A Treasure Come Home

Stored within the Heritage Village Museum in Steinbach, Manitoba is a Bible dated 1630. It has a leather cover, is bound together by string and weighs about 15 lbs. The movements of the Bible have been carefully documented through handwritten notes on the inside cover of the book. As one follows these notes, one gets a true glimpse into the life of a Bergthaler Mennonite from the years 1630-1993.

The very first note establishes the ownership and gives us the first documented travel route of the Bible:

1793, 1, Abraham von Riesen from Neuendorf, bought this book for 5 Rubel, 50 Kope.

Abraham von Riesen was born in 1769 in Prussia. He brought the Bible with him when he emigrated to Russia along with his fellow Mennonites. The Bible then travelled to Nieder Chortitza where, upon Abraham's death in 1823, Jacob (Abraham's son) bought the Bible from his mother "als nachlass" (inheritance) for 36 Rubel.

Painstakingly written, the notes continue, giving not only the history of the movements of the Bible, but the family tree and other notes and events important to an immigrant family. For example, important to Jacob was the sermon that Cornelius Regier and Cornelius Warkentin preached on April 7, 1794. Cornelius Warkentin preached on the first holiday of Easter having Mark 16:1-7 as his text and Cornelius Regier preached on the other Easter holiday choosing the 14th Chapter of the Ep. Paul to the Romans as his text.

Rev. Heinrich Friesen's inscription is dated Nov. 11, 1877. He had bought the Bible from his father Jacob for $10.00. He was living in the Bergthaler village of Schoenfeld at the time together with his wife's family. It is clear as one reads his notes, that Rev. Friesen inherited a rich past, full of new places, much involvement in the church and close family ties. There is no question that this was an important part of the Friesen luggage as they joined the Bergthaler movement, emigrating to Canada in 1874. The Bible was to winter...
HSHS Opens a Window into History

“It is exciting to see one’s history come alive in a book,” stated Dr. John Friesen at a book launching ceremony held at the SBC auditorium on March 21, 1993. Published by the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society, the Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch created a stir among the Bergthaler people as they gathered to celebrate the publication of another piece of their history. This most recent publication will, for the first time, enable the Bergthaler people to trace their family tree through information provided in the Church Registry dated 1843-1876. People will be able to find the name of the ship the family travelled on through The Quebec Passenger List as well as the area they settled in when they arrived through the 1881 Federal Census List. With complete indexes by the editor John Dyck and Historical Society worker Cathy Barkman this book “meets the genealogical requests of the Bergthaler people in a way that has not been possible before,” replied Rev. Bill Hildebrandt, Bishop of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church.

“Let the story of your family be a window into history,” urged Dr. Friesen. Genealogical records such as these contain a lot of information: marriages, baptisms, how many children they had, how many died, etc. “See the joys, the excitements and the pain experienced revealed in these records.” These records are a way of telling a faith history in an authentic way.

A Treasure Awaiting Discovery

For those of us who are descending from a Bergthaler background, the publishing of the “Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch” is a real godsend. Our reaction to this book may range from indifference, (same as talking about “toyaoscha schnei”!) to mild interest, to “This is what I’ve been waiting for!” Some of our own people refer to this curiosity about where we come from and to whom we are related as a “Mennonite” disease. However, the growing desire of people everywhere to discover their roots leads me to believe that we Mennonites are actually in the vanguard of this movement and need not be apologetic.

Some of our family histories are already published, others have theirs well started, and then there are those who feel the need to get something started but are at a loss how to get beyond what “Uncle John or Aunt Helen” knew or were not quite sure of. To illustrate the first category I’ll use my own history. The Peter P. Hiebert book 1841-1984 was published in 1985, and my mother Mrs. Tina G. Hiebert (who took over the work of collecting the information) thought that Peter Hiebert of 1841 was as far back as there was information. While searching through the “Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch” I discovered two more generations beginning with Heinrich Huebert, born 1791. Also of note but as yet unexplained is why the name changed to Hiebert around 1825-30.

