second, the study reminds all students of history, Mennonite and non-Mennonite, of the importance of geography in society, that is, the dynamic relationship between people and land; even forty years later the study is relevant as an environmental history of a Mennonite community.

Third, the work has become a primary source about Mennonites at the mid-point of the twentieth century; Warkentin's numerous references to developments of "today" are now in 2000 historic references to life in the dynamic 1950s when Mennonite society in Manitoba underwent a fundamental transformation.

Fourth, the work is always honest; readers will not always agree with Warkentin's analysis, for he moves readily between praise and criticism, offering sharp statements on what he believed constituted progress and regression, and reflecting a mid-century enthusiasm for technology, commerce and acculturation.

Fifth, the dissertation represents a particular point in the evolution of Mennonite historiography. Historians who preceded Warkentin quoted from oral history sources and church-sanctioned accounts.

His successors had access to a corps of personal records that in the 1950s were still venerated family treasures; diaries, immigrant letters, memoirs, and household account books were not generally available to Warkentin. But Warkentin must be credited for discovering his own set of sources. They were scientific records of landscape and more importantly, perhaps, the public record. Like no other study of Mennonites before, this one used census records, tax rolls, municipal by-laws, homestead claims, survey reports and studies of several government departments.

Sixth, this is a study of the ancestral homes of tens of thousands of Mennonites across Canada: Warkentin set out to compare two starkly different communities, the East and West Reserves, but in the process presented the history of a single, cohesive community bound by a distinctive religious faith and a commitment to agrarian society.

#### Conclusion.

We are pleased to present this important study to the students of historical geography, Manitoba history and Mennonite society. The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society is to be congratulated for doing so on the occasion of the Manitoba Mennonites' 125th anniversary.

#### Endnotes:

Note One: Interview with Prof. John Lehr, Department of Geography, University of Winnipeg, January 12, 2000.

Note Two: Andrew Hill Clark, *Three Centuries and the Island: A Historical Geography of Settlement and Agriculture in Prince Edward Island, Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1959).

Note Three: Graeme Wynn, "The Writing of Canadian Historical Geography," *A Scholar's*

*Guide to Geographical writing on the American and Canadian Past*, eds., Michael P. Conzen, Thomas A. Rumney, and Graeme Wynn

(Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993): 106.

Note Four: *Ibid*, 92.

## Crimean Church Records Discovered

"Mennonite Church Records from Busau, Crimea Discovered," by Tim Janzen, 12367 SE Ridgecrest, Portland, Oregon 97236, E-mail: Janzen@pacinter.net

In 1996 the LDS Church was allowed to microfilm certain items currently stored in the Simferopol Archives in Simferopol, Ukraine. Among the items they microfilmed were two church books from the Busau Mennonite Church previously at Busau (now Biyuk-Busau) in the Crimea.

These two church books provide us with rich and extensive genealogical information about the Mennonites who lived in western Crimea. Almost all of these Mennonites originally came from the Molotschna Colony and these church books also provide much information about the Molotschna roots of these Crimean settlers.

The Busau Mennonite Church was founded in 1884 under the name of the Ettingerbrun Mennonite Church. In 1905 the church had a congregation of 632 people, of which 272 were members. It is difficult to know for certain exactly when the first volume of these two church books was begun but it seems that entries may have been made in the book as early as 1884 when the church was founded. In 1901 Heinrich Martens (1860-1905) was installed as the elder and the name of the church was changed to the Busau Mennonite Church. It appears that this occasion was the impetus to begin the second volume of the two church books since this volume carries the date 1901 on its cover. The last event recorded in the second Busau church book occurred on September 20, 1922. Apparently, the church was closed shortly thereafter by the Soviet authorities and the two church books were eventually deposited in the Simferopol Archives.

If you are interested in reviewing the microfilm of the original church books, you may order Microfilm #2084337 for viewing at your nearest LDS genealogical library. Volume 2 is at the beginning of the microfilm and Volume 1 is at the end of the film. There are 140 different families listed in Volume 1 and 220 families listed in Volume 2. It appears that families who were members of the church in 1901 were entered into Volume 2 when it was started even though they had already been included in Volume 1. This resulted in quite a few families being entered in both books.

Generally, these books only cover Mennonite families that lived in the western portion of the Crimea. Most of the people listed in the church books lived in the following villages: Aktatschi-Busau (Aktatschi), Biyuk-Busau (Busau), Baschliitscha, Danilovka, Saribasch (Ettingerbrun), Jalantusch (Marienfeld), Tokultschak (Johannesfeld), Kaban, Kodagai, Kopkari, Kutuyki (Alexanderfeld), Minlertschik, Muni (Monie), Montonai, Temir



The author, Tim Janzen, is a family physician practicing in Portland, Oregon.

Bulat (Philipstal), Safronovka, and Tschokmak. Almost all of the entries in the book are in German, although in Volume 2 some information is given in Russian.

The information contained in the church books is fortunately quite detailed with the locations and dates of births, baptisms, marriages, and deaths generally being given. Notes were usually made about which Mennonite church the family transferred to or from when they joined or left the Busau Church as well as the date they transferred.

I have recently completed an extraction of the two Busau Mennonite Church Books and have made this information available on the internet in the form of two gedcom file databases. The database of the records as they appear in the original church records is called Busau Original Data and contains 4706 names. A modified database I created after merging all duplicate people is called Busau Modified Data and contains 2686 names. These databases may be downloaded from the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta's web site at <http://www.rootsweb.com/~abmhsa/busau>, the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society's web site at <http://www.mmhs.org/russia/mmhs4.htm>, and the Odessa Library web site at <http://pixel.cs.vt.edu/library/gedcom>

# Clarkson Recognizes Ukrainian Grievance

“Clarkson Recognizes Ukrainian Grievance regarding WWI internment one of Canada’s ‘sadder stories’,” by Helen Fallbing, Winnipeg Free Press, August 5, 2000, page A3.

**DAUPHIN**-Gov. Gen. Adrienne Clarkson yesterday acknowledged the injustices Ukrainian immigrants faced during the First World War, surprising community leaders who are still fighting for the same recognition from the Prime Minister.

“The internment of Ukrainians during World War One as enemy aliens...is one of the sadder, sadder stories in the difficult steps that immigrants have had in this country,” Clarkson said as she officially opened Canada’s National Ukrainian Festival outside Dauphin.

“It’s one that’s not that well known, so I’m happy for you that tomorrow you’re unveiling a memorial to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of that internment.”

A plaque will be consecrated today at the festival site to remember thousands of Ukrainians who were forced into camps across the country and used as free labour to build Canada’s national parks.

Borys Sydoruk, director of special projects for the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association in Calgary, said he never expected the Governor General to broach the internment issue. “Her saying that at this site is major step,” he said. “If (Prime Minister Jean) Chretien did the same thing in the House of Commons, we would be very, very happy.

An immigrant from Hong Kong herself, Clarkson said in an interview it is important to remind people not only about the positive moments in Canadian history, but about the darker ones.

With her comments, Clarkson once again has ventured into controversial waters. Ukrainian groups have criticized the prime minister for abandoning their cause after he won the 1993 federal election.

While in opposition, Chretien told the Ukrainian Canadian Congress he supported its cause. “The Liberal Party understands your concern. As you know, we support

your efforts to secure the redress of Ukrainian-Canadians’ claims arising from your internment,” he wrote in a 1993 letter to the group.



Adrienne Clarkson, Canada’s Governor-General. Redressing the iniquities of the past.

Sydoruk said Ukrainians want wealth that was confiscated from internees to be returned, but they have not asked for the kind of compensation awarded to Japanese internees.

Looking back over her week in Manitoba, Clarkson said children’s services at Rossbrook House in Winnipeg’s north end demonstrate how disadvantaged people can be helped without tearing them away from their families.

Clarkson, 61, is developing a reputation as an activist Governor General,

but she prefers to call herself simply “active”.

This week, she won respect in Sioux Valley Dakota Nation by speaking out in support of the community’s self-government aspirations. She also talked about the need for continued funding to a University of Manitoba program that helps aboriginal students access professional programs.



John Ralston Saul, husband of Adrienne Clarkson, who enunciated a triangular view of Canadian history in his book, *Reflections of a Siamese Twin* (1997), see *Preservings*, No. 13, page 130.

She and husband John Ralston Saul said they were able to maintain their whirlwind pace-36 events in under six days in Manitoba-because the people they met were so inspiring.

Yesterday Clarkson presented a Caring Canadian Award to Dauphin resident Alice Dent, who delivers Meals on Wheels in addition to carrying

out a long list of volunteer activities. “That inspires you and makes you feel wonderful, meeting somebody like that. A real person doing real things,” Clarkson said before heading over to the Dari-Dip for an ice-cream with owner Jack Bay--the uncle of a Toronto friend.

From Winnipeg, Clarkson will head to the Northwest Territories for six days. It is traditional for Governors General to visit every province and territory during their first year in office.

# Volunteer Required.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society is looking for a volunteer interested in serving one or two days a week as research director and coordinator. Must have an interest in the history of the Hanover Steinbach area, and appropriate language and deciphering abilities.

If interested, please call D. Plett editor at (204)326-6454.

# Positive Report by Teacher

Positive Report by Teacher Regarding Mexican Mennonites, Jorge Reimer, Strassborgo, Chihuahua, Mexico.

On July 11 and 12, 2000, Mary Fischer, gave a report in two Amish homes in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, about her experiences among the Mennonites in Mexico, where she taught this year in Gnadenthal [Manitoba Plan]. The Mexican Mennonites had invited her and others from the U.S.A. She reported on the wonderful hospitality among the Mennonites and the interest in improved teaching.

From *Die Zeitung*, Km 14, Apdo 14, Strassborgo Plaza, Chihuahua, Mexico, 31603, Issue No. 3, August 2, 2000, page 5.

Editor’s Note: How wonderful to see some genuine Christian partnering between the Amish Mennonites and the Mennonites in Mexico instead of missionaries such as Jakob Funk, Winnipeg, who seemingly go there largely to demonize and denigrate the local people, seeking to subvert them from Gospel-centric faith. See news release by Funk in *Der Bote*, September 20, 2000, No. 18, page 27, *Canadian Mennonite*, July 31, 2000, Volume 4, Number 15, page 22, and *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, August 11, 2000, page 15, “Mexican Mennonites in Crisis,” which would have been considered defamatory, libelous and slander if written about any other ethno-cultural group.

For example, Funk stated “more than 100 Mennonite men and women are in prison for drug dealing. And that is only the tip of the iceberg.” A member of the Kleine Gemeinde prison visitation program in Chihuahua stated that he could only count three inmates of Mennonite background in prison in the State at the present time only one whom was a member of a Mennonite Church. Funk’s remarks presumably are typical of those seeking to build up their own reputations and denominations.

# MENNONITES - WEST RESERVE



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## Mission Work

Mission Work of Amish Mennonites in Mexico, by Jorge Reimer, Strassborgo, Chihuahua, Mexico.

Mennonites from Indiana and other States are working with a program to give a copy of *Biblischen Geschichten* [the compilation Bible Stories traditionally used in the Mennonite confessional schools], to every Mennonite family in Mexico. They have already made a good start in the N. Casas Grandes and Campeche Colonies. 120 books per month are currently being shipped to El Paso, where Mennonites pick them up and distribute them in designated colonies. There are orders from NCG [Casas Grandes] for over 800 copies. Usually they are distributed by the deacons. The donors are currently preparing a document which the village leaders would sign, which would assure the desired distribution. The books are provided at no cost from Christian Aid Ministries, Ohio [the charitable arm of conservative Mennonites of the Swiss Pennsylvania tradition]. How many more they will make available in this manner is not yet certain.

From *Die Zeitung*, Km 14, Apdo 14, Strassborgo Plaza, Chihuahua, Mexico, 31603, Issue No. 3, August 2, 2000, page 5.

## HSHS Reorganizational Meeting October 17, 2000

The board of directors of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society held a reorganizational meeting October 17, 2000. First elected January 11, 1996, Orlando Hiebert, has resigned as President. He will continue to represent the Society as Past President. Having served for almost five years, Orlando is the longest serving President to date. Orlando is replaced as President by Ralph Friesen, formerly Vice-President. Irene Kroeker, who served as the third President of the HSHS in 1995 replaces Ralph as Vice-President. Ernie Braun, Niverville, was appointed as Corporate Secretary, replacing Lynette Plett. Delbert Plett remains as Treasurer.



The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society board of directors meeting October 17, 2000. Front row: l.-r. Ernest Braun, Hilton Friesen, Irene Kroeker and Ralph Friesen. Rear: Ken Rempel, Henry Fast, Orlando Hiebert, Jake Doerksen, Ben Funk, . Missing from the photograph are D. Plett and Royden Loewen.

## BUHEP Grad 2000: An Auspicious First

On May 26, 2000, the first group of graduates in the Brandon University Hutterite Education Program celebrated their graduation at Baker Colony, McGregor, Manitoba. There were about 300 people in attendance consisting of university professors, some dignitaries, as well as families and friends. There were several speeches as well as a light hearted Power Point presentation in the history of the group and singing.

This graduation is the end result of a program begun as a leap of faith in 1994. The intention was to produce better educated teachers from within the Hutterian Brethren community to staff their confessional school system. Finally after many years of hard work and careful planning the first fruits have come forth.

News article courtesy of *Fairhome Focus*, May June 2000, pages 18-21.

*Preservings* congratulates the Hutterian Brethren for their splendid achievement and wishes them God's blessing in the ongoing work of this endeavour. Here is a program which conservative Mennonite Gemeinden would do well to study and adopt for their own. Higher education is becoming more important but it is equally important that this be pursued within the context of affirming respect and understanding of the faith and culture of the students, a need not being met by other educational facilities.

The Editor

### Sources:

From the *Fairhome Focus*, May June 2000, pages 18-21.



Standing-l.-r.: Jan Brancewicz, Paul Maendel (Oak Bluff), Michael Hofer (Green Acres), Ian Hamburg, Robert Maendel, Colin Mailer, Elma Maendel (Elm River), Butch Wipf (Decker), Kathy Stahl (Odanah), Ernest Waldner (Baker), Catherine Wurtz (Oak River), Gordon Reimer, Serena Maendel (Fairholme), Karl Kleinsasser (Crystal Springs), Susan Tsukamoto, Lloyd Penner. Kneeling: Lydia Hofer (Green Acres), Noaline Hofer, Victor Kleinsasser (Crystal Springs), Sandra Wollmann (Good Hope), Jennifer Kleinsasser (Glenway), Eileen Waldner (Hutterville), Ruth Maendel (Riverbend), Frances Maendel (Baker). Photo courtesy of Fairhome Focus, May June 2000, pages 19.

# Union de Credito de Cuauhtemoc SA de CV

“Grand Opening of Union de Credito de Cuauhtemoc SA de CV, November 10, 2000, Chihuahua State, Mexico,”  
by Delbert F. Plett Q.C., Steinbach, Canada.



*The new home of the Union de Credito, the Mexican Mennonite credit union, officially dedicated on November 10, 2000. The building was modelled after the Credit Union at Rosenort, Manitoba, Canada.*

## **New Building.**

The new premises of the Union de Credito de Cuauhtemoc SA de CV serving the Mexican Mennonites at Cuauhtemoc were officially opened November 10, 2000.

The structure was built at a cost of \$1,300,000 Cdn of which \$800,000 was covered by Government grants. It followed the design of the Rosenort Credit Union in Manitoba, which provided its blue prints.

The building replaced the previous facilities located on the western outskirts of the City of Cuauhtemoc.

## **Location.**

The new Credit Union building is situated on the most prestigious real estate in the area, the intersection of “Gomez Morin” and Highway 28.

“Gomez Morin” is the by-pass around the northern perimeter of Cuauhtemoc coming from Chihuahua. It runs along the southern boundary of the Manitoba Colony.

The four-lane Highway No. 28 runs 40 kilometres north of Cuauhtemoc to Rubio, dissecting the Manitoba Colony.

The Manitoba Colony is the largest of the settlements established by the Old Colony Mennonites in 1922 upon their exile from Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Cuauhtemoc is a city of 100,000 developed as a service centre for the 30,000 Mennonites now living in the area.

Highway 28 is sometimes called “the golden strip”, referring to the 200 businesses

located along the busy stretch of highway. This compares to 280 businesses in the City of Steinbach.

Next to the Credit Union building to the east is the well-known “Electrosola” plant, manufacturing computer wire and employing 200 people. The factory is owned by German investors. The current manager of “Electrosola” is Leonel Klassen.

## **Founding, 1994.**

The Union de Credito was founded in 1994 with 100 members. Peter Rempel, Jakob Heide, Peter Stoesz and Peter Olfert, were the charter members of the first executive. Local apple grower and merchant, Peter Rempel, served as the first President, and his nephew, Jakob de Heide, apple grower and

manufacturer, was the first Vice-President. Jakob de Heide serves as the current President and Peter Rempel, as Vice-President.

From that humble beginning the Credit Union has grown with current assets of over \$20,000,000 Canadian and 800 members.

Under Mexican law all Credit Union employees must be University graduates with appropriate degrees in Agriculture, credit management, computers, etc. For this reason the majority of the Credit Union’s 25 employees are non-Mennonite. Ada Benkomo has been the General Manager of the Union de Credito since the start in 1994.

## **Co-op History.**

The successful co-op ventures quickly established in the Kleine Gemeinde settlements



*The spacious boardroom of the Union de Credito Cuauhtemoc. L.-r.: Franz “Poncho” Rempel, Peter Rempel and Abe de Heide take their places at the oval conference table where the decision making of the Mexican Mennonite Credit Union takes place.*

in Mexico and Belize are not found in the Old Colony territories. The reason for the difference is that the Kleine Gemeinde remained in



Businessman Peter Rempel, founding President of the Union de Credito, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, has been the driving force behind a number of business, cultural and social innovations in the Chihuahua region.

Manitoba until 1948 and were strongly influenced by the co-op movement in that Province during the Depression years. The Old Colony people had already departed from Manitoba by that time and were not influenced at all by Canada's co-op movement.

Instead the impetus and inspiration for the Union de Credito came from the Mexican Credit Union movement. In Mexico credit unions are founded to also start and initiate other co-operative projects such as factories and marketing ventures to provide jobs and community development in a more general way.

Vice-President Peter Rempel stated that "The Credit Union is not seen as an end in itself, in the sense of mere equity growth, but it is seen as a tool to provide cooperative undertakings and the building up of the community overall. This wider concern is critical in stabilizing the local economy and thereby also making member loan risks viable."

The philosophical scope of the Mennonite Credit Union at Cuauhtemoc is wider than that of credit unions in Manitoba, where the main operating paradigm is the management of money with financial returns the primary goal.

According to Peter Rempel, founding President, the Cuauhtemoc Credit Union considers the overall social and economic well-

being of its cultural constituency. Thus when beans were selling for only a low price in 1999, the Credit Union intervened in the market, purchasing large quantities and warehousing them. Later the beans were cleaned and bagged for sale to supermarkets all over Mexico.

In this way the Credit Union was able to help not only its own members but by raising the prices which coyotes (the brokers) had to pay, they were also able to increase the cash flowing into the area by a considerable amount.

**Motto.**

The motto of the Credit Union is recorded on a bronzed plate displayed in the entry way of the new building:

"God would not have given us the capacity to dream without also giving us the capability to transform the dream into a reality. The simple things are already done, but that which is difficult will be done, and that which is impossible, we must submit ourselves to."

The Union de Credito at Cuauhtemoc is only one example of how the innovative Mennonites in the Bustillos Valley near Cuauhtemoc have united to build a stronger community.

**"Iman"**

"Iman" from the Kleine Gemeinde School Centre, Centro Escolar Evangelico, Jagueyes, Mexico.

**Normal School.**

The normal school or teachers' college of the Kleine Gemeinde in Mexico this summer was alternated, one week in Quellen Colony, and during a second week in the school on the street at Campo 67. Forty male and female teachers took part. Teacher Hein Wolf planned the entire seminar and chaired the sessions. The Normal School is a program of the General School Committee [of the Kleine Gemeinde at Jagueyes].

At the same time there was also a teachers' college in La Honda, Zacatecas, with teacher Henry K. Reimer from the Quellen Colony as the instructor.

**Iman.**

The teachers' college and secondary school held every year, early in summer, is now called "Iman". By some it will always be known as the "June School" or the "general teachers' college".

It was considered necessary to give this school a different name in order to avoid the name "teachers' school". Too many interested individuals are turned away by the name "Teachers' School". Not everyone wants to become a teacher. Certainly all youths and many others could benefit from attending this school.

At the suggestion of one of the ministers, the search for another name was undertaken. After many discussions, the students of the year 2000, decided for the name "Iman". It is the acronym for the Spanish "Instituto Manantial (Quellen-Institut or primary institute). The word "Iman" in Spanish means "magnet", and, it is hoped, the school will inspire many people like a magnet.

Will you be attending "Iman" next year?

From *Nachrichten aus dem Schulzentrum*, Year 6, No. 1, August 2000, page 1, published by Centro Escolar Evangelico, Jagueyes, Aptd 502, Cd. Cuauhtemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico, 31500.



The Kleine Gemeinde teacher's college ("Zentral Schule") at Campo 67 (Lichfeld in Colony Ojo de la Yegua, not far from Heuboden where Kleine Gemeinde from Meade, Kansas, settled in 1926). The teachers are taking a break during the instructional sessions. Photo courtesy Nachrichten aus dem Schulzentrum, Year 6, No. 1, August 2000, page 1.

**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 Ernest Braun, Box 595, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0 phone 204-388-6146.

The Randy Kehler, "Chortitzer CD-ROM", is still available for \$100.00 a copy at Mennonite Books, 67 Flett Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Tol Free: 800-465-6564  
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# ***Hanover Steinbach Historical Society***

**- presents -**

## **Genealogy and Family History Day - March 4, 2001**

The Annual Genealogy and Family History Day sponsored by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society will be held at the Heritage Village Museum on Saturday, March 4, 2001.

**DATE: Saturday, March 4, 2001**

**PLACE: Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach**

### **Agenda**



*Writer and educator Edith Friesen, Winnipeg, inspires beginners and more advanced researchers attending the family history workshop.*

**10:00 a.m.:** Opening remarks and welcome, HSHS President Ralph Friesen.

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 - 1:00 p.m.** Orlando Hiebert, chair. Alf Redekopp, "Computers, Internet, New Resources and Russian Archives"; Edith Friesen, "Writing your grandparents' biography". and Henry Fast, "Kleefeld, an example of village research";

**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, bread, pastries, and coffee or tea available.



*Historian Henry Fast talks about his two decade long quest in re-searching the history of Kleefeld, said to be the oldest Mennonite village in Western Canada. "How to do a community history." Photos from Preservings, No. 16, page 66-67.*

# Articles

## Johann E “Cluck’ke” Toews, Greenland

Johann F. “Cluck’ke” Toews (1853-1915), Greenland, Manitoba, by Lee Toews, 526 Edison Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0M4.

### Background.

This writing is about my grandparents Johann F. Toews (1853-1915) and Elisabeth Geerke Toews (1844-1924), Greenland, Manitoba, and their six children who grew to adulthood and married.

Johann F. Toews’s parents were Johann H. Toews (1829-95) and Katharina Friesen (1831-56), daughter of KG minister Abraham F. Friesen (1807-91), Neukirch. They lived in Neukirch for a number of years, where “Mrs. Toews from Neukirch was buried May 6, 1856.”

Johann H. Toews was the half-brother of KG Aeltester Peter Toews (1841-1922), and delegate Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908), later both of Grünfeld, E.R., Manitoba. Brothers Johann, Cornelius and Peter were the sons of Johann Toews (1793-1873), Fischau, Molotschna, who wrote a book “The Watchful Eye of God” in 1850 regarding various life threatening experiences which was published in 1908, and translated and published in English in 1993. Johann Toews Sr. was married for the first time to Elisabeth Harder, Blumstein, the aunt of Johann P. Harder (1811-75), Blumstein, Aeltester of the Ohrloff-Halbstadt Gemeinde from 1860 to 1875.

Johann H. Toews remarried to Anna Warkentin, daughter of Gerhard Warkentin (1796-1848) of Lindenau, formerly of Blumstein. Johann Toews lived in Alexanderkrone, Molotschna. In 1864 they sold their Wirtschafft for 2600 ruble silver and moved to Friedrichsthal, Markuslandt, 15 kilometres north of Alexandrowsk, across from the Old Colony. In 1867 they moved to a new settlement called Grünfeld, some 30 kilometers north of Nikopol, in the Borosenko area. In 1874 they emigrated to Manitoba and settled in the village of Grünfeld, E.R.

More information about Johann Toews (1829-95) is found in the article by son Peter W. “Schmidt” Toews, “Life’s Chronicle,” in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 137-155. For the story of son Cornelius W. Toews see Ted Wiebe, “Cornelius W. Toews (1871-1946),” in *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 100-103.

### Baptism and Marriage, 1872.

Sunday, May 14, 1872, Johann F. Toews (1853-1915) was presented to the Gemeinde after the worship service in Blumenhoff, Borosenko, together with a group of 14 KG young people “who wished to be baptised, (Peter Toews, “Di-

ary,” *Profile*, page 154).

There seems to be some uncertainty about how Johann met Elisabeth Geerki, an orphaned girl of German Catholic background. Granddaughter Frieda Hopcraft heard that Johann met his wife-to-be while travelling with horses and wagon to sell some products (possibly a load of wheat being shipped to Nikopol). He stayed at an inn overnight, where he met and fell in love with Elisabeth

about their faith before the Gemeinde,” (Peter Toews, “Diary,” *Profile*, page 161). Both were baptised the following Sunday, the 18th, on confession of their faith on March 18, 1873.

On the following Sunday, March 25, “banns were announced for Johann Toews and Elisabeth Geerki, both in Grünfeld, who had promised each other their hand in marriage. They were betrothed in Grünfeld on Thursday the 28th.”



1909. Jakob G. Toews and Anna Toews and their three oldest daughters, l.-r.: Elisabeth, Mrs. Jakob Esau; Agnes, Mrs. Jakob T. Reimer; and Maria, Mrs. Aron Wiebe. All photographs for this article are courtesy of Lee Toews, 526 Edison Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0M4.

Geerki, a charming and beautiful young woman (Note One).

However, granddaughter Elma Toews Barkman (Mrs. Waldon) heard the story that Elisabeth Geerki was working as maid in the home of the senior Johann Toews’ where son Johann met her. According to the 1881 census Elisabeth Geerke was born in Germany.

In any case on March 11, 1873, both Johann and Elisabeth were in a group of KG baptismal candidates “who were examined and questioned

### Emigration, 1874.

In 1874 Johann F. and Elisabeth Toews immigrated to Manitoba, Canada, travelling with the first group of Mennonite settlers, arriving at the Forks in Winnipeg on July 31, 1874. With them was their oldest son Johann born May 18, 1874 who would die of cancer of the eyes in August, 1914, leaving a large family.

Together with his father and father’s uncles, Aeltester Peter Toews, and delegate Cornelius Toews, Johann and Elisabeth settled in Grünfeld (later known as Kleefeld), East Reserve, where they filed for a homestead on SW5-5-7E on September 3, 1874. The adjacent quarter NW5-5-7E was purchased by Johann Toews on July 2, 1888.

These lands were adjacent to the village of Heuboden, situated immediately to the west. Nevertheless Johann and Elisabeth Toews lived in the village of Grünfeld. They were insured for \$175 for buildings and \$150 for feed and equipment in the KG Brandordnung. The insurance on their buildings was reduced to \$125 on April 1, 1876, and to \$100 on April 1, 1877. On September 17, 1881, the newly purchased buildings from Schwarz were entered in the insurance for \$150 on the residence, \$75 for the barn, and \$75 for the second house. All coverage was cancelled on December 25, 1882, indicating that the family had left the KG and joined the Holdeman Gemeinde.

In 1877 Abraham S. Friesen in Steinbach, Manitoba built a windmill for which Johann’s father “made the gears.” Finally the mill was ready for its trial run. In his “Life’s Chronicle,” brother Peter “Schmidt” Toews recorded that “My brother Johann was there too,” (*Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 141).

### Farming.

Johann Toews Sr. moved slowly when it came to buying equipment and converting to horse power

from oxen. Son Johann F. Toews presumably was more progressive as according to son Peter, the parents "...often used brother Johann's plow."

Sometime around 1879 brother Peter W. Toews "...went to the woods together with Johann about 10 miles southeast of Steinbach." Brother Peter later recalled some of their adventures working together as woodsmen. One time they returned home with loads of logs at 3 a.m.

The next winter Johann Toews Sr. and son Johann F. Toews built a board shanty in the woods which they hauled to the woods with a sleigh. It had room for six men. One time they were almost out of food and getting cold. "The last day Johann got up early...[Peter was]...still half asleep and heard him sing what seemed to be a sad song." On another occasion brothers Peter and Heinrich headed for Steinbach with a load of logs when their sleigh tipped. Peter ran back to the camp to get brother Johann to help them out.

According to the 1883 assessment records Johann and Elisabeth Toews owned 320 acres of land with 48 acres cultivated, five oxen, three cows, etc. with a total assessment of 712--in the median range for the village. By 1884 their assessment had increased to 778, the sixth highest in the village. They had finally acquired two horses, among the last in the East Reserve to make the change from oxen.

In 1884 the Johann Toews family lost their home to fire (*Prairie Pilgrims*, page 58).

In 1889 Johann wrote a letter to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* postmarked "Hochstadt P. O." inquiring about his brother-in-law Martin Geerki.

### Greenland, 1898.

The Johann Toews family from Grünfeld became the first settlers to move to Greenland "...they settled two miles west of the present church site in 1890," (*History of the Congregations*, page 163). They settled on the SW7-8-6E in the R. M. of Ste. Annes. They chose this quarter because it had a ridge across it, it was a little higher than the surrounding ground. It was also closer to the creek. The property had a good artesian well where neighbours frequently came to get water.

Johann F. Toews was "...very instrumental and involved in starting up the school in Greenland." Granddaughter Frieda Hopcraft, Linden, Alberta, recalled that Johann Toews "was instrumental in establishing the first public school in the Greenland area." Son Heinrich G. Toews "said he had only four winters of school. The school only ran the winter months, during the summers months they were too busy on the farm."

Johann loved gardening. He planted many trees: maple, plum and cherries. The yard became a beautiful park. He freely shared the fruit with neighbours. People said that the cherries that grew there were especially good (Note Two).

Son Jakob G. Toews also talked about Johann F. Toews "as a kind and loving father." When brother Peter's wife Anna Broesky died in 1901, Johann stepped in to persuade Peter's housekeeper, Aganetha K. Kornelsen (later Mrs. Jakob Schellenberg), to stay on to help him so that Peter did not have to stay alone with his young children.

Johann felt close to his siblings: when Peter



*This is the house where most of the Jakob G. Toews children were born. The house was being moved from the Kleefeld area to Greenland. One of the tractors belonged to Abr. G. Toews. It must be the same machine identified as an gas-powered International tractor owned by Abram G. Toews, in a photo published in East Reserve 125 Years, page 70, Can anyone identify the make and model of these machines?*

moved to Linden, Alberta, in 1907, and had everything loaded on train cars in Giroux "...Johann came for the farewell."

### Cluck'ke Toews.

Johann F. Toews was a chicken farmer, presumably among the first in Manitoba to specialize in that line. In those days the chickens were hatched with brood hens, "Cluck'ke" in Plaut-Dietsch. He must have had quite a few. Apparently son Abe was responsible for giving his father the nickname "Cluck'ke Toews". The name stuck. Grandson Lee Toews has reported that as recently as five years ago, someone asked him if he was related to "Cluck'ke Toews."

Following in the tradition of the pioneering enterprises of Johann F. Toews, the Greenland area by the 1930s had become one of the most advanced communities in Manitoba specializing in poultry farming, particularly with broilers and layers.

### Death, 1915.

Johann F. Toews died in 1915 at the age of 62 of a heart attack.

The following was related by grandson Ben E. Toews. After his father had passed away he accompanied his grandfather Johann F. Toews to the elevator with a load of grain. On the way home grandpa asked him to take the reins since he did not feel too well. When they got home, Ben E. Toews realized that grandfather had passed away on the wagon. This was just 14 months after he had lost his father, Johann G. Toews (As related to Don Toews).

Granddaughter Elma Toews Barkman (Mrs. Waldon) recalled being told that Johann F. Toews was of average height and build.

Grandmother Elisabeth Geerki Toews died in 1924 when grandson Lee Toews was six years old and so he remember her quite well.

"In her last 10 years or so, grandmother lived with youngest son, Heinrich G. Toews, about three-

quarters of a mile from where my parents lived. My twin sister, Helen (Mrs. Simon Reimer) and I would gladly walk over there to visit her. She was always kind and sweet, and she always had a peppermint candy for us. She went to be with the Lord at the age of 80 years old."

Johann and Elisabeth had eight children: Elisabeth (1872-3); Johann (1874—1914); Elisabeth (1876-7); Jakob (1878—1945); Elisabeth (b. 1880); Peter (1882-1972); Abram (1885—1969); and Heinrich (1888-1976). Biography of Johann F. and Elisabeth Geerki Toews compiled by Delbert F. Plett.

### The Farm, SW7-8-6E.

After Johann F. Toews' death in 1915 youngest son Heinrich G. Toews took over the farm. Daughter Elisabeth Toews lived with him and his family and continued living on the farm for a while after her marriage to George Warkentin.

After Heinrich G. Toews sold the farm in 1928, it was owned by Aron R. Wiebe who had the Greenland Telephone Central. Aron R. Wiebe moved to Abbotsford, B. C., in 1948 where he founded "Brookdale Farms" which later became part of Canadian Inovatech, the largest specialty egg processing company in Canada.

Thereafter the farm was purchased by George W. Wohlegmuth who was killed in a car train accident in Ste. Annes, Manitoba. His widow Linda remarried to Henry R. Wiebe from Kansas. Thereafter the farm was sold to her son-in-law Milton Warkentin who sold it to brother Marlin Warkentin in 1978, the current owner.

### Johann G. Toews 1874-1914.

By grandson Donald J. Toews, Montreal, Quebec.

My grandfather Johann G. Toews was the first born of Johann F. and Elisabeth (Geerki) Toews on May 18, 1874. He came along with his parents who immigrated to Canada later in the same year arriving at Winnipeg on July 31, 1874.

Johann G. Toews spent most of his growing up years in the Greenland area. He married Mary Giesbrecht March 24, 1901. On May 29, 1902, Mary died.

May 26, 1903, Johann remarried to Anna, daughter of Johann T. Enns of Rosenort. To this union were born six children, four of whom reached adulthood: David (1904-05; Bernhard (my father) (1905-91), Elsie (married Aaron Penner) (1907-98), Maria (married Jake Kehler) (1909-92), Armien (married Katherine Klassen) (1911-97).

Johann G. Toews suffered with cancer of the eyes to which he succumbed on Aug. 7, 1914 at the young age of 40 years. My father the oldest child was nine years old at the time. George R. Wiebe, Greenland, relates how he accompanied his father Jacob T. Wiebe to grandfather's place which was 1/4 mile west of their place to wash out his eyes with a strong solution. This had given grandfather tremendous pain. The treatment was apparently prescribed by Dr. Isaak L. Warkentin, Blumenhof.

Farming had been hard enough when grandfather was still alive. Now grandmother had to take care of the farm with her young children. Neighbours and friends helped at times to make life a little easier. They had a good house, reasonable barn and a drive-through granary. You could drive into the granary with a big wagon and unload on either side.

The place that they were living on (NW32-7-6E) had earlier been the home of Isaac de Veer, who had married the widow of Heinrich Wiebe, father of Jacob T. Wiebe, Anna, Mrs. Klaas Friesen, and Peter H. ("Post") Wiebe. Aaron Wiebe, son of Jakob T. Wiebe bought this place when grandparents moved to Steinbach.

Grandmother Anna Toews was a widow till Feb 5, 1931 when she married John W. Klassen from Linden, Alberta, who had been a widower for four years. He brought six children into the home: Esther, Ed, Joe, Kay, Elisabeth and Margaret.

They moved back to Greenland on October of the same year they were married. Later in their retirement years they moved their house to Lichtenau onto the farm of son Ben E. Toews 1 1/2 miles west of Steinbach (SE33-6-6E). They lived here until Grandmother died in 1952. Grandfather Klassen died at the age of 91 years.

#### Jakob G. Toews (1878-1945).

Jacob G. Toews married Anna Giesbrecht (1880-1951) on February 10, 1901. Anna was the daughter of Gerhard Giesbrecht (1846-1907), one of the Steinbach pioneers in 1874 and mayor of the village in 1883.

Anna Giesbrecht Toews gave birth to 15 children. Three of them died in infancy. My sister Adina (1919-23), four years younger than I, died at age four.

#### The Farm.

Jakob G. Toews acquired the NE12-8-5E, two miles west of the Greenland church and half-a-mile north. Johann M. Penners were their next neighbours to the west on the NW12-8-5E. Both families lived on the north side of the half-mile road, part of the original Ste. Annes Road which connected Ste. Annes and Ile des Chene. The



Home of Jakob G. and Anna Giesbrecht Toews, NE12-8-5E, in the R. M. of Tache. Their son Lee Toews is riding Smokey. Circa 1937 or 1938. The farm was located kitty-corner to the northwest from the farm of Jakob's parents', Johann F. Toews, situated on SW7-8-6E.

Cornelius Wohlgemuth daughters now live where the Jakob G. Toews family previously lived.

Jakob G. and Anna Toews were farmers. Seeding and harvesting were the busy times. Cattle, hogs, and chickens kept them busy the rest of the year. Our parents also owned a quarter section of bush land. During the wintertime my dad would supply our school with firewood. I still remember him hiring two or three men to cut wood.

It was during the depression time, "The Dirty Thirties". Wages and prices were very low. Twenty-five cents a day was the going wage at that time. When the wood cutting contract was filled, my dad would have to lay the men off. Some of them offered to work for room and board only. Things were different back then.

Jakob G. Toews was a hard worker, mind you he had to work hard to raise a family of 12.

Jakob G. Toews was noted for his physical strength. I believe he was sometimes called "The man of Steel"!

Economically speaking my parents were considered poor people, and by today's standards we would have been very poor.

#### Faith.

However, the good book says that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God that proceedeth out of his mouth."

My parents taught us the fundamental faith that can only be found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Daily family devotions were a rule of the day. That was also done in a positive way. Looking back now I have to say our parents left us a legacy of precious memories and a rich heritage that we are still benefiting from today.

Jakob G. Toews was quite conservative in his faith. This is recalled in a story from around 1930 when the Toews were visiting at the home of brother-in-law Cornelius E. Giesbrechts, living on 12-8-6E, just north of what is now known as "Greenland Road." When the family sat down with their guests for the noon meal, Mr. Giesbrecht wanted Jakob Toews to say the table grace.

Jakob Toews found it difficult to pray out loud as he "was still too Kleine Gemeensch." To break the ice, Mrs. Toews jokingly said that her husband could not pray out loud because "his big toe hurt him too much."

#### Stories.

My father was a great storyteller. Usually Saturday mornings, right after breakfast, he would gather us around him and read or tell us stories from a paper called *The Northwestern*, also bible stories. He was also a man of prayer and faith. He took great pleasure in telling us how God had answered his prayers. I will try and tell one of his stories that he told us several times, and we never got tired of hearing it. The story is true. It happened in the late twenty's or early thirty's.

