

Preservings

-being the Magazine/Journal of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc.



Preservings \$10.00

No. 18, June, 2001

“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*

Mennonite Institutions

The Mennonite people have always been richly endowed with gifted thinkers and writers. The seminal leaders in Reformation-times compiled treatises, polemics and learned discourses while the martyrs wrote hymns, poetic elegies and inspirational epistles. During the second half of the

Friesen (1782-1849), Ohrloff, Aeltester Heinrich Wiens (1800-72), Gnadenheim, and theologian Heinrich Balzer (1800-42) of Tiege, Molotschna, continued in their footsteps, leaving a rich literary corpus.

The tradition was brought along to Manitoba

portant essay on the historical and cultural origins of Mennonite institutions. The personal reflections of Ted Friesen, Altona, who worked closely with Francis during his decade long study, add a personal perspective to this important contribution to the Mennonite people.



The B. J. Hamm housebarn in the village of Neu-Bergthal, four miles southeast of Altona, West Reserve, Manitoba, as reproduced on the cover of the second edition of E. K. Francis, In Search of Utopia, republished by Crossway Publications Inc., Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0. The house was built in 1891 by Bernhard Klippenstein (1836-1910), village Schulze, and the barn dates to the founding of the village in 1879, and perhaps even earlier to the village of Bergthal in the East Reserve. The structure stands as a vivid reminder of Mennonite culture which has often served as a receptacle and mooring for Gospel-centric faith, inspiring generations of Mennonites to remain steadfast as disciples of Jesus. Photo by Ken Loewen, Altona, Manitoba.

16th century Flemish and Dutch writers (the ancestors of the conservative Mennonites in North and South America), brought forth a rich flowering of devotional, theological and historical writings, coinciding with a Dutch “Golden Age”—thousands of books and other writings, mostly unknown today.

In 17th and 18th century Prussia, Aeltesten such as Georg Hansen, Hans von Steen and Peter Epp (uncle of Klaas Reimer, Kleine Gemeinde founder), in Danzig, and Gerhard Wiebe, Ellerwald, produced Confessions of Faith, Catechisms and devotional writings. In Imperial Russia, Old Colony leaders such as Aeltesten David Epp (1781-1843) and Gerhard Dyck (1809-87), and Molotschna leaders such as Aeltester Abraham

and was best exemplified by the three pioneer Bishops Johann Wiebe (1837-1905) of the Reinländer (Old Colony), Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) of the Bergthaler (Sommerfelder/Chortitzer), and Peter Toews (1841-1922) of the Kleine Gemeinde.

It was good fortune that E. K. Francis undertook the study of the Mennonites in Manitoba in the 1940s. His doctoral thesis published by D. W. Friesen & Sons, Altona, in 1955, as *In Search of Utopia*, became a classic of scholarly writing, reminding Mennonites of their historical and literary heritage and their unending quest for utopia, defined as the building of God’s kingdom on earth.

In this issue we celebrate the work of sociologist E. K. Francis with the publication of his im-

Inside This Issue

| | |
|--------------------------|---------|
| Feature stories | 3-35 |
| President’s Report | 37 |
| Editorial | 38-43 |
| Letters | 48-52 |
| News | 53-69 |
| Articles | 70-119 |
| Material Culture | 120-136 |
| Book Reviews | 137-148 |

Introduction to Issue 18

Feature Story “Mennonite Institutions”

In this issue we proudly feature “Mennonite Institutions” by Emmerich K. Francis as the lead article. Reprinted from *Agricultural History*, Volume 22, (July, 1948), pages 144-155, the paper stands as a benchmark of research and writing. Particularly noteworthy is Francis’ description of the peculiar inheritance laws of the Mennonites which enshrined full equality of male and female, tracing these remarkable protocols to their roots in medieval Flanders, the ancestral home of many of the Russian Mennonites.

“Mennonite Institutions” celebrates the republication of *In Search of Utopia*, E. K. Francis’ classic work of the Mennonites of Manitoba, in an attractive second edition. The book, based on research conducted by Francis during the 1940s, was originally published by D. W. Friesen & Sons in 1955. The work by E. K. Francis reminds us of the struggles of our forebears and their sacrifices in building the foundations upon which the modern generations are prospering. No doubt the fact that Francis was Catholic enabled him to empathize with the Mennonite people and their struggle to maintain the integrity of their faith and culture.

The new edition of *In Search of Utopia* and the recently published *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba*, by geographer Dr. John Warkentin, Toronto (see *Preservings*, No. 17, pages 77-80), will soon be joined by a more modern popular history being written by Dr. John J. Friesen, Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba, to be ready for publication later this year. These three works will provide a sound base of historical writing, interpretation and understanding for scholar and lay person alike.

Dr. Justina Bergensche (1828-1905), Moun-tain Lake, Minnesota, was one of the important medical practitioners among the Mennonite people of Russia and North America. Her story reminds us that the field of medicine and health care was largely the domain of women in conservative Mennonite culture in the 19th century.

Wilhelm Hespeler (1830-1921) was the agent of the Canadian Government who travelled to Imperial Russia in 1872 to persuade the Mennonites to emigrate to Manitoba instead of Kansas and Nebraska. By the late 1870s Hespeler was resident in Winnipeg. He continued to play an important role in the Mennonite experience in Manitoba. We are pleased to publish an abbreviated version of a biography of Wilhelm Hespeler by Angelika Sauer, former Professor of Canadian-German Studies, University of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hespeler has recently been named to the “Historical List of Canada”, reflecting the importance of his work in bringing the Mennonites to Manitoba.

For tragedy and epic drama nothing can come close to the story of Mennonite suffering in Soviet Russia in the aftermath of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Among the most horrible chapters was the scourge of Machno in 1919 whose armies looted, raped and murdered their way through most of the settlements in the Black Sea region.

The activities of the Machnovse in the Jasykovo area north of the Chortitza Colony seem to have been related to the successful operations of a Mennonite Selbstschutz. However, as seen in previous articles published in *Preservings* dealing with the massacres in Steinbach and Ebenfeld, Borosenko Colony, equally severe atrocities occurred elsewhere. On the other hand, it cannot be said for a certainty that matters might not have been even worse in the absence of the Selbstschutz.

While deplorable in one sense, the departure from Mennonite teachings represented by the Selbstschutz was certainly no worse than those who converted themselves over to Separatist-Pietist religious culture, such as the “Tent Missionaries”. In fact, after reading the report that the tent missionaries had targeted Eichenfeld because of they were staunchly conservative (presumably meaning they were happy to remain with the genuine Gospel-centric faith of their fathers), I query whether the “in your face” religious screed of the tent missionaries did not spark the massacre or at least contribute to its severity? These are questions that will probably remain unanswered.

Writer Marianne Janzen, Winnipeg, whose grandfather was killed in the massacre, has compiled a gripping account of the horrible events of October 25, 1919, in Eichenfeld. The article is an important contribution to the growing literature on the topic.

Among conservative Mennonites the emphasis regarding the rebirth and salvation has been mainly on conversion by Christian formation, namely, the discipling of the young by parents, school and Gemeinde. There are still those among so-called Evangelicals who hold to the antiquated belief that the only valid way to salvation is by crisis conversion, notwithstanding that such a teaching cannot be supported biblically. Nevertheless, Protestant Fundamentalist proselytizers routinely use this teaching as they work among conservative Mennonites thereby stereotyping them as being beyond the pale of God’s Kingdom and instilling spiritual anxiety, fear and confusion. As a result many sincere and searching souls have been turned away from genuine discipleship and induced to forsake their spiritual heritage, a tragic loss for them and the Church of God.

Dr. David Schroeder has come to the rescue in this dilemma with an insightful article, explaining the Biblical understanding of salvation and what it means to be born again. This article will be a blessing to many whose beliefs have been challenged by false teachings and heresy and help them to reaffirm their faith.

The editorial continues in this vein addressing the controversial question, whether the Evangelical understanding of missions based on sectarianism, separatism and sheep stealing, is really a wholesome way for determining how one group of human beings or even Mennonites relate to another? Some people will find these comments enlightening, other readers will be furious.

Our letters section again gives readers a chance to let off steam or simply comment on their im-

pressions of *Preservings* and/or matters of importance to them. Presumably some readers are in a state of shock that after a hundred years of silence, conservative Mennonites actually have a voice and are able to articulate their views. It must be an encouragement to realize that their faith is intellectually and biblically much superior to Protestant Fundamentalism which is almost non-intellectual by definition.

Another piece of delightful historical writing by Elizabeth Reimer Bartel, leads off the articles section. She presents a well crafted piece continuing the saga of the H. W. Reimer clan of Steinbach, Manitoba, focusing on her spinster aunt “Ennee”. David K. Schellenberg has contributed a worthy biography of his grandfather, pioneer Steinbach teacher Gerhard E. Kornelsen. The “Family Chronicle 1900,” by former Kleine Gemeinde Aeltester Peter Toews provides an intriguing view of several ancient dynasties which had great impact on our community.

The biography of Mennonite film producer Otto Klassen, Winnipeg, continues the endeavour of *Preservings* to present the lives and ideas of contemporaries who have contributed significantly to our fellowship.

The lead article in the material culture section is the long awaited “Story of Two *Gesangbücher*” by Dr. Peter Letkemann, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hymnody among Russian Mennonites has often been the battle ground between conservatives and those who adopted alien religious cultures and/or those seeking fulfilment through accommodation and assimilation with their host societies, see *Preservings*, No. 15, page 66. Dr. Letkemann’s article chronicles the outstanding efforts made by our conservative Mennonite forebears in Prussia in the 1780s to compile a *Gesangbuch* based in large part on the core hymn texts of the Dutch/Flemish Mennonite church.

Through their valiant efforts these leaders preserved the spiritual legacy of the martyrs of the faith and Reformation-era composers, a precious gift of God. Their sacrifices created a marvellous work of hymnody and devotional literature still being enjoyed by over 100,000 Mennonites to the present day. Will modern conservatives have the same vision for their faith and compassion for their descendants?

A short article by deacon Henry Friesen, Wheatley, on the Old Colony Mennonite School System in Ontario with 850 students continues our look at how conservatives express their ongoing concerns regarding a Christ-centred education for their children.

The issue concludes with reviews of another excellent crop of books. Hopefully the book review article by Chris Huebner of J. Denny Weaver’s revolutionary new restatement of Mennonite faith and theology as separate and distinct from “the theology in general of Christendom” will wet the appetites of readers encouraging them to delve deeper into the mysteries of their faith and culture.

The Editor.

Feature Articles

Mennonite Institutions

“Mennonite Institutions in Early Manitoba: A Study of their origins,” by Dr. Emmerich K. Francis, University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana, reprinted from *Agricultural History*, Volume 22: 144-155 (July, 1948).

Introduction.

The Mennonites who settled in Southern Manitoba in and after 1874 were part of a group which had migrated from West Prussia to Russia at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. As colonists in Manitoba they attempted to continue their traditional culture pattern. Their partial success was due to the fact that they were left largely to themselves for almost 10 years after their arrival. The present article deals with some of the distinctive culture traits of this ethnic group during the pioneer period (Note One).

Mennonitism is an offshoot of Evangelical Anabaptism (Note Two), one of the major Protestant movements of the Reformation. Menno Simons, a former Catholic priest of Frisia, was the founder of the Mennonite church. Between 1536 and 1544 he succeeded in uniting and organizing the persecuted Anabaptists who had gathered in the northern parts of the Netherlands. After he had been forced to leave his country, he extended his missionary activities to northern Germany, and between 1546 and 1553 he worked in the Baltic lands.

Origin of Mennonite Institutions.

West Prussia, particularly the marshy lowlands of the Vistula-Nogat Delta, became the refuge for considerable numbers of Dutch Protestants who had fled before the Counter Reformation of the Duke of Alba. Many of these refugees were Mennonites who, together with converts made among other settlers, eventually formed large religious congregations. The members of these congregations, who became commonly known as Mennonites after about 1570, encountered much opposition from the recognized Catholic and Protestant churches and from the secular authorities of West Prussia which was then subject to the Polish king.

When that territory came under the rule of the Prussian king in 1772, new difficulties induced a section of the Prussian Mennonites to accept a generous invitation by the Tsarina Catherine II in 1788 to settle in southern Russia. There, for the first time in their history, these Mennonites found an opportunity to live according to the principles of their faith and to develop their social institutions in almost complete segregation from other cultures.

After 1870 the introduction of the general military draft and the suspension of the autonomous administration of their colonies in Russia, combined with social unrest due to scarcity of contiguous land, prompted the Mennonites to look to the New World. Both the Ca-

nadian Government and railroad interests in the United States were anxious to win such a large body of most desirable immigrants for the empty spaces of the recently opened West.

Although the majority were finally pacified by substantial concessions and decided to remain in Russia, about 10,000 of them turned to the United States and approximately 8,000 settled in Manitoba. During the first decade after their immigration, privileges granted to them by the Dominion Government and the absence of any systematic administration of outlying districts by the Provincial Government permitted them to establish a form of socio-economic organization in their settlements, called Reserves, without any interference to the social pattern of the majority of the population.

Significant Institutions.

The following are the most conspicuous institutions which characterized Mennonite culture in Manitoba during this pioneer period.

Habitat.

All the Mennonites in early Manitoba, with a few exceptions, lived in small villages of from six to 30 homesteads. The lots for the dwellings, each of the same size, were laid out either on both sides or on one side of a road. Thus a village consisted of one or two rows of houses, each at the same moderate distance from the other. The arrangements of houses in the Mennonite village bears a certain resemblance to the type of line or row village which is derived from the medieval “Marschhufendorf” (marsh village) and “Waldhufendorf” (forest village).

The latter type of habitat was introduced into North America from northern France by the French settlers and is still characteristic of French Canada and Louisiana. In both marsh and forest villages (and related types), the farm buildings are more or less loosely located along a road or a river, and the “Hufe” (unit of tenure) or farm extends in one single rectangular piece, parallel to the neighbouring farms, back into raw forest or marsh land. Thus cultivation progresses gradually from the dwellings of the farmers far into the hinterland until further cultivation becomes uneconomical. Usually the last portion of the property is preserved as uncultivated commons where fuel and wild hay can be obtained and animals pastured. The long rows of houses that border the main artery of communication are united in village communities or parishes.

In the Mennonite village, on the other hand, the village lot of each farmer comprises only enough space for buildings and barnyard, plus a few acres of arable land to be used for a garden,

orchard, vegetable plot, and the like. The rest of his property, however, was laid out after the pattern of the open-field system, as found, for example, in 13th century England. George Caspar Homans has called it champion husbandry (Note Three), while R. Kotszschke and W. Ebert have coined for it the very descriptive term, “Siedlungsform der Gemeinschaft” (solidaristic type of settlement) (Note Four). It was widely adopted all over Europe during and after the Carolingian period (Note Five).

“...the Mennonite form of settlement [was an]...unusual combination of ...marsh village and the solidaristic type of settlement.”

However, the “Haufendorf” and the “Angerdorf”, both of the nucleated village type (Note Six), are more commonly connected with the open-field system than the line village. Thus, the Mennonite form of settlement seems to represent a rather unusual combination of characteristics of the marsh village and the solidaristic type of settlement.

Communal Organization.

With the exception of the old river parishes which were arranged in the manner described above for the forest village, Canadian legislation provided for settlement of individual farmers on scattered homesteads in the West by adopting the American checkerboard system of land survey. Accordingly, farm land was left in one piece as in the forest village but shaped in squares rather than oblongs. This prevented the formation of villages, and homesteaders usually located their dwellings so they could have easy access to all parts of their rather large property.

The Mennonites, however, were averse to living on scattered homesteads. In order to preserve village habitat and solidaristic communal organization, they obtained, prior to immigration, a number of concessions with regard to the application of the Dominion Lands Act for members of their group. Thus, they were able to organize themselves according to the following pattern.

The families who wished to form a village community would appeal to the “Oberschultze”, the elected head or reeve of a Reserve, who would then allot a certain area to the community and make arrangements so that the quarter sections to which the heads of these families held property rights under the Dominion Lands Act would coincide with the territory included in that village.

As each family was granted one quarter section of land, the size and area of a village was determined from the beginning by the number of families. A village of 24 families, for instance, comprised six sections of contiguous land. The further planning of the settlement was then left to each village community thus formed. They at once proceeded to elect a "Dorfschulze" (village mayor) and two councillors, but all the major decisions were made by the "Schulzenbott", the assembly of all operators of the farms which were incorporated in the village.

A comparatively small portion of the total village area was set aside as a village site and divided into lots in the way described above. The rest of the land allotted to the village was divided into a number of open fields, a common permanent pasture, and a common bushland to provide fuel and timber, while in the beginning some land remained unused.

"...to every farm belonged a lot in the village and a varying number of strips in different fields..."

Every homesteader received an equal share in each of the open fields. These shares were distributed in the form of narrow strips, usually half a mile long, but their configuration was, of course, adjusted to the size and situation of the fields. The number of fields was determined by the texture, accessibility, and agricultural value of the available land. By this method an equitable distribution of land among all members of the village community was guaranteed.

Thus, to every farm belonged a lot in the village and a varying number of strips in different fields; moreover, every farmer had the right to send an equal number of animals to the common pasture. He was also entitled to a certain amount of wood and hay to be cut on unimproved lands; and finally, if needed, to one or two lots at the end of the village to build houses for his grown-up sons and their families. These latter were called "Anwohner" (cotters) as distinguished from the "Wirte" (farmers) and had no other property in the village except their house lots with small gardens.

For all encumbrances and taxes on property held within the village area, the community as such was held responsible, and it was to divide them equitably among all inhabitants. Thus, the "Oberschulze", who watched over the public works in the colony, would in concurrence with all the mayors of the Reserve, prescribe to a village the amount and kind of statute labour or other tributes in cash or kind to be rendered. It was then up to the mayor and the village assembly to distribute the burden among all farm households.

Other performances or payments for purely local purposes such as school and teachers, wells,

herd and herdsman, poor relief, and the like, were determined by the village assembly and also divided in equal parts among all the farmers. In addition, a considerable number of other cooperative enterprises were carried out and regulated by the community--for instance, transportation of grain, mail, and timber, erection of buildings, cheese factories, and mills, and various forms of mutual aid. There are also instances reported of field work done and machinery used collectively on a village level. However, cooperation of this kind was usually left to the initiative of individuals and was not considered a concern of the village community as such.

Although collectivistic to a considerable degree, this system cannot be termed communistic. A farm with all its appurtenances was considered private property that could be sold or inherited. It was an independent economic unit, operated by each proprietor according to his own wishes and abilities; but management and disposal, though free in principle, were strictly controlled by the community. As we have seen, the layout of each farm within the village area was determined collectively and could only be changed by collective decision and for all in the same way. As far as real estate was concerned, it was indivisible and sale to outsiders was prohibited by Mennonite mores.

Church and Civil Administration

Separation of church and civil self-government was maintained to a certain degree, particularly as far as the office holders were concerned. The circumstances, however, under which the Mennonites set up and tried to run their colonies in Manitoba, brought about a very close association between church organization and civil administration. The socio-economic institutions according to which these people intended to live were not sanctioned by the laws of Canada and in part were directly contrary to them.

"Separation of church and civil self-government was maintained to a certain degree..."

Certain legal provisions had been made by order-in-council or agreement to enable them to maintain their village habitat, field system, and regional autonomy. However, these provisions held good only as long as all Mennonites consented to their communal institutions, although individuals were not prevented from appealing from Mennonite customary law to Canadian statutes or common law. Thus, any court would support a homesteader who might wish to live on, and operate individually, the quarter section to which he held legal title even if this meant the immediate disruption of the village collective. In

this way, the existence of a whole village settlement was endangered if the buildings of all the farmers were on the quarter section held by the member who separated. Such cases actually occurred, for instance, in Neuanlage near Gretna.

This situation was remedied in the following ways. First, any individual appeal to the courts and the authorities of the Province or Dominion was outlawed and made an offense against Mennonite mores. Secondly, obedience to the whole body of customary Mennonite law and to all the decisions made by elected officers as well as by any recognized public assembly was put under the strictest religious sanctions. Since the civil authorities of the colony had practically no legal means of punishing offenders, the church took over the function of a court of appeal as well as the execution of punishment.

A recalcitrant individual who, for instance, refused to comply with a decision made legitimately by the majority of villagers would be brought to the attention of the Aeltester (bishop) and the preachers. A number of these, together with the Oberschulze and mayor, or separately, would approach the offender and try to bring him to reason by persuasion. Continued refusal to abide by the law would bring about a summons before the "Bruderschaft", that is the general meeting of the church congregation presided over by the respective Aeltester.

Punishment consisted mainly of private censure, public censure, public confession of sin, and, as the last resort, the church ban. This last form of punishment involved very serious discomforts, quite apart from personal religious scruples and loss of face. The banned individual had to be avoided, or shunned, by all the other members of the community, including his own family; nobody was allowed to deal with him or even talk to him.

Administration of Inheritances.

Unlike the village and district administration which was, at least theoretically, a secular institution, the "Waisenamt" (orphans' office) was considered a prime responsibility of the church, although secular officials were requested to cooperate. Its main business was to supervise the division of estates of deceased householders, the safeguarding of property rights of persons not able to care for themselves or of minors deprived of both or either one of their parents, and the supervision of the proper upbringing of orphans. In addition, it functioned as a savings bank for church members, and from the sums of money which it held in trust, it provided substantial credits for individual as well as public enterprises. Thus, it might be called a combination of trust and loan company, a credit union and savings bank.

The body of regulations by which the Waisenamt was run is to be considered as nothing less than a law of inheritance valid for all members of the colony. It was based on the prin-

Publication Statement. "Preservings" is the magazine/journal of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc., Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0, published in June and December, semi-annually at Steinbach, Manitoba, the voice of conservative Mennonites. Editor Delbert F. Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, Phone 1(204)-326-6454, business, 1(204)326-6719fax, E-mail "delplett@mb.sympatico.ca". Web sites: "www.hshs.mb.ca" and "www.mts.net/~delplett". The publication of the magazine/journal is funded in part by the D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation Inc. We are always looking for more individuals who may want to contribute articles and/or photographs. Please send manuscripts, articles and/or photographs to HSHS c/o Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0. Annual subscription/membership fee is \$20.00, individual issues \$10.00 each.

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

ciple that a family homestead was the common property of both husband and wife, upon whom, however, rested the responsibility for rearing and educating their children and as far as possible reestablishing them in life when they got married. Whenever either of the parents died, the whole estate was at once assessed by the local mayor and under the supervision of the Waisenamt.

Shortly afterward, the actual liquidation of the estate took place in the presence of the mayor, the "Schichtgeber" (surviving parent), the major

"...the "Waisenamt" (orphans' office) was considered a prime responsibility of the church..."

heirs, and the guardians and curators for minor, insane, or absent heirs. The assessed value of the estate, including all mobile and immobile property, was divided in such a way that the "Schichtgeber" (the widower or widow) retained half of it, while the other half was divided in equal shares among all the children. Moreover, each of the children was entitled to a good suit of clothes, a Bible, a hymnal, a catechism, and the "Zugabe" (extra). The latter actually represented a customary dowry which consisted of such items as a chest of drawers, bedding, and one or more head of farm animals (usually a horse for boys, a cow for girls).

The "Schichtgeber" always remained in possession of the undivided farmstead but was under obligation to pay out in cash the shares credited to the other heirs upon their leaving the common household. If, however, a child had previously left the paternal home and had already received some allowance while both parents were still alive, this amount was subtracted from his share. Similarly, the "Zugabe" was only given if the child stayed and worked on the family farm until the age of 21.

Minor children were left with the surviving parent, who usually married again fairly soon, but if they had to be removed by their guardians for some reason, their capital was to bear 5 percent interest, and the parent was to pay for their board until the age of 12; after this, they apparently were no longer considered an economic liability to foster parents. The shares of major heirs which were not withdrawn also bore interest.

The shares of minors in liquid capital as well as in the proceeds of auction sales, and interest credited to their account, were deposited with the Waisenamt. In every case, settlement had to be perfected at least before the surviving parent, man or woman, entered a new marriage, and no marriage was solemnized by any minister without a written permit issued by the Waisenamt.

Fire Insurance.

Another institution of major social significance was fire insurance. Originally, it was compulsory for all colonists. Reparation for losses was made according to an elaborate key. In cases of total loss of buildings, two-thirds of their assessed tax value was paid out in cash, and fixed sums were designated for each lost animal, piece

of machinery, etc. Lost stores of grain, hay, etc., were restituted in kind.

Premiums, however, were collected from each of the insured only after the damage had occurred, and the sums due were divided among them in proportion to the assessed value of their insured property. As social controls weakened and compulsion to make the payments became difficult, the communal system of security against damages caused by fire was changed to one which more and more took on the character of a mutual fire insurance association on a voluntary basis.

Basic Religious Doctrines

In order to establish the origins of the aforementioned institutions, we shall first examine the principal tenets of the Mennonite creed that affect social life.

The Anabaptists not only continued their opposition to the old Roman Catholic church but extended it to the new Protestant churches of Zwingli, Luther, and Calvin whom they accused of having betrayed the ideals of the Reformation. As one of them wrote: "It happened to be with them not different as if one mendeth an old kettle, whereby the hole becometh but worse."

Against the doctrines of Luther and Calvin on grace, the Anabaptists emphasized the freedom of will, individual responsibility for moral conduct, and the imitation of Christ.

While other reformers wished to reform the old church, the Anabaptists rejected a thousand years of church history as one great apostasy from the ideal of the Apostolic church. To them, the church was the community of those who had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit, a voluntary brotherhood of the saved and saints. They considered baptism a symbol of church membership which could be attained only upon profession of faith and proof of sanctity. Whenever, after admission to the church, sins were committed without subsequent penance and atonement, church membership was forfeited and had to be explicitly revoked by the ban.

"...the Anabaptists rejected a thousand years of church history as one great apostasy from the ideal of the Apostolic church."

The Anabaptists insisted that true Christians, united in the visible church, had to live separate from the "world" in communities modeled after those described in the New Testament. Although they considered the State an institution of God which had to be obeyed, they held it to be an order outside the Christian church. Government and force are necessary only for "sinners," while the saints lived by conscience and brotherly church control. In 1571 an Anabaptist conference at Frankenthal declared that the sword was the rightful attribute of the civil authority, but they wished to have no part in any such authority and to remain always subjects.

In their desire to follow the precepts of the New Testament to the letter, the Mennonites adopted the principle of nonresistance, particu-

larly after the disaster of Munster, and rejected the taking of oaths.

The church organization of the Mennonites was congregational. They chose laymen as their ministers, either by lot or, more commonly, by majority vote cast by the respective congregations.

These early Anabaptist doctrines and practices, which have been partly preserved intact through the centuries, show some relationship with the Mennonite institutions in Manitoba as described above. Their congregational church structure contains a number of democratic elements, such as majority rule, election of officers, and self-government. The emphasis on the christian concept of brotherly love was certainly favourable to a spirit of cooperation and mutual

"...to follow the precepts of the New Testament to the letter, the Mennonites adopted the principle of nonresistance..."

aid. Their sense of justice fostered the equitable distribution of the means of production and of inherited property.

However, it cannot be said that the socio-economic organization and institutions of the Mennonites in Manitoba in all their particular aspects followed as a necessary consequence from their religious ideals. Above all, the intermingling of the church and civil authority seems to contradict one of the basic principles of their faith, the separation of church and coercive state. Moreover, the culture of the Old Order Amish Mennonites in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which is based on the same general religious principles, shows many essential differences from that of the group in Manitoba. The same is true with regard to the Hutterites. Both are offshoots of the southern branch of 16th-century Anabaptism.

Because of violent persecutions, the Amish Mennonites had to leave their old homes in Switzerland, and eventually migrated to Pennsylvania, while the followers of Jakob Hutter, a Tyrolean peasant, established their first Bruderhof in Moravia, but were driven from country to country, and made their way from Russia to the New World together with the Russian Mennonites in the 1870s.

The Hutterites live under a system of true communism whereby all property is owned and operated by the congregation as such, which is organized along lines similar to a monastic community (Note Seven). The Old Order Amish Mennonites, on the other hand, recognize private

Attention Readers: Readers responses, critical or otherwise, are welcome: see "Letters" section for criteria regarding publication of letters and e-mails. The editor can be contacted at 1(204)326-6454 office, fax 1(204)326-6917, mail Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, ROA 2A0, e-mail delplett@mb.sympatico.ca

property in the same way as the Mennonites of Russia and Manitoba, but none of the peculiar institutions described in this article are known to them (Note Eight).

These observations make it highly probable that factors other than religious persuasion have contributed to the origin of the institutions investigated in this article.

Prussian Origins.

We can assert with a fair degree of certainty that the social conditions under which the Mennonites lived in West Prussia for a little more than two centuries prior to their emigration to Russia differed considerably from those which prevailed among them at the time when they came to Manitoba another century later.

In the 16th century, and partly in the 17th, groups of immigrants from the Netherlands--mostly refugees from the Counter Reformation--were invited by various landlords in West Prussia to open up, "after the Dutch manner," certain areas of wet alluvial land that had been left waste or had become devastated in the course of time and were continuously threatened by floods or to polder in shallow basins of brackish water to reclaim them permanently for agriculture.

Contracts were always made with a definite group of colonists who had to arrange among themselves the manner in which their stipulations were executed. The landlord did not deal with each individual farmer but with the local magistrate or Schulze who was elected for one or two years from amongst the community. The form of tenure was usually the "Zeitpacht" (tenure for a certain time) as applied to the "hollandische Zinshufe" (Dutch Leasehold). Under it, land was given to the immigrants in simple nonheritable tenure for a limited, often rather short, period of time.

Habitat and Communal Organization.

The Mennonite villages in West Prussia were organized after the pattern of the marsh village described above. Buildings were arranged in a long drawn-out row, usually following the courses of riverbanks. The distance between individual dwellings was more than in the Mennonite villages in Manitoba. All the land belonging to a homestead was kept in one piece, forming a long strip, and near one of its shorter sides the farm buildings were situated.

"The Mennonite villages in West Prussia were organized after the pattern of the marsh village..."

The open-field system with its high degree of cooperation, solidarity, and strict communal supervision of the farm economy was alien to the Hollander settlements in West Prussia, although it did exist there from the Middle Ages onward in settlements founded prior to the Mennonite immigration. In the latter, the villages were not a row but a nucleated type, mostly the "Angerdorf", where the buildings were arranged somewhat loosely around central squares, the village greens, upon which the parish church and other public buildings were located (Note Nine).

Customary laws or mores, copied from their ancestral home, provided a strong regulative force in the Hollander communities of Prussia. Generally the village community regulated practically all phases of life. Although each individual farm theoretically constituted an independent unit whose operation was left to private initiative, the erection and maintenance of the elaborate dike and drainage system which was necessary in the polders and marshes of the Vistula mouth, necessitated a close cooperation and strict discipline.

Thus, it becomes obvious that the Mennonite and other Hollander villages in West Prussia were organized and laid out mainly after a pattern which had been customary in their country of origin, the Netherlands. It was developed there in the middle Ages and thus, of course, without any particular reference to Anabaptist principles.

Church and Civil Administration.

As all the Mennonite institutions in West Prussia remained within the legal framework established at that time and were fully safeguarded by the ordinary courts and superior civil authorities, there is no reason to assume that the Mennonite church had any cause for or opportunity of taking over public functions in the fields of economy, local government, and law.

It must also be kept in mind that the Mennonite religion was only tolerated by the recognized churches, the Evangelical [Lutheran] and the Catholic, as well as by the State and had no official status. Moreover, probably few, if any, of the Hollander settlements (at least in the earlier period) were made up exclusively of Mennonites, although in the 17th and 18th centuries a majority of their population appear to have belonged to this denomination. Even then, the Mennonites seem to have lived largely intermingled with Hollanders of different church affiliation (Note Ten).

Inheritance.

Whether institutions similar to the Waisenamt already existed in some form in West Prussia is not known. Mennonite tradition maintains, and it seems not entirely improbable, that the church did concern itself with the safeguarding of the interests of orphans. It is, however, important to note that one form of inheritance which was in force in West Prussia prior to Mennonite immigration is based on the same principle as that followed by the Waisenamt regulations.

Inheritance of property leased under the Law

"Inheritance of property...was according to the Flemish Law which provided equal rights to blood relatives of both sexes."

of Chulm was according to the Flemish Law which provided equal rights to blood relatives of both sexes (Note Eleven). Moreover, both husband and wife had the right to an equal share in half of their respective properties.

Its main provisions have been described as follows: "Of the Flemish law among the colonists from the Netherlands in northern and east-

ern Germany we know that equal right of succession applied to both sons and daughters, and the other cognates of the land-owners falling under the law. At the same time it was linked with the principle of *eheliche Halbteilung* after the conclusion of marriage...According to the Flemish law and the adopted principle of *eheliche Halbteilung* (each spouse)...was entitled to half of the combined property of both spouses, if not already during the lifetime at least after the death of the (other) spouse" (Note Twelve).

The principle of the indivisibility of farm holdings was also common to many parts of Germanic Europe, including medieval Prussia, from early times.

Fire Insurance.

As far a compulsory fire insurance is concerned, we find no direct proof of its existence in Prussia prior to the Mennonite migration to Russia. However, the fact that in Russia assessment for it was made according to the "preussische Brandhube" makes its Prussian origin unquestionable. This "Hube" or "Hufe" was equal to 15 dessiatines while the size of the standard "Hufe" in Russia was 65 dessiatines (about 175 acres) (Note Thirteen). According to a Mennonite tradition the first fire insurance association was founded in 1625.

Up to this point, our discussion seems to indicate that a number of Mennonite culture traits originated in the Hollander settlements of West Prussia. To these belong habitation in row villages, communal administration by elected officers, law of inheritance, and communal fire insurance, and perhaps the institution of the Waisenamt or some form of forerunner of it. None of these institutions seem to have any direct relation to Anabaptist religious principles but appear partly as imports from the ancestral home of the 16th century immigrants and partly as later adaptations to their new environment.

We, therefore, have to look to further developments in Russia in order to establish the origin of the traits not accounted for so far and the factors leading to their final integration into the consistent culture pattern which was characteristic of the Mennonite group in early Manitoba.

Russian Modification.

Many years before the Mennonites of Prussia were considered as prospective immigrants to Russia, legal provisions had been made in that country for the economic organization and political administration of foreign settlements, which were to become decisive for the future social organization of the Mennonite immigrants. The second half of the 18th century was a period of large-scale colonization and agrarian reforms in the three leading empires that emerged in Eastern Europe between the wars against the Turks and the partition of Poland: Austria, Russia, and Prussia.

It was the absolute monarchs of that day, Maria Theresa and Joseph II, Catherine II, and Frederick II, whose names are inseparably connected with the improvement of the economic, social, and cultural conditions in that part of the Continent. In their desire to consolidate their ter-

ritorial acquisitions, they made the settlement of depopulated or less advanced parts of their possessions a cornerstone of their broad and rational agrarian policies. The Tsarina, herself a German princess, turned mainly to Germany to win model farmers for the colonization of what was then called New Russia, that is the Ukraine.

“...the Russian government
...took the institutions of the
Mennonites, up to a certain de-
gree, as a model in the organiza-
tion of the majority of the other
colonies.”

Before considering the development of Mennonite institutions in Russia we must examine the general legal framework for foreign settlements which had been laid down by the Russian government long before the Mennonites entered the picture but which was applied also to their colonies. Under Catherine II, German and Western influences were strongly felt in the expanding realms of Russia, although they had been present ever since Peter I had decided to remodel his domain into a modern European state.

Thus, it is not surprising to find among the socio-economic institutions decreed by Catherine and her successors for the benefit of foreign settlers striking similarities to those which belonged to the old German cultural heritage rather than the typical Russian and Slavic traditions.

On December 4, 1762 and July 22, 1763, the Tsarina issued two manifestos by which foreigners from all over Europe, except Jews, were invited to settle in her possessions. In the second manifesto and in the colonial law of March 19, 1764, which was based on it, the following provisions, among others were made. Free land was to be provided by the Crown above all in the southern governments of Yekatarinoslav, Cherson, and Taurian. The new colonies were to be formed by groups that were not only homogeneous by nationality but mainly by church affiliation, and districts were to be established with about a thousand families each. Within a district (called *volost*) villages were to be laid out. All the land within a village became the collective and indivisible property (*dominium directum*) of the village. Land was apportioned in such a way that every settler family, registered as belonging to a certain settlement, obtained the heritable possession (*dominium utile*) of a definite measure of “*udobnie*” (arable land) in that village. Its size in Mennonite colonies usually was 65 *dessiatines* (about 175 acres) per family and homestead.

The remainder of the village land, which in the beginning was quite large, was reserved for the common use of the village community. Some of it was left for common pasture, hay land, bush, and the like. But it also could be leased to private individuals, in which case the rent collected became part of the community's income. Thus, each village resembled a stock company and each farmer a shareholder. The homestead was given to a family in permanent usufruct, but if it died

out the farm reverted to the community. No land apportioned to a farm family for heritable usufruct and possession was permitted to be sold, mortgaged or partitioned.

Local Autonomy.

These initial provisions also included a law of inheritance; as it was repudiated by the Mennonites and most of the other foreign colonists it need not be discussed here. Of greater significance was the law's insistence on free “inner jurisdiction,” or, as we would say, local autonomy, for each colony. However, this provision was not carried out at once but was revived later after concrete experience had been gained with certain classes of colonists, mainly the Mennonites.

We have now to ask in what way the Mennonites contributed to the further development of these principles originally laid down without any reference to them. The privileges granted prior to their immigration upon their request and made known to them on March 3, 1788 by the Russian minister at Danzig contained little which would have a bearing on the future form of their social organization (Note Fourteen).

In July, 1789 the first group of Mennonites from Danzig arrived at the Chortitza River, a small creek flowing into the Dnieper River. The division of the land among the individual settlers was left to their own decision. At first, obviously an attempt was made to settle in exactly the manner to which they had been accustomed in Prussia. All the land belonging to a homestead was apportioned in one piece (probably in oblong rectangles), and each homesteader built individually on his own farm. However, repeated attacks by half-civilized Tartar neighbours and horse thieves and the general insecurity of the country soon forced the settlers to move closer together (Note Fifteen). The transition from a loose to a compact village habitat apparently was brought about by such incidents, while the arrangement of the dwellings in rows was maintained.

Until 1800, conditions in the new settlements were rather chaotic. The letter of the law meant little in comparison with the arbitrary actions of local officials. This, however, left the settlers considerable leeway in managing their inner affairs according to their own concepts. After the accession of Tsar Paul I, the authorities made a strong effort to bring order into the colonial administration; to this end, new laws were enacted in 1800, 1801, and 1803.

With respect to them, one observer did not hesitate to state that the Russian government “convinced of the surprisingly quick success of the Mennonite economy, took the institutions of the Mennonites, up to a certain degree, as a model in the organization of the majority of the other colonies” (Note Sixteen). This judgment is all the more valuable as its author was a high civil servant, a state councillor, who had the opportunity to deal with the matter in an official capacity during the 1860s. He concluded that in this way the communal family organization of the Mennonites and their legal concepts and practices came to exercise a decisive influence upon all colonies of foreigners in Russia.

The Russian legislation therefore seems to

offer an opportunity to infer the manner in which the Mennonites, when more or less left alone, developed their socio-economic organization. On September 6, 1800, they obtained from the new monarch a *gramola* (charter) which confirmed and partly extended the privileges previously granted to them. Of particular interest is a reference in this document to the fact that inheritance among the Mennonites followed the rules laid down by their own customary law rather than the Russian colonial law and article 2 of the *gramola* recognizes, at least in part, this significant digression (Note Seventeen).

The instructions for the Inner Organization which were issued in 1800, 1801, and 1803 not only for the Mennonites but for most of the other foreign colonists in Russia went considerably further. The resemblance of these provisions to Mennonite institutions, as stated above for the early Manitoba period, proves conclusively that the latter were directly imported from Russia with only minor changes. The form of village self-administration, as described for Manitoba, is identical with the Russian regulations.

In Manitoba, the Reserve took the place of the “*volost*”. At the head in both cases was the *Oberschulze*. In Russia, however, the *Schulze* and *Oberschulze* were endowed by law with wide executive and judicial powers, which were shared with village and district assemblies, and in court with the “best men,” apparently some sort of jurymen. Moreover the village assembly also had the right to expel a member from the community, thus depriving him of privileges connected with the status of a foreign colonist, including the family homestead.

Church and State.

Without going further into details, interesting as they may be, we now have to decide what was the original contribution of the Mennonites regarding self-administration. The complete separation of ecclesiastical from secular power was

Do you need back copies of *Preservings*?

One solution is to visit our HSHS web site:
www.hshs.mb.ca

The web site includes *Preservings*, Issues No. 8 to 15 of *Preservings* and our special 125 anniversary booklet *Celebrating Our Heritage East Reserve 125 1874 1999* (Note no photographs included for issue No. 8, only script).

Each issue is saved as Acrobat PDF file for easy viewing on screens and the ability to do text searching. Adobe Acrobat Reader for Windows 3.1 and Windows 95/98 is included on the CD-ROM.

Readers should note that these files are quite large and take an hour or so to download.

Readers interested in the *Kleine Gemeinde* story can check out Delbert 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

in perfect agreement with their religious concepts. It is also apparent that the highly democratic form of local self-government fits in well with the congregational organization of their church, according to which their ministers are elected by and from the members of the church and all major decisions are left to the church meeting (Bruderschaft).

In another respect, however, serious difficulties arose from the fact that the Mennonites themselves had to take over all the local magistracies and the burden of maintaining law and order in their settlements. Refusal to accept worldly power and offices was one of the principles of the Evangelical Anabaptists. Although Menno Simons did not leave any definite doctrine on civil authority, the idea was widespread among Mennonites that force and government is necessary only for the sinners, the "world," while the "saved," that is the members of the true church, despite being bound to obey the civil authority in nonreligious matters, do not need any coercive power in addition to their own consciences and the brotherly discipline of the church.

The real test for this concept came when the Mennonites themselves had to take over the full responsibility for their political organization and were unable to leave it to others to "rule the world" as they had preferred to do before. Of course, they at once ran up against the weakness of human nature, even the human nature of baptized Mennonites and their progeny. Since it was impossible to expel from their communities all those who acted against the principles of their faith, even those who were disciplined by excommunication, the civil authorities, now in the hands of Mennonites, had to resort to force and punitive measures, often very severe ones including corporal punishment, just as any other civil authority elsewhere in the world. This unavoidable inconsistency, in fact, became the main cause of many theological quarrels and church divisions, which occurred in the course of the 19th century.

Later on, a rather serious blending between church and civil affairs occurred, particularly in the Molotschna colony. In their extended struggle against demands advanced by the landless members of the community, the party of the farmers frequently used the church as a powerful weapon in the defense of their interests. This was all the easier to be achieved as elders and preachers usually were elected from the ranks of the wealthy farmers. In order to suppress dissident church groups which were composed largely of the economically and socially dissatisfied elements, the ministers organized themselves into district conferences, which cooperated closely with the civil district authorities, not always to the advantage of religion (Note Eighteen).

The basic elements of this communal constitution were obviously copied from similar institutions in Prussia. Not only the name of the Schulze but also his official position as the responsible representative of the colony was a direct import from the old homeland of the Mennonites, although the Russian practice apparently opened a wider field for autonomy. Moreover, the contributions made to the political organization by Russian civil servants in their advisory

and supervisory capacities, either as local inspectors attached to each "volost" or as directors of the *Vormundschafts-Kanzlei* (department for the care of foreign colonies), should not be underrated. Since many of these officials were Baltic noblemen of German extraction and many others learned jurists and expert administrators, it is not surprising if they took institutions, tried out for centuries in certain parts of Germany, as models for the proposals that they submitted to higher authorities as well as to the colonists themselves.

We may conclude that Mennonite self-government in Russia was not only the result of past experience in Prussia and of outside influence but also of well thought-out and efficient adjustment of inherited forms to new conditions which were made with direct reference to their congregational and democratic church organization. Their constitution was not only unlike anything else which existed at the time in the Russian Empire but still remained one step ahead of what was achieved for the Russian peasantry after their liberation on February 19, 1861.

Open Field Village.

The colonial laws of 1800, 1801 and 1803 and later additions (all of them were eventually embodied in the code of 1842) also throw light on the development of the Mennonite economic system. References in the earlier of these statutes clearly show that originally all the land belonging to a homestead remained undivided in one consolidated piece. It was the Russian authorities themselves who suggested redivision of the arable appurtenances of all the farms in a village into three, four, five, and more open fields. The Instructions for the Inner Organization allowed such a compulsory redistribution of the village lands "for the improvement of agriculture" upon a majority decision by the village assembly.

It is obvious that this measure was a deviation from the economic organization of the marsh and forest village. It had, however its precedent in the agrarian system of the Russian peasantry. In the ancient Slavic villages, land was partitioned among all inhabitants, though not in open fields nor in long rectangles but in scattered irregular blocks (checkerboard fields). Under the institution of the *mir*, which had been imposed upon the Russian peasantry in the 17th century, redistribution of the land held in common property by the village was made periodically according to the "male census soul". One reason for this practice was the wish to assure an equitable partition according to the varying agricultural value of fields. All the property, real and mobile, was being inherited in equal parts by all heirs, as was provided by Peter I's ukase of March 23, 1714, although this went back to an ancient Slavic custom.

While Klaus recognized the similarity between the ideal of equal inheritance which prevailed among the Russian peasants and among the Mennonites, he, and most later authors, not only failed to see the origin of the latter in ancient western legal practices but attributed it solely to their religious concepts. In the Russian village, the number of farms and the number of representatives in the village assembly was multiplied not only with every census but with every

death that occurred in the ranks of the operators, and the size of the holdings decreased in a lamentable manner. The principle of the indivisibility of real property among the Mennonites had no counterpart in Russian peasant customs. This was not simply a result of the special Russian legislation for foreign colonists; its precedents were among the older agrarian systems of the West, whose influence Klaus erroneously denied.

Thus, we see that the layout of the farms and the farm villages, characteristic of the Mennonites in Russia and Manitoba, stands between the system of the Russian *mir* and that prevailing among the Prussian Mennonites. Communal property by villages and heritable usufruct by families was decreed for both by the Russian government. However, by declaring every farm in the foreign colonies with all its appurtenances as indivisible family possession, the dangerous reduction of the size of the farm unit which had become so characteristic of the Russian peasant economy was prevented.

The Mennonite customary law of inheritance and their institutions for administering inheritances for orphans and absent heirs were partly legalized by the *gramola* of 1800. In a petition, submitted by the Mennonites of the Molotschna colony to the Russian authorities, we find the following passage: "We are unable to depart in the least detail from our rules regarding inheritance...these regulations are closely connected with our religious beliefs and principles and are even based on them..."(Note Nineteen).

These rules, however, are materially identical with the principles of the Flemish law of inheritance which was in wide use throughout the Middle Ages and which the Mennonites simply assimilated from a social heritage shared by them with all the Hollanders of West Prussia.

This is a good example of a social phenomenon common to most cultures. Whatever the roots and origin of a particular culture trait, it tends to assume a magic quality, a religious sanction, when threatened from without. Although the law of inheritance was in no way connected with the Mennonite religion, being an ancient social heritage of the group, it was revered by them as a tradition almost as sacred and inalienable as non-resistance or any other of their strictly religious tenets (Note Twenty). Eventually, the institution and functions of the *Waisenamt* as described above were fully recognized by the Russian law for the Mennonite settlements and even imitated by other foreign colonies in that country.

Conclusion

In conclusion it may be said that the following factors seem to have contributed to the development of the Mennonite institutions discussed in this article. The culture pattern of the Mennonites in Russia which was transferred to Manitoba with only minor adjustments to the law of the new country contained certain elements of a social heritage derived from the Hollander settlements of West Prussia without any reference to peculiar religious beliefs.

For the first time in their history, the movement to Russia made possible the organization of homogeneous communities exclusively com-

prising Mennonite church members and their unbaptized children. This permitted the full realization of the religious principle of separation

“...the movement to Russia made possible the organization of homogeneous communities...”

from the “world.” Contacts with the out-group, tabooed by the church, were made still more difficult by the difference of language, and this segregation was fully recognized by the Russian code of law and administrative practice. Thus assimilation of Slavic culture traits was largely excluded.

Acculturation.

New culture traits were introduced in Russia mainly under the influence of government legislation. The general framework of the social and economic organization of the Mennonite colonies in Russia was laid down independently from them and prior to their immigration. Later on, however, it was partly adjusted to their own customs and to spontaneous developments within their settlements which were stimulated by novel environment. These modifications concern primarily the form and extent of local self-administration. The introduction of the open-field system was entirely due to Russian economic planning.

By and large, the provisions and intentions of the Russian government were in agreement with the social heritage and religious principles of the Mennonite immigrants. This probably explains the readiness with which they adjusted themselves to the legal framework set up by the authorities. Thus, Klaus was able to write: “The principle of communal property of land, which is not known to Mennonites abroad, appears however as *de jure* completely identical with the communal-religious doctrines and statutes of their church order. On the other hand, the principle, according to which one person should operate a farm, corresponds with the agricultural methods (i.e., social heritage) of the Mennonites. For, this principle gave the Mennonite community the full opportunity to develop logically that system of personal-communal economy the essential points of which had been already established by the law of March 19, 1764” (Note Twenty-One).

Where such provisions, however, contradicted some traditional institution, as was the case with the law of inheritance originally prescribed by the Russian legislation, the Mennonites successfully opposed any attempt to put them into force.

Religion.

The religious concepts of the group played largely a supporting and selective role in the formation of these institutions. None of them were completely new inventions of the Mennonite group as such. On the other hand the church was always a decisive factor in the preservation of once accepted cultural elements and their integration into a consistent culture pattern. There was a strong tendency to give the fullest religious sanction to institutions which originally had no religious connotation but had become part of their

social heritage.

When the law of the country failed to protect them any longer, the church--contrary to the traditional principle of strict division between church and civil authority--took over a large proportion of the latter's function.

Endnotes:

Note One: Dr. E.K. Francis is assistant professor of sociology at the University of Notre Dame. Previously he taught the same subject at the University of Manitoba and St. Paul's College, Winnipeg, Manitoba. While in Manitoba, he was engaged in a research project on the Mennonite group in that province, under the auspices of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. He has completed a book manuscript entitled “In Search of Utopia: A Social History of the Mennonites in Manitoba”. The article here printed is a redaction and expansion of a paper read before a meeting of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba on February 18, 1946, which was printed in that association's Papers.....1945-46 (Winnipeg, 1946), 56-71.

Note Two: See R. J. Smithson, *The Anabaptists* (London 1935); and the valuable analysis by Ernest Muller, *Geschichte der Bernischen Täufer* (Frauenfeld, 1895). See also Harold S. Bender, “The Anabaptist Vision,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 1867-88 (April 1944); and Donovan E. Smucker, “The Theological Triumph of the Early Anabaptists Mennonites,” *ibid.*, 19:5-26 (January 1945).

Note Three: George Caspar Homans, *English Villagers of the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941).

Note Four: R. Kotschke and W. Ebert, *Geschichte der ostedeutschen Kolonisation* (Leipzig, 1937).

Note Five: Barthel Huppertz, *Raume und Schichten bauerlicher Kulturformen in Deutschland* (Bonn, 1939), maintains that the solidaristic type of settlement was closely connected with crop rotation and compulsory fallow. It originated in Carolingian Gaul and spread over Germany and to Eastern Europe. The moor and marsh village, on the other hand, is said to have developed in Flanders and Holland. From there it was taken to the East by colonists in the 12th and 13th as well as in the 16th and 17th centuries. According to the same author, the forest village was a later variety of the marsh village, probably also introduced by Flemish immigrants to central Germany. However, this opinion has been contradicted by K. F. Helleiner, University of Toronto, who maintains that it was developed as early as the 9th century in western Germany and was also known in France at a very early date.

Note Six: For a good survey with ground plans of the various types of settlement, see T. Lynn Smith, *The Sociology of Rural Life* (New York, 1940), 203-218.

Note Seven: See Lee Emerson Deets, *The Hutterites; A Study in Social Cohesion* (Gettysburg, PA., 1939); and John Horsch, *The Hutterian Brethren, 1528-1931* (Goshen, Ind., 1931).

Note Eight: See Walter M. Kollmorgen, *Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community: The Old*

Order Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania (U.S. Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Rural Life Studies 4, Washington, 1942).

Note Nine: H. Bertram, W. La Baume, and O. Kloppel, *Das Weichsel-Nogat-Delta* (Danzig, 1929), reproduces the plan of a West Prussian medieval Angerdorf or nucleated village. The same habitat is found in certain towns of New England.

Note Ten: That the Mennonites of the old villages of West Prussia lived intermingled with non-Mennonites follows clearly from the account by H. Bertram on early settlement in Bertram, La Baume, and Kloppel, *Das Weichsel-Nogat-Delta*. Note Eleven: The Law of Chulm was laid down in the Kulmer Handfest (charter of the city of Chulm) of 1233 and in many subsequent patents for urban and rural settlements such as the Handfeste von Preussisch Holland (charter of Prussian Holland) of 1292.

Note Twelve: This statement is a translation of the very difficult German text which reads: “Von Flamischen Recht der niederländischen Kolonisten im nordlichen und ostlichen Deutschland wissen wir, dass ihm das gleiche Erbrecht der Sohne und Tochter und der ubrigen Blutsverwandten der damit begabten Grundbesitzer, ohne Unterschied des Geschlechts, immanent war. Zugleich verknupfte sich damit bei stattgehabter Verheiratung die eheliche Halbteilung..Nach flamischem Recht und dem adoptierten Prinzip der ehelichen Halbteilung gebuhrt (sc. Dem Ehegatten), wenn nicht schon bei Lebzeiten, so doch beim Tode des anderen Ehegatten, die Halfte des beiderseitigen Gattenvermögens (sog. Kolmische halfte)”--W. von Brunneck, *Zur Geschichte des Gerundeigentums in Ostund Westpreussen; Die Kolmischen Guter* (Berlin, 1891), 1:3, 80.

Note Thirteen: A Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien; Studien und materialien zur Geschichte und Statistik der ausländischen Kolonisation in Russland* (Odessa, 1887), a German translation of a Russian book, published in 1869.

Note Fourteen: This and a great number of other legal documents concerning the Mennonite colonies in Russia have been published in the German text or in German translations from Russian originals, in D.H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten* (Rosenthal near Chortitz, Russia, 1888), and Franz Isaak, *Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten* (Halbstadt, Taurien, 1908).

Note Fifteen: Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*, Ch. 3.

Note Sixteen: Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*, 163ff.

Note Seventeen: Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*, 66; Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*, Appendix, 114.

Note Eighteen: Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*; and P.M. Friesen, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland, 1789-1910* (Halbstadt, 1911).

Note Nineteen: Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*, 238.

Note Twenty: With exactly the same tenacity and religious arguments, Mennonites have repeatedly upheld others of their own peculiar folkways such as dress, church language and music, beards (or the shaving of them, as the case may be), etc.

Note Twenty-One: Klaus, *Unsere Kolonien*, 199ff.

E. K. Francis 1906-94, Reflections

“Reflections: Emmerich “E. K.” Francis 1906-94, Sociologist and Historian,”

by Ted Friesen, Box 720, Altona, Manitoba, R0G 0B0.

Introduction.

Three groups of Mennonites, emigrated from the Ukraine to Southern Manitoba, in the years 1874 to 1876 and subsequent. They were the Kleine Gemeinde (one branch of whom are now the Evangelical Mennonite Conference), the Fürstenländer (known as the Reinländer and later the Old Colony) and the Bergthaler (known as the Chortitzer and Sommerfelder).

These three groups were conservative in theology as well as lifestyle. They were concerned with their children having a basic education, but thought higher education was unnecessary to maintain a simple agrarian way of life. One of the causes to emigrate was to ensure a way of life based on their interpretation and understanding of scripture.

The books found in most homes were the Bible, the *Gesangbuch* and the Catechism. Written records were diaries, family history, farm accounts.

Historiography.

In Manitoba, around 1890, the Bergthaler split, on the question of higher education. The issue was the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, founded to train teachers for Mennonite schools.

Better educated men became teachers, and later entered other professions. They began to write about their own people. One of the earliest books was by I. I. Friesen, *The Mennonites of Western Canada*, with special reference to education. Unpublished M. A. Thesis, 1934.

In the years 1942 to 1946 the Mennonite Agricultural Advisory Committee, published: *Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten* in four slender volumes, by P. J. Schafer. This was a general history designed for study. They were intended for instruction for young people, particularly men of military age to help them understand history in preparation for achieving the status of a conscientious objector.

C. Henry Smith, Professor of History of Bluffton College in Ohio had written several books on Mennonites. *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites* published in 1927 described the emigration of Mennonites from Eastern Europe to the Midwestern U.S.A. and Manitoba. His other book *Story of the Mennonites* was a general history of the Mennonites in Europe and America.

There were also several smaller books on

Manitoba Mennonites written by English people who lived adjacent to the Mennonites.

E. K. Francis.

However the first scholarly study of Manitoba Mennonites was written by E. K. Francis. He was an Austrian Catholic, who found refuge in Manitoba.



E. K. Francis on his 85th birthday, 1991. Photo by Ted Friesen, Altona, Manitoba.

I was attracted to Francis, the first time we met. It was in Winnipeg at the home of Fr. Hillard, an oblate priest. He was a recent immigrant, and had found employment as a linotype operator. His recent flight from Europe had left its mark. He was nervous and high strung, but his congeniality gradually contributed to adapting to Canadian society. Friends helped in this, as well as his own good relationship to people. He soon graduated to teaching at the University of Manitoba. This was in the early 1940s.

It was at this time that the Manitoba Historical Society, under the presidency of Mrs. R.W. McWilliams decided to commission studies of a number of ethnic groups in Manitoba. Among them were the French, Ukrainians and Mennonites. Francis was asked to write about one group. He was eminently qualified to study any ethnic group. He

chose the Mennonites. Why? I believe he was attracted to this group for a number of reasons. As a sociologist interested particularly in ethnic groups, he saw the Mennonites as unique, evolving from a religious to an ethnic group. He was intrigued by their history. Relationship to the group was facilitated by language. German was his mother tongue. His congenial personality gained an easy entry into most Mennonite homes.

Field Work.

I was one of the persons who accompanied Francis on his field trips in Southern Manitoba. This was primarily in the West Reserve. It was amazing to me how well he, as a practising Catholic and an Austrian, related to Mennonites of every age and denomination. He always knew what to ask, and where to look for it. Perhaps his own experiences as a refugee and displaced person made him more sympathetic, even to a degree identifying with the Mennonite people, who had a long history of persecution and wandering. Certainly he could have written about the French-Canadians, the Ukrainians, or any other group in Manitoba. His choice to write about the Mennonites was fortuitous, and resulted in that classic study “In Search of Utopia”.

For me sociology was a new field and opened up a new understanding from the perspective of that discipline. My task was to find people who could respond to his particular questions, to introduce them, to interpret from Low to High German and English. To get an idea of the variety of people contacted and interviewed one need only to see the listing in the preface to his book.

An example of such an interview. He wanted to find a house that still had the oven construction in the wall separating the kitchen and the living room. This combined two functions, heating and cooking. It was a common feature in Russia. We heard there was a house in the village of Reinland, W.R., that had this.

We were warmly greeted by the owner of the house, a Mr. Peters.

Francis immediately used this particular subject to ask questions relating to every aspect of Mennonite life. It ignited in the interview, Mr. Peters' recollections of the past: the early pioneer years, the gradual adaptation to Canadian environment and society. Francis was able through questions to focus on what he was after. These interviews were repeated countless times. Gradually they contributed to both the story and his sociological theories. Catholic and Mennonite values converged to form the picture of a people that forms the subject of the book.

Manitoba Historical Society.

After two years of study Francis was able to present his final research report to his sponsor the Manitoba Historical Society. Here he encountered his first difficulty.

In his study of Mennonites he observed, despite their many differences, the homogeneity of the group as a whole, and their compulsion to retain their distinctive way of life. Originally they were completely separate in their closed communities. Once they moved into towns, and entered public schools, they encountered other ethnic groups and the larger society. The governing class was British, and the Manitoba Historical Society, headed by Mrs. McWilliams was thoroughly Anglo-conformist and expected ethnic groups eventually to assimilate. Francis in his book observed that Mennonites, while accommodating somewhat, certainly were not going to assimilate, as the British hoped.

The long and the short of it was that the Historical Society decided not to publish Francis' study. This made him furious. He had spent several years of intense and diligent research. For him as a newcomer to North America, publication was imperative to his advance in his career as a sociologist.

A long period of negotiations began, where he probed different ways to get it published. First of all he had to get the manuscript released, which the Society refused to do. He negotiations with a view to publishing were with the University of Toronto Press, and with Dr. Harold S. Bender, Dean of Goshen College.

In the meantime the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana, hired Francis to help build a Ph. D. program in Sociology. He now began publishing articles in prestigious sociological journals. A list of these is included in the bibliography available from the author. These publications helped to establish his reputation as a sociologist.

At the end of 11 years at Notre Dame, he had published a dozen scholarly articles. Some of these dealt with various aspects of Mennonite history and life, such as the "Manitoba school question", "From religious to ethnic group", and "Mennonite Institutions". They were products of his research while completing his manuscript.

However there was still no sign that the

Society would release his work. It was six years since he had finished his work. Once in a while the Society promised to relinquish it, but always delaying tactics on their part postponed it.

A word on selection of title. In his paper "Tradition and Progress among the Mennonites in Manitoba", he went back to his peasant, utopia and progress themes published in the 40s, illustrating this search for perfection (Leo Driedger). Francis wrote "if not utopia, [they] have found the next best to it; social and psychological security in a well organized community" (Francis, 1950:328). Hence the title "In Search of Utopia".

Publication.

Francis had established a good relationship with H. S. Bender. Since it seemed no publisher was willing to take it on, Francis suggested to Bender that he was prepared to have D. W. Friesen & Sons publish it in Canada, and the Mennonite Historical Society in Goshen jointly publish in the U. S. A. Friesens agreed to publish. However it was the first book of stature that they took on, and resulted in a trial and error process that was frustrating to both author and publisher during the course of getting it published. Eventually the Free Press, a major publisher of social science books became the U. S. distributor.

Friesens printed 2000 copies of the book, of which 500 went to the Free Press; the U. S. distributor. This was not a large print for a book of this kind--5000 would be an average. However the printers did not feel inclined to risk more. The book found an immediate response, and sales went well. The entire edition was sold out in 1972. It has not been reprinted, although there



E. K. Francis with grandson Alex, and son George. Photo by Ted Friesen, Altona, Manitoba.

has been thought given to it. For a fuller account of the writing and publishing process, see Dr. Leo Driedger, "E. K. Francis' search for Utopia; A Tribute," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Volume 13, 1995, (pages 89-107), a comprehensive and sympathetic telling of their story.

The Book.

Something about the contents of the book.



E. K. Francis with Ted and Linie Friesen, Altona, Manitoba.

On a broad historical canvas the author depicts life among some of the very first pioneer farmers to settle the plains of the prairie provinces. He describes the institutions; the

solidaristic village communities; the communal fire insurance; the Waisenamt; the architecture of their buildings; the ethical code. In their desire to attract this most desirable class of settlers, the Dominion authorities in Ottawa had practically guaranteed the perpetuation of their forms of social life, which eventually were bound to clash with the larger society.

Francis depicts this dramatic conflict, which led not to the assimilation of the group but to slow imperceptible change as such and an adjustment with both the group, and the larger society. He describes the transition from a self sufficient peasant economy to commercialized farming, until the Depression in the thirties reversed the trend with the introduction of the co-operatives.

The greatest tensions however arose over Manitoba's school policies at the time of the First World War, and over military service during the Second. These were perceived as a direct threat to basic Mennonite beliefs and way of life. Both times, large groups left Canada: both times the losses were more than made up through the influx of refugees from Soviet Russia.

Another interesting aspect is the conflicts within the group itself; the further fracturing of the church; the tension between tradition and change. "He shows the factors influencing the behaviour of minority groups, how Mennonites did not and would not assimilate, because mechanisms of adjustment worked well. Acculturation, not assimilation could be clearly demonstrated" (Leo Driedger). It was this theoretical insight which the Anglo-Canadian, typified by the Manitoba Historical Society, could not accept.

Responses.

What were the responses to the book, both from within and outside the Mennonite Community? Here are a few:

"The most thorough and complete sociological analysis of any Mennonite community ever made... epoch making in its field," Dr. H. S. Bender, Dean of Goshen College, Editor: *Mennonite Quarterly Review*.

"Combining the skills of the historian and sociologist, the author presents an objective and readable account of a religious community in a manner that is creditable to the author and to the Manitoba Historical Society," Chris Vickers, *Winnipeg Free Press*

"This study is a major contribution to knowledge in this field," John A. Hostetler, Sociologist.

"This book, exact in its portrayal, written in readable and lively language, belongs to the best that has been written about the Germans in America," Walter Kuhn, Hamburg, Germany.

"He comes nearer to catching and understanding the deep religious motivations of the Canadian Mennonites, than any other outside writer has done," Melvin Gingerich, Editor: *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

Career.

Francis was at Notre Dame University for 11 years from 1947 to 1958. Then he was called by the University of Munich in Germany to found its first Sociological Institute. In 1965 he published *Ethnos and Demos*. This contains a summary of some of his best known English, and previously unpublished works. The first part centers on issues of ethnicity. The second part includes an 80 page summary of "In Search of Utopia." Mennonites still occupy a prominent place in his studies, evidence of how his Mennonite research shaped his thinking (Leo Driedger).

"In 1976, when he was 70, he published his magnum opus *Interethnic Relations: An Essay in Sociological Theory* by Elsevier in New York. In this he brings together his anthropological, historical, political and sociological researches on ethnic groups. Thirty years after his original Manitoba Mennonite study, he still includes Mennonites in his chapter 15 on "Group Formation as a Result of Migration" devoting 13 pages to this case study. He deals with their origins, ethnic formation, migration to Canada, the challenges to tradition, modernization and change, and the readjustments and problems which ensued.

It is striking how his two year intensive scholarly research of Mennonites in 1945 to 1947 made such a pervasive influence on his thinking right to the end. The Mennonite search for Utopia was essentially also his quest, and as a Catholic, he seemed to identify with all minorities, who together sought to shape their identity in the midst of modernization and minority change," (Leo Driedger).

He headed the Sociological Institute, University of Munich, a position held for 16 years, retiring in 1974. He built up this faculty to such an astonishing extent that today it has five full professors, 19 co-workers, 1050 full-time and 1300 part-time students. The department confers two degrees, that of Ph.D. and Dr. rer-pol.

Retirement.

His interests in his life work continued in his retirement to the very end of his life. He took part in seminars, and astonished his colleagues with his ability to digest and discuss new issues.

For his 80th birthday in 1986, his former colleagues and students honoured him with a "Festschrift", a 539 page book of essays on various aspects of sociology. Dr. Leo Driedger, professor of Sociology at the University of Manitoba contributed the lead article "The Pluralist Ethnic Option: Francis' Contribution to Multiculturalism". Twenty-three scholars mostly from Germany as well as several well known American Sociologists contributed articles. A veritable tribute indeed, recognizing Francis' stature in sociology.

Legacy.

What is Francis' legacy in the field of cultural anthropology? Leo Driedger did a survey of some 40 books dealing with social aspects of Mennonites, and found that citations of his, appeared in 25 Mennonite works, (*J. M. S.*, page 101). The bibliography of his writings illustrates the extent and depth of his research. Today, 45 years after the publication of his book, it is still used as a basic reference to Manitoba Mennonite history from the period 1874 to 1945.

In Search of Utopia gave both Mennonites, and the larger Society around them an entirely new perspective of themselves. It was a picture created by an outsider, who was sympathetic, and yet to a remarkable degree objective. In spite of their troubled history, and tendency to divide, basic values and beliefs remained and were reinforced by similar experiences. They might divide into separate church groups, yet when adversity and persecution confronted them, they reacted unitedly on the basis of their common beliefs.

To me Francis made a deep impression. His insights as a sociologist gave me a new understanding of my people. I learned to appreciate their history, their values, and their deep desire to retain their identity. I learned to realize the response to the threat of assimilation, and what it meant to a way of life. To some the answer was emigration, to others accommodation.

Friendship.

He also had a deep influence as a friend. His perceptive comprehension of Mennonites as a minority group seeking survival in a large society, generated tolerance in me towards other ethnic groups. His congenial outlook on life, his cultural interests had a deep effect on me.

I am grateful for a relationship, which had a profound impact on my life.

From the time we met, beginning in the early 40s, to our last meeting in 1992, my wife Linie and I developed a close and meaningful friendship that was to grow during the years.

Our first visit was in 1970, in Munich, when he was still teaching. We drove to Innsbruck where his mother lived, and he had an apartment. He loved to hike in the Alps.

In 1991 he invited us to his 85th birthday. Present were his son George, and grandson Alex. George is Professor of Mathematics, at the University of Illinois, and Alex was studying linguistics at the University of Munich. Present were friends: a publisher and former university colleagues and students.

Our last visit was in 1992. We went to see the opera "Die Lustige Witwe". On our last day we met at the Lenbach Art Gallery, a favorite of his and ours. He was then a diabetic, and his doctor recommended much walking. We decided to walk over to the Ratskeller, a distance of about three miles. We had a delightful dinner, and an evening reminiscing about the past. That was the last time we saw him.

Two years later he died.

The Mennonites: Picturesque Canada, 1882

“The North-west: The Mennonites,” by J. B. McLaren, in George Grant, editor, *Picturesque Canada* (Toronto, 1882), Two Volumes, pages 318-324. Courtesy of Jake Doerksen, Box 154, Ile des Chenes, Manitoba, R0A 0T0.

Editor's Introduction

Around 1880 Professor George Grant, Queens University, Kingston, Ontario, sent his students across Canada to write the stories and gather illustrations of its people. These articles were then gathered and published in Grant, editor, *Picturesque Canada: The Country as it was and is* (Toronto, Belden Bros., 1882), Two Volumes, pages 319-234. The reader and *Preservings* is indebted to HSHS board member Jake K. Doerksen, Ile des Chenes, Manitoba, who provided a copy of this historic document.

J. B. McLaren, a Master's student, was chosen to document the story of the Mennonites, newly arrived in Manitoba. Included in his article, published at pages 318-324, were six woodcuts by artist W. T. Smedley depicting scenes from the West Reserve, all of which are again reproduced with this article.

The wood cuts created by W. T. Smedley and E. R. Teichenor circa 1880 and reproduced originally by George Grant, editor, *Picturesque Canada* (Toronto, 1882), pages 318-324, have been published and republished numerous times in various Mennonite and community history books. But they have never been republished together with the article for which they were originally created written by J. B. McLaren, a Master's student from Queens University, Kingston, Ontario.

In actual fact, these illustrations are among the very first depictions of the Old Colony settlement, and, indeed, of the Mennonite experience in Manitoba. As such they are of some importance.

At the time of McLaren's visit the Old Coloniers still pretty much had the West Reserve to themselves. In 1878 the Bergthalers from the East Reserve had started moving across and settling in the lower poorly drained lands in the eastern part of the Reserve which had earlier been rejected by the Old Coloniers.

McLaren's report underlines the importance of Reinland as the centre and "capital" of the West Reserve. He also reminds us of the fact that the downs between the Red River and the Pembina Hills had been rejected by several generations of earlier settlers as uninhabitable. Within a few years Anglo-Canadians were outraged that the resourceful Old Coloniers had seized the best farming ground in Manitoba "from under their noses".

Beyond this, McLaren's paper probably adds little of significance to the historical record regarding the Mennonite settlement in Manitoba. Like all works of history it records the mindset of its composer and the people he represented becoming a time-piece of attitudes of the 1870s. The stereotypical characterizations employed are jarring reminders that modern racism had even stronger antecedents in earlier times.

As we find even today, the characterization

The North-West: The Mennonites.

Our journey to the Red River of the North by the old voyageur route from Ottawa by the Nipissing, the Sault Ste. Marie and Fort William showed us how to reach the North-west, across Canadian lands and waters; and our expedition from Winnipeg by York Factory to England showed us how to leave it, without putting foot on foreign soil. The first of these two routes is historically Canadian; the sec-

of other cultures as dirty and ignorant is an important preliminary stage typically used by predator cultures in their endeavours of aggression (It is a strategy not unknown to the modern-day Evangelical mission movement, for example). The portrayal of Mennonites eating from a communal dish appears to be a flight of journalistic fancy and the reports of fowl freely running about on dirt floors are equally exaggerated.

The portrayal of all Mennonite men as smokers is at odds with the report of Cornelius Giesbrecht (*Mennonitische Rundschau*, July 25, 1888), "that Aeltester Johann Wiebe had asked him 'whether smoking was not a sin to him?' I said, 'No.' Then the Aeltester related how smoking had become a sin to him." However, the Kleine Gemeinde was the only Russian Mennonite denomination which had actually prohibited smoking as part of its church "Ordnung", a practice dating back to it's early days in Russia.

All things considered, J. B. McLaren does provide an interesting bird's eye view of the Reinländer (Old Colony) settlement in the West Reserve and how they were seen by their new Anglo-Canadian neighbours. By the beginning of World War I, jealousy over the elevated wealth of the Old Coloniers had turned the mildly condescending views of McLaren and others such as J. F. Galbraith (*The Mennonites in Manitoba 1875-1900*) (Morden, 1900), 48 pages), into a raging racism, mass hysteria and potentially violent persecution, eventually resulting in the exile of the Old Colony community from Canada in the 1920s.

For a survey of other "outside" perspectives on the West Reserve between 1875 and 1885, see "Appendix H," John Warkentin, *Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba* (Steinbach, 1999), pages 349-352. The Editor.

List of Illustrations:

"A Mennonite Village," artist W.T. Smedley, and C. Schwarzburger, engraver, page 319; "A Mennonite Girl herding cattle," artist W.T. Smedley and J.W. Evans engraver, page 320; "Interior and exterior of Mennonite Church," artist W.T. Smedley and R.A. Muller engraver, page 322; "Interior and exterior of Mennonite dwelling," artist W.T. Smedley and E.R. Tichenor, engraver, page 323

ond, historically English. The first route is now all-rail; the second can never be good for more than four or five months of the year.

From Winnipeg as a starting-point, the artist should take several excursions, before taking the long road west to the Rocky Mountains. In August or September, when mosquitoes cease from troubling, one can most pleasantly get acquainted with the picturesque features of the country, and the characteristics of its conglomerate of nationalities.

He can drive down the river to the Stone Fort and Selkirk, and thence to the thriving Indian settlement of St. Peter's, through some of the most beautiful scenery in the North-west. Without going much farther from his base, he can visit the Icelandic and the Mennonite settlement, two ancient communities which, starting from the opposite ends of Europe, have sought and found homes for themselves in the heart of Canada.

The prairie is seen at its best and enjoyed most, on the back of a horse or from a buckboard. It is more diversified and broken than appears from a general view. The first impression of monotony soon wears away. And if the tourist has a gun, and knows how to use it, he may have sport to his heart's content. Mallard, teal, spoonbill and other species of duck, three or four kinds of geese, a dozen varieties of waders--snipe and curlew predominating--are found in and about every creek, pond and lake. Prairie chickens are omnipresent in the open; and the wooded districts have the partridge and rabbit. Sand-hill cranes, as large as turkeys, and almost as good eating, are plentiful. But the sportsman must now go farther afield for elk, deer, bear and buffalo.

The prairie stream has special characteristics. Muddy at high water, it is always clear in summer, though unlike the brawling mountain torrent or the brook that ripples over a pebbly bed: in spots haunted by wild fowl: and where the wood has been allowed to grow, and shade and water from bank to bank, it has beauties all its own.

The loam of the prairie cuts out easily when called on by running water. A few plough-furrows may before a year become a stream fifteen or twenty yards wide. This, joined by other "runs," and fed from the lower-lying lands, becomes in the rainy season a wide and deep creek. Should succeeding years be dry, vegetation may grow on the banks and form a sod so tough that the process of erosion is stopped. Otherwise, it may go on to an extraordinary degree. Hence the rivers are generally very wide from bank to bank, and every year the smaller streams encroach on the prairie.

Old settlers say that 70 years ago, the Red River could be bridged at any point by felling

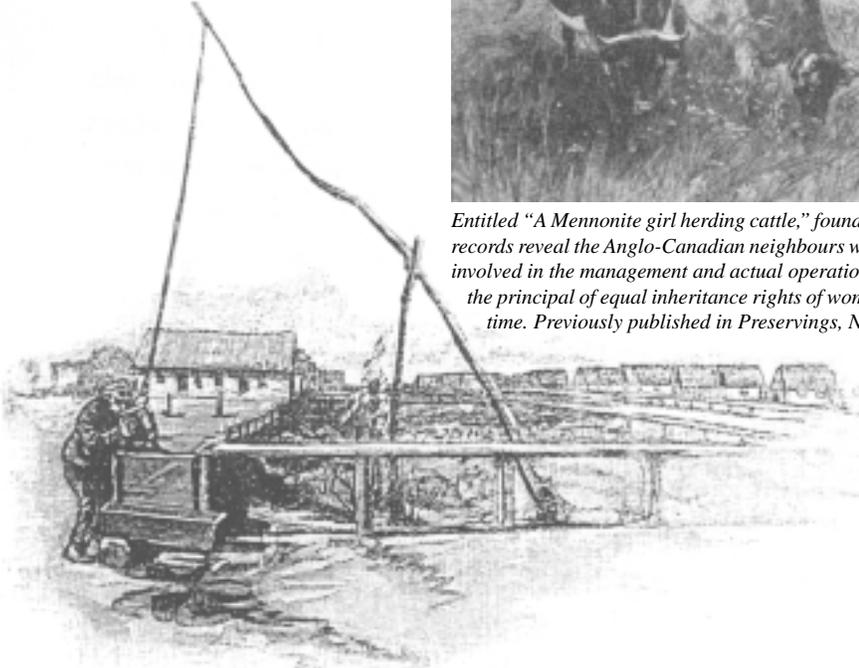


Entitled simply "A Mennonite Village", this woodcut is found on the title page of McLaren's article, page 318. Although not identified as such, the scene is that of the central village of Reinland, West Reserve, Manitoba, founded by Old Colony (OK) settlers in 1875. In the accompanying article J. B. McLaren refers to Reinland as the "Windmill village, as it is the 'capital' of the Colony and has the largest church," (page 324). The post, front centre, is part of the famous "Post Road" which traversed the West Reserve. Previously published as the cover photo of *Preservings*, No. 16.

a tree on its banks. Now the tallest Douglas pine from the Pacific Slope would fall short. All along the banks of creeks near Winnipeg, buildings may be seen undermined by erosion, and fences suspended in mid-air. Sometimes, a stream that flows through forest within well-defined banks spreads when it reaches the open and becomes a dismal swamp. Every stream makes its way through the prairie in the most tortuous way imaginable. Peninsu-



Entitled "A Mennonite girl herding cattle," found on page 320, is another view of the village of Reinland. Early records reveal the Anglo-Canadian neighbours were astounded by the degree to which Mennonite women were involved in the management and actual operations of their farms. The concept of the household economy and the principal of equal inheritance rights of women were apparently unknown among Anglo-Canadians at the time. Previously published in *Preservings*, No. 16, page 5.



The village well with well sweep. A typical street scene of an Old Colony (Reinländer) village in the West Reserve, Manitoba, possibly Blumenort? The woodcut was also found on the title page of McLaren's article, page 318. Previously published in *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000*, page 16.

las of various sizes and shapes are formed, and occasionally a complete circle is described.

The Mennonite Reserve.

Belts and "bluffs" of wood break the monotony of the prairie almost everywhere in Manitoba except on the Mennonite Reserve. This great treeless expanse was shunned by the first immigrants into the province, but the Mennonites have proved to them their mistake.

Starting from Emerson, the "Gateway City," the traveller does not proceed far on his way to the setting sun before a broad level prairie, extending 24 miles to the north and 30 to the west, opens out before him.

This is the Reserve, a beautiful stretch of farming land, unbroken by a single acre that is not first-class. Odd-looking, old-fashioned villages now dot the plain in every direction. One street of steep-roofed, low-walled houses, with an old-country air of pervading quiet and an uniform old-country look about the architecture, describes them all. There are about 80 of these villages in the Reserve.

The farms are innocent alike of fences and of buildings. Each village has its herdsman,

who goes out daily with the cattle. The husbandmen live in the villages, submitting to the inconvenience of distance from their work, in order to better preserve their language, religion and customs, and enjoy the pleasures of social intercourse.

To a stranger these pleasures would appear not to be very great. "They never have no tea-meetin's nor dances," said an old settler, of a rather different nationality, "and when they drink, every man walks up to the bar and pays for his own liquor. They ain't no good to the country."

The Church.

Thrifty and industrious farmers, they have already brought a large acreage under cultivation; peaceable and law-abiding citizens, they cost the country nothing for administration of justice. Any disputes that arise are settled amongst themselves, either by the intervention of friends, or, failing that, by the adjudication of the church. This adjudication takes place on Sunday, after public worship. The women and children go home, the parties and their witnesses are then heard, the bishop presiding, and the congregation says what is the "very right and justice of the case."

The bishop has jurisdiction over the whole community, is elected for life, and "preaches round." Every village has a preacher of its own, who is elected for life by the villagers, chosen on account of his pious life and gift of exhorting. He receives no salary. The sermons, as might be expected, are generally practical, and

as the whole duty of man is quickly exhausted by the preacher, there is frequent exchanging of pulpits with neighbourly pastors.

All the people attend church. The men sit on one side and the women on the other. Visiting preachers are placed in an elevated pew to the left of the pulpit; and the choir, consisting of three or four elderly men, sit in a similar pew to the right.

The bishop is elected from among the preachers; but though held in high honour, he, too, must support himself. No emoluments are connected with the office.

Each village has also a schoolmaster. This functionary is appointed without regard to any particular gift or aptitude. It is enough if he will undertake the duty for a trifling remuneration. Reading, writing and arithmetic are the only



Labelled the "Interior and Exterior of Mennonite Church", this woodcut is the earliest depictions of a Mennonite worship service in Western Canada. The presiding minister may well be Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905) himself. The inset sketch showing the church located on the village street, together with the two drawings by Smedley showing the windmill in Reinland, and the 1883 drawing by Richard N. Lee (Preservings, No. 15, page 127) should enable local history buffs to recreate a fairly detailed village layout of Reinland. Previously published in Preservings, No. 14, page 4.

subjects he is allowed to teach. Like their forefathers, the Mennonites regard learning as a dangerous thing, and not lightly will they sow its seeds among the young. their religion has shaped their history.

The Emigration.

They adhere tenaciously to the same doc-

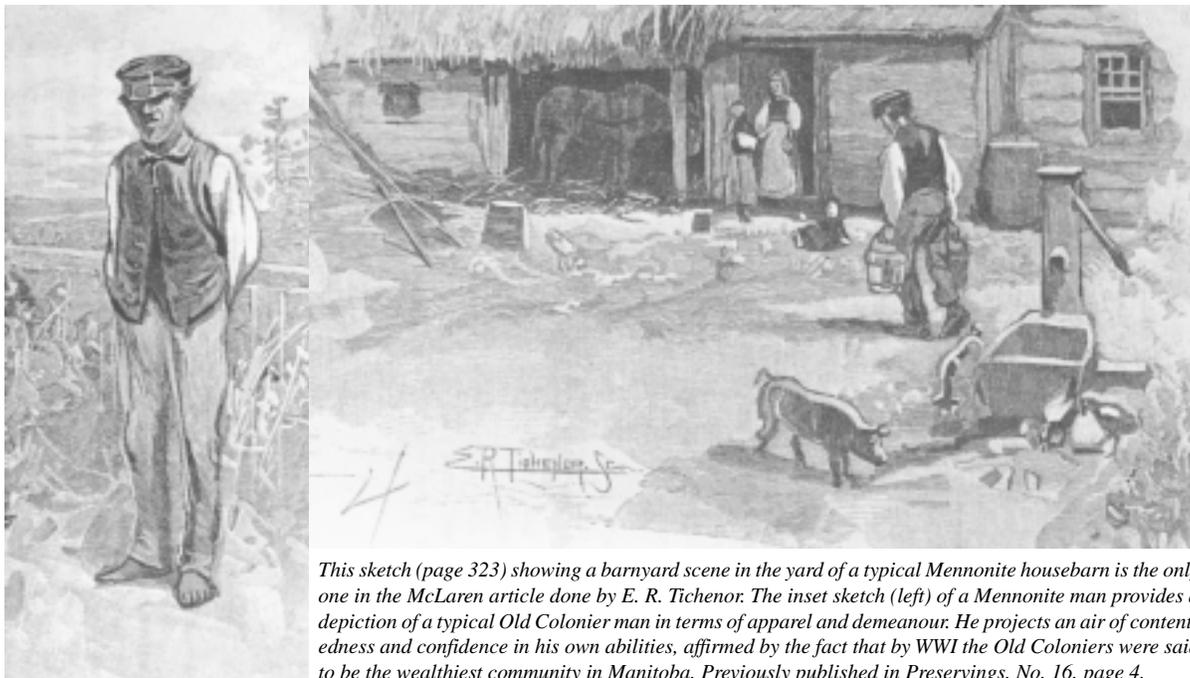
trines and forms of worship and government that their German forefathers gathered in the 16th century from the Scriptures and good pious Menno Simons. They reject infant baptism and refuse to take an oath or bear arms.

Compelled to leave Germany on account of their refusal to do military service, they found an asylum in Russia. No better illustration of the helplessness and immobility of the political system of the great European Colossus need be desired than the fact that the Mennonite belonged to it for three centuries without being assimilated.

Under the administration of the late Czar, the national faith that had been so long pledged to them was broken and their immunity from military service withdrawn. Obeying conscience, they parted with houses and lands for what they could get, and sought new homes once more.

Their rule against fighting soon brought them into contempt with the early settlers in Manitoba, who not appreciating so tame a principle, would ever and anon test its reality by dealing out kicks and thumps to the long-suffering Mennonites.

Under great provocation, some of them have been known to display the spirit of the Quaker, who, when struck on one cheek



This sketch (page 323) showing a barnyard scene in the yard of a typical Mennonite housebarn is the only one in the McLaren article done by E. R. Tichenor. The inset sketch (left) of a Mennonite man provides a depiction of a typical Old Colonier man in terms of apparel and demeanour. He projects an air of contentedness and confidence in his own abilities, affirmed by the fact that by WWI the Old Coloniers were said to be the wealthiest community in Manitoba. Previously published in Preservings, No. 16, page 4.



Domestic scene in the interior of a Mennonite housebarn is found on page 323 of the McLaren article together with the barnyard scene. The sketches together are simply labelled "Interior and Exterior of Mennonite dwelling". Another excellent depiction of early dress, household furnishings and building construction. The drawing depicts the family togetherness so integral to the Old Colonier philosophy, sharing family time together. Previously published in Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000, page 55.

turned the other, and that having been smitten, remarked that "now he had fulfilled the Scriptures," and forthwith proceeded to pay back the aggressor in kind, and with usury.

Habits.

As a rule the Mennonites are honest, upright and moral, and were it not for the filthiness of their domestic habits they would be more respected by the "white men" of the country than they are.

Most of their dwellings consist of a timber frame, built in with large sun-dried bricks of earth and straw, and covered with a straw-thatched roof. The ground is their floor. Fowls and other domestic animals have the freedom of the house. At meals all the members of the family eat out of one large dish placed in the centre of the table--a custom borrowed perhaps from Scripture, or it may be a trace of communism.

The men generally are slow workers and move about with great deliberation. A large share of the out-door work falls to the lot of the women, who may be seen harrowing or even ploughing in the fields.

Observations.

The Mennonites came to Manitoba in 1876, and they have prospered exceedingly. They at once accommodated themselves to the climate and all the material conditions that they found in the new world. Their religious faith, social cohesion and simple piety make them excellent pioneers. A better substratum for character could not be desired, and though at present sternly intolerant of all change, new

ideas will gradually dawn upon their horizon and they will become good Canadians.

They have long been accustomed to self-government, and that is always the right training for free men. Each village elects two masters; a herd Schultz who is pathmaster and overseer of the herders; and a brontschultz, who looks after property and insurance. Every

villager's property is appraised, and in case of fire, the sufferer gets two-thirds of his loss made up to him by a ratable assessment. A Kaiser or general business manager of the community is elected annually. He and the village masters constitute a kind of municipal council. They meet every Saturday afternoon in Reinland or Windmill village, as it is the "Capital" of the colony and has the largest church.

Already, a progressive class is arising among the Mennonites--American and Canadian solvents are evidently more potent than Russian. Some of the younger men wish that English should be taught in the schools, and hold other heterodox views equally abominable to the seniors. Some of the young women have seen Emerson, and sigh for the dainty bonnets and shapely dresses their "white" sisters wear.

But the merchants of Emerson and West Lynn have few good words to say for the Mennonites. And travellers who have been in their villages report them churlish and unfriendly, as well as dirty in their houses and habits.

But let them have reason to think their visitors friendly, and their real nature comes out. Oats are brought for his horse, a cup of the best coffee to be had in the province, for himself. The coffee is ground as it is needed, in a little mill, with which, and with a brass or copper kettle, every house is supplied. Pipes are also brought out, for all--boys and men--smoke. A lad in his teens may be seen filially supplying his aged father with a light.

It is at all wonderful that we bid them a friendly farewell, quite convinced that there are worse people in the world than the Mennonites?



This drawing entitled "Early Mennonite Villages, West Reserve," was published in Mennonite Life, April 1949, page 25. The artist was W.S. Macey. It is not from Picturesque Canada (1882), but it does seem to fit the style of the other engravings. The proximity of the large ravine (left) should make it possible to establish the identity of the village.

Steinbach, 1924

“Steinbach, The First Mennonite Settlement in Western Canada,” 1924, author and publication source unknown.

East Reserve, 1874.

“In 1874 the Government set aside eight townships, since called the East Reserve, for Mennonite settlement, and three parties of settlers, numbering about 500 people, arrived to colonize it. This settlement centres round the village of Steinbach, 35 miles southeast of Winnipeg. The colonists came from the valley of the Dneiper in southern Russia, bringing their personal belongings and tools with them. Moorhead, in Minnesota was then the rail head. From there they voyaged down the Red River by boat to Niverville, where they had to hire halfbreeds with Red River Carts to take them to their destination.

“Twenty-one families settled at the village of Steinbach, the remainder being scattered over the Reserve. Fifteen of these families were able to buy an ox team each, but many of the colonists were able only to have a team and cart between three or four families.

“Summer was passing before they got on the ground. It was the 16th of September before the third party arrived. They put up tents and ploughed fire guards which they were told to do by their English neighbour, John Peterson. Then they made hay in October, but the grass was frozen, and they lost some cattle through the winter on this account.

“Their next work was to dig holes in the ground, which they covered with poles and sod, for winter shelter. It was too late to put up houses. There was lots of snow and cold through the winter and when spring came it was found many of these dug-outs were too deep and the water flooded them out.

“The Government gave them credit for flour, dried apples and beans, and they bought potatoes for \$1.50 per bushel, but could not get nearly enough. For meat they trapped prairie chicken and rabbits, but, of course, they had no work during the winter.

Grasshoppers, 1875.

“In the spring of 1875 they broke land, planted gardens, and cleaned and ploughed for grain to be sowed the following year. The land on which they had settled was a rich black loam soil, a very flat prairie country interspersed with much poplar bush. That winter found them with plenty of hay and enough food for the settlement.

“In 1875 another party of about 100 people arrived from Russia. These had some money and the original settlers worked for them and so got a little ahead. This year a crop of wheat, barley, oats and potatoes was sown but it was the year of the grasshopper plague, and all crops were utterly destroyed.

“The grasshoppers were noticed early in the spring, many were frozen in the ice that was made overnight, but when the sun warmed them they were not long in commencing their ravages. Many of the colonists tried to protect their

gardens by digging trenches around them and keeping fire in them, but when the hoppers began to fly this proved useless. They left the country about the 1st of July flying straight west and for two days their flight was so dense it often obscured the sun. They appeared to always move in a westerly direction from the time they could first hop. They also greatly damaged the hay and ate the leaves off many of the poplars. After this the settlers replanted potatoes, but they only grew to the size of hens eggs.

“Owing to this plague the Colony had to get assistance from the Government again to tide them over the winter. Flour was sent out from Ontario by way of the States, but the boat was frozen in at Emerson which necessitated sending ox teams all the way from the settlement to bring it in. This was the last time outside assistance had to be asked for.

Flooding, 1877-80.

“Many log houses took the place of dug-outs during this year. Also a whipsaw was brought into the settlement and some lumber was manufactured.

“1877-78-79 and 80 were all very wet years. The coulees were full of water and it seemed

the whole country was swamp. There were no roads, railways or drainage canals to take the surplus water off the flat country in those days. Many people moved away to the Pembina Mountains to get higher dryer land. Still some crop was raised, and where not drowned out, it yielded extraordinary returns, the straw being five feet high with very long heavy heads of grain.

“The settlers--farmers for generations--were greatly encouraged by seeing such marvellous stands of grain. Hay too, was a very heavy crop. A man could cut three loads a day with a scythe, but it was difficult to cure and haul. All grain was cut with a cradle, and a man when reaping would sink in the soft ground as deep as it was ploughed.

Milling, 1877.

“In '77 the settlement got their first threshing outfit, the power being furnished by four teams of oxen hitched to a cross and walking in a circle.

“There was then a flour mill at the old French settlement in St. Anne and the wheat was taken there to be milled. Sometimes there would be 40 or 50 teams waiting at St. Anne

Editor's Note:

“Steinbach, the first Mennonite settlement in Western Canada,” was written in 1924. Possibly it was written for the 50th anniversary of the Mennonite arrival in Manitoba being celebrated that year.

At some point a copy of the article came into the hands of Steinbach's folk historian, Klaas J. B. Reimer, who passed it on to *Familienfreund* (the church paper of the Kleine Gemeinde) editor, Abraham R. Reimer, Blumenort, Manitoba, on March 20, 1954. Abraham's son Garnet Reimer, Box 138, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, recently passed it on to *Preservings*.

The article is written from the standpoint of Steinbach as being representative of the East Reserve, a bit triumphalistic by today's standards. The three emigration parties referred to seem to be those of the Kleine Gemeinde which included families settling in Steinbach. The recounting of the story contains some errors. The article gives the impression, for example, that Steinbach was the first village settled in 1874, when in actual fact it was the last of some 33 villages established that summer. Another example, Menno Simons gathered a small community in Friesland not Zurich and the time was 1536 not 1523.

The article does not appear to be the writing of Klaas J. B. Reimer. He was born in 1897 and only 26 years-old when it was written. He was widely known for his historical knowledge but his known work was produced between the late 1940s to the 1960s. Possibly it was an article published by some academic journal or newspaper, with Klaas J. B. Reimer as one of the informants.

The article is largely a restatement of information readily available in other sources but adds a particular viewpoint. It is interesting, for example, to see the growing effort to assist the Russländer immigrants coming out of Russia starting in 1923, from a contemporary “Kanadier” Mennonite and southern Manitoba perspective. “Outside” perspectives such as these sometimes add valuable insight to understanding a community, and this article joins “The East Reserve” by J. Harb, published in *Der Nordwesten* in 1895 and Alexander McIntyre's elementary school textbook, *The Canadian West: A Geography of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories*, published in Toronto in 1904, in providing such views (See Ralph Friesen, “Early Perspectives on Steinbach,” in *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, pages 7-10).

Although the article contains some factual errors, it is well written, seemingly by a professional historian or journalist, which adds to its inherent value. Hopefully someone among our readers can identify its author and the source as this would further authenticate its contents and perspective.

Section headings have been added and paragraphs created for this printing but otherwise the article remains in its original form. The Editor.

for days to get their few bags of wheat ground.

"At this time the colonists bought second-hand wheat bags and Indian-tanned buffalo hides in Winnipeg to make into clothes. When winter came Mr. William Hespeler gave work to all who wanted it hauling tamarack logs and fence posts from the bush to Steinbach. These were all peeled in the spring of '78 and afterwards hauled to the railway then building from Emerson to Winnipeg.

"In '77 Mr. A. Friesen built a windmill in Steinbach for grinding flour. The shafting for this mill was two pieces of oak, one 32 feet long and 12 inches square, the other 18 feet long by 12 inches square. Hauling these from Winnipeg was quite an undertaking.

"The teamsters, A.W. and K.W. Reimer were a week on the road. It rained almost incessantly. They would camp under the wagon on a canvas sheet, and find themselves lying in water in the morning, while through the night the oxen sloshed round the wagon bawling from the torment of mosquitoes. The front end of each timber was loaded on a wooden sleigh, and the rear end was slung under a wagon axle. For part of the journey the timbers were actually floating in the water they were being dragged through.

Harvesting, 1880.

"In 1880 the first combination reaper and mower made its appearance, and also horses, or rather cayuses began to be used. Previous attempts to use horses had failed, the animals dying from the wet and mud of the damp years with lack of grain and probably being unused to the prairie hay.

"The reaper was run day and night throughout the season, so that the whole settlement might be served. Butter was then so cheap, five cents a pound, that the machine was kept greased with it. Grain also was cheap--35 cents, oats and barley 15 and 25 cents. There were lots of hens by this time. At first eggs had been 40 cents a dozen, but they dropped in a year or two to eight cents, and at that price were sent into Winnipeg by the ox team load.

"In 1880 too, a steam flour mill was built in Steinbach, the Mennonites in Ontario putting up the money to buy it from the Waterous Engine Company. The Steinbach farmers, several of them, signed a guarantee of from five dollars to one hundred dollars each, to pay it back. This mill was running in the fall of 1880 and ran day and night for about 10 years when it was replaced by a larger 75 bbl. mill. In 1882 binders first made their appearance, tying with wire.

Business Enterprises, 1924.

"From this time on the settlement has been as prosperous as any in the country, this owing to the enterprising methods of the people, coupled with reasonably good opportunities. They are not specially favoured. Steinbach, the principal village built up by the surrounding country is still eight miles from the Canadian National Railway at Giroux, with which it is connected by an excellent gravel road and bus

service. In spite of being so far from a railway, considered by most people now-a-days a fatal drawback, Steinbach boasts--

"A 100 bbl. flour mill
six stores, three large garages
blacksmith and tinsmith shops
butcher business, and cold storage plant, a cheese factory
two lumber yards and two sash and door factories,
two implement businesses, two shoemakers
two barber shops, a watchmaker
a machine shop for repairing anything from a set of harrows to
a steam engine,
a good restaurant--one of the best little hotels in the
country, a doctor, a printing office and paper,
an electric light plant.

"The village, its business and industries are growing and thriving because it is the centre of a district where inhabitants have practised mixed farming--steadily and intelligently--dairy products, pork and poultry taking their place with forage crops and grain in their scheme of farm development.

"A number of the original colonists who came out with their parents as young men and women, are still active in the district, and their descendants have stayed in it judging by the numbers answering to the names of Reimer, Friesen, Barkman, Goossens, Toews, or Kroeker, while Mr. Peter Neufeld died two years ago, aged 102.

The Russländer, 1923.

"As to the opportunities of further or denser settlement in the "East Reserve" it may be mentioned that the three churches in it now have a membership of 650 to 700 families, and that since the Revolution in Russia followed by the persecution and wholesale slaughter of all hitherto prosperous people in that country, the Mennonites throughout Canada have been making great sacrifices to rescue their unfortunate kinsmen and give them a new start amongst their people out here.

"Last year they pledged themselves to raise over 400,000 dollars to reimburse the Canadian Pacific Railway for bringing out 3000 of their ruined countrymen, and made a first payment of 64,000 thousand dollars.

"Some of these people are finding their way to Steinbach and the "Eastern Reserve". One man who owned very large estates in Russia has settled at Steinbach and is going in for nursery work--trees and shrubs, etc. on 40 acres sold to him by a fellow Mennonite with 20 years to repay, free of interest. Another man who owned an implement factory employing 300 hands is now working as a clerk in a Steinbach store, and a third who was overseer of seven flour mills now has a job at the mill here.

"Many more want to come out, but their people are not at present able to finance the journey.

Mennonite Origins, 1525.

"A short account of the origin and early his-

tory of the Mennonites may be of interest in concluding this narrative. The founder of the sect--or religious and social community--was Menno Simons, born in Friesland in 1492. He founded a small community in Zurich in 1523, who left the State Church, and espoused the tenets to which their followers have since adhered. The principal of these were denial of the Christian character of the existing church, and of the civil authority. They own no authority outside the Bible and enlightened conscience. They limit baptism to the believer, and lay stress on precepts which vindicate sanctity of life and of a man's word. Oaths and taking of life are forbidden. Therefore the magistracy or other public office cannot be held by them, while military life and taking up arms is abhorrent.