The “need to get started but don’t know where to look” category I think is best illustrated by a friend of mine. Sensing that she had an interest in genealogy I gave her a copy of the “Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch.” Inquiring a week later how she liked the book she confided “daat book haft me an jui fisem.” From having no names complete with birthdates beyond 1901, she has now been able to trace her father’s family back to 1740, or four more generations. The increasing number of pages of notes tucked between the pages of the book lend me to believe that others will also benefit from her research.

I am indebted and thankful especially to founder of the HSHS presented Bill Hildebrandt, representative of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church and Reeve Aron Friesen, representative of the Rural Municipality of Hanover with a copy of the book. The book is available for purchase at The Mennonite Post office in Steinbach or may be ordered by phoning John Dyck at 326-6451.

— Irene Fann Kroeker

You are invited to join the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society. Your membership will bring you this newsletter, the joy of supporting historical research in our local area, and the opportunity to have your own work brought to public notice.

Send $10.00 to:

HSHS
Box 1305
Steinbach, MB.
R0A 2A0

Left to right: John Dyck, Cathy Barkman, Aron Friesen, Rev. Bill Hildebrandt, Delbert Plett, Dr. John Friesen.
"Material Culture" Provides Historical Insight

The Mennonite Heritage Village, hosting the annual Hanover Steinbach Historical Society meeting, set the scene for the topic "Material Culture of the Mennonites," held on February 12-13. The HSHS had invited Dr. Reinhold Kauenhoven Janzen, Curator of the Kaufmann Museum in North Newton, Kansas and co-author of the book Mennonite Furniture: A Migrant Tradition.

Comparing various items of Mennonite furnishings found in the Prairie States to those in the Russian steppes, Dr. Janzen unfolded a fascinating story of a people whose material "things" depicted a society that remained distinct and separate from the surrounding culture. She led us through a period of immigration via slides and personalized stories of the families and the craftsmen involved in the creation of these furnishings. Mennonites, finding identity and continuity in the midst of chaos through their possessions, often sanctified these objects with Biblical messages and religious decorations. Dr. Janzen replied "Things embody who we are and what we are historically... they concretize history."

Dr. Janzen emphasized the importance of presenting history that focuses not only on the spectacular and the beautiful, but also that which is humble, simple and handmade. She presented several functional pieces of furnishings important to the survival of a pioneer family: the central kitchen/heating systems, benches, bedding, cream separators and many other items. Also presented were children’s toys, lovingly crafted by grandfathers. These remembered miniatures give important clues to forgotten items of the past.

Dr. Janzen expressed the urgent need to photograph traditional pieces of furniture and other household items, as they are fast disappearing from our Mennonite culture. "Do not be narrow in the time frame of what you collect," Dr. Janzen urged, "as this will tell a more complete and continuing story of the people."

Books were on display by Mennonite Books and the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society. An announcement was made regarding the soon to be released Berghal Gemeinde Buch containing four significant documents: a church registry of the members of the Berghal community from 1836-1876; three early Chortitzer church registers of the East Reserve 1878-1907; the Quebec Passenger List of Mennonite families arriving in Canada between 1874 and 1880 and the Hamburg Passenger List; as well as the 1881 Census list of the East Reserve, the West Reserve and the Scratching River settlement.

Preorders are currently being accepted by contacting John Dyck at the HSHS office, 326-3337. — Irene Enns Kroeker

A Treasure yet to come: Historical Sketches of The East Reserve 1874-1910

Sometime within the next twelve months the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society is expecting to publish the third volume in the East Reserve Historical Series under the title Historical Sketches of the East Reserve 1874-1910. The book will be divided into three sections.

The first section, under the heading "Village Sketches," will include brief histories of 18 pioneer villages. Sixteen of those villages were not covered in the previous volume, Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories 1874-1910, and the other two will add information to the previous work. This will bring to 24 the number of villages on which the society has published sketches and will add substantially to the information readily available on many villages that dotted the East Reserve landscape in the 1870s and 1880s.

The second section, under the heading "Biographies of Pioneer Leaders," will provide biographies of three pioneer church leaders and four leaders from the business and farming community. All of these were born in Russia and ably served the East Reserve community during the early years.

They each left an indelible mark on the community.

