

Preservings

ISSUE NUMBER 39, 2019



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MISSION

To inform our readers about the history of
the Mennonites who came to Manitoba in the
1870s and their descendants, and in particular
to promote a respectful understanding and
appreciation of the contributions made by
so-called Low German-speaking conservative
Mennonite groups of the Americas.

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COVER IMAGE

Alternative Service workers
lifting rails on a railroad track.

MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO, MAID: HIST.MSS.22.1.9-69

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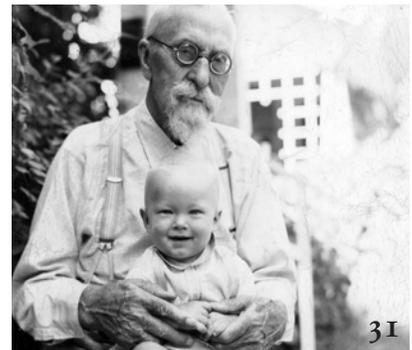
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FROM THE EDITOR

Aileen Friesen

There is no need to send us letters of complaint about the shortened length of this issue of *Preservings*. As an experiment, I have decided to publish two issues a year. This issue will focus on how Manitoba Mennonites have interacted with the railway. The following issue, which will explore the theme of Mennonites and the railway in Mexico, Paraguay, and Russia, will be in your mailboxes sometime in April. Two issues a year allows for more flexibility with our content and the possibility of lengthening the journal. And most importantly, for our Mennonite audience, the cost of *Preservings* will not increase; readers will actually receive more Mennonite history for their \$20 contribution.

Over the course of its twenty-five-year history, *Preservings* has explored a variety of topics related to Mennonite history. While individual authors have tackled railroads in their submissions, we have never had an issue (in this case two) dedicated to the topic. This is not surprising as traditionally Mennonites have formed an ambiguous relationship with trains. While railroads have been essential to the development of Mennonite communities, offering paths to new homelands and connecting the Mennonites to agricultural markets, they have also brought the world into Mennonite villages and created easy escape routes for those curious about city life. Some Mennonite communities have sought to integrate the railway into their villages in very specific ways, hoping to reap the economic benefits and simultaneously limit cultural interference.

When I put out the request for articles, I wondered about the type of responses I would receive. Not surprisingly, the theme of markets dominated the materials submitted. Indeed, the economic implications of the railway for Mennonite communities in western Canada looms large in this conversation. As Hans Werner shows, the railway carried benefits into some communities while leaving others to witness the billowing smoke of progress from afar. Undoubtedly, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the railway had the capacity to determine economic prosperity for towns and the surrounding communities more than roads, schools, and co-operatives.

Although railways reoriented space, the results were not unfavourable for every community that shunned such direct access to the city and the progress or worldliness – depending on your interpretation – that it promised. Steinbach thrived without a railway, as Ralph Friesen has shown, through a combination of a strong local identity that kept people rooted in the community

and a willingness to develop intermediary routes to reaching the railway in Giroux. Steinbach's proximity to Winnipeg, however, helped to create the possibility for this alternative path, which raises questions about the prospect of replicating this particular model of engaged isolationism.

It was not only Mennonite communities that demonstrated their ambivalence to the idea of the railway; some Canadian communities also expressed their hesitation with the influx of immigrants that seemed to accompany the laying of such tracks. The Community Progress Competitions, run by the Canadian National Railway, reflected the tensions embedded in an economy that required a larger population and the cultural clashes that accompanied the integration of these diverse ethnic and linguistic groups into Canadian society. In James Urry's analysis of these competitions, both the strong vision of progress articulated by the judges and the apparent buy-in from Mennonites are striking and raise questions about the willingness of rural Mennonites to embrace measurements of merit initiated from outside the community.

While these articles address a number of important themes related to railroads, there are still many within the Canadian context yet to be researched. One of those themes is depicted on the cover: Mennonite men in Canada building the railway as conscientious objectors during the Second World War. Not only did railroad-building offer Mennonites a somewhat respectable alternative to military service, but trains would become essential in facilitating the travel of religious leaders as they established regional, national, and international communities. Although the railway challenged the values of Mennonite communities in a number of ways, it also created new spaces for the preservation and promotion of those same values.

Personal family histories are also closely connected to the experience of the railway. Migration stories from the 1870s often feature trains, as Mennonites sped through the European countryside, enthralled by the views out the window, but also suffocated by the smoke of the steam engine. Within my own family, my paternal grandfather, Isaac Dyck, engaged in freighthopping as he rode the train from Manitoba into the United States in search of work during the Great Depression. While these individualized stories might seem to have little historical significance, in reality they reveal the ways in which Mennonite life was shaped by the rails.



A FORGOTTEN ENCOUNTER

The C.N.R.'s Community Progress Competitions

James Urry

“And we still get the train through Steinbach as an encore” wrote Arnold Dyck in an editorial in his Steinbach *Die Post* in 1931.¹ But Dyck was quick to point out that he was just being ironic. No rails had been laid, no trains had steamed through the town and they never would. Instead he was reporting on the visit of the judges of the Canadian National Railway’s (C.N.R.) Community Progress Competitions, then in its second year. Steinbach and the surrounding Mennonite area, designated as “Hanover,” had been selected for the competition in 1930, as had Rhineland. Surprisingly little has been said about Mennonite participation in these competitions. For instance, E. K. Francis’ book does not mention the competitions and assess their influence.²

THE ORIGIN AND FORMS OF THE COMPETITIONS

The Community Progress Competition was the idea of Dr. W. J. Black³ of the C.N.R.’s Department of Colonization and Agriculture (D.C.A.) “to determine the relative degree of progress being attained by communities of immigrants” from Europe settled in Western Canada. It was not intended to “measure” their wealth “but those things that make for better living and attractive homes.”⁴ The competitions were part of a much larger strategy, in part built upon the need to

counter the effects of the Depression, anti-immigration sentiments among “Anglo-Saxon” Canadians, and to help develop communities who, it was hoped, would later improve the revenue of the company.⁵ Robert England, who was in charge of the competition, would later write that this initiative was intended to act as a “lever” to promote agricultural progress through raising the “group consciousness” of ethnic communities in Western Canada.⁶ The C.N.R. was not the first rail company to promote such competitions and festivals among Canada’s immigrant groups, especially in the prairie provinces. The Canadian Pacific Railway had sponsored “Folk Festivals” although Mennonites, lacking “folk” costumes, dance, and other colourful markers of “ethnic” difference had been involved only through a choral performance presented in Winnipeg in 1929.⁷

In 1930, 40 entries were received from communities wishing to participate in the competition but only a few were selected.⁸ The prizes offered were highly attractive at that time: \$1,000 as first prize, \$500 for second, and \$250 for third.⁹ To be eligible a community had to constitute a majority in a municipality or a grouping of six or more school districts “with a population of at least 75 percent of immigrants of the first or second generation from Continental Europe.”¹⁰ In reality the regu-

lations “Governing the Competitions” were complex with nine detailed points. The first brochure provided a complicated “Score Card” indicating how the judges would assess the communities: A: Education (250 points); B: Agriculture (250), C: Citizenship – Co-operation – Social Welfare (300 – subdivided into Adults and Boys and Girls); D: Arts and Handicrafts (150); E: General, a category consisting of “constructive” activities not included in earlier categories (50).¹¹ Each of these sections, however, was subdivided and then subdivided again. For instance, Education was subdivided into eight categories (Community, Teachers, Pupils, School Grounds, School Buildings, Equipment, Library, Records, and Reports). The Teacher category had the most subdivisions with 15 additional points. Scoring was an equally complex business but at least provided the judges with an easy method of assessment and for communities entering later competitions some indication of what was required to impress the team of judges.¹²

MISS HAIG’S REPORTS OF 1930

During the first competition a journalist for the *Manitoba Free Press*, K. M. Haig, accompanied the judges on their inspections of the groups.¹³ Eventually she would write nine reports on the areas and peoples she encountered devoting four to the two Mennonite communities entered in the competition. Her articles provide a

With thousands of new immigrants settling in Western Canada, the C.N.R. initiated a competition to judge the level of progress attained by these communities.



A display created by the Rural Municipality of Laird, Saskatchewan for the local Community Progress Competitions, exhibiting samples of grain, spices, and other agricultural products as well as facts about the region.

fascinating insight of an outsider’s view of the communities living through the dark days of the Depression.

Born on a farm near Brandon, Kenneth Macmohan Haig (1887–1977) had graduated from the University of Manitoba with a B.A. in Philosophy. She became an editorial and feature writer for the *Manitoba Free Press* where she worked alongside another pioneering, journalist, and colleague, E. Cora Hind whose biography Haig would later write.¹⁴ Both women supported progressive causes and were important in the development of female journalism in Manitoba and Canada.¹⁵

Haig titled her articles “Meeting Manitoba.” They were obviously written to inform her mainly English-speaking readers that beyond the predominantly urban, middle-class world mostly consisting of “Anglo-Saxons” as she referred

to them, was a province inhabited by a large number of non-British immigrants. These people, she wrote, had long been visible on Portage Avenue when they visited Winnipeg from rural areas: “the Mennonite, the Ukrainian, the Polander, and so on . . . but there they receive only a glance.” The competition proposed by the C.N.R. was about to change all this, “and as a result Portage Avenue will never be the same again.” Haig hoped that the competition would reveal “the pattern of Manitoba” which she compared to a loom in which “the cross thread” varied “even among colonists of the same blood and faith.”

RHINELAND, HANOVER, AND WOMEN

To illustrate this point Haig compared the two Mennonite communities entered in the competition: the Rural

Municipalities of Rhineland and Hanover. As she wrote, “Both have their origins some fifty years back; both are situated in country well adapted to farming; both have made considerable development in agriculture; both have stultified themselves by the same methods of withdrawal within themselves; both have sought to use such educational tools as they had to hand; both are now the centre of conflict, the age-old one between one generation and the next, a conflict intensified by the fact that in this case all the elements of a new country with its new loves are thrown in one scale.”

In Hanover, Haig continued, “these elements seemed to stand out in clearer juxtaposition than in Rhineland. There are pleasant homes there, as in Rhineland, well up to if not beyond the average of farm homes in any part of the province. And there are sweet, gracious women

presiding over them. Big rooms to keep sweet and garnished, piles of feather quilts, and in the basements rows and rows of preserved fruits and pickles and bins of vegetables. There is an air of plenty over a Hanover farm home. So there is over those in Rhineland. An old fashioned air of plenty of the kind that goes with shining pewter and smoked hams hanging from oaken beams.¹⁶ There were chest drawers also filled with cunningly wrought linen.”

According to Haig, Rhineland gave the impression of conservatism more than Hanover. “It is ill to see a woman, old before her time, with a grey, drawn face. Gardens some way lose their winsomeness when one thinks of those long rows tended by women who have borne and reared large families, who tend the dairy and the poultry yard, who feed the farm hand, who polish these shining floors. That wistful snatch at beauty, too – those windows of house-plants and the glowing flower-gardens. The point is not the success of women’s work. There is no question of that. The fact that left its stain on the memory is that, especially in Rhineland, there seemed little evidence of appreciation of the burden being carried, so small an effort put forward to secure labor-savers for the women. Are they so cheap?”

But Haig also saw hope: “Yet dancing along the way are bonny girls, fair of hair and bright of eye, challenging the day with the gay laugh that gives to her young womanhood. The woman with the grave, deeply-lined face, lifts a worn hand to push back her shawled head-dress. ‘My daughters,’ she murmurs, and watches intently this meeting of Canadians. Is the deepening shadow of her eyes anxiety as she senses this kinship of country? I do not know.”

The idea of a shift in the opinion of generations, essential for “progress” and assimilation, essential in her view in the making of good citizens, was again referred to in the case of men where: “... there is no difficulty reading the glance of the youth who catches the motors manoeuvring their way out of the yard. His father considers automobiles an evil probably prays for his Mennonite neighbour who has one – he looks like a man whose

prayers should prevail. But [the] son looks as though he knew what a carburettor was or at least intended to know presently.”¹⁷

NEW IMMIGRANTS AND NEW GENERATIONS

Haig started her second article with an account of the C.N.R. judges’ journey to “Mennonite country” stressing that there is no “need to go to Europe, to see an old world village.” As she wrote: “Begun as a community settlement some still remain so, the farms extending out in long ribbons. Others are assuming a separate entity of towns with the churches, high school centres, garages, hotels, printing plant and so forth. And then in case the old world flavor should be thought lost, over the meadowland comes the village cowherd bringing home his charges.”

Haig suggested Mennonites are somewhat isolated from their non-Mennonite neighbours; they “do not attend agricultural fairs or share breeding stock or knowledge with outsiders.” To the “Anglo-Saxon way of reasoning” she argued, this seems “wilfully self-limited” but at the same time Mennonites appear to be doing well.

One “of the faith” explained to her that a Mennonite “considers it sinful to make a display.” She commented that “if one is doing a thing [that way], one might as well do it as well as possible” adding ironically that there “is scripture for that, too.” Haig recognised that a “conservative factor [was] still strong,” and that any attempt at progress would have to take this into account. The answer lay, she suggested, in “two new factors, one is the recent immigration and the other is the new generation.” To an outsider as herself, these two factors appeared in “sympathy” and as well as to “have much in common.” She then reported a story related by an “English Canadian”: “I happened to be on the platform five years ago when a train load of these new Mennonites came in ... The residents who met them immediately held with them a service of thanksgiving. I slipped candies to two children and at once their father instructed them to say ‘Thank you.’ I asked him if he knew English and he explained that he knew a little and was

trying to learn it as fast as he could. ‘As soon as we got on the boat coming out of Russia we began to learn English’ he said ‘We wish to be Canadian.’”

The “recent immigrants” to whom she had referred were obviously *Russländer* from the Soviet Union who were to influence life on both the West and East Reserves. The most important influence of the newcomers was in the area of schooling, something confirmed in the reports from the Department of Education supplied to the judges. The combined influence of the immigrants and a new generation of the older immigrants meant, “there is beginning among the Mennonites themselves a body of opinion demanding good Canadian schools.”

SCHOOLS AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

Before 1916 Haig noted that Mennonites ran their own schools, insisting on Mennonite teachers and teaching in “their own language.” The teachers were not always qualified and thus the poor level of education might explain “why a section of the community, so obviously well-endowed intellectually should through fifty years of history contributed to so comparatively few leaders in any of the professions.” But the one case she referred to as an “anomaly” to this situation was the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna under H. H. Ewert’s leadership.¹⁸ She added, however, that the attempt to establish a similar institution in Altona failed when its premises burned down and it was never rebuilt.

In many ways progress in education was crucial in the judging of communities by the C.N.R. teams. The judges could assess progress with information supplied not by the communities but independently by the Department of Education. This showed a steady progress in enrolments and attendance since 1925/26; attendance had increased from sixty percent to approximately seventy percent of the school-age population, “well above average for rural schools in the province and within measurable distance of the consolidated [i.e. urban schools].” High school enrolments in grades nine, ten, and eleven



The children pose in an enclosed verandah against a backdrop of flowers and plants positioned in every window, showing some of the house and gardening work undertaken by Mennonite women.



A group of young Mennonite women, the new generation of “Canadians,” pose in the garden/yard of a Mennonite farmstead, with their modern dresses and hair styles.

had more than doubled in Hanover in years from 1925/26 to 1929/30.¹⁹

In Mennonite municipalities 90 percent of the teachers were mostly married men with a long period of service who were provided with a “teacherage.” All possessed suitable “academic requirements” and their average salary (\$1,200) was 25 percent higher than in other rural districts. This higher pay was “tempered by the knowledge that the teacher is required to teach the German language [for] an extra half hour and to give the children religious instruction.” As all the children were of the Mennonite faith, this was not a problem and explained the “prevalence” of teachers of “like origin.” The children’s knowledge of English did not lead the judges to think that German was being “over-emphasized.”

In her fourth and final report devoted

specifically to Mennonite competitors Haig noted that, in spite of their material progress an “extraordinary small number” of Mennonites had “taken part in the public life of the province in which they have made their homes for half a century.”²⁰ But she added that “notably” they also do not appear in the records of “the police court and jail.” In paying taxes, however, Mennonites prove conscientious citizens. She provided figures for both Rhineland and Hanover showing the equalized assessments for 1927/28/29 mainly the amounts levied and actually collected. In spite of the Depression, Mennonites’ record of paying taxes she declared “measures up quite well with other communities, an attribute of citizenship that has much to commend it.” In terms of involvement in the political life of the province, the information the

judges were given was that the “more conservative elements do not even vote” evidently because Mennonites thought “we-are-but-strangers-here, heaven-is-our-home,” a view which Haig cynically suggested “is some distance removed from the usual run of politics.”

RELIGIOUS CONSERVATISM, HEALTH, AND FARMING

Returning to her earlier point about “the pattern” of community life, Haig had to admit that it was difficult to see among Mennonites entered in the competition a single community that “had no less than four shades of the faith accommodated in as many edifices.” And these edifices themselves were far from attractive to an outsider’s eye: “bare, save for the rows of backless benches, the pulpit and choir stalls, painted light blue and white, where



A photo of children and their teacher gathered around a flag pole flying the Union Jack. Public schools, with their state-prescribed curriculum, English-language instruction, and provincially certified teachers, were highly controversial in the Mennonite communities in Manitoba around this time.

women sit on one side and men on the other.” This she found was in stark contrast to the churches in Ukrainian communities entered in the competition. For example in the Ukrainian settlement of Rossburn, visited by the judges, the Greek Catholic church was “set in the bush ... set upon a hill with distant prospect of scattered homesteads.” Unlike a Mennonite meeting house here they saw a “blazing altar, its seatless nave, its walls and ceiling aflame with bright pigmented representations of the Madonna.” What a contrast indeed.

For Haig the “blackest mark against the ‘Mennonite country’ is beyond doubt its public health record.” Although she was unsure whether or not its poor record reflected “the sect’s teaching and the idea that the “‘Lord’s will [will] be done’ which seems to the Anglo-Saxon mind ...

a confusion of thought which identifies Providence with a promiscuous towel,” the reality was that until 1930 the community had refused the “claims of the rest of the province to be protected against the contagion of trachoma.” It was, she wrote “extremely painful” to visit schools and witness its effect on children. She then provided statistics on the incidence of eye diseases in the Mennonite communities in the summer of 1930: in Hanover of the 1,966 persons examined, 214 had sore eyes and 152 were suspected of having trachoma; in Rhineland a survey of 4,469 showed 676 cases of sore eyes and 697 of suspected trachoma. A clinic, she noted, was due to be established in the next few weeks but she suspected it would “mean a long, hard fight” before its work was accepted.