We had a red cow at our home. Her name was Rosey. She was a mean animal, also quite dangerous at times. We kids had to be careful to stay away from her. One day my dad decided it was time to take her to the stockyard and sell her.

It was during the month of November. There was not too much snow on the ground but enough so that he had to take her in the sleigh. When he got about a half a mile from the stockyard, to his horror Rosey had broken loose. She had jumped right out of the sleigh and ran away. What was he going to do now? He could not race after her on account of there was not enough snow on the street. He did the only thing he could think of. He knelt right down beside the sleigh and talked to the creator of all things, and that included the cow! As he was finished praying he looked up and saw two cowboys on horseback riding towards him.

They stopped and asked if they could help him. Well needless to say he could use their help. He told them his dilemma and in a few minutes they had roped the cow and had her back on the sleigh tied down. After thanking them several times and thanking the heavenly Father, he proceeded to the stockyards.

Another story as told to me by one of my older sisters Margaret Loewen, of Abbotsford BC, hap-

pened in the late 1920s. My father used to sell oats to the T. Eaton Co. in Winnipeg. He would haul it in a large sleigh. On one particular trip he got as far as the Norwood Bridge in Winnipeg, and his sleigh got stuck. He tried very hard to get out, but no luck. When all his attempts failed he again turned to his heavenly Father, and just like that, a kind gentleman came from behind with a truck and gave him a push. I'm sure that must have "made his day". An answer to a much needed prayer request!

#### Humour.

In addition to what I have already wrote about him, my father also had a sense of humour. He would quite often tell humorous stories that would put a smile on people's faces.

One story goes like this: there had been an argument between a man and his wife. The argument had become so strong that the wife decided she would never talk to her husband again. So after this silent treatment had gone on for several days, the husband got an idea. He came running into the house, opening every drawer he could find. He looked into cupboards and behind doors, pretending he was looking for something very important.

After this had gone on for some time, she broke her silence (that did it) and she said five words, "WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?"

His reply was, with a heart-warming smile: "I am looking for your mouth to say something."

Well, needless to say, they both started to laugh, and they were in each other's arms, and all was forgotten.

#### Anna Giesbrecht Toews.

My mother was also a hard working person.

One of the things she loved very dearly was to have a garden and lots of flowers. She loved to see things grow. I can still see several rows of hollyhocks. They would grow up to 5 or 6 feet high, a sight to behold.

Another highlight that occurred in our parents' home happened in 1924 when my father brought home his first car. It was a 1918 Model T Ford Touring. I was six years old at the time, and believe me, it was a real highlight for me, and of course, the rest of the family.

The Rev. Jacob Barkman was the salesman working for J. R. Friesen. He came to our home and sold my dad this 1918 limousine for \$100.00.

I can still remember well the excitement it caused in the family, especially to us children. Those who were old enough were given a chance to drive the car around the yard... very slowly. The first pedal was the clutch, the middle was to back up, and the third pedal was the brake. In that order was it explained to all the new drivers that day.

When it came to my mother's turn, she of course didn't want to drive, but with the kids coaching her, she finally consented to try it as well.

But with all the excitement going on, she had

forgotten which pedal was the brake, She had to stop somehow so she drove the car against a small building.

Well, that ended her driving career.

We loved our parents dearly. They have given us so much of themselves, for which we as a Toews family are forever grateful. God Bless. Lee Toews

#### The Farmyard.

The house that we lived in was a log house with two large rooms downstairs and two bedrooms upstairs. This was the home where 12 kids grew up. Two more rooms were later added to the house.

Our barn was 100 feet away from the house and was filled with animals: 5 or 6 horses and 8 to



*Peter G. Toews (1882-1972) and family, l.-r., mother Katharina Toews; daughter Amanda, Mrs. Peter F. Barkman; father Peter G. Toews; Alma, Mrs. Waldon Barkman, on father's knee; Anna, Mrs. John G. Friesen; Andrew; and Elizabeth, Mrs. Peter F. Barkman.*

10 milk cows. There were lots of chores to be done. At the age of 10 or so, we had to take part in milking, feeding the cattle, cleaning the barns, etc.

Money was hard to come by those days, so our dad taught his sons to earn a few cents for ourselves. He showed us how to comb the horses' tails and save the hair for selling. As I think of those days, I was amazed how after some months we had earned a whole dollar. That was our spending money.

#### Descendants.

Among the many descendants of Jakob G. and Anna Toews is grandson Hugh Wiebe, Bellingham, Washington, U.S.A., part owner of Inovatech Industries, with plants in Winnipeg, Abbotsford, B.C., and Ste. Mary, Ontario, as well as U.S.A., Mexico and Europe.

#### Elizabeth (Toews) Warkentin (1880-1981).

Elizabeth (Toews) Warkentin (1880-1981) was only daughter of Johann and Elizabeth Toews. Two baby girls died in infancy whom they had named Elizabeth. The third baby girl lived. She reached the ripe age of 101.

Elizabeth married George Warkentin in 1923, see Plett, *Dynasties*, page 95 for the history of his family. He was a brother to Abr. Warkentin who had "Abe's Pop-in" Restaurant, a portable kitchen on wheels, during the 1930s. It was located on Steinbach Main Street where the Post Office is today. They were grandsons of Steinbach pioneer Gerhard Warkentin (1848-1900).

Elisabeth and George Warkentin had no children. They lived in Greenland and later Ekron near Steinbach. He died in the Maplewood Manor, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Heinrich G. Toews told a story about Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Abe. One day while they were milking cows, he kept teasing her.

She took it quietly. When she had a pail full of milk, she got up walked over to him and dumped the whole pail of milk on his head. They both had a good sense of humour. Life was not dull around there. As recalled by Frieda Hopcraft.

No photograph available.

#### Peter G. Toews 1882-1972.

In 1904 Peter G. Toews 1882-1972 married Katherina Toews 1883-1977, daughter of Peter B. "Grouta" Toews, see Cathy Barkman, "Anna Toews (1868-1933): Midwife," *Preservings*, No. 10, Part Two, pages 50-53. Grouta Toews was 6 1/2 feet tall and hence the name. Peter G. Toews was an average sized man but by comparison to his father-in-law he was called Small "Kleine" Toews.

Peter G. and Katharina Toews had eight children all born in Greenland.

Peter was a kind outgoing person always greeting everyone with a friendly smile. He was always ready to give help where there was a need.

He was very proud of his family. He lovingly spoke of his Katherina and called her his "Sweet-heart".

They farmed in Greenland living together with Mr. and Mrs. Martin M. Penner. The women helped each other with almost everything, especially the sewing machine. They farmed in the Greenland area for several years.

In 1906 they sold the farm and moved to the Lorette (today Landmark) area. Mother was so lonely here they moved back to Greenland in 1907. Peter G. Toews worked hard to make the farm pay with cows, horses, hogs, etc. Shortly after this move, brother Johann G. Toews and family moved in with them.

Peter G. and Katherina Toews were great gardeners and beautified every place they lived. Katharina loved to read seed catalogues. She ordered seeds that would make a quick high hedge to protect her garden. Some time later she ordered



Abraham G. Toews (1885-1969) and wife Helen Wiens. Abram G. Toews lived in Ste. Annes, Manitoba.

the same seeds called "Hemp". She received a letter that these seeds were off the market. Today we all know what hemp is.

Peter G. Toews and son Andrew built a tennis court which the entire family (and then some) enjoyed. Peter was a carpenter, a trade which kept him busy.

Presently they moved to Steinbach, so the children would be close to school, and have the opportunity for a good education. In 1923 Peter G. Toews purchased the C. T. Kroeker property on Main Street in Steinbach, Manitoba, just south of the Kleine Gemeinde church (the property formerly owned by Aeltester Peter R. Dueck), see E. Toews, "Steinbach Main Street," in *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, page 70. The transaction was a trade with the Kroekers taking the Toews' farm in Greenland.

Later they sold the farm and moved to B. C. for a few years. Next they moved back to Steinbach where Peter G. Toews died in 1972. Katherina Toews moved to Valhannen, B. C. living in a nursing home. She moved back to Steinbach where she died in 1977.

#### Abram G. Toews 1885-1969.

Abram G. Toews married his second cousin, Helena Wiens, daughter of Isaak Wiens and Anna W. Toews, see *Dynasties*, page 472-3.

Heinrich G. Toews told a story about brother Abe G. Toews, who had a finger cut off when they were sawing wood.

There were no hospitals. They phoned the doctor at Ste Anne who came out to the farm to see the patient. They put him on the kitchen table and performed the surgery. My father helped give the chloroform. They had to cut more of the bone to be able to sew up the skin. All went well and the surgery was successful.

In 1968 I visited my uncle Abe and aunt Helen. While we were sitting at the kitchen table, Uncle

Abe said, "This is the table they put me on to sew up my finger." As recalled by Frieda Hopcraft (niece).

Grandson Ernie Toews, Landmark, recently recalled how as a five year-old boy, Abr. G. Toews had shown his hand and told him the story how he lost his fingers.

Abram G. Toews must have been an enterprising young man. He apparently owned one of first large gas powered tractors in the Greenland area, see *Reflections*, page 182. Lee Toews recalled that his uncle Abram G. Toews loved tractors and had owned quite a few--a Titan with two cylinders and a Mogul with one cylinder. He did custom work for the neighbours, especially fall ploughing.

Grandson Lee Toews also remembered the day his uncle came to his home to tell father he had become a Christian--they were driving a wagon with two horses. He had seen a vision, two roads in the sky, a wide road and a narrow one. Lee remembered uncle Abram as a very strong man, fearless and brave.

Abram G. Toews was a colourful character. He was very outspoken, he always talked about politics and sports. He had a radio which he kept hidden which was his information source. In his younger years he got caught making moonshine.

Nephew Lee Toews recalled uncle Abram had a sense of humour and was quite a tease. In his younger years he was known as being wild. Feuds were common in those days. For example, there were seven Penner families and five Toews brothers in Greenland, plus a few buddies also Toewses. This was their entertainment before the days of radio and T.V.

In their later years Abram and Helena Toews lived on Vandal Street, in the village of Ste. Annes. He was legally blind and walked with a white cane. They did not drive for themselves and depended on others to get around.

He was periodically separated from the church. At his death he was reconciled with the church and died with a good hope of salvation.

They were the parents of Rosella, Mrs. Peter Siemens, and Ben Toews, whose widow, Minna Siemens Toews, is presently living in Linden Place, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Interview with granddaughter Mrs. Art Klassen, nee Grace Toews, Box 289, La Broguerie, Manitoba, R0A 0W0.

#### Heinrich G. Toews (1888-1976).

Heinrich G. Toews was the youngest of the children of Johann F. and Elisabeth Geerki Toews. December 1919 Heinrich married Anna Toews. To this union six children were born, including Frieda Toews Hopcraft who contributed some of the recollections for this biographical sketch.

Heinrich and his family remained in the parental farm until 1928 when they moved to Alberta.

Heinrich loved music, he loved singing. He would sing in the morning when he stoked up the fires. He would sing as he walked about doing the chores.

I remember a story my father told about when they were young. A group of young people managed to buy some instruments. Because musical instruments were not approved of by the church they hid them and got together secretly to practice. They found that Sunday mornings worked out

good when the parents were off to church.

This particular Sunday morning they planned to meet at father's house. After the parents were safely off to church, they struck up the band.

This Sunday morning father sensed something was going on. He decided to walk back home. Quietly he opened the door and walked in. The musicians were in full swing.

He said to them, "Boys you don't need to hide your instruments. If you play good Christian music you can get together and play. Be open don't hide it."

Heinrich G. Toews father played the violin and mouth organ.

He was a man of deep faith. He had a personal relationship with his heavenly Father.

I remember family devotions when we all knelt to pray. I remember my father praying that God would keep His protecting hand over his family. We his children are deeply grateful for our Christian heritage.

As recalled by Frieda Hopcraft (Daughter).

#### Sources:

Plett, *Dynasties of the Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia and North America* (Steinbach, 2000), pages 470-73.

Aaron C. Toews, *Johann Toews 1829-1895* (Linden, Alberta, 1972), 126 pages.

Peter W. "Schmedt" Toews, "Life's Chronicle," in Plett, *Pioneers and Pilgrims* (Steinbach, 1990), pages 137-155. For a photo of Peter W. Toews, see *East Reserve 1874-1999*, page 27.

#### Endnotes:

Note One: This story was recalled by Anna Toews Friesen, Abbotsford, B. C., daughter of Peter G. Toews, brother to Jakob.

Note Two: Recollections of Frieda Hopcraft, Box 501, Linden, Alberta, T0M 1J0, daughter of Heinrich G. Toews.



Jakob G. Toews (1878-1945) and younger brother Heinrich G. Toews (b. 1888).



and poorer farmers acquire property of their own.

Isaak Harms (1811-91), Lindenau, Molotschna Colony, was one of the principle promoters of the KG resettlement program for its landless young families. In July, 1863, Harms together with son Cornelius and the future Aeltester Peter Toews (1841-1922) toured the area around Nikopol and Alexandrovsk seeking suitable parcels of land. "At Einlage they crossed over the Dnieper, where we arrived at the home of the nobleman" the owner of the land.

After some negotiations a six-year lease was agreed upon, commencing in 1863.

The village of Friedrichsthal was laid out that fall. It has been suggested this village was later known as Pawlo-Kitschkas. But this is not considered a possibility as Pawlo-Kitschkas was located directly across the river from Einlage. More than likely the KG village of Friedrichsthal became Ebenfeld, or possibly Blumenau.

The village of Andreasfeld was laid out in the spring of 1864. It was known as Andrejewka in Russian.

In 1864 a KG congregation was organized at Markus. A ministerial election was held on November 23, 1864, with the election of brothers-in-law Isaak Friesen (1834-98), Fischau, as minister, with 45 votes, and Peter Wiebe (1829-1901), Schönau, as deacon, with 29 votes. A total of 78 votes were cast indicating that some 40-50 KG families settled on the Markus land in two villages.

The Isaak Friesen family relocated to Blumenhof, Borosenko, and in 1874 emigrated to Kansas, settling in Gnadenau and in 1894 in Weatherford, Oklahoma (Note Six).

### Pioneering, 1863-69.

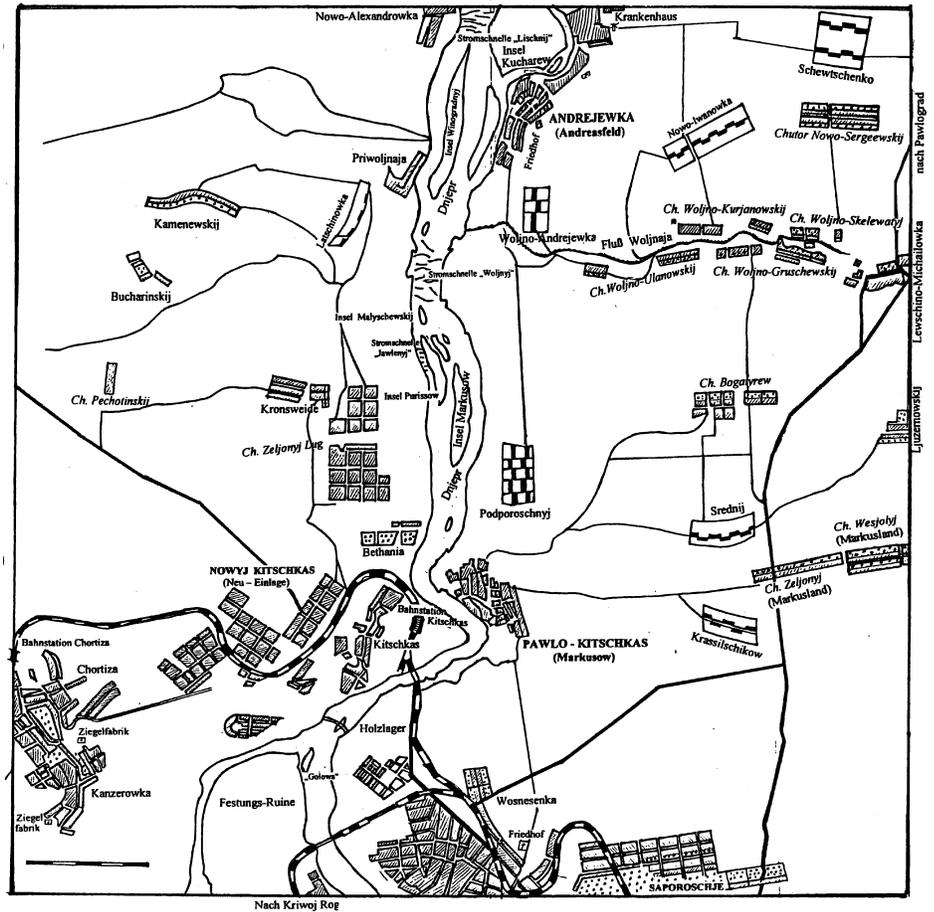
Many young KG farmers got their start at Markusland.

Klaas R. Reimer (1837-1906), later pioneer merchant in Steinbach, Manitoba, moved from Kleefeld, Molotschna, to the village of Friedrichsthal together with his parents and siblings in 1864. Young Klaas, the grandson of KG founder Klaas Reimer, had fallen deeply into debt in the Molotschna through various land rentals and bad fortune.

Reimer later described their experiences in the new settlement "...we lived here on Markus for five years"...we were always able to earn some income in the blacksmith shop...We lived in a *semclin*, and the blacksmith shop was also dug half into the earth.....My brother Abraham Reimer was my neighbour and he brought his blacksmith shop along from Kleefeld. Here he reerected his premises so that both the blacksmith shop and the *semclin* were dug half into the earth. The parents also lived at Reimers in a *semclin* which we were able to build very cheaply."

In 1866 Klaas R. Reimer and brother Abraham purchased sheep for two ruble a piece and "had good luck with them."

As a result he was able to build a new house and improve his blacksmith shop. Soon he had



Map of Mennonite settlements in the Chortitza/Zaporozhe area 1930, just prior to the completion of the "Dnieprogress" hydro electric dam in 1932. The map shows the location of Einlage (Kitschkas) and Andrejewka (Andreasfeld), further north on the left bank (east) of the Dnieper. Northwest across the river are the Jasykowo villages including Hochfeld, where Arnold Dyck grew up. Note the various Chutors ("ch") shown along the river "Woljnaja". See also map of the area prepared by the Stumpp army group 1941-43 and published in Loewen, Jasykowo (Beausejour, Manitoba, 1995), page 167, and many other places, showing the area along the Dnieper after the flooding. The 1930 map was found among declassified military documents of the U. S. Army and obtained by William Schroeder, 434 Sutton Ave, Winnipeg. It was redrawn with German captions by historian Adina Reger, Weiszenthurm, Germany.

two workers and was building three and four bottom plows, indeed, "many master blacksmiths came to ...[his] shop in order that" Reimer would demonstrate how to build them properly.

In 1869 Reimer sold his Anwohnerstelle to a Johann Warkentin for 800 ruble. He sold three wagons and some plows he had manufactured at the *Jahrmark* (annual fair). He also sold 100 sheep, a third of his flock, to Martizan (Markusov?), for 4 ruble a piece, effectively doubling his money. He was now able to pay off all his creditors.

Reimer truly felt blest at Markus, Friedrichsthal, where "...we had much good fortune and temporal blessing."

Reimer gave Isaak Harms the testimony that "...he had repeatedly put his entire property at stake for us poorer brethren," (*Storm and Triumph*, page 22-23).

In 1863 Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908), later the delegate, sold his Wirtschaft in Hierschau and moved to Friedrichsthal, Markusland "by Harms." Cornelius had some

interesting adventures during the pioneer times at Markus. For the first winter he and brother-in-law Cornelius P. Goossen had built themselves a *semclin*. Son Johann F. Toews later recalled "On one occasion it occurred that wolves descended upon the roof of our miserable dwelling whereupon they taunted us with their howling and growling. Presently Father and Uncle armed themselves with pitchforks and carefully stepped outside in order to chase them away."

On another occasion "Father and others had ridden to .... [Einlage (Kitschkas)] on the west bank of the Dnieper] on horseback one beautiful winter day. On the way back the ice broke under the horses' hooves so that Father only escaped by valiant exertion."

The move to Markus may also account for certain marriages between KG-ers and spouses from the nearby Old Colony. In 1864 Cornelius P. Toews' wife died and he remarried to Anna Bartel (1838-1918), daughter of Peter Bartel, Kronsgarten (north of Ekatherinoslaw), the widow Peter Friesen from Einlage.

September 9, 1864, Cornelius' father Johann Toews (1793-1873) sold his Wirtschaft in Fischau and also moved to Friedrichsthal (Markuslandt), living on the place of daughter Susanna and Johann P. Goossens and taking over a small farm of 33 1/3 desjation of rented land.

On Pentecost, 1864, son Peter P. Toews (1841-1922) moved to rented land in Andreasfeld. In December 1864, brother Johann Toews (1826-95) sold his Wirtschaft in Alexanderkrone and moved to rented land at Markus.

In the meantime the "...rich estate of Borosenko had been bought by a few family fathers..." of the KG 20 verst north of Nikopol.

In 1866 the Peter Toews family sold their Wirtschaft in Andreasfeld to Aron Lepp, a Brüdergemeinde minister, and purchased land in Blumenhof in the newly founded Borosenko Colony. By 1869 all the KG families had departed from Markusland, thus closing the first segment in the history of the community.

Additional personal accounts and memoirs of KG families at Markuslandt could be added but the foregoing will suffice.

### Brüdergemeinde, 1872.

Many of the KG farms at Andreasfeld were sold to Brüdergemeinders from the Chortitza Colony. Johannes Epp writes that in 1870 "The Markuslandt was bought from the Russian estate owner Markus upon which the village Andreasfeld, in Russian Andrejewka, was settled on some 925 desjation of land some 10 km north of Saporoshje and 15 km distant from Einlage. The leasehold villages of Ebenfeld and Blumenau were founded at Andreasfeld," *Iwanowka*, page 83.

The area, henceforth usually referred to as Andreasfeld, quickly became an important centre for this denomination. In 1870 Andreasfeld was organized as a branch of the Einlage Brüdergemeinde, the main congregation in the Old Colony. In 1872 Andreasfeld became the site of the first Brüdergemeinde conference in Russia.

There were 12 Brüdergemeinde families in Andreasfeld with a membership of 60. Aron Lepp, Andreasfeld, was the Aeltester of the Einlage congregation.

Andreasfeld had its own worship house which served also as a place of worship for the Brüdergemeinders from Einlage and Blumenau. P. M. Friesen writes that "here the Einlage Brüdergemeinde had its first house of prayer under the same roof with a school," (page 404).

In 1870 Heinrich Epp (1831-1916) moved to Andreasfeld from Einlage. He was married to Maria Unger, sister to Abram Unger, first Brüdergemeinde Aeltester in the Old Colony. Heinrich and Maria Epp converted themselves to Separatist Pietism and in 1862 were rebaptised in the Dnieper in accordance with the rites and rituals of this religious culture. In 1907 Heinrich Epp was the author of a biography of brother-in-law Abram Unger. After the death of his wife, Heinrich Epp moved to

Iwanowka, Siberia, where he lived with son Kornelius Epp in Margenau.

August Liebig, Baptist Evangelist, lived at Andreasfeld during the 1870s and for a time it appeared that Baptist religious culture would prevail in the village.

Aron Sawatzky (1876-1935) was born in Andreasfeld in 1876. In 1903 he emigrated to Rosthern, Sask. He was the most prolific of all Mennonite composers in Russia.

P. M. Friesen (page 404, German edition) refers to Jakob Reimer, founder of Wiesenfeld, as "having left Blumenau, which disbanded as a village, after living in the Region Alexandrowsk for 15 years--in Friedrichsfeld near Andreasfeld as renter and in Blumenau, also near Andreasfeld as land owner" (Note Seven).

The importance of the church declined with



*Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908), one of the pioneers in Friedrichsthal, Markuslandt. Photo courtesy of Saints and Sinners, page 317. Toews later served as the delegate to North America for the Blumenhof KG. Toews moved from Grünfeld, E.R., to Steinbach, Manitoba, in 1885.*

the resignation of Aron Lepp as Aeltester in 1903 and the moving away of several families.

The neighbouring villagers of Ebenfeld and the landowners of Blumenau, belonged to other congregations (*ME*, I, page 121).

P. M. Friesen wrote that Blumenau was founded by Brüdergemeinde families from the Molotschna and that its story was marked by "the tragic sin of three prominent leaders" whom he does not name (P. M. Friesen, footnote 1, pages 403-4, see also page 416).

The Brüdergemeinde sources all refer to Andreasfeld as being founded around 1870, presumably originating from P. M. Friesen, page 404. The failure to refer to the KG founding of Andreasfeld is not explained. Perhaps the omission reflects the anxiety of Separatist-Pietists regarding these successful sectarians

who continued to adhere to Gospel-centric faith. This underlines the reality that all conservative Mennonite groups must take responsibility for documenting their own history and to take ownership of their own story.

### Flurbuch, 1898.

According to the Flurbuch (Survey Record) the following were the registered land owners in Andreasfeld in 1886: Johann Abraham Neufeld, Heinrich Johann Neufeld, Jakob Johann Neufeld, Gerhard Jakob Sawatskij, Aron Peter Lepp, Kornelius Wilhelm Unrau, Peter Kornelius Froese, Johann Kornelius Froese, Kornelius Kornelius Froese, Heinrich Kornelius Epp, Johann Kornelius Epp and Johann Peter Siemens. (courtesy of Zaporozhe State Archives, August, 2000).

A list of the first Brüdergemeinde residents of Andreasfeld is found in Johannes Epp, *Iwanowka* (Beilefeld, 1992), pages 83-84.

### Petermann's, 1898.

According to *Petermann's Mitteilungen*, 1898, Andreasfeld was situated in the Nataljew Vollost, and was grouped together with four other villages, "Neu-Schönwiese (Dmitrowka/St. Leshina)(117) founded in 1867, Grünhoffenthal (29), Eigenfeld (49), Ebenberg and Andreasfeld (49). Together the five villages encompassed 3800 desjation of land. Schönwiese, Neu-Schönwiese and Andreasfeld had their own village schools. The latter is the seat of the Einlage Brüdergemeinde...." (*Preservings*, No. 15, page 86).

After 1907 the Einlage Brüdergemeinde had its own church building.

Schönwiese, Neu-Schönwiese and Grünhoffenthal were located on the southern side of Alexandrowsk/Zaporozhe, the latter also being known as the "Janzen Chutor", (Note Eight).

The village of Jakowlewo/Eigenfeld "lay about a verst from the Sophiejewka train station, on the Moscow-Sevastopol railroad." The village was founded in 1880 on 1669 desjation of land.

### Kronsweide Gemeinde.

Andreasfeld also had a congregation of the Kronsweide Gemeinde, a "Kirchliche" Gemeinde whose roots traced back to the Frisian pioneers of the Chortitza Colony.

Rev. Is. P. Klassen has written that Andreasfeld had approximately 150 residents--mostly Mennonites and some German Lutherans, except for one Russian who had a German wife and worked as the night watchman.

The village had its own school, with about 20 students.

The Mennonites were divided into two or three denominations: Kirchliche, Brüdergemeinde and Allianz. "They had one common place of worship", presumably the school.

"The last minister who served before they had to flee was Rev. Peter Falk."

Rev. Is. P. Klassen writes that "Agriculture



Heinrich Epp (1831-1916) and Maria Unger (1831-1907), long-time residents of Andreasfeld, farmer and Grützmill owner. Photo courtesy of Johannes Epp, Ewanowka (Beilefeld, 1992), page 36.



House of prayer and school of the Einlage Brüdergemeinde at Andreasfeld. This was the first Brüdergemeinde house of prayer in Russia. Photo courtesy of P. M. Friesen, Brüderschaft, page 407/Brotherhood, page 487.

in Andreasfeld was successful and progressive. The homes stood surrounded by trees, the orchards produced an abundance of fruit and the colour and scent of the flowers pervaded day and time. Times were good and precious in the years preceding World War I."

#### Heinrich Hildebrand.

Heinrich Hildebrand (1872-1920) was one of the villagers in Andreasfeld. His son Abram later recorded his recollections. Abram was born in Andreasfeld in 1905.

His parents were married in 1898 and lived in the leasehold village of Ebenberg, about one verst from Andreasfeld. Around the turn of the century they purchased land in Andreasfeld where they farmed until 1918 where they had a double Wirtschaft with Russian men and maid servants.

Heinrich Loewen was the teacher in 1913 when Abram Hildebrand started school. Rev. Is. P. Klassen writes that Loewen "was possibly the last teacher before times became too difficult and revolutionary chaos caused the villagers to flee."

#### Revolution, 1917.

During the Revolution in 1917 lawlessness descended upon the land. "...Machno, with his brutal followers, raged savagely throughout the Ukraine." Local homes were often robbed in the middle of the night, men were murdered and women raped.

The Heinrich Hildebrand home was one of these.

One night there was a loud rap on the door.

Heinrich opened the door with a lit lantern in his hand.

He advised the bandits, "My money is all gone."

The bandit pointed a gun at Hildebrand's head and fired. The bullet was meant to kill him but only grazed the skin on the side of his head.

Hildebrand sat down with his head on the table.

The bandit aimed and shot a second time at his head.

Thank God it was not fatal. It hit his skull and lodged under his skin.

#### Flight, 1918.

Rev. Johann P. Nickel, Schönfeld-Brazol, reported in his diary for Sunday April 21, 1918, that "Nikolai Friesens visited his wife's parents at Ebenberg. The Bolsheviks have conducted raids here too, and also in the nearby village of Andreasfeld. Three men were shot, one of whom will probably die. There were

possessions," *Hope Springs Eternal*, page 268.

Isaak P. Klassen describes the end of the Mennonite experience in Andreasfeld: "In the spring of 1918, the farmers rallied once more to overcome the economic crisis by planting crops and committing them to the care of the master creator. But this did not last, for when the German military left the area, the flight of the Andreasfeld villagers became imminent and they left in November of that year. Only one older couple, the John Janzens could not decide to leave. Later that night he was shot. That was the end of Andreasfeld."

According to another report, "Johann Jakob Janzen, formerly of Ebenberg, was hacked to death in Andreasfeld in October, 1918 (FRST 16 Nov 1918). "He was buried in Schönwiese, the funeral sermon being delivered by Johann Klassen," Rev. Johann Nickel, *Hope Springs Eternal*, page 249.

The Heinrich Hildebrand family was among those leaving Andreasfeld in 1918. They moved to live with relatives in Einlage across the Dnieper (Note Nine) where Heinrich died of typhus in 1920. "Peter Hildebrand (b. 1876) fled to Einlage; he was killed during a White Army bombardment on July 31, 1919.

Another account of the flight from Andreasfeld is remembered by Peter Martens, Fanneystelle, Manitoba. Around 1900 his maternal grandfather, Cornelius J. Peters (1858-1917), moved from Petersdorf, Jasykowo, to Andreasfeld. In 1907 his paternal grandparents, Jakob J. Martens (1856-1920) moved from Adelsheim, Jasykowo, to Andreasfeld and purchased the flour mill from Kasper who had bought it from Froese in 1898.

On Nov. 5, 1918, uncle Abr. Peters ran down the village street, knocking on windows, warning the occupants that bandits had attacked and had already killed some people at the other end of the village. The villagers were in the



Dnieper River, view to the south in the direction of Zaporozhe. The beautiful village of Andreasfeld was located in this once picturesque setting, now a bay of the mighty Dnieper.

beatings and women were raped. One girl is said to have barely survived the attacks of one gang of bestial ruffians," *Hope Springs Eternal*, page 225.

April 26, 1918, Rev. Nickel, reported that "Nearly all the people from Andreasfeld, Ebenberg and Jagoslav have returned home and resumed farming. However, they live in great fear that still another gang, the Vosnissensko band, is lying in wait until all the Germans have returned to their villages, and then they will rob them of their last few

process of preparing to flee and had already loaded their wagons. The Cornelius Martens family fled from their house and hid in the wood lot. The bandits searched for them, calling Mr. Martens by name since they knew him. Their little black dog had not run out with them and had hidden in the parent's bed, where the bandits shot it. The bandits stole everything

**Andreasfeld Today.**

Prior to World War Two, two small islands of the former village remained in the Dnieper where children played and often found various Mennonite artifacts (pearls, spoons, etc.). When the dam was blown up during WWII, this remaining part of Andreasfeld disappeared as well.

**Visitor's Directions.**

One of my concerns in seeking out and locating the village of Andreasfeld, was that here was an important chapter of KG history (and Kronsweide and Brüdergemeinde as well) within 30 minutes drive of Zaporozhe which all Mennonite tour groups use as their headquarters. What a shame not to be aware of this



*Dnieper River, view to the southeast. The inner portion of the bay in the River where the east end of the village of Andreasfeld was presumably once located.*



*Concrete casing which once served as a well for the village of Andreasfeld.*

except one old horse. The next morning Cornelius Martens found another old horse and an old wagon, and loaded their remaining possessions and escaped from the village.

"Five members of the Froese family died of typhus in 1920 (probably fled to Einlage and died there)--Peter Peter Froese age 36, Katharina 10, Helena age 7, Agatha 9 and Emma 5.

By 1941 and '42 when Karl Stumpp and his Wehrmacht task force prepared a map of the Chortitza region, Andrejewka was shown as being a Ukrainian village.

**Hydro Dam, 1927-32.**

The work on the construction of the hydro electric dam "Dnieprogress" at the north end of Zaporozhe (approximately one kilometre south of Einlage) was commenced November 8, 1927. The dam was officially opened and put into operation on October 10, 1932.

With the flooding of the catchment area, the village of Andreasfeld disappeared under the waters of the Dnieper River.

According to local residents interviewed in May, 2000, Andreasfeld was a large village stretching approximately four kilometers along a single street from the present location to "Wolno-Andreewka." One speculates whether possibly the villages of Andreasfeld and Ebenfeld were situated adjacent to each other along a single street, and referred to collectively as "Andreasfeld"?

Because of the construction of the dam "Dnieper Progress", the villagers were resettled and founded a number of new villages in the immediate vicinity: Kruglich, Sokolowka, Schewtschenko, Saporoschkoje, Iwanowskoje, Sergejewka, Wolno-Andreewka, Filtrowo, and others.

Today a huge concrete cylinder lies on the banks of the Dnieper adjacent to where Andreasfeld once stood. Apparently it served as a casing for one of the village wells. At the end of WWII three such structures lay here, but two were used for the construction of the Kolkhoz buildings.

The bank of the Dnieper was very steep at this place after the war. The shore has since been reinforced with stone and concrete, and covered with beach sand. The rehabilitation

interesting, but missing piece of history right under our noses.

Descendants of KG, MB and Kronsweide Mennonites wishing to visit Andreasfeld should depart Zaporozhe on the road to Charkov, through Skworzowo. The highway is marked "M2" on a recent road map. Go five kilometres past the sign "Andrejewka 8 km", and then turn left (west) towards the river at the sign "Sokolowka".

Sokolowka is 1.5 km west of the highway



*"Progress" the Rehabilitation facility at Andrejewka, view from the beach.*

facility "Progress" from Zaporozhe is now located here.

The only Mennonite building still remaining in Andreasfeld is the hospital together with some outbuildings. It was used as a hospital until 1945. After standing empty for two years, it was used as a children's home until 1957. From 1957 until 1960 it was used as a senior's home and since then has belonged to the rehabilitation centre "Progress."

and then another 5.5 kilometres further to get to Andrejewka. Total distance approximately 30 kilometres from Zaporozhe to Andreasfeld. Turn right at the first intersection and then left (west) towards the river to get to the beach access and the "Progress" rehabilitation facility and the former Mennonite hospital.

**Conclusion.**

Like other Mennonite settlements in Imperial and Soviet Russia, Markusland/Andreasfeld experienced several time periods or phases in its history.

Founded in 1863 by the Kleine Gemeinde in search of land, it had become an important centre for the Brüdergemeinde by 1872. After the turn of the century the settlement had a strong *Kirchliche* presence with a congregation of the Kronsweide Gemeinde.

In 1917 and 1918, Andreasfeld experienced the full brunt of the Machno ravages, murders and brutality. In 1918 the villagers fled to Einlage in the Old Colony and the village was

such as tax lists and maps which will shed more light on these and other questions, to fill in more details of a missing chapter in the story of Mennonites in Imperial and Soviet Russia.

**Endnotes:**

Note One: Abram Hildebrand in his journal states that Andreasfeld was 12 kilometres from Einlage and six kilometres inland. This is confirmed by Rev. Is. P. Klassen, "The Kronsweide Mennonite Church," unpublished paper, pages 34-5, who states it "lay about 10 verst north of Alexandrowsk/Saporoschje, about 5 verst from the left bank of the Dnjepr River." See also Johannes Epp, *Iwanowka* page 83.



The former hospital, the only Mennonite building left in Andreasfeld. View to the north.



The former Mennonite hospital in Andreasfeld, view to the south.

occupied by others.

In 1932 the village was flooded by the construction of the hydro electric dam at Einlage, and experienced relocation.

Today the residents of the village are Ukrainians and ethnic Russians many of whom are employed in the nearby City of Zaporozhe.

Various facets of the story of Markuslandt, Andreasfeld remain a mystery. Originally there were two villages--was Ebenfeld the mysterious Friedrichsthal?

No doubt there are errors, misconceptions and many missing pieces in this brief sketch of the story of Markuslandt, Andreasfeld.

Surely there are more personal diaries and possibly also official government documents

Note Two: Peter Toews, "Family Chronicles 1900," unpublished journal, 18 pages, trans. by Joe Isaac, Linden, Alberta, courtesy of grandson Terrence Toews, Linden, Alberta, letter to the author August 3, 2000.

Note Three: Heinrich Bergen, 59 Richardson Cres., Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, S4S 4J2.

Note Four: Isaak P. Klassen, pages 34-5.

Note Five: Although there was a village called Markushof in the Kleine Werder, West Prussia, there is no known connection to the KG.

Note Six: Isaak Friesen was the grandfather of Gordon Friesen, author of the controversial novel, *Flamethrowers* (Cadwell, Ohio, 1936).

See *Dynasties*, pages 508-11.

Note Seven: Heinrich Bergen, Regina, has written that P. M. Friesen is referring here to Wiesenfeld, 60 Km. east of Ekatherinoslav in the Schönfeld/Brazol region founded by members of the Brüdergemeinde in 1880. There was another Wiesenfeld (Kornjevka) founded on the Globa estate in 1863 by 10 families from Kronsgarten and a part of the Kronsweide Gemeinde, see H. Bergen, *Men. Historian*, Sept. 1999, page 8.

Note Eight: Rev. Is. P. Klassen, "Kronsweide Mennonite Church," provides a brief description of these villages and several others in the area east of the Dnieper.

Note Nine: As recalled by son Abram Hildebrand, father of Werner Hildebrand former Assistant-Superintendent, Hanover School Division, Steinbach, Manitoba.

**Sources:**

P. M. Friesen, *Bruderschaft* (Taurien, 1911), pages 403-4, 407, 416 and 677.

Plett, *Saints and Sinners* (Steinbach, 1999), pages 113 and 130.

Plett, *Dynasties* (Steinbach, 2000), pages 462, 470 and 474.

Plett, *Pioneers and Pilgrims* (Steinbach, 1990), page 157.

Abram Hildebrand, "Life Story," unpublished manuscript, translated 1997, 37 pages, courtesy of Mary Anne Hildebrand, Steinbach, Manitoba.

*Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Volume One, page 121.