"The sect soon became numerous in Holland, Germany and Poland, but more important are the German Mennonite colonies in Southern Russia, brought there in 1786 by the Empress Catherine II, and freed by the grant of complete religious liberty from the hardships imposed by Prussian Military rule. Many emigrants from these colonies came to America, but the older settlements [pre]date the movement from Russia, the first Mennonites to cross the Atlantic having settled at Germantown, Pennsylvania in 1683, while in Canada they date from 1786.

Emigration, 1874.

"Emigration on a large scale from Russia has been of more recent date. In the '70s there was growing dissatisfaction with their exemption from military service in that country. The rulers were friendly to them however, as they were more enlightened and progressive, and built up a more prosperous country than the Russians themselves.

"A compromise which worked well for many years was therefore arrived at. The Russian State Forests were worked and looked after by conscripted labour, and the Mennonites readily agreed to serve their three years in the Forestry service instead of in the army.

"This satisfied the rank and file of the Russians, who looked down on the Mennonites shoving a spade while they were shouldering a rifle. But while the horrors of the Bolshevik regime could not be foreseen, many of the Mennonites were becoming convinced that after many prosperous years in Southern Russia there were troublous times in store for them, and so, when the opportunity offered they emigrated to America, where they have prospered, and are now doing their best to assist others of their community still in tyranny-ridden Russia to join them."

Attention Readers:

The views expressed by the editorial and other articles and comments in *Preservings* do not necessarily reflect the views of the HSHS and/or individual members of the board of directors.

Dr. Justina Bergensche 1828-1905

“Dr. Justina Bergensche 1828-1905, pioneer doctor, Mountain Lake, Minnesota,” by Delbert F. Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba.

In the area of medical services Mennonite women in the 19th century entered the public realm and played a prominent role. With the exception of a few isolated medical doctors referred to from time to time in contemporary journals, women dominated the field, acting as *Hebammen* (midwives), nurses, undertakers, and even as Doctors.

The most renowned medical practitioner among the Mennonites both in Russia and North America was the famous Dr. Bergensche, nee Justina Loewen (1828-1905).

Justina was the daughter of David Loewen (d. 1865). She was born in Gnadenheim, Molotschna Colony, in a little Anwohner cottage at the edge of the village, the first child by her father by his third marriage. Her father was a poor shoemaker in the village, too poor to buy milk for the child when the mother could not nurse it. A visitor overnight, hearing the child cry all night, gave money to purchase a cow for the child.

At this time her father left his wife and children to go to Danzig, Prussia, for medical training. By virtue of exceptional industry and will power, he completed the course in a relatively short time, returning to Russia as “Dr. Loewen”. He established a practice in Alexanderwohl, Molotschna Colony.

Dr. Loewen was remembered as a very generous man. One old-timer remembered an incident which occurred during the Crimean War. A general had been seriously wounded. Nothing could help him and hope was lost. Finally one of his officers said, “I know one place. You take him there.”

So they took the General to Dr. Loewen. There was something wrong with his bones. Dr. Loewen cured him.

When it came to payment, Dr. Loewen said, “Oh, not very much.” It was like \$3.00 or so.

But the general said, “No, no, that is too little” and gave him a large sum.

Justina’s mother died before she was grown up. At an early age, one person remembers it as 14, she began accompanying her father on his professional calls in the neighbourhood. At that age, she was sent by her father with medicines to strange homes, there to see to it that the doctor’s orders were being carried out. At age 15, she was serving as a midwife’s assistant.

Her sunny disposition made her an instant favourite in every home and her skill allowed no one to despise her youth.

During this time she married Isaac Baergen. Poverty described both the home from which she came and into which she married. Her husband worked as a hired hand during threshing seasons and in the evening made wooden shoes; while she worked at the spinning wheel, making yarn for stockings and spinning flax or sewing for others. For a long time they lived in a mudhut with windows of oil paper.

In the course of time, during which she became known as “Bagesche” (Low German for Mrs. Bergen), she had three daughters and four sons.

Justina’s father died in the spring of 1865. From that time forth, her family experienced a remarkable change in the family finances. Almost as if by magic she was lifted into the position



Justina Loewen Bergen Neufeld (1828-1905) and her husband, Aeltester Gerhard Neufeld (1827-1916), Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Photo courtesy of Bruno Penner, First Mennonite Church, page 9.

formerly held by her father; day and night her services were in demand. No darkness was too great, no storm too violent, no road so impassable, no work or family affairs so demanding that she would not go to the bedside of some sick person to help.

Dr. Bergensche was well-known to the Kleine Gemeinde people. In 1867, Klaas R. Reimer, later pioneer merchant in Steinbach, Manitoba, took his mentally dysfunctional wife to Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, “to Frau Bergen, she being the best doctor.” When Sara Enns Plett became sick of pneumonia in 1872, her husband, Cornelius L. Plett, took her all the way from their home in the village of Blumenhof, Borosenko, to the Molotschna Colony to seek the medical services of the Dr. Bergensche.

In 1875 Justina married for the second time to Gerhard Neufeld (1827-1916) of Fürstenau, a well-established widower, also a minister. Gerhard brought with him three single sons and three married daughters, all of whom came to love her in time and affectionately call her mother. About the second marriage, one person recalled that Justina had not wanted to marry again but Gerhard Neufeld came again and again. Finally she consented but only after Gerhard had promised never to send people away who came to her for help when they were ill.

In 1878 the family emigrated to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, mainly at the wishes of Justina. She never regretted it no matter how hard the pioneer life here was—and it was hard for her. They travelled on the S. S. Strassburg, together with their sons and daughters and their families, arriving in New York City on July 2. They settled on Section 35 near Mountain Lake, Minnesota, where they were joined by her brother David Loewen.

Here Gerhard became the first Bishop of the

Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake. He served from 1878 to 1909. Gerhard was a sincere and capable man. He was strict and fundamental in his preaching and church doctrine. With a strong body and voice he was seen and heard by all.

As soon as they were settled Justina became the medical practitioner not only for the Mountain Lake area, but also made many trips of mercy to Nebraska, Kansas and Manitoba. Interviewed in 1959, Maria Becker provided the following memory of Dr. Bergensche: I remember her very well. She was a small woman and VERY fat. She came to York, Nebraska. You see the women in those days were scared to use a male doctor; so they had this grandma Neufeld come from Minnesota. She always carried a little *Bencksje* (Low German for footstool), because she could not sit on an ordinary chair. They asked her how she could come so far on a train. She replied, “That WAS almost impossible. They squeeze me and squeezed me until I got in.” She lived in Alexanderwohl. I recall particularly after church, how we children (in Nebraska) were all standing around; and seeing all of us little children, she remarked, “I guess I helped bring most of you into the world.” She had a friendly and good personality. I recall exactly how she sat in the church with her little bench—her legs were very short, and she had to rest her feet.”

On at least one trip to Manitoba, she, among other things, conducted courses in midwifery for three Kleine Gemeinde women: Aganetha Barkman, Mrs. Johann R. Reimer, Steinbach; Margaretha Loewen, Mrs. Jakob B. Toews, Hochstadt; and Anna B. Toews, Mrs. Peter B. Toews, Blumenort. Chortitzer Bishop David Stoesz has recorded that Dr. Neufeld made at least two trips to the E. Reserve: January 26, 1884, and again May 22, 1892.

December 15, 1881, the “Kansas News” in the *Rundschau* reported “The Tante Neufeldsche is here from Minnesota, treating the sick.” September 1, 1882, the *Rundschau* reported “Mrs. Neufeld from Mountain Lake, wife of Aeltester Gerhard Neufeld visited the [West] Reserve [Manitoba].”

With the passing of years, Justina Neufeld more and more had to let go of this world. She had to give up her knitting (presumably because of her eyes, and gave herself more to the study of the Bible. Her obituary reports that she brought over 11,000 babies in the world with her open arms. She was much loved by her patients and community and over 1,000 people attended her funeral when she died in 1905.

Sources:

Bernhard Baergen, *A Baergen-Neufeld Genealogy* (North Newton, Kansas, 1962), pages 70-71.

Bruno Penner, *First Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, Minnesota 1878-1978* (Mountain Lake, Mn., 1978), pages 9 and 93.

Plett, *Dynasties of the Kleine Gemeinde* (Steinbach, 2000), page 349.

William Hespeler (1830-1921)

“Ethnicity Employed: William Hespeler (1830-1921) and the Mennonites,” by Professor Angelika Sauer, Texas Lutheran University, 1000 West Court Street, Sanguin, Texas, 78155, formerly University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Wm. Hespeler - Background.

On a cool Saturday in April 1921 an unusual procession of dignitaries of the highest rank and order filed through quiet Fort Rouge to fill the pews of St. Luke's Anglican Church: Lt. Governor Aikens was in attendance as were Manitoba Premier T.C. Norris, W.J. Tupper, local financier and stockbroker Sir Augustus Nanton and many other prominent Winnipeggers. Jacob Beck, half-brother of Sir Adam Beck of Ontario Hydro fame and Charles R.H. Warnock, President of the Galt Knitting Company had made the long trip from Ontario.

They all had congregated to lay to rest one of Winnipeg's last surviving pioneers - a man who had not once but twice in his lifetime witnessed the emergence of a thriving new community in the young country that was Canada. They had come to bury William Hespeler.

William had not really been one of them. Born Wilhelm Hespeler in the Grand Duchy of Baden, in today's Germany, in late 1830, he was an immigrant who spoke a heavily accented English all his life. Although the Anglican church became his final destination — Canon Heeney presided over his funeral mass and Wilhelm found his final resting place in St. John's Anglican cemetery, surrounded by the men who collectively had transformed Winnipeg from a muddy village into a bustling metropolis — Wilhelm had been a Lutheran and was closely associated with the Mennonites of Manitoba. He was a private man and a wealthy man, one who did not belong to the right clubs but was known by all the right people. His family, through marriage, was linked to many well-known Anglo-Saxon Protestant business people in both Ontario and Manitoba and Wilhelm himself twice married women of Scottish origin. Yet he himself was unmistakably German in his speech and manners.

Wilhelm Hespeler was an ethnic Canadian in British Canada, and a singularly successful one at that. And while he failed to penetrate the circle of the socio-economic elite during his years in Ottawa and during his years in Winnipeg, he left behind an astounding array of accomplishments that, in their own way, changed one country and commanded the respect of another.

Historiography.

And yet the name Hespeler, and the remarkable family that it signifies, is barely known in either Winnipeg or the Kitchener-Waterloo region, let alone in the rest of Canada. The town of Hespeler, named after Wilhelm's older brother Jacob, is now part of Cambridge, Ontario. Similarly the settlement of Hespeler, Manitoba was soon renamed Gretna. The Manitoba municipality of Hespeler, in existence between 1880 and 1890, disappeared in its amalgamation with the R.M. of Hanover. And Winnipeg's short and undistinguished Hespeler Avenue is in a part of town that few people choose to visit. This lack of pub-

lic memory is hardly surprising: Canada's early history is not written to include the likes of Wilhelm Hespeler and his family.

They remain on the fringe, relegated to so-called “ethnic” histories. Their success is seen as an exception to the rule, mostly because their ethnicity is judged an obstacle that had to be overcome through Anglicization and assimilation, rather than a tool that was consciously used to devise alternative strategies to material wealth and personal fulfilment.

People like William Hespeler, who consciously put their ethnicity to work when it suited them, do not seem to fit the mould of either mainstream or ethnic histories. His obituary remembered him as a man “who was at one time so foremost in the life of the province.” Yet Gerald Friesen's standard work on the history of the Prairies does not mention him at all (Note One). Alan Artibise's history of Winnipeg, which so convincingly defines Winnipeg's civic leaders as a sociological group with identical traits, fails to identify Hespeler as one of a handful of exceptions to the Anglo-Saxon Protestant rule (Note Two).

Ethnic histories also fall short: despite Hespeler's involvement in the migration of Russian Jews to Winnipeg in the summer of 1882 and

his service on the Keewatin Council during the smallpox epidemic in 1876, neither Icelandic nor Jewish-Canadian histories make mention of him (Note Three). In German-Canadian historiography Hespeler appears as a one-dimensional man of “firsts:” the first German consul in Manitoba, the first German to reach a high parliamentary position in Canada, the first to bring ethnic Germans from Russia to the Prairies, the first to build a grain elevator in the prairies (Note Four).

Most references to Hespeler are, of course, found in Mennonite historiography. Klaas Peters, for example, pays tribute to him as a friend, “lieber alter Freund” or “höchst achtbarer Freund” (Note Five). A 1972 article in the *Winnipeg Tribune* by Peter Lorenz Neufeld calls him a “forgotten man” who made “many major contributions” to Western Canada (November 11, 1972).

No Mennonite history fails to mention that it was Hespeler who, as the Special Immigration Agent for the Canadian government, brought the Mennonites to Manitoba. And yet relatively little is known about the man, about the nature of his involvement in the 1870s migration and about his motivations. This article will attempt to shed some light on these issues.

Editor's Note:

During the past two decades a considerable amount of documentation regarding the immigration of Russian Mennonites to Manitoba during the 1870s has been published. Most important are the writings of the immigrants themselves, explaining the reasons for their move and documenting the actual relocation of their sophisticated quasi-communal societies from one continent to another and from one host culture to another.

Since the Mennonites came as Christian communities, the writings of the Aeltesten or Bishops of the three immigrant denominations are highly significant. By now a considerable quantity of writings of Aeltester Johann Wiebe (Old Colony), Aeltester Gerhard Wiebe (Bergthal/Sommerfelder/Chortitzer) and Peter Toews (Kleine Gemeinde) have been translated and published in English.

Various primary documents such as the journals of delegates Suderman and Tschetter, and the immigration accounts of Jakob B. Koop, Franz Harder and David Stoesz have been published. Also important are the often eloquent reminiscences of those who experienced these events such as the writings of folk historians Klaas Peters, Johann W. Dueck, Jakob Fehr, Jakob Wiens, Peter Elias, Bernhard Toews and others.

To these can be added a number of biographies such as the works by Reimer and Gaeddert, *Exiled by the Czar*, the story of Consul Cornelius Jansen, and Sam Steiner, *Vacarious Pioneer*, the story of Ontario Mennonite Jakob Schantz, who actively assisted the Mennonite immigrants arriving in Manitoba.

Others such as Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens* and Royden Loewen, *Family, Church and Market* have made excellent use of public sources such as parliamentary debates and newspaper reports to bring the wider national and cultural perspective into our understanding of the story.

William Hespeler was one of the key figures in the Mennonite immigration. Although his significant role is invariably acknowledged in the literature, the details of his contribution to the Mennonite community and his life's story are only little known. The William Hespeler biography by Professor Angelika Sauer responds to this void, bringing him to life not only as one who contributed immensely to the very foundations of the Mennonite community in Western Canada but as an interesting and complicated personage who in his own way faced, successfully, many of the same challenges of immigrants everywhere.

Hespeler was recently named to the “Historical List” of Canada by Heritage Minister Shelia Copps (*Free Press*, May 2/01) recognizing his important work in bringing immigrants (presumably Ottawa language for Mennonites) to Manitoba. This will mean that eventually the Heritage Department will erect a plaque in Hespeler's honour. The Editor.

Waterloo, 1850.

Wilhelm Hespeler arrived in Canada West in 1850, not quite 20 years of age. His background and profile seem to be those of a typical Forty-Eighter, a refugee of the failed 1848 revolution: he was young, single, well educated and from a prosperous bourgeois background in Baden, one of the hotbeds of revolution.

However, there is no evidence that Hespeler was in fact a Forty-Eighter. Instead, he was a member of a family chain migration that had started with his older brother Jacob in the 1820s and had already brought two or three of his older sisters to Preston, the town that William was to make his home. Preston, in what was to become Waterloo Township in 1853, was a multiethnic settlement with a predominant German element and a strong Scottish presence.

For the Hespelers to assimilate into the majority culture might have meant choosing a life in an ethnic German enclave. However, the behaviour of the family indicates the opposite. Only one sister, Charlotte, married a fellow German immigrant from Baden, whereas his other sisters and nieces all married Anglo-Saxons. William himself married a Scottish-Presbyterian woman, Mary Keatchie.

Similarly the Hespelers' business and political connections displayed an emphasis on Anglo-Saxon contacts, often also of American background: William went into business with George Randall, a wealthy young American and Grand Trunk contractor and the latter's brother-in-law William Roos to build up a mill and distillery in the town of Waterloo which, by 1861, produced 12,000 barrels of flour, 2,700 barrels of whisky and employed 15 men.

The Hespelers displayed the behaviour of an upwardly mobile family in 1850s Canada. They identified with the Anglo-Saxon political and commercial elites of Waterloo South more readily than with the Mennonite farming community and the German immigrant artisans of Waterloo North. None of them denied their German heritage: Charlotte liked gardening in a typical kerchief and apron and provided lots of German food to guests. William served on the Berlin school board in 1857, along with Jacob Shantz and A.J. Peterson, at a time when bilingual education had to be defended. They named their children Wilhelmina and Anna and Albert and Alfred ... and always George or Georgina (to honour the late Hespeler patriarch Georg). They also maintained some contacts with Europe, presumably because of the existence of extended family and a family estate; also, two sisters had married French subjects in Alsace-Lorraine. And in the 1870s, when his life took a different turn, Wilhelm would use these German ties to build an alternative career path.

By the time Canada became a country, the Hespeler family was ready to disperse, each taking the opportunities that the developing political and economic structures of Canada had to offer. By 1874 the Waterloo County miller and distiller William Hespeler had reinvented himself as a representative of the Russian Mennonites, immigration expert and frontier capitalist in Winnipeg, the muddy outpost of the new nation.

The whereabouts of William Hespeler in the

intervening years 1869-71 are unclear. Steiner's biography of Jacob Shantz suggests that he moved to Winnipeg in 1870 to take on the management of the Manitoba Land Company. This account, though first advanced in Lehmann's 1939 study *Das Deutschtum in Westkanada*, seems unlikely since Hespeler at the time had not only a thriving business in Waterloo but also an ailing wife and two small children. Another (unfortunately unsubstantiated) account claims that Hespeler left Canada in late 1868 and participated in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870 as a volunteer stretcher-bearer.

Unfortunately his trail in Waterloo is equally ambiguous: old biographies of Joseph Seagram have him buy Hespeler's shares in the distillery in 1870 but the Seagram papers demonstrate that the partnership between Randall and Hespeler was not dissolved until 1878. He almost certainly travelled



William Hespeler (1830-1921), East Reserve 1874-1999 125 Years (Steinbach, 1999), page 8.

to Manitoba and in fact bought 153 1/2 acres of land (2-14-6 W1) there (in what would later become the West Reserve) sometime in 1871.

Emigration 1872.

By late 1871 Hespeler seems to have been looking for a new career and possibly a way to finance a lengthy sojourn in Germany which had become necessary for his wife's recuperation. His knowledge not only of the German language but of Southwestern Germany and the newly annexed German provinces of Alsace-Lorraine were the key. He approached the Canadian government with his idea to organize a system of immigrant recruitment in the German Southwest by going from place to place and calling upon clergy and government officials.

The timing was fortunate: By early 1872 the Dominion Government acknowledged the necessity to compete with the undisputed attraction of

the United States by combating widespread ignorance of Canada in Europe. A federal recruitment plan was developed which was to replace the efforts of individual provinces and to supply better information about Canada to private steamship agents. Designated recruitment targets outside the United Kingdom were "parts of the continent, particularly Alsace and Lorraine, to the continuous parts of Germany and France, and the Scandinavian Kingdoms."

Not surprisingly, Hespeler was authorized to implement his idea by Order-in-Council dated 28 February 1872 which appointed him as "Special Agent for Germany" for six months at a salary of \$200 per month plus \$4 per diem. Upon the Minister's request, several Catholic bishops in Canada supplied letters of introduction for Hespeler. At the beginning of April 1872 Ottawa, through London and the British Ambassador in Berlin notified the German Ambassador of Hespeler's appointment. On 25 April 1872 he arrived in Strasbourg and immediately placed his wife in the care of doctors at the spa of Baden-Baden where she stayed for several weeks.

Hespeler's move into the business of immigrant recruitment was not unusual for a German-Canadian in the early 1870s; nor was it in any way surprising that private interests and motivations played a large role in taking up public service. Since Ottawa had identified Germany as one of the areas of recruitment, other Canadians with German connections explored the field as well, notably William Wagner and the German Society of Montreal.

If German-Canadians in Central Canada took an active interest in furthering German immigration, the government was eager to employ their services. A few weeks before approving Hespeler's appointment, Ottawa also licensed Jacob Klotz of Preston, Ontario as Special Immigration Agent in Germany at \$100 per month. This duplication of appointments seems surprising, and there must have been some rivalry between the two men, not in the least because of the discrepancy in salaries.

Otto Klotz.

Canadian-born, 30-year-old Jacob - the son of famous Waterloo County hotel keeper, wine importer and German school promoter Otto Klotz - spoke English as well as High and Low German and had previously worked as importer of cigars through a family business in Hamburg. If anything, he seemed overqualified for the task of distributing printed material, including Mack's pamphlet, and lecturing on Canada as a field for German immigration. However, his ulterior motive emerges in his consistent efforts to promote direct transatlantic shipping traffic between the German ports of Hamburg and Bremen and Quebec City - no doubt a requirement for his and his father's export-import business.

Klotz's somewhat subordinate interest in recruiting immigrants was reflected in his style. He was impassive and conventional, awaiting government instructions, while Hespeler was impatient, ingenious and quite willing to circumvent the law. For example, he used the name of an agent of the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company (popularly known as the Allan Line) to make illegal contacts and presentations throughout May of 1872. Klotz,

who had expected to be in charge in Alsace-Lorraine became frustrated with Hespeler who was obviously well connected in the southwestern regions.

Eventually, after a meeting on 25 April 1872 in Strasbourg to discuss "our mission hither" the two men seem to have split the recruitment territory, with Klotz returning to northern Germany and Silesia and Hespeler continuing to concentrate on the Southwest.

Russian Mennonites.

It is clear at this point that neither Klotz nor Hespeler had been appointed for the recruitment of Mennonites. In fact, the initial focus was very much on Alsace-Lorraine. Until the summer of 1872 neither man showed any obvious interest in the Russian Mennonites (Note Seven).

When Hespeler, on or around 24 June, received government instructions dated 1 June to plan a trip to Russia his response displayed a distinct lack of enthusiasm. "Personally I do not care much for going to Russia," he confessed to Canada's main immigration agent in London. As Klotz had repeatedly hinted in his own reports to the government, Hespeler's mind was on his sick wife as much as on emigration matters: "Three days ago I was called away from [Strasbourg] to Baden, where my wife is under medical treatment on account of her illness having taken a sudden change for the worse, so much so, that she was not expected to live....[and] as she is not yet out of danger, it will be impossible for me to leave..." Hespeler had other reasons to resent the sudden change in instructions.

He had rather doggedly been pursuing his plan to implement his immigration system in Alsace Lorraine: "I have engaged to visit several places in Elsass during the latter part of [June]." Going to Russia now, he complained, would "leave my work just begun here uncompleted and consequently the cause of this mission must suffer."

Hespeler, however, also had some good reasons for suppressing his ill humour and setting out on his trip to Russia in early July. First, as a civil servant he had to obey instructions given to him by the government or lose his job. Second, a trip to Berlin in early June had turned out to be not only frustrating but alerted Hespeler to the basic hostility of the German government toward any form of emigration. Third, he began to realize the magnitude of his task of competing with the allure of the United States in Alsace-Lorraine; there would be no immediate success in recruiting immigrants and hence his appointment might not be renewed.

On the other hand, a mission to Russia, a new recruitment field where U.S. competition seemed non-existent, might well save his reputation: "I think these people (unlike the people here) have no prejudice for the United States having in former years not been emigrating and consequently having no friends or relatives living in the United States to ask them to come there having found that challenges from friends have the greatest weight to draw people to the one or the other country."

The previous success of Mennonites in Ontario, "superior farmers and people of wealth" in Hespeler's words, was a good omen. Hespeler also

shrewdly observed that in a tightly knit religious community assistance for newly immigrated brethren would surely be forthcoming. With all this in mind and money for his services prepaid by the London office, Hespeler finally started out on his journey to the East in early July 1872.

The details of his adventurous trip through Russia have been summarized elsewhere. However, it is important to point out that Hespeler returned to Strasbourg on 17 August still with the intention of continuing his previous work. Various factors made him change his mind and become more heavily involved in the Mennonite emigration. Perhaps most importantly his wife Mary died after her lengthy illness in August and Hespeler found himself a widower with two minor children who needed their extended family in Canada. Second, emigration from Alsace was all but prohibited after 1 October and the prospects for improvement became dim. Finally, Hespeler had been very favourably impressed by the Mennonites and saw a realistic chance for a large-scale settlement project that would bring people as well as capital into the young country.

In October, 1872, Klotz returned to Europe after a few months in Canada only to find that once again, as in the case of recruitment in Alsace-Lorraine, he had been out manoeuvred by Hespeler. Klotz expected to pick up the Russian work and for this purpose had his passport registered with the Russian consul in Paris "so that I may have no trouble in the event of my going to Russia." A few days later he realized after talking to Hespeler in Strasbourg that the latter had taken the offer to go to Russia for a second time and "it was needless for me to go there." Klotz then proceeded to concentrate on the northern areas, especially Mecklenburg. Hespeler's unconventional and often illegal methods, in the meantime, ran afoul not just of the Russian but of the British authorities and he was recalled to Canada in early December (Note Eight).

Manitoba.

As is well known, his involvement with the Mennonite migration did not end with this hasty recall. Hespeler, along with his old acquaintance Jacob Shantz, organized the visit of a Mennonite delegation in the summer of 1873 and Hespeler accompanied them to Manitoba (Note Nine). Hespeler's successful efforts came to the attention of John C. Schultz, famous as the driving force behind the "Canadian party" in the Red River Settlement whose advocacy of annexation of the Northwest to Canada had brought him into direct conflict with Louis Riel in 1869 (Note Ten).

By 1873 Schultz represented the new province of Manitoba in the federal parliament in Ottawa. As an expansionist and sworn enemy of the Catholic Métis population he promoted the active recruitment of reliable, and preferably Protestant, settlers for the region and witnessed, with considerable delight, "the ability and zeal displayed by Mr. William Hespeler while acting temporarily as Immigration Agent."

Hespeler was the kind of man needed to fulfil the expansionists' dreams. As a consequence, Schultz recommended him for a permanent position in the Department of Agriculture, arguing that

such an appointment "will in a large measure aid in diverting to Manitoba and the North West the stream of Scandinavian and German Immigration which is developing and enriching the North Western American States." The minister obliged the very next day and recommended to the federal cabinet Hespeler's appointment as Immigration Agent for Manitoba and the Northwest Territories as of 1 July 1873 at a salary of \$1,400 per annum. Hespeler would hold this position until his resignation in 1882 when he would take up the office as honorary consul for Manitoba and the Northwest territories for the German Empire.

Hespeler moved to Winnipeg in late 1873 but maintained close family and business ties with the Waterloo County region, thereby reflecting a pattern typical for the Ontario expansionist movement. In late 1875 he returned for several months to get married in Seaford, near Guelph Ontario, to a Canadian-born woman of German origin. And because only one of his nephews and his older widowed sister had moved to Winnipeg, Hespeler returned annually, each spring, to visit his family in Ontario. As time went by, he attended more and more funerals of family members in Ontario.

He also forged some business links, strengthening the connection between Waterloo County and Manitoba which was built around Jacob Shantz's involvement in the Mennonite migration. Hespeler himself directed some family members to invest in land in Manitoba and the Northwest and he himself took up Military Bounty Grants probably given to his nephew, George Hespeler, for his 1860s involvement in repelling the Fenian Raids. Hespeler also represented Seagram's as an agent. Quite possibly he was responsible for the flax mill built by James Livingstone in Niverville in 1879, the year Hespeler and his son Albert erected the first grain elevator there (Note Eleven).

It could be argued that Hespeler used his ties to his former Waterloo County home as he used his ties to Germany and German culture: strategically and selectively without letting them dominate his basic integration into the Anglo-Saxon mainstream of Winnipeg society. Once settled, Hespeler deftly explored the entrepreneurial opportunities of a frontier area. In late 1872, while still in Waterloo County, he bought an entire section of land between Portage and Poplar Point, near the planned reserve for a German settlement sponsored by the German Society of Montreal.

Hespeler also acquired town lots in Winnipeg and Niverville, sold water in the city of Winnipeg, provided mortgages and loans, organized grain shipments and acted as a middleman between the Winnipeg business community and the Mennonite settlements. Like his fellow Ontarian Jacob Shantz he did not see anything wrong with profiting from his connection with the Russian Mennonites, although some of the migrants obviously had expected more altruism and grumbled that "he sought not only our benefit but also that of the [Winnipeg] merchants and his own" (Note Twelve).

Throughout the 1870s and early 1880s Hespeler also acted as an intermediary between the Mennonites and both levels of government, provincial and federal. In fact, so extensive was his involvement with Mennonite issues that he was

accused of neglecting his duties as immigration agent. Hespeler justified his involvement, in a typical manner, as serving national Canadian goals: "I beg to say that I have and am assisting [the Mennonites] in various ways...; my services rendered to them are of course gratis, and from my point of view only reasonable, when considered that this valuable class was brought to a country foreign in habits, laws and language." His work on the Provincial Board of Education, for example, led to the integration of the Mennonite schools into the Protestant Board of Education "promoting thereby the introduction of the language of their adopted country." He also had, he added, assisted Mennonites in becoming British subjects in order to obtain their homestead patents.

Self-interest.

There can be little doubt that to Hespeler the Mennonite settlement was a business *and* a cause, just like his civic and government positions served both the common good and his own or that of his friends. Numerous examples demonstrating the mixing of public and private interest exist. In 1874, he erected the "Hespeler Block" on Winnipeg's South Main Street (which later housed the Government emigration office) and next door built "Lorne House" as a hotel. The *Nor'wester* reported that the hotel had been constructed "for the special accommodation of Mennonites. It is to be kept by a Mennonite on the Russian plan and will no doubt prove a giant convenience to the class of our population." He later used his position as alderman on City Council to plead for improvements to the sidewalks in front of his buildings.

Apart from his service as an alderman, Hespeler found other pathways into mainstream Winnipeg. Almost immediately after his move to Manitoba he became a director on the Board of the Winnipeg General Hospital (and served as its president for more than a decade from 1889 onward), and was appointed to the Council of Keewatin during the smallpox epidemic of 1876-7. William and his second (and later his third) wife were regular guests at social functions. When his daughter Georgina turned 21 in 1885, he introduced her like a debutante, taking her to a ball at the Legislative Chambers and paying respects at Government House. Georgie quickly captured the heart of young Augustus Nanton, a rising star at the Winnipeg branch of Toronto financial agents Osler and Hammond. Although Georgina tragically died the next year after giving birth to Hespeler's first grandchild, the tie between Nanton and his erstwhile father-in-law remained a close one. Through Nanton, Hespeler reached into the upper echelons of Manitoban and Canadian society and linked them to the ethnic enclaves he had helped create.

In the early 1890s Hespeler purchased land in township 42, Range 3 in Northern Saskatchewan. This was a township mostly owned by Nanton, his business partner Edmund Boyd Osler and the Qu'Apelle, Long Lake and Saskatchewan Railroad and Steamboat Company which Osler had financed. Osler, Hammond and Nanton were also agents of the North of Scotland Canadian Mortgage Company which provided first mortgages to settlers and Hespeler had a seat on the board of directors.



William Hespeler photo courtesy of German-Canadian Studies Newsletter, Volume 3, Issue 2, Fall 1998, page 1. Additional photos of William Hespeler and his family are found in Heritage Posting, No. 33, page 1.

However, this was not the extent of his involvement in the area which was located along the edges of what was to become the new Osler-Hague Mennonite Reserve a few years later. In fact, Hespeler made one final effort to attract new settlers to the Northwest in 1891-2. When approached by Cornelius Jansen with the news that young people in the Mennonite colonies in Nebraska were looking for new settlement areas, Hespeler travelled to Ottawa and Toronto and garnered support from both the Minister and Edmund Boyd Osler for a two-month recruitment trip to the United States.

After this trip he spent most of the rest of the year in Europe, but the following year he repeated his efforts, this time among the Mennonites in Kansas. Whether these efforts (which anticipated a government recruitment drive in the United States under Clifford Sifton) directly resulted in new immigrants and profits for Hespeler and his Anglo-Saxon business partners is not known. Historian Adolf Ens does report that by 1894 about 400 Mennonites had moved from Kansas and Nebraska to the Rosthern area and it is possible that Hespeler profited from the migration.

Ethnicity Employed.

That this well integrated German-Canadian never severed his connection with Germany and German culture suggests that there is no contradiction between ethnic persistence and assimilation. It is not clear how Hespeler was chosen to represent Imperial Germany as honorary consul in 1882, yet with this appointment his displays of Germanness increased. As already mentioned he participated in a short-lived German society in the 1880s. In 1888 he supported the establishment of a German-Lutheran congregation in Winnipeg. The following year he was instrumental in setting up a German-language newspaper (*Der Nordwesten*) to provide an ecumenical bridge between Mennonites and other German-speakers. Hespeler continued to take extended trips to Germany. Indeed, on one such visit in 1884 his second wife, like his

first wife died. In both 1891 and 1896 Hespeler again visited his home country.

Yet Hespeler was not considered an ethnic outsider by his contemporaries. They accepted him and his cosmopolitan tastes, the latter displayed in a luxurious Fort Rouge apartment bloc which noted Chicago-style architect John D. Atchison designed for him in 1906. Upper middle class Winnipeggers soon copied Hespeler's example. A 1911 portrait of him in the "Pioneers of Winnipeg" series of the *Winnipeg Tribune* identified him as "that shrewd little business man who hails from the land made famous by Frederick the Great and later by Bismarck." "William" the writer wagered "always partakes of the best the markets afford."

A personal cultural gap remained nonetheless; Hespeler appeared to the Canadian writer as "a citizen that has never allowed any man to come near enough to him to really learn the manner of man he is. He has gone smoothly along, well groomed and living carefully..." The sense that Hespeler was an enigma even to those who had lived in his vicinity for decades was shared in his obituary: "He was of a reserved nature which forbade familiarity and did not seem to encourage intimacies," (*Manitoba Free Press*, 20 April 1921).

Conclusion.

The experience of Hespeler and his family shows that early non-Anglo-Celtic immigrants in Canada were not victims of Anglo-conformity and British exclusivity, but agents and participants in a fluid society that offered a wide range of choices. William Hespeler was a man who was both typical and atypical for his generation: typical because he followed many patterns that made for commercial and financial success in 19th century Canada, yet atypical because his repertoire and interests were, in many ways, wider than those of his Anglo-Saxon contemporaries who moved along more established paths.

He thus pioneered efforts in the field of immigrant recruitment. His German connections proved an asset rather than a liability but his inherent conservatism prevented him from becoming the spectacular success (or failure) that characterized Winnipeg's growing elite. Well-connected, if not well-liked, he lived a comfortable life and died a peaceful death, albeit in a slightly 'wrong' part of town.

Reference:

The article, "Ethnicity Employed: William Hespeler (1830-1921) and the Mennonites," by Professor Angelika Sauer, is a shortened version of a paper presented at the "1874 Revisited" conference held at the University of Winnipeg by the Chair of Mennonite Studies, Dr. Royden Loewen. Many of the footnotes have been deleted in this publication in order to reduce the length of the paper and to make it more reader friendly. The complete unabridged version is published in *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Volume 18, pages 82-94.

Endnotes:

Note One: Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto, 1987).
 Note Two: Alan F.J. Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth 1874-1914* (Montreal

1975), 36. Artibise identifies five "ethnic" civic leaders: two Jews, two Icelanders and one Ukrainian.

Note Three: See for example Wilhelm Kristjanson, *The Icelandic People in Manitoba* (Winnipeg 1965) and Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto 1992).

Note Five: Werner Entz, "William Hespeler: Manitoba's first German Consul," *German-Canadian Yearbook* 1(1973), 149-52 and "Wilhelm Hespeler: Britischer Parlamentarier aus Baden," *Mitteilungsblatt des Instituts für Auslandsbeziehungen* 7 no.3 (1957): 171-2. Heinz Lehmann, *The German Canadians 1750-1937*, trans. and ed. Gerhard Bassler (St. John's 1986), 135-7.

Note Five: Klaas Peters, *The Bergthaler Mennonites*, Winnipeg, 19880, page 11.

Note Six: Some information can be found in W.H.E.Schmalz, "The Hespeler Family," *Waterloo Historical Society Report* 57 (1969): 21-9.

Note Seven: I have not yet found any evidence for Klaas Peters' suggestion that Hespeler was told about the Mennonites by Count Menchikov in Baden and then proceeded to tell Prime Minister John A. Macdonald about them.

Note Eight: Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870-1925* (Ottawa 1994), pages 14-6.

Note Nine: The trip is described in Peters, *The Bergthaler Mennonites*, pages 11-16. Shantz's involvement is described in Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jakob Y. Schantz* (Winnipeg,

1988), esp. chapter 6.

Note Ten: Doug Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Toronto 1980). Hespeler's link with the expansionist movement can be explained by parallel goals: the development of the Northwest through Central Canadian efforts and in direct competition with the United States.

Note Eleven: Fred Kaita, editor, *Niverville: A History 1878-1986* (Niverville 1986), pages 16, 23, 57.

Note Twelve: Quoted in Royden Loewen, *Family, Church and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850-1930* (Toronto 1993), page 288 note 52. See also Peters, *Die Bergthaler Mennoniten*, page 38.

1870 Aeltester Election, Johann Wiebe 1837-1905

Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905), Rosengard, Manitoba, was one of the most inspired Christian leaders of the 19th century. More details of his life and ministry are coming forth as scholars begin to realize the significance of his work and the relevance of his vision of a renewed New Testament church. It is understandable, therefore, why Satan has exerted such immense efforts over the past century to eradicate these teachings often causing Ohm Johann's followers to be chased down and hunted like cast-out wild animals. Editor's Note.

The following report of his election as Aeltester of the Chortitza (Old Colony)



Jakob and Judith Epp and their children Elisabeth and Johann, circa 1880. Photo courtesy of A Mennonite in Russia The Diaries of Jakob D. Epp 1851-1880 (Toronto, 1991), title page. Jakob Epp (1820-90) lived on the Judenplan, moving to Gnadenfeld, Baratov, in 1874. His diaries constitute a fascinating look at the Mennonite life world of the three decades commencing in 1851.

Gemeinde at Fürstenland, Imperial Russia, September 13, 1870, is found in the diaries of Minister Jakob D. Epp from the Judenplan.

"September 13 A general Brotherhood Meeting took place at 1 p.m. in Peter Lepp's implement shed in Georgsthal. Lepp is Obervorsteher of the settlement. The beloved Aeltester (Gerhard Dyck) was there to conduct the election of an Aeltester from among the three ministers. Of our Chortitza colleagues only Reverend David Wienz had come. Deacon Johann Enz and we ministers from outside of the settlement took our places in the room where the brethren passed through to vote. Elected to the important office of Aeltester by majority vote was Reverend Johann Wiebe with 55 votes. Abraham Wiebe received 41 votes and Franz Bukkert 23. May the Lord endow the elected Bishop with his Holy Spirit and grant him the gifts needed for this high calling."

"September 14 The consecration of the new Aeltester took place this afternoon in Lepp's implement shed in the presence of a very large congregation. The ceremony began with the singing of nine verses of Hymn 142, 'A Joyous Heart.' In his introductory sermon the beloved Aeltester Gerhard Dyck commented on the purpose of the ceremony and prayed. The text was then read, and I preached a sermon on the duties of an Aeltester and his congregation to one another. After the newly elected Aeltester had answered the two customary questions by saying 'yes' and the congregation had answered the questions put to it by remaining silent, we again prayed."

"Wiebe then kneeled before Aeltester Ger. Dyck, who ordained him an Aeltester with the Word of God and through the laying on of hands. He then raised him to his feet and kissed him. Aeltester Dyck invited his ministerial colleagues to congratulate the newly ordained Aeltester, and as Reverend Dav. Wienz had already left, I was first. After kissing him, I said, 'Thus saith the Lord Zebaoth: If you will walk in my ways and wait on me you shall rule my house and protect my court. I will ensure that those who surround you will follow you. May the blessings of Jehovah be poured out in torrents over your head



Gerhard Dyck (1809-87), Aeltester of the Chortitza Gemeinde of southern Russia with 3200 baptized members in 1888. Gerhard Dyck ordained Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905). Photo courtesy of Quiring, In the Fullness of Time (Kitchener, 1974), page 33.

that you might have the strength to pasture His flock according to His will and to His satisfaction."

"The congratulations of the other colleagues varied, but in each case they kissed one another. The deacon Johann Enz read his blessing. The newly ordained Aeltester spoke some deeply moving words, and we sang Hymn 603, 'Abide in Thy Grace.' Aeltester Gerhard Dyck delivered a sermon. The congregation kneeled for prayer and the ceremony ended with the singing of five verses of Hymn 244, 'Jesus Our Sanctification.'"

"This is a brief description of the ordination of this Elder, included so that people in the future might know how it was done."

From *A Mennonite in Russia The Diaries of Jakob D. Epp 1851-1880* (Toronto, 1991), pages 299-300, translated by Professor Harvey Dyck, Toronto, Canada.

The Eichenfeld Massacre - October 26, 1919

“The Eichenfeld Massacre - October 26, 1919,”

by Marianne Heinrichs Janzen, Box 25052, 1650 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2V 4C7.

Background.

Eichenfeld - Dubovka, was a Mennonite village in the Imperial Russia where in 1919 75 men were massacred by anarchist terrorists (Note One).

In 1868 the Chortitza Colony purchased 19,800 acres of land for its landless people, allowing 146 families to settle in four villages. In 1872, more land was purchased from the Countess Morozov, and 30 more families settled in another village that was created. The settlement was called Jasykovo. The villages were: Nikolaifeld, (Nikolaipol) #1, 34 families; Franzfeld (Warvarovka) #2, 34 families; Adelsheim (Dolinovka) #3, 38 families; Eichenfeld (Dubovka) #4, 38 families; Hochfeld (Morosovo), #5, 30 families.

This settlement lay 22 km. from the Chortitza railway station, and 45 km. from Jekaterinoslav (today Dnjepetrovsk). It was situated on the great post road that ran south from Jekaterinoslav. The easterly tip of the settlement touched the Dnieper.

Since 1873, these villages belonged to the Nikolaipol Volost which included various estates or Chutors. Petersdorf [Nadeshdovka] had been established by Daniel Peters before 1850. His children also established estates at Reinfeld [Jelenovka] and Paulheim [Pavlovka]. The entire Nikolaipol Volost covered 14,427 desjatine of land; 8600 desjatine belonged to the villages, the rest to the estate owners.

At the turn of the century there were 440 families in the settlement, with a population of 2,200. The first harvests were so rich that the settlement was able to pay its debt to the mother colony long before the due date.

Every village had an elementary school. A teacher would have up to 60 children in the six classes. A Zentralschule [high school] was built in 1905 between the villages of Nikolaipol and Franzfeld. It had the capacity of 50 boarding students on the main floor. The classrooms were on the second floor. In 1908 the school had four classrooms with five teachers.

Most of the villagers attended church in their village schools, only going to the church of their faith--Kirchliche or the Brüdergemeinde--on special occasions such as Easter, Ascension, baptism and Christmas. Both churches and the Zentralschule were in the one km. strip between Nikolaipol and Franzfeld.

World War One.

The ideal life soon came to an end. In August of 1914, Germany declared war on Russia. The tide of public opinion was running strongly against the Mennonites. The press was particularly bitter in its attacks making the Mennonites out as the enemy of the Russian people. In November of 1914, Russia forbade the use of the German language in the press, or in a public assembly of more than



The prosperity of the Jasykovo Colony is demonstrated by Zentral Schule (high school) built in 1905, highlighted by a beautiful central facade over the main entrance. Gerhard S. Derksen, who later purchased the Steinbach Post in 1936 taught in this school. Photo by D. Plett, May, 2000.

three persons.

In 1915, Czar Nicholas had signed an imperial decree which proposed the expropriation of all German held lands, and the eastward deportation of the colonists. The Mennonites averted this confiscation by appealing to the Minister of Justice, and obtaining an interpretation that the Mennonites were of Dutch, not German descent.

The Czarist government collapsed in February of 1917. By October of the same year the Bolsheviks, under Lenin, became the strongest political force. They signed the treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918) allowing an Austro-German occupation army in the Ukraine. Marauding soldiers and bandits, anticipating the restoration of public order, resorted to last minute extortions. By the time the Germans had arrived in mid-April of 1918, the Mennonites in the Black Sea region had

experienced both anarchism and Bolshevism.

During the summer of 1917, most of the estates of the Russian and Mennonite landowners were pillaged and eventually destroyed. The smallest hamlets had also suffered, and most of the inhabitants had to flee to larger villages for protection. From November 1917 to April 1918 when the German troops arrived, the Mennonites lived under continuous fear or robbery, imprisonment, torture and murder as the bandits rode the countryside at will.

When the German Army appeared, many Mennonites openly welcomed them. Peace and prosperity returned. But it was only the lull before the full fury of the storm. German troops had to be withdrawn from the Ukraine by November 1918. The Mennonites and the German colonists suffered the most for they were comparatively rich.

Nestor Makhno.

Nestor Makhno, born 1889 in Gulaipole, was the son of Russian peasants. By the age of 16 he was involved in revolutionary activities. He was captured in 1908 and sentenced to death which later was commuted to life imprisonment. In prison he was influenced by the anarchists. In the general amnesty of 1917 he was released, and returned to Gulaipole, north of the Molotschna settlement. Filled with hate for all authority, his ruthlessness soon made him head of the band of renegades that pillaged the rich and defenceless homesteads.

In November of 1918 after the German army withdrew, Makhno managed to seize substantial quantities of abandoned arms and equipment for his followers to use. These bands, whether under direct leadership of Makhno or some other chieftain, were collectively known as Makhnovtse. Known for their cruelty, they flew black flags with slogans such as “Liberty or Death” and “The land to the peasants, the factories to the workers”.

The hatred of all forms of authority whether police, army officer, clergy, or landowner; the bitterness left by the German Occupation Army; the hunger for his own land by the peasant who existed at subsistence levels; or the carnal desire to murder, rape, loot and destroy; --any one of these was sufficient reason for a person to join the Makhnovtse for one raid or for a period of time.

Makhno won great popularity among the peasantry and as his success and fame as a requisitioner spread, his following increased.

Makhno's fighting strength was a little over 8000 men (Note Two). His army known as the "Insurgent Revolutionary Army of the Ukraine" had 10 regiments: eight regiments of infantry, and two regiments of cavalry [made up of 1500 men]. The military units had a large camp following, including herds of sheep and cattle.

Makhno alternately fought against or sided with the Red army. It was said about Makhno that he swept "like a giant broom....through the villages and cities", destroyed and massacred anyone he regarded as an enemy, "land-owners, kulak peasants, policemen, priests, village leaders, and officers." Like a whirlwind he moved on, sometimes a 100 kms. a day. It is estimated that Makhno and his band were directly or indirectly responsible for the death of between 2-3000 Mennonites.

Selbstschutz.

By the end of the summer of 1918, it was clear that with the withdrawal of the German troops, the roving bands would return to lawlessness. The villages and districts would receive no protection from the central government, so they organized their own local militia groups for self-defence, called Selbstschutz. In the Nikolaipol district, Peter von Kampen undertook this leadership. About 250 young men permitted themselves to be organized into these self-defence groups, all Mennonite, except for three Cossacks. The German army organized them and it did not take long until they went around armed.

Opinion was sharply divided in the settlement. No show of armed might was ever justified, said many church leaders...Stand meekly by and permit brutes in human form to defame the home? God had clearly given man his mental and physical powers to be used. Moreover, this was a Selbstschutz, purely defensive. It would never be used for offensive purposes. Some young men decided to arm themselves to defend their loved ones against Makhno. Eighteen men from Eichenfeld were in this defence group.

Each village had a cavalry of 10 to 12 men. A machine gun section was in each village. The riders [cavalry] ran communication between the villages. The remaining men were in the infantry, and had to guard the village. The whole operation was quite strict. Watch was maintained 24 hours. During the day the men worked on their farms. They had no uniforms - everyone wore their own clothing.

Each village had its own commander who looked after discipline and gave orders. The village commander was subordinate to the Selbstschutz commander. The Selbstschutz organization in Nikolaipol was commanded by the Commandant of the German garrison. No one was allowed to oppose it. Nor did the church leaders actively oppose the Selbstschutz.

Skirmishes.

As the violence in the area mounted, the colonists became targets for attack from both

the roving bands and the neighbouring peasants. The unresolved tensions between Russian and Mennonite villages, which perhaps existed for decades, was given free reign by the prevailing disorder. Already in spring of 1919 a skirmish near the village of Hochfeld resulted in the capture of several bandits. Shortly thereafter Paulheim, a small Mennonite village of seven families, successfully resisted a determined bandit attack.

In the spring of 1919 the bandits also tried to take over Petersdorf. The Selbstschutz was



A wedding in Eichenfeld, November 4, 1906--Kornelius Pauls (1881-Oct. 26, 1919) and Helena Andres (1883-1937). Except as noted all photographs in this article are courtesy of the author Marianne Heinrichs Janzen, Winnipeg.

ready to help, arriving in time before too much had been looted. Later a larger band demanded that the Selbstschutz should hand over their weapons to them. Because many of the Selbstschutz young men wanted to be heroes, they told the bandit envoy that the weapons could be picked up in Hochfeld [#5] early the next day.

The Selbstschutz men prepared themselves and were ready to take the bandits prisoner. The bandits also came in the early morning, knowing that they had to retrieve the weapons. So they entered into combat. Hochfeld was fired upon by two cannons and other weapons. It took the Selbstschutz young men about four hours to force the bandits' retreat, taking many weapons and some prisoners.

But what to do with the prisoners? They were tried and then brought to "Katharinoslav". Whether they arrived there is debatable. The Red guardsmen (government troops) arrived and demanded all the weapons. Most of the Selbstschutz men handed over their weapons, but 14 men did not. They kept their weapons and hid them.

One day Red guardsmen came to Eichenfeld and held many rich landowners hostage in exchange for money and weapons. They took some people prisoner; they were able to return home after some months. An eyewitness relates this account: "Some men came during the day and took my father and his three brothers outside the village to a bunch of trees. The bandits returned and demanded a large sum of money."

Susanna Warkentin Klippenstein, Weyburn, Saskatchewan, later reflected on the purpose of this raid: "My dad's parents (John and Maria (Peters) Warkentin) had been wealthy before they passed away and these bandits were sure that the money had been left for the children. They gave us until evening to come up with the money, and if we didn't, the bandits would kill their hostages. We did not have the money, so mother went to friends and got some. They were all released. My dad (Franz Warkentin) was not beaten too badly, but some of his brothers (Johann, Daniel, and Isaak) were."

Susanna Warkentin Klippenstein recalled another scary day: "Some riders came and threatened to set our village on fire. They had it surrounded so that no one could get out. A plane flew over us. A lot of people were standing on the street. I don't know if they demanded money, or why they didn't set fire to the village, but everyone was thankful that we were saved once more."

July, 1919.

In July of 1919 came another call that Eichenfeld's young men should assemble in the Volost. They did not heed the command. Early the following morning at 4 AM, the village of Eichenfeld was surrounded, allowing no one to come in or to leave. At six they began to shoot; the Reds had about 200 men. Eleven Selbstschutz men hid themselves in the smithy and held the Reds off with their guns. The other three were holed up at the other end of the village, watching that no one would enter from behind. Other young men ran from house to house to beg for shells, as the Selbstschutz did not have many. About 11 o'clock they shouted for horses so they could chase the Reds. Not one of the 14 men lost his life, but many on the other side were shot.

A story is told of how the Eichenfeld men won the battle. The Reds at the smithy end of the village had a cannon which they used against the men in Eichenfeld. The men manning the cannon were shot, and the Eichenfelders captured the cannon. They then turned it around and used it to shoot at the Reds. This helped in the Selbstschutz's victory.

The village council was dismissed and a new one elected. Comrade Commissar Snissarenko was appointed as its head. Soon even the local Russian farmers were disgusted with his administration and his thievery. One day Comrade Snissarenko was found dead. Murdered!

Here is one account of the events leading



Eichenfeld school student body 1907-8: front row, l.-r., 1) _____ Dan. Warkentin, 2) Lise Harder; 3) unknown, 4) unknown, 5) unknown, 6) unknown, 7) Neta Dan. Warkentin, 8) unknown; Second row: 1) _____ Klassen, 2) unknown, 3) unknown, 4) _____ Epp, 5) teacher Isaak Epp, 6) Maria Dan. Warkentin, 7) Tina Dan. Warkentin, 8) unknown, 9) _____ Klassen; Third row: 1) unknown, 2) _____ Warkentin, 3) Joh. Joh. Warkentin, 4) unknown, 5) Heinrich Harder; 6) unknown, 7) _____ Klassen, 8) Kornelius Heinrichs; Fourth row: 1) Jakob Pauls, 2) unknown, 3) Aron Klassen, 4) unknown, 5) unknown, 6) _____ Friesen, 7) Heinrich Heinrichs, 8) unknown, 9) unknown. Student identification is courtesy of the author Marianne Janzen. A photograph of the Eichenfeld school class of 1912 is published in Quiring and Bartel, editors, *In the Fullness of Time*, page 56, where the photo is dated to 1916. Many of the students in this photo have been identified by Marianne Janzen as follows: Front row: 1) unknown, 2) Jacob Heinrich Heinrichs (died 1917), 3) unknown, 4) unknown, 5) unknown, 6) Jacob Harder; Second row: 1) Maria Heinrich Heinrichs 2) Maria Is. Warkentin 3) unknown, 4) Maria Block, 5) Lena Funk 6) teacher Gerhard Zacharias 7) his daughter Lisa 8) Maria Dyck 9) Lena Warkentin 10) Justa Klassen 11) Susie Hildebrand; Third row: 1) Maria Klassen 2) unknown, 3) unknown, 4) Anna Giesbrecht, 5) Tina Hildebrand (wrote the diary), 6) unknown, 7) Liese Harder 8) Agatha Hildebrand 9) unknown, 10) unknown; Top row: 1) unknown, 2) Gerhard Rempel 3) Heinrich Heinrich Heinrichs 4) John Is. Warkentin (d. Oct. 26, 1919), 5) unknown, 6) David Warkentin (d. Oct. 26, 1919), 7) unknown, 8) unknown, 9) unknown, 10) David Hildebrand (d. Oct. 26, 1919), 11) unknown, 12) Kornelius Heinrich Heinrichs. Note the change in the apparel of the students from 1908 to 1912, only four years later. Teachers of Eichenfeld included Isaac Epp 1903-9, Mr. Sawatsky 1909-11, and Gerhard Zacharias 1911-18.

up to the murder. Intent upon possessing the "wealth" held by the colonists, some 300 heavily armed bandits descended upon the village of Nikolaifeld. Thirty friendly Russians from the nearby village of Wesolaya joined 40 Mennonites and successfully repulsed the attack. Thwarted by this rather spontaneous Selbstschutz, bandit leaders complained to Bolshevik authorities in Ekaterinoslav about the "military stronghold" in Nikolaifeld. Red army troops subsequently occupied the village and gave it over to plunder. A volost soviet composed of the impoverished classes was established, and its chairman took up his residence in Eichenfeld. Unfortunately some Selbstschutz elements, apparently to avenge

a betrayal, attacked the residence of the soviet and shot three of its members, including the chairman. A fourth escaped to bear news to his superiors.

There was another version of these events, namely, that one of Eichenfeld's Selbstschutz men had turned traitor. Daniel Hiebert went to the Red Army and gave them the names of the 14 men who had shot against them. One of the Cossacks who had been in the Selbstschutz but who now worked for the Red Army received information about this traitor. Thus it became known in Eichenfeld that the members of the Selbstschutz should flee if they wished to remain alive. But Peter von Kampen and some of his men wanted to get

rid of the traitor. One evening they surrounded the building, pushed their way in and killed three men, including the traitor Daniel Hiebert and Snissarenko. The fourth man, a little Jew, could not be found. Later he told how he had crawled into an oven and from there he had witnessed the murders. Thus it became known who had done the deed.

There are discrepancies in the above story, and other versions of what took place.

Tent Missionaries.

It did not take long until revenge was sought on the village of Eichenfeld where these Selbstschutz men lived.

In the meantime an evangelistic group

called the “Zeltmission” (tent mission) had arrived in the Jasykowo settlement. They had split up into four different groups, one part going to Eichenfeld under the leadership of Jacob Dyck. After obtaining permission, they held their first service on Friday afternoon and one in the evening. The events that followed was later described by one of the members of the group.

“Jacob Dyck chose the fourth village of Eichenfeld where up until now no service had been held. The following people went with him: Juschkewitsch, Golitzin, local minister Johann Schellenberg, Liese Huebert-Suckau, and Regina Rosenberg, a converted Jew. They arrived in Eichenfeld, and went to widow Johann Peters’ place.

“After some difficulty from the Makhno hordes, Brother Dyck received permission to hold a meeting, and the first one was held in the afternoon of Friday, October 25th.

“Saturday morning Mrs Peters prepared breakfast for them. Just as they were about to sit at the table, some Makhnovtse entered and sat at the prepared table. They invited the others [tent missionaries] to sit at the table and made room for them. When the meal was finished, more and more Makhnovtse entered, until the room was full. Brother Dyck talked about the Word of God to them until dinnertime. When his voice began to fail, Mrs. Peters brought him some raw eggs, and he continued talking.

“At dinnertime the soldiers went back to their camp. The sisters went to the school to have a service with the children. Brothers Dyck and Schellenberg went along. After a short talk, they knelt to pray. Then the Makhnovtse entered the room and asked Brother Dyck for the permit papers. He showed them. The Makhnovtse stood before him with downcast eyes so that his evil thoughts could not be seen. With the words, “We know you, you evangelists!”, they left the school.

“While these were in the school, other Makhnovtse went to their quarters. There they found Brother Golitzin and asked him who he was. Upon the answer that he was a preacher, they began to hit him.

“As this brother lay upon the floor in his blood, they (the bandits) obtained a clean cloth from Mrs Peters. They picked up the brother from the floor, took off his bloody clothes, and put clean bandages on him. Then Golitzin had to wipe up his own blood from the floor, and the Makhnovtse went to the school where the others were.

“When they entered the schoolhouse, the



The Hildebrand's of Eichenfeld. Helena and Heinrich Hildebrand. L-r: Eva, David on mother's lap, Agatha, Tina with Father (she wrote the diary--see Preservings, No. 16, page 134), and Lena standing behind parents, Heinrich Hildebrand and son David were killed in the massacre, Oct. 26, 1919. Photo courtesy of Anna Schroeder, Abbotsford.

evangelists were ordered to stand against the wall. They did as they were told. Then the teacher came in and requested that no killing should be done in the school. The Makhnovtse told the evangelists to follow them. They went to the other side of the street where an empty storage shed [scheune] was. The school teacher's wife looked out of a schoolroom window and saw how obediently the evangelists walked. Jacob Dyck covered his face with his hands, then the two Makhnovtse who escorted them, hit him in the face with a drawn sabre.

“When they had just entered the storage shed (scheune), a shot was heard. Then Regina Rosenberg came out, followed by a Makhnovets. Her eyes beamed joyfully as she told him something and pointed upwards. Thus they went to the house where Juschewitsch had remained behind, and soon returned with him to the storage shed [scheune].

“During this same time as this bloodbath was taking place in Eichenfeld, another Machno band murdered inhabitants of other villages. We were with another group in the third village. On Saturday evening we had to endure a severe testing. The Makhnovtsen came to our service with the intention of shooting us all. Brother Heinrich Epp from Alexanderwohl, Molotschna and I preached the Word, and the Lord protected us.

“When we heard what occurred in

Eichenfeld, we drove there to see for ourselves. On the way there, a woman with tears in her eyes, stopped and begged us not to drive there as all the inhabitants had been shot. She told us that the brothers and sisters had been shot, and that one sister fell with a Testament in her hand.

“Suddenly some Makhnovtse sprang out of a yard and enquired where I wanted to go. I said that I had heard that our preacher was dead. With the words: “Aha, and you too!”, he drew his sabre and motioned that I should get down and follow him onto the yard. I told him that I would remain seated where I was. Then he said that I should empty my pockets. I gave him my Bible and another book. Then his companion talked him into leaving me alone, and I and the sister took advantage of it and turned around.

“We anxiously wanted to see our fallen comrades, so two days later we drove to Eichenfeld...At the first house in the village we found two mangled bodies; by another house lay two to three bodies with mangled hands and faces. Then we came to the storage shed [scheune] where the evangelists lay. Upon entering we saw some bodies which we could not identify. To the right lay two people in the underclothes, their heads near the door. It was Jacob Dyck and Golitzin. Their faces were mangled. By the door lay Juschkewitsch, face down in prayer fashion, one hand under his head, a deep cut in the neck. Somewhat farther away lay the former Jewess, Regina Rosenberg, killed in a prayer stance. She had two deep wounds on her head and throat. Not far away lay Liese Huebert-Suckau, also killed with the sword. Thus our dear brothers and sisters had died.”

The Massacre.

On Friday, October 25, 1919, toward evening, a small number of bandits were stationed in the village. The next morning, over 1000 Makhnovtse began to arrive in a carefully organized surprise raid. Access to the village was cut off. The bandits demanded food, thus keeping the women busy.

Not wanting to alert the whole population that a massacre was in progress, gangs of bandits, “the Commission of Death”, went from house to house to carry out their gruesome deed. They proceeded to cut down in cold blood all the villagers over 15. Some women tried to shield their men with their own bodies, only to lose their own in the process. Some women and girls were raped, or otherwise abused (Note Four).

Elisabeth Harder Warkentin later described what happened.

“A deep sense of foreboding filled my heart



Heinrich Kornelius Heinrichs family, 1913. Standing: Maria, Kornelius, Heinrich and Jacob. Seated: Aganetha Pauls Heinrichs, Herman, Bernhard, John, Julius (the author's father) and grandfather, Heinrich Kornelius Heinrichs, also murdered Oct. 26, 1919.

on that dreary morning of October 26, 1919. As I fed my two-week-old son Willie, I looked over to the crib where my one-year-old Hans lay sleeping soundly; and I prayed a fervent prayer that their father would return safely. Two days before, a band of "Reds" had pounded at our door and demanded that my husband John Johann Warkentin should hitch up our last team of horses and take them to an unknown destination, immediately. The memory of so many similar instances where the driver had been killed at the end of the journey struck terror into my heart; but he had no option.

"This morning everyone seemed to be on the move. Out on the street many horseback riders and wagons loaded with heavily armed men driving past the herds of stolen cattle that were being driven through the village of Eichenfeld could be seen. Anarchy reigned as bands of robbers demanded whatever they wished from the helpless village inhabitants. At about 10 in the morning there was a noisy disturbance and screaming on the Heinrich Heinrichs yard. A shot rang out and Heinrichs lay dead.

"Before long there was a sound of heavy boots and a loud pounding on the door of my in-law's home, (John and Maria nee Redekopp Warkentin where we lived). A group of bandits demanded food. All of us rushed about to heat the oven and bake "schnette", and to cook whatever we had. It was a long, hard day.

"At dusk, a troop of Makhno bandits galloped through the village at full speed and set a guard at either end so that no one could escape. Of all the bandits, those of Makhno were feared the most because they were so well organized, and they were so brutal.

"Supper was just over when we heard the dreaded sound of boots on the doorstep. A loud pounding followed. Father (John Warkentin Sr.) invited them into the "Grote

Schtoave" (living room), where the talk became loud and angry. Mother, David (19), and the girls, (Lena 15, Maria 21, Liese 13) and I (Elisabeth Harder Warkentin) cowered around the stove. Suddenly two shots rang out, and father (John Warkentin Sr.) lay in a pool of blood.

"The "Reds" came into the kitchen.

"Is this your son?" they asked mother, pointing to 19 year-old David. The look in her eyes was enough, and another shot rang out as David's head seemed to explode before her eyes. The shot made the light go out, and we fled into the night.

"While the Makhno bandits were busy with their killing, we grabbed my babies and ran to a Russian refugee family who lived nearby. Although it put his life on the line, the Russian father let us crawl onto the "Peitsch" where his own children were sleeping; and he denied our presence minutes later when the bandits were out to rape the wives and daugh-

ters of the men they had murdered.

"Oh how long was that night! When morning finally dawned, we dared to look toward our home. The shutters were closed. The village streets were empty. A few older women were on the street, and each had her own gruesome story to tell. Only then did we realize that all the men in the village had been brutally murdered. My own father (Wilhelm Martin Harder 57) and brothers (Heinrich 21 and Peter 30) had been taken out and hacked to death by the straw stacks at the end of the village. Now I was thankful that my husband had not been home on that fateful night. My 14 year-old brother Jake who was attending school in the city, was also spared."

Another account.

Susanna Warkentin Klippenstein remembered the events of that fateful day as follows: "I remember the last day with my parents. It was Saturday, October 25, 1919. We had only half-a-day of school.

"The teacher let us go home when the troops started to ride through the village on horseback and in buggies. It was a sad day for all of us. The troops went into the homes and demanded food.

"By evening there was nothing left to eat in our house, and in a lot of others too. Then, just before dark, the bandits started to kill people. They started in the center of the village, and that was us. Mother's brother, a teacher, they cut off his head. They shot mother and dad with a gun. Mother died immediately. My younger sister, (Neta), was in the same room.

"I was standing in the doorway, and I saw the couple who lived with us (Paul Friesen and his wife Katharina Pauls Friesen) being shot. Dad didn't die immediately. When the men left he (Papa) ran and jumped through the window. A neighbour lady found his body outside by the little brick fence behind the garden the next day. My grandpa (Redekopp) walked across the street to see his daughters and they killed him too. Our hired girl took us to our aunt across the street. The shooting kept up all night."



The farm of Johann Regier of Eichenfeld. Seated in the wagon is Jacob J. Regier, murdered Oct. 26, 1919. In the driver's box is Isaac Driedger. Photo courtesy of Quiring and Bartel, editors, In the Fullness of Time, page 56.

Another account.

Another villager, Cornelius Heinrichs, recalled the tragic day as follows:

“The Makhnovtse spent the night in Petersdorf, and it was at this time that it was cleaned up and put into ruins. In the early morning they [Makhnovtse] arrived in Eichenfeld, bringing along the livestock from Petersdorf.

“When they came to our [the Heinrichs’] yard, they took my father out to the shed [area between the house and the barn] and were going to hack him to pieces, but he was a very strong man and so they could not do it. Then they took him out to the ‘sidewalk.’

“Inside the house everyone was asking what was going on, so I [Cornelius 18] went out to investigate. I was standing beside my father when the Makhnovtse turned around, and shot him. Later on, about midday, I asked someone to help me carry my father into the house.”

“The Makhnovtse plundered the houses and took whatever they wanted. All the families in the village had to cook and bake for them, but only in our [Heinrichs] household we did not have to. The Makhnovtse went through the house, but none of the soldiers stayed because they were very superstitious of a dead person in the house. At one point they put me beside the corpse, and asked if I wanted the same fate to befall me. My mother asked me several times if I did not want to run away and hide. The death of my father and his corpse in the house, was our family’s salvation.

“The next morning everything was very quiet, and everybody [Makhnovtse] was gone. I walked out onto the street and a Klassen boy asked, “And you are still alive?” David Woelk said, “Think we will live until morning?”

“We decided to leave [the David Woelk family and the Heinrichs family]. We left before dinner, on foot, to Nikolaipol, and stayed with the teacher, Mr Wieler, for a time.”

The Morning.

After a sleepless and terror filled night, the bandits disappeared at daybreak. The families went out into the chilly and foggy morning to look for their loved ones. Cries of grief and horror echoed through the village as family after family discovered their men dead behind barns or on the straw piles. Many of the bodies had been mutilated: hands cut off, throats slit and bodies cut up with the sabre.

When the women and girls from one household went to a neighbour’s house to inform the occupants of their tragedy, they were confronted with tales and sights of a similar fate in the house visited. With the realization of the enormity of the horror, most surviving villagers fled across the muddy fields to a neighbouring village.

A total of 75 persons were murdered on October 26, 1919 and another three in Petersdorf, six in Nikolaipol, and 15 in Hochfeld.



Heinrich Heinrichs born 1899 in Eichenfeld, was a participant in the Jasykowo Selbstschutz, later joined the White Army. He fled to Constantinople. He was one of the “62” that MCC helped over to the United States in 1922. He died in 1941 in Detroit, Michigan.

The Funeral.

On Tuesday, October 29, 1919 people from the neighbouring Mennonite and Russian villages came to help bury the 75 dead of Eichenfeld.

A lot of revulsion had to be overcome. The skulls of many corpses had been smashed, throats cut so that heads dangled, and there was missing body parts such as hands and feet. Some faces were so cut up they were unrecognizable. Some bodies were so mutilated to such an extent that recognition was nearly impossible, and only by the underwear was identification made possible. It was like a battlefield. To collect the bodies and the various parts and place them on the wagon took courage and strength from above.

Five bodies were put onto a wagon and taken to the cemetery. During this time John Schellenberg’s son had come to Eichenfeld looking for his father. When he found the body, he returned with it to Reinfeld for burial in the family plot. In all the bodies of 70 men and four women were brought to the cemetery.

It was a dreadful time when the next-of-kin saw the bodies laid out on the grass. Most of them were covered with blood, for only a few bodies had been washed. Most of them were in their underwear, for their murderers had robbed them of their clothes.

Some people screamed when they saw the bodies, others prayed fervently to God. Some placed their arms around one another, consoling each other. Some milled about the cemetery like sheep. It was a heart-rendering scene.

Since it was cold; because of the large number of dead; and because everyone feared the return of the Makhnovtse, the bodies were not washed or dressed. The bodies of father and son, relative with relative, were put into the graves--10 to 12 bodies to a grave. The corpses were lain on their sides, alternating head to foot so that more could be accommodated in the small space. No sheets were used to wrap the bodies, for they had been stolen. No pillows were used for their heads, only a little straw.

No formal service was held. There were some verses recited, and tears shed. Planks were placed over the graves and covered with dirt.

Peter Dietrich Klassen recorded the names as each body was being placed in the grave. In the spring the planks were removed, and the graves filled in. A burial service was held in the Nikolaipol church under the leadership of Aeltester Heinrich Epp.

Those from the neighbouring villages who had helped to bury the Eichenfeld dead, returned to their homes. Most of the Eichenfelders went back to the neighbouring villages before nightfall. But some remained behind.

Peter Abram Giesbrecht’s mind could not understand how a loving and merciful God could condone such gruesome and wanton killings, and he committed suicide on October 30, 1919.

During the next few days scores of looters ransacked the village and carried away any moveable object. A few bandits also returned and in the next week another seven people lost their lives. The remaining people fled, abandoning their village forever.

Epilogue.

Because the village was abandoned, the houses were looted. Russians began to live in the houses, but found that the large brick homes were not fuel efficient and too expensive to heat in the winter. Some of the buildings were burned to the ground, others were torn down, the bricks used to build smaller houses. Others built mud huts instead. The trees that had been so lovingly planted and cared for were used for firewood. The gardens, once so immaculate, now boasted of tall weeds.

The Mennonites referred to this village as “Makhno Dorf” (Makhno’s village). They did not want to return as there were too many horrible memories that could never be erased.

In November of 1919, all the villagers of Eichenfeld had fled their own village in terror and had found refuge in a neighbouring one. Almost immediately they had to face another devil - typhus.

The Makhnovtse had brought this plague to the Mennonites. Because they had occupied almost every bed in their homes, most families became infected with typhus. Even though the Makhnovtse had taken clean clothes, they themselves remained dirty, rich with parasitic insects. They had lain in all the beds, and had gone to enough homes to spread the disease.



The tent mission. Enthusiastic young people carried the gospel of Separatist-Pietism into the Russian villages with Jacob Dyck as their leader. Photo courtesy of Lorentz, *Heritage Remembered*, page 174.

Cold weather, a chronic absence of wood for heating, an acute shortage of food, insufficient blankets, and ragged clothing all worked to lower the resistance of the Mennonites to the dreaded disease. Because most of the bedding and clothing had been stolen, very unsanitary conditions prevailed, and the disease spread like wildfire. One after another the people became ill. The Nikolaipol congregation had to take every fifth person to the grave.

The women who had been raped by the Makhnovtse suffered from venereal diseases.

But more was still to come. In 1921 Russia had a famine. Many Mennonites died as a result of this famine.

In 1921-1922 the refugees from Eichenfeld were given a chance to establish a new village [Eichenfeld 2] approximately one km. east of Hochfeld. Very few took advantage of this offer, most of them preferred to remain where they had found refuge. The landless of Hochfeld then went to the new village of Eichenfeld.

In 1923 the opportunity arose for the homeless Mennonites to leave Russia and to emigrate to Canada. The refugees of Eichenfeld were included. Some chose to go to a land they had never seen and to a future they didn't know. They trusted God to care for them.

Others chose to remain in Russia, hoping that better conditions were still to come. Some could not leave because of medical conditions. But no one could have predicted the utter economic, cultural or social ruin that they would have to undergo, and the anti-Christian political ideology to which they would be subjected.

Conclusion.

But whether they remained or emigrated out of Russia, the refugees from Eichenfeld had suffered a great psychological shock on that fateful night of October 26, 1919. Nothing could obliterate the events of that night from their subconscious. Many refused to talk about

their experience, forever blocking it out of their minds. Others were very hesitant to speak about the event, and in later life, spoke only of certain incidents that were not too painful. All the adults of that day have now passed on. Their children cannot recall in detail the events of that day, only how they felt.

During that horrible time in Eichenfeld, many totally innocent people were murdered. The earth of Russia was saturated with blood and tears. This Eichenfeld tragedy, where 83 lost their lives, was the second worst massacre suffered by the Mennonites in Russia, exceeded only by the slaughter of Münsterberg, Sagradovka.

What possible reasons could explain why such a catastrophic deed?

Eichenfeld was a very prosperous village and highly desired as a prize for looting (Note Five). The "spirits from the barrel" had given the Makhnovtse the courage to do the deed (Note Six).

Most historians agree it was because of the Selbstschutz, organized as a response to the widespread robbery, raping and murder. The Jasykovo leader who lived in Eichenfeld had led raids where men were killed. From Makhno's standpoint, his men had been murdered by Mennonite colonists, and his army struck back when in a position to do so.

It cannot be assumed that no violence would have occurred if the Selbstschutz had not existed or that the bands would not have committed even more outrageous acts had they had free reign.

Endnotes:

Note One: Two important sources regarding the Jasykovo Colony are Heinrich Toews, *Eichenfeld - Dubovka: Ein Tatsachenbericht aus der Tragödie des Deutschtums in der Ukraine* (Karlsruhe, 1B) and Julius Loewen, *Jasykovo Mennonite Colony on the Dnieper* (Beausejour, 1995), 169 pages.

Note Two: See Victor Peters, *Nestor Makhno*

The Life of an Anarchist (Altona, 1969), 139 pages, and William Schroeder, "Nestor Ivanovich Makhno (1889-1934): Died as an exile in Paris", *JMS*, Volume 6, 1988.

Note Three: Bernhard J Dyck, "Something about the Selbstschutz", *JMS*, Volume 4, 1986. Note Four: Margaret Epp, *But God Hath Chosen*, page 13.

Note Five: Gerhard Schroeder, *Miracles of Grace and Judgement*, page 116.

Note Six: A. A. Toews, *Mennonitische Martyrer*, page 493-495.

About the Author:

Marianne Heinrichs Janzen, Winnipeg, Manitoba, has written about the Mennonite experience in Russia. She is married and has four children. She is a health care worker employed by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. Marianne is the granddaughter of Cornelius Heinrichs (1876-1919), killed in the Eichenfeld massacre. She is currently researching the emigration of Mennonites from Soviet Russia to Mexico in the 1920s.

Source:

The article on Eichenfeld was written by Marianne Janzen in 1991 as part of a course in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, under historian and writer Dr. George Epp. The paper has been shortened and the detailed footnotes deleted for publication in *Preservings*. Readers who are interested in obtaining the unedited version of the paper or those who have additional details and photographs to add can write Marianne Janzen, Box 25052, 1650 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2V 4C7.

A shorter account of the Eichenfeld massacre was written by Art Toews and published in Neil Heinrichs and Marianne Janzen, *et.al.*, editors, *Cornelius Heinrichs and his descendants 1872-1979* (Altona, 1980), pages 81-88.



The author Marianne Janzen, Winnipeg, with her display of historical documents at the Family History Day, Mennonite Heritage Village, March 4, 2000. Photo courtesy Henry Fast, *Preservings*, No. 16, page 66.

Salvation

“You will know them by their fruits,” Matthew 7:16,” by David Schroeder, 745 Coventry Road, Winnipeg, R3R 1B8, Retired Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Canada.

Introduction.

It is strange that salvation in Christ, which incorporates all believers in the Body of Christ, should be the cause of so much division and conflict in Christian churches and denominations. Salvation surely must also include salvation from conflict over salvation!

Jesus was outspoken on the question of judgment (Luke 6:37). We are not to judge (i.e. condemn) if we are not to be judged ourselves. We are to leave final judgments to God (Romans 12:19; 14:1-12). But when it comes to questions about salvation we are quick to condemn those who disagree with us on the meaning of salvation. It could be helpful for us to indicate where and why we do not always agree on the meaning of salvation.

Inadequate Understandings: - theological Language.

Some differences arise out of the nature of theological language. Theological language is derived from ordinary everyday language, describing the things we have tasted, seen, heard or events we have experienced. We know that sugar is sweet to the taste, but when we call a child “sweet” we are adding a new layer of meaning to an ordinary word. Theological words are also derived from ordinary language. Thus, what we now call the *Gospel* of Jesus Christ was previously the words for “good news”, and “redemption” was the process of buying the freedom of a slave.

The words for salvation in the Old Testament are used most often for being saved from harm, danger, oppression and captivities. When the same word is then used to describe freedom from any and all forms of possession and bondage, including sin, a new, theological layer of meaning is added. Since the term can be used to describe so many different kinds of bondage, it presents the opportunity for persons to argue about which occurrences of the word in scripture are the most definitive usages of the term. If people focus and insist on one meaning and reject all the rest, there will be a lot of room for differences in interpretation. This is understandable.

Cultural Influences.

We are not always aware of how much our interpretation of the scriptures is influenced by the culture in which we live, and in which we have come to feel at home. The writers of the biblical books spoke and wrote from within a specific time and culture. The words that they used to describe the actions of God such as liberating, redeeming and ransoming, came out of a culture in which slaves were being ransomed, redeemed and set free. The writers used words that everyone understood from their own experience.

When we, who now live in another culture,

read what was written back then we interpret it all too often in terms of our own culture. When a “family” is spoken of in scripture, it refers to the *extended* family, but we interpret it in terms of our *nuclear family* of husband, wife and their children. This can significantly distort the meaning of the text. What we bring to the text and read *into* the text in this way is often misleading. At the same time, we cannot help but interpret the text in our own time. All diligence must therefore be applied to let the message of the text address us in a proper way today.

What has had the most severe impact on our view of the Christian faith is the individualism of our society. We live in an extremely individualistic culture and this colours our view of salvation. We very quickly focus on the individual rather than the corporate aspects of salvation. The church then becomes a club of like-minded persons rather than the Body of Christ. It causes us to seek out churches or congregations that can give us what we want or what we think we need, rather than the church holding us accountable for what we are and do. To be truly Christian we need the church - those who share our life in Christ.

A sign of this kind of individualism are the persons who proclaim loudly their faith in Christ and their wish to be baptized but refuse to belong to any local congregation. The intent is to belong to the universal church only, but to do so denies the corporate nature of salvation and of the church. Salvation is both personal and corporate in that those who are in Christ are members of one body and the local congregation is the manifestation of that Body of Christ on earth.

Another sign of this individualism is the emphasis on a spirituality that is shaped by whatever the individual fancies as being spiritual. It is hard to define because it differs from person to person. It focuses on experience rather than on Christ. True spirituality, however, is in harmony with the fruit of the Spirit as given in Gal. 5:22-23, and with the spirit of the beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11). That is, it is in harmony with the life that is expected of all Christians.

This kind of individualistic interpretation of salvation is foreign to both the Old and the New Testament. Although Ezekiel refers to persons being personally accountable to God, the emphasis is on God not judging or holding people accountable directly for things they have not done (Ezekiel 18). The salvation of the person is always tied up with the salvation of a people. There is a corporate aspect to salvation that is so easily overlooked in our society.

Limiting Salvation.

Perhaps nothing is as damaging to our understanding of salvation as the many ways we find of limiting or narrowing the meaning of salvation so that it does not encompass all of life.

It is easy to limit salvation to the salvation of the “soul.” What is focused on is the individual’s relationship to God, period. Here the vertical relationship to Christ is emphasized over and against the horizontal relationships with others. There are two problems here, however. First, this usage of “soul” often denies the unity of the person, the unity of soul, spirit and body. Salvation speaks to the salvation of the whole person, not only to the soul. Secondly, biblical salvation holds the vertical relationship with God and the horizontal relationship with others together. There is no new relationship with Christ if it does not include a new relationship with all others, and to the structures of society in which the person lives. Salvation cannot be limited to the salvation of the soul. There is to be love of God and love of the neighbour at the same time.

Another way of limiting salvation is to relate salvation to “belief.” We have so often heard the expression “only believe.” It is meant to emphasize that we do not have to earn our salvation. That is correct, but so often it is taken to mean believing something to be true, or giving assent to the affirmation that Jesus saves. Yet in this sense, James tells us the demons also believe and tremble (James 2:19). This is not what is meant by “believing” in scripture. Dietrich Bonhoeffer characterized this position as “cheap grace”. By believing in Christ, the scriptures refer to a whole-soul faith obedience to Christ. It means counting the cost of obedience to Christ and therefore a change in character and lifestyle.

We also limit salvation when we link it to specific concepts of salvation that relate to only one aspect of the word. This can happen when we relate salvation to being “born again” and mean by this a specific way of coming to faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. This necessitates all persons to have the same experience in coming to faith in Christ. But the Spirit of God should not be limited in this way. In fact, coming to faith in Jesus was very different for Cornelius, Paul, Lydia, Timothy and the Ethiopian Eunuch. This approach also does not make any difference in how persons who have never heard the gospel before and those who have grown up in a Christian home come to the faith.

It is also possible to limit salvation to a particular tense, but to do so is to limit salvation. Evangelicals tend to emphasize the past tense of Salvation. It gives the impression of salvation having been completed in the past. The New Testament does use the past tense for salvation but it has the connotation of an action begun in the past but not completed in the past. Conservative Mennonite churches have used the future tense of salvation more often. This too is biblical. Both groups tend to avoid the fact that we are being saved (Present Tense). To emphasize

one tense over the other is to limit salvation.

So often salvation has been limited to getting to heaven. This has been spoken of as "pie in the sky by and by!" What is missing is God's concern for the whole world. It does not engage sufficiently what salvation implies for the present world and the overcoming of evil with good in the world. It does not speak sufficiently about the responsibility that believers have for the fallen world.

Blood stands for life.

The saving work of Jesus is often misrepresented when we speak of being saved through the "blood" of Jesus. We often use biblical words and phrases without understanding what the words were meant to convey in their original usage. We do not hesitate to speak about being saved by the "blood" of Jesus but we have long since forgotten the institutions and practices that gave meaning to these words. When we speak of the blood of Jesus in a way that makes the earthly life and ministry of Jesus next to superfluous we misrepresent the message of salvation.

The language of "blood" made perfect sense in the sacrificial institutions of the First Covenant. The people had covenanted to be God's people and to keep what God had commanded. But often they were disobedient and sinned against God and were estranged from God. God provided a way for them to show their repentance and return to God through the ritual of sacrifice. They were asked to choose a spotless lamb, identify with the lamb, and offer it totally to God. The blood of the lamb stood for the life of the lamb that was now offered to God. In offering the lambs the people were saying that they offered themselves (i.e. their lives) to God the way they had offered the life of the lambs to God. God understood this act of repentance and recommitment and did not hold the sin against them. The sin was covered, the relationship with God was restored and the people could again be a people of covenant, obeying God and keeping the commandments.

In the New Testament Jesus is shown to be the only person who gave full obedience to the will of God. He was obedient to God even to his death on the cross. He was crucified and it seemed at first as if God did not honour Jesus' life of obedience. But then God raised him from the dead and confirmed the righteousness of Jesus' life. Through his obedience to God (shown in his earthly ministry) Jesus had overcome the powers of sin and death and opened the way of salvation for others. In this sense when we speak of the blood of Jesus, the blood stands for his life, for the life given in obedience to God. If we now identify with Christ in faith and obedience, God understands this act of repentance and commitment and forgives our sins. We are then reconciled with God.

There came a time in Israel's history where the sacrifices were no longer appropriate. When the people offered the sacrifices as usual but no longer kept the commandments; God did not accept the sacrifices. God was not interested in the blood of bulls and goats but in the hearts of

the people and in their obedience to the will of God, so the prophets declared the sacrifices null and void (Ps. 40:6-8; Hebrews 10:5-7). The Psalmist says, "Sacrifices and offerings you do not desire, but you have given me an open ear". The Psalmist speaks about his ear having been opened. This was idiomatic language for obedience. In translating this into Greek the writer to the Hebrews translated "a body you have prepared for me." This is idiomatic language for obedience in Greek. Both texts emphasize the obedience of Jesus. Apart from the obedience of Jesus there would have been no salvation. He, like the sacrificial lamb, was totally offered to God and became the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.

Towards an Understanding of Salvation: - biblical usage.

The first thing to be noted is the wide range of usage and meaning of the term "Saviour" and the verb "to save." In the Old Testament the title Saviour is applied to successful captains (Judges 3:9) kings (II Kings 13:5) and to other leaders and deliverers of the people (Nehemiah 9:27). But since it was God who raised up these saviours, God was seen as *the* Saviour of the people (Exodus 14:30; I Samuel 10:19). In the Greek translation (Septuagint) "Saviour" is used some 30 times as a divine title and especially so in Isaiah (Isaiah 45:15, 21: 46:8-13).

The root word for "salvation" (*hoshia*) in the Old Testament refers to being "wide," "spacious," "to develop without hindrance," or "to have victory in battle". It is the word most often used to describe the saving acts of God. God saves the people from their political enemies (I Samuel 14:23), the poor from distress (Psalm 34:6), and the people from material and physical oppression. Oddly, in the Old Testament the words for *save* are not used in the sense of salvation from spiritual or moral defects or sin. They point rather to the deliverance or liberation of the needy, the disadvantaged, and the poor and helpless from their oppression. The recipients can be individuals (Psalm 7, 109) or groups (Israel, Exodus 1:11, 13, 16; Judges 6:8-9)

In the New Testament the word for "save" (*sodzo*) is used 106 times meaning, "to save," "rescue," "heal," or "liberate." The word "rescue" (*ruomai*) is used 15 times. Other related words are freedom, justification, life, reconciliation, redemption, resurrection and reign of God.

People are in need of salvation because of sin (Luke 15:18), sickness (Luke 8:48), deformity (Mark 3:1), demon possession (Mark 1:34), the threat of death (Mark 14:26-31), the power of wealth (Mark 10:25-26), and the domination of evil (or the evil one) in people's lives. There are also collective needs. Paul indicates that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Cosmic powers also hold people in bondage (Romans 5:20; 10:4; I Corinthians 15:57; Galatians 3:10-14).

Both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament there is an earthly and a spiritual dimension to salvation. Thus, people are set free from slavery (Deuteronomy 24:18) and sickness

(Luke 17:19). The spiritual aspect refers to the redemption and restoration of the people after the exile (Isaiah 43:14-44:5; Ezekiel 36:22-32) and according to Paul, salvation brings freedom from sin (Romans 6:1-23), from the law (Romans 7:4; Galatians 2:15-21), from death (Romans 6:21), and from the cosmic powers (Galatians 4:8-10; Colossians 2:16-23). Salvation brings about a new life "in Christ." The saved have received the gift of the Spirit (Romans 5:5; 8:9, 11), have been born again (John 3:3-6) and have become a "new creation" in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). They have become sons and daughters of God (Galatians 4:4-7).

The future dimension of salvation is noted in both testaments. The promises of God to the people were never really fully fulfilled in their present experience. Early on, the prophets promised the coming of the reign of God and a new Davidic kingdom such as they had not yet experienced (Isaiah 9:2-7; 11:1-9). They also promised a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) for which they were still waiting. Their focus was more and more centered on a reign of God yet to come.

In Jesus the reign of God was in the midst of the people because he came to do the will of God. As people accepted Christ and were obedient to the will of God, the reign of God was already present but not yet in its fullness. There was an *already and not-yet* aspect to the reign of God. The final salvation is related to the Second Coming of Christ. Those who persevere to the end will be saved (Mark 13:13 Hebrews 9:28; Revelation 2:10). Peter indicates to the believers that their salvation will be revealed in the last time.

- paradigm Events.

The people came to know God through the acts of God in history. The Exodus, the establishing of the covenant with the people of Israel at Sinai, and the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ furnish the paradigm events through which the concept of salvation came to be understood. These events indicate that salvation is to be understood in terms of the loosing and binding work of God.

Exodus/Covenant.

In the Exodus God became known as a freeing, liberating, saving, and redeeming Lord. God liberated a slave people from bondage. For the first time God was not seen as aligned with the mighty lords of the earth, the Pharaohs, but as seeking the welfare of people who were poor and powerless. People could now look to God and know that their pleas for salvation would be heard and that they would be delivered from bondage and oppression. They now understood that God was a just and righteous God.

At first, the rejoicing was over being saved from a life of slavery in Egypt. But the people of Israel also understood that God is truly a saving God, and comes to save people from bondage and oppression. This understanding could now be applied to any and all forms of bondage that keep people from being the people God meant them to be.

Freeing the people of Israel from slavery was not the final objective of God's salvation. God wanted to bring them into the Promised Land and wanted them to be God's people. God wanted to restore the people to fullness of life as intended in creation.

The people, however, did not really know what it meant to be God's people. They had to be instructed first. God, therefore, revealed to the people the will of God in the Law of Moses. The law revealed what acts would lead to life, and what acts would lead to death. God's invitation, however, was that they might bind themselves to that which would be life giving. They had been set free from bondage and could now respond to God's invitation to choose life.

At Sinai God covenanted to be their God and Saviour, to bind himself to look out for their welfare. God covenanted to seek their salvation. But God also invited the people to covenant to be God's people and to bind themselves to the keeping of the Law. The law expressed at one and the same time the will of God for the people, the righteousness of God, and the way to salvation. The invitation of God was for the people to bind to the will of God.

The righteousness of God was revealed in the law of God. This was the case not only in the Ten Commandments but also in the laws that specified how oppressed and rejected people were to be treated. There were laws related to the poor, to slaves, strangers, criminals, widows and orphans and men who died without an heir. These were all people who were powerless to defend themselves against oppression and exploitation. In establishing the covenant the people knew that salvation meant not only freedom from oppression and bondage but also righteousness and justice. To choose life was to choose to be just toward the poor, the rejected and the oppressed.

On the basis of the Exodus and the Covenant at Sinai we can now understand that our relationship with God depends not only on being set free (loosing) but also on accepting the call to a new and righteous life (binding). Liberation is God's gracious gift to set people free from bondage so that they can serve the living God. It is also an invitation to accept God's will for, and offer of new life through trust and whole-soul commitment to God.

The goal of deliverance was the establishment of the reign of God among the people of Israel and the other nations of the world (Isaiah 49:25-26; 52:6-10; 55:1-5; Jeremiah 31: 31-34; Ezekiel 36:22-32; 37:23-28). When the people did not abide by the covenant they had made with God, they were again taken into captivity. They now spoke of their hope of salvation more in terms of an anointed, righteous king (messiah), who would redeem the people and establish the coming reign of God. They looked to the future for their salvation.

The Incarnation.

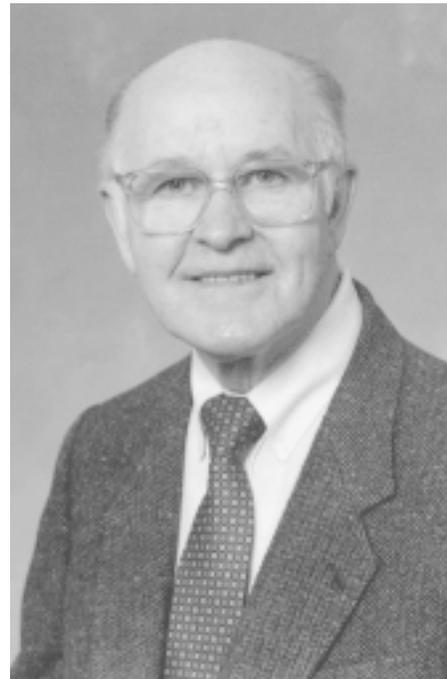
The work of God, manifested in the Exodus and at Sinai, was made more explicit in the coming of Jesus the incarnate Son of God. The love and righteousness of God was now revealed in

a person of flesh and blood. People could see in Jesus what humans, created in the image of God, were meant to be like in their relationship with God and how they were expected to live in a sinful world. They could also see in Jesus the nature and character of God and the character of the coming reign of God.

In the New Testament, God's intent to "save" and "rescue" the people was identified with the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth (Luke 19:10). Jesus came to save the lost, those in bondage to sin and death. But the term "to save" is most often applied to Jesus saving those who were sick, possessed by demons, rejected, poor and powerless. The people nevertheless understood that in the way that Jesus saved people from bondage to sickness and demon possessions, so Jesus came to save people from bondage to sin and death.

The loosing and binding work of God, noticed in the Exodus and in the Covenant, is seen also in Jesus. Jesus came to free people from bondage. He expressed it clearly in his inaugural address at Nazareth; "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19).

Jesus also came to invite people to follow him (Mark 8:34-9:1) and to accept the will of God for their lives. Jesus asked his followers to bind themselves to a new life of righteousness in which the spirit of the law would be kept (Mark 9:42-49) and not only the letter of the law. In every way Jesus called on his followers to bind themselves to that which would be life giving to them and a blessing to others. The loos-



David Schroeder, retired Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Canada. Courtesy of Preservings, No. 15, page 48.

ing and binding work of God continues in Jesus.

When we call Jesus "Saviour" and "Lord" we refer to the same loosing and binding function. When we call Jesus "Saviour" we indicate that Jesus has set us free from bondage (looses). When we call Jesus "Lord" we indicate that we have *bound* ourselves to do his will. Thus, when Jesus invited the church to become a loosing and binding fellowship he invited us to represent the work of God in the world.

The commission:

Jesus asked the disciples, and through them all his followers, to become a loosing and binding community (Matthew 16:13-20; 18:15-20; John 20:23). The so-called Great Commission is given in Matthew 28:18-20. But this commission to "go into all the world and make disciples" can be subsumed under the commission to the church to be a loosing and binding fellowship. The church is to be a loosing and binding church both to those who have never heard or responded to the gospel (to whom the great commission is directed) and to those who are members of the Body of Christ.

- to all the World;

Those who are in bondage need to be set free. They need to be set free from bondage to self and bondage to the principalities and powers of darkness. People need to be set free (loosed) so that they can become Disciples of Christ (i.e. bind themselves to do the will of God). When we proclaim the gospel we allow the Spirit of Christ to work in the hearts and lives of people freeing them from bondage and strengthening them in their commitment to Christ. We are called to work in the world the way God and Jesus worked in the world. We are to liberate and disciple people for God.

- to Members of the Church;

Loosing and binding is also an activity of the church towards its own members. The Anabaptists spoke of the "Rule of Christ". They held that if you named Jesus as Lord and confirmed it in baptism, you placed yourself under the rule of Christ as exercised through the church. That is to say, you opened yourself to the admonition and counsel of other members of the church and also accepted responsibility for others in the church. This mutual accountability made it possible both to encourage each other's growth in the faith and to discipline those who rejected the admonition of the church. People would be helped to free themselves from error and bondage and would be encouraged to bind themselves to the Word and will of God. There is need today to revisit this understanding of church.

The task of the Church in both commissions is to help free people from bondage and to invite them to bind themselves to that which is of God. We do this by proclaiming the Gospel and manifesting the love of God towards all people. People cannot be forced to accept the will of God for their lives. God does not force anyone. Therefore, the "binding" needs to be understood in terms of the person binding him or herself to

Errata

the will of God just as God covenanted to be our God.

In seeking to free people from bondage we need to name the form that bondage takes in their lives. This applies to people who are not Christians as well as to members of the church. The term "salvation" should not remain vacuous. It needs to spell out what people are saved from. Sin manifests itself in a multitude of different forms and situations. Some captivities are all too obvious. They relate directly to the culture we live in. We are all in some way captive to the spirit of individualism, materialism, consumerism, militarism, and the desire for security. They are part of the Western way of life. They are part of the "powers" of darkness operative in our society. They need to be named by the church as bondage and are to be overcome in Christ.

Paul and the early church understood that Jesus had come to save them from the principalities and powers of darkness (Colossians 2:8-15). They understood that Christ had delivered them from the dominion of darkness. They also knew this to be a gracious gift of God and not something they had earned. It was appropriated through faith and not by works. This bondage to the powers is what people are to be freed from in Christ.

- the Call to a New Life.

We have indicated that in the Exodus and through the Law the righteousness of God was revealed, and that in the covenant at Sinai the people were asked to bind themselves to the commandments of God. That is, they were to live a righteous life by observing those things that would lead to fullness of life. They were to become a righteous people.

Jesus revealed in his person the righteousness of God and invited the people to follow him. They too were to give their lives in obedience to God as he himself had done. The people were to become God's people. They were to manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and the spirit of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-11) and in their character represent God on earth. They were to be living witnesses of the fullness of life God seeks to impart to all people.

This new life is to manifest itself in love to God and love to the neighbour (Luke 10:27; Mark 12:29-31). It is to manifest itself in seeking to free people from sickness, poverty, oppression, rejection, discrimination and all other forms of bondage. It is to manifest itself in inviting people to choose what is right and just and bind themselves to that which will be God ordained life to them. Jesus presented his body as a living sacrifice (obedience) and Paul exhorts us by saying "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Romans 12:1).

When all kinds of claims are made about being saved, we have the right to ask whether it is evident in a changed character and in a changed life-style. The story is told of an old pioneer who had often taken advantage of people in his dealings with them. When he claimed boldly one day that he had been saved, the people

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) Errata, Preservings No. 17, 2000, P. 102.

Just received this issue of Preservings with appreciation. Since I am kind of a car nut, I noticed the caption beneath the car on page 102 erroneously labels it as a 1912 or 1913 Ford. The make and model of an old car is no big deal to most people. But it is to those who are interested in old cars and their history. I have in my possession the full specifications for all Ford cars from the first Model A in 1903 until the Model T of 1920.

The car depicted on P. 102 is distinctly not a Ford of 1912 or 1913, nor does it appear to be a Ford at all. The model T Fords of both 1912 and 1913 had the steering wheel on the left side of the vehicle, as they do to this day. The radiator on a model T Ford of that vintage did not protrude past the front wheels as does the one in the photograph.

I don't know what make or model of car is shown in the photograph. But a Model T Ford of 1912-1913 it is not!

Cheers! and keep up the good work! "Reuben Epp" 648 Thorneloe Road, Kelowna, BC, V1W 4P6 <repp@silk.net>

2) Message from December 28, 2000, regarding photo caption on page 99, *Preservings*, No. 17, should read Peter and Helen Martens, not Mary Martens. From Peter Thiessen, Winnipeg (son of Peter D.), a former resident of Moscow Street. Editor's note: Our dear friend Peter Thiessen has since passed away.

3) 3653 Oxford Street
Port Coquitlam, B.C.
V3B 4E7
August 9, 2000

Dear Editor,
Preservings, No. 16, June 2000, p. 106, David Loewen (1836-1915) Hochstadt.

did not know whether this was really true or whether they should trust him even less than before. Someone went and measured the cordwood that he had for sale and announced that he was truly converted because the measurements were correct! In truth, by their fruits you will know.

The new life in Christ is at the same time a new life in the church. There is a corporate aspect to salvation that is often neglected in our individualistic approach to things. Being part of a community of believers immensely strengthens the witness of the individual. It is here where persons are nurtured and challenged in their faith and in their application of the gospel to life in society.