Haig’s five remaining articles turn to her visit to the three Ukrainian and one Polish community who also entered the 1930 competition. She mentioned Mennonites only once in her discussions, interestingly on a subject not mentioned earlier in her reports: “The weakest point [for the non-Mennonite communities] remains the agricultural. Take, for instance, the record of livestock in two of the Ukrainian municipalities: In the one, horses, 1.6 head per farm; cattle, 6.1; sheep, 2.1; swine, 1.4; poultry, 30. In the other municipality are: horses, 3 head; cattle, 6; swine, 2, sheep, 500, among 50 farmers. Contrast this with that of the Mennonite municipalities. Horses, 3 head; cattle, 30; swine, 15; poultry, 100, and sheep, 300 head among 10 farmers. The last is about average for the type of

farm.” She suggested it might be argued that Ukrainians and Polish farmers had settled on inferior land in comparison to Mennonites but points out that the authorities – Provincial and Dominion – had provided agents to improve agriculture but “their efforts have by no means always been met with enthusiasm, sometimes not even with acceptance.”²¹ It would seem not only Mennonites were conservative communities.

THE 1931 AND 1932 COMPETITIONS

The judges chose the Ukrainian community of Rossburn as the first winner of the Progress Competition, with Hanover coming second and Rhineland third.²² What attracted the judges to Rossburn was that it presented itself as an integrated community centred on its single church, reasonable elementary schools, and cultural groups who entertained the judges with folk songs, dancing, and exhibitions of colourful crafts. Mennonites, of course, did not dance, sang only hymns in public and their craftwork, being mainly restricted to women’s practical needlework, was not as colourful or wide-ranging as that found in Ukrainian communities. If Mennonite communities were to do better in 1931, they needed to organize themselves across all the categories to be successful.

In Rhineland teachers took the lead starting in 1930 and continued to play a major role, along with members of the municipal council, in reorganizing the community’s entry for the 1931 competition in spite of earlier opposition from some farmers. A detailed report from one of the teachers involved illustrates how great efforts were being made ahead of the second competition. These included innovations in agriculture, creating a Co-operative Buying Association and establishing a United Farmers of Manitoba Local, forming a sewing club, a literary society, a Junior Red Cross, and a baseball league for the younger people, organizing displays of arts and handicrafts, and finally spending their 1930 winnings on improvements to schools in the district.²³ As a result, in 1931 Rhineland won

the competition.²⁴ The money they won in 1930 was spent, with the approval of the C.N.R., mainly on improving school grounds; however, in 1931 the prize money was used to purchase pure-bred bulls, create boys’ and girls’ clubs, establish sewing groups, improve school grounds and finally, a donation to MCI.²⁵

While great efforts were also made in Hanover in the 1931 competition the community slipped from second to third place. In 1930 and 1931 support for participation in the competition in Hanover

G. G. Kornelsen, gave further details as to the “visitors” involved and other aspects of the programme the community presented.²⁸ Besides the same judging team as in 1930, the local Member of Parliament, Albert Prefontaine, was present along with the Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Immigration for Manitoba, James Howell Evans. Herr Weitingger of the “Deutschkanadischen Bund (von Manitoba)” gave a speech in German and Mennonite children replied in the same language. A choir under the direction of a Rempel²⁹



Mennonite Collegiate Institute was established in 1889 and has the longest history of any Mennonite school functioning today in Canada.

also appears to have come mainly from teachers and progressive sections of the *Kanadier* community largely settled in or around Steinbach. In his newspaper editorial on the 1931 competition Arnold Dyck reported that an exhibition of Mennonite artefacts and crops had been displayed in the schoolhouse.²⁶ While Dyck suggested this came as a “surprise” to non-Mennonite visitors and even some Mennonites, he “regretted that so few have seen it” a comment that suggests that some Mennonites thought it too “worldly” and a sign of pride. Dyck wrote that: “... all irony aside, the exhibition was really successful. It is to be wished that such exhibitions might become a permanent fixture and not only have the purpose of showing what man can and is, but can provide a stimulus for new creations, to new aspirations and thus prove itself to be a culture-fostering factor of merit.”²⁷

The teacher, amateur historian, and regular contributor to Dyck’s newspaper,

presented religious pieces but the choir also sang “Way Back on Memories Wall”³⁰ and “Carry me back to Old Virginia.” Finally, one of the judges, Mrs. Watts, was presented with “a beautifully crafted foot rug by the local women’s association” and in turn young girls were presented with prizes for their needlework.³¹

Although there appear to be no contemporary Mennonite accounts of the 1932 competition, it seems that the community increased its efforts in the categories to be judged even if these involved activities not usually to be found in Mennonite circles at the time. Some idea of these efforts can be seen in Robert England’s summary of the community’s achievements in 1932. These included not just improvements in agriculture, horticulture, and schooling but also the organizing of community clubs for children and adults as well as long-term community assets when work began on the construction of a new hospital.³²

After winning in 1932, the money in

Hanover was spent on a diverse set of projects. A pure-bred Percheron stallion (“Monarch’s Commander”), “bred to 72 mares” in order to improve Mennonite draft horses and 6,900 day-old chicks which helped establish a “Better Poultry” campaign. When the cockerels were sold in the fall, the money was placed in a “revolving fund” used to improve livestock, principally hogs. The competitions also encouraged farmers to take advantage of the support offered by the Dominion government to improve dairy stock and establish a “Dairy Calf Club.” Some money was used to improve the school library.³³ Part of the money, however, was placed in another revolving fund from which the girls’ and boys’ clubs could borrow, especially for developing agricultural skills.³⁴

THE IMPACT OF THE COMPETITIONS

The winners of these competitions were unable to enter again. Although the C.N.R. had hoped to continue the competitions after 1932, it decided not to hold any more as the Depression restricted the funds available. But had the competitions achieved their purpose in furthering economic, social, and cultural progress in communities? Had they encouraged their inhabitants towards achieving good Canadian citizenship? On reading the reports of the C.N.R. judges, one promoter of “British” community settlements in Canada certainly thought the success of the competitions “offered a challenge to the United Kingdom to put forth greater efforts to send over more and still more British families” to balance the progress made by Central European settlers.³⁵

In the early 1930s researchers from McGill University carried out what were probably the first sociological studies of ethnic communities in Western Canada, including Mennonites. The research indicated that the competitions had indeed made an impact on Mennonite communities that would “continue long after the competition itself is forgotten.”³⁶ In Rhineland teachers such as Jacob G. Neufeld, Jacob D. Siemens, and Peter D. Reimer formed an agricultural



society ahead of the 1931 competition. This eventually would become the Rhineland Agricultural Society (R.A.S.) that organized its own community competition at the Fall Fair held in Altona.³⁷ Siemens, at the time a teacher in Edenthal (1927–1933), would later promote the co-operative movement in Manitoba more widely, aided at first by “Jack” Crawford, a graduate of the Manitoba Agricultural College.³⁸ Other projects stemming from the competitions involved clubs and crafts that persisted long afterwards. As the teacher from Rhineland reported in 1931,

the competitions were a “great medium to lift us out of the rut and set us on a modern highway, looking towards a new and better goal.”³⁹

In Hanover, although not as well documented as Rhineland, similar influences can be seen. A strong cooperative movement never developed in Hanover, but local teachers still took the lead in the competition assisted by the long-time secretary-treasurer of the Hanover Municipality (1922–1944), John D. Goossen. Goossen had been the first person approached by the C.N.R. author-



ities to help organize the local work but had at first declined. However, encouraged by local schoolteachers he eventually agreed.⁴⁰ Julius Toews, one of the teachers involved, would later recall that the beginning of so many new community initiatives in 1930, in the heart of the Depression, was not just by chance, but was instead a “result” of these competitions.⁴¹ It is surprising (or “puzzling” as Toews suggests), that none of the accounts

of the local history of Hanover published since the 1970s has mentioned the competitions or their impact on community life.

CONCLUSION

Although the competitions may have been intended to measure and encourage “progress,” Robert England had his doubts about some kinds of “industrial” progress. Discussing Mennonites he wrote: “What can defeat a people when

the table is backed by well-stored cellars with sauerkraut, canned eggs and small fruits, the products of the smoke-houses, pretzels, cheeses, sausage of every variety, ‘*pflaumenmuss*’ (*pluememoos*) and a good larder with chickens, eggs and butter produced on practically every farm? Such household economy is a challenge to the industrial meat-packer, fruit canner and groceteria – proof positive that if our industrial civilization cracked, our

The interior of the Old Colony Worship House originally located in the village of Chortitz on the West Reserve, now at Mennonite Heritage Village. The interior of this building is painted plain white and though the benches were backless when the meeting house was built in 1881, backs were added to them in the 1950s.

rails rusted, and our towns crumbled there are rural people in Western Canada who could emulate the examples of early Canadian settlers...”

Mennonite meeting houses he noted might be “bare edifices” and as a people Mennonites might: “distrust the world, the flesh, and the devil of our modern world ... But the most progressive mind must also feel so doubtful of much of the glitter and tinsel of our world... To substitute novelty for progress, mechanization for efficiency, and standardization for style means commercialized sport, news-

paper sensationalism, radio jazz, sex films, cosmetics, drug stores, and the emotion-alism of the morticians’ trade. The evils of which a Mennonite is warned are sins of the flesh, the error of force, the stupidities of blasphemy and pride, but the evils against which advertisement pages of any magazine warn are halitosis, the offence of being out of style in dress or automobiles, and the risks of social or business failure.”⁴²

Whatever their personal opinions, the representatives of this railway company came to Rhineland, Steinbach, and surrounding areas only briefly in the early

1930s. They soon departed, taking their opinions and score-sheets with them. Presumably they arrived and left in motor vehicles instead of rail carriages pulled by a steam engine and mounted on rails, a form of transport that may have brought the “world” to Mennonite communities. When the dust settled from the unsealed roads, the impact of these visitors from afar may have lived on in the progressive practices and institutions the competitions had encouraged, but most Mennonites appear to have forgotten this brief encounter with the judges of the C.N.R. competitions.

1 Arnold Dyck, ed., “Community Progress Wettbewerb 1931,” *Die Post* 18, no. 34 (22 August 1931): 5.
 2 Robert England, *The Colonization of Western Canada: a Study of Contemporary Land Settlement (1896–1934)* (London: P. S. King, 1936); see E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: the Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona: D. W. Friesen, 1955), 279.
 3 William John Black (1872–1941), former President of the Manitoba Agricultural College and Professor of Animal Husbandry.
 4 Walter Murray, “Continental Europeans in Western Canada,” *Queen’s Quarterly* 38 (1931): 63; Murray (1866–1945) was the first President of the University of Saskatchewan where he promoted links between agriculture and other academic fields of study.
 5 On the larger context see Susan E. Wurtele, “Apostles of Progress: Robert England, the C.N.R. and Prairie Settlement,” in H. John Selwood and John C. Lehr, eds., *Reflections from the Prairies: Geographical Essays* (Department of Geography, University of Manitoba, 1992), 14–25; Brian S. Osborne and Susan E. Wurtele, “The Other Railway: Canadian National’s Department of Colonization and Agriculture,” *Prairie Forum* 20, no. 2 (1995): 231–254; reprinted in Gregory P. Marchildon, ed., *Immigration and Settlement, 1870–1939* (University of Regina: CPRC Press, 2009), 103–128.
 6 Robert England, “A Project in the use of Group Consciousness as a Lever in Agricultural Progress,” *Scientific Agriculture* 13, no. 4 (1932): 260–272.
 7 Stuart Henderson, “While there is still time ...: J. Murray Gibbon and the Spectacle of Difference in Three CPR Folk Festivals, 1928–1931,” *Journal of Canadian Studies/ Revue de études canadiennes* 39 (Winter 2005): 158, 169, n. 37.
 8 “Introduction” to the brochure for the *Competitions in Community Progress: Provinces of Manitoba Saskatchewan and Alberta* (Montreal: Department of Colonization and Agriculture, C.N.R., 1931); copy is in the W. C. Murray Fonds, University of Saskatchewan, University Archives & Special Collections at <http://sain.scaa.sk.ca/collections/w-c-murray-fonds>. Some documents of these funds have been digitized by the University of Manitoba Library at: http://manitoba.net/islandora/search/competitions?type=edismax&cp=uofm%3Apie&islandora_solr_search_navigation=0
 9 Allowing for inflation this means in 2019 terms the prizes would be worth around \$14,600/\$7,300/\$3,500; figures from the calculator of the Consumer Price Index of the Bank of Canada although their purchasing power would have been higher than perhaps indicated by these calculations
 10 Murray, “Continental Europeans,” 63.
 11 *Competitions in Community Progress* (1930) and for 1931, 1932 in copies in W. C. Murray Fonds, University of Saskatchewan and also digitized by the University of Manitoba.

12 Examples these score cards and the calculations can be found in the Murray Papers at the University of Saskatchewan again digitalized in the University of Manitoba Library collection.
 13 Newspaper reports of the competition appeared in a number of local Canadian newspapers all across Canada and even one from the Ottawa correspondent of The Times of London, “A Citizenship Contest. Foreign Stocks in Canada,” *The Times* 45877 (July 17, 1931): 13.
 14 *Brave Harvest: The Life Story of E. Cora Hind, LL.D* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1945); Hind (1861–1942) contributed articles on agricultural issues and also wrote a lengthy entry “The Mennonites of Manitoba” in *Canada, an Encyclopaedia of the Country: The Canadian Dominion Considered in its Historic Relations, its Natural Resources, its Material Progress and its National Development*, 4 (1898), 140–144.
 15 Shirley Muir, and Penni Mitchell, “Winnipeg Women Journalists have always Led the Way,” *Manitoba History*, 70 (Fall 2012): 47–48; Marjory Lang, *Women Who made the News: Female Journalists in Canada, 1880–1945* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1999), 257–259.
 16 It has been pointed out to me that Mennonites possessed few items made of pewter and even those items they did possess did not exactly shine.
 17 All the quotations above come from K.M.H., “Meeting Manitoba Article 1,” *Manitoba Free Press* (hereafter *MFP*) (October 28, 1930): 1.
 18 Haig notes that Ewert’s own children were highly successful in education and employment but that this is uncommon in the community; this ended the second of Haig’s reports, K.M.H., “Meeting Manitoba Article 2” *MFP* (October 29, 1930), 1; Ewert himself mentioned the competitions in his 1932 address to the *Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba* published as *The Mennonites*. (Rosthern: D. H. Epp, c. 1932), 11.
 19 K.M.H., “Meeting Manitoba Article 3,” *MFP* (October 30, 1930): 1; her article provides more detailed statistics supplied by the Department.
 20 K.M.H., “Meeting Manitoba Article 4” *MFP* (October 31, 1930): 1.
 21 K.M.H., “Meeting Manitoba Article 6” *MFP* (November 3, 1930), 1.
 22 Paul Yuzyk, *The Ukrainians in Manitoba: a Social History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1953), 214 claims Ethelbert won second prize and this is repeated in a number of other later sources, but the Ukrainian Municipality of Stuartburn was second in 1931 and 1932 and the Ukrainian-Polish Municipality of Sifton third in 1932.
 23 Details in England, *The Colonization of Western Canada*, 186–192.
 24 C. A. Dawson, (*Group Settlement: Ethnic Communities in Western Canada* [Toronto: Macmillan, 1936], 145) incorrectly claimed that Edenthal won the competition in 1931 when it was just a school district in Rhineland.
 25 England, *Colonization of Western Canada*, 179.

26 For an example of a similar display see the photographs of one created for the competition by the Mennonite community of Laird, Saskatchewan in the W. C. Murray Fonds, University of Saskatchewan scanned in the University of Manitoba digitalized collection at <http://hdl.handle.net/10719/1899413>
 27 “Community Progress Wettbewerb 1931,” 5.
 28 On Kornelsen (1878–1958) see numerous references in Ralph Friesen, *Between Earth and Sky: Steinbach, the First 50 Years* (Steinbach: Derksen, 2009)
 29 Most likely Jacob S. Rempel (1890–1947), see Friesen, *Between Earth and Sky*, 512.
 30 Probably the hymn by Charles J. Butler, the opening lines of which are: “On memory’s wall engraven stands and continues/ My mother’s precious face/ Time’s rude and ever busy hands/ Naught from it can erase [c. 1897].
 31 G. G. Kornelsen “Ostreserve-Nachrichten,” *Die Post* (18, 34, 22 August 1931): 8.
 32 England, *The Colonization of Western Canada*, 242–243; the hospital would not be finished and operational until 1937.
 33 Details in England, *The Colonization of Western Canada*, 180; 195.
 34 Julius G. Toews, “Among Other Canadians: Acculturating Mennonites,” in Lawrence Klippenstein and Julius G. Toews, eds., *Mennonite Memories: Settling in Western Canada* (Winnipeg: Centennial Publications, 1977), 263.
 35 Brigadier-General M. L. Hornby, *A Plan for British Community Settlements in Canada* (Lethbridge: Lethbridge Herald Print, 1931), 8.
 36 Dawson, *Group Settlement*, 146.
 37 H. H. Hamm, *Sixty Years of Progress, The Rural Municipality of Rhineland Diamond Jubilee 1884–1944* (Altona: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1944), 21, 23 and Robert Meyers, *Spirit of the Post Road: A Story of Self-Help Communities* (Altona: D. W. Friesen & Sons for the Federation of Southern Manitoba Co-operatives, 1955), 16–17 who also referred to the competitions as unavoidably “paternalistic and nationalistic.” On the influence of the Competitions on the Society’s formation see also David Schroeder, “The Rhineland Agricultural Society: Its Cultural and Educational Contribution,” *Newsletter of the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society* 20 (December 1997): 4, 6, footnote 9.
 38 On Siemens and his struggles with the Mennonite establishment, see Hans Werner, “Sacred, Secular and Material: The Thought of J. J. Siemens,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 17 (1999): 194–210.
 39 Quoted in England: *The Colonization of Western Canada*, 192.
 40 Toews, “Among Other Canadians,” 262–263; on Goossen (1884–1951) see Friesen, *Between Earth and Sky*.
 41 Toews, “Among Other Canadians,” 260.
 42 England, *The Colonization of Western Canada*, 246, 247.