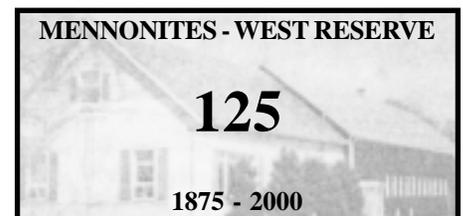
Johannes Epp, *Iwanowka* (Beilefeld, 1992), pages 33-54 and 83-86.

Rev. Is. P. Klassen, "The Kronsweide Mennonite Church in Russia: Its Villages and Elders," unpublished paper, printed by Mennonite Heritage Centre, 1993, pages 89 pages. Rev. Is. P. Klassen (1899-1996), Winnipeg, was the nephew of Johann P. Klassen (1868-1947), first Aeltester of the Schönweiser Mennoniten Gemeinde or First Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, of which the Steinbach Mennonite Church was a branch congregation.

Esther Paetkau, *The Paetkau Book, Volume One*, page 191.

Peter Letkeman, 5-1110 Henderson Hwy, Winnipeg, R2G 1L1 (email lblpeter@mb.sympatico.ca), Documentation of Mennonite victims of terror and repression in the Soviet Union, e-mail August 31, 2000.

Isaak Reimer, "Einlage," unpublished two volume manuscript.



## The Bridge at Einlage

“The Bridge at Einlage 1906-1917,” by Catherine Berg, Autumn House, Winnipeg, Manitoba, recollections at age 94.

The bridge at Einlage was built in 1906 by German and American engineers. During the construction one of the engineers was accidentally killed. This bridge was the first bow or arch bridge built in the world.

Both sides of the river consisted of solid granite rock. The engineers began construction from both sides and worked towards the middle. The middle section which was approximately 120 feet long had a specially built piece of reinforced steel that was lowered into place. The last part of the construction consisted of laying railroad tracks over the bridge.

At the official opening Czar Nicholas II and the Czarina were in attendance and watched the ceremony from a specially built shelter. There was also a very large crowd of local residents and musicians.

As the train drove over the bridge the train engineer blew the whistle releasing the steam, the musicians began to play and the crowd sang the Russian national anthem.

During the war, the bridge was destroyed three times by blasting the middle section. However, the ends of the bridge which were fastened to the solid granite rock on the banks of the river withstood all of the blasts.

One evening we witnessed a spectacular but horrible sight. While the Red Army was retreating a long train of railway cars with a locomotive in front, filled with wounded soldiers, prisoners of war and undesirable citizens, was pushed onto the bridge by a locomotive at the back and fell through the gap into the Dnieper river.

As the cars rolled over the edge huge sparks could be seen as the cars slid over the edge of the

bridge into the river. We watched in horror and counted 90 flashes of sparks.

The last locomotive, which was uncoupled, stopped in time and then backed up and drove away. When it was finished, nothing could be seen in the river of the train cars and locomotive which were resting on the bottom.

In 1926, we heard a rumour that a huge dam was to be built at the site of the bridge. This dam, which was to produce hydro-electric power for a large portion of the Ukraine, would flood our village and all of the surrounding area. In 1927,

an edict came from the government that all the villagers of Einlage and the surrounding area would have to leave due to the flooding which would come when the dam was completed.

The citizens of Einlage were given the option of receiving money and permission to leave the Ukraine--six families accepted the money and came to Canada--others build new homes higher up on the hills. The new village which was built was named New Einlage.

The article was first printed in German in *Der Bote*, May 17, 2000, No. 10, page 40.



*Painting of the bridge at Einlage (Kitschkas) by Heinrich Pauls, 1975. The original painting by Heinrich Pauls is found in the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba. Heinrich Pauls was the most gifted of painters of Mennonite life and culture. See also In the Fullness of Time, page 23.*



*In 1901 the famous Einlage Bridge was built across the Dnieper River and opened for traffic in 1908. The train passed on top and other vehicles below. Einlage (Kitschkas) became an exhibition centre in 1912. During the Revolution and Civil War in 1920 the bridge was blown up. At this time the Red Army built a floating bridge across the river which was used until the completion of the “Staudamm” or Hydro Electric Dam in 1932. Mennonite villages such as Einlage and Andreasfeld were flooded and the inhabitants relocated to higher ground. Photo courtesy of Froese Family Tree 1871-1998, page 16. Einlage is part of the heritage of conservative Mennonites through Heinrich Wiebe (b. 1746), who immigrated to Imperial Russia in 1803, first settling in Blumenort, Molotschna, and then moving to Einlage, Chortitza Colony, in 1820. Among his grandsons are three famous Aeltesten: Heinrich Enns (1807-81), Kleine Gemeinde; Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900), Bergthaler; and Johann Wiebe (1827-1905), Reinländer/Old Koloniers, prominent in the 1874-6 emigration movement to Canada, see Dynasties, pages 108-110.*

# How McKenzie Road Got Its Name

“How McKenzie Road Got Its Name,” by Hildegard Adrian, Box 1211, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

## Introduction.

Why would Steinbach have a street named after an Englishman, and not have a name like for instance, Abr. S. Friesen, Kl. R. Reimer, Franz Kroeker or Peter K. Barkman, among its more important pioneer founders? or even for “Elisabeth Reimer,” the community’s matriarch, whose courageous speech in 1876 probably saved it from oblivion?

Some people may suggest that it is Anglo-conformity, the social pressure put on immigrants to discard their culture and to conform to Anglo-Canadian mores.

What is now McKenzie Street was the original government road allowance at the south side of Section 35-6-6E.

Very few people will even know that the modern-day McKenzie Avenue was once known as “Moscow Street”, presumably for the convergence of 9,000 Mennonites on Moscow in 1930 clamouring for freedom, among the greatest acts of civil disobedience and resistance to Sovietization in the history of the U.S.S.R.

The first known name for this street was Sunnyside, at least in the late 1930s. The north side of the street already had some homes inhabited by descendants of the 1874 settlers. The land on the south side, Section 26-6-6E was owned by the Cornelius P. Kroeker family.

## The Russländer.

That was when a number of late immigrants from Russia had purchased 10 acre plots along the south side of the street.

Several of them had built up new homes there and had their furnace and duct work done by the H.W. Reimer firm. One of the old ledgers from that store has the name of the owner and the name of the street “Sunnyside” entered in that book.

Before you knew it, this street became known as Moscow Street. These new owners had left their homeland some 10 to 15 years ago in search of freedom and peace. Most of these immigrants found work with farmers here. After they had earned enough, they purchased or rented a place to raise their family.

Russia had been their home. Many had owned huge parcels of land there. All that changed after World War I and the Russian Revolution in 1917. They no longer felt secure and many had also suffered during the 1920s famine.

## Soviet Revolution, 1917.

After the Revolution, many of our Mennonites feared losing their lives or being sent into exile to Northern Siberia.

My mother’s family, the Jacob J. Janzen family, were forced from their home for a period of time. They found refuge with some relatives some distance away. Later they were allowed to return, but would no longer be in charge of their own property. The local Soviet was in control and they were at its mercy. My grandfather feared for

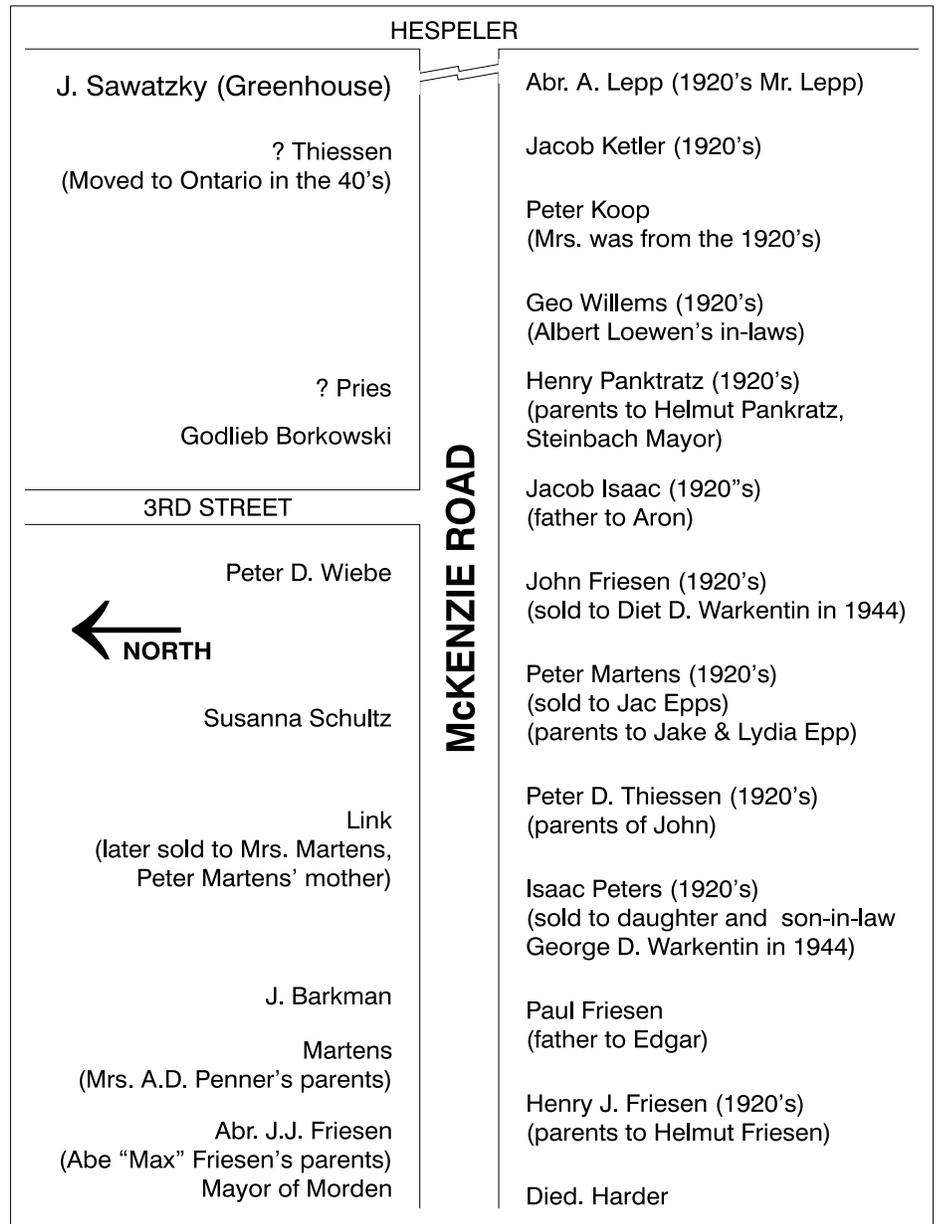
the safety of his family. He begged the local government for permission to emigrate. Finally after much hassling, he was able to obtain the necessary passports.

My paternal grandparents, the Dietrich G. Warkentins, also had some hair-raising experiences with the ruthless bandits that made their way into the villages and farm homes. They would rob and destroy anything that lay in their way.

homes with fire. Everyone feared Machno and his followers.

Some of the family members of my relatives stayed behind. They still hoped that the situation in Russia would calm down. They hoped that they would be able to return to their homes and continue with their normal lives. But this never happened.

Then in 1929, approximately 9000 Menno-



Map of Moscow Street 1944. It was renamed McKenzie Road in 1947. Map prepared by Hildegard Adrian, Box 1211, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

The Warkentins also decided to sell their property and find a new home in America.

Some of the Mennonite villages were totally destroyed, first the Machno bandits massacred the villagers and then they would destroy the

nites flocked to Moscow, hoping that they would be able to get permission to leave, hoping that the doors of freedom would open once more.

But they were disappointed. Train loads of people were shipped like cattle to Northern Sibe-

ria, only to meet their doom.

From the 9000 only 3000 were able to obtain their passports. A few slipped through the cracks and made their way to freedom.

Among these 3000 were my husband's parents, the Heinrich Adrians and his maternal grandparents, the Jacob Klassens and their immediate family.



Peter and Mary Martens, Moscow Street, the parents of Lydia, Mrs. Jake Epp. Mr. Martens was a Mennonite Brethren minister.

My parents were both born in the early years of the 1900s. If there was unrest within a country, things do not happen overnight. It takes a number of years before the situation erupts. They were both old enough to take note of the tense situation. In W.W.I the Russians fought Germany. Many of the Russian people living among the Mennonites and surrounding areas became hostile to them and other German-speaking people.

**Naming the Street.**

In 1944 my parents, Dietrich and Katie Warkentin, purchased one of these properties on the south side of the then Moscow street. They did not exactly appreciate the name. Some of the newcomers may even have felt it was a derogatory term on the part of some of the locals.

After Steinbach was incorporated as a town in 1946, Mr. K.J.B. Reimer was hired to put house numbers onto each home. I happened to be at home at the time when Mr. Reimer made his rounds. My father asked Mr. Reimer, "Now that we have a number on our house, what will be the official name for this street?"

"Moscow, I presume," came the answer.

"Why that name? Is there no better name that would be more suitable?"

My father suggested that the street be named after Prime Minister Wm. L. McKenzie King. After all it was through the governing Liberal Party that we were able to come to Canada. McKenzie King was a prime factor that we were able to come to this land of freedom.

It would sound much better than Moscow

Street. Soon the signs were posted, "McKenzie Road", and the name became official.

**Conclusion.**

A number of the original owner's families still reside in this area. I was able to get their personal feelings and also the feelings of their parents about the name "Moscow Street".

One person felt that there was no reason why we should cater to such a name. Another felt that the 1929 episode to him was not an historical event, but rather a life experience.

The name "Moscow" meant to him a "sour note". All in all their parents did not feel comfortable with the name "Moscow".

The name "Moscow" and the colour "red" did not spell pleasant memories.



Mr. and Mrs. Henry Pankratz, Moscow Street residents in the 1940s. They were the parents of Steinbach's former mayor and M. L. A. Helmut Pankratz. Photo courtesy of daughter Hilda Wiebe, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Some of the well-known individuals who grew up on Moscow Street include Jake Epp, former Conservative Cabinet Minister, Helmut Pankratz, former mayor and Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and Abe Friesen, former mayor of Morden.



Dietrich and Katie Warkentin instrumental in naming McKenzie Road.

**For Further Reading:**

Colin Neufeldt, 11620-32nd A Ave, Edmonton, Alberta, T6J 3G8, "Cleansing the Countryside: The Dekulakization of the Soviet Mennonite Community 1928-1933," in *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 6-9.

**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 initial emphasis was on the period 1874-1910 but much current research and writing is focusing on the 1920s and 30s, with more attention being directed to the story of our ancestors in Russia. 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 five books. Other works 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 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	_____

# Aganetha Barkman Reimer 1859-1955

Aganetha Barkman Reimer 1859-1955, by great-granddaughter Levina Reimer,  
Box 354, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, and Delbert F. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

## Introduction.

A stony creek, poplar bush, a few oaks and mosquitoes were what greeted 15-year-old Aganetha Barkman as she climbed down from the wagon that had brought her from the Red River to Steinbach.

It was September 15, 1874, and the end of a long, wearisome, but exciting journey from her comfortable home in the village of Rosenfeld, Borosenko Colony, Imperial Russia, to this wilderness.

Aganetha was born August 20, 1859, in Margenau, Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia, daughter of Peter K. and Anna Toews Barkman. Peter K. Barkman (1826-1917) was the son of Jakob J. Barkman, prosperous Vollwirt and Schulz (mayor) of the neighbouring village of Rückenau.

Peter K. Barkman had a lifelong interest in building windmills and the flour milling industry, owning a mill in Margenau, Molotschna. When the Barkman flour mill in Rosenfeld, Borosenko, burned down, "...a Schuldschreibung of 900 ruble was destroyed which the borrower never repaid," *Dynasties*, page 499.

Aganetha's mother, Anna Toews, was the daughter of Jakob Toews (1805-73) from Prangenau, Molotschna and aunt of the "B" Toews' of Greenland. Her father was the uncle of the "B" Koops of Neuanlage, East Reserve, see *Dynasties*, page 496-504, and 304; see also *Saints and Sinners*, pages 238-40.

## Girlhood Years.

Aganetha attended the school in Margenau, together with the children of a small but prosperous conventicle of Kleine Gemeinde (KG) families in the village including brother-in-law Peter W. Toews, Peter Penner, Johann Koop, David Klassen, Abraham Rempel and, at various times, teachers Cornelius Friesen and Abraham Harms, and others.

Aganetha's time of formal education was shortened when she got the measles resulting in being unable to see for a year.

According to publisher Johann F. Harms the daughters of the KG "...distinguished themselves in school with their apparel, by wearing a large black bonnet," Johann F. Harms, *Eine Lebens Reise*, pages 1-9.

## Emigration, 1874.

In 1874 the Peter K. Barkman family group emigrated to Canada arriving in Quebec City on August 31, with fellow Steinbachers Franz Kroekers, Heinrich Brandts, Klaas Friesens, Rev. Jakob Barkman, Gerhard Giesbrechts, Heinrich Fasts and Johann Wiebes. Only four days earlier the powerful Reimer clan, consisting of brothers Johann and Klaas, and in-laws, Peter Toews and Abraham S. Friesen, the new community's first mayor, had arrived from the

original Steinbach in Imperial Russia, situated along the picturesque Basavluk River, north-west of Nikopol.

Aganetha and her sister Anna, Mrs. Johann S. Friesen, were known as feisty women. When robbers attacked Anna's husband in Odessa during the immigration, she "knocked one of the would be robbers flat. His accomplice got cold feet and beat it posthaste," Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach,"



Mr. A. W. Reimer, pioneer flour miller and sawmill operator who started the first retail lumber yard in Steinbach. In this picture we see him at the Winnipeg Exhibition, 1912, showing the patented A. A. Reimer bag holder. Photo courtesy of Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach," Carillon News, 1952, page 10.

*Carillon News*, 1952. See *Preservings*, No. 14, page 99, for a photograph of Anna and her husband.

## Steinbach, 1874.

Years later Aganetha Barkman Reimer recalled the Steinbach creek and the buffalo trail running along side. Occasionally Indians came along the trail, noteworthy for their colourful blankets. In the early years the creek was a

blaze of native flowers, with blooms of various colours as spring turned to summer and summer to fall: *Preservings*, No. 12, page 83.

Aganetha had three brothers, Jakob, Peter and Johann, all active in the pioneer business growth of Steinbach. Jakob T. Barkman had a machinery dealership in Steinbach (see *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 68-70), and brother Peter T. Barkman also had a machinery dealership in Steinbach, although somewhat later, see *Preservings*, No. 9, Part Two, pages 32-6.

Father Peter K. Barkman, son Jakob and daughter Anna and her husband settled on Wirtschaften (village farms) 14, 15 and 16, adjacent to each other on the section of Main Street where Barkman Ave was later laid out. Together with unmarried children Peter, Johann and Aganetha, the extended Barkman clan built a semlin where they all lived together that first winter.

Brother Jakob T. Barkman later recalled some details of this building which "...was two feet into the ground, 18 feet wide and 48 feet long. Light rails were used on the roof, closed tight with long grass and mud. The front 30 feet held the stable room for oxen and probably a milk cow," Kl. J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches," page 14.

It was here in the bosom of one of Steinbach's most successful dynasties that Aganetha grew to womanhood. One can well imagine how she must have worked and slaved to overcome the difficulties of that first horrible winter.

Her future husband later recalled the next summer and how a beautiful crop of grain was eaten by grasshoppers whose "flight was so dense they obscured the sun," K.J.B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches," page 5.

December 25, 1875, the family grieved as Aganetha suffered the death of her beloved grandfather Jakob J. Barkman, age 81, one of the oldest residents of the settlement and one of the few who had been born in Prussia.

## Marriage 1881.

August 4, 1878, four years following her arrival in Canada, Aganetha was baptized upon the confession of her faith by Aeltester Peter Toews and received as a member of the Kleine Gemeinde (*Profile*, page 169).

August 5, 1881, Aganetha experienced the untimely passing of her mother, nee Anna Toews, only 54 years old. September 11, 1881, her father remarried to a spinster, Elisabeth Warkentin from Grünfeld.

Five months later, December 31, 1881, Aganetha married 21-year-old Abram W. Reimer. It was a sound choice as the Reimers were the most successful family in the early history of Steinbach.

On July 1, 1883, Aganetha's brother Peter married Abraham's sister Katharina, so they

were “double geschwister.” These marriages cemented the already strong links between the two most important clans in the village.

### Abraham W. Reimer.

Aganetha’s bridegroom had also experienced all the hardships of the pioneer years. Being the oldest son of pioneer merchant Klaas R. Reimer, Abraham early learned about business and entrepreneurship.

Abraham carried a heavy load of responsibility. In 1877, at age 17, he and younger brother Klaas were assigned the task of freighting the shafting for A. S. Friesen’s windmill to Steinbach from Winnipeg. It took them a week to ship the 12 inch square 32 foot long beams to Steinbach.

The two young men loaded the beams on a wagon and set out. It rained almost continuously. They camped under the wagon on a canvas and found themselves lying in water the next morning. During the night the oxen slogged around the wagon bawling because of the torments of mosquitoes. For part of the journey the beams were actually floating in the water they were being dragged through: Kl. J. B. Reimer, “Historical Sketches,” page 5.

### Family - Community, 1879-80.

The conservative Mennonite culture evolved around a strong ethos of family and community values. The journals of Abram W. Reimer’s grandfather and namesake Abraham “Fuela” Reimer, Blumenort, reveal a great deal about what this meant in a pioneer society such as the East Reserve in Manitoba.

Monday, July 7, 1879, grandfather Abraham Reimer recorded that “Abr. son of Kl. was here” visiting his grandparents in Blumenort. Sunday, Abr. and his sister visited again, and again on Sunday October 5, presumably attending worship and then staying at grandparents for dinner.

Monday, October 13, 1879, grandfather Abraham recorded that grandson Abr. “had been twice at Heinrich Fasten asking for the hand of their daughter in marriage.” Presumably the request was denied.

October 20, brothers Abr. and Klaas were in Blumenort visiting their grandparents, a trip which Abr. repeated on November 2. January 18, 1880, Abraham Reimer Sr. recorded that grandson Abr. had gone to Niverville to sell wheat, receiving 97 cents per bushel. Presumably the shipping of grain through the recently founded railway siding in Niverville was still a matter worth recording.

Abr. W. Reimer’s interest in the lumber industry germinated early. February 8, 1880, Cor. and Martin Penner complained about Abr. at a brotherhood meeting alleging “he had taken [down] a huge pine tree from the border”, presumably referring to the apportioned section of the forest to which they had cutting rights.

Abram and his father Klaas R. Reimer often went out together on business or visiting. February 13, 1880, is a typical, when father and son were visiting at Abr. Reimers Sr. in Blumenort.



Home built by Aganetha and Abraham W. Reimer on Lot 14, Steinbach. They had bought the lot from her older brother Jakob in 1884. The home were unique in the area because of its sloped end gables referred to as “Hollandish-style gables” by Steinbach historian Kl. J. B. Reimer. The house was demolished around 1970 and replaced by the optometrist’s offices between Chicken Chef and Carillon Stations. Photograph courtesy of John Warkentin, The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba (Steinbach, 2000), page 79.

February 15, Abr. visited his grandparents. February 22, Abr. and siblings Katharina and Cornelius visited at the “old” Peter Toews in Blumenort, bringing [cousin] Anna [Toews] along to visit at their grandparents. Sunday, April 18, Klaas Reimer and son Abr. and Peter Toews’ daughters Anna and Katharina visited grandparents for dinner. Such interaction of cousins and aunts and uncles was common.

Saturday, December 31, 1881, was a special day for the Reimer family: Abram, the oldest grandson, was getting engaged or betrothed (Verlobt).

Grandfather Abraham Reimer accompanied by sons

Peter and Abram made a special trip the four miles from Blumenort to Steinbach to mark the occasion. Abraham Sr. recorded that he was at son Klaas’ place for supper. In the morning they had been at the “old” Peter Barkmans for dinner [mittag].

Grandfather proudly added the note, “Abr. son of Kl. Reimer, was getting engaged to Aganetha, daughter of ‘old’ Peter Barkman.”

### Flour Mill 1881-91.

Presumably Aganetha and Abram lived with her parents for the first year as was common at the time.

Upon their marriage Abraham was taken

into the milling business joining “as a partner in the first steam flour mill” which her father had established a year earlier, “Kl. J. B. Reimer, “Historical Sketches,” page 6. Apparently



Photograph of the Barkman and Reimer flour mill in Steinbach constructed on Mill Street (now First Street), after the first mill was destroyed by fire August 16, 1892. Note the buildings of flour mill shareholder and manager Johann I. Friesen in the background (“Schloss Kinder Reich”), situated where the new “Stone Creek” condominium was constructed in 1999. View towards the southwest. These buildings were later purchased by Peter B. Reimer who married “Malla Fries’ Katharina”. Compare with the photo in Preservings, No. 9, Part Two, page 44.

Aganetha’s father sold Abraham a quarter share in the venture retaining only a one-eighth share for himself.

For the story of Steinbach’s steam-powered flour mill founded in 1880, see “Peter K. Barkman 1826-1917,” in *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, pages 40-46.

### New Home, 1884.

In 1884 Aganetha and her husband bought Lot 14 from brother Jakob T. Barkman who was liquidating his holdings in Steinbach, to establish himself in the village of Heuboden.

A few years later Aganetha and Abram W. Reimer built a spacious new residence on this



The Steinbach Flour mill as it was rebuilt after 1892, view to the southwest, winter scene. Again note the buildings of flour mill manager Johann I. Friesen (later owned by son-in-law Peter B. Reimer) in the background. These photographs of the 1892 mill are from the collection of "Central" Toews, but the originals have recently gone lost. Those anyone have original copies? A similar photograph was published in Reflections, page 55 and attributed to A. A. Reimer, son of Abram W. Reimer.

site. Their new home had angled gables, referred to by Steinbach historian Klaas J. B. Reimer as "angled Hollandisch gables," see *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, pages 62-3. The Steinbach school built in 1880 and the home of David Loewen in Hochstadt were the only other two buildings known to have been built in this style in the East Reserve.

"This house was occupied sequentially by three Abram Reimers. In 1908 Abram W. Reimer sold the house to son Abram A. Reimer. In 1925 Abram Jr. sold the house to cousin Abram J. B. Reimer, who ran a small dairy here with the daily shipment of milk until his untimely passing in 1936," Kl. J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahre," *Steinbach Post*, May 4, 1965, page 6.

#### Mill Fire, 1892.

On August 16, 1892, misfortune struck the blooming venture when the flour mill was completely destroyed by fire.

This event coincided with Abraham realization that he would need to look for another means of making a living "because he could no longer stand working in the mill because of the dust..." Margaretha F. Reimer, "Recollections."

#### Lumbering.

Access to the forests to the south and east was one of the few advantages enjoyed by Steinbach by virtue of its isolated location at the southern margins of the Mennonite settlement in the East Reserve. Although lumbering was unknown amongst Mennonites in Southern Russia, where the closest forests were miles away, Steinbachers and other KG-ers soon took to the work with natural ease. Quickly they learned how to harvest and saw their own board lumber.

By 1876 Abraham's uncle Abraham S. Friesen had already set up a horse-powered saw mill in Steinbach.

Peter W. "Schmidt" Toews has provided some valuable descriptions of these early logging endeavours in his *Memoirs*, see *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 142-3. David Loewen from Hochstadt was one of the early pioneers in the lumber business operating a saw mill at "River Park", "a 3 1/2 hour trip east of Stein-

bach." "The significantly larger Friesen and Reimer operation at Pine Hill was located nine miles further east," J. Harbs, *Preservings*, No. 8, Part Two, page 9.

#### Pinehill, 1892.

Aganetha and Abraham now decided "...that work out doors would be best for his lungs....[and] planned to find a stand of good timber and set up a saw mill," Margaretha F. Reimer, "Recollections."

Abraham joined his uncle Abraham S. Friesen in the lumbering business. "The business partners were `A. S. Friesen and Sons'"

In 1892 Abraham "blazed a trail to Pinehill, some 25 miles southeast of Steinbach, what is now the Bedford district.... It was an historic

event when they started that fall going by the Dawson Trail, to avoid the open swamps. From the very start they befriended two or three Indian families living there in the desolate swamp. One of the Indians, by the name of Morrow, a good hunter, became a valuable guide for the white men to locate the best timber stands."

"Mr. Reimer...afterwards told of his experience, how he camped in 30 below weather outside by the big wood fire, sleeping soundly and warmly between two Indian guides. In the morning twilight these nature children got up without any sound, stretched their arms to get the blood circulating again and nonchalantly started the glowing embers to blaze again...."

"About 1894 Mr. C. B. Loewen...became a partner with Mr. Reimer. A few winters later the sawmill was put up in Steinbach, and a lumberyard business started at the same place where Steinbach Lumber Yard is located today [1952]," Kl. J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches," page 6.

"At this time, when the oldest son Abram A. Reimer was merely 10 years old the parents together with family usually lived in Pine Hill during the winter. In the mornings Abram enjoyed the school instruction with his playmate C. T. Loewen, who was the same age. In the afternoons they were to cut boards under the oversight of the teacher, where his patience was sometimes sorely tested," Kl. J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahre," *Steinbach Post*, May 5, 1965, page 6.

It was at Pinehill that Aganetha Barkman Reimer, although she had received little formal



One of the first factory built cars in Steinbach. This 1912 or 1913 Ford was owned by Abram A. Reimer, oldest son of Aganetha and Abram W. Reimer. Mr. Reimer is at the wheel with Isaac T. Loewen in the passenger seat. The men in the back seat are, l.-r., Jakob Schmidt, J. R. Friesen, and Peter S. Rempel. Photo courtesy of Wright, Steinbach: Is there any place like it? (Steinbach, 1991), page 43. When I visited Abram A. Reimer shortly before his death, he still vividly recalled his great-grandfather and namesake Abraham "Fuele" Reimer (1808-92) coming from Blumenort on foot to Steinbach to visit his children and grandchildren. A. A. Reimer passed away in 1984 at the age of 101.

education, taught her second son, Peter B. Reimer, a formula for calculating the measurements of a load of lumber.

**Records, 1883-1906.**

Abr. W. Reimer and brother-in-law Peter T. Barkman first appear in the tax/assessment records of the R. M. of Hanover in 1883. They are each assessed for 100 acres of pasture, 1 ox and 2 pigs. Abr. W. Reimer also has 5 yearlings. Presumably Aganetha and her husband were still living with her parents in 1883.

By the following year they each have 150 acres of pasture. Abr. W. Reimer has a home valued at \$100 and contents of \$20 compared to Peter T. Barkman whose home was valued at \$200 and contents of \$25. Barkman had 2 cows and 5 pigs while Reimer only had 1 cow and 2 pigs.

Kleine Gemeinde Brandordnung records show that Abraham W. Reimer was first entered for insurance coverage on December 25, 1883, "dwelling house \$200 and inventory \$50. April 25, 1886, Peter T. Barkman and Abr. Reimer each added \$100 to their insurance for half a barn indicating some form of joint venture.

On August 25, 1886, \$200 was added for a new barn "behind the flour mill". The coverage for this barn as cancelled August 25, 1886.

From these humble beginnings, successful businesses evolved. By 1896 Abr. W. Reimer, sawmiller, owned NE24-6-6E with no cultivated acreage and personal property (in the sense of chattels) of \$522 for a total assessment of \$1602, compared to \$1130 for brother-in-law Barkman.

By 1900 Abr. W. Reimer, now listed as a lumber merchant, was assessed for \$1700 real property and \$1290 personalty, total \$2990. This compares to brother Heinrich W. Reimer, store owner, at \$975 realty and \$8760 personalty. In this comparison it must be remembered that a substantial portion of Abr. W. Reimer's assets--the sawmill and lumber cutting operations--were located at Pine Hill and hence not included in these figures.

By 1906 Abr. W. Reimer, lumberman, was assessed at \$1020 for "buildings, horses, wagons and sleighs" and \$3920 for stock-in-trade. By comparison, "K. Reimer Sons" owned by brother Jakob and father Klaas R. Reimer was assessed at \$13135 and the H. W. Reimer store operations at \$22000. The "Reimer Barkman

& Co" flour mill is assessed at \$8000. There was also a business "Friesen & Reimer" assessed at \$1340 although this need not necessarily refer to Abr. W. Reimer.

The extent of the financial activities of Abr.

ing a cartel. The strategy of forming a marketing group to control prices was deemed to be wrong by the KG leadership.

Historian Royden Loewen has written, "[Abram S.] Friesen's business also owned a sawmill at Pine Hill...and sold lumber from its yardsite in Steinbach. By the turn of the century, two other entrepreneurs had set up smaller shops at Pine Hill; the young partners Cornelius B. Loewen and Abram W. Reimer sold lumber from their sawmill in a shop in Steinbach, while [brother] Peter W. Reimer shipped firewood and fence posts from his mill by railroad to his retail outlet on Elgin Avenue in Winnipeg," from Loewen, *Family, Church and Market*, page 153.



*The Steinbach offices of the Abr. W. Reimer trading company built in 1917, on Lot 15, west side of Main Street, where Solomon's Furniture stands today. Photo by photographer Jakob D. Barkman, Steinbach, and courtesy of Preservings, No. 9, Part One, page 63.*



*Aganetha Barkman Reimer and her husband Abram W. Reimer, photo courtesy of Kl. J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahre," Steinbach Post, May 4, 1965, page 6/Preservings, No. 9, Part One, page 45.*

W. Reimer and fellow lumbermen in Steinbach such as Cornelius B. Loewen and Abram S. Friesen is revealed by a brotherhood meeting of the Kleine Gemeinde of January 15, 1904, were members were admonished against form-

always be loyal."

"Here [Aganetha Barkman Reimer] cooked for 20 or so hard-working men...." [She] was a thin little wiry woman with three or four children. [Daughter] Agnes was a babe in arms

**Recollections.**

In 1998 Margaretha F. Reimer, former teacher in Manila, Philippines, wrote a short sketch about her grandparents lumbering operation at Pine Hill.

"Who would know best where to find good stands of timber but the natives. He hired two of them as guides. They walked many days.

"For the night the men prepared a shelter in a snowdrift and they bedded down on beds of spruce boughs, grandfather between the two men to keep him warm. A small fire at their feet was kept going through the night not only for warmth, but also to ward off any wolves that might be around. Pemmican and tea were part of their daily ration in addition to wild fowl roasted over the fire. The pemmican was made in fall when wild berries were plentiful, mixed with animal fat and pounded together to make solid blocks.

"Now and then they would come across an Indian's encampment. To show that they came in peace, the three men set their guns against a tree and then walked forward. To welcome the strangers the Indians's invited the men to join them sitting in a circle. The peace pipe was then passed around. The strangers were expected to draw on it as well, that is, if they came in peace. So they did. Thereupon they were asked about their mission. Most likely the Indians could give grandfather good advice. Grandfather told us that once one had won the good will of an Indian he would

## Preservings

who needed to be looked after while grandmother cooked and fed the men. She found a good baby sitter in an Indian woman.

“Now what to feed these men?”

“Breakfast was fried potatoes, fat pork, her own white bread and syrup. Very likely baked pork and beans will have been part of her menu. How she managed to bake all those loaves of crusty white bread, I wouldn’t know. The small tub of red potatoes she cooked every day had to be peeled in the evening to be ready for breakfast. But by evening she felt dead tired, so then how would she get the work done?”

“Well, above the kitchen lived Mr. Friesen, the school teacher who had a fiddle. Every night after supper out came the fiddle and filled the air with lively music. This, grandmother said, put new life into her so that she got the job done.”

“Evenings when the six o’clock whistle blew, grandmother wrapped her hands in her apron, went outside to hear it echo and re-echo through the forest.

“The teacher, Mr. Friesen, was needed to teach grandfather’s two oldest sons, Abraham and Peter. There may have been a few other children there as well.

To go back to the beginning, only in winter when the muskeg was frozen could one take the short route of 20 miles to Pine Hill. Initially, the boilers and all the heavy equipment for the mill had been transported to Pine Hill via the Dawson Trail which was a corduroy road. Via that road the distance was 80 miles. The boilers were carried on several sleighs hitched together and drawn by, was it 12 teams of oxen?

“After a number of years the timber was depleted. So then the mill was moved to Otterborne.”

### Memories.

Aganetha Barkman Reimer cooked for 20 employees at Pine Hill. She had two huge cookstoves for baking bread as well as preparing all the meat and potatoes for three square meals a day. Fortunately she had the luxury of a pump at one end of the kitchen.

The children at Pine Hill were Abram, the

eldest, Peter, Klaas and baby Agnes. The school age children lived at Pine Hill only one winter.

One very cold winter, Abram W. Reimer was away for three months preparing to float logs down the Rat River to Otterborne. Aganetha was so worried because she had no communications with him for all that time.



*Jakob A. Reimer (1891-1965), circa 1913, son of Abram W. Reimer. Jakob married Margaret Reimer, daughter of Isaak W. Reimer, Greenland. Jakob was a partner in “Reimer Abattoirs” Giroux and later Saskatoon. Photo courtesy of son Walter R. Reimer, Steinbach, Manitoba.*

Abram W. Reimer had a facility for languages and spoke French as well as Cree. He was an advocate for the Indians when they were summoned to appear in Court regarding their hunting privileges and acted as a translator.

From an audio tape by Abram A. Reimer, 1982.

### Giroux, 1909.

About 1908 Aganetha and Abraham W. Reimer “sold their holdings in Steinbach and moved to Giroux where he built a travellers home which operated successfully for many years,” Kl. J. B. Reimer, “Historical Sketches,” page 6. According to a 1917 photo the “Reimer Trading Company” was still in operation in Steinbach adjacent to the site of “Steinbach Lumber Yards” where Solomon’s Furniture is located today.

Aganetha and Abram acquired a house at the south end of Giroux and a store nearby. With their sons they also owned and operated “Reimer Trading Company” (an abattoir) situated at the north end of Giroux.

They also operated a boarding house, serving as a “Bed and Breakfast” of the day. Salesmen on their way to Steinbach, as well as the train crews, anticipated hearty and nourishing fare at a sizeable dining room table, tastefully set with white damask tablecloths. The number of times the train whistle blew always indicated the number of guests who would be arriving.

Dressed in her conservative attire--a long skirt, an apron, a shawl, and a head covering, Aganetha served up generous portions of her tasty fried potatoes, roast beef, soup, pie and a variety of preserved fruits and jellies. All produce had been garnered from her large vegetable garden and fruit orchard.

Frank F. Reimer, third oldest grandchild, recalls he frequently was the happy recipient of his grandmother’s “aufjeladdade Pei” – pie from which the meringue had slid, and therefore not suitable for guests.

Aganetha was slight of stature and presented an attractive figure. She was known for her physical strength, self-determination, vigour and hard work. The story is told that one day when her husband was away and she was doing chores, a stranger of considerable size became friendly towards her. Apparently she grabbed a horse halter and whipped him soundly.

Grandson Frank F. Reimer recalled how he extracted his grandmother’s tooth with a pair of pliers, while she stood outside on her front steps.



*Abram W. Reimer general store and butcher shop in Giroux. The business was sold to sons Klaas, Jakob and Johann circa 1920. The premises burned down shortly after the business was relocated to Saskatoon. Photo courtesy of son Walter R. Reimer, Steinbach, Manitoba.*

Evidently the family was still involved in the lumber business at this time. It was in Giroux that grandson Frank F. Reimer observed how father Peter B. ("Butcha") Reimer, sold a shipment of lumber. He would count off the boards as they were loaded, calling out, so many 2 by 4s', so many 2 by 6s', etc. Meanwhile grandmother, Aganetha, was standing by mentally calculating the board feet in each item and totalling the same. When the loading was completed, grandmother announced the total board feet which was accepted as the correct sum for the purposes of the transaction, all without the benefit of an adding machine or even pencil and paper.