The life lived in Christ is to model what it

I was astonished to see the picture in "Preservings" of David Loewen's farm home with two buggies and family members? An identical photograph was sent to me recently by Mrs. Betty (Victor A) Loewen of Portland, Oregon.

The somewhat smaller print was restored in Portland for Betty Loewen. According to her information, the young boy seated in the buggy on the left side of the photo is David F. Loewen (1884-1973) at age of 12. He is the son of Isaac R. Loewen (1861-1953) m. Elizabeth Friesen (1865-1934). They resided in Winkler, Manitoba.

Therefore Mr. & Mrs. David Loewen (1836-1915) would be the grandparents of young David F.L. Although it was known that Is. R.L.'s brother Jacob D.R. Loewen lived in Alberta in 1953, there seemed to be no information of the parents nor their place of residence.

The couple standing beside the buggy on the left side of the photo may well be Isaac R. (age 35) and Eliz. (age 31) Loewen...parents of their oldest son David, seated in the buggy.

My connection? Eliz. Friesen Loewen was my great aunt, a sister to Jacob S. Friesen, founder of the "Steinbach Post" newspaper.

Hoping to see more information in the future, I remain a faithful reader of "Preservings".

Sincerely, "Katherine H. Loewen"

Encl: copy of Berry L's photo

P.S. Although the David Loewen family in Steinbach [Hochstadt actually], Man.; Isaac R. Loewen family of Winkler and son David F. Loewen are distant relatives. I compiled records because they had been begun by my late father: Peter T. Friesen of Winkler [son of Drekka Friesen, Steinbach]. I left Winkler in 1983 to reside in B. C.

Editor's Note: We appreciate immensely these type of responses from our readers. Fairly complete information on David Loewen (1835-1915), his siblings and parents and in-laws, the

means to live under the rule of Christ in a sinful world. It is to demonstrate to people that those in Christ have overcome the principalities and powers of the darkness of this world. Christians should demonstrate how to treat people equitably and justly in a capitalist society that assumes that people will act selfishly in all their dealings. The poor, new immigrants, aboriginal people, the discriminated against and service personnel should all experience the love and help of those who confess Christ as Lord. This new life of greater justice and love even for those in underdeveloped lands models a new way of life to others that may lead them to accept Christ as well. In this way Christians reach out to the whole world. They proclaim Christ in deed and in word.

Heinrich Reimer family, is found in *Leaders*, pages 509-646. The David Loewen photograph is one of the important pioneer pictures of our area.

The homestead situated on SW3-6-5E was part of Hochstadt, East Reserve, Manitoba. For a map of the village, see Henry Fast, "Hochstadt," in *Historical Sketches*, page 138. The property is currently owned by Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Froese, Box 9, Grunthal, Manitoba, R0A 0R0. The house portion of the structure is still standing and still being used as a residence.

4) 37188 Dawson Rd,
Abbotsford, B.C., V3G 2K9
Nov. 20, 2000

I don't know whose attention this should involve but in a recent edition of your magazine (*Pres.*, No. 16, page 106) there was a request for information about the enclosed picture. The farm house shown is presently owned and occupied by the Froese family of Grunthal.

The David Loewen shown here was my grandfather. J.D.R. Loewen, "de Roode Liewe", was my father and the other family members I have managed to identify through conversations with elderly cousins. Unless their memories were faulty, the information is correct.

Hope this helps with your research. If I can be of any further use, I will be delighted. "Frank Loewen"

5) April 19, 2001
Sir:

I've been trying to locate pictures of my Grandfather, David W. Loewen; unfortunately without success...My hope is...they will surface

somewhere.

Family stories of Grandfather Loewen are rather scarce and skimpy but I will list some facts that I know to be correct.

- He apparently lost interest in the extensive Hochstadt properties and decided to sell out in 1900. My father, Jacob, the youngest of the boys, left on the death of his first wife, Mary Isaac, and Grandfather lost heart in trying to carry on by himself.

- My Grandparents travelled a great deal but maintained a sort of home base with daughter, Helen Nickel, in Hillsboro Kansas.

- While visiting with the eldest son, Henry, in 1901 in Houston, Texas, Grandfather David and my father, Jacob, spent some time helping with the clean-up and re-building in Galveston after the hurricane of 1900.

- Grandma, Anna Reimer, died in Houston in August 1901. She was buried in the Fairfield cemetery there.

- My eldest sister, Nellie, has vague memories of her Grandfather helping at a hog butchering at Aunt Margaret's (Mrs. J.B. Toews) at Linden, Alberta. My sister was born in 1912 so her earliest memories would have to place this in the spring of 1915.

- David Loewen died in Hillsboro, Kansas in June of 1915 and is buried in the Alexanderfeld cemetery a few miles south of that city.

There's not much meat on these historical bones but, perhaps, you can flesh them out. Obviously I will be very interested.

Sincerely, "Frank Loewen"

Editor's Note: We are herewith republishing the photograph together with the names of the people as identified by you. Thank-you for your

helpful letter and information. The original photograph was published in a magazine, does any reader know which one? David Loewen was one of the more important entrepreneurs of the East Reserve--please, keep the information coming.

Notice to Subscribers.

If you are no longer interested in receiving *Preservings*, or if you have moved and your mailing address has changed, please drop us a line. With each issue we lose a number of readers who have moved and have not bothered to send in their new addresses.

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.

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.



David Loewen housebarn, Hochstadt, October 1898, on SW3-6-5E. David F. Loewen (1884-1973), son of David R. Loewen, later of Winkler, Manitoba, is seated on the wagon (left side). He was allowed to drive the wagon with his family to church. The couple to the right of the wagon are Jakob D. R. "Roode" Loewen (b. 1871) and first wife Maria Isaak (1880-99), who is pregnant in the photo. She died in childbirth May 29, 1899 and is buried somewhere in the yard behind the house together with her child. The older man at the right side of photo is David Loewen (1836-1915) and the lady to his right is his wife Anna Reimer Loewen (1835-1901). The three women in the middle l.-r. are Susanna Loewen, Helena Loewen, and Margaret Toews, daughter of Margaret Loewen (1856-1948), married to Jakob B. "Busch" Toews (1855-1938). The boys on the buggy (right) are David and Cornelius Toews, sons of Anna Loewen. Helena Loewen married Johann Nickel in 1899; they moved to Fairbanks, Texas, and in 1906 to Hillsboro, Kansas. Photo courtesy of Frank Loewen, Abbotsford, B.C.

President's Report

by Ralph Friesen, 306 Montgomery Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L 1T4.

As the newly elected president of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, I am required to write a report. Some readers who have known me from childhood may find it rather hard to believe that this is the Ralph Friesen they thought they knew.

For example, I'm quite confident that my long-suffering high school history teachers would never have predicted that I would become the president of any society with the word "historical" in its title. They would perhaps be less surprised to find me in a clowns' club, or a team of Taugenichts. In high school, history seemed to me to be a garble of dates and treaties and squabbles among unknown parties in some far removed place. I could not connect any part of this too-great wealth of fact with my own life, and so I did not demonstrate anything more than the most evanescent of curiosities.

Nor did Mennonite history in particular find lodging in my youthful sphere of consciousness. As it happened, Anabaptist theology, or really any part of the Mennonite story, were ignored in the Evangelical Mennonite Church Sunday School I attended. But even if they had been given attention, that would probably not have changed my angry, rebellious focus on challenging the logic of the lesson, or on giving the teachers a hard time.

Even before adolescence, I began to develop the feeling that being Mennonite was a handicap. I thought it meant being ignorant, strict, no fun, and definitely un-cool. It was coolness I tried to cultivate: rock 'n roll music, professional sports, and the vast, fascinating "English" world that seemed to lie outside the boundaries of our little town.

At the same time, I did not reject all things Mennonite. I felt a certain pride in being the son of a pastor, of being related to important business people like the J. R. Friesen family, and of knowing that my grandfather once had a reputation as something of an inventive genius. Although I did not speak much Low German past childhood, I liked listening to my mother speaking her comical mix of Plautdietsch and English to her friends.

For many years, subsequently, I carried an ambivalence about my origins. I could acknowledge positive influences of my Mennonite upbringing, but I was also happy to remain distant from it, mostly.

Something began to change when, in my 30s, my mother turned my late father's diaries over to me. As I read Peter D. Friesen's accounts of his life, I looked for ways in which I might be like him. And I began to wonder—how was *he* like his parents? And so on, down the line? What sort of lives had

these people lived, the ones who came before me? And how, exactly, was their branch of Mennonite tradition, the Kleine Gemeinde, different from others?

These questions lay dormant in my mind until the early 1990s, when I began serious research on the Friesen family. Using Delbert Plett's books as resources, going to early editions of the *Mennonitische Rundschau* and the *Steinbach Post*, and interviewing senior



President Ralph Friesen doffs his hat as he chairs his first annual business meeting of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, in Niverville, January 20, 2001. He is the fifth President of the society since its incorporation in 1988.

family members, I compiled a considerable body of information. I saw that there was much more to the family story than I had ever dreamed. Delbert, always on the lookout for people who might in some way share his passion for the story of conservative Mennonites, noted my interest, and recruited me for the HSHS board.

Delbert has prodded me to increase my scope beyond my own family, to include the town of Steinbach (actually, the village, be-

fore it became a town, and much before it became a city), and the world of Mennonites of the conservative tradition. He has been only partially successful. I confess to a certain Kleine Gemeinde-like narrow-mindedness. Or maybe it is a kind of family-centredness. In any case, as the new president of the HSHS, I am somewhat troubled that my greatest historical passion is still for my own family. I can say this, though—our board is fairly diverse, and the interests of board members even more so. We certainly reflect a great breadth of knowledge and experience and connection to different communities of the East Reserve.

The HSHS mandate, of course, extends much beyond the Friesens, Steinbach, and the Kleine Gemeinde. The Bergthaler, Old Colony Mennonites, German-Lutherans, Ukrainians, Scots-English—even First Nations and Metis, all of these are part of the East Reserve story. French Canadians, too, living adjacent, have a parallel and intertwining *histoire*. I know that I have the support of the organization in inviting more participation especially from the non-Mennonite communities with East Reserve roots.

The success of the Village Museum, the publication of many family histories, and the ever-increasing distribution of *Preservings* are evidence that there is a much greater interest in the lives of our ancestors than there used to be. There is greater recognition that, in going back to the past, something valuable may be found for the present, and even the future. I certainly believe this. I also believe that, mainly through ignorance, we have drastically undervalued the beliefs and practices of those who went before us.

Nevertheless, I retain some of the scepticism of my youth. Or maybe I am pleading for a kind of Biblical inclusiveness in our approach to our history. The characters of the Old Testament, especially, are put forward in all their glory and shame, as great and feeble, heroic and faithless. Not everything in our tradition, religion and culture is positive. Our forbears were human, whether they came from "conservative" or "progressive" or some other branch or tradition. I believe we do them the greatest honour by refraining from pre-judging them, while at the same time understanding that they, like us, made mistakes. If we are lucky, our descendants will do the same for us.

So this is my little manifesto, and a little bit of background on where I come from. "Whose boy are you?" the townspeople used to ask, upon meeting diminutive, barefoot, white-haired urchins like myself. For those of you who wondered, this has been my response.

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

Church Growth.

Pentecostals and other segments of the Evangelical community frequently trumpet church growth as proof that they are God's only legitimate representatives on earth. According to an article, "Church Growth 2000," *christianweek*, March 20, 2001, page 2, the Pentecostal "Assemblies of God" was the fastest growing Christian denomination at 1.9 per cent annually.

The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest single Evangelical denomination with 15,800,000 members, grew by .7 per cent. The Roman Catholic Church grew by .9 per cent and continues to be by far the largest Christian denomination with over half of some two billion Christians world wide.

In many segments of Protestant Fundamentalist religious culture, especially among Pentecostals, success--whether personal financial enrichment or in terms of church growth--is seen as the evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of God (this belief is known as "Prosperity Theology, a widespread if superficial Gospel that amounts to praying for dollars," *Time*, April 23, 2001, page 60).

Conservative Mennonites, often denigrated by their Evangelical enemies as religious dinosaurs, can take heart from these statistics. The Old Colony Church in Ontario, for example, grew from 8179 souls at the end of 1999 to 8848 souls at the end of 2000. This represents a growth of 8 per cent, over four times that of the fastest growing Evangelical denomination.

Hindrances.

It must be noted also that this growth took place in the face of immense obstacles. At least two Manitoba-based denominations are actively targeting Old Colony people for conversion to so-called Evangelical religious culture, targeting unsophisticated, confused and vulnerable immigrants as they cross the border.

It is told that the E.M.C. minister in Leamington, Ontario, personally visited every Old Colony home in the area, trying to persuade the people to switch to his church. I think most people would agree that this is hardly the conduct of gentlemen, and certainly not of Christians, and yet, typical of the distasteful tactics routinely employed under the "mission model" of so-called Evangelical religious culture.

One wonders what would have happened if the Old Mennonites in Ontario had treated our great-grandparents that way when they came from Russia in 1874. Imagine what would have happened had they seen them only as targets for denominational expansion, or if they would have misused their position of trust as mentors to impose precisely their theological view on the immigrants?

Instead the Ontario Old Mennonites genuinely respected the Russian immigrants and ac-

cepted them as Christian brothers and sisters, providing them with food and money, gave them jobs, dealt with immigration officials, and travelled to Manitoba, preparing the way, building immigration sheds, etc.

What would have happened if the newly formed MCC, supported financially by the Sommerfelder, Old Koloniers and Kleine Gemeinders in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, would have gone to Russia with this attitude in 1921? How would those suffering under Soviet oppression have felt if they had been told they were "stupid" for not having left Russia in the 1870s when they could have? Or that they first had to convert themselves to American Fundamentalism before they could eat at the MCC soup kitchens?

Or how about the Flemish/Dutch ancestors of the conservative Mennonites who in the 17th century helped their Amish and Swiss co-religionists flee persecution and to establish successful new colonies in colonial Pennsylvania?

There is no doubt that Jesus weeps when one part of his church attacks another, thereby affirming that the forces of evil are "loosed" and that Satan has not yet been "bound". John 11:35.

Bullying.

Not only does predator conduct do immense damage to the Church of God and to the community being attacked, it also damages the

predator community.

The analogy of the school yard bully may be helpful. What are the conditions for bullying to take place? 1) there must be a bully; 2) there must be some institutional or environmental support; 3) there must be victims. One of the responses to bullying is to work with the victims teaching them positive and productive ways of responding to bullying.

Although blame should never be attributed to the victim, it is trite to say, that passive acceptance only affirms the bully in his or her conduct. Over time the bully accepts and/or becomes affirmed in the character traits of bullying, i.e. beating up smaller or weaker kids, etc.

Likewise with predator churches. Over time they no longer feel the pain of the mothers whose children have been turned against them, nor do they recognize the difficulties of immigrant communities in reestablishing themselves in a new country under adverse circumstances, facing racism and bigotry. They see the situation merely as an opportunity for denominational growth. Meanwhile the mission boards of predator denominations throb with the excitement of charts and graphs showing growth, expansion and new territories.

I know that for so-called Evangelicals this is a startling concept, but would it not be better if one community would rather help the other?



In February, 2001, Frank Froese and son Carl, Steinbach, Manitoba, travelled to Bolivia to visit the Mennonite Colonies there. They were invited to visit the home of Abram Loewen in Neuendorf, Compas 76, Santa Rita Colony. The Loewens are members of the Old Colony Church who moved to Bolivia some 25 years ago. Left to right: Mrs. Sara Loewen, Mariechen, Lena with Abram Jr., Carl Froese, Katrina with Lenita, Abram Loewen and son Jacob. Front row is Peter Loewen and photographer Frank Froese. Missing is son John. They also have another son and two daughters that are married. Mrs. Loewen's mother Susanna Friesen, lives in Altona, Manitoba. Conservative Mennonite children are raised in an environment of Christian formation where home, school and church combine to disciple children in the Kingdom of God. A culture so completely conditioned by Christian teachings is beyond the comprehension of most North American Evangelicals whose superficial religious culture has succeeded only by absorbing new motifs from popular culture as they arise and by its superior economic resources.

Or perhaps they might rather target the slums of New York and other major cities where there are drug dealers, pimps and prostitutes who possibly have never heard the Gospel? Or is reaching those who have never heard the Gospel too difficult a mission for so-called Evangelicals? Is targetting non-resistant Gospel-centric Christians the path of least resistance? Matthew 18:6.

Further Reading:

Kelly Henschel, "Is racism lurking in your church?" in *christianweek*, Feb. 6, 2001, page 6.

Family Life Network.

One of the strategies employed by predator cultures as a prelude to more overt aggressive actions is to dehumanize and denigrate their victims. This was the methodology used by the Southern whites against the Negroes in the 19th and 20th centuries (millions of American Revivalists and Fundamentalists were associated with these measures).

The historical record shows that Protestant Fundamentalists sometimes employ similar measures to destabilize and disorientate under their "mission programs" amongst conservative Mennonites. One example is an article by Jennette Windle, "New life for an 'Old World'", in *The Gospel Message* (published by "Gospel Missionary Union", Winnipeg), Issue 4, 1998, pages 2-5, a diatribe against Old Colony Mennonites in Bolivia, which misinterprets an isolated incident to stereotype and impugn another Christian culture and community.



One of the features of conservative Mennonite life is the wonderful bonds that form between siblings. Daughters Mariechen and Lena are doing the family wash. Katrina, in the background, is hanging the laundry. Old Colony families are known for their togetherness, honesty, work ethic and high moral values.

These tactics have seemingly also been adopted by Mennonites who have converted themselves over to Evangelical religious culture. A recent example, this time targeting Mexican Mennonites, was a press release issued by "Family Life Network", Winnipeg, and appearing in the *Cdn Men.*, July 31, 2000, Vol. 4, No. 15, page 22, the *M. B. Herald*, August 11, 2000, and *Der Bote*, Sept. 20, 2000, Number 18, page 27.

The press release entitled "Mexican Mennonite Churches in crisis," reports on the work of "Evangelist" Jakob Funk, stating that "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 State, Mexico, in November, 2000, could count only three inmates of Mennonite background in prison in the State, only one of whom was a member of a Mennonite church. An unattributed report in *Die Mennonitische Post* (April 20/01) states that there were 13 Mennonites in jail in Juarez, Chihuahua. It does not indicate whether any were church members. But even this unsubstantiated report is far from the numbers that Funk claims (see also *Deutsche Mexikanische Rundschau*, Vol. 1, No. 7, page 1).

The real story here is not that there are individuals of Mennonite background in jail in Mexico--this happens everyday among Canadian Mennonites without anyone blinking an eye or caring. What is really significant is that such events are still news among Mexican Mennonites and that their sense of community extends out to encompass those who have erred, something relatively rare among so-called Evangelicals.

Funk describes Mennonites in Mexico, *inter alia*, as follows: "Weak ethics result in widespread immorality and spiritual confusion....Families are in crisis, marriage problems are huge. The most common problems are drugs, alcohol and marital infidelity."

Anyone with even a passing knowledge of the Mexican Mennonite communities knows

that these insinuations are simply false and untrue. In truth, conservatives in the Cuauhtemoc area such as the Old Coloniers, Sommerfelder, *Kleine Gemeinde* and *Reinländer*, manifest higher morals and spirituality than most Evangelical churches in North America in terms of key indicators such as divorce, substance abuse, family violence, crime, etc. (see Barna research study, *christianweek*, July 4/00, pages 10-11, reporting that "born again" Evangelicals rate no higher than the general population by 70 moral and ethical standards.)

In this way one could respond to each of the statements Funk makes. His observations are based on "four ministry tours to Mexico during the past five years." Funk must have limited his inquiries to the marginal one per cent of his target population. Apparently he did not go to Mexico to be confused by the facts.

Alf Poetker, board chair of Family Life Network (*Cdn. Men.*, Nov. 27/00), defended the statements made in the earlier press release, stating my response (*Cdn. Men.*, Sept. 4/00) was incorrect as "the Mexican church leadership" had invited Funk and paid his way. This claim itself is false and would come as a shock to the conservative ministers in the Cuauhtemoc area. Why would they pay for someone to come to Mexico to denigrate and stereotype them and tell them their spirituality is worthless and their communities depraved when that is patently false?

If Funk was invited, this invitation presumably came from the so-called "Schpikja Konferenz" which has been working in the area for decades attempting to turn individuals away from the Gospel-centric churches such as the Old Colony, *Reinländer*, Sommerfelder and *Kleine Gemeinde*. Their efforts over several decades (and millions which could have been better used to feed starving Tara Humara Indians in the Copper Canyon) have resulted in the creation of three marginal groups with perhaps several hundred members in total.

Perhaps Funk is describing circumstances in the "Schpikja Konferenz", but if that is the case, it is no excuse to malign the remaining 99 per cent of the community. Obviously there are those in the region who are not committed Christians but this holds equally true even in southern Manitoba.

It is noteworthy that neo-colonial missionary endeavours always find some disgruntled individual to issue an invitation. It reflects negatively on Funk's organization that they made these poor people pay to have someone travel all the way to Mexico; if the circumstances really are as bad as they claim, they could at least have paid for it themselves.

I am saddened that Alf Poetker, board chair of Family Life Network, chose to defend the unfair characterization of the Mexican Men-



Granddaughter Anna was out for a visit Sunday afternoon at the Abram Loewen home.

nonite community. I would have hoped that he would have apologized and retracted the press release and committed his organization to working together with all Christians in the Cuauhtemoc area in a peaceful and respectful manner. If this were to happen, I know that Poetker and his organization would stand to learn much about genuine Christian charity and brotherly love.

Like all Christian communities, the Mennonite churches in Mexico have many serious problems and challenges to face. NAFTA alone has created massive restructuring requirements.

Unfortunately these are not helped by untruthful stereotyping. Even worse, such reports are picked up by secular media, who either republish such false information as fact or use it as background orientation for their own stories. Either way, the forces of good lose out.

Discrimination.

Sometimes stereotypical categorization of conservative Mennonites in Evangelical religious culture is based on the flimsiest and most superficial of grounds. A letter in the *M. B. Herald* (Jan. 5, 2001, issue "Christians and non-Christians in Mexico") gives the impression that the majority of Mexican Mennonites "do not know what it means to be truly born again, who do not have assurance of salvation."

Such statements are unfair to Mexican Mennonites as well as to conservatives in general. Yes, the Old Colony, Sommerfelder, Reinländer, Kleine Gemeinde and Berghaler, preach "rebirth" by Christian formation as op-



Four kids in a wheel-barrow together with Jessica, Ron Banman's adopted daughter. The "kleine schmankjap" are the grandchildren of Abram Loewen. Ron is M.C.C. representative in Santa Cruz, Bolivia.

posed to "crisis conversion" and emphasize the genuine peaceful joy and "Gelassenheit" found in faithful discipleship over the artificial and manmade "assurance of salvation" doctrine found among Protestant Fundamentalists.

But prominent M.B. leaders such as Jacob A. Loewen have also professed conversion by formation over crisis conversion (Educating Tiger, page 18). I understand that a number of Evangelical Bible colleges no longer teach the categorical and ritualized requirement of crisis conversion. To differentiate between Mennonites, and, indeed, among believers, on such artificial lines hardly seems consistent with the call of Jesus inviting "ALL" to follow Him, especially those that "are weary and heavy laden," Matthew 11:28.

Such views also increase the problems of an immigrant community, not the least of which is the immeasurable pain which Mexican Mennonites feel when they return to their ancestral homes in Canada and encounter rebuffs and aloofness from fellow Mennonites and schoolyard bullying from their children. Such stereotypical attitudes ripple through society echoing amongst non-Mennonites and the secular media aggravating the problems of obtaining employment, housing, dealing with immigration officials, justice administration, social welfare agencies, poverty, etc.

I suspect that the person writing this letter felt they were being generous by allowing that there might be "hundreds" of Mexican Mennonites who are saved, a result of the stereotypical attitudes already referenced. I think that people have heard these types of insinuations and false statements for so long in sermons, obituaries and church media, they are completely desensitized to the fact that they are unjustly condemning and denigrating real flesh and blood human beings, many of whom are at an extremely vulnerable stage in their lives.

Are these really sound principles of human decency for Evangelicals to be teaching their own young people?

The challenge for the Church of God is to

carry out the Great Commission in ways which are consistent with the essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as articulated in the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes. Those who are called to Evangelize should not lose sight of the even greater commission, "to love your neighbour as yourself," Matthew 23:28.

Government Liability.

The Canadian Government will at some point have to take responsibility for cynically standing by as commitments made to Mennonite immigrants in 1873 were ruthlessly overrun by fascist governments in Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the 1920s.

In Saskatchewan alone 5493 criminal prosecutions were brought against Mennonites be-

tween 1918 to 1925. There was an epidemic of fines in Manitoba. The accused individuals were third generation Canadians who relied on the civil rights supposedly guaranteed to them by the Canadian Government in 1873. In many cases goods and property were forcibly seized by Writs of Execution and sold for a pittance at public auctions to pay these "illegal" fines.

Of the 42,000 Mennonites living in Saskatchewan and Manitoba in 1921, 9,000 were forced into exile by the ruthless pursuit of Anglo-conformity. They made the heartrending decision that the only escape from oppression was to flee the country they regarded as home, the land they had wrested from the wilderness and built into the most prosperous regions in Western Canada.

Of these exiles, 6000 Old Colony and 1000 Sommerfelder went to Mexico in 1922 and after. In 1926 and 1927 some 1700 Chortitzers from the East Reserve, Manitoba, including some Sommerfelder from the West Reserve and Saskatchewan, settled in the "Green Hell" of the Chaco in Paraguay, establishing the Menno Colony.

In the West Reserve some 100,000 acres of "the finest improved agricultural land" in the "richest farming districts of Manitoba" was put on the market. The financial loss suffered by the exiles can be readily calculated. Newspaper reports claim that land normally selling for \$90 to \$150 went begging for \$10 to \$30 an acre. Assuming a loss per acre of \$80.00, a quick calculation reveals that damages for direct losses incurred in the sale of properties comes to \$8,000,000.00. Over eight decades at 8 per cent interest, this comes to damages of just over two billion dollars for the Old Colony Mennonites alone.

In addition there would be huge amounts owing to compensate the Old Coloniers, in particular, for all the infrastructure they had built in the West Reserve since 1875: bridges, roads, drains, and public buildings, regarded as the best in Manitoba. All of these had to be abandoned when they were exiled.



Young Peter Loewen is all smiles as he poses with his little niece.

There would be further damages regarding the sale of buildings, equipment, and of course, for the trauma caused to thousands of young innocent children. Other more general damages would include the numerous unnatural deaths caused by primitive conditions experienced by the exiles in their new environments. Ten per cent of the exiles in the Menno Colony, Paraguay died of diseases.

No reparations or damages have yet been paid by the Canadian Government for its heartless breach of the guarantees made to the Mennonites in 1873. Even the interest in these amounts would provide much needed funding for new schools and better paid school teachers, as well as badly needed infrastructure in many of the newer Mennonite colonies all over Latin America.

Kanadier Concerns?

A flurry of recent press releases report that the MCC Thrift Shops and auction sales have again brought in millions of dollars. The majority attending these auctions, based on their dress, are conservative Mennonites. Many if not most of the workers in the Thrift Shops and those who patronize them fall into the same category.

The millions coming from these sources are spent across the world on the pet projects of the liberal and evangelical Mennonites who control inter-Mennonite institutions such as MCC. Out of the goodness of its heart, MCC returns a small fraction this money back to the conservative community.

The money is funnelled through a committee of MCC known as "Kanadier Concerns". In the past, this committee then hired so-called Evangelical Mennonites to work with conservatives in various projects. Let us remember that because of their narrow religious culture Evangelical Mennonites are sworn to destroying conservative communities regarding them as "unsaved" or "heathen".

Hopefully this scenario no longer holds true. In my view, having someone in a position of trust or authority whose denomination is committed, as a matter of principle, to destroying the other, is patently unacceptable. At the very least, it creates the appearance of a conflict of interest and an atmosphere of mistrust. (Someone who is too bigoted to accept conservatives as fellow Christians should not be working for an Inter-Mennonite organization, in the first place, nor should they be allowed to describe themselves as Mennonites--or even as Christians, for that matter.)

The name of the MCC advisory committee dealing with conservative Mennonites, and particularly returnees from Latin America, has recently been changed from "Kanadier Concerns Committee" to "Friends of the Kanadier". Hopefully this signals a new attempt to bring greater understanding to the issue. It is critical that MCC establish a close relationship with conservatives as in years to come they will likely represent one of the few possibilities for constituency growth. On the other hand, if conservatives can not be absolutely certain that their faith and spiritual ethos are respected and even appreciated and promoted by MCC, then it is high time they formed their own relief organization or gave their support to C.A.M. the relief organization of "Old Order" and Amish Mennonites who at least share their Gospel-centric faith, spirituality and ethical concerns.

Mennonitische Post.

One of the greatest missed opportunities in MCC programs relative to the "Kanadier" is seen in *Die Mennonitische Post*. One would have expected that the volitional pages of each issue would have been filled with extracts from the thousands of volumes of theology, history, arts and culture which define and articulate conservative Mennonite faith. The *Mennonite Bibliography* lists almost 30,000 items up to

1960. Much of this material is written in the beautiful Danziger High German used by our beloved conservatives and resonating fully with their faith.

Instead the volitional pages of the *Post* have too often been filled with material drawn from Separatist-Pietist and Protestant Fundamentalist religious culture, much of which is not Biblical. This has resulted in further alienation among conservatives, who may have felt--not without some justification--that *Die Post* was merely another tool at the disposal of the enemies of genuine Gospel-centric faith.

Do such measures manifest a lack of vision and a serious misunderstanding of history and theology?

What conservatives in Latin America needed as they went about conquering the jungles was a print medium they could hold besides the plow, filled with wholesome material from their faith, drawing on the vast archives full of inspiring and enriching writings, interpreting and defining their teachings and theology for them as they went about their God-given labours, providing a spiritual beacon as they struggled on new frontiers.

In fairness to *Die Post*, a marked improvement is evident over the past six to 12 months. There have been more stories of conservative communities and believers, and a more positive tone and content.

Defense Strategies.

A whole book could and should be written on the topic of how Christian communities can defend themselves against attacks by better funded, better educated and more sophisticated predators. There are some suggestions:

Provide some services in English if a percentage of the denomination are no longer functional in German. Many conservative groups have several worship houses in a particular region and there is no reason why one of them could not have an English service. Although no one is suggesting that German be abandoned, it should be remembered that our forebears in Prussia 200 years ago made a successful double language transition, from the Friesian/Saxon Low German to Prussia Plaut-Dietsch in the vernacular, and from Dutch to Danziger High German for religious discourse.

Provide more pastoral services and counselling. Part of the appeal of the predators is that they offer a much higher level of pastoral service. Stress levels and personal needs are high during immigration and in its aftermath. People in this situation require and benefit from personal mentoring and counselling. I would recommend that conservative groups hire full time workers to help these people with personal problems as well as counselling in job finding, dealing with bureaucracies, crooked employers and landlords, etc. These "Reisepredigers" would quickly gain experience in dealing with outside interdiction and would soon bolster the ranks of the faithful, just as earlier leaders such as Jakob Froese, Jakob Penner and Abraham Doerksen did sev-



Son John Loewen gets a farewell from his siblings he prepares to visit the neighbours. The Old Colony people have excellent wagons and horses that are second to none. Some Pennsylvania-Dutch men have expressed their envy of these wagons with their excellent suspension systems and smooth ride. The picturesque setting of the Loewen farmyard manifests the deep love of nature and the land of the Old Colony people and their desire to live in harmony with God's creation..

eral decades ago.

For example, the Old Colony Church now has 8,000 members across Canada. A fee of \$10.00 per member would generate \$80,000.00 which would pay for four full-time workers. These could then follow in the aftermath of enemy proselytizers, counselling and encouraging where spiritual confusion has been sown in order to negate and overcome their impact. It is a shame that Satan has been successful in bringing matters to the stage where precious resources have to be designated for such defensive action, but the young people in any denomination are simply too precious to lose to an alien religion culture.

Cooperation is vital. Conservative Gemeinden have been weak in working together. This holds true even regarding Gemeinden from the same denomination. According to the recently published biography of Dirk Philips there were already well-developed protocols in 1600 covering the way in which Gemeinden in different locals related to each other and the circumstances when an Aeltester Committee from other Gemeinden could or should be struck to assist a Gemeinde in trouble and so on, see Koolmans, *Dirk Philips* (page 115), *Pres.*, No. 17, pages 131-2. (Koolman's work also establishes once and for all that the blame for the great Frisian schism of 1567 cannot be attributed to Dirk Philips as the enemies of Gospel-centric faith have cynically claimed.)

Surely it would be good for modern conservatives to be familiar with these protocols and procedures as they provide precedents regarding how theoretically independent Gemeinden relate to each other, thereby minimizing internal problems, and allowing for greater cooperation in important matters such as enhanced defense strategies against outside interlopers, etc.

Each denomination--Old Colonier, Sommerfelder, Reinländer and Kleine Gemeinde--should have an Aeltesten Komitee with a "Sitz" several times a year and a full ministerial meeting and Bible study retreat at least annually. This practice has already been adopted successfully by the Kleine Gemeinde denomination where representatives from five different countries gather annually for spiritual development and fellowship. Following ancient tradition, the Aeltesten Komitee can adopt protocol and recommendations for all the member Gemeinden, with the realization that variations on non-essential points are not only healthy for a denomination but essential.

From the Aeltesten Committee and the All-Gemeinden Prediger Sitz should come things like a "Gemeinde Blatt" (a church newsletter with inspirational and devotional material) and denominational workers as already discussed. According to ancient tradition, if difficulties arise in a particular congregation, the sister Gemeinden are empowered and have an obligation to stand by and assist. This is already happening, for example, with the Old Colony in Mexico. When a Gemeinde falls



Every day is shopping day for Mennonites in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The folks come in by bus early in the morning to do their shopping, visiting the post office and catch the evening bus home. Editorial photos are courtesy of photographer Frank Froese, Steinbach, Manitoba.

into difficulty, or a more conservative Lehrdienst relocates, the Manitoba Gemeinde in Cuauhtemoc steps in to reorganize the sister Gemeinde. This is important as enemy proselytizers are always on the alert, ready quickly to swoop in to take advantage of any difficulties and confusion.

A knowledge of history and theology always helps people to avoid being confused by heretical teachings. By now most conservative denominations have some historical material or have a history book in progress. Good books including both fiction (e.g. *Rosanna of the Amish*) as well as history and doctrinal books should be reviewed and approved by a committee of each Gemeinde and then distributed among the people. The Holdeman denomination has an excellent system for this with a book agent in each local congregation through whom wholesome reading material can be ordered from the central book depot.

It is essential to maintain doctrinal orthodoxy. One of the very great strengths of Gospel-centric faith is its intellectual integrity (the name of the religion is Christianity, therefore the interpretation of the Bible and the resulting doctrine is Christ-centered). The orthodox canon has great intellectual depth with a corpus of thousands of books, treatises, epistles, and polemics in Dutch, German and English, the vast bulk of which still remains to be rediscovered. It has the marvellous attribute of being logical, simple and universal. Above all it is true and divinely inspired; the only requirement for salvation being genuine repentance and submission to God's grace.

It is important that each Gemeinde have a few members with an interest in deeper theological reading, learning and understanding. The writings of John Horsch, Harold S. Bender, Robert Friedmann, Daniel Kauffman, and,

above all, John C. Wenger, are based on doctrinal orthodoxy and can be recommended wholeheartedly. A deeper introspection will provide the discernment that conservatives need in order to distinguish the good seed from the bad.

If the younger generation are not well instructed in the teachings of Gospel-centric faith they are vulnerable to apostasy and heresy, often cleverly packaged by Madison Avenue marketing strategies. A Bible school committed to these teachings would be a great asset, a need not being met by existing institutions. Most existing Bible Schools are committed to propagating so-called Evangelical religious culture and it is dangerous for conservatives to send their children to these institutions.

A family in Belize was devastated recently when their son returned from one such institution "up north" instilled with false teachings and alienated against parents and Gemeinde. Another family in Belize had a wonderful experience when their son returned from a Bible study retreat with the Amish in the U.S.A. enthused with the Gospel and affirmed in his commitment to the Gemeinde. Perhaps there is room here for cooperation with Old Order and Amish Mennonites.

Each denomination can also enhance its own Bible teaching internally as the Old Coloniers in Ontario have done very successfully by an extension to the traditional "Jugend unterricht". The Kleine Gemeinde in Belize recently ran its own Bible School, renting a resort for several weeks where their young people retreated while receiving instruction from one of the more knowledgeable ministers.

For settlements and colonies that still control their own schools, this is a golden opportunity to instruct the youngsters in the teachings of the faith and the practices of the

Gemeinde. Any improvement here can bring vast dividends in later life. One Aeltester used the example of the minds of children being like empty vessels. It is no longer possible to erect walls around communities to keep out evil influences (although the more affluent in American society seem to think so with their gated communities), and so, youngsters must be inoculated with sound teaching and example. If they can be filled up with good wholesome teachings and knowledge when they are young, it will be nigh to impossible for outside interlopers to deceive them with their propaganda.

In some settlements too few resources are allocated to education. Pay your teachers a little more. It will increase the number of devoted people available for the cause. Even though conservative Mennonites typically have a much higher retention rate for their young people than so-called Evangelicals, the souls of their children are far too precious to lose even one. If a little of the immense integrity, intellectual depth, and inspired simplicity of the faith can be instilled in young people, they will not only remain steadfast, they will be filled with wonder and excitement and serve the church with enthusiasm.

In the face of persistent proselytization, conservative Mennonites can also resort to the tactics pioneered by great Christian leaders such as Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela. How would a predator denomination react if a busload of Old Colony mothers, with strings of cute blue eyed, blond-haired children in tow, carrying placards, and shouting "Imperialists leave our children alone," started picketing their headquarters? I venture to say that such responses would quickly attract extensive media coverage.

Above all, it should be remembered that were it not for the power of God, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel-centric communities (today known as conservative Mennonites) called forth by God in Reformation times, would long since have been obliterated from the face of the earth.

The Gemeinden should remain steadfast in prayer for the prayer of righteous people shall prevail. They should pray for their young people that they would become mighty in wisdom and discernment, they should pray for their community to remain steadfast in faith, and yes, they should even pray for those who are attacking their communities that they too might truly come to know and experience God's marvellous grace and all-encompassing love and forgiveness.

The challenge for conservatives is the question of how far they can go in adopting some of the organizational strategies of the so-called Evangelical movement in self-defense, but without losing the integrity of their Gospel-centric faith in the process.

As the character Isbrandt Koep says in my novel *Sarah's Prairie*, "We are not to act out of hatred or revenge. So you see, as soon as we challenge these people, using their tactics, we are no longer true to our precious Erloeser



Katrina Loewen helps with the milking twice a day; 7:00 am and 7:00 pm daily.

whom we have once covenanted on bended knee to follow" (pages 141-2).

Conclusion.

"To live in the light of the resurrection," proclaims the front cover of the April 11, 2001, issue of the *E.M.C. Messenger*, "that is the meaning of Easter - Dietrich Bonhoeffer."

How does this expression manifest itself in the way Evangelical Mennonites have treated their co-confessionists, the conservative Mennonites?

Do their strategies and actions compare to the parable of the good Samaritan who had compassion on the man from Jerusalem, who was bypassed by the priest and the Levite? "Which now of these three, thinkest thou was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" Luke 10:36.

Did they bind up the wounds of the immigrants and those that were needy and send them on the way strengthened and encouraged? Or did they merely take advantage of their vulnerability to strip them of their faith, condemn them for their culture, and wound them with their disdain? (or perhaps hired them for cheap wages?) When they asked for bread, did they receive bread or a stone? The Good Samaritan, of course, was a type or representation of Jesus Christ.

In my opinion, conservative Mennonites

The practice of encouraging individuals to forsake one church or religious culture in favour of another is known as "Separatism" or as "sectarianism". Separatism has been practised by Protestant Fundamentalists since the Reformation and has contributed significantly to the rootlessness and lack of respect for societal authority which plagues modern North American society. The Editor.

are better Christians than Evangelicals. Faithfully and steadfast they have borne and endured severe tribulation and travail. They have not responded in anger or out of revenge, although most Evangelical communities subjected to a permanent *Jihad* or Holy War would have been ordering a supply of cement overshoes long ago already.

There can be absolutely no question that conservative Mennonites are genuine Christians, fully saved, redeemed and heirs of all of Christ's promises. To deny this is religious bigotry.

Will the world really be a better place, or the Church of God for that matter, if one more or even a thousand more convert themselves over to so-called Evangelical religious culture?

Perhaps there is a golden opportunity here to begin a vigorous debate about the "mission model" of Protestant Fundamentalism. Such a debate could have significant long-term benefits for both the aggressors and the victims amongst us. Perhaps our precious Evangelical Mennonite brothers and sisters could use their experiences as a mirror for the rest of Evangelical religious culture, to say, "the model doesn't work, it is not biblical, it needs fixing."

The faith of Dietrich Bonhoeffer was validated in that he dared to stand in opposition to the might of the Nazi world order, the official religion of the day. He paid "the cost of discipleship". He was executed by a firing squad.

I suggest that "to live in the light of the resurrection," should inspire all believers to work for wholeness and healing for communities, rather than sectarianism and separatism. This is particularly relevant for recent returnees from Latin America, most of whom have also suffered severely although in a different way.

As I understand Bonhoeffer's writings, he would say that "living in the light of the resurrection" is the precious gift of God and His promise to all mankind. Genuine believers of whatever denomination or faith are equal heirs to these promises and should be respected as God's children. John 11:51-52.

Attention: Libraries and Researchers.

Do you need back copies of *Preservings*?

We now have available a CD-ROM with Issue No.s 8 to 18 of *Preservings* (Note: No pictures included for Issue 8, only the script).

Cost is \$25.00 plus \$10.00 for shipping and handling. To order send cheque or money order to Scott Kroeker, Box 21306, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2T3. Check it out first on our website - www.hshs.mb.ca

Guest Essay

Mennonite Racism?

“Mennonite Racism and some observations regarding Protestant Fundamentalism,”

by Sam Koshy, 70 Green Valley Bay, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2K 3R8.

Background.

I should declare my interest and vantage points first of all. I am from a Christian community almost 2000 years old in South India known as the “Malabar Syrians” whose theology and lifestyle was radically changed through coercive methods by the Portuguese in 1490s, then by Imperial British rule and then by Western Fundamentalism; changed to the point that most of us now believe fundamentalism, especially American evangelical fundamentalism is our own heritage. Darby is the spiritual ancestor of the denomination most of my family belong to now (Plymouth Brethren).

Through personal circumstances including marriage to a person of Mennonite ancestry from Southern Manitoba, I have had occasion to visit the area regularly for almost 30 years and observe the changes the Mennonite community has been going through.

I however briefly attended a Mennonite Bible college in Manitoba. While my “Mennoniten Geschichte” is very rusty I have a fair grasp of it in broad strokes.

My father studied theology in Mennonite colleges and seminaries both in Canada and the U.S. and I believe taught at one of them for a while. Their commitment to pacifism, nonviolence and community impressed him immensely.

I have an enormous respect for their demonstration of Christ’s love and compassion around the world especially through MCC, MEDA etc.

I come from a community where even Christians belonging to the same denomination attend different congregations because of caste differences. My family almost literally held a wake for me when I married a person of Mennonite background here and some members consoled themselves by reminding themselves of how much worse I could have done had I chosen to marry someone of a lower caste next door. One of my aunts thanked me for not heaping such shame on them. Yes, it is true we are also victims of the scourge of racism. In fact I believe we in India developed it into a fine art through the caste system.

From 1989 to 1993, I served as the Executive Director of an organization known as the “Manitoba Intercultural Council” which represented over 400 ethnocultural organizations in Manitoba where I met the editor of this Journal. On behalf of the council and upon request by the Government of Manitoba, I co-authored a comprehensive report and recommendations to the government on “Combating Racism in Manitoba”.

Little did I realize that one could find similar attitudes within the same, almost homogenous Mennonite community. I was both fascinated and saddened by this.

The Maxas.

It was in the early ‘70s that I first noticed the strained expressions, sarcastic tones and the rolling of the eyes when the subject of returning Mennonites from South America and Mexico came up. They were often referred to as “Maxas” or “Kanadiers” I think, often pronounced with a sarcastic curl of the lip.

I was both puzzled and curious about what brought about these negative feelings for people who are closely related to each other, suffered many persecutions together and in the end left their homelands together just a generation or two before to seek safety and freedom in Canada.

Granted it was only rarely that these negative feelings expressed themselves in angry or violent language or behaviour (thank goodness that Mennonites generally view themselves as being thoughtful, gentle and nonviolent, “stille nem lande” I think the expression goes), but I did hear one young man say, “I couldn’t care less if they put them all on the Titanic and sent them out to sea.” This comment came from a man who had relatives in South America. I couldn’t resist asking myself how things got so bad even within families.

I heard conversations about newspaper reports referring to Mennonite people engaged in crime, sexual abuse and alcoholism. These actions were almost always attributed to the returning Mennonite people whose last names many Southern Manitoba Mennonites seemed quite embarrassed to share. Did these people in barely two generations of life in Mexico abandon all their values as well as their faith and buy into whatever social culture they encountered in Mexico or South America, I wondered?

I also noticed that Southern Manitoba Mennonite church leaders and missionaries were engaged in the effort to “save the souls” not only of the returning Mennonites but also those back in Mexico, Paraguay etc. Were these people no longer followers of Jesus the Christ? had they completely capitulated to the world and rejected Jesus in such a short time? Or had those who stayed in Canada changed so much?

Admittedly I did not spend a great deal of time researching the history and social dynamics that brought this situation about but continue to be fascinated by this phenomenon especially among a people who at least profess a oneness in Christ and shared the same genes to boot.

Racism.

A few years ago I met the editor of this magazine Mr. Del Plett as a member of a Manitoba-wide committee to combat racism and confronted him with these questions and asked him how these feelings between people were different from the racism I saw in the Southern United States or read about in Rwanda or in Yugoslavia other than in the lack of physical violence in this situation.

These questions must have hit him pretty hard because many years later having never even seen him for years, he called me up and asked me if I wanted to share my observations, questions or views with the other thoughtful people who read *Preservings*. I agreed.

I still do not have answers to many of the questions I raised (I admit though to having some interesting psychological and theological hypotheses), and I strongly suspect the answer lies not just within the history and social dynamics of the situation but equally in the dynamics of the human soul and its natural tendency towards separation rather than oneness, the oneness in Christ that members of this community profess to actually seek.

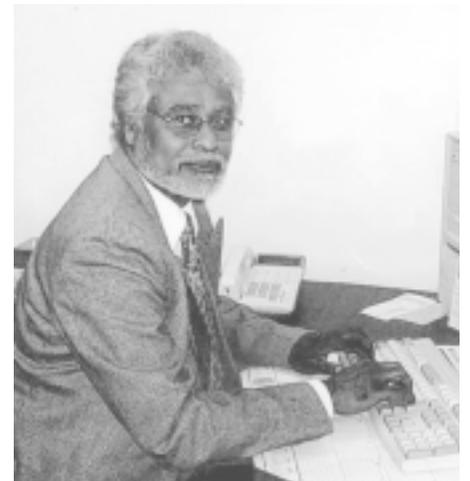
Fundamentalism.

My father in India was recognized by everyone as a pious and saintly man all his life. As an old man, he suffered from senile dementia. Because of his strict literal interpretation of verses he read from the Bible, he experienced a continuous terror of being sent to hell by God for minor infractions and simple omissions he may have committed decades ago.

While in India in 1998 to look after my dying father, I came to serious reflection regarding some of my own adolescent fears and anxieties. Perhaps these thoughts can shed some light on the origins of Mennonite racism, and provide some guidance for those seeking restoration and healing.

Shortly before my father’s death, I visited my aging parents. An evangelist I knew well from my childhood came to call. He was a gentle soft-spoken man. After speaking to my aging father a short while, he summoned me with a certain authority.

“How is your spiritual life?” he asked.



Samuel “Sam” Koshy.

"That is all well and good," he said after I answered him as positively as I could, "but I want to know how you are growing spiritually!"

Although he sensed my reluctance to continue the conversation, this very gentle man pursued me with the tenacity of a bulldog. I sensed a certain tacit approval from my mother, who hovered about the room, her ears opened wide to catch my answers, so she could ascertain whether I had a chance to enter the Gates of Heaven or was doomed to suffer in Hell for eternity. Of course, we all knew this depended entirely upon the doctrinal purity (as seen from their perspective) of my spiritual beliefs.

Childhood Memories.

Much as I resented him aggressively pursuing me, I knew from my religious upbringing that he had no choice in the matter. For as an evangelical fundamentalist, he saw it as his duty to save my soul. By his own rigid doctrine, he must do all he could to save me from the flames of Hell for not to try would condemn him to punishment in the hereafter. I knew he and my parents felt they had no choice but to judge me, whether they wanted to or not. But knowing that still didn't make me feel much better.

This ordeal, more than anything else, resurrected a disturbing mix of early childhood memories and my adolescent rebellion against my family, concerned relatives, and even Christianity itself. As early as five years of age, I wondered aloud, much to the horror and dismay of my parents, as to why an all-seeing, all-powerful Creator, who, as they claimed loved all people, would not have revealed the way of salvation to everyone on earth, rather than a very small tribe in a remote desert. Why were they alone given the onerous responsibility of bringing the gospel of eternal life to all others? And why is it they themselves are then threatened by a loving God with perishing in Hell if they failed to evangelize with the utmost fervour?

The pain and fear my questions caused my parents was sometimes more than I could bear at that age. I saw myself through their eyes: a precocious five-year-old, their eldest son, asking questions they could not answer, yet knowing the questions I asked were prompted by Satan himself. Special prayer meetings were even held. They could only refer helplessly to that voluminous book of 66 parts, and read the passages contained within. They despaired of my soul, for they knew my simple ordinary childlike questions doomed me to eternal damnation unless I was saved. Yet I could not stop these thoughts induced by a free roaming, curious and inquiring child's mind.

I not only learned to hide my thoughts and feelings about these matters from others, but I prayed earnestly and tearfully to God for many years to divest me of my mind. I didn't care if I became mentally backward, just as long as I could be like the people around me: accepting of the eternal truths espoused by my parents and our congregation as The Word given to them alone by God.

I know now that children need acceptance and approval from their parents, and above all, unconditional love, for that is what a child offers to the world. But in the milieu of religious fundamentalism in which I grew up, children were born into evil, and required regular and severe physi-

cal chastisement and correction in order to be saved from their inborn sinful natures. Yet, as a child, deep down, I could not grasp the concept that I was untrustworthy and my own thoughts were inherently evil. Yet, through their efforts, I came to mistrust myself.

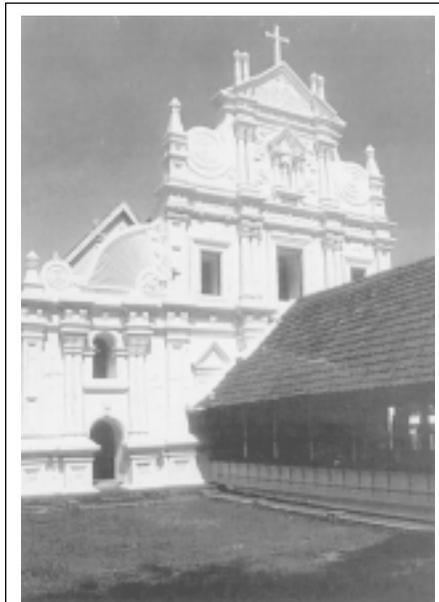
I suffered from an enormous conflict, and the implications for my spiritual health concerned me as much as it did my parents and others around me. The great doubt my upbringing engendered in me was to have repercussions throughout my life. I was at a loss as how to react to the grilling of the evangelist before me.

He believed that we, the members of our group were the "believers" and all others, the "unbelievers" must be converted to the Faith by any means at his disposal. His was the proper and correct belief represented by the book under his right hand, given to him and his flock as the Word of the Almighty. His was not to question that most wars that humankind has suffered were under the banner of God. It mattered little that religious fervour doubled the cruelty of forcible conversion.

Wrathful Yahweh

In human conflict, whoever has the strongest right arm, by default, has the strongest God. It is incredible to me that in the Old Testament the Hebrews considered it part of their duty to God to treat unbelievers with intense ferocity and cruelty, simply because they believed in another God. As is well documented in the first few books of the Bible, men were slaughtered wholesale, women raped and children enslaved. All under the instruction of the desert god Yahweh, a strict disciplinarian who enforced inhumane laws even upon his own people.

Even for what many will now consider minor



St. Mary's Orthodox Church in Kottayam, India, popularly known as "Cheriyapalli". It is one of the oldest Syrian Christian churches in Kerala built circa 1300, well before the arrival of the Portuguese in India. Kottayam is one of the major centres of Syrian Christians of Kerala. This historic church attracts thousands of visitors both native and tourists.

follies, it was ordained that the transgressors of the law should be put to death in one of the most excruciating ways possible: *stoning*. There have been psychological and anthropological rationales given as to why such ideas about God could develop in a hostile physical and social climate; a god who seems routinely to have led the people of the Book to commit some of the world's greatest and most abominable atrocities in his name.

I must restrict myself and my comments at the moment to the implications of fundamentalism which thrives amongst the throngs of TV evangelists and their followers.

Unholy Alliance.

In the 4th century, the Emperor Constantine and the Bishop of Rome called together bishops from every corner of the Roman Empire to settle theological matters once and for all, and to come to a consensus as to Doctrines of the Catholic Faith. Thus, at the Council of Nicea in 323 A.D., the bishops met. There the Emperor and the Roman bishop essentially subjugated the council to their will, and placed the bishops of Constantinople, Alexandria, Ephesus and Antioch under the interdiction of the Imperial Roman See. Using the claim that Peter who was the first Bishop of Rome, had been ordained by Christ himself as the Rock upon which his church was to be founded, they claimed, ergo, the Bishopric of Rome must be the supreme authority in the new church.

As part of the strategy to ensure the council reached a consensus as to the validity of this claim and the make-up of the Canon, which we now know as the New Testament, some bishops, who were on their way to Nicea with contrary ideas about the teachings of Jesus and orthodox Gospels such as the Gospel of Thomas were apparently ambushed and murdered before they arrived.

This was not unusual, for many adherents to understandings and beliefs about Jesus which had arisen from the ashes of the sect of the gentle Galilean, were branded as heretics. It is impossible not to notice the convenient way in which the doctrines of God and State dovetailed to control the material and spiritual affairs of the Empire.

Protestantism 1517.

When Martin Luther questioned and challenged the Church in the 16th Century and established Protestantism, he threw out a handful of books and labelled them Apocrypha, namely, of doubtful authenticity. Luther's Canon has been held up by the descendants of the Reformation to be the literal revelation of the Word of God.

These literal adherents most often quote the verse attributed to Jesus that "not a dot nor a comma of the Word shall be changed". Somehow it escapes them that Jesus made this statement in the first century AD and the composition of the New Testament itself was voted upon in the fourth century AD. Such factual matters are of no concern to true believers.

Ironically, the basic difference between Luther and the Catholic Church at this point was his assertion that every Christian had the right to read the Book of God, and to interpret it with help of the Holy Spirit. His editorial purging of the Bible

did not prevent him from claiming each word remaining was divinely revealed. So far, his assertion has spawned over 29,000 separate Christian denominations. And the number is still rising.

This proliferation is inevitable because anyone who believes in literal revelation is bound to take very seriously any differences from their own opinion. With literal Divine revelation there is absolutely no room for misinterpretation. Therefore those who believe in "crisis conversion" cannot possibly accept those who believe that "conversion by Christian formation" is Biblical. Speakers in "tongues" cannot possibly accept the "non speakers" into their fold because every divinely ordained word has to be interpreted in the proper manner, which means in the way "I" do or "we" do.

Some denominations, or at least some individuals within them, seem to make allowances for culture and history having some bearing on how the divinely revealed texts should be interpreted. For instance even the most fundamentalist evangelicals no longer condone or encourage slavery these days on the basis of Paul's writings, but the same denomination or individuals may interpret his injunctions about women's place in the church without regard to the culture within which the writer lived. It has been my experience that any questions regarding history, fact or logic are generally seen as irrelevant or even inspired by the devil himself.

On the other hand, it is also important to point out that many fundamentalists perform great acts



The frescos behind the altar in the St. George Syrian Orthodox Church near Cochin, India, featuring icons of Mother Mary and baby Christ in the middle. The roof above the altar is blue.

of charity and compassion. Yet when this is done in the hope of saving the souls of unbelievers and traded for favour from God in the afterlife, the actual sacrifice of these acts may appear negated.

Asian Fundamentalism

In the Indian context, both our Christian fundamentalism and our belief in literal revelation were brought to us by Western missionaries. In many cases, the denominations from which they originated, have long ago reconsidered their positions on these matters, having found some aspects to be untenable.

Yet, in India, we hold on to the Orthodoxies and claim that our denominational fathers are now being led astray by false prophets, who by definition are led astray by Satan himself. Certainly

tory.

The Love of Christ.

The fundamentalist position essentially thrives by developing and expanding the fear of existential doubt. For example, with questions such as "What if there is a million in one chance, we are correct? Are you willing to burn in the eternal flames of Hell just to prove us wrong?" This position creates an either or situation where doubt and faith cannot exist simultaneously, and there are no shades of grey between black and white.

Christianity in India.

Kerala, the southernmost province of India on the western coast on the Arabian Sea, has the largest percentage of Christians - six million. They currently constitute 20 percent of Kerala's population.

According to the legend, it was the apostle St. Thomas who introduced Christianity in Kerala in A.D. 52. There is, however, historical evidence that in A.D. 345, there was a major migration of Christians from Persia (currently Iran) to Kerala. There were also further migration of Christians in the 9th century from Syria. As all these early Christians and their followers followed the Syrian Orthodox rites, they are known as the Syrian Christians.

The Portuguese arrival in 15th century had a major impact, as they tried to bring the early Christians under the Pope. The majority of early Syrian Christians joined the Roman Church, but a significant minority revolted and continued to follow the Syrian Orthodox tradition. The British, later on, introduced Protestantism in Kerala. Currently there are many evangelical groups also in Kerala along with the old Syrian Christians.

Kerala has also a large Muslim population (20 percent). The remaining 60 percent are Hindus. Although there is considerable religious diversity in Kerala, the various religious groups have lived in harmony for centuries.

By Varghise Cherian, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Engineer Planner.



The St. George Orthodox Church near the seaport of Cochin, India. Note the coconut tree (left side) and churchgoers in the front. This church is at least 400 years old. There were some historic meetings held in this Church (similar to the Synods). The church attracts a large following and has significant annual income from the offerings provided by the visitors. Even the Hindus give their offerings at this church. Other than cash, the main offerings at this church are bananas and brown sugar (non-crystallized sugar, also known as "jaggiri"), a custom probably somewhat similar to Hinduism. These gifts in kind are mixed and then distributed to churchgoers and visitors. The church runs a hospital as well as school.

You are left in the unenviable position so many psychological extortionists create: that is, if you are not with us, you must be against us.

It is difficult to reject such premises, especially if one has been exhorted since childhood not to entertain any doubts, nor question what is written. Yet, I could never understand how Jesus, whose message is of unconditional love, forgiveness and acceptance, could be the leader and personal saviour of the very same people who perpetrate violence in his name upon themselves, their families and on each other, not to mention outsiders or even the "Mexas".

It is not necessary for those who have problems with fundamentalism to reject the experience of the divine, as many I met have. I still live as a follower of Jesus the Christ. I believe that groups could be organized to provide some healing and the opportunity for dialogue between people who have experienced the unkindness and condemnation inherent in fundamentalist faith. I have seen many such groups springing up in North America, but to date, I am not aware whether groups are dealing with this subject at all in India.

Compassion.

I recognise within myself even in the tone of this article the very same unacceptance and righteous judgment of the fundamentalist believers. I am humbled by this. Yet I realise the difficulty of purging myself of the fundamentalist psychology in my life, and relinquishing my own position of judgment and condemnation. I am not proud of it and recognise that I am formed by the very attitudes and positions I am questioning. I pray for the grace and maturity to overcome my own judgment of those who I feel have judged me.

I am coming to realise that the only useful and productive response to fundamentalist abuse is one of compassion and understanding towards those who abuse themselves and others in the name of God. Fundamentalists are not monsters. They are human beings who need and crave certainty. Their fear of not knowing and the despair it brings them, is so strong that they are prepared to sacrifice themselves and their God-given freedom on the altar of a severe God. However, they fail to see the cruelty and unforgiving judgement they impose upon themselves and others, including the "Maxas", in their desperate quest for predictability and certainty.

But I, like countless others everywhere and at all times, having suffered severely from overzealous evangelism and mindless fundamentalism, hope to reach others, who like me, from deep within their own tortured psyches, may want to talk about their suffering at the hands of well-meaning, but misguided parents, relatives,

communities and even mission boards. In the West there are a number of organizations dedicated to bring healing to people from these backgrounds and beliefs. One of them uses principles from Alcoholics Anonymous calling themselves Fundamentalists Anonymous.

If you have been brought up in a culture or family that demands absolute and unquestioning faith and obedience, it is important to know that

gentler way of honouring, and living in harmony with God, the Spirit behind all human religious impulses.

A few years ago during the crisis in Bosnia, I had the opportunity to get to know and become friends with Croats, Muslims and Serbs, many from the same towns. I kept asking them, how did this happen? How could this happen between some of the most "civilized" knowledgeable well-educated people I have ever had the privilege to meet? They usually returned with a question like, how did it happen in Germany?

While by no means am I equating the proportion and severity of these situations or predicting that the Mennonite community is going to take up arms against each other, I cannot help but feel that the source of the problem is the same and that it lies in the human heart.

I will leave it to others to preach the sermon about this problem and bring about the necessary healing that I am sure in the depths of their hearts, everyone desires. I'm not a preacher, only the son of one (although I have to continuously fight my perhaps genetic tendency to be preachy, I am resisting it this time).

I share these thoughts with a community that I have come to love and admire for their demonstrations of compassion worldwide, irrespective of all human differences, and the desire to live consciously the Truth of the oneness and peoplehood of all humanity through Christ.

An uncle of mine, an admitted evangelical fundamentalist, who I have argued with over the years, ended a recent conversation by quoting Jesus, who said all law is contained in "loving God and loving your neighbour". In contemplation of this thought, it made me realize that, despite our differences, and the subsequent pain, anger and isolation this causes, we still have such thoughts in common.

About the Author.

Sam Koshy was born in Kerala, India. He immigrated to Canada in 1965 and settled in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He has served as Director

of Community and Resource Development, Child and Family Services, Executive Director of Anishinabe R.E.S.P.E.C.T. Inc. and Director of the Age and Opportunity Centre. His life's experiences have taken him to many countries on different continents. He can get by in more than a dozen languages. For the past five years Sam Koshy has worked as a Career and Life Consultant with his own firm, "ReDirections Career/Life Consulting", located at 304-475 Provencher Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2J 4A7, telephone 204-956-1436, e-mail: sk@samkoshy.com

Sam Koshy and his family attend the Rivereast M. B. Church, Winnipeg.



Priests serving at the altar in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Kottayam, India. The fresco features a figure of Jesus on the throne. Over the centuries, western "missionaries" have sometimes been too ignorant to realize that the Christian cultures they were attacking and extinguishing were more profound and significant than their own.

many others have suffered as you have. By sharing our experiences with each other, we, who have been through the same spiritual meat grinder, can find resolution to our suffering and a personal relationship with the Divine who, as Jesus asserted, is, Love. It would be the greatest loss indeed to "throw the baby out with the bathwater."

Conclusion.

The continuous reminder of God and spirituality as being at the core and essence of life has been for me one of the greatest contributions and legacy of evangelical, fundamentalist faiths everywhere. I am grateful for this orientation which I believe is what kept me searching for a kinder,

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.

Jan. 1, 2001

Dear Sir or Madam:

My cheque for \$40.00 is enclosed. Please renew my subscription for 2001, and also add my mother to your subscription list....

Incidentally, I believe I have solved the riddle excerpted from Peter Wiens' 1787 Rechenbuch, which you published in Preservings No. 17, page 22. Interpreting the German "Tuhm" (tower or rook) and "Staffeln" (echelons) as chess references, I translated the riddle as follows: "Just as a rook through the echelons must go, So "one times one" the way to arithmetic must show."

This suggested to me that solving the puzzle involved moving up and down the number chart, just as a rook moves up and down the chess-board. "One times one" was the key: one times one is one, and one is the first number in the first row. This relationship turns out to be true for each number in the chart: each number is the product of its row number and position in that row. For example: The fourth number in the sixth row, 24, is the product of 4 times 6. The fifth number in the seventh row, 35, is the product of 5 times 7.

By reversing the process, the chart may be used for divisions as well as multiplication. A very clever chart, indeed!

Thanks again for your wonderful journal. I first subscribed because of the genealogical information, but I have found your historical articles to be very enlightening as well. Keep up the good work!

Sincerely yours, "Ken Goertzen", 1179 Paterson St., Winnipeg, MB, R2L 1G8.

Box 720, Altona
Manitoba, ROG 0B0
January 3, 2001

Editor Preservings;

I received Preservings No. 17, December, 2000 just before Christmas. Very timely, because I could then read it during the Holidays.

Another fine and extremely interesting issue, Delbert. Each time I am amazed at the amount of material that you gather in the six month period.

Of particular interest to me were the two articles concerning John Warkentin. First of all you are to be congratulated in making possible the publication of John's book, *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba*. The feature article is an excellent oversight on the subject matter of the book. Of great interest also is the article on the book launch.

Of interest always of course are your edito-

rials. The picture on page 57 of the parade showing typical manifestations of pentecostal religious culture is extremely interesting. To have this take place in a Mennonite town is a sad commentary of the times.

I am always amazed at the variety of letters that appear from different places all over. Your comments often add the necessary information relating to the letter.

Also the Neuberghthal Commemoration beginning on Page 70 was very well done. This Commemoration is precious to me because it was my grandfather Johann Klippenstein and his four siblings that founded the village in the late 1870s. Many of his descendants still live either there or in Altona. My grandfather's brother Bernhard married the widow Hamm and therefore all the Hamms around became a part of the extended family. The Fort Dufferin reenactment as recorded is invaluable. We have here the counterpart of the one that took place in August of last year and celebrated the East Reserve.

The story of the Mexican Credit Union is amazing. Here we find an up-to-date organization. So often our image of our people there is a negative one. This counters that impression and shows the enterprising spirit of the people there. The Mennonite people always had to adapt to the conditions of their hosts.

Finally the Book Reviews by Henry Schapansky, John J. Friesen and Karen Loewen Guenther are all excellent. Karen is my niece.

Summing up again, a splendid issue. Congratulations and best wishes for your future endeavours.

Sincerely, "Ted E. Friesen"

Dec 19, 2000

Del, thanks again for putting out an excellent issue of *Preservings*. I am amazed at the quantity and wide spectrum you cover with every issue. I am positive that you will again amaze some of your readers and fulfil expectations of others.

My thoughts on some of your articles run parallel to yours; however it is a jolt to see them in print. I encourage you to continue with your total coverage and particularly thoughts and events that have not been released by the generic media.

Please find enclosed a check for \$ ___ to cover another year subscription for myself as well as a new one for my cousin. The balance can be used to further the Old Colony literature distribution that you feel is important. I concur.

"Frank Froese" Box 294, Steinbach, Man.,
ROA 2A0

Box 657, Altona
Man., ROG 0B0
December 24, 2000

Dear Delbert:

Thank you for sending me Preservings again. You can understand that page 97 was of special interest to me because I grew up in Einlage.

When we stood on the platform in front of the back door (we had a front door, but it was never used) we could see the bridge. Neither my mother nor my aunts have ever talked of a floating bridge. My Aunt Anna, born 1900, said she had walked across a primitive hanging bridge that they built to connect the two ends. There were boards to walk on and ropes to hang onto, but one trip across had satisfied her curiosity. There were several trains that were sent to the bottom of the Dnieper. They counted the cars. After one of them, one cow survived and it became our family's property.

I remember going over the bridge in a wagon pulled by one horse. Since we did not have a horse, it must have been rented. That was the way you got to Alexandrovsk. Grandfather, my mother's second foster father, went there by train, early every morning and came back late in the afternoon. He was the architect that built all the big buildings in the city.

Catherine Berg was a Hildebrand daughter that lived just across to the south of us. I must admit I do not remember her from then. When we all came in 1927, she was 20 and I was seven. The painting of the bridge has rocks on the left side, but none is large enough to be the rock from which we flew our kites. Grandfather and I witnessed them blow that one up into little pieces. It would have been a hazard for shipping after the dam was built.

Where do you get all the information to print 140 pages. I am trying to get used to a Pentium II 400 to print my Grandfather's genealogy. Some cousins are sure hesitant to provide information.

It is too late to wish you a Merry Christmas, but maybe this letter will reach you in time to wish you and yours a blessed New Year.

Sincerely, "Theodor C. Martens"

Editor's Note: Thank-you for your letter and information. I now regret that I did not listen more attentively during some of your Grade Nine history classes in the huts in Blumenort.

8 Jan 2001
Walter & Marina Unger

Delbert,

You latest issue of Preservings is a wonder, especially to those of us who do not have Kleine Gemeinde roots. Good for you! It might appear to some that you have declared a competition with the new Manitoba Mennonite University in terms of research, diaries and journals. If this is the case you have won hands down before the contest begins. Turf counts. Congratulations!

There are many articles I really liked, at the head of which is "Island of Chortitza: Sunday, 1840". With your permission, and attribution of course, I would like to scan/copy it as an insert in our Sept 2001 Mennonite Heritage Cruise kit. The article on Andreasfeld is a good source. I wish I would have had it on hand for the last cruise when we had passengers who had roots there. I had already encountered the John Warkentin piece and was delighted that it had prominence. Marina and I also enjoyed the Guest Essay by young Tanya Riazantseva, daughter of our treasured Kiev travel partner, Larissa Riazantseva (and long-time friend of Larissa Goryacheva in Zaporozhye).

Warm regards, "Marina & Walter Unger"
Conference World Tours/Vision 2000, Toronto,
Mennonite Heritage Cruise

Delbert Plett,

My husband and I got a copy of Preservings from one of our friends and I must say that money could have been spent wiser.

You call yourself a keen observer of religious practices. My opinion is you may do better by spending more time in your own church and less in others. Going from one church to the next only to send out negative reports, is in my opinion a heathen practice if ever there was one.

You should also share the English name of your church with the rest of your readers. From what I've seen here most of the magazine has been written in English.

"C. Kehler"

Editor's Note: This typewritten letter was received Jan. 8/01 in an unmarked envelope post-marked Steinbach, Manitoba, but with no return address or identification.

Box 335, Hague
Sask., S0K 1X0

George K. Fehr passed away Dec. 2/00. George loved the subscription. He was historical by nature. I want to reorder it. Wife "Anne"

Stan Reimer

G'DAY MATE;

Greetings from Down Under!!!

I received my No. 17 Edition of Preservings in my letter box last week and am reading with fascination the articles about the Steinbach pioneers--A. W. Reimer, C. T. Loewen, Rev. P.S. Kehler and others.

I grew up in Steinbach and received most of my education there but left as a young man to

see the world so to speak. Although I returned briefly in 1954 to start my first business with my wife Vera it was short lived. I do remember many people you write about from having been their paper delivery boy as a youngster.

The HSHS board of directors deserves much credit for their work which they perform, I am sure on a voluntary basis. It is a welcome sight to see one of my former school mates, and employee, Mr. Hilton Friesen on the board. Hilton's enthusiasm will be a great asset.

Also after reading the article about "C. T." Loewen by Mary Hoepfner I remembered that my wife Vera and I visited with the Ben Hoepfners in 1985 on our trip to South America. We enjoyed their hospitality very much and Vera was so pleased that we could visit with them because Rev. Hoepfner was a good friend of her grandfather Mr. Franz H. Schroeder and spoke at Mr. Schroeder's funeral. I would once again thank Mary for the hospitality shown to Vera and myself.

My father Mr. Klaas J. B. Reimer would be very proud and supportive of the work done by HSHS and to be sure if he was alive he would also be a regular contributor.

Keep up the good work, and I am already looking forward to the next edition.

CHOW FOR NOW from OZ.

Stan Reimer, G P O Box 1211, Mooloolaba
Queensland, Australia 4557

610 Hoskin Ave.,
Winnipeg, Man.
R2K 1Z8
Jan. 1, 2001

Dear Mr. Plett,

Thank you for your interesting issue of Dec. 2000. although I haven't finished reading it, I was particularly drawn to the note on Isaac Wiens, "the original owner of SE 4-3-4W", and the farmstead photo on p. 38. My father-in-law, David H. Funk, said that his father Heinrich P. Funk (1868-1939) bought SE 4-3-4W from Isaac (or Isaak) Wiens in 1918; there were three generations of "Isaac Wiens", he said.

The farmstead photo (1895) also appears on p. 27 of *Architectural Heritage: traditional Mennonite Architecture in the R.M. of Stanley*, 1990. If this is the same farmyard as the H.P. Funk farm, then the same barn may have been standing until 1962: the one replaced then was a long low barn of that style, but the house was a huge, square 2 1/2 story farmhouse built farther forward, in 1914, where Dad lived from age seven (1918) until retiring to Winkler in 1974, when our youngest child was three.

My wife Betty spent her first 19 years on that farm. She remembers Dad phoning people saying, "This is David Funk, Rosenbach", long after there was no Rosenbach, and it was known as Edward S.D., where Dad was School Board Secretary. Recently the name has been revived as "Rosebrook Trailer Court", just north of Rosenbach Cemetery, where Heinrich and Maria Funk, Dad's parents, are buried. But "Rosenbach" is much easier to say than "Rosebook", even for us "Anglischers"

These are photos of the old barn being torn down, and the 1914 house at SE 3-4-3W, in 1962. "Dan Spurrill"



Box 26, Cecil Lake
B.C., V0C 1G0

Dear Mr. Plett,

Thank you so much for this information magazine. Some kind soul (and I don't know who) has been sending me this magazine, which I appreciate very much.

I am enclosing a cheque for \$40.00 for past and future mailings.

Even though the magazine came in the name of Albert Unruh (my name is Abe) the box number was right so I assumed it was meant for me. Thanks again, and keep up the good work!

"Abe H. Unruh"

28 Homestead Crescent
Edmonton, Alberta
T5A 2Y3
Jan. 14, 2001

Hi,

I'd like to join the HSHS and have enclosed a \$40 cheque (\$20 membership and \$20 donation) for 2001. I find your newsletter to be really interesting and informative....

I am a descendant of a number of the pioneering Mennonite families of 1875 including Jacob Friesen/Maria Knelsen, Aron Peters/Maria Hamm, Peter Hamm/Elizabeth Loewen, and Jacob Knelsen/Christina Pullman.

Yours truly, "Grant Sommerfeld"
Grant@sommerfeld.net

8220 Forest Grove Dr.,
Burnaby, B.C. V5A 4G9
18 Jan 2001

Congratulations on another successful issue of "Preservings".

The diary of Jacob Wiens of his trip from Russia to Canada, was most informative, providing place names and terrain, through which he traveled.

Over the past ten years I have researched, the ancestors and descendants, of Peter K. Funk and Heinrich D. Friesen. The *Preservings* articles of these well known pioneers, stirred my curiosity for further research. I have gained much knowledge of my ancestors, Mennonite religion, Mennonite culture, history and their contributions to society.

In the past three years I have compiled and printed two books of family, pictures and stories. The *Funk Family 1749-2000* (300 pages) and *The Von Riesen/Friesen Book 1769-2000* (455 pages) have become my retirement project and are works in progress.

Enclosed is my cheque for my annual subscription and a small donation, to help in the continuation of *Preservings*.

Your truly, "Marion L. Wright"

1706 Kentfield Way
Goshen, Indiana
USA, 46526
LoewenMelf@aol.com
23 Jan., 2001

Editor, HSHS

I join many colleague members of our Historical Society in thanking Orlando Hiebert for his years as President of HSHS and his continuing dedication to the preservation of artifacts, memories and community values.

And I congratulate you too, Delbert, in the completion of the seven volume "Blue Books" series on the *Kleine Gemeinde*. I have all of them. That was a remarkable feat of research and perseverance.

Yet, troubling to many readers of the ongoing *Preservings*, is the vehemence of your attacks against all forms of religious renewal. Your screeds against Gospel-centric Pentecostals, Evangelicals, Holdemans, EMBs, MBs, EMMCs, overseas missions and revival movements are difficult to understand from the perspective of history. Our cherished *Kleine Gemeinde*, *Bergthaler* and *Old Kolonie* churches are in constant change too. Those parts that renew their commitments to Christ continue to flourish. The intransigent are left behind.

The revival movements of our community are very much a part of our history. Some day HSHS will sponsor an in-depth study of the role of various churches in the socio-economic development of southeastern Manitoba. We do not expect that to happen under your watch. But in the meantime we suggest a gentler, kinder, appreciation of all of God's children.

Sincerely, "Melvin (Jakie) Loewen"

Editor's Note: I find it amazing that denominations that have made a cottage industry out of attacking other Christian communities, tearing apart families and turning children against their parents would have the gall to ask for "gentler, kinder appreciation" when someone speaks out in defense of their victims. Typical of this conduct was the baptism of my 14-year-old aunt on Sept. 11, 1938, against the express wishes and notwithstanding the tearful entreaties of my

grandparents. This act of immense stupidity and cynical manipulation of an innocent child set her off on a life of rebellion, a life that was not particularly pleasant.

The problem seems to be that Protestant Fundamentalists have purposely misread their mantra, "Go ye forth and preach to Gospel to all the ends of the earth," and have interpreted it to mean, "Go ye forth and attack your neighbour and tear apart his church, until he accepts your legalistic and man-made religious culture and dogma." And if the neighbour happens to be a poor, unsophisticated and vulnerable immigrant (hence, an easier target), so much the better.

When you write the story of the economic contribution which your denomination (the *Bruderthaler*) made to the Steinbach area you should consider also the role which the hyperactive proselytization and condemnation of conservative Mennonites as "unsaved" had in influencing 10,000 of their number to leave Manitoba and Saskatchewan in the 1920s and again another 4-5000 in 1948. Granted these measures may have been in their best interest in the short run allowing them to purchase cheaply the properties of their departing neighbours, but in the long-term, the exile of these fine citizens has cost the Canadian GNP 2 billion dollars annually. Imagine how prosperous the communities of southern Manitoba would have become had these gentle Christian people stayed here and not been driven out of the country by being typecast as "unChristian"?

In using the term "revival movements" you seem to refer to those denominations that had to separate from another because "salvation" was not obtainable there. Of these movements, Dr. Leland Harder, in a study done for your church in 1970, opined, "...two obstacles...must be stated for comment. One is the 'divide-in-order-to-renew' motif...If a schism between faithful and unfaithful members must occur,...it is the faithful members who 'stick in there' and through admonition, conversation, and forbearance work toward renewal of Christ's church" ("*Steinbach and it's Churches*," page 100).

The truth is that the instigators of the so-called "revival movements" you refer to were those who had converted themselves to religious cultures such as American Revivalism and Separatist Pietism as in the case of the founders of your denomination and were seeking to impose the same upon their co-confessionists. These movements resulted in schism and separatism, a typical manifestation of Protestant Fundamentalism. A genuine revival movement results in increased religious fervour and devotion within the context of the existing theological paradigm and spiritual structures, not one where outside teachings and religious motifs are imposed on a community. For example, I would regard the work of Pope John Paul in the Catholic Church over the past decades as a genuine revival movement.

I find it interesting that although most so-called Evangelicals are fanatically opposed to and refuse to accept any scientific evidence of evolution, the model of church growth and re-

newal which you put forth seems to be based on the motif of "the survival of the fittest". Should the life and work of Jesus Christ and obedience to His commandments not also play a role?

You may not realize this, but under the "law of the jungle" model of church growth and renewal you put forth, you are condemning your denomination, the "*Bruderthaler*" (also known as the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren), to the scrap-heap of history. Since the name change in 1987, dropping the name "Mennonite", this denomination has quit growing. Evidently there is little call in the world for yet another garden variety version of American Fundamentalism. As you say, "The intransigent are left behind."

By comparison, the Ontario Old Colony Mennonite Church alone now outnumbers E.M.B.-ers, growing at a smashing 8 per cent in 2000. In this case, I agree with your criteria, that they have "...renew[ed] their commitments to Christ [and therefore] continue to grow."

If the ideas espoused in *Preservings* are "troubling to many readers" imagine how troubling the shallow echoing of Protestant Fundamentalism found in your church paper and that of other so-called Evangelical media must seem to genuine Gospel-centric Christians? Frequently conservative Mennonites, Catholics and Orthodox Christians are targeted for ridicule and arbitrarily categorized as "unChristian". For example, an article by Jennette Windle, "New Life for an 'Old World'," in *The Gospel Message*, Issue 4, 1998, pages 2-5 (published by an organization calling itself "Gospel Missionary Union" with offices in Winnipeg), was so full of racist characterizations and bigoted stereotyping in its vehement diatribe against Old Colony Mennonites in Bolivia, it could have won awards for "best creative fiction" from the propaganda departments of the Nazis or the Ku Klux Klan.

Your allegations about attacks against so-called Evangelicals are spurious and false, unless you define the term as anything which does not unquestionably accept and echo the latest edicts issued by the Gurus of the movement in the States. Their actions in inducing schism and separatism among Mennonites would lead Gospel-centric Christians to agree that many so-called Evangelicals and Pentecostals subsist in spiritual darkness, not to mention bigotry, defined by the dictionary as "stubborn and complete intolerance of any creed, belief or opinion that differs from one's own." Conservative Mennonites, in contrast, are tolerant of other Christians, a trait originating with Erasmus and the Renaissance.

But God be thanked, for even in the midst of great spiritual darkness, He knows His own and has many genuine believers.

Our job as historians is to document the facts, fairly and honestly. If the motley assortment of Separatist-Pietists, Revivalists, Fundamentalists and Evangelicals who pass across the stage of Mennonite history, manifest themselves unfavourably because of their endeavours to destroy communities called forth by God, be they otherwise as pious and religious as they wish,

they will have to take the blame, not those who document the story. If they did not want to occupy a black page in history, they should have deported themselves in a civilized—even if not in a Christian--manner.

Rather than attacking the messenger, you should see the historical research documenting the debris and damages left in the wake of religious imperialism, as an opportunity to improve the strategies and tactics of your religious culture. Perhaps the mistakes of the past do not have to be repeated *ad infinitum*, and future missionary endeavours can be more constructive, building up Christian communities instead of seeking to destroy them. Knowing quite intimately the inherent nature of Protestant Fundamentalism, I recognize that the easier course will be to denigrate, ridicule and shun the messenger rather than to reevaluate the three centuries-old dogma of schism, sectarianism and separatism.

At the same time, I want to make it clear that many of my best friends are Evangelicals and that the spirit of God can work miracles everywhere no matter how deep the spiritual darkness may be. There are many Evangelicals whom I deeply admire such as Jimmy Carter, Jesse Jackson and, of course, Martin Luther King. But they suffered equally as much at the hands of their co-confessionists as have conservative Mennonites and as such could empathize with the plight of the downtrodden, the weak and the dispossessed.

You should be made aware also that there are many Evangelicals, who, far from seeking to convert Mennonites, are encouraging their own communities to rather move towards their Gospel-centric teachings and religious motifs. Among these Ron Sider comes to mind but there are many. If you are interested in sharing the views of James McClendon, Fuller Theological Seminary, Stanley Hauerwas, Duke University, Christopher Marshall, Bible College of New Zealand, Nancy Murphy, Fuller Theological Seminary, Stuart Murry, Spurgeon's College, and the reasons why these scholars have come to this conviction, you will find an excellent collection of their writings published in the *MQR*, October, 2000.

In closing, I confess, I am a Mennonite and proud of it (although admittedly not a very good one). I am not an Evangelical and never want to be one. I love my Evangelical brothers and sisters in the Lord as I also love my Catholic brothers and sisters in Christ. I find it fulfilling to have been liberated from 100 years of Protestant Fundamentalist imperialism. I recommend it highly. I encourage others to declare their liberation. What a wonderful feeling to be able to breathe the fresh air of intellectual freedom and spiritual integrity.

I stand on my position that the orthodox faith of Mennonites (whether conservative or otherwise) is genuine and that **ALL** attempts by those who have converted themselves to alien religious cultures to denigrate them and destroy their communities are deserving of the strictest censure.

Mennonites are entitled to defend their spiritual ethos, heritage and faith traditions. Hopefully a time of greater tolerance will come about

where those who have converted themselves over to Protestant Fundamentalist religious culture can recognize the inherent right of Mennonites to abide steadfast in the faith of their fathers (and mothers) and to evaluate critically the tactics and motives of those who attack their religious assemblies, spirituality, and kinship networks.

I appreciate your taking the time to write.

Box 664, Altona
Manitoba, R0G 0B0
March 19, 2001

To Delbert Plett:

I am sending you some more writings by Bernhard Toews. Some of this information you have, but because it is all in one package I am sending you the whole package.

The written pages marked A, B, C & D, I believe, come from original papers that we found after my mother-in-law, Elizabeth (Toews) Krahn, passed away in 1999.

These original papers are fragile so I am sending you duplication copies as are all the rest. I hope you can add to what has already been written.

On a personal view, I certainly enjoy the efforts that you have made and are making in Mennonite history and genealogy, etc. I hope you continue it.

I am disappointed in that you have decided to put down or even tell or write things about the evangelical Anabaptist movement which in my opinion is not accurate.

When our church the Rudnerweider at the time in 1936 moved away from the Sommerfelder church. The reason, in a nutshell, was that one side supported Bible study and mission work which was the side that became the Rudnerweider and later the E.M.M.C.

We believe that Bible study is the real way to teach us what God wants us to do for Him. We have no difficulty in believing a person who says he believes in Christ or should we say in God's word.

When you say your father did not invite people who wanted to present God's word to him, was he violent when he dismissed them, was he verbally abusive? I am sure he was not. This is where it at times becomes rather obvious that more teaching is needed.

My appeal to you is, do not create a negative in something that we feel and know is positive for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Some other people or one other person would also like a book, Old Colony.

"Dick Hildebrand"

Editor's Note: I appreciate the material and plan to publish the article dealing with the Altona shootings in the next issue. The compassionate responses of Aeltester Johann Wiebe, Reinländer, and Aeltester Abraham Doerksen, Sommerfelder, to this tragedy, are no less than amazing.

I am not putting down "Evangelical Anabaptists" (whatever that term means, presumably you are referring to the Rudnerweider

Church). Rather we are documenting the Christian lives and communities of their victims, the conservative Mennonites. If that makes predators feel uncomfortable, perhaps the reason is because the so-called renewal movements which have affected Mennonites over the centuries were inspired more by the desire to introduce foreign religious cultures and denominational empire building than by genuine Christ-centered love and compassion. The so-called "mission work" you speak of, was not directed at those who had not heard the Gospel, but against good Christian neighbours who were happy to remain with their Gospel-centric teachings, the faith of the fathers and mothers, practised since the Reformation.

To suggest that the Rudnerweider (EMMC) Church started in 1937 just because they wanted Bible studies is a deception. What they really wanted was Bible studies teaching American Fundamentalist religious dogma, much of which was unbiblical. Would it not be better to be honest and acknowledge that this was the case?

According to the book *Search for Renewal*, page 76, by 1953 the Rudnerweide church openly professed Darbyite Scofieldian dispensationalism, a monstrous apostasy which took Christ out of current Biblical teaching. Actually it is unfair to call this religious culture an apostasy as by definition it is more aptly described as "Anti-Christian".

I am not sure what you mean by the term Anabaptist Evangelicalism? Is this mainstream Evangelicalism with a twist of "maybe" non-resistance and "sometimes" social conscience when convenient and when it brings a little extra curb appeal with other Evangelicals? or is it simply a Madison Avenue marketing strategy to repackage the bigotry and intolerance of Protestant Fundamentalism in a "gentler, kinder package"?

Regarding your comments about my father, I have absolutely no idea what you are talking about.

I am glad you are enjoying the book *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875-2000* and am sending you two copies. If you read the book you will learn much about genuine Christian faith.

Box 41, Vanscoy
Sask., S0L 3J0
March 12, 2001

Dear Sir or Madam:

Enclosed please find a cheque for \$20.00 for a couple more issues of Preservings for 2001.

We also wish to say a big THANK-YOU to editor Mr. D. Plett for the extra copies of Preservings in 2000 as well as the copies of the recent book, OLD COLONY MENNONITES. One of the copies of the OLD COLONY book was appreciated by the Main Branch of the Saskatoon Library, History section.

Thanks again for all your hard work.

Sincerely, Betty and Dale Keeler

Preservings

Box 445, Warman
Sask., S0K 4S0
February 27, 2001

Dear Mr. Plett:

I am enclosing the money for a subscription renewal of my "Preservings" magazine, my last copy came in December 2000.

Please be so kind as to keep me on your mailing list. I'm so addicted to Mennonite history I can't wait for my next copy.

Also, do you know where I can get a copy of the book "First Mennonite Villages in Russia" 1789-1943, Khortitza-Rosenthal, by N.J. Kroeker?

It may be out of print but I would be willing to purchase an old copy providing someone is willing to part with it.

Thank you so much, "Susan Doell"

Editor's Note: We usually recommend Gil Brandt at Mennonites Books, Winnipeg, Canada, for ordering any kind of Mennonite books: 800-465-6564/204-668-7475 and e-mail mennonitebooks@brandtfamily.com (See ad elsewhere in this issue).

Box 102, La Crete
Alberta, T0H 2H0

HSHS:

I would like to become a member of the HSHS. A friend lent me a copy of the Preservings. It was very interesting.

I am enclosing a cheque for \$25.00 for a membership fee. Is this enough? If it's more please let me know.

C.F. Driedger

P.S. I'm looking forward to your next issue.

New Bothwell, Man.
March 26, 2001

Preservings;

Regarding the last issue of Preservings and the review of my book, *Making strange to yourself*, by Doug Reimer.

I do not pay much attention to book reviews as a matter of course, but I am afraid that I must address the review that was printed.

The review gives the impression that *Making strange to yourself* is an autobiographical work. It is not. I am well aware of how literary criticism works, but I must confess that the leaps of imagination and the psychological interpretations of some of my poems left me both amused and nonplused.

I have often noticed the tendency for Mennonites to assume that everything written down "must" be true. Without engaging in a lengthy explanation of each and every poem and how it came to be written and what other literature and what other writers influenced certain poems, I will say that those who think that all writing must be "true" are partly correct. If something can be imagined, it is "true" in that sense. Writing about marriage, to use an obvious example, doesn't make it my marriage. The poem writes the poem.

One hopes that Mennonites can eventually overcome this unfortunate tendency to read au-

tobiographical material into everything. While amusing, it gets tiresome. "Audrey Poetker"

Editor's Note: The reality is that all writers whether Mennonite or not, "write from experience", whatever that means. In some cases it is autobiographical and in others it may reflect something they have seen on TV. If you say *Making Strange* was not autobiographical, I am disappointed as I found the characters endearing.

Men. Genealogy Inc.
Box 393, Winnipeg
Man., R3C 2H6
27 March 2001

Dear Delbert,

It is time that I write a thank you note for...*Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000* which arrived here in February. It was the week of our daughter's wedding and I've been trying to catch up ever since.

All those articles in *Preservings* have come to good use in this collection and together with some additional contributions make an informative compilation of the story of the Old Colony people. I am impressed by your dedication to include so many aspects of their past and present.

Besides all that history, for those of us who were raised in an environment where we were conditioned to think "Evangelical", your articles and those by Adolph Ens and David Schroeder are of particular significance. I also especially enjoyed Wes Berg's thoughts on Old Colony Mennonite singing. I might get in touch with him about this.

Thank you for your generous offer of giving us the opportunity to share this material with others. As I distribute these books, I trust the recipients will be in touch with you with some feedback as well...

With best wishes, Sincerely, "Margaret Kroeker"

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society,

Thank You! The copy of *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba* was a much appreciated gift. As a "Menno" by choice and a History "Buff" it will be read with much interest. "Gordon Daman"

Box 267, Niverville, Man., R0A 1E0.

April 11, 2001
Christian Light Education
Box 1212, Harrisonburg
Virginia, 22801-1212

Thank you very much for the nice gift of the copies of the *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada* books. We are certainly enjoying them and find them very informative. Congratulations! For a work well done - especially the "Historical Background."

Thank you, again to a fellow pilgrim who has a deep appreciation for Mennonite history. James D. Hershberger

Hanover School Division No. 15
Box 2170, Steinbach,
Manitoba, R0A 2A0
March 27, 2001

Dear Delbert,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and Schools of the Hanover School Division please accept our sincere appreciation for your generous gift.

This collection of articles on the history of *The Old Colony Mennonites in Canada* is both interesting and educational. Trustees expressed their gratitude for the gift and principals were eager to take the books back to their respective schools.

Congratulations on a fine piece of work and thank you once again for this valuable contribution to the children of Hanover School Division.

Yours truly, "John Peters", Assistant Superintendent

Menno Simons Historical Library
Eastern Mennonite University
Harrisonburg, Virginia
22802-2462
March 16, 2001

Dear Mr. Plett:

Thank you very much for sending us five complimentary copies of your book, *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000*. We are glad to add two copies to our Historical Library collection. One may go into the Main Library and we will find good use for the other two.

You have produced a very interesting and informative volume. The index, bibliography and wonderful collection of photographs all add value to the book. The bright cover introduces a truly attractive product.

Again, we appreciate your generosity. Best wishes.

Sincerely yours, "Lois B. Bowman" Librarian

3307 Brekenridge Dr.
Little Rock, AR 72227-2135
April 17/01

Greetings Delbert,

Please extend *Preservings* subscription/membership by two years and let me know my expiration date. Please keep up your good work and accept our thanks for your great efforts! Sincerely, "Hilde and Mick Terry"

Editor's Note: Thanks for your encouragement. Thanks also for your kindness in forwarding the historical records of the Holdeman and Brüdergemeinde settlement in Littlefield, Texas. By my quick count this included 32 claims filed by Mennonites with Kleine Gemeinde or Hanover Steinbach connections including Johann G. Barkman who served as mayor of Steinbach for 25 years. Among the West Reserve stakeholders one finds notables such as Jakob A. Kroeker, Winkler. Can you pass on the name, author and publisher of the Littlefield history? Thanks.

News

A.G.M. January 20, 2001

“Report on the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, Annual General Meeting (A.G.M.) January 22, 2001, by Ralph Friesen, 306 Montgomery Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L 1T4.

Introduction.

Many years ago, just out of high school and a fledgling writer for the *Carillon News*, I found myself in a conflict of interest. I had pitched a game for Steinbach’s senior baseball team, the Millers, and now was to report on the event for the sports page.

How would I do this? Write in the first person or the third? Pretend I was objective or just give my point of view? Give myself credit for a well-pitched game or take an “aw-shucks, t’warn’t nuthin” attitude? I don’t recall exactly how I resolved the problem, except I know that I went ahead and wrote the article.

Well, here I am again, in a similar dilemma, having to report on the Hanover Steinbach His-

torical Society annual general meeting, while at the same time being the new HSHS president. And, by some spooky coincidence, Niverville is involved again, this time as the locale for the meeting. What follows, therefore, is, once again, a rather personal interpretation of events.

Business Meeting.

The 2001 annual meeting was held at the Niverville Golden Friendship Centre on Saturday, January 20. In the business part of the meeting, Ernest Braun, Hilton Friesen, Ken Rempel, Delbert Plett and I were re-elected to two-year terms. Continuing as directors whose terms will expire in January 2002 were Orlando Hiebert, Royden Loewen, Henry Fast, Jake Doerksen and Irene Kroeker. Ben Funk was appointed to the board in October, 2000.

Dinner.

Attention then turned to more earthly delights. A thanksgiving prayer was offered by Rev. Bill Rempel of Niverville. A tasty meal of homemade soup, vereniki with farmer sausage and corn, and pie and ice cream for dessert was served by Pal’s Diner of New Bothwell (Darlene Doerksen) to the 115 attendees. At our table there was a non-violent competition for the brown buns, even though they were not tweeback. Apparently new culinary traditions are being developed, even among the historically minded.

Tribute to Orlando.

Following the meal, and greetings from the Town of Niverville by Steve Neufeld, Delbert Plett gave a tribute to Past-President Orlando Hiebert. Orlando was President from January 1996 to October 2000. Delbert recognized him for the many historical and local initiatives he has undertaken, including the Landing Site Memorial.

Jack and Margaret Stott.

Jack and Margaret Stott presented an hour of personal anecdotes about the Anglo-Canadian pioneer experience of the Richot and Niverville area. The Stotts, themselves children of pioneers from England and Scotland, told of the hardships their parents’ generation had endured, but also of the good times. These stories were told with affection and humour and an underlying gratitude for the times and people now gone.

The Stotts did a kind of tag-team presentation, complementing each other nicely. Margaret kept to her script while Jack tended to a more extemporaneous style. A sampling from their great store of anecdotes:

“Margaret’s mother always said she was born



Jack and Margaret Stott, entertained the guests with their reminiscences about life in Niverville in the 1920s and earlier. Photos for this article are courtesy of Henry Fast, Steinbach.



Steven Neufeld brought greetings from the Council of the Town of Niverville. He is the Councillor with the Heritage and Culture portfolio.



Board member Ernest Braun called on his theatrical training to present the Angelika Sauer paper on “Wilhelm Hespeler”.



Guests enjoying dinner. Front left is board member Dr. Royden Loewen, Mennonite Chair, University of Winnipeg, and across from him, President Ralph Friesen and Mrs. Hannah Friesen. To her right is board member Hilton Friesen.

in a gopher hole in the prairie—actually, unsurveyed land in North Dakota.”

“One of the buildings in town was called the “tea box,” because that’s what it looked like. Interestingly enough, it was also a place where folks would come and have tea.”

“There was a woman whose family had a reputation in the district for making good butter. She



Gil Brandt from “Mennonite Books” again had an attractive display table always a popular place to browse. Gil Brandt (right) and across from him is Stan Toews, R. M. of Hanover Councillor for the New Bothwell/Niverville Ward.

went to the grocer’s one day and asked for a pound of butter. She said she didn’t want her own butter, since, confidentially, a mouse had fallen into the cream. She reassured the grocer that it wouldn’t matter to other customers: ‘What they don’t know won’t hurt them.’ The grocer gave her a pound of—her own butter. ‘What she don’t know won’t hurt her,’ he said, afterwards.”

There were stories of the men who went to war, including one who was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for flying on bomber missions. Some of the men, like Jack’s father, came

back. Others didn’t, and the sadness of their loss was still felt.

William Hespeler.

The keynote address, “Ethnicity Employed, William Hespeler and the Mennonites,” written by Dr. Angelika Sauer, former head of the German Department, University of Winnipeg, was read by HSHS board member Ernest Braun of Niverville.

With verve and dramatic flair, Ernest spun the tale of Hespeler’s important role as an immigration agent who brought German-speaking people to the West, including, of course, the Mennonites. Not the least of Hespeler’s many accomplishments was the founding of the village of Niverville. His story is one of fascinating contradictions: he retained his German-ness while seeking and finding acceptance among

the Anglo-elite of Winnipeg (see feature articles section for the reproduction of an abridged version of this important paper).

Sometimes he seemed to work on behalf of maintaining ethnicity, sometimes toward denying it. This split quality is well understood by anyone who has tried to “make it” in a dominant society while being part of a distinct minority group. Was Hespeler’s Anglo-conformity an indication of his hunger for acceptance? Is today’s conformity part of that same kind of hunger on the part of many Mennonites?



Guests Ed and Alice Laing visit with Henry Braun, Secretary Treasurer, Hanover School Division, Steinbach. The Laings have been frequent and valued contributors to Preservings.

Drama.

The evening was rounded out with an English-language skit called “This Veil of Tears,” written by Grunthal dramatist Anne Funk and performed by veteran actors Hilde Toews, Bill Krahn, Ed Esau and of course Anne Funk herself. In the play, love conquers all, even the “Trilby curse” of yielding to the power of a woman’s tears. The assembled throng was highly entertained and left wanting more.

Conclusion.