REORIENTING THE WEST RESERVE

Mennonites and the Railway

Hans Werner

The settlement in the 1870s of the Mennonite West Reserve in south central Manitoba is an early and representative example of the colonization, occupation, and reorientation of what had been Indigenous prairie space, a landscape they had inhabited “since the world began.”¹ The section-township-range survey imposed a rectangular grid on the trails, crossings, and hunting areas used by Indigenous peoples to make a home on the lake bottom landscape of Manitoba’s Red

River Valley. After the signing of Treaty One, and the completion of the survey, eighteen of the sections were designated by the government for settlement exclusively by Mennonites. Although the Mennonites who came from the Russian Empire to the West Reserve in the 1870s wanted to remain separate from others, they needed supplies and would soon require transportation to markets for their grain surpluses. The railway revolutionized the transport of people and goods and was

instrumental in the colonization project. Railways would transform the economic geography and the settled landscape of the West Reserve a number of times between 1875, when the first Mennonites arrived, up to their gradual decline after the peak of the railway era in the 1920s.

BEFORE THE RAILWAY, 1875–1878

Mennonites from the Chortitza and Fürstenland colonies in the Russian



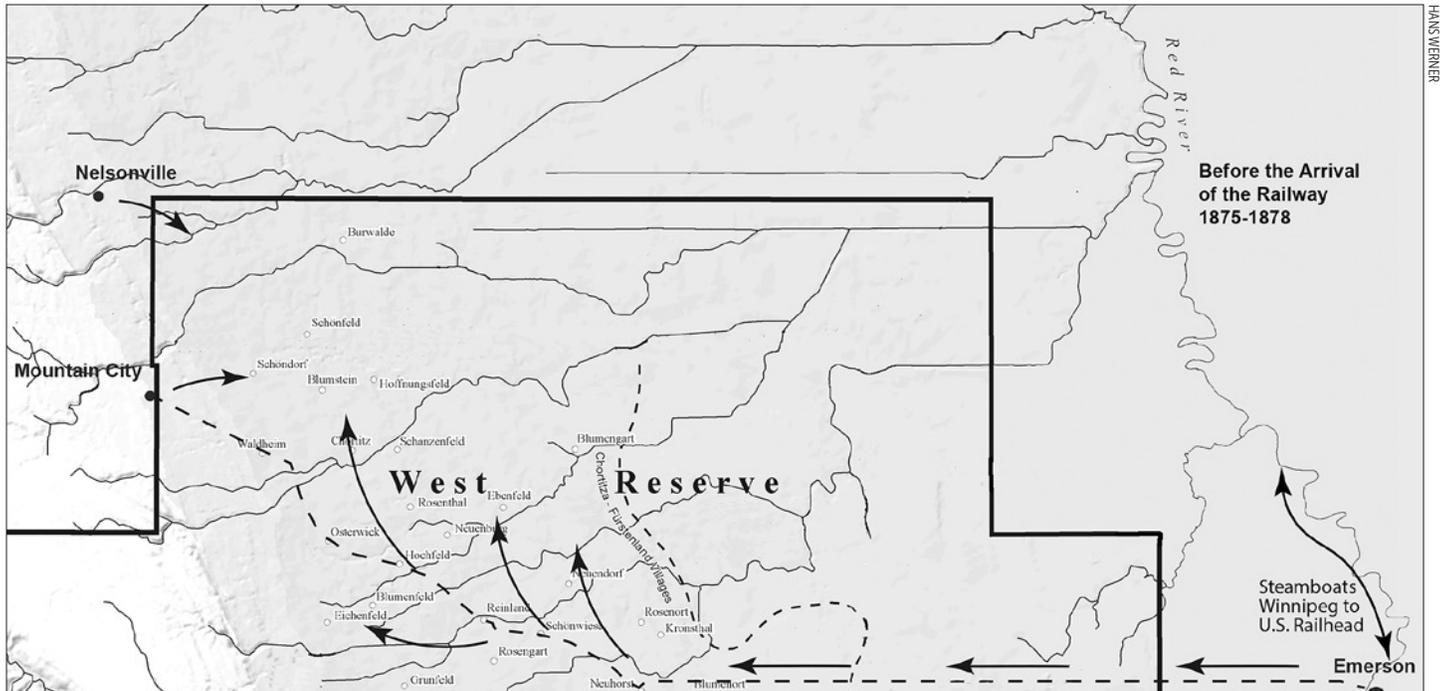
MENNONITE ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO XV-19.3-1994-14-678

People awaiting the first train into Haskett, Manitoba in 1920.

Empire were the first settlers destined for the land between the Red River and the Pembina Escarpment. They travelled by train from Quebec City to Sarnia, then by boat on the Great Lakes to Duluth, by train to the railhead in Minnesota, and finally by riverboats to Fort Dufferin, just north of where Emerson was being estab-

to Fisher's Landing near Grand Forks by 1875.² Emerson, on the Red River at the international border, quickly became the depot for the steamboats that plied the Red River between Winnipeg and the railhead in the United States. Established in the fall of 1873 in anticipation of a rail link to the United States, Emerson

Reserve. Mountain City and Nelsonville were 'English' towns located just outside of the west corner of the reserve. These towns became service centres for nearby Mennonite villages for a time. For the first few years the unmarked Post Road, as it would eventually be called, was in the words of one traveller, "a primitive road



Before the arrival of the railway the Post Road to Emerson was the main route to bring supplies to the West Reserve.

lished. While they waited at Fort Dufferin for the survey of their lands to be completed, they organized as one church and elected religious and civic leaders. Then they moved on to the prairie to establish their villages on what they believed to be the most desirable land in the Reserve. Mindful of the challenge of breaking the tall grass prairie and looking for good drainage, they chose the sandier lands on the secondary beaches of the former Lake Agassiz below the Pembina Escarpment in the most western part of the Reserve. By 1878 some twenty-five villages had been established with the village of Reinland serving as the religious and civic 'capital.' For the first years Mennonite farm families were preoccupied with putting up the initial shelter and breaking enough land to grow their own food and feed for their oxen and horses. Supplies had to come by riverboat from the railhead in the United States which had advanced

soon became a possible competitor for Winnipeg as the future hub of the west. After 1876, as a local historian suggests, Emerson became "the trading centre for an area that stretched 200 miles westward along the international border."³

The main route used by Mennonites to purchase the supplies they needed roughly followed the earlier North West Mounted Police expedition and Boundary Commission trails that had been used to survey the boundary and to establish a Canadian presence on the new frontier. After going slightly north after leaving Emerson, the route went parallel to the international border before passing just north of Blumenort, the first Mennonite village. At Neuhorst the route angled to the northwest, passing successively through, or by, Schönwiese, Reinland, Hochfeld, Osterwick, and Waldheim before arriving at Mountain City, a growing town just outside of the West

... across the virgin prairie."⁴ Before the arrival of the railway from Winnipeg to Emerson, it was also the main route used to purchase supplies for the pioneering villages.

THE PEMBINA BRANCH, 1878-1882

Railways and the 'hardening' of the international border would factor heavily into the development of the West Reserve after 1878. In the early days of the new Confederation, Canada's survival was not a given and annexation to the United States remained a real threat. The Conservative government under John A. Macdonald had been ambitious in creating a nation from 'sea to sea,' but its viability was ultimately dependent on a connection that would solidify a country whose boundaries defied geography. The scandal that erupted over Macdonald's handling of the contract to build an

all-Canadian transcontinental railway sent his government to defeat in the 1874 election and Alexander Mackenzie and the Liberals came to power. The Liberals favoured a route through the United States to bypass the difficult terrain of the Canadian Shield. They also favoured Free Trade with the United States. The tenure of the Mackenzie Liberals pointed to a 'softer' border with the United States and in keeping with that sentiment the first railway to be built on the Canadian prairies went from St. Boniface to the international border at Emerson. The line from St. Boniface to Emerson was to be built by the federal government as the first leg of the Canadian section of a line that would connect the Western provinces to Eastern Canada through the United States. The arrival by riverboat of the steam locomotive, the Countess of Dufferin in Winnipeg in 1877 signalled the start of construction and by November 1879 the first train arrived in Emerson. The Pembina Branch was initially operated by the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway, but would later be incorporated into the Canadian Pacific Railway (C.P.R.).

The arrival of the railway immediately changed the nature of transportation along the Red River. As J. E. Têtu, the Dufferin Immigration Agent noted in his annual report "river navigation, as a means of transport for immigrants coming to this country is a thing of the past." He effusively extolled the virtues of train travel. The trip to Manitoba was now "being more rapidly made, and it being less tedious, immigrants are in better condition, and moreover, in much better spirits than formerly."⁵ The railway improved the fortunes of Emerson and soon the Hudson Bay Company established West Lynne on land it owned across the river opposite Emerson to capture some of the West Reserve market. At the time of the completion of the Pembina Branch in 1879, Mennonites from the Bergthal Colony who had initially settled on the East Reserve began moving to the unsettled areas of the West Reserve. New villages sprang up on the lower areas of the West Reserve although the very poorly drained

sections in the north east would remain largely unsettled until they could be drained in later decades.

By the 1880s Mennonites on the reserve were also growing grain in excess of their immediate needs and the volume of grain being transported to Emerson and West Lynne steadily grew. By 1883, West Reserve farmers produced 211,743 bushels of wheat, an amount that had grown from 35,048 just four years earlier. By 1878, increased traffic and the problem of visibility in winter prompted Isaac Mueller, the Vorsteher (civil leader) of the West Reserve to order villagers to prepare wooden posts to mark the route that was being used to transport supplies to the reserve and, increasingly, grain to Emerson. The popular route would become known as the 'Post Road.' The Schellenbergs in Neuanlage, the Giesbrechts in Reinland, and William Brown's hotel near Neuhorst were spots to spend the night as a stagecoach made its run along the Post Road from Emerson to Mountain City.⁶ Mountain City and Nelsonville had their own ambitions and by 1881 Nelsonville was the county seat and boasted a population of one thousand. John Warkentin's study of the reserves points out that by early 1880s, West Reserve agriculture "had arrived at a stage where a railway was essential for further development."⁷ The growing market to the west of Emerson and West Lynne prompted an economic boom for the two rival towns and the air was filled with rumours of railway lines extending to the West to capture the business of Mennonites and the increasing numbers of non-Mennonites settling further west.⁸

THE RAILWAY ARRIVES, 1882–1888

John A. Macdonald's Conservatives returned to power in the 1878 election and the National Policy of the Conservatives was set to be implemented. This policy included a Canadian route for the transcontinental railway and high tariffs, both of which did not bode well for the town of Emerson, a 'city' of one thousand people.⁹ Construction of the transcontinental railway began immediately and by 1883 there

was an all-Canadian lake and rail route from Eastern Canada to Winnipeg. Even before the railway finished building its main line across the country, branch lines were being built to capture the revenue needed to finish the project. Emerson was desperate to expand its railway connections; a traffic bridge was built across the Red River to compete with West Lynne and various railway companies were created on paper. The intentions of the C.P.R., or 'the Syndicate' as it was known, with regard to branch lines in southern Manitoba first appeared in the Emerson paper, *The Southern Manitoba Times*, on July 15, 1881: "From information we have received we are led to believe that the construction of the 'line' of the Syndicate will be commenced immediately. The new road connects with the C.P.R. about sixteen miles west of Winnipeg, near Headingly, and strikes a straight line between ranges 1 east and 1 west. It passes Morris, the nearest point it gets to the river about six miles to the west, in the vicinity of Lowe Farm. At the Boundary Line it is distant from West Lynne some 15 miles, crossing the Boundary Line on Section 5, tp. 1, range 1 west of which section the Syndicate have lately bought the south half."¹⁰

Construction of the Southwestern and Pembina Mountain Branch of the C.P.R.¹¹ proceeded rapidly not only south to the U.S. border but also west through the northern part of the West Reserve from a junction near the Mennonite village of Rosenfeld. By late 1882 the rails had reached what would become the town of Gretna with the western portion of the line reaching its temporary terminus at Manitoba City (Manitou) when winter set in.¹²

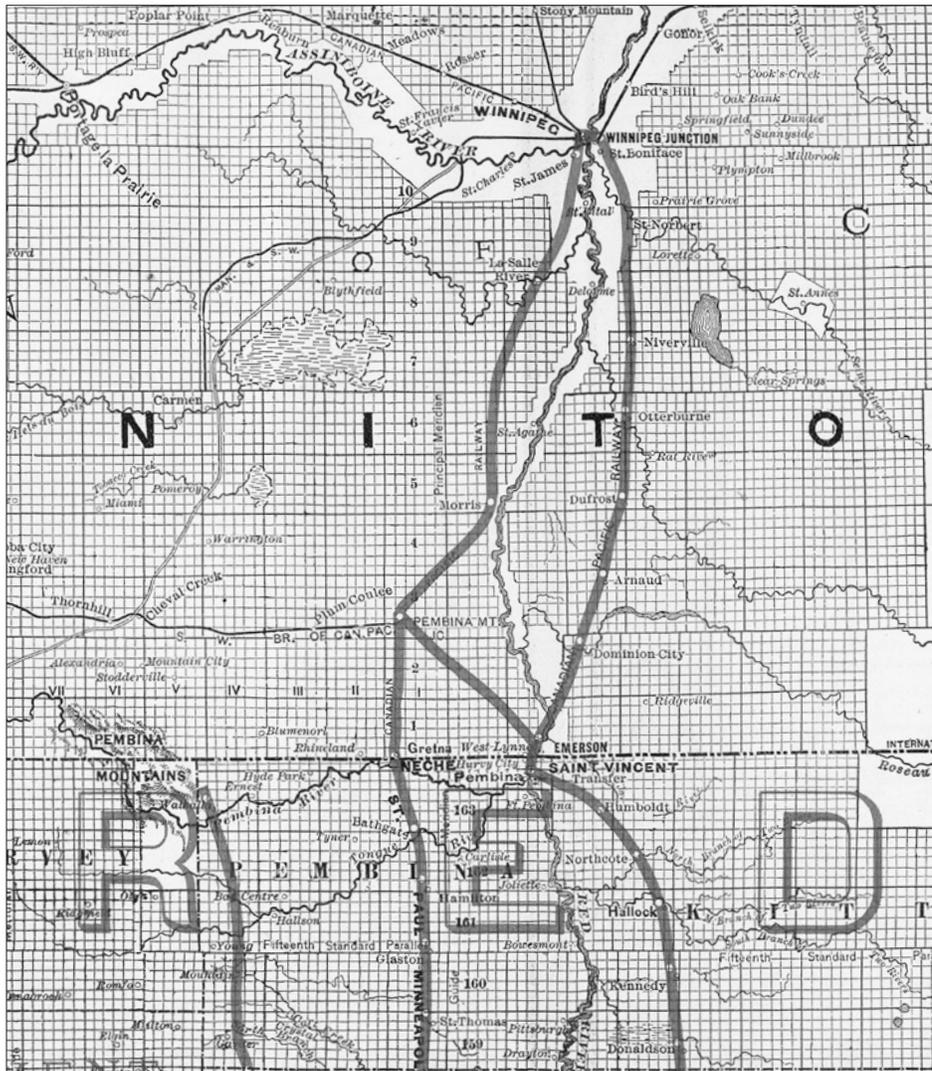
In the western part of the reserve the town of Stephen sprang up in matter of months in the fall of 1882. The C.P.R. constructed a siding and soon three stores and a hotel were built. Mennonite farmers responded immediately and were delivering enough grain to Stephen that three car loads were shipped daily in March 1883. The C.P.R. was, however, ruthless in its approach towards speculators and fully aware of its power to make or

break towns. The company was also quite willing to have site selection for stations result in profit for the company. In 1883 the company established its own townsite a few miles down the line from Stephen at the base of the Pembina Escarpment on the banks of the Cheval (later Dead Horse) Creek.¹³ The creation of Morden

between the C.P.R. and the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway, whose terminus was now at Neche just across the border from Gretna, was intense. The *Manitoba Free Press* correspondent reported in the fall of 1883 that “the C.P.R. Co. refuses to send grain south even when billed to the southern road,

Unlike much of the building of the C.P.R., the branch line that came through the West Reserve was not built through unsettled lands. On the eve of the railway’s arrival there were 53 villages and a population of 3,692 in the West Reserve.¹⁵ Mennonite settlement had also not been premised on their being a railway. The Southwestern and Pembina Mountain Branch changed the West Reserve landscape dramatically and totally reoriented the patterns of traffic and trade that had characterized the first seven years of the reserve’s existence. After the demise of Stephen, Morden became the preferred centre for the western part of the reserve, while Gretna enjoyed the business of the central and eastern Mennonite village farmers. Emerson attempted to pursue a solution to its sudden isolation from the West Reserve market. The town negotiated an agreement with the C.P.R. to build a bridge over the Red River for a ‘loop’ line that would connect the town with the Southwestern and Pembina Mountain Branch at Rosenfeld. Although the bridge was started and a line graded and rails laid, “it had been made very clear by [W.C.] van Horne... that the bridge had to be constructed and the right of way through the city purchased by the time track arrived at the city limits.” When the rails reached Emerson in September 1883 the bridge was not ready and the C.P.R. began immediately to tear up the tracks for use elsewhere. By 1885 Emerson was forced into bankruptcy with many of its formerly prominent merchants now established in Gretna and to a lesser extent in Morden.¹⁶

However, as the following map illustrates, the location of the two railway towns of Morden and Gretna did not entirely solve the problem of rail access for West Reserve farmers. The C.P.R. came to realize that for farmers to load their horse drawn wagons with grain, make the trip to the elevator, pick up supplies, do their banking and other business in town and return home in time to do chores, the maximum distance between towns could be about five or ten miles.¹⁷ Gretna’s five-mile radius was bisected by a hardening international boundary, while Morden’s covered a good deal of the sparsely settled