Grandson Frank later put some of the lessons he learned from his grandmother to good use in establishing his trucking company "Reimer Express Lines".

### Strategy.

Historian Royden Loewen has written that when the railroad passed through Giroux seven miles to the northeast in 1897, "Steinbach had a well-established merchant elite, willing and able to turn Giroux to its own advantage.... The Steinbach merchants merely redirected their teamsters from Winnipeg to Giroux and increased their shipments of cheese, butter and eggs to the Winnipeg markets.... Indeed, Giroux enabled them to swing the economic axis of the East Reserve by 180 degrees, so that its geographic entrepot now became Steinbach," Loewen, *Family Church and Market*, pages 157-8.

March 5, 1916, these activities were referred to in the brotherhood meeting of the KG by Steinbach Aeltester Peter R. Dueck, who stated "regarding A. W. Reimer, Giroux, that he also had a large store in Winnipeg, [that it] is detrimental for the souls' salvation, yet..."

Apparently Abraham and Aganetha were able to work some accommodation as no action was recorded in the minutes. This incident speaks for the pioneer years in Steinbach when the Sermon on the Mount regulated the conduct of business as well as the personal lives of its residents.

### Recollections.

Granddaughter Margaretha F. Reimer also recorded some recollections and stories about her grandparents' experiences in Giroux:

"Aganetha and daughter Agnes made a living by feeding trainmen who came through. I still remember that large dining room bright

with the sun splashing through windows on three sides. There was a pot-bellied wood stove which grandfather stoked from where he sat on his rocking chair. In one corner was a side board laden with all manner of plants, and geraniums on the window sills. An old "schloape bank" (sleeping bench or settee) stood against the wall under the big clock. But the centre of attraction was the big round table covered with

white bread and butter. Aunt Agnes always had several layer cakes ready to be served. Now and then Aunt Agnes was under the weather so that she couldn't serve the men at the table. Nothing did they like better than to come to the kitchen and help themselves to the good food prepared for them.

"At times the men would stay over night. A flight of stairs led to clean warm beds above the living room."



Truck loading at "Reimer Abattoirs", Saskatoon. The firm was a wholesaler of meat products (weiners, baloney, sausages, hams, etc.) to the grocery stores in Saskatoon. The business fell victim to the Depression in 1930. Brothers Ben L. Reimer and Walter L. Reimer, Steinbach, also worked for Reimer Trading in Giroux and moved along to Saskatoon. Photo courtesy of son Walter R. Reimer, Steinbach, Manitoba.



1951 five Generations: Standing: Great-grandson: Delbert Reimer; Sitting: grandson, Frank Reimer (holding great-great-granddaughter Marcia); Great-grandmother Reimer; son, Peter B. Reimer. Photo courtesy of great-granddaughter Levina Reimer, Box 354, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

a white damask tablecloth.

"Aganetha would have her ears open to see how many times the train whistle would go off as it rumbled in. Was it 4, was it 3, or whatever--that was the number of men to expect to dinner. Quickly potatoes were fried. Ham was ready to be sliced and of course the "plume mousse" was always ready, so was the crusty

### Father's Death, 1917.

It was in Giroux that Aganetha suffered the loss of her beloved father, Peter K. Barkman, January 5, 1917, at the age of 91 years. He had been a widower since 1911. He had lived the last years with various of his children including Aganetha.

### Retirement, 1920.

Around 1920 Aganetha and Abram W. Reimer retired selling their business interests to sons Jakob, Johann and Klaas.

In 1922 A. W. Reimer was involved with a project to build a steam mill in Steinbach. Saturday July 1, 1922, Johann W. Dueck, Rosenort, recorded in his diary that "This week A. W. Reimer was in this area in order to collect pledges for the erection of a steam-powered mill which he was able to obtain in Regina for one-third the original price. I hardly think he will be able to get enough pledges (\$30,000.00) to make a go of it. I have also pledged \$200 but am almost sorry I did seeing he will have a great deal of expenses moving it here and setting it up." *Johann W. Dueck: Prairie Pioneer*, page 206.

Abraham W. Reimer joined his brother Peter to go "...into big scale farming buying a thousand acres of land in Ile des Chenes." Grandson Walter R. Reimer remembered that they paid \$125 per acre with approximately \$25 down.

With the onset of the Depression in 1929 land values fell to \$15 and \$25 per acre, resulting in huge losses.

Another Steinbacher Cornelius B. Loewen had also "invested heavily in the Landmark area. Great financial losses were encountered during the Depression," Kl. J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches," page 12.

### Abram's Death, 1931.

In 1926 the Reimer brothers sold out in Giroux and reestablished their business interests in Saskatoon, Sask. The enterprise was known as "Reimer Abattoirs".

In 1930 the parents Abram and Aganetha,

together with daughter Agnes, moved to Saskatoon as well to be closer to their sons.

After eight months in Saskatoon, Abraham W. Reimer died on February 25, 1930.

Abraham's body was taken back to Steinbach for the funeral and interment. Aganetha had shared 49 years and two months of joy and sorrow with him.

"The pioneer time had been difficult, it was comprised of much toil; but loyally Aganetha had stood at the side of her spouse, the many years during which they owned a sawmill at Pine Hill. Here Aganetha made the food, which she also did a lot of later in Giroux where they lived for 20 years," from the Obituary.

In his latter years Abraham W. Reimer had "...dictated some experiences of early frontier

life in Steinbach to one of his many English friends, a copy of which is still in possession of his daughter Agnes [as of 1952]," Kl. J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches," page 5.

**Widowhood, 1931.**

About a year after her husband's death, Aganetha Barkman Reimer along with daughter Agnes returned to Steinbach. They resided first with son Peter B. Reimer and family.

Later Aganetha and daughter Agnes had a little house built at 198 Lumber Avenue. The small home was tastefully decorated.

They boarded teachers and students. In 1941 Helen Bergmann boarded with them and retained vivid memories of the experience.

In 1998 granddaughter Margaretha Reimer

recalled that her aunt Agnes made gorgeous wedding cakes and sold raspberries from her little garden thus making a living for the two of them.

"Although totally blind for many years, Aganetha delighted in doing simple household chores. The baking of the famed Mennonite "Tweiback" was her job in her home, nearly until the end," Kl. J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahre," May 4, 1965, page 6.

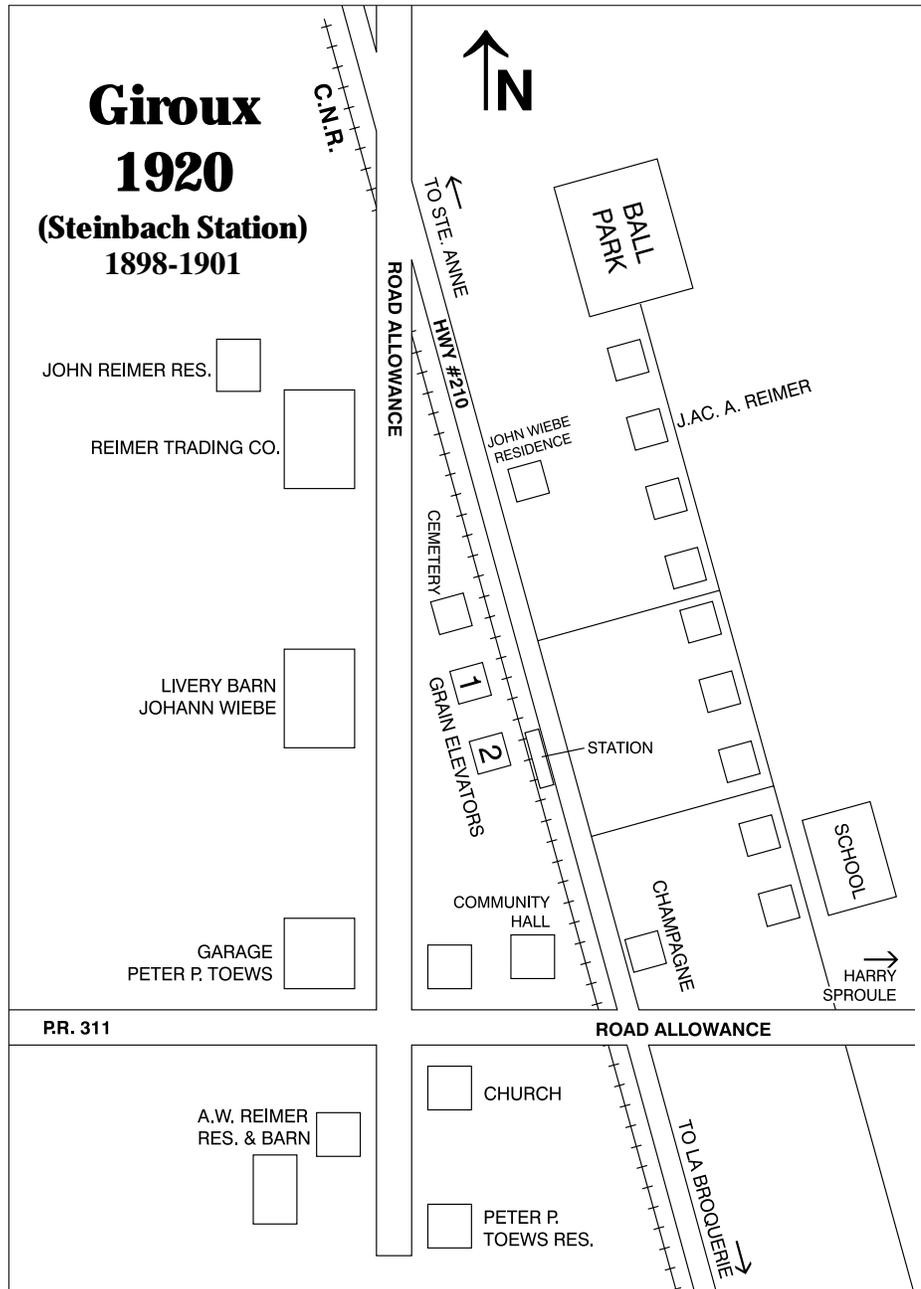
Aganetha's eyesight deteriorated more and more until she went completely blind in 1948.

Her sons visited his mother regularly in her later years. One day Peter B. Reimer noticed she was not feeling well and did not seem her usual self. He thought this unusual, for though she was blind for the last eight years of her life, her mind was alert. After inquiring about the cause of her discomfort, he learned that she had been reprimanded for having a daily elixir of juniper berries and gin, and had consequently stopped this practise. Peter hurried home and cooked up a batch of her "medicine", which she then resumed taking.

Aganetha Barkman Reimer lived to be older than most women in the new settlement.

One day when she was getting on in years and after most of her contemporaries had passed away, Aganetha was heard to say wistfully, "Kjeena weet waa ekj sie; kjeena veet daut ekj dee Barkmaun's Neitcjhe von Maujenave see, ne twalf-Joasche mejal met brune Ssoppe." ("No one knows who I am. I am Barkman's Neitcjhe from Margenau, a 12-year-old lass with brown braids.")

At the time of her death, on April 24, 1955.



Map of Giroux, circa 1920, by Walter R. Reimer, Steinbach, Manitoba, 2000. See John Warkentin, *Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba (Steinbach, 2000)*, pages 171-4, for a description of Steinbach enterprises in Giroux and its rapid decline in the 1920s. A. W. Reimer's sausage business employed 12 people from 1910 to 1925.



Mrs. Aganetha Barkman Reimer, Steinbach, on her familiar rocking chair. Aganetha was born in Imperial Russia, village of Margenau, Molotschna Colony, 1859. Photo courtesy of Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach," Carillon News, 1952.



Funeral of Aganetha Barkman Reimer, Pioneer cemetery, Steinbach. – April 1955. Children (l to r): Agnes Reimer, Katherine & Peter Toews, John & Mary Reimer, Margaret & Jacob Reimer, Katherine & Peter Reimer, Helen & Klaas Reimer, Abram & Margaret Reimer. Some grandchildren present (l to r): Katherine Reimer, Regina Reimer, Cliff Reimer, Ann Reimer, Margaret & Walter Reimer. Some great-grandchildren present: Lorena Reimer, Levina Reimer, Grace Reimer. View to the northeast. Note the Kornelson School in the background. Photo courtesy of great-granddaughter Levina Reimer, Box 354, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Aganetha Reimer had reached the age of 95, eight months and four days, and was Steinbach's oldest resident.

#### Epithet.

In the obituary, Aganetha's children wrote "that mother had left a testimony behind of her relationship with God, and so we know she is in a land where there will be no more troubles, and where no darkness will prevail, nor shall any sorrow or pain intrude upon her."

"Although Aganetha lost her eyesight in her later years, the light in her heart grew always stronger. When difficulty with hearing was added thereto, she remained patient in her travail. She rejoiced when visitors came to keep her company or when they drew close to her speaking loudly so she could also understand. She treasured these visits and was inwardly strengthened when visitors would sing, read God's word and pray for her."

The obituary of Aganetha Barkman Reimer concludes: "Without a struggle in death and without any particular expression, the singular and outstanding life of one of our oldest Mennonite pioneers in the East Reserve came to its sudden termination."

"At 4:30 Sunday morning, daughter Aganetha became aware that the otherwise so steady breathing of her mother, even though often combined with scarcity of air in the latter times, came to suffocation. And after only a few minutes, the last breath departed from a tired worn-out blind pilgrim of the earth."

"Endlich kommt er leise, nimmt uns bei der Hand, führt uns von der Reise, heim ins Vaterland." "Finally he comes quietly, takes us by the hand, leads us from the journey, home to our Fatherland."

#### Conclusion.

Aganetha Barkman Reimer and her husband Abraham have been credited with "playing a key role" in establishing the lumber industry in Steinbach and hence its growing preponderance as the trading centre of southeastern Manitoba.

Aganetha was one of those rare pioneer women who not only survived under the harshest frontier conditions but rose above hardship and travesty. She was an incredibly tough and resourceful woman, yet one who was remembered for her loving nature and willingness to pitch in where needed to build the family enterprise or to advance the business fortunes of her sons.

Above all, the love of God and selfless commitment to her community characterized her life and marked her as a stellar and shining example for others to follow.

#### Descendants.

Aganetha Barkman Reimer was survived by five sons--Abraham, Peter, Klaas, Jacob and Johann, as well as two daughters--Agnes and Katherina. All were resident in Steinbach at the time of her death except Johann living in Saskatoon and Katharina, Mrs. Peter P. Toews, in Winnipeg.

At the time of her death Aganetha was survived by 42 grandchildren, 52 great-grandchildren and three great-great grandchildren.

All the children except for Katherina, are deceased. Katherine resided in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she passed away on October 19, 2000.

Longevity seems to have run in Aganetha Barkman Reimer's family. Her father Peter K. Barkman (1826-1917) reached 91 years of age,

and her grandfather Jakob J. Barkman (1792-1875) survived two migrations, from Prussia to Imperial Russia in 1816, and to Canada in 1874. Aganetha's son Abram A. Reimer got to be 101 and daughter Katharina turned 100 on November 18, 1999 (She passed away in October of 2000).

Among Aganetha's descendants not already mentioned elsewhere in the article is Helena Reimer, who worked with the World Health Organization and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Winnipeg as part of the Mennonite centennial celebrations in 1974.

#### Sources:

Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach," *Carillon News*, 1952, as collected and filed with the Manitoba Provincial Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Margaretha F. Reimer, "Recollections of Abraham W. and Aganetha Reimer," unpublished sketch, Steinbach, Manitoba, 1998, two pages.

Frank F. Reimer, "Peter K. Barkman (1826-1917), A Photograph, 1917," in *Preservings*, No. 15, page 137-138.

Aganetha Barkman Reimer Obituary, *Familienfreund*, May 13, 1955, pages 9-10, courtesy of David K. Schellenberg, E.M.C. Archives, 440 Main Street, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Abram A. Reimer (1883-1984), "Taped interview at age 91," extracts courtesy of Dorothea Reimer, 105 25th St. S.W., Calgary, Alberta, T2S 0M3.

Charlotte Reimer, "'The one with a hat': Peter B. Reimer (1885-1966)," in *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, pages 34-36.

## Rev. Peter S. Kehler (1896-1968), Bergthal

Rev. Peter S. Kehler (1896-1968), Ebenfeld, Bergthal and Steinbach, Manitoba,  
by daughter Katharina Kehler Bergen, Box 1108, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2A0.

### Introduction.

My father, Peter Schulz Kehler was born in Ebenfeld on January 1, 1896.

His father was Jacob K. (Berliner) Kehler (1863-1923) described in *Preservings*, No. 14, June, 1999, page 110. His mother was Elizabeth Schulz Kehler (1866-1943) whose story appeared in *Preservings* No. 10, June 1997, page 28.

Peter was the eighth child in a family of 14 children. Two brothers and one sister predeceased him in infancy. His siblings were born between 1885 -1904. Growing to adulthood were Maria 1885 - 1909, Jacob 1886 - 1945, Gerhard 1888- 1943, Aron 1889 - 1968, Johan 1893 - 1962, then Peter 1886 - 1968, Susanna 1897 - 1988, David 1898 - 1963, Heinrich 1900 - 1983, Elizabeth 1903 - 1946 and Cornelius 1904 - 1968. Peter's birth place was the farm located just north of the Mitchell ball park.

Peter was a small baby weighing a mere three and one-half pounds, so he was told. Incubators were unheard of but with intuition and ingenuity, bricks were warmed in the oven to surround him with warmth. He survived and grew to be a slim, dapper-looking man in his younger years. He was not very tall and later filled out to be robust in stature.



Peter S. Kehler, 1918. Photo taken at T. Eaton Co. at age 22.



"Making Music." Peter S. Kehler and sister Elizabeth, later Mrs. Peter J.B. Reimer (1903-46), circa 1920.



Peter and brother John S. Kehler's garage in Niverville. Sitting in the Model T is John D. Neufeld and young daughter Katherina H. Neufeld. Standing is John S. Kehler, before 1921.

### Early Years.

Peter was a quick learner. Early on he discovered music. At the age of four his Aunt Maria Friesen, or "Mitchimum", as she was affectionately called by her nieces and nephews, gave him a harmonica which he quickly mastered. Aunt Maria lived at the west end of Hochfeld about four miles from Ebenfeld. She was a sister to Peter's mother. Her first husband was Rev. David Friesen and second husband was Jacob Enns.

With so many small children in the Kehler household he became as an adopted son in the Friesen home from the age of four to ten. He had happy times here. Mitchimum taught him rhymes such as the following which he in turn taught all of his children.

"Haesgen sasz in die Grube, sasz und schlief;  
Armes Haesgen, bist du krank;  
das du nicht mehr huepfen kannst?  
Haesgen hupf, Haesgen Hupf, Haesgen hupf!"

Back in the early 1900s small boys wore trousers with a flap or "Luck" at the seat. Peter remembers a Mr. Johan Doerksen from Reinland telling him how he had been lying on the table with his "Luck" open, playing an auto-harp.

At the age of four Peter played "Wenn der Heiland, wenn der Heiland" for his grandfa-

ther Gerhard L. Kehler who praised him and rewarded him with ten cents. He also played for Mrs. Unger, an old lady who also promised 10 cents if he would come get it. However, he was bashful and never did receive the money.

### Music Interest.

This early introduction to music sparked an interest in other instruments. He was able to pick up the violin, Jewish harp, zither, mandolin, flute, organ, clarinet, and harmonica. His favourite remained the violin which he kept up, however he admits that for the most part his use of the violin had not been Christ honouring. His parents had a gramophone. There he learned to appreciate classical music. Some of the pieces he learned to play were "Ave Maria", Brahm's "Wiegenlied" and part of "Meditation from Thais, Messenet." One particular favourite piece which he played often was part of "Intermezzo 'Cavalleria Rucicon' mascagni".

Once in a while he would entertain his family with a swinging waltz or lively polka number. When he wanted to be funny, he would play "Pop goes the Weasel", "Yankee Doodle", or a little tune that went "Ich kann spielen auf meine Violine, Vio - Vio - Violine, Vio - Vio - Violine." As he practised new tunes the children were able to learn and sing along.

### Schooling

School was in session during the winter months. Peter started at nine years of age. His first teacher was Cornelius Fast of Steinbach. The second winter in Hochfeld he was tutored by Rev. Heinrich Friesen: four winters in Ebenfeld with Gerhard P. Schroeder of Eigengrund.

Two days before his death, teacher Gerhard Schroeder told Peter that he had been his best student. This inspired him to further his education. He attended the Steinbach High School which was situated near the Heinrich Reimer store. His teachers were principal Abram P. Friesen, Jacob G. Kornelsen and Gerhard G. Kornelsen. He finished his grade nine at 17 years of age.

### Youth.

Peter remembers the village of Hochfeld lay out as follows. Johan Hiebert, Peter Hiebert, the school, Bernard Wiebe, widower Jacob Kehler, Peter Gerbrandt, Gerhard Kehler,

Peter Harder, and Rev. David Friesen.

The village had hired a cow herdsman by the name of Mr. Hemming. He was a German man who lived at the end of the village. In the spring when the weather warmed sufficiently the calves were let out and the young boys and girls were given the job of herding them. Some of the other herders were: Peter Doerksen, Johan L. Wiebe, Cornelius P. Hiebert, David P. Hiebert, Margaretha Kehler, Helena Harder, Peter K. Gerbrand, and Gerhard U. Kehler.

Peter remained small for his age. At 17 he was the size of the average 14 year-old. He, along with brothers Johan and David loved to ride the horses. Their father got several unbroken ones which they then trained. They took great pleasure in showing off riding calves and steers. When Peter was 16 he placed second out of ten riders at the Giroux Exhibition. His father was a lover of horses and owned one that could run like the wind.

Peter remembers that before they had a buggy, all they had was a sulky. He was lying at their feet when the horse seemed to take off. His mother was terrified, Peter got knocked about but still confident that everything was fine with his strong father at the reins.

#### Work.

Peter started working away from home at 17-18 years of age. He started with wood cutting, moving on to working with tractors, mechanics as well as threshing. One summer he worked for an Englishman west of Niverville who had a 600 acre farm. Here he cultivated with six mules and two horses. He also had the opportunity to work with a tractor that looked like a steam engine. He made \$60.00 per month.

In 1920 Peter bought his first car, a 1918 Ford Runabout for \$475.00 from Heinrich Braunstein of Niverville. In the fall of 1921 he went to Herbert, Sask., to work with the threshing crews. At that time the Trans-Canada Highway was being constructed in certain areas. He worked at Bernard W. Funks, and Johan Funks at Main Centre, Sask., for \$7.00 per day as an engineer tending the fire box.

He made his home at in-laws Heinrich S. and Tina Penner (Tina's first husband Abram S. Penner had been the husband of Peter's oldest sister Maria Kehler). Other relatives in the area were three uncles on his mothers' side, Rev. Johan H. Schulz, Peter H. Schulz, and David H. Schulz.

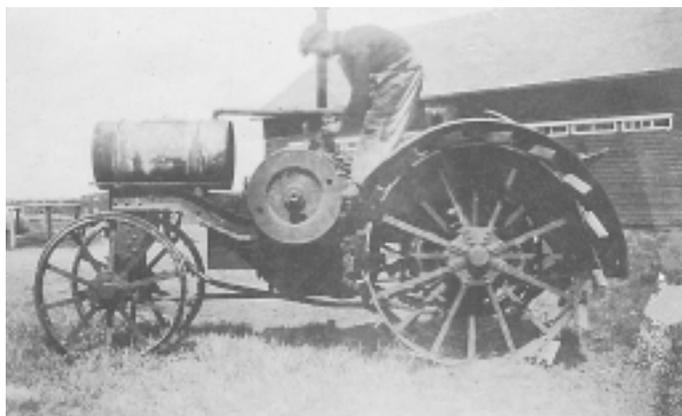
In 1922 he bought a 1918 Model T one-ton truck. He started hauling cream to Winnipeg and expanded to hauling cattle, pigs, grain, and general freight. He had this truck for seven years.

Peter and his brother Johan owned a ga-

rage in Niverville for a short time. No definite date has been established but it was before 1921.

#### Teaching Career.

During the winter months, Peter turned to teaching school for a total of nine years; two years at Reinland (Prefontaine); one at Eigengrund (Hanover) and six at Halbstadt (Shakespeare). In 1918-19 at Eigengrund he boarded at the Andreas P. Blatz residence where he met his future wife Katharina (Tina Blatz). Two other dates recorded are 1921 and 1923 both at Halbstadt. Cornelius S. Stoesz's were



Peter S. Kehler on George Schroeder's Titan.



General Store at Blumengard. The store was later moved to New Bothwell near the cheese factory 1926.

able to give board and room during the week.

Peter had inherited some of his fathers talent at writing poetry. In 1965 he published a 52 page booklet of the writings of several people. Of particular interest are the poems by his father Jacob (Berliner) Kehler and by Peter himself.

He had beautiful handwriting and lovely old Gothic lettering which he drew and painted in Bibles, and hymn books.

For one of his students, Peter F. Doerksen, 88, of Woodhaven Manor, the Hochstadt school and his teacher holds special memories. He remembers the day the photograph of the students was taken. On the wall near the window were the school rules mounted in a frame. It started with a quote, "Dasz erste was du tust wenn zur Schule kommst, Bette gute morgen dir Lehrer, fuer euch zu sorgen..."

Textbooks used to learn reading were the

New Testament, Bible, and Catechism. They also had Bible stories and learned arithmetic.

Teacher Kehler had a hard rubber eraser which was available when someone made mistakes. He had a good straight aim and when someone wasn't busy studying, the eraser would come flying across the room. Peter Doerksen remembers ducking and the person behind him got hit. When some of the boys misbehaved they had to go to the bush across the road and cut their own rod.

Playtime included baseball, tag, and football. Being taught to lasso proved very helpful in later years when he hauled cattle in a transfer business. The teacher took great pride when young Peter Doerksen took down the older, bigger boys in wrestling matches.

One form of punishment nobody enjoyed was to stand in the front of the room with a black board hanging by a cord around the neck. On the board was a drawing of a mule. After awhile the cord would dig in the neck from the weight of it. In spite of this type of punishment, he was well liked as a teacher.

#### Marriage.

Peter married Katharina (Tina) Blatz, daughter of Andreas P. and Barbara Blatz of Eigengrund on August 12, 1923. The wedding was held at the home of the bride. His father had just passed away on June 11, 1923, so the newlyweds moved in with his mother while he taught at Halbstadt. They also lived at the Andreas Blatz's for awhile.

In the fall of 1924 he bought 80 acres of land at Schönfeld near Rosengard for \$500.00. They lived here for one winter. Their first son Andreas (1924) was born here. In the spring of 1925 they moved to Blumengard, living at Heinrich K. Neufeld's place, who was still single at the time. During the year they lived here, daughter Maria

1925-1980 was born. Here Peter was able to obtain some livestock, two horses, some beef cattle and hogs.



Interior of the Peter S. Kehler, "General Store".

**General Store.**

In the spring of 1926, Peter bought an acre of land in Blumengard, from Diedrich Harder (location 5 miles north and 5 miles west of Steinbach). He built a 16' by 40' store with two room living quarters at the rear.

With Peter operating the transfer business, running the store became Katharina's responsibility. In addition she took care of the livestock, garden, sewing, cooking, milking, and taking care of the children. The shed at the back housed butchering hogs as well as gas and oil.

The living quarters became increasingly cramped as more children came. Heinrich-1927, Helena-1928, Aganetha-1930, Peter-1931, Wilhelm - 1933, and Eva -1934 were born here.

As the depression of the 1930s deepened they were no longer able to extend credit to their customers and had to close the store. Much of this debt remained unpaid.

During the years at Blumengard, church services were held in the private school house. Here he became a Vorsänger or song leader, This school was later moved to Rosengard and used as a church till 1958.

The oldest children started their education at the Moray school. Here the teacher Andreas Sobering and his wife started a Sunday School. Mrs. Sobering taught the youngest children in their living quarters while Mr. Sobering had the middle class and Peter taught the older ones.

**Bergthal Farm, 1935.**

Katharina's father Andreas P. Blatz died on Oct. 16, 1934. Six months later, April 19, 1935, her mother Barbara (Stoesz) Blatz died.

Katharina inherited some money from her parents' estate. With some cash on hand they were able to make a down payment on a 320 acre farm from Mrs. Jacob Rempel in Bergthal, two-and-one-half miles north of Mitchell. (See *Preservings* No. 11, Dec 1997, page 88), NW17-7-6E.

The agreed price was \$20.00 per acre or \$6400.00 with machinery. They paid down \$1000.00 with 4% interest on the balance. They started with four horses, 50 hens, eight cows and some pigs. The first year they left most of the land in summer fallow. What they did seed, yielded one box car full of rye which sold for 28 cents per bushel.

The second year was very dry. The yield was not as good but the prices were better. Things began to improve so that the farm was paid off in 10 years.

Between the garden and the driveway just west of a summer kitchen were several trees. In this area are about 11 graves one of which is the burial site of Jacob (August 7, 1937), still-born son of Peter and Katharina. Another three daughters--Anna-1936, Katharina-1938, and Frieda-1941--joined the family here.

There were good neighbours here. The clos-

est ones were Henry and Nettie Mueller to the north. They exchanged their honey for milk since they didn't have a cow. To the north-west were the Henry R. Klippensteins who moved to Paraguay in 1948. To the west were the Abram U. Brandts, Peter K. Duecks and Cornelius S. Ungers. These farmers took turns picking up the milk cans and taking them to the cheese factory.

Livestock was built up to about 35 cattle,



*Ste. Pierre, Aug 23, 1927, on the way to the Carey train station. Peter S. Kehler's truck on left. Helping the Diedrich Wiebe family in their move to Paraguay. This photograph was originally published in Preservings, No. 7, page 10.*

up to 500 hens and 5 sows and their offspring. There 4 to 6 horses--heavy work horses, as well as riding horses. For many years there was a Shetland pony trained for the younger children.

Geese and sheep allowed Katharina to build her stock of wool comforters, feather pillows and comforters for her large family. Here the children went to the Twin Creek School where Peter was a trustee for one year.

**Ordination, 1948.**

Having served as song leader and Sunday school teacher at Blumengard, Peter found himself again serving as a song leader in the Chortitz church.

In 1948 with the exodus to Paraguay, more ministers were needed. Peter, along with Abram F. Kehler were chosen by lot, just as in Bible times. This method is still being used in the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference.

Never in all its days had a Model A come down the narrow country road at such a snail's pace. The lot had fallen on him.

Among daughter Maria Kehler Isaac's (1925-80) belongings was found a paper on which she had recorded her feelings at the time: "A day I so well remember is when Aaron and



*1921. Peter S. Kehler with threshing machine at the Bernard Funk's Main Centre, Sask.*

myself went to Cash & Carry Grocery store to buy a loaf of bread. Aaron stayed in the truck while I went into the store. As Mr. Reimer (the store clerk) got the bread ready for me, he told me that my Dad had been elected as Pastor that day. I could not believe my ears, so asked him if he knew that for sure. He was very sure. It really struck me hard, and I fainted in the store. When I did come around, I went to our truck and told Aaron. We went home to mother and dad. I ran into the summer kitchen.

There was my mother crying. I asked Mom "Is true what people are telling me?"

"She answered `YES'."

The family had not been told. My sister Helen said that is why everything is so different in our house today.

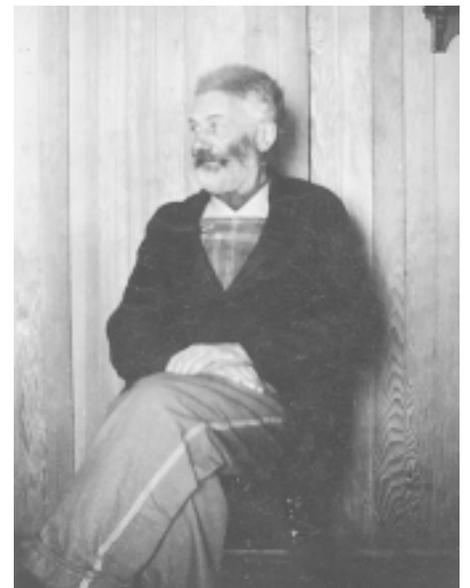
I ran upstairs to see Dad. I can still see the sweat drops on his forehead. I felt so sorry for him. Teaching God's Word to the public seemed to be a very heavy load put on Dad's shoulders. Dad did not have any Bible schooling.

But our tender loving God took over. He was Dad's comforter in times of need, teacher in times of confusion. God was the leader, He

guided, directed and corrected, helping Dad become a stronger Christian and giving power to witness to others, Acts 1:8.

Both Peter and Abram Kehler were ordained on January 16, 1949. In 1949 or 1950 the two of them were in a delegation that went to Riverton area to look at land. There was some interest in an exodus to the Interlake by some Chortitzer members. However this move did not materialize.

His last public function that he spoke at was the Golden Anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. George U. Kehler.



*Gerhard P. Schroeder of Eigengrund. Peter S. Kehler's teacher for Grades 3 to 6.*



Peter S. Kehler's Bergthal Farm (NW17-7-6E) as seen in the early 1950s. The graveyard is located under the trees at the extreme left. This farm was purchased from the widow Jakob Rempel in 1935. See Stoesz Heritage (Steinbach, 1987), page 59, for an areal photograph of the Bergthal farm.



Circa 1921, Halbstadt School (Shakespeare). Back row 3<sup>rd</sup> from left is Peter Doerksen of Woodhaven Manor. Front row 2<sup>nd</sup> from left is Mary Krause (Mr. John Harder of Personal Care Home). Identified by Peter and Tina (Krause) Doerksen.

### Off The Farm.

One by one the boys left home to seek employment elsewhere. Unable to carry on by himself he sold the farm in 1954. Half of the farm went to Heinrich P. Brandt and the other 160 acres were sold to Peter B. Reimer all for \$27000.00. An auction sale took place and the family moved to a four acre lot at 112 Mill Street (1st Street) bought from a Mrs. Derksen. There was a barn to house a cow, butchering hogs and hens, providing milk and eggs. Some of the neighbours took advantage of these commodities. A large raspberry patch brought some income. Peter had a small garden tractor. He was kept busy cutting weeds and working gardens. He loved children and soon found that some of the neighbourhood children would follow him around hoping to get a ride in the tractor or be lucky enough to get a treat.

### Trip to Paraguay.

In 1957 Peter was still enjoying good health. He longed to see friends, relatives, and former school pupils who immigrated to Paraguay in 1926-27 and 1948. He flew to South America and stayed for three months. He visited schools, mission stations, a Bible school, leper station

and churches. He had the opportunity to preach to the Linqua Indians through an interpreter. He took hundreds of slides which he showed upon his return. Gifts that were collected here were sent to the Leprosy Station at Kilometre 81, East Paraguay.

The night of his return was to be "Family Night". Word leaked out as one of the boys had gone to the Esso Station and was told to come home. Soon everyone knew that Rev. Kehler was back from his travels. There was a lot of merry making and rejoicing on Mill Street that night. Peter however was experiencing a problem as his voice gave way with all the speaking in Paraguay, and now retelling his experiences over and over.

### Steinbach to Mitchell.

In 1963 Peter underwent major lung surgery at which time it was discovered he had a weak heart. It was then that he began writing his memoirs about himself and his father. Unable to look after the large parcel of land in Steinbach he traded for a house and lot at 109 Hwy 52 West in Mitchell.

He made countless visitations both in private homes and hospitals. His cheery manner

could bring a smile to the most grumpy person. He was a "people person" who loved to greet people at the post office or H.W.Reimer store or have a pepsi with his nephews at the Husky Station. No matter what age or what station in life he had a friendly way with everyone and expected the same from his family.

In 1966 diabetes was discovered and as his health failed the doctor advised him to give up driving. This he found very difficult.

### Death.

On February 11, 1968 death came suddenly. After visiting with friends that Sunday he went to sleep never to waken. God knew what was best for him.

Although he would have dearly loved to enjoy good health and his family, he would not have wanted to be restricted to a wheelchair or to be dependant on others for his well-being. His love for the children in the neighbourhood was evident when the school was closed the morning of the funeral. His body was brought to the house and the teacher brought all the children to see him once more.

The funeral service in the Steinbach Chortitzer Church saw about 1100 people come. The church was filled to overflowing with the sanctuary of the Steinbach Mennonite Church



Peter with one of his classes. He taught them to print their names in beautiful lettering.

(now Christian Fellowship) being filled as well. Mr. Abram Funk pulled a wire between the churches so the people could hear the service. Those wishing to come for viewing had to walk the block and walk back to their cars.

He was buried at the Steinbach Memorial Cemetery. One of the poems found in his booklet describes his feelings about his impending home-going.

1. So lebt denn wohl, du stilles Haus,  
Ich zieh betruht, von dir hinaus,  
So lebt denn wohl, ich musz nun fort,  
Von dir, du sehr, geliebter Ort.
2. So lebt denn wohl, ihr Freunde ihr,  
Ich ziehe traurig, fort von hier,  
Und find ich einst, ein groszes Glueck,  
Dann denk ich gern an euch zurueck.

### Family Memories.

Daughter Helen Kehler Unger remembers: Thinking back to my childhood I think our father was wise in that he brought us up where

he did. He taught us to work but also to enjoy life. I was brought up at a time when there was no milking machine and combine at our place. The girls in our family outnumbered the boys. So when father was short on man power, we had to help out in whatever was being done. At an early age, anyone who could handle a pitchfork had to be on the field to stook the grain or clover that the boys had cut.

After our years of school were done usually at 14 or 15 you helped with the milking by hand. When threshing time came, there was grain to shovel by hand. When it came time to cut the green feed and clover sheaves and straw to feed the cows, the sheaves were brought to the feed grinder (Hacksel Machine) by the boys. I unloaded and father guided the sheaves to the cutting blades. All cooking was done on a wood burning stove so I helped when the wood was being cut into stove length. As children we didn't need any T.V. for entertainment.

There was a creek near the barn. In the late '30s father built a row boat. One might be holding the baby, another one or two would row, and if the boat had a leak, another one would bail out the water. There was a spot in the creek nearby which made a perfect swimming hole and got plenty of use. The few acres of bush land grew saskatoons, choke cherries and wild plums which would be turned into pies and jam.

Dad played the violin and took us to sing for the elderly neighbours, or took us to other school's christmas programs. We went to singing hour at the Mitchell school. In the house after chores were done in the evening you would soon see the smallest one on his lap and playing catch the star in the Eatons catalogue or giving hugs when he hadn't shaved.

When he became a minister in 1949 and had to go to Austin or other places a distance away to bring the Sunday morning message, he would leave home on Saturday and stay overnight. It was then that he had to put all his trust in his family. The cows were fed and milked and the barn cleaned. There was a time to work but also a time to play. **Helen Unger**

Daughter Anne Kehler Doerksen remembers:

Father took very good care of his draft horses as well as the big driving pair. These served him well both on the farm and in his

ministry. During the stormy winter months he put feed for the horses in a little caboose-type sleigh and off he'd go to preach. Sometimes he'd come home in the afternoon on a Sunday, and mention in passing that he had not only preached the word, but had to act as song leader

car had to be in good mechanical shape. Father was not a patient man. He liked to drive fast, not recklessly, but he did not like to be last. No doubt the Model A or the Volkswagen Bug that he drove for years, would have testified to the fact that they knew who was behind the wheel, had they been able to speak.