In closing, let me echo the words of my grandfather K. R. Friesen, which he would say at the conclusion of his sermons in the Kleine Gemeinde church many years ago: “I ask your pardon if I hurt anyone or say anything wrong:”

A.G.M. January 26, 2002 - J. Denny Weaver

At the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society meeting of April 3, 2001, the board of directors approved plans for next year’s Annual General Meeting to be held at the Heritage Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba, on Saturday, January 26, 2000. Entertainment will be provided by “De Heischraitje.”

Special guest speaker will be J. Denny Weaver, Professor of Religion and chair of the Department of History and Religion, Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio. Dr. Weaver has written extensively regarding Mennonite theology and history. *Becoming Anabaptist* (Herald Press, 1987), 174 pages, is a clear and insightful exposition of the first decades of the Anabaptist Mennonite movement and its spread from Switzerland, to Moravia and finally Flanders and the Netherlands.

In *Keeping Salvation Ethical* (Herald Press, 1997), 280 pages, Dr. Weaver looks at Mennonite and Amish atonement theology in the late 19th century. See book review by Dr. Archie Penner, *Preservings*, No. 14, pages 141-2.

In his newest work, *anabaptist theology in face*

of Postmodernity A Proposal for the Third Millennium (Herald Press, 2000), 221 pages, Dr. Weaver tackles the development and evolution of a Mennonite theology as something separate from either Protestant or Catholic roots, a dilemma never satisfactorily dealt with by earlier scholars.

In the words of J. R. Burkholder, Professor Emeritus, Goshen College, “Weaver audaciously rejects the prevailing ‘theology-in-general,’ as exemplified in the historic creeds of Christendom. It is the story of Jesus, not the Nicene and Chalcedonian formulations, that ought to shape an authentic Christian theology for the twenty-first century.”

Dr. Weaver will be publishing a paper in the December, 2001, *Preservings*, in which he will develop these concepts with particular reference to the Mennonite leaders and theologians who have informed the Dutch-Russian Mennonite stream such as Dirk Philips, P. J. Twisk, Klaas Reimer, Heinrich Balzer, Gerhard Wiebe, and Johann Wiebe.

His paper at the A.G.M. on January 26, 2002, will elucidate the topic further extrapolating various theological motifs from the historical as they apply to

his thesis and inform the Gospel-centric Christian in the post-modern era. J. Denny Weaver is the son-in-law of J.C. Wenger, Goshen College, Indiana, prolific expositor of Mennonite theology.



J. Denny Weaver. His experience as a Conscientious Objector volunteering with MCC in post-colonial Algeria, “...made him aware of the need to know history in order to interpret contemporary events.”

Orlando Hiebert - Tribute

I am honoured to be able to present a tribute for Orlando Hiebert who served the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society for five years as President.

As I recall Orlando was involved with our Society almost from its incorporation in 1988. Looking through old records I find that Orlando did a presentation on the history of the village of Chortitz (Randolph) at our Annual Meeting on February 4, 1989. This presentation was among the papers published in *Working Papers of the East Reserve Villages* in 1990, the second publication of the Society.

Around the same time, Orlando was elected to the board of directors of the Society where he has served faithfully ever since, contributing with sage counsel and a heart sensitive to the voices of his people.

He contributed another historical article about Altona, a small village which quickly dissolved, situated southwest of New Bothwell. This article was published in 1994 in *Historical Sketches of the East Reserve*.

Over the years Orlando also contributed valuable articles to our newsletter-journal *Preservings*. In the first issue in January 1993, he wrote a piece on "What's in a name", pointing out the historical significance of the name "Chortitz" and encouraging its preservation. He suggested, perhaps tongue in cheek, that like the citizens of Leningrad, who changed their name back to St. Petersburg, the residents of Hanover Steinbach might wish to enshrine some of their history in the landscape by keeping the name "Chortitz Road".

Orlando's writing and lobbying efforts on this issue were prophetic and served as a wake up call for many that our heritage and culture is a precious thing. He showed me and others that it may sometimes be necessary to take a public stand to preserve it.

In another article in *Preservings*, No. 3, Orlando, expanded on the Low German expression, "Handich es im Chortitz," referring to a young suitor whose requirements for his bride-to-be included the ability to back a set of harrows into their "Scheen" or machinery shed.

Orlando has preserved his heritage as an active member of the steam club operating the Case steam engine and threshing machine, always a popular entry at Steinbach's museum and in parades across southern Manitoba.

Orlando was also active in the Mennonite Landing Site Committee which developed the site at the confluence of the Red and Rat Rivers where the Mennonites immigrants first landed on August 1, 1874. The site is now a

popular tourist attraction for Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike. He also represented this committee on the 125 Committee which planned the anniversary celebrations in Hanover Steinbach in 1999.

Orlando has a great love of his historical



Orlando and Donna Hiebert, enjoying the 1874 wagon ride reenactment on September 12, 1999. Photo courtesy of Carillon News, Sept. 13, page 1A.

roots in Ukraine, formerly Russia. He has been back to the old Homeland, several times to work as an agricultural adviser and also several times to tour the villages where his people once lived. In the process he has come to a deep appreciation of the Ukrainian people and the Orthodox Church.

He has also written several articles published in *Preservings* describing some of his adventures during these overseas visits. In 1994 (Issue No. 4) he described his first trip back to Bergthal, the ancestral home of the community known here as the Chortitzer. He described the anxiety of foreign travellers on Russian trains in those years. He happened to be placed in a roomette with two Russian men who were combatting boredom on the trip by imbibing the national beverage--and no, it wasn't tea, although that too is popular.

Naturally the situation alone makes a traveller nervous. It was also dangerous to leave one's berth even when nature called for fear of baggage disappearing.

Orlando's most valuable service to the Historical Society has been his five years as our faithful President. He was first elected January 11, 1996, and served until October 17, 2000.

During this time he gave the society a new face, representing us capably at many Council meetings as well as numerous community events. For example, he represented the society at the Fort Dufferin commemoration for the

125th anniversary of the West Reserve on July 16, 2000.

He is a modest person and will insist that he is not a public speaker. Well, in my view and that of the other board members, Orlando always seemed to find the right words that were both sensitive and appropriate to the occasion.

At the Fort Dufferin event already mentioned, Orlando had the tough task of speaking after six other dignitaries, all of whom had gone over their allotted time. Keeping his remarks short, Orlando related an anecdote. An old man had come to him while working the steam engine at the Museum and told him that the only people who had stayed in the East Reserve, that is, those who had not emigrated from "dit sied" to "yant sied" in 1878 were those who were not able to swim across the Red River. Needless to say, this brought down the house with laughter.

Although Orlando is stepping aside as President, he has promised to continue to represent our society as Past-President and will continue his valuable role as board member and contribu-

tor in other areas.

Orlando has also defended the activities of the Historical Society at various coffee shops and meetings across our region. Heritage preservation especially when that heritage is neither the official culture nor the popular religion of the day, is not always easy.

Orlando has done all these things and more, while being a full time farmer during a time when farming has become more and more difficult. In fact, during this entire time, Orlando has developed a highly successful secondary career as a land surveyor for drainage and development work.

For all these efforts and particularly for your work as our President, Orlando, you deserve this tribute. By Delbert F. Plett

HSHS Board of Directors

After the A. G. M. and election of January 20, 2001, the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society board of directors consists of Ralph Friesen, Hilton Friesen, Ken Rempel, Delbert Plett and Ernie Braun whose terms expire at the end of 2002.

The terms of Henry Fast, Royden Loewen, Orlando Hiebert, Irene Kroeker, Ben Funk, and Jake Doerksen, expire at the end of the 2001.

Family History Day March 3, 2001

Family History Day, Saturday, March 3, 2001, report by board member Ernest Braun, Box 595, Niverville, Manitoba, R0A 1E0.

Introduction.

People crowd around rows of long tables spread with books and fan-charts, tracing names with their fingers and punctuating their animated discussion with words with a mantra-like quality, words like Schapansky, Unruh, Bergthal Gemeinde Buch, Horst Penner, Adelbart Goertz. This is the vocabulary of the Mennonite Genealogist, and this is the scene at the annual Family History Day sponsored by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society at the Mennonite Village Museum in Steinbach on Saturday, March 3, 2001.

Displays.

Morning is dedicated to displaying family charts and artifacts, especially new breakthroughs experienced during the last year. Several exhibitors, like Ben Funk and Peter Reimer, had published a new Family History in the interim, to be unveiled for the first time. Veteran exhibitors brought genealogical classics and personal memorabilia as well as family histories. Jac. Doerksen set up a display of Mennonite "private school" documents and artifacts; Jake and Hildegard Adrian as well as Richard and Thelma Unruh again brought their extensive family history charts. Board members Hilton Friesen and Ernest Braun also displayed personal family histories. The cross-section of exhibitors was a credit to the organizers.

This year several names well-known to the West Reserve were able to attend, and bring a wealth of material and a whole new network of contacts. Among these were Ed Falk of Winkler who has done extensive work on his own Falk line as well as the Hoepfner family; and John Wall, Morden, of Reinländer Gemeinde Buch fame. He has entered and cross-indexed all the volumes of the Sommerfelder records on disk,

which can be purchased from him. George and Mavis Dyck of Morden set up an impressive display of family genealogy and artifacts and work on an upcoming Waldheim Village History. Harry Hildebrand of Winkler brought a rough draft of a Hildebrand history and Esther Zacharias again displayed her huge family history quilt and published Doerksen book.

Gil Brandt of Mennonites Books set up a display of recent publications and sold out of GRANDMA 3 almost immediately. Delbert Plett arrived from vacation just in time to add two new books to the display; namely, his own History of the *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000*, and a reissuing of *In Search of Utopia* by E. K. Frances by Crossway Publications of Steinbach.

Alf Redekopp and Conrad Stoesz from the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg brought the newly acquired 1801 Chortitza Census as well as classic reference materials and a computer running a GRANDMA CD.

Gold Watch.

One special feature was the gold watch of Oberschulz Jacob Peters which was on display at the entrance of the exhibition room. This watch, on loan for the day from Jacob R. Peters of Mitchell, was given to the Oberschulz in recognition of his efforts in furnishing supplies and medial aid to the Crimean War effort in 1854 and 1855.

Henry Fast brought a copy of the Molotschna Fire Insurance records [East Reserve] out of his vast store of historical materials, William Schroeder of Winnipeg displayed his atlas as well as large-scale copies of maps of the Manitoba Mennonite settlements, and Cheryl Woywada set up a display of photo preservation resources. Dick and Maria Blatz laid out a

host of original documents, including several funeral letters with the lists of villagers intact, as well as fascinating stories of Blatz heritage going back to Pre-Russian days.

A unique addition to the displays was Marianne Janzen's material on the Mexican connection: Mennonites who came directly from Russia in the mid-twenties, settled in an idyllic part of Mexico but abruptly left again less than two years later to settle in Canada. Her collection included two volumes of letters written during those years, letters that beg to be translated.

After a lunch of chicken noodle soup, multi-grain bread and Mennonite pastries, the afternoon session began with Alf Redekopp of the Heritage Centre giving an update on resources available at the Centre, especially the website maintained by the Heritage Centre on Mennonite Genealogy, an overview of the new Census material just in process now, and an explanation of the features of the GRANDMA 3 compact disc.

Speakers.

Henry Fast gave a short overview of the resources he uses to compile his impressively complete life histories. Another speaker, Elisabeth Enns of Winnipeg, was to present an overview of her work in recording her own personal memories, but regrettably was mis-scheduled too late in the afternoon and was unable to stay. The Society extends its gratitude to Powerland who supplied the hardware for the sessions, both the VPU and the laptop, and to Gary Snider who worked non-stop to facilitate the event at the Museum.

Conclusion.

March 3 saw a wealth of genealogical treasures carried in and out of the Village Museum, sometimes by different people. That is the great benefit of this day — to learn from what other people have already done, and to walk away with a dozen new leads, and maybe a new resource I didn't know even existed. By next year, perhaps I can pronounce "Schapansky" or even "Kleine Gemeinde" as well as the rest of them.

Grünfeld (Kleefeld) History Book

Presenter Henry Fast spoke at the Family History Day, March 3, 2001, regarding his ongoing research of the early history of Grünfeld (Kleefeld) and provided an interim report on the progress of writing the actual book.

The village history encompasses also the surrounding Kleine Gemeinde hamlets of Heuboden, Schönau, Rosenfeld, Blumenfeld, Steinreich, Gnadenort, and Hochstadt. A first draft of four chapters is complete. These include biographical sketches of the pioneers, the churches, the schools, and a chapter describing the eight villages. Further chapters may deal with the emigration from Russia, agriculture and commerce, mutual aid, and 'from the cradle to the grave'.

If any readers are aware of diaries or letters still extant, please contact Henry Fast, Box 387, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0, or at hfast2@home.com.



Historian Henry Fast, Steinbach, is compiling a history of the Kleine Gemeinde villages in the Kleefeld area. Photo courtesy of Preservings, No. 17, page 85.



Check out our **NEW** web site.

Toll free: 1-800-465-6564

Email: mennonitebooks@brandtfamily.com

Your best one-stop source for Mennonite products.

Archives Report, Heritage Center, by Alf Redekopp

Recent Archival Acquisition at the Archives: A presentation at the Genealogy and Family History Day, Saturday, March 3, 2001, Mennonite Heritage Village, Steinbach.

In mid-November of last year we received



Alf Redekopp, Director of Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Canada, R3P 0M4, provided an excellent hour-long review of new archival finds in Russia and Ukraine, and accessing new web sites in the internet. Photo courtesy Preservings, No. 16, page 68.

a reel of microfilm compliments of Tim Janzen of Portland, Oregon which contained selected files from the Odessa Archives, Fund 6, Inventory 1 covering 1800-1820. These records were originally held by the Guardianship Committee for Foreign Settlers in New Russia. Eight (8) files (42, 65, 67, 92, 98, 179, 195, 138) totally 2656 pages and 3883 frames were microfilmed at the request of the California Mennonite Historical Society. Tim Janzen also provided a seven-page inventory description of these materials which I will now summarize.

File 42: 1800-1812; 764 pages in the original file, 1066 frames on the microfilm. This file consists of reports of village elections in the Molotschna, Chortitza, and other Black Sea area colonies, e.g. Chortitza Colony election lists – 1801-1811; Molotschna Colony elections lists – 1805-1810.

File 65: 1801-1806; 139 pages in the original file, 169 frames on the microfilm. This file consists of births, marriages, and deaths in the Chortitza Colony during 1801, 1802, 1803 and 1806. There is also statistical data for the Chortitza Colony in 1801 include Krons Garten.

File 67: 1801-1802; 118 pages in the original file, 270 frames on the microfilm. This file consists of economic reports and family census listings: e.g. The census of the Chortitza Colony in South Russia which was taken on September 1, 1801, compiled under the direction of Oberschultz Peter Siemens. The census containing the names and ages of 1,665 residents and data concerning their possessions has been extracted by Tim Janzen and it avail-

able at the Heritage Centre and on the web at the Alberta Mennonite Historical Society site.

File 92: 1801-1802: 75 pages in the original file, 114 frames on the microfilm. This file includes a list of Mennonites without land (singles) that are not listed in the 1801 Chortitza Census.

File 98: 1801-1808: 388 pages in the original file, 442 frames on the microfilm. This file includes official correspondence for a number of other German colonies but also includes Hutterite settlements and villages of Krons Garten and Neuenburg: e.g. Krons Garten census October 15, 1801.

File 179: 1806-1810: 90 pages in the original file, 149 frames on the microfilm. This file contains lists of recent settlers in the Chortitza and Molotschna Colonies in 1806; reports from 1806 to 1808 concerning various Mennonites

including David Penner's application, Cornelius Epp's loan, watch maker Johann Krueger, and Philipp Koehler among others.

File 195: 1805-1820; 254 sheets in the original file, 420 frames on the microfilm. This file consists of Joesphstal and Chortitza District reports concerning cowpox vaccination among the colonists' children.

File 138: 1804-1806; 828 pages in the original file, 1253 frames on the microfilm. This file contains information about building materials purchased for building houses by Mennonites in the Molotschna Colony, etc.

The most valuable items on this microfilm is a complete 1801 census of the Chortitza Colony listing about 1,650 Mennonites from nine villages.

Prepared by Alf Redekopp based on an inventory compiled by Tim Janzen.

Jimmy Carter Leaves Southern Baptists

The Southern Baptist Convention in the United States appears to be unravelling. Many congregations are halting support or leaving. The Texas convention pulled \$5 million out of seminaries and agencies on the grounds that the denomination has become too conservative.

Jimmy Carter, former U.S. president, publicly renounced his membership in October because of the "increasingly rigid" theology. Two decades ago, biblical conservatives gained control of the denomination, barring women pastors and demanding support of biblical inerrancy.

Carter said he is leaving because the conservatives threaten freedom of biblical interpretation, separation of church and state, priesthood of all believers, freedom of religious press and women's equality. The denomination has 15.8 million members. (Oct. 31 *Globe and Mail/Cdn Men.* Nov. 13, 2000, page 39.)

Carter, Jim

Atlanta, Georgia-Former President Jimmy Carter believes that homosexuality is a sin, but does not believe homosexuals should be excluded from ordination. In an interview with Baptist Press, Carter said that if a homosexual "was demonstrating the essence of Christianity, I would not object to the individual being ordained." Carter added that in his view "adultery is a more serious sin than homosexuality." Carter who recently announced that he is ending his affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, said, "Homosexuals have a perfect right to profess to be Christians, accept Christ as Saviour, and I wouldn't have a problem if they worshipped side by side with me. Jesus never singled out homosexuals to be condemned. When the Southern Baptist

Convention started singling out homosexuals as a special form or degree of sinfulness, I didn't agree with it." (EP News) - from *christianweek*, Nov. 14, 2000, page 4.



Former U. S. President Jimmy Carter. In his autobiography *Living Faith* (Time Books, New York, 1996), Jimmy Carter writes that he felt "...especially sympathetic with the basic beliefs of the Mennonites and the Amish, two groups I know well" (page 196). Carter also writes, "I can understand why a number of our Mennonite friends left the Amish faith because of their desire for higher education and in order to use their talents in our technological society. However, both the Amish and the Mennonites offer significant examples of Christian living for me because of their apparently successful attempt to live out, within their close-knit families and communities, the principles of peace, humility, and service above the grasping for modern luxuries" (page 241). Preservings is indebted to Reg Reimer, Reimer Farm Supplies, Steinbach, Manitoba, for referring Jimmy Carter's book.

St. Francis of Assisi ca.1181–1226

Francis was born at Assisi in Umbria in 1181 or 1182. His father, Piero Bernardone, was a prosperous merchant, and Francis planned to follow him in his trade, although he also had dreams of being a troubadour or a knight. In 1201 he took part in an attack on Perugia, was taken hostage, and remained a captive there for a year.

As a result of his captivity and a severe illness his mind began to turn to religion, but around 1205 he enlisted in another military expedition, to Apulia. However, he had a dream in which God called him to his service, and he returned to Assisi and began to care for the sick.

In 1206, he had a vision in which Christ called him to repair His Church. Francis interpreted this as a command to repair the church of San Damiano, near Assisi. He resolved to become a hermit, and devoted himself to repairing the church.

His father, angry and embarrassed by Francis' behavior, imprisoned him and brought him before the bishop as disobedient. Francis abandoned all his rights and possessions, in-

cluding his clothes. Two years later he felt himself called to preach, and was soon joined by companions. When they numbered 11 he gave them a short Rule and received approval from Pope Innocent III for the brotherhood, which Francis called the Friars Minor.

The friars returned to Assisi and settled in huts at Rivoreto near the Porziuncula. They travelled throughout central Italy and beyond, preaching for people to turn from the world to Christ. In his life and preaching, Francis emphasized simplicity and poverty, relying on God's providence rather than worldly goods. The brothers worked or begged for what they needed to live, and any surplus was given to the poor.

Francis turned his skills as a troubadour to the writing of prayers and hymns. In 1212 Clara Sciffi, a girl from a noble family of Assisi, left her family to join Francis. With his encouragement she founded a sisterhood at San Damiano, the Poor Ladies, later the Poor Clares. In 1219 Francis joined the crusaders and preached to the Sultan of Egypt.

Francis did not wish to found an 'order', but in time the brotherhood became more organized. As large numbers of people, attracted to the preaching and examples of Francis, joined him, Francis had to delegate responsibility to others. Eventually he wrote a more detailed Rule, which was further revised by the new leaders of the Franciscans. He gave up leadership of the Order and went to the mountains to live in secluded prayer. There he received the Stigmata, the wounds of Christ. He returned to visit the Franciscans, and Clara and her sisters, and a few of his followers remained with him. He died at the Porziuncula on October 3, 1226.

Francis called for simplicity of life, pov-

erty, and humility before God. He worked to care for the poor, and one of his first actions after his conversion was to care for lepers. Thousands were drawn to his sincerity, piety, and joy. In all his actions, Francis sought to follow fully and literally the way of life demonstrated by Christ in the Gospels (www.travel.it/saints/francis.htm).

Preach the Gospel.

Conservative Mennonites might be mindful of the words attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach the gospel at all times; if necessary, use words," as quoted in Debra Fieguth, *christianweek*, February 6, 2001.

Giovanni Beradone (1182-1226), later known as St. Francis of Assisi, was converted in "a gradual process". He gave his worldly possessions for the building up of the church. He preached repentance and the Kingdom of God. "He would imitate Christ and obey Christ's commands, in absolute poverty, in Christ-like love, and in humbled deference to the priests as his representatives." His followers founded the Order of the Franciscans, known as the Grey Friars in England.

In an age of cynicism, self-promoting mission organizations, self-aggrandizing evangelists, and mega-Churches who need Madison Avenue pollsters to tell them what to preach, there is a real need for those who actually seek to walk the footsteps of Jesus and obey His commandments. *Editor*



St. Francis of Assisi, preaching the Gospel. He walked across Italy and beyond preaching the Gospel. Courtesy of www.travel.it/saints/francis.htm.



St. Francis of Assisi. He gave away all his possessions and emphasized simplicity, poverty and humility before God. Courtesy www.travel.it/saints/francis.htm.



Franciscan monks were called Minorites from the designation *Fratres Minores*. In England they were popularly called "Grey Friars" from the colour of their habits or dress. Photo courtesy of Kuiper, *Church in History*, page 129.



Rueben Epp - Wins Award

Rueben Epp (left) receives a certificate from Jürgen Hennings of de Spieker, a society for Low German/Low Saxon cultural groups in Oldenburg, Germany. Epp, who is from Kelowna, British Columbia, received the certificate of honorary membership in the society in Bad Zwischenahn last September for his work on the Low German language. Looking on is Günter Kühn. From *Cdn Mennonites*, March 12, 2000, Volume 5, Number 5, page 9.

de Spieker is an umbrella group for a number of Low Saxon/Low German cultural groups of Oldenburg. Rueben Epp is widely known for his popular *The Story of Low German & Plautdietsch Tracing a language across the Globe* (The Readers Press, Hillsboro, Kansas, 1993), 133 pages. See also *Pres.*, No. 15, pages 88 and 165.

John Warkentin Receives Order of Canada

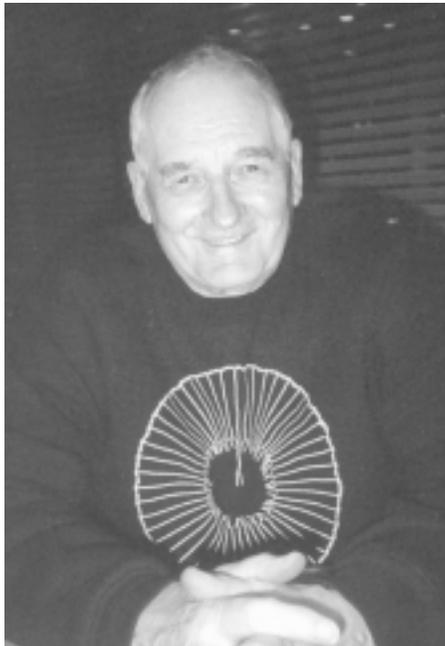
Announcement.

John Warkentin O.C., Ph.D., LL.D., F.R.S.C., Toronto, Ontario, has been awarded the Order of Canada on November 15, 2000.

"Professor Emeritus at York University and Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, he is recognized as one of our country's pre-eminent historical geographers. Beginning with his early work on Mennonite settlements in Manitoba, he has expanded the knowledge and understanding of the exploration and colonization of our country, for more than 35 years. His books, monographs and, notably his work on the widely-acclaimed *Historical Atlas of Canada*, have contributed significantly to the literature of the geography of our nation."

Source:

The Governor General of Canada web site. Received courtesy of nephew Robert Rempel, the Rempel Group, Winnipeg, Manitoba.



John Warkentin, October 5, 2000, at the Sheraton Centre, Toronto, Ontario, received the Order of Canada, Officer rank, November 15, 2000. John attended high school in Steinbach and his sister Helen, Mrs. Arnold Rempel, and her son Jack Rempel (*Southeastern Insurance*) live in Steinbach. Photo courtesy of *Preservings*, No. 17, page 77.

Hometown Boy.

John Warkentin is proudly claimed as the hometown boy of Steinbach, Altona and Winkler, Manitoba. He is direct descendant of Johann Warkentin (1760-1825), who together with Kleine Gemeinde founder Klaas Reimer negotiated on the 1,000,000 ruble Volenko estate in 1805.

Johann's grandson, Jakob Warkentin (b. 1836) lived in Nieder-Chortitz in 1858. In 1879 they immigrated and settled in Kronsfield, West Reserve, Manitoba where they belonged to the Sommerfelder Gemeinde. Jakob's son Johann Warkentin (1859-1948) served as a teacher in

Hoffnungsfeld and became a Brüdergemeinde Reiseprediger. He was probably the one informed by Steinbach's village counsel in the 1890s that the community was well served with ministers and that his services here would not be required.

Johann's son Isaak studied in Germany and became school principal in Altona, Lowe Farm, and Steinbach. Isaac's children, including son John who was to become the famous geographer, therefore have strong roots in all three of the major Mennonite centres in Manitoba. From *Dynasties*, page 700.

Thesis.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society was proud to be able to publish the 1960 doctoral thesis of John Warkentin "The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba" in 2000 as a special tribute to his scholarly work and the 125th anniversary of the Mennonite settlement in Manitoba. See tribute to John Warkentin by Dr. Royden Loewen in *Preservings*, No. 17, pages 77-80.

Cairn feting pioneers unveiled in Niverville

"Cairn feting pioneers unveiled in Niverville," November 19, 2000,

By Doris Penner, from the Carillon News, November 20, 2000, page 11A.



Orlando Hiebert, President of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, addresses the crowd at the cairn unveiling in Niverville while Councillor Steve Neufeld and Mayor Claire Braun look on. Photo courtesy of Doris Penner/Carillon News, November 20/00, page 11A.

About 100 people on hand Sunday afternoon as Niverville mayor Claire Braun and senior resident Regina Neufeld unveiled a cairn dedicated to Mennonite pioneers on behalf of the town.

The large plaque set on a rock is located in Hespeler Park, named after William Hespeler who was sent by the government of Canada to Russia in 1872 to encourage Mennonites to come to Manitoba.

"This is an excellent way to honor our forefathers for the freedom we enjoy," said Cornie Goertzen who represented MP David Iftody at the ceremony.

Several of the speakers at the event – which was held in a large tent to shield against the chilly wind – spoke about the hardships endured by the Mennonites who landed at the junction of the Red and Rat Rivers in 1874 after a long and difficult journey from Russia.

From the landing site, the Mennonite families made their way to immigration sheds at

Schantzenburg, located 2½ miles south of where Niverville is situated today. The sheds, built by Jacob Shantz, the man in charge of reception arrangements, provided a place to stay before the immigrants headed out to settle in Steinbach and other villages on the East Reserve.

Ben W. Hiebert told the audience about his relative Aeltester (Bishop) Gerhard Wiebe who was a comfort to the people on the ship when a fierce storm blew in during the ocean voyage.

"Wiebe said the prayers saved them," noted Hiebert reading from diaries kept by the bishop.

Regina Neufeld told stories about her grandmother Katharina Hiebert who delivered many babies in her role as midwife after coming to Manitoba.

Representing the Hanover-Steinbach Historical Society was Orlando Hiebert while chairman for the event was Councillor Steve Neufeld.

Albert Waldner will be sadly missed

Honoured to Know Him.

Rosedale Hutterite Colony lost one of its most beloved citizens last week, my good friend Albert Waldner, 67. By Laurie Mustard, *Winnipeg Sun*, Sunday, October 1, 2000.

Extraordinary person.

Albert died doing one of the things he loved most, harvesting dead trees from the countryside, which he hauled home to Rosedale, and sold as firewood. The tractor he was using to lift a log rolled over and pinned him.

It was truly the last thing you would ever expect to happen to a person with Albert's knowledge and experience.

But that's what accidents are all about.

Albert's passing leaves a huge hole in the community and in the hearts of all who loved him.

Since retiring as manager of the hog barn at Rosedale a number of years ago, along with his firewood business, Albert took it upon himself to cut all the grass at the colony, keeping it looking fit and trim all summer long.

Shipshape

He also helped keep the kitchen ship-



Albert Waldner set an example of civility, friendship and love. Courtesy of *Winnipeg Sun*, October 1, 2000.

shape, and was more than happy to lend a hand whenever needed.

Winter was snowblowing season, and no one ever tackled a job with more pride and dedication.

No matter what, if it snowed overnight, Albert was up before everyone else, cheerfully cleaning snow from the walks, making sure no one ever had to wade through the white stuff when the colony woke up for the day.

Albert's brother Paul, 65, says he's really going to miss hearing that snow thump against his bedroom wall in the early hours of the morning, because it told him Albert was out there taking care of business, and that all was right with the world.

Along with being a bit of a "workaholic" as Rosedale school teacher Debbie Laxdal describes him, Albert, who made the Energizer Bunny look like a turtle, helped lighten the load on people's minds as well.

"He uplifted everybody spirits," Debbie says with a smile. "He had a truly wonderful sense of humour, which he balanced with a strong faith in his culture and religion. He was a very creative person, very inquisitive, energetic. He gave to people, to nature, and was an inspiration to younger people.

"His sports ability, even at 67, was amazing. He could smack a ball and run the bases like a 20 year-old. It was never any surprise to see him standing off a base soliciting the crowd for cheers and asking 'Come on, where's the wave?'"

Swapping stories

I first got to know Albert when I ordered a cord of wood from him a few years ago, and within minutes of meeting him, he and I were swapping stories aplenty and laughing a lot. Before long, he introduced me to his home-made wine (excellent, grew his own grapes at Rosedale) and I never knew when he was going to pop by and drop off a bottle from a new "batch."

His passions were a love of his family, of nature, and hunting. No one could milk a hunting story quite like Albert. In fact, storytelling was a favourite pastime of his, and Debbie tells me the kids at school couldn't wait for him to drop by and spin a yarn.

Not that he didn't have lots of practice at home, Albert and Elizabeth had 11 children of their own, who then proudly gave them 25 grandchildren. I'm told there was no mistaking the pride in his eyes when he played with those grandkids. Couldn't love them enough, which was certainly also true of Elizabeth, his wife of 44 years.

"Mother was his main passion in life," says one of their children. "He loved her so very much."

And she him: "He was very precious to me..." Elizabeth told me during a visit with the Waldner family Friday, her voice choked with emotion.

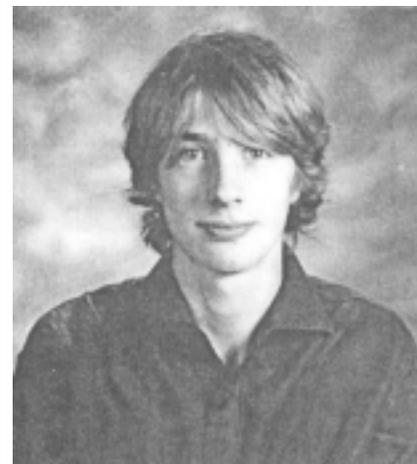
So many people are going to miss this remarkable man. His family, his faithful pooch, Chipper, and the endless number of people he befriended over a most productive 67 years. Albert was one of those people who raised the bar while setting an example of civility, friendship, love, compassion for others, a tireless work ethic, and how to get the most of life, while giving the most you possibly can, to others.

It was an honour to know him.

Laurie Mustard can be reached by phone at 632-2749, or fax at 632-4250, or e-mail at lmustard@wgpsun.com

H. E. Plett Memorial Awards

Winner of the H. E. Plett Memorial Award for 2000, was Andrew Braun of W. C. Miller Collegiate, Altona. Andrew is the son of Terry and Kathy Braun, Altona.



Andrew wrote a biography of his deceased grandfather John Enns, for many years manager of C.S.P. Foods in the Altona. Andrew's teacher was Ted Klassen. The H. E. Plett Memorial Award received by Andrew Braun for first prize was \$250.00. The prize is awarded annually for the best historical paper on Mennonite family history for high school students in Manitoba. The award is administered by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 600 Shaftsbury Blvd., Winnipeg, Manitoba, and is sponsored by the D. F. Plett Historical Foundation Inc., Steinbach.

Photo courtesy of W. C. Miller Collegiate and *Heritage Posting*, No. 32, Dec. 2000, page 5.

Father Louis Plamondon (1931-2001)

“His contribution to Africa was monumental: Esteemed priest devoted to his life of fighting poverty: Obituary of Father Louis Plamondon,” By Tracy Tjaden, Free Press, Wednesday, January 10, 2001, page A9.

As family and friends mourn the loss of an esteemed Manitoba Jesuit priest, hundreds of Africans join in prayer.

Father Louis Plamondon died on New Year's Day at age 70, after 51 years as a member of the Society of Jesus and 38 as an ordained priest. He gained wide recognition for his tireless work in East Africa, including founding a high school in the slums of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Born in St. Jean-Baptiste and educated in Winnipeg, he was buried last week on the school grounds.

Leo Plamondon, 68, said his brother's heart was always in Africa.

“He was so devoted to Africa. All he did for the people and everything he sacrificed, that was always his thing,” he said. “We'll miss him so much, but he always said that was his home. The people were family to him.”

Plamondon, who had heart troubles, spent time with his family during a visit to Winnipeg last summer.

He learned the realities of poverty at a young age.

There were 12 kids in his family and things were tough, said brother Emilien Plamondon. Their father was a railway foreman and the family was constantly on the move.

“We grew up poor and he always had sympathy for the poor,” Emilien said.

The experience sparked what would later become his life's work for impoverished people and he devoted his life to that.”

A graduate of St. Boniface College, University of Manitoba, University of Montreal, University of St. Louis, Missouri, and the University of St. Francis Xavier's Coady International Institute, Plamondon took his first trip to Africa at age 20.

He later came home to teach in Manitoba but only stayed a few years, resuming his teaching career in Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. Plamondon was a director of the Ethiopian Confederation of Labour Unions and, later, secretary general of Agri-Service-Ethiopia. From 1982-88, he was elected Major Superior of the Jesuits in Eastern Africa, covering Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania.

He returned as assistant parish priest at



Father Louis Plamondon (centre), shown saying mass in Montreal in the early 1960s, will be honoured at a memorial service in his home town of St. Jean Baptiste on Saturday at 2 p.m. He died on New Year's Day at age 70.

St Joseph's, Nairobi. In 1991, he was sent to Dar es Salaam to found Loyala High School.

The road his brother took in Africa was not always smooth, said Leo Plamondon.

On one occasion, Leo remembers his brother making a narrow escape from the Ethiopian army after former Ethiopian emperor Haile Salassie died.

“They wanted to get rid of all the Jesuit priests and he just made it out by the skin on his teeth,” Leo said. “Someone came to the school and warned them and he didn't even have time to go back to the house for his things.”

Father Richard W. Cherry SJ, Acting Superior of the Dar es Salaam Jesuit Community, said during a service in Dar es Salaam that ‘Father Plam’ put together his business plan and marched ahead with faith and enthusiasm. The result was a three-tiered school campus unlike any the area had seen before.

On Jan. 5, in a Requiem celebrated by the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, bishops, the Jesuit Provincial and other religious orders, Plamondon was laid to rest in the grounds of Loyala High School. The entire school and more than 1,000 parents and well-wishers crowded Loyala to bid a final farewell to their beloved priest and mentor.

Plamondon was the first Provincial of the Jesuits in East Africa. Cherry said the night before he died, Plamondon told his fellow Jesuits of his delight in the fact that East Africa's Jesuits were now almost entirely African born, commenting that “there were al-

most no white faces” at a meeting of the Jesuits of East Africa the day before.

The service also drew tributes from one of Plamondon's friends, Canada's High Commissioner, Dr. Wayne Hammond.

“His contribution to Africa was monumental and of the sort which tends to set Canadians apart in Africa. Father Plam's selfless work in education in Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania would always be seen as one of Canada's greatest gifts to Africa.”

Plamondon will be honoured during a memorial service in his home town of St. Jean

Baptiste Saturday at 2 p.m.

President visits Steinbach, May 11, 2001

May 11, 2001, Dr. Gerald Gerbrandt, President of the Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba, visited Steinbach for discussions with supporters of the university. Here he discusses mutual challenges in the educational field with Dr. Harvey G. Plett, past President of Steinbach Bible College. Dr. Gerbrandt is the son of Henry J. Gerbrandt, author of *Adventure in Faith* (Altona, 1970), 379 pages, the story of the Berghthaler Mennonite Church. Dr. Gerbrandt also paid a much appreciated visit to the *Preservings* offices.



Bishop Herman J. Bueckert, Prespatou, B. C.

Tribute to Bishop Herman J. Bueckert (1911-2001), Prespatou, B. C.,
by brother-in-law Jacob G. Guenter, Box 1281, Warman, Sask., S0K 4S0.

Youth.

Herman (1911-2001) was the son of Sarah and John Bueckert of Schönwiense, between Hague and Osler, Sask. He attended the Old Colony church school. Herman's 91 year-old sister Justina recalls that there were about 41 students which increased to 50 when the Christmas season approached. Teachers from 1917 to 1921 were Johann Klassen and Peter Unruh. For a review of denominational curriculum and teaching methodology, see *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada*, pages 13 and 82-89.

Herman was a conscientious student and learned rapidly. He had a wish to further his education. When the Grünthal School District was formed, Herman was asked by his father to attend night school to acquire some English. He attended four months driving the two miles by horse and sled. He was accompanied by Isaac Bueckert sitting on a big box on the sled with recent immigrant Cornelius Dyck hitching a ride. Herman was excellent in German and learned quickly. This helped him considerably in his farming career.

Herman left home at a young age, working for farmers at the Hepburn and Dalmeny area during the summer months.

Marriage.

Herman Bueckert and Helena Harms exchanged vows on June 13, 1937. They lived for a time with Aron and Helena Harms, her parents, in the Steele district, before settling on their own farm east of Neuanlage. Later in the 1940s they moved a mile north of Chortitz, farming at that location until 1961.

Scarcity of land prompted another move to Prespatou, 60 miles north of Fort St. John, B. C. Through this opportunity family members obtained land of their own and with hard work, the results were positive. They were all good carpenters and mechanically inclined. These gifts served them well, since they lived some distance from town.

Herman was a master of many trades. He was a good carpenter, machinist and farmer. His shop with numerous tools was his pride and joy. His motto appeared to be, "why buy it if I can manufacture it myself?" He built a power-take-off snow blower from scratch to prepare himself for the harsh winters. He worked many hours to perfect it.

Bishop Bueckert was known for his exacting finish carpentry. He was routinely contacted to build coffins for members of his church. He never charged for his work from the underprivileged.

Ministry.

Herman Bueckert was ordained into the ministry of the Old Colony Mennonite Church on August 24, 1950. He served in the Hague Osler Gemeinde and continued to serve as a servant of

the Gospel after they moved to Prespatou. On July 8, 1969, he was ordained as Bishop serving until his retirement in 1990.

During his ministry, he preached 1316 sermons, the last one on January 5, 1992. He presided at 42 funerals and 50 weddings. He served the church with baptism 42 times, bringing 230 believers to Christ by baptism. He officiated at communion 104 times, serving 10,211 faithful souls with the communion bread and wine. He conducted two ministerial elections, one Aeltester election, and ordained seven ministers and two deacons.

Johan Fehr replaced Hermann Bueckert as Aeltester in 1992 and his son John Bueckert in 1995.

Retirement.

Herman Bueckert was lonely after wife Helena passed away December 16, 1984. She had given a lot of support. She realized that a minister of the Gospel needed more support than someone in another calling. Helena was a wonderful asset to him. Many parishioners fail to understand the magnitude of the Bishop's obligations, but none understands it better than the spouse, who inevitably shares the burdens and sorrows.

Herman's life did not stop there. He was more self-sufficient than ever. He was a man who could cook, sew, patch his own clothes, and bake bread, cookies and buns. He had an ample supply of food ready if company arrived.

After his retirement in 1990 Herman lived in Prespatou Lodge near his place of worship.

Herman passed away February 13, 2001, to his eternal reward. The Lord took home His tired servant who so faithfully served through many trials and hardships. The funeral took place on February 15, 2001, in the Old Colony Mennonite Church, with Bishop Peter Wolfe, Hague, Sask., officiating.

Legacy.

Bishop Herman Bueckert provided sound and stable leadership during difficult times and left a legacy of spiritual faithfulness. He was warm-hearted and a good co-worker to many, often enjoying fellowship in a kind humorous way with both young and old.

A life filled with service for the Lord had come to a close. Loving memories will remain with all who knew Bishop Bueckert.

Sources:

Jakob G. Guenter, "Aeltester Herman J. Bueckert," in *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000* (Steinbach, 2001), page 137.

Robert Loewen, "Prespatou Old Colony Mennonite Church," in *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000* (Steinbach, 2001), pages 159-161.

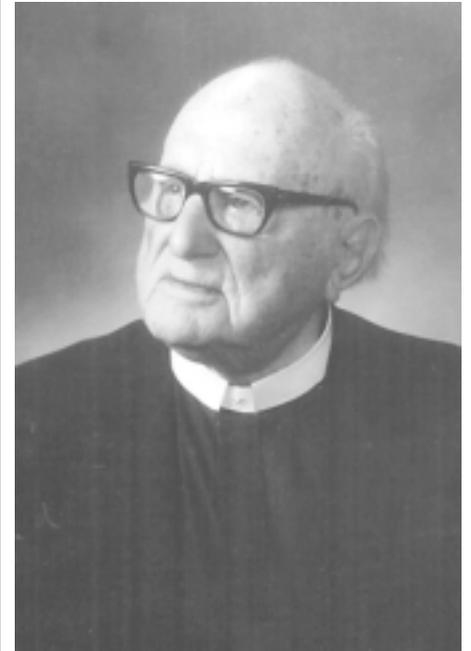
George Brunk II

Box 575, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 22801-0575, October 19, 2000

Dear Friends of the Steinbach Community:

In response to a request from Delbert Plett for information of my activities since the two tent crusades which I was privileged to conduct in Steinbach in June 1957 and July 1962, let me say this:

It is not likely that there are many of you who will recall these crusades. No doubt, many have gone to their eternal rewards in heaven.



George R. Brunk II. at the age of 90. Photo taken in May, 2000. Most Mennonite clergymen in Virginia no longer wear the clerical collar. In June, 2001, Rev. Brunk is getting remarried to the widow Rhoda Webber Neer.

The Brunk Crusades began in 1951 and were discontinued in 1984. The 100 crusades during that 33 year period were greatly blessed of the Lord, but somewhat exhausting. Twenty-five of these 100 crusades were conducted in the various provinces of Canada.

In 1963, I returned to Union Theological Seminary where I worked for three years to obtain my Ph.D. degree. In 1968, I was called to serve as Dean of Eastern Mennonite Seminary here at Harrisonburg. I enjoyed that position for seven years and continued the tent crusades during the summer months even then, though on a reduced scale.

Since my "retirement" as Dean of the Seminary I continued a heavy schedule of speaking engagements in Bible conferences and revival meetings. That continued until 1985. My dear wife, being in ill health, required more of my time at home.

In 1990, I organized and gave leadership to the Calvary Mennonite Fellowship which



Even Barnum and Bailey didn't have any tents larger than this one erected at Steinbach in June 1957 to accommodate the crowds who came to hear a Mennonite evangelist named George Brunk. The tent held seats for 1,900 people. Photo and caption courtesy of Gerald Wright, Steinbach Is there any place like it? (Steinbach, 1991), page 94.

has been meeting in the Seminary Chapel ever since that time. Paul Emerson is now pastor of this congregation.

The health of my dear wife, Margaret, continued to decline until her home-going on January 5, 1999. Since that time I have lived alone in the facility which we had occupied for 11 years. I continue with speaking engagements here and there on a reduced

schedule. My most recent engagement in Canada was at Conrad Grebel College in Waterloo, Ontario where my son, Conrad, serves as Dean. The folks there gave me an unexpected and undeserved, but warm, reception.

I have had several severe accidents in which I almost lost my life. The first of these was an airplane crash in 1975. The most recent accident was a collision I had with a panel

Virginia Mennonites.

The original Mennonite settlements in Virginia were established in 1728, although they were nearly wiped out in an Indian raid in 1754. Most of the Mennonites in Virginia belong to the Mennonite Church, organized locally as the Virginia Mennonite Conference established in 1835 with a number of Bishop districts.

In 1996 the conference had 7800 members, although some of these lived outside of Virginia. The more conservative Southeastern Mennonite Conference in Virginia has approximately 3000 members. The total Mennonite population is 15-20,000.

Eastern Mennonite College in Harrisonburg was established in 1916 by the Virginia Conference, because many of the young people who were attending other facilities were being lost to the church. Eastern Mennonite University today has a liberal arts program and a seminary.

The "Sword and the Trumpet" was founded in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1929, with George R. Brunk I as editor. The quarterly magazine announced itself as "Devoted to the Defense of a Full Gospel...and to an active opposition to the various forms of error that contribute to the religious drift of the time." Although it was intended to combat the inroads of Calvinism into the Mennonite commonwealth, it was dispensationalist and adopted some other religious motifs of American Fundamentalism.

In recent decades the teaching of dispensationalism has been quietly dropped. Although the magazine continues to adhere to a pre-millennial teaching it accepts as brethren those who hold the traditional Mennonite amillennial view.

"The Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites" was founded in 1981 publishing a newsletter "F.C.M. Informer" published bi-monthly with 6 pages per issue and a circulation of 4000. The current editor is Paul Emerson. The organization was formed to address liberal trends in existing Mennonite institutions. The organization promotes "Biblical teachings" which in their view does not automatically include all the teachings of traditional Mennonites.

Further Reading:

Harry A. Brunk, "The Virginia Mennonites," Mennonite Life, January, 1963, pages 18-21.

truck while riding my bicycle on July 15, 1998. I am still recovering from damages from the near-fatal accident when I suffered 11 broken ribs and a broken hip with other injuries.

I served as Executive Director for the Fellowship of Concerned Mennonites for 15 years since 1981. Also, since 1987, I have served as editor of the monthly magazine, *The Sword and the Trumpet*, which was founded by my father, George R. Brunk I, in 1929. Within the next year, I will probably turn this over to our associate editor, Paul Emerson.

Finally I want to say that I have the most pleasant memories of my experiences in Steinbach and pray God's continued blessing upon all until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cordially yours, "Geo. R. Brunk II"

Further Reading:

Jim Penner, "George Brunk revisits his past," in *Canadian Mennonite*, June 12, 2000, page 24.

"Brunk Brothers Evangelistic Campaign." *Men., Life*, July 1952, pages 123-124.

Christian Light Education.

Christian Light Publication was founded in Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1969, by Sanford Shank, as a faith work. The board of directors consists primarily of members of the Southeastern Mennonite Conference. The initial purpose of the non-profit organization was to provide Christian literature, by publishing books and Gospel tracts.

Christian Light Education was founded in 1979 to provide Christian school curriculum. The materials are written from a conservative Mennonite perspective with a sprinkling of pre-millennialism. This need not be too harmful if those using the material are aware of it and direct discussion and study to the correct scriptural teachings (amillennialism) as the Mennonites had traditionally understood it. The material is sold in every State and Province and in more than 100 countries. It is extensively used by non-Mennonites, currently 87 percent.

The Old Colony Mennonite Church in Ontario with a student body of 850 uses this material. The Kleine Gemeinde in Jagueyes, Mexico, is translating some of the CLE curriculum and using it in its own educational program as well as making it available to other conservative Mennonites who still use German in their elementary schools. Recently the material has also been used by some Hutterite Colonies.

The Kleine Gemeinde in Mexico are also using the CLE Sunday School materials and translating and printing this material in German for use by other Mennonites as well.

Anyone interested in more information about Christian Light Education can contact John Hartzler, Box 1212, Harrisonburg, Virginia, 22803. Phone 540-434-0768.

Further Reading:

John Coblenz and Merna Shank, *Proclaiming God's Truth: The story of the first 25 years of C.L.P.* (Harrisonburg, Virginia, 1994), 177 pages.

Book Launch April 28, 2001, Altona

Book Launch of "Church, Family and Village":

Volume Three of the West Reserve Historical Series, Altona, Manitoba, April 28, 2001.

Book Launch.

The spring workshop of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society was held at the Senior Centre, Altona, Manitoba, on April 28, 2001. The workshop featured a launch of their new publication, *Church, Family and Village*. Volume Three of the West Reserve Historical Series. The editors Jake E. Peters, Otto Hamm and Adolf Ens were on hand to receive the first copies of the book from society President Jake

Peters (University of Winnipeg).

Church, Family and Market is a collection of essays on life in the West Reserve including valuable pieces on Fürstenland and Puchtin Colonies in Russia, biographies of Aeltester Johann Wiebe, Aeltester Abr. Doerksen and Obervorsteher Isaak Mueller. Published for the first time is the prolific Old Colony writer Peter Elias (1843-1926), Grünfeld, West Reserve, and later Hochfeld, with a piece on the 1875

emigration. Also included are village histories of Alt-Bergthal, Edenburg and Neuenburg. The book has an entire section on Sommerfelder history.

Volumes One and Two of the West Reserve Historical Series, the *Reinländer Gemeindebuch* and the *1880 Village Census* focused on documenting the early pioneers of the West Reserve. *Church, Family, and Market* will be a welcome addition to these works

Mennonite Centre Ukraine Report April 27/01

"Friends of the Mennonite Centre, Ukraine, purchase Halbstadt Mädchenschule," Report by Dr. Harvey Dyck and Walter Unger, Toronto, April 27, 2001.

The society known as "Friends of the Mennonite Centre, Ukraine," has purchased the former Mädchenschule in Halbstadt, Molochansk. Nearly 200 people gathered in St. Catherines, Ontario, to hear about these plans, the first of several such meetings held across Canada. A second meeting was held in Abbotsford, B.C., April 21, followed on April 27 and 28, at Canadian Mennonite University, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg.

Reports were given by Professor Harvey Dyck, well-known for his research in former Soviet Archives and organizing the "Khortitza 1999" Conference in Zaporozhe, widely credited for putting the Mennonite story back into the folk culture of the Ukraine, and Walter Unger, co-organizer of the highly successful Dnieper Cruises which have taken thousands of Mennonite pilgrims back to visit the homes of their ancestors.

The mission of the society is to acquire and maintain a historic building in Molochansk (Molotschna) as a vehicle for humanitarian services which are to be community based,

provided without discrimination, foster local initiative, and are sustainable, while interpreting and commemorating the Mennonite past.

The programs interim co-directors, Herb and Maureen Klassen, were to arrive in Ukraine in the middle of March. Intended programs will include medical, health and social assistance initiatives in selected communities of the former Mennonite commonwealth. A small Mennonite interpretative display will greet Mennonites and other visitors to the area.

The initiative has been endorsed by Professor Paul Toews, Fresno, California, who writes, "Ukraine also provides us with an unusual opportunity to demonstrate our commitment to the gospel of reconciliation. I can think of no stronger witness than for us to return to the place where a regime inflicted on our people more suffering and death than in any other place and time since the 16th century. For 150 years Mennonite hymns and prayers were lifted from the Ukrainian steppes. Once again those voices are being heard. Today they are a small but growing choir. With our support the Mennonite voice

can once again become a mighty chorus across the landscape and bring restoration to a broken land and people."

From the new interim directors, Herb and Maureen Klassen, "Like the restored Petershagen church, we trust that the Mädchenschule will evoke again a sense of authentic pride in the rebuilding of a culture that will respect people and care for their needs both spiritual and physical."

There are many who will wish to support this project both with their prayers and financially. To reach out and to help people as those who have suffered with them is a wonderful alternative to the programs of many churches, where the primary goal is denomination building and spreading their particular religious culture and dogma. Show the love of Christ and send your cheque to Mennonite Centre in the Ukraine, 5 Monarchwood Crescent, Toronto, Ont., Canada, M3A 1H3. Tax receipts can be issued for both U.S.A. and Canada.



The Mädchenschule as it looks today, together with the mission statement of the Friends of the Mennonite Centre, Ukraine. Photo courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach, Manitoba.



Professor Harvey Dyck and tour organizer Walter Unger speak to a packed house in the gallery of the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Photo courtesy of Frank Froese, Steinbach, Manitoba.

as it starts the task of adding flesh to the genealogy and story sketched out in the earlier volumes.

Volume Three has appropriately been dedicated in the honour of John Dyck, former HSHS Research Director (see *Preservings*, No. 15, pages 68-71), and William Harms, Altona, whose exceptional service and contribution to the Mennonite community is deserving of the recognition.

Work Shop.

The topic of the spring workshop was "Material Culture" with the keynote address by Betty Unger, a life-long collector of Old Colony artifacts. Betty displayed some marvellous items of glassware, dolls, paper mache,

samplers, knitting, crocheting, miniature furniture, head dresses (Haube) and kerchiefs. Each item had a story, a pedigree. Her collection reveals again the great love of colour and art among the Old Colony people.

Hopefully Betty can be persuaded to compile the story of her treasures into a book and to share it with her people.

Jake E. Peters, the second presenter, spoke on the Mennonite furniture tradition. Reinhold Kauenhoven Janzen has compiled the authoritative work on the subject, *Mennonite Furniture A Migrant Tradition 1766-1910* (Inter-course, Pa., 1991), 231 pages. But Jake did not repeat this material, rather he read from various literary works such as Arnold Dyck's *Verloren in die Steppe*, and others, describing

the furnishings in a typical Mennonite home in 18th century Prussia, 19th century Russia and 20th century Manitoba.

The final presentation by Tony Funk dealt with the Krüger clocks.

The spring workshop of the MMHS was attended by some 80 people who deemed it a great success.

Further Reading:

Elmer Heinrichs, "Mennonitischen Workshop: Staffe, Möble und Uhren," *Menn. Post*, 18 May, 2001, page 2.



The editors of *Church, Family and Village* come forward for recognition and to receive the first copies of the book, hot off the press at Country Graphics, Rosenort. L.-r. Jake E. Peters, Adolf Ens and Otto Hamm. Introducing them is Jake Peters, University of Winnipeg, President of the MMHS.



Betty Unger exudes enthusiasm as she tells the stories of the individual treasures in her vast collection of Old Colony artifacts. Standing to her right is husband Henry Unger, who assisted with the presentation.



Some of the dolls in Betty Unger's collection. These dolls were hand made by various Old Colony artisans. The mannikins to the right model some typical Old Colony caps or Haube. Many of Betty's treasures were family inheritances, and she displayed photographs of grandparents and particularly two single aunts who had been avid collectors and creators of various works.



A sample of some of the dishware that Betty has collected over the years. Mennonites in Russia sold their wheat to England which in turn marketed glasswear and other products in the Black Sea region. Therefore it is fairly common to find good pieces of glasswear among the Old Colonier and other Mennonite pioneers, brought over in the 1870s. In the rear are visible some beautiful miniature furniture pieces built in the Mennonite furniture tradition by a master Old Colonier furniture maker in Mexico.

News from the Gemeinden

News of interest to Old Colony, Sommerfelder, Kleine Gemeinde and Reinlander Mennonites in North and South America. The intention of this column is to provide some unbiased reporting and holistic information about events and activities among conservative Mennonites. Please forward items of interest in your Gemeinde to *Preservings*, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0 for insertion in this column.

Südflusz Church Closed.

The closing of the Berghthaler Südflusz worship house, near Hague, Sask., Canada, was marked with an evening of commemoration held March 4, 2001. The church was situated on the south side of the Saskatchewan River, hence of the name.

The building itself has been purchased by the Hague Sommerfelder Gemeinde, affiliated with the Swift Current Sommerfelder under Aeltester David Wiebe which started in the Hague area in 1985. The building will be moved across the Saskatchewan River and re-located close to Reinfeld, east of Hague, and



Aeltester George Buhler, Berghthaler Mennonite Gemeinde. Photo by A. G. Janzen, Warman, Saskatchewan, and courtesy of Die Mennonitische Post, April 6, 2001, page 17.



Rev. John Quiring, Warman, Old Colony Mennonite Gemeinde. Photo by A. G. Janzen.

We are particularly interested to receive reports where conservative Mennonites are being attacked by outside proselytizers seeking to turn people away from the Gospel-centric faith of the fathers and to alienate their young people and tear apart their communities. By making readers aware of such incidents, 200,000 conservative Mennonite across North and South America can unite in prayer and intercede for the threatened community. The Bible teaches that "the prayer of a righteous man [and woman] availeth much." The Editor.

used as a worship house for the Sommerfelder Gemeinde.

Speakers at the commemoration service in-

cluded George Buhler, Aeltester of the Berghthaler Gemeinde, Saskatchewan, and Rev. John Quiring of the Old Colony Gemeinde.

Seniors' Home Purchased.



The seniors citizens home at Strassburgo Plaza, along Highway 28 which dissects the Manitoba Colony founded by the Old Colony Gemeinde in 1922. The original wing built in 1986 accommodated 44 residents. The new wing (right, east) was added in 1997. Visible on the left hand side is the book store and a library operated by Jorge Reimer, (Reimer Seeds, Winkler, Manitoba). Behind that is visible the four-lane Highway 28 which connects Cuauhtemoc and Rubio. Since the Old Colony Mennonites were exiled from Canada in 1922 and never compensated for all the millions of dollars in infrastructure (roads, bridges, drainage, etc. considered the best in Manitoba) they had created in the West Reserve, Manitoba, and elsewhere in Saskatchewan, it took decades to achieve the state of economic development necessary to sustain such social institutions. Instead of pitching in to help, Canadian Mennonites have preferred to send agents to tear apart communities in the pathetic desire to increase their own denominational empires. Photo courtesy of 75 Jahre Mennoniten in Mexiko, page 184.

"On March 28, 2001, the Old Colony Gemeinde in the "Nord" Colony [northeast of Rubio, originally known as the "Ojo de la Yegua" Colony] made the decision to purchase the private old folks home from Cornelius Loewen. The brotherhood meeting was held in the granary at Campo 64B [these public granaries are huge buildings which can comfortably accommodate several thousand people], where the funeral of Aeltester Peter Peters [dearly beloved Bishop of the Nord Colony] was recently held.

"The price for the home is \$200,000.00 U.S. payable over five years with a downpayment of \$40,000.00. The new owners take over the management of the home on April 1. A number of individuals will be appointed who are to be in charge. The home has 25 rooms and currently has 19 residents. It was opened on September 1, 1999.

Widow Maria Enns was the first to move in.

Cornelius Loewens who built the home in 1999 want to move to Ontario where many of their children live."

From *Kurze Nachrichten aus Mexiko*, March 30, 2001, compiled by Jorge Reimer, Strassburgo Plaza, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico.



A photograph from years gone by but Vaspa is offered every day at the "Altenheim" Km. 14, and also on the 20th of September when "grandparents day" is celebrated.....The women visible in the picture are no longer there. The friendly Mrs. David Wiebe (left), Mrs. Cornelius Enns and Mrs. Abram Penner have already departed for their eternal home, and the nurse (standing) Lise Martens, is married and living in Canada. The workers and residents come and go, but the [Senior's] home remains and celebrated its 11th anniversary on May 11, 2000. Photo courtesy Die Zeitung, No. 4, page 4.

Should we call the Women "deacons"?

"On the afternoon of March 27, 2001, a group of women again gathered in the new Colony offices in Lowe Farm, [Manitoba Colony, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico] where they gathered much food, clothes and other necessities for another two needy families.

"A so-called 'Grocery Shower' self-help movement is responsible, which started with a family from Lowe Farm a year-and-a-half ago, when they invited siblings and friends to gather the necessities of life for a large family where the father was an alcoholic. In this case, after earnest discussions with the father, the result was not only to give fish to the needy but also to teach the needy how to fish, as the saying goes. For in the meantime he had opened a profitably smithy, provides good work for the neighbours, and quit drinking.

"The organizers and supporters are pleased with such results but are not in the position to prioritize this as their main objective. Much more, they seek to relieve the extreme distress of individual families, whatever the circumstances of their life may be.

"Neighbours and relatives report the names of needy families. A woman is sent to visit such a family, to make inquiries regarding their circumstances and to confirm that they would accept the help of a "Grocery shower".

"If the answer is 'yes', some 60 invitations are printed and distributed, inviting the women for a specific afternoon, together with their gifts, and something in addition, for a 'potluck' supper. The family being benefited must be present.

"Over half of those invited honour the invitation and are generous with their gifts. In addition to visiting and eating Vassa, suitable songs are sung from the *Gesangbuch* on photocopied pages in both the long and short melodies.

"Up to three families are helped in one such gathering, and even then the gifts are sufficient. In one instance, three tables were set up, each with the name of one family. Each table received seven bags of beans, two bags of sugar, and other useful items, as well as a large selection of food and clothing.

"In order to know what sizes of clothes are needed, some details are included in the invitation, so that the gifts will also fit....

"This 'heart to heart' organization, is spreading in many respects without any organization...."

From *Kurze Nachrichten aus Mexiko*, March 30, 2001, compiled by Jorge Reimer, Strassburgo Plaza, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico.

Ministerial Election.

"A ministerial election is to be held in Capulin, Nuevo Casas Grandes, on February 13, 2001. The election is being conducted by the Old Colony Gemeinde at Cuauhtemoc and the protocols (e.g. regarding electricity) will then be the same. For the past year, ministers from Cuauhtemoc have served the Gemeinde in Capulin.

"A ministerial election is also to be held in

Durango in the near future.

"A familiar chapter in the Mennonite story is again developing in these situations. Divisions arise in the various colonies regarding new innovations and protocols (such as rubber tires, electricity, vehicles, etc.) and then those who are not yet ready to adopt the "new" move away, and those that remain reorganize themselves with the help of the Gemeinde at Cuauhtemoc.

"It is a familiar process in recent times which has come to pass first in La Honda, Zacatecas, and then in several colonies in Nuevo Casas Grandes, and now Capulin and Durango.

"So far the Sabinal Colony at Nuevo Casas Grandes has remained spared from the phenomena, and remains fairly immune, thanks to its isolation, and the fact that it is in quite good circumstances financially, particularly the milking sector and speciality crops....

From *Kurze Nachrichten aus Mexiko*, compiled by Jorge Reimer, Strassburgo Plaza, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, from *Men. Post*, March 2, 2001, page 19.

School Building at Gnadenthal.

"The school building at Gnadenthal, Manitoba Plan, Cuauhtemoc, is making long hours. Children during the day and young people and teachers in the evening are making good use of the [Zentral] school which the Old Colony Gemeinde purchased two years ago from the Kleine Gemeinde.

"Since Nov. 22, Cornelius Thiessen is picking up school children from 25 to 37 km. away with a regular Chevy van and brings them to the school. The seats in the van are taken out and replaced with benches which results in seating for 32 children.

"So far this has been sufficient but there are always more students coming. If they would have started two weeks sooner, it could well have been 200," said Thiessen."

"Presently many of the students attend school in the neighbouring villages, since this alternative was not yet offered and as the parents do not want to change schools during the school term.

"In the school at Gnadenthal they study more intensively than in the village schools. More mathematics books instead of slates and scribblers instead of slates are used. An attempt is made to use better methods in order to make learning easier.

"Since January 8, 2001, the teacher's school is again in operation, where 10 students are taking part. There is hope that more individuals will be interested in this, in order to fill more teaching posts.

From *Kurze Nachrichten aus Mexiko*, compiled by Jorge Reimer, Strassburgo Plaza, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, from *Men. Post*, March 2, 2001, page 19.

Mexican Mennonite Museum.

"A monument with the inscription, 'Museo y Centro Cultural Menonita, 15 de diciembre del 2000' was unveiled at the construction site by the Vorstehers Jakob Fehr and Peter Enns and



Peter Enns, Neuendorf (left), and Jakob Fehr, Neu-Reinland, Manitoba Colony Vorstehers, have been influential in various projects in the Manitoba Plan such as the constitution of the school committee (school board) to oversee all 2500 children and 60 schools in the local school system and have worked along with important local initiatives such as the museum project. Jakob Fehr is representative of many gifted leaders. He is a large-scale farmer and also owns several factories.



Manitoba Colony Vorstehers Peter Enns and Jakob Fehr assisted by Museum President Abram Heide (right), turn the sod for the start of construction at the museum site along Highway 28, between Cuauhtemoc and Rubio. Photo courtesy of Kontakt, Nr. 1, 18 dezember 2000, pages 1.

Abram Heide.

Many typical buildings and businesses are to be erected on the grounds in order that it shall become a first class historical centre.

Up until now the Federal and State Governments have each contributed 300,000 Pesos, to support the project, and 350,000 have been raised from among our midst [the Mennonites] by the committee.

From *Kontakt Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, Nr. 1, 18 dezember 2000, pages 1-2.



David Friesen (former travel broker in Cuauhtemoc), Vice-President of the Mexican Mennonite Museum, presents the reasons and benefits of a museum to those gathered for the sod turning on December 15, 2000. Photo courtesy of Kontakt, Nr. 1, 18 dezember 2000, pages 2.



By the end of April the Mexican Mennonite Museum building is starting to take shape. It is being built in the configuration of a traditional Mennonite housebarn. Photo courtesy of George Rempel, Winkler, Manitoba, who spent many hours in February and March as a volunteer in the construction.

Teacher's Seminar, U.S.A.

A group of teachers and other interested personal from the Manitoba Colony, Cuauhtemoc, want to travel to Indiana, U.S.A., on Sept. 18, 2000, in order to take part in the teacher's training seminar of the Amish (or Old Mennonites). The following persons want to drive there with the "van": Mr. and Mrs. Jakob Fehr [the Vorsteher] from No. 8, Johan Harms from 61/2, Jakob Dyck, No. 23, three teachers from No. 2A; Elisabeth Loewen, No. 61/2, Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Janzen [School board], No. 27 1/2.

A group of [Amish] teachers from the U.S.A. came here [Cuauhtemoc] in early summer in order to provide teachers and other interested individuals here with an interesting and very informational instruction.

From *Die Zeitung*, No. 4, page 5.

Auction for Schools.

"Surprisingly many items were brought to the school in Gnadenthal [Old Colony Secondary School, at Cuauhtemoc, Mexico] for the auction sale. The School Committee was very pleased with the results. The auction sale brought in approximately 118,000 pesos [about 20,000 U.S.].

"These monies will be designated for use to make it possible that children from poorer homes can go

to school, even when they do not live in a village. A van has already been purchased from these funds (\$2000.00). It is already being used to bring together a large group of children, that live along the highway and do not belong to any village.

"The School Committee [school board] says that [nor-

mal] school expenses are not being paid from these funds, but their motto is "No child without a school". In the current year it was possible to find a teacher for all the schools.

"Particular valuable for the School Committee was the week long teachers seminar held prior to the beginning of the last term. Six teachers who attended the Amish school in Indiana in September, returned with newly awakened optimism and shared their experiences and observations. Unfortunately some of the teachers felt that they already knew enough without such a week of instruction.



Franz Dyck (left) and Cornelius Janzen, both members of the School Committee, were surprised at the amount of goods which were brought to the auction sale at the Gemeinde school in 2A (Gnadenthal). Many ovens, fridges, a hammermill, a white donkey, and many other things were donated. In fact, a few items were left over for the next auction. Photo courtesy of Kontakt, Nr. 1, 18 dezember 2000, pages 2.

"Nevertheless, they continually seek to challenge the teachers to improve their methodology, and where can they obtain such knowledge easier than at such a seminar.

From *Kontakt Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau*, Nr. 1, 18 dezember 2000, pages 3.

Ministerial Election in Durango.

Three more Ohms [ministers] were elected in the Durango Colony, on September 5, 2000, namely: Franz Braun Wall, from Neublumenhof, Peter Hiebert, also Neublumenhof, and Peter Berg, from Grünfeld. All are to be ordained on September 6. 19 Ohms were present from other colonies, including Nuevo Casas Grandes, Tamaulipas and the Cuauhtemoc area.

From *Die Zeitung*, No. 4, September 6, 2000, page 1.

Apple pickers.

"The apple picking season has begun [in the Cuauhtemoc area]. Ten thousands workers from other States have come to help, which results in increased social problems. The police report that the majority of the thousands of persons living in granaries in this week, use strong drink and/or marijuana. [These are Mexican people]

"In fact, drug dealers even come with them, since such paid workers are good customers. The number of those arrested for theft, etc. during this week has increased by 30 per cent.

From *Die Zeitung*, No. 4, September 6, 2000, page 1.

Groom Again.

"For a final time Peter and Isaak Thiessen, No. 66, [Fernheim, Nord Kolony, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico], demonstrate their loving care for their heifers, before the judges made their decision last year and declared them winner. Whether a cow wins in the show or not, the owner is a winner regardless. He receives a recognition for his participation and the value of the cow increases in the market. when it is entered in the competition.

"More cows are needed for the competition for this year, if it is to be to most important cattle show in the State [of Chihuahua], if it isn't already.

"But the benefits are not only those related to the cattle industry. Many opportunities for the nurture of the entire family are offered. For example, can the oiled little pig be captured by hand? and whoever achieves this receives the pig as their prize. Also the "Mennonite Country Singers" will lovingly entertain the guests. It is indeed supposed to be a fair for the entire family--a genuine farmer and neighbour festivity.

From *Die Zeitung*, No. 4, September 6, 2000, page 3.



Peter and Isaak Thiessen, No. 66, [Fernheim, Nord Kolony], with their prize heifer. Photo courtesy of Die Zeitung, No. 4, page 3. The three day long cattle show was held in No. 60 [Hoffnungsthal, Nord Kolony, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico], from Sept. 21 to 23, 2000. 50 different businesses have displays at the exhibition.

Winkler, New Aeltester.

Peter Elias from Winkler, Manitoba was elected as the new Aeltester of the Old Colony Gemeinde in Manitoba on March 24, 2001. The election was held in the Old Colony worship house in Chortitz, West Reserve. The ordination was held the following day, in the Reinland meeting house. Almost a 1000 believers attended the ordination services to



Katharina Friesen. "I will learn the Catechism." This is what a good student, Johan Friesen's Katharina, 11 years old, from Reinland No. 4 [Manitoba Colony, Cuauhtemoc], thinks to herself. Katharina has a sort of eye problem, for which even her glasses are not strong enough. Her family had a Catechism enlarged for her at Strassburgo Plaza, km. 14, Highway 28], so that she could read with less difficulty. She is in the "Testament Level" [Third form, the traditional Mennonite church schools did not use the grade system] and has already memorized the entire catechism. Naturally she feels good about this. It demonstrates again that even at such a young age, the stones in life are only steps towards a higher goal. Katharina is also otherwise very knowledgeable in her work. Photo and story courtesy of Die Zeitung, No. 4, page 5.

demonstrate their prayers and good wishes.

Peter Elias is a cattle farmer in the Winkler region. He is the great-great-grandson of Peter Elias (1843-1926), who compiled an extensive history of the West Reserve and the early years of the Reinländer Gemeinde under Aeltester Johann Wiebe. Rev. Jakob Elias of the Old Colony church is the uncle to the new Bishop.

Old Colony leaders and members representing the six other Old Colony congregations and 8000 members in Canada were in attendance. The Old Colony church in Manitoba has four meeting houses and a membership of around 1100.

The office to which Peter Elias has been elected in accordance with Biblical teaching is a lifetime position. *Preservings* extends prayers and best wishes to Peter Elias as he takes up this most difficult task. Satan will be sure to muster his forces to attack a new leader and his congregation.

May conservative Mennonites everywhere unite in prayer for the new Bishop and may the Lord go with him and the Spirit dwell within him as he ventures forth with courage and optimism going about his work in the vineyard of the Lord.

Two Hills, Alberta.

Some 30 to 40 families with Mexican origins live scattered in this region over an area of some 80 kilometers, and more are planning to join them. Some have also moved there from Manitoba and Tabor, Alberta.

Some have bought their own farms and others work for English people on their farms. Still others have purchased beef cattle which they later sell for slaughter. Heinrich Elias, formerly dentist in Mexico, has a large herd of some 50 head...

There is snow in the region in winter but

at present (April 12/01), it is as nice as here in Cuauhtemoc, Mexico. There is not that much work at the moment but farmers are preparing their machinery for the field work and seeding. Two families, whose Canadian citizenship papers were not yet completed, have left the area as their expenses were too high and they were not earning enough. They want to work somewhere else.

This region is quite attractive for the Mexican Mennonites since they do not need to irrigate, and the crops are nonetheless very good [presumably there are as of yet no so-called Evangelicals here to denigrate and belittle them. The Editor]. Someone reported that the four-foot-high barley looked better than the irrigated barley in Mexico. The crop can be sold, even if it sometimes takes a while.

More Mennonites from Mexico will move to Two Hills if they can make reasonable sales of their land. Some who can buy it from them offer too low a price [irrigated land in the Manitoba Colony is worth \$2000.00 U.S. an acre. The editor] and those who need it do not have the money to pay for it.

There are still many acres of land for sale in Two Hills. Terms are available with up to 25 and 30 years to pay at eight per cent interest. The Mennonites are of the understanding that the government is happy that they are coming, so that the region remains populated.

They are allowed to have their own schools as they know them in Mexico from the village schools. In fact, the government even pays the German teachers and the fuel required for school transportation. They do not yet have a school bus but the parents join together and drive the children.

Some 70 to 80 children, from 40 km. away and closer, attend the school. Two hours a day are spent instructing English language and writing by an English teacher. The children attend school from kindergarten until they are 12 years old. Those who do not have work by then are to remain in school longer. Adults and young people take part in evening classes in order to learn English.

The Aeltester Jakob Giesbrecht and the Ohms come to Two Hills from Vauxhall, Alberta, every second Sunday, to conduct worship services. They wish to hold the "Spring Church" and baptism together. Two youths from Two Hills and many others from Vauxhall are planning to submit themselves to Holy Baptism. Presently a further ministerial election is to be held for Grassy Lake and Vauxhall, this time together with Two Hills.

From *Kurze Nachrichten aus Mexiko* (April 12/01) compiled by Jorge Reimer, Strassburgo Plaza, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, from *Men. Post*, April 20, 2001, page 21.

Further Reading:

"Vauxhall Old Colony Mennonite Church," in *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000* (Steinbach, 2001), page 162.

Articles

Elegy for Tante Ennie

“Elegy for Tante Ennie”, Anna H. W. Reimer (1886-1958), Steinbach, Manitoba,

by niece Elizabeth Reimer Bartel, 730-26th St., Courtenay, British Columbia, V9N 6K1, a continuation of the H. W. Reimer family story begun in “A Legacy - Memoir: Memories of Anna Wiebe Reimer (1866-1932),” published in Preservings, No. 10, Part One, pages 37-43.

Introduction.

She died 40 years ago, a woman with no direct descendants. She left no visible endowment, kept no diary or journal, had no street named after her. The only way to bring her back is through the perspectives of three people whose lives so intertwined her own they are impossible to disentangle. I relate them here in no particular order the way they came to me as I began to write. Many thanks to my extended family and friends who prodded my memory. In the final event this is my recollection of how things were. Sins of omission and commission are mine alone. There are those who may have other recollections. They are free to recount them.

Her name was Anna but in the flat intonations of our low German dialect it sounded more like Ennie. She was my aunt, my father’s oldest sister, first-born of nine siblings in the H.W. Reimer family. I always called her Tante Ennie even when I spoke English.

The News.

“Tante Ennie’s in the hospital. She stumbled and fell,” my father relates among other news as he comes into my kitchen on a gust of frigid air to stand on my door mat and catch his breath. It is a Manitoba winter day, his face is red with cold, blue eyes dripping half frozen tears. “Mama is waiting at home. We have to get back to the shop, so the girls can get their lunch.”

I see his car through the frosted window on the snow-packed driveway. A blue Lincoln Continental, like a small tank, small jets of exhaust streaming from the tail-pipe. My father loves it.

It is 1958. Cars are only getting bigger. In a few more years Steinbach will be advertised as the Automobile Capital of Canada. This once isolated Mennonite village transplanted from the old world to the new in 1874, prides itself on its progress, new waterworks, churches, schools and a Credit Union. The Carillon News now past its tenth birthday proclaims a Grand Opening of one sort or another every week.

“Tante Ennie? Dear me. Too bad,” I put



About 1910, Henry H. W. Reimer (1888-April 27, 1985).

down the paper, fresh from the press this morning with the smell of ink still on it.

“Come in for a minute, Dad. Mama can nap a little longer. The shop will wait,” I point to a chair. “I haven’t seen Tante Ennie lately. Not since last fall. Was she alone when she fell?”

“... well...The car’s running,” my father removes one rubber overshoe with the other and unbuttons his overcoat. “Well, yes. Henry almost walked by her. She’s been very confused lately, ever since the house moving. Not eating properly. Henry and his diets! No wonder. Wheat germ and distilled water. Raw oatmeal!” My father is a dedicated bacon and eggs man. “Now Henry’s worried about who will bake his special bread. Ennie’s nearly burned the house down once or twice doing just that.” He hesitates, removes his hat and sets it down on the Formica counter top be-

side the door.

“A wonder Tante Ennie didn’t break something sooner, climbing over broken concrete and scrap lumber -- no proper steps, the door-way hanging in space.” I stack the lunch plates my husband and two children have left behind before their return to work and school. The baby is already tucked up for his nap in the back bedroom. “I mean, after all, Grandpa’s house - it looks like some kid dropped it into that swamp beside the creek and forgot about it. Poor Tante Ennie, to have her home moved from under her. What was Uncle Henry thinking?”

“Well, that’s how it goes,” my father says dismissively, impatient to be gone.

“I...really have to get to the bank before three.” It is not the day for pondering the continuing decline of the Reimer family fortunes.

“You’ve got a few minutes. Come on! There’s a chair. Tante Ennie is paying the price, I guess, for having a brother with delusions of grandeur?” I say moving to the sink with my stack of plates. “She should’ve stood up to him long ago. Why didn’t she?” The plates slide into the hot water and disappear beneath the suds. “She is the oldest. Hasn’t Uncle Henry done her enough

harm?”

“He was really desperate this time; he needed the money. The Credit Union wanted the location.” My father removes his gloves and pulls a handkerchief from his pocket, wipes his nose. “Henry’s flour mill in Altona soaks up money like a sponge.” He walks back and forth in his well-polished shoes, his heels clicking on the tiles of my shiny kitchen floor, and then sits down at the lunch table still cluttered with the butter dish, the cream jug, the pepper mill. His overcoat trails on the floor beside his chair.

“I’ll make fresh coffee. I say does Uncle Henry think he’ll save the world with his very own brand of whole wheat flour?”

“Not with wheat-germ,” my father erupts with a brief chuckle. His shoulders shake with repressed mirth.

I smile at the thought as I reach for the



H. W. Reimer store, Steinbach. Based on the model of the truck parked in front of the store, the photo could date to about 1940.

dish-cloth and wipe crumbs from the plastic tablecloth. I had better stop my derogatory remarks about my uncle. My father is sensitive about his brother Henry, his most eccentric brother in this family of eccentrics.

"Henry's just born thirty years too soon. Today they make fun of him. But just wait." My father leans back in the chair.

"Don't say that to Mama." I laugh.

"I know, I know. She thinks it's all so simple. It's not. He's not her brother," my father says.

We both know exactly what my mother thinks. She's told us often enough. She's had plenty to say over the years about Henry, her brother-in-law, the man who withheld from us our rightful legacy. It's all ancient history now.

Since my parents came back to Steinbach in 1945 there has been an uneasy truce between my father and his brothers -- Henry, with Klaus and Ben watching over H.W. Reimer's Ltd store established in 1885, now barely functioning -- and my father, the up-start brother across the street in his new dress-shop, thumbing his nose at them as it were on land where once our ancestor Klaus Reimer first settled in 1875.

"Sure, Sure. Of course I'll go to see Tante Ennie." I say to my father as I run cold water to make the coffee. His head has disappeared behind the newspaper for the moment. I think of my aunt and the last time I saw her.

The Last October.

Autumn: I was pushing a baby buggy down Main Street, in a hurry to be home to greet my two school-age children.

My aunt stopped me, asked after the baby.

Not now, I thought, I'm late. Another time. But I didn't want to be rude. She stood on the walk, thin as paper, grey hair plastered to her narrow skull, the dark dress covered by a pale blue cotton smock with many pockets. Her eyes were unsure, her hands in constant motion showing her agitation.

I looked more closely at this aunt I once loved so passionately.

The aunt who always had room for me in her big white bed piled high with pillows, my special place; I slept there when we came from Sperling, eighty miles away, for a visit to grandfather's house and the unlimited bounty of the store. In the morning I would watch from the bed as she stood before the handsome bureau in the sun-filled room, preparing herself for the day ahead. Soon there would be breakfast downstairs in the dining room where Grandma, in her favourite place by the hot-air register, directed the kitchen



Painting of house-barn of pioneer merchant Klaas Reimer (1837-1906), on Steinbach's main street where the Steinbach Credit Union is located today. Artist unknown.

help preparing the day's meals. Then she would be gone to the store, often until late into the evening. The store. Her first love. As a child I took for granted that Tante Ennie was not like a mother; at least not like any mother that I knew; she didn't scrub or dust or sew. She gave orders to clerks and stock boys, and, without ever even raising her voice. Only my Uncle Henry overruled her.

"I have to go, Tante," I said to her on that cold early October day on the street in front of my grandfather's house where my aunt still lived. I pulled the blue-knitted carriage cover back into position over my sleeping baby.

My aunt's head was shaking with the familiar tic -- a slight epileptic seizure that had worsened over the years, aggravated by an automobile accident in her early twenties. The story of that accident was woven into the fabric of my childhood.

"Hit by a car," my Uncle Klaus always said when she would be overcome, where she stood behind the counter in the store and my uncle would quietly lead her away from a customer shocked by my aunt's sudden spasms and tremors. He would guide her gently into the silence and empty gloom of the hardware section and place her on a waiting stool, where he could watch over her until she recovered.

"Yes, well, Liesebet isn't it? Who was it you married?" Age was making Tante Ennie forgetful. She who remembered the cost price and the selling price of a thousand items in the store; the first and last name of every customer and of his wife and the name and age of all their children. "One of the Printer's boys -- Friesen, Derksen? A Russlenda. Nice people. Fine people. The *Russlenda*. I have friends...", my aunt's mind veered off among the Vogts and the Kreugers in another time, as she stroked the sleeve of my new winter coat.

I waited. She continued to stroke my arm.

"Nice wool," she said, "...good quality. H.W. Reimers have quality - wool flannel, serge, hand-woven tweed." She waved a hand in the direction of the store. "New stock every week. Come and see."

Old times, I thought and smiled, rocked the carriage back and forth impatient to be gone. Those times were past. Nothing new had arrived at H.W. Reimer's for a long time.

"Well, yes, yes, I must go too. Your Uncle Henry is waiting...", she murmured.

Yes, Uncle Henry. Impossible to forget my bachelor uncle - like a toy bear with short arms and legs and the blue gleam of the true fanatic in his eyes; the uncle who charted millennial dispensations on the walls of his room, who loved to expound on the horror stories from the Book of Revelations in the Bible. The stories were



Anna H. W. Reimer (1886-1958), about 1905.

enough to frighten the bravest child; stories I had never become inured to. The terrible words would roll off his tongue, the lurid descriptive passages he relished, "The mark of the Beast, the Whore of Babylon, and blood, blood, blood running as deep as the manes on apocalyptic horses", he would almost shout.

At last Tante Ennie climbed the familiar steps to the porch I knew so well, that porch where I remembered--it must have been ten years before--my current boyfriend kissed me good-night behind the Virginia creeper and, where my aunt came to check out the mysterious laughter and scuffling. "... yes, well," she sighed, peering up into an embarrassed



1911 or 1912. Anna H. W. Reimer, with brother Ben and sister Margaret, Mrs. Johann F. Giesbrecht. The housebarn of grandfather Klaas R. Reimer (1837-1906) is in the background with the K. Reimer & Sons Ltd. store (later Center Store) visible at the right. The pines which later framed the H. W. Reimer manor home on Main Street and turned it into a local landmark are just in their infancy.

male face. ... and who did you say your father was?"

I smiled at the thought. Then released from obligations, I turned the corner by the post office and hurry down Reimer Avenue past the parking lot where once my grandmother's orchard had bloomed and flourished more years before and the Reimer grandchildren hunted for Easter eggs in the tall grass. Walking hurriedly along, I wondered about the McLaughlin Buick that must have come down the wide Main Street and hit my aunt where she had crossed safely so many times before.

The Movers.

It was not long after that meeting with my aunt--at the end of that October--that a team of movers came, placed hydraulic jacks on each corner of my grandfather's house, and pried it loose from its foundations to sit teetering like a nervous giant on long I beams. The large windows of the house stared blind and helpless as the workman nonchalantly went about their tasks, and people passed by.

The row of pine trees, planted by my grandmother fifty years before on each side of the house, tilted sadly towards the yawning hole that had been the basement. Whitewash crumbled from those walls, the dusty top of the furnace finally exposed like a child with dropping underwear. My grandmother's pickle barrel still stood in its accustomed place in the corner of the pantry.

Finally the movers had pity on the house. A truck, dwarfed by its size, trundled it easily down the street, the hydro crew at hand to hold up the power lines as if they were fastidious woman's skirts. It disappeared around the post office corner to arrive at its new site beside the weathered fence that in winter marked the boundaries of the skating rink. The move was a one day wonder in Steinbach. Everybody came to watch. My aunt stood silently beside her brother Henry and looked on, her face stony and determined as one of our Anabaptist ancestors martyred upon a rack. What was she thinking?



Circa 1926. Grandchildren of Heinrich W. Reimer (1864-1941): Rowena Reimer, Elizabeth Reimer Bartel, Wendyln Reimer, Naomi Reimer Lepp, in their grandmother's garden, behind the grand house on Main Street. To the right, probably the maid. Visible in the background is the housebarn of pioneer Klaas R. Reimer (1837-1906). For another view of the housebarn, after it was converted into use as a garage, see Preservings, No. 9, Part One, page 58.



Wedding photograph, 1919. John H. W. Reimer and bride Anna Toews Reimer; daughter of centenarian school teacher Johann B. "de Hundat Joascha" Toews (1865-1967), brother to "Busch" Toews and "Grotta" Toews.

Questions.

Now, as the smell of coffee fills my kitchen and I reach in the cupboard for two mugs, I wonder aloud. "Dad? Whatever happened to those two? Tante Ennie and Uncle Henry? Why did neither of them marry?"

He shakes his head with a faint smile as he moves the newspaper out of the way in order to make room for the cup of coffee I place before him on the table.

I sigh with exasperation. That's the answer I always get from my father.

I know it was Uncle Henry who found my mother - a little "Holdeman" girl tucked away on a farm on the banks of the Seine River near Ste. Anne and hired her to help Tante Ennie in the dry-goods department of H.W. Reimer's in Steinbach. I've wondered how my uncle found her. Why *my* mother and not some other pretty young women? Uncle Henry and my mother did not move in the same social circles; he the eligible son of a prosperous merchant family, "Kleingemeinde" down to his spats and she the youngest daughter of a teacher turned farmer, a faithful "Holdeman" since his youth.

My father will never say what he thinks. There are secrets, upon secrets in this family.

"Henry's run out of land to sell," my fa-



Steinbach Ball Team, 1915. Standing left to right: Andrew Sobering, Jac. T. Loewen, Frank Goossen, H. K. Neufeld, Peter U. Brandt (later Morris), Abe Kroeker, front: John H. W. Reimer, Peter S. Guenther, and Peter R. Toews. The picture is from an undated clipping, presumably from a newspaper--possibly the Carillon. The caption (in English) states that Abe Kroeker and Frank Goossen are deceased. If the Frank Goossen is Frank D. Goossen (1895-1928) and if the Abe Kroeker is Abram T. Kroeker (1896-1933), then the photograph must have been published sometime after 1933.

ther does say now, sounding disgusted as he dapples his coffee with cream from the pitcher. "The Credit Union made a fantastic offer. Henry couldn't refuse," his voice has softened. "I'd loan him the money... if I had it. Help him out..." he moves as if to rise. My restless father, never still for long.

"You wouldn't! Mom would..."

"Do you think I like what's happened? The Reimer family down the drain." He gets up from the chair, cup in hand, paces up and down. "Henry's my brother! He's my brother! Why not? If I had the money, which I don't. But moving the house was the last straw. Henry's broken Ennie's heart." My father sounds angry and sad at the same time.

Past Wars.

The old battle of money and land between the Reimer brothers has finally been laid to rest. We seldom speak of it. My father is not aware that I was a witness at the age of fourteen to our bleakest time when he came from Sperling to demand his share of his mother's estate that Henry refused to divide among her heirs.

That depression year, the car and implement business in the dust-bowl west of the Red River Valley was at a standstill and my father could not pay even essential bills. The telephone had long since been disconnected. The hydro bill for his garage and auto repair shop was overdue.

However, times were noticeably better in the mixed-farming economy around Steinbach and his brother Henry and H. W. Reimers were under no financial strain, still cushioned by the accumulated wealth of the past. As co-executor with Henry to their mother's estate,

now ten years in probate, my father wanted an end to the dispute.

A few months before he had gone reluctantly to the law, a last resort. As a Mennonite he was discouraged by church rule to settle disputes in the secular courts. It was against every principle my father believed in. He hated the constant bickering with lawyers,



Johann H. W. Reimer (left), and Peter S. Guenther, 1915, at about the time of Peter Loewen's appearance. Enlargement from the Steinbach ball team photograph, the original of which is not extant.

the huge costs. But Henry was adamant and refused to fulfil the terms of their mother's will. My father was desperate for resolution.

Instead of resolution they had come to blows. It happened in the front hallway of my grandfather's house.

By this time in 1958 the memory of that moment is no longer clear. Did it happen after my Aunt Margaret had moved out of her father's house and away to her farm with her husband and her two boys? And my grandfather, senile and confused, would call out in his quavering voice, night after night? Did I really see Uncle Henry standing over my grandfather, forcing a pen into the shaking hand.

"Here," Uncle Henry, his voice insistent, saying, "sign, sign?"

Or was it after my grandfather died and the miasma of age and decay, the stench of illness had faded from the rooms of his house? A house where a feeble old man had changed his will in favour of his son Henry just before he died.

I can't remember anymore.

Whenever it was, I do remember that night, standing at the top of the long flight of stairs, the downstairs hall-way dimly lit and full of shadows. I heard my father's voice, angry with his brother Henry. I was shocked at first, but secretly elated. At last, at last, my father would pound my uncle into submission. Yet I was afraid. Mennonites did not use their fists. My father was never a violent man. To raise a hand against his brother was a grave sin.

"Henry, it can't go on," I heard my father gasp as he wrestled with my uncle, who held his arms over his face in an effort to protect himself, "Not right...not fair! I need help now." Ennie stood in the door of the dining room, wringing her hands and wailing.

"Henry, stop, now stop, Henry, John, what will people say? Stop... stop," she moaned over and over. Henry managed to free himself and scrambled through the front door with my father right behind him; down the steps, along the sidewalk and across the street to the store. All I could see was the flash of two white shirts in the dark. I crept further down the stairs. My aunt heard me and turned.

"Oh dear, oh dear, what have we come to?" she sobbed.

Moments later my father came back alone, his white hair flying, the sleeve of his shirt in tatters; he sat down on the hall bench, gasping for breath and looked up at his sister.

"I'm sorry, Ennie, I'm sorry. God forgive me. I couldn't stand it. How bad does it have

to get? Must we go on relief? Henry can't..." He was crying. Only once before -- at his mother's death -- had I seen my father cry.

Crying! So this wasn't the retribution I had hoped for.

I knew nothing then of my father's conscience, as finely tuned as the strings of his guitar.

"*Lieber Heiland*, if Mama..." Ennie whispered "What shall we do, John? Tell me." She laid a trembling hand on my father's shoulder.



1912, wedding photograph. Katharina H. W. Reimer (b. 1890) and Johann F. Giesbrecht (b. 1886), son of Holdeman Evangelist Wm. T. Giesbrecht. The marriage represented the union of two of Steinbach's most prominent families, the *Kleine Gemeinde Reimer* clan and the *Holdeman Giesbrechts*.

"What can you do?" he said bitterly. "You've handed everything over to Henry."

She bowed her head as if in prayer. I went back up the stairs. This was real; not just my speculation about my father getting even with his brother. Did this mean that my mother and sisters would go hungry now, be homeless?

"Better now than later - apologize - get it over with," I heard my father say. He rose from the bench trudged through the open door without another word. All I heard was my aunt sobbing in the dark.

That scene comes back to me as I look at

my father now. His business is doing well. He's built my mother a fine house on Hanover Street, her life-long dream come true at last. It is on land inherited from my grandmother which my father at last holds title to. The years of my childhood against the background of litigation, the talk of lawyers and depositions and judgments is over. I used to think I knew who was right and who was wrong. As I grow older I am less sure. Who dares to judge?

"Best you go and see Tante soon. She's very frail," my father says now as he puts down his empty cup, shakes his head at my offer of more coffee. Still in his overcoat he moves into the living room to stare through the window at the hospital in the distance across the street.

Past Happenings.

"Dad, what really happened to Tante Ennie?"

My father shakes his head and half sits on the arm of the sofa by the window, looking but not seeing the wintry scene before him.

"I loved her." I say to my father.

He doesn't hear me. His thoughts are elsewhere.

"I once cut a huge hole into a piece of yard goods, lovely dark green wool, lying on the chest in her room. A wicked thing to do. I don't know why I did it. She did not even scold me. It was then she told me about her baby sister Elizabeth."

"That Elizabeth? I had forgotten her." My father looks at me.

"...who died when she was seven; Tante Ennie said I was another Elizabeth born to fill an empty place. I felt forgiven. Special. Almost anointed. She should have had children, Dad. Why didn't she marry? What happened?"

"I was just a boy then. I would hear the talk. An American, name of Peter Loewen. I remember his car. Kansas license plates.

"Henry and Ennie went to Meade on the train several times. There were letters back and forth.

Then they stopped." With that my father sits down on the sofa, crosses one leg over the other, stares at the toes of his shoes. He hates gossip. He might ponder on more profound topics like the symbolism of numbers in the old Testament, but not about things like letters gone astray, blighted love; at least, not to me.

"What did Tante Ennie want most? The store or Peter Loewen?" I ask. "Did she have a choice? Couldn't she have both? If she had been a man..." I ask further. It's an opportunity I don't often get. My father sitting on my sofa staring into space. Into the past?



1908. Katherina H. W. Reimer (b. 1890).

“You mean, Ennie a man and the oldest in the family?”

“Yes. How different it might have been. Ennie would have been a better family head than Henry don’t you think?” My feminist instincts are muted, in the formative stages.

“She wouldn’t have, couldn’t have,” my father hesitates for an instant, “she’d never, No, not against Henry,” my father replies.

“Who told her she was less worthy than Henry?” I query and drain the last of the cof-



Margaret H. W. Reimer (b. 1902), Mrs. Henry T. Kroeker, with niece Adeline, on cutter in the H. W. Reimer backyard, circa 1916. The H.W. Reimer summer kitchen is visible in the rear. It appears that the roofline of what must be the Johann R. Reimer housebarn is visible to the left side of the photo. See Pres., No. 10, Part One, page 38.

fee from my cup leaving a few bitter grains on my tongue, a delicious after taste.

My father is silent, withdrawn. He is wary of such talk, but he shouldn’t be. He knows by now his daughters have minds of their own, will think for themselves. He ought to be used to females, since he has only daughters. “Besieged by women,” he’ll say to my mother in a teasing way. In an old photograph he sits quite happily on the passenger side of a touring car with his younger sister at the wheel. “Teaching her to drive,” he says to me. “Women should know how to drive.” I’ve heard him say. “And type too.” Tante Ennie sits in the back of the car with a woman I do not recognize.

I look at my father--the Reimer face--the face I see when I look in the mirror; fine-featured, pale eyes, light hair. An Anglo-Saxon face.

We all look the same. Tante Ennie, Uncle Henry, my father. A stranger would know we

were related. The Reimer men are now white-haired dignified, always in a suit and tie. Henry and his brothers. They were fine gentlemen even in their youth.

My mother says they hated to get their hands dirty.

“Did Tante Ennie believe all that stuff about Primogeniture? Where did Uncle Henry get that idea anyway?” I ask my father as I get up from the table to sit in the arm chair opposite him.

“Primogeniture? The oldest male inheriting everything? Holding the family wealth together? You can see where *that* got us.” He smiles ruefully.

“Henry read a lot. He ordered books. They came to the store with the patent medicines,” my father says with a secret grudging admiration for a brother he loves in spite of their differences. Differences that are not so great when I think about it. They have strange theologies. Arcane enthusiasms. My father and his brothers were men, young with the century believing the future limitless.

“I don’t know if Ennie always agreed with him. She’s the quiet sort,” my father adds.

“Was marriage really for her, Dad? Did she even want it? She’d have had one baby after the other. Maybe she was relieved that Peter Loewen stopped writing.”

My father shakes his head, embarrassed. Such talk. With a daughter, yet. We sit in silence for a moment.

“Ennie’s life was the store--since she was twelve years old.” My father says.

“Didn’t she realize no marriage would give her the kind of recognition she got working in the store?” I try to imagine Tante Ennie as a Kansas farmer’s wife. I can’t.

My mother grew up in Kansas. It was so hot she turned yellow in the summer she never forgets to tell us. None of the Reimers think much of Kansas.

“In 1914 H.W. Reimer’s was the finest store in Manitoba! And Ennie was at its heart. Modern fixtures, steam heat, plate glass, the



Mrs. Anna Wiebe Reimer (1864-1941) and daughter Anna H. W. Reimer (right) with seamstress Mariechen Krüger (seated on railing), on the front porch of the H. W. Reimer home, Steinbach.

newest cash-register. She could sell anything--the very nails from the walls." My father visibly expands with his enthusiasm. He is a salesman, first and last. "Eaton's! The Catalogue!" He waves away the thought of such competition. "South-eastern Manitoba belonged to us."

"So why did you leave all that?" I ask him. "And in such a hurry too? I remember Tante Ennie crying before we went to live in Sperling. You took us to a 'foreign' country away from everything we knew. Sperling felt like exile." I am taken unaware by the sudden spurt of anger I feel towards my father at his seeming lack of heart. I have been taught that children do not question their parents. Daughters are obedient.

"Ennie begged me to stay; but in spite of that she sided with Henry in every important decision. Besides, times were good in 1929. There was only one way to go. Up. What could possibly go wrong?"

"Nothing go wrong?" I ask with the benefit of hindsight.

My father does not admit to past errors of judgment. He talks as if the stock market crash is just a blip in his memory.

"Farmers had money for John Deeres and Fords. In the store I was only the *Scheck Bengel*. Your Mama was unhappy with the way the entire family lived off the store and sucked it dry. It's all been for the best, as you can see now." He beams, pleased with his life, and gets up to go.

These *are* good years for my father.

"A visit to Tante won't hurt," my father says again. The doctors haven't said much about her condition. She's over seventy, getting on. Better go. You never know."

That is as close to a command as my father will allow himself in relation to me, a married daughter. I am now the responsibility of another man, my husband. My father slides back into his rubbers, buttons up his coat. I watch through a corner of the frosted window as the car backs off the drive and moves down the snow banked street.

"Tonight, I'll go tonight," I say aloud as I stand by the window in the living room, waiting for my son to wake from his nap. Behind me on the stereo, CFAM plays Mozart. The Carillon lies unread beside me as I stare into the February blue of the Manitoba sky, at the sun blazing on heaps of crusted snow left by the snow-plough, at the skeletal branches of trees, against the brick walls of the hospital where my aunt lies.