The third section will deal with a variety of topics, including education among the early Chortitzer, the emigration to Paraguay, writing family history, a sample family history, early immigrants from the Puchin community in Russia, the relationship of early localized farmers with the outside world and a review of the print culture of the East Reserve. Each of these articles will stimulate the thinking of readers.

Twenty-one writers have devoted much time and effort to research and write these chapters in order to preserve the history of the early pioneer period of what is now the Rural Municipality of Hanover. They have produced an excellent variety of documents that include something for every reader.


John Dyck

Books of Ongoing Interest
At Evangel Book Store
Introduction to Mennonite History
C. Dyck, now revised. Available in fall about $20.00

At Mennonite Heritage Village
Genealogy Books
Abram & Anna Falk Braun Family Reflections 1850-1991
200 pp., hard cover w/ pic. $35.00
The Muensterberg Hutteri
419 pp. with photos $27.50
Heinrich Fast Reimer and Margaret Warkentin Family Book
319 pp. $14.50
Abram J & Marie Toews Family
104 pp. with pictures $30.00
Memoirs and Family Book
of Johann B. Toews, 1993
83 pp. $7.50
The Descendants of Ohm
Abraham Wiebe
1821-1991
304 pp. with pictures, hard cover $50.00
Heinrich F. Wiebe Family Book
112 pp. $7.50
Kashubisch

During my 20 years of law practice in Steinbach I have become very aware of the different Low German or Plattdeutsch dialects spoken in the area. In speaking to clients the distinctions such as Old Colony or Molotschna origins, quickly become obvious. Within that context it is even more fun to try to establish people's history from their dialects or accents, e.g. Sommerfelder or Chortitzer and Bredenkleer or Holdeman.

But as a young lawyer I also became aware that Plattdeutsch or Flat German as Armin Wiebe calls it, had no monopoly in this area, and that other dialects were spoken as well. I recall sitting around the horn at Pete's Inn two decades ago when friend Art Mantle would thrill me with a statement like, "Kast nich!" Spoken slowly I could barely get the meaning to stick when it came out in rapid machine gun after a village of the same name in the area was settled. "Friedensfeld was a God-fearing, law abiding, hard-working community" — a gift which comes through his writing — a gift which comes as a heritage from his maternal vaudeville forebears.

Here was something new and absolutely fascinating. The language was spoken in the area southeast of Steinbach, known as Friedensfeld. The name — as far as I can figure out — was given to the region by the man Lutherans today.

Steinbach — started settling in Friedensfeld. "Gout rap schlau we war te fles" meaning "Giv' em the gas, and we'll get through what happened here in our own area and how it is impacting on people's lives today. I believe that the completion of Urry's theses, "The Closed and the Open" in 1978 and the publication of None but Saints in 1989 marked the beginning of a new era in Russian Mennonite historiography; an era much more open to new ideas and ways of understanding things and which allows all groups of this background to claim their proper place in history.

Urry has come to me that the work of Urry has been most important for a group such as ours. The field of Russian Mennonite history until 20 years ago was dominated by historians who could barely see beyond the edict of Peter M. Friesen, that the Kleine Gemeinde (and presumably all other conservative Mennonite groups) were a Godless lot, and the pronouncements of Frank H. Epp that the Bergthaler descendants of the Chortitzer/Old Colonizers were a lower genetic and social-economic race.

In contrast, Urry has come to see the field as an outsider with no preconceived notions or baggage of historical misconceptions. As an anthropologist he has also hearkened to the subject a complete new set of ideas and conceptualizations which fit in well with the modern-day interest in social history as opposed to the former exclusive concentration on "the story of the kings and queens." In fact, this dovetails with the predilection of our researchers who are primarily interested in telling and interpreting the story of the past.

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James chucked as he ordered his wild boar. He insisted that it be fresh; he wanted to hear the "shot" — presumably like some rich Gutsbeutler in the steppes of southern Russia, eh? My plate of roast beef was superb. Klassen, the raatje de, dropped by to tell us the story of his roots in Brazil. The Henkel-Frohken was great. Who said Henkel was only the name of a German bomber plane in WW2?