His desk was well used as he sat at it, pouring over scripture, often far into the night. When weddings or funerals were in the offing, the hours at his desk lengthened.

This desk was passed on to son-in-law Rev. Cornie G. Peters who is still using it. **Anne Doerksen**

Daughter Frieda Kehler Neufeld remembers;

Farming was a way of life for dad for many years. I can remember only a few times when he was very worried. In 1952 there was an outbreak of foot and mouth disease on the Alberta/B.C. border. Whole herds were destroyed in an effort to contain it. Dad was very afraid someone would smuggle stock out of the quarantined area.

The time came for mandatory testing of cattle. As one barn after another was emptied Dad became very worried. "I believe I have a healthy herd. I have been careful where I bought my livestock," he would say.

The day came that they tested. A week later the results were in. All his cattle were alright except one heifer hadn't tested as well as it should have. He was not required to ship it, but that heifer made a speedy exit from the barn shortly after.

He was also strict with the vet who came to test the cow after we moved to Steinbach. I remember him telling someone he had not let the vet into the barn without disinfecting his boots. He did not want him tracking contamination from other barns. **Frieda Neufeld**

#### Broki Milkj and other things.

Dad was a "meat and potatoes man". Not particularly fond of pasta dishes. After spending three or four days on the road, eating at various places he came home to find Mother had just fixed a pasta meal. That did it! It seemed that at each home he had supper he had been graciously served pasta!

A house rule was "If you don't like what's on the table, have a bowl of Broki Maelk" (pieces of bread soaked in bowl of milk). You can be sure dad had his bowl full too.

When the opportunity presented itself Dad



The Halbstadt School (Shakespeare) where Peter taught for six years.



Circa 1914. L-r: Peter S. Kehler, brother John S. Kehler, and friends Jacob H. Peters (later Reeve) and Erdman H. Peters. The Peters boys lived to the east of the Kehlers in Ebenfeld, see Preservings, No. 11, pages 69-72.

as well. And sometimes the numbers in attendances had been very small.

The dairy cows provided for the travelling expenses as there was no allowances or credit cards allowed for the "men of the cloth". The

would like to sneak up behind one of us girls and pull just one hair. Our instant reaction brought him much pleasure.

Dad was good at building scaled-down furniture. We had a folding ironing board just like mothers. There was a table and chairs, cupboard, doll bed and doll lawn swing.

Dad didn't have a problem doing things for himself. He could fry up an egg when he came home late. He was also handy with needle and thread sewing on buttons. On occasion he would be seen sitting at the treadle machine in his underwear sewing up a ripped seam in his pants.

Dad liked to claim the latest reading material in a novel way. He would come silently and grab the paper on the top with thumb and forefinger, keep up the pressure until you just had to let go. When he wanted that section he got it!

In addition to the *Steinbach Post* and *Carillon News* he subscribed to farm papers such as *Free Press Weekly*. He liked to read King of the Mounties in the comic section.

One little puppy got in the way of a horse's hoof. One of the boys buried it under the willow by the toilet marking it with a small cross. This was visible from both the house and summer kitchen table. Visitors would ask about the cross and on several occasions Dad would tell people how that embarrassed him. It was amusing since he could have easily pulled it out and chucked it over the fence. Sometimes it seemed as though he had a short memory. Like when he would bring home one small chocolate bar from the Co-op store and plunk it down on the table. The older girls were disgusted, wondering whether Dad had forgotten how many children he had as they tried to divide up one chocolate bar.

A small bag of candy easily fit on the wide ledge above the door. Then he would demand his kiss before he gave us any.

When we were sick or complaining of pain or cut, he would come and put finger to tongue and say, "I'll make it all better".

This may have amused us when we were small, but as we got older we would yell, "Get away with your germs" and run feigning horror.

Christmas mornings were wonderful. If the younger children slept in a little too late, he would wake us up and then race for the stairs. Sometimes he would swing a leg over the banister and slide down. There were times when he nearly got pushed down the steps in our effort to get to the gifts on the dining room table first.

This dining room table became his short cut when several children would gang up on him and chase him around the house, onto the benches, along the walls and down again. Mother would scold Dad for setting such a bad example.

The connecting doors, hall way, dining and living room also were great for tag. However, there was a coal heater jutting into the living room that was kept stoked in the wintertime. With Dad hot on our heels we circled the area



Nov. 18, 1948. Peter S. Kehler family portrait taken at Lyseum Studios, Winnipeg. L.-r.: Eva (Mrs. Jake Schellenberg), Peter, Helena (Mrs. Leonard Unger), Heinrich, Andreas, Maria Kehler and Aaron Isaac, Aganetha (Mrs. C. J. Peters); front row, Anna (Mrs. Jake Doerksen), Frieda (Mrs. Ed Neufeld), Katharina (Mrs. Peter S. Kehler), Peter S. Kehler, Katharina (Mrs. Bill Bergen) and Wilhelm. Two of the son-in-laws C. J. Peters and Jake Doerksen are ministers of the Chortitzer Gemeinde. This photo was also published in *The Stoesz Heritage*, page 59.

much to Mother's displeasure. She would mutter darkly about upsetting the stove and getting burned and then remove herself from the scene.

He had a bad habit of coming in from the barn, and keeping on his barn boots. He would go through the dining and living rooms and look out of the window at the barn. This did not sit well with whoever was washing the floors.

In later years he got great pleasure from honking and driving past us as we were walking home from work.

#### Rich Heritage.

In reading the stories about our grandparents and fathers' memoirs and remembering our experiences with him we have been truly blessed with a rich heritage. It is one that had its serious side but also one filled with love and laughter.

Father's inscription on his tombstone reads "He fought the good fight, he finished the course, he kept the faith".

#### Sources:

Peter S. Kehler, "Unpublished Memoirs". 1963

Peter S. Kehler, "Book of Poems". 1965 "Our Stoesz Heritage" page 58

"Memories" daughters Helen Unger, Eva Schellenberg, Anne Doerksen, Tina Bergen, and Frieda Neufeld.

Peter F. Doerksen, Woodhaven Manor (former student)

Rev. Abram F. Kehler (Fernwood Place) Photographs are from the Peter S. Kehler collection

Painstakingly typed by Granddaughter Marcia Unrau (Bergen)

## Kornelius Wiebe (1826) Neuendorf, E.R.

### *Men. Rundschau*, 1889

April 20, 1889, Kornelius Wiebe (b. 1826), wrote a letter to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* published May 1, 1889, as follows:

"Steinbach (Neuendorf), April 20. The weather is truly favourable for seeding. Only on the 15th was the work here interrupted by a refreshing rain. One can not really say how much progress has been made here with the seeding, for although some start in March, others wait for the seeding season customary in Manitoba. The wife of Isaak Dörksen has already lain sick of typhus for six weeks." "Kornelius Wiebe"

Kornelius Wiebe was the father of Kornelius Wiebe (1853-1929) whose grandson Henry T. Wiebe moved from Morris to Blumenhof, north of Steinbach, in 1953, and of Susanna Wiebe (1878-1967), who married Abr. T. Funk, Pansy, Manitoba, see *House of Funks* family book, *Pres.*, No. 10, Part Two, page 81, and *Pres.*, No. 13, page 63. Kornelius Wiebe (b. 1826) was a great-great uncle to novelist Armin Wiebe, Winnipeg.

## “C.T.” Loewen 1882-1960, Steinbach,

“CT”: The Story of Cornelius T. Loewen (1882-1960) and Helena Friesen Loewen (1892-1950), Steinbach Entrepreneurs, by daughter Mary Hoepfner, 411-20 Valhalla Dr., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0Y1.

### Introduction.

It was in 1882 that Mr. Cornelius T. Loewen was born, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius B. Loewen, who had immigrated from Russia to Manitoba in 1874.

The family settled in Grünfeld moving to Steinbach in 1877 when Cornelius Loewen Sr. (1827-93), the family patriarch, married the widow of Rev. Jakob M. Barkman (1825-75), nee Katharina Thiessen (1829-89) and took up residence on her Wirtschaft.

It was here that young Cornelius received his elementary education in the traditional Mennonite confessional school, consisting of four levels or forms from ages 6 to 13, with academic progress based on individual ability.

Because the extended Loewen clan was so huge with branches in Blumenort, Rosenort, and even Kansas, and having the same name as his father and grandfather, young Cornelius soon acquired the colloquial “C.T.” by which he was known all his life.

### Family Life.

At age 31 he married Helena Friesen and established a Christian home. The family altar became an integral part of the day in that the family gathered around the Word of God. At the table before breakfast, he would read from the “Abreisskalender”.

With the entire family he would pray, “Alle gute Gaben.” At bedtime it was “Lieber Heiland.” He

would also sing “Muede bin ich geh zu Ruh.” This was a cue for the family to retire. In this way the children were taught the importance of a vital relationship with Christ.

CT was a generous provider for the family. Every summer he used to buy a big barrel of apples which was kept in the basement. The children were free to help themselves. On a family trip to B.C. he noticed that the children liked soft ice-cream and hamburgers. Frequently he would stop where these were available. They enjoyed these heartily. At meal times there was never a question about not having enough.

His ample provisions for the family did not prevent him from teaching his children economical values. Shoes could be resoled, and that for 10 cents at the neighbour’s shoe repair shop, Mr. Gerhard W. Reimer.

He also gladly saw his children get a Biblical education, from which George, Mary, Anna, Wilma and Elvira benefitted.

He had a healthy motto for the family. It was, “Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.”

He practised this. When Mary, the eldest daughter, was old enough, he promised her 10 cents per morning if she would get up early and make breakfast. He taught her how to build a fire. Then she cooked the rolled-oat porridge. Soon it was time to awake the others. He then knocked on the hall door and called the sleeping ones upstairs, “Time to get

up.” At times this call would have to be repeated.

Through good insight he taught his children to drive the family car. This ability was convenient at times. After his wife died, CT went to B.C. with Elvira, the youngest daughter, as helper in driving. With him were his aunt and uncle, Abram Penners, and their daughter. In the mountains they ran out of gas with evening coming on. What now? Fortunately they managed to reach a hamlet.

At times the children did not always follow his driving instructions precisely. During potato harvest, Cornie was going to go by car to the potato field north of Steinbach. But he was under 16, although able to drive the Model T jalopy. So, he asked Mary to do the steering while he sat beside her and shifted the gears. Now, who was to pass them, if not the town police! Fortunately no ticket was issued.

During the early years the CTs had a family cow which they kept in the barn. Each morning it was sent out to pasture with the other village cows. John Friesen, the shepherd, would start at the east end of Main Street, blowing his horn, signalling the people to send their cows onto Main Street, so that he could chase them to the pasture. By supper time, he would return them and again blow his horn, so that each villager could get his cows from the street.

At CTs’ Edward, the eldest, did the milking for the family for a while. Next it was George’s turn. Apparently he did not enjoy this work too much. Hence he worked out a plan. He went to a Mr.



This photo was taken in 1950 in front of CTs’ house, which was built in 1916 on Steinbach Main Street beside the lumber yard. Rear: l.-r., George F. Loewen and wife Helen with Roger, Aaron and Anna Loewen Warkentin with Bobby, Mary, Wilma and Elvira Loewen, Anna and Edward, Anne with Cornie F. Loewen with son Paul. Middle row seated: CT and Helena Loewen. Front row: grandchildren: Ron, Gary and Ken Loewen, and Don Warkentin. The following have died: George, Aaron and Anna Warkentin, Anna and Edward, Cornie, CT and Helena Loewen and Ron Loewen.

Thiessen and offered him the cow in exchange for the daily milk supply for the family. CT liked the innovative plan. It was time anyway to get rid of the cow, as it no longer fitted into mid-town.

As a family man CT took care that there was an ample supply of wood for the house. During the early times CT bought cord wood and had it unloaded on the back yard and sawed into short pieces for the kitchen stove. This was chopped by the older children and carried to the back fence and piled up. While George and Mary were thus engaged, George taught Mary to whistle. This pastime is still enjoyed to this day. A friend used to whistle in harmony with her sisters. What a feat!

One year the girls piled up four wood walls for a play house. As a result CT, in his love for his children, had a play house built on the side of the yard.

CT was concerned about what his children were reading. He would ask, "What are you reading?" When the children had failed in what they were doing, he would ask, "So, what have you learned now?"

It is obvious that he thought much of the family.

### Church Life.

The Kleine Gemeinde Church had an important part in his life. Sunday was the day of worship, when the entire family went to the service. Sunday mornings he would take the children to Sunday school, and, if need be, on a toboggan. If the John B Reimers happened to catch up with them, he would tie the toboggan to the sleigh, get on and enjoy a happy free ride to church.

The church mid-week Bible study, which at times was held in his home, was a source of spiritual strength. He was involved in getting the Red Rock Bible Camp started, which through the years has been a great blessing to many, many children.

When the Gospel Light Hour was started by some young Christian men, CT came to their help and donated windows for the building.

In regard to this radio work he was assisted by his wife and her sister, Mrs. J. T. Loewen, who at one time went out to collect money for the project. They came home with the grand sum of 25 cents!

One Sunday morning he made a rare experience of attending the E.M.B. Church. George, one of his sons, had told the family that the Parschauer were here and that their singing was bit of heaven. C.T.Loewen happened to sit in front. When he had an occasion to leave early, he respectfully acknowledged the speaker by bowing, so as not to offend him.

### Characteristics.

C.T.Loewen was a man of character. He was kind. Never once did he speak unkindly to his wife or to his children, although he would be strict with the children, when they cried too hard or when they were too unruly. At such times the cellar steps became good resting places for them.

C. T. Loewen never spoke negatively of the clergy. The local Kleine Gemeinde minister, Rev. Peter D. Friesen and his wife, were close friends. He would say, "We should have the preacher, the doctor and the police for our friends."

In spite of his low academic education of the four levels offered in the church run school in the village, he was a wise man. He established a big,

prosperous business. His wisdom also came to the fore in training and disciplining his children. He did not allow them to grumble. He instilled in them a thankful and optimistic attitude.

C.T.Loewen was also generous. The church and the poor had to be supported. Once when he went out to collect just debts and found that the customer was too poor to pay, he gave him a bag of flour. In addition, he gave work to many a person, so that many families could earn a decent livelihood.

C.T.Loewen worked for the good of the community. He was involved in getting the first telephone system into the community, as well as the fire brigade. He also served as a member of the Steinbach Village Board.

He was a peace loving man, although with some latitude. Once when one of his sons overplayed the older one, he said to him, "You don't have to allow that."

At another time when a Gypsy woman in east Steinbach reached into his pocket, he firmly grabbed her wrist until she let go.

To his children he said, "If anyone threatens you, stand your ground. Then that one knows that he does not have power over you." And with tongue in cheek, added, "And they won't kill you." He also said, "If any stranger gets into the house, shout as loudly as you can, "Johnny, get the gun," although there was no Johnny and there was no gun. He also said, "If you are in a crisis in the presence of others, do something to encourage others."

He enjoyed a congenial relationship with others.

CT had an interest in music. When Rev. John R. Barkman and family moved to Alberta, and needed a trailer, CT provided one in exchange for their piano - and this in spite of the fact that the Kleine Gemeinde did not favour music. Soon he provided a piano teacher, Bill Weiss, of Friedensfeld. One of the daughters took advantage of this opportunity. Mary could get instructions for a dollar per lesson.

Edward was inspired to play the alto horn and joined the town band. At one performance when the town band was playing in the CT factory, a leading businessman declared that the band had pretty much "punk." The word caused a ripple of chuckles.

George was encouraged to learn to play violin, taking lessons from Neil Unruh. Cornie sang in harmony with Jackie (his cousin) and Art Reimer. They sang Gospel songs accompanied on the piano by sister Mary. CT's music interest brought in good results.

CT was a lover of nature. A few times he took his family to the zoo in Winnipeg. He liked animals. Once he brought home a young bear. A large cage was provided for it on the back lawn, and he himself or one of the children would feed it by pushing the food through the opened cage door. Once this cub ran its claws along Elvira's face leaving some long scratches.

For the winter the cage was placed behind the back fence with plenty of straw inside. Under this the cub hibernated during the winter. In spring it came forth much emaciated.

One Sunday morning when the family returned from the church, the bear was gone. After a search, it was found inside the lumber yard building. Soon after this it was disposed of.

Another time he brought home an owl. It was placed in the garage, where it remained in the corner

looking very menacing. Still another time a porcupine was spotted up on a tree, but it was uncertain how it got there.

He also brought home a big dog, but it bit the milkman. Hence it had to go. He also had grandma's cat, but it ate the canary. The cat too had to leave.

He enjoyed a friendly relationship with others. Once he had a little quip with one of his employees, Rev. J. S. Guenther. When CT made a round to see his workers, CT said to Mr. Guenther, "Johnny on the spot." Who in turn responded with, "Johnny on the right spot."

Congenially he would visit Mr. Kreutzer, the blacksmith across the street. When CT was in need of a small loan, he would ask Mr. Kreutzer, who responded in a generous way. Or if Mr. Kreutzer was in need of money, then CT would respond very favourably. And all this without going to the bank.

CT was no respecter of persons. When a former acquaintance, a young man known as "Buffalo Bill," came from the west, CT accepted him into his home. The poor were never looked down upon.

CT had pleasure in travelling, which rubbed off on Cornie, his son. One day Cornie heard that there was help needed to take horses to Europe. He and his cousin Jackie (Mel) Loewen decided to help and thus get a trip to Italy. Great experience!

### Business.

He was a good businessman. He held the view of starting small. He believed in providing quality service.

The "75 C.T. Loewen & Sons Anniversary" pictorial report gives further insights into C.T. Loewen as a businessman.

He began a sawmill operation near Sandilands, about 50 miles southeast of Steinbach.

"It was 1910 before the lumber business started, that Mr. Loewen had a Main Street office...."

"With the start of the First World War in 1914, the company's volume took a big swing upwards, as it supplied the building material for the many homes constructed during this period. Included in these materials were doors and windows which the company's small woodwork shop began furnishing to the local trade in 1917.

"The business was expanded in 1919 with the construction of a mill work factory...."

"The financial depression of the Thirties marked a crisis in Mr. C.T.Loewen's business career. The events of this difficult period affected C.T.'s business dealings in that they resulted in an understanding of others' experiencing financial difficulties...."

"In 1941 the company became the owner of a lumber yard located in Rosenort, near Morris.

"The building boom which came with the war created a lumber shortage. To help alleviate this shortage, and at the same time provide an alternative for the Conscientious Objectors, the C. T. Loewen firm set up lumber camps which it operated during the winter months.

"In 1946 a large, modern factory was built for the production of beekeepers' supplies. As well, equipment was installed for use in cabinet making.

In regards to this beekeeping business CT sent a truck to the southern US for a load of bees. Isaac Plett invented a machine for making wax for the bee farmers. By means of the centrifugal principle the

honey was extracted. Needless to say, CTs always had honey in their house.

"In 1947 the company's new lumber drying kiln was ready for use. Drying was done by heat and steam, a process resulting in an equal drying of both the inside and outside of the lumber. This opened the way to manufacturing products such as office counters and desks.

"When the beekeeping industry declined, the C.T. Loewen firm used its facilities to manufacture hydro pole crossbeams for the Manitoba Government's rural electrification program. As well, it manufactured church pews during the winter months....

"With the increase in housing construction following the war, the company began large-scale production of doors and windows."

CT was involved also in other helpful business enterprises. This showed that he was not only a hearer of sermons but also a doer of it. According to his nephew, Wilbert Loewen, CT was a "do-it-man."

When the CT family visited his brothers Isaak T. Loewens and A. T. Loewens, who lived in Nebraska, USA, and when CT saw that they were having a hard time making a living, he told them, if they would move to Steinbach, he would help them to get a good start.

Thus Isaak Loewen became a successful car repair man and Abram T. Loewen a caring undertaker. No more was there a need to have coffins stored in the small upstairs of the CT office on Main Street.

In 1914 the first Ford dealership was started in Steinbach and in 1923 the first General Motors dealership was started by CT and his brother P. T. Loewen. Later CT gave Peter Loewen the choice of taking either the car or the lumber business. Peter Loewen chose the former and developed it into a successful business.

CT, further, started the business of moving houses. This business he sold to J. T. Loewen, his brother, who did it in a big way, even moving an elevator.

Also CT started a sawmill in Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan. In this enterprise he was helped by his two older sons, Edward and George and their wives, who moved there to operate it. CT would ever so often go down to see how things were getting along. He enjoyed the camp life.

Together with Pletts, CT had a planing mill in Roblin. When bearings needed repairing, he showed his nephew, Wilbert Loewen, how to pour babbit. These instructions CT gave in a friendly way, although quite dogmatically.

CT got into the ice business before the electric refrigerators had come on the market in the community. At the rear of the lumber business ran a creek, which provided plenty of ice during the winter.

In the enterprises of the doors, windows and church pews CT was ably assisted by Mr. Frank Friesen, his brother-in-law, and Mr. Jones Friesen, who managed the business for a long time, and also Miss Nora Rieger, his efficient accountant for a number of years.

All in all Helen, his wife, ably assisted him throughout their marriage.

#### Last Days.

In 1950 after he had sold his business to his

three sons, he suffered a massive heart attack, which was followed by a severe stroke. As a result, he was bed-ridden for nine years. At first he was taken care of at home, but later he was cared for in the Rest Haven and finally in the St. Boniface Hospital, where he died in 1960.

He suffered without complaining. Just before he died, he said a few times, "Come, come, come." The Lord then took him peacefully into His eternal presence.

#### Helena, Mrs. C.T. Loewen.

Helena P. Friesen, Mrs. C. T. Loewen, was born Feb. 12, 1892, near Steinbach, to Klaas I. Friesen and Katharina P. Penner, see Mrs. Maria Reimer, "Klaas I. Friesen 1868-1927," in *Preservings*, No. 8, Part One, pages 54-55; see also Mary Ann Loewen, "Katharina Penner Friesen 1871-1952," in *Preservings*, No. 10, Part Two, pages 55-56.

#### Characteristics.

Helena was a gentle and kind woman, as well as devout and generous. The maids whom she at various times had were always treated in such a way. Years later one of them testified of this characteristic trait.

Helena was a good home maker. In summer she would plant a garden in the back of the yard and on the other side of the creek, which ran past the property nearby. She had the children help her and thus teach them to garden. When the produce was ripe, she would fill many jars with preserved fruit. This caused much heat in her kitchen, so that her face was bathed in perspiration. When CT saw this, he build a summer kitchen, which took care of much of the heat in the main kitchen. The many pantry shelves in the basement were filled.

Helena was a very devout woman. During her pregnancies, she would pray that, if life become too hard for the child, God would take it home. Thus when some of these died at age two or under, she was reminded of her prayer and could accept the loss.

Her devotion one day was clearly evidenced by one of her daughters. When the daughter entered the house without her mother knowing it, she heard her praying. It was very intense. No wonder that all her seven children accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and got baptized and became members of the church.

She was quite generous. This showed itself when poor guests would come. At such a time she would give a piece of fabric which always seemed ready for such purposes.

Furthermore, she had a good sense of humour. At one time CT took Helena for a boat ride on the creek running past the back yard. Before long the neighbour, Mrs. G. Goossen, remarked, "I saw some strange clothing on the wash-line." Helena and CT had capsized and gotten a good dip necessitating laundry washing. They had a good laugh.

At another time when she was ready to return home from Mrs. Klaas I Friesen, her mother, she could not find her hat. As a result, she had to return bare headed. Then in a church service in the town tabernacle she wore it again. Mrs. J. T. Loewen, her sister, who knew of the lost hat, remarked, "So you found your hat!" Her sister Margaret teasingly confessed that she had placed it with the dirty laundry.

Hats could be worn too long!

Helena had a wholesome attitude. Cheerfully she accepted adverse circumstances. She used to say, "One person is particular here and another there." Thus she accepted shortcomings in others.

She loved her family and conscientiously showed it in practical ways. When the children came home from school, she was there to meet them. Occasionally she and CT would go to Winnipeg. At such times she would have provided meals for the children. There would be rice pudding or pumpkin pie. Sundays there would be pluma mooss or canned fruit, date cake, meat, etc.

Helena with her love, generosity, gentleness, kindness and firm devotion was a great reason of the success of CT and the family.

#### Helena's Departure.

When her time for departing into eternity came, she was sick only one day. It was on a Saturday. Cornie and wife Annie had come home for the weekend. When her sickness set in, she said, "Pray that I may have joy to die." The next moment she said, "Now I want to die." That evening she breathed her last. That was September 13, 1950, about 10 years before CT died.

She was dearly missed by her family. On her tombstone is engraved, "Nimmer vergeht, was du liebend getan." (What you do in love remains for all eternity).

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Isaak Loewen, Biography, in Plett, *Saints and Sinners* (Steinbach, 1999), pages 242-2.

Melvin Toews, *75th Anniversary C. T. Loewens* (Steinbach, 1980), 24 pages.

Johann W. Dueck, "Diary 1928," in Levi Dueck, ed., *Prairie Pioneer* (Rosenort, 1995), pages 314-5, has an excellent description of the death and funeral of C. B. Loewen. Dueck also refers to brother Is. B. Loewen, Swalwell, Alberta, who "belongs to the 'Abendlichter' [Gemeinde Gottes--Anderson Group]."



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# Material Culture

## Hutterian Education

“Hutterian Education: Early Europe to Manitoba: A Brief Overview,” by Art Rempel, Box 20,888, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2T2.

### Introduction.

The history of the Hutterian Brethren, like that of the Mennonites, is a fascinating story. Both groups suffered immeasurable hardships and persecution for their Anabaptist beliefs at the hands of the European State Churches and the secular ruling bodies in post-Reformation Europe. No wonder that Emil J. Waltner states: “their footprints have often been bloody as they fled from one country to another seeking freedom to worship God, according to the dictates of their conscience” (Note One). Throughout their sojourn in Southwestern Europe, the Hutterians and their Anabaptist counterparts, the Mennonites, remained in touch with each other (Note Two).

Not surprisingly for both groups, the education of their children in the ways of the faith was a vital component and top priority of their brotherhood and pilgrimage. For the purpose of this paper I will endeavour to present a brief overview of the birth and evolution of the Hutterian movement and the emergence of their education system which has carried over to Manitoba to this day. I should point out that this paper is based not on primary but secondary research. No doubt, therefore, Hutterian historians may not agree with all the interpretations and dates of historical events as quoted from the sources used as references in this paper.

### Birth of Hutterianism.

The Hutterian and Mennonite movements were born in the early 16th century, because of individuals and groups, that based their Anabaptist beliefs on their interpretation of the Bible. They were led by men like Menno Simon and Jacob Hutter who challenged the tenets of faith and doctrines of Roman Catholicism, the “universal” state church. Not only did they challenge Roman Catholicism but all those later Protestant Reformers like Luther, Calvin and Zwingli who retained a concept of “corpus christianum,” meaning that the church, state and society are coterminous (Note Three).

Leonard Gross, the consulting archivist at the Archives of the Mennonite Church, tells us that Kasper Braitmichel recounts many early events and occurrences prior to the Reforma-

tion which led to the birth of Anabaptism in 1525. From these events and occurrences the seeds for the Hutterian and Mennonite movements were sown and from which they had their beginnings (Note Four).

Out of this also grew the Hutterian prac-

George Blaurock, both spiritual leaders, were the catalysts that linked the Tirolean Anabaptists, under the leadership of Jacob Hutter with the Swiss. Thus the Hutterian Brethren movement was founded (named after Jacob Hutter) in 1529 (Note Five).

According to the Mennonite historian Victor Peters, the first actual Hutterian community was established in Hungary in 1546, a historical discrepancy perhaps (Note Six).

### Educational Roots.

Around that time frame the Hutterian education system appears to have taken its formal roots. A 16th century Hutterian leader by the name of Peter Riedemann insisted that colonies maintain their own schools away from worldly influence (Note Seven). As a former Swiss priest, turned Anabaptist, not only was he instrumental in the writing of their Confessions, he set the goals and objectives for future Hutterian education. It appears, however, that Peter Walpot put Peter Riedemann’s education objectives into reality in the practical sense. This was the same Peter Walpot who started the oldest known chronicle, known to the Hutterites as the “Gross-Geshichtsbuch” (Note Eight).

In 1567, Vorsteher Walpot composed the Seven Articles of 1567. Article Five dealt specifically with the upbringing and education of children (Note Nine). Article Five essentially defines their early philosophy of education, which in many ways they have adhered to until this day in Manitoba. In the Hutterian School Regulations of 1578, these ideas of Walpot crystallized into definitive instructions (Note Ten). Rudolf Wolkan, the Viennese historian writes: “So superior were the schools of the Brethren in those days that, despite of their hated religion, people of other faiths sent their children to Hutterian schools by preference” and with these policies the fame of Hutterian schools were spread (Note Eleven).

### European struggle.

The three centuries that elapsed between 1567 and 1867 were monumental in terms of solidifying the Hutterian faith. They were also years of not only triumphs, but of dissension,



*Peter Reidemann (d. 1556), working on his “Rechenschaft” while imprisoned in the dungeon in Marburg. An artist’s conception by Ivan Moon. Reidemann was imprisoned in the Castle of Marburg on the Lahn from 1540-42. Photo courtesy of Leonard Gross, The Golden Years of the Hutterites (Kitchener, Ont., 1980), page 133.*

tices known as community of goods (having all things in common) as advocated by Jacob Wiedeman in 1528 to 1529 and from which the first communal community was formed. Jacob Wiedeman’s views and the teachings of



The Hutterites became famous after 1570 for their beautiful pottery. Even their archenemies purchased these artistic works and willed them to their descendants. Photo courtesy of Leonard Gross, *The Golden Years of the Hutterites*, page 143.



The writer Art Rempel observing Hutterian students on a distance delivery program--Tiffany Kleinsasser, left, and Louisa Kleine Kleinsasser, right. Grade S2 (10). All photographs for this article were taken by Art Rempel, Steinbach, Manitoba, at Crystal Springs Colony, southwest of Niverville.

factions and failures. Nevertheless, their doctrine and theology became deeply rooted insofar as it became distinctly separated from other Anabaptist groups.

Throughout their long pilgrimage in Europe—Switzerland, Moravia, Hungary, and Romania, etc.—in quest for peace, they suffered much persecution for their faith. Lack of freedom and persecution was precisely the reason for their constant movement. The gains they had experienced slowly eroded during these years of turmoil. Even the schools, which their forefathers had established and considered one of the first necessities, became so neglected, because of the unfavourable circumstances surrounding them, that the children grew up unable to read and write. Both temporal and spiritual ruin seemed imminent by the early 1800s it appears (Note Twelve).

A temporary breakthrough from their destitution, however, came in the 1840s from a member of the Russian Imperial Domain Supervisory Council, namely, Johann Cornies. He supervised the Molotschna Mennonites in South Russia. He had befriended the Mennonites for their ingenuity, industriousness and way of life. He saw many parallels between the Mennonites and the Hutterites and made it possible, for what was left of the Hutterian movement, to resettle near the Mennonites along the Molotschna River. Here they soon established Hutterthal and Johannesruh (named after Johann Cornies) and several other colonies during the next few decades. Just when they had again re-established themselves after years of turmoil, unfavourable political winds started blowing in on the Hutterites and Mennonites of the Molotschna region.

#### To America, 1874.

In 1870, Czar Alexander II proclaimed that all citizens in his Imperial Domain should be Russianized and that the time of special privileges for groups like the Hutterites and Mennonites were over. He decreed that the Russian language, rather than German would now be the official language. Although the Mennonites spoke their Plattdeutsch and the Hutterians their Tirolean dialect, both groups used standard German in school and in church (Note Thirteen).

As well, Alexander II revoked the exemption from military service (Note Fourteen). Almost overnight it seemed, the privileges they had enjoyed during the reign of Empress Catherine II and Czar Paul I during the past century had evaporated.



Grade One students admiring their rabbits. Front left, Andrea Waldner, and Jarius Kleinsasser, front middle.

Meanwhile, Canada was looking for European agronomic immigrants to help settle and secure Western Canada. A Canadian government agent, namely, William Hespeler, was sent to Southern Russia in 1872 for that purpose. He encouraged the industrious Mennonites and Hutterians to migrate to Canada. Incidentally, Hespeler Street in the City of Steinbach is

named after William Hespeler who was the catalyst for the Mennonites' Eastern Reserve settlement.

Even before he left, Hespeler promised them the special privileges they were looking for and exemption from military service (Note Fifteen).

After sending delegates to Canada, the Hutterites and conservative Mennonites upon their return, reported that they were encouraged by what they had seen in North America. The decision was made to move. In 1874 the conservative Mennonites and Hutterians ventured out to their new land of freedom. Most of the Mennonite contingent settled in Manitoba.

The Hutterians and some Mennonite families settled in the United States, namely in North Dakota and Minnesota. The Hutterians stay in North Dakota was short lived. The First World War brought about considerable anti-German hysteria in North America. The United States government reneged on some of its promises to the Hutterians. Thus in 1918, a good portion of the Hutterian population in North Dakota relocated to Canada--some in Manitoba, some in Saskatchewan and others in Alberta (Note Sixteen).

#### Education, Manitoba.

The Hutterian Brethren began negotiating with Canadian Immigration officials during the later part of the 1890s. After lengthy negotiations, the delegation of Hutterian leaders was encouraged to immigrate to Canada. In October, 1899, Jas A. Smart, Deputy Minister for the Department of Interior, Ottawa, in a letter to W.F. McCreary, Esquire, Commissioner of Immigration, Winnipeg, Manitoba stated:

“There will be no interference with their living as a commonwealth...and these people will not be molested in any way in the practice of their religious services and principles, as full freedom of religious belief prevails

throughout the country...they will be allowed to establish independent schools for the teaching of their children...the children will not be compelled to attend other schools...."(Note Seventeen)

While the negotiations were going on, a small group of Hutterians established a colony on the Roseau River east of Dominion City, Manitoba. Because the land was unsatisfactory due to repeated flooding they returned to the Dakotas in 1904 (Note Eighteen).

The promises Jas. A. Smart made to the Hutterians were not unlike the commitments John Lowe, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, made to the Mennonites in 1873 when he guaranteed them among other things in his letter of privilege:

"The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles...without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever, and the same privileges extend to the education of their children in schools" (Note Nineteen).

With the assurances of 1899 the Hutterites, like the Mennonites in 1874, moved to Canada to stay in 1918 following their brief and unsuccessful stay in Roseau River between 1899 and 1904.

#### 1918-47.

Upon their arrival in Manitoba in 1918, and with the assistance of Dr. Robert Fletcher, Deputy Minister of Education of the day, Hutterian landholdings were organized into Hutterian school districts. In this way, Hutterian colonies gained the freedom to conduct their schools in accordance with their Christian faith and religious convictions but yet within the public school system.

This arrangement lasted until after World War II. Then, in part, in response to post-World War II anti-Hutterian agitation, a select Special Committee of the Manitoba legislature was established to review Hutterian education in Manitoba. This was due to political pressure put on government.

#### 1947 to 1960.

In 1947 the Special Committee completed its task, and recommended that in regard to the

administration of the Hutterian schools in Manitoba, "the function of the School Administrator, the School Inspector, and Attendance Officer be vested in a single official who should have jurisdiction for Hutterian Colonies and their schools".

Acting on these recommendations, the Department of Education appointed Bernie Grafton to the position, who worked in cooperation with the Chief Inspector of schools, C.K. Rogers. During this time, as they do today, in most cases, Hutterian schools paid for their German and religious instructors,



Two young girls solving a puzzle. Their smiles say it all. Elementary students, Kara Kleinsasser, left, and Javanna Kleinsasser, right.

their school buildings, and school maintenance expenses. This arrangement continued until the move to the consolidation of provincial schools into unitary school divisions in the early 1960s and continues to this day.

#### 1960s-Present.

Fearing that the proposed unitary school division system would diminish and compro-

mise the educational freedom and government cooperation that they had enjoyed to this time, Hutterian elders again began meeting with senior government officials in an attempt to resolve their concerns.

The primary fear of Hutterian elders was that the public schools on colonies would be eliminated as a result of consolidation, and thus, their education system, based on their religious convictions and practices, would be compromised, if not eroded. Following a series of meetings, it was agreed to by Department of Education officials that Hutterian schools could continue to operate, but each colony would need to deal directly with its respective school board. The result has been that some colonies receive fairer treatment than others.

This less than fair treatment of colonies by their respective school divisions has led at least two colonies to privatize their schools. Unless the situation improves there may be others to go private. Other colonies like Crystal Spring near Ste. Agathe and Oak Bluff near Morris, successfully made application to the Manitoba Board of Reference for transfer into another school division. Crystal Spring is now part of the Hanover School Division and Oak Bluff is part of the Morris-MacDonald School Division. In both situations, they feel much better and more positive about their new school division. The new divisions are more cooperative and appreciate them, I am told by colony elders.

On the whole, however, this system has worked quite well.

Currently there are 96 Hutterian public schools in Manitoba with 2,484 students in 24 school divisions. There are also two Hutterian funded independent schools with 64 students. To date, the Hutterian public schools enrolment ranges from a low of seven students to a high of 61. Twenty-two percent of the Hutterian school population is Senior 1 to Senior 4 compared to thirty-two percent of the non-Hutterian school population in Manitoba according to Department of Education and Training records.



Students busy doing their assignments. Anita Moody, right, and Charlott Kleinsasser, to her right. Grade Eight classroom.



Hutterian teacher, Mr. Jim Evans, observing electronics student Mark Waldner, Grade Twelve.

### School Organization.

The basic principles of Hutterian education have been preserved relatively unchanged amongst Hutterites from the days of Peter Walpot in the 16th century to the present day. In the grade schools the legally prescribed curriculums are taught by Hutterite teachers if possible, though the teachers are usually non-Hutterites, since up to recently Hutterites did not meet the educational requirements of the Province for teaching (Note Twenty-One).

To correct this, the Hutterians in conjunction with the Brandon University, established the Brandon University Hutterian Education Program (BHUEP) in the early 1990s—designed to train Hutterian high school graduates for the teaching profession. The program was spearheaded by Dr. Gordon Reimer, son of the late Ben D. Reimer of Steinbach, who coordinated the program until recently. Each year more teachers of Hutterian descent graduate.



*A young Hutterian lass Tiffany Kleinsasser working on her computer program "on-line".*

### Kleinschule.

Typically, all colonies start the education of their children with nursery school and Kindergarten known as the "kleine schul" (small school). It operates from early spring to late autumn for children between the ages of two and a half and five or six. This school is headed by a supervisor known as the Schulmutter (school mother), Kinderweib (woman in charge of children), Schulangela (school guardian), or simply Angela (Note Twenty-Two).

According to Vetter Ed Kleinsasser of Crystal Spring Colony, the Hutterian Brethren were the first "society" to introduce nursery and kindergarten programs into their education system. Kleinsasser states this was more readily achieved in their schools because of the communal setting in which they lived (Note Twenty-Three).

### German School.

The German school within Hutterian circles is known as the "grosse schul" (big school). This school is attended by children of public school age. The instruction in German takes place before nine o'clock in the morning and after three thirty in the afternoon; that is, before and after public school instruction.

The function of the German school was outlined by Peter Riedemann. The main objective of the German school is to instruct children to know God and to become wise and knowledgeable in the faith. The German teachers are usually mature men, perhaps ministers, all of whom are well respected in the colony and by the children. All children are also required to attend Sunday School until they join the church and receive the rite of baptism at that time.