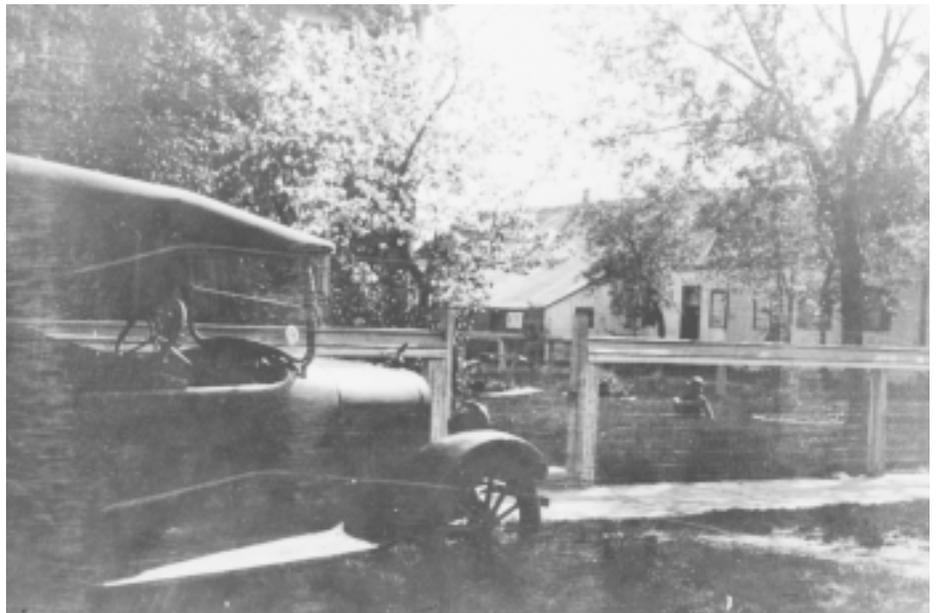
My Mother and the Dress Shop.

My thoughts have returned to the winter of 1945, the year I spent waiting for my husband to come home from the war and the hours I spent in conversation with my mother during that year, as I helped out in the new dress-shop just coming into being, a seemingly miraculous reality after months of planning. All the fixtures new and gleaming.

"What about Tante Ennie?" I asked my mother as I watched my aunt cross the street,



View of the H. W. Reimer store (southwest side of Main Street), from the old Klaas R. Reimer premises. The H. W. Reimer residence is visible on the right. Note the magnificent bay window, with the obligatory geraniums beaming in the sunshine. The Kornelsen school is visible to the rear (right) of photo where the Steinbach Civic Centre is located today. Note house standing at the rear, across from the Brüderthaler Church. The house was later purchased by Klaas H. W. Reimer (father of mayor Wes), and moved east across Mill (First) Street and stood for many years just south of the Steinbach Civic Centre. See Steinbach 1946 - 1986), page 9, for another photo showing the same building.



Circa 1920. Automobile parked in front of H. W. Reimer house, showing old Klaas R. Reimer housebarn in the background. This picture clearly shows the leanto (*o'va sied*) on the north side. Who can make the year and model of the car. Presumably this is the car of John H. W. Reimer.

bending forward into the wind, her grey lisle stockings sagging on frail legs as they hurried along, then her arms struggling with the heavy doors of my grandfather's store. He had died several years before, but to my mind H.W. Reimer's would always be his store.

"What about her? Tante Ennie, I mean?" my mother asked from where she sat doing alterations in a small alcove near the hosiery counter.

"Why didn't she marry?" I looked down at my hands occupied with sorting silk scarves and white gloves. "Uncle Henry? What about him? He spoiled it for her, didn't he? She's devoted her life to him." I stopped to stare at

the traffic slowly going by on Main Street. And beyond where the H.W. Reimer store stood -- not one hundred yards away.

"Ennie never has had the heart to refuse him. He's ruled her all his life," my mother said absent-mindedly; I turned to look at my mother spreading a flowered dress out on her lap. "She was like that; almost too kind. Even about her broken engagement. She never blamed Henry. The suitor from Kansas never came back. She cried a lot of tears all by herself. Not one accusing word. Not Ennie." My mother shrugged, turned the dress inside out and with the point of her scissors poked sharply at the waist seam. "Pity...not much



1921. Mr. and Mrs. John H. W. Reimer together with sister Margaret H. W. Reimer on their trip to Pike's Peak, Colorado. The little two-year-old is daughter Naomi Reimer Lepp, who provided many of the photos for this article. See Pres., No. 10, Part One, page 40.

of a life alone. But Henry couldn't have coped with a brother-in-law. Katherina's and Margaret's husbands were quiet men. They would not interfere. He could manipulate his

the Reimers. But people do forget."

"I can't imagine her married to anyone, Mom," I said as I thought of my aunt now out of sight behind the big plate glass windows,



Another photo of the H. W. Reimer store. The ad in the window proclaims, "We buy cream. Premier Creamery, Winnipeg. Spot Cash - Highest market prices." The sign could date the photo to the post-WWII era when high cream prices drove local cheese factories out of business. This photo came from the collection of "Central" Toews. The original recently went lost.

brothers and their wives. Ennie's husband would be another matter. If she had married...? No. Henry couldn't have dealt with that."

I turned away for a moment, heard the sound of ripping like the putt-putt of a tiny motor until my mother's hand was halted by the zipper stitched into the side seam. "No," she said again.

"One of the Loewen boys wanted to marry Ennie but she refused," my mother went on, her eyes on her work. "He finally settled on another bride and when Ennie came to the *Verlaffness*," my mother smiled, "he broke off his engagement on the spot thinking Ennie had changed her mind. The fiancee got him back soon enough, but she never forgave Ennie or

bordered by Coca-Cola signs, windows that had been a modern innovation in 1914.

My aunt had been young once. A ripe young woman. But to me she would always be chaste and virginal, turned away from marriage and child-birth, and certainly above the crude male jokes that went the rounds amongst her brothers in the store.

"She must have seen Great-grandpa Klaas across the way with his third wife? One child after another? And so many of them dying. What kind of life was that?" I said turning back to the invoice for the gloves to check the price.

"Oh! You mean the 'red granny'?" That young thing. Men like your great-grandfather didn't waste much time. A girl with the bright

red hair? Most of her babies died. She had left by my time. I only heard about her. Your uncle Jacob and Aunt Teene lived upstairs in the old house by then." She laid her work down for a moment and wiped her eyes behind her glasses with a cotton handkerchief. "Then your uncle Klaas turned the downstairs into a garage. He liked to tinker with machinery."

"Ennie wasn't stupid. She could see. I mean, who would want..." I tugged at the Venetian blind as I thought of the dead babies, the many small graves in the church-yard: the 'red granny's' Maria, her Elizabeth, her David, her Franz. Who had told me first about them? One of the girls in my Grandma's kitchen?

Automatically I straightened the blond wig on our smooth-faced mannequin in the window display and turned it to face the street.

My mother nodded her approval at the mannequin and went on with her alterations. "That old house and barn--it was a fire-trap anyway. Just as well it's gone."

"It felt haunted," I said, watching my reflection in the triple mirrors as I walked past the shapely plastic leg that stood on the counter at an angle displaying the latest colours in nylon stockings, "strange, empty places do." I thought of my great-grandfather's house. I stood almost within arm's reach of the very spot where it had once reared its walls and roof. If I went out the back door of the shop, I would see the crumbling foundations sticking up through the earth like broken teeth. I shivered. I remembered peeking through the small paned windows shrouded with dust and grime. In the shadows loomed mysterious shapes, ancient machinery mired in grease and oil. Up the narrow staircase, the sloping ceilings came down low in the empty rooms; garish blue paint stood out on the doors and tiny old-fashioned window frames. A thick sludge of creosote seeped from the chimney. Off the little hallway through a small door there was a dimly lit loft, empty of hay. The smell of horses and cows that had lived below in the barn, had still lingered.

Missing Letters.

"Didn't Tante Ennie wonder about that boy-friend from Kansas?" I continued with the questions. I thought of Kansas. A place like Sperling. A vast dun-coloured plain, heat and dust in summer and howling blizzards in winter. "He did seem to give up rather easily don't you think? Did he ever come to see?"

My mother shook her head.

"And what happened to the letters? The letters from Kansas?"

Square white envelopes they must have been with a masculine scrawl addressed to Miss Anna Reimer; strange stamps, showing presidents instead of kings; letters that would surely stand out amongst the regular mail that came to the store. Letters that could easily slip between the top of a desk and the wall behind it. Did a willing hand help them to disappear only to have them reappear long after, when

it was far too late?

"No one knows that. No one says anything about that," my mother said and picked up her work again.

More secrets.

"It's as well *Ennie's* father was rich. She was not left to grind her life away in another woman's kitchen," my mother continued.

"Nothing happened?" I asked.

"*Ennie* had to settle for the store in the end, the salesmen who flattered her when they came. They brought her gifts, spread their sample cases out on her counters.

"Come and see this" she would say over the phone.

And I would come, sighing over the shantung and Swiss eyelet, the shoes! *Ennie* settled. She accepted. What else could she do?" my mother sighed.

My mother would not have accepted so easily.

I thought of *Ennie*, fingering the satin ribbon soft as a baby's cheek? The salesman ready for her order, his eager pencil in hand. "She settled for that?" And her brother *Henry*, of course, I thought.

"Could it have been different? I don't know. She made the best of things. Put on her bravest hat and lived her life. When "*Kleingemeinde*" women still wore prayer caps, *Ennie* sported a hat. In *Winnipeg* at *Galt's*, at *Bowe's Lunch* everyone greeted her by name. She was somebody then," my mother was silent, her shoulders hunched, threading her needle under the light.

"She let it happen," I said.

"To really change things you sometimes have to take your life in your hands and do what you have to do," my mother said.

I was reminded of how my mother had taken her life in her hands, turned her back on conformity, walked away with my father. Why had she lost her rebellious spirit? Maybe we all did that. Like our pilgrim ancestors, it was impossible to remain a dis-senter forever.

My mother avoided this topic: the fact that she and my father had at their beginning strayed so far from their roots. That after extracting a blessing from her father, they had climbed aboard the train to *Winnipeg* and there, married in an alien ritual foreign to them both. Raised in the "*Holdeman*" tradition, my mother never said how she had withstood then, the pressure to conform. Beneath her softness there was a layer of steel.

"*Tante Ennie* wasn't a victim."

My mother didn't reply. With her scissors she trimmed away a generous inch from the frayed waist seams at the front of the dress. Without any basting she laid the two edges beneath the shining needle of her sewing machine, a *Singer*, one of the first electric ones. The polished walnut cabinet looked out of place among the glass display cases and chrome racks, like an *Edwardian* lady in a bazaar. My mother pressed her foot down on the pedal. The whirl of the machine halted the conversation for the moment. I looked out

through the sepia-tinted vinyl blind at my grandfather's store across the street. It reminded me of a photograph turning brown.

Grandfather's Store.

The smell of oiled floors in my grandfather's old store came back to me, the smell of the sizing impregnating the bolts of cotton print that stung in my nose, the sound of my cousin *Raymond's* chuckle, as we hid behind the rubber boots in the shoe-department. Whole families of cats would hiss at our intrusion where they slept on their sunny window sills below windows that were placed at regular intervals between stacks of shoe boxes on shelves rising to the ceiling. *Tante Ennie* fed the store cats faithfully with edges



1930. Mr. H. W. Reimer on the back porch of his *Steinbach* home. The reknown business tycoon takes a few minutes to relax. View towards the north, towards the plum garden.

of greening cheese and the rinds of bologna she placed into their encrusted bowls beside the basement door.

In a time when every single purchase of cinnamon or prunes, every gallon of vinegar or coal oil was weighed or measured, bottled and corked and tied with string by a grocery clerk, my *Uncle Ben* never lost his hope of modernizing the store. He dreamt of refrigerated meat cases, fluorescent lighting, self-serve grocery shelves in vain.

My cousin and I in our youthful ignorance, sensed in that first year of the war, the black headlines across the top of *Uncle Henry's* daily paper unconsciously impressing our minds - life would never be the same again. But we never spoke about it as we sorted through piles of excelsior, our hands groping

for the Christmas toys and bric-a-brac that *Tante Ennie* had chosen so carefully almost a year before. The goods had been packed by what we thought of now as enemy hands in Germany and Japan. The exquisite porcelain faces of the German dolls, the fresh paint on the toy steam engines, the fine brush strokes of the Japanese tea sets, stood, not for the beginning but the end of something. This place--this chilly second floor of the big store where *Raymond* and I cavorted among the crates bearing foreign labels, the out-dated washstands, the wooden kitchen chairs; this whole building, the place that had nurtured us, witnessed us nearly grown, was slowly falling into ruin.

We laughed, hid from our *Tante Ennie* when she called us to come and see to the customers, when our *Uncle Ben*, solemn in his flannel pants and ancient cardigan caught up with us and gave us a baleful *Reimer* stare. Cruel and thoughtless we were.

"I don't mean to say *Ennie* was weak," my mother broke in to my wandering thoughts. "She wasn't - isn't. *Ennie* taught me all about the store. A good teacher. She made me feel welcome in the family after our marriage." She stopped her machine, her right hand still resting on the wheel. "*Ennie* gave us the flowered plates that you are so fond of." She smiled, remembering. "She held a wedding reception for us, decorated the dining room table with flowers. Everybody came, your grandmother stood in the bay-window greeting the church elders." My mother lowered the needle again; it flashed in and out obediently under the light, her left hand guiding the cloth.

"Of course. Nobody would want to miss it." I said, thinking of 1919. It was long before I was born.

My mother said nothing, smiled faintly over her work. She raised the needle, cut the double thread with the tip of her scissors and pulled out her work to examine the stitching. "She was delighted when you were born and we called you *Elizabeth Anne*. She had a name-sake and a reminder of the little sister she had lost. During the next *Pentecost* when you were ten months old I was baptized into the *Kleingemeinde* church. No one was happier than *Ennie*."

My mother never did lose her vision of a plain God in a plain church even when her daughters wandered, searching for more exotic or sophisticated ways of worship and her husband dabbled in the numerology of the old Testament, or was seduced by the siren voices of American evangelists.

Uncle Henry.

I turned my gaze through the glass of my father's show window in the dress shop to see the doors of *H.W. Reimer's* open. *Uncle Henry* came out. There was no mistaking the long coat and the hat pulled down over his forehead. My cousin *Victor*, sixteen or seventeen then, sat behind the wheel of the truck parked by the long railing which ran along the front



Back row (l.-r.): Anna Giesbrecht Loewen, Bill Giesbrecht, Naomi Reimer Lepp, Roweena Reimer, Wendy Reimer Rempel, Victor Reimer and Wilma Reimer Suderman; second row: Evelyn Reimer Doerkson, Elizabeth Reimer Bartel, Alvin Giesbrecht, Grandma Anna Wiebe Reimer, Tina Reimer Semenick, Raymond Reimer, Edmar Reimer; foreground and at Grandma's knees: seated, Wesley Reimer, Gordon Kroeker and, standing, Art Kroeker. Photo taken at the H. W. Reimer home on Main street, view towards the northeast. Photo caption by Naomi (Reimer) Lepp.

of the store, along which teams of horses had once pawed and snorted. Uncle Henry climbed into the passenger side on his short legs and they drove off. At the back of the truck were one-hundred pound bags of unbleached flour from the Altona mill. The villages of Gardenton and Piney were about to experience the power of my uncle's persuasion. My uncle believed in whole wheat long before it came to be fashionable.

"There goes Uncle Henry, off to Marchand. What about him, Mom? Were you ever in love with him? Did he fancy you?" I asked.

"Don't be silly," she said, and then hesitated; "I will not speak ill of Henry. I want to forgive him, but I didn't trust him, even then. After the 1929 Crash, suddenly, for what reason I did not fathom then, an extra H appeared on the counter bills - H.H.W. Reimer instead of H.W. The store suddenly belonged to Henry. I never did understand how it happened.

"Was it about the time when we moved to Sperling?"

"Sperling! I don't want to think about that place. Your father had no idea how I felt. I couldn't seem to make him understand. He just didn't know how to do without; he had grown up rich. Ennie did try to help us. She sent bolts of cloth to Sperling, shoes - often the wrong size; pails of syrup - I still can't stand syrup. But think of it! We were family.

Not charity. But Henry would not budge. Ennie could do nothing about it. I'm trying hard to forgive Henry for that." My mother rose from the chair before the sewing machine and laid her work on the ironing board. She switched on the iron and tested its heat with a tiny dab of a wetted finger. "I'll never understand it."

I went to the other side of the counter to the racks of dresses and began to sort them according to size as my father had taught me, making sure that each garment hung properly on its hanger. Reimer's used no wire or wooden hangers. My father imported plastic hangers by the hundreds. It was quiet with little traffic on the street. Soon my father would return from the bank, his deposit book flapping from his coat pocket. The ladies of Steinbach would rouse from their afternoon naps, bundle up their toddlers and come shopping for a blouse, or a pair of nylons, and a sociable chat. A customer, on her way out the door would be overtaken with the longing for a new spring coat and my father would hold one out invitingly, place it gently on her shoulders. She could well imagine it as a shimmering velvet cloak and she about to attend a concert. She would walk home in a daze carrying the coat in its precious pink bag with the Reimer logo in flowing script, not knowing exactly how it had happened but pleased nonetheless. It was not

only Ennie who could sell the very nails from the walls.

The Hospital.

Soon after my father's visit I take him at his word and go to visit my aunt in the hospital across the street. The brass-bound doors swish in and out. Inside, under glaring lights, the smells of a modern hospital envelope me. My steps are silent on the shiny floor of the corridor. There is a whiff of that day's lunch, good Mennonite chicken noodle soup. The smell hangs in the air.

In the small room at the end of the hall my Tante Ennie looks frail under the white hospital sheet, her head tossing from side to side, her voice is a low murmur, then becoming louder.

I heard my grandfather call out like that in his last days, during my last schooldays, when I lived in my grandfather's house. I was uncaring, unfeeling, running up and down long flight of stairs past his open door, while Tante Ennie stood helpless beside him.

How could I be so blind? An ignorant girl with a head full of nonsense. How can I ever think that my Tante Ennie doesn't matter. Quick tears sting my eyes. Her eyes are open but I see no recognition there. Her false teeth have been removed. Her cheeks are hollow.

My other aunt, Margaret, her youngest sister, sits beside her stroking the thin arm in

the unfamiliar hospital gown.

"She's had a needle. She'll be quieter soon," she whispers, seeing my tears. My aunt Margaret's comfortable bulk is reassuring. I remember how these two women mourned over my grandmother's dead face long ago when as a child of seven I was shocked into the awareness of death.

"Poor Ennie. I tried to keep her at home with me," my aunt says, her voice low. "She just wouldn't stay. How could I keep her unless I tied her up? It was Henry this and Henry that all day long. What could I do?"

Tante Ennie is quiet now. The radiator hisses in the sudden silence. I take off my parka and lay it on the extra chair.

"What's happening to her?" I speak in a whisper. "Dad said she broke something."

"She's had a stroke." Aunt Margaret whispers in return, then speaks normally but in a voice that harbours tears. "I don't want her to die. Not like this. Not now. She deserves better."

"Of course you don't," I murmur, thinking of Tante Ennie. Over seventy, after all--a forgetful old woman tottering up and down the aisles of a store that has seen better days. "It's really not fair to die now. What did she do beside work in the store for sixty years?"

"No, No, she...Not just work. It wasn't like that at all. She had her moments." Aunt Margaret is crying, then she chuckles. A large, broad-bosomed woman, my aunt can go from tears to laughter in an instant. "Dear Ennie. Yes. She did. Of course she did." She glances over at the figure on the bed. The almost transparent eyelids have closed.

Aunt Margaret.

I look at my Aunt Margaret: at her round pleasant face, her white hair. She is my favourite aunt. Positive. Not easily shocked. I'm very fond of her. I've told her secrets I could not share with my own mother.

"You wouldn't remember, Liesebet. Tante Ennie did have another life. We shared a lot, good things and bad. I could tell her anything. She played tennis with me, skated on the creek in winter; we danced together to the music of your father's guitar."

A nurse-aide materializes in the doorway on her rubber-shod feet, a blood-pressure cuff in her hand. My aunt waves the white-clad figure away and points to the bed. "She's just fallen asleep. Come back later." The girl disappears from the door-way. People pay attention to my aunt when she speaks. She has that friendly manner used to giving orders, knowing they will be obeyed without question. She turns back to me.

"The elders from the church would come and frown on our guitars and violins. They didn't like Grandma's fancy curtains, the jet beading on my dress. But your grandma had a mind of her own. She could always smooth their ruffled feathers. After their scolding they sat down at our table for *Faspa*."

I get up from my uncomfortable chair. Visiting hours must be nearly over.

My aunt takes a breath and goes on. "We had lots of friends. On a summer Sunday the table in the summer kitchen was set for twelve at *Faspa*." My aunt looks to make sure her sister is still asleep. She continues, "Reimer cousins coming and going from *Yant Sied*. The Wiebes liked to come for a visit. That was before they left for Paraguay. There were weddings."

"Brides in black dresses!" I giggle at the thought.

"No, no. By then we wore navy-blue and grey. Sometimes even rose. I wore rose at my wedding." she says proudly.

My aunt will surely have set the precedent for change.

"And of course all the babies arriving one



1953. The author Elizabeth Bartel with husband Bruno Derksen, daughter Audrey and son Michael. The photograph was taken about the time her aunt Ennie died.

after the other. The downstairs sewing room was busy with Doctor Schilstra and the "Stork" coming and going." She wipes a nostalgic tear from the corner of her eye.

"The Stork!" I laugh. Of course I believed that old story. Me swinging back and forth in a pink flannelette sling under his beak before I was dropped into Grandma's lap."

I smile at my naivete and look around at the pale green walls. A laminated motto hanging there with a picture of a blond blue-eyed Jesus in the Old Testament robes of a shepherd holding a lamb. "Jesus saves" it says in flowing script. I think of Tante Ennie living for her brothers' children.

"Tante Ennie with no child of her own..."

My aunt frowns as much as her round cheeks will allow. "I know. How Ennie cheered! I heard her tears. She never knew why Peter Loewen did not come to her again. I didn't know either until long after."

"It was almost a blessing when the refugees from Russia came. Our own people surviving a revolution, with tales of famine and hardship. It occupied Ennie's mind." My aunt pauses and looks again at her sister.

"She could have gone to university. Sal-

vaged her broken heart with a degree, become famous. Why didn't she do that?" I ask.

My aunt shakes her head. "It's really too bad. Grandpa was against school after our private schools were taken away." She folds her hands, is silent for a moment.

She doesn't like to say anything critical of her father.

"When they built the big high school across the street. Grandpa's house was overrun with his grand-children going to school. Adeline, Walter...from Prairie Rose...Evelyn. You and your sisters from Sperling."

"School learning was no longer dangerous?" I ask.

"Times change," my aunt settles more firmly in the chair and leans over to listen to her sister's breathing. "Good thing that old house was sturdy; Ennie said it came alive again." She looks away from me, through the tall narrow window where we can hear the cars starting up in the parking lot. Visiting hours must be over. We are in a private room so we haven't heard the announcement.

"We were those 'wild' Reimer girls. Only the bravest and most daring "Kleingemeinde" boys would take us to the dance in Giroux," I dare to say. How much does my Aunt Margaret know about our youthful escapades?

"Maybe it's as well I moved to the farm." She raises her eyebrows at me, smiles and fastens the combs more firmly to the thick knot of hair at the back of her head. "I know! Imagine you and Raymond watering down the Catawba in Uncle Henry's wardrobe." She laughs and squeezes my arm.

"Tante Ennie caught us." I remember. It was a huge embarrassment, being caught at our illicit sampling of my uncle's wine. "She pretended not to see, turned away so we could return the key to its hiding place. Very diplomatic."

"She knew you were better off with not too tight a leash." My aunt nods and looks down at her hands in her lap.

"You know, then?" I ask. We tried to sneak past the dining room door on our way upstairs. "Well girls. A fine evening. Come and have a snack. I've just peeled some apples," she said as if it was just after supper and not past midnight. Waiting up, she was.

It is only now I become aware of what I really owe my Tante Ennie.

"Of course. Watching out for you. Just as well your parents weren't there. Although your father was young once too, as I remember." My aunt leans back in the chair, suddenly showing her weariness.

Change.

"So when did everything begin to change?" My eyes are fixed on Tante Ennie's fingers beginning to fret at the edge of the coverlet. The sedative is wearing off.

"*Lieber Heiland, Lieber Heiland,*" her cracked lips move, the words no more than a whisper. Her eye lids lift as if weighted, then close again. Aunt Margaret smooths her sister's hair. Tante Ennie's skull shows through

the grey strands of hair; through the papery skin which barely covers the bone. Skulls. My aunt's, my own. I look again. That is how I will look when I am dead.

"Ennie, Ennie, I'm here, I won't leave you, I'll stay with you," Aunt Margaret leans closer to her sister's ear.

The lips murmur "Henry? Henry?" then the litany of "*Lieber Heiland, Lieber Heiland,*" and there is silence again.

"I should go," I whisper and reach for my parka. Now is not the moment to ask about change. Who knows exactly when it all began to change?

"Stay, stay a little. When Tante Ennie wakes she'll recognize you. The drugs have confused her." My aunt is suddenly overcome with emotion. She doesn't want me to leave. "Oh it shouldn't have to be like this. Heartache and sorrow. I should have seen. Looking after Grandpa was too much. I should have known. Henry away, beating about the countryside, and that stupid flour mill. To come to this!" Tears flow from her eyes in earnest. She gestures towards the bed. "This family! So much promise and then to be torn apart by quarrelling. Why? Why?" My aunt heaves with another strangled sob. "And yet! And yet! Ennie, she never wavered. Couldn't she? No! Henry remained her darling. What could we do?" Still sobbing she follows me to the door.

I do not cry. I have no answer. I do not want to talk about the old quarrel. The family, the money, the land, the ancient grievances. I don't want to take sides.

"Henry has a few things to answer for," she says, plying her handkerchief; she regains her composure as we walk together down the wide hallway, "playing fast and loose with his sister's life." She walks on with me, further down the hall as if she can't bear to let me go.

"Surely he's come to see her?" I ask.

"Yesterday. Not much comfort there." Aunt Margaret mutters. Not for me. He sang at least ten verses out of the *Gesangbuch*. You could hear him all over the hospital. I left the room."

We have reached the front door of the hospital. People sit in the overheated waiting room, their heavy coats and parkas open. There is the smell of human sweat, and underneath it the smell of manure on a pair of farm boots.

"You know, I wonder if Henry won't outlive us all, convinced of his righteousness," my aunt has iron in her smile and only a trace of her recent tears. "I can see him, when we're all dead and buried and him living on his wheat germ diet, a hundred years old and the darling of all the nurses in the old folks home." Then she becomes serious again. "And who will even remember Ennie?"

"I'll come over and see Tante Ennie again. I'm not far away." I say as we hug each other in good-bye. We are laughing as we part, not knowing that in less than ten years she will be dead, my dearest aunt Margaret, along with my father.

As I walk out into the crisp air of late afternoon my boots crunching on the snow-covered path leading amongst the leafless shrubbery, I think of Uncle Henry and the gleam in his bright blue eyes. He is no longer a threat to my well-being as he once was. My Uncle Henry. I can laugh at him now too. He's part charismatic part charlatan, my Uncle Henry. It's funny, now that Stalin the Russian dictator has died like an ordinary mortal, my uncle is configuring with charts and obscure verses from the Bible who the next Anti-Christ will be. The town wags at the local cafe are laying wagers of who my uncle will nominate.

I don't really want to laugh. Just as in the hospital, sudden tears sting my eyes. As I cross the street and find my way home I want everyone to stop laughing at my Uncle Henry.

Tante Ennie will never laugh. She has been loyal. When the *Bruderschaft* banned Uncle Henry for a time because of his intransigence she refused to go to communion, cutting herself off from God. Is she the only one who has accepted Uncle Henry as he is? Does she hope that eventually he will see the light?

Death.

I did not see Tante Ennie again. She died suddenly that night. Aunt Margaret was grief stricken and yet, I sensed, relieved. Tante Ennie would not wander away from her younger sister again, would no longer call for Henry in her delirium through the long hospital night. Now my Aunt Margaret could get out the old photograph albums and remember her sister, young and fresh, with smooth round cheeks in a white dress, smiling happily. The dead become as we choose to remember them.

I took my eight-year old daughter with me to the funeral in the south-end church where my aunt had worshipped faithfully all her life. I wanted my daughter to remember.

I would never again see my Tante Ennie in her place on the women's side of the church, wearing the simple dark dress of fine silk or wool, a hat firm on her smooth grey head, white hands folded devoutly in her lap, her eyes downcast. My aunt had never sat proudly at the front of the church, nor abjectly, meekly, at the back but about half-way down, right on the aisle.

I wished now that I had asked her what she thought about the quarrelsome eccentrics in her family. Of one brother - Klaus or Jacob - saving up scrap metal for years in the hopes of setting up a foundry which never came to pass. Those rusting steam engines and threshing machines, grass growing through wheels and sprockets, stood about like immobile overgrown monsters grazing in the pasture behind the house and barn where my great-grandfather and the "red granny" had lived long before I was born.

And of my father who after a life of business yearned over his potter's wheel, striving to bring beauty into existence, hung over his kiln like a mid-wife over a labouring mother about to give birth.

And of course the most flamboyant of all, Henry, her dearest most beloved brother, who was caught up in visions and dreams of Messianic glory that continued to elude him. Her devotion to him had been misplaced, I thought, but it was devotion nonetheless.

The church was only half full, I could find no comfort in the starkness of its blank white walls. The uncurtained windows looking out on a dull winter sky, dirty snow heaped against the pickets of an unpainted fence.

The modest grey coffin stood at the front of the church; there was a single spray of white roses on the closed lid. My Aunt Margaret had not forgotten her sister's love of roses. But there was no extravagant floral display now, as had been the case for my grandparents, no school half-day holiday, no flags at half-mast. It was another time. Different names blazed in neon on the streets of Steinbach. My Tante Ennie's brothers and two sisters again stood all in black; the men, each with a black band on one sleeve: Henry, Jacob, Klaus, my father, Peter and Benjamin. This time my Uncle Henry did not pray with his eyes turned to heaven, looking like a balding angel, small neat hands folded under the plump chin, as he had done in previous times.

He had embarrassed his family dreadfully. The Reimers were against ostentation, especially before God. They believed in silent prayer. Now my uncle Henry was suitably deferential; but it was difficult to tell what he was feeling. Age was taming him too. Whatever had happened between him and the elders, his excommunication had been rescinded. He never spoke of it. Neither did my father. Uncle Henry was again a member in good standing of the "Kleingemeinde" Church.

My Tante Ennie was gone. The scene would be imprinted on my memory for all time. The slow sad singing began. I took my daughter's hand in mine.

About the author:

Elizabeth Reimer Bartel was born in Steinbach and lived there for 10 years with her late husband Bruno Derksen., then publisher with his brother Eugene, of the Carillon News. She now lives on Vancouver Island. Besides a collection of poems, she has written a historical novel about life in Steinbach, which she hopes to publish soon, and is at work on a memoir of her father, John H. W. Reimer.

Further Reading:

Elisabeth Bartel, "A Legacy - Memoir: Memories of Anna Wiebe Reimer (1866-1932)," in *Pres.*, No. 10, Part One, pages 37-43.

Heather Dram, "H. W. Reimer House," *Pres.*, No. 7, page 44.

Ernest Toews, "Steinbach Main Street, 1930, Part Two," in *Pres.*, No. 9, Part One, page 58.

Anna Wiebe Reimer, funeral photograph, 1934, in *Pres.*, No. 9, Part Two, page 48.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen, Pioneer Teacher

“Gerhard E. Kornelsen 1875-1933, Pioneer School Teacher, from Lichtenau, Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia, to Steinbach, E.R., Manitoba,” by grandson David K. Schellenberg, Box 1661, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0.

Background.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen was the son of Gerhard S. Kornelsen (1816-94), life-long resident of Lichtenau, Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia, and Maria Enns, sister of Heinrich Enns (1807-81), Fischau, fourth Aeltester of the Kleine Gemeinde (KG).

Gerhard S. Kornelsen taught school for 20 years in Lichtenau and served as Brandaeltester. In 1872 Gerhard S. Kornelsen married for the second time to Kornelia Warkentin, widow of Peter Harms.

In 1875 Gerhard S. Kornelsen sold his Wirtschaft in Lichtenau to Isaac Bergen and emigrated to Manitoba together with wife Kornelia and sons, Gerhard age 18 and Heinrich age 15, and step-son Jakob Harms age 18, and step-daughter Sarah Harms, 17. They settled two miles west of Steinbach, E.R., in the hamlet of Lichtenau, sometimes also known as Eigenfeld and/or Neuendorf.

Gerhard S. Kornelsen was a highly respected veteran teacher who drafted the regulations for the KG confessional schools in Manitoba. He was the second KG Brandaeltester in Manitoba serving from 1881 to 1889.

In 1891 Gerhard S. Kornelsen travelled to visit daughter Maria Enns in Jansen, Nebraska, and presumably to Gnadenu, Kansas, to visit his brother Abraham and Kornelia's brothers at Inman.

October 26, 1892, son Heinrich wrote the *Rundschau* reporting the death of his step-mother “because his father Gerhard is not capable of writing anymore.”

Gerhard S. Kornelsen maintained an extensive letter correspondence with relatives, friends, colleagues and former students, from Russia, Kansas, and elsewhere, which constitutes a major source of information for the social and cultural life of the time. Considerable information about Gerhard S. and family is found in the journals of son-in-law Abraham R. Friesen.

Also immigrating to Manitoba were Gerhard S.'s children: daughter Maria--the oldest, married to Jakob Enns, who soon moved to Jansen, Nebraska; daughter Agatha and husband Abraham R. Friesen, also a career teacher who taught in Blumenhof, north of Steinbach; and daughter Anna married to Gerhard R. Giesbrecht, one of the original 18

Steinbach settlers and mayor in 1883 (Note One).



Gerhard E. and Anna Doerksen Kornelsen, around 1932. All photos for this article are courtesy of the author David K. Schellenberg, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Homesteading, 1875.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen later described some events from the pioneering years: “Father G. S. Kornelsen took up a homestead on NE28-6-6-E. I found my homestead on NE33-6-6E and brother Heinrich on SE28-6-6-E. All these homesteads were part of the village of Lichtenau.”

“The winter of 1875-76 as also the next summer, I stayed with my parents in their Wirtschaft. It followed the pioneer style and was erected in a primitive way out of raw timbers, straw roof and earthen floor for man and beast. Animals consisted of some cows, oxen, pigs and fowl.”

“For seeding there were some 10 acres cleared from raw forest. The first years the crop was harvested with a scythe, bound by hand into sheaves and threshed with ox-power. Steam threshers came only in the beginning

’80s. Hay for cattle fodder there was plenty. Unfortunately the late cutting deprived it of nutrients and many a beast perished the first winter, which was also severe.”

Steinbach School, 1874.

The village of Steinbach was founded in the late summer of 1874 by 18 families. There is some confusion regarding the teaching facilities that first winter. Cornelius Fast (1840-1927), a veteran teacher from the “old” Steinbach, Borosenko, in Imperial Russia was among the pioneers who founded the infant village (Note Two).

Gerhard E. Kornelsen, himself, has written that the spiritual leader Rev. Jakob Barkman and store owner Klaas Reimer, took turns conducting school.

While our forefathers favoured no fad and fancy education, they were fully aware of the advantages and necessity of a good elementary education. By October of 1875 they had completed a schoolhouse and engaged Abraham T. Friesen as the teacher. Gerhard E. Kornelsen later described the school house and details of wages, students and teachers for each subsequent teaching year (Note Three).

Teaching, 1876-78.

In the fall of 1876 Gerhard E. Kornelsen received an offer from the Steinbach village fathers to take over the village school. Since Gerhard came from a teaching family it was not surprising when

he welcomed this opportunity.

The school term originally was for five months, October to April. The summer months were kept free for students and teacher to pursue agriculture as well as village obligations. He received \$40.00 cash, free board by rotating at the homes of parents, as well as getting five acres sod broken on his homestead in Lichtenau by the village land owners.

The enrolment consisted of 14: Johann N. Wiebe b. 1864, Heinrich W. Reimer b. 1864, Heinrich L. Fast b. 1865, Isaak Plett b. 1867, Peter W. Reimer b. 1867, Abraham R. Friesen b. 1869, Heinrich W. Brandt b. 1867, Joh. W. Reimer b. 1870, Klaas F. Friesen b. 1869, Klaas R. Friesen b. 1870, Maria Wiebe b. 1868, Katherina Reimer b. 1866, Maria Barkman b. 1867, Katherina Toews b. 1866.



Gerhard E. Kornelsen (1857-1933).

Confessional Schools.

The Mennonite confessional school system had four levels of student achievement or competence. From this arose the saying by some who attended these schools that they had only Grade Four. The textbooks used for instruction in reading in the four levels were the Fibel, Catechism, New Testament and Old Testament.

The daily timetable consisted of Bible stories, three hours; Reading, ten hours; Writing, five hours; Arithmetic, eight hours; Grammar, two hours; Geography, one hour; Friday afternoons were usually used for drawing and painting, as well as recitation of the catechism, multiplication tables, certain facts in Grammar and Geography. A race to see who could first find certain verses in the Bible was a common feature on Fridays. An examination at the end of the term determined the pupil's standing.

"The main subject in the school was religion. First came the stories of the Bible. The text book was Calwers Bible Stories. It contained 52 stories of the Old Testament and 52 stories of the New Testament...The teacher would relate the story in one lesson and review the story in the next lesson by asking questions. The object of the lesson was always the relationship between man and God...Another part of the religious teaching was the catechism. The answers had to be memorized..."

Another source summarizes it this way: the curriculum consisted of the Three R's, Bible studies and



Gerhard and Anna Kornelsen (sitting center) with family and some of their Lutheran neighbors. (It is probable that the occasion was Mr. Kornelsen's 75th birthday in 1932, the year before he died.)

penmanship. A typical timetable for a week of classes included three hours of Bible reading. On Friday afternoons, Bible catechisms were recited. "The private school reinforced religious values and helped the roots of faith to sink into firm soil."

Teachers within the KG confessional school system followed a regime of teachers' conferences, Prufungen (public examinations where the techniques and knowledge of the teacher were evaluated by his peers), apprenticeships and supervisory inspections by the ministerial in order to develop professional qualifications and insure the integrity of subject matter and teaching standards.

On March 2, 1878 Mr. Kornelsen attended the first Teacher's Convention (Note Four).

The church schools were at first were conducted in German. It seems that most of the KG teachers obtained some English (in Russia some of them had already been teaching

Russian) which they incorporated into the curriculum. Gerhard took English lessons as well from an Anglo-Canadian teacher at Clearsprings and first introduced it formally in the classroom in 1888.

Marriage, 1878.

On January 13, 1878, Gerhard married Elisabeth Giesbrecht, daughter of Gerhard Giesbrecht (1816-63). Her mother came to Canada as a widow (Note Five). The wedding took place in Grünfeld (Kleefeld). Rev. Abr. Loewen performed the ceremony. They set up housekeeping in the school residence.

1879-86.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen again taught for 1877-78. With government assistance, the salary increased to nearly \$100.00 in 1878-79.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen only made his contract to February 1 planning to devote his time to farming thereafter. He also tanned animal hides ("Rohleder Gerberei").

For the next eight years or so Gerhard stuck to farming. He was now married with two children and possibly wanted to spend more time with his family.

A recorded note dated 1885, likely by son Gerhard G. Kornelsen, refers to an evening school started by G. E. Kornelsen in Lichtenau with five students. Three of these were sons of Abr. Wiebe plus Agatha and Maria Friesen, children of his sister Agatha, recently widowed.

Letter, 1888.

In 1888 Gerhard E. Kornelsen wrote a letter to Russia in which he provides a little glimpse of his life world: "Manitoba is a nice Province but also had many grey areas; Three months of mosquitos,



A 1953 photo of four of the Kornelsen children Agatha (Mrs. Jac R. Schellenberg) William, Gerhard and John.



Farmstead on Section 14-6-6E where the Kornelsen's lived before retiring to Steinbach in 1925.

swamp on the way to Winnipeg, barns without rafters which created problems when it rained. One time the horses ran away and were found only after a month and \$13.00 expenses."

Teaching, 1888.

In 1888 the Steinbach school committee again asked him to teach. He accepted notwithstanding that he had improved his farm through a new barn and house.

The salary had increased to one dollar per day. A total of 120 school days meant \$120.00. The contract included an enlarged free residence, cow barn for 12 cattle and free tuition for his children. In addition there was the plowing of one acre of land from each of the 18 village land owners and the hauling of one load of hay from the teacher's hayfield. They also provided free pasture for his cattle.

School began October 26, 1888 with 46 pupils. The term consisted of 135 days. Instruction was in German with the exception of 30 minutes a week English



Jacob G. Kornelsen (1886-1953), son of G.E. Kornelsen, and long-time teacher in Steinbach, with wife Susan.

"Schönschreiben." (Calligraphy). During this period there were four teachers' conferences or more a year. Teachers received one dollar for attending these functions.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen was also interested in books. In 1889 he took over the book store of Johann W. Dueck (1865-1932) who operated it out of H. W. Reimer's store. Johann had taken it over from his father Peter L. Dueck (1842-87)(A.D. Penner's grand father).

School began on October 5 with 45 pupils. They now also had 10 minutes of English learning daily. The 1893-94 school term saw the third revision of the wage scale with a significant increase. The school term now was 140 days and the salary \$175.00 cash plus plowing 20 acres, free living quarters and heat, free cattle pasture and free tuition for his children.

The Kornelsens moved into the village in winter where they lived in the teacherage. In the year 1890 my mother wrote they lived in the school at one end. In the middle room was the kitchen where mother would cook dinner. When the students went out for recess some remarked how good it smelled. At the other end was a barn with cattle and chickens where one could hear mooing and cackling.

Father's Death, 1894.

In a diary entry of August 14, 1894, Gerhard E. Kornelsen described the death of his father, Gerhard S. Kornelsen, after an eight months sickness:

"At seven in the evening father died. I still saw him alive, or more correctly, battle with death...In the morning he had said to me and brother Heinrich that we should not stay away long. At six Elisabeth came from Steinbach on foot to the farm with the news that Grandfather is dying. Without loading on hay we hurried home." The funeral service was at the schoolhouse on August 18.

There was emptiness and possibly some guilt that Gerhard had not visited him oftener and looked after him more and made his life more pleasant, in particular in the last days: "But now it is all past and no more favours can be done for him, in spite of our wanting to."

Farmer.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen continued farming in addition to teaching school.

In 1889 Gerhard E. Kornelsen was looking for other land. He noted he had looked at the NE12-6-6E and SW24-6-6E.

A note, likely by son G. G. Kornelsen, states that Gerhard E. purchased a farm three miles south of Steinbach, behind Felsenton, from Johann Koop in 1892. Gerhard began working it in early summer (Hard cover summary G.G.K.).

On July 15, 1893 G. E. Kornelsen recorded they plowed the first furrow of sod at the new homestead, NW6-6-14. This was at the edge of the stony Friedensfeld area where many KG-ers were selling land to buy better land elsewhere. Around 1900 and later much land in the area was purchased by German Lutheran immigrants.

The farmyard was located about half a mile from the main road and obscured by trees. Ever ingenious, he cleared a narrow swath through the bush on his adjoining parcel of land to be able to see the light of the next door neighbours, William F. Giesbrechts, about a half mile away.

In the years 1892 and '93 there were testings: "First the long winter was very cold. The first harvested hay was not very nutritious. The dear cattle got so run down that of the 10 cows we brought through the winter...the three best ones died after weeks of care and help. One of the cows which died we had loaned from J. Reimers for three years.

"Then early in spring there occurred a terrible coughing with the children. Heinrich after suffering for seven weeks died on June 14, 1893 at the age of nine. He had had measles in the fall and never really was well all winter."

1894-1910.

Gerhard E.'s teaching career continued. In 1894-95 there were 123 school days with 58 pupils. In 1895-96 there were 122 school days with 60 students.

The 1897-98 school year saw a change in teaching staff with a second teacher hired. Dietrich S. Friesen who had been the teacher in 1880 to 1885 was the new elementary teacher while Mr. Kornelsen became principal. A significant jump is also seen in days of school which climbed to 150. Dietrich S. Friesen taught up to the spring of 1901 when he died shortly after school closing (Note Six). The next school year saw son G. G. Kornelsen take over as teacher for the elementary students serving until 1911. The school days dropped to 125.

1910, Anniversary.

On April 21, 1910, a celebration commemorating 25 years of teaching was held by his students. They gave him the following tribute:

"To G. E. Kornelsen; Teacher in Steinbach.

"Loving and honourable teacher;

"Firstly a greeting of love and regards.

"We as your students bring to you a chair, out of love and respect, as a remembrance of your 25 years of teaching endeavour as a ju-



G.G. Kornelsen (1878-1958) on right, eldest son of Gerhard E. Kornelsen, was a Watkins dealer after his teaching career. Can anyone identify the farmyard or the customer (left)?

bible gift. We recognize that this item is little and perishable but hope that you will accept it as a sincere token of love.

"It is also our wish that the Lord, according to His will and good pleasure will give you many years of health and whatever He plans for you will also be your pleasure.

"We as a small part of your great student group undersign ourselves with regards.

"From Johann I. Friesen's family: Anna P. Friesen, Abraham P. Friesen, Margaretha P. Friesen, Johann P. Friesen, Katherina P. Friesen, Maria P. Friesen.

"From H. Sobering's family: Simon Sobering, Barbara Sobering, Johanna Sobering, Heinrich Sobering, Andreas Sobering,.

"From Heinrich Reimer's family: Anna Reimer, Heinrich, Katherina, Jacob, Klaas and Johann.

"From Cornelius Reimer's family: father Corn. W. Reimer, daughter Louise and Albert.

"From Cornelius Kroeker's family: C. T. Kroeker.

"From P. R. Toews' family: Peter, Heinrich and Abraham.

"From Gerh. W. Reimer's Family: son Gerhard and father G. W. Reimer.

"From Jakob W. Reimer's Family: son Jakob.

"Further the following students and school Friends: Isaac D. Plett, Jakob F. Giesbrecht, Bernhard S. Rempel, Johann F. Giesbrecht, P. T. Barkman, Katherina R. Barkman, Elisabeth

R. Barkman, Klaas R. Barkman, Jakob R. Barkman, Peter R. Barkman, Johann B. Reimer, Klaas J. B. Reimer, Margaretha B. Reimer, Maria B. Reimer, Aganetha B. Reimer, Susanna B. Reimer, Klaas B. Reimer, Gerhard Brandt, Peter F. Giesbrecht, Klaas R. Friesen, Abraham D. Friesen, Klaas D. Friesen, Johann D. Friesen, Peter T. Loewen, Martin K. Reimer, Franz K. Dueck, Jakob B. A. Reimer, Abraham A. Reimer, Franz S. Friesen, David K. Reimer, Gerhard S. Rempel, Peter K. Neufeld, Heinrich K. Neufeld, Elisabeth Kreutzer, Peter S. Guenther."

Parents' Meetings.

Gerhard Kornelsen was a modest man. This trait was manifested at a public meeting where the parents and ratepayers came and had their say. At one meeting Gerhard had come in for a good deal of criticism.

At the end he was asked if he wanted to continue in his job for another year and whether \$15.00 a month would be satisfactory. He had replied that after what he had just listened too he thought \$15.00 per month would be almost too much.

Personal Life.

A farm accident in the year 1900 resulted in Gerhard injuring his foot. He had been mowing grass for hay when something came loose and the horses bolted causing him to get his foot in the wheel. With this he fell off the mower and had to drag himself home. He made a visit to a chiropractor but it took a long time to heal.

In 1902 daughter Maria (1882-1941) married Cornelius F. Friesen (1876-1980), and Margaretha (1884-1948) married Peter R. Friesen (1872-1933).

Mrs. Kornelsen was not a strong person and eventually also became nearly blind. The children had to lead her around and read to her. This no doubt gave Gerhard a lot of concern.

In May of 1905, when she was around 50 years old, she had eye surgery at the St. Boniface hos-



1892, teaching Certificate from the teaching days of Gerhard E. Kornelsen.



Steinbach school teacher G.G. Kornelsen with his elementary class, circa 1910. Can anyone identify any of the students? Gerhard G. had purchased the former Klaas Friesen housebarn at the north end of Steinbach and was active in attempting to preserve the historical structure. His dream was crushed by the developer A. D. Penner who bulldozed the historic structure.

pital in Winnipeg. My mother writes that she and her father would go with horse and buggy to visit her. Such a trip would likely have taken some three days. The surgery helped her so that she could see again.

An account book entry on June 7, 1905 could well be a record of the cost of her stay at the St. Boniface hospital. The item is St. Boniface hospital 16 days board and care \$32.00.

In 1908 an event occurred which must have torn at the heartstrings of Gerhard and Elisabeth Kornelsen. Their daughter Elisabeth, age some 27 years, had to be committed to the Hospital for Mental Diseases in Brandon, Man.

To visit Elisabeth entailed a great effort in 1908. My mother described one such trip: "I went to Brandon last week to see my sister in the asylum. My father and sister Agatha accompanied me. We went by auto to Winnipeg with P.R. Friesens (another sister) and stayed there over night. On the 23 we boarded the train for Brandon which we reached at 11:30 a.m. We went to the asylum right away but could not talk very much to our sister on account of her not being able to converse comprehensively. We wanted to see some others whom we knew, but our time was very limited because we had to go back at 3:30 in order to meet Mr. P.R. Friesen to go home the same day as he waited for us in Winnipeg."

On other occasions they would take the train in Giroux to Winnipeg and from there by train to Brandon.

Death and Remarriage.

On January 9, 1910, after a brief illness Gerhard's wife Elisabeth died.

"After a blessed marriage of 32 years," Gerhard later writes, "came the hour of parting and after a five day illness on January 9, 1910, my wife died. She leaves me and her mother and 10 children to mourn her death." (Autobiography). A hard blow, to be sure.

On May 5, 1912, Gerhard E. Kornelsen married again. His second wife was the widow Martin G. Barkman, nee Anna Doerksen,

whose husband died on May 6, 1910. She was an intelligent literate person who maintained her own journals (Note Seven).

Also in 1910 two more children got married. They were the two oldest, Gerhard (1878-1958) married Anna Dyck (1882-1982) from Winkler and Aganetha, (1879-1966) married Jacob R. Schellenberg (1882-1952). Aganetha, my mother, had been employed at K. Reimer & Sons as a clerk.

Trip 1910.

A death and two marriages in one year was extremely hard on Gerhard E. Maybe that was one of the reasons he decided to take a break and visit the U.S. in September of that year. One of destinations no doubt would have been to visit the Jacob Enns who lived in Nebraska. Mrs. Enns, Maria, was his sister.

In a little notebook, ("1910 G.E.K. To U.S.A.") he recorded his experiences and trip cost, from the day he departed on September 12 to October 13. Of course travel was by train. He embarked at Otterburne. Travel expenses were as follows: Otterburne to Emerson, \$1.10, Emerson to St. Paul, \$7.95, St Paul to Omaha, \$7.00, Omaha to Jansen. Jansen to Inman, \$4.35, Inman to Meade, \$3.23, total \$25.74. The return journey came to \$28.15 making a total of \$53.89 for the round trip. Maybe one reason for the higher cost was that he returned via Winnipeg and disembarked at Giroux station.

Church School, 1911-19.

The term 1910-11 was the final year of teaching in the old village school. Even before the school closing of that spring, the raising of the Union Jack was begun.

Through the lobbying of the more Anglo-conformist Holdeman and infant Brüderthaler congregations in Steinbach the building which the KG had built in 1880 to serve as both worship house and school was declared to be a public building. The KG was even prohibited from holding worship services in the building.

"That latter year a majority of Steinbach ratepayers voted for a public school with En-

glish as the language of instruction."

"A majority of the Kleine Gemeinde members of Steinbach under the leadership of Aeltester Peter R. Dueck and the merchant layman Jakob W. Reimer decided to continue a private church school for their children in the village...The old residence of Franz Kroekers near the southeastern end of the village was remodelled for a classroom and Gerhard E. Kornelsen was engaged again to teach in the German language as had been customary up to that time..."

Mr. Kornelsen writes, "On October 14, 1912 we began instructions with the lower grades in the Steinbach Private school. Already in summer there were classes with the entire school; May four days, June four days, July four days, August four days, September four days. Then in October teacher Bernhard Rempel took over the upper classes."

The pupils were: G.G., Abr. G., Kl. Kr, Pet. Bark, Bernh. H.W., G.U., G.R., H. Fr., Fr. G., D. Strech, Joh. Bark, H. G., Joh. Kr., Anna. B., Sus. Reimer, Ann. Kornel, Agan. R, El. Toews, Agan. Brandt, El. Dueck, Anna R., S.R., An. G., Agan. Loew., Died. Fast, Kat. Toews, An. Koote, Marg. Reim, Kath. Dork., Marg. Dork., H. Toews, Bernh. Toews, Pet. Esau, Eli. Esau, Agan. Esau. 1913 Oct. 1 School beginning."

In 1914 a new two-room school was built on Mill Street (later renamed First Street) where the Grace Mennonite Church later stood.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen recorded some details as to how the school was funded: "October 1, 1913 we the undersigned, members of the Steinbach Private school agreed that the private school ownership, as to land and building, [shall be] divided into 120 shares at \$25.00 per share. These shares, with 5% interest, are to be repaid yearly in 10 instalments, collected by the trustees and forwarded to Jac. Reimer yearly on November 1."

It was further decided that the following were included in the Steinbach church school (assets): "One acre, more or less of land, The buildings on it, two new stoves (Steinbach Private Schule p. 63 from "Meine Schueler")."

The school operated successfully until 1919 with an enrolment of around 70. When Jakob W. Reimer died in 1918 and the Bishop Peter R. Dueck passed away in January, 1919 the school had run its course and was closed in May (*Sesquicentennial*, page 28).

Sons' Education.

From time to time a number of KG and Holdeman teachers attended the Mennonite Educational Institute in Gretna in order to upgrade their teaching skills and credentials.

Several of Gerhard E. Kornelsen's sons attended as well. I do not have the impression that they had to beg and plead to get permission to continue their education. Son Jakob also attended Wesley College in 1914.

It appears Gerhard also helped his sons financially in pursuing their education. In a let-

ter from school to his sister, one of the sons wondered when he could expect money from his father so he could make the necessary arrangements. Whether it was money owed him or assistance, is not stated.

History, 1916.

Like many senior members of the KG, Gerhard E. Kornelsen had a sense of historical consciousness and interest in history. He was a literate man who maintained a letter correspondence with friends and relatives in Kansas, Russia and Western Canada.

In 1916 he wrote an important series of articles, serialized in the *Steinbach Post* between February 23 and April 12, reporting on the history of each Homestead along Steinbach's Main Street since the founding of the village in 1874. In 1990 these articles were translated by Steinbach historian Henry Fast and published in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 255-260 (Note Eight).

Farming, 1921.

Gerhard E. Kornelsen continued farming in addition to his teaching career. By today's standards income from the farm was modest. The 1921 Income Tax returns report the following income: Wheat sold; 26 bushels for \$39.00; Oats; 1 bushel .50; Poultry sold; \$49.09; Cattle sold 36.50; Sheep sold, 35.00; Hides and wool, 7.36; Eggs, butter and cheese sold; 76.58, Cream and milk sold, 322.29; Value of products of farm consumed on farm, 240.00; Other income: Cheese Association Steinbach; 18.25. Fiduciaries, 16.75 .A total of \$620.63.

Machinery included a binder, mower, wagon, drill, plow and sleigh with a total original cost of \$246.00. Buildings (other than dwelling) were a horse barn, cow stable and granary - total value \$800.00.

Steinbach, 1925.

In 1925 Gerhard and Anna moved off the farm some three miles south of Steinbach (Section 14-6-6E) and settled in the village of Steinbach.

On April 7 of that year they held a public auction. The following were some items listed on the auction bill: three horses, five cows, one two-year-old bull, one heifer two-years-old, three heifers one-year-old, one female calf, 26 sheep, one freight wagon, 1 double box, 1 farm truck, 1 omnibus, 1 milk buggy, 2 freight sleighs, 1 Cutter, 1 binder, 1 scale, 1 mower, 1 hayrack, 1 cultivator, 1 disk drill, 1 harrows, 1 brush breaker, Hay and straw forks, 1 bone mill, 1 garden cultivator, 1 cream separator, 1 old cream separator, 2 milk cans, 1 sleep bench, 2 wall clocks, 3 bee hives, 1 horse power, beds, tables, 2 cook stoves, 1 clothes closet, 1 bookcase, 1 butter churn, school and other books, 1 spinning wheel, 10 bushel buck wheat.

Anna and Gerhard purchased a house now standing at 165 Hanover Street in Steinbach. After renovating it they moved in. He was some 68 years of age. But this by no means

meant a life of idleness as the following shows:

Sunday School 1925.

Already in 1890 Gerhard E. Kornelsen had raised the possibility of starting a Sunday School. One of his daughters later recalled church and ministers counselling against this and eventually it stopped due to a lack of support. The historian P. J. B. Reimer puts it as follows; "It was briefly debated and decisively rejected."

The idea surfaced again in 1894. In a diary entry for June 10, 1894 Gerhard E. made record of a Brethren meeting with the entry ending with, "Among other things also concerning the Sunday School."



Anna (Dyck) Kornelsen, wife of G.G. Kornelsen.

[Sunday Schools were originally used by American Fundamentalists to spread their religious creed and culture, views which were not regarded as Biblically sound and therefore had a negative connotations for conservative Mennonites. Editor's Note].

The Mennonite denominations in Manitoba already operated their own confessional school systems where the Christian faith and their teachings were instilled in the children. Therefore it was deemed that there was no need for a Sunday School. It was obvious that children in a school system under church administration received superior Christian training than what was possible in a Sunday School.

The situation changed with the closing of the church schools in 1919. There was now a need for another means of teaching Christian faith and values to the children.

In the Fall of 1925 it was decided at a brotherhood meeting in the Blumenort worship house, that the Steinbach congregation was allowed to establish a Sunday School (*Sesquicentennial*, page 31).

The brethren of the Steinbach church were

called together by Rev. Klaas R. Friesen to discuss starting a Sunday school. It was decided to start about the middle of January. They elected the old village teacher, Gerhard E. Kornelsen as Superintendent (*Sesquicentennial*, page 31).

In a letter to daughter Agatha, Gerhard E. Kornelsen writes that Klaas J. B. Reimer and Jac R. Barkman had been over concerning teaching Sunday school. Were they the appointed committee?

Can one imagine what must have gone through the mind and heart of this man? Finally, after almost attaining the age of 70 he saw his vision realized, one could say. And they made him Superintendent!

He described the situation in a letter to daughter Agatha: "On January 17 [1926] we held Sunday school for the first time in Steinbach with six teachers as follows; Anna Dueck for small girls; Abr. Toews for bigger girls; Abr. R. Penner for married women; Klaas J. B. Reimer, bigger boys; Peter R. Reimer, small boys; G.E. Kornelsen, married men and big boys."

After this they continued every Sunday and at the time of the writing he could say it had gone very well. "Hopefully the Lord's blessing is on it because all depends on that." Modestly, he says he cannot report of attendance figures except that never had there been under 100. And they now had nine classes as well as nine teachers.

Elisabeth, 1926.

In 1926 daughter Elisabeth passed away at the age of 45 years at Brandon. It must have been a sad day when her father received a letter dated May 8, 1926 from the Medical Superintendent of the Hospital for Mental Diseases in Brandon informing him of Elisabeth's deteriorating condition: "I regret to advise you that Miss Elisabeth Kornelsen is ill with Pulmonary Tuberculosis. She is very thin and steadily losing ground. She is now running some temperature. She never speaks to anyone."

Elisabeth died on May 9, 1926. My eldest brother remembered that the body was sent from Brandon to Giroux station where Gerhard E. and a son picked it up. The funeral likely was held on May 13, 1926. However it appears that the grave was not closed till Monday May 17 to accommodate the Peter R. Friesens, who were not home yet from a trip to the South and had telegraphed that they could be home by Monday (Mrs. Friesen was Elisabeth's sister).

A letter by Gerhard E. dated May 22 to daughter Agatha recalled the events: "When you were here it seemed long till Peter Friesens would arrive to have one last look at the beloved Elisabeth..." Friesens came on Monday afternoon around 3 p.m. and at around 7:00 p.m. the grave was closed. "I believe that Elisabeth," he continued, "after she left this world of sorrow, has gone into everlasting rest."

Retirement.

Even though retired Gerhard E. kept busy. In a letter to daughter Agatha (1895-1989), he described some of his activities: "I have been quite busy the last two weeks. One week there were four days when I was in Sunday clothes during the week. Last week I got five loads of freshly sawed wood from the farm. I had borrowed horse and sleigh from Schellenbergs. The road was very good and the weather fine."

The year after their move to Steinbach he found himself working in the harvest, "...I have enough work here now, at Cor. P. Reimers. First in stooking and then as field pitcher during threshing. Already worked nine days and went quite well."

Other occupations keeping him busy were: church janitor, selling nursery stock for Patmore Nurseries. When there was time he went to the farm to cut wood.

He deplored that making vis-its fell behind; "For visiting there is still not quite time, although the need is there."

Daughter Agatha.

Daughter Agatha (1895-1989) was the youngest of the 12 children born. She never married. After she became an adult she spent much time working away from home, on the farm and also in Winnipeg. One of the places of employment was for the H. E. Sellers family in Winnipeg.

The letters to his daughter reveal the father heart Gerhard E. still had for his daughter, although grown. An example: I suppose she thought of changing jobs and her father gave her the following directives to look for in an employer:

1. Is there love and Christianity; 2. Duties should not be too strenuous and not detrimental to the health of body and soul; 3. Wages ample; 4. The possibility to come home, favourable; 5. Time to eat and sleep; 6. The children courteous, etc., etc."

Mostly his letters to daughter Agatha were newsy, informing her of daily happenings. But here and there he would put in strategic words of wisdom. A favourite was, "Bliebe fromm und halte dich recht den solchen wird es zuletzt wohl gehen," Ps.37:37. He would also advise church attendance.

Still in his strong handwriting in June 1932 (the year before he died) he modestly shares with daughter Agatha about his physical condition; "My health is also not always the best. My working is also only on a small scale, especially when the day is hot." The buggy and wagon they had already sold.

Death, 1933.

By the time January rolled around a letter by Aganetha to a sister in the States had the news that father is completely sick. He always

says that he has the cold so bad, but she fears it must be more. And yesterday he had remarked that everything has an end. She had not thought that his condition would deteriorate that quickly. He is also ready to die, which will signal the end of all his "Kummer" (concerns) and "Muehe" (trouble, pains, toil).

On February 2, 1933 this remarkable man, teacher, farmer, husband, father, grandfather and more, answered the call of the Lord.

A daughter has chronicled some of the events of the final days of his life. "January 28, he had said he felt somewhat fluish. On the 29th he and Mrs. Kornelsen had kind of taken it easy, but still prepared meals.

January 30, Aganetha, a daughter, writes they received a phone call that father was mostly lying down so they went over. But he was up, sitting in the rocker. He said that he misses going downtown.



On left, Agatha Kornelsen, youngest daughter of Gerhard E. Kornelsen, seen with the oldest daughter, Aganetha Schellenberg. Aganetha was the mother of David K. Schellenberg, the author of this biography.

They even had "Vesper with him, not realizing that this would be the last time I poured coffee for him... January 31 we heard that he had had a restless night. Towards evening they received a phone call that they should come over. We went and by then he lay almost helpless. Agatha came around 8:30 for which he was very glad saying, "You have come."

They also called Dr. Schilstra who said his heart was much affected and left medicine.

On February 1 we went again. "His condition had deteriorated much." They stayed for night. At around seven in the morning he peacefully departed.

Funeral.

The funeral was held on Sunday February 5. It was a cold and stormy day. Officiating ministers were David P. Reimer and Henry R. Dueck. Also speaking in closing, was Jacob W. Reimer of the Mennonite Brethren church.

The following obituary, was written by his son G.G. Kornelsen, for many years a co-teacher with his father.

"It has pleased the Lord of life and death

to take from our side through death, on February 2 at 7 a.m. our father G.E. Kornelsen..."

"Some two years ago father suffered a light stroke from which he nevertheless recovered remarkably soon, except that his memory and his alertness were significantly affected and the signs of advancing age became more evident. But he still went downtown, attended church, made visits to neighbours etc. as before. And even cut his six loads of green wood with a bucksaw last winter.

"The last Friday of January his domestic endeavours proclaimed, "Thus far and no further". His last walk was to the office of John D. Goossen to finalize the sale of a lot. Very tired upon his return he remarked, "So, that is now finally accomplished, I wanted so much to have this done."

"On Saturday he was a sick man and mother phoned us whether we would not send Willie to look after needed chores, which we did and also went over.

"Thus it stayed Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Father just lay around. Also had a bad cough and temperature, especially at night. Upon our question of whether he had such a heavy flu he replied, "No, I think the end nears."

"Tuesday we abandoned the idea of 'sickly' and saw that father was a sick man. In the evening the doctor diagnosed heart problems and gave to understand that the human machine was running out.

"Father at times was quite restless and breathed heavily. His speaking was only in a weak voice, because of a swollen tongue. On Wednesday it was evident that strength was failing and instead of tossing around he only made brief gestures with his hands as if he was writing-- likely an involuntary reflection on his former profession.

"Thursday morning, Ground Hog Day, the mill whistle blew its customary whistle, which often had been to him a joyous signal, a beloved morning greeting at his work, now the signal of his last journey. He went, and we stayed standing. His covering blanket which sometimes had been heavy during his battle with death, no longer moved. It was 7:00 a.m. Feb. 2, 1933..."

After his death Mrs. Kornelsen moved in with one of her daughters. Another auction took place, April 22, 1933. Among the items for sale were a Russian chest, a fur blanket, and a number of books; 1 "Hollaendische" (Holland) Bible, Martys Mirror, Menno Simons book, Holdemans Book, Koehlers Large German-English English-German Word Book as well as 12 cords of green and dry wood.

Tributes.

The following is a brief tribute to Gerhard E. Kornelsen from the 1939 copy of Steinbach Collegiate Institute Yearbook: "The late

G. E. Kornelsen, one of the first teachers of Steinbach. Mr. Kornelsen first entered the profession in 1876 and completed 33 years of teaching in the Steinbach School District. He passed away on Feb. 2, 1933. The residents of the community will long remember him as a kind friend, a gifted teacher, and a loyal member of his church. “

From Mr. H.H. Ewert, principal of Menonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna, Manitoba to his friend G. G. Kornelsen (son) came the following, excerpted from a letter of condolences: “Your father was very dear to me. What a precious warm heart he had for his friends, yes for everyone. How he recognized good enterprises. What courage he manifested, when in spite of misunderstandings...he was helpful in seeing that his sons got a good education. Long will I, in quiet meditation, remember him.”

A grandson, wrote the following about his grandfather: “My grandfather, Gerhard E. Kornelsen, was a tall man with broad shoulders and his entire build was in proportion. He had a well kept, although bushy beard turning grey by the time I came on the scene. He was friendly but not in an overbearing manner. My grandfather, although a school teacher for 33 years, was always dressed very ordinarily. This may have been of necessity; 1) because he also had to farm to make ends meet, and 2) there was not always money to purchase clothes to suit the occasion, and 3) he would have been the last man to put on a show of being dressy. Although he was friendly and smiled often, I don't recall that he ever told jokes or laughed aloud.”

Historian Klaas J. B. Reimer gave Gerhard E. Kornelsen the following tribute; “The late Mr. Kornelsen is still reverently remembered by his many former students for his kind and friendly manner, coupled with a deep Christian conscience,” (Sketches, page 9).

Condolences upon his death, came from Charles and Annie Snarr, Morris Man. former employers of daughter Agatha: “Dear Agatha; We were very sorry to read in Saturday's paper the account of your father's death and wish to send you our deepest sympathy. We often speak of your father and enjoyed his little visits so much when he came over to see you while you were here. Charl often talks of the day they spent walking through the trees and garden. It will always be nice for you to look back on the long and useful life he led...”

Legacy.

As a teacher himself, it must have given Gerhard E. Kornelsen great joy to see at least three of his sons follow him into the teaching profession. In later years sons Gerhard G. (1878-1958), Jacob G. (1884-1953) and William G. (1888-1967) all taught in Steinbach. William also taught school in Saskatchewan. Another son, John (1892-1963) is listed as having taught at Spencer, Manitoba, in the book “Schools our Heritage” by John K. Schellenberg, but probably did not pursue this profession.



The Peter R. Friesens in California. Mrs. Friesen, daughter Margaretha, is seen on the left of the photograph and Mr. Friesen is in the center. He is wearing his traditional bowler hat and bow tie. In front are the Peter R. Friesen daughters. See *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, page 71. Who can identify the other couple and/or where the photo was taken?

Granddaughter Mary Kornelsen also became a teacher making it her life's profession. Thus the Kornelsen teaching dynasty became a four generation tradition.

Perhaps the greatest tribute to Gerhard E. Kornelsen and his father Gerhard S. came from the Steinbach community when they named the new school built in 1911 “Kornelsen School.” It was a public recognition of the immense contribution the family had made to the KG as well as the wider Mennonite community in Imperial Russia as well as in Manitoba, and also more directly to the village of Steinbach, educating many of its most successful entrepreneurs and matriarchs.

Endnotes:

Note One: Biography of Gerhard S. Kornelsen is from *Dynasties*, pages 120-121.

Note Two: Johann W. Dueck has written that Cornelius Fast was the first teacher in Steinbach, see Johann W. Dueck, “Reminiscing about the past,” in Levi Dueck, ed., *Prairie Pilgrims* (Rosenort, 1999), page 31; see also *Dynasties*, pages 173 and 180.

Note Three: See Gerhard E. Kornelsen, “The School in Steinbach 1874-1911,” in *Preservings*, No. 8, Part One, pages 5- 7. For a photograph of the new school built by the KG in Steinbach in 1880, see *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, page 56.

Note Four: A good summary of the curriculum and teaching practices of the Mennonite ecclesiastical school systems is found in John C. Reimer, “Our Schools,” in Plett, ed., *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 240-242.

Note Five: See Aganetha Thiessen Giesbrecht (1825-1912),” in *Preservings*, No. 10, Part Two, pages 19-23.

Note Six: See *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, page 25.

Note Seven: See Ben B. Dueck, “Anna: Woman of Strength,” in *Preservings*, No. 10,

Part Two, pages 1-6.

Note Eight: The article was incorrectly attributed to Gerhard E.'s son Gerhard G. in the *Pioneers and Pilgrims* publication.

Sources:

Gerhard E. Kornelsen, “The School in Steinbach 1874-1911,” in *Preservings*, No. 8, Part One, pages 5- 7.

Plett, “Education in the East Reserve 1874-1920,” in *Preservings*, No. 8, Part One, pages 2-29.

Der Nordwesten Kalender 1949.

Steinbach Collegiate Institute *Yearbook*, 1939.

G. E. Kornelsen and G. G. Kornelsen, Diaries and letters in possession of the author.

John K. Schellenberg, *Schools - Our Heritage: From 46 School Districts to Hanover Unitary School Divisions 1878-1916* (Steinbach, 1985), 280 pages.

John C. Reimer, “Unsere Schulen,” in *75 Gedenkfeier* (Steinbach, 1949), pages 70-91, trans. “Our Schools,” in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, pages 235-247, also slightly amended version of this article in *Sesquecentennial Jubilee* (Steinbach, 1962), pages 156-174.

Plett, “Steinbach Private School 1913-1919,” in *Preservings*, No. 9, Part One, page 4.

Peter J. B. Reimer, “My elementary Education in a Private School,” in *Manitoba Mennonite Memories* (Steinbach, 1974), pages 110-113.

Peter T. Wiebe, “Learning was hard,” in *Manitoba Mennonite Memories* (Steinbach, 1974), pages 128-150.

Mary Kornelsen, *Give Me This Mountain* (Steinbach, 1974), 151 pages.

Heinrich Kreutzer (1873-1961), Blacksmith

Heinrich Kreutzer (1873-1961), Steinbach Blacksmith,”

by Margaret Kreutzer, 4901 E. State Hwy. 107, Edinburg, Texas, 78539, widow of son Ronald Kreutzer.

Background.

Heinrich Kreutzer was born in the village of Reichau, Austria, May 3, 1873. His father passed away in 1873 before he was born and his mother died in August 1873, when he was three-months old. Heinrich had one sister, Barbara, and two brothers, Jack and John.

Heinrich Kreutzer was raised by his uncle, Peter Schick, who lived in the same village. At the age of eight, he went to live with another uncle, William Kreutzer, also in the same village. He attended school about four years.

At the age of 14, Heinrich started his apprenticeship in blacksmithing. He continued in this occupation moving from one village to another. He was drafted into the Austrian army at the age of 22. He continued blacksmithing in the army, moving as the army did until age 25. He shod many, many horses for the army, at that time it was all cavalry. He always said he'd never had a horse he couldn't shoe and anyone who saw him at work would believe that.

Emigration.

In the meantime, Mr. Abram S. Friesen (Ed J. Friesen's grandfather) had asked William Mauthe, if he knew a blacksmith who would be willing to come to Canada. Mauthe suggested Heinrich Kreutzer. Friesen sent a ticket or money to Heinrich for his passage to Canada. The price of the ticket was \$55.

Heinrich had a bit of trouble getting from Austria to Germany as he didn't have any immigration papers. However, a family whom he had never seen before were at customs at the same time and Heinrich stepped in with their family. When the immigration officer asked the couple if these were all his family, he looked around but realized Heinrich's situation and said "yes, they were".

Once across the border Henry thanked the couple and was on his way.

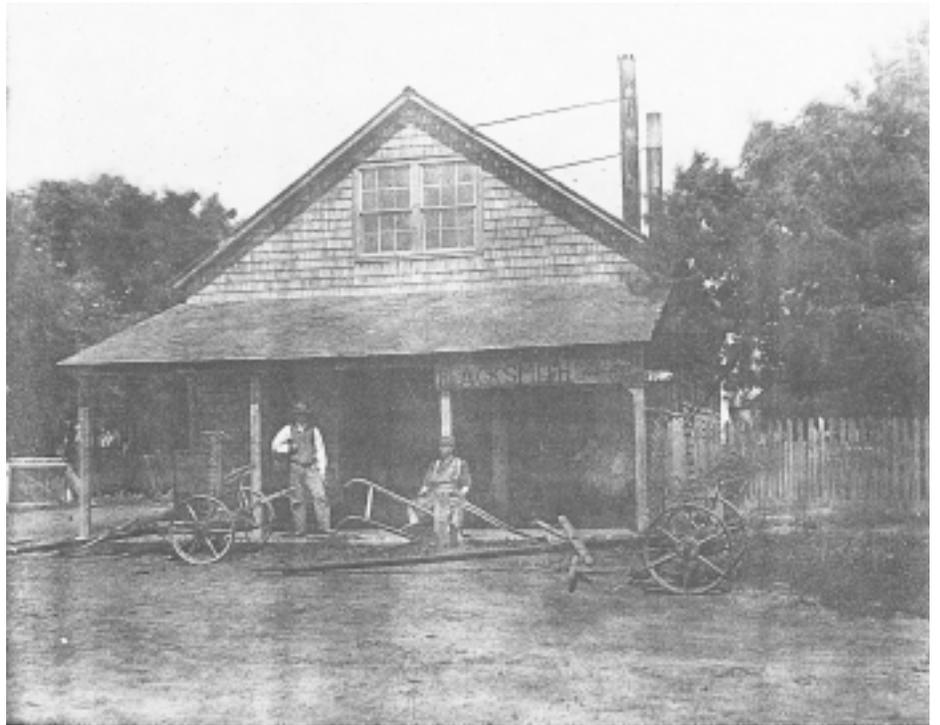
He was met in Winnipeg by his uncle, Franz Schick who had a lumber yard on Main Street in Winnipeg. Some years later, when C.T. Loewen started his lumber yard, he was unable to buy lumber direct from British Columbia, so Henry Kreutzer took Mr. Loewen to Winnipeg to meet Franz Schick and through him got contracts in British Columbia.

Steinbach, 1898.

When Heinrich Kreutzer arrived in Steinbach in November 1898, he began work as a blacksmith for Peter W. "Schmet" Toews.

Heinrich lived in the house with the Toews family until his marriage to Barbara Mauthe, daughter of William Mauthe, on July 16, 1899. After their marriage, they lived upstairs at Peter W. Toews' for over a year. Next they moved into a small house behind Toews Blacksmith shop.

In his memoirs, Peter W. Toews later wrote, "The next winter, there was a young man, an



A photograph believed to be of the original Peter W. "Schmet" Toews, blacksmith shop on Steinbach's Main Street, where Heinrich Kreutzer got his start. Situated where Jolly Miller is located today. Photo courtesy of Ben B. Dueck, Steinbach, Manitoba. See E. Toews, "Steinbach Main Street," in Presv., No. 9, Part One, page 67.



Heinrich Kreutzer, pioneer blacksmith in Steinbach demonstrates his art, courtesy Carillon News, and Gerald Wright, Steinbach There's no place like it (Steinbach, 1991), page 62.

Austrian, who was interested to work for me. This was very timely, he was a blacksmith, and I gladly hired him. In summer he let me know that he would like to get married. I told him if

our home was good enough for them they should go ahead and get married. We would provide his wife with food," *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 147.



The "H. Kreutzer General Blacksmith" Shop in Main Street, Steinbach, and Kreutzer residence (right) as they appeared circa 1920. Rieger Clothing is today located where the Kreutzer home stood at the time.

According to oral tradition Heinrich Kreutzer took over Toews' blacksmith business when he moved to Linden, Alberta, in 1907 (Note One). Of this Toews' writes only that, "I had a good blacksmith who could manage all the work very well," *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 149.]

Another detail which may have a bearing on when Kruetzer started his own blacksmith shop is found in the R. M. of Hanover council minutes for July 3, 1906, when Heinrich Kreutzer's name is found under agenda item #16, accounts payable "1.75". According to a 1948 report in the *Carillon News*, Heinrich Kreutzer established his own shop in 1905. Presumably he had already bought out "Schmet" Toews two years before he moved to Alberta.

Heinrich Kreutzer had bought property from Peter R. Toews, just north of the Klaas R. Toews livery barn. He was apparently the first non-Mennonite person to own property in the village of Steinbach, causing an uproar with the town fathers (Note Two). It was about that time that Heinrich Kreutzer decided to grow a beard as nearly all the Mennonites [at least the Holdemans like Peter W. Toews] had beards in those days.

Civic Affairs.

In 1916 school teacher Gerhard E. Kornselens wrote as follows about Heinrich Kreutzer's blacksmith work: "The tireless hoof blacksmith, Heinz Kreutzer, has his residence and shop on the west side (of Lot No. 12). For years Mr. Kreutzer has had no equal in this area in the art of shoeing horses,"

Pioneers and Pilgrims, page 259. Certainly Heinrich Kreutzer had a heart for others who like himself came to Steinbach as a place of opportunity. In 1915, Heinrich, together with Notary Johann D. Goossen and auto dealer Jakob R. Friesen co-signed for a \$100 loan so

that Sebastian Rieger could start his tailoring business (Note Three).

Heinrich Kreutzer was active in civic affairs and served on Steinbach town council for 16 years (presumably the U.V.D. board which governed the village from 1920 to 1947), school board for 9 years, light board and as church elder with the St. Pauls Lutheran church for 9 years.

The Shop.

Heinrich Kreutzer was very busy in his shop and worked from 6:00 A.M. until late evenings. Winter was his busiest time when he shoed hundreds of horses and set sleigh runners. Mrs. Kreutzer helped in the shop, too, when necessary, and had to hold the wagon rims while her husband hammered them on. The sons all had to work in the shop when needed, but it was Bill, John and Ronald who learned the blacksmith trade and who carried on the tradition of blacksmithing.

On January 1st, 1941, sons John and Ronald formed a partnership with their father for the ownership of Kreutzer Blacksmith Shop. On January 1, 1946, their father retired when John and Ronald bought the business. However, he continued to work in the shop, sharpening plow shares and shoeing horses.

In the summer of 1948, John and Ronald built a new shop in the same location, tearing down the old one while building the new one. They expanded their business considerably with the new shop, also adding some new equipment. They quit shoeing horses in 1952.



Ronald Kreutzer, son of Heinrich, at the forge in 1970. Ronald passed away in 1990. All photographs for this article except as noted as courtesy of the author, Margaret Kreutzer, Edinburg, Texas.

Retirement.

Mrs. Barbara Kreutzer died in 1931 and in 1932 Mr. Kreutzer married Mrs. Anna Penner. This union lasted until September 2, 1946, when she passed away following a stroke. In 1947, he married Adele Buechler. After nine years, she passed away in 1956 following a lengthy illness.

In 1948 Heinrich Kreutzer was interviewed for the *Carillon News*. At the time he recalled that "During his 50 years of blacksmithing,...[he] had shod thousands of horses, but says he never had to tie down a single one to do it. He recalled too, that Peter E. Reimer had brought in the wildest horse ever to be shod."

At this time the reporter, probably Eugene or Bruno Derksen described Heinrich Kreutzer as "...one of those healthy, robust characters who think that life has always been good to them, and who have enjoyed every minute of it."

Mr. Kreutzer continued to live alone and enjoyed gardening. He always grew larger tomatoes and potatoes than anyone else in the area. He also became quite a cook and would make his own "gritzwurst", many kinds of soups and other goodies. He even tried doughnuts.

He enjoyed good health until May, 1957, when he suffered a heart attack and spent three weeks in the hospital. He returned to his own home and took care of himself until December 24, 1961, when he was again admitted to hospital and passed away December 31, 1961, at the age of 88 years.

Descendants.

Heinrich and Barbara Kreutzer had nine children, Lizzie (Mrs. Rudolph Pachal), Bill (farming in B.C. in 1948), Henry (district supervisor for Coca-Cola, Winnipeg, in 1948), Katie (Mrs. Charlie Appler), John (blacksmith), Jack (dentist in Toronto in 1948), Olga (Mrs. Harry Topnik), Art (beekeeper, Winnipeg, 1948) and Ronald (blacksmith).



Portrait of John Kreutzer, son of Heinrich, and partner in the blacksmith business. John's son Gordon owns Harvest Honda in Steinbach.

Epilogue.

The family business lasted for two generations. Upon the illness and death of John in 1961, Ronald bought John's share and was sole owner of Kreutzer Blacksmith Shop until 1971.

On January 1, 1971, Ronald sold the shop to Harold Kihn and the business became known as "Steinbach Precision Enterprise". In 1990 the business was relocated from its premises beside "Riegers Clothing" to a new location on the west side of Steinbach along P.T.H. 52.

About the Author.

Margaret Kreutzer is the daughter of William Laing, Clearsprings, and sister to Ed Laing who has written various articles for *Preservings*. Margaret is the widow of Ron Kreutzer, son of Heinrich Kreutzer, pioneer blacksmith.

Sources:

From a clipping, "Blacksmith for 50 Years," bearing the date April 8, 1949, and believed to be from the *Carillon News*.

Endnotes:

Note One: Oral tradition as recalled by Harold Kihn who bought the blacksmith business from Heinrich's son. Telephone interview March 30, 2001.

Note Two: Harold Kihn recalled the story that apparently it was Peter W. Toews who vouched for Heinrich Kreutzer to the village council who then agreed to allow him to acquire the property.

Note Three: *Reflections*, page 103.



Kreutzer Family photograph taken in May, 1975 in Steinbach, the children of Heinrich and Barbara Kreutzer: rear, l.-r., Bill, Henry, John, Jack, Art, Ronald; front, Olga, Lizzie and Katie.



Photo of Kreutzers Blacksmith Shop (Steinbach Precision) on Main Street. Another photo, showing the building as it appeared December 1989, just before the relocation to Highway 52 west, is found in *The Carillon News*, Dec. 1989.

Immigration Sheds - Tragedy, 1874

“The Immigration Houses at Shantzenberg - Tragedy, August 1874,”
by Wm. Schroeder, 434 Sutton Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 0T3.

Introduction.

When the first ship loads of Mennonite settlers arrived at the immigration houses for the East Reserve on August 1, 1874, and the weeks to follow, a serious problem immediately arose - there was no water supply at hand. The pioneers tried to obtain water by digging a well.

A tragic mishap almost resulted in the death of two men. The incident must have occurred around August 15, 1874, after the arrival of the large Bergthaler contingent.

In 1986 the story was told by historian/cartographer William Schroeder in his book, *The Bergthal Colony* (CMBC Publications, Winnipeg, 1986), pages 83 and 86-87.

The account is reprinted here with a few revisions and updates by Mr. Schroeder, mainly incorporating additional details which have come to light since the original publication. The Editor.

Shantzenberg.

“Jakob Y. Shantz of Kitchener, Ontario had built four sheds, seven meters by 30 metres in size, at the northwest corner of Section 17-7-4E. These sheds had no foundation, no floor and no shingles. The inside was divided into numerous small rooms with a larger dining area in the middle.

“About these sheds Abram Isaac asserts: ‘They protected us from the sun and the wind and partly from the rain,’” (Note One).

“In time these sheds came to be known as Shantzenberg,” (Note Two).

Water.

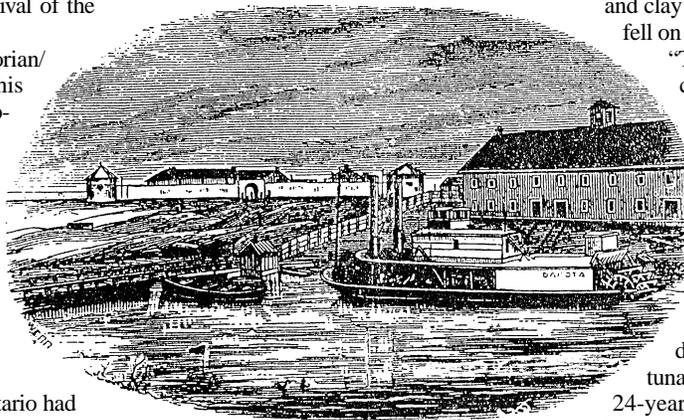
“Precipitation during the summer of 1874 had been minimal, and low-lying areas which usually had some water were rapidly drying out (Note Three). They tried to carry the water by hand and by ox cart from the Red River which was a distance of eight kilometers (five miles) away, but that was too difficult and cumbersome. The few ox carts that were available to them were needed to carry supplies from Winnipeg, and to survey the Reserve for future village sites.

“In desperation they dug shallow pits in a recently dried out puddle about a hundred meters west of the sheds. The soil in this depression was still waterlogged. During the night small amounts of water would seep into the small pits. The precious commodity was then rationed out to the various families to be used for coffee and drinking water.

“Obviously a better supply of this life-essential resource had to be found, and so the immigrants tried to solve this dilemma by digging a well.

Digging the Well.

“The men and older boys worked at this well in shifts. Each shift consisted of four men; two men were in the well and filled pails with earth and the other two hauled the buckets to the surface with a rope, emptied them and lowered them back into the well to be refilled (Note Four). They



Sketch of paddlewheel steamer “Dakota” docking at the forks of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers. Note Upper Fort Garry visible to the rear. The drawing appeared in the *Klaas J. B. Reimer*, “Historical Sketches,” Carillon News, 1952, as collected and filed with the Manitoba Provincial Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba. The caption with the sketch reads, “The Red River flat-boat which in 1884 [sic] brought the Abram Friesens from Moorehead, Minnesota to Manitoba. Presumably the caption should refer to 1874.

dug at this well for several days till they reached a depth of 12 meters, but even then they did not reach the water table.

“The ground in the East Reserve was different from the ground in Bergthal where they had rich

topsoil of about 50 centimetres and then firm clay. In the East Reserve, however, the ground consisted of irregular alternating stratus of silt, sand and clay of various textures,” (Note Five).

“Apparently in Bergthal it had not been necessary to line a well with boards as they burrowed deeper into the ground (Note Six). They did not realize that the men at the bottom of the well were in great potential danger. Soon small pieces of sand and clay loosened from the sides of the well and fell on the two men below.

“The men at the bottom of the well merely cursed at the two above them who they thought had carelessly dropped the earth back into the well (Note Seven).

Cave-in.

“Suddenly, before anyone could comprehend what was happening, large chunks of sand and clay dislodged from the sides of the well about five meters below the surface and plunged down on top of the two below. The unfortunate men, 18-year-old Johann Hiebert and 24-year-old Peter Reimer (Note Eight) were knocked down and almost completely buried by the cave-in.

Only their faint cries for help during the first few seconds after the accident proved that they were still alive (Note Nine).

“Immediately a panic-stricken crowd gathered around the mouth of the well. More earth threatened to fall in and no one dared to descend into the well to rescue the helpless men.

“Helena, Reimer’s 23-year-old wife, was hysterical.

“Time and again she made desperate attempts to jump into the well to help her dying husband. Those at the surface had to physically restrain her until she fainted (Note Ten).

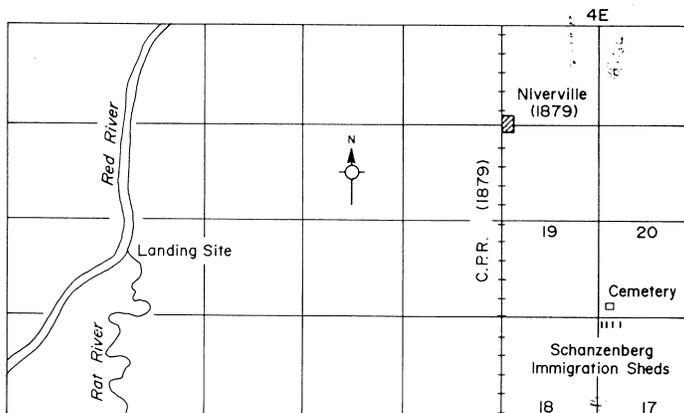
The Rescue.

“Fortunately, at this critical moment, out of mad turmoil, a controlled voice was heard.

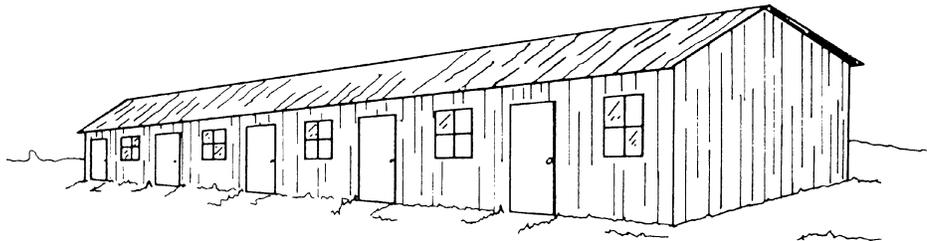
“Peter Redekopp and Wilhelm Vogt from the Judenplan and originally from Chortitza [from among the 10 Old Kolonier families who had arrived at the Forks July 31 with the first group], volunteered to descend into the well and attempt to rescue the victims (Note Eleven).

“Redekopp was lowered by rope and bucket. Halfway down the shaft he secured a wooden brace to hold-back the threatening walls (Note Twelve) and then continued his descent to the suffocating men below.

“Working quickly, efficiently and in constant danger of his own life, he pulled the, by now unconscious, men out from under the loose earth. Then,



Map showing the landing site of the Mennonite settlers of the East Reserve and the Immigration Sheds located on NW17-7-4E. This is where the first group consisting of 10 Old Kolony and 55 Kleine Gemeinde families arrived, August 1, 1874. They were followed within two weeks by a large Bergthaler contingent. Map courtesy of Wm. Schroeder, *Bergthal Colony*, page 84.



Sketch of the four Immigration Sheds built by Jakob Shantz from Berlin (later Waterloo), Ontario, June of 1874. This sketch is based on the recollections of Mrs. Johann Doerksen (b. 1887), Niverville, who played in and around these sheds as a small girl. She thinks these sheds disappeared around 1895, see Wm. Schroeder, *Bergthal Colony*, page 84. Another sketch based on the recollections of centenarian school teacher Johann B. Toews (1865-1967), *Greenland, Manitoba*, and drawn by John C. Reimer, appears to be in error in that the siding was nailed upright and not horizontally, the so-called bat and board style: see Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach," *Carillon News*, 1952. Another sketch is found in *Grunthal History*, page 13. All three sketches share certain characteristics and are obviously based on the same structure. Another sketch showing all four sheds is published in John Dyck, ed., *Working Papers*, page 108.

with Redekopp carrying one man at a time they were hoisted back up the surface and into the welcome arms of their loved ones.

"Both of the victims recovered from this accident. However, Johann Hiebert, who had been leaning on his spade when the falling earth knocked him down, suffered permanent chest injuries (Note Thirteen).

According to Peter W. Toews who stood at the side of the hole when the two men were brought out, "The men lay there as dead."

Murmuring.

"The Mennonite immigrants had been very disappointed with the "promised land" from the day they arrived. This near fatal accident brought their anger and frustration to the surface. They could not control themselves any longer.

"David Stoesz wrote in his diary on August 24: 'I went back to the sheds again, for there is great unrest among the people.' They accused the delegates, Peters and Wiebe, of having betrayed them (Note Fourteen). Several discouraged families moved their few belongings back to the banks of the Red River so that they had access to water.

"Fortunately, Heinrich Wiebe [minister and delegate] arrived at the sheds just in time to calm the disgruntled immigrants. He was able to convince them that there was more good land and also an adequate supply of water further east in the Reserve.

"The weary settlers renewed their faith in their leaders and proceeded with the tedious task of building a pioneer community."

Thus far from Wm. Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg, 1986), page 86-7.

Injuries.

"One day, while two men were in the well, it collapsed, covering the men. Shouting and crying started, and the wives of the two men who had met the accident, were held by force to prevent their throwing themselves into the well. Some of the men began getting the buried men out. One man had suffered a fractured leg and the other a broken arm. Fortunately there was a bonesetter among the settlers, who set the injured limbs. The name of the man was Duerksen...." Johann K. Esau, "The Esau Family Tree 1741-

1933," in Plett., ed., *Profile 1874* (Steinbach, 1987), page 195.

Endnotes:

Note One: Abram P. Isaac, "Remembrances of the Past," in D. Plett., ed., *Pioneers and Pilgrims*(Steinbach, 1990), page 174.

Note Two: The story of Jakob Y. Schantz and the construction of the immigration sheds is recounted in Samuel J. Steiner, *Vigilant Pioneer: The Life of Jakob Y. Shantz* (Winnipeg, 1988), pages 93-94.

Note Three: Johann W. Dueck, "History and Events," in Plett, ed., *History and Events* (Steinbach, 1982), page 117. This account was later also published in Levi Dueck, ed., *Prairie Pioneer: The Writings of John W. Dueck* (Rosenort, 1995), pages 11-52. See also Johann R. Dueck, "Historial Report," in *Profile 1874*, page 203.

Note Four: J. B. Peters, "Die ersten Pioniere aus Südrusland in Kanada," *Steinbach Post*, October to December 1939.

Note Five: J. B. Peters, *ibid.*, Fortsetzung 4.

Note Six: Johann I. Friesen, "Presentation," K. J. B. Reimer, Chair, *Das 60=Jährige Jubiläum der mennonitische Ost-Reserve* (Steinbach, 1935), page 30, English translation in Plett, ed., *Pioneers*

and Pilgrims, page 131.

Note Seven: J. B. Peters, *op.cit.*, Fortsetzung 4.

Note Eight: Johann W. Dueck, *op.cit.*, page 117. Reimer was referred to as Johann in the original 1986 text but has since been identified as Peter by oral tradition, see below.

Note Nine: Johann B. Toews, "Erinnerungen aus dem Pioneerleben," in John C. Reimer, ed., *75 Gedenkfeier der Mennonitische Einwanderung in Manitoba, Kanada* (Steinbach, 1949), page 52.

Note Ten: Johann W. Dueck, *op.cit.*, page 117.

Note Eleven: Klaas Peters, *Die Bergthaler Mennoniten* (Hillsboro, 1935), page 11-16, translated and published as Klaas Peters, *The Bergthaler Mennonites* (C.M.B.C., Winnipeg, 1988), page 28.

See also Peter W. Toews, "Life's Chronicle," in Plett, ed., *Pioneers and pilgrims*, page 139, who refers to Wilhelm Vogt as "the father of the yet living William Vogt."

Note Twelve: Johann B. Toews, *op.cit.*, page 52.

Note Thirteen: Klaas Peters, *op.cit.*, page 27.

Note Fourteen: *Ibid.*, page 34.

THE KLEINE GEMEINDE HISTORICAL SERIES

Edited by Delbert F. Plett Q.C.

| | | |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <p>VOLUME ONE</p> | <p>HISTORY AND EVENTS. Writings and maps pertaining to the History of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde from 1866 to 1876. 306 pages. \$15.95</p> |  <p>Delbert F. Plett Q.C.</p> <p>Complete Seven Volume Set for \$130.00 plus \$10. for postage</p> |
| <p>VOLUME TWO</p> | <p>THE GOLDEN YEARS. The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Ontario 1882-1899. 393 pages, small print. \$15.95</p> | |
| <p>VOLUME THREE</p> | <p>STORM AND TRIUMPH. The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde 1890-1871. 317 pages, small print. \$15.95</p> | |
| <p>VOLUME FOUR</p> | <p>PROFILE OF THE KLEINE GEMEINDE 1874. Includes genealogies of the first Kleine Gemeinde families in Manitoba, Nebraska and Kansas. 312 pages, small print. \$19.95</p> | |
| <p>VOLUME FIVE</p> | <p>PIONEERS AND PILGRIMS. The Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba, Kansas and Nebraska 1874-1892. 604 pages, small print. \$19.95</p> | |
| <p>VOLUME SIX</p> | <p>LEADERS OF THE MENNONITE KLEINE GEMEINDE IN RUSSIA. 1842-1844. 662 pages, small print. \$29.95</p> | |
| <p>VOLUME SEVEN</p> | <p>DYNASTIES OF THE MENNONITE KLEINE GEMEINDE IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA AND NORTH AMERICA. 356 pages, small print. \$29.95</p> | |

FREE

Receive a free copy of "SAINTS OF SINNERS". The Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia 1812-1815

WHEN YOU PURCHASE THE COMPLETE SEVEN VOLUME SET

Evaluations:

"The largest single collection of published source material on the Russian Mennonites presently available."
—The Kleine Gemeinde leadership... called in more practically and culturally oriented conclusions back to their information team."
—Dr. Lawrence Kijpström, *Mennonite Historical Review*, Dec. 1983

"Delbert Flett was an EM. Pleased to read and found him to give ground in more than one instance."
—Dr. Al Evers, *Mennonite Review*, Jan. 1986

"Demonstrates convincingly that their EM, Plett's and C.H. Jost's assessment of Elias Reimer and of the Kleine Gemeinde was based on either an insufficient knowledge of the sources or on their cultural personal bias."
—Dr. Henry Lorenz, *Mennonite Life*, Dec. 1985

"From a documentary standpoint it is difficult to dispute Plett's contention that the Kleine Gemeinde, more than any other group, kept the Anabaptist perspective alive and viable in the Russian Mennonite setting."
—Dr. John E. Toews, *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Dec. 1987



Send orders to:
Crossway Publications, Box 1960 Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0, Canada
Cheques or money orders should be made out to Crossway Publications.

The Shantz House Heroes, 1874

“The Heros at the Shantz Sheds, circa August 14, 1874,” by Delbert Plett, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2A0.

Introduction.

The story of the well digging tragedy at the Shantz Sheds NW17-4-7E in mid-August, 1874, has been referred to in a number of journals and memoirs, but nowhere have the principals involved been clearly identified.

The following are brief biographies of these men and the story of what happened to them and their families.

Peter Reimer

Peter Reimer (1846-1947) was one of the heros who almost lost his life in the service of the infant community, BGB B390. Only months earlier on April 28, 1874, Peter had married to Justina Wiens (1855-76), BGB A64. He later settled in Rudnerweide, West Reserve, where the family is listed in the 1881 census, BGB 382-379. The family always lived in Rudnerweide.

Peter Reimer married for the second time to the widow Heinrich Dyck, nee Margaretha Braun (1847-1921), BGB B323. She was the daughter of deacon Abraham Braun (1819-50), Bergthal, BGB B34, and the granddaughter of Jakob Braun



Peter Reimer (1846-1947) and second wife Margaretha Braun (1847-1921). Peter Reimer was one of the two men buried at the bottom of the well shaft at the Shantz Sheds in mid-August 1874. The Reimers had settled in Rudnerweide, W. R., Manitoba by the time of the 1881 census. Photograph courtesy of grandson William Reimer, Steinbach, Manitoba.