Then we got on the topic of the matriculation or matriline, as James preferred to call it — and why it was more powerful in the Kanadier societies than those that stayed in Russia after 1874. Well, we didn't come to any firm conclusions, but hopefully James will address this question in his forthcoming study of the Grunthal area. I was delighted to hear that he has another year of leave coming up in 1994 and that he intends to use this time to complete this project. This work will undoubtedly represent another important benchmark in the historiography of the East Reserve — R.M. of Hanover.

— Delbert F. Plett
President's Report

This year is not even half over and yet it is obvious that 1993 will be a significant one for the HHSJ. The decision to invite Professor Reinhold Janzen, Curator of the Kauffman Museum in Kansas to speak on the topic of "material culture" at our annual meeting in February (see report elsewhere in the Newsletter) reflected a Board decision that much of the groundwork for the research and study of the villages of the East Reserve from 1874 to 1910 had been laid. No the task is not nearly done — in fact, it is only barely begun. But we can be proud of our success in ferreting out primary source documents and publishing the same and of the numerous excellent articles which have been researched and written.

Material culture is a somewhat stilted phrase referring to the physical objects and spaces which human beings use in their day to day existence, e.g., pottery, tools, buildings, etc. The study of material culture has become a thriving industry in areas such as Waterloo County, Ontario, and among the Amish Mennonites of Pennsylvania. Almost every month, one sees a publication announcement for yet another book on quilts, or fraktur art. But the field is almost totally unexplored in Southern Manitoba. It was our hope that a speaker such as Professor Janzen would inspire us in the task of gathering and recording our own activities and of communicating the same to our membership and constituency — which consists of the populace of the R.M. of Hanover and Town of Steinbach. But it will also provide our researchers with a vehicle for publication of tidbits and anecdotes which do not warrant an article in our Historical Series, and yet, which often are the most interesting. Some suggestions for the Newsletter include a series on "interesting" characters of the area, historical homes and buildings, century farms, and a series of biographies about local historians and history makers.

An issue which needs to be looked at in the future is the relationship of our Society with respect to the Heritage Village Museum in Steinbach. Our objective is to foster research and writings. We see ourselves as supplementing the work of the Museum. We are most certainly not competing or conflicting with it in any way. And yet, the question remains, are there ways in which we could work closer together. One suggestion has been to co-sponsor meetings and seminars together. The hosting of a speaker such as Reinhold Janzen is very expensive and the idea of several organizations sponsoring such an event together, certainly has merit. Another area which will need to be addressed in the forthcoming years is whether the activities of the society should be expanded to include genealogy. This is an important category of study with an active group of researchers in the area.

Finally, in these times of recession and budget cutbacks, we too have seen a curtailment of our financial support. This has meant that we have temporarily laid off our research director, John Dyck. We are hopeful that the various funding agencies will approve our funding for 1993 and that our research program will not be unduly restricted. The collection of data, the writing and publication of historical material of the village period, 1874-1910, of the East Reserve (now R.M. of Hanover) remains our number one objective and it would be a tragedy if our efforts in this regard would have to be curtailed.

Debert F. Pleit

And then there was the "Haube"

After attending both of Dr. Reinhold Kaunenwagen Janzen's presentations on Mennonite material culture, I realized how much there was to learn about our material traditions. My growing interest focussed on a recently acquired "haube" which I had found at a local MCC Thrift Shop. Dr. Janzen's recommendation to read Melvin Gingerich's book Mennonite Attire Through Four Centuries proved to be an eye opener. It had never occurred to me that the progression of Mennonite clothing would have been such a complicated issue.

After discussing the "haube" (a married woman's head covering) with a number of people, it became obvious that each Mennonite branch seemed to have its own version. Some women had worn only a kerchief while others had worn their kerchiefs over their "haube". Women in the more conservative churches had ribbons to tie them under the chin. The Chortitzer women had clung to its usage much more religiously than had some others. A haube belonging to a Mexican Mennonite woman had a much longer lace "train" which hung well onto the shoulders.