### Public School.

The public schools in Hutterian colonies in Manitoba follow the program of studies prescribed for in the provincial curriculum. Until relatively recently, Hutterian children attended school until the completion of grade 8. At the age of 15 or 16, most Hutterian children left the public school as well as the German school.

The young boys, now young men perhaps,

are apprenticed to different enterprises, such as the various facets of farming, machinists, mechanics or whatever. Eventually they become heads of a department—some as chicken boss, pig boss, head mechanic, etc. Although the training is quite informal, the boys develop all the expertise to operate the colony industry and enterprise, which one-day they will take over and become the leaders.

The girls on the other hand help at home with the children, do laundry work, help in the kitchen, work in the garden, and spend time in such things as knitting and sewing. Some who show special ability may be assigned to assist the kindergarten teacher in looking after the "kleine schul" (Note Twenty-Four). No doubt, today some will aspire to be teachers.

### Secondary/Post Secondary.

The general practice of the Hutterian children attending school only until they reached the age of 16 is changing in most colonies. The majority of colonies now see the need to have their children graduate from high school and in many cases post secondary institutions. With their increasingly sophisticated farm operations and industrial enterprises, higher learning in the trades and academic skills are essential. Herein lies the challenge for today's Hutterian colonies and school divisions.

As noted above, the formal education of Hutterian children has traditionally ended at age 15 or 16, and from that point, been replaced by practical training within the colony structure. However, the economic activities of colonies are increasingly diversifying, mostly

into areas which require higher education levels. As well, there seems to be a growing desire in many Hutterian colonies to be more self sufficient in their internal labour force, including some professional services. This is leading to an increased demand for education at the high school level, and in some cases, at the post-secondary level. At the same time, however, Hutterian colonies for the most part will

not send their students to high school institutions outside the colonies. Herein lies a dilemma for colonies and school divisions.

### Distance Learning.

For the above reasons, as well as their rural placement and small student population, Hutterian schools have turned to distance learning through information technologies and are pursuing all such options for their high school students. The need for distance education—whether it be tele-teaching, WEB based or other—requires financial support to Hutterian schools over and above what already is provided to the school divisions in which Hutterian schools are situated.

Since Hutterians do not receive compensation for capital school projects nor for ongoing maintenance and operating of their school buildings, it may be a fair request for those colonies who currently cannot access distance program delivery, to ask government for special funding in this regard. There is also a strong belief by the Hutterians that their schools do not receive fair and equitable resourcing from some school divisions.

The Manitoba School Divisions/Districts/Boundaries Commission offered the following view:

"It was disconcerting to the Commission to discover the low level of priority that many divisions gave to interaction with colony elders and schools...The Commission also encountered considerable frustration expressed by and on behalf of the colonies and other small schools in their attempts to obtain information from school divisions" (Note Twenty-Five).

The existing arrangement, as it stands, has some advantages and disadvantages for both Hutterians and school divisions. For Hutterians, the most obvious advantage has been that their need to educate their children on colony schools (which are usually quite small) has been accommodated; Hutterian students are not bussed to larger off-colony schools. The disadvantage, from the Hutterian perspective, is that these schools often appear to have received less than their "fair" share of divisional resources; the view is that these

schools are often under resourced and that this is most apparent at the senior grade levels.

For school divisions, the advantage has been that the current relationship recognizes the delivery of education as being largely guided by the principle of local autonomy. A major challenge for school divisions has been to respond to the educational needs of small Hutterian schools which also often require some customization in light of Hutterian religious and cultural concerns and how those concerns relate to the curriculum.

#### Hutterian Brethren Education Inc.

To deal with the various issues facing them, the Hutterians have established the Hutterian Brethren Education Incorporation. This is a body consisting of approximately eight elders from eight different colonies who attempt to resolve not only the problems with school divisions inter-relations and communication, but



Crystal Springs Colony school.

also provides leadership and direction for Hutterian secondary and post-secondary education initiatives.

Just recently, 1995 in fact, the government also appointed a Hutterian Education Liaison Officer to help resolve some of the issues facing colonies and school divisions with regards to Hutterian education. It appears that progress is being made, particularly in identifying problems, if not resolving them to the school divisions and Hutterians mutual satisfaction. Knowing that the Hutterians have a strong will to provide secondary education opportunities for all students on their respective colonies bodes well for the future of Hutterian education in Manitoba.

No doubt the 16th century Hutterian leaders like Peter Riedemann and Peter Walpot, were they alive today, would be much pleased to see the quality of education in Manitoba's Hutterian schools today. Particularly would they be pleased to see Hutterians training for the teaching profession at Brandon University Hutterian Education Program (BUHEP).

Riedemann and Walpot, like Hutterian elders today, were of the opinion that their children would be best served in the classroom by their own people as teachers. It will be interesting to see if School Divisions will fill teacher vacancies in colony schools with certified Hutterian teachers, as they become avail-

able from the BUHEP teacher-training program. Only history will tell.

#### Conclusion.

The biggest challenge for Hutterians perhaps will be to keep their faith, culture, and way of life intact for future generations. Consistent with their tenets of faith and beliefs, they have managed quite well to remain separated from the world around them. In other words, they have tried to heed the Lord's teaching about "being in the world, but not of the world". Their relatively recent pro-active stance for higher education on colonies however could change all that if their goals and objectives for higher learning are not clearly defined and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The purpose for higher learning, in other words, must be clearly understood, namely, it must enhance their faith, spirituality and focus of why they are here and for what purpose

they are in this world. If that will be the case, we may well see current Hutterian schools in Manitoba recapture their "superior education system of the 16<sup>th</sup> century," which Rudolph Wolkan, the Viennese historian, spoke so eloquently of that it bears repeating:

"So superior were the schools of the Brethren in those days that, despite their hated religion, people of other faiths sent their children to Hutterian schools by preference and with these policies the fame of Hutterian schools spread" (Note Twenty-Six).

No doubt, with our present universal public school system, for all children of legal school age, we will not see Volkan's findings re-enacted in Manitoba or elsewhere in North America. It is a noble goal, however, for the Hutterian Brethren to strive for such excellence in their own schools. Based on their "work-ethic" track record, they are sure to succeed, we hope.

#### Endnotes:

Note One: Emil J. Waltner, *Banished For Faith* (Jasper Ark: End-Time Handmaidens, Inc., 1979), page VI.

Note Two: Victor Peters, *All Things Common* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1965), page 28.

Note Three: Leonard Gross, *The Golden Years of the Hutterites* (Kitchener, Ont: Herald Press

1998) page 21.

Note Four: *Ibid.*, page 25.

Note Five: *Ibid.*, page 26.

Note Six: Peters, *op. cit.*, page 20.

Note Seven: *Ibid.*, page 128.

Note Eight: *Ibid.*, page 121.

Note Nine: *Ibid.*, page 121.

Note Ten: *Ibid.*, page 129.

Note Eleven: Clark, *The Hutterian Communities* (Journal of Political Economy, 1924) page 373.

Note Twelve: Waltner, *op. cit.*, page 121.

Note Thirteen: Peters, *op. cit.*, page 136.

Note Fourteen: Waltner, *op. cit.*, page 131.

Note Fifteen: *Ibid.*, page 132.

Note Sixteen: Peters, *op. cit.*, page 46.

Note Seventeen: *Ibid.*, page 46.

Note Eighteen: *Ibid.*, page 48.

Note Nineteen: Delbert Plett, *Preservings*. No. 8, Part One, page 3.

Note Twenty: Finance and Administration Records, Manitoba Education and Training 1999

Note Twenty-One: Robert Friedman, *Hutterite Studies* (Goshen Ind.: Mennonite Historical Society, 1961) page 139.

Note Twenty-Two: Peters, *op. cit.*, page 130.

Note Twenty-Three: Horst Gerlag, *Hutterer in Westpreussen: Ein Bruderhof in Wengeln am Drausensee* (Münster/Westfalen, 1999), page 7.

Note Twenty-Four: *Ibid.*, page 135.

Note Twenty-Five: Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission, Final Report and Note Recommendations, Nov. 1994, page 161.

Note Twenty-Six: Peters, *op. cit.*, pages 129 and 130.

**About the Author:** Art Rempel, originally from Silberfeld, north of New Bothwell, received his Masters of Education from the University of Manitoba in 1973. He received the Margaret Williams Award for his thesis entitled, "The Influence of Religion on Native Education to 1870."

Art Rempel served for 13 years as a trustee for the Hanover School Division and since 1991 as a Councillor for Steinbach. He has been employed with the Department of Education since 1973, most recently as Hutterian Education Liaison Officer.

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# The Clock Keeps Ticking

“The Clock Keeps Ticking: The Pendulum Clock of Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905),”  
by Elaine Wiebe 24-1605, 7<sup>th</sup> Street East, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7H 0Z3.

## The Clock 1866.

Aeltester Johann and Judith Wiebe, Olgafeld, Fürstenland Colony, Imperial Russia, bought an 1866 pendulum clock.

The clock bears the identification mark “No. 1866 K.HDB. 190”. Clock expert Tony Funk, Hague, Saskatchewan, has indicated that this clock was built by Cornelius Hildebrand (1833-1920), Insel Chortitza, Imperial Russia.

## To Manitoba, 1875.

Johann and Judith Wiebe took the pendulum clock along with them among their possessions when they migrated from Imperial Russia to Manitoba in 1875.

The emigration, however, was only the beginning of its travels.

When Aeltester Wiebe passed away in 1905 it is believed the clock was distributed when family possessions were divided among the children. The clock was given to son Aeltester Peter Wiebe

but his wife did not want the clock because she feared their children would play with the long dangling cords and ruin it.

So Peter and his older brother Jacob exchanged their inheritances. It is not known what Jacob traded; however the clock kept ticking.

Jacob lived at Springfield, Saskatchewan, on the Swift Current Reserve. When he passed away in 1921 the clock was handed down to his daughter Gertruda and son-in-law, Johann V. Wolfe. They had homesteaded one mile south of Springfield, Saskatchewan.

And the clock kept ticking.



Johann V. Wolfe and Gertruda Wiebe Wolfe in 1938 in Springfield, Ojo de la Yegua Colony, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico. Gertruda was the granddaughter of Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905), Rosengard, Manitoba and inherited the clock from her parents.

## To Saskatchewan.

Jake and Margaret Gerbrandt lived in Martensville, Saskatchewan, at the time. Jake contacted someone in Manitoba about repairing it.

Along with the mechanical repairs, the numbers were repainted and the bird stickers were added.

Being rejuvenated, the clock started ticking again!

## La Crete, 1974.

This clock made one more move in 1974, this time back to La Crete, Alberta, where it now resides in the place of honour in Margaret Gerbrandt’s home. She is Johann and Judith Wiebe’s great-granddaughter.

Contentedly, the clock keeps ticking.

## Source:

Interview with Helen Buller, La Crete, Alberta.



This wall clock kept time in Johann and Judith Wiebe’s home in Olgafeld, Fürstenland Colony of Russia and then in Rosengard, Manitoba. It is a Hildebrand clock, “No. 1866 K. HDB. 190” with an age of 134 years. The unique one-hour hand keeps perfect time even today.

## To Mexico, 1922.

This was the time the Mennonites were struggling with educational issues in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Johann and Gertruda Wolfe moved to Mexico in 1922. They settled in the village of Neu-Hoffnung (No. 114a), Swift Colony, Cuauhtemoc, Chihuahua. Later they moved to the village of Springfield, Ojo de la Yegua Colony, northeast of Rubio.

They took the treasured clock with them.

## To Alberta, 1939.

In 1939 the clock moved back to Manitoba with them and then on to La Crete, Alberta, in 1941.

Since the face of the clock had badly faded, John Wall (a son-in-law of theirs) repainted it and added the rose stickers.

In 1953 after the death of both Johann and Gertruda the clock was sold at their auction. Daughter Helena and son-in-law, Peter Neustaeter, bought it for \$20.00 and the clock kept ticking.

## To Belize, 1960.

In 1960 the clock was sold privately to William Neufeld for \$25.00. About this time they decided to move from La Crete to Belize.

While here the clock stopped ticking.

It was sold at the Neufeld auction for \$10.00 to Aron and Mary Krahn, another daughter of Johann and Gertruda Wolfe. The clock was now back in the family!

What a disappointment, the clock stopped ticking.

Jake Gerbrandt married to Mary’s sister Margaret inquired about the clock several times while visiting in Belize during the 1960s.

Since the clock wasn’t working and there was no one who could fix it, the Krahns sold the clock to Jake for \$10.00.



1993, Jakob B. Gerbrandt and Margaretha Wolfe Gerbrandt, Box 373, La Crete, Alberta, T0H 2H0. Margaretha is the daughter of Johann and Gertruda Wolfe and great-granddaughter of Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905). Mr. Gerbrandt has already passed away.

## Diedrich and Anna Isaac, 'Kjist'

"The 'Kjist' of Diedrich Isaac (1831-1902) and Anna Esau Isaac (1840-1919), Rosenfeld, E.R., Manitoba,"  
by great-great granddaughter Lori Scharfenberg, Box 106, R.R.1, Morris, Manitoba, R0G 1K0.

### Family Background.

Diedrich Isaac (1831-1902) was the son of Peter Isaac (b. 1799) and Justina Doerksen (b. 1807) of Fischau. They are listed in the 1835 Revision (census) with his parents Dirk Abraham Isaak (1772-1833) and Katerina Harder (b. 1770) on Wirtschaft 9, Fischau, Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia. According to the 1808 census the family came from Krebsfeld, Elbing, West Prussia, in 1804, Unruh, pages 310 and 341.

The Isaac family was closely associated with the strong Kleine Gemeinde fellowship in Fischau. Peter Isaac's brother Abraham Isaac (b. 1806) married the widow of Cornelius Toews (1802-31), Fischau, brother of Johann Toews (1797-1873), who also moved to Fischau in 1838. Peter Isaac's cousin Abraham

Isaac (b. 1805) married Catarina Enns (b. 1810), sister to Aeltester Heinrich Enns (1807-81), Fischau. Abraham Isaac (b. 1805) served as village Schulz of Fischau and was known as "Schulz Isaac".

Other families in Fischau associated with the Kleine Gemeinde included Heinrich Bergen No. 4, brothers Gerhard, Martin and Bernhard Doerksen, No. 5, 6, and 7, Cornelius Eidse No. 12, Cornelius Enns No. 14, Jakob Friesen No. 15, Kornelius Esau No. 21 and Wilhelm Fast No. 22(1835census).

According to son-in-law Jakob R. Dueck, Kleefeld, Manitoba, Dietrich Isaac (1831-1902) had two brothers Gerhard and Peter and three sisters Katharine, Maria and Justina, see *Dynasties*, pages 146 and 149.

### Education.

Diedrich, called "Dirk", attended school in Fischau.

A number of material culture items indicate that Dietrich Isaac had a sound education and interest in writing. He also had one or more teachers who taught him about *Fraktur* art. He continued to draw the rest of his life and gave these away as gifts and remembrances. Gerhard Doerksen (1825-82), for example, who taught in Fischau from 1844 to 1849, was a noted *Fraktur* artist, see *Preservings*, No. 6, page 28.

A *Gesangbuch*, still in its original protective black cardboard cover, has Diedrich's name engraved in gold lettering and the date 1841. Did he get this as an inheritance?

A lengthy letter dated January 1, 1842, ended with Diedrich Isaac's name, is still extant and attached to the lid of the Isaac *kjist*.

### Crimean War, 1853.

Diedrich was baptized in 1853 shortly before being enlisted to serve in the Crimean War as a transport driver. The Mennonites agreed to haul food during the war but not ammuni-

tion. Interestingly, all the boxes and bags had been stamped as containing bread!

Showing his humour Dirk said that the bread he'd hauled had been very heavy. Dirk drove wagon loads of supplies to the front lines with bullets and shrapnel flying overhead.

Toward the end of the war Dirk was hit with British enemy shrapnel (from a grenade) which blew away the top of his skull and scalp. Medics moved him aside and left him to die. When hours passed and he didn't die they decided to patch him up. They managed to stretch the skin together but he was in actuality partly scalped. His brain had actually been exposed and there was no bone left to protect the top of his head. It was ribbed with white scar tissue.

That part of his head healed but was always very sensitive so he was known for wearing woollen caps (toques) year round. He had a pommel on top so that he could feel if his head was brushing the top of a doorway and protect himself. His family expected him to be left mentally handicapped but the joke was that he was actually fairly average for an Isaac. The war came to an end in 1856.

### Marriage, 1860.

Another family joke was that one of Diedrich's brothers got married for the first time late in life--perhaps in his 70s. Maybe this will provide a clue for someone as to identifying Diedrich's siblings.

Diedrich, too, married fairly late--at the age of 29.

In 1860 he married Anna Esau, born in 1840--the seventh of 10 children. She had been baptized in 1860. Anna was the daughter of Johann Esau (1805-55) listed in the 1835 census with parents Cornelius Cornelius Esau (b. 1772) and Anna Kornelsen (b. 1774) on Wirtschaft 21 in Fischau.

Anna's brother Johann Esau (1832-1904)



Prussian Pendulum wall clock, dating to circa 1840. This clock was inherited by daughter Justina Isaac Bartel and is currently displayed by the Morris Museum, Morris, Manitoba. All photos for this article are courtesy of Lori Scharfenberg, Box 106, R. R. 1, Morris, Manitoba, R0G 1K0.



A hand covered yard stick to measure cloth. The yard stick was inherited by daughter Justina Isaac Bartel and is currently owned by her grandson Dick B. Eidse, Rosenort, Manitoba.

was a prominent member of the KG who settled in Rosenfeld, E. R., Manitoba, in 1874 and served as Brandaeltester from 1890-1903, see *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 330-331.

**Emigration, 1875.**

Anna Esau wrote a letter to brother Johann in 1874 of sad farewell, see *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 330.

Shortly afterward, she and Diedrich must have decided to move as well. Heinrich Enns in a letter to Peter Toews, Jan 20, 1875, mentioned that “three families have sold their Wirtschaften and want to move namely: Dirk Isaac, Zinner (tinsmith), Gerhard Doerksen and cousin Cornelius Toews. seem to be very committed and hopefully will take their part there.”

Anna’s Esau Isaac’s sister Margaretha and husband Abraham Schellenbergs (Margaretha Esau) wanted to join the Kleine Gemeinde as well. Enns wrote that “the Isaacs (Anna and Diedrich) knew Schellenberg and believed that he was true hearted.”

Diedrich and Anna immigrating in 1875 crossing the Atlantic Ocean on the S.S. Prussian with daughters Justina (b. 1866) and Anna (b. 1868).

**Rosenfeld, 1874.**

Diedrich and Anna Isaac settled in the village of Rosenfeld where her brother Johann had pioneered the previous year.

October 5, 1875 they were accepted as members of the Kleine Gemeinde in the East Reserve. He was entered in the Brandordnung (fire insurance) with coverage of \$100 for buildings, \$175 for inventory and \$150 for feed and supplies. The first winter the family had a frightening experience. The parents left the two girls alone in their home which was partly in the ground and partly out surrounded by bush. The girls were playing when they felt something watching them. Looking at the tiny window they saw a pair of fierce eyes. They hid under the parents bed in fear until they heard the parents come home. By then it was dark outside. When they told their father what they’d seen he doubted them. When he checked outside the window the next morning he saw to his horror, the huge paw prints of a wolf.

July 1, 1877, insurance coverage on buildings was increased to \$275 indicating that they may have built a new housebarn.

In 1879 Dirk filed for a homestead on NW27-6-5E, part of the Rosenfeld village complex, originally the homestead of Peter Unger

who relocated to Blumenhof in 1875, see *Dynasties*, p. 420. More information on his land ownership is available in the John R. Friesen book.

In 1883 Dirk Isaac owned 240 acres of land with 22 acres cultivated, 2 1/2 horses, 5 cows, with a total assessment of 654 about average.

ries since they might be poisonous. They watched the birds and on the sly sampled only what they ate. So they quickly discovered the joys of blueberries, saskatoons, cranberries, pingcherries and wild plums. On the way to church one day their mother remarked that the berries looked so good, she wished she knew whether they were poisonous or not. Then the

girls confessed and soon berry-picking became a favourite family pastime.

Dirk was fluent in several languages: Russian, German, and Low German. He actively tried to learn English. He encouraged his children to learn English quickly and among his favourites gifts to them were English storybooks he purchased on rare trips to Winnipeg.

Diedrich left a will to his children remonstrating them to look after their mother if he passed away and to look after him if he was left behind, See J.R. Friesen book Kleefeld.

Mrs. Anna Isaac, although known to be blind in old age - had an uncanny knack for knowing what others were up to. One day her grandson Gerhard Bartel snuck out to ride bicycle, which she disapproved of. When he came in quietly after having royally wiped out she remarked, “Have you learned your lesson from riding the ‘Flitzepei’?”

Gerhard wondered how she’d know what he’d done. Perhaps she only lost her front vision and still had some side vision. We’ll never know. Despite her blindness, she whiled away many hours knitting socks and mitts and sweaters for all her grandchildren and hardly ever lost a stitch.

One day when the Isaac family was digging potatoes and placing them in the cellar of their house, the door was left open. A skunk got in and decided to relax on their potatoes. Since Justina Isaac was an animal lover, she got an old overcoat and talked to the skunk soothingly. She took the skunk in her arms and walked outside and put it in the creek. Then the skunk let loose. But the Isaac home was saved from the smell.

Anna Isaac made fruit cordial (mild wine). She encouraged her granddaughter Anna Bartel to taste test the three varieties she had created: cherry, current and grape wine. She was blind so she never noticed how much Anna was sampling. After the second round of all three types of wine, young Anna fell fast asleep and slept all night and through the morning until the next noon hour. She woke up ill and never liked wine after that.



*The Dirk Isaac Kjist. The original paint has been removed and it was refinished with dark oak stain. Note the till for valuables visible at the right side. Note the expert tongue and groove construction. The chest sat on a five pedestal base which was removable. The colourful paintings and art work typically displayed inside the traditional Mennonite Kjist is still intact. The Kjist is currently owned by grand-daughter Marge Eidse Kroeker and her husband Rev. Frank P. Kroeker, Rosenort.*

**Anecdotes.**

Dirk Isaac was easy-going and humorous while his wife was more serious and stern.

Dirk loved raw eggs and would eat many of them. His saying “one egg--one gulp”. His daughters enjoyed finding freshly laid partridge eggs for him when herding cows.

The girls were warned not to eat wild ber-



*Close up view of a simple greeting made by Derk Isaac for daughter Justina Bartel in 1893. It is hand coloured with gold, purple and black.*

**Rundschau Notes.**

The *Rundschau* has some information on the Isaac family. The following items are taken from the research notes of Steinbach historian Henry Fast:

In 1899 June 28 Anna's brother-in-law David Koop mentions a visit to Manitoba, "Diedrich Isaacs are quite well".

Dec. 4, 1907 the widow Diedrich Isaac, sister to lame Joh. Esau, wrote, "her children Jacob Bartels live across the street."

May 1, 1912 Kleefeld. Jacob R. and Anna Dueck ask about uncle Peter Esau in Orenburg (Chortitz), Russia, only living brother to widow Died. Isaac and uncle Heinrich Arendts.

Sept 17, 1913. Kleefeld. J.R. Dueck wrote "Father-in-law Diedrich Isaac of Fischau, 2 daughters. (Widow). Now living with Jacob Bartels. Wife's uncle Peter Esau died in Siberia."

Feb 4, 1920 "death of Mrs. Died. Isaac Dec. 25, 1919 Funeral Dec. 29, 1919. Born Nov. 9, 1840 (old calendar?), age 79 years 1 month and 1 day. Married Sept. 26, 1865. Her husband Isaac died July 5, 1902. She was blind for last 4 years."

After their death their children, the Jacob Bartels, continued to support relatives in Russia who were struggling with survival. In the year 1922, the Jacob Bartels sent three money orders to the widow Johann Harder of Fischau and two to uncle Peter Peter Isaac who was being fed at a kitchen.

**Treasures.**

Several of Diedrich and Anna's treasures still exist. They include a hand carved yard stick to measure cloth and Diedrich's 1841 *Gesangbuch* with his name engraved (Dick B. Eidse).

The Isaac's old Prussian clock circa 1830s is currently displayed in the Morris Museum.

The outstanding item of material culture is Derk Isaac's "kjist" 4 1/2 feet by 2 1/4 feet with pedestal base.

Originally it was painted dark brown. The original brass handles are still there.

The inside is decorated with two beautifully illustrated *Fraktur* gifts for son-in-law Jakob Bartel and daughter Justina Bartel nee Isaac. They are dated 1872 in his handwriting which would indicate he did several drawings at a time and then filled in names after the fact.

A unique picture he drew was of an outdoor scene in Russia including wolves, European robins and trees.



A closer view of two items of Fraktur art attached to the lid of the Kjist. The New Year's Greeting dated 1872 (left hand side) was later gifted to son-in-law Jakob Bartel who had a special relationship with Derk Isaac, since he never had a father. The letter dated January 1, 1842, (right hand side) has not yet been translated.

**Descendants.**

Dietich Isaak and Anna Esau had only two daughters who survived to adulthood.

Daughter Justina Isaac married Jakob Bartel (1864-1947). Their descendants in the Steinbach area include Gilbert Unger,

Superintendent of the Hanover School Division, folk historian Dick Eidse, Rosenort, Alfred Isaac, Kleefeld, Gladys Isaac, Mrs. Milton Fast, and Pentecostal minister Harry Bartel, deceased.

Daughter Anna Isaac married Jakob R. Dueck (1866-1924), elected as Aeltester of the East Reserve Kleine Gemeinde in 1919 to replace his brother Peter R. Dueck of Steinbach.

Among their descendants well known in the Steinbach area are Garry Dueck, G&E Homes, Phyllis Dueck Toews, Mrs. Reg Toews, Levi Schellenberg, founder of the Kleefeld General Store, and Ron Friesen, author of *Kleefeld Pilgrims*, see *Preservings*, No. 16, page 135.

**For Further Reading:**

Reinhild Kauenhoven Janzen, "The Canon of Mennonite Furniture," in *Preservings*, No. 12, pages 87-92.

Lori Scharfenberg, "Anna Bartel Eidse 1889-1954," in *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, pages 30-31.

John Dueck, *Descendants of Jakob and Maria L. Dueck 1839-1986* (Steinbach, 1986), pages 119-158.

Dick Eidse, "Our grandfather Jakob W. Bartel (1864-1947)," and "The story of Justina Isaac and her family, the Dietrich Isaacs," in Rev. P. K. Bartel and Harvey

Bartel, *et.al.*, editors, *Bartel 20th Century American Bartel from 19th Century Ukraine* (R. R. #1, Steinbach, 1991), pages 6-7.

**Rosenort Web Site**

The [www.rosenort.com/history](http://www.rosenort.com/history) is a website containing an overview of the Kleine Gemeinde settlement at Scratching River, northwest of Morris, Manitoba, Canada.

It includes various data bases such as burials in local cemeteries, the 1881, 1891 and 1901 census extracts for Rosenort-Rosenhoff, ministers and deacons of the Rosenort Kleine Gemeinde and later the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, list of war veterans and conscientious objectors (incomplete), an article on the original pioneer families with short summaries of each, some photos (with the intention of collecting as many of the Russian Mennonite Scratching River pioneers as possible -- please submit).

Also included is an overview of education and the teachers of the Kleine Gemeinde and the Holdeman schools plus a Rosenort history by P. J. B. Reimer (1967).

Each congregation in the area will have a short feature. The Rosenort E. M. C. page contains the basic history of the Scratching River Kleine Gemeinde because it was the mother church. Several detailed family histories and more on the Holdeman church will be added in the future as well as a chronological Rosenort history.

Come, visit and drop us a line at [www.rosenort.com/history](http://www.rosenort.com/history)

# Books

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 or self-published authors to provide a complimentary copy of a book to the journal or magazine providing the review and hopefully some helpful exposure. The review copy is provided to the person selected to do the review as a courtesy for writing the review of the book.

## Book Review Essay by H. Schaponsky.

Peter Hildebrand, *From Danzig to Russia* (CMBC publications/Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society inc., Winnipeg, 2000), 63 pages. \$10.00

The great works of history, like those of literature have a life independent from that of their authors. They can stand alone, and one need know little or nothing of their authors' lives to value and esteem them. There is a distance between the author and his creation which makes the work live on after the author has ceased to plead for it. It then matters little what political or social causes the author expressed, what his private life was like and whether he was a petty miserly fellow or a kindly philanthropic person. The life of such an author does not intrude and permeate the creation.

Lesser works, which nevertheless may occupy a place on our shelves, gain much, if not most, of their value from the relationship between the author and the work. We read these in spite of, or because of, this relationship, where the writer has not been able to distance himself from his writing. It is often just because of this relationship, that we read them. Such works include many eyewitness accounts, biographies and autobiographies, and works of history written by famous persons who are in some respect less than competent as historians.

The present work is of the latter category. It consists of two pieces written by members of the same family, and we need to understand their family relationships as well as their personal background, before we can assess their writing. Indeed, the pieces in this volume shed much more light on the authors themselves, than on the events they describe.

The writers in question are Peter and Kornelius Hildebrand, who lived, for some part of their lives at Insel Chortitza in the Old Colony, Russia. Peter Hildebrand (1754-1849) was born of Lutheran German parents, Michael Hildebrand and Maria Börns, at Bröske in the Grosses Werder of Poland. He became employed as a young man by a Mennonite, Jacob Höppner who at that time was operating a general store, a shop which also sold bread and beverages. Later he went to Russia with the Höppners and married Jacob Höppner's daughter Helena. Peter Hildebrand later served as Lehrer (minister) in the Kronsweide Gemeinde (church), as did his son Jacob (1795-1867).

Jacob later was elected Aeltester from 1826-1867, and also maintained a diary. Jacob Hildebrand's son Kornelius (1833-1920) turned to manufacturing agricultural machinery and founded the firm "Hildebrand and Pries". Kornelius Hildebrand was a multi-tal-

ented person and took an interest in art, literature, history and nature. He was a competent writer, and as his business prospered, devoted more time to cultural activities. He undoubtedly played a major role in the publication of his grandfather Peter Hildebrand's manuscript (On the Immigration to Russia) at Halbstadt, Molotschna in 1888.

Kornelius Hildebrand's wife was Anna Epp, a granddaughter of the third Old Colony Flemish Aeltester David Epp. He was also uncle to D.H. Epp who published "Die Chortitzer Mennoniten" in 1889 (Odessa).

All of these details are of vital importance in understanding and assessing the value of the two pieces in this volume.

The second piece "A Sunday in 1840 on the Island of Chortitza" is a short narrative story of a Sunday which begins with the residents of Insel Chortitza setting off for church and ends with the successful conclusion of a wolf hunt in the late afternoon. The story is written by Kornelius Hildebrand in fictionalized form, but may have been based on an event recorded in his father's diary. Kornelius would have been seven years old at the time, so much of the detail of the story, written perhaps as an elderly man (it was published in 1913), would have been drawn from youthful memories. While it contains various elements of historical interest, including a description of the Sunday service and the Hymn singing, and some detail on the role played by Jacob Höppner (son of the deputy) in organizing the wolf hunt, the balance of the piece is fiction. As a story, it is well written, and the translation in this volume captures the mood and spirit of Hildebrand's memories. The piece itself reveals Hildebrand's great love of the Island and the Islanders, and his love of nature. This could probably be said of most of the Islanders since they lived in an idyllic location and a similar love is reflected in the writings of later Islanders. It also reveals Hildebrand's great esteem for the early generations of Mennonites in general who were alive in the 1840s [see feature articles section].

The first piece in this volume, entitled here as "From Danzig to Russia" is much the more important. It was written by Peter Hildebrand, it would seem, at the age of 82. It is of primary importance for two reasons. Firstly, it does give factual details on the immigration itself, and the pre- and post-immigration period, in respect of the Mennonites who moved to the Old Colony in 1788-1795. It is the only account of its kind since none of the several hundred other immigrants left anything as substantial behind.

The second, and perhaps most important reason, is that the manuscript was used by a

class of Mennonite historians, whom we might call the "pro-Tsarist Russian school". These writers felt comfortable in the Russia of pre-revolutionary times, and took it as a self-evident proposition that the moral and economic situation of the Mennonites would continue to improve, as it had in the past, under the benevolent patronage of the Tsarist government. As such they had a rather low view of the majority of the early settlers, since the early history of the Russian Mennonites is a history of resistance to the Tsarist attempts to integrate them into Russian society. They were able to use Peter Hildebrand's writing in support of their thesis because Hildebrand himself gave a negative account of the first settlers. This school of writers includes D.H. Epp (mentioned above), Heinrich Heese, P.M. Friesen and Franz Isaac.

We need to say a word about the translation itself. Here I am comparing the 1888 edition (an original copy) and not the Echo-Verlag version, with the current volume. In a work of this importance, I would have expected that an exact copy (translated) as originally published would have been preferred to a modernized and re-arranged edition. This has not been done in this volume. The original title of the book, and the title page detail has not been translated, the post-script has been moved to the front of the book, and the organization of the section headings, as well as the titles themselves, have been modified. In my opinion, something of the original tone of the 1888 work has been lost as a result.

Occasionally, the translation itself is less than enlightening. The "narrows of Danzig" does not seem to relate well to the original "Danziger Nehrung", a specific large region owned by the city of Danzig. "Wirte" is a multifaceted word which can mean landlord, innkeeper, farmer, or employer (in the context of this work), and does not always translate well as landlord. In some other cases, a less than satisfactory translation is rendered (as for instance, when "Bartsch legte sich bald aufs Biten" is translated as "Bartsch soon resorted to pleading" which does not in the context clearly indicate that Bartsch formally applied for readmission to the Gemeinde through an established procedure). The overall translation is nevertheless satisfactory.

At the outset, Hildebrand states that his manuscript was prepared as a personal record for his descendants. He also states that he has omitted dates so as not to give offense. In both of his objectives he has failed. His manuscript did not remain as a personal memoir, and it does give offense because the majority of the early settlers are classified as ignorant and recalcitrant people.

Did Hildebrand deliberately fail his objectives? It would seem that this is a possibility. At the time he put pen to paper, he knew that he was perhaps the only surviving adult of the early immigrants and that none of the other several hundred early immigrants were likely to have written a historical account of the same kind. Then too there is a great deal of anger in his work. This anger was in response to what he considered the unfair treatment of his father-in-law Jacob Höppner, the deputy.

Hildebrand's position was shaped not only perhaps by his relationship with Jacob Höppner, but by his upbringing as a Lutheran. As a late comer to Mennonite circles he appears to have had little respect for Mennonite institutions, and in particular, the role of the Gemeinde. He sees the Aeltester as a typical Lutheran pastor, and not as an elected member of the community who had and needed the support of the community. The fact that ministers could be removed from office is viewed by Hildebrand as a negative rather than positive feature of Gemeinde life. Hildebrand's main purpose in joining the Mennonites was to better his economic circumstances and acquire land, which would have been rather more difficult in the West Prussia he left behind.

The underlying thesis of Hildebrand's account is that Jacob Höppner (his father-in-law) was unfairly treated by the Gemeinde in Russia. We would not have expected that he would have taken any other position. What is disconcerting is that this thesis is developed from the beginning of the narration, and that as the narrative progresses, an increasingly prejudicial and inflammatory vocabulary is employed. This distracts considerably from the account, which is nevertheless not without historical value.

The current and original text divides the account into three sections: (1) Preparation for Emigration, (2) The Emigration, (3) and, Settlement and Discord in the Gemeinde. The first two sections contain the most historical detail including specific events as well as dates (although as recorded in the excellent footnotes, these dates are not always accurate or reliable). As a result, the first two sections are considerably more informative than the last section. But even here, he prepares us for the conclusion in section three by stating that in the general meeting at Danzig "it later became apparent that some secret Judases were also present". There is considerable mention of Mennonites who expressed negative opinions in respect of the Emigration. It is possible that Hildebrand was unaware that at this time, a Prussian agent Lindenowski was actively circulating stories that many of the early German Volga settlers had fled to Turkey because of the poor conditions in Russia, and that the new prospective Mennonite emigrants were destined for settlement in the personal lands of Potemkin (viceroy of New Russia), for his personal benefit, (Note One).

This in fact actually did happen, and when the settlers found that they were to settle on the barren lands of the Potemkin estate, instead of

the original much larger, more fertile tract of land, close to Berislav, originally promised, it is not surprising that some of the settlers felt betrayed. As J. Höppner had been a principal contact with Potemkin, Höppner received some blame. Potemkin's death in 1791 may have led many of the settlers to believe that they could now continue onto the lands originally promised. In any event, the Director of the colony, Major v. Essen, repeated the order to settle in the lands of Potemkin. None of this is mentioned by Hildebrand. It is relatively clear that the Berislav settlement option was much superior, consisting of a greater quantity and quality of land, and being close to the port city of Berislav.

Section three, in which Hildebrand's thesis is fully developed and concluded, contains almost no dating of events. In fact the narrative jumps backwards and forwards in time. A chronological ordering of events would certainly have given a clearer picture of this period. The narrative almost gives the impression that the events took place in a very short period of time, rather than in a space of over 10 years.

The central questions which still remain unanswered are: what were the accusations which led to Höppner's conviction of criminal activity in 1800, was he guilty, and was he unfairly treated by the Mennonite community? The specific charges against Höppner, according to Hildebrand, stem from the Director Brigontzi's insinuation that the deputies might line their pockets from funds destined for the settlement as he himself had done. Brigontzi was director of the colony from 1797 to 1801, and it would seem that the Director involved was actually Brackel who served from about 1793 to 1797 and who routinely took 5% of the funds. This is a case where Hildebrand's jumping around in time confuses the issue. Hildebrand himself states that he believed without a doubt the accusations were false, and that the accounting of the funds was correct.

The evidence against Höppner appear to be somewhat circumstantial and prejudiced by the hostility of many settlers towards him. Much of the hostility probably stemmed from the Potemkin-Höppner relationship in which Höppner was likely a victim of circumstances. Höppner appears to have been an outgoing, dynamic and enterprising person. He was known as such to the Russian Consul General in Danzig, and later had many friends in the non-Mennonite landed gentry around Chortitza, including the nobleman Miklaschewsky. He had constant contact with the Directors and in fact during the period of the weak Director v. Essen (1788-93), was actually managing the colony affairs.

There were numerous misfortunes which befell the settlers during this period including theft of most of their personal possessions, and theft of most of the lumber and horses. Funds destined for the settlers did not arrive in a timely fashion. As a result of the poor conditions many of the early settlers died, or lost relatives. During this period (1790-93) a great deal of timber destined for the settlement was

stolen, and Höppner was accused of negligence. His brother Peter was accused of having appropriated some of this for his personal use. It was also duly noted that Jacob Höppner had managed to build one of the best houses in the colony. During the Brackel period, the trading of homesteads, and irregularities in connection with land acquisitions, as well as financial irregularities, also became an issue.

When Brackel was dismissed, the settlers complained to the new Director Brigontzki. It was not only the Mennonites who complained, but also the Lutheran settlers at Josephsthal. It should be remembered that the Colony Director had much the same responsibilities as the later Oberschulz, including active management of Colony affairs. If anything was to be done of importance in the Colony, the Director had to be involved. Kontenius abolished the office of Director later in 1801 and the office of Oberschulz and local self-government was established in its place. Complaints of this sort can therefore be viewed as complaints to an Oberschulz rather than complaints to the Tsarist government.