(1791-1868), Schöneberg, Chortitza Colony, Imperial Russia, and elected first Aeltester of the Bergthal Colony in 1840, BGB A27--see Wm. Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony*, pages 128-29, for a brief biography. Margaretha was a niece to Margaretha Braun who married Johann Funk, Aeltester of the West Reserve Bergthaler.

Peter Reimer was partially crippled by the accident and suffered from a crooked back for the rest of his life.

Peter's grandson Bill Reimer later served for years as elevator agent in Ste. Annes, and is presently retired and living in Steinbach.

Johann Hiebert (1856-1930).

Johann Hiebert, the second hero, was still single at the time of the unfortunate incident. Presumably he was the Johann Hiebert (1856-1930),

son of David Hiebert (1818-72), BGB A67.

Johann Hiebert later settled in the village of Hochfeld, six miles northwest of Steinbach, Manitoba--see Kl. J. B. Reimer, *Carillon News*, 1952.

Johann Hiebert married Gertruda Kehler, daughter of Gerhard L. Kehlert of Hochfeld.

According to eye-witness Peter W. Toews, “Hiebert was never very well but still lived to an old age and only died several years ago [1944]. I knew him very well.” He died in Hochfeld, Manitoba, and presumably was buried in the vil-



Granddaughter Gertruda Hiebert Neufeld (1907-59) and husband Abram S. Giesbrecht (1904-63), Loma Plata, Menno Colony, Paraguay, with son Jakob N. Giesbrecht (b. 1931), pharmacist and long-time Oberschulz of the Menno Colony. Photo courtesy of Frank W. Giesbrecht, Steinbach, Manitoba.

lage cemetery. His widow moved to Paraguay in 1935 and settled in Osterwick, Menno Colony together with sons Jakob, David and Gerhard.

The Hiebert family suffered many mishaps. “Son Peter Hiebert (1882-1928) was killed by a load of falling logs.” Son David Hiebert (b. 1893) was badly burned on a straw stack as a young man. Son Gerhard fell into a well after they moved to Paraguay. Daughter Susanna (1889-1911) was scalded when she fell into a food cooker in the summer kitchen and remained speechless after the accident.”

According to the article by Peter Peters in *Working Papers of the East Reserve*, page 62-63, “The Johann Hieberts immigrated to Menno Colony, Paraguay in 1926.” This is not correct as only the widow Johann Hiebert went to Paraguay and then only in 1935, see Abraham B. Giesbrecht, *Die Erste Mennonitische Einwanderer*, page 78.

Son Jakob Hiebert (b. 1888) married Ida Hiebert and raised a family. Daughter Gertruda Hiebert (1886-1931) married Jakob Neufeld.

Their daughter Gertruda Neufeld married Abram S. Giesbrecht and moved to Paraguay in 1935. The Abram S. Giesbrechts later owned a store in Loma Plata together with brother Franz. The store is now operated by Abram's son Wilhelm.

In 1931 Abram S. Giesbrecht and Gertruda Neufeld had a son Jakob N. Giesbrecht who served for many years during the 1980s and 90s as Oberschulz of the Menno Colony, Paraguay, population 8,000.

Wilhelm Vogt.

Wilhelm Vogt (b. 1843) also arrived with the first ship load of Mennonites at the Forks on July 31, 1874.

Wilhelm Vogt was of Old Kolonier background originating in Neu-Chortitza. He was married to Anna Quiring (1845-95), and had lived in the Judenplan together with brother-in-laws

Alfred van Vogt (1912-2000), great-grandson of Wilhelm Vogt, one of the heros of the Shantz Immigration Sheds. Photo courtesy of Prairie Fire. Vol. 15, No. 2, page 205/Preservings, No. 16, page 69. Alfred van Vogt wrote an autobiography entitled A. E. van Vogt: The Autobi-



ography of a Science Fiction Writer Giant with a Complete Bibliography (*Lakemount, Georgia, 1975*).

Johann Quiring and Abram Klassen.

The three families were pioneers in the village of Chortitz, E. R. In 1878, “Vogt in company with others, purchased a steam threshing machine in Chortitz,” Peter Braun, “Economic Development...,” in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 228.

After a few years they all moved together to the West Reserve settling in the village of Edenberg. (It is noteworthy that eight of the 15 signatories to the Chortitza village agreement in 1877 moved as a block to found the village of Edenberg, W.R. In Edenberg the Vogts belonged to the Bergthaler Gemeinde.

In 1890 the Wilhelm Vogts moved to Dallas, Polk County, Oregon, where Anna died in 1895. Wilhelm Vogt wrote a letter to the *Mennonitische Rundschau* published June 11, 1890, extolling the virtues of his new homeland. He also mentions that many tracts have been distributed among the Mennonites there by the Swedenborgians.

Son Heinrich Vogt (1865-1900) remained in Manitoba and married Judith Wiebe. In 1886 Judith gave birth to son Henry Vogt (1886-1968) a practising lawyer in Neville, Sask. (1912) and after 1922 in Morden and Winnipeg, Manitoba.



Klaas Peters (1855-1932), settled first in Grünthal, E.R., then moved to Edenburg, W.R., and finally to Waldeck, Sask. Photo courtesy of The Bergthaler Mennonites, page 46/East Reserve 125 Years, page 34.



Peter W. "Schmidt" Toews (1866-1935), successful Steinbach blacksmith/investor who wrote about the near tragedy at the Shantz Sheds in August 1874. Photo courtesy of East Reserve 125 Years, page 27.



Johann W. Dueck (1865-1932), Steinbach's first book store owner in 1887, described the panic at the Immigration Sheds. He was the uncle to A.D. Penner. Photo courtesy of Prairie Pioneer, page 330.



Career teacher Johann B. Toews (1865-1967), Greenland, later revered among his people as the "hundat joascha". He recalled the tragedy of the two men buried alive. Photo courtesy of Reflections on our Heritage, page 51.

Henry had a son, Alfred, the famous science fiction writer, Alfred van Vogt (1912-2000), Los Angeles, California.

The hero Wilhelm Vogt (b. 1843) also had a son Wilhelm (1868-1952) who in 1887 married Maria B. Toews (1868-1952), daughter of Kleine Gemeinde delegate Cornelius P. Toews by this time a resident of Steinbach, or more specifically, Fischau, a small three-family hamlet where Madison Street is being developed today. Maria and Wilhelm belonged to the Holdemans Gemeinde.

The Wilhelm Vogts farmed in Greenland until 1911 when they moved to the ill-fated Watshan Valley (Needles) settlement in British Columbia. In 1916 they bought a farm in Swalwell, Alberta.

They had only one adopted son Wilhelm who courageously assisted his uncle and aunt Cornelius F. Toews, Swalwell, Alberta, as male nurse during the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918. Tragically he was attacked by the disease and died after ten days of severe suffering.

In 1936 the Wilhelm Vogts retired and moved to Steinbach, Manitoba, living close to where the R. M. of Hanover offices are located today on Main Street.

Peter Redekopp.

The Redekopp whose valiant efforts were credited for saving the two men in the well must have been Peter Redekopp (b. 1846), from the Judenplan. He came to Manitoba with the first group of Mennonites arriving at the Forks on the evening of July 31, 1874.

Peter is the only Redekopp listed as coming to Manitoba in the ship records for 1874, BGB page 259. Peter Redekopp later settled in Edenberg, West Reserve, where he is listed in the 1881 census, BGB 363-1.

Peter Redekopp was of Old Kolony background. Presumably he joined the Bergthaler Gemeinde after he moved to Edenberg, but remained loyal to the faith once received and stayed with the Sommerfelder Gemeinde where he is listed on page S1A-15 of the Gemeindebuch. He was married to Anna Dyck (b. 1849) and had a family of nine children three of whom died in childhood.

Johann W. Dueck later wrote that "...the man who carried out this rescue quite appropriately was known by the right name." "Rad-a-kopp", in Low German, means literally "rescue head".

The Chroniclers.

The tragedy at the Shantz Immigration sheds created a deep and lasting impression upon the settlers. A number would refer to the incident in their journals and memoirs.

Among them was Klaas Peters (1855-1932), a Bergthaler, whose interesting life's story was told by historian Leonard Doell, Saskatoon (*The Bergthaler Mennonites*, pages 43-86).

Klaas Peters settled first in Grünthal, E.R. where he served as a teacher, certified in 1879. In 1881 he moved to the West Reserve settling in the Gretna area serving as a teacher in Edenburg in 1886. In 1890 Klaas Peters became involved with the immigration movement to Oregon and by 1892 was promoting immigration to Rosthern, Saskatchewan. In 1925 he wrote and published his memoirs under the title *Die Bergthaler Mennoniten*.

Others who referred to the incident were from the Kleine Gemeinde.

Peter W. Toews (1866-1935) was a successful Steinbach blacksmith who moved to Swalwell, Alberta in 1907.

Johann W. Dueck (1865-1932) owned Steinbach's first book store in 1887 operating out of the H. W. Reimer store. He later moved to Rosenhof where he was a school teacher, owned a store and wrote journals.

Johann B. Toews (1865-1967) was a school teacher who lived in Greenland, Manitoba, and Kansas. He attained the age of 102.

More detailed information regarding all three can be found in *Dynasties* (Steinbach, 2000).

All of these men referred to the near tragedy incident at the Shantz sheds in mid-August, 1874, in various of their journals and writings.

Conclusion.

The near tragedy at the Shantz Immigration Sheds circa August 14, 1874, was averted only through the quick thinking and action of Peter

Redekopp and Wilhelm Vogt, Old Colony Mennonites from Russia.

The incident was truly the first joint effort for Manitoba Mennonites--the well-diggers being Bergthaler, the rescuers were Old Koloniers, and several of those whose writings described the tragedy were from the Kleine Gemeinde.

Other disasters befell the pioneers while at the immigration houses. A prairie fire raged on the horizon for days, drawing ever closer. The settlers saved themselves by energetically plowing furrows around their site and by lighting backfires.

Teacher Peter L. Dueck (1842-87) and wife Susanna, later Grünfeld, E.R., suffered the death of their 1 1/2-year-old son Heinrich, half-brother to carpenter Abram L. Reimer, Steinbach, and uncle to Steinbach's former mayor A. D. Penner, Blumenort broiler farmer Emil Reimer, and Landmark minister Frank D. Reimer.

Before the immigration was complete the body of little Heinrich and some 34 other souls were laid to rest in the nearby graveyard, the first Mennonite cemetery in their new homeland.

The heroism of Peter Redekopp and Wilhelm Vogt stands as a testimony to the faith and vision of the new settlers, here to tame the wilds of Manitoba.

"For greater love hath no man."

Let us remember their sacrifice!

Sources.

Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach," *Carillon News*, 1952, as collected and filed with the Manitoba Provincial Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Klaas J. B. Reimer, "Neunzig Jahre Steinbach in der Ostreserve," in *Steinbach Post*, Nov. 24, 1964.

Interview with Wm. Reimer, 62 Brandt Road, Steinbach, August, 2000.

Wm. Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg, 1986), pages 85-87.

Harold J. Dyck, *Lawyers of Mennonite Background in Western Canada Before the Second World War* (Winnipeg, 1993), 164 pages.

Toews Family Chronicle, 1900

“Genealogy or Family Chronicle Illustrated by a Family Tree of the Töws (Toews) family from the Year 1766 to 1901, written in December 1900,” by Aeltester Peter Toews (1841-1922), Grünfeld, E. R., Manitoba, translated by Joseph Isaac, Swalwell, Alberta, with an introduction by grandson Terrence Toews, Box 156, Linden, Alberta, TOM 1J0.

Introduction - Terrence Toews.

Today, June 12th, 1994, I have read the Family Chronicle that my grandfather, Peter Toews, wrote and which he concluded on the 17th day of January 1901. He wrote this by hand, together with a hand drawn Family Tree.

He had this Toews Chronicle and Family Tree bound in a book together with *Botschafter der Wahrheit* (Messenger of Truth), Year One, Hillsboro, Kansas, June 1897, No. 1 to and inclusive the fifth year, December 1901, No. 12, together with index. He (Peter Toews) was editor of the *Botschafter*. In the “Chronicles” he wills that the *Botschafters* and family chronicles are to be a family heirloom.

I have had this book in my possession since my father, John Warkentin Toews, died May 10th, 1975. When we divided out parents’ things by auction, my brother Bill and I both wanted this book. I outbid him. Not because I had more money, but I was determined to have this piece of historical evidence, as my father had got this from his father Peter Toews, their author....

Last year when we had a reunion of the John W. and Elisabeth Bartel Toews family, I mentioned this book and how I would like to have it translated. My nephew, Dennis Toews (son of Bill) offered to approach Joseph Isaac about translating it. Mr. Isaac agreed to do it. Dennis sent me a copy of the translation. These chronicles are mainly family history and an explanation of the hand-drawn family tree. On the tree he has listed only the male members of the family, but in the written text he also includes the female members.

As well, I have the book *By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them*, by Peter Toews, which was taken from an article serialized in the *Botschafter* in 1900, translated by Otto Isaac and published by C.W. Friesen. This is part of the *Botschafter* that grandfather Peter Toews designated as a heirloom to his family: Part A of Family Chronicles. Grandfather translated part of this from Blaupot, Dutch to German.

While the “Chronicles” speak mainly of the physical family, in the *Botschafter der Wahrheit*, Peter Toews speaks of his faith and belief System....

In the physical many different genes soon make a personage very diluted, but in the Spiritual we are only one generation away from The Source. John the Apostle says: “We know that we live in HIM (Jesus) and HE in us, because He has given us part of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His son to be the Saviour of the world”. 1 John 4:13-14.

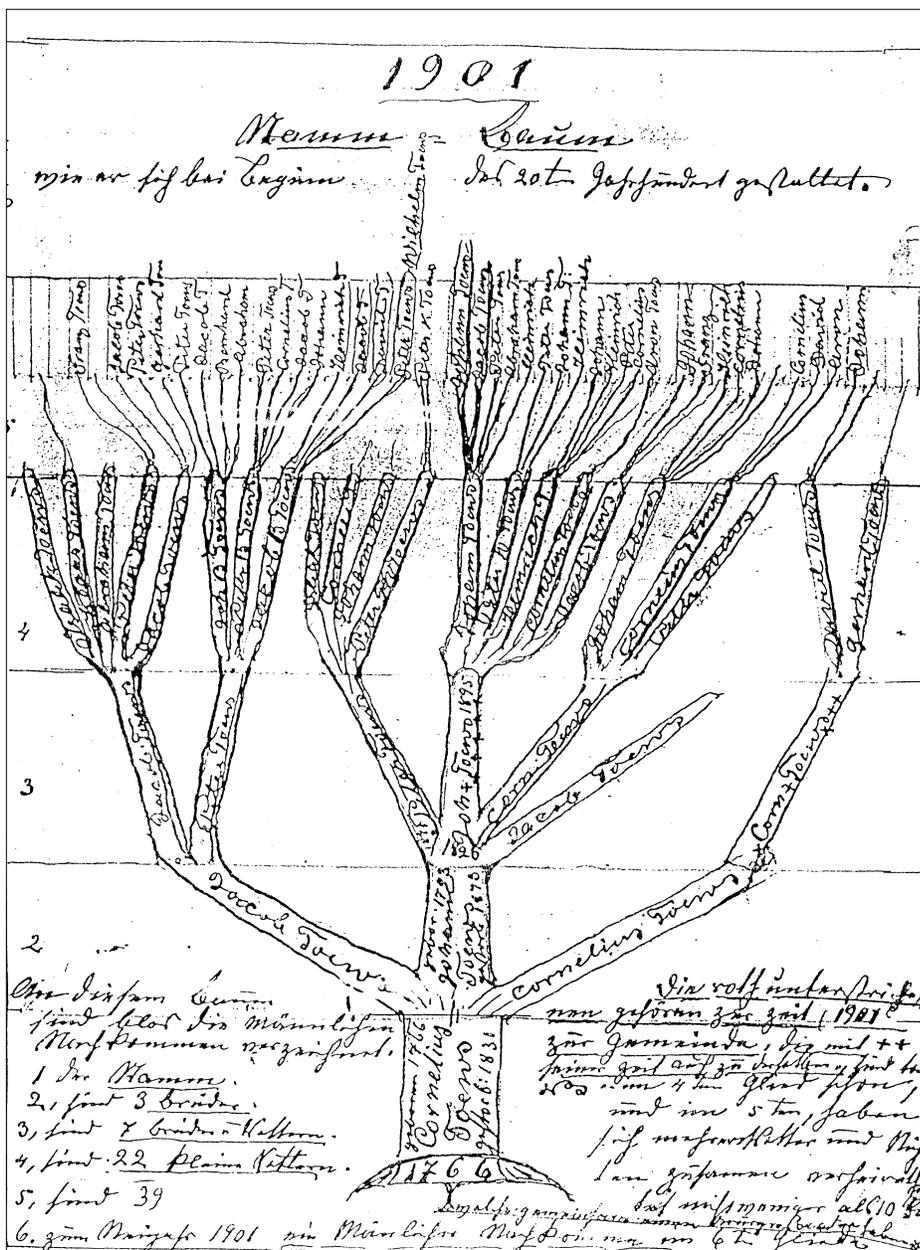
“Terrence Toews”, Box 156, Linden, Alberta, Canada, TOM 1J0.

The Family Chronicle, 1900

(Title page): This Family Chronicle together with the *Botschafter der Wahrheit* is ordered by me, Peter Toews, to be a Family Heirloom.

The means * (The perishable seed) to the end, ** the incorruptible seed, namely, the living Word of God which abideth forever, 1 Peter 1:23.

The inclusion of the “Family Chronicle” with the *Botschafter der Wahrheit* shall be the means * to the end ** that my children and descendants shall treasure with appreciation and preserve the truths contained in the *Botschafter der Wahrheit* since they will also discover much therein from their father, which



1900 - Toews Family Tree - as it stands at the beginning of the 20th Century. On this tree only the male descendants are noted: 1) the trunk, 2) our three brothers, 3) our seven brothers--cousins, 4) our 22 second cousins, 5) our 39 third cousins, and 6) for New Year 1901 one male descendant of the 6th generation. Those heavily underlined belong to the church at this time, (1901) those marked ++ also belonged to the church in their time but have died. In the 4th generation already and also in the 5th a number of cousins were married together, at least 10 couples, which have a common great-grandfather. By Peter Toews 1900.

together with his personal experiences constituted the foundation for his unshakable faith.

This is my Will and both the "Chronicle" and the *Botschafter* shall be bound together in one book and shall be preserved from generation to generation as a fatherly gift and inheritance and shall remain in the family in the sense of 2 Peter 1:15, where it says: "Moreover, I will endeavour that Ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance," namely, the Godly truths.

"Peter Toews" (Page 1)

Introduction.

Genealogy or Family Chronicle Illustrated by a Family Tree of the Töws (Toews) Family from the Year 1766 to 1901 – Peter Toews, Introduction.

The probability lies close at hand, that the Dutch family name "Teevuis" is the ground root of the name of the Toews family. Here in America where names are written with English letters, all the Töwses now generally write their names Toews.* *Grandfather, however, also wrote "Töews" when writing with Latin letters.

It makes a profound impression, when we have the picture before us of such a strong tree and recognize in it not only a shade tree but a fruit tree. (Page 2) Let us consider it as a wild tree producing wooden apples, and then let us humbly admit and be reminded that it has taken the dear Lord much work many times and in many ways (Isaiah 43:24) grafting around (Romans 11:20-22) on the branches of the wild part of this tree. By the grafting of our heavenly Father we understand the tree of life (Luke 23:31; Revelations 2:7; 22:2 and 14).

When we already recognize in the Bible studying of our common grandfather and great-gr in in in in in in the evening of his life and further by the reading of the biography of our father, Johann Toews: "The Watchful Eye of God," and in many others more, the footprints of a godly work, then how much more so in the sanctification which this family tree experienced in the third and fourth and into the fifth generation, through the grace of God, in the last part of the past 19th century. Namely that sound compared to the wind (John 3:8) which moved mightily through its branches and (Page 3) brought about being born of the Spirit; which sanctification, from the standpoint of our consideration, every member particularly must personally experience, to bring forth acceptable fruit for the Lord.

Sad to say, however, the song of the sour grapes in Isaiah 5, all too soon finds a strong echo among its branches, because some of it



Aeltester Peter Toews (1841-1922), one of the most prolific writers and evocative thinkers of 19th century Mennonite life. Drawing by Henry Fehr, Steinbach, Manitoba, as remembered by Mr. and Mrs. Peter R. Wiebe, Steinbach, Manitoba, September 19, 1983, from an old photograph. Courtesy of Saints and Sinners, page 308.



A certificate for emigration duties paid by Cornelius Toews (1766-1831), issued in Tiegenhoff, June 21, 1802. The script is still the "old" Gothic used in the 18th century, difficult to read even for those familiar with the later more linear form of the script commonly used in the 19th century. As near as I can make out the translation is: "Quit Claim 12 gr. [Groschen?]" "_____ 12 gr. [Groschen], Prussian, is the export duty [payable] by Cornelius Toews with 91 Thaler, 24 groschen of property to export, which the same has paid in full in cash on the date hereof. Tiegenhagen, June 21, 1802, 'signature'. The official government seal was affixed in the bottom left corner of the document.

has sour fruit. May all the branches together which are ordained thereto, spread out into the 20th century and branch themselves out further, allowing the experiences of their fathers to become a blessing to them. May the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of this family tree, in the learning appropriate to their time

period, and at the height of their existence, continually be in remembrance of the Scripture of the Apostle Paul: "Be not high-minded but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed, lest he also not spare thee, etc., otherwise thou also shalt be cut off," Romans 11:20-22. (Page 4)

Cornelius Toews 1766-1831.

Cornelius Toews, the grandfather and great-grandfather, from which the family and descendants described in this chronicle descend, was born in Prussia in Ladekopperfeld in the year 1766, October 4.

My grandmother, the mother of my father, was born in Tiegenhagen, also in Prussia, in the year 1767, March 27. (Sorry I cannot produce her girlhood nor family name. *) [Margaretha Loewen] (*see note at the back.)

In the year 1790 the two above mentioned (the forbears of this Toews family) were joined in marriage and made their home at Tiegenhagen.

In the year 1793 our father Johann Toews was born at Tiegenhagen, Prussia. My father had two younger brothers and one sister. Concerning these natural siblings, the following is noted here: the names of the two brothers were Jacob (the older) and Cornelius the youngest. The sister [Elisabeth] as well as the oldest brother I well remember. These two have also left numerous descendants.

Jacob Toews had two sons, Peter and Jacob, and four daughters from which (Page 5) many descendants are at hand.

The sister of our father was married three times. In the first marriage were born Jacob, Isaak, Cornelius, and Johann Braun and the daughters were no less. The name of the second husband was Dueck and they had two daughters. The third husband's name was Wiens.

[Son] Cornelius Toews died an early death (through self-inflicted strangulation). He was survived by one son, Cornelius, and one daughter. The descendants of Cornelius presently live in Kansas and those of the daughter live in Manitoba--to them belong Johann Ens and Heinrich Plett. The above mentioned C. Toews was grandfather to Ens and great-grandfather to Plett. Thus far about the siblings of our father.

Our grandparents left Prussia together with many other Mennonites in the year 1803 in the month of July. (The Certificate they received from the Prussian government for paid dues (emigration tax) before the emigration is still extant.* (* Based on the 10th part of which they paid, their property was only 91 Thaler. See the receipt attached.)



1908 John W. Toews (1880-1975), at age 28, son of Bishop Peter Toews. John farmed in Swalwell, Alberta. Son Terrence still lives on the original homestead. Photo courtesy of Terrence Toews, Box 156, Linden, Alberta, TOM 1J0. A photo of Mrs. John Toews, nee Elisabeth Bartel, is found in Preservings, No. 11, page 55. Their daughter Anna, Mrs. Peter W. Toews, wrote a book *Of Such is the Kingdom (Crooked Creek, Alberta, 1967)*, 53 pages.

They arrived October 27 [in Imperial Russia] in the so called Old Colony (Page 6) in the village by the name of Neuendorf, where they remained until 1804. Then they moved to the Molotschna taking over a so-called "Feuerstelle" in the Colony Lindenau where they settled and made their home.

The grandmother died in the year 1823, the 23rd of October. She reached the age of 56 years, six months and five days.

According to the written testimonies of her youngest son Cornelius, which he wrote after her death to the homeland (Prussia), "her faith was always the source of her patience" she appears to have been a God-fearing woman.

The grandfather married again. The daughter of this second marriage died while she was still in the single state. I have as a little boy, together with my father, visited this grandmother in Rückenau, and have seen her.

The grandfather died in the year 1831, September 14 at the age of 65 years, two weeks, and six days.

From the oral discourses of my father, I can note the following: the Grandfather was a very learned man thirsty for knowledge. Regrettably he also read a number of books by the famous French (Page 7) writer and atheist Voltaire, but gave it up toward the last (and gave himself to studying the Bible).

He had the books burned before his death, which became my father's assignment. This fire-offering of the harmful books may have made a wholesome impression upon our father as he had earnestly warned us about detrimen-



Ca. 1900, Cornelius W. Toews (1882-1960) and John W. Toews, sons of Bishop Peter Toews. Cornelius W. Toews remained a bachelor and farmed near Linden, Alberta. He was one of the founders of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Linden. Photo courtesy of Terrence Toews, Linden.

tal reading (Lektüre). And even though this passion for reading was inherited by him (and also by his family in a peculiar way) still all questionable and soul-ruining reading material remained foreign to our father's home.

Johann Toews 1793-1873.

Our father joined the Gemeinde in the year 1814 and entered the state of matrimony for the first time in the year 1816 to Elisabeth Harder of Blumstein (July 4). His profession was carpentry and furniture making. Later around 1825 he was also a very gifted

"Regrettably....[Cornelius Toews 1766-1831] also read a number of books by the famous French (Page 7) writer and atheist Voltaire,..."

"Stellmacher" as the manufacturers of wooden wagon parts were called. In still later years our parents belonged to the so-called Kleine Gemeinde.

In the year 1817 our oldest sister Helena was born, and after a time was married (Page 8) to Jacob Buller in Alexanderwohl. Their children are the following: Anna, Helena, Johann, Heinrich, Maria, Elisabeth, Eva, Sarah, and Margaretha. At this time, 1901, these all live in the United States. Of the second and third marriage of this long ago passed away sister there are no children.

Margaretha was born in 1819 in Lindenau. Later she married to Jacob Friesen. Their children: Margaretha, Anna, Maria, Jacob, Johann, Abraham. This sister died in 1860 in Kleefeld.

The daughters Margaretha and Anna also do not live any more. These descendants (with only one exception) live in Manitoba at this time.

In 1821 sister Elisabeth was born (in Lindenau). She was married to Martin Klassen. Their children are: Martin, living in Russia; Johann in Kansas; Agatha in Manitoba, and Elisabeth in Nebraska. The above sister died in Russia.

In 1824 sister Maria was born in Lindenau. She was married to Peter Loewen of Fischau. Their children: Maria (already died), Helena, Anna, Peter and Elisabeth. All the children are in Russia. The sister died in the year 1854. (Page 9)

In 1826, September 10th, Johann Toews was born in Lindenau. His children: from the first marriage one son named Johann; from the second marriage, Peter, Heinrich, Cornelius, Jacob, Helena, and Anna. They all live in Manitoba. Joh. Toews died in October 1895, in Grünfeld.

In 1830, January 17, sister Katharina was

"Johann Plett was descended from a well-to-do family that possessed 14 "huben" [560 acres] of land.

born in Lindenau. She was married to Heinrich Abrams in Alexanderwohl. She is now already many years a widow. Of her children are living one daughter by the name of Katherina, married to a Harder from Halbstadt. One granddaughter, Maria, lives in East Russia.* Ufa. The sister lives in Alexanderwohl, Russia.

In 1830 our father transferred his place of residence from Lindenau to Schönau.

In 1832 our sister Anna was born. She joined in marriage to Jacob Regehr. Children are: Anna, Jacob, Maria, Johann. The latter mentioned has died leaving one son by the name of Johann, the spitting image ("liebhaftige") of his father. The children all live in Manitoba. The mother of these children died in the fall. (Page 10)

In 1834 the mother of these above mentioned siblings, and the first wife of our father died, October 16th.

November the 18th of the same year our father was married the second time to a widow Wiebe. And already on the 21st of December of the same year she died.

In 1835, the 20th of August, our father was joined in marriage to Maria Plett from Blumstein, which was our mother. She was born in 1811, the 3rd of March, in Prussia in Fürstenwerder.

Johann Plett 1765-1833.

Her father Johann Plett had already passed away in 1833 on March 17th in Blumstein. It is a noteworthy fact that not only the mother of our half-siblings but also our mother and finally also the mother of our children all originate from Blumstein. Therefore Blumstein in the Molotschna in Russia is the homeland of

our family from the maternal side.

The history of our grandparents on the mother's side, deserves (or part of it at least) to be rescued from being forgotten and to be recorded. (page 11) May the grandchildren and great-grandchildren learn something towards the good from their history and experiences.

The grandparents, the parents of our mother, had both been married once before when they joined together in marriage. The grandfather, Johann Plett descended from a well-to-do family that possessed 14 "huben" [40 acres per huben] of land. He had, however, through voluntarily joining the military and through outside marriage, estranged himself from the family of his father, and his father disinherited him.

Through difficulties of acquiring an immigration pass they had a tiresome journey from Prussia to Russia, suffering with many hardships. Eight long years they were interrupted in Poland in severe poverty (Grandfather's work consisted mostly of weaving baskets).

Through a certain so-called "Grosze Reimer" they were looked up and supported in their dilemma regarding their immigration visas and helped in the continuation of their journey. They came to Russia in about the year 1828 completely without means (with a vehicle of (page 12) such a nature that the children had to walk). Of the girls, among whom was also our mother, three took jobs in Schönwiese in the Old Colony while the others moved on to make their home in Blumstein on the Molotschna and were accepted into the Orloff Gemeinde.

While still in Poland these children had been shouted at through the open window by

"Hans Warkentin [1764-1853, Blumstein] by trade was also both a wagon builder and a blacksmith."

the neighbour children calling out to them: "You are heretics!" And yet, relative to these Papists they were also only baptized as children. The only brother of our mother (that is still living) was Cornelius Plett.* * the aged uncle C. Plett died November 18, 1900, at the age of a little over 80 years. From him are descended the whole Plett family in Manitoba.

The children of the sisters of our mother are Isaacs, Goossens, Friesen, Enzes, and of the half-sisters Harder and Zacharias'.

I was personally well acquainted with my grandmother;* * Grandmother's family name was Schmidt and her Christian name was Esther. I still have a living memory of a well deserved motherly punishment which I received through her influence. Although suffering from a certain sickness from which she was in great anguish of soul (to the point of becoming convulsive) she became well again, (page 13) she was deeply God-fearing.

A dream of my childhood should be mentioned here. I got sight of my grandmother through a small portal in Heaven out of which

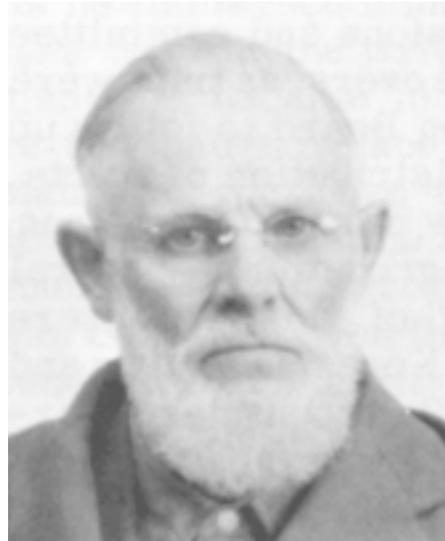
she called, "there I too will have to crawl through." Her body rests in the cemetery at Rosenort, Molotschna.

In 1836, the 13th of June our brother Cornelius was born in Schönau.

In 1838 our parents changed their place of residence to Fischau to be involved in agriculture.

Siblings.

[Brother] Cornelius Toews entered into the



Isaac W. Toews (1887-1976), Abbotsford, B. C., son of Bishop Peter Toews. Isaac farmed in Linden, Alberta, and served as a minister of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite for 34 years. He was the father of Milton Toews, Neilberg, Saskatchewan, whose wife Margaret Penner Toews is the famous poet and who translated the Peter Toews poems for this article. Photo courtesy of Clarence Hiebert, The Holdeman People, page 309, and Saints and Sinners, page 144. See Footprints on Mi-Chig-Wun, pages 255-259, for biographies of both Isaac and John W. Toews.

state of matrimony in 1857. From his first marriage with Elisabeth Friesen, two sons Johann and Cornelius are living. In 1864, July 24th his wife died. In September he was married to the widow Friesen, born a Bartel. From this marriage are the following children; Maria, Anna, Peter, Katharina, Susanna, Anganetha, Margaretha and Elisabeth, all living in Manitoba.

In 1839 our brother Jacob was born, and died of smallpox at the age of 20 years and three months, (page 14).

In 1841, July 24th-(*August 5th *according to our present calendar (1900) August 6th.) I, Peter Toews was born in Fischau.

Of my younger siblings not less than three brothers died in their infancy. The sisters Susanna and Maria are living. The first was born January 10th, 1844, and since 1861 is married to Johann Goossen. They are living in Kansas with their family.

The youngest sister by the name of Maria was born in 1854, shortly after the death of her sister by the same name. She was married

in Kansas with a widower Cornelius Dürksen from which many children are alive. The next time she was married to Jacob Hildebrand. They presently live in Oklahoma with their family.

In 1861, the 4th of June, I betook myself to the "Kleine Gemeinde."

Hans Warkentin 1817-86.

On November 12th, 1863, I entered into the state of matrimony with Anna, nee Warkentin, (**born February 12 Russian time, February 25 our time or new time, 1843 in Blumstein).

She was the second oldest of five daughters of Johann Warkentin of Blumstein. Her two twin brothers are named Johann and Isaak Warkentin.

The grandfather of my wife was called Hans and had his place of residence in Blumstein. (page 15) The grandmother from the father's side was born a Neufeld.

My wife's mother was born Anna Loewen from Lindenau, one of five daughters of Isaak Loewen, and there were eight brothers which were the uncles of my wife. The mother of these Loewens was born a Wiens.

In many respects it is understandingly interesting to know the relationships or names of the great-grandparents. Therefore may this serve as primary information: the Wienses, the Neufelds, the Loewens, and the Warkentins belong to the maternal relationships of our descendants.

In addition to being a farmer, the great-grandfather, Hans Warkentin, by trade was also both a wagon builder and a blacksmith. The Russian neighbours also called him "cold-smith".

"Johann Cornies was accustomed to placing the young trainees with...[Isaak Loewen, Lindenau] to teach them agriculture (Land Wirtschaft)."

The grandfather of our children Johann Warkentin was the only child of his parents. He also received the name of Hans at birth but later wrote his name Johann. But in the common language of the people he retained the name Hans.

Isaak Loewen 1783-1873.

Isaak Loewen, the great-grandfather of our children, was recognized as a model farmer (inclusive of the silk fibre processing of his son David). The chairman of agriculture* (*by the name of Johann Cornies) was accustomed to placing the young trainees with him to teach them agriculture (Land Wirtschaft). (Page 16)

Considering that many peculiarities of the relatives from the mother's side may be inherited by the descendants, one condition should be mentioned here. Great-grandfather Isaak Loewen was very short-sighted, and though none of his children of the first line, yet many

of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, are short-sighted, or they have weak eyes, or squint or the like: without exception of their branch of descendancy, whether they are Plett, Klassen, Warkentin, Toews, or have some other name.

The old grandfather Isaac Loewen died in June 1873 in Heuboden, Borosenko at the age of 83 years.



Elisabeth Bartel Toews, Mrs. John W. Toews, 1935. She was the daughter of Heinrich Bartel, born Sept. 12, 1891, the first child born in the Greenland settlement north of Blumenort. Shortly thereafter the Bartels moved to Hochstadt and from there to Clearspring. Photo courtesy of son Terrence Toews, Linden.

Our Family.

The first couple of weeks after our marriage we lived in Blumstein by the parents-in-law and then, through the winter, in Fischau at my parents.

On Pentecost 1864 we together with others moved to Markusland; not far from the lowest rapids of the Dnieper on the left bank, opposite Einlage, on six years rent. Our village received the name Andreasfeld from the first name of the nobleman Andre Markus (as it still exists to the present time).

Meanwhile, the noble estate of Borosenko was bought by a number of family fathers (among whom was also our father Warkentin) on the right bank of the Dnieper towards Nikopol. In 1866 in spring we moved there together with many others, including also our parents from both sides. Derived from [the vil-

lage name] Blumstein, we called our place Blumenhof.

Already on Markus a son was born to us (Joh. was his name) who (Page 17), however, died the first fall in Blumenhof, of diphtheria.

Three more children were consecutively born to us in Blumenhof but died of whom only one daughter reached the age of four years old, who died of scarlet fever on our journey of visitation to Alexanderwohl. Of the other two, one was a son who died of smallpox and the daughter died of measles.

During this time while we lived at Blumenhof, from 1866 to 1875, there were many experiences which would be worth recording. However, I will restrict myself to the family chronicle.

Since our children died we took in two foster children, Isaac Wiens, and Anna born Bröske, now married to my brother Joh. Toews's son, Peter Toews living in Steinbach.

In 1873 on May 15 while I was absent in the Crimea, our father Johann Toews died at the age of 79 years. His body rests immediately adjacent to that of his brother Jacob Toews who passed away three months earlier (who was a couple years younger) in the cemetery close to the worship house at Blumenhof.

In 1874, May 29th (June 10) our son Peter was born only a few hours before the first of our siblings boarded the steamboat for emigration, where I was nonetheless also present.

In 1875, May 4th, we in the company of 30 families also boarded the steamship *Nocnawncui* at Nikopol to leave Russia forever. The journey went downstream the Dnieper to Odessa. From there it went by railway to Hamburg; then again by steamer to Hull, England; then by rail under and over mountains to Liverpool.

From here after stopping for a couple of days, we again proceeded by the steamer "Prussian" of the Allan line to Quebec; then by railway via Toronto, Montreal, Chicago, Detroit, St. Paul, to Moorhead, where we boarded the steamboat Dakota. And so we came to the vicinity of the mouth of the Rat River early morning on the 29th of June, where we disembarked. Late in the evening of the same day we arrived (Page 18) per oxen-drawn vehicles, at our new, future and still present homeland of Grünfeld.

Both my sisters Susanna and Maria together with our mother embarked on a different steamship at Liverpool and on to Kansas by way of New York where our mother later died in 1895, June 15th, at the age of 84 years.

Three of our children already born here in Grünfeld also died here: Joh. Isaak, and Jacob.

Besides son Peter, who was born to us while still in Russia, four are still living, born here in Grünfeld, as follows: daughter Maria born 1877, Dec. 17; son, Johann (the fourth by this name) born 1880, Jan. 5; son Cornelius born 1881, Oct. 21; and son Isaak born 1887, Aug 5.

Son Peter was joined in marriage to Katerina, nee Klassen from Rosenhof, Morris in the fall of 1895. Their children Peter, Elisabeth and Anna. Five children and three grandchildren are now living.

Songs

Sieben sind vogangegangen
In die frohe Ewigkeit

Um mit Unschuld dort su prangen
Angetan mit Herrlichkeit

Fünf sind noch im diesim Leben
Auf dem kampffplatz angestellt
Guter Gott! Du wollest gehen
Dasz wir einst in jenner Welt

Möchten unsere Namen finden
(Und durch's Blut des Lammes Jesu
Uns gereinigt von Sünden)
In dem Buch des Lebens Heh'n.

O! Du Todes-überwinder!
Heiland, Jesus, Gottes-Sohn!
Mach uns schon zu Gottes kinder
Hier, und einst vor deinem Thron. Amen

With these verses the above is finished,
January 17th, 1901 – Peter Toews, Grünfeld,
E.R., Manitoba.

English translation.

There are seven who have entered
In the realms of endless bliss,
Clothed in innocence forever
Glory-clad with happiness.

Five remain to man their stations
On the battlefield of life.
Loving God! May we be valiant
That beyond this world of strife.

We might find our names inscribed
Within the Book of Life one day,
Cleansed thro' Jesus, Lamb of God,
Whose blood once washed our sins away.

O, Thou Victor over death,
Savior, Jesus, God's own son!
Take and make us as Thy own
Here, and then before Thy throne.

Peter Toews, January 17th, 1901
(Trans. Margaret Penner Toews, Neilberg,
Saskatchewan, September 2000)

Unser Monument

Glaubens voll auf Gott vertraut
Haben wir auf ihn gebaut
Nicht auf Sand unser Gebaeu
Auf dem Fels des Heils getreu

Jesus Christus is der Grund
Und mit ihm auch unser Bund
Hier in dieser Prüfungszeit
Und in alle Ewigkeit

Das sei auch am Grabe noch
Unser Zeugnisz tief (*) und hoch
Als dem Herrn geweihter Dank
Statt der Klage Lobgesang

Denkt ihr an ein Monument
Dasz man unser Grab erkennt
Pflanzet von des Waldes Saum
Einen immergruenen Baum

Der da lege Zeugnisz ab
Von dem Leben uebern Grab
Da uns Sterben war Gewinn
Fort zu leben immerhin

Unser Leibe wird auferstehn
Unverweslich neu und schoen
Abgestreift das altes Kleit
Agenthan mit Herrlichkeit

* Psalm 130:1, Korinther 2:10



Peter P. W. Toews (1874-1949), oldest son of Aeltester Peter Toews, moved from Rosenort to Grünfeld, E.R., in 1899. He homesteaded in Swalwell, Alberta, in 1905. In 1911 he served as the land agent for the B. O. Company, persuading some 20 Greenland families to relocate to the Watshan Valley (Needles) settlement in B. C. where many lost their entire investment when the company went bankrupt and could not provide the deeds to the land. Peter P. W. Toews was excommunicated as a result: see John W. Dueck, *Prairie Pioneers*, pages 253-5, for a more detailed description. Peter P. W. Toews eventually moved to Winton, California, where he and his second wife are buried. Photo courtesy of granddaughter Mary Pickford, Atwater, California.

Our Monument

Trusting God, His Word within.
We have built our lives on Him.
We've not built our house on sand;
On the fields of grace it stands.

Christ is our foundation sure,
And in Him we live secure.
Here in time He is our plea*,
Our hope in all eternity.

In the grave wherein we'll lie.
Our Advocate will still stand by.
No lament these lips shall raise,
Instead our Savior we will praise.

A monument? Should one be made
To mark the place where we are laid,
From forest glades go get a tree
And plant an evergreen for me.

'Twill be a sign that life can bloom
From the darkness of the tomb,
'Tis sure our earthen bodies die,
but we will rise to live on High,

Rise to live in perfect love,
New and beautiful above.
We'll shed our old worn dress, to wear
Refulgent garments over there.

*Psalm 130; 1 Cor 2:10

Peter Toews, Grünfeld, E.R., Manitoba
(Translated by Margaret Penner Toews, Box 3451, Neilberg, Saskatchewan, S0M 2C0, Sept. 2000)

And so we planted that tree...in fact, lacking Faith...we planted four. Two at each end of the grave. For in those dry years even well established trees failed. But these trees were different: we planted them, praying that God would honour the last Will of His Faithful servant...and let the tree grow, witnessing of father's life beyond the grave....

Then when mother also went Home we laid her weary body right beside father's--and planted four more evergreen trees.

Where one was asked, eight are growing, sending their roots,...feeding on the very frame that once were the earthly temples of our dear father, great and noble, and mother's tender loving spirit...a living monument...witnessing of their steadfast faith, a living hope, ever ready to serve...looking beyond.

Still more real than the evergreen tree is his work wrought in true humility and rich in the wisdom from above...prompted by love divine....prospering still....bearing fruit into the endless ages of eternity....where father is one of those "that the wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." Daniel 12:3.

Written by son Isaac W. Toews, from "Toews Family Letter," 1940, printed by Annie and Martha Toews.

Looking backward. What else would you expect from me? Sixty years is long or short, depending on how you look at it. If you look at the 60 summers or the 60 winters.

When in 1880 I first looked at this world, that was long before a lot of our today commonplace inventions, as telephones, bicycles or cars, even before the topbuggies, which came later. And to have meant a lot in those years. At the close of the last century they were priced from about \$70.00 to about \$130.00. And believe me young folks of today, to drive in one of them was to drive in state.

If you believe me what I tell you about the events of the last 60 summers, perhaps you will believe me too what our parents and grandparents told us about the 60 years prior to my short span of years. Then the first Mennonites were 30 years in Russia, invited there by Catharine the Second.

The old ministers at that time sometimes preached in the Hollandish language to the old folks. It was hard for them to give up that language, just as it is today for our old folks to give up what they have been used to.

But even a 120 years is a comparatively short time. We trace the Toews family back to 1737.

My grandmother was a Loewen. Her family can be traced back to 1665 when Michael Loewen was born. He was an officer in the army and became, in his later years, a Mennonite, and was baptized by the famous Georg Hansen. That was about 100 years after Menno Simon's time. What a time did the Christians have in those days, when it was forbidden on penalty of death to have a Bible in their possession.

The story of Christendom up to that time has been written with blood. They were persecuted by the Roman Catholics and Protestants. Persecuted by heathen governments, ungodly kings and dictators.

Christ the Saviour and also the prophets told of this in advance, just as the 17 prophets told of Christ in advance. But the 17 prophets recorded in the Bible were by no means the first prophets, for Moses long before them prophesied to his people "the Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me, unto him ye shall hearken".

But even long before Moses there were prophets. For what blessings and curses Noah, the preacher of righteousness, pronounced upon his descendants, are being fulfilled to the end of all days. The first prophet was Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who spoke of the last of all days that the Lord will come with ten thousand of his saints; and for this last great event of our and all times, O ye descendants of Peter Toews, let us prepare.

John W. Toews, from "Toews Family Letter," 1940, printed by Annie and Martha Toews.

Editor's Note: When I first became interested in my own history in 1976, Mr. C. L. Toews (1891-1982), Steinbach, long-time school teacher and folk historian, took me under his wing and introduced me to the writings of Aeltester Peter Toews.

Besides a box full of bundled letters and old journals many dating to Imperial Russia, he showed me the Toews family chart. I was enthralled by this graph, of which he had a full size version, evidently hand draw by Aeltester Peter Toews himself. C. L. Toews had personally known Bishop Toews, his great-uncle, and gave him the testimony of being a gifted, charismatic yet modest leader of his people.

Many of the poems and writings of Aeltester Peter Toews (1841-1922) have been published in the *Kleine Gemeinde Historical Series*. In particular, an extensive biography of Peter Toews was published in *Leaders*, pages 819-922. For a biography of his wife, Anna Warkentin Toews, see Margaret Penner Toews, *Preservings*, No. 10, Part Two, pages 23-25. See also *Footprints on Mi-Chig-Wun: Memoirs of Sunnyslope pioneers*, pages 441-4. For further reading about the Cornelius Toews (1737-1800) family, see *Dynasties*, pages 457-527.

I note also that in as far as I know a definite connection between the *Kleine Gemeinde* deacon Isaak Loewen (1787-1873), Lindenau, Imperial Russia, and General Michael Loewen, Germany, has never yet been established by historical records. Editor D. Plett.

Otto Klassen, Mennonite Film Producer

“Otto Klassen, Winnipeg, Mennonite film producer,”
by Evelyn Rempel Petkau, Box 1191, Carman, Manitoba, ROG OJO.

Introduction.

Like many who have lived through most of the last century, Otto Klassen has amassed a wealth of experiences and changes that younger generations can only imagine. For those concerned with both preserving and learning from history, he is a valuable resource.

Klassen has lived through times of war and peace; he has lived through times of great fear and suffering; he has lived on three different continents; he is a man who follows a vision but lives with a sense of history.

Early Years.

Born in Schöneberg, Ukraine in 1927, Klassen was a young student when the winds of war were felt in his village. Just as was change the course of history and redefine alliances, war impacted and changed the course of Klassen's life.

The young Klassen relished his studies and enjoyed literature, mathematics, history and languages taught by German teachers. His mother nurtured in him an appreciation and desire for education. So it was no surprise to him and his mother when Klassen was one of 42 students from throughout Ukraine selected and sent to a school in Kiev for leadership training in 1943 by the Germans.

World War Two.

Because Klassen knew the Russian language, the German army often used him as an interpreter. He moved from place to place with the army, sometimes finding himself on the last train out of a region.

War time atrocities, inhumanities, and close calls with death and imprisonment remain vivid in Klassen's mind. Moving through war-ravaged areas, many images have been imprinted forever in his memory. He relates the stories in fragments. They are too difficult to put into words and emotions that are connected to these 57 year-old events are still very raw. The fragmented stories are just the tip of an iceberg of memories and tragedies Klassen carries with him.

Acts of humanity and compassion are also remembered. These were moments when not only lives were saved but also when faith in humanity and God was kept alive. At the age of 16, Klassen together with 12 young men was assigned to a German officer with orders to destroy everything that was left behind. “But we travelled through villages and that German officer did not give any order to destroy. No homes, no equipment, no harvests were destroyed. He was human. He knew it was late summer, that winter was coming and the people would need something to live,” said Klassen. Klassen remembers that this officer never took food without paying for it.

As captured Russians were being loaded onto trains by the Germans, one of the Russians told Klassen that he had seven children. Klassen helped him escape.

Klassen was on a train to Germany in December 1943, excited about the possibility of seeing his mother and sisters and brother whom he had learned were also in Germany, when the train blew up. The track had been mined and most of the people on the train were seriously injured or killed. Klassen spent the next several weeks in a hospital undergoing



Otto Klassen, a life dedicated to documenting on film the story of his people.

three operations. He was told by the doctor if he had not had such a strong heart he would not have survived the explosion.

Photography.

Klassen was able to visit his family briefly after leaving the hospital. He returned to school and from there he was assigned to a western Ukrainian division as interpreter and for the first time became involved in photography. He met Nick Boris, a filmmaker involved in making a film for instructional purposes. Klassen was recruited to assist in shooting photos with a still camera for this project. In the midst of destruction and death, Klassen found within himself a gift and a passion for photography. The leadership training that the war-time schools provided him with could be put to use in working with people for the purpose of filming.

As Klassen fled from the Russians a friend who had to go to the front gave him his camera. “He said, ‘I know you love it. That’s my gift to you’,” remembers Klassen. That camera was destroyed when Klassen's train was attacked on the way to Prague. “I broke down and cried,” said Klassen.

Paraguay, 1947.

Near the end of April 1945, Klassen ended up in an American Prisoner of War camp near Munich. He managed to escape after three days. He travelled by foot through side roads, forests and fields making his way to where he believed his family was. He found his family and began making preparations and arrangements to follow through on a promise he made to himself as early as 1938.

“My father died in 1936. Even on his death bed he was threatened with deportation to Siberia. As a child I experienced the tragic years of 1937 to 1938 when countless people in our village, among them many relatives, were carried off to Siberia never to return. I pledged there and then that my mother and siblings would not be exiled to Russia,” writes Klassen.

In 1947, Klassen together with his mother, two sisters and younger brother immigrated to Paraguay. There, Klassen helped build houses and was amongst the first pioneers to build roads and bridges in the Chaco. It did not take long for the community to recognize Klassen as a great builder. He was very instrumental in building both the hospital and the church. “The church was always important to me,” notes Klassen. He remembered the symbolic power of the church bells in Germany calling people to worship, and although he was able to persuade the community to build a tower on the church, no bell was ever installed.

Klassen first met Kaethe Bergen in Germany, but in Paraguay he got to know her better. In 1949 they were married.

Klassen remembers his sister-in-law having a camera and that he, “played with it a lot.” He was soon taking pictures for weddings and various occasions

Canada, 1955.

In 1955, Klassen and his young family came to Canada. “I liked the wilderness in Paraguay, seeing the snakes, tigers, apes and enjoying the nature. I learned a lot there and was mayor of my village (No. 5) but I never planned to stay. I did not see a future for the children. There was not enough land in the Colony for all the people and many would leave for Ascuncion where there was more opportunity,” he explained.

Canada looked more promising for the future of their children. In October 1955, they moved into a house close to the Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church in Winnipeg and for the next four years he looked after the church and became the foreman for the construction of the present building.

Film.

Klassen was in Winnipeg for only a short time before he saw his first Walt Disney movie

on TV. "I was 29 years old and said, 'I would make films'. I used a stop watch to time things and studied the angles from which he took shots." Klassen soon purchased a still camera, took pictures of everything and entered exhibitions. In every exhibition he was awarded high marks.

Klassen started as a carpenter in Winnipeg. His skill in building and masonry soon led to his first masonry contract and eventually a very successful masonry business. His filming hobby was also growing and in the early 1960s he purchased a movie camera.

"C.A. DeFehr had filmed the arrival and settlement of Mennonites in Paraguay and someone told him about me," said Klassen and so this became his first film editing project. Shortly after he made a film of an interview with J.J.Thiessen, Gerhard Lohrenz, and C.A. DeFehr. It did not take long for his services to be in demand, but Klassen insists it remained just a hobby.

Klassen was involved in the making of a film celebrating the 100th anniversary of Manitoba. It was previewed at the Winnipeg Concert Hall and Klassen learned that the head editor of CBC was asking to see the person responsible for the footage of Queen Elizabeth and the Steinbach Mennonite Museum.

When CBC's Nick Boris discovered that the man was Otto Klassen with whom he had worked over 25 years ago in filming during the war, he said, "Come, I will teach you," remembers Klassen. "He saw that I got books on film editing and helped me buy equipment. He showed me how to work with film editing. Never let the commentator tell you how to make the film, he told me."

Klassen has made more than 25 films.

The Chaco.

One of his major works is a six part series on "Pioneers in the Chaco". "I had dreamed for a long time of doing this," said Klassen. "I always believed they (the Mennonites) were the great pioneers of the Chaco."

At first the leaders of Fernheim and the Menno Colony were suspicious of Klassen, but eventually he got the permission and co-operation of the Menno Colony in 1976 to come in with his cameras. His patience, persistence and respect for the people and their contributions and way of life paid off. Over a period of 10 years he was able to return several times and capture their history and that of Fernheim on film. "I let them tell me their story. I like to show what the Mennonites can do," said Klassen.

The Great Trek.

The Paraguayan experience is part of Klassen's story but the project that has been his greatest undertaking is the filming of "The Great Trek". "That's my story," he says with a sense of ownership that comes not just from producing it, but living it.

In 1975 he began his research, reading books, doing interviews and making his first

trips back to Germany. It took many more trips, letters back and forth and persistent appeals before Klassen gained the trust of the German government and was able to search their archives in 1985. "This story had to be told," explained Klassen. "It is not only the Mennonite story; it is the story of the Ukrainians and Latvians too." Klassen, as is the case with many of his projects, financed it himself. "The Great Trek" was released in 1992.

continue to interest him. "The word, the picture and the music must say the same thing. Where we are weak in picture, the music and speech must be stronger. You must bring the three together and I enjoy that challenge. With his Steinbeck editing machine he works with up to 12 reels to edit the sound effects. His basement workshop is full of cameras, filming and editing equipment, books and an untold amount of film footage.



Otto Klassen works with his filming and editing equipment in the basement of his Winnipeg home. Photo by Evelyn Rempel Petkau, Carman, Manitoba.

It has been given to the "Faith and Life Commission" of the Conference of Mennonites in Manitoba for use and promotion.

Other Projects.

Klassen made three trips to Florida. "I wanted to see how they made films in the big studios," he said. In the early 1970s Klassen was offered a job with CBC but "my dream was to film the Mennonites, to tell their story," said Klassen.

Klassen retired as a master brick layer and masonry contractor more than 10 years ago but his interest in film making continues to flourish. A recent film is "Women of Courage Stories of Sadness and Stories of Survival." Four films about the Mennonites in Mexico were released in 1999. The first two films have already been translated into four languages.

Klassen has worked closely with historians Gerhard Lohrenz, George Epp and Gerhard Ens and broadcaster Victor Sawatsky on many of these projects. Mostly however, it is the stories people tell him that inspire him. "That is where I start. I see the story in a picture. I see everything as a picture," he explains.

The skill, the challenges and the bringing together of various media in producing film

Conclusion.

Just as a photographer needs to know the focal point of a picture and draw out what is important in an image, Klassen knew how to use and build upon some of the experiences of his life. The leadership training he received during the war years impressed upon him the importance of the picture and the word in communicating. The skills he learned in influencing and working together with people during the war have helped him direct films that effectively tell the stories of Mennonite people.

He has documented and dramatized on film some of the suffering and the tragedies, as well as demonstrations of strength, compassion and faith of the Mennonite community that he has witnessed over the past century. These films tell Klassen's own story and that of many others. Klassen has and continues to preserve the rich heritage of Mennonite people over a century of enduring faith.

Sources:

This is an extended version of an article published in the *Canadian Mennonite*, August 21, 2000, Volume 4, Number 16, page 5.

Films Opened the Doors to Mexico

By Otto Klassen, 346 Hawthorne Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, R2G 0H5.

Introduction.

Henry Dueck, from Ontario, formerly MCC worker and also a teacher among the Mennonites in Mexico, was the first to come and ask whether he could show the films "Pioneers in the Chaco" and "In the Service of Love, Km. 81" in Mexico.

The films were shown by various MCC workers. Dueck believed that the time would come when the Mennonites in Mexico would be interested in a film about their story.

MCC workers Jake and Mary Friesen from British Columbia wrote me from Mexico, "we have shown your films "Pioneers in the Chaco" and "In the Service of Love, Km. 81" in eight locations in six colonies. More than 3,500 people have taken the opportunity to view these worthwhile films. For the Mennonites in Mexico these films represent a window to the outside, a recognition that the Mennonite fellowship encompasses and includes Mexico, that taken from our foundations we are one community of faith."

Community Building.

The wide exposure of these films gave us an opportunity, to bring Mennonites from various denominations, closer together. It also served to awake and affirm that there were various needs amongst them, namely, the needs of the handicapped, the weak and crippled. The recognition that these needs existed and that they needed to be improved or carried, was wakened.

The will to build a home for the handicapped as a community is growing. (When I was in Mexico in 1996, the Manitoba Colony had already built a splendid Seniors Home and made provision for handicapped.)

75th Anniversary.

In June of 1995 I received a letter from the Mennonite Historical Society in the region of Cuauhtemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico, informing me



Many scenes were recreated for filming, "Old Colony Mennonites emigrate from Canada to Mexico." Here a scene where the delegates travelled through the Sierra Madre Mountains west of Durango.

that they were hoping to produce a film for their 75th anniversary celebrations. They wanted to know whether I would be able to help them with the venture.

I assented to the request.

The Beginning.

The Historical Society appointed George Rempel, Winkler, as the liaison person to work with me. George Rempel, who was born in Mexico and who had received his education there as well as at the Mennonite Teaching Institute in Gretna, Manitoba, and who had been a teacher in Mexico, had worked for 10 years for Mennonite Central Committee among the Mennonite immigrants from Mexico.

When we met for the first time, I shared

Were the roads ran parallel to the railway tracks, I repeatedly filmed the surrounding area. I gained some information from the books, *Die Altkolonier-Mennoniten in Mexiko* von Walter Schmeidehaus and *Die*

"The wide exposure of these films gave us an opportunity, to bring Mennonites from various denominations, closer together."

mennonitische Kolonisierung in Mexiko 1922-1959 by Harry Leonard Sawatzky.

During this trip I realized that George trusted something which I would never misuse. He is a knowledgeable expert of our story.

Mexican Mennonites.

The Mexican Mennonites were different than what a number of people in the north had described to me. People from all church backgrounds helped along.

I was allowed to film during the worship services in the Reinländer worship house, also in the Kleine Gemeinde during the worship service and in their schools. Spanish was also taught here in addition to German. I was also allowed to film in an Old Colony school while in session.

The "Conference Schools", so-called be-



The delegates hired a Mexican guide with a wagon to inspect more closely the western portion of the Bustillos valley.

cause they are part of the General Conference in North America, are recognized by the Government. Those who graduate here have access to the universities in Mexico. There are students from the Colonies who are studying in the Universities in Mexico, including among them those who have graduated as medical doctors and in other professions.

In the "Conference" congregation (Blumenau), the worship service is improved through group and choir singing. They had Sunday Schools for children and adults, Bible studies and instruction in Catechism and "deeper life" services.

Repeatedly members of the Old Colony, Sommerfelder, Reinländer and Kleine Gemeinden, expressed their frustration regarding the negative stereotyping of them in the north.

Filming.

Most of the time George Rempel drove around with me in Mexico. He has many friends among the Mennonites there. He assured them that they need have no concerns in that regard. "Klassen will not bring any

"...the Mennonites have made this region of the State of Chihuahua into an important production center for agriculture..."

reports in the north. His films will be a testimony of us," Rempel declared to them, "just as the films "Pioneers in the Chaco" and "In the Service of Love, Km. 81" stand as a witness to the work of the Mennonites in Paraguay."

My editorial committee were the three brothers Rempel--George, Franz and Peter. They sought to fulfil all my wishes. A train trip was organized where all the passengers were dressed like the first emigrants. A caravan of [horse drawn] vehicles demonstrated the journey from the railway station to the land.

The journey of the delegates in 1921 was also presented. We also drove in the mountains. The men, dressed like the delegates in 1921, rode through the mountains on donkeys. We also travelled to Mexico City in order the film the places where the delegates had been and what they had seen. A trip was also made to Durango.

The working of the land--as done presently as well as in the beginning--was demonstrated and filmed. Likewise with the harvesting and the gorgeous apple orchards while in blossom as well as in harvest. The Swift and Manitoba Colonies were filmed from an airplane and many other things.



A scene recreated for the film, showing the first train load of Old Colony pioneers arriving at San Antonio der los Arenales (today Cuauhtemoc).

The Films.

The first film, "Old Colony Mennonites emigrate from Canada to Mexico," was 29 minutes long. It reported briefly on the background story from Holland to Prussia to Russia to Canada, something about the school issue in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, about the journeys of the delegates to Mexico investigating the land and the granting of the required privileges, up to the beginning of the emigration; and it showed the arrival of the first immigrants in San Antonio de los Arenales [later renamed Cuauhtemoc] on April 8, 1922.

The second film, called "Pioneers in Mexico, Canadian Mennonites colonize in Mexico" ran for 54 minutes and showed the development of the colony during the 75 years of its existence. Special emphasis was placed on the energy and perseverance of the pioneers. These videos have been produced in four languages: German, Plautdietsch, English and Spanish.

My fellow editors entrusted to me the task of writing the script. I granted them the right to edit my work where they could demonstrate that I had been falsely informed.

I produced a 59 minute film regarding the 75th anniversary celebration of the Mennonites in Mexico, 57 minutes in English.

A well written Plaut-deutsch drama by George Rempel, "The Delegate's Journey," is 35 minutes in length.

Peter Rempel made a presentation regarding Mennonites in the world. I have also filmed a lot for a film regarding the spiritual

and social life of the Mennonites in Mexico. Much wisdom, love and understanding is required to write a script on this topic. My own knowledge is too limited to write the script regarding the spiritual and social life of the Mennonites in Mexico.

Accomplishments.

I have marvelled at their accomplishments. Our historians write that the first Mennonite immigrants to Russia had little education. But they write further that soon a windmill was being built in each village. My question is, how do we understand the meaning of education?

In Mexico they have also established an industry in the colonies. They produce part of their own needs for farm machinery. They have machine works, they build harrows, cultivators, hammermills, bean and corn harvesters, trailers of various types, Erstatzteile, and other equipment. They have also established a cheese industry.

With their expertise in the work of grain farming, raising cattle and producing apples, the Mennonites have made this region of the State of Chihuahua into an important production center for agriculture, which is important not only in the immediate area but for the entire country.

Conclusion.

I did not accept any remuneration for my time and work, but all the other expenses were paid for by the Mennonites in Mexico. It is my wish that when all the expenses are finally recovered, any further income would be designated for the construction of a Mennonite museum in Mexico.

On January 23, 2001, I heard the news that in December of 2000, the ground breaking had taken place for a museum, and that the monies promised for the construction of a museum had been received from the government.

I have received heartfelt hospitality in the Colonies and have met many genuine Christians.

Reprinted from Der Bote, Feb. 21, 2001, pages 8-10.



A wagon train of Old Colony settlers on their way to the site selected for the establishment of their new villages in the Bustillos Valley, Mexico.

Peter T Funk and Maria (Rempel) Funk

“Peter T. Funk and Maria (Rempel) Funk, ‘Rickje Funke’, Kronsgart, East Reserve, Manitoba,”
by Linda Buhler, Box 2895, Steinbach, Manitoba ROA 2AO.

Introduction.

For some time now, I have been collecting information on my husband’s maternal great-grandparents, the Peter T. Funks of Kronsgart, East Reserve. They were known locally as the “Rickje Funke” (rich Funks) as they prospered in what was marginal farm land. However, their prosperity came from entrepreneurial endeavors rather than their farm. Perhaps reading this article will trigger some memories and will spur a descendant to write another article with more anecdotes than I have been able to uncover.

Family Background.

Peter T. Funk was born on November 10, 1864, the first born child of Jacob Funk (1841-1906) and Agatha Thiessen (1843-1930) BGB B250. His parents lived in the village of Schönfeld in the Bergthal Colony prior to their emigration to Canada. His paternal grandparents were Peter Funk (1805-66) and Helena

Schroeter (1806-69) and his maternal grandparents were Jacob Thiessen (1799-1862) and Katarina Rempel (1799-1875).

As one can read by the death dates of both sets of grandparents, Peter T. Funk would only have gotten to know his Thiessen grandmother who died when Peter was almost 11 years old. She accompanied his parents and family on their journey to Canada on the S.S. Quebec, arriving in Quebec on July 20, 1875. However, church records indicate that she died on August 7, 1875, just two weeks after arriving in Canada. It is not known where in Canada she passed away or where she was buried.

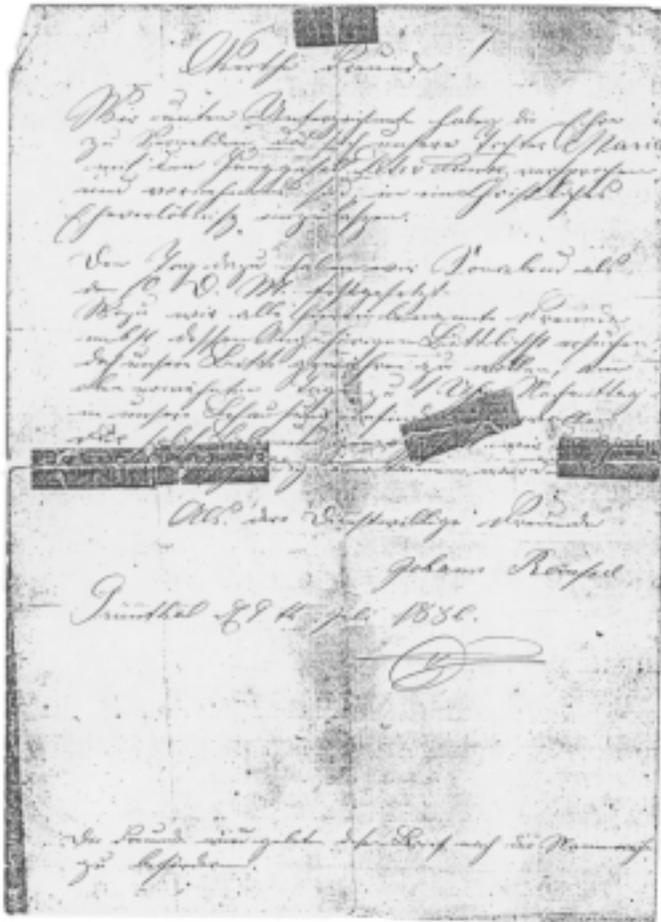
Peter’s parents, the Jacob Funks settled in Gnadenfeld, E.R. where they farmed on the NW20-5-5. Following Jacob’s death in 1906, his widow Agatha remarried to widower Peter Toews, BGB B273 (see Ernest Braun article for a biography of Jakob S.

Funk, Pres., No. 15, page 95). The Toews family is recorded on the 1881 census lists as residing in Bergfeld, E.R. Peter Toews was elected as deacon in the Chortitzer Church in Manitoba in 1885, as minister in 1889 and as Aeltester in 1903.

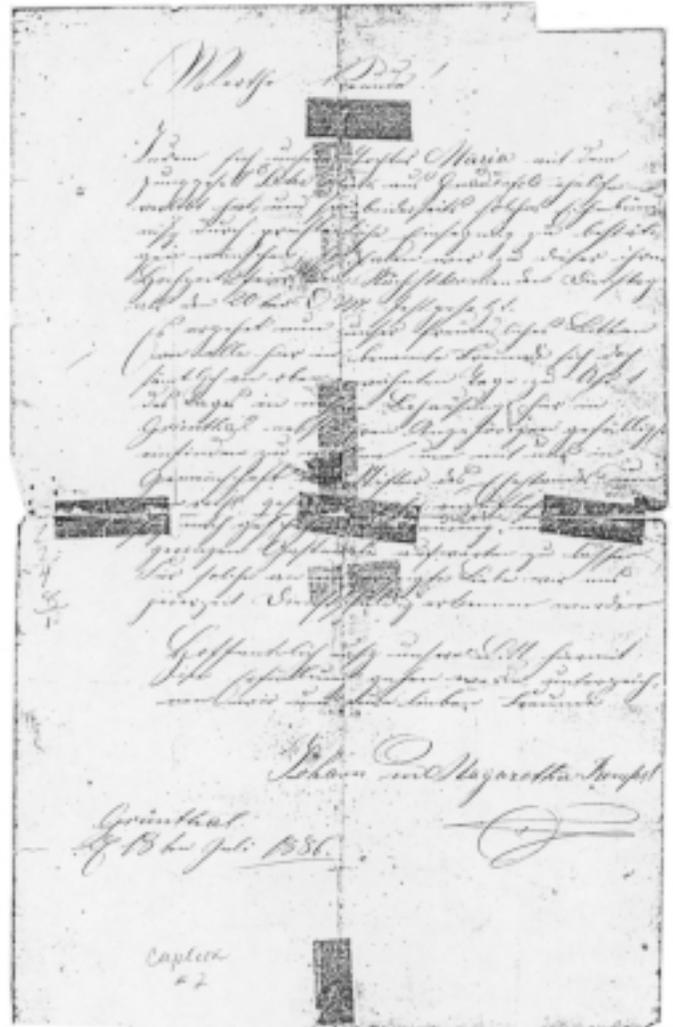
Rempel Family

Maria Rempel was born on March 10, 1868 to Johann Rempel (1830-99) and Margaretha Sawatzke (1833-1914) BGB B104. The Rempels lived in Heuboden in the Bergthal Colony at the time of Maria’s birth.

Maria’s parents along with their 10 children emigrated to Canada arriving in Quebec on July 1, 1875 on the S.S. Moravian. Margaretha Rempel was pregnant on their long and haz-



Engagement announcement for Peter T. Funk and Maria Rempel, dated July 9, 1886 inviting guests for the celebration to be held the following day. In accordance with age old tradition, the announcement is signed by Maria’s father. These documents were passed on in the family. The list of guests on these documents is worth noting as they often identify kinship and fellowship patterns which shaped the life of early Hanover pioneers



Wedding Invitation dated July 18, 1886, for the Peter T. Funk and Maria Rempel wedding nuptials to be held on July 20, 1886. The invitation was handwritten by Maria’s parents and then communicated by the traditional “Wieda Droag”, one villager passing it on to the next, inviting the guests listed on the backside, see Preservings, No. 16, pages 131-2, for an article on this quaint and useful tradition.

Lowe farm 57

Peter H. Wiens

| 1904 | | Debit | Credit | Balance |
|-------|----|--------------------------------|--------|---------|
| Nov | 1 | Nov Debit 2.10 | | 51.10 |
| April | 8 | 1 Grover's | 2.50 | |
| July | 2 | five telephon | 13.52 | |
| " | 15 | gold eggs | 13.52 | |
| | | | | 67.12 |
| | | | | 13.52 |
| July | 25 | groceries | 53.60 | |
| | | Aug 1 Mar 1910 | 3.12 | |
| | | | | 56.72 |
| " | 25 | gold eggs | 31.72 | |
| " | 26 | Black Rest | 25.00 | |
| Aug | 8 | 50 lbs Seal Band + | 4.50 | |
| | | Amund's Band | 20 | |
| " | 16 | five Buns | 4.30 | |
| | | Oct 1000 | 4.50 | |
| | | | | 1.50 |
| | | | | 25.00 |
| Nov | 27 | 4 lbs. Coal Oil | 1.00 | |
| March | 18 | Amund's for 3 hours | 4.00 | |
| April | 25 | 5 lbs. Coal Oil | 1.25 | |
| " | | groceries | 15 | |
| May | 6 | Amund's | 60 | |
| " | 26 | groceries | 50 | |
| July | 8 | 20 Buns | 1.20 | |
| " | | Rice | 10 | |
| " | | for Madam | 20 | |
| " | | 1/2 lb. coffee | 40 | |
| " | | 1/2 lb. sugar | 30 | |
| " | 15 | oil | 15 | |
| Aug | 5 | 50 lbs L. Band | 4.75 | |
| " | 8 | 50 lbs L. Band | 4.75 | |
| " | 15 | 1 Amund | 30 | |
| " | 22 | 2 Amund | 60 | |
| Oct | 18 | groceries | 1.50 | |
| " | 18 | 17 1/2 lbs. Coffee 30.00 32.35 | 32.35 | 46.75 |
| | | | | 32.35 |
| | | | | 17.40 |
| Oct | 30 | Gold eggs | 31.00 | |
| " | 30 | Black Rest | 5.40 | |
| Nov | 15 | Gold eggs | 4.00 | |
| Jan | 5 | Gold eggs | 4.00 | |
| Aug | 5 | groceries | 4.00 | |

185

Peter S. Martens

| 1910 | | Debit | Credit | Balance |
|------|----|------------------|--------|---------|
| May | 13 | Leander's | 7.00 | |
| Aug | 18 | 15 lbs Seal Band | 1.35 | |
| Sept | 19 | Leander's | 3.40 | |
| | | 3 flour | 1.50 | |
| Oct | 19 | Gold eggs | 15.00 | |
| " | 28 | 1 flour | 85 | |
| " | 28 | 1 flour | 45 | |
| Nov | 2 | Gold eggs | 1.00 | |
| " | 7 | Gold eggs | 25 | |
| Dec | 3 | 1/2 lb. Coal Oil | 25 | |
| " | 5 | Gold eggs | 7.5 | |
| " | 5 | 1/2 lb. Coal Oil | 41 | |
| " | 5 | Challenge | 1.00 | |
| | | | 21.25 | 33.25 |
| | | | | 21.35 |
| " | 5 | Amund's | 13.20 | |
| " | 24 | oil | 15 | |

Copies of ledger sheets recording Peter T. Funk's store sales, payments on outstanding loans and accounts receivable: 1904 account (top) with Peter W. Wiens, Lowe Farm, and 1910 account with neighbour Peter S. Martens. Courtesy of Harry Bergen, Grunthal.

ardous voyage, giving birth to baby Anna on October 19, not quite four months after their arrival in a new country. Anna, who we assume was born in Ontario, was the youngest child in the family.

The Rempel family's journey was perilous as stormy weather prevailed for most of their journey across the ocean. As they neared the end of their voyage, the captain of the S.S. Moravian lost his bearings on the banks of Newfoundland as they faced yet another storm. When the fog lifted, and they could see how

close the ship was to the tall rocky cliffs, they were again thankful and cognizant of God's tender mercies and His faithfulness.

The Rempel family stayed in Ontario during the winter of 1875-76 and were among the 622 people (422 Mennonites with the remainder being French) who boarded the ship "Ontario" in Sarnia and set out for Duluth on May 10, 1876. This trip was interrupted when, on May 16, the ship got stuck in the ice about five miles from their destination. Here they remained for nine days. A small thunderstorm accompanied by strong winds finally freed the ship on the evening of May 24. The Mennonites on board fared quite well as they had brought provisions with them but before the ship was freed from the ice, they had consumed all that they had brought with them, including the seed potatoes and flour which were to get them started as they pioneered in Manitoba.

186

Peter T. Funk

| 1897 | | Debit | Credit | Balance |
|--------|----------------|-------|--------|---------|
| Jan 9 | Angewandung zu | | 1.50 | |
| Jan 13 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 15 | Angewandung zu | | 15 | |
| Jan 17 | Angewandung zu | | 30 | |
| Jan 18 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 19 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 20 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 21 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 22 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 23 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 24 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 25 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 26 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 27 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 28 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 29 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 30 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jan 31 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 1 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 2 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 3 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 4 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 5 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 6 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 7 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 8 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 9 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 10 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 11 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 12 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 13 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 14 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 15 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 16 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 17 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 18 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 19 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 20 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 21 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 22 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 23 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 24 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 25 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 26 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 27 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 28 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Feb 29 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 1 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 2 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 3 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 4 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 5 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 6 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 7 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 8 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 9 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 10 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 11 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 12 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 13 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 14 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 15 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 16 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 17 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 18 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 19 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 20 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 21 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 22 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 23 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 24 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 25 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 26 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 27 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 28 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 29 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 30 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Mar 31 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 1 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 2 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 3 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 4 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 5 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 6 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 7 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 8 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 9 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 10 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 11 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 12 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 13 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 14 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 15 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 16 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 17 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 18 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 19 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 20 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 21 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 22 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 23 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 24 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 25 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 26 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 27 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 28 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 29 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Apr 30 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 1 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 2 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 3 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 4 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 5 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 6 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 7 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 8 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 9 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 10 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 11 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 12 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 13 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 14 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 15 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 16 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 17 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 18 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 19 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 20 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 21 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 22 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 23 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 24 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 25 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 26 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 27 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 28 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 29 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 30 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| May 31 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 1 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 2 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 3 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 4 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 5 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 6 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 7 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 8 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 9 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 10 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 11 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 12 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 13 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 14 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 15 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 16 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 17 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 18 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 19 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 20 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 21 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 22 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 23 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 24 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 25 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 26 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 27 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 28 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 29 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jun 30 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 1 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 2 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 3 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 4 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 5 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 6 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 7 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 8 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 9 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 10 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 11 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 12 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 13 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 14 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 15 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 16 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 17 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 18 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 19 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 20 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 21 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 22 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 23 | Angewandung zu | | 20 | |
| Jul 24 | Angewandung zu | | | |

from Heinrich Streimer for \$250. The R.M. of Hanover assessment roll for 1898 shows Funk as owning 241 acres, 2 horses, 6 cows, 5 head of cattle under the age of 3 years, 2 sheep and 2 pigs. However, the 1910 Assessment Roll shows a significant increase in land holdings and livestock. At that time, he owned 587 acres of land, 6 horses, 1 bull, 12 cows and 4 pigs.

The notation of "Farm Implement Stock" is also made beside his name with the figure of \$200. encircled under the column heading "Personal Assessment". On another line, the figure of \$870 also appears under the same heading of "Personal Assessment". The figure for the "Total Assessable" for this year was \$1961, by far the highest amount for that page on the assessment roll. The next highest was \$1200 for neighbour Jacob Martens.

Municipal Dealings

Peter T. Funk was involved in various municipal affairs. Reading through the Council Minutes for the R.M. of Hanover until the year 1910, his name is recorded a number of times for such positions as fire watchman, road boss, and weed inspector.

Business.

From the one existing ledger that records Funk's business dealings from 1907 until his death, one can only imagine how much traffic frequented their farmyard. It would seem that Funk had his own hardware store on premises. Hundreds of entries record the daily transactions of the time. Equipment that was sold included cultivators, shoe drills (\$84.00 in 1908), McCormick binders (\$30.00 in 1907), brush breakers (\$24.00 in 1909), harrows, a fanning mill (\$36.00 in 1909) and even sleighs (\$34.00 in 1911). Some second-hand equipment was also sold.

Apart from being an agent for Massey Harris Machinery, Funk had a gas pump on his front yard and sold gas to neighbours in the area (25 cents a gallon in 1910 and rising in price to 35 cents a gallon in 1923).

Wheelbarrows seemed to be the going item in 1911 when Funk was selling them for \$5.75 each. Common entries were for such merchandise as sisal rope, fence wire, cream separator oil, bolts, clips and rivets, guards and shanks, oil cans, coal oil, rake teeth, trees for harnessing horses, and brooms and brushes.

In 1911, coffee was a common item that was charged to his clients' accounts. Priced at approximately 15 cents a pound, some customers purchased up to 60 pounds at a time.

Entries in 1909-1910 show which customers were charged for telephone services as the Funk household operated the "central" from their home.



Jacob S. Funk and Agatha (Thiessen) Funk, parents of Peter T. Funk. Courtesy of Peter T. Funk Family History, page 3/Preservings, No. 15, page 92.

Beginning around 1918, Funk began to take wheat and potatoes as payment on account which he in turn sold to other customers. One entry in 1918 shows the sale of Timothy hay seed for 7 cents a pound. In 1924, one entry records the sale of 221 pounds of flour for \$7.65. Wool was another item that he sold in the 1920s for 15 cents a pound.

Funk also operated a mill and has recorded the income generated from his mill for the years 1919 to 1926. The last notation for mill income was recorded in 1928 which was the year following his death.

His customer base was mostly local but extended not only to the Mennonites but to the French in St. Malo and the Ukrainians as well. Of the 73 names listed in his "index" for his ledger, 56 are Mennonite names and 17 are non-Mennonite. Unfortunately, not all ledger sheets are accounted for as some pages have either fallen out over the years or have been purposely removed.



Peter T. Funk and wife Maria (Rempel). Courtesy of Peter T. Funk Family History, page 5.

Loans.

An intriguing discovery in the ledgers was the amount of money that Funk loaned out to his clientele, not only for credit for purchases but straight cash loans at an agreed upon interest rate. Ranging anywhere from \$1.50 to \$500 per loan, it would seem that he was as busy banking as he was storekeeping. Most often no particulars were noted for the entries marked "Geld geliesen", however, on one or two occasions he has written "zum doktor".

Peter T. Funk was not your stereotypical rural Mennonite of the early 1900s. From his ledger entries, we can see that he was at least functionally fluent in English. One wonders if he had any knowledge of Russian as he dealt with his Ukrainian neighbours. His financial portfolio also included Government Bonds which he purchased in 1918 and 1919. One

would think that a staunch Mennonite would not have invested in bonds, especially since World War I (and the issue of conscription) had just ended. His ledger heading of "An den Regierung Geld Geliessen" offers more questions than answers.

This same ledger was used after Funk's death in 1927. Meticulous records were kept in regards to the salaries his widow paid out to the single children who continued to farm the land. As well, each year's taxes were recorded. During the early 1930s, Maria Funk continued to loan out some money but on a very limited basis. All entries in this surviving ledger ended in 1937 when Maria died.

Business Acumen

It almost seems that the business acumen was inherited from the Rempel side of the family seeing as both Peter T. and Maria were descendants from Johann Rempel (b. 1772). Another daughter of this Johann Rempel was Maria (b.1796) who married Jacob Friesen; their great grandson, David W. Friesen founded the firm "D.W.Friesen & Sons" in Altona.

Peter T. Funk's second cousin and brother-in-law, Johann S. Rempel was well-known in the village of Chortitz, E.R. as he operated a small bank there, a branch of the St. Pierre bank as well as being postmaster and serving several terms as municipal secretary in the early 1900s.

Funk's first cousin, Johann Funk Braun, was also an agent for the Massey Harris company in nearby Gnadensfeld. Braun became Grunthal's first prominent businessman and was involved in a variety of municipal affairs. He was a Commissioner of Oaths and Conveyancer of the Province of Manitoba for many years. (See Preservings No. 8, Pt.I, p. 44)

In contrast to Peter's knack for making a decent living in an area that wasn't prime agricultural land, his brother Abram T. Funk of



The Peter T. Funk family on their farmyard in Kronsgart, circa 1909, demonstrates the rising prosperity of the family. The house in the background was replaced by a larger home in 1915. L.-r.: John on horseback; back row Agatha, Maria, Peter T. Funk. Front row: Anna, Maria (Rempel) Funk with Aganetha, "Grandma", and Tina. Franz and Peter are in the buggy. Courtesy of Peter T. Funk Family History, page 117; see also John Dyck, ed., Historical Sketches, page 165. This picture is also found in larger format on page 64 of the Grunthal History Book)

nearby Barkfield struggled financially. However, the business acumen can be seen by the success of Abram T.'s grandson, businessman Peter Funk of Funk's Toyota in Steinbach (see book review, *Preservings*, No. 10, Part Two, page 81).

Another member of the extended Rempel family who made a noteworthy contribution to the area was Peter Toews (b.1839) who served as Reeve of the R.M. of Hanover, beginning in 1883 (*Preservings* No. 10, Pt.I, p.69). Toews' mother was Helena Rempel (b. 1809), another daughter of Johann Rempel (b.1772). (According to historian Henry Schapansky who noted the error on the notation made on BGB A47)

Anecdotes.

Because Peter T. Funk died in 1927 of what was believed to have been stomach cancer, none of his grandchildren have clear memories of him at all since they were very young children at the time of his death. However, some oral history has been preserved and from this we can piece together a bit of the home life as it revolved around the Funk household.

Peter is remembered as being a typical patriarchal head of the household who wasn't particularly talkative in nature. It is said that he was not a man who joked around. Neighbour Jacob Martens was the exact opposite and on one occasion, Martens noticed that the Funks

had a chimney fire. Calling up his neighbour, Martens chose a slightly indirect way of alerting (or irritating) him by telling him the "Funkis" (sparks) were flying out of his chimney. Being unaware of the purpose of this call, Peter retorted, "and at your house the Martens are flying out of the chimney", (*Preservings* No. 14, p. 108).

The "ackschoap" (corner cupboard) in the living room held his important personal and business papers and was kept under lock and key. He was stern and quite strict in his dealings with his children and believed that his wife, Maria, was not to do any amount of work around the house and yard - this is what their children were there for.

Of their 12 children, six remained single and lived at home, although four of these six married later in life. Chores in and around the house were divided between four single daughters. Daughters Mary and Katherine did all the baking, Anne stayed in the house and operated the "central" telephone exchange from their living room, and Helen took care of the chickens and the gardening. While single son John would haul logs from Marchand to their home in Kronsgart, it was the girls who had to strip the bark so that they could be sharpened for fence posts. Daughter Anne was an expert seamstress and offered her services to others while she was still single.

However, it wasn't always work and no play. Singing played a large part in their leisure time. Daughter Anne played the organ and guitar and son Franz played the violin. Their musical talent was inherited from the Rempel side as Maria (Rempel) Funk's brothers Cornelius and Abram were excellent singers. Her brother Johann is remembered for having introduced the *Gesangbuch mit Ziffern* (songbook with



Peter T. Funk's mother, Mrs. Agatha Toews (nee Thiessen), in her later years. After her husband Jacob Funk died, she remarried to Aeltester Peter Toews (1846-1915), Alt-Bergfeld. Courtesy of Grunthal History Book, page 40.



Circa 1911. Peter T. and Maria (Rempel) Funk with their youngest two children, Helena and Cornelius. Courtesy of Johann S. Rempel 1830-1899 Book, page 120. See also John Dyck, ed., Historical Sketches, page 165. Photo courtesy of John F. Krahn.



Painted picture of the Peter T. Funk farmyard as it looked after their new house was built in 1915. The initials "P.K." appear on the picture but it is not known who the artist was. It may have been painted from photographs like those published in the Peter T. Funk book, page 117. This painting is currently in the possession of Harry Bergen.

numbered notes) into the Chortitzer Church which caused quite a controversy at the time. He also bought musical instruments such as an organ and guitar for his family. (Preservings No. 8, p. 48).

References to the Rempel musical talent can be found in a number of articles found in the *Preservings*, such as Issue No. 15, p. 116 which also features a photo of the Chortitz Orchestra. This same issue also includes a fascinating article on the "Ingenious Funk Brothers of Altona" (p. 128) who were also related to Maria (Rempel) Funk. These Funks were famous in the area as master builders, mathematicians, inventors and musicians. The reference to their self-taught musical ability to play a variety of instruments including the cello, guitar and violin leads us then to believe that the "Rempel musical talent" had been inherited from the Sawatske connection as follows: the father to these Funk brothers was Peter S. Funk, a first cousin to Maria (Rempel) Funk. Maria's mother, Magareta (Sawatske) Rempel was a sister to Katarina Sawatske (married to Peter Funk); they were daughters of Johann Sawatske (b.1804).

Grandchildren.

Christmas time at the Peter T. Funk's always meant some sort of present for each grandchild. Sometimes it was a handkerchief with a coin tied in the corner but one memorable Christmas saw stuffed animals given to the grandchildren. They measured about six inches long and three inches in height and the stuffed cows are remembered as having white and red fabric

patches on them. However, unlike some households, the Funks didn't follow the tradition of reciting Christmas verses and wishes so the grandchildren were spared the agony of lining up and waiting their turn.

The Funk household was always open to their grandchildren, even if that meant having them live there for several months either for

reasons of health or giving some relief to their daughters or daughter-in-laws when there was a new arrival in the family. One thing that most all grandchildren remembered was upon taking their leave for home, was their Grandma always calling after them "Kommt Vadda, kommt vadda" (Come again).

However, there were certain rules that had to be adhered to if you stayed at the Funks. Cleanliness was extremely important and one granddaughter recalled being made to wash her hands before being allowed to work in the kitchen as she had just changed a diaper. Although she wasn't surprised by the request, it was something that wasn't enforced in most homes. This same granddaughter stayed at her grandparents' home for some three months while she was in need of the services of chiropractor (Schmedt) Friesen. She constantly fidgeted and had difficulty standing still for any length of time. During her stay there, another granddaughter from a different family was also living there. Since these two girls were much the same age, it was expected that the fidgety one would learn by example from the calmer, quieter one.

After Peter's death at the age of 63, his widow continued to live on the farm in Kronsart until her death some ten years later. Her grandchildren remember her as always sitting in her rocking chair. From here she would tell stories to the children. Whereas the Funks tended to be tall and lean, Maria was of generous proportions which was a Rempel characteristic. She seemed to have an endless supply



Peter T. and Maria (Rempel) Funk with their two youngest children, Helena and Cornelius, circa 1914.



Peter T. Funks's daughters, l.-r., Maria, Lena, and Tina. They are busy spinning wool. This was usually done during the long winter months so that wool for stockings and sweaters was ready for the next winter. Photo courtesy of Grunthal History, page 66.

of hard mint candies in her apron pocket that she handed out to her grandchildren.

The house and outer buildings on the Funk farmyard were well maintained and painted as was the household furniture. Unlike most of the neighbouring homes, the windows were all hung with curtains. They also had an outbuilding that was unique in the area. Divided into two rooms, one room contained the traditional two-hole outhouse but the other room was in effect a shower room. It was outfitted with a large pail that hung from the ceiling and had a number of holes in the bottom which served as a sprinkler of sorts. Lowered by a rope, the pail was filled with heated water which was carried in as needed.

It has been incorrectly written (Preservings No. 8, Pt. I, p. 48, Pt. II., p. 63) that Peter T. Funk and his family moved to Paraguay in the 1920s. However, emigration to Paraguay was never an issue and they lived in Kronsgart until their deaths.

As was mentioned, Peter T. Funk died on February 20, 1927 at the age of 63 years. He had undergone surgery (presumably on his stomach) in Winnipeg prior to his death and would sit on the stairway in the kitchen while everyone else ate. Yet he never complained, no matter how ill he felt. Maria Funk suffered a stroke and was paralysed for some time before she passed away on July 24, 1937. Although the Kronsgart cemetery was beside their property, they are both buried in the Grünthal cemetery. This decision had been made prior to their deaths when a badger had unearthed a braid from a recent grave in the Kronsgart cemetery.

The funeral invitation written by Peter's widow Maria, and dated "Kronsgard, February 20, 1927, is still extant.

Other articles as they pertain to the extended Funk family include Al Hamm's article on "Berliner" Peter K. Funk (Preservings No. 12, p.84) who was a first cousin to Peter T. Funk

and "Gnadenfeld - The Funk Clan" by Ernest Braun (Preservings, No. 15, p.90). A photo of a *Gesangbuch* belonging to a Peter Funk, Bergthal is also found in Issue 15, p. 34. There is speculation that this Peter Funk might in fact be Peter T. Funk but as yet, this has not been verified.

Children.

1) Margaretha (1888-1952) married Peter S. Martens, son of neighbour Jacob Martens. Descendants include Margaret Esau of P.V. Esau Insurance, Grunthal; Maggie Smith, wife of lawyer Robert Smith; and John Fehr of Trucks Unlimited.

2) Jacob (1889-1971) married Aganetha Krahn. He was ordained as a minister in the

Chortitzer Church and emigrated to Paraguay in 1948 but returned to Canada in 1959.

3) Agatha (1890-1965) married David F. Wiebe. They left for Paraguay in 1948 but returned the following year. Descendants include Peter Wiebe, Steinbach Hatchery; Andy Wiebe of Keystone Agri-motive; and Clare Braun, mayor of Niverville.

4) Johan (1893-1978) remained single.

5) Maria (1894-1983) remained single.

6) Peter (1897-1960) married Sara Sawatzky. See Preservings No. 10, Pt. II, p. 40. These were my husband's maternal grandparents.

7) Franz (1900-86) married Katharina Doerksen. Descendants include Franz Funk of Carleton Hatcheries, Grunthal;

8) Katharina (1902-87) was married at age 35 to Bernhard Friesen, son of "Schmedt" Friesens.

9) Anna (1906-92) married widower John F. Toews in 1948.

10) Aganetha (1908-83) married Jacob Hamm in 1949.

11) Cornelius (1910-83) married Anna Ginter.

12) Helena (1913-91) married widower Jacob Bergen in 1983.

Sources:

Historical Sketches of the East Reserve 1874-1920, p. 165

Bergthal Gemeinde Buch, B250, B104

Peter T. Funk Family History

Jacob Doerksen, "The Jacob Y. Shantz Passenger List," *Preservings*, No. 3, p. 5

Orlando Hiebert, "Chortitz", in John Dyck, ed., *Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories 1874-1910*, p. 45-51.

Herman Rempel, *Johann S. Rempel 1830-1899*



Peter's brother Abraham T. Funk and family. Abraham T. Funk was born in 1875 in Canada, and his wife, nee Susanna Wiebe was born in 1878. Abraham lived in Barkfeld (Neu-Bergfeld) and struggled financially. His grandson Peter Funk is the owner of Funk's Toyota. Photo courtesy of Grunthal History, page 66.

The Missing Souls of Kronsgarten, 1797

“The Missing Souls of Kronsgarten (‘Polovitz’) , the garden of the crown, founded 1797,” compiled by Delbert F. Plett, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, ROA 2A0.

Introduction.

Some months ago Heinrich Bergen, Regina, Sask., made a passionate appeal to the editor regarding the lack of historical documentation for Kronsgarten, the village of his birth. Kronsgarten was one of the original Mennonite settlements in Imperial Russia, founded in 1797.

Heinrich Bergen has pointed out that the village did not receive an entry in either the *Mennonitische Lexikon* (1913) or the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* (1956) nor is a listing of the village inhabitants among those published by Professor Benjamin H. Unruh in his *Hintergrunde der mennonitischen Ostwanderung* (1955). Likewise the “index” of all Mennonite pioneers in Russia prepared by genealogist Alan Peters, Fresno, omits to mention its 151 inhabitants and the *Mennonite Historical Atlas* (1996) fails to identify its location.

Heinrich Bergen calls these settlers “the missing souls of Kronsgarten” and appealed to the *Preservings* tradition of speaking for the voiceless, to publish something of these courageous pioneers. This article is a response to his appeal and based in part on information he provided.

The Frisians.

Between 1793 and 1796, 118 families arrived in Chortitz of whom 44-45 were Frisians (D. G. Rempel. *Der Bote*, No. 20, 1991, page 4). Historian D. G. Rempel observed that “These on the whole represented a more prosperous class of people. They brought with them 400 horses and a good many head of cattle” (“The Mennonite Settlements in Russia,” page 79). Henry Schapansky has written that “... almost all of these were Flemish Delta Mennonites,” *Preservings*, No. 14, page 12. Eighty-six of these families were divided among the existing eight Flemish villages.

The other 32 families were Frisians of whom Professor James Urry has written that “[They] ...were skilled farmers, well supplied with money, equipment, and livestock” (*None but Saints*, page 55). The arrival of this group strengthened the Frisian Gemeinde and “by 1800 just under a quarter of the population were Frisian, the majority of whom lived in Kronsweide, Einlage, and Insel Chortitz and later in Schönwiese and Kronsgarten” (page 67). The Frisian Gemeinde in the Old Colony was known as the Kronsweide Gemeinde, the site of their main worship house.

The 32 Frisian families settled on two outlying parcels of land available for their occupation. The village of Schönwiese was established on the left bank (east side) of the Dnjepr, south of the frontier fort of Alexandrowsk, which became the modern city of Zaporozhe and which eventually absorbed the village as one of its more prosperous suburbs.

Kronsgarten.

The remaining 15 Frisian families settled in Kronsgarten, on a parcel of land also on the left side of the Dnjepr 100 km. north of Chortitz proper, 18 km. northeast of Ekatherinoslav (today Dnepropetrovsk) and 10 km. from the neighbouring Nowomoskowsk. Kronsgarten was located “near the junction of the Kiltchen and Samara Rivers which joined the Dnjepr some ten kilometres downstream at Ekatherinoslav.” It became the tenth Old Colony village.

Henry Schapansky writes that this out settlement occurred when the original allotment at Chortitz was not sufficient for all the settlers. Heinrich Bergen suggests the Frisians volunteered to take the further removed parcels; perhaps relieved they did not need to settle among the Flemish majority.

Kronsgarten was quite removed from the main Mennonite settlement being a two day wagon journey away from the Chortitz Colony. On the other hand it had some advantages being close to Ekatherinoslav, the administrative capital for the entire region of “new” Russia. A ready market existed here for all their produce. Although physically separated from the other villages, Kronsgarten “came under the jurisdiction of the Chortitz region in 1843” for administrative purposes (Is. P. Klassen, page 42, cf. Urry, page 55).

N. J. Kroeker writes that some of the land set aside for Lutheran colonists at Josephstal, north of Ekaterinoslav, was not required “as the anticipated addition of Lutheran settlers... [had not] materialized, the authorities decided that the fifteen Frisian families could easily be accommodated on the available 975 dessiatens of arable and 473 dessiatens of waste land in the immediate vicinity of Josephstal. Here the fifteen families founded the colony of Kronsgarten in 1797, *First Mennonite Villages* (Vancouver, 1981), page 29.

Two other Lutheran villages Billerfeld and Fischerdorf were located in the vicinity.

The Settlement.

Historian John Dyck has written that “When the first Mennonites arrived here in 1795 and saw the remnants of a royal garden they named it Kronsgarten (‘crown’s garden’). Two large empty buildings provided temporary housing for families while the village was under construction,” John Dyck. ed., *Jakob Dyck and Elisabeth Jager* (Winnipeg, 1992), page 13. Each family received some assistance from the crown and money was also allocated for a mill. Two feet of rich black soil on top of a layer of loam produced excellent crops.