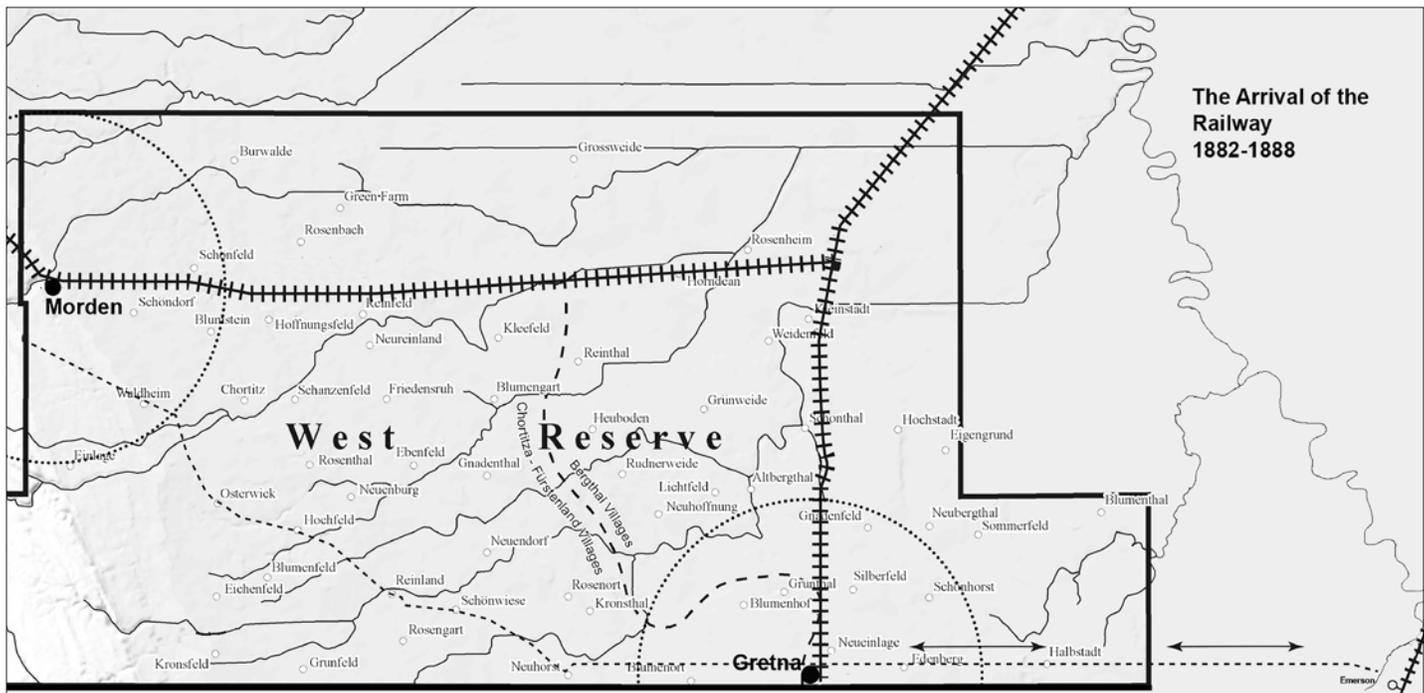


A portion of a map of the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway and its connections dated 1886. The map shows the ‘Emerson loop’ that was built, but never used. It was immediately dismantled when the town of Emerson was unable to fulfil its part of the contract with the C.P.R.

along the railway tracks meant the end of Nelsonville and Mountain City. Mountain City moved its buildings into Morden and in spite of considerable effort and political pressure to have its own railway, by 1884 buildings from Nelsonville were also arriving in Morden.

In Gretna the Ogilvie Flour Milling Company built the first of the familiar style of elevator that would come to dominate the Canadian West. Competition

and train loads of grain are sent north to Winnipeg.” The writer went on to suggest it was all part of the plan to “boom” the Canadian main line. The correspondent was also indignant about the tariffs: “The utter idiocy of trade restrictions is well appreciated in towns on the boundary. To describe how the tariff smells in the nostrils of the farmers and traders, who most do congregate at Gretna, would require more space than I can claim.”¹⁴



In 1882 the Southwestern and Pembina Mountain Branch had reoriented the economic patterns of the West Reserve. Bergthal villages had sprung up on the lower areas of the reserve and Gretna and Morden became the centres for grain deliveries and supplies while Emerson's fortunes declined. Using a radius of five miles, the location of the two towns still left much of the population with quite a distance to travel to get to the railway.

Pembina escarpment. The heart of the West Reserve was outside the optimum catchment area for both towns.

NEW PLACES, 1888–1895

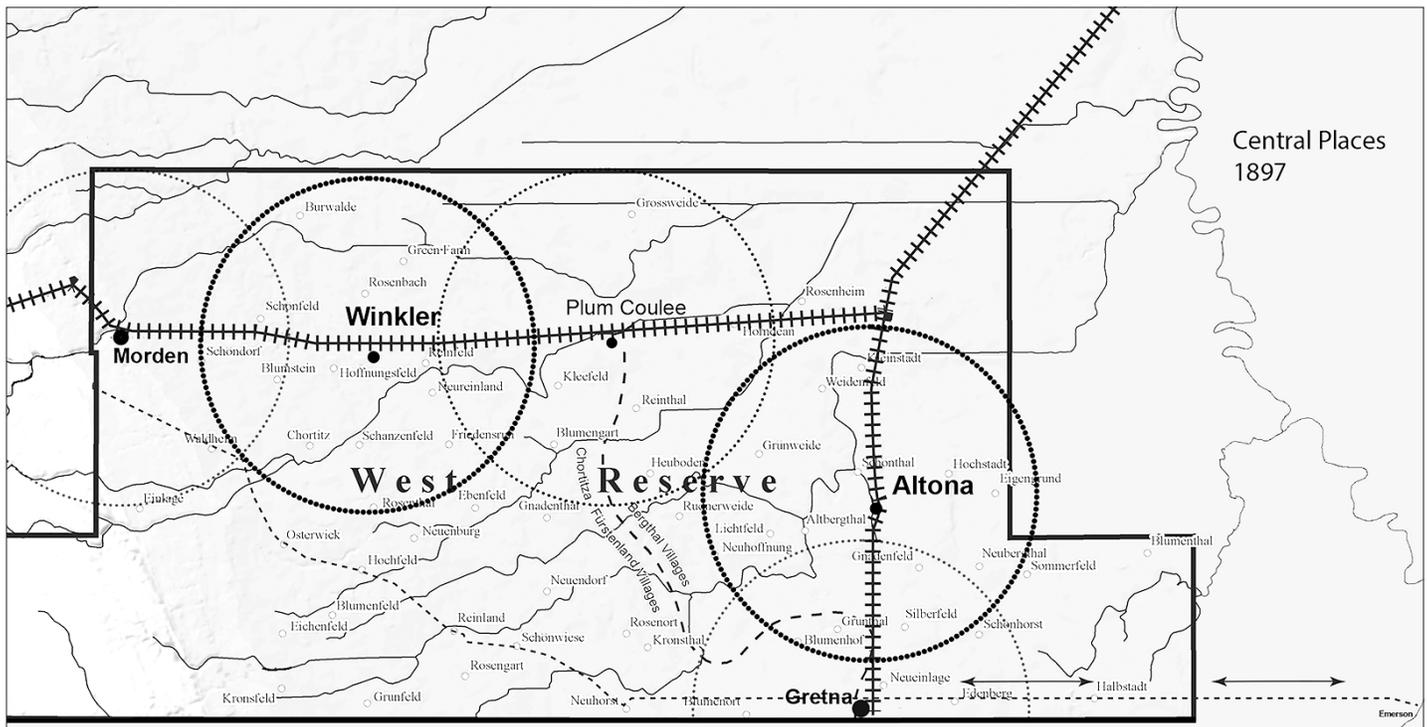
Even with only two grain delivery points, the arrival of the railway dramatically boosted wheat production in the West Reserve and almost immediately Mennonite farmers began clamoring for sidings closer to their villages. The C.P.R. and private entrepreneurs responded by establishing four new townsites along the C.P.R. branch line between 1888 and 1895. In 1888 the townsite of Plum Coulee was laid out some seventeen kilometers (ten miles) from the Rosenfeld Junction and twenty-four kilometers (fourteen miles) from Morden. The town soon became a service center for the central part of the reserve and by 1892 featured a number of businesses, including a grain elevator.¹⁸ Much like Gretna and Morden, Plum Coulee's position as a possible premier service center of the West Reserve was restricted by the poorly drained lands north of the townsite.

Four years after the establishment of Plum Coulee, Valentine Winkler would be successful in persuading the C.P.R. to build a siding near the Mennonite

village of Hoffnungsfeld, some twelve kilometers (seven miles) from Morden and fourteen kilometers (eight miles) from Plum Coulee. Valentine Winkler was a businessman and politician who came to the West to work at his brother's lumberyard in Emerson, and then Gretna and Morden, before purchasing the Morden location from his brother. The idea for a townsite east of Morden likely originated with Mennonite farmers since William Whyte, the Superintendent of the Western Division of the C.P.R. indicates in a letter to his superior, W.C. van Horne, that he received a petition from sixty-eight farmers advocating for a station between Morden and Plum Coulee.¹⁹ Much to the dismay of Morden, the town of Winkler began as a 500-foot siding and a waybill office that was initially served by the Morden agent. Morden boosters, some of whom had already experienced the failure of Nelsonville, were appalled at the actions of one of their own and dismayed at the prospect of a new town just down the tracks. Winkler seemed to be ideally positioned to capture the grain deliveries and supply business from the areas of the West Reserve that had been settled first. By October 1893 the *Morden Monitor* reported that Winkler elevators

were taking in six thousand bushels a day while Morden's take had fallen to 2000 bushels.²⁰ In contrast to the earlier railway towns, Winkler's first merchant was a Mennonite, Bernard Loewen, reflecting the trend of Mennonites slowly accepting and adapting to railway towns in their midst.

Even though it was a boon to area farmers, the establishment of Winkler would deal a blow to Morden and Plum Coulee; in the case of Gretna, the challenge would come with the creation of Altona. In the summer of 1895, the C.P.R. began building a spur just north of Gretna and by fall a new town had been laid out. By January 1896 there were three elevators and a number of stores. One historian suggests the creation of Altona came because of the requests of area Mennonite farmers, "who had been clamouring for another depot on the Southwestern Branch for years," and "were overjoyed when their request was finally granted."²¹ Altona quickly became a major centre and while Gretna held on to the loyalties of some farmers it began to gradually decline in importance. The creation of new towns with overlapping hinterlands shifted the West Reserve's geography again. By 1897, some five years after its founding,



Plum Coulee (1885), Winkler (1892) and Altona (1895) dramatically changed the patterns of economic activity in the reserve in the fifteen years after the railway arrived. The location of Winkler and Altona allowed them to capture the business of the largest concentration of Mennonite settlers and they rose to prominence quickly at the expense of Morden and Gretna.

Winkler was emerging as the dominant railway town of the West Reserve. Wheat deliveries to Winkler had exceeded both Morden and Gretna. In the case of Altona, just two years after its founding, it had attracted almost as much wheat as Plum Coulee. In 1897, wheat deliveries to Winkler were 500,000 bushels; in comparison deliveries to Morden and Gretna were 410,000 bushels combined.

As had happened when the railway first arrived in the West Reserve the creation of new railway towns set off a flurry of activity among merchants and equipment dealers. For them questions immediately arose about whether their fortunes would improve if they moved to the new town. The same merchant names that had been in Gretna and Morden began appearing in Plum Coulee, Winkler, and Altona. Otto Schulz, a former partner of Gretna businessman Erdman Penner, and his brother-in-law H.P. Hanson owned stores in Plum Coulee and Morden. In 1894 they moved the Plum Coulee store to Winkler and closed the Morden store. They sold out to Ernest Rietze and Max Heyden in 1897. Rietze had worked for Schultz in Gretna, while Heyden had been a Gretna implement dealer.²²

TOO MANY RAILWAYS, TOO MANY TOWNS, 1895–1939

Altona was the last of the major railway towns built in the West Reserve to have a lasting significance. The era of railway building would, however, not reach its peak until the first years of the new century. In 1903 the Midland Railway Company of Manitoba was incorporated as a partnership between two American railway companies, the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific.²³ The Midland Railway constructed two lines through the West Reserve. One line originated at Portage la Prairie, went through Krongart, just north of the reserve, south to Plum Coulee and then connected to the Great Northern Railway at the border at Gretna. The line was completed in late 1906 with passenger service beginning in early 1907. The other line completed a year later went from Morden to Haskett and then on to connect to the U.S. railways at Walhalla, North Dakota. On July 1, 1909 the Midland Railway Company was purchased by the Great Northern but would retain its name.

As Bruce Wiebe has outlined, although few properties along the company's rail lines were actually sold to residents or

businesses, there was considerable speculation and land dealing associated with the potential townsites along the Midland rail lines. New townsites along the eastern section were planned at Bergman, just west of Altona, while the western section envisioned the townsites of Haskett at the U.S. border south of Winkler and Glencross, west of the West Reserve village of Chortitz. The McCabe Brothers from Duluth, Minnesota saw the new lines as an opportunity for them to get into the Western Canadian grain market and the envisioned townsites invariably had properties in their name for possible agent residences and elevators along railway right of ways.²⁴ McCabe elevators sprang up in the West Reserve along the Midland rail lines at Bergmann (25,000 bushels), Glencross (23,000 bu.), Gretna (25,000 bu.), and Haskett (23,000 bu.).²⁵ John Warkentin's study concludes that the Midland Railway lines "were unsuccessful." By the time the Midland Railway Company arrived on the scene, the towns along C.P.R.'s branch line had been there for ten years in the case of Altona and twenty-four years in the case of Morden, and the location of the lines and projected stations provided limited

improvement to rail access. The line going from Plum Coulee to Gretna was abandoned and the tracks removed in 1926 while the Morden to Haskett line managed to remain in limited operation for another ten years. Warkentin discounts any effect of the Plum Coulee to Gretna line on West Reserve trading patterns and suggests the Morden to Walhalla line had some effect on the West Reserve because of the establishment of Haskett as “a satellite of Walhalla.” Local farmers shipped their cream to Walhalla creameries through Haskett and although the town never had more than one hundred residents, it was also a service center for farmers in the southwestern corner of the West Reserve and non-Mennonite farmers from townships one to five just outside the reserve.²⁶

A similar fate awaited new towns and sidings along the Southwestern and Pembina Mountain Branch. Although the C.P.R. had surveyed the townsite of Rosenfeld at the junction where the line went to Gretna and west as early as 1891, the lack of drainage to the north and presence of Plum Coulee ten miles away prevented Rosenfeld from becoming

a major centre. In 1911 the C.P.R. was finally convinced to construct a siding at what would become Horndean, a short five miles down the track from Rosenfeld and only four miles from Plum Coulee. As early as 1908 C. W. Wiebe and his brother John had organized a petition to have a siding built on their land beside the tracks. Horndean came into existence alongside the siding, but it was too late and too close to Plum Coulee to become a major centre.²⁷

For the most part, trains have left our consciousness as determinants of where we live and do our shopping. Even for farmers the truck has become dominant and the location of the nearest railway line less important. Passenger service in the West Reserve came to an end in the 1950s and gradually the train stations disappeared due to demolition or were moved to become museums. The arrival of the diesel locomotive around the same time as the end of passenger service meant that water towers, roundhouses, and the smoke and hiss of the steam locomotive also faded away. The railway had its most dramatic and lasting effect on the geography of the

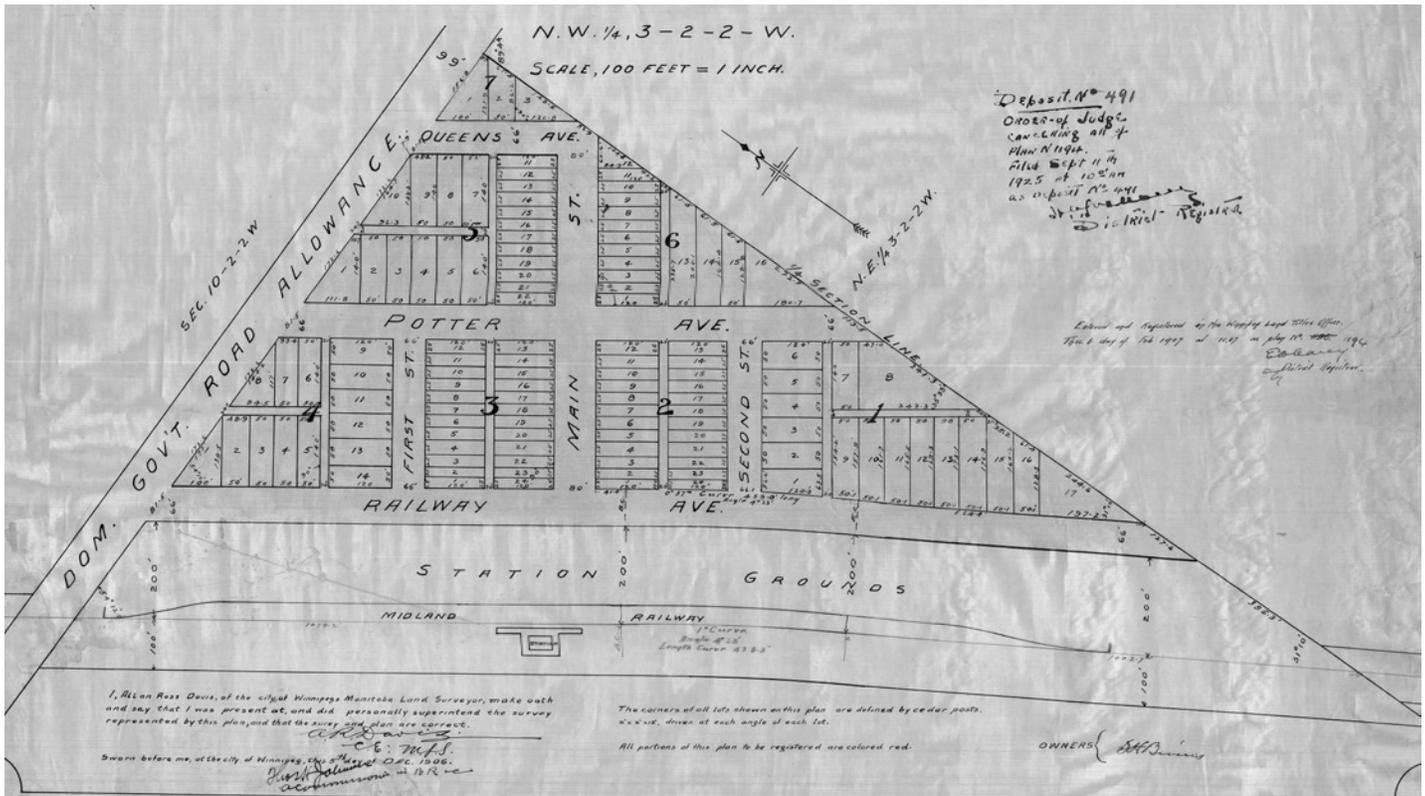
West Reserve between 1882 until the First World War. In the space of the fifteen years between 1880 and 1895, Mennonite farm families that had faced two and three day trips by ox-drawn wagons to bring their first surplus grain to Emerson, could hitch up their horses in the morning, deliver their grain to the elevator in Winkler, Altona, or Plum Coulee, do their other business and be home in time for evening chores. A trip to Winnipeg, previously a major undertaking, became easily possible. In 1894 one could board the train in Gretna at 10:30 and be in Winnipeg for a late lunch at 12:50 every day except Sunday.²⁸ Winkler and Altona, the largest service centres in the West Reserve today, grew because of the railway.