The Mennonites reacted in the only manner available, they banned Höppner and Bartsch. Recourse to legal action was normally unacceptable. Nevertheless, state councillor Samuel Kontenius was commissioned to review the settlement conditions in New Russia, with particular emphasis on the Lutheran settlement at Josephsthal and the Old Colony settlement, probably because of a report prepared by Brigontzi. It was Kontenius who ordered a trial at which Jacob Höppner, Peter Höppner and Peter Rempel were charged. At the trial, which probably took place in 1800, the Höppners were found guilty of financial irregularities and fined (Peter Rempel had died before the trial). Imprisonment followed since Höppner could not pay the fine from the sale of his moveable goods (his land technically, like that of the other settlers, belonged to the Gemeinde). It appears that several Mennonites were required to testify at the trial, which they did with much reluctance. Was Höppner guilty? The court certainly thought so, and the circumstantial evidence was probably unfavourable.

Was Höppner unfairly treated by the Mennonites community? Or was the Gemeinde unfairly treated by Hildebrand and later historians of the "pro-Tsarist school"? This may be a matter of opinion. There was certainly anger or resentment on the part of many of the set-

#### Editor's Note:

For further detail regarding the controversy over how later Russian Mennonite writers such as P. M. Friesen and D. H. Epp treated the conservative Mennonite pioneers at Chortitza in 1789 and used Hildebrand's account as a tool which suited their own agendas, see H. Schapansky, "From Prussia to Russia: towards a Revisionist (Chortitza/Old Colony) Interpretation of Mennonite History," in *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 9-14, available on our website: [www.hshs.mb.ca](http://www.hshs.mb.ca)

tlers, as well as on the part of the Höppner-Hildebrand group. It would seem that there were two sides to this story and the views of both sides need to be explored. This has not been done in Hildebrand's account.

Peter Hildebrand makes it clear that economic and material concerns were important factors in his personal decision to come to Russia. He states "whosoever does not cherish physical blessing (Wohltaten) will not also cherish spiritual ones". In this, he may not have found total agreement with the Old Colony Flemish Gemeinde. The Höppner party found fault with the Gemeinde leadership, particularly singling out Aeltester David Epp in a letter to the Lehrdienst of West Prussia. Hildebrand, in an anticipating aside in Section One, contrasts the poor reception at Petersburg of Aeltester David Epp and Lehrer Gerhard Willms with the warm reception given to Höppner and Bartsch some 10 years earlier. As an interesting curiosity, the copyist notes that one of the delegates was Gerhard Willms, the name of the other he could not remember. This is curious because David Epp was by far the more well-known of the two. In the same section Hildebrand repeats an admittedly second hand story of the shabby treatment by the two delegates of their Petersburg host Johann Hamm. Another curiosity in this connection is that D.H. Epp, without mentioning this account, particularly stresses the warm relationship which existed between David Epp (his grandfather) and Johann Hamm (Note Two).

It seems to me that a much deeper cause of dissension were the differing views on the roles of the Gemeinde and the Imperial government in the future of the Old Colony. The outcome of this struggle was that the role of the Gemeinde in the Old Colony was strengthened and endured, despite the efforts of subsequent pro-imperialist individuals to destroy it.

#### Endnotes:

Note One: Kroeker, N.. *Erste Mennoniten Dorfer Russlands*. Vancouver, 1981 (most of the original material relevant here is from the works of D.G. Rempel. Particularly relevant are Chapters One and Two, including pages 42-48).  
Note Two: Epp, D.H. . *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*. Odessa, 1889.

**Book Review Essay, by Henry Schapansky, 914 Chilliwack, New Westminster, British Columbia, V3L 4V5.**

*Sommerfeld 1948-1998 Ich gedenke der alten Zeit der vergangenen Jahre Psalm 77,6 (Geschichtsbildband zum 50jaehrigen Bestehen der Kolonie Sommerfeld 1948-1998, Fil. Paraguay: Imprinta Off y Graph, 1998), 93 pages. Colour photographs.*

Sommerfeld tells the story of a group of Canadian Mennonites who settled in Paraguay in 1948. Even though the Sommerfeld Mennonite colony was founded 50 years ago, its history and experiences are not well known because the colony carefully nurtured a separation not only from the Paraguayan society,

but also from the other Mennonite communities in Paraguay.

With the publication of this book the story of the Sommerfeld colony has become much more accessible. This very fine book of about 100 pages tells the Sommerfeld story in concise historical narrative, an ample supply of pictures, helpful maps, and a variety of charts and tables.

Authorship is not attributed to any one person, but to a committee whose members are not identified. The initiative for producing a publication came from a small evangelical faction that separated from the main church group recently. Financial support was provided by the Sommerfeld colony offices.

The Sommerfeld book begins with a brief survey of the Mennonite story from the sixteenth century Anabaptist movement, through Poland and Prussia, to Russia, and to Canada. Very little detail is included, although some reference is made to the formative Anabaptist beliefs of biblicism and adult baptism.

The writers begin to provide greater detail when they deal with the emigration from Manitoba to Paraguay. The migrants to Sommerfeld came from two Church groups in Manitoba: the Chortitzer Mennonite Church in south eastern Manitoba (East Reserve), and the Sommerfeld Mennonite Church in southern Manitoba (West Reserve). Both groups originated in the Bergthal Mennonite settlement in Russia, and had settled in Manitoba in the 1870s.

Two reasons are provided for why members of these Mennonite groups emigrated to Paraguay. One reason was the threat of military service. During World War II about 38 percent of all Canadian Mennonite men who were called up for military service enlisted in the military. The rest, about 62 percent, chose some form of alternative service. The leaders of the Chortitzer and Sommerfelder Mennonite Churches were alarmed about the number of their young men who chose military service. The church felt it needed to emigrate in order to avoid further erosion of a peace theology among its members.

The second reason for emigrating was that the leaders feared that the Manitoba government would take even greater control of the school system, use the school system to teach nationalism to their young people, and thus further erode an already shaky peace conviction.

A large section of the book is devoted to the story of the emigration experience, waiting in Paraguay to settle on the land selected by their leaders, and finally settling on the land. Since the Sommerfeld colony is located in east Paraguay, the land was heavily forested with hard wood trees. This made clearing the land very difficult. However, the settlers soon discovered that selling the hard wood provided good income.

The early years in Paraguay were filled with disease, many deaths, especially of children, poor health care, inadequate farm equipment, and untold hardships. Some people despaired and returned to Canada. Most remained to carve

new homes in this tropical wilderness. Villages were laid out, roads built, homes established, schools organized, and a health clinic founded.

The economic development of the settlement was slow. The 1950s and 1960s were years of trial and error, and as the writers say, a lot of money was spent in learning. Grain farming on the Canadian prairies was very different from farming in tropical east Paraguay. Eventually they learned how to grow wheat, but also added crops like soy beans and peanuts.

Many of the farmers had had dairies in Manitoba, but found it difficult to find the right kind of dairy cattle in Paraguay. They had trouble finding a stable market for their products. Raising beef cattle also proved to be difficult, and it took a lot of experimentation to breed the kind of cattle that would be able to withstand the climate, grow well, and fetch a good price.

These challenges were gradually overcome by the late 1980s and early 1990s. The key to financial success in some areas was provided in the formation of cooperatives. A cooperative was founded to mill and market wheat. The milk cooperative Lactolanda, organized together with the neighbouring Bergthal Colony (which settled in Paraguay at the same time as the Sommerfeld colony), has been very successful in processing and marketing a variety of milk products like yogurt, cheese, butter, chocolate milk, cottage cheese, and sterilized milk.

About 20 percent of Paraguay's milk products are today provided by this cooperative. The economic life of the community has been under girded by a Credit Union, cooperatively organized by three Mennonite colonies, Sommerfeld, Bergthal, and Tres Palmas.

In other areas groups of individual have provided the initiative and finances to create the organizations that process and market agricultural products. Soya beans processing and marketing, as well as the marketing of beef cattle, is in the hands of groups of Mennonite farmers who have formed local private companies. The church plays a central role in the colony. Leadership in the church consists of an bishop (Aeltester), ministers and deacons. The church is responsible not only for the regular church services, but also gives leadership to the schools, cares for the poor, takes care of widows and orphans through the Waisenamt, has a fire insurance organization, and cares for children who have disabilities. The church gives leadership to mission programs to native and Spanish speaking Paraguayans. The mission program to native Paraguayans consists of helping native people acquire land, and establishing schools, clinics and churches for them.

In 1994 the Sommerfeld church divided with a minority forming a new church. The book does not indicate any reasons why this division occurred.

Colony affairs are directed by an administrative committee. In the early years this committee consisted largely of the ministers. After a few years the constitution was changed, and

the leadership of the colony was placed in the hands of elected people, most of whom were not ministers.

The colony has established a hospital and a home for the aged. Private individuals have established the necessary retail stores, service stations, and other commercial enterprises. A fine all weather road connects the colony to the capital city, Asuncion.

Following numerous pages of excellent photos of homes, businesses, people, landscape, and crops, the book concludes with a number of helpful charts of membership statistics, rainfall, prices for products, and agricultural production.

For those who read German, this book provides an excellent view into the life and development of the Sommerfeld Mennonite settlement in Paraguay.

Reviewed by John J. Friesen, Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Gislason, Leona Wiebe, *Rückenau: The History of a Village in the Molotschna Mennonite Settlement of South Russia From its Founding in 1811 to the Present* (Windflower Communications, 67 Flett Ave., Winnipeg, Canada, R2K 3N3, 2000, 260 pages, 8" by 11" spiral bound photo duplicated.

I must admit I was sceptical when I ordered my copy of this book about Rückenau, a Molotschna village which had played a significant (as opposed to leading role) in the Kleine Gemeinde story. Sceptical because so much which is written about the Mennonite Colonies in Imperial Russia is notable for its lack of through scholarly research and genuine understanding of the dynamics of life as our ancestors once knew it.

My scepticism turned to respect as I started reading Gislason's treatment of Rückenau. It quickly became manifest that she had tapped a number of recently available sources to flesh out the story, telling it from the standpoint of its historical embryo as well as the socio-economic factors which played on the village.

Gislason also explores the life of the villagers from the perspective of the various Gemeinden--Ohrloff-Halbstadt, Lichtenau (commonly known as the Grosse Gemeinde), Kleine Gemeinde, and Brüdergemeinde to name those whose influence was most prominent.

In the task of telling the story of a Molotschna village, Gislason has had only little to follow in terms of previous work. Although there are half-a-dozen histories found for the "old" Chortitza Colony villages, and a number relating to the newer daughter settlements, there are two previous histories for a Molotschna village, namely, *Hierschau*, by Dr. Helmut Huebert, Winnipeg, and a privately published volume on Gnadenfeld by Elizabeth Schmidt.

Truly a model of research and historical writing in its time, the publication of *Hierschau* in 1986 predated several sources which Gislason has used to provide depth to the pre-

1870s history of Rückenau. These sources are the mass of documents regarding the Kleine Gemeinde which have been gathered and published over the past two decades as well as the contents of the Peter J. Braun Archives and other documents which have been mined from recently opened Soviet archives by historians such as George Epp, Harvey Dyck, Peter Rempel and others.

The new sources have allowed Gislason to provide a relatively complete record as to the pioneers and first settlers of the village. Of interest to readers from the East Reserve and the Rosenort area is the treatment of the Kleine Gemeinde fellowship in Rückenau. Gislason has done a good job of digesting and incorporating the information found in the Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series, notwithstanding that the two most helpful volumes, the overarching *Saints and Sinners* (published in 1999) and the concluding Volume Seven, *Dynasties* (published in 2000) were not available to her.

Gislason documents that in 1817-18, three KG Vollwirthen settled in the villages, Peter Martin Klassen (uncle to delegate David Klassen (1813-1900) (see Scharfenburg, *Pres.*, No. 16, pages 107-111), and the brothers Barkman--Martin and Jakob, both of whom played an important role in the administration and financial well-being of the village (page 11).

The descendants of these two brothers were influential in the founding of Steinbach and Blumenort, Canada, as well as several other communities across the American mid-west. Martin's son Rev. Jakob M. Barkman (1824-75) was the spiritual leader of Steinbach who drowned in the Red River in 1875. His son Johann G. Barkman was the mayor of Steinbach for 25 years and grandfather of Marlene, wife of Milton Penner, Penner International.

Jakob Barkman himself was to undertake another migration to America where he died in Blumenort, Manitoba, in 1875 (my great-great-grandfather). His descendants include: son Peter K. Barkman, pioneer windmill builder and founder of Steinbach's steam mill; all of the "B." Toews' of Greenland (including all the "M" Penners); the "B" Koops of Neuanlage, including four granddaughters who married "L." Pletts of Blumenhof, and Mrs. Peter W. Loewen, Neuanlage, whose grandson Abram K. Penner founded Penco Construction, Blumenort.

It is my suspicion that the Abraham Jakob Enns family (Wirtschaft 10) (page 25), may well be the Abraham Enns referred to by KG Aeltester Abraham Friesen in his letter of February 16, 1840 (*Golden Years*, pages 257-259). I have found no other family in the Molotschna to date who fits the context.

Also influential in the village were several members of the Tiede Isaak clan, including school teacher Kornelius Isaac and historian/minister brother Franz, whose sister was the third wife of KG Aeltester Johann Friesen, Neukirch. The Isaac brothers were members of the Ohrloff Halbstadt Gemeinde and

Gislason correctly points out that the close family connections between members of that group and the Kleine Gemeinde nurtured a warm working relationship between the two denominations (page 59).

Gislason was aware of the visit of Czar Alexander I to Rückenau in 1825 and the tradition that he ate a meal in the Martin Barkman home (Martin served for a time as village mayor). She quotes another account that the "Tsar did not stop to eat" (page 23). M. B. Fast, grandson of Martin Barkman and long-time *Rundschau* editor, is the source for the account of the Czar eating dinner in the Barkman home, but is not referred to by Gislason (see M. B. Fast, *Reisebericht* (Scottdale, 1910), page 69).

At this point also I note the lack of photographs and/or illustrations in *Rückenau*. The photograph which M. B. Fast took of the Barkman Wirtschaft during his visit to Rückenau in 1908 has been published in many books and would surely have added historical interest to her work.

In the section entitled "The Building Years" Gislason has done an exceptional job of incorporating data from newly opened Soviet archives. Her work in this regard is comparable to that of Dr. John Staples ("On Civilizing the Nogais": Mennonite Nogais Economic Relationships, 1825-1860", *M.Q.R.*, April 2000, pages 229-256), and the presence of both writers in Toronto would suggest some collaboration in accessing sources, although this is not mentioned in the acknowledgements.

Gislason has documented that in 1837 Martin J. Barkman sold Wirtschaft 17 to another KG-er, Abraham Friesen (1812-89), son of KG Aeltester Abraham Friesen (1782-1849), Ohrloff, and purchased another Wirtschaft in the village, No. 13. In 1847 Heinrich Friesen (1815-56), another son of the famous Aeltester, purchased Wirtschaft 5. It is noted (page 32) that the two Friesen brothers "hired Mennonite maids from Cornies' estate, Taschtschenak."

Peter Brandt, brother of KG-er Klaas Brandt, Tiegenghagen, located to Rückenau as an Anwohner during this period. Peter Brandt apparently was the local distributor of spirits (page 43).

KG Wirthen such as the Friesens, the Barkmans, Peter Klassen and Abraham Enns, played a prominent role in the economic life of Rückenau. Most of them are recorded as purchasing seedlings from the Jushanlee tree nursery. In 1846 Heinrich Friesen planted 252 trees, the seventh largest planting for that year in the entire Molotschna Colony. Heinrich was the father of Margaretha Friesen Harms Brandt, later famous matriarch and midwife of Rosenort, Manitoba (*Saints and Sinners*, page 182).

By 1847 his brother Abraham owned 5600 trees, more than any other farmer in the entire settlement. Abraham was the father of the "B" Friesens including Heinrich B. Friesen who grew up in Rückenau and who, together with his family was photographed in 1860, one of the earlier photos among Russian Mennonites,

another item which could well have been reproduced in the book. Many descendants of Abraham's family lived in Steinbach, including grandson Isaac F. Friesen, whose son Jonas owned Steinbach Lumber Yards.

The largest mulberry nurseries in the Molotschna were owned by Jakob Barkman, Abraham Friesen and the widow Penner (page 38). Martin and Jakob Barkman were among the three Wirthen in Rückenau who owned "Haspelmaschinen", used to process the silk. Martin Barkman Sr. and son Johann also operated a kiln for making bricks or roof tiles (page 71).

Abraham Friesen had 12,015 hardwood trees in his nursery, second (presumably in the Molotschna) only to Stephan Kerber of Alexandertal.

Gislason correctly notes that the involvement of KG-ers in such agri-business activities "illustrates the reputation of this group for their readiness to accept new technologies, despite their religious conservatism" (page 39).

Gislason also presents an accurate description of the KG out migration from the Molotschna Colony to the Crimea and Borosenko (page 53), and later of the emigration to America (page 56). Of interest also to students of KG history is the ongoing account of descendants of KG families who chose to stay in Russia, e.g. the sons of Martin Barkman--Johann, Kornelius and Julius.

Rückenau played an important role in the history of the Brüdergemeinde being the location of its first worship house in the Molotschna in 1874. Gislason's account of this denomination in Rückenau will be of considerable interest to M.B. historians (pages 73-80).

Gislason also provides detail regarding the out-migrations of Rückenauers to new daughter colonies in the 1880s and after. Gislason incorrectly refers to Peter Johann Wiens as a son-in-law of Martin J. Barkman (page 65). Although it is not totally clear, the footnotes indicate the reference may be intended to note that two of Peter Wiens' sisters had married sons of Martin J. Barkman.

Of interest to the story of Rückenau is the visit in 1883 of Martin M. Barkman (son of Martin Sr.) a wealthy KG farmer from Jansen, Nebraska (page 67). He was accompanied by Peter P. Thiessen, a nephew of Abraham and Heinrich Friesen, formerly of Rückenau, and brother to Abraham F. Thiessen, the famous KG land reformer. Apparently Peter gave a talk in the school house. In 1908 M. B. Fast, grandson of Martin J. Barkman, also visited Rückenau.

Gislason has been exceedingly thorough in collecting and documenting primary sources and so I almost hesitate to mention the omission of the journal of Peter I. Fast (1831-1910), later Jansen, Nebraska, son-in-law of Martin J. Barkman. The journal contains not only many interesting anecdotes about Rückenau, but also a valuable list of Vollwirthen as of 1872 (page 95). A copy of this journal is on file at Tabor College, and a rough translation was completed by John W. Wohlgenuth,



*Housebarn combination of Martin J. Barkman in Rückenau, Molotschna, Imperial Russia. Here the Russian Czar evidently visited the Barkman family in 1825 and ate dinner with the Barkman family. According to grandson Martin B. Fast who took the picture of the Martin J. Barkman Wirtschaft on a trip to Russia in 1906, the large hayshed originally located diagonally across the rear--which only the wealthier farmers could afford--had already been torn away when the photo was taken. Photo courtesy of Martin B. Fast, Reisebericht, page 68. This photograph has appeared in many Mennonite publications including P. M. Friesen, Brotherhood, page 850, but without the identification. Photo from East Reserve 125 Years, page 7.*

Hadashville, Man., in 1989.

Gislason's exposition of the ongoing story of Rückenau during the 20th century is excellent to say the least. She deals with each of the issues and calamities that befell the Mennonites in turn, explaining what happened and then describing--often with gripping first hand detail--the horrible manifestation which these events had in Rückenau.

In Chapter Five "War and Revolution" she deals with the course of the war on the battlefield and then explains what this meant for Rückenauers--Anti-German sentiment, expropriation of property, etc.. Then came the Revolution, the German occupation, the forming of the Selbstschutz, return of the White Army, Makhnov's scourges, etc.

Sometimes in trying to tell the larger story in order to explain what happened in Rückenau, Gislason meanders far afield. On page 104 she tells the story of the massacre in Eichenfeld, Jasykovo, presumably because some of the "tent missionaries" who triggered the massacre had a tenuous connection with Rückenau.

In any event I found it interesting to know that the tent missionaries who were propagating Jung-Stillgian religious culture had decided to target Eichenfeld as the villagers had a reputation for being "staunchly conservative", presumably meaning they preferred to abide by the Gospel-centric faith of their fathers. In their effort to spite the Eichenfelders, the "tent missionaries" ran afoul of the Makhnovze, irritating them with their arrogant religious scree, resulting not only in their own deaths but also the murder of many innocent villagers.

With the defeat of the White Army, the Reds again established order in southern Russia. This was followed by famine and relief efforts by American Mennonites. In the midst of all this sorrow and tragedy some humour remained. Gislason tells the story of Julius Barkman, presumably the grandson of Martin, who "was brought before the village soviet for having stolen a rooster...He explained that he

had run the rooster down on horseback with the prayer that if the Lord willed, he should catch the rooster. The Lord had willed it and therefore it should not be considered theft" (page 116).

A short window followed during which a third of the villagers were able to emigrate. Again the reader is drawn along with the drama of those who were able to escape the horror of the sovietization of their idyllic life worlds. Among the four Vollwirthen who left Rückenau at this time was the family of Abraham Peter Bergmann who settled in Ste. Annes near the famous "sand pits". His sons George, Abram, Peter and Henry were well-known and highly regarded in the Blumenort and Steinbach area.

Throughout the book Gislason has provided helpful maps, statistics and lists of people involved in various aspects of life including a record of those who emigrated during the 1920s.

Chapter Seven deals with "Collectivization 1923-1929" under the so-called NEP or New Economic Policies implemented under Lenin. This period involved reapportionment of land, and resettlement of Ukrainians and ethnic Germans into the Molotschna territory. In 1929 the kulaks were liquidated. Those with any amount of property was dispossessed and most exiled to Siberia. In 1936 the "great Terror" was implemented by Stalin, during which time a number of men from Rückenau were taken away by the infamous "Black Ravens" in the middle of the night.

Chapter Eight "The Final Years 1940-1943," deals with the events of World War Two, including considerable detail about the military campaigns which raged through the Molotschna, followed by two years of German occupation, and then the "Great Trek" of Mennonites and other ethnic German to the west, fleeing to escape rapidly advancing Soviet forces.

About 100 people from Rückenau traveling in "twenty to twenty-five wagons" (page 172) were part of a great flood of refugees

streaming westward. Arriving in Germany, many were forcibly expatriated, loaded in cattle cars and sent to Siberia. Again Gislason has exerted great efforts to provide the names of as many Rückenauers as possible.

Remarkably Gislason doggedly continues the story of Rückenau--renamed Kozolugovka--after the departure of its Mennonite inhabitants in 1943. It became part of the Balkovo village council which farmed the kolkhoz "Road to Freedom". This section will be particularly useful for former residents or their descendants, who wish to study and/or return to visit Rückenau, to help them understand the changes which have taken place, and even to locate former homes and Wirtschaften.

With this work Gislason has established herself as a first rate historian. Given the quality of her writing and ability to tell the story through the voices of her subjects, it is perhaps regrettable that the book could not have been published with a proper binding and illustrated with numerous photographs of the village and/or its residents which surely are still extant.

This is a book I would heartily recommend to all students of Mennonite history and particularly to all descendants of the Molotschna as it tells its story, albeit from the perspective of one village, in a detailed and holistic way. Indeed, *Rückenau* could well be read as a companion to James Urry's *None but Saints*, the standard history on the Russian Mennonites.

There were 60 Molotschna villagers many with a 200 year history and each with a distinctive ethos and unique story. Hopefully *Rückenau* will be a model for many other village histories to follow.

Gislason is to be congratulated for an outstanding contribution to Mennonite faith and culture. Hopefully, we will see more of her writing in the future.

Reviewed by D. Plett, Q.C., editor

Jacobus ten Koornkaat Koolman's, *Dirk Philips. Friend and Colleague of Menno Simons 1504-1568*. Trans. William Keeney, ed. C. Arnold Snyder. Kitchener, Ont./Scottsdale, Pa: Pandora Press, 1998, softcover, 234 pages.

The writings of Dirk Philips have always been part of any good Mennonite library. They have been available in Dutch since 1564 and in English since 1910.

But very little is known about Dirk Philips himself, the best friend and coworker of Menno Simons. This is surprising, since he ranks only second to Menno Simons in his influence on Dutch Anabaptism during the first decades of the movement in the Netherlands and Prussia. His writings are more systematic and readable than Menno's. Some scholars might rank Dirk even higher than Menno as a theologian.

The only major biography of Dirk Philips was written by ten Doornkaat Koolman in Dutch in 1964. Ten Doornkaat Koolman was born in a Mennonite family in Hamburg in 1889. He studied theology in Berlin and

Marburg and then at the Mennonite Seminary in Amsterdam from 1911 to 1915. Under the influence of professor Cramer and de Bussy, ten Doornkaat Koolman developed a keen interest in Anabaptist theology and history. Many articles in the *Mennonitisches Lexikon* and the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* bear witness to his scholarship.

For his *proponenexamen* in 1913 ten Koornkaat Koolman wrote a paper on Dirk Philips, which he intended to extend into a future dissertation. But World War I interrupted his plans. Instead he became a pastor. Only after his retirement in 1957 he was able to return to his research and finally in 1964 he published his biography of Dirk Philips under the title, *Dirk Philips. Vriend en Medewerker van Menno Simons 1504-1568*.

In this biography ten Doornkaat Koolman proves the high level of his scholarship. He knows and uses all the available sources. The footnotes alone fill 55 of the 220 pages of his work. It took him almost a lifetime to finish his research and writing, but his biography of Dirk Philips still is the fundamental monograph on this subject.

Like in the case of Menno we know very little of the early years and education of Dirk Philips. J. Kuekenbieter, a contemporary, reports that Dirk got his education in the monastery of the Lesser Brothers (Franciscan) in Leeuwarden. He was baptized before February 2, 1535 by Pieter Huutzager, a messenger from the late prophet and leader of Muenster, Jan Matthijs. More than 25 years later Dirk will call Pieter Huutzager God's messenger.

Obbe Philips' later resignation is discussed. Nevertheless, his baptism and ordination by the false prophets of Muenster, remains for Dirk scriptural and binding.

Upon request of the brethren Obbe Philips ordained Dirk as fellow elder in Appingendam in late 1534 or early 1535.

Ten Doornkaat Koolman agrees with the majority of Mennonite scholars that neither Dirk nor Obbe got involved in the turbulent events around the apocalyptic kingdom of Muenster. Since some of the evidence points in a different direction, even Obbe's confession, more research of this period is needed.

In 1537 we find Dirk as well as Menno in East Friesland where Enno II was governor. When he died in 1540 his widow Anna van Oldenburg came more and more under the influence of the Reformed reformation. She called Johan a Lasco as the new leader of the reformation of her province. His debates with Menno are well known. Ten Doornkaat Koolman assumes that Dirk was a close coworker of Menno at this time. He probably was present at these confrontations and might even have been Menno's secretary. In 1544 the Anabaptists were expelled from East Friesland and Menno and Dirk headed for the Rhine land.

In the decades of the forties Dirk remains in the shadow of Menno. It is in the fifties that Dirk outgrows Menno and takes his own position on different issues. In the confrontation



Dirk Philips (1504-68), Gerlag, Bildband, page 16. Courtesy of Saints and Sinners, page 31.

with Adam Pastor, Dirk already plays a prominent role.

In the fifties it is obvious that Dirk is more concise and stricter than Menno. He supports radical shunning of the brothers and sisters who have been banned from the fellowship of believers. Although there might have been disagreements, Menno continues to call Dirk in the fifties "our trusted and very beloved brother."

In the fifties Dirk moves further east. We find him in Wismar, Luebeck and then in Danzig. He starts writing and publishing in 1554. With his growing recognition and authority he now takes his own stand on many of the important issues of the time. As an elder in Danzig Dirk becomes in the sixties the most respected leader of the Anabaptist movement in the Netherlands, Northern Germany and Prussia.

In this period he writes prolifically. In his writings Dirk works mostly on the same issues as Menno did: the monofisitic Christology, the spiritual resurrection, the ban and shunning, the ordinances and the purity of the church and the presence of the Kingdom of God among us now, are his major concerns. Dirk was convinced, just as Menno and most of the reformers, that his teaching and interpretation of scripture was correct and irrefutable.

As a leading elder Dirk took a firm stand in the Frisian-Flemish controversy and has to be blamed at least in part for the great schism.

For Dirk the Anabaptist reformation is the great turning point in the history of the Christian church. The true church finally has been liberated from the Babylonian captivity of the Roman Catholic Church. The fellowship of the believers, as small and insignificant as it might appear to be, is already the New Jerusalem. Did Christ not predict that only a very few would enter the narrow gate and find the path to eternal life. But this true church had to be one in spirit and faith, otherwise it would not stand. To protect its unity and purity the strict ban was indispensable.

Although Dirk's role in the great schism

throws a shadow over his life for some, his writings became normative teaching for conservative and orthodox Mennonites to the present day. Ten Doonkaat Koolman reminds us that Dirk guided many with his literary works and strengthened their faith.

Ten Doonkaat Koolman writes in the typical style of the European scholars. Long and complicated sentences are the norm.

W. Keeney and A Snyder have produced a translation which reads easily and is concise. Since not many people read Dutch this translation provides the English speaking world access to the life and works of one of the major leaders of early Anabaptism.

Reviewed by Rev. Helmut Isaak, First United Mennonite Church, 659 East 52nd Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5X 1G8. This is a slightly revised version of a review which appeared in *The Conrad Grebel Review*, May, 2000, pages 110-112.



A group of Mennonite refugees who fled Soviet Russia in 1931 across the Amur River and who had arrived in Harbin, China, by 1934. Through the assistance of the Foreign Mennonites, the German Government and the Red Cross, this group received the permission to emigrate to Brazil on April 2, 1934. The photo was submitted by Dr. J. J. Isaak, a medical doctor practising in Harbin, China. He was presumably related to the Tiede Isaacs, see *Dynasties*, pages 193-242. Identified in the photograph in the first row of adults are: Herr Keno, representative of the International Red Cross in China, Mrs. Consul Balzer, Consul Balzer, Secretary of the German Consulate Mr. Marks, Dr. J. J. Isaak and group leader Mr. Froese, presumably the six adults to the right. If any reader has further information about this photograph, please contact the editor Preservings.

Wilmer A. Harms, M.D., *The Odyssey of Escapes From Russia – The Saga of Anna K.* (Hillsboro, Kansas: Hearth Publishing, Inc., 1998), 203 pages, \$30.95, paperback.

This book is divided into two sections. Part One begins with an historical overview, beginning with 18th century Russia, and the efforts of Peter I and Catherine II to entice immigrants, including the Mennonites, to settle in Russia.

While there is nothing new in these first 40 pages, Harms includes them in order to put into perspective the historical background which impacted the events and nuances that

led to large scale emigration out of Russia.

By 1870 growing disenchantment and distrust led to the first major Mennonite migration out of Russia. The atrocities which followed the October Revolution in 1917, the famine years, and the collectivization of private property intensified the desire for Mennonites to emigrate in the first half of the 1900s. When Russia began to close normal emigration channels, desperate refugees looked for alternative routes out of Russia.

Some moved to Eastern Siberia hoping to be far from the collectivization program of Stalin, but quickly realized that their only hope for freedom lay in flight to the West. Many undertook dangerous, daring, almost impossible attempts by way of Harbin, China, near the Sea of Japan.

Harms interviewed about 25 survivors of these escapes, and the second half of Part One

of the book includes about a dozen escape accounts. These dramatic stories chronicle the dangerous and daring attempts of people desperate to flee the persecution of the Germans in Russia.

Part Two, *The Saga of Anna K.*, is a more detailed narrative by one of those refugees, as recounted by Anna Klassen Neufeld. Harms first met Anna K., as she preferred to be called, in 1937 when she taught German at Goessel Rural High School, in Goessel, Kansas. At a 50th year class reunion in 1986 Dr. Harms heard Anna K. talk about her experiences in Russia and her ultimate escape. After 25 years of teaching Russian and German at Southern State University in Carbondale, Illinois, Anna had retired to Los Angeles, and was planning to write a book about her adventures. However, at nearly 90 years of age, Anna didn't have the energy to complete the project.



Mrs. Franz Froese, Agatha Klassen (1903-36), daughter of Rev. Peter Klassen. Agatha was the sister to Anna Klassen whose story is told in *The Saga of Anna K.* Photo courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach, Manitoba. See Froese Family Tree (Steinbach, 1998), pages 59-68.

Road to Freedom: Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering  
 Edited by Harry Loewen

(Kitchener, Ont.: Pandora Press, 2000; co-published with Herald Press).  
 302pp., hardcover with bibliographic references. ISBN 0-96855-13-5-0.



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Through Dr. Harms's persistence he was able to obtain her unfinished manuscripts. Using those writings and several interviews with Anna, he was able to develop the story that is *The Saga of Anna K.*

It is a fascinating story, often painful and unsettling, but always gripping and inspiring, a tribute to the power of the human spirit.

Anna Klassen grew up in Yekaterinovka, Ignatievo Colony in the southern Ukraine. At the age of 27 she travelled to Moscow to try to get permits for her family to leave for America, only to find that exit visas were no longer being issued. She then travelled across Siberia by train, finally arriving in Blagoveshchensk, in eastern Siberia. From there she planned to escape over the Amur River into China.

It was a harrowing and eventful journey, but miraculously Anna made it to Harbin, China. While awaiting exit visas in the refugee center in Harbin, Anna met George Neufeld, the secretary of the refugee committee. Shortly before their December 1930 wedding, George became ill. Immediately after the wedding ceremony he was taken to hospital where he lapsed into a coma. He died two weeks later, leaving Anna a widow. Anna finally made it to America where she resumed her education and went on to become an teacher for the next 27 years, until her retirement.

A list of Lutheran refugees in Harbin, and another list of Mennonite refugees in Harbin make up the final 40 pages of the book. These lists contain nearly 1200 names which Dr. Harms collected through his study of the archives from the Lutheran Mission in Harbin, China.

Of further interest to readers of *Preservings*: Anna Klassen's sister Agata was the first wife of Rev. Franz Froese (1902-78), who served for many years as lay minister at Steinbach Mennonite Church, Steinbach, Canada. He died in 1978, but his second wife, Elizabeth, is still living at Fernwood Place. Agata and Franz had four children: Frances (Derksen), Ted, Marian (Banman), and Hertha (Tessman), before Agata's death. Hanover readers may know Frank Froese of Derksen Printers, and Eric Froese of E & E Electric in Steinbach, two of the sons born to Franz and his second wife Elizabeth.

The story of the escape from Russia through Harbin, China is not new. Gerhard Lohrenz has written the story of Anna K.'s good friend and fellow escapee, Maria Reimer, (also known as "Mia", and later married to Abe DeFehr in Winnipeg) in the book *"Mia: oder über den Amur in die Freiheit"*, published in 1981.

Anna K. wished to correct "several errors" that she had found in Mia's book. Unfortunately, it appears that Anna K. has introduced some new errors (including the gender and name of Agata's fourth child, whom she calls "Peter" when in fact it was daughter Hertha). The unsubstantiated charge that Agata was poisoned during the delivery of this child by a revengeful Jewish midwife is an allegation that is rejected by the Froese children.

This book, particularly the escape stories and the *Saga*, is a short but fascinating read. It is a tribute to Wilmer A. Harms's years of research and persistence that these stories have been preserved for us.

Reviewed by Rudy Nikkel, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Audrey Poetker, *Making Strange to Yourself* (Winnipeg: Turnstone Press. 1999), 67 pages.

The poetic scene of these poems is a marriage relationship between a young woman and an old man. The poetry takes the stance of a young woman who has much to say and an old man who is essentially foolish and in need of his physically young, emotionally older wife's wisdom:

"... Candles flicker as night blows into the room through the open window. Leaf shadows cluster his face. Tell me another story, he says, closing his Madeira eyes. The young wife sighs. If no one believes the truth, how will they believe the stories?..." (Poetker *The Prelude*).

The poems which follow tell this "other story" of hers, a story of wanting something which the words and mouth of her husband cannot provide. She wishes for children and remains barren; this is the gist of all the "story" she tells him in the first part of *making strange to yourself*.

The title of the book already prepares the reader for the subject of the barren-mother. The cliché "about making strange" usually applied to infants who fear separation from their mothers and who consequently make everyone else near them except mother intensely unwelcome, in this case appears to apply to the female persona of the poems.

The story tells us, in fact, that not she herself but her old husband has become intensely strange to the young wife. The wife has begun at some point in their marriage to perceive *herself* as a child. Though physically mature and getting older, she feels bereft of the emotional possibility of becoming an adult: she is stuck, it seems to her, in a perpetual state of childish strangeness.

The fault lies with the husband himself somehow, the wife thinks. He makes love to her with average vigour and more than average interest, but he cannot fill her womb, and she is by now only mildly optimistic: "Another lover's / sperm would bore into your egg like a bee into a rose, a/pneumatic drill into oak" (10). She cannot love him fully, conscious as she is of his impotence: "His hands, reaching for my breasts, / sometimes I'm there and sometimes / I'm not there, my eyes are always / filled with tears" (13).

Childless, she blames first herself almost before she blames "him". "Your body refuses to release its eggs, it clings to them, a /jealous lover"(10).

And again, self-blaming, in "After the Fall": "did you ever tell anyone that? / you spend ten woman years trying *not* to get / pregnant, and



Audrey Poetker, *New Bothwell, Manitoba*, has been published in literary journals such as *Canadian Literature*, *Prairie Fire*, and others. Her second book of poetry standing all the night through was nominated the *McNally-Robinson Book of the Year* in 1992.

then, you couldn't with all / that trying"(7).

In a highly lyrical moment, in a poem entitled "Old Man," she fantasizes about what it would be like to have married a younger man, to be a young woman, alive, lithe, hopeful, trenchant with still unproved potency and possibility, and married to a man with a "wishbone" capable of fulfilling the desire at the heart of her wish (clearly--and cleverly--shaped like a wishbone with its slender structure a miniature female legs and womb entrance): "Suppose we both were young / and the history of our hearts / was not yet sung... and we, we were wish / and wishbone" (14).

The journey she longs to take is the journey of love and motherhood; a journey which begins in "throbbing," joyful, young experience and ends in the "sun" light of children. But sadly not to be.

She admits, in this long story to her aging husband, to having tried other lovers, as in *Darling, the doctor is in*. No sense of apology filters through these lines, only facts, only a statement of attempted child-making. Finally, she imagines the "old man's" death; not maliciously, not with longing so much as with a finality of understanding: "Someday, someday too soon / I will bury you, lover / in the clay of the great Lake Agassiz"(17).

Her fear of his loss to her, however, takes the form of a comparison of children's fears at ghost stories (not unlike the apparition of stories she's telling her old husband lying here in her arms). Her thought is not of his death but of their childlessness when he dies: "As children do with ghost stories / I scare myself with a widow's bed" (17).

He will be remembered not for fine things but for the coarse and unhappy, for the irritating: "what is your old man's grief/to mine, that first day that I awaken / without your icky breath / and bed farts, our homely love, love?" (17). He will be dead much sooner than she and all they will have had to show for their "love" is a shallow thrusting and a set of childless embraces adorned with his fruitless intellectualism: "How softly you quote Goethe /to me, when I am frantic with grief" (27).