The "haube" was a source of pride (and sometimes rivalry) even among the more humble women. While there was no time for women to do crafts as we enjoy them now, their creativity and handiwork were displayed in the sometimes ornate caps which they trimmed with ruffles, ribbons, rosettes and even beads — all in black, of course. For those women in the West Reserve who could afford to have such an item made, a new one could be bought in the 1920s for as little as $10 from Mrs. Bernard Wiebe in Altona.

The cost for repairing or remaking one was $8.

The more well-to-do women owned two — one for everyday and one for Sundays and visiting. Since it was the custom to be buried wearing the better one, there are few left other than those in our museum or those that have been handed down in the family.

After seeing the intricate hand stitching and fine workmanship it seems appropriate to say "latch off" to these pioneering women.

— Linda Buhler
**Book Report**


Born and raised on a turkey farm in Blumenort, Manitoba, Royden K. Loewen is known locally mainly for his 1983 community study *Blumenort: A Mennonite Community in Transition* (Blumenort, Man., 1983), 669 pages. This is a ground-breaking work which tapped the abundant records and writing of the pioneers who settled in the Steinbach area in the 1870s and demonstrated that these early settlers were a people of rather impressive cultural and religious achievements.

Since that time Royden has gone on to complete his doctorate in 1990 at the University of Manitoba. He has earned wide recognition as an scholar contributing frequently to various academic journals and presenting learned papers at conferences all over North America. But a propst is not known in his own land, they say, which is also true here. This, however, will change with the publication of his second book *Family, Church, and Market*, in which he has rewritten his doctoral dissertation in a book form for a wider audience.

In academic circles the book will enhance Royden's reputation as a recognized scholar in the field of ethnic studies and rural social history. The book is a case study of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde which originated as a reform group in the Molotschna Colony in Imperial Russia in 1812 and emigrated en masse to Steinbach, Kleefeld, Blumenort and Roscornt, Manitoba and Jansen, Nebraska, during the 1870s.

In this pioneering work, the author successfully presents the position that the conservative Mennonites who came to Manitoba in the 19th century, carefully orchestrated their emigration, choosing economically viable locations for settlement and consciously articulating the continuation of these communities in order to preserve their religious and cultural ethos. This thesis is a direct contradiction of the views of earlier scholars such as Frank H. Fip who presented conservative Mennonite groups such as the Kleine Gemeinde as a hapless band of reactionaries, wilfully driven from pillar to post by forces completely beyond their control. For this reason *Family, Church, and Market* is one of the most important books written in recent years relative to Manitoba Mennonites, comparable, perhaps, to James Urty's classic 1989 study of the Mennonites in Russia *None but Saints*.

But the book is much more than merely a ground-breaking academic work. It is well-written in concise and yet very readable prose. Royden has done extensive research on his topic, travelling as far afield as Kansas, Nebraska, Mexico, and Belize to gather the abundant primary source materials which he used to develop his presentation. He tells the story of the Kleine Gemeinde for the first time from a cultural and socio-economic perspective as opposed to a merely religious standpoint.

It is fascinating to read of the strategies for survival which this group successfully developed in Russia during the 1820s and 30s, and which were reconstituted in the North American context 50 years later, to ensure their continued cultural survival. This is also the first major historical work with special chapters devoted to the role of women in these pioneer communities. In addition, the influence of the matriline and matrilineal structure established "old order" communities such as the Kleine Gemeinde is outlined relative to major decisions made by the settlers, such as in which village to settle and so on.

Of great value to the general reader is the fact that each chapter is filled with anecdotes and stories. These will be of interest to family historians and genealogists who will be exposed for the first time to valuable primary sources such as the Russian era diaries of Abraham F. Reimer (1808-1892), who had the interesting nickname of "Fulla Reimer," Reimer is the ancestor of 90 percent of the population of Blumenort and a goodly portion of Steinbachers today.

*Family, Church, and Market* will be essential reading for anyone with even a passing interest in the culture and history of the Steinbach/Hanover area. The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society is very proud of the national acclaim which Royden has achieved. We are also very conscious of the positive impact which the publication of this book will have on the culture and identity of our community.