Mennonites of the West Reserve had an ambiguous relationship with the railway and the towns it brought with it. For the most conservative, living in a railway town conflicted with their sensibility of being separate from the world, while at the same time they thrived on the railway’s benefits, which brought them supplies and took their grain to the market. For the more liberal-minded they soon adapted to the



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Altona was the last of the major railway towns built in the West Reserve to have a lasting significance.



The plan for the new town of Bergman. The Midland Railway Company envisioned new towns at Haskett, Glencross and at Bergman, just west of Altona. They were similar in design and had some streets named after the principals in the land development company that was connected to the railway owners.

business opportunities and employment that came with the railway town. By the time Winkler and Altona made their appearance Mennonite businessmen and merchants were an integral part of community life in both places, and eventually both became 'Mennonite' towns.

While the ordering of the prairie landscape was dramatically shaped by the railway in the years of European settle-

ment, the influence of the railway on the West Reserve has some unique features. The railway did not stimulate the settlement of the West Reserve, but rather the development of railway lines responded to pre-existing settlement. And yet, the railway still reoriented West Reserve space dramatically over a fifteen-year period. The arrival of the Southwestern and Pembina Mountain Branch of the C.P.R.

was a tremendous economic stimulus for West Reserve farmers, even though their relationship with railway towns was somewhat ambivalent. Ironically, perhaps, the more conservative Mennonite area along the western side of the reserve who were most reticent to have too much to do with railway towns, stimulated the creation and growth of Winkler, ultimately the largest West Reserve centre.

- The Indigenous view of their origins in contrast to migration theories that account for their presence. The phrase is also the title of a popular illustrated history. Arthur J. Ray, *I have lived here since the World began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native Peoples*, (Toronto: Lester Publishing and Key Porter Books, 1996).
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- James McClelland, "Emerson during the 1880s, the Town, the People and the Railroad," in James McClelland and Dan Lewis, eds., *Emerson, 1875-1975: A Centennial History* (Emerson: Town of Emerson, 1975), 12.
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- Conrad D. Stoesz, "The Post Road," in Adolf Ens, Jacob E. Peters and Otto Hamm, eds., *Church, Family and Village*

- (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2001), 85-86. See also: Albert Siemens, "William Brown, Innkeeper on the Post Road, 1880-1894," *Preservings* 36 (2016): 44-50.
- John H. Warkentin, *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba* (Steinbach: Hanover Historical Society, 2000), 97.
- McClelland, 19.
- McClelland, 18.
- As quoted in Gerhard Ens, *Volost and Municipality: The Rural Municipality of Rhineland, 1884-1984* (Altona: R.M. of Rhineland, 1984), 22.
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- Ens, 70.
- Hans Werner, *Living Between Worlds: A History of Winkler* (Winkler: Winkler Heritage Society, 2006), 15
- Morden Monitor*, 12 October 1893.
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- Wiebe, 36-39.
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- Warkentin, 186.
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THE RAILROAD PASSES BY STEINBACH

Ralph Friesen

Many of the original roads from Steinbach to the surrounding communities and to Winnipeg were little more than rutted trails, subject to being washed away in spring.¹ It was unheard of for Canadian prairie communities to thrive, or even to exist, without a railroad to link them to larger centres. But Steinbach did thrive, responding to the lack of a railroad by developing a busy

local transportation system. Merchants, lumbermen, farmers, machine dealers and others either took care of their own transporting or hired others to do it for them, using horse- or ox-drawn wagons or sleighs. Poorer individuals who could not afford wagons and were thus limited in their transportation options in summer, welcomed winter snows, as they could easily build sleighs out of poplar wood and

thus move along the winter roads.²

Obstacles to winter travel could be considerable; in 1891 the correspondent to the *Nordwesten* described snow drifts as high as eight feet in some places following two days of storm.³ The following year on January 22, 1892, the temperature dipped to 48 below, so that almost everyone was “looking for the comfortable spot behind the warm oven.”⁴ The northern



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An essential part of Steinbach's transportation system was provided by men using sleighs and wagons, first drawn by oxen and later by horses.

lights put on spectacular displays against the backdrop of inky night skies above the snow-covered plains, a sight both inspiring and a little disquieting for the pioneers, one of whom reported that “a red band. . . appeared and then became one with a broad band running from east to west.”⁵

The Steinbach-Winnipeg journey became especially challenging during the late winter. At the end of March 1892, tanner Johann F. Toews made this trip with his brother-in-law Wilhelm Vogt. The two men made the usual stop at Ile des Chenes overnight on the way back, with snow falling. Starting out on the morning of the next day, they found that water had pooled everywhere and frozen, forming what Toews called “an inland sea.” Laboriously, they broke ice in front of their horses. At a bridge, Toews fell into the icy water while trying to fix a broken harness strap. He extricated himself and they continued, only to get the wagon stuck. Unhitching the horses, they rode on and stayed overnight again at a farmer’s house. The next morning they found that other travelers had broken trail through the ice before them, so they followed until they safely reached home at supper time.⁶

In 1886 a Winnipeg firm received a contract to build a road between La Broquerie and Steinbach, which brought increased traffic into Steinbach from the French community. Until this time, if the La Broquerie settlers wanted to get to Steinbach during the months that had no frost, and therefore no possibility of travelling by sleigh, they were obliged to go north, passing through Blumenhof, and then travel south to their destination.⁷

Some travellers were even more adventurous than Toews and Vogt: a young man named Cornelius Giesbrecht arrived in Steinbach in June 1901, having cycled from North Dakota. He reported the roads were “very bad.”⁸

TEAMSTERS

From early days, an essential part of Steinbach’s transportation system was provided by men using sleighs and wagons, first drawn by oxen and later by horses. One of the first teamsters was

pioneer Peter Toews of Wirtschaft 12. Another was farmer-teacher Gerhard E. Kornelsen, who frequently hauled goods to Niverville or Winnipeg for merchant Klaas Reimer. In January of 1885, for example, Kornelsen made a three-day run on sleigh, netting \$1.60 from his \$5 gross income, “which in the winter time is a good earning.”⁹

In 1893, produce farmer and butcher Johann R. Reimer of Wirtschaft 11 began a transport business to Winnipeg and the train station at Niverville, with a humble span of oxen. It would not be long before he had a team of horses pulling a covered wagon. He ran his transport business for K. Reimer & Sons for more than 25 years.¹⁰

Peter Dalke (1828–1909), who married into the Kornelsen family, was a resident in or near Steinbach for a number of years in the 1890s. Dalke, a drayman of freight and milk from nearby farmers, came to Manitoba from Nebraska after the death of his second wife in 1879. In 1901 he was hired by A. S. Friesen & Son to transport their locally manufactured straw blowers to Gretna.¹¹

Heinrich E. Kornelsen of Friedensfeld, brother to Gerhard, supplemented his teacher’s income with a delivery service. His business, like that of the farmers, was subject to interruption by unfavourable weather: “Our express man, H. Kornelsen, is unable to transport sufficient quantities of lime and soda water because of the frequent rain and the bad roads,” remarked the *Nordwesten* correspondent in 1902.¹² A few years before Steinbachers might hardly even have known of the existence of soda water; now it was on offer—albeit not reliably—along with a growing variety of other consumer goods.

Heinrich Kornelsen was a big man with a legendary reputation for his physical strength. On one occasion a number of wagons, including Kornelsen’s, got stuck in a low spot on a muddy road outside Steinbach: “While others took the trouble to hitch several teams in front of one wagon in order to pull it out, Kornelsen just got off the wagon, put his back to the wheel, and with one tremendous heave, lifted the wagon out. He was overheard to

remark, “No wonder the horses couldn’t move it. I found it hard myself.”¹³

For some years pioneer Johann S. Friesen, initially of Wirtschaft 4 and then of Hochstadt, held the mail transportation contract from Grunthal to Hochstadt, using a donkey and buggy before the regular rural mail route was inaugurated. *Äsel Fries’e*, as he was known because he kept donkeys, stuck to this mode of transportation long after horses had become the norm.

RAILWAY PETITION

The dream of a railroad for Steinbach, despite opposition, was powerful and persistent in the minds of some boosters. In the summer of 1879 the so-called “Emerson Section” of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway was completed between Winnipeg and Emerson, through Niverville, 40 kilometres west of Steinbach. As Niverville was closer than Winnipeg, it served as an alternative shipping and receiving destination for some of Steinbach’s commerce, including trade with the United States. Still, it was impractically distant. When the Canadian Pacific Railway line across Canada was completed in late 1885, rail transportation became even more important interprovincially and internationally.

In 1892 the South-Eastern Railway Co. proposed to build a new rail line, prompting some Steinbach citizens to initiate a petition in favour of bringing the line through the community. Their “strong petition,” signed by “the people of Steinbach,” rhapsodized about “a number of excellent places of business.” These businesses needed a reliable link to Winnipeg, “which . . . can only be reached by several days’ [of] laborious and expensive traveling.” The petition boldly claimed that “the surrounding district could easily accommodate ten times the number of settlers now in it.” Nothing came of the petition, which in itself would very likely have been the cause of controversy in Steinbach, where traditionalists were anxious to maintain the difficult access to the secular city that the petitioners wished to overcome.¹⁴

Six years later another proponent let it

be known that a railway might be built in a south-easterly direction from Winnipeg. The *Nordwestern* correspondent stated that he had heard talk in Winnipeg to the effect that the East Reserve Mennonites did not want the railroad, but according to him “most would be very happy to be able to deliver their wheat here, instead of incurring the costs of transportation to

The Manitoba and South Eastern Railway was a branch line which was soon consolidated into the much larger entity known as the Canadian Northern Railway, linking the prairies with shipping routes on Lake Superior. In July 1900, a large picnic was held in Warroad, Minnesota, in celebration of the CNR’s completion. An expedition of locals took

Eastern line was going through Giroux, talk of still another railroad to come through Steinbach persisted, generating a strong demand for land. In the spring of 1899 the *Nordwestern* correspondent commented that the buying and selling of real estate was marked almost by “a kind of joy.”¹⁸ At the administrative centre of the real estate transactions was A. S. Friesen,



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Without a railway, Steinbach responded by developing a busy local transportation system.

Winnipeg.” A railroad going through the middle of Range 9, Township 3 beyond the Rat River would be preferred, according to the correspondent, as that route would facilitate the best transportation for grain and wood.¹⁵

As it turned out, the Manitoba and South Eastern Railroad Company did start laying tracks—at Giroux, about seven miles northeast of Steinbach. In October, 1898 the flour mill manager, Johann I. Friesen, who had had a high vantage point on the roof of the mill, reported that he had already “seen the smoke of the working locomotive,” while others said they heard the sound of spikes being pounded in.¹⁶

advantage of reduced fares and went to the picnic. Some got more than they bargained for. Three Steinbach fishermen set out on their boat on the waters of Lake of the Woods. The choppy water made the going a little precarious, so one of the three was told that he should lie down on the bottom of the boat, for stability. He soon lost patience with this humble posture, sat up, and dumped himself and his fellows into the water, necessitating a rescue operation. One of the three, the merchant Johann Esau, was not much of a swimmer and barely reached shore. To add insult to ignominy, he was charged 15 cents for the rescue operation.¹⁷

Even after it was clear that the South

who had become a notary public in 1891, enabling him to attest to the authenticity of deeds and take affidavits. He conducted almost all of the land transactions in the Steinbach district for more than two decades, as many as 75 in a year. For the most part he charged \$3 for registering deeds and transfers with the Land Titles Office, while the occasional letter of administration cost \$10 or \$13.¹⁹

“Steinbach Station,” as it was called, was built in Giroux, not Steinbach, even though as many as 13 sleighs in a caravan might travel between Steinbach and Winnipeg carrying grain or transporting goods. Trips to Winnipeg were becoming commonplace, and the teamsters made



Businesses on Steinbach's Main street, like Klaas B. Reimer's Dry Goods Store, relied on teamsters to transport goods from the Giroux railroad station.

frequent use of a livery barn on Elgin (then Jemima Avenue), run by a man named Bill Crawford, to unhitch their oxen or horses.²⁰

At first Giroux showed signs of flourishing and some Steinbach Mennonites opened commercial enterprises there. Aganetha and Abram W. Reimer sold their holdings in Steinbach in 1908 and built a "travellers' home" in Giroux, where Aganetha served meals to the train crews. The Reimers also opened an abattoir and general store under the rubric Reimer Trading Company. Yet most Steinbachers,

already landowners rooted in their village, would not move existing businesses. Instead "Steinbach Station" created a new route for the village's teamsters. Johann W. Reimer, son of merchant Klaas Reimer, started a transport service between the Giroux railroad station and Steinbach which was to last 25 years, beginning with oxen but graduating to horses, of which he had 17 head on his farm at one point. His rate was \$1.25 per load.²¹ Gerhard F. Friesen, a "Texas" nephew of postmaster A. S. Friesen, took the contract for transporting mail from the Giroux station to

Steinbach, effective October 1, 1900.²²

When Peter (*Schmett*) Toews left Steinbach in 1907, Klaas I. Friesen, brother to miller Johann I. Friesen, moved from the Greenland settlement north of Blumenort onto Toews' old lot (originally Wirtschaft 8), where he operated a cartage business also running goods from the Giroux railway station to Steinbach. Friesen took over the operation of Toews' lodging house, known as "the Stopping Place," and ran the adjoining livery barn until 1920.²³

1 Adapted and re-printed with permission from Friesen, *Between Earth and Sky: Steinbach, The First Fifty Years* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, 2009), 292–299.

2 *Rundschau*, November 25, 1896.

3 *Nordwesten*, December 18, 1891.

4 *Nordwesten*, January 22, 1892.

5 *Nordwesten*, February 26, 1892.

6 *Nordwesten*, April 15, 1892.

7 K. J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches," *Carillon News*, 1952.

8 *Nordwesten*, June 19, 1901.

9 Quoted in Royden Loewen, *Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and New Worlds, 1850–1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 157.

10 *Die Steinbach Post* [hereafter SP], April 6, 1965.

11 Delbert F. Plett, *Dynasties of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Imperial Russia and North America* (Steinbach, MB: Crossway Publications, 2000), 81; *Nordwesten*, February 14, 1901.

12 *Nordwesten*, June 19, 1902.

13 *Carillon News*, Sept. 16, 1960.

14 Manitoba and South-Eastern Railway Co.: Summary of petitions along the line of the M & SE Ry., 1892, Manitoba Archives.

15 *Nordwesten*, June 16, 1898 and June 30, 1898.

16 *Nordwesten*, October 20, 1898.

17 *Nordwesten*, July 26, 1900.

18 *Nordwesten*, March 9, 1899.

19 Gerhard G. Kornelsen, in Delbert F. Plett, *Pioneers and*

Pilgrims: The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Manitoba, Nebraska and Kansas, 1874 to 1882 (Steinbach, MB: Crossway Publications, 1990), 257. A paragraph in the *Steinbach Post*, undated, refers to Friesen as "a notary public and agent in complicated legal issues."

20 SP, July 30, 1941.

21 K. J. B. Reimer, "Historical Sketches of Steinbach," *Carillon News*, 1952; Levina Reimer and Delbert Plett, "Aganetha Barkman Reimer," *Preservings* 17 (Dec 2000): 104.

22 *Nordwesten*, September 20, 1900.

23 *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, September 18, 1907; *Nordwesten*, September 18, 1907; SP, April 20, 1965; Delbert F. Plett, "From Steinbach to Flanders Field," *Preservings* 13 (Dec 1998): 49.