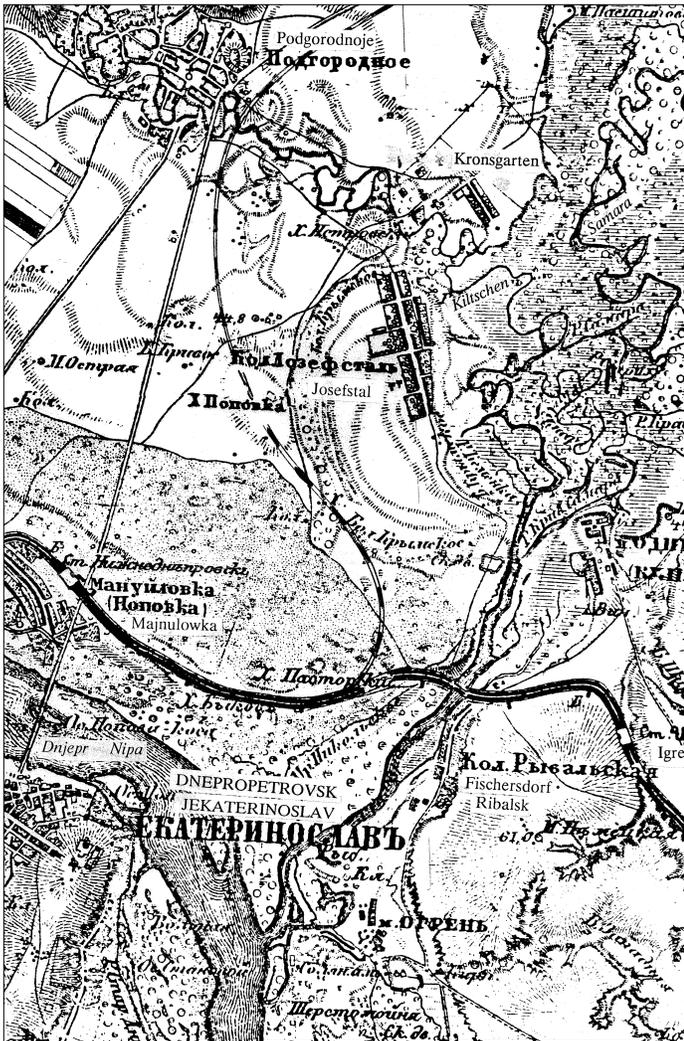
Kronsgarten was built beside the Kiltchen River which overflowed its banks periodically. In 1820 practically every house was flooded

Kronsgarten, 1797

From the List of Mennonites who emigrated to the Gouvernement Taurien in 1793, 1794, 1795 and 1796 with record of their assets and family members, as well as their Wirtschaft, compiled on October 14, 1797. Kolonie Josephstal

| <u>Name of Wirt</u> | <u>Male</u> | <u>Female</u> | <u>Horses</u> | <u>Cattle</u> | <u>Sheep</u> | <u>Pigs</u> |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. Abraham Quiring | 2 | 4 | 5 | 12 | 10 | 8 |
| 2. Franz Bartel(?) | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 6 |
| 3. Steffan Gerzen | 4 | 2 | 5 | 12 | - | 9 |
| 4. Johann Nickel | 2 | 4 | 4 | 15 | - | 12 |
| 5. Franz Klassen | 1-2 | 2 | 6 | 13 | 8 | 10 |
| 6. Wilhelm Plenert | 1 | 2 | 4 | 15 | - | - |
| 7. Konrat Klasson | 1 | 1 | 4 | 16 | - | 8 |
| 8. Johann Klasson | 1 | 4 | 5 | 11 | 10 | 9 |
| 9. Konrat Klasson | 1 | 2 | 5 | 13 | 7 | 10 |
| 10. Johann Janzon | 2 | 4 | 4 | 12 | 11 | 6 |
| 11. Johann Bartel (Tiwsin) | 2 | 2 | 5 | 15 | - | 11 |
| 12. Johann Klasson | 2 | 1 | 6 | 14 | 8 | 7 |
| 13. Peter Klasson | 1 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 7 | 4 |
| 14. Wilhelm Janzon | 2 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 5 | 12 |
| 15. Jakob (Jakob) Bartel (Tiwsin) | 1 | 5 | 7 | 15 | 13 | 19 |
| Total: | 24 | 33 | 73 | 192 | 86 | 121 |

Translator’s Note: In the Russian original the word “Tiwsin” is found after the name Bartel meaning “von der Mowsen”. This list was filed with the Mennonite Heritage Centre, 600 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipg, Manitoba, by Dr. David G. Rempel, and later passed on by John Dyck to D. Plett ca. 1988. It was translated from Russian by A. Reger, Weiszentrum, Germany.



Map of the Kronsgarten area, ca. 1917, showing the actual location of the village relative to Dnepropetrovsk and the larger neighbouring village of Josephsthal. Map received courtesy of Heinrich Bergen, 59 Richardson Crescent, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4S 4J2.



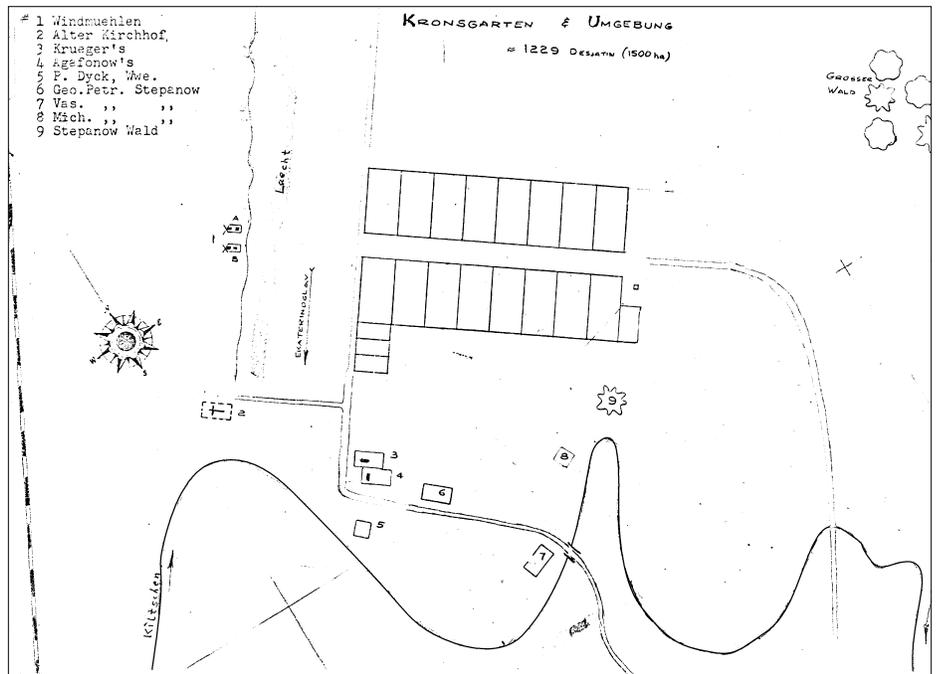
The young teacher Heinrich Wiens (1845-1931?) and wife Katharina, nee Loewen (1844-1901). Heinrich and his siblings were orphaned suddenly when both parents died of cholera in July, 1855. Thanks to the intervention of teacher Heinrich Epp, Heinrich and brother Abraham Wiens were able to get an education. The story goes that Heinrich was an orphaned shepherd boy tending his flock near Einlage, when a nice carriage came by and stopped. He was asked, "Boy. Would you want to go to school?"

and in 1845 an even worse flood led to the re-location of the village three km. east in 1847-48. Rev. Is. P. Klassen has written "With the exception of one, all houses were built of brick and measured 32 feet by 55 feet," Klassen, "Kronswende Mennonite Church," page 42.

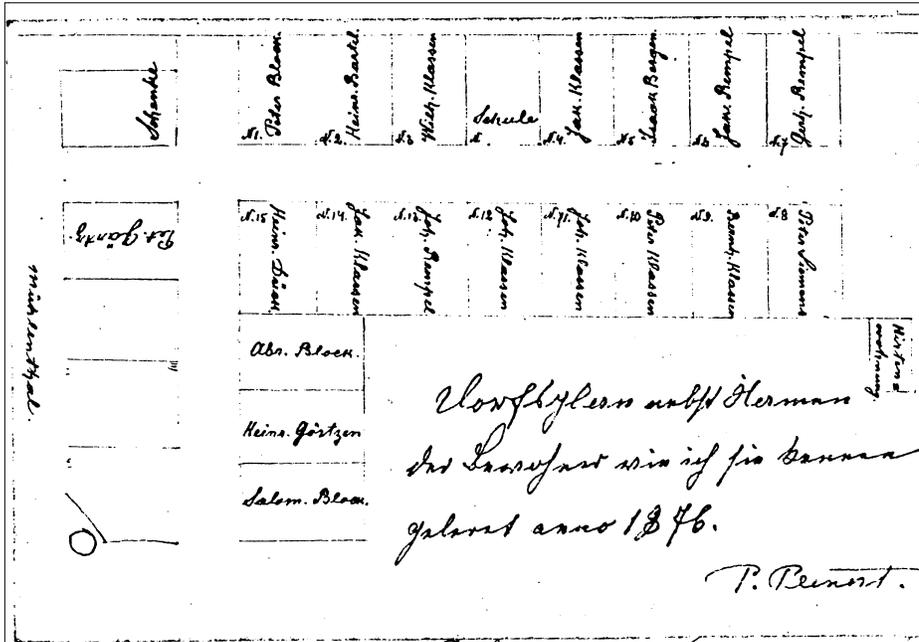
The new village was pre-planned with a fence and walkway along both sides of the street. John Dyck describes it as follows: "Along the front of each yard was a row of wild berry trees. A mulberry hedge on the other three sides served as a beautiful shelter and was used for raising silkworms... A fruit garden on the opposite side of a yard and a vegetable garden in the back completed the picture," John Dyck, page 13.

The Settlers, 1797.

Historian David G. Rempel obtained a list of the 1797 pioneers of Kronsgarten (used by Marianne Janzen in her compilation): widow Franz Bartel, Jakob Bartel, Johann Bartel, Steven Gerzen, Johann Janzen, Wilhelm Janzen, Conrad Klassen, Conrad Klassen, Franz Klassen, Johann Klassen, Johann



Detailed map of the village of Kronsgarten ca. 1920, by Heinrich Bergen. Regina, Sask.



Map of Kronsgarten with the name of the villagers as of 1876. The map was drawn by Peter Plenert, Kronsgarten. Henry Bergen has written that the villages as of the early 1920s were as follows: 1. Jakob Wiens, 2. Heinrich Bartels, 3. Heinrich Wiens, 4. J. Enns, 5. Abram Bergens, 6. Frantz Bergens, 7. Jakob Rempels, 8. Heinrich Bergens, 9. Johann Klassens, 10. Peter Klassens, 11. Theodor Klassens, 12. Abram Enns, 13. Bernhard Rempels, 14. Jakob Dyck, ? Dyck.

Klassen, Peter Klassen, Johann Nickel, Abram Dr. Quiring.

The village of Kronsgarten was also listed in the major Russian Revision (census) of 1801 (Available courtesy of Dr. Tim Janzen, Portland, Oregon, and the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Canada). A detailed list of settlers as of 1811-14 was published by Dr. Karl Stummpp in *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the years 1763 to 1862* (Lincoln, Neb., 1978), pages 873-874.

The Pioneers.

One of the important pioneers of Kronsgarten was Johannes Bartel (1764-1813), who in 1797 became a minister of the

Frisian Gemeinde (later known as the Kronsweide Gemeinde) (see *Dynasties*, pages 33-56). Great-granddaughter Aganetha Block married Andreas Vogt, Schönwiese, a minister of the Kronsweide Gemeinde. She later settled in Steinbach, Manitoba, together with her prominent family (see *Pres.*, No. 9, Part Two, page 28). Also living in Steinbach by 1885 was granddaughter Maria Bartel, married to KG delegate Cornelius P. Toews (*Pres.*, No. 9, Part Two, page 48/*Dynasties*, pages 474-8), and great-grandson Cornelius Bartel Loewen, whose son C. T. was featured in *Preserving.* No. 17, pages 114-116.

When Johannes Bartel married he made his fiancée, Aganetha Quiring, a beautiful

Valentine in the *Fraktur* art tradition of the Mennonite people (see *Pres.*, No. 4, pages 11-12). He also gave her a gold watch, inherited by grandson Jakob Bartel, Meade, Kansas, and presently displayed in the Meade Historical Museum.

Among the pioneers of Kronsgarten were Jakob Dyck (b. 1776) and Anna Bartel (1779-1850). Their son Jakob Dyck (1800-69) moved to Rosenthal in 1828 where he married Elisabeth Jager (1807-93), daughter of Karl Jager, nursery manager at Rosenthal, who had also grown up in Kronsgarten, see John Dyck, ed., *Jakob Dyck and Elisabeth Jäger*, page 17. Their daughter Elisabeth Dyck (1831-91) immigrated to Canada in 1876, settling in the village of Hoffnungsfeld, West Reserve, from where she wrote numerous letters back to relatives in Russia. Another well-known descendant of Jakob Dyck (1800-69) was John Dyck (1928-99), Winnipeg, long-time HSHS Research Director (*Pres.*, No. 16, pages 68-71).

Heinrich von Bergen (1742-1812) was another pioneer of Kronsgarten listed in the 1811 census. Mike Hornbaker, Maize, Kansas, is of the view that Heinrich Bergen (b. 1778) who settled in Fischau, Molotschna in 1804 was his son. Heinrich Jr., in turn, was the father of Isaak Bergen (1821-75), first husband of the famous Dr. Bergensche, see article elsewhere in this issue. Another daughter Aganetha married Heinrich Friesen (1822-95), who settled in Inman, Kansas, in 1877.

Education.

In the memoirs of Jakob Bergen (1895-1974) recalled the Kronsgarten school house and the date 1800 inscribed as the year of founding. This must refer to the first school house in the original location of the village. Isaak P. Klassen writes that "The building housing both the school and the church, built in 1835, was laboriously brought to the new location. It was also of brick and was attractively finished," (page 42).

Rev. Is. P. Klassen writes of one of the



View from the west end of Kronsgarten in 1926. The school yard is located in the middle to the left. The mill chimney to the right was the home of Jakob Dycks, until the 1924 emigration (Hanley, Sask.). Later it belonged to Jakob Bergen. In 1876 it belonged to Peter Klassen. Photo courtesy of Heinrich Bergen, Regina, Sask.



A typical Kronsgarten Wirtschaft as it appeared in 1926. In 1876 it belonged to Peter Blocks, later it was acquired by a distant relative and thus became the home of Jakob and Maria (Dyck) Wiens. The picture was taken just before their immigration to Canada, Gouldtown, Sask. Centre. The three people in the middle are Heinrich Wiens (1845-1931?), seated. He was the long time teacher in Kronsgarten and representative in the local Duma (Heinrich was the brother of Abram Wiens, Altona, Man., grandfather to Elfrieda, Mrs. Herman Neufeld, Steinbach, Manitoba). To H. Wiens' right is his son Jakob Wiens (1870-1942). To the left of H. Wiens is Mrs. Jakob Wiens, nee Maria Dyck (1873-1967). Further to the right, Maria Wiens Jr., Mrs. Jakob Bergen (Heinrich's mother), and Nela Wiens, Mrs. Hein. Rempel. To the very left on picture is Susanna Wiens, Mrs. Heinrich Peters, granddaughter of Heinrich Wiens. Photo courtesy of Heinrich Bergen, Regina, Sask.

school teachers, Heinrich Wiens, a student of the famous Franz school, known for their strict discipline. "Whether teacher Wiens' teaching methods and scientific learning were applied by means of a stick, I am not prepared to assert, but he could be quite strick and his faultless discipline is what we remember gratefully over the years since then," Is. P. Klassen, page 43.

KG Connection.

My own interest in Kronsgarten has always

been fuelled by the interconnections between the Frisian Gemeinde in the Chortitza Colony and the Kleine Gemeinde in the Molotschna. In 1812 the Frisian Aeltester Heinrich Janzen sympathized with the Kleine Gemeinde reformers in the Molotschna and assisted the movement by conducting a baptismal service and an Aeltester Election.

Various descendants of three Frisian families from Kronsgarten relocated to the Molotschna and joined the Kleine Gemeinde: Johann Regiers, Heinrich von Bergen and

Johannes Bartels. Johann Regier (b. 1759) was married to Katharina, daughter of Aeltester Peter Epp (1725-89), Danzig, and a brother-in-law to KG founder Klaas Reimer. Regier's descendants left an important Molotschna legacy: son Johann Regier (1802-42), Schönsee, and son-in-law Johann Klassen, Tiegerweide, served from 1827-41 as Oberschultzen of the Colony. Johann Klassen Jr.'s son Abraham was a Kleine Gemeinde minister and great-great-great grandfather of Matt Groening, founder of the TV program



The front entrance of Jakob Dyck's Wirtschaft in Kronsgarten, west side of village street. Displaying a prize horse. Photos of Jakob Dyck Wirtschaft are courtesy of his son Ernest Dyck, Saskatoon. Courtesy photo collection of Heinrich Bergen. Regina, Sask.



A group of workers and Jakob Dyck in front of his flour mill in Kronsgarten. The mill was purchased by Jakob Bergen in 1925 together with the Wirtschaft. Photo courtesy of Heinrich Bergen, Regina, Sask.

“The Simpsons.” Oberschultz Klassen’s daughter Helena married David A. Friesen, Halbstadt, Oberschultz from 1848 to 1865.

Peter Penner, Prangenu, another Frisian from Schönwiese, joined the Kleine Gemeinde and served as a minister. His great-great-grandson Jakob (“Communist”) Penner, served as a councillor of the City of Winnipeg during the 1940s and ‘50s, and was recently honoured for his work on behalf of the poor and dispo-

essed.

In 1827 when the Johann Plett (1765-1833) family from Fürstenwerder, Prussia, emigrated to the Molotschna, they overwintered in Schönwiese, where daughter Helena (1809-29) died while working in the harvest and was presumably buried in the village cemetery.

Weisenfeld and Prijut.

In 1999 Heinrich Bergen published an article in the *Mennonite Historian* (Sept., page 8) regarding the village of Wiesenfeld founded by settlers from Kronsgarten in 1867. It was located on “land purchased from the Globa estate on the east side of the Kilttschen River, 35 km. north of Jekaterinoslav.....It consisted of 10 farms and a schoolyard and would have been located 1 km. north of the present-day Olexandrowka.”

Mr. Bergen distinguishes this Wiesenfeld from another village by the same name, located 60 km. east of Dnepropetrovsk and founded in 1880. The later village was founded by members of the Brüdergemeinde while the earlier village was affiliated with the Kronsweide (Frisian) Gemeinde.

The Frisian Wiesenfeld in turn established a daughter settlement, “Prijut”. It was located 40 km. north of Jekaterinoslav, and six km. west of Wiesenfeld. Eight farmyards and a school were established. The village was abandoned in 1923-25 when most of the inhabitants immigrated to Canada. Rev. I. P. Klassen refers to Kronsgarten, Wiesenfeld and Prijut as “the German-Mennonite trio”. The physi-



Jakob Bergen (1895-1974) as a 1915 Kiev Commercial Institute student. He was the mayor (Schultz) of Kronsgarten from 1917 to 1919. In 1931 he and his family fled Kronsgarten and settled in Einlage. Jakob Bergen was sent to Siberia in 1935 and only released in 1953. He came to Canada in 1963 and settled in Regina. In his later years he wrote his memoirs recording many details of Kronsgarten during the Revolution and the sovietization period. Photo courtesy of son Heinrich Bergen, Regina, Sask.



The gold watch which Rev. Johann Bartel (1764-1813) gave his fiancée. It was inherited by grandson Jakob Bartel (1858- 1929) who immigrated to Jansen, Nebraska. The pocket watch is currently displayed in the Meade Historical Museum, Meade, Kansas. Photo courtesy of Pres., No. 6, page 24/Saints and Sinners., page 157.

cal locations of Prijut and Wiesenfeld (north) are shown on the Stumpp map of German settlements in southern Russia.

Trouble.

Signs of trouble were brewing for the Krons Garten settlers. Is. P. Klassen refers to an incident from 1887 when “the house of one villager and that of a farmer burned to the ground”. The farmer rebuilt his house only to have it burn down again a few years later.

In 1907 a widow and her three sons were murdered by bandits. “On a second occasion [17 January, 1925], a mother, her sister and brother, and two children were murdered. The father, Heinrich Bergmann, was in Ekaterinoslav, when it happened,” (page 43).

Tribute.

In his *Mennonite Historian* article of 1991 Heinrich Bergen provides a tribute to the inhabitants of Krons Garten:

“Krons Garten ...was not without merit. Almost as many poems and songs have been written about it as Rosenthal. It had its outstanding people. Mr. Henry P. Rempel fills a whole page of the January 28, 1989, *Der Bote*, with the notable ones he remembers from his generation alone. The longstanding Chortitza secretary Jakob J. Klassen, was from Krons Garten (*Der Bote*, April 1956), as was the aviator Henry Plenart...[see *Men. Historian*, March, 1991]. There was also the young frivolous maiden who jilted the young diarist Jakob D. Epp on the eve of their Krons Garten wedding on October, 1840 (Harvey L. Dyck, ed., *A Mennonite in Russia*, page 18).

Genealogist Henry Schapansky, New Westminster, B.C., was one of the few researchers to have included Krons Garten in his study. He pointed out that because Krons Garten was no longer a Mennonite village after the flight to America in the 1920s, the German occupation troops gave the 1811 Revision Liste for the village to Dr. Karl Stumpp, instead of Professor Benjamin H. Unruh for research.

Heinrich Bergen, Regina, Saskatchewan, recalls that there were still a few Mennonite families in Krons Garten when the Wehrmacht arrived in 1941.

Krons Garten Today.

In August, 1996, Heinrich Bergen made a trip to visit Polovitza, as Krons Garten, the village of his ancestors, is called today. The only reminder of the 16 Wirtschaften which once proudly framed the village street were a few decrepit granaries. The magnificent housebarns of the settlers have been dismantled and the bricks used to build the smaller more modest homes of the Soviet “workers’ paradise”. Nothing is left of the farmyards themselves other than a few rudimentary foundations.

The entire area of the former village of Krons Garten is now used for dachas, i.e. weekend cottages located on small subdivided plots used by city dwellers from Dnepropetrovsk as weekend retreats and for gardening, necessary to supplement their meagre wages. It is virtu-

ally a suburb of the city.

In fact, Polovitza proper no longer exists, having been encompassed by the eastward expansion of “Podgorodnoje”, a neighbouring town.

Conclusion.

In 1991 Heinrich Bergen published a short article on the village of Krons Garten in the *Mennonite Historian*, hoping this might act as a catalyst for the gathering of further material.

He points out that ‘the spatial detachment (of Krons Garten) may explain in part its official ‘non-existence’”.

This article is another attempt at gathering and publishing some of the available material on Krons Garten together with maps as provided by Heinrich Bergen. Hopefully it too will stimulate interest among descendants of the “missing souls of Krons Garten” and assist researchers as well as those who want to visit the land where their ancestors once walked.



Krons Garten in 1996. In the foreground, a remnant of a foundation and wall of a Wirtschaft. Above, to the right, some of the new dachas belonging to city dwellers from Dnepropetrovsk, that now dot the area. In the far distant (southwest), to the extreme left of photo, over the Kilttschenj-Samara-Dnjepr Inlet, can be seen the outskirts of Dnepropetrovsk. Photo courtesy of Heinrich Bergen, Regina, Sask.



Krons Garten, 1996. Another view from the same vantage point, looking southeast. In the middle, the outlines of the new Krons Garten shore of the Kilttschenj. Originally this was a meadow in the flood plain of the river but after the dam was built in Zaporozhe, the water level rose and it became a part of the Dnjepr River estuary. In the background to the right, the outlines of what would have been Josephsthal. To the left, one of the dachas now covering the former village lands. In the foreground, three well-tended graves with the iron crosses of the Orthodox believers. Photo courtesy of Heinrich Bergen, Regina, Sask.

Sources:

Heinrich Bergen, "The 'Missing' Village of Krongarten," in *Mennonite Historian*, Dec. 1991, page 10; see also *Der Bote*, 1992, No. 41 and 42.

Mike Hornbaker, "The Bergen Genealogy," Box 123, Maize, Ks., 1983), 120 pages and updates.

Marianne Janzen, "The First Mennonite Settlers in Russia," 1989, Mennonite Heritage

Centre, pages 14-15.

I. P. Klassen, "The Kronsweide Mennonite Church," 1993 Mennonite Heritage Center, Winnipeg.

D. Plett. *Saints and Sinners* (Steinbach, 1999), pages 51 and 64.

Henry Schapansky, "Krongarten: The Old Colony: The First Settlers 1811—1816," in *Mennonite Family History*, October 1998, pages 166-173.

Attention Readers:

If you have information, photographs, artifacts and/or writings pertaining to Krongarten, please contact Heinrich Bergen, 59 Richardson Crescent, Regina, Saskatchewan, S4S 4J2. Thank-you.

Krongarten.

"Krongarten," written April, 1986,

by Mrs. Tina (Abram) Berg (first marriage Gerhard Martens), from information she had and from her own memories.

Krongarten was a unique village. It had been built up twice and [the second time] exactly to the specifications as given by Johann Cornies.

The first settlers had come from Germany in the beginning of the 19th century. I believe it must have been a special group that came. They were people that wanted to do business. They built treadmills.

The village was built quite close to the stream "Chilschin". This stream ran into the "Samara" which ran into the Dnjepr. The Chilschin was a shallow stream but in the spring it would overflow and the settlers had to leave their houses and move onto higher places where they lived in tents until the water receded. About 40 years after the settlement there was such a flood. Only our grandfather, Jacob Klassen, who had a treadmill and lived in a brick house, didn't have to move.

After the water had receded the settlers wanted to build up their village again at the same place where it had been but Mr. Cornies would not permit them to do that. They had to build their houses on higher ground and so Krongarten became the nice village it was. All houses were built exactly the same style to specifications given by Mr. Cornies, of brick. They had to build their own brick kiln and make their own bricks. It took them two years until all the houses were completed.

Every farmstead covered 1 ½ dessiatiens of land. At the beginning there were 18 farmsteads and each farmer had 60 dessiatiens of land. After some time three farmers sold their farms, one of them was Mr. Plenert, the second was Mr. Block, the name of the third one I can not find. The village bought their land and divided it up among the 15 remaining farmers so that each one of them would own 75 dessiatiens.

Along the street they had a nice lumber fence from one end of the village to the other, also built to specifications given by Mr. Cornies. The fence had to be painted every spring and if some one was somewhat slow doing it the neighbours grumbled.

Along the fence they had a row of pear trees, small and larger and the other three sides of the yard had mulberry hedges. The mulberry leaves were used to feed silk worms.

All the barns had a roof of straw and so they had many storks in the village. In the spring

when the storks came back from their winter quarters, the first thing they would do was to repair their nest. More and more brush was woven into the nest. One farmer put on a new roof on his barn and the nest had to be destroyed. It made a whole wagon load. When we came to visit our grandmother, I could sit for hours and watch the stork family, how they fed their young—there were many frogs, small snakes and lizards. Towards evening, when the young had been fed and went to sleep in their nests, Mama and Papa Stork took their walk at the top of the roof conversing in their language. I presume they talked about their adventures of the day.

In the valley, along the shores of the Chilschin, grew many wild berries, strawberries, raspberries and gooseberries and high luscious grass. That was the pasture for their cows. The herd was brought home at noon and the cows were milked, that is the cows were milked three times a day. Each time the milk was put through a separator and each week the cream was churned. On a set day of the week a businessman from Jekaterinoslav would come to pick up vegetables, roses and jasmine of which everybody had a patch in their front garden.

The creek Kiltchen was the border line between Krongarten and a large German-Lutheran village. Probably those people came at the same time. Those people spoke a similar Low-German as the Mennonites and their church was built the same style as the Mennonite church in Chortitza. Their village was named Josephstal and those people must have come from the same district in Germany. The people of Josephstal were not as well off financially as the Mennonites, quite often people from there came and asked for bread. Josephstal was about three miles from Krongarten and then came a large Russian village "Podgorodnoe", close to Ekaterinoslav. The closest Mennonite villages were Wiesenfeld, an estate, and the Jasykovo villages.

The first minister of the Krongarten church was Johannes Bartel van der Moewsen. He came with his young wife Netchen, nee Quiring, from Prussia in the year 187. The son-in-law of Johannes Bartel was Peter Block. He was a minister of the Kronsweide congregation, elected in 1833. In Krongarten he was from 1833-1878. He had a treadmill and was also an innkeeper where people could stay over night if they had to wait, sometimes several days, until their grain

had been milled. He also had a distillery, a good stiff drink had to be part of business and hospitality at the time.

One of the teachers of Krongarten was Johann Epp (1830-88) later Gebiets-Schreiber in Chortitza. Of him it was said that he had a very loud voice but he could not sing, so to teach his pupils a song he would play the flute. He is supposed to have had good success. After Johann Epp came the old teacher Johann Nickel, and after him his son Johann Nickel. The last teacher and minister was Peter Rempel. He was there for many years and very well liked. In 1923 he emigrated to Canada and settled in Saskatchewan on the Sheldon Farm where he also served as minister until his death.

Many of the settlers of Krongarten emigrated in the 1920s, the others were resettled by the Communist government. Their farmsteads and everything that remained behind was stolen or else destroyed. The German poet Uhland has a poem in which it says: "It was a proud village, and it is sunk and its sound has disappeared."

"Memories of Krongarten," by Mrs. Tina (Abram) Berg, nee Hildebrand (born 1906), Autumn House, Winnipeg, Manitoba, was received courtesy of Mennonite Genealogy Inc., Box 393, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 2H6, March 27, 2001. Mrs. Tina Berg's maternal grandparents, the Klassens, lived in Krongarten and she spent many summers there with them. Another article by Mrs. Berg, "The Bridge at Einlage," was published in *Preservings*, No. 17, page 97, and in *Der Bote*, May 17, 2000, page 40.



The author, Mrs. Tina (Abram) Berg (first marriage Gerhard Martens), Winnipeg, 1945.

Material Culture

A Tale of Two Gesangbücher

“The German Hymnody of Prussian Mennonites: A Tale of Two Gesangbücher,” by Peter Letkemann, 5-1110 Henderson Hwy, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2G 1L1, lblpeter@mb.sympatico.ca

Introduction.

The hymnbook is often regarded as the most important devotional book of any Christian congregation, next only to the Bible itself. In their hymns, congregations express the strength of their faith and the depth of their religious devotion. In a very real sense, the history of our hymnbooks is the history of the inner life of the church.

This article looks specifically at two hymnbooks produced by Prussian Mennonites in the second half of the 18th century – a period that marked the final phase of a significant cultural change in the life of Mennonites living in Polish (West) Prussia – and shows how they reflect two markedly different attitudes and faith-responses to the influence of Protestant German cultural domination.

Historical Background.

During the 16th century, Anabaptists fleeing persecution in Western Europe found refuge in the Duchy of East Prussia, in Polish (West) Prussia and in the free cities of Danzig and Elbing. Some came from Switzerland and southern Germany, via Moravia and Silesia. The majority came from the Netherlands (Holland, Flanders, Friesland, Groningen), via the well-established trade routes that existed between Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Antwerp and Emden and the Baltic ports of Danzig and Königsberg.

Individual Anabaptists began settling in and around Danzig and Elbing in the 1530s. In 1534 the Danzig city council wrote to the port cities of Amsterdam, Antwerp, Enkhuizen and Emden requesting that no more Anabaptists be permitted to board ships bound for Danzig. But Anabaptists kept coming, even after they had achieved toleration in the Netherlands, seeking new economic opportunities. Many of the Dutch Anabaptists were merchants, skilled craftsmen and artisans who brought with them new trades, such as the distilling of brandy and the making of fine textiles such as silk and lace. They contributed significantly to the economic growth and well being of Danzig and Elbing. The toleration and acceptance they eventually experienced here was in no small part the result of their economic contributions. Not infrequently, their prosperity aroused the envy and anger of other merchants and craftsmen, who felt threatened by Mennonite competition.

In 1547, the Danzig banker Loysen acquired the territory of Tiegenhof in the Vistula Delta. In the following years he invited Dutch

Mennonite settlers to drain this area and make it into fertile farmland. Since the defeat of the Teutonic Order the dikes protecting these low lying lands had been neglected and many areas had been flooded. From this time onward large numbers of Mennonites settled in the rural areas between Danzig and Elbing, and made a valuable contribution in draining this low lying Delta region.

Menno Simons and Dirk Philips visited these scattered communities in the summer of 1549 in order to establish the church in Prussia more permanently. Menno's loving concern for the brethren in Prussia can be seen in a letter he wrote to them on 7 October 1549 from his home in the west. Dirk Philips settled in Schottland, a suburb of Danzig, in 1561 and assumed the leadership of the Danzig



Dr. Peter Letkemann. Photo courtesy of Preservings, No. 13, page 10.

church for the rest of his life. In 1567 Dirk made the long trip to Emden to mediate in the controversy between the Frisian and Flemish Mennonites which had erupted in the northern Netherlands in 1566. He himself sided with the Flemish.

The church in Danzig followed its leader in joining with the Flemish party. The division soon spread to all the congregations in Prussia. The Danzig Old Flemish Mennonites constituted the majority of all Mennonites in Prussia, with large congregations in Danzig and Elbing. In the Vistula Delta the large *Grosswerder Gemeinde* was divided into four congregations, with centres in Rosenort, Tiegenhagen, Fürstenwerder and Ladekopp. A large Flemish congregation was also located

in Heubuden. A small group of Groningen Old Flemish lived in the area around Przechovka (also called Wintersdorf) near Culm, in the Vistula Valley.

The Frisians, who united with the Waterlanders and High Germans in 1596, had small congregations in Danzig, Königsberg and in Thiensdorf-Markushof near Elbing. In the Vistula Delta there was only one Frisian congregation, centred in Orloffersfelde, whose members lived scattered in some 20 surrounding villages. There were also a number of small Frisian congregations located in the Vistula Valley between Marienburg and Thorn: Montau-Gruppe, Schoensee, Tragheimerweide and Obernessau.

Though the majority of Mennonites in Prussia came from the Netherlands it should be understood that not all Dutch people in Prussia were Mennonites; many adherents of the Reformed Church, especially from the southern provinces, had also fled persecution. Nor were all Prussian Mennonites Dutch. As early as 1535 sixty families of Swiss and South German Anabaptists had fled their temporary refuge in Moravia and come to West Prussia. They constituted the initial core of the congregations in the Vistula Valley near Culm and Graudenz. At the beginning of the 17th century other Swiss and South German Anabaptists settled in the Vistula Valley, as well as in the area around Lake Drausen near Elbing. The latter group joined the Frisian congregation at Thiensdorf; many of those who settled in the Valley joined the Groningen Old Flemish congregation at Przechovka.

Mennonites in Prussia thus represented a number of ethnic and national backgrounds, speaking at least four different languages and a variety of dialects. Depending on their ethnic origin, Mennonites would have spoken Dutch, Frisian, Low German (Oostersch) or Swiss-German. They came into a land that was already a melting pot of various Germanic and Slavic ethnic groups. The languages of commerce in port cities like Danzig and Elbing were German, Dutch, French, English and Polish. In the rural areas of the Vistula Delta the daily language was probably Low German, since the majority of inhabitants were of Germanic origin. In the Vistula Valley, the inhabitants would have spoken Low German or Polish. The official languages in the upper circles of government were Polish and Latin, but at the local level most government business was conducted in the German language.

The question of language, therefore, is crucial to an understanding of Mennonite

hymnody and worship in Prussia. Were all Mennonites in Prussia using Dutch as the language of worship and singing Dutch hymns and psalms? If not, what hymnbooks were they using? The situation is complicated by the variety of social, economic and cultural environments in which Mennonites found themselves, as well as by the Mennonite tendency to congregational independence. Since it is impossible to make generalized statements about West Prussian Mennonites as a whole, one must examine the various regions and congregations separately.

a) Mennonites in Danzig

When the first Anabaptist refugees from the Netherlands came to Danzig early in the 16th century they found a city that was medieval in its appearance. Within a century, however, the old Hanseatic city had taken on a new appearance. The towers and gates of the city, the public buildings such as the city hall and the *Artushof* (Guild Hall), and the homes of the wealthy patricians had been rebuilt in the style of the Flemish Renaissance. Mennonite architects, engineers and artists, like Anthony van Obbergen, Adam Wiebe, Peter Willer, Wilhelm von dem Block and his sons Abraham, Isaac and Jacob contributed to this rebuilding.

Dutch and Flemish merchants, craftsmen and artisans were welcomed in Danzig during the time when the Netherlands was a world power. Those professing Mennonite faith were not granted citizenship in the city, nor allowed to settle within the city walls. However, in Schottland just to the east of the city, the Catholic Bishop of Cujavien welcomed them to help rebuild the economy of his territory.

Without civic rights, Mennonites were dependent on the good will of the land owners, Polish kings and the Danzig city council. While they were granted privileges from various Polish monarchs, these applied only during the lifetime of the particular monarch. The city council had to be responsive to the wishes of its citizens and to the Polish crown, as well as to the economic well-being of the city - sometimes it supported the Mennonites, sometimes it sided with the citizens. Local guilds were especially envious and angered by Mennonite competition in trade and manufacturing. At times they succeeded in placing economic restrictions and imposing heavy fines or taxes on Mennonites.

Occasionally, Prussian Mennonites were forced to appeal to their brothers in the Netherlands in order to enlist the diplomatic protection of the Dutch government. For example, in 1751 the Polish Chancellor von Brühl

sought to impose severely restrictive measures on the Mennonites. At the same time, the city of Danzig found itself in a financial crisis and appealed to the city of Amsterdam for a large loan. Since some of the wealthiest and most influential bankers and merchants in Amsterdam were Mennonites, they succeeded in having this loan request coupled with the condition that full rights be restored to the

After all, the Netherlands were a major world power, both politically and economically, throughout the seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Dutch culture, as represented by musicians like Jan Peterszoon Sweelinck and artists like Rembrandt, stood at the height of its development and was second to none in Europe. The continued use of the Dutch language in Mennonite worship served not only to separate them from their neighbours, but also to maintain ties with this rich, powerful and somewhat idealized country from which their ancestors had fled so many years earlier.

Postma has made the astute observation that the relationship of Prussian Mennonites to the Dutch Republic was in direct proportion to the latter's status as a world power. The political decline of the Netherlands in the second half of the 18th century and the concurrent rise to power of the Hohenzollern-Prussian state under Frederick the Great was reflected in the fact that Prussian Mennonites in general, and Danzig Mennonites in particular, gradually relaxed their Dutch ties and lost their Dutch language in favour of the language of this new Prussian power.

The Danzig Old Flemish congregation was officially organized in 1569. Worship services were held at first in private homes. The order of service was probably similar to that in Dutch Mennonite churches, with singing at the beginning and end of the service, with prayers, Scripture reading and a Sermon in between. Sometime before 1648 a church-meeting place was built near the Petershagen gate. The exact date of its construction is not known. In 1648 the congregation purchased property just inside the city limits, but still in the vicinity of the Petershagen Gate, and built a second meeting place, together with a house for the poor. Just as in the Netherlands, these were actually "hidden" churches, that is, from the outside they resembled ordinary houses.

Mennonite worship was not permitted to have a "public" character, as the Polish King Jan Kasimir made clear in his Privilegium of 1660. The *Chronik* of the Danzig Church confirms this situation: "Since our local Mennonites were only tolerated within great limitations, they saw it as a necessity to conduct themselves as quietly and withdrawn as possible. Therefore, their worship services at the beginning had to be conducted quietly and in secret, so that they would not be disturbed by the Catholic clergy or even by the common people."

Given this desire for secrecy it is understandable that singing would not have played a prominent role in their worship services.



Title page of Geistreiches Gesangbuch 1767 edition.

Mennonites in Danzig. Given these political and economic factors one can understand why Mennonites in Danzig, especially those belonging to the Flemish Church, held so tenaciously to their Dutch language and culture.

Horst Penner has characterized the Mennonite settlement in Danzig as a ghetto existence. This situation developed partly from conditions imposed on them by the city council and partly from their own desire to live separately from the world. It may also have arisen from a feeling of cultural superiority over their German and Polish neighbours.

In 1780 the writer of the Danzig Church *Chronik* wrote: “there was no singing in our meetings, especially in the previous [i.e. 17th] century, probably because our ancestors did not trust themselves to conduct such a public worship service for fear of reprisal from other religious groups. Thus, when they wanted to introduce congregational singing in the early years of this century they first requested and received the permission of the city council. At first they sang out of a variety of small, unknown Dutch songbooks.”

The first German sermon in the Danzig Old Flemish Church was preached by Gerhard Wiebe, a Flemish minister from Elbing, on 19 September 1762. Permission to do so was granted reluctantly, especially since Hans van Steen, the elder of the church, was a strong advocate of the Dutch language. The sermon was not greeted with general approval. Cornelius Regehr from Heubuden preached the second German sermon five years later, on 20 April 1767.

Beginning in 1768 the records of the Danzig Church were written in German. On 1 January 1771 Cornelius Moor became the first preacher of the Danzig Church to preach in German. Others soon followed. Peter Thiessen and Jacob de Veer, who were elected to the ministry in 1774, both preached only in German. Together with Hans Momber and *Aeltester* Hans van Steen, these men were responsible for the publication of a German hymnbook in 1780: *Geistreiches Gesangbuch, zur öffentlichen und besonderen Erbauung der Mennonitischen Gemeinde in und vor der Stadt Danzig*. Prior to the publication of this hymnbook, the congregation had been using the Lobwasser Psalms in its German services. The transition from Dutch to German in the Danzig Flemish Church was not complete until 1780.

Danzig also had a small Frisian congregation located in Neugarten, just west of the city. This congregation separated itself from the larger Flemish congregation in September 1586. For several years the Waterlanders and the High Germans also had their own congregations in Danzig. These three groups had united in the Netherlands in 1591 and a similar union of Frisians, Waterlanders and High Germans was effected in Danzig in 1596.

This move was strongly supported by Lubbert Gerritsz, pastor of the Frisian-Waterlander congregation in Amsterdam. He was a friend and co-worker of Hans de Ries and worked diligently and successfully for unity among Mennonites. In a letter dated 19 December 1596, he expressed joy at the union. The letter was published as an appendix to a

songbook which he had prepared for this new united congregation in Prussia: *Sommige andachtige... Liedekens* (1597). This was the first hymnbook printed especially for use in Prussian congregations. It is likely that the United Frisian-Waterlander-High German congregations also used the Dutch Waterlander *Lietboek*, first published by Hans de Ries in 1582.

the Waterlander tradition of Psalm singing, it is quite probable that the United Frisian congregation in Danzig would have been using the German Psalms of Ambrosius Lobwasser. The Lobwasser Psalms and the Dutch Dathenus Psalms found in the songbooks of Hans de Ries were both sung to the same tunes, those of the Genevan Psalter. This would have eased the transition from one to the other.

The United Frisian congregation built a church in Neugarten in 1638. In 1788 they became the first Prussian congregation to install a pipe organ in their sanctuary. After this building was destroyed in 1806, during the Napoleonic wars, the members of the Frisian congregation worshipped and eventually united with the Flemish congregation, ending 230 years of division.

b) Mennonites in Elbing

A second large Old Flemish congregation was centred in and around the city of Elbing. In the 1530s and 1540s Dutch merchants and craftsmen, including Mennonites, were welcomed by the city council and the citizens for their economic contribution to the city. The council repeatedly ignored decrees of the Catholic Bishops and the Polish Kings ordering the expulsion of the Mennonites. When the King ordered Mennonites expelled in 1550, they were allowed to settle in the low lying marshland of the Ellerwald, just west of the city. Here they made a valuable contribution in draining the marshes, turning them into fertile farmland.

As early as 1585, Jost van Kampen and Hans von Cöln, two Mennonite dealers in fine silks, were granted the right of citizenship in the city. In 1610 several more Mennonites were granted citizenship, and by 1612 there were sixteen families living in Elbing.

Sometime before 1590, Jost van Kampen and a number of other Mennonite merchants purchased a house in the city and converted it into a meeting house. This house was given to the congregation as a gift in 1590 and remained in use until 1900. The city council must have placed some restrictions on their worship, since Horst Penner states they were not allowed to sing in their church meetings.

There is no definite indication as to how long Dutch was maintained as the language of worship in the Elbing congregation. When Gerhard Wiebe, a minister and later elder of this congregation, was invited to preach in Danzig in September of 1762 he requested permission to do so in German. His inability to preach in Dutch would indicate that German had been the language of worship in



Title page of *Geistreiches Gesangbuch* (Danzig) 1780 edition.

It is not known how long this congregation maintained use of Dutch in its worship services. One writer assumes that it must have been at least up to 1740. This assumption is contradicted by the fact that as early as 23 September 1671 five preachers of the Danzig Frisian congregation had written a German letter to the Lamist congregation in Amsterdam. One may conclude that preachers who write to the Netherlands in German are no longer preaching in Dutch.

If German was being used in the worship of the Frisian congregation as early as the 1670s they must have been singing from Lutheran or Reformed hymnbooks, since the first German-language Mennonite hymnal in Prussia was not published until 1767. Given

Elbing since at least the middle of the 18th century. Aeltester Wiebe was influential in the preparation of the first German hymnbook of the Prussian Mennonites, *Geistreiches Gesangbuch, worinn nebst denen 150 Psalmen Davids, eine Sammlung auserlesener alter und neuer Lieder zu finden ist, zur allgemeinen Erbauung herausgegeben*, published in 1767. Wiebe's initials - G.W. - appear after the preface to the second, third and fourth editions of this hymnbook.

It is not known which German hymnbooks were used in Elbing prior to the introduction of the *Geistreiches Gesangbuch*. Since all 150 Lobwasser Psalms were included at the beginning of the 1767 edition, it is likely that the congregation had already been using these Psalms prior to this time. The Lobwasser Psalms had been introduced into the Reformed churches of Elbing in 1655. The congregation may also have used one of the Lutheran hymnbooks of Freylinghausen or Rogall discussed below in Part II.

c) Mennonites in the Vistula Delta

The Flemish congregations in the Vistula Delta also made the transition from Dutch to German at least one generation before their mother congregation in Danzig. Apparently it was Abraham Buhler, minister of the *Grosswerder Gemeinde* in Rosenort from 1753-1791, who introduced German sermons into the worship services of this congregation in 1757.

Mennonites began moving into the Vistula Delta in the years after 1547. For the next one hundred years they toiled at the task of draining these low lying areas and turning them into productive farmland. In this they were very successful and in time the small area between the Vistula and Nogat Rivers produced over half of the grain of the Polish Kingdom, grain that was loaded directly into ships in nearby Danzig and shipped to western Europe.

The majority of these Delta Mennonites belonged to the Flemish *Grosswerder* congregation, centred around Rosenort. As the number of members increased, and as they spread out geographically in the Delta, a second congregation was established in Heubuden in 1728. Further growth led to the division of the Rosenort *Gemeinde* into four congregations in 1735: Rosenort, Tiegenhagen, Fürstenwerder and Ladekopp. The Frisian congregation was centred around the village of Orlofferfelde - its members met in homes and barns prior to the construction of their own church building in 1751.

Mennonites in the Delta did not live in closed settlements. They were scattered in small towns and villages, living alongside of other Dutch and German inhabitants. The native language of the region was a form of Low German (Oostersch) known as *Werderplatt*. Mennonites soon adopted this as the language of daily life. The Flemish congregations, however, under the strong influence of their

German in their worship services at least since the early decades of the 18th century is evident in the *Landes-Beschreibung* published in 1722 by the Lutheran pastor Abraham Hartwich. This is a lengthy description of the geographic, economic and religious situation of all residents living in the Vistula Delta.

In his description of the Mennonites, Hartwich distinguished clearly between the Flemish and the Frisians: "Even though there a number of different types of Mennonites, one finds only two kinds in the Delta, the "fine" and the "coarse" Mennonites. The "fine" are also called by the names Flemish, Klahrken, *Reinstoff* and *Feinstoff* [referring to the fine clothing of the Flemish]; the "coarse" Mennonites are known as Frisians, *Bekümmerten* ["worried" = serious in nature] or *Dreckwagen* [garbage-wagon or manure wagon]. The latter damn all other Mennonite groups. . . but they gladly receive one of these as a member if they are thrown out of their own congregation, which is why they are called *Dreckwagen*."

Hartwich described their worship as follows: "As far as I know, the organization and manner of their worship meetings, is in the hands of their *Vermahner*, who are their *Lehrer*. They also have deacons, who assist in serving communion and take charge of collecting money and distributing it to the poor. . . The *Vermahner* preaches either in Dutch or Low-German (*niederdeutscher Sprache*). In the winter their meetings are held in the large living room of a home, in the summer they meet in granaries or barns, which are thoroughly cleaned and spread with a layer of green grass. When he preaches, the *Vermahner* usually stands with his back against a large arm chair; in the meetings of the *Klahrken* (Flemish) he sits in a large arm-

chair with the congregation seated around him. The "fine" Mennonites do not sing, instead they sit quietly in a devotional mood until the sermon starts; the "coarse" Mennonites on the other hand, sing Psalms and other Lutheran hymns. Their sermons are often very long; it is not unusual for a *Vermahnung* to last up to three hours."

From this account one can conclude that at the beginning of the 18th century the Flemish preached in Dutch and did not sing in their worship services. This corresponds to the practice of the Old Flemish Church in Danzig, described above. The Frisians [in Orlofferfelde], on the other hand, preached in Low German and sang Psalms and Lutheran hymns in German. The Psalms would probably have been those of Ambrosius



Title of Abraham Hartwich, *Landes-Beschreibung*, 1722 - referred to in the text.

mother congregation in Danzig, maintained Dutch as the language of worship until the middle of the 18th century.

The Frisian congregation at Orlofferfelde may have dropped the use of Dutch in worship as early as the 1670s. In the years 1677-78 the village of Orlofferfelde suffered severe flood damage. Letters, written in High German, were sent to the Dutch Mennonite congregations requesting financial assistance. It is most likely that these letters were written by the elder or the ministers of the congregation. One must assume again that those who write to the Netherlands in German no longer preach in Dutch on Sunday morning. The church records of this congregation, dating back to 1723, are all written in German.

That the Frisian Mennonites were using

Lobwasser. The familiarity with Lutheran hymns is accounted for by David H. Epp in the following way, when he writes: "In Prussia most Mennonites lived in scattered communities and could not always attend Mennonite worship services regularly. Thus, they accommodated themselves to their Lutheran neighbours, went to their churches and sang from the same hymnbooks used in the local Lutheran Church."

The use of Lutheran or Reformed hymnbooks was common to all German-speaking Mennonites in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, since there were no German Mennonite hymnals available. Some Swiss and most Amish congregations still sang from the 16th century *Ausbund*, but the majority of Swiss and south-German congregations sang the Psalms of Lobwasser or the hymns of the local Lutheran or Reformed Church. The south-German Mennonites did not publish their own hymnal until 1832. The Swiss Mennonites did not publish a hymnal until 1955, when they joined with several other denominations in publishing the *Neues Gemeinschafts-Liederbuch*.

d) Mennonites in the Vistula Valley

As indicated earlier, many of the original Mennonite settlers in the Vistula Valley were of Swiss and South-German origin. Later settlers arrived from the Vistula Delta to the north. The majority belonged to the Frisian group. They lived in a number of scattered villages, with congregational centres in Tragheimerweide, Montau, Gruppe and Obernessau, and maintained close contact to the Frisian congregation in Thiensdorf-Markushof. In Frisian congregations such as Montau, church records were written in German from the beginning. Unfortunately, I have found no indication in these records of which hymnbooks were used by these congregations prior to their adoption of the West Prussian *Geistreiches Gesangbuch*.

Members of the congregation centred around the village of Przechovka (Wintersdorf) belonged to the Groningen Old Flemish group. They maintained close contact with their brethren in Groningen until well into the 18th century. Alle Dercks, elder of the Groningen Church, visited Przechovka about 1710-11. His fellow elder, Hendrick Berents Hulshoff, made two visits to Przechovka, one in 1719 and another in 1733. The diary of his 1719 trip has been preserved. It describes the details of his journey, the people he met, congregations he visited, and where he preached. He visited not only Groningen Old Flemish congregations but also Danzig Old Flemish congregations in Danzig and the Vistula Delta, as well as the Frisian congregations in the Vistula Valley near Montau-Gruppe.

He brought with him a large basketful of books, some of which had been ordered by friends, others to distribute to those who might want them. These books included the writings of Menno Simons and Dirk Philips, copies of

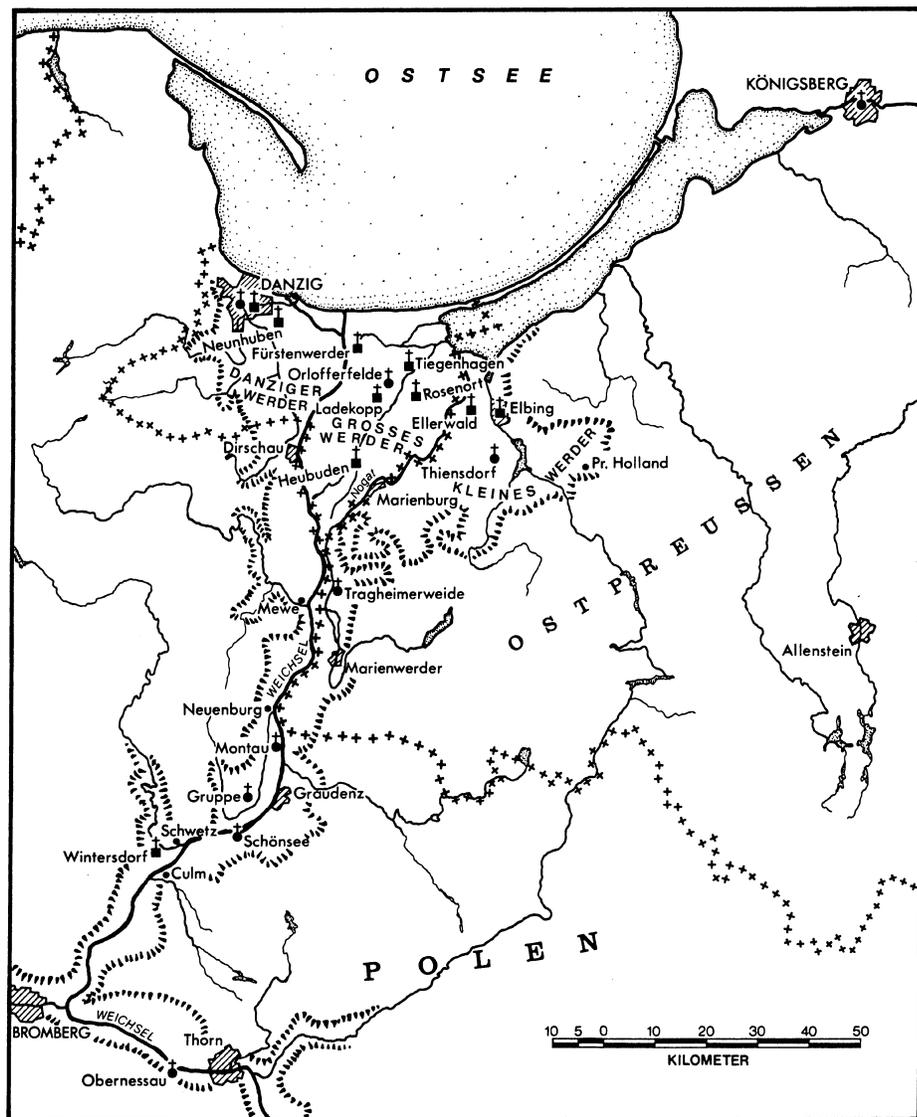
the Dutch Biestkens Bible, *Het Offer des Heeren*, and a number of songbooks. Unfortunately the titles of the songbooks are not listed.

Hulshoff arrived in Przechovka on 4 July 1719 and was greeted with the singing of several "wellekoomlietjes" (songs of welcome). On Sunday July 9, he preached in the morning service and in the evening enjoyed a time of fellowship "met singen en spreeken" (with singing and speaking). He stayed in Przechovka until July 29.

This congregation in Przechovka was one of the last, if not the last West Prussian congregation to make the transition from Dutch to High German as the language of worship. On 18 August 1785 the brotherhood of the congregation, which included members from Jeziorken (Kleinsee), Schönsee and Neumark,

met in the church at Przechovka. The purpose of the meeting was to elect a new *Aeltester* (elder), as well as several preachers and deacons. The members chose Jacob Wedel to be their new *Aeltester*. At the same brotherhood meeting, it was decided to give preachers permission to preach either in Dutch or High German, as they preferred. Jacob Wedel promised that he himself would make a special effort to become more proficient in German preaching.

This discussion has shown that by the last quarter of the 18th century Mennonites in Prussia formed very diverse groups, covering a wide geographic, economic, social and religious spectrum. There were urban Mennonites - merchants, bankers, craftsmen, distillers, shopkeepers - living in large cities such as Danzig, Elbing, Königsberg and