His mouth's pained whispering, a sign of his own grief at not being able to satisfy his ailing wife, is minor, as she has claimed, in

contrast with her mouth's silence in the world: "...I am not a mother/ how can I save myself/ with my womb full of silence/ empty of desire?" (25).

The set of poems which begins this book ends simply with the notes of grief, the mouth's inconsolable emptiness and silence like a childless womb. "Nearer/ than my thoughts, moving over me/ with cruel understanding, /you find it, heal it with your tongue/ and I cry out, cry out.(27)

*Making Strange to Myself* is well worth reading, even if it is for Mennonites in general possibly too graphic a look at married love and loss. I recommend it to those who are not easily offended nor afraid in their own lives of reading the experiences/imaginings of others.

All of us humans in the late 20th century, just like all of us humans through the ages, suffer dark losses which we hardly know how to or dare to name. Poetker has named her dark losses and asks us to read about them without crying foul or worse.

By this I mean that a community tries not to make all members the same because if it attempts that it loses the possibility of understanding the complex nature of life itself. Poetker's book, thus, painful material for some, is worth reading because of its poetic treatment of afflictions common to members of the Mennonite (and all other) communities.

Reviewed by Douglas Reimer, 307 St. Johns College Winnipeg, MB R3T 2M5.

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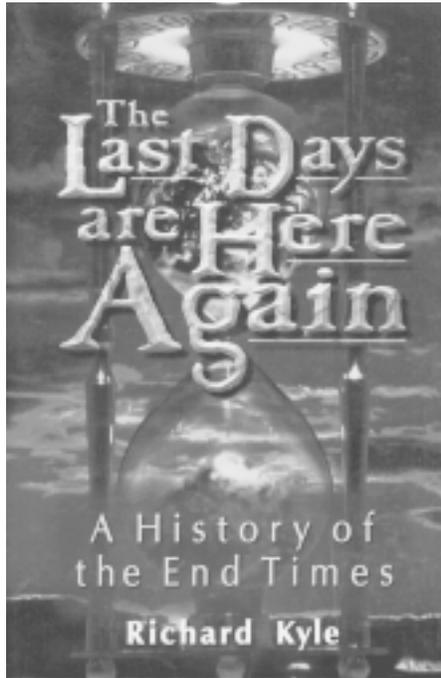
Richard Kyle, *The Last Days are Here Again: A History of the Endtimes* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House Co., 1998), 255 pages.

The sub-title of this book could be misleading. It is not a history of the endtimes, but a history of endtime expectation. As such it is a very useful manual describing the most important forms of endtime expectation from the first century to the present.

While it deals mainly with expectations of the endtime among Christians, Kyle also deals extensively with non-Christian, mostly modern secular warnings about the expectation of the end of the world by scientists as well as in the New Age movements.

Chapters 2-7 deal specifically with the Christian story, while chapter 8 concentrates on Christian fringe. New Age, and Jewish and Muslim groups which expected the end to come. Chapter 9 titled "The Secular Apocalypse" deals with science fiction scenarios, nuclear annihilation, ecological death, the population explosion, AIDS, threats to the earth from comets and meteors, and the extinction to come ultimately through the death of our sun.

The author has read widely and brought together in one volume a kind of encyclopedia of endtime movements and ideas. He makes very careful distinctions between pre-, post-, and a-millennialism and shows how, even though these terms belong mainly to the 20th century, they do help in grouping differing understandings of how the end will unfold. The author provides the reader with useful



An attractive cover. Richard Kyle, *The Last Days are Here Again: A History of the Endtimes* (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House Co., 1998), 255 pages.

summaries at the end of each chapter, and which function as a bridge to the next section.

This book serves better as a textbook for a college class than for popular reading. It is not an easy book to read. The author often uses short, repetitive sentences as for example in the second paragraph on page 59. There is much repetition throughout the book which after a while becomes tedious. Page 188 repeats much of what was already said on page 186.

The elimination of repetition could have reduced the length of the book considerably without sacrificing content, and would have made it more readable. Too often the names of individuals are repeated rather than using pronouns, and grammatically faulty sentences stop the reader. For instance, was Cotton Mather "a precedent" or was the precedent his rapture doctrine (74)? Was doomsday "widespread" or was the expectation of doomsday widespread (76)? Is the author serious or facetious when he says that "Nostradamus may be the world's most famous prophet" (152)?

When he says that "in the developing world humans are still breeding like rabbits," is he making a personal judgement or reporting someone else's prejudice (167)? Does Revelation 9:16 speak "of an army of 200 million from Asia" (127-8)? (Emphasis by reviewer). On page 67 the author seems to claim, quite erroneously, that Quakers were part of the 17th century "apocalyptic frenzy".

There are also occasional errors of fact. It is Herman, not Herbert Kahn (173); it has been proposed that a meteor, not a comet, led to the extinction of the dinosaurs (182); there were Franciscan conventuals, not conventionals (49). A good editor at Baker Book House

would have caught most of these unfortunate blemishes and mistakes.

Kyle's linking of millennial hopes with the emergence of an independent America and with it the doctrine of the special divine destiny of the United States is important for understanding why millennial expectations have led to the notion that the United States of America was and continues to be the last best hope of the world, and that the Antichrist is usually looked for in other nations.

This is perhaps the reason why the expectation of an earthly millennium continues to be more widespread in the USA than anywhere else. The author might, therefore, also have identified the movements led by Jim Jones (142-3) and David Koresh (149-50) not as bizarre, but as vintage American events, and expressions of the original convictions of the Pilgrim Fathers that the millennium would be established in the new world.

While in even so extensive a survey as Kyle offers us not nearly everything can be mentioned, he should not have missed a discussion of the development of Christian Zionism in Great Britain in the 19th century which was much concerned about the return of the Jews to Palestine and had notable influence on the Balfour Declaration.

For readers who are not familiar with the long story of endtime expectation and may think that it is all very recent, this book will be very informative. They will be able to compare the views about the Antichrist and the naming of the Antichrist in other centuries with those in our time.

They will learn how world events in any given time gave shape to the interpretation of biblical prophecy. They will see from the chapters of this book that the meaning of the prophetic sections of the Bible such as Daniel and Revelation is not obvious because Christians have disagreed so widely about the interpretations of these books.

Finally, they will have to conclude that in the details all the prophecy experts of the past have been mistaken. And they may conclude that therefore the modern prophecy experts are no more reliable than those who spoke so confidently in the past.

Reviewed by Walter Klaassen, Site 12A, C.23, R.R.7, Vernon, B.C., V1T 7Z3.

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Cornelius B. Dueck, *40 Years In The Land Of Milk And Honey* (Box 22054, Steinbach, Manitoba, R5G 1B6, 1997), 131 pages. \$7.00

The author begins by suggesting an alternative title for his book, namely, "My Forty Years In Kleefeld"; this tongue-in-cheek seems to establish the writing style and tone in this literary work.

The book is a detailed account of Neil Dueck's life's journey, tracing sequentially the experiences of a growing boy through adolescence and into maturity. Despite the quiet, rural setting of the Peter R. Dueck family farm, many unusual and sometimes quaint events occurred, resulting from individual or family

decisions as well as those that were fate-directed or acts of God.

All family members are given coverage and so both the parents and children become familiar to the reader. A selection of family snapshots and a sketch of early Kleefeld help create clearer insight into their lives and geographical area.

The author appreciates and acknowledges the historical significance of the Kleefeld area, referring to resources that include the writings of local historians and a family diary. In addition, he includes a general section on the Mennonite saga, beginning with the 16<sup>th</sup> century Anabaptists to the exodus from Prussia and Russia, and ending finally with the settlement at Grünfeld.

Reference is made to Klaas Dueck, great-great-grandfather of Knals (a forerunner of Neil), whose son, Johann (1801-66), became an early Kleine Gemeinde minister, and to the Rev. Jacob Barkman (1824-75), a great-grandfather, who assumed spiritual leadership just prior to the emigration from Russia in 1874 and would subsequently die in a drowning mishap on the Red River.

Along with family stories, this historical sketch demonstrates Dueck's interest and concern over family connectedness that can be seen only in retrospect as the forebears throughout the centuries lived out their lives, faithfully embracing a common creed.

Perhaps the writer intended this work primarily as a record of the Peter R. Dueck family but, as can be readily understood, interest in this portrayal has extended to numerous present or former Kleefelders.

Noteworthy is the detail found in the anecdotal accounts as the reader senses the struggles of the people: the hardships, the disappointments, pain of life's setbacks, and the ultimate soul-searing crying for answers when facing the loss of loved ones.

Not until Knals reconciles his spirit with God's Will is there a release from the inner struggle and, despite subsequent traumatic events, he is able to substitute submission for anger, faith and optimism for cynicism.

As the book ends, the family is prepared to attend the Sunday morning church service, having just spent its final night at the old farmstead, but little David burns his hand on the hot stove, requiring medical attention. This unanticipated emergency prompts a change of plans for the family.

One can't help but feel this event represents a microcosm in the adult life of Neil: the inevitability of adversities in life's journey countered by faith and hope that spell resilience.

Reviewed by Len Dueck, Box 21825, Steinbach, Manitoba, R5G 1B4.

Susan Biesecker-Mast and Gerald Biesecker-Mast, editors, *Anabaptists & Postmodernity* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press U.S., 2000), 440 pages. \$39.95 paperback.

In August 1998 Mennonite scholars at Bluffton College in Ohio sponsored a conference on the intellectual movement or condition

known as "postmodernity." This volume is a selection of twenty of the papers presented at that conference. It is also the inaugural volume in a new scholarly series dedicated to the memory of C. Henry Smith, early Mennonite historian. J. Denny Weaver, Professor of Religion at Bluffton, is the editor of the series. In recent years Bluffton College has emerged as a center of Mennonite scholarship and this book is one evidence of the creativity and energy of a core of gifted scholars there.

What is "postmodernity"? These scholars do not offer a clear definition of the term, nor do they agree on whether it is a threat or a potential benefit to the Anabaptist/Mennonite tradition. Postmodern thinkers have attacked the modern faith in human reason, the modern faith that truth is absolute and knowable, and the modern "master narratives" which see history as a progressive triumph of freedom. Postmodernists are suspicious of all truth claims. They say we have access not to truth but to multiple "texts," each of which is unique and relative to its own time and place.

Stanley Hauerwas, the conference keynote speaker, says that the church must resist postmodernism. "Christians have a stake in history," writes Hauerwas, and must be able to tell the Christian story more truthfully and powerfully than either modernists or post-modernists can. To tell this story, the church needs the "skill of resistance" to "survive post-modernism." Hauerwas, a friend and student of John Howard Yoder, fears that postmodernism undermines the ability of the church to sustain integrity and identity as a worshipping community.

On the other hand, some of the essays say that postmodernism has created valuable space for Anabaptist/Mennonite theology by discrediting the absolute claims of classical Christian

theology. J. Denny Weaver writes that postmodernism has liberated Mennonites credibly to claim a commitment to the Jesus of peace and nonviolence. In the past the established state churches have assumed that theology should support the social order, and that the witness of smaller prophetic peace churches can be dismissed as irrelevant. Postmodernism exposes all faith traditions as particular and limited.

Most of the twenty essays in this book do not welcome or deplore postmodern influences, but rather explore how various themes in both Anabaptism and postmodernism relate to each other. Paul Tiessen of Wilfred Laurier University has an insightful essay on postmodern insights and strategies in the novel by Dallas Wiebe, *Our Asian Journey*. Marlene Kropf, Professor of Spiritual Formation and Worship at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, suggests that the postmodern temperament can help free Mennonite worship to engage all the human senses rather than be limited to the reasoned word.

Other essays address questions of historical memory, church polity, practical discipleship, and political commitment.

*Anabaptists & Postmodernity* is a book for Mennonite intellectuals, not for the average church member. We need more such books. In the past Mennonites have been victims of what Mark Noll, scholar at Wheaton College, calls "The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind." We have been suspicious of self-conscious Christian thought, forgetting that God made our minds as well as our bodies. The essays in this volume suggest that Mennonite scholars are increasingly equipped to value the life of the mind and to make a distinctive contribution to contemporary intellectual dialogue.

Reviewed by Professor James C. Juhnke, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas, 67117.

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Peter (Isaak) Derksen, *Es wurde wieder ruhig: Die Lebensgeschichte eines mennonitischen Predigers aus der Sowjetunion* (Men. Heritage Centre: Winnipeg, 1989), 183 pages.

A genuine, untraditional presentation of the real life's story of a Mennonite, a minister, a true and honourable servant of God; surely these are the characteristics which have assured the wide popularity of the book by Peter Derksen. In the foreground stands a human-being, his feelings and his life. The immense responsibility of being a Christian is the motif of the entire work. It stands as a model of the genuine living faith of a Mennonite.

First of all, the author Isaak Derksen (b. 1905) describes his origins. The short dialogue, historical description of his heritage, accompanied by definite dates, names of settlements and individuals, give us a clear insight into the life of a Mennonite of the time. But the sometimes painful realities also assist in a better understanding of the contents. Certain thoughts have no end--they simply remain "cognizant in thought", allowing the reader room for personal opinions. Those, who have shared the experiences of the writer, will well be able to follow the thoughts of the author.

The briefly composed and yet sufficiently representative writing style of the story, is certainly that which also appeals to younger readers. Again and again, one is amazed at the courage of the author, of calling things by their name. It appears as if Derksen's unshakable faith had never forsaken him. An example worthy of emulation.

The in-part robust, humour-filled Mennonite turn-of-the-phrase is expressed in a very interesting manner: "...and now, the two bloody ones--Stalin and Hitler--can greet each other in Hell."

Already from the beginning of his life, Derksen's existence was not destined for good times. They were the dark days of the Revolution (1904-5), the First World War (1914), the Revolution (1917). The hatred of [ethnic] Germans had severe manifestations: 1918, the German occupation of the Ukraine which in fact brought a short time of peace, but which was quickly overcome with a time of the most horrible occurrences. "All village residents of Steinbach were murdered...", "In Annafeld the Germans were murdered also."

Particularly helpful, even though horrible, are the detailed descriptions of the acts of murder, committed by the various bands (1919) in the German villages. "...Greta had her hand full of bread dough, the bowl with the dough stood on the oven, the dough had risen and over flowed from the oven. Her skull was split open."

In spite of all these surreal events, life went on: "I fed the cattle at our place and at many others, they were bawling from hunger. The



*The Abraham Derksen Wirtschaft in Felsenbach, Borosenko, reflects the prosperity of many Mennonites in Imperial Russia before the 1917 Revolution. Son Jakob is standing by the bicycle and brother Isaak (the author) with the horses, nephew Jakob Wiebe beside him. Sister Agatha with three children is standing nearby. Felsenbach, where Isaak Derksen grew up, was in the Borosenko settlement, northwest of Nikopol, co-founded by the Kleine Gemeinde in 1865. Photo courtesy of Es wurde wieder ruhig, page 7.*



*Isaak Derksen, 1977. The author after years of torture, imprisonment, hard labour. A story of endurance, faith, and genuine conviction. Photo courtesy of Es wurde wieder ruhig, page 150.*

horses ate through their cribs. No one was there to water them and clear the manure. I worked from dawn to dusk, over and beyond my strength." Such events are deeply touching and poignant.

Presently followed the 1920s with crop failure, hunger, sickness, emigration, exile and imprisonments. Christianity was weakened. Yet, there were momentous times of faithfulness, to follow Him in trust.

The 1930s. Survival stood in doubt. There was no congregational [Gemeinde] life. With the passage of time the Mennonite world became smaller, confused, without will, more torn from its roots. Unrighteousness came to power. Dispossession, persecution, discrimination and loss of worth [rights]--with its goal--that religious communities were to wither.

In spite of it all, many remained true to their confession of faith. These are fascinating recollections of a Christian who feared God and not man, who was faithful to God and not man. He remained a Christian throughout the most difficult political and material times in Russia. With only one example, that of the life of his

family and his own, the author provides an amazingly truthful and captivating description of the life of Mennonites in Russia.

1941. German occupation--attacks by bombers, but also cutting and threshing grain, and baptisms. Then--flight to the West. Hundreds of thousands of citizens--on trains, wagons and on foot, set out for the borders of Germany. But God had compassion...

The Soviet Army grasped for them. Two-thirds of the Mennonites who had trekked from the Ukraine to Germany in 1943, again had to return to Russia. The disappointment was undescribable. Forced labour, starvation, arrest and separation followed.

I believe that even the least informed reader regarding the Mennonite experience in Russia will have no difficulty in understanding the content and following the unfolding story, due to the author's vivid exposition of the events.

In the midst of inhuman circumstances the Word of God was again propagated... persecution, betrayal, starvation, treats, humiliation... one extreme followed another, and there was hardly time to refresh, reflect, or do anything. An instinct to survive, somehow.

1945. What remained of the Mennonite world? Families torn apart, scattered over the breath of the entire country, no organized congregational life. The majority imprisoned. Thousands dying of hunger. In spite of all this, the author can repeatedly affirm, "Praise the Lord, oh my soul."

The 1950s. After years of ever increasing restrictions on life, things gradually loosened up. Many were released from prisons. Families were reunited.

But the story of a Mennonite minister did not therewith come to a close. With equal intensity Derksen describes the further unfolding of life in the relatively greater freedom. He rejoices over the improved experiences of his family, his fellow human beings and in the Gemeinde. We read further also of the immigration to Germany; of the joy in family circles after decades of separation.

But "it is a story which has not yet come to the end and no one can say, when it will come."

When one pursues the Mennonite story, one quickly comes to the thought, that each new book reveals a whole new world. The experiences of the Mennonites in Russia were many faceted: the material well-being and the brutal destruction: the spiritual distinctiveness and the peaceful interaction with different confessions.

One lived, became wealthy, or possibly did not. One was spared from death, or also not. One disparaged the spiritual life, or remained true to his Saviour unto eternity.

May this book, touch the hearts of the readers.

Reviewed by Adina Reger, Tulpenstr. 14, 56575 Weisenthurm, Germany.

Peter Rempel, *Mennonite Emigration to Russia 1788-1828*/edited by Alfred H. Redekopp and Richard D. Thiessen (Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, R3P 0M4, 2000), 249 pages. Spiral bound \$35.00 and \$5.00 postage and handling.

We have good reason to be proud that the younger generation has concerned itself for the collecting and preservation of the documentary material of the Mennonites which has been scattered by the war and intervening times or has been hidden in obscure archives.

Researchers of the Mennonite story will be pleased with this helpful and informative work about the Mennonites in Russia. Those starting their research will have no difficulty finding information in this treasure trove of historical information. The material is conveniently organized which makes researching interesting and successful. The book has a particular value in that it also contains dates from the early settlement years.

Peter Rempel has successfully extracted the following material from the Russian State Archives in St. Petersburg, where it has survived the storms of time undamaged, and compiled it in his book.

#### **1. Mennonite Households, Chortitza Colony 1797/1806.**

With the name of the colony one finds the year of settlement of the family in the record of 1797. The individual families are recorded separately (not in the groups as they immigrated), under the place names where they were living at the time. Also provided are the number of male and female family members, property (house, cattle, etc.) and destination.

The family record of the Chortitza Colony 1806 includes, firstly, the owner of the *Wirtschaft* in 1797 and then the owner in the year 1806. It again includes the number of male and female family members but no record of property owned.

#### **2. Transit Lists of Families Immigrating to Russia 1803-1810** (as collected in Grodno, an immigration border crossing). One difference from earlier immigration records is that information about fellow travellers such as partners, relatives and friends is also found here. In addition they contain a record of the amounts of assistance advanced from the state, birth dates for the entire family, place of origin, and cash for the further journey.

#### **3. List of *Wirtschaften* Founded 1815-1828.**

In addition to the information about family status and year of settlement, one finds here the following interesting details, for example, "...he is without means, has cash assets of 400 rubles and 30 kopeks, has no wagon, no horse, 1 cow. 70 ruble will be allotted for 1 wagon, 1 horse or a cow. The regional authorities offers a subsidy for 1 wagon, 2 horses, in the cash amount of 215 ruble and for the construction of a house and establishing a *Wirtschaft*, a sum of 589 ruble."

#### **4. List of travel visas presented by the Russian Consul-General in Danzig from 1819-1828.**

Recorded here are the name of the passport holders, together with most of the birth dates and first names and the dates of their passports and visas.

The concise and informative exposition of this material makes this book one of the important reference works regarding the Mennonites in Russia and one of the primary sources for Mennonite genealogical research. The work is a useful resource for Mennonites all over the world.

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society in Winnipeg has exerted a great deal of effort in publishing this historical work in the present form and making it available.

We can only hope and wish that researchers who use this work may be inspired thereby and build further on this foundation, as they pursue the exposition and writing of the story of the Mennonites.

Reviewed by Adina Reger, Tulpenstr. 14, 56575 Weiszenthurm, Germany.

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Funk Family Book Committee, *Funk Family 1740 - 2000 10 Generations* (Steinbach, 2000), 477 pages. \$90.00 Soft cover.

As a descendant of the Johann Funk given as the patriarch of this Funk clan, I read with great interest the family book compiled by another branch of the Funk family.

Any family book about Funks tends to be a massive undertaking, and this volume is no exception. It reviews the sketchy historical information available from other sources about generations one and two, and then the book provides complete genealogical information on generations three to ten.

The grey soft cover depicts the river boat *International* as sketched by an artist (I couldn't find the credit for it) with a praying hands symbol above it between the wording of the titles. It is a very heavy book, having 477 pages, but handles well.

The greatest part of the book consists of a carefully organized compilation of the descendants of Jacob Funk (1807) and Maria Neufeld (1816). Jacob and Maria left only one surviving son, Jacob Funk (1834), who in turn left only one son, Jacob Funk (1864) and one daughter, Katherina Funk (1870) who married Heinrich Heinrichs. Hence, the book is actually the genealogy of two families: Jacob and Helena Funk (1864); and Heinrich and Katherina Heinrichs (1868) families. This is the first edition of the family history of these two families.

The system of numbering the generations is easy to understand, once one realizes that the first digit identifies the generation (e.g. 6<sup>th</sup>) of the person, and that the subsequent numbers provide his/her birth order within each generation (e.g. 53 = fifth child of third child). For the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> generations, the editors have used letters of the alphabet (I assume to avoid double digit numbers which would be neces-

sary for some of the larger families).

The layout of each page is in an attractive two-column format for text and photographs, while each genealogical table extends across the entire page, clearly highlighted by grey-scale boxes for the parents, with the children listed underneath. Information in the tables gives name, date and place of birth, marriage date and, where applicable, date of death. Each entry includes a short write up and usually, a photograph.

One unusual feature of the book is that the text for the entire book is given in both German and English, usually side by side. This gives the book considerably wider currency, in that the German-speaking relatives in South America have complete access to the material.

A subtitle of the book is *Menno Laender 1536 - 2000*, a claim supported by the introduction, which provides a brief history of the Mennonites, followed by ten maps of Menno Laender, including South Russia, East Reserve (Manitoba), Paraguay, Bolivia as well as emigration route maps for 1874 both in North America and in Europe. Most of these maps are familiar to Mennonite genealogists since they appear in the *Mennonite Historical Atlas* by Wm. Schroeder, Winnipeg. Two maps that may attract special attention are those depicting today's Mennonite colonies in Paraguay (village by village) and Bolivia (colony blocks only).

The scope of the book is ambitious and yet remarkably complete, considering that the family extends to both Paraguay and Bolivia as well as most of Canada. Each descendant down to the tenth generation has a detailed writeup giving occupation and place of residence, and in many cases, a brief life history. With few exceptions each person is also depicted by a clear up-to-date photograph with captions. This part gives the book its value and constitutes its strength.

There is a wealth of family and demographic detail, as well as a few cultural touches, such as the reference to the *Englische Krankheit* (page 288), a uniquely Mennonite term that deserves attention all by itself. What an impressive example of family information!

A comprehensive index closes off the work, making the book very user friendly, especially for family members who want a quick update on a distant cousin.

The intent of a family tree book such as this is not to be a history textbook, with extensive documentation and acute historical insight. However, these books do serve as "history" to our immediate kin, and should be as accurate as sources permit, since these family histories are often the only text referred to for information about our roots. A few little inaccuracies in the information about the earliest generations have crept into this otherwise exemplary work. One or two place names need some clarification: Johann Funk (1740) is listed in Henry Schapansky's work as resident in Kronsweide, but that village is in Russia, not "Holland". Jacob and Maria Funk are listed as living in "Schoenfeld Colony, Bergfeld", which may

lead to confusion with the Schoenfeld Colony (Brazol). More likely the editors mean the village of Schoenfeld in the Berghal Colony. In one instance the historical information has been misinterpreted, as in the writeup about the early years of pioneering when "tax rate" is confused with rate of "assessment", a not so academic mistake when one considers what taxes our forefathers would have had to pay if the book is correct. And occasionally sources (e.g. H. Schapansky) from which the information is derived are not given clearly. Minor details like this certainly do not seriously affect the work as a whole, which is dedicated to preserving for posterity a slice of the Funk family as it is known today, and this is achieved admirably.

The book includes some historical background both on the Mennonites in general, excerpted from another family book, and on the emigration to Paraguay in the 1920s, also excerpted from a different publication. Both provide a very short and general overview of the topic and lack the same degree of enthusiasm revealed in the rest of the book.

Overall, the end product in the shape of this volume vindicates the enormous amount of work that the Funk committee has done in its preparation. Succeeding generations will rise up and call them blessed. Congratulations!

This book is available from Ben Funk, Box 1737, Steinbach, MB ROA 2A0 for \$65.00.

Reviewed by Ernest Braun, Niverville, a descendant of Jacob Funk's (1807) older brother Peter (1805).

Marlene Epp, *Women without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 275 pages. \$21.95, paperback.

In 1949 a book of short biographies was published which consisted primarily of men who were "considered martyrs of the religious repression in the Soviet Union during the 1920s and 1930s" (p. 40). The terrible suffering experienced by these men cannot be underestimated, but what was the experience of the women who were left behind?

Marlene Epp, instructor of history and Ca-

nadian studies has written and lectured previously on gender issues and Mennonites, especially in relation to the Second World War. For this book, she set out to gather stories that look specifically at the Soviet refugee woman's

she lived until her death. She never heard what happened to her husband.

One of the purposes of the book "is to record and analyze the stories of individuals and families like the Maria Wall family, whose tragic tales and amazing narratives of survival have received little public attention....What makes their story deserving of attention is the intersection of multiple identities - those of woman, of widow, of Soviet, of ethnic German, of Mennonite" (Intro., p.4). Epp relies on several kinds of sources: "oral interviews...; published and unpublished autobiographies and memoirs; and semi-autobiographical historical fiction" (Intro., p.14).

Four themes give shape to her analysis: "the intersection of gender, war, and immigration" (Intro., p.4) since such a high percentage of the approximately 12,000 Mennonite refugees during this time were widows; the role of ethnicity in these war-time stories; family fragmentation and reconfiguration; and the role of memory - especially how memories are processed within the Mennonite community.

Some of these personal stories reveal what has often been suppressed in other accounts of this time. Especially disturbing is the second chapter which recounts the horrendous conditions of the trek west across Europe: the cold weather, the sick children, the desperate means the women often had to resort to feed their children, and their vulnerability to rape and theft. Many were killed by the pursuing Soviet

troops when they had already reached Poland and Germany. Others were driven to suicide to avoid facing a life of repeated rape. Those who were repatriated suffered starvation and hard labour.

There are also stories of courage and ingenuity in the face of grave danger. For example, Justina's family consisting of about 20 women and children had just barely escaped being identified as Soviet which would have meant repatriation. When they finally reached a refugee camp in Britain, Justina stated that they had just escaped the Russian zone and needed new identity papers. When she filled them out, she identified the members of the family as evangelical Protestants from Poland and gave them all new names (p. 66).



*Wehrmacht officers survey massaced German women in the aftermath of the Soviet advance into East Prussia, 1944. Courtesy of Women without Men, photo plates.*

experience and perspective in relation to the horrific events of the Stalinist oppression in the 1930s and the flight to different parts of Europe during the 1940s. Included also is the migration to Canada and Paraguay, and the adjustment to life in a new land over the next decade.

Epp recounts events in the lives of women like Maria Redekop Wall whose husband was arrested and taken from their home in a village in Ukraine by Soviet secret police. Maria, who was left with six children, was "evacuated westward with the retreating German occupation forces" (Introduction, p.3) in 1943, arriving in Canada as a refugee in 1948 at 47 years of age. She worked to pay off her travel debt, and bought a berry farm in British Columbia where

Although women who had lost the men of the family had assumed total responsibility for their families during the trek, they were looked on by North American relief workers in the refugee camps as weak and in need of the assistance and guidance of men. Because of the large majority of women, however, it was difficult to assume that traditional roles for men and women would automatically reassert themselves.

In Paraguay, for example, the village of Friedensheim in Neuland was inhabited by 147 women who had stayed together in their flight from the Soviet Union. Based on the reflections of one of the women of this village who later moved to Canada, Epp concludes that "In helping each other undertake the hard tasks of settlement, a community of women was created, joined by common experience and common suffering. A village of women without men was also, to a certain extent, free from the suspicions, sexual tension, and traditional patterns of authority that exerted themselves in villages with even a limited number of adult men" (p. 101).

Considerable tension arose between the refugees and church and MCC leaders especially in Paraguay over the question of remarriage. Because many women had not heard anything concerning the whereabouts of their disappeared husbands for years, they were assumed dead. As a result, new relationships developed out of a need for intimacy and economic security. These "companionate marriages," as they were called (p. 105), would not go away, so finally a ruling was put in place by church leaders from both South and North America that said essentially that remarriage was allowed "if a spouse had not been heard from for seven years. If a spouse was known to be living in the Soviet Union or Europe but had married again, then remarriage was also permitted. But if a spouse was known to be alive and unmarried, then any relationship begun by the Paraguayan resident had to be terminated" (p. 107-108).

Refugee women who settled in Canada had to struggle for survival on many levels. The ideal family of the 1950s was a nuclear one where the male was the sole wage earner, and had a position of authority in the family. Refugee women with children had to seek work to pay off the travel debt and support their families which often consisted of additional relatives. They were often employed, as well as taken advantage of, by the relatives who had helped them come to Canada. They had to learn a new language, adapt to a new culture and take the lower paying jobs working as domestics or farm labourers. Some suffered from poor health because of the harsh conditions they had suffered during wartime.

In addition to these hardships, these women had to face the discrimination of Canadian Mennonites, some of whom considered them inferior, immoral and a burden to society. Although there was sympathy on the part of some for the plight of women with illegitimate children born as a result of rape, there was also the attitude that somehow these women were to

blame for how their lives had been shattered by war.

I found it interesting that Canadian Mennonite leaders were more rigid than their counterparts in Paraguay on the remarriage question. They held that if there was any doubt at all about the survival of the missing spouse, the woman was not allowed to remarry (although this position was modified later on). Although these two groups did learn to live together, there were cultural and political differences as well.

Canadian Mennonites, in their eagerness to condemn the ways of the world, objected to the mode of dress of the new members and their dancing, which was a common means of entertainment among the refugees. They also considered the newcomers too anti-Soviet and too supportive of German nationalism. It was assumed that the Soviet Mennonites would be farmers, but many left their jobs as farm labourers as quickly as they could, in order to enjoy the economic opportunities of the cities. Disappointing is the fact that in spite of the large influx of women in many congregations, leadership roles or even a voice in the decision-making were not an option for them at that time.

Epp provides us with a comprehensive study in which "the stories of Mennonite refugee families exhibit the complex dichotomy of women as victims of the times but heroines of their own lives" (p. 194). Epp has meticulously documented her sources with copious footnotes and tables of statistics showing the ratio of women to men from different areas, years and age groups. She also compares the Soviet Mennonite refugee experience to that of ethnic Germans, Lithuanians and Ukrainians which she says would merit further study. I agree that the effect of the experience of these Second World War refugees on the next generation would also be a fascinating sequel to this eloquently written book.

Reviewed by Karen Loewen Guenther, Winnipeg.

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Nikolaj Reimer, *Nur Aus Gnaden* (Adina Reger, Tulpenstr. 14, 56575 Weisenthurm, Germany, 1990), 160 pages. \$16.00 plus \$3.00 postage.

Nikolaj Reimer is telling us his life story writing in German. He was able to complete his records on March 13, 1977, after a year of writing. On April 4 (five weeks later), he was called to eternal rest by his heavenly Father. His journals were later edited and published by his granddaughter Adina Reger.

At the end of the 18th century, all the Mennonite Colonies were overcrowded. Even the emigration to Canada and the U.S.A. had done little to remedy the situation. Thus, the younger of the Mennonite people, led by experienced leaders of the older colonies, pushed towards the East. Among others, the settlement of Orenburg was established. Reimer's parents were part of this movement. In 1900, a son, Nikolaj was born to Aron and Sara Reimer.

Unfortunately, this settlement quickly became too crowded as well, and the move further into the East was on. This resulted in the development of the Slawgorod settlement near the larger city of Slawgorod. The Reimer family also settled in this new Colony in 1909.

Here Nikolaj enjoyed a happy childhood and youth. This included all the joys that God presents to young people. He accepted Jesus Christ into his heart and thereupon received the Holy Baptism.

However, World War I came and following this, the revolution with its difficulties and terror. Thus ended the long periods of calm and peace in Russia. This is what Reimer tells about.

In 1918 after the collapse of the Tsarist Empire, regiments of the White Army were organized all over Russia in order to halt the Red Flood (Communism). Reimer was also called. The Soviets promised equality and prosperity for all and the Russian people readily believed this. Because of this, many of the White Soldiers went over to the Reds. Reimer escaped too, and fled to his people. Reimer tells of other events that happened during his time, e.g. the first Mennonite World Conference took place in 1925, in Basel, Switzerland.

In 1922 Nikolaj was able to marry his beloved fiancée, Agatha Penner, even though at first his family was not in favour. Now, as one German folksong says, life began with all its misery and woes. The giant empire became poor and the new government kept things under control using terror tactics. This hit the Reimers hard.

The children arrived and one of them died. What sorrow this brought! They had missed the emigration to Canada in 1925. Several families, including the parents and siblings of Nikolaj, had the opportunity to emigrate to Mexico (from where they went to the U.S.A.). In 1928 many Germans, especially Mennonites, were relocated. Several thousand emigrated to Brazil and Paraguay via Germany. The Reimers again missed the opportunity, because Nikolaj found the price for the passport too high, since they wanted 120 rubles instead of the prescribed 40. Many who were in the same situation went back to the colonies (or directly into exile), under many difficulties and threats.

Upon the invitation of the government around 1927-28, Mennonites relocated to a newly founded colony, "Trakehn". This Colony consisted of four villages in a desert area in the "Kaukasus". They were to breed war horses for the army (The start of this venture came from Germany). At the same time the abduction, especially of men in leadership positions, began. Reimer and his wife Agatha also ended up in prisons and labour camps up North.

Some day God will reveal the terrors which millions experienced in various measures, as well as the millions (around 1927-1960) who became victims of this terror. According to some historians, around 30 million people lost their lives during this time through forceful confinement in prisons and exile camps (Gulags)



*Nikolaj Reimer (1900-77), hero of the Mennonite faith. He refused to compromise his beliefs notwithstanding cruel torture, death chambers and slave labour camps. Photo courtesy of granddaughter A. Reger, Tulpenstrasse, Wieszenturm, Germany.*

in the large Soviet Empire.

Reimer, who has experienced these terrors along with many fellow-sufferers, tells of this time from his recollections. He has a very good memory and vividly narrates these stories. Several times he cites A. Solschenizyn. Among the exiled, there were many Germans as well as many Mennonites. According to various accounts, the Soviets usually targeted Mennonites, since they had a strong faith in God and seldom renounced it. Reimer and his fellowmen prayerfully supported and helped each other repeatedly in these sad situations.

Their innermost desire was to be reunited with their loved ones. For many, including Reimer, this was not to be. His wife Agatha was imprisoned shortly after he was, and the small children were left behind with acquaintances. Once, while he was in prison, his oldest daughter brought him a pot of cooked potatoes. The poor child did not have enough for herself to eat. Through Reimer's continued fasting and pleading, God always gave renewed confidence not to give up, even when he was sent North to the Arctic camps.

He found the death cell especially difficult; through repentance, remorse and new submission to his Saviour he always found new courage to carry on. The endless painful interrogations and false evidence by slanderers were horrible.

In the polar circle they sometimes had to work nights to keep the railway tracks free of snow. During one of these nights, Nikolaj was called to revive a frozen man who was leaning like a board against a wall of snow. The young man was thrown down, rolled back and forth until suddenly they could feel his pulse. After a few hours the same treatment was repeated. The man was not happy, because he had felt so warm. Then he was brought to the watchmen by the fire and thus he was rescued.

After a three year confinement, Agatha was released in 1939. However, she died after one year and the children were again without a

mother. This news totally crushed Reimer inwardly. This drama occurred by the millions in Russia. That is why there were so many orphanages and youth homes. Here the young people grew up without the care of a family. The Mennonites tried again and again to accommodate their orphaned young people among their own people.

The masses who were in exile, had only one wish, that is, to be free again. This was the



*Agatha (Penner) and Nikolaj Reimer. Rear: Liese and Johann--Agatha's siblings. Children: Katharina and Nikolaj. Schontal, 1926.*

conversation topic of the enslaved. (Man in the western world has no concept of what it means to be robbed of one's freedom.) Communism spread the slogan about the worker's paradise. Many young idealists from other lands went to Russia where they suffered the greatest disappointment of their lives. Unfortunately, there was no turning back. Their fate was the road to exile.

The believers had a strong desire for fellowship under the word of God. This was next to impossible. All spiritual care and meetings were forbidden. However, the captives met in small groups for prayer and Bible reading. They comforted each other and found strength, until they were again forced apart. Any meetings of this kind were strictly forbidden, even if it was a small group in a home. It was the

women who gave the family a foothold. They continued to meet, encourage each other and gathered strength from God's word.

In 1946, when many of the captives were freed, (including N. Reimer), the Germans started to organize small unofficial congregations. Unfortunately in all of Russia there was no Mennonite leadership or leader. They had all been annihilated. Now many of these new congregations joined the Baptists, because they had an approved seat in Moscow and they enjoyed more freedom. In spite of this, there were still difficulties for the Germans and Reimer was imprisoned a second time for 2 1/2 years.

When Reimer was freed in 1946, he first of all gathered his children together as much as possible. However, the Mother--the housewife and, above all, the life partner--was missing. N. Reimer went back to the settlement of Slawgorod, his old homeland. Here he married Tinchon Sukkau, whom he knew from his youth. Life now became more bearable and together they could again establish a home--only a small hut to start off with.

Small German congregations were developing as well. Reimer was called into the ministry after a few years even though, according to him, he was older and uneducated. He had, however, gone through God's school. Christ's Church grew and the pressures of the government diminished after 1966. In spite of poverty, people were happy. In the seventies, people began to move to Germany. N. Reimer always had the desire and longing to move to Germany. He had written a farewell letter to his congregation. He wanted to read this to the congregation upon leaving. However, this was not meant to be for him. His descendants were able to resettle in Germany.

Until shortly before his homecoming to his Lord and Saviour, he was still able to serve his fellow believers with spiritual aid. On April 20, 1977, God took his servant, who had suffered many trials, home to be with Him in glory.

Reimer tells his story from his perspective, the way he saw it. His notes contain no nominal errors.

This book can be recommended to all for spiritual strengthening and edification. It is really worth reading.

Reviewed by Jacob Pries, 1166 DeGraff Pl., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 1Y6, translated by Dorothy Martens.