MENNONITE DEBT IN THE WEST RESERVE

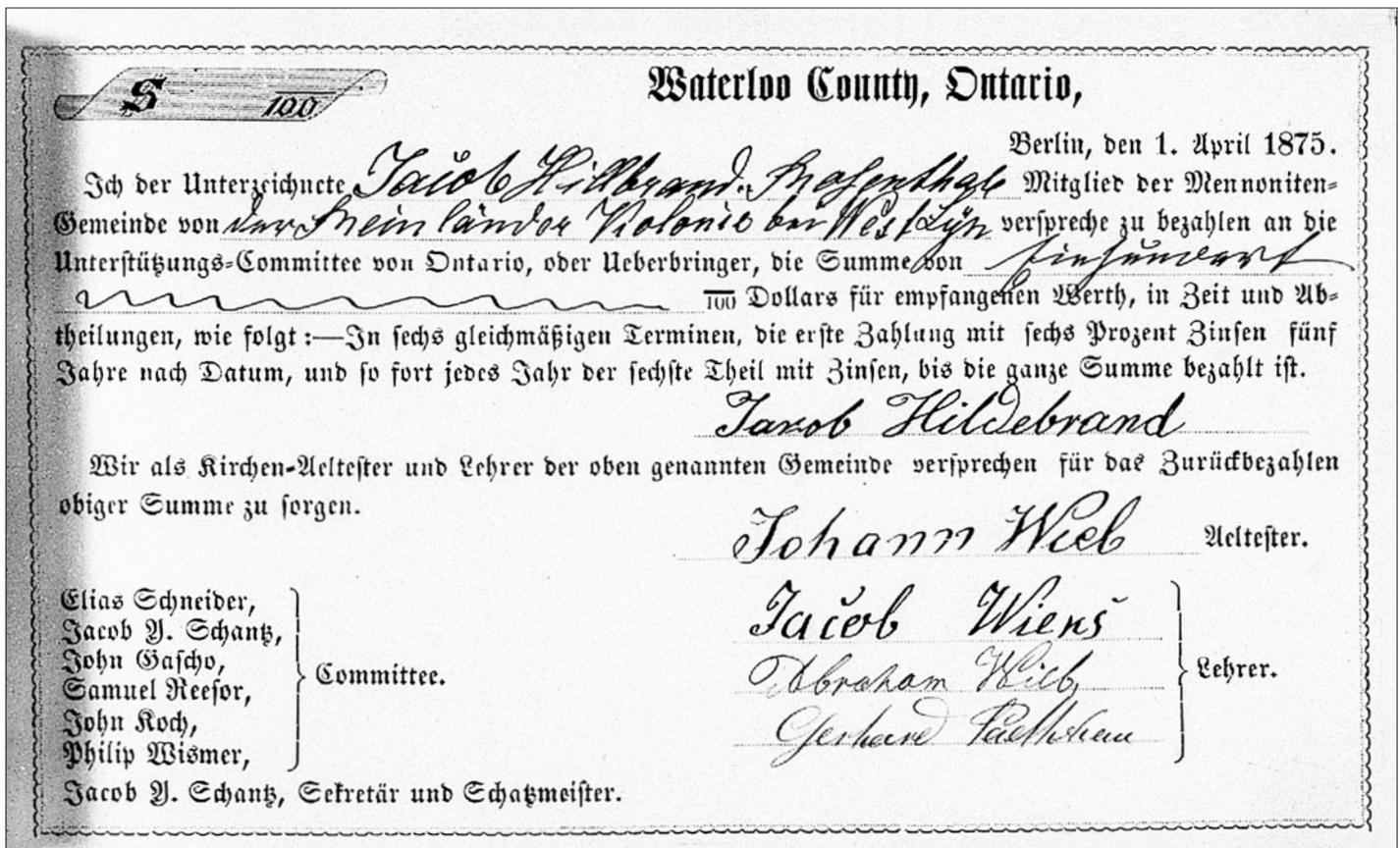
Bruce Wiebe

The *Gebietsamt* (district government) of the *Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde* on the West Reserve maintained records of individual and collective debts.¹ The *Reinländer Gemeinde* considered the repayment of these debts as its obligation.² Jacob Y. Shantz, in his position as Secretary and Treasurer of the “Unterstützungs-Committee von Ontario” (hereafter referred to as the Waterloo Society),³ was involved in the final resolution of some of

these debts, in addition to having personal Manitoba real estate interests.

The government loan for the 1870s Mennonite immigrants’ travel and resettlement expenses, which was secured by bonds signed for by Ontario Mennonites, in addition to the direct loans of their own funds extended by the latter, has already been extensively covered by others.⁴ The West Reserve *Gebietsamt* records, fragmented as they may be, pro-

vide the *Reinländer Gemeinde* account of events. In 1875, the Mennonite immigrants destined for the West Reserve settled in eighteen villages and it seems apparent that the Waterloo Society had prepared for their arrival and anticipated their financial needs. The society had pre-printed promissory notes marked “Berlin”⁵ and dated April 1, 1875, with blanks left open for names, sums, and signatures. The individual’s name and village of settlement was subsequently added and that he was a member of the Mennonite “*Gemeinde*” of the *Reinländer Colony* at West Lynne. For value received, the individual promised to pay the society or bearer, a certain sum: in each case \$100 was entered. It was repayable in 6 equal installments, the first payment with 6% interest due 5 years after the issue date, with payments continuing annually thereafter until it was fully paid. This promissory note was signed by the individual and then countersigned by *Ältester* (bishop) Johann Wiebe and three



The Waterloo Society promissory note for Jacob Hildebrand.

ministers, (Jacob Wiens, Abraham Wiebe, and Gerhard Paetkau), who promised to ensure the repayment.⁶ Some individuals signed several \$100 notes.⁷ Heads of 145 families, all appearing to be 1875 arrivals, were recorded as owing \$22,252 through these notes.⁸ However, at the end of 1875 this sum had only reached \$21,852.⁹ This amount was recorded as part of the Gebietsamt corporate debt.¹⁰ Despite the first West Reserve settlers having only arrived in July 1875, the Gebietsamt noted that interest would be calculated thereon from the 1st of April,¹¹ the date on the preprinted promissory notes. Other such promissory notes for the 1876 immigrant arrivals likely existed but the Gebietsamt did not designate a further corresponding sum specifically owing to the Waterloo Society as they initially did for the 1875 arrivals.

The Gebietsamt also records that, independent of the government loan secured by the Waterloo Society, twenty-one individual Reinländer Gemeinde members provided their own personal bonds and independently obtained a total of three thousand dollars directly from the Department of Agriculture.¹² This group of men, all living in or having land belonging to the West Reserve villages of Neuhorst and Schoenwiese, included West Reserve *Obervorsteher*¹³ Isaac Miller (borrowed two hundred dollars), Franz Guenther (homesteaded SE 3-1-3W and borrowed five hundred dollars) and Johan Heide (borrowed fifty dollars but died June 1877 before obtaining a homestead).¹⁴ This money never passed through the hands of the Waterloo Society as Jacob Y. Shantz later claimed it did,¹⁵ but instead the total three thousand dollars was “paid to individual Mennonites by Department of Agriculture” agents at Emerson.¹⁶ Accordingly, patents for their individual¹⁷ homesteads could only be issued upon notification from the Department of Agriculture to the Department of the Interior that the bonds had been released.¹⁸ Having apparently negotiated these bonds independently of the Waterloo Society, these funds were not channeled through the Gebietsamt.¹⁹ Even though these individual bond obligations

were not necessarily the responsibility of the Reinländer Gemeinde, the amounts borrowed were also included as part of their Gebietsamt corporate debt totals.²⁰ They not only took note as repayments were being made on them,²¹ but they also forwarded certain repayments through Jacob Y. Shantz.²² As newly arrived non-English speaking Mennonites were unlikely to have the necessary contacts to arrange for these individual loans, it was likely Obervorsteher Isaac Miller who organized and coordinated them through his relationships with government officials.²³ The involvement of Miller in these loans made their repayment a responsibility of the Gemeinde. Although no copies of these bonds are known to exist, the Gebietsamt noted that interest would be calculated thereon from July 19, 1876.²⁴

Beyond the resources provided by the Waterloo Society promissory notes and these direct government loans, the Gebietsamt acquired additional government funds through the Waterloo Society plus personal loans from several members of the society. These latter loans, from Jacob Y. Shantz (\$458), Samuel(?) Reesor (\$900), and Elias Schneider (\$800), were likely made early in 1878.²⁵ From the dates given for interest calculations it appears that the government funds acquired through the Waterloo Society were \$29,000 on January 8, 1877, \$4,700 on November 5, 1877, and \$1,458 on January 12, 1878.²⁶

The ability of the West Reserve Gebietsamt to repay these loans to the government and the Waterloo Society depended upon those individuals who ultimately benefitted from them. Accordingly, the Gebietsamt kept meticulous records, including individual accounts for each family requiring assistance, which allowed these families to obtain on credit²⁷ the necessities of life as well as the equipment, livestock, and supplies to begin re-establishing themselves in farming. The case of Jacob Hildebrand and Maria Nickel illustrates this point. They arrived in July 1875, settling in the village of Rosenthal and making a homestead entry for NE 3-2-4W. The actual signing date was not recorded

but Jacob signed two Waterloo Society promissory notes for \$100, dated April 1, 1875. Over the span of two years he received on credit from the Gebietsamt flour, lard, meat, eggs, bacon, oil, beans, potatoes, salt, wheat, barley, oats, sacks, a stove, one-half share of a plow, an ox, and a cow for \$95, and \$5 in cash. Added to this balance was his \$176 debt²⁸ which was still owed for the family travel costs from Russia. By the end of 1876 he owed \$501 at which point the \$200 from the Waterloo Society was deducted from the balance and noted as being transferred to the Shantz Gemeinde.²⁹ This distinction would seem to confirm that the amounts specified in the promissory notes were a separate source of funds.³⁰ However, for year-end 1878 this \$200 owing to the Waterloo Society was, without explanation, added back to Hildebrand’s balance owing to the Gebietsamt.³¹ Within the personal accounts such as Hildebrand’s, the Gebietsamt appears to have only temporarily differentiated between the two sources of funds, the portion of the Canadian government funds which they had received through the Waterloo Society and the funds which they acknowledged as being from Ontario Mennonites as evidenced by these individual Waterloo Society promissory notes; by the end of 1878 they were also merged in the corporate records.³² The personal Gebietsamt accounts of certain 1876 arrivals also show \$100 multiples being deducted and noted as transferred to the Shantz Gemeinde, but only in 1878, and then almost immediately added back to their debt totals.³³

On January 1, 1878 the Gebietsamt recorded that it owed \$3,000 directly to the government on personal bonds, \$50,952³⁴ to the Shantz Gemeinde (this sum would have included amounts owing both on the individual promissory notes as well as the government loan), and \$4,285 to an unnamed bank. They also owed \$14,240 to their own Reinländer Gemeinde members³⁵ and had received \$1,881 in donations from unnamed sources.³⁶ By June 1, 1878 the bank loan appears to have been replaced by further advances from Ontario. Records indicate that \$3,000 was owed directly to the gov-



As the secretary and treasurer of the Waterloo Society, Jacob Shantz (second row on the right in this photograph of the Shantz family) was involved in the final resolution of some of these debts.

ernment on the personal bonds, \$21,952 to the Waterloo Society on the individual promissory notes, two entries of \$29,000 and \$4,000 to “Shantz” (the Waterloo Society for the government loan), plus the sums owing to Shantz, Reesor, and Schneider. In addition they now owed \$17,140 to their own members and had

received \$1,886 in donations.³⁷ At year-end 1878 a lump sum of \$69,934 was noted as owed to Shantz und *Regierung* (Government) and year-end 1879 the government (no reference to Shantz or the Shantz Gemeinde) was owed \$71,691, plus \$1,179 to Shantz and Reesor. By 1880 the government debt, (the term

“Regierung” continuing to be used collectively for both debt to the government and to the Ontario Mennonites), was \$75,971. The foregoing totals appear to include 6% simple interest.³⁸ Thereafter only government debt is noted but now including 6% interest compounded annually: \$69,529 in 1881,³⁹ \$74,691

in 1882,⁴⁰ \$74,862 in 1883, \$69,125 in 1884, \$69,668 in 1885, \$59,906 in 1886, and \$47,211 in 1887.⁴¹

The largest loan repayments by the Gebietsamt appear to have occurred in 1887/1888, most of them recorded as paid to Shantz, without specifying whether they were intended for the government loan or the Ontario Mennonites.⁴² However, sometime during 1888 the Gebietsamt noted that they had fully repaid their government debt with \$18,115⁴³ but subsequently noted that in July the government had cancelled \$8,118 thereof.⁴⁴ As of January 1, 1888 they still owed the “*Canadische Brüder*” (the Ontario Mennonites) \$28,990⁴⁵ but this was reduced to \$23,367 after the *Bergthaler Gemeinde* assumed responsibility for \$5,623.⁴⁶ This debt assumption by the Bergthaler was logically the sum total still owed by those former Reinländer Gemeinde members who had left the Reinländer and who were now Bergthaler members.⁴⁷ Upon the remaining \$23,367, the West Reserve Gebietsamt repaid a total of \$9,300 and in December 1888 the “*Gemeinde in Canada*” (the Ontario Mennonites) cancelled \$4,065, leaving a total of \$11,504 owing.⁴⁸ By October 7, 1890, only \$84 remained, which was repaid on November 18, 1890 to Jacob Y. Shantz, together with an additional \$150 to him personally for his efforts (“*seine mühe*”). Franz Froese, who was now Obervorsteher, signed the page after writing that the “*Canadische Gemeinde*” was fully paid.⁴⁹ Although both the government and the Ontario Mennonite loans were now repaid, not all Reinländer Gemeinde members had been able to fully repay their own Gebietsamt accounts. These monies were still due the Gebietsamt but could not necessarily be collected.

As previously covered by others the debt cancellations recorded by the Gebietsamt were actually due to an 1889 commutation of the interest charged on both the loans received from the government and from the Ontario Mennonites.⁵⁰ However, the implications of this reduction in interest for the Gebietsamt and the individual debtors, after the majority of the

loans had already been repaid, should be noted. On November 6, 1890, Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde Ältester Johann Wiebe, together with several ministers, administrators and church members, met to discuss this reduction, or as they described it, “the gifted money upon the 1879 debt” (“*das geschonkene geld welches auf Schuld Anno 1879 gewesen ist*”).⁵¹ They noted that the 1879 loan balance had been \$90,000, from which the government had now cancelled \$10,000, and that the Canadian Mennonites had cancelled \$5,000, for a total of \$15,000, which represented 16.66%.⁵² Accordingly, for those who were still in debt, the ministers and administrators decided to calculate 16.5% of that person’s 1879 debt total and apply this sum to reduce any amounts currently still outstanding in 1890. Any surplus would be paid out to the poorest in the community once incoming funds permitted.⁵³ They also noted that “should the occasional person later also request such funds” (“*sollte nachher einer oder der andere kommen*”), they would then be paid out as per this decision.⁵⁴ In an attached list of those persons, whom they presumably considered the poorest, are persons with current debt which was then reduced by the sum calculated. Some had their “refunds” transferred to the Waisenamt, some took theirs in cash, while others had portions paid to a third-party, presumably to satisfy debts or make purchases. The majority of these refunds occurred in 1891/1892 but several were recorded as late as 1900.⁵⁵

As noted, except for the \$3,000 obtained directly from the Department of Agriculture, the Waterloo Society and Jacob Y. Shantz had direct involvement with all other Gebietsamt recorded loan obligations. Others have already covered the concerns about repayment of these loans and the “*First Lien*”⁵⁶ which was a priority claim upon the individual debtor’s homestead prior to its being patented. Manitoba Mennonites had requested through petition that the patents to their homesteads not be issued until, in essence, their individual Gebietsamt debt was repaid, or “...until he or she shall have first paid to the said Jacob Y.

Shantz as such Secretary and Treasurer as aforesaid of the Mennonite Community of the County of Waterloo the sum set opposite his or her name...,” (that sum being the 1882 debt as recorded by the Reinländer Gebietsamt). Because the petition acknowledged that, “Whereas certain monies have been advanced to us by the Mennonite Community of the County of Waterloo in the Province of Ontario...,” the wording of the petition implied that all monies advanced were from Ontario Mennonites and made no reference to the government as the source of any funds.⁵⁷

The repayment of these individual debts, as indicated in the various records, occurred either directly by payments from the debtors, through alternate financing by a mortgage company, through direct sale by the owner of the property, or through transfer of the property to a purchaser in exchange for their repayment or assumption of the Gebietsamt debt. In each case, prior to any patent being issued, Jacob Y. Shantz would first notify the Department of the Interior that the individual had repaid his debt to the Waterloo Society. However, Shantz in his position as Secretary and Treasurer of the Waterloo Society, was more directly involved in the final resolution of some of these debts, specifically in those situations in which the individual was unable to complete repayment to the Gebietsamt. The case of Jacob Hildebrand of Rosenthal illustrates how this worked. Due to the compounding of interest, his total indebtedness had increased but he had managed to repay only \$26 thereof. At the end of 1882, he signed the Petition, the “*First Lien*,” and his debt was recorded as \$823. On January 10, 1883 he made an application for patent to his homestead. Subsequently unable to repay his debt and therefore ineligible to be granted the patent, on June 6, 1887 Hildebrand signed a Quit Claim deed of the property to Jacob Y. Shantz personally and the patent was issued in Shantz’s name. At his request the patent was sent to Obervorsteher Franz Froese at the Gebietsamt where the property was sold via a deed from Shantz to Julius Klassen for \$1,250. According to the Gebietsamt records, at the end of 1887

Hildebrand still owed \$1,100 and the difference of \$150 was paid to him in cash on April 14, 1888. These arrangements were acknowledged by Hildebrand to have been made in his presence and with his consent. The only monies that changed hands were the \$150 paid to Hildebrand by the Gebietsamt after having received them from Klassen who then additionally assumed responsibility for the repayment of the remaining \$1,100 of Hildebrand's Gebietsamt debt.⁵⁸

In a somewhat similar manner, 28 other West Reserve homesteads were also patented to Jacob Y. Shantz to enable their disposition and the repayment of the related debt owed to the Gebietsamt and, by extension, to the Waterloo Society on the government loan or to Ontario Mennonites.⁵⁹ Despite the Gebietsamt having satisfied all debt owed to Ontario Mennonites by November 1890, con-

tinuing for some time thereafter Shantz's authorization was still required in order for patents to be issued to a homesteader who had signed the First Lien, and this aided the Gebietsamt in their continuing efforts to collect monies owed.⁶⁰

The inexplicable initial segregation of the individual debtor's \$100 Waterloo Society Promissory Note obligations is open to conjecture. Whether or not these funds originated with the Ontario Mennonite community or the government loan secured by them, the notes were clearly repayable to the Waterloo Society. The government would have had no obligation to assure Manitoba Mennonite repayment of the Ontario Mennonites' own funds but government funds advanced to and secured by the Ontario Mennonites was another matter. A February 6, 1883 report of the Privy Council Committee which rec-

ommended the First Lien noted that "it would tend to facilitate the repayment by the Western Ontario Mennonite Community of the loan made by the Government."⁶¹ Whether intentional or not, the 1878 commingling of these sums had the effect of obscuring their origin. Mortgage Companies who later wished to advance monies to Mennonites for debt consolidation,⁶² but who had to await the issue of patents to enable the execution of such mortgages to secure their position,⁶³ could perhaps have argued that theirs would have been no less a priority claim prior to patent than that of the Waterloo Society's personal funds.⁶⁴ However, this possibility was then effectively pre-empted by the subsequent May 24, 1883 Dominion Lands Act where, similar to the "First Lien, Section 38 of that Act made provision for charges upon homesteads."⁶⁵

1 In the West Reserve Gebietsamt records the reference is always to "Regierungs Schuld" and/or "Shantz Gemeinde Schuld" but never to "Brottschuld." This latter term appears limited to the East Reserve.

2 Although the Gebietsamt annually balanced its books, it is not evident exactly how they recorded and then reconciled certain assets and liabilities. The income and expense statements are incomplete and therefore there is no alternative but to accept the numbers as they recorded them as fact for purposes of this paper.