We salute Royden for choosing to expand his rich talents on a topic relative to his home community rather than a purely academic subject which might well have been more beneficial to the development of his professional career. Since the writing of history articulates the self-identity of a people which in turn impacts integrally on their success and happiness, we are glad that Royden has made this choice. We congratulate him for this rather significant achievement.

Delbert F. Plett, Q.C.
Steinbach, Manitoba
June 26, 1993

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En Baat Silberfeldschet Spöß

As I look back on my childhood I'm filled with many fond memories. One that I seemed to appreciate more and more as I grow older is that I was able to spend the first 24 years of my life with my grandfather. We lived in Silberfeld. His name was Cornelius Krause, well-known farmer, butcher, and trucker. He was the son of the original settler that moved into Silberfeld area. When he was about eight years old his parents moved into the "Bette Staape", opening up off reserve land to the Mennonites. As I think back upon my childhood I think I can truly say that even though I never experienced pioneer life I had the fortune of being able to share some of the customs and maybe even some of the folklore with them firsthand.

One thing that sticks out in my mind about my younger years is those terrible encounters with the much dreaded "Yule Tain" (Yellow Tooth). I always thought that probably all Mennonite children got to know this individual but recently I was surprised to learn that he probably only lived in Silberfeld and never went outside the community. As best as I can remember he probably was a friend of my grandfather's. At least it was through him that I got to know this ever-smiling, yet dreaded character. Somehow he always appeared at our window, gazing in at us when my brothers and I were at our very best irritating our grandfather. Many times when we were hard at it, he would say, "Look there is the 'Yule Tain' watching you through the window." We would look and sure enough there was the rascal. His big golden yellow tooth was clearly visible in his pitch black face. Many times this "Yule Tain" spoiled our even nights of terror and it wasn't until many years later that my youngest brother mentioned to me that now since the "Yule Tain" was gone from Silberfeld he wondered if it couldn't have just been the reflection of the glowing coal oil lamp in the window that spoiled our otherwise wild and noisy evenings.

— Jac Doerksen
the right. With the help of his family Jacob then published a small German paper which he called the Volks Bote. The first issue of December 1913, solicited subscriptions from interested readers in Canada and the U.S.A. Getting good reader support, Jacob moved the business to Steinbach and renamed the paper the Steinbach Post. The business community of Steinbach and area very quickly became aware of the value of advertising and filled the pages with new and wonderous accounts of the products they promoted. In this way the Steinbach Post had a significant role in the growth of Steinbach.

In 1924 the Friesens decided to retire and sold the business to Arnold Dyck. Jacob in his early retirement years again enjoyed the work of watch repair. However, shortly after this his health began to fail and he passed away on May 16, 1931.

— Henry Fast
May 20/93

Pennerings

We need your articles.

This second edition of the Preservings shows us again the possibilities that a local history window offers us all. Your particular interest can be put on public record.

Henry's article of Jacob S. Friesen may remind you of an interesting character in your community's past. The evocative talks given by Dr. Janzen on material culture inspired Linda to write about the "Hauhe". What artifacts are in your possession that show the daily life of our people? Not all need be as rare as the Bible Irene reports on to be interesting. Royden's important book reminds us that more and more of our people are bringing our books on our Mennonite life—we need to hear about them. Orlando's response to the Bergthal book reports helps us seek out significant readings. Houses and places and names have valuable histories worth recording.

And of course, articles such as Jake's "Spoo" and Del's "Kashubische" remind us that the range of articles is limited only by the alertness of your eye or ear.

So all readers! Send me your article for publication in the January Preservings.

— Wilmer Penner
Box 1305
Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0

Book Review


As I paged through the family book Hiebert Heritage 1883-1993, I was impressed with the vast amount of information which it contained. Along with genealogies and pictures, the families have been brought alive through touching stories which have been repeated over the generations and now have been recorded for everyone to read.

Compiled by Regina H. Neufeld, the idea for the book had its beginning as a result of several Hiebert reunions. Included in the book are 2224 descendants of Jakob (1883-1906) and Katharina Hiebert (1855-1916). This couple lived in the village of Schoenthal in the Bergthal Colony, South Russia, and immigrated to Canada in 1875. They settled near Niverville (Schanzenfeld), and many of their descendants still live in the area today.