- ✚ Flämisch Congregations
- Friesian Congregations
- Cities
- Political Boundaries 1918-1945
- ~~~~~ Escarpment

Map of West Prussia showing Mennonite settlements and villages. Courtesy of Gerhard Lohrenz, Heritage Remembered, page 5.

Marienwerder or in smaller towns such as Heubuden or Rosenort. There were rural Mennonites - both farm owners and hired farm labourers. There were Frisian and Flemish Mennonites, and the gulf between them seemed as wide as ever; up until 1786 members of the Frisian group wanting to join a Flemish congregation still had to be rebaptized.

There were marked differences in Mennonite attitudes to the "world" around them. Some clung to their Dutch heritage more strongly than others. Some were still singing old Dutch *Liedekens*, while others sang German Psalms and Lutheran hymns. The process of acculturation to a strong German cultural environment was more advanced in some groups than in others.

The acculturation process speeded up after 1772 when the territory of West Prussia, which had been under Polish rule since 1466, became a part of the growing Prussian Empire of Frederick the Great. At first it seemed that this change would be advantageous to the rural Mennonites of West Prussia, since Frederick had a high regard for superior farmers. But it soon became clear that they were now subjects of a military state, quite different in its goals from that of their previous Polish monarchs.

Geistreiches Gesangbuch, 1767 - Königsberg, Elbing, Marienwerder.

Prior to 1767, German-speaking Mennonites had published only two other hymnbooks, both of which had appeared some two hundred years earlier in the 16th century: *Ausbund* (1564, 1580) and *Ein schön Gesangbüchlein* (1563). The latter book was not used beyond the 16th century. The *Ausbund* continued in use among some Swiss Mennonite congregations until the early 19th century, and continues in use today in Amish congregations throughout North America.

There is no evidence to indicate that either of these hymnbooks were used in Prussia. However, the editors of GG1767 must have known one of these books, since they included the Anabaptist hymn "Merkt auf, ihr Völker allgemein" (GG1767, #481), which is found in both the *Ausbund* and *Ein schön Gesangbüchlein*. As indicated earlier, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries most Mennonite congregations in Germany and Switzerland used hymnbooks of the Reformed or Lutheran state churches rather than make the effort and incur the expense of

producing their own hymnbooks. The same was true of Prussian Mennonites in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Especially popular were the German Psalms of Ambrosius Lobwasser, and the hymnbooks of Freylinghausen and Rogall.

Evidence indicates that Lobwasser's German version of the Psalter was widely used by various Mennonite congregations in

German as the language of worship in the years prior to 1780. These Psalms were also used in the Elbing Flemish congregation. All 150 Lobwasser Psalms were included in the first edition of *Geistreiches Gesangbuch* in 1767.

Ambrosius Lobwasser (1515-85) was a Lutheran legal scholar from Königsberg. He translated the French Psalms of the Reformed Geneva Psalter and published them in Leipzig in 1573. This publication found wide acceptance in both Reformed and Lutheran churches throughout Germany and Switzerland. Many of the French tunes to which these Psalms were sung eventually found their way into Lutheran hymnody. For example, the tune for Psalm 42 came to be known as "Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele," and the tune for Psalm 140 as "Wenn wir in höchsten Nöthen sein." Prussian Mennonites must have known many of these Psalm tunes, since they are frequently used as tune designations, both in their Dutch language hymnbooks and in their two German hymnbooks published in the late 18th century.

In addition to the Lobwasser Psalter, Mennonites may have used Johann Freylinghausen's *Geistreiches Gesangbuch, den Kern alter und neuer Lieder . . . in sich erhaltend*, first published in Halle in 1704. Some Mennonite congregations in Prussia also used Georg Friedrich Rogall's *Kern alter und neuer Lieder*, first published in Königsberg (East Prussia) in 1731. The preface to the sixth edition of the Mennonite *Geistreiches Gesangbuch* states that the Rogall hymnbooks were still being used in a number of Prussian Mennonite congregations as late as 1818. David H. Epp reports that Prussian Mennonites brought copies of Rogall with them to Russia. The edition of 1738, available for my study, was such a book. This well-preserved volume was used by a Mennonite family in Prussia and brought to Russia at the beginning of the 19th century. It eventually made its way to Manitoba in the 1870s in the possession of a certain Loeppy family.

By the 1760s most Frisian and Flemish Mennonite congregations in Prussia, with the possible exception of Danzig and Przechovka, were conducting their worship meetings in German. Mennonite elders and ministers of both groups met regularly to discuss matters of common concern. One of these matters would have been the need for a German hymnbook - a collection of hymns that would



Photo of the Elbing Mennonite Church (house church), built 1590 (referred to on page 122 of the text), courtesy of Horst Penner, *Die west- und ostpreussischen Mennoniten* (Weierhof, 1978), page 512, photo plates. Note the cornices on the roof which are modelled after contemporary buildings in Amsterdam. Next to Pingjum in Friesland where Menno Simons served as priest, this is the second oldest Mennonite church.

Prussia in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In his description of Mennonite worship in the Vistula Delta, Abraham Hartwich reports that Frisian congregations were "singing Psalms." There is also evidence that the Lobwasser Psalms were included as an Appendix to the 1724 edition of *Veelderhande Liedekens* published specifically for use in the Danzig Old Flemish congregation. According to Jacob v.d. Smissen, the Lobwasser Psalms were used in the Danzig Old Flemish church during the period of transition from Dutch to

reflect their Mennonite faith, as well as meet the worship needs of Mennonite congregations and the “devotional” needs of Mennonite homes. It must have been a difficult undertaking - involving compromise in the selection of suitable texts and the allocation of financial resources from member congregations for the printing.

In 1767 the fruit of their labours was published as: *Geistreiches Gesangbuch, worinn nebst denen 150 Psalmen Davids, eine Sammlung auserlesener alter und neuer Lieder zu finden ist, zur allgemeinen Erbauung herausgegeben.* (Spiritual Songbook, wherein, in addition to the 150 Psalms of David, we find a collection of selected new and old songs, published for general edification). It was published in Königsberg (East Prussia) in 1767 and printed by the Daniel Christoph Kanter, printer to the Royal Prussian Court.

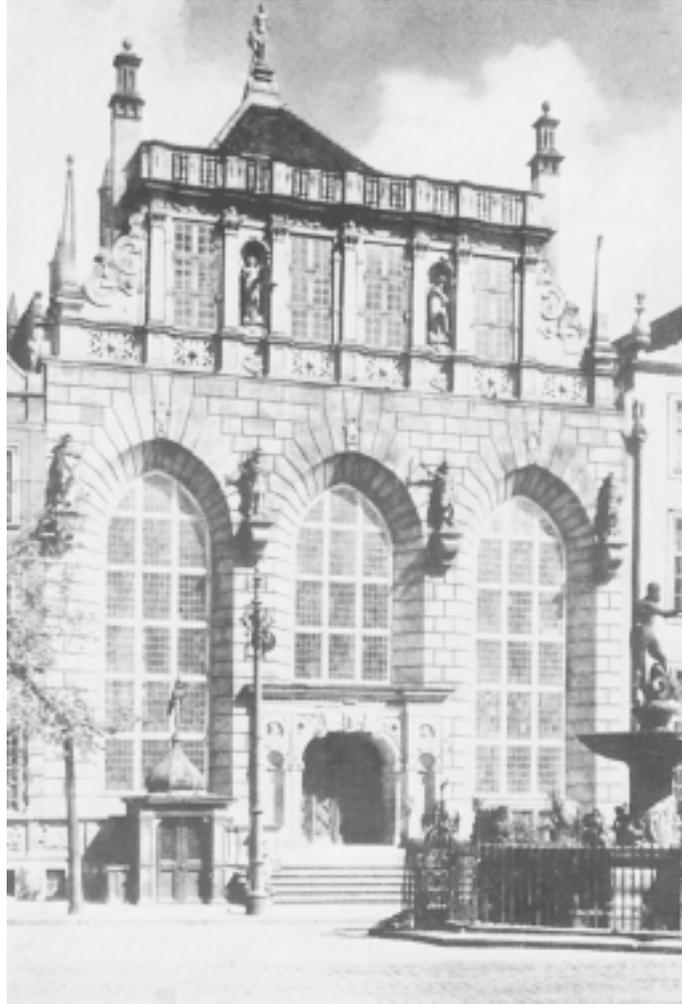
The wording of the title clearly reflects the influence of both the Freylinghausen and Rogall hymnbooks. In fact, almost one-half of the 505 hymns in this first edition (245 texts = 48.5%) were taken from Freylinghausen or Rogall. In all, a total of 291 hymns were borrowed from these and other Lutheran or Reformed sources.

The remaining 214 hymns (42.4%) cannot be found in any contemporary Lutheran source, and I have labelled these as “Mennonite” hymns: 106 were translations of Dutch Mennonite hymns found in *Veelderhande Liedekens* (VL1752), a collection of 284 Dutch hymns published in 1752 specifically for use in the Danzig Old Flemish congregation. The remaining 108 “Mennonite” hymns are either translations from some other, as yet unidentified, Dutch source, or original German hymns by Mennonite authors.

In the preface to this first edition of *Geistreiches Gesangbuch*, the editors gave the following reason for the publication of a German hymnbook: “Among our fellow believers, the majority of hymnbooks to date have appeared in the Dutch language. The question arose, why do we not use High German songs, since here in Prussia, the youth in our congregations are instructed in the German language. In order to meet this need we, in the fear of God, have come to the decision to publish both the 150 Psalms in the well-known German version [of Ambrosius Lobwasser], together with 505 spiritual songs [*geistliche Lieder*] in this practical format, in the certain hope that this book will serve for general edification and that all God-seeking souls will benefit by it.”

In choosing hymns for this collection, the editors claim that they did not consider the religious outlook or denominational affiliation of the author. Their main criterion for selection was “Erbauung” (edification or devotion). If the text was felt to be edifying and in accordance with their understanding of the Word of God, it was included, regardless of its artistic merits, or lack of such.

The editors of *Gesangbuch GG1767* ar-



Artushof in Danzig (referred to on page 121) with its renaissance facade, an example of Mennonite architecture and construction. The facade was redesigned by Abraham von dem Block in 1616/17. Photo courtesy of Horst Penner, Die west- und ost preussischen Mennoniten, page 521, photo plates.

ranged the selected hymns according to the topical order used by Rogall. The first 83 hymns dealt with the topics of – God, Jesus (Life and Works), and the Holy Spirit. The following 62 hymns were chosen for specific Mennonite worship needs – hymns before the sermon, hymns of faith, repentance and conversion related to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and finally hymns for the ‘Election of Ministers’. Over one-half of these hymns were “Mennonites” hymns, many translated from VL1752. This section was followed by 247 hymns for various aspects of the Christian Life – prayer, discipleship, love for God and one’s neighbour, humility, joy, praise of God, songs for morning, evening, and for

table-grace. Finally, there were 61 hymns dealing with death and resurrection, the final judgement, the New Jerusalem and eternal life. The first edition concluded with an *Anhang* - an Appendix of 52 hymns of varied content.

In the second edition (GG1775) the number of Psalms was reduced to 58 and the number of hymns increased to 533, with a second *Anhang* of 28 hymns. The third edition (GG1785) retained the 58 Psalms and added a third *Anhang* of seven hymns, making a total of 540 hymns. The fourth edition (GG1794) was identical to the third edition. In the fifth edition (GG1803) the Psalms were dropped completely, and the number of hymns increased to 545. The title was also changed to read: *Gesangbuch, worinn eine Sammlung alter und neuer Lieder zum gottesdienstlichen Gebrauch und zur allgemeinen Erbauung herausgegeben.* It is these first five editions that Prussian Mennonites would have taken with them during the first three decades of emigration to Russia, from 1788-1818.

Of the 545 hymns included in the fifth edition, 312 are borrowed from Lutheran or Reformed sources. The most frequent authors are: Paul Gerhardt (24), Johann Rist (20) Johann Heermann (13), Laurentius Laurenti (10), Johann Franck (8) and C.F. Richter (7). The remaining 233 hymn texts I have designated as “Mennonite” hymns - i.e. they are not found in contemporary Lutheran or Reformed sources. One of these “Mennonite” hymns - #481: “Merkt auf, ihr Völker! allgemein” - is taken from the *Ausbund*. Another 108 hymns are translations from Dutch Mennonite hymns in VL1752. The remaining 124 hymns may include translations from other Dutch sources (which I have not been able to identify),

as well as original German Mennonite hymns.

By 1818, the fifth edition was out of print and several Prussian Mennonite leaders held a meeting to decide on the publication of a sixth edition. It was felt that many of the particularly long hymns and those whose melodies were no longer known could (or should) be left out and replaced by new hymns. However, since most of the congregations were still using one of the first five editions, and since it was unlikely that all members would be willing to incur the expense of replacing their older editions with a new sixth edition, this projected change would have resulted in a confusing “dual number” system. It was there-



Bishop Hans von Steen (1705-81), Danzig, Prussia. Courtesy of Saints and Sinners, page 31.

fore decided to leave the first 545 hymns intact and include any new hymns in a second part. Five additional "Mennonite" hymns were added to Part I, to make a total of 550 hymn texts; an additional 175 hymns were included in Part II - making a total of 725 hymn texts in the sixth edition. The title of the sixth edition was changed again to read: *Gesangbuch, worinn eine Sammlung Geistreicher Lieder befindlich. Zur allgemeinen Erbauung und zum Lobe Gottes herausgegeben.*

Of the 180 hymn texts added in this sixth edition, 28 were "Mennonite" texts. None, as far as I have been able to determine, are translations from previous Dutch sources. In its final form, the *Gesangbuch* thus contains a total of 261 original Mennonite hymn texts! Although it is beyond the scope of the present study, this large body of original Mennonite texts deserves careful examination from the standpoint of both its literary and theological content.

The remaining 152 hymns added to the sixth edition are taken from a variety of Lutheran and Reformed sources, including Freylinghausen and Rogall. Three of the Lobwasser Psalms - Psalms 116, 106 and 103 - reappear in Part II as #676, #678 and #680.

The most frequent authors of hymns in Part II are: Benjamin Schmolck (10), Paul Gerhardt (7), Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (7), Johann Rist (5) and Johann Heermann (4). Combining Parts I and II we find that the most frequent authors are: Paul Gerhardt (31), Johann Rist (25), Johann Heermann (17), Laurentius Laurentii (12), Benjamin Schmolck (12), Johann Frank (10), and Christian F. Gellert (10).

Gerhardt, Rist, Heermann and Franck were the leading Lutheran hymn writers from the time of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Their hymns, growing out of the intense suffering of that time, focus not on doctrine, but on the emotional and spiritual needs of the

individual: - on the suffering and example of Jesus [e.g. "Herzliebster Jesu" (#58), "Jesu, du mein liebstes Leben" (#46); - trust in God ("Ich weiss, mein Gott! Dass all' mein Thun" (#306), "Ist Gott für mich so trete" (#336); - assurance of salvation ("Schwing dich auf zu deinem Gott" (#338), "Warum sollt ich mich denn grämen" (#340); - and a longing for life with God in eternity ("Ich bin ein Gast auf Erden" (#416). The choice of so many hymns by these 17th century authors and others of that time indicates that Prussian Mennonites, with their own history of suffering, identified with the personal piety and faith expression of these writers.

A large number of hymns, including those of Laurentius Laurentii, originated in late-seventeenth and early-18th century Lutheran Pietism. Benjamin Schmolck, while not considered a "Pietist" hymn writer, reflected many of the ideas of Pietism in his hymns. The choice of so many Pietist hymns reflects an identification with the concerns of Pietist leaders such as Spener, Francke and Zinzendorf, for spiritual renewal in the church. This is also an indication that at the time of the first Mennonite migration to Russia, the elders and ministers in both the Frisian and Flemish congregations of Prussia had read the edifying literature of 17th- and 18th-century German Pietism. Familiarity with this literature, and the use of Pietist phraseology can be seen in the letters of leaders such as Isaac van Dühren, minister of the Frisian congregation in Danzig, and Cornelius Regehr, minister of the Flemish congregation in Heubuden. It can also be seen in the correspondence between a number of Prussian ministers and the south-German Mennonite Pietist Peter Weber. The tendency to borrow from Pietist sources is of great significance in understanding future religious developments among Russian Mennonites, and in understanding the development of congregational singing and choral music among Russian Mennonites in the 19th century.

The sixth edition of the *Gesangbuch*, published in Marienwerder in 1818, was reprinted in Marienwerder in 1829 and labelled as the seventh edition (GG1829m). In the same year, another "seventh edition" was also published in Elbing. While the Marienwerder edition (GG1829m) contained all 725 hymns of Parts I and II, the Elbing edition (GG1829e) contained only the 550 hymns of Part I. It seems that not all congregations were willing to accept the "new" Part II which had been added with the sixth edition.

In the preface to the Elbing edition (GG1829e) the unnamed editors wrote: "When a sixth edition became necessary, a second part was added to it; as a result the book increased substantially in size. However, in congregations where the first five editions were still being used, the second part of the sixth edition would not be able to be used; therefore the congregations in this area [i.e. Elbing] requested that this seventh edition be

a reprint of the fifth edition, and that the second part be left out."

Both the eighth edition (Marienburg, 1838 - Graudenz, 1845) and the ninth edition (Elbing, 1843) also contained only the 550 hymns of Part I. The tenth, and last, edition, published in Danzig in 1864, again contained all 725 hymns of Parts I and II. All Russian Mennonite editions of the *Gesangbuch* - first published in Odessa in 1844 - also contained all 725 hymns of Parts I and II.

Mennonites coming from Prussia brought copies of the *Gesangbuch* with them to Russia. Until the early 1840s Russian Mennonites continued to rely on the Prussian editions to supply their needs. As early as 21 May 1840, however, *Aeltester* Bernhard Ratzlaff of the Frisian congregation in Rudnerweide wrote to *Aeltester* Jacob Hildebrandt in Khoritsa about the possibility of publishing a new edition in Russia. He had heard that a "Baptist brother of the faith" named Tauchnitz [a Leipzig publisher] was interested in opening a printing establishment in the Molochna colony, provided that the colony would pay the freight charges from Germany for the press. Tauchnitz does not seem to have gone through with this plan, and the first four editions of the *Gesangbuch* in Russia were printed in Odessa.

In the Preface to the 1844 edition (the First Edition in Russia), *Aeltester* Bernhard Fast wrote: "Although this hymnbook has been published and disseminated in Prussia in several editions, various circumstances still make it difficult to supply Mennonite congregations here in southern Russia with sufficient copies. Therefore, following the advice and approval of our local ministerial council [*Kirchen-Convent*], and with the permission of the Government, we decided to publish a 'new' edition of this hymnbook - the tenth according to the order of the previous editions - in order to meet the needs of our local congregations. . ."

This 1844 edition was not an exact reprint of the Prussian editions: it retained the same 725 texts, but there was a considerable change in tune designations - it contained a completely new *Melodien-Register*. The 2nd Russian edition (GG1854) again included a new *Melodien-Register* listing the 163 tunes as found in Part I of Heinrich Franz' *Choralbuch*. The *Choralbuch* was not published until 1860, but the melodies had been in circulation in hand-written manuscript copies since 1836.

Changes were also made to the preface of the Russian editions. It was rewritten and shortened, yet the writers borrowed heavily from the phraseology of the previous Prussian editions. The editors must have had a copy of Rogall available to them, since they borrowed the phrase "glühende Kohlen aus dem Heiligthum Gottes," which is found in the third paragraph of Rogall's preface, but not in any previous Mennonite hymnbook preface.

From these prefaces we can get an accurate idea of the number of hymnbooks printed:

the first edition of 1844 consisted of 3,000 copies; the second in 1854 consisted of 4,400 copies; the third edition of 1859 had 8,000 copies; a fourth edition was printed in 1867, but the number of copies is unknown. All of these four editions were printed in Odessa. Beginning with the fourth edition in Russia (GG1867), the *Vorrede* to the hymnbook was preceded by a dedicatory poem by Bernhard Harder: "Dir, Jesu, sei dies alte Buch auf's Neue dargebracht." In the fifth Russian edition (n.d.) the editors also added Bernhard Harder's poem: "Herr zu diesem wicht'gen Schritte" as hymn #726 of the *Gesangbuch*. The fifth, sixth and seventh editions in Russia, all undated, were printed in Leipzig by the firm of Ackermann und Gläser in the 1870s.

While the West Prussian congregations replaced the *Gesangbuch* in 1869, Russian Mennonites continued to use it for another generation. It was not until 1888, exactly 100 years after the first Mennonites had begun their long journey to Russia, that the Conference of Mennonites in Russia decided to replace their old *Gesangbuch* with a new one. This new book, entitled *Gesangbuch zum gottesdienstlichen und häuslichen Gebrauch* was published in 1892.

It was the older Russian editions that Mennonite emigrants brought with them to Manitoba and USA in 1870s, and reprinted numerous times. This *Gesangbuch* is still in use today in Old Colony congregations from Northern Alberta to Central America - over 230 years since its first publication. It is second only to the *Ausbund* (of the Amish) in the longevity of its continuous usage.

Geistreiches Gesangbuch, 1780 - Danzig

The worship services of the Danzig Flemish Congregation were conducted in the Dutch language until 1768. Songs were selected from the *Veelderhande Liedekens*, published exclusively for use by the Danzig Congregation in 1724 and again in 1752. By the early 1770s it became apparent that many members, and especially the youth, no longer understood enough Dutch to make it a meaningful worship language, and thus the decision was made to switch to German. This entailed the need for a German songbook, but the congregational leaders were not prepared to adopt the existing hymnbook being used by other Prussian Mennonite congregations, nor to duplicate any other German hymnbook, since many songs unique to the needs of this congregation were not included in these other books. Instead, the leaders of the Danzig congregation decided to prepare their own hymnbook, tailored specifically to their needs for public worship and for private use in worship at home. The book, entitled *Geistreiches Gesangbuch, zur öffentlichen und besonderen*

Erbauung der Mennonitischen Gemeinde in und vor der Stadt Danzig (Spiritual Songbook, for the public and special edification of the Mennonite Congregation in and around the City of Danzig), was published in Marienwerder in 1780 (GG1780). It was printed only once, and remained in use exclusively in Danzig until 1854, when it was replaced by *Gesangbuch zur kirchlichen und häuslichen Erbauung*.

GG1780 was produced by three well-educated, brilliant and creative individuals. The first was *Aeltester* Hans van Steen (1705 - 81). His grandfather Jost van Steen had been

which he served faithfully for over 40 years. He died on 21 September 1781. His funeral hymn was written by Hans Momber.

Hans Momber (1742 - 1815) was both a successful Danzig businessman and a talented speaker and writer. He was appointed deacon of the Flemish congregation in 1781, and *Prediger* in 1788. The third editor of the Danzig *Gesangbuch* was Jacob de Veer (1730 - 1807), who owned a successful brandy distillery. He became a deacon of the Danzig Flemish congregation in 1772, was appointed *Prediger* in 1774, and later served as *Aeltester* from 1790 until his death in 1807.

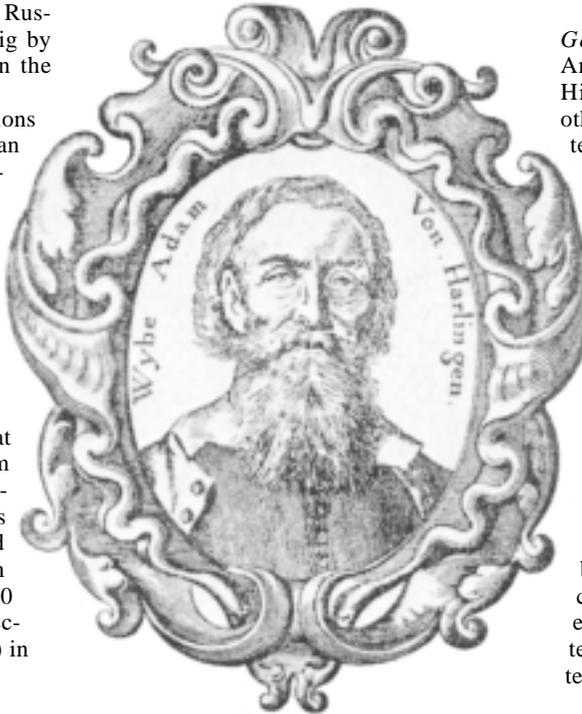
Only two copies of the Danzig *Gesangbuch* are available here in North America. One can be found at the Mennonite Historical Library (Newton, Kansas), the other at the Schwenkfelder Library. The latter library possesses a copy that was once owned by Anthony Conwentz (1792), a prominent member of the Danzig congregation. In this copy, Conwentz wrote in the names of the authors after each hymn. This information, together with a comparative analysis with the contents of the West Prussian *Gesangbuch* and other contemporary Lutheran hymnbooks allows us to make important conclusions on the contents of GG,1780.

The Danzig *Gesangbuch* shares not only the title of the West Prussian *Gesangbuch*, but also the element of "Erbauung" - edification and devotion. Yet despite these initial similarities, the two books differ greatly in content. GG1780 contains 620 hymns in forty 'Subject Categories' plus an appendix of 23 additional texts, for a total of 643 hymns. Of these 643 texts, only fifty are also found in GG1767. But even these fifty songs are not identical, as will be discussed below.

Of the 643 hymn texts, 186 [= 29%] can be identified as "Mennonite" texts written by Hans Momber, Jacob de Veer and Peter Thiessen, according to entries in the Conwentz copy of GG,1780. Momber contributed 132 hymns to the *Gesangbuch*: 104 original German texts and 28 translations of Dutch hymns. He is thus the most prolific hymn-writer in Mennonite history. Jacob de Veer contributed 42 German hymns and 2 translations of Dutch hymns. His successor as *Aeltester*, Peter Thiessen (1749 - 1825), who served from 1807 - 1825, contributed 10 German hymns to the collection.

These "Mennonite" hymns are found especially under Subject Heading XV - "Of the Word of God" - which includes four hymns "Before the Sermon" by Momber, and four hymns "After the Sermon" - two by Momber and two by de Veer. The latter also wrote three special hymns "On the occasion of a guest preacher" for this section.

Sections XVI (Faith) and XXII (Admonition to Youth) also contain many "Mennonite" hymns. In section XXIII (Baptism) all 12 hymns are by Mennonites: Momber (5), de



Wiebe Adam

Mennonite engineer Adam Wiebe who came to Danzig, Prussia, from Harlingen, Holland, in 1616. He became famous as an architectural and drainage engineer. Photo courtesy of Horst Penner, ...preussischen Mennoniten, page 530, photo plates. See K. Kauenhoven, "Wiebe, Adam," Mennonitische Lexikon, Volume IV, pages 528-9.

preacher of the Hamburg Mennonite Church. His parents lived in Danzig-Neugarten and were members of the Frisian (Neugarten) congregation. As a young man, Hans travelled to Amsterdam to study business, and was baptized there in 1726. He returned to Danzig in 1729, married Sara Siemens, and took over management of her aunt's small grocery store. Steen joined the Flemish congregation and was appointed a deacon in 1738, *Prediger* in 1743 and *Aeltester* on 24 March 1754. He preached in Dutch, but instructed the baptismal candidates in German. It is written that van Steen not only chose the songs for the Danzig *Gesangbuch*, but - at the advanced age of 73 - also prepared a complete manuscript copy of the entire book. The hymnbook stands as his final testament to the congregation

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:

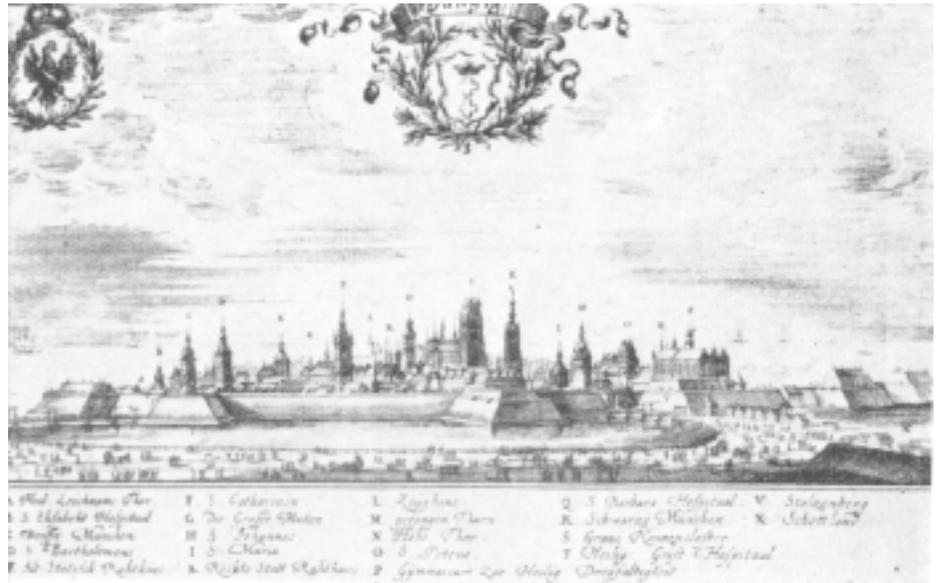
Donation to society for which please issue a receipt \$_____

TOTAL \$_____

Name _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____



Danzig, Prussia, circa 1684. It was a wealthy city state, and member of the powerful Hanseatic League which controlled commerce around the in Northern Germany and around the Baltic Sea. Bottom right, are visible the suburbs of Stolzenberg and Schottland, the main place of residence of the Danzig Mennonites from the 16th to the 17th century. Horst Penner, Die west-und ost preussischen Mennoniten, page 517, photo plates.

Veer (4), Tiessen (1), P. Schreder (2). Sections XXIV (Lord's Supper), XXVI (Election of Ministers) and XXVII (On the Punishment and Reacceptance of Sinners) all contain hymns by Momber or de Veer

The remaining 457 hymn texts in the Danzig *Gesangbuch* are borrowed from Lutheran sources, but almost all of the texts have been altered to some degree by the editors, making it impossible to say from which source they borrowed.

This practice of altering texts was a peculiar feature of the 18th-century German Enlightenment, initiated by Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803). In the preface to his "Spiritual Songs" [1754] Klopstock had written that his sense of devotion in worship was often disturbed by [old-fashioned] ideas and expressions found in the hymn texts being sung. Klopstock took it upon himself to alter existing texts to fit his (and the Enlightenment's) conception of true devotion and rational religion. This practice is not unlike that of editors in recent 20th-century hymnbooks, who have also tried to "update" the language of traditional hymns - to include "inclusive" language. . .

This practice of freely altering existing traditional hymn texts was carried on extensively by the editors of GG1780 - especially Hans Momber - who even altered texts of Klopstock himself. An example is the familiar hymn: "Liebster Jesu wir sind hier, dich und dein Wort anzuhören." Klopstock, disturbed by the personal address "dearest Jesus" alters the opening stanza to read: "Jesus Christus, wir sind hier, Deine Weisheit anzuhören." His opening is less personal, and the 'Word' of Jesus is expressed in Enlightenment terms as "wisdom." Momber [GG1780,#157] writes: "Jesu Christe, wir sind hier, dich und dein Wort anzuhören." He also rejects the expres-

sion "dearest Jesus," but retains reference to the 'Word,' rather than "wisdom." Countless other examples of such alterations can be found on every page of the hymnbook. All of the fifty texts from GG1767 also found in GG1780, including both Mennonite hymns and traditional Lutheran hymns from Freylinghausen or Rogall, have been altered to some degree.

One of the only writers whose texts are not altered is Christian Fürchtegott Gellert (1715-69), the leading poet of the German Enlightenment. The editors of GG1780, exhibiting a considerable fondness for his poetry, included 28 of Gellert's 54 *Geistliche Oden und Lieder*, published in 1756, in their hymnbook. In contrast, only three Gellert poems are included in GG1767. In fact, GG1767 contains only seven hymns by 18th-century hymn writers. The Danzig *Gesangbuch*, on the other hand contains 103 texts by the prominent 18th-century writers Rambach, Neumeister, Gellert, Klopstock, Cramer, Lavater, Schlegel, and Dietrich.

The editors of GG1767 and GG1780 rely equally on Pietist writers, but differ in their selection. GG1780 includes no hymns by Reformed Pietist writers, such as Neander or Teerstegen, nor hymns of the Moravian Pietist tradition, such as the songs of Zinzendorf. Both of these traditions are well represented in GG1767.

GG1767 borrows a great many of its texts from 17th-century Lutheran hymn writers, especially Paul Gerhardt, Johann Heermann, Johann Rist, and Johann Franck - a total of 68 hymns by these four writers. In contrast, GG1780 borrows only 47 hymns by these men.

Further detailed analysis and comparison is beyond the scope of this brief article, but the few examples given show Momber and his fellow editors trying to be "contemporary" and

willing to adapt to 18th-century Enlightenment thought. Even succeeding Danzig hymnbooks are characterized by Christian Neff as “showing a definite preference for songs of rationalist [Enlightenment] poets.” It may be this “modern” orientation that kept their hymnbook from being used by other congregations. GG1767 was much more “conservative” and traditional in its selection of texts, with the majority dating from the 17th century.

Peter Klassen has written that Prussian Mennonites “interacted with a dynamic, constantly changing culture [and] found themselves confronted by a relatively urban, strongly cosmopolitan, increasingly secular society.” They “faced the choice of adapting traditional doctrines and ethics to a world in flux or seeing an increasing estrangement from dominant cultural forces.”

The two Prussian hymnbooks discussed here reflect two markedly different attitudes and differing responses to the world of this dominant German culture. GG1767 and its succeeding editions exhibit a “backward-looking” orientation to older and traditional texts - both Mennonite and Lutheran. Prussian Mennonites and their descendants found comfort in these old hymn texts and guarded them carefully as their tradition in Russia, in Canada and today in Latin America. GG1780 exhibits a willingness to accommodate to the spirit of the times - an identification with the German Enlightenment mindset. This was only the first step in a long process of accommodation to Prussian rule, which would eventually lead to the abandonment of many distinctive Mennonite traditions, including “non-resistance.”

About the Author:

The author Dr. Peter Letkemann is an organist and historian living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. His doctoral dissertation on “Hymnody and Choral Music of the Mennonites in Russia 1789-1915,” 860 pages, was completed at the University of Toronto in 1985.

Dr. Letkemann is currently preparing his documentation of Mennonite victims of Soviet terror and repression from 1918 to 1956 for publication under the title, “A Book of Remembrance”, see *Preservings*, No. 13, pages 10-11. He is also working on an article about the origins and development of the hymn tunes of the *Gesangbuch*.



• Spacious Rooms • Pool / Hot Tub
• Waterslide • Breakfast
P.T.H. #12 North, Steinbach, MB Canada
To Reserve:
Phone 001-204-320-9200
Fax 001-204-320-9222

An English *Gesangbuch*?

It is unfortunate that Russian Mennonites in North America never accompanied the language transition from German to English with translations of their devotional literature and religious icons such as the *Gesangbuch* as their forefathers had done in Prussia in the 1780s when they translated their Dutch hymnals to German. Because of this sacrifice our people have had the benefit of accessing and using the rich spiritual and theological content of the *Gesangbuch* for the past two centuries. Imagine how impoverished the Mennonite commonwealth across North and South America would be today if the Mennonite Aeltesten and other leaders in the 1780s had not made this effort on behalf of their people and their descendants?

Preservings would encourage leaders in the conservative community to consider a project of translating the *Gesangbuch* into English for use in the many Gemeinden that are either already using English in their worship services or are moving in that direction. The alternative is to take song material from Protestant denominations such as Anglican or Lutheran, or even worse, to start using the song material in a shallow and superficial religious culture such as Protestant Fundamentalism. This, in turn, leads to gradual abandonment of the faith once received.

Many of the songs in the *Gesangbuch* were written by martyrs awaiting their death or compiled from the epistles they wrote for grieving families. Translating such material in a true and honest way together with poetry that not only rhythms but creates the meter necessary to maintain the same musical bar is a task of immense complexity and challenge. It is certainly easier by far to borrow from alien religious cultures.

Two songs from the *Gesangbuch* No. 549 and 658 were translated by the renown poet Margaret Penner Toews, Neilburg, Sask. (see *Pres.*No. 15, page 34), and sung in the 125th anniversary commemorative service in the worship house at Chortitz, East Reserve, Manitoba, on Sept. 12, 1999, although only to the “neue wiese” and unfortunately not the “ole wiese”. Many had tears in their eyes, especially the older folks who remembered singing these songs in their youth.

The English translations of these songs were published in *Preservings*, No. 15, pages 66-67. A stanza from song # 704 was published at page 71. Here follows a treat, an extract from Song No. 138 found in the section on brotherly love and harmony:

In yonder world, how blessed and joyous we'll be,
our peoplehood united, the Saviour will see,
in the fire of the Spirit, and zeal of the bless'd,
we'll all taste together, God's grace and sweet rest,
so unite now our hearts and lift up our hands,
we pray, Zion's help soon us He'll send,
for true love knows, neither beginning nor end.”

Imagine how inspiring this song could be at the end of an uplifting worship service or business meeting!

In the 20th century North American Mennonites went through a phase where it was “cool” to disassociate from the spiritual motifs of the past. For many this was coupled with a conversion over to alien religious cultures. Hopefully this phase is almost over and those believers who are still faithful to Jesus Christ now realize that maintaining the spiritual motifs of the faith are essential in keeping their communities and especially the young people inspired in the ways of discipleship. Furthermore, once the young people are persuaded that it was okay for their parents to disassociate themselves from the religious motifs of their past, they will just as quickly teach the same to their children!

Why don't you sing songs No. 549 and 658 during the Sunday morning worship service in your church. Try it *a cappella*, then in German and in English. I would recommend this even for those who have converted themselves over to so-called Evangelical religious culture. I'm sure its a lot of fun singing single stanza songs 150 times over to the jarring sounds of drums and guitars and the raucous melodies of beerhall ditties and marching songs. This may explain why their young people swarm from one church to another, whichever one can most closely replicate a rave or an AC/DC concert, with the biggest amplifiers, and still mention the word Christ a few times, which church then claims their success as manifesting the presence of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of God.

No wonder these denominations can't keep their young people. But do not rob your children and grandchildren completely of their spiritual heritage. Why not take the time one Sunday morning to sing these songs for them. Maybe here and there one or more might even be encouraged to return to a deeper faith and genuine discipleship.

Surely, also, here and there, there must individuals with a song in their hearts and a melody in their souls, who can translate their favourite *Gesangbuch* song. Please send them to me and I will try to publish them. Perhaps this can be a small humble beginning to recapturing what next only to the *Martyrs Mirror* was the greatest single devotional and inspirational book of the Mennonite people over the centuries, a precious gift of God.

The next step might even be that some brilliant young scholar, not satisfied with writing the 500th thesis on love triangles in Chaucer, might undertake the project suggested in his article by Dr. Letkemann, namely tracing the origins and history of each of the *Gesangbuch* songs identified as being Mennonite in origin.

Who knows, the martyred composer might well even be your great-great-great grandmother or grandfather? The Editor.

Old Colony Mennonite Schools in Ontario

“Old Colony Church Schools in Ontario: A collection of articles and reflections regarding education in the Old Colony Mennonite Churches of Ontario,” written and compiled by deacon Henry R. Friesen, Box 53, Wheatley, Ontario, N0P 2P0, reprinted from Plett, ed., *Old Colony Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000* (Steinbach, 2001), pages 168-170.

Background.

“In the early 1900s the governments of Manitoba and Saskatchewan legislated increasingly strict guidelines to unify their provincial education systems. However, the Mennonites who had immigrated there earlier, had come with the clear understanding that the education of their children would be entirely in their own hands. Now the OCMC, who saw one of their central convictions being threatened, was the group that most sharply opposed the new laws. They did this in the spirit of their overall faith convictions, offering passive yet passionate resistance, boycotting public schools, and refusing to assist the authorities in other ways. They were fined repeatedly and even taken to court several times for violating the School Attendance Act.”

“Finally, the Old Colony Mennonites saw no other alternative but to move out of the country: in 1922 an unprecedented mass emigration began to Mexico, which offered, among other things, complete freedom of education in exchange for their work in land development. Later emigrations followed as well.

“In Mexico, Mennonite leaders intentionally limited the level of education, for example, by using only internal teaching resources. Gradually, however, their children began to attend the schools which the Russian Mennonite immigrants of the 1920s had already established there. When a secondary level was added to these schools in 1967, tension increased in the Old Colony Mennonite Church, as the “Ohms”, the church leaders, remained firmly opposed to any education beyond elementary school. (See also Mennonite Encyclopedia, Vol. 5, pp. 258-259.)

“Subsequently, Old Colony Mennonites came to Ontario because of different hardships in Mexico, but they brought many of these deep convictions along. Hence, they developed their own school system, starting no less than five private schools by 1994. In Essex County, the Kingsville Old Colony Christian Academy was opened in September 1990 in the Kingsville Old Colony church. The school’s curriculum, which is recognized by the Ontario Department of Education was produced by an Old Mennonite—not an Old Colony Mennonite!—group in Harrisonburg, Virginia. In this system, children go to school 186 days per year and are free to work on the farms during the remaining half year (See Karin Kliever’s history of the OCMC, p. 12)

“Aside from this school program, the OCMC has placed great value on their German Sunday School Classes, which began in the early 1960s. These are one of the main means of preserving the German language, since all other education is in English. In the early years the curriculum materials were the same as the schools used in Mexico. Young children started with the “Fibel”—a phonics and alphabet starter text; the “Katechismus”—the traditional catechism—was used for the stu-

dents who were a little older; finally, the oldest children used a reader called “Biblische Geschichten”—stories from the Bible.

“Sunday School teacher seminars, conducted by church ministers and deacons, are held four times a year for all Old Colony teachers in Ontario. In these seminars, problems and changes are addressed, the teachers receive help for their tasks. One major project that was underway in 1996 was the development of a new Sunday School curriculum, as the church sought to address the changing needs, especially related to the increasing use of the English language.”

Reprinted from “Education in the Old Colony Mennonite Church,” in Victor Kliever, *Mennonites in Essex County*, pages 53-55.

Reflections, Henry Friesen.

“A Few Notes on the Old Colony Mennonites,” from *Memories: Sixty Years of Mennonite Life in Essex and Kent Counties*, pages 64-65..

“I’m writing this as an individual and I want to describe a little bit about the Old Colony Mennonite Church and some personal experiences. I was born in Patos (later called Nuevo Ideal), Durango, Mexico, and lived there for 16 years with my parents; then we moved to Ontario, Canada.

“I was raised on the family farm until I was sixteen. There I experienced the so-called old-fashioned way of life. Travelling was by horse and buggy and working the land with old machinery, such as old John Deere tractors, Models B & A & G on steel wheels. Tires were outlawed by the church since one could abuse the machinery by using it for travel.

“As a Mennonite family in Mexico we also raised some livestock such as cows, pigs, chickens, etc. My father was a mechanic and we had a machine repair shop, and I spent a lot of time in the shop as I grew older.

“Like all the others, I started school at the age of six in the Fibel level where I was taught the ABC’s, counting to 100, and some printing. Next I progressed to Katechismus where I was taught writing and spelling and beginner’s math; then I progressed to “Testamentler” where reading was enhanced and writing and math got heavier, and finally to “Bibler” with math in general and good writing and good reading.

“Discipline was good throughout the school, as the teacher had the right to punish any student who disobeyed, by having him stand up for a length of time, by having him sit on the “Faul Banke” (lazy bench), or by lashing him with a whip. (the lazy bench was a bench on the stage.) The sports in the schools consisted of baseball and soccer and other easy games, but they were never played in competition.

“The social life was very limited. The young men would go out at night and visit friends or meet at the fireside on the side of the road in the village, even though the fire was discouraged by parents

and neighbours, or they would meet at the local variety store and chat over a coke and chips or peanuts or chocolate. Hunting and fishing were sometimes done in groups, and going shopping in town became a social event sometimes.

“To think back about sixty years when the Mennonites settled in Mexico in only two communities, Chihuahua and Durango, one is amazed to realize that there are now about ten or more communities in Mexico alone, and various others in Honduras and Paraguay and Bolivia, and in the last twenty years some in Ontario, Canada, as well.”

Written by “Heinrich R. Friesen, January, 1985, and published in *Memories: Sixty Years of Mennonite Life in Essex and Kent Counties* (Leamington, 1985), pages 64-65.

New School, 1989.

“Several years ago, a conscientious group of church members from the Old Colony Mennonite Church, north of Wheatley on County Rd., attempted to institute a private school. Unfortunately, the financial support they required was lacking.

“However, their efforts have not been in vain. Last winter, church members, along with their ministerial counterparts, pulled together to form a volunteer board and provide the necessary funding. Thus the Old Colony Christian Academy was established.

“The reality of their effort and hard work put into this project is evident and can be seen throughout the Sunday School building of the Old Colony Mennonite Church from which the school functions.

“The hallways are filled with smiling, friendly faces and the school yard rings out with laughter and discipline. On the front of each desk is the young occupant’s name card is done in the pupils’ own hand writing. Inside, the compartments are filled with books and necessary tools of knowledge.

“Mr. Henry Friesen fills the role of principal and teacher at the Academy. He feels that there were various motivating factors behind the efforts to establish the new school.

“First of all, many of the Mennonite children who had been attending school within the Public School Board system, were experiencing difficulties due to language barriers and cultural differences.

“The Academy however, provides a sense of equality and shared beliefs that the students can feel comfortable in. Also, being that the teachers and students have a common background, it provides for a deeper understanding throughout the curriculum. Consequently, it is the Academy’s function to eliminate previous learning difficulties for its students and in so doing, raise the calibre of learning and understanding the pupils receive.

“Although various publishing programs were considered for the school’s curriculum, an indepth study proved Christian Light Publications to be the best suited for the Academy’s program.

“Two factors that played key roles in the determining process were quality and religion. The quality of the Christian Light Publication program is considered, by those involved, to be exemplary. Thus they feel that this program will assist in their students achieving high ranking academic accomplishments.

“Yet, although the calibre of the program is important to those involved, the religious element is essential. Considering this, it is obvious that their choice of “Christian Light Publications” is compatible with their church and faith. Devotion and dedication to the values and principles within the realm of Christianity, on which their church is based, is also one of the strongest motivational forces behind the Academy’s establishment.

“As the students move upward in this academic structure, they will grow mentally, physically and spiritually. Such a growth then, prepares them not only for life but more importantly for eternity. This preparation, when achieved by the individual, serves as a testament to the belief in eternal life, which is the back bone of their Christian religion.

“The ancestry of most of the children in attendance is Mexican and although the children speak both High and Low German, they are required to converse in English when in class. As a result, the language barrier that serves as an obstruction in the children’s daily life is obliterated.

“Presently, the school accommodates grades one through nine and Board members remain optimistic that one day the Academy will eventually continue to grade 12.

“Throughout the course of a typical day, the students will receive instruction in Bible Study, Social Studies, Science, Math and Language Arts. The only exception to this can be found in the first grade program in which the emphasis on science and social studies is lessened so that Language Arts, and its importance, is increased. Therefore, with intense study of the English language, the children can create a basis on which their future studies can thrive.

“For the most part, the teaching staff is on a salary basis, aside from volunteers who donate their time. As preparation, those wishing to fulfil teaching obligations must complete an intense Christian Light Education Teachers Training Course. Following this, they must also pass a series of exams and if successful, will receive diplomas and accept positions at the Academy. In addition, these individuals are also recommended to attend annual Alumni Courses that serve to refreshen and keep them up to date on current practices.

“The present enrolment at the school is 88 with an expected total of 120 to be reached. Adequate records of each enroled pupil will allow the school to trace each student before a final enrolment total is given.

“A number of the students in the Wheatley area, assist their families on farms as the growing season nears its end in September. In the Public School system, these children are granted work permits which allow them to start the school year later. The Academy foresees problems with this system in that these children fall behind in their studies and the language obstacles they already have to face, are intensified.



The Old Colony Mennonite School north of Wheatley in 1997. Photo by George Schartner and courtesy of Mennonites in Essex County, page 53.

“The Academy has found a solution to this problem. Their school year, for the student body as a whole, commences two weeks later than many other schools this allotting for any time the students may have missed in the Public School system.

“As compensation for this change, the school does not break in March and Christmas vacation is only one week in length. While they will observe certain religious holidays in accordance with their faith, some of the statutory holidays observed elsewhere, will function as full school days for the students.

“This being their first year of operations, the Old Colony Christian Academy is still setting precedence in many ways. For example, enrolment at the school is open and any child wishing to become educated in their system, will be given an opportunity.

“As the Board, which governs the Academy, becomes finalized, a sense of solidarity is appearing. They have chosen not to pursue government funding and although their self funding and tuition based enrolment can, at times, prove to be somewhat of a strain or slight financial limitation, school representatives feel such support is inspiring. In their opinion, it assists not only in making the school easier to run, it also serves to unite the community in a very special manner.

“There will not be “Grand Opening” ceremonies at the school for it is the intention of the Board and all involved, to keep publicity to a minimum. Their main concern is to ensure that the school remains community oriented and that it functions, not only to serve and understand, but also to detect and nurture the needs of each individual student.

Source: *Wheatley Journal*, September 27, 1989

Wheatley School, 2000.

In 2000 the Old Colony Church at Wheatley purchased the Romney Central Public School for \$300,000.00. The building is 16,000 square feet and is situated on 10 acres of land, 10 miles from the Wheatley worship house where students were crowded into overflowing classrooms in the Sunday School building and church basement.

The Romney public school was built in 1965. It had a fully developed playground. Because there were too few people living in the area the school was closed in 1998.

Some 220 students will have classroom space in the new school. The first teaching day was held on October 25, 2000. The new school will become the centre of the Old Colony Church school system and also serve as a community centre for the Old Colony people.

A Day at the Academy..

Starting a day of school is basically the same every day. We, the teachers, arrive sooner than the students, so, we have some quiet time to get ready. After we all arrive we go into our staff room and start the day with devotions together. Then we go our separate ways and finish preparing our classrooms, making sure we have the schedule put up and answer keys set out.

Soon the students start arriving. At ten to nine we blow the whistle, which calls all the children in. It’s a bit rowdy in the morning, but eventually we get them all settled down. We start our day as a whole school with a song and a prayer. After that we close our doors and begin our classes. In class we start off with devotions. Normally one student will read the required Scripture passage, as well as the moral. We discuss it for a few minutes and then carry on. Homework assignments are handed in, and attendance is taken. The students begin working independently with their books for the next hour, so I can work classroom-style with another grade.

Recess is at ten o’clock. One of the teachers goes out on duty with the students. After the fifteen minutes are up, we blow the whistle again. Another hour and forty minutes go by with classroom-style work before lunch. Then we all pray together. By then the lunches are warmed up. We eat and a twenty after twelve the students go outside. One teacher will again go out on duty. The afternoon hours are similar, with classroom-style work and recess.

At the end of the day we close together with a song and a prayer. Then the students are dismissed. We, as teachers, stay until all have left and we have cleaned up for another day. Then we also take our leave.

Tina Schmidt, Old Colony Mennonite Church
Reprinted from “Education in the Old Colony Mennonite Church,” in Victor Kliever, *Mennonites in Essex County*, page 54.



The former Romney Central Public School purchased by the Old Colony Church in 2000, and now in use as its largest church-run school. Photo courtesy of Rev. Peter Dyck, Wheatley, Ontario.

A dedication service for the new school was held October 22, 2000, with over 1000 people taking part. Money was also raised for the project.

Bob Shepard, from the Wheatley area, the last chairman of the public school before it was closed, spoke during the program. He congratulated David Dyck, chair of the school committee, Treasurer Peter Enns, Trustee Rev. Peter Dyck, committee members and the entire congregation.

Source: Marvin Dueck, "Altkolonier in Wheatley, Ontario, kaufen eine Schule," *Mennonitische Post*, 1 Dec., 2000.

The Schools Today.

In 1989 a group of Old Colony members started having meetings about setting up church run schools for our children. The schools at Alymer and Wheatley were started in 1989, and the schools in Kingsville and Dresden in 1990. The school in Glenmeyer was started in 1993 and the school in Walsingham in 1997.

We now have six church schools in operation, three on the west end and three in the east end. These schools, even though they are Old Colony schools (in the sense that they are guided by the church), are not financed through the church directly. Most of the buildings belong to the church but the cost of purchasing curriculum material, paying staff salaries, and transportation, etc., must come from the students' parents as tuition fees.

These OCMC schools are financially totally independent of the Government or other corporate bodies.

As already mentioned some of these schools have been in operation since 1989. The first year or two we comforted ourselves in that we thought that some of the hardships might decrease with experience and familiarization. And it might have to a certain extent. But some of these schools struggle financially either because budgeting was done too conservatively or parents do not have the income as they had hoped when the school year started. Other problems such as finding and keeping qualified staff and the need for transportation have not lessened.

All of the schools use the CLE (Christian Light Education) curriculum with the exception of mathematics where it has been replaced by conventional text books and teaching methodology. All instruction is in the English language with about twenty (20) percent in German instead of French. To integrate the German language we open and close the school days with German language songs and prayers. To help teach the German language we

also use books such as the German "Katechismus" and "Grammatik" books published in Mexico.

We started the New Year 2001 with a combined student body of 846 students and 45 full time staff and teachers.

Conclusion.

In conclusion we should recognize that these stories (and captions) have a positive tone to them and this is only a very small part of our story, for, (I assume that) as in any other community, there have always been two forces at work.

As we continue the work of our forefathers--indeed, the work begun by our Lord Jesus Christ

Himself--we strive to enhance the lives of many and help prepare a blessed eternity for as many as possible by teaching children with a Bible based curriculum and by preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

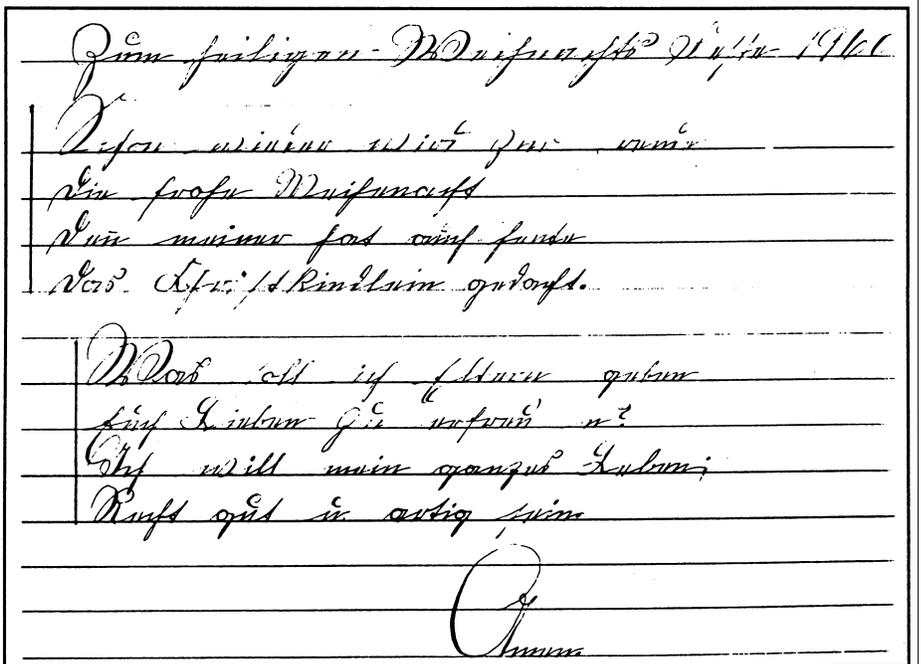
In spite of the pain caused by divisions and by individuals and groups leaving the church to form or join something better in their own view, God has richly blessed many people with great peace and fellowship because of the help that was provided to us in the 1950s and later by dedicated Old Colony ministers from Manitoba. God has given us a great responsibility. We pray that God will continue His blessing.

The "Wunsch"

Among the Old Colony Mennonites, as also formerly among other Mennonite groups, there has been the tradition of the Wunsch—literally, a "wish"—normally a short piece of poetry that school children learned by memory or wrote out very carefully in order to present it to their parents or others at special occasions. A typical Wunsch would relate to Christmas or New Year's Day.

The following sample of a Wunsch was written and placed inside a special cover by Henry Friesen of the Old Colony Church in 1960. It is in the old "Gothic" writing, and blue and red ink are used in the original.

Reprinted from "Education in the Old Colony Mennonite Church," in Victor Kliever, *Mennonites in Essex County*, page 55.



Text of the Christmas prepared by Henry Friesen, Wheatley, Ontario, in 1960, in accordance with an age old tradition. The calligraphy was placed into a special colourful cover and given by the child to the parents as a special Christmas wish. Photo courtesy of Mennonites in Essex County, page 55.

Schwiens Kjast

“Schwiens Kjast”, a Mennonite Hog Slaughtering Bee, by Glenn Kehler, 680 Buckingham Road, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3R 1C2.

Back in the 1930s and 40s, next to Christmas and Easter, the most awaited day of the year was the “Schwiens Kjast”, literally the pig wedding. This terminology was similar to the Low German word for a house warming, which was a “fensta kjast”. The schwiens kjast was usually held around November 11th when nature provided our coolers and freezers.

Like most Mennonites raising our own pigs was the only way we could be assured a good supply of meat for my parents’ large family.

Father had a breed of hogs that, when ready for slaughter were almost six feet long, very tall and leaner than most pigs, and when November came around weighed in at about 400 to 450 pounds each. We had worked all summer, hauling feed and schroue (chop) from the Flour Mill, feeding and sloping the hogs, and now it was time to get even.

The large “meagrope” (cauldron) was set up in the garage and filled with water the day before. Fire wood was brought in as well. Father would be up extra early and fire up the meagrope full of water for the scalding, this was repeated for each pig.

The chosen ones were usually three couples from the following, Uncle Dofi and Taunte Lien, Uncle Heinrich and Taute Zaun, Uncle Heinrich and Taunte Oatije, and Uncle Oante and Taunte Liese. On occasion Uncle Jacob and Taute Marie would come when they had the time.

They would arrive in the early morning darkness, after completing the chores on their own

farm. Uncle Heinrich and Taute Zaun lived next door, and walked across the well worn path through the garden.

Mother had set the breakfast table long before the friends arrived, the food consisted of ham and eggs, griev’e (crackles), fried potatoes and very strong coffee. This was also the only time of the year that we had cake for breakfast.

On arrival the women would go inside to help the hostess, and prepare for the task of the day. Taunte Zaun would keep the dialogue and laughter going inside the house, and on occasion come outside to tease Uncle Heinrich, stir up some laughter, and go hack inside.

The men would go to the garage, and stand around the warm meagrope, sharpen their knives and partake of some good cheer, usually “Hospital Brandy” to ward off a cold they could all feel coming on.

After a hearty breakfast the men would again stand around the meagrope and decide who would do the shooting and who would do the sticking or bleeding, two important chores that should not be botched.

And then came the big moment. I had to be right there to watch this gruesome task. After a few minutes the carcass was dragged to the scalding trough, which was tipped on it’s side, the carcass was rolled in and the hot water was poured over the hog, one pail full at a time.

The pig was turned within the trough to make sure all of the areas were evenly scalded. This was done with two sets of car chains, which worked rather slick.

The carcass was then laid out on a ladder and the hair scraped off with some especially made scrapers and knives.

Next they hung the animal up by the hind legs, either in a shed or outside on a tripod. The head was removed, scraped and washed very clean. After cleaning the specialist preformed the utname (removal of the intestines). This could leave an awful mess if a tear or a cut was made in the wrong place--so this was always Father’s job, at home or wherever he was asked to help.

The carcass was then cut, and sawed in half, but not the way it is done today. They made a cut on each side of the spine, which gave them the backbone for soup. The choice cut we now know as pork chops was ground into sausage.

The carcass was then laid onto the cutting table. One man stayed behind to cut it up and the others prepared for the next pig to meet it’s fate. At times there were two or three on the go.

The women took the intestines into the garage for the messy smelly work of cleaning them. Once the contents were removed, they were then taken inside for the final scraping and cleaning, ready for stuffing the sausages.

The way this was done was quite ingenious. The intestine were turned inside out, washed with a mixture of water and whole bran as an abrasive cleanser, and then, using a pair of knitting needles with the ends tied together they would pull and scrape the intestines between the needles, until the outer layer was completely removed, leaving the inner portion of the casing, clean as a whistle.

The large intestines which were used for liver sausage were cleaned in a similar manner, but



The start of the hog slaughtering sequence. The hog is killed, bled; and scalded and now Peter Doerksen, Peter Toews (right) and C.G. Peters are removing the bristle hair and the thin layer of outer skin. The pig is then hung for a final scraping, which is traditionally done by the women, who make sure no hair is left on the carcass.



Peter and Edward Doerksen pitch in to clean the heads for head cheese, and the cheeks go into the liver sausage.

were much larger and stronger.

In the meantime, I would keep an eye out for the pig's tail. This was always the prize the youngsters would fight over. I would take a safety pin, and sneak up behind either Uncle Doft or Uncle Heinrich, and hang the tail onto



"Utname" is the next step where the intestines are very carefully placed into a large bowl usually assisted by the ladies who cleaned them. This task was always done by the head butcher C.G. Peters (right), who became an expert at this.

his backside. We all enjoyed a good laugh, and being good sports, they would leave the tail on at least until dinner time. After the prank had run its course the pig tails were also cleaned and saved for Father's favourite, "pusta-nacke zupe" (parsnip soup).

The meat on the table was soon reduced to extra large hams, thick slabs of bacon, and spare ribs. The fat was ground up with a coarse cutter for rendering into lard, and the lean meat, including the tender loin and pork chop meat was ground finer for the farmer sausage. Father would add just the right amount of salt and pepper, mix it and it was ready for the sausage stuffer--usually Father and Uncle Heinrich's job.

This was all done while the meat was still very warm, and the spice could permeate through the meat evenly. The sausage was stuffed into the casing and hung in the smoke house while still warm. That is the reason none of the present-day mass producers of farmer sausage can duplicate the taste of the old-style farmer sausage.

Dinner was ready and all of the adults sat down for a major feast, with two big roasting chickens complete with bubbat (stuffing) loaded with raisins, and all the usual trimmings and dessert.

I looked forward to the meal but most of all liked to sit in the background and "schnack up" the outrageous stories and jokes that Taunte Zaun and her brothers would come up with, amongst the loud laughter around the table. These are memories I treasure.

Meanwhile one of the older children would have to stay behind to continually stir the lard being rendered in the large meagrope, which took about one and a half hours. In the meagrope, frying in the lard was knackwurst and spare ribs, real delicacies done in the traditional

way. When the lard was clear and done, it was ladled through a strainer into a milk can, and the crackles were saved for a winter of breakfasts, and a lifetime of clogged arteries--but were they ever good.

The clarified lard was then poured off into 20 pound containers, often as many as 10 pails full from one day of butchering. The griev'eschmult (crackling lard), made up of the fine meat particles settled out of the lard, was used as a spread on bread. With a bit of salt it tasted good spread on a slice of mother's bread, and a cheap substitute for butter.

The ingenious women would put some knackwurst and rebshpae (spareribs) into the freshly



Next the ladies would clean and prepare those intestines--a long and tedious job, but how else would you make the delicious farmer and liver sausages. Shown here are Mrs. Dora Kehler and Mrs. Betty Toews.

rendered lard. That way the meat would stay fresh unrefrigerated all summer and could be dug out of the lard as required.

While this was going on, Uncle Doft and Uncle Heinrich, each specializing at their own task, would be sitting on a heive klotz (splitting block), working away as the smoke curled up above Uncle Doft's hat and Uncle Heinrich's shilt metz (peaked cap). The cigarette was rolled, lit and stuck in the corner of the mouth, where it would stay until expired, as they were working with wet hands.

Uncle Doft would have a large pig's head on another heive klotz and scrape off all of the hair and unwanted items. This was the main ingredient for the head cheese and so he liked to remind us of the very important job he had, "kopp oabeit" (brain work). Uncle Heinrich would be sitting and scraping the feet, at times 8 or 12 feet to be cleaned good enough for pickled pigs' feet. These were cooked and eaten on those cold winter evenings with vinegar and onions, often as a bed time snack. This must have caused terrible nightmares. Uncle Heinrich's specialty was fhoote obeit (foot work).

The liverwurst was made from the coarse meat from the jowls and neck, mixed with a third part liver and ground with a fine grinder. Salt and pepper was added and the mixture was stuffed into the large casing, cooked for an hour with the zilt-kjize, cooled and it was ready to eat.

Meanwhile the men were grinding and stuff-

ing sausage, which went into the smoke house as soon as it was made.

Then came the womens' turn. The "zilt-kjize" (headcheese) and the liver sausage was then cooked in the meagrope. The headcheese was ground and mixed with salt and pepper and some of the cooking broth, which was a gelatin, poured into pans to set into a rubbery loaf. I did not care for this. My brother would fry it up and when I saw him pour this grey rubbery "schnudda" over the potatoes, I left the table in disgust.

Faspa was on the table and all of the adults were invited to another good meal which included fresh rebpshepa and knackvorsh. The men were a bit slow in coming in because they had to indulge in another round of medicine. Uncle Doft and Uncle Oant, in particular, came in smiling and had large tears running down their cheeks--strong drink always gave them away.

My school teacher Miss Heinrichs, and another Uncle Pieta (P.J.B.), would always come for faspa. Being a school teacher and Pastor, he could not get away to help. But he enjoyed the food, a short indulgence from a shot glass, and the camaraderie with his brothers-in-law, their



The noon meal highlights the day--a "hons brode" (roasted rooster) which always included "bubbat" and all the other traditional Mennonite trimmings. Sitting around the table are Peter H. Doerksen, Abe H. Kehler, hostess Violet Doerksen, C. G. Peters, Peter Toews, Ed Doerksen and Betty Toews.



Abe Kehler at the controls, C. G. Peters sausage maker, and Peter Doerksen cutting them to length. The famous Mennonite farmer sausage.

jokes and wild stories as only they could dish out in humorous volleys. And one always knew that the one that laughed the loudest was the one who told the joke.

After fasma the Aunts and Uncles would wrap up their knives etc. in the aprons, visit all the way to the vehicles, and long after they had closed the doors and finally headed for home. But not before Mother rewarded them with packages of liverwurst, rebschpae and a ring of farmer sausage, if it was ready, and they went home to do the chores. This was the custom.

Next day Father would cover the schinkje (hams) and spakj (bacon) with salt. He stored them in a cold place till early spring and then smoked them for three or four days, ready for Easter dinner--another tasty Mennonite food that cannot be duplicated. I remember Mother asking me to take a knife and a plate, and cut thin slices of ham for supper. This was during the summer and the ham was stored in a ventilated box where the insects could not get at it, and it kept fresh.

During the schiewn's kjust season, my parents, being good butchers, were in great demand.

They would at times be invited to help two or three times a week, well into December.

Since the early 1940s, Father had assembled most of the equipment necessary to butcher hogs at home. Some items he bought--most he made himself.

He built a scalding trough and ladder, made a singletree into a hanger, bought a good chain block, and found a WWI bayonet in a surplus store for sticking the hog. He built a grinder table complete with an electric grinder--sure beat grinding by hand.

He built a large wooden cutting table and designed a sausage stuffer. Except for a few metal bands, it was made entirely out of hardwood. For this he went to his friend Julius Block, who had a nice shop on Hanover Street, and was a true craftsman, who made some of the pieces for him. The stuffer worked well and made tons of sausage.

He had two large cauldrons, one to render lard complete with a reaschtuck (stirring ladel), and one to heat water in.

The equipment was in great demand, and was never home, always borrowed, so Father bought

a four-wheel trailer and fitted all of the equipment into the box, and started the first equipment rental business in town. He charged \$2.00 per day for the entire load, and was booked well in advance from the middle of November into late December. The load went from home to home, and only came home for repairs. The rule was that it had to be clean and loaded onto the trailer by 6 p.m., ready for pick up by the next customer.

This worked until 1947 when Father bought the slaughterhouse from the Steinbach Cold Storage, and went into the butchering business.

Photo Credits.

The photographs for this article were taken by Abe Warkentin for a full two page spread on a "Dying Tradition", for the *Carillon News*, Nov. 29, 1969, on the Peter H. and Violet Doerksen farm at Bergthal, north of Mitchell, Manitoba.

Futher Reading:

Arnold Dyck, "Schwein Schlactin," *Mennonite Life*, Oct, 1947 pages 26-27, (from *Verloren in die Steppe*).

The Auto, 1919

"The Auto, 1919," by Bishop Peter Toews (1841-1922), Swalwell, Alberta, translated by Margaret Penner Toews, Neilberg, Saskatchewan, 1999.

Introduction.

Peter Toews (1841-1922), grew up in Fischau, Molotschna Colony, Imperial Russia. In 1870 he was elected as the Aeltester or Bishop of the Blumenhoff congregation of the Kleine Gemeinde. In 1875 he together with the last 30 familys of his denomination emigrated to Manitoba, Canada, where he and his family settled in Grünfeld, East Reserve. In 1882 he left the Kleine Gemeinde and joined the church of Johannes Holdeman, a Revivalist preacher from the Mennonite Church in Ohio. In 1897 Toews was co-founder of the *Botschafter der Wahrheit* the first denominational paper among the Russian Mennonites.

In 1900 he moved to the nearby village of Hochstadt and in 1911 to Swalwell, Alberta.

A prolific writer, historian and churchman, Peter Toews was also a gifted poet. A number of his poems and an extensive biography were published in 1993 in *Leaders of the Kleine Gemeinde*, pages 819-922.

The Auto, 1919.

Suppose while walking I should meet a man in Scripture versed
Who asks a friendly question in love for truth immersed
And he, deferring to my age, quite solemn in his quest
Would ask, "What think you of the auto? Is it for the best?"

What would I say? So many words have crossed my fragile lips!
Then I recall a prophet who was off upon a trip.
He took a million people on a trek across the sand;
He didn't have an auto to go check the Promised land.

Back and forth debating, we puzzle and demur
If for us the auto and its use in truth concur.
We cite Paul's words of wisdom; he would rather far abstain
From any meat if eating it would give his brother pain.

The auto, when no longer new, its use so well-entrenched,
Will, much like our eating meat, no longer bring offence.
All will gladly drive one. Men, more cultured, strive amain
To make life soft and easier, for man and horse the same.

There's a proverb "Time is money". And the auto will become
A "must" for work, being prompt for church, for visiting and fun.
And in emergencies its use, together with the phone
(New-fangled gadget that it is) and should you be alone,
How speedily could help be reached if you'd an auto own!

It takes no high degree to learn; a fool will quickly know
That money can be borrowed, taking years to pay, and so
He, too can drive an auto! Wealth? It does no good to hoard it.
He has the right to buy as well as one who can afford it.

Rebecca once a camel rode to birth another nation.
After camels, horses well provided transportation.
Now its autos we behold that drive across the

range.
Nothing stays the same. Life's only certainty is change.

Since Adam once from dust was formed we're given feet to walk,
The middle road the best place after all our "tenet-talk".
Most people had slow-moving oxen when we immigrated;
A few had horses, serving well e'en since they were created.

Now children think of autos. "Autos, autos!" is the cry.
Before they're grown they probably will even want to fly.
Someone must venture forth and bravely make the first big leap,
(Though not in truly sinful things...we have a watch to keep.)

Not everyone is thus inclined. We all must move with care.
Until we've reached agreement if we should, or should not dare.
It doesn't take a sage to see affluence is a snare;
Whoever takes the "middle road" will find it safest there.

The air was made for birds to fly. 'Tis not for mortal man,
Especially God's children, made according to His plan.
When through Christ's blood we're saved, and we at last are called to die
We'll be given perfect bodies furnished with the wings to fly.

Written by Grandfather Peter Toews, Swalwell, Alberta, circa 1919, published in the *Mennonitische Post*, December 4, 1992, as "Aus der Zeit für die Zeit." Translated 1999 by Margaret Penner Toews

Books

Please forward review copies of books of relevance to the history and culture of Conservative Mennonites and/or the Hanover Steinbach area to the Editor, Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0, phone Steinbach 1(204)-326-06454 or Winnipeg 1(204) 474-5031. It is customary for publishers to provide a free copy of a book to the publication, this copy is provided to the person selected to do the review as a reward for doing the work.

John H. Warkentin, *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba*, Steinbach, MB: Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, 2000. \$20.00 Softcover. 409 pages.

Dr. E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia, The Mennonites in Manitoba*, Steinbach, MB: Crossway Publications Inc., 2001. \$20.00 Softcover. 294 pages.

These two publications make two older, but valuable, studies about Mennonites in Manitoba available to the reading public. Francis' book, published in 1955, had been out of print since 1972. Warkentin's book is his 1960 doctoral dissertation which has not been published before.

Both authors did extensive field work within the Mennonite community to produce their respective studies. Francis, who was a sociologist at the University of Notre Dame, in South Bend, Indiana, did most of his research during the years 1945 to 1947. He interviewed many people, and utilized the records of individuals, municipalities, bishops, government departments and provincial archives. Financial assistance was provided by the Manitoba Historical and Scientific Society and the Canadian Social Science Research Council.

Warkentin, a native of Plum Coulee and Steinbach, started his field research in 1955. He used the newly developed techniques of historical geography, "with a special focus on the origins of contemporary landscapes, hence an interest in frontier settlements and land use patterns." (xiv) Warkentin set aside earlier geographers' methodologies which assumed that geography determines human possibilities. For Warkentin, people change and adapt as they interact with their geography. His study of the two Mennonite reserves documented his thesis.

Whereas Warkentin's book is a study of Mennonite interaction with their geography, Francis' study analyses Mennonite interaction with the host Manitoba society. Both see this interaction as changing Mennonite identity. In both cases the peasant, old world ideals give way to superior ways of organizing communities.

Francis begins his study with the Mennonite immigration in 1874 and develops the story up to the end of World War II. After a brief background survey of Mennonite history from the sixteenth century in the Netherlands, to the end of the nineteenth century in Russia, he discusses the immigration to Manitoba.

In the immigration story Francis develops his theme of the search for utopia. The utopia that Mennonites were looking for, he says, was "not the possible freedom of the individual from social controls, but with the freedom of the group as a whole for the exercise of strict social controls over the individual. They wished to be

free from all institutional control on the part of the host society in order to preserve and enforce all the more rigidly the constituent norms of their own social system."(82)

In order to strengthen his case that Mennonites were looking for a place to exercise group control, he argues that the immigrants were the poorer, less educated, and the marginalized within the Mennonite communities in Russia. This assumption carries over into Manitoba, where he shows that under the influence of the Canadian Anglo-Saxon influence, Mennonites gradually became more enlightened.

Francis shows how this search for the group's freedom to control the individuals played itself out in various areas of community life. Mennonites organized their own Volost or municipal organizations which came into conflict with the municipal governments organized by the province. Francis shows how Mennonites accommodated themselves to this threat. He explains why this accommodation happened without major conflict.

In other areas there was greater conflict as Mennonite group values and the society's view of individual initiative and freedom clashed. The conflicts happened in the break up of the villages, the development of new agricultural practices and in the rise of towns on the Mennonite reserves. In each case Francis discusses the traditional Mennonite view of freedom of the community to set its own standards, and the view of the Manitoba Anglo-Saxon society which tried to impose its view of individual freedom upon all its citizens.

The climax of this conflict occurred over the issue of education. The Mennonite belief that controlling education was crucial to maintaining group control clashed with the government's desire to control education in order to instill values of nationalism into children. In this case the compromise Mennonites were forced to make was too great, and a third of them emigrated.

Francis sees the new immigrants, who came to Manitoba from Russia in the 1920s, as much more willing to accommodate. The 8,000 new immigrants who supplanted the 7,000 that emigrated, he says, greatly changed the way Mennonites in Manitoba related to their host society.

Warkentin, in his study of Mennonites' interaction with their physical environment, gathered quite different data than did Francis. Warkentin's focus is on the physical landscape of the East and West Reserves. He discusses the establishment of the villages, but from the standpoint of how they fit into and shaped the landscape. The breakup of the villages is discussed from the perspective of how the Anglo-Saxon model of individual farms fit better into the ge-

ography and the demands of Manitoba agriculture than did the traditional Mennonite pattern of villages with its long narrow *kagels* of land.

Warkentin discusses the development of roads, central places, drainage ditches, towns, soil conditions and land usage. He shows how geography influenced which towns succeeded and which lost out. He pays special attention to soil conditions in the various parts of the reserves and how this affected the type of agriculture that developed. He shows how human initiative overcame problems of geography. Throughout the book, he discusses the interaction of Mennonites with their landscape.

Warkentin concludes his study with the observations that it was not government policies which destroyed the traditional Mennonite communities. Rather, when the traditional Mennonite patterns of community organization competed with the Anglo-Saxon models, in most cases the Anglo-Saxon model was better adapted to their geography. Mennonites thus adopted these models in place of their own.

Both Francis and Warkentin work with a "progressivism" model, in which the modern is seen as superior. One effect of this approach in Warkentin's book is that the emigration of the conservatives in the 1920s does not figure significantly in his analysis. For Francis, even though he uses the progressivism model, and documents that Mennonites have in many respects acculturated (accepted cultural traits from the larger society) he admits that Mennonites have successfully resisted assimilation (whereby individual members of a minority are transferred into the host society with permanent loss to the ethnic group). He notes that in a number of important areas, like language and inter-marriage within the group, Mennonites up to the 1940s had also successfully resisted acculturation.

Despite the interpretative approaches which hold up the modern as the ideal, and which would likely be formulated differently if the studies were written today, the books are a valuable addition to the studies about Mennonites in Manitoba. The charts, maps, and statistical tables were carefully done. The descriptions are valuable and the interpretations are provocative. The books provide not only information, they should stimulate healthy discussions about how to interpret the Manitoba Mennonite experience.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society and Crossway Publications Inc. are to be congratulated for bringing these books to the reading public in attractive format and at a very reasonable price.

Reviewed by John J. Friesen, Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite University, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB R3P 2N2.

Detweiler, Lowell, *The Hammer Rings Hope: Photos and Stories from Fifty Years of Mennonite Disaster Service* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 2000, 186 pages. \$29.92.

The book *The Hammer Rings Hope*, first appeared in our home when my wife Elaine, who sits on the Board of MDS, returned from the MDS annual meeting and fiftieth anniversary celebration in Newton, Kansas in June, 2000. We browsed the narrative, glanced at the pictures, purchased another copy for Elaine's parents, and left our copy on the living room coffee table with Pierre Berton's *Canada: The Land and the People*. I've paged through it several times since but only picked it up for a deliberate read after I was asked to review the book for *Preservings*.

The Hammer Rings Hope is a coffee-table book and a good one. Photographs tell stories and good photographs tell stories well. In a very short period of time, one can survey important images of the history of the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) from its beginning in 1950 to the present.

The book, however, is much more than coffee-table material. Lowell Detweiler, executive coordinator of MDS from 1986 to 1998, has presented a first-rate pictorial history of MDS.

Detweiler, by his own admission, is the author, editor and compiler of *The Hammer Rings Hope*. He acknowledges, and makes extensive use of *Day of Disaster*, Katie Funk Wiebe's 1975 book which gathered stories and chronicled activities of MDS over its first 25 years. In addition to interviews with people involved in or affected by MDS work, as well as research in MDS files, Detweiler employs the contributions of others in the writing: John A. Lapp, Mennonite educator, historian, former executive director of MCC, contributes much of chapter three, "Why Are You Here?" which links MDS to the larger Mennonite world.

Marj Heinrichs, who lived in the region most affected by the 1997 Red River Flood, contributes with stories of flood-water devastation in chapter seven, "The Red River Runs North." Paul Unger, who represents the Mennonite Health Association on the MDS Board, contributes to chapter nine, "Dear God, It Hurts," a chapter which details stories of pain, healing and on the mental health of survivors. Finally, Edgar Stoesz, longtime MCC/church leader, contributes to chapter eleven, "New Paradigms: A Changing World."

The Hammer Rings Hope is the story of people who work tirelessly and courageously for others in need. It is the story of a Mennonite organization which presents yet another Mennonite image. Says John Lapp, "We've created the activist image of MCC and MDS. We've created the cultural and media images of plain people. We've created the theological and ethical images of the great minds among us....I think the image of MDS is as good as any other Mennonite image I know" (pg. 31).

The Hammer Rings Hope is the story of suffering people who have been affected by the work of MDS. Some of the accounts are moving while others are humorous. Frank McCoy, Pastor,

Pinopolis United Methodist Church shares a story about responding to an MDS Amish volunteer who commented, "People around here think we are peculiar." McCoy replied, "You are." And then quickly added, "You've left your homes, families, friends, and all that's familiar. You've never met us before and probably never will again....You work from sunup to sundown without pay. You bring your own tools. If we can't supply the material you need, you furnish it yourself. You ask nothing in return. It seems to us that all of you are working in the way Jesus would if he was here in this mess. Now that seems awfully strange to us. Yes, we do think you MDS workers are peculiar" (p. 57).

In addition to reviewing the past fifty year of MDS activity, *The Hammer Rings Hope* focuses on the present and future in three of its fourteen chapters. "Give of the Strength of your Youth," chapter ten, highlights young people as the future of MDS. "New Paradigms: A Changing World," chapter eleven, includes web sites on weather and disasters and articulates MDS priorities for the future – pre-disaster preparedness, disaster investigation and cleanup, long-term reconstruction and recovery, advocacy and counselling, communication and the Information Age. "On Doing Good Better," chapter thirteen, looks at the opportunities ahead for MDS and raises the question of how the vision from the past fits the future.

In *The Day of Disaster* (1975), Katie Funk Wiebe expressed two concerns facing MDS in the years to come: First, that praise may rob MDS of its spirit of servanthood; and second, that the trend toward bureaucracy may cause MDS to lose its original vitality. The narrative and pictorial history of MDS over the past 50 years would suggest that while both of these concerns are still valid, service is alive and well and MDS remains a vibrant, enthusiastic grassroots-orientated organization.

Detweiler writes, "At age 50, MDS has reached a mature middle age. We have learned from the past, yet we know we cannot stay there. We look to the future. Changes may weary us, but we know that much remains to be done. We sense that those fears of 1975 have neither overtaken us nor gone away. New challenges have been added" (p. 161).

Anniversary books by their nature chronicle achievements and document victories. *The Hammer Rings Hope* does this too but it also looks forward to its future min-

istry of bringing hope when hope seems lost. In his foreword to the book, Peter J. Dyck writes, "A natural disaster destroys property and can also destroy reason and faith, relationships and hope.

That is why it is so urgent for those who have been spared to assist disaster survivors, with saws and hammers, and with love and compassion. MDS represents a golden opportunity....MDS is God's gift to the church" (p.4).

Reviewed by Donald Peters, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Executive Director MCC Canada.

Book Notes:

Peter and Helen Isaac, *Gerhard R. Giesbrecht Family Book Born 1846-Died 1907* (Box 1, Grp 325, R.R.3, Morris, Manitoba, R0G 1K0, 2000), 264 pages, \$20.00 plus \$3.00 postage and handling.

The book is a genealogical listing of the descendants of Gerhard R. Giesbrecht (1846-1907), patriarch of one of the 18 pioneer families of the village of Steinbach in 1874 and mayor in 1883. Unfortunately the book has no biographical information about the family patriarch although a brief biography is found in *Dynasties*, pages 90 and 123.

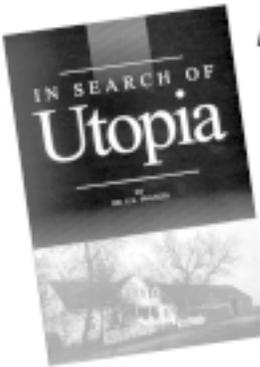
The book does have short biographical notes about the 10 children who married and had families, the most detailed being for the oldest son, school teacher, Gerhard K. Giesbrecht (1872-1945), who was crippled by an accident at the sawmill of "Reimer and Friesen" at Pinehill in 1893, see *Preservings*, No. 17, page 102. The book does not refer to an earlier family history about son Gerhard K. Giesbrecht, by Waldo Giesbrecht and Delma Friesen, *G. K. Giesbrecht Reunion* (Ulysses, Kansas, 1967), 85 pages.

CROSSWAY PUBLICATIONS

is pleased to announce the re-publication of:

**IN SEARCH OF
Utopia**

by Dr. E.K. Francis



The first edition of this book was published simultaneously by D.W. Friesen & Sons, Altona and the Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois in 1955. It was sold out in 1972.

The second edition, published by Crossway Publications, is a reprint of this classic work by the noted sociologist, Dr. E.K. Francis of Munich, Germany. It was the first scholarly study of Manitoba Mennonites, and had

a profound impact in understanding on all who are interested in the history of these people, both academic and lay.

To Order Send \$20.00 plus \$3.00 postage to
Crossway Publications Inc.
Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada
R0A 2A0

The book is an important accomplishment for the Giesbrecht family and the listing of family members, with appropriate birth, death and marriage dates will be appreciated for generations to come.

Henry P. Dyck, *Thisles in My Toes* (Box 1706, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada, R0A 2A0, 1995), 86 pages, \$6.00 plus \$2.00 postage.

This is the autobiographical story of a young boy growing up in the village of Ebenburg, near Aberdeen, Saskatchewan. The author's grandfather Heinrich H. Dyck homesteaded in Olgafeld in 1902, and was the first deacon of the Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church.

Peter K. Reimer, *Aron Peters Family 1746-2000* (Box 205, Kleefeld, Manitoba, Canada, 2001), 585 pages plus appendices. \$35.00 plus postage. Order from the author.

This book is compilation of the descendants of Klaas Peters (1797-1866), youngest son of Aron Peters (1746-ca.1806). Aron was among the first Mennonites to emigrate from Prussia to Imperial Russia in 1788, settling in Schönhorst, Chortitza Colony.

The book is essentially a compilation of names with some biographical detail such as place of birth and death. Nonetheless it is a valuable addition to the burgeoning literature of the Old Colony people, a community often overlooked by other writers. The author and publisher is to be congratulated for completing this massive family study.

Book notes by D. Plett.

Hope Springs Eternal: Sermons and Papers of Johann J. Nickel (1859-1920). Translated from the German and Edited by John P. Nickel, Nickel Publishers, Nanaimo, B.C., 1988, illustrated (photos and maps), 304 pages, soft-cover, \$19.50 Cdn. (Available from John P. Nickel, P.O. Box 1674, Battleford, SK, S0M 0E0).

Hope Springs Eternal is yet another account of Mennonite life in Russia, beginning with the prosperous years in mid-to-late 19th century Russia and ending with the anarchy that was the Russian Revolution. The central character is one Johann J. Nickel (1859-1920) who lived in several communities during his tenure as teacher and minister and died, a victim of typhus, in the village of Burwalde in the Chortitza Colony. He was also the grandfather of John P. Nickel, the translator and editor of this book.

The latter had done his homework in producing this book. Although relying heavily on the material provided through the writings of his grandfather and other information from family members for the substance of this work, Nickel has also attempted to grasp the tenor of the times in which his grandfather lived and worked. Thus the reader comes away with a two-fold product: (1) an understanding of the life and work of Johann J. Nickel; and (2) an appreciation of the challenges faced by Russian Mennonites during the time in question.

John P. Nickel divides his book into three parts: (1) a brief biography of Johann J. Nickel

and his family; (2) a translation of a number of Nickel's sermons (Chapters One to Five and Chapter Seven); and (3) translations of 87 diary entries, dating from January 12, 1918, to May 12, 1919 (Chapter Six). It is the diary entries that are most captivating. Not only is the anarchy of the time in question carefully detailed, but interwoven with those details are comments on sermon preparation, family activities, crops, weather, and other day-to-day events. One gains the impression that despite the horrors of revolution and war, life carried on.

The sermons, often lengthy discourses, centre consistently upon recurring themes: faith as sustenance; repentance and confession of sin; forgiveness as prerequisite to justice and righteousness; the importance of prayer; and God as comfort in troubled times. Based largely on the ministry of



Rev. Johann J. Nickel (1859-1920) as a young boy with parents Johann B. and Elisabeth Nickel. *Hope Springs Eternal*, page 2.

Jesus, Johann J. Nickel's sermons reflect literal Scriptural interpretations as well as a genuine concern for his listeners and parishioners. He obviously took very seriously his ministry as a shepherd entrusted to care for his flock. Interestingly, his references to the world about him, despite fear and upheaval, are essentially apolitical.

Hope Springs Eternal is not a quick read. As reviewer, I found myself reading the book seemingly on several levels simultaneously--Johann J. Nickel, teacher and minister; Johann J. Nickel, family man; and Johann J. Nickel, commentator on the Russian Revolution. I found, as I believe others will, too, that to read it quickly was to miss portions of its multi-level message. Nevertheless, I appreciated this work. Nickel, John P., that is, stays close to his sources and allows the material, carefully translated and edited, to speak for itself.

Reviewed by Carl A. Krause, Ph. D., 204-710 Eastlake Avenue, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, S7N 1A3.

Ralph Groening, chair, *KANE--The Spirit Lives On...2000* (Kane Book Committee, R.R.#1, Box 32, Lowe Farm, Man., R0G 1E0, 2000), 369 pages, hardcover, 600 pictures.

KANE--The Spirit Lives On is a book about the community of Kane, Manitoba, located on Highway 23, 15 miles west of Morris. The book is divided into eight chapters dealing with subjects such as history, education, faith, roots, livelihood, troubled times and Rose Farm. The research for the first section of how Kane got its name and the early pioneers was done by Ralph Groening and his father, Eddie H. Groening. Three of the Kane descendants attended the Kane Reunion of July 1-2, 2000 when the book was launched.

The chapter on schools gives information on two early local public schools: Woodvale School (Living Gold) and Queen Centre (Eddie H. Groening). We had such notable educators as G.G. Siemens and Dr. C.W. Wiebe in our school.

The section on the church starts with small efforts of Sunday School in the Kane School in the 20s and 30s, to regular services in the 40s, and a church building (Bergthaler) in the 50s. The church closed in 1973. The writers were Dora Hildebrand and Tina Giesbrecht.

The community life chapter takes you through the years of an active Community Centre (Elva Blatz), the 4-H (Audrey D. Friesen and Viola Wiebe), sports (Ralph Groening, Dulaney Blatz, Audrey D. Friesen), reunions (Pete and Marion Harder, Elva Dyck, Les Harder), floods and fires. Even "Halunkendarp" (Margaret Harms) came out of the woodwork and stirred up a little interest and for the first time we found out how it got its name!

The family histories take up a large section with about 126 families participating. It is full of home life, church and school memories. It also seems a good time for those confessions of pranks played at school, etc.

The business and agriculture chapter tells the story of the railway (Paul Joyal, Dave Penner), which opened in 1889 and elevators; first elevator in 1918 (Audrey D. Friesen, Dulaney Blatz) and their agents are listed. Many interesting stories are told of the stores and garages in Kane (Pete Harder). The Agri-business is also included (Lawrence & Tammy Dyck). It also contains a large section of pictures pertaining to agriculture dating back to the turn of the 20th century.

The war years were painful to the ones who enlisted, the COs, the people who stayed home, the prisoners of war and the relocation of the Japanese. Yes, we have stories of them all (Dora Hildebrand, Helen Penner, *Furrows in the Valley*)! There was a POW camp just three miles west of Kane. These German prisoners worked in our beet fields and also attended the German services in the Kane School. The Japanese were employed and lived at the Tom Weaver and George Miller (now Frank Blatz) farms at Kane. One Japanese man who had lived at the Weaver farm as a 17 year old, and his wife also attended our Kane Reunion in 2000.

The last chapter is devoted to the community of Rose Farm (the late Dan G. Blatz, Art



Franz Giesbrecht (b. 1844) and Aganetha Gerbrandt (b. 1846) BGB B290 from Berghal, Imperial Russia came to Canada in 1875 travelling with the Old Colony contingent led by Aeltester Johann Wiebe (1837-1905). They settled in Blumengart, East Reserve (Pres., No. 8, Part Two, page 42) but soon relocated to Neuhoffnung, West Reserve where they are listed in the 1881 census (BGB, page 377). In 1897 they moved to the Kane district settling on Section 15-4-2W. Many of their descendants still live in the Kane area today.

Hiebert), just southeast of Kane. It contains the story of early pioneers, the school, church and an article from High School teacher, Mr. Abe Heide.

Reviewed by Dora Hildebrand, R.R.#1, Box 32, Lowe Farm, MB R0G 1E0

Jacob A. Loewen and Wesley J. Prieb, *Only the Sword of the Spirit*. Winnipeg, Manitoba/Hillsboro, Kansas: Kindred Productions, 1997, softcover, 346 pages.

For some years now it has been fashionable to talk about a crisis of Mennonite identity. A number of academic conferences have probed whether Mennonites know who they are and whether the Anabaptist vision still can or should define them, committees processing integration of General Conference Mennonite Church and Mennonite Church have to *decide* what direction the new entity will take, vigorous discussion in several Mennonite conferences and denominations consider whether Mennonite identity includes women in leadership, or whether Mennonite identity can welcome/tolerate/live with the presence of gays and lesbians in its midst. The supposed “crisis” is language for public dialogue about the nature of the church in time of change.

I like the suggestion that in place of the inner-focused language of “identity,” we should say that these discussions concern the “future faithfulness” of the church. *Only the Sword of the Spirit* joins that discussion with a prophetic statement about the future faithfulness of the contemporary Mennonite churches. It is addressed both to the Mennonite Brethren, the life-long church home of authors Jacob Loewen and

Wesley Prieb, and then to the wider Anabaptist-Mennonite world.

Jacob Loewen, Mennonite Brethren missionary to Colombia, Tabor College professor and Bible translation consultant provided the basic content of the book. Wesley Prieb, lifelong English professor at Tabor College, contributed some research and shaping of the argument as well as writing much of chapters 23 and 24. Together they produced a personal statement that is based on a great deal of reading in Anabaptist and Mennonite historical and theological writing from the sixteenth-century to the present.

Loewen refers to the same heartfelt story at both ends of the book. He recounts a conversation with his son, who left the Mennonite Brethren church after his pastor had said that the church could no longer take a firm position on nonresistance. And the son asked his father, “But Dad, why in Heaven’s name did you not give me a foundation in Anabaptist/Mennonite peace principles?” (i, 253). The question brought to the fore an uneasiness that Loewen had long felt about neglect of this peace heritage by his church, and his own ignorance of how to articulate it. He resolved to provide an answer for his grandchildren that would partially atone for the failure toward his children (253, 257). *Only the Sword of the Spirit* is the fruit of that effort.

The book traces the history of nonresistance and nonviolence from sixteenth-century Anabaptists to present-day Mennonites. The story follows primarily the Dutch-Russian stream of Anabaptism, from its origins in the Netherlands through Prussia and South Russia to North America. This stream produced the authors’s Mennonite Brethren tradition.

Part One presents the vision of Menno Simons. As understood by Loewen and Prieb, this lifestyle included, of course, the rejection of the sword of war. But it also involved much more, which the authors describe in terms of twelve “distinctives,” including being citizens of Christ’s kingdom and separation from the world, complete separation of church and state and then governance of Christians by church leaders rather than by civil leaders, functional church leadership that rejects hierarchy based on office and includes every member in church governance, a “focused” or Christocentric Bible, consensus decision-making under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and sharing of material resources. The distinctives describe what the authors call living “only by the sword of the spirit,” which is a lifestyle that applies nonresistance to all of life rather than just to war (13-18).

Part two deals with the fate of Menno’s vision from the sixteenth-century to the present. The authors use their interpretation of the ethical vision of Menno Simons as the norm against which to evaluate subsequent experience of the church, from the generation after Menno until the present. The complex Dutch story explains how Anabaptists survived persecution, then their entrance into trades and into business, which brought questions such as whether to arm ships as protection against pirates. The story is that as they attain wealth and status through accul-

turation, there is an accompanying erosion of the only-the-sword-of-the-Spirit lifestyle.

In Prussia Mennonites encountered issues of taxes, salaried ministry, nationalism and more which by the nineteenth-century resulted in an almost complete demise of nonresistance. Many factors in Russia challenged the only-the-sword-of-the-Spirit lifestyle, including bringing civil government into the church in the Mennonite villages, the land problem, attitudes toward Russian peasants, class issues and more.

Also posing a challenge to the nonresistant life were revivalism and pietism, which had the potential to substitute an experiential conversion and inner religious experience for a full-orbed life of discipleship to Christ. These movements both precipitated needed renewal movements—principally the Mennonite Brethren—but also make Mennonites vulnerable to erosion of the nonresistant lifestyle. But in Russia, “By far the most tragic departure from *Gewaltverzicht* . . . was the organization of the self-defense army (*Selbstschutz*) during the Bolshevik Revolution” (135). Finally in North America all of these factors of acculturation, class, revivalism, pietism, as well as the phenomenon of fundamentalism are present to erode the Mennonite commitment to live a life of nonresistance. To call attention to this drift and consequently to spur the church to renewal on the basis of Menno’s original vision is the purpose of *Only the Sword of the Spirit*.

In part three the authors put the twelve points of Menno’s vision in conversation with a variety of voices, both past and present. These responses range from those who believe and affirm the vision to those at whom this book is aimed, namely those who think it is time to move beyond or away from the Anabaptist peace tradition and to live comfortably in the real, the modern world. Part four concludes the book with some stories that give glimpses of the renewal which the authors hope to stimulate, as well as the authors’s own testimonies of renewal and appreciation for Menno’s vision of only-the-sword-of-the-Spirit living.

One could fault the book’s scholarship by pointing out lapses such as confusing the names Muentzer and Münster or by listing significant books absent from the bibliography. Some scholars will be tempted to be critical of this book and to dispute some aspects of its interpretation because of the clear faith commitment and churchly agenda that motivates the writing. But such critique would be either misguided or beside the point. For one thing, we ought to remember that the supposed or claimed neutral standpoints, whether secular (Note One) or religious (Note Two) versions, have their own biases. Further, additional bibliography would not change the author’s admonition. This book should be read and taken seriously as intended, as a prophetic critique of the present direction of the Mennonite churches on the basis of knowledge of the history of Anabaptist churches.

I share the authors’s concern about the erosion of the Mennonite commitment to peace and nonviolence, and some of my theological work adds to their argument. Loewen and Prieb describe the fundamentalist gospel that makes sal-

vation a transaction and separates ethics from salvation. Much of the discussion in the first three chapters of my *Anabaptist Theology in Face of Postmodernity* as well as *The Nonviolent Atonement* [Erdmans, forthcoming], supports their contention.

While *Only the Sword of the Spirit* is directed first of all at the Mennonite Brethren, it may be virtually as true for the two largest North American Mennonite bodies, the Mennonite Church and General Conference Mennonite Church that are currently in the midst of a difficult merger process. Loewen and Prieb describe the Mennonite Brethren mission efforts that make no mention of the Anabaptist peace tradition (150-53). Meanwhile the 9 November 2000 issue of *Mennonite Weekly Review* carried several articles spread over more than two full pages about the projected organization of the new, integrated denomination on the basis of mission. There was no mention of awareness that the gospel to be proclaimed was a gospel that included Jesus' nonviolence. Or note the recent guest editorial in the November 2000 issue of *Ohio Evangel*, the newsletter of the Ohio Conference, in which the writer points out that the new Great Lakes Conference that will encompass several regional conferences is organized around mission and has major mission committees but no Peace, Justice, and Service commission (Note Three).

Mennonites concerned about the future faithfulness of the Mennonite churches and who still believe that nonviolence is intrinsic to the gospel of Jesus Christ should persuade all their friends to read this book.

Reviewed by J. Denny Weaver, Professor of Religion, Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio 45817.

Endnotes:

Note One: For analysis of a presumed neutral, secular perspective, see Thomas Heilke, "Theological and Secular Meta-Narratives of Politics: Anabaptist Origins Revisited (Again)," *Modern Theology* 13, No. 2 (April 1997): pages 227-52.

Note Two: For my analysis of a presumed neutral, religious perspective, see J. Denny Weaver, *Anabaptist Theology in Face of Postmodernity: A Proposal for the Third Millennium*, The C. Henry Smith Series, vol. 2 (Telford, PA: Pandora Press U.S., co-published with Herald Press, 2000), pages 94-120.

Note Three: Robin Miller, "How Necessary is a PJS Commission?" *Ohio Evangel*, November 2000, page 2.

Stambrook, Fred and Bert Friesen, eds., *A Sharing of Diversities: Proceedings of the Jewish Mennonite Ukrainian Conference, "Building Bridges"* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center and Jewish Mennonite Ukrainian Committee, 1999), Paperback, xv, 264 pp. \$19.95.

In August 1995 a conference entitled "Building Bridges" was held at St. Paul's College in Winnipeg. Jews, Mennonites and Ukrainians gathered together to reflect on the similarities

and differences between the various communities, acknowledging that all three not only have a similar but also a shared history in both Ukraine and in Canada.

In his foreword Ken Reddig writes that all three groups "had suffered the ignominy of hatred and violence over the centuries, and all three came to Canada to find a place where they could live and prosper in an environment of peace and security. All three brought with them their histories of oppression and antagonism" (vii). This book is a partial record of the conference proceedings, containing 19 articles written by 21 authors from throughout Canada as well as Israel.

The keynote address by Raymond Breton places the dialogue between the Jews, Mennonites and Ukrainians in the wider Canadian social context. A feature of this wider context is "the ambivalence of Canadians with regard to ethnic diversity" (3).

In the section sub-titled "Interaction in Eastern Europe" there was only one paper. John J. Friesen's paper on the *Judenplan* relies quite extensively on the diary entries of Jacob H. Epp which appear in *A Mennonite in Russia*, edited by Harvey Dyck. In the mid-19th century the Russian government encouraged land-less Mennonites to relocate to the *Judenplan*, an agricultural Jewish settlement established to give Jewish settlers training in agriculture, in order to serve as model farmers for the Jews. Friesen notes that while there was some natural interaction between the two groups, two separate societies were established within the villages.

In a paper entitled "Canadian Demographic Profiles: Jewish, Mennonite and Ukrainian Comparisons," Leo Driedger, sociology professor at the University of Manitoba, undertakes a sociological study of the three groups. John C. Lehr and Yossi Katz's article on Mennonite, Jewish and Ukrainian patterns of settlement in Manitoba illustrates the role of religion and culture in shaping settlement patterns, and in determining the long-term survival of the settlements. "For the Jews, nucleation was necessary if they were to observe the rules of Orthodox religious life. Jews gradually migrated to urban centres because they were unable to maintain their strict Orthodox practices." The authors also explored the segregation in Ukrainian settlements between those from Galicia who were Catholics of the Eastern Rite and those from Bukovyna who were Eastern Orthodox.

Peter Melnycky's paper entitled "Following the *Volksdeutsche*: Early Ukrainian Migration from Galicia to Canada" describes the phenomenon of cross-ethnic chain migration, using the example of Ukrainians from Galicia following ethnic Germans from the same area to Canada. They also point out that some Ukrainians found work on the Mennonite West Reserve in the 1890s, and they tell the story of two Ukrainians working for a Mennonite farmer in Gretna. When invited to sit for dinner, one observed: "There was a white tablecloth . . . and the table was spread with meat, cakes, white bread bright as the sun, like on a lord's holiday." (68).

Phyllis M. Senese's paper explores the atti-

tudes of Canadians towards the Jews, Mennonites and Ukrainians upon their arrival in Canada between 1880 and 1920. All three groups were often at the receiving end of hostile responses from all levels of society—one which rejected "otherness" and lauded individualism over the communal ways of living and thinking common to immigrant groups like the Jews, Mennonites and Ukrainians. Senese concludes that "it is time to add a dimension of comparative historical analysis that crosses the boundaries between these and other groups" (86), while warning that "a comparative rediscovery of the past is intimately and painfully linked to the present" and "if the groups who have suffered for being different, for being "the other," have no compassion for the new strangers, the suffering was pointless" (86).

Royden Loewen's paper on rural ethnic historiography outlines the evolving literature of rural ethnic communities in western Canada.

Lisa Singer's paper entitled "God Could Not be Everywhere – So He Made Mothers" describes the role that Jewish women played in the development of their communities. It is an example of the difficult yet vital task of recovering the history of women in all facets of history – difficult because of society's traditional preoccupation with documenting and preserving what mirrored only a male system of values (102).

Aster and Potichnyj's paper explores the concept of an ethnic or national homeland, a diaspora, and a return to that homeland in the context of Jewish and Ukrainian history, and the challenges of preserving an ethnic identity outside of one's traditional homeland.

The section entitled "Encounters and Responses" begins with a paper by Gerald Romsa titled "Jewish-Mennonite-Ukrainian Intergroup Perceptions." Romsa argues that the three groups share a burden of history in Ukraine that contains oppression, victimization and inequality. "In general, the Jewish, Mennonite, and Ukrainian communities co-existed in relative harmony, but different interpretations of the cause of their suffering, combined with differences in economic and social success, periodically overcame positive interpersonal networks and resulted in intergroup hostility" (134).

The section on literature, theatre and art contains a paper on the artist William Kurelek by Abraham Arnold, an exploration of the theme of exile in Jewish, Mennonite and Ukrainian writing by Nick Mitchell, "Early Jewish Theatre in Winnipeg" by Mildred Gutkin, and "Ukrainians, Jews and Mennonites in the Writings of Gabrielle Roy" by Ben-Z. Shek.

The final section includes some sobering papers on anti-Semitism in Canada by Lionel Steiman, Mennonites' responses to and involvement in National Socialism and anti-Semitism by Harry Loewen, and the opposing agendas of Jews and Ukrainians in Canada by Sol Littman.

A glaring omission seems to be the lack of any meaningful exploration of religious or theological themes in the papers presented in the book. It is hard to understand how one can re-

flect on the similarities and dissimilarities of Jews, Mennonites and Ukrainians without exploring the religious identities and theological worldviews of each group.

The various papers that have been published in this volume will obviously be of more interest to some than to others. Each individual will naturally gravitate to those papers dealing with their own ethnic group or with their area of interest, be it history, sociology or the arts. Nonetheless *A Sharing of Diversities* is an impressive volume that should be read by anyone with an interest in the history of Western Canada and a desire to understand the diverse components of our pluralistic society.

Book review by Richard D. Thiessen, Library Director, Columbia Bible College, Abbotsford, B.C.

Penner, Archie. *The New Testament, The Christian and The State* (Hagerstown, Maryland: James Lowry/Deutsche Buchhandlung, 2000), 2nd ed. Mennonite Reprint Series, Number 3, 128 pages.

This book was originally written as a thesis for the Master of Arts degree at Wheaton College in 1955. In 1959, D.W. Friesens & Sons, Altona, and Herald Press, Pennsylvania, jointly printed the first edition of the book. James Lowry, through the "Deutsche Buchhandlung" from Hagerstown, is reprinting various significant studies on Anabaptist themes. Penner's book is number 3 in their Mennonite Reprint Series.

Dr. Harold S. Bender, dean of modern Anabaptist studies, commenting on the content of the book in his Introduction to the original edition of *The New Testament, The Christian, and The State*, says, "I find his results fully satisfying." In terms of recommendations for a book on a Christian's relation to the state, none could have been better or stronger. This recommendation by Bender indicates that Penner has done a thorough job of his exegesis as well as presenting it in an acceptable manner.

The book of 128 pages, is divided into seven chapters. The chapters are: I. Introduction, II. Church History and the Christian's Relation to the State, III. Jesus and the Christian's Relation to the State, IV. Paul and the Christian's Relation to the State, V. Peter and the Christian's Relation to the State, VI. John and the Christian's Relation to the State, VII. Conclusion.

The key underlying assumptions that guided Dr. Penner in the writing of the book included an uncompromising acceptance of the inspiration of Scripture, the "Grammatico-Historical" method of interpretation, and progressive revelation. An important conclusion of these assumptions is the fact that the New Testament takes precedence in determining the relation between the Old and New Testament. Penner suggests that the Old Testament does not aid materially to the solution of the problem of the relation of the Christian to the state (15). As one walks through the book one finds Penner has been consistent with his assumptions.

The question addressed in the book, *the*

Christian's relation to the state, even if controversial, needs to be looked at by each generation of non-resistant believers. The Anabaptists, especially the Mennonites, have a long history of political non-involvement while other evangelical and Protestant bodies have defended political participation on the basis of Romans 13, where we are told that the state is God's instrument to enforce retributive and relative justice. This position of non-involvement is being questioned by some and outright rejected by others within the non-resistant communities of faith. Penner argues that this purpose of the state runs counter to the teaching that the believer is to love his/her enemies, to return good for evil.

Therefore, the Christian's relation to the state is one of non-participation, since the state works on an ethic that makes the practice of love impossible as well as using evil means to achieve its goal. Penner says, Paul supports this thesis by citing Paul's statement that the believer is to return good for evil, while the state enforces retributive justice, an eye for an eye, rather than forgiveness.

Penner points out that the concept of a dual morality, personal and professional, is unconvincingly used to justify participation in the non-Christian activities of the state. Penner argues for a single morality that an individual is to apply in personal and professional life and decisions.

The demonic influence on the state is briefly mentioned but could be elaborated. I received an unpublished document from Dr. Penner where he takes more space to discuss this issue. Hopefully that document will be published and become a resource in the discussion of a Christian's relation to the State.

Penner's summary conclusion outlines well, the closely argued thesis, that non-resistance makes being consistent with that Biblical teaching and still functioning as a dignitary of the state contradictory.

The summary of his conclusions follow (128-122):

The New Testament does not give detailed information about the origin, nature and function of the state. There is, however, sufficient Scripture that speaks to this issue that helps a Christian determine how to relate to the state as well as determine his moral conduct.

Penner concludes that it is impossible for the state to love as the New Testament commands the Christian to love. The state is the instrument for the application of vengeance and justice. This is incompatible with the love and the forgiveness required by the New Testament and therefore the state cannot be Christian.

The state is of the order of this world and not of the order of grace. In some real and present way it is under demonic control.

The basis of the existence of the state is coercion. The function of the state is to apply the wrath of God which is described as the exercising of vengeance against evil.

The state is God's arrangement and is appointed by Him for enforcing justice and order. Penner says the state is God's arrangement but

it is not divine.

A *de facto* state is a *bona fide* state.

The Bible teaches submission and obedience to the state, though this obedience is not absolute.

The New Testament teaches nonresistance. All coercion is forbidden, which necessarily includes homicide.

"From this study and the conclusions which have been made, it follows that the Christian cannot participate in any function of human government, or act on behalf of any state or society, which involves him in those things which God has forbidden the Christian. This means, specifically, that the Christian cannot participate in any function which is directly connected with the retributive action of the state." (120-21)

The nonresistant Christian makes a major contribution serving as salt and light and thus functions as preservative for society. The believer must be the best citizen and do the most good for the most people, and that is supremely done by winning men and women to Christ.

We thank James Lowry for reprinting Dr. Penner's book. Not every one will agree with the conclusions, but no one can read the short volume without rethinking again the application of nonresistance to the political scene. Bringing the book back into the public eye should help to rekindle discussion of the centrality and essentiality to the teaching of love for the Christian and how it affects our involvement in politics. It will also help to focus the essentiality of love in the life of the Christian. Penner's study underlines the truth that nonresistance is not an option but an essential if one wants to be biblical in one's theology and practice. The book is a call to be consistent in our application of New Testament love. It will certainly demand that readers re-examine the shift in thinking from non-resistance to non-violence that has been happening in many non-resistant communities of faith.

A brief biographical note is added to get a better view of the writer. Dr. Penner was born and raised in Landmark, Manitoba. As a young man he attended the Winnipeg Bible Institute, to day Providence Bible College. His education includes graduation from Winnipeg Bible Institute, 1940; Goshen College, B.A. 1950; Goshen College Biblical Seminary, B.D., 1954; Wheaton College, M.A., 1954; University of Iowa, Ph. D., 1971. In addition, he has studied at various other colleges and universities without graduating from those schools.

Dr. Penner was one of the founding fathers of Red Rock Bible Camp, has taught at the Steinbach Bible College, Manitoba; Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Indiana; Malone College, Ohio; and Ashland Theological Seminary, Ohio. In addition, he has been active as a pastor and minister in various churches in the U.S.A and Canada. He was the first moderator of the newly organized Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 1959. He and wife Elvira live near Kola, Manitoba.

An interesting note connected to this book is the money it generated to assist Dr. Penner in his studies. Shortly after the first edition was



Dr. Archie Penner graduating from the University of Iowa with his doctoral degree in 1971. Archie Penner is the grandson of Martin Penner (1849-1928), Greenland, minister of the Holdeman Church, see Preservings, No. 11, pages 85-7.

published, it was on display at a Herald Press book display at the Jacksonville, Florida Sunday School Convention. A Miss Maurine Watson purchased a volume, read it, and then sought contact with the Penners. She was so impressed that she gave Dr. Penner a blank check to continue his studies.

Contact was never face to face. When the Penners needed assistance they would telegraph her. Maurine would then telephone them and money would be transferred. She provided a significant contribution to help in Dr. Penner's training. She also made contributions to Goshen College Biblical Seminary as well as giving some assistance to Dr. Harold S. Bender personally.

The Penner's never met her personally though they had lengthy conversations on the telephone.

Review written by Harvey Plett, Ph.D., Steinbach Bible College, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Editor's Note: Archie Penner's, *The New Testament, the Christian and the State* may be ordered from the publisher, James Lowry, Deutsche Buchhandlung, 13531 Maugansville Rd., Hagerstown, Maryland, 21740, \$6.95 U.S. plus postage.

Harry Loewen, ed., *Road to Freedom: Mennonites Escape the Land of Suffering* (Kitchener: Pandora Press and Scottdale: Herald Press, 2000), 302 pages.

The handsome, tastefully designed coffee table format of *Road to Freedom* hardly prepares the reader for the emotionally searing personal experiences of Russian Mennonites who were forced to flee from Soviet Russia to Poland and Germany during World War II. Probably not since *Martyrs' Mirror* has there been a book so filled with vividly gripping stories of Mennonites suffering for their faith and ethnic identity.

The Mennonite diaspora began in 1943 when

Editor's Note: Wheaton College was one of the strongholds of American Fundamentalist religious culture. In 1950 when Dr. Penner started work on his Master's thesis, Wheaton served as an officer training facility for the Korean War. One of the three members of his examining committee, Dr. Camm, was a "hawk" on military issues. When Penner submitted his thesis, the questioning was vigorous. Later it came out that Dr. Camm had sought to refuse Dr. Penner his degree on the basis that his thesis was not Christian, thereby affirming the deep spiritual darkness of Protestant Fundamentalism. Fortunately, Dr. Tenney, one of the other examiners, had held forth that the degree could not be refused since the work was scholarly and academically highly acceptable.

Dr. Penner completed his actual research at Goshen College, where he and Dr. Robert Friedmann shared the basement of the library building to do their writing.

the German army was forced to retreat from the Soviet Union and took the Mennonites back to Germany with them. It did not end until well after the end of the War when the lucky survivors were able to escape to countries like Canada and Paraguay. Altogether, some 35,000 Mennonites participated in the "Great Trek" (with thousands of others having already met a tragic fate at the hands of Stalin in the thirties), but only about 12,000 were able to make it safely over to the Allied zones of occupation. The rest, some 23,000, were recaptured by the Russians and sent into bleak exile in Kazakhstan and other far-eastern places.

This deeply moving book was directly inspired by a two-day "Fifty Year Freedom Jubilee Celebration" of post-World War II Mennonite refugees which took place in Winnipeg and Steinbach in August, 1998. It has been sensitively edited and partly written by Dr. Harry Loewen, the retired Chair in Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, who is himself one of the post-war refugees to Canada. Dozens of former refugees related their experiences at the conference and many of their stories are to be found in this fascinating collection. Some additional accounts were written expressly for this book or have been excerpted from other publications. Many of the stories are tragic almost beyond belief, but others also have happy endings born of a never-flagging faith in a righteous God and of seemingly miraculous events coming together at the right time.

It is, after all, the survivors of this cataclysm who are doing the remembering, not only on behalf of themselves but also on behalf of those who perished. Commendably, most of these stories are told in a matter-of-fact narrative style that does not seek to over-sentimentalize or sensationalize their harrowing contents. Scores of well-chosen photos also help to give the book an added dimension of depth and authenticity.

Russian Mennonites, with their embedded hatred for Soviet Communism, under which they had undergone so much degradation and suffering in the decade before the War began, were inevitably drawn to Germany regardless of Hitler and National Socialism. They had experienced a heady new freedom under the protection of the German army of occupation in Ukraine between 1941 and 1943. At the time they would have known little, if anything, about the horrendous racial policies and mass slaughters all over eastern Europe. It is not surprising then that many young Mennonite men were quite willing to serve in the German military. As Harry Loewen points out, by the "early 1940s Mennonite men of military age had had little religious training" as a result of having grown up under Communism (p.105). The German SS even organized ethnic German (including Mennonite) cavalry squadrons in the Molotschna area. This would come close to being a World War II version of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* organized during the Russian Revolution.

Many young Mennonites either joined the German army at this time or were drafted, some into the dreaded SS. Whether these Mennonite soldiers helped in the purging of Jews and other "undesirables" as dictated by the Nazis is not clear from this book, but it is logical to assume that at least some of them did. This brings up the whole ugly question of whether the Russian Mennonites were altogether the innocent victims of Soviet tyranny during this period that they claimed to be. Just as early on there had been some Mennonites who supported the Communists and persecuted their own people, it may be assumed that there were at least some Mennonites who aided and abetted the Nazis in their equally nefarious policies.

While the stories in this collection do not directly deal with this issue, some of the circumstances described make one a little suspicious. It is also worth noting that these young men, whatever their wartime activities may have been, were received in Canada and Paraguay with open arms along with the other refugees. Ironically, that was not the case with many Canadian Mennonites who had served in the military during the War. Many of them were ignored at best, ostracized at worst or even expelled from their home churches.

Another issue that is dealt with only peripherally in this book is that of the many Mennonite women who were raped by Soviet troops during the time of terror in 1944-45. As was the case during the terrorist period of the Russian Revolution, Mennonite women have been understandably reluctant to talk or write about this shameful horror in their lives and Mennonite historians have been equally reluctant to broach this subject. The historian Marlene Epp points out in this book that "as long as rape is understood as a woman's personal experience and an isolated phenomenon, it remains excluded from the 'history of a people' type of narrative so integral to Mennonite historiography" (p.260). This is certainly a subject from both world wars that cries out for thorough treat-

ment by Mennonite historians.

As one would expect from an eclectic collection such as this, the writing in this book is of uneven quality and abrupt shifts of focus. It opens with an accurate, succinct summary of Mennonite history by editor Loewen and then moves directly into the Stalinist period of the thirties and the tragic stories of Mennonite men being arrested and either executed summarily or sent into exile never to be seen again. While the facts and statistics are incomplete, it is certain that thousands of Mennonite men, most of them married with families, were taken away forever in the late thirties. By the time of the Great Trek there were very few men left, except for the elderly, to help the women and their families on the long, arduous journey from Ukraine to Polish Germany (the Wartegau, mainly).

These women were heroic figures who not only did the work of their missing men, but who were almost superhuman in their determination to keep their families together as best they could through all the hardships and adversities they encountered during the months they were on the road and after. These brave, self-sacrificing Mennonite women should be held up for all time as shining examples of what ethnic solidarity and a staunch Christian faith can accomplish. Without them the Great Trek could not have happened.

While some of the material in this fine book consists of little more than contemporary diary entries or experiences remembered at a considerable distance, there is plenty of vivid writing here and some of it reaches a literary level. An example is Jakob Klassens's "The End of the War Through the Eyes of a Child", in which a Mennonite lad is exposed to the violence of bombing raids in Germany and who tries desperately to find enough food to survive in the chaos of war. Ulrich Woelke's stories "Christmas 1951" and "The Burial" depict personal experiences with the artistry of well-written short stories.

There is also the heart-stopping story of a mother who leaves her children on a refugee train while she goes out to fetch something only to have the train leave without her. Frantically she takes the next train, checks at every stop and finally, miraculously, finds her children in a newly opened hostel. Another incredible story involves a man who survives a Siberian prison and takes a job on a collective farm after being told that his wife and son are dead. He remarries, but when it becomes obvious that he will never be able to father another child the couple decide to adopt one at a local orphanage (of which there were many at the time). They choose a little girl who insists that her older brother has to come too. In talking to the children the man discovers that they are his own children, his little daughter having been born after he was taken away to prison.

"Essays and Reflections", the closing chapter, contains informative and well-researched articles that help put these many personal experiences into a larger historical perspective. Foremost among them are Marlene Epp's account

of the Great Trek as seen by a professional historian, and Colin P. Neufeldt's grim account of how the Mennonite communities in Ukraine were sadistically destroyed by Stalin's ruthless henchmen during the 1930s as the policies of collectivization and dekulakization were enforced at the cost of countless lives. Neufeldt's article is painful to read, dealing as it does with one of the saddest, most shameful chapters in Russian-Mennonite history.

The "apocalypse of 1928-33", as Neufeldt calls it, shattered the Mennonite "commonwealth" in Russia for all time, leaving only broken and scattered ethnic fragments behind. On the more pleasant side, there are such essays as Harry Loewen's account of the rise of the MCC, which saved so many lives during this terrible period, and Peter Letkeman's diligently researched history of choral singing in Mennonite Russia, a tradition that was courageously kept alive through all the upheaval and violence.

Harry Loewen deserves much credit for putting this book together in such an effective manner. His was by no means a simple editing job. He had to translate much of the material from German to English and had to abridge and adapt many of the contributions. In addition, he wrote most of the historical background material that gives the book an acceptable degree of unity and sequential shape. Finally, in his "Epilogue: Reflections on Mennonite Suffering" he reflects upon some of the social and moral issues raised by the many narratives that make up this book. These are not one-sided or biased reflections and Loewen is not afraid to rouse sleeping dogs. He points out that the Germans deliberately waited until the harvest was in before beginning the Great Trek and that by doing so they added a great deal to the misery and suffering of the refugees as winter weather caught them on the way.

He also argues that the brutality and terror the Red Army perpetrated in Germany was "a cruel response to the terror the German armies brought to Russia in 1941-42, only more terrible in its expression" (p.287). And while Loewen certainly believes that the Mennonites of Russia were "more sinned against than sinning", he does not altogether absolve them from moral responsibility and raises the question of whether even innocent victims need to repent and forgive. His careful answer is that Mennonites at least "need to *understand* their exile and suffering within the context of history" (p.293), and that "for a faith community to *understand* the historical reality, however painful and cruel it may have been, is to accept it as from God" (p.293).

Mennonites who read this book with care and attention will not only learn about a highly troubled Mennonite past, but will also have a clearer understanding of what it means to be a Mennonite.

Reviewed by Al Reimer, Wordsworth Bay, Winnipeg, Manitoba, retired Professor of English and Literature, University of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Larry Towell, *The Mennonites* (London, England: Phaidon Press Limited, 2000), n.p. (hardcover).

The Mennonites by Larry Towell is a book of his personal experiences with Old Colony Mennonites. His experiences begin in Ontario and proceed to the different Mennonite colonies in Mexico where his subjects originated.

The book consists of two stories, one in photos and the other in script. The photo story is told through the lens of Towell's camera, in which he observes the Old Colonists in their daily life of work, leisure, travel, worship, and sorrow. This story is told in large, black and white photos, which are organized geographically according to colony and country. The photos have no explanation, title or cut line. Each stands starkly on its own.

The other story consists of brief historical sketches, rounded out with stories of families and individuals. The narrative is written on onion skin thin paper. The writing is sparse, gripping, personal and informative.

After a brief, deft, historical overview of the Mennonite story from the Netherlands, to Poland and Prussia, to Russia, to southern Manitoba and then on to Mexico, Towell begins the book in Ontario. He met Old Colony Mennonites in southwestern Ontario, and was drawn to them. He observed them as "otherworldly and therefore completely vulnerable in a society in which they do not belong." He began to observe, photograph and write. Towell claims there are 30,000 Old Colonists in Ontario, many of whom travel back and forth to Mexico with the seasons.

As Towell got to know the Old Colonists, and they him, families invited him to accompany them to Mexico. The first colony he visited was La Batea in the state of Zacatecas. The colony had not had rain for three years. Everything was so dry, that "men give up working out of doors to avoid suffocation. Even the milk tasted like digested cactus."

The second group of colonies he visited lie north of Casas Grandes. These colonies were all conservative in 1990 when he first began his travels. None had electricity or used pickup trucks. At the end of his writing in 1999, all but one had decided to modernize. The dilemma was that if they did not modernize, and accept electricity to drive their irrigation pumps, the price of diesel fuel would bankrupt them. So, rather than modernize, the leaders and a faithful remnant, left and the rest reorganized into viable communities.

From Casas Grandes his photos turn to the colonies in the state of Campeche. In Mexico, Campeche has become the refuge of the most conservative Old Colonists. (The rest of the conservatives in Mexico emigrate to Bolivia, Paraguay or Argentina) Even though they are in a tropical area, and have more rainfall, farming is still a struggle. Like all the Old Colonists everywhere, they are taken advantage of. In this case a Texas merchant came to buy sixteen loads of watermelon, and then forgot to send the cheque to pay for them. When Towell later phoned the number on the merchant's business

card, the number was not in service.

Towell moved from one colony to the next ending with the mother colonies in the Cuauhtemoc area. These colonies are the largest. The residents number about 38,000. The two original colonies, Manitoba and Swift Current, acquired two additional colonies: Santa Rita and Ojo de la Yegua. All of these have modernized in that they have accepted electricity and pick-ups. However, like most of the Old Colonists in Mexico who have modernized, they still retain their old school system. The result is that many of the people are functionally illiterate. On his travels back and forth to Mexico, Towell wonders what it must be like not to be able to read. Road signs and maps have no meaning.

The book ends with an account of his trip from Ontario to the colony of Tamaulipas. The last reference is to an Old Colonist who left to join another Mennonite church. Towell's comment is that he was saved by grace and not by works.

The cover of the book is pitch black and fits into a sleeve. It thus looks like an Old Colony hymnbook.

Readers will immediately recognize that, despite the title, the book does not tell the whole Mennonite story. It tells the Old Colony story, which is one small slice of the Russian Mennonite story, which in itself is only one part of the Mennonite story. Even within the Old Colony

story, only the story of those who migrated to Ontario is included.

Towell's story thus includes those who for one reason or the other had to leave Mexico. It is a story of the marginalized, of the poor, of those who could not survive economically in Mexico, and of those who did not follow the bishops to Campeche, Bolivia, Paraguay, or Argentina. It is the story of a remnant.

The heart of the book is Towell's artistic, well chosen photographs. He traveled with families, stayed in Mexican Old Colonists' homes and worshipped in their churches. Everywhere he went, he took photos. Photos of families around a table, of young women stooking grain, of horses and wagons and of the stark dry Mexican landscape.

Photos of children in school, of mothers cooking in the kitchen, of picking cucumbers and tobacco leaves, and of the deplorable shacks in which the immigrants live.

Photos of large families, of lovers embracing and of a child being prepared for burial. Photos of women running in the wind and protecting their faces against the flying sand. Photos of men kneeling in prayer in church.

It is evident that the photographs are not fully representative of Old Colony life. Old Colonists do not like to have their photographs taken. Thus many of Towell's photos are taken when people were not looking, of children and of those who covered their faces. The leaders, the people at the centre of the communities, and the well to do, rarely make it into the photos.

A reoccurring theme in the book is that of exploitation. The Old Colonists are exploited by their employers in Ontario who pay them meager wages, who employ their little children, who charge them outrageous rent for run down shacks and who cheat them out of a summer's pay because the Old Colonists can't read the contracts.

Old Colonist are exploited when their leaders buy land for far too high a price. They are exploited by fellow Mennonites who become rich, buy up the land and force the poor to work for them for miserable wages. They are exploited by their leaders who are more concerned about rules than about the welfare of people.

Towell also portrays beauty: the beauty of large families around a kitchen table, of children playing and of a father proudly holding a baby; the beauty of a sleeping child surrounded by baskets of cucumbers.

And always there is

struggle: the struggle to put food on the table, to have enough money to go back to Mexico and to overcome the ever present drought; the struggle to stay on the land, for land is the life-blood of the Old Colonists.

How will the Old Colonists feel about how they are portrayed? Will they feel badly about the poverty, or will they see the incredible strength of spirit that infuses the story?

Towell's book shows both negatives and positives. His book is not the whole story, but his photos dramatically portray a beautiful story that words alone cannot tell. The book is highly recommended.

Reviewed by John J. Friesen, Professor of History and Theology, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Book Review Essay:

J. Denny Weaver, *Anabaptist Theology in the Face of Postmodernity: A Proposal for the Third Millennium*. Telford, Penn.: Pandora Press U.S., 2000. 221 pages, softcover.

It is almost impossible to get very far these days without encountering something that falls under the description "postmodern." More than just an intellectual movement, postmodernism often names a turn in contemporary culture, or at least the cultures of "advanced" Western capitalism. Discussions of contemporary culture frequently contain references to the "typically postmodern moment," such as the scene of an Amish buggy in a Wal-Mart parking lot, or the veiled Muslim woman talking on a cell-phone in a crowded airport.

Such images nicely capture the sense in which postmodernism typically refers to some sort of dislocation, rupture, or fragmentation. Yet beyond such generalities, there remains much confusion and debate about what postmodernism is and whose interests it primarily serves. At the very least, it is fair to say that postmodernism is a diverse and many-headed monster. It is used to capture significant shifts in architecture, politics, art, and theology, among other things. Indeed, since postmodernism denotes a change in the way we understand movement through time and space, it can be said to depict a transfiguration of day-to-day life in general.

To provide some background for the discussion that follows, it might be instructive to highlight just a few examples of where we encounter postmodernism. In architecture, postmodernism names a shift from centres of strength and purposeful functionality to playfully excessive structures. For example, it has been suggested that Toronto's Eaton Centre and most Las Vegas casinos are paradigmatically postmodern buildings, since they gleefully reject the idea of a unified space designed for a specific usage and experiment with the ongoing mutation of space itself. Modern architecture, by contrast, is characterised by the more centred structure of the department store, such as Eatons in downtown Winnipeg, which is arranged around a unifying core, or the functional ode to power and virility that is the high-rise



Towell's photographs are stark, crisp and poignant.

office building or apartment block.

In art, postmodernism typically implies the employment of self-referential pastiche, a kind of layering of meaning which borrows familiar images or concepts and gives them radically new meaning by placing them in a different context. In many ways, this kind of "intertextuality" is best exemplified by the rise of sampling in music, where familiar tunes or otherwise recognizable sounds are reworked into new formats, often in a subversive attempt to make a political point of resistance to mainstream forms of power. Among other things, such a technique calls into question the modernist assumption that creativity implies absolute originality.

In film, postmodernism is often manifested in the rejection of linear narratives, as in *Pulp Fiction*, *Run Lola Run*, or the more recent film, *Memento*. When these are referred to as "postmodern films," what is being highlighted is the sense in which they unfold (a favourite postmodern category) one unpredictable layer at a time, often without any kind of final resolution. Characteristically modern films, such as the traditional Hollywood epic, do not so much unfold as they are directed by a single narrative voice towards a definite and unambiguous ending.

In short, postmodernism grows out of the collapse of world-unifying narratives. In its most interesting varieties, it stresses not the loss of narrative as such, but rather points to the possibilities for critical *re*-narration, as exemplified by the *Simpsons* or the use of sampling in some rap music.

In addition to the shifts it implies in art and architecture, postmodernism is also intrinsically tied up with the question of politics. Indeed, postmodernism is often summarised in terms of a general turn to the political. Against the modern (Enlightenment) search for abstract theories of reality and universal principles, postmodernism asserts that there is no such thing as pure knowledge. All knowledge originates in some concrete political context and is thus bound up with some form of power.

This political turn is nicely captured by two standard accounts of the beginnings of postmodernism. According to one popular story, postmodernism began in Paris in May, 1968. This point in time marks the moment of widespread student revolts, in the name of radical democracy, against the French government and its contribution to the authoritarian nature of education. Although it acknowledges the significance of the student uprisings, a second account suggests that the origin of postmodernism is best located some years earlier, with the Algerian War of Independence. For it is this event that best represents a break with the "sovereign model of power" associated with Eurocentric imperialism and colonial rule. Despite minor differences, both stories portray postmodernism as an attempt to call into question the idea of centralized power, whether in French education or in the colonization of other nations.

Accordingly, the shift from modern to postmodern politics can be seen as a shift from a conception of territorial and bounded space, organized around a central locus of power, to a deterritorialized, non-concentric understanding of political space. Politics is no longer understood in terms of bipolar oppositions, such as the relationship between the East and West during the Cold War, nor as an organizing centre of power through which far off lands are colonized. Both models understand power to be primarily "reactive," the imposition of force over against another. Postmodern politics, by contrast, views power as a kind of creative unfolding, much like the unfolding of the postmodern film noted above.

It is against the background of this complicated mix of factors that J. Denny Weaver sees a new and exciting opportunity for Mennonite theology. For Weaver, postmodernism is understood primarily as the abandonment of the universal in favour of the particular. Whereas modernity is defined as "the idea that one, commonly shared truth would emerge from presumed universal philosophy" (20), postmodernity emerges on this side of a long history of failed attempts at justifying universal schemes and thus represents a new respect for the particularity of specific perspectives.

In a theological context, Weaver suggests that postmodernity is best understood in terms of the demise of Christendom. Associated with the conversion of Constantine, Christendom is built on the assumption that there is "one general theological Truth for all Christians, or one generally recognizable set of answers" (18). This assumption receives concrete expression in the alignment of church and world and the

corresponding practice of infant baptism. Because Anabaptist/Mennonite theology has long been suspicious of the constantinian alignment of church and world, Weaver suggests that the postmodern world is peculiarly suited for the development of characteristically Mennonite ideas.

In a more apologetic tone, Weaver claims that the postmodern turn to the particular makes Mennonite theology more viable vis-a-vis the mainstream theology of Christendom. Stripped of its universalist pretensions, the theological assumptions of Christendom are no longer privileged in the way they once were. At the level of epistemology, previously marginalized particular theologies now attain a newfound credibility. In other words, the status of the established church is no longer guaranteed or to be presumed at the outset. It must be supported with sound theological arguments. Weaver suggests that "if the particularity of the established church theology is acknowledged, then that theology must make a case for itself and other expressions may legitimately assert their validity over against or alongside it" (107).

Mennonite concerns used to be marginalized, sometimes even excluded altogether, by the kinds of questions deemed legitimate in wider theological discussions. Postmodernity changes all this by helping us recognize that the universalist claims of the mainstream church are actually just another particular option. As Weaver himself puts it, "a particular theology for Mennonites as a peace church can now assert its version of truth on a logically equal footing with the theology of Christendom. The context of postmodernity thus offers Mennonites an opportunity virtu-

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc.
is pleased to announce
the publication of professor
JOHN H. WARKENTIN'S
The Mennonite Settlements
of Southeastern
Manitoba




- reprinting of a 1960 doctoral thesis
- 409 pages, 55 charts & maps
- describes the impact of the Mennonite settlers of 1874 on the landscape
- describes the settlement of Hanover, Steinbach, Rhineland, Stanley, Altona and Winkler

To order send \$20. plus \$3. for handling to:
HANOVER STEINBACH HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
Box 1960
Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0

ally unprecedented since the early church: a chance to articulate and receive a hearing for theology shaped specifically by the nonviolence of Jesus" (21).

I am not convinced this is the best way to state the opportunities afforded by postmodernism. Because all theologies are now recognized as being particular, Weaver hopes that Mennonites will now be taken just as seriously as everyone else. In other words, our status and potential influence has risen, even if only because others have been brought down to earth. This way of putting it is odd because it suggests that the opportunity postmodernism affords has to do primarily with a concern for effectiveness rather than the traditional Mennonite emphasis on faithful discipleship. But it is precisely such a pursuit of power that Weaver is otherwise against.

Although it contradicts his substantive theological claims, there is an echo of what might be called the "anxiety of influence" that rings throughout this book. The result is an ongoing tension between an emphasis on vulnerability and peace, on the one hand, and the opportunity to secure more relative power, on the other. Put differently, the apologetic orientation Weaver assumes at various points is a distinctly modern one. It is the epistemological equivalent of securing power and protecting territory.

A postmodern epistemology, by contrast, refuses the temptation to security and thus looks more diasporic or nomadic. It proceeds in a fundamentally fragmentary and ad hoc manner and remains vulnerably open to critique at the hands of its dialogue partners. Because of his commitment to peace, Weaver would benefit from dropping his apologetic intentions altogether in favour of a more thoroughly postmodern stance.

This tension between Weaver's support for pacifism and his underlying apologetic orientation is all the more surprising because much of his overall argument turns on precisely such an Anabaptist/postmodern awareness of the interrelationship of power/knowledge.

Indeed, although I have suggested he slips up at certain points, the most important contribution of this book is its attempt to draw attention to the way theologies are bound up with concrete political structures and particular formations of power. Weaver's primary targets in this regard are the orthodox creedal statements of Nicaea and Chalcedon as well as the classic (i.e., Anselmian and Abelardian) theories of atonement. In short, Weaver maintains that, contrary to common assumptions, the theology of the creeds is not neutral with respect to ethics/politics. Rather, he suggests that orthodoxy is complicit with the essentially violent politics of imperialism (see, e.g., 113, 126). The root of the problem is that the creeds identify Jesus only in the abstract (ontological) categories of "man" and "God" (124).

Similarly, the classic atonement theories understand salvation in terms of an "abstract, legal transaction between God and the sinner, which takes place outside history" (125). But

Weaver claims that such an abstract Jesus cannot be followed (124). Put differently, he is suggesting that the concept of discipleship is unintelligible in the context of a theology shaped by the creeds. This is because to be a disciple presumes that there is a concrete example or model to be followed. And it just such a concrete or narrative portrayal of Jesus that the creeds fail to provide. By shifting from a concrete to an abstract christology in the 4th and 5th centuries, Weaver argues that classical orthodoxy contributed to a growing consensus that non-violence is not intrinsic to the person and work Jesus (153-154). But by restating the 16th century Anabaptist call to reorient theology back to the story of Jesus as found in the Gospels, Weaver seeks to reverse this shift and return to a concrete, non-violent christology (110, 124).

Boiled down to the bare essentials, Weaver's basic claim is that because orthodox theology presupposes the violent context of a state church, it follows that Mennonite theology, which claims to take more seriously the non-violent story of Jesus, must develop a distinct theological alternative (see, e.g., 25-26, 68-70, 106-107, 112, 145-146, 152). Taking the argument one step further, he suggests that Mennonite theology has unwittingly contributed to the problematic state of affairs he identifies. Accordingly, this book serves as a corrective not only to mainstream theology, but to contemporary Mennonite theology as well.

In short, Weaver maintains Mennonite theology has tended to articulate its commitment to pacifism as a distinctive "add-on" to be built onto a generalized core of beliefs shared by all Christians. Mennonite theology is typically structured according to a two-tiered scheme, in which a wider base of Christian doctrine is topped off with peculiarly Anabaptist commitments to an ethic of peace. As Weaver himself puts it, "this larger theological entity contained formulations of the classic foundational doctrines of Christian theology, including but not limited to the classic formulations of the Trinity, Christology, and atonement. As such, these formulas comprised a standard program—a theology-in-general or Christianity-as-such that existed independently of particular historical contexts and particular denominations.... It was simply assumed that Mennonites borrowed this standard theology-in-general and then built their own theology on it" (50).

According to Weaver, this two-tiered approach reflects the dominant tendency for Mennonite theology in the 19th and 20th centuries. He outlines numerous examples in a host of Mennonite theologians as diverse as Gerhard Wiebe, John Horsch, Harold Bender, and more recently A. James Reimer, Ron Sider, and Thomas Finger. He also claims that this tendency is reflected in recent historical work, most notably that of Walter Klaassen and C. Arnold Snyder, which questions the assumption that 16th C. Anabaptism marks a "brand new departure" from the rest of the Christian tradition (95). Indeed, the bulk of the book is an attempt to substantiate his thesis about the shape of recent Mennonite theology.

The problem with such an approach, Weaver argues, is that it ends up inadvertently contributing to the very marginalization of peace Mennonites have traditionally resisted. In fact, he

suggests that “the effort to retain a theology-in-general has succeeded more in enabling Mennonites to identify with some version of wider Christendom than it has produced a genuine peace theology for Mennonite churches or has persuaded other Christians of the truth of Christian nonviolence” (67).

Put bluntly, Weaver alleges that Mennonite theologians have let down the church. They have failed to provide their own people with the theological resources necessary to sustain a robust commitment to pacifism. By accepting the creedal formulations more or less as is and merely topping them up with a pacifist ethics, Mennonite theology does not go far enough in establishing the claim that non-violence is intrinsic to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Such an approach leaves an opening for violence in the very structure of Mennonite theology, even if it goes on to argue against violence in practice.

Weaver suggests that Mennonite theology tends to be particular only at the top level in terms of its commitment to peace, whereas he maintains that it should be particular all the way down. We must therefore be wary of the violence-accommodating creeds and classical atonement theories and develop instead a theology which places peace at the very core of the Christian tradition. In this regard, he suggests that Mennonites can benefit from a closer dialogue with Black and womanist (i.e., Black feminist) theology.

Growing out of a similar experience of marginality to mainstream theology, for example, James Cone has developed a christology which refuses to dehistoricize the work of Christ into abstract rational formulas, thereby maintaining the link between liberation and reconciliation, justification and sanctification, or theology and ethics in a way that mainstream and two-tiered approaches cannot (131).

Weaver is certainly correct to claim that peace is intrinsic to the gospel message and thus a basic rather than peripheral theological category. He is also correct to align his argument with some of the distinctive claims associated with postmodernism.

But I will close by raising a few questions about the way he executes his plan for a renewed Mennonite peace theology. Against the background of postmodernism, perhaps the best way to state my worry is in terms of Weaver’s understanding of particularity and Mennonite distinctiveness. In short, it appears that his conception of particularity remains a strongly unified one. His repeated calls for a wholly distinct Mennonite theology can be read as a shift from larger unities to smaller ones. But it does not seem to call into question the very idea of a unified whole itself.

By contrast, I am suggesting that both postmodernism and a Mennonite understanding of peace provide good reasons for a more thoroughgoing appreciation of particularity, a more radical move beyond thinking in terms of wholes. In other words, Weaver’s discussion too easily slides into the rhetoric of strength and security. His call for a distinct Mennonite theology sounds too concentric. He does not

go far enough in resisting the idea of delineating clear borders, and can thus be read as implying an underlying territorial conception of theological enquiry.

In light of these claims, it might be suggested that both postmodernism and pacifism encourage *more*, not less, engagement with the tradition of classical orthodoxy. Since pacifism consists in a refusal of a territorial conception of theological enquiry, it becomes possible to take more seriously the possibility of *re*-narration in the sense exemplified in the discussion of postmodernist art above. Classical orthodoxy and Mennonite theology are not two distinct or concentric wholes. There are numerous threads of potential overlap. Does Mennonite pacifism not turn on the trinitarian claim regarding the divinity of Jesus? Against Weaver’s sharp condemnation of the creeds, it might be suggested that a willingness to engage the basic claims associated with orthodoxy has everything to do with the way pacifism informs the very nature of theological enquiry.

Consider, by contrast, the way John Howard Yoder engages the work of contemporary just war theorists. Instead of suggesting that just war theory is essentially violent, as Weaver seems to do with respect to the creeds, Yoder engages the just warrior on her own terms and calls for a clearer articulation of its general presumption against violence. I am suggesting that a similar strategy might be employed with respect to classical orthodoxy. In other words, not all ways of engaging the theology of the wider church constitute the marginalization of peace Weaver attributes to contemporary evangelicals. Indeed, by making

his rejection of orthodox theology too complete and thorough, it might even be suggested that Weaver also leaves an opening for violence—albeit in a very different way.

Having said this, I do not mean to suggest that Weaver’s argument is essentially wrong. That would, of course, be to partake in equally concentric habits of thinking. The above objection grows out of a deeper agreement with Weaver’s theology. His passionate plea for a Mennonite theology which emphasizes the centrality of peace is much needed in an age of “seeker-sensitive” churches willing to downplay any distinctiveness from the wider world in the name of evangelical outreach.

His call to be attentive to the social contexts in which theological commitments are articulated is an equally necessary reminder. And his recognition of the opportunities afforded by postmodernism is instructive in many ways. But while I share all these central claims, I still have some worries about the way Weaver develops his position in certain respects.

I hope it is clear that my objections are offered in the spirit of friendly disagreement. This book raises important questions about the relationship between Mennonite theology and the ethics of pacifism. If I have added some questions of my own, it is only because I think Weaver is exactly right that theology and ethics cannot be separated in the way that much mainstream and some Mennonite theology has assumed to be necessary.

Book review essay by Chris K. Huebner, Sessional Instructor, Canadian Mennonite University, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>OLD COLONY Mennonites in Canada 1875 to 2000</p> | <p>In 1875 the Old Colony (Reinlander) Church was formed in Manitoba, Canada, a Christian community committed to the restoration of the Apostolic Order. For 125 years Old Colony Mennonites have persevered through exile, poverty and harassment, blazing a trail of Biblical faithfulness across North and South America.</p> <p>This anthology of historical sketches, biographies and congregational histories is written by professional historians and by the Old Colony people themselves. The inspiring story of this remarkable community is finally told. 196 pages. Editor: Delbert F. Plett Q.C.</p> <p>To Order send \$20.00 plus \$3.00 postage and handling to: Crossway Publications Inc. Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada R0A 2M0</p> |
|--|--|