3 Waterloo Society is how Jacob Y. Shantz himself referred to them in his extensive correspondence with the Department of the Interior. Homestead application files, Mennonite Heritage Archives (hereafter MHA). November 1883 Memorandum, Minister of the Interior to the Privy Council, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 250, file 27630, pt. 1, "Western Ontario Mennonite Community, otherwise known as the "Waterloo Society."

4 Adolf Ens, *Subjects or Citizens: The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870-1925* (University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 24-27. Samuel J. Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jacob Y. Shantz* (Winnipeg, MB: Hyperion Press, 1988), chapters 7,10. Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada: The History of a Separate People, 1786-1920* (Toronto: MacMillan of Canada, 1974), 216-226. E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* (Altona, MB: D. W. Friesen & Sons Ltd, 1955), 55-59. Peter D. Zacharias, *Reinland: An Experience in Community* (Reinland, MB: Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976), 63-68.

5 Berlin, now Kitchener, Ontario.

6 West Reserve Gebietsamt records were located in 1992 in Mexico by the author and borrowed for microfilming. The handwritten volumes are not always titled, have few indexes, are sometimes repurposed, infrequently paginated, and entries fragmented over multiple volumes. Copies available at MHA. Gebietsamt, one booklet containing 184 signed promissory notes at the end of which, in what appears to be the handwriting of Jacob Y. Shantz, is noted "Total Notes Signed in this Book 18,400.00, Total in other." It should also be noted that examples of a somewhat similar (with different repayment terms and without a preprinted date, other than identifying the decade) type of promissory note

used by the East Reserve Bergthaler exist in the Chortitzer Waisenamt collection. They include one note for \$17 and another for \$799.

7 To a certain extent these funds appear to have been doled out by Jacob Y. Shantz to various 1875 group leaders to assist the needy: Jacob Niebuhr (\$3,370), Abraham Doell (\$967), Isaac Miller (\$465), Johann Wiebe (\$1,502), Peter Friesen (\$1,244), David Nickel (\$1,847). Gebietsamt, "An Schreibe Buch des Peter Wiens," MHA.

8 Gebietsamt, "Raport-Buch, Hauptanschreibungen von Einnahmen und Ausgaben der Kolonie Reinland 1877 und 1878" MHA. "Namen derjenigen die an Shantz Gemeinde schuldig ist und wie viel," MHA. Undated list of individuals by village and amounts owing to Shantz Gemeinde. Gebietsamt, Gemeindebuch der Dorfschaften Schanzenfeld, Chortitz, Waldheim, Schoendorf, Blumstein, Schoenfeld, p. 307, MHA, records this sum in June 1878 as \$25,852.

9 Gebietsamt, "Gemeinde Buch der Kolonie auf dem Reservierten Land in Manitoba von die Fuerstenländer und Alt Kolonie Ansiedler," MHA. The record is undated but inferred from the names recorded.

10 "West Reserve Gebietsamt," volume in private hands located and photographed in Mexico by the author in 2009. Current location unknown. "Anschreibe Buch des Bezirks Amt zu Reinland, der Schlussrechnung vom 6ten Juli 1875 bis 11ten Januar 1878." Hand paginated 2, column heading, "Nachweis wie viel die Doerfer an Shantz Gemeinde schuldig."

11 Gebietsamt, "Raport-Buch, Hauptanschreibungen von Einnahmen und Ausgaben der Kolonie Reinland 1877 und 1878," MHA.

12 LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 250, file 27630, pt 1. Schedule of Mennonite Bonds given direct to the Government. When these bonds were actually signed and the monies received is not recorded.

13 In the Gebietsamt election results, Obervorsteher is the term used for Miller's position. No 13, Bekanntmachungen und Wahlresultaten, 6, MHA.

14 Schedule of Mennonite Bonds given direct to the Government. LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 250, file 27630, pt 1.

15 June 1, 1886, Jacob Y. Shantz to the Department of the Interior. LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 288, file 54018.

16 Ibid., June 25, 1886, Department of the Interior to Jacob Y. Shantz. The letter also states that "the bonds given by these men are an entirely separate affair from those given by the Waterloo Society and must be kept separately."

17 The other individuals and their bonds were: Johan Guenther (\$100), Jacob Reimer (\$100), Gerhard Enns (\$100), Gerhard Friesen (\$100), Peter Froese (\$300), Bernhard Wiebe (\$100), David Giesbrecht (\$100), Isaac Miller Jr, (\$50), Johan Bueckert (\$200), Bernhard Penner (\$200), Abraham Friesen (\$100), Heinrich Vogt (\$50), Gerhard Friesen (\$50), Jacob Wall (\$100), Johan Miller (\$200), Peter Klassen (\$100), Jacob Wall (\$200), Klaas Wall (\$100).

18 June 25, 1886, Department of the Interior to Jacob Y. Shantz. LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 288, file 54018. Klaas Wall Homestead application file. Oct. 29, 1886, Department of the Interior to John Lowe, Department of Agriculture.

19 Ibid. Implied by the wording of the June 25, 1886 letter to Shantz.

20 Gebietsamt, "Anschreibe Buch des Bezirks Amt zu Reinland, der Schlussrechnung vom 6ten Juli 1875 bis 11ten Januar 1878." Hand paginated 2, column heading, "Die Gemeinde schuldig an die Gemeinde Glieder, an Shantz, Waisenamt, und Regierung betrag," MHA.

21 Gebietsamt vol. 1 "Gemeinde ausgaben...", 216, "Verzeichnis wie viel die Bürgen, die für die \$3000 Dol bei der Regierung gebürgt haben, bezahlt haben, in Summe ein Jeder," MHA.

22 April 27, 1886, Jacob Y Shantz to the Minister of the Interior. LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 288, file 54018.

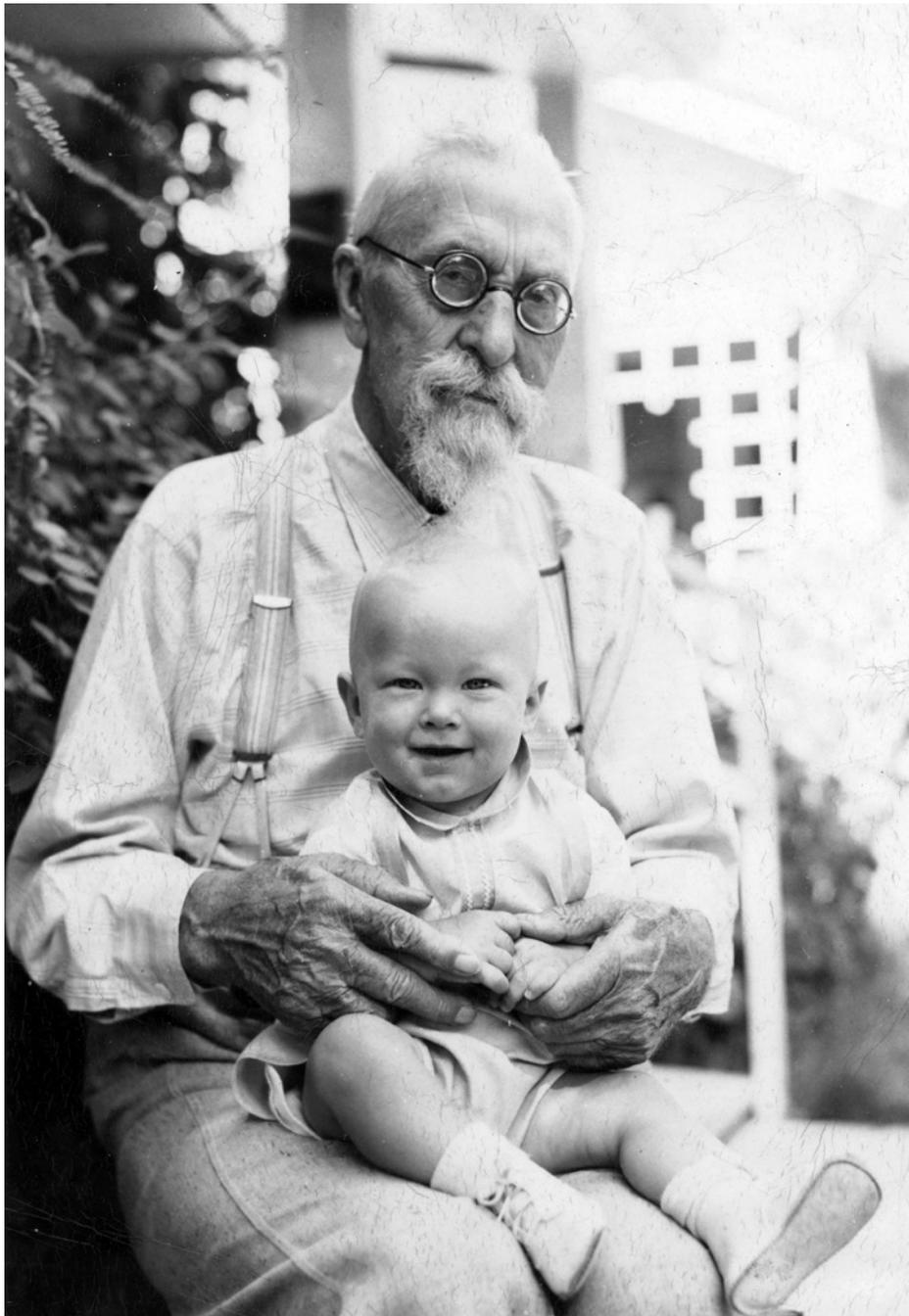
23 Gebietsamt, "Gemeinde Buch der Dorfschaften Schoenwiese, Neuendorf, Rosenort, Kronsthal, Neuhorst, Blumenort," 3,195, MHA. In the accounts for at least two of these individuals during this time period there appear entries of sums they received from Miller equal to the sum each borrowed from the government. E.g. Gerhard Enns (\$100) and Jacob Wall (\$100). Additionally, one of the individuals, Franz Guenther, who provided these bonds, was relatively wealthy and had himself loaned monies to the Gebietsamt, which suggests that at least a portion of the \$3,000 was intended for Gebietsamt and not personal usage.

24 Gebietsamt, "Raport-Buch, Hauptanschreibungen von Einnahmen und Ausgaben der Kolonie Reinland

- 1877 und 1878, MHA.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid. However, Gebietsamt, "Haupt Ausgaben und Einnahmen der Reinländer Kolonie vom 1sten Januar 1879," 368, MHA, records \$21,952, \$3,000, \$29,000, and \$4,000 all as from the government and only \$700 and \$1,457 from Shantz. This practice of using the term "Regierung" collectively occurs until the government portion itself was fully repaid. The already noted publications in note 4 vary considerably in their calculations as to the amounts owed by the West Reserve Reinländer Gemeinde on their portion of the Government loan.
- 27 Credit extended by the Gebietsamt which was funded in turn by the Gebietsamt's portion of the Government loan, the individual's signed Waterloo Society promissory notes, and funds acquired by the Gebietsamt from, and owed to, other Mennonites with surplus funds.
- 28 Cents have been omitted from all sums in this paper.
- 29 Hildebrand's drawings compiled from the various Gebietsamt volumes with Rosenthal village entries. This particular entry is recorded as "von obige Schuld an Schanz Gemeine ueberwiesen \$200," MHA.
- 30 This being the \$22,252 owing to the Waterloo Society as per the Promissory Notes. The already noted publications in note 4 also vary considerably in their calculations as to the amounts owed by the West Reserve Reinländer Gemeinde to the Ontario Mennonites.
- 31 Gebietsamt, various volumes with entries for individuals in the village of Rosenthal. Other examples of such \$100 or \$200 in and out entries include those for Johan Guenther, Franz Peters, and all others so verified. MHA.
- 32 "Anschreibe Buch des Bezirks Amt zu Reinland, der Schlussrechnung vom 6ten Juli 1875 bis 11ten Januar 1878," Hand paginated 10, 17, MHA.
- 33 The available records for Wilhelm Janzen, Jacob Doerksen, and Heinrich Letkeman.
- 34 The "Raport-Buch, Hauptanschreibungen von Einnahmen und Ausgaben der Kolonie Reinland 1877 und 1878" (MHA) records the \$3,000, \$21,952, \$29,000, and \$4,000 all as owing to the "Regierung," the government. However, an undated list in Gebietsamt, „Gebietsamt, Haupt Ausgaben und Einnahmen der Reinländer Kolonie vom 1sten Januar 1879," 321 records the previous year's debt to Shantz as \$22,052 and the current year's as \$4,047. Thus within one year the Gebietsamt refers to the same total debt owed on the individual Waterloo Society promissory notes as owing to the government and to Shantz. A totally untitled, unpaginated, and undated Gebietsamt volume records \$21,853 as owing to "Jacob Y Shantz Gemeinde." Another unpaginated Gebietsamt volume simply entitled "Gemeindebuch," for 1875 and 1876 records that, according to Shantz's calculation, they owe the Shantz Gemeinde \$22,052. This sum Shantz has calculated is composed of \$18,381 for grain, flour, meat, and lard, \$3,480 for wagons, \$990 for plows, \$198 for tickets, and \$108 for wheels(?), less the amount already paid \$1,105.
- 35 Some of these Gemeinde member's monies were available to the Gebietsamt without interest.
- 36 "Anschreibe Buch des Bezirks Amt zu Reinland, der Schlussrechnung vom 6ten Juli 1875 bis 11ten Januar 1878," hand pagination 2, MHA.
- 37 Gebietsamt, "Gemeindebuch der Dorfschaften Schanzfeld, Chortitz, Waldheim, Schoendorf, Blumstein, Schoenfeld," 296, MHA, Gebietsamt, "Raport-Buch, Hauptanschreibungen von Einnahmen und Ausgaben der Kolonie Reinland 1877 und 1878," MHA.
- 38 The Gebietsamt initially calculated compound interest on the various loans but then noted them as incorrectly calculated. Gebietsamt, "Raport-Buch, Hauptanschreibungen von Einnahmen und Ausgaben der Kolonie Reinland 1877 und 1878," MHA.
- 39 The remaining \$536 debt to Shantz, Reesor, and Schneider was paid January 6, 1881. Gebietsamt, "Haupt Ausgaben und Einnahmen der Reinländer Kolonie vom 1sten Januar 1879," 366. They also later noted having made an \$8,000 payment to the government in December 1881, 368.
- 40 Ibid. \$3,000 was noted as paid to the Government in February 1882.
- 41 "Anschreibe Buch des Bezirks Amt zu Reinland, der Schlussrechnung vom 6ten Juli 1875 bis 11ten Januar 1878." There are minor discrepancies in the year-end totals when compared to those recorded in "Haupt Ausgaben und Einnahmen der Reinländer Kolonie vom 1 Januar 1879."
- 42 Record of payments made is incomplete with individual entries distributed among various volumes. The earliest payments located included \$1,250 to Shantz in 1880, and 6 payments totaling \$2,060 in 1881/1882 for Miller to send to Ottawa. The majority of the payments were to Shantz with only a few specified as to the Government.
- 43 Gebietsamt, Haupt Ausgaben und Einnahmen der Reinländer Kolonie vom 1 Januar 1879, p 327.
- 44 Ibid., 329.
- 45 Ibid., 327. The \$47,211 owing at year-end 1887 was reduced by \$106 in January 1888 from which the \$18,115 was then deducted to arrive at \$28,990, the amount still due the Ontario Mennonites.
- 46 Gebietsamt, "Haupt Ausgaben und Einnahmen der Reinländer Kolonie vom 1 Januar 1879," 327.
- 47 Gebietsamt, "Enthaltend wer an die Gemeinde schuldig ist," MHA, file no. 6. The individual amounts transferred to the Berghthaler are recorded in the Gebietsamt pages for such individuals, for example, Ludwig Esau (\$907), David Driedger (\$168), Peter Rempel (\$691), Wilhelm Toews (\$324), Franz Enns (\$917), Johan Niessen (\$403), etc.
- 48 Ibid., 328. There were also other minor entries plus added interest to arrive at this sum.
- 49 Ibid., 329. Without details of payments made and debt cancellations the "Anschreibe Buch des Bezirks Amt zu Reinland, der Schlussrechnung vom 6ten Juli 1875 bis 11ten Januar 1878," 115 records owing the "Canadische [sic] Brüder" \$15,965 at year-end 1888, and 118, the "Canadische Gemeinde" \$11,003 at year-end 1889. No such debt totals are recorded thereafter.
- 50 Ens, *Subjects or Citizens*, 25 and Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer*, 147, Epp, *Mennonites in Canada: The History of a Separate People*, 226, Francis, *In Search of Utopia*, 57, 59, Zacharias, *Reinland*, 65.
- 51 "Vorschuss erhalten bei Rosthern und Hague. Bis dahin Regierungsschuld (Alte)," 192, MHA, file no 10.
- 52 Although this percentage calculation is obvious, the rationale is not. For it to be accurate would require that the 1879 total Reinländer Gemeinde debt, including interest, owed both to the government and the Ontario Mennonites, be \$90,000 (they had recorded it as \$71,691 at year-end 1879) and that the cancelled sums total had for this purpose been rounded off to \$15,000 from \$12,183.
- 53 These payouts would be dependent upon other debtors continuing to repay their Gebietsamt debts.
- 54 "No 10, Vorschuss erhalten bei Rosthern und Hague. Bis dahin Regierungsschuld (Alte)," 192, MHA.
- 55 Ibid., 192-209. At year-end 1890 they noted that \$4,245 was to be paid out to those on their list. To offset this sum and other liabilities the Gebietsamt had \$13,767 receivable from still outstanding debts at year-end 1890. No totals are recorded for the actual amounts that loans were reduced and refunds paid but 16.5% of \$71,691 suggests that, although the Reinländer Gemeinde leadership obviously did not anticipate a great demand, \$11,829 in total could have been so requested by their members. Gebietsamt, "No 6, Enthaltend wer an die Gemeinde schuldig ist," records additional such debt reductions, for example, for Peter Heide (\$26), 37, and Heinrich Hildebrand (\$32), 39.
- 56 Ens, *Subjects or Citizens*, 39-41 and Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer*, 145.
- 57 There were two copies of the petition with only minor variations signed by 190 individuals in the westerly portion of the West Reserve, and two copies of another petition signed by 146 individuals in the easterly portion. LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 250, file 27630, pt 1 has copies of all petitions.
- 58 Although Klassen assumed responsibility for the debt January 1, 1888, the deed from Shantz to Klassen was only dated November 6, 1889. Details of all transactions from Hildebrand's relevant Gebietsamt debt records, the Homestead Application File for NE 3-2-4W, and the abstract for NE 3-2-4W.
- 59 Of the twenty-nine individuals whose homesteads were patented to Shantz, twenty-four were recorded on the petition for the westerly portion of the West Reserve and their debts were to the Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde's West Reserve Gebietsamt. The other five were on the easterly portion and would therefore have been indebted to the Berghthaler Gemeinde.
- 60 Homestead Application Files, SW 19-2-4W correspondence where on February 3, 1891 Shantz advises the Department of the Interior not to issue patent since the individual still owes \$346. However as per LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 250, file 27630, pt 2, on April 26, 1892, Shantz advises that "the Waterloo Society make no further claim on any land held by the Mennonites of Man: The loan which they were security for is all settled."
- 61 LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 250, file 27630, pt 1.
- 62 January 1883, Frank Smith, President, The London and Ontario Investment Co Limited to Right Hon Sir John A Macdonald, Minister of the Interior etc. These debts were incurred for purchases of "livestock, implements, and other supplies," the same type of expenses financed by the sums secured by the First Lien. LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 250, file 27630, pt 1.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 An Act to amend and consolidate the several Acts respecting the Public Lands of the Dominion, assented to May 15, 1879, made no provision for such charges prior to patent. Great care in the wording of any security documents would have been required since Section 34 subsection 17 noted that assignments and transfers of homestead rights prior to recommendation for patent would be deemed evidence of abandonment of the right and a second entry would not be permitted. [http://metisportals.ca/MetisRights/wp/wp-admin/images/1879%20Dominion%20Lands%20Act.%201879%20Amendments%20\(s%20126%20impotrant%20as%20others%20too\).pdf](http://metisportals.ca/MetisRights/wp/wp-admin/images/1879%20Dominion%20Lands%20Act.%201879%20Amendments%20(s%20126%20impotrant%20as%20others%20too).pdf)
- 65 The "Dominion Lands act, 1883, with the amendments and additions thereto" (Canadiana Online, http://eco.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_03762/3?r=0&s=1) clearly stated the requirements in order for advances to immigrants to be considered for a lien upon their homesteads. Unlike the Mennonites who had received travel subsidies, it differed from the First Lien in that the immigrants were to be placed free of expense to the government and that charges could not exceed \$500. Section 36 of this Act also retained the forfeiture of homestead if such right had been assigned or transferred prior to recommendation for patent. There appears to have been some confusion about how the First Lien had not contravened this particular Section or whether perhaps Mennonites were not subject to it. September 9, 1885, Winnipeg Law Firm Bain Blanchard & Mulock, acting for The London & Canadian Loan & Agency Co. inquired of the Minister of the Interior whether they were not subject. The company intended to make loans to Mennonites and wanted to ensure that it was safe to do so. The Department did not categorically address this on Sept 22nd when it replied that in the case of Mennonites the only difference was "the Agent does not issue a certificate of recommendation, but forwards the application here, where if the debt due to the Waterloo Society has been liquidated, the patent is issued at once." LAC, RG 15, D-II-I, vol. 288, file 54018.