Grateful for their heritage, the family acknowledges their strong faith in God which had led them throughout the generations. The Hiebert family has challenged all of us through their statement: "As we pray through the book may we be challenged to uphold the beliefs and ideals of our forefathers and keep faith that God will guide and protect us in the future as He has throughout the years. Ours is a rich heritage, one to be cherished and remembered."
in Ontario for a season before stopping for a time in East Reserve, namely Hochfeld, Manitoba.

Serving Rev. Friesen well during his ministry years, careful plans were made for the preservation of the Bible. The following is a diary entry of Rev. Friesen, dated April 22, 1904:

"The boys were all here. We talked about the big Bible and the land and what we will do when we sell it. The Bible will go to Jacob and the land to Heinrich and Abraham for $6.00/acre that is, here in the village. The 80 acres hayland for $5.00. David will also get a portion of the hayland."

The importance that was placed on the value of God's written word is evident in this brief diary entry. It was to be the Bible that would be passed on to the firstborn son; the land rights would be divided between his other sons. When Rev. Friesen died on Sept. 12, 1921, he was comforted in the knowledge that his most cherished possession was well looked after in the hands of his oldest son.

The Bible however, was to continue to lead an exciting and very full life. It was lucky enough to witness a period of immigration to Paraguay, disappointment with this untamed land, reestablishment in British Columbia and a trek to Minnesota.

Giving the Bible to his daughter Agatha, Jacob was the first Friesen to pass it on to a female. She took it with her when she and her husband A.J. Hermès emigrated to Paraguay in 1948. They were quick to return to Canada however, settling near Agatha's parents in British Columbia.

A grandchild to Agatha, Mr. Abraham J. Friesen, offered to buy the Bible from Agatha for $25.00, and Agatha was quick to agree. Abraham lived in Butterfield, Minnesota and was to pay a further $2.00 for the shipping costs.

The last inscription, written in English and dated April 14, 1950 reads:

I bought this family Bible from my uncle Abraham J. Friesen for $30.00, being the fifth generation to own this book.

— Irene Enns Kroeker

A Treasure Come Home

**“New Years Wish” of Johann Koop, Muntau, 1808**

This beautiful “Schönenschreiben” was received by the Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba, sometime in the 1970s. When I came across the document during some research in 1982, no history was available; so I decided to do some detective work. I found out that the article had been donated by Gertrude Klassen (1892-1986), a well-known Chiropractor of Klesfelde, Manitoba.

According to Anne Klassen, a foster daughter and niece of the donor, this item was originally in the possession of the donor’s grandfather Johann Koop (1831-1897). She remembers that it was always carefully stored away in the “Schlopbank.” It was a treasured family heirloom passed on from one generation to another.

Johann Koop (1831-1897) was a wealthy farmer formerly from Muntau, Molotschna, who established the village of Neu-anlage (presently Twincreek), three miles northwest of Steinbach, Manitoba, in 1878, together with three sons and two son-in-laws. Additional information about this family is found in the Koop Family Register 1801-1974 and in Roy Loewen’s book on Blumenort.

According to family records, the father of Johann Koop (1831-1897), was Johann Koop (1801-1838). The family has always been associated with the village of Muntau. Benjamin H. Unruh, in his book Die Mennonitische Ostwanderung, page 307, has record of a Johann Koop family living on Wirtschaft 14 in this village in 1808 who had a son Johann who was six years of age at the time. This was the author of the “Schönenschreiben.”

The “New Years Wish” of Johann Koop, 1808, is a beautiful example of its genre. A copy of the document and an English translation is published by Elsie Abraham in her 1980 Frakturmale und Schönchenreiben, page 50. Unfortunately she incorrectly described the document as being from Muntau, Prussia.

The story of an artifact adds immeasurably to the enjoyment of its beauty and an appreciation of its cultural significance. The “Schönenschreiben” of Johann Koop is a work which all his descendants and indeed, all Mennonites can be proud of, for it speaks well for the society which it represented.

D. Plett, 1984