THE EARLY LIFE OF MARTIN B. FAST

Katherine Peters Yamada



MAID, MLAP-2012

Martin Fast's Mennonite forebears left their Prussian homeland in the early 1800s in response to an invitation from Russia's Tsarina Catherine II, who sought experienced farmers to settle new lands recently wrested from Turkey. Both of Fast's ancestral families settled in a Mennonite colony, Molotschna, established in 1804 in South Russia (present-day Ukraine).

His maternal grandfather, Martin J. Barkman, was a prosperous farmer in Rückenau, one of the Molotschna villages. He was a staunch member of the *Kleine Gemeinde*, which encouraged nonconformity, humility, and church discipline while discouraging higher education and mission outreach.¹

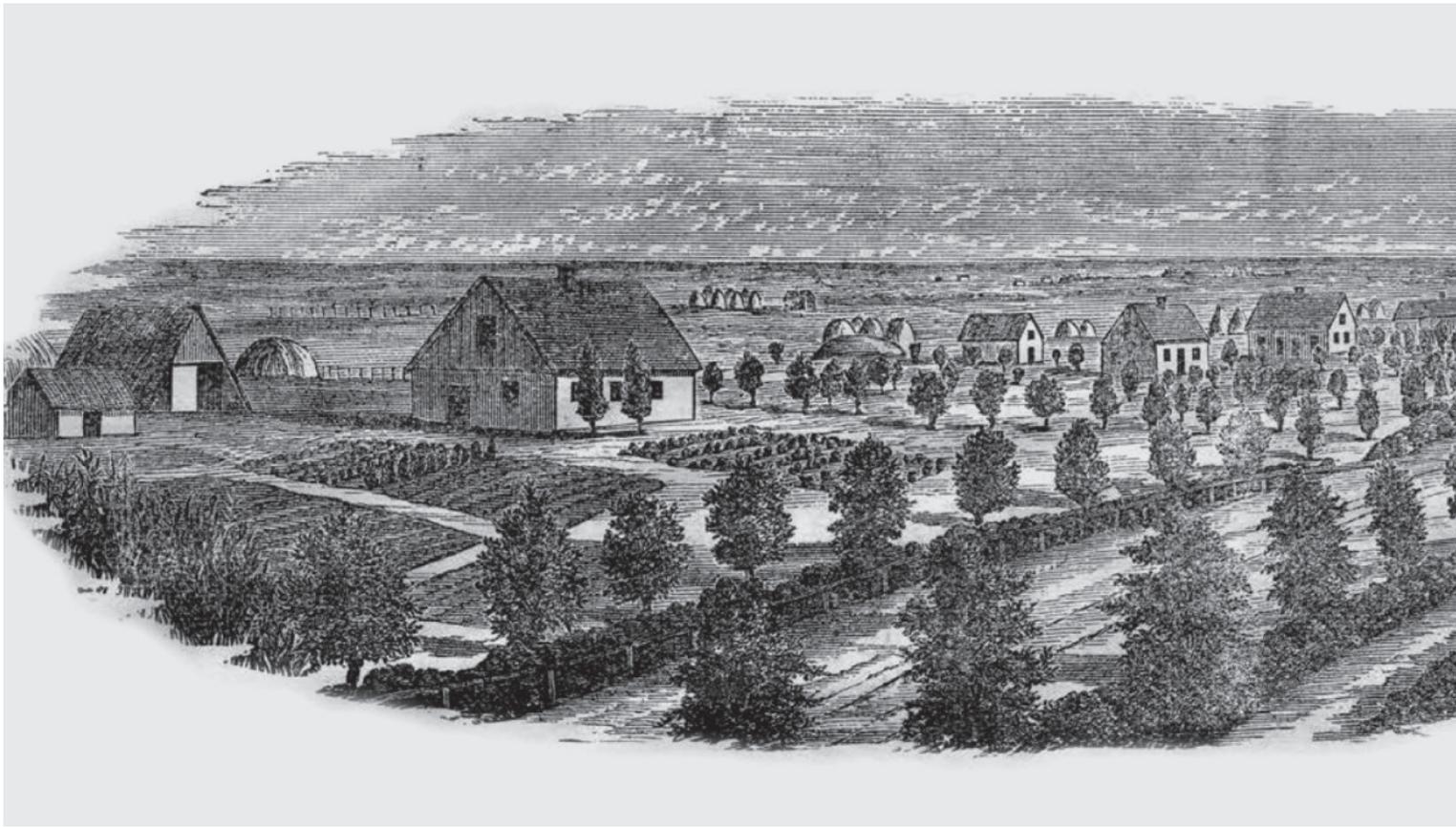
Fast's paternal line included preachers, teachers, and writers. His grandfather Bernhard Fast served as a *Kleine Gemeinde* minister for a time and taught school in Rosenort, also in the Molotschna colony. At some point, he and his wife, Justina Isaak Fast, joined the larger Mennonite Church in the nearby village of Ohrloff and raised their son, Peter, in that church.

Fast was born in 1857 to Peter and Aganetha Barkman Fast in the small Molotschna village of Tiegerweide. His father, Peter, was an *Anwohner* (landless person) who mediated issues between the farmers and the landless, thus gaining the title of "Anwohner Mayor."² He supported his family as a miller before eventually purchasing a farm.

TWO INFLUENTIAL TEACHERS

Young Fast entered Tiegerweide's village school before he was six. There he learned to read, write, and calculate, using only a primer and the Bible. He had five different teachers in the course of six years and was greatly impacted by two of them. One of his first teachers, named Heidebrecht, told his students of a local widow who needed help. He encouraged his students to support her with a donation. As the six-year-old walked home from school that afternoon in 1863, he debated as

Martin B. Fast (pictured with a grandchild) would become a key figure in Mennonite aid to Russia.



Fast immigrated to the United States with his family in the 1870s.

to whether he should give the widow a copper coin from his “wish money” or a silver coin received as a Christmas gift. He decided on the silver coin, but when he told his mother, she discouraged him, concerned that he might later regret it. Nevertheless, the next morning, he took the silver coin to school.

Years later, in 1880, his generosity was rewarded. By then, his family had left Russia and relocated to Nebraska and Fast, in his early twenties, was preparing for his first communion in the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren (KMB) Church. He and several others had traveled to a small town near Gnadenu, Kansas for their testing. At the end of the evening, Fast discovered his group had inadvertently continued on without him. A fellow student, realizing what had happened, invited Fast to his family’s home for night. The next morning, Fast discovered that his hostess was that very same widow to whom he had given the silver coin. In his 1935 autobiography, he wrote, “I have often experienced how the Lord makes note of everything and often what we do

for the benefit of our fellow human beings produces 100% interest.”³

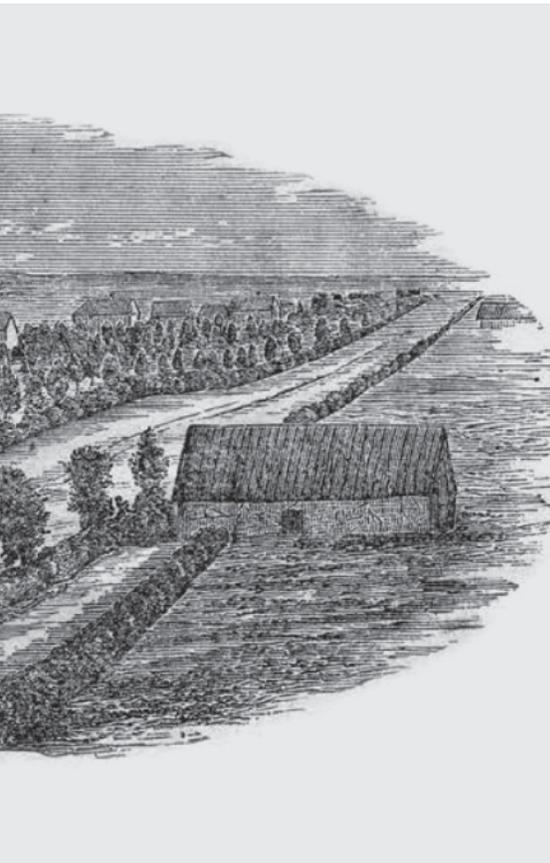
In contrast to the generosity Fast learned from Heidebrecht in the Tiegerweide schoolroom, he suffered greatly under another teacher in that same school. This teacher frequently spent the evening in the local tavern and was not totally sober the next morning; he smoked his pipe and scolded the students, calling them “block-heads” and “dumb sheep.” One day, young Fast was seated next to a disruptive student. Thinking it was Fast, the teacher hit him over the head with a “big volume of Bible stories.” Seriously injured, Fast, not yet a teenager, was confined to bed for an extended period. The village mayor sent the teacher to apologize, but Fast reflected in 1935 that he had had great difficulty in forgiving the teacher. As an adult, he had referred to 1 Peter 2:23 for guidance: to act like Jesus, who “when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.”⁴

Fast had been an excellent student and was at the head of the class for a time.

But after his injury and lengthy recovery, he did not return to that school. His family later moved, eventually settling in Rückenau, where he enrolled in the local school. When the term ended, he was fourteen and no longer of school age.

YOUTHFUL DESIRE TO BE A MISSIONARY

In his youth, Fast desired to be a missionary to a foreign country; but his desire was thwarted by his mother’s family’s strong feelings against mission work. From an early age Fast read not only the Bible, but also, despite the Kleine Gemeinde’s teachings, any books or stories that came his way. He was greatly disturbed by descriptions of “the sins of the slaveholders,” possibly referring to the highly popular book, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, published in 1852 and later widely translated. Several early editions included an introduction by a British minister noted for his abolitionist views.⁵ Reading about the plight of the slaves moved Fast both to sympathy and anger, which ignited a desire within him to become a missionary.



FRANK LESLIE ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER

Gemeinde, had left the Molotschna colony and resettled near Borosenko, where they hoped to strictly follow the teachings of their church. Fast's mother evidently shared her brothers' views, which discouraged higher education and mission outreach. As Fast noted, in the strong Barkman family "mission [was] a foreign word."⁶

Many years later, his mother withdrew her objections to his youthful desire. On her deathbed in Jansen, Nebraska in 1899, she encouraged her son to be like Jesse Engel of the River Brethren who had "suppressed the spirit both directly and indirectly" before going to Africa as a missionary at age sixty-two.⁷ By the time his mother told him this, Fast was married in his early forties and the Lord had shown him "a different path." He had joined a new foreign missions program, initiated in 1898 by six KMB congregations.⁸

TO THE UNITED STATES

There were "great and many-sided upheavals all over the world," as Fast was growing up in the Molotschna colony.⁹ The American Civil War had freed the slaves and Alexander II had eliminated serfdom in Russia. But the Russian government also introduced compulsory military service, thus rescinding the exemption given to Mennonites. They had ten years to decide whether to accept alternative military service or leave the country.

His father, Peter, agonized over the choice of staying on the farm they had finally been able to purchase or of joining the exodus to North America. If they stayed, Fast, then nineteen, would be forced to serve his country, either in the military or in the alternative forestry service. If they left, they faced huge financial losses and the great unknown of starting over in a foreign land. Eventually, Peter decided for the latter and in 1877 was elected to help lead one hundred families to their new home in Jansen, Nebraska.

In 1880 men from the KMB Church in Kansas came to Jansen. The KMB, established in Russia in 1869, was very conservative in its teachings, but encouraged evangelism outreach and mission

programs.¹⁰ Fast became convinced that their teachings were biblical. After passing the testing in Gnadenu, Kansas, he was baptized into the church, along with others. His father, Peter, together with Peter Thiessen, helped form a new KMB Church in Jansen and Fast taught Sunday School.

Fast also applied for citizenship. He spread his wings by leaving home to work on the railroad, but then returned, perhaps to court Thiessen's daughter, a young woman named Elisabeth. He had noticed her at a Kleine Gemeinde service soon after they arrived in Jansen. But his family was poor and when he learned that her parents were wealthy, he was discouraged about his chances of winning her hand.

Fast knew he needed a steady income in order to marry. He had been a good student back in Tiegerweide and was at the head of his class for a time. He could read and write well and was fluent in Russian. He knew he could teach. He applied for a position as teacher in the village of Rosenort, just north of Jansen. He also became a correspondent for J. F. Funk's new *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*.¹¹

Funk established the *Rundschau* for the Mennonites from Russia who were living in North America by 1880. He later added a semi-monthly edition "for readers in Europe and Asia," to keep them in contact with those who had come to North America. The subscription price was given as fifty cents, three marks, or one ruble, suggesting that it was sent to North America, Germany, and Russia.¹²

Fast described the *Rundschau* as a "friendship leaflet."¹³ More recently, Conrad Stoesz, archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Archives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, remarked: "It was the Facebook of one hundred years ago."¹⁴ In any case, the *Rundschau* was a popular way for Russian Mennonites to keep informed about their fellow Mennonites.

One of Fast's first submissions, on August 1, 1881, describing Mennonite settlements in Nebraska, appeared on page one of the popular publication. Further contributions, under the heading: "*Aus Mennonitischen Kreisen*," (roughly translated as "From Mennonite Circles") were

One Sunday evening, when he was in his very early teens, Fast was alone in his family's Rückenau home. He sat close to the brick oven, heating it up slowly by filling it with straw, an hour-long task which had to be done on a regular basis. After finishing his schoolwork and studying his catechism, he decided to practice his preaching. He directed his sermon to the "imaginary heathen to whom I wanted later to be a missionary." Speaking loudly, he didn't notice that someone had come into the house. (It was customary in those days to enter without knocking.) His visitor was the local schoolteacher, Abram Isaak, who paused to listen to Fast preach before announcing himself.

When Fast traveled back to his South Russia homeland in 1908, he visited his former schoolteacher, who reminded Fast of that evening when he had preached to the imaginary heathen. The two men spoke of Fast's youthful longing to be a missionary. But, it seems, Fast's strong Barkman family, including his dear mother, had not encouraged this desire. Some years before, two of Aganetha's brothers, along with many other Kleine



The Fast family (right) in the early 1900s. During his trip to Russia in 1908, Fast visited young Mennonite men in the forestry services (above).

also published on page one. This column, interspersed with his reports on conferences and trips to other states (along with poetry and hymns), appeared frequently for many years.

A year after becoming a *Rundschau* correspondent, Fast met with George Cross, editor of the local English-language newspaper, the *Fairbury Gazette*, and became a correspondent for that publication as well. “I learned a lot at this job,” Fast wrote, referring to the skills he gained in writing and speaking English.¹⁵

Fast still nurtured his youthful desire to be a missionary and his involvement with the KMB Church reawakened that desire. Meanwhile, his relationship with Elisabeth deepened as they encountered each other at Sunday worship services and Wednesday night prayer meetings at the KMB Church. When he first proposed marriage, he told Elisabeth of his missionary goals. She, in turn, said she wasn’t

ready to leave her family. A year later, when Fast again proposed, she accepted. But this time, it was her father, Peter Thiessen, who delayed their marriage. He had planned a trip to Russia to visit relatives and asked the couple to wait until his return. After their 1884 wedding, they moved to a small property near Jansen and Fast tried farming, while also teaching German in the local school. But times were difficult and they lost the farm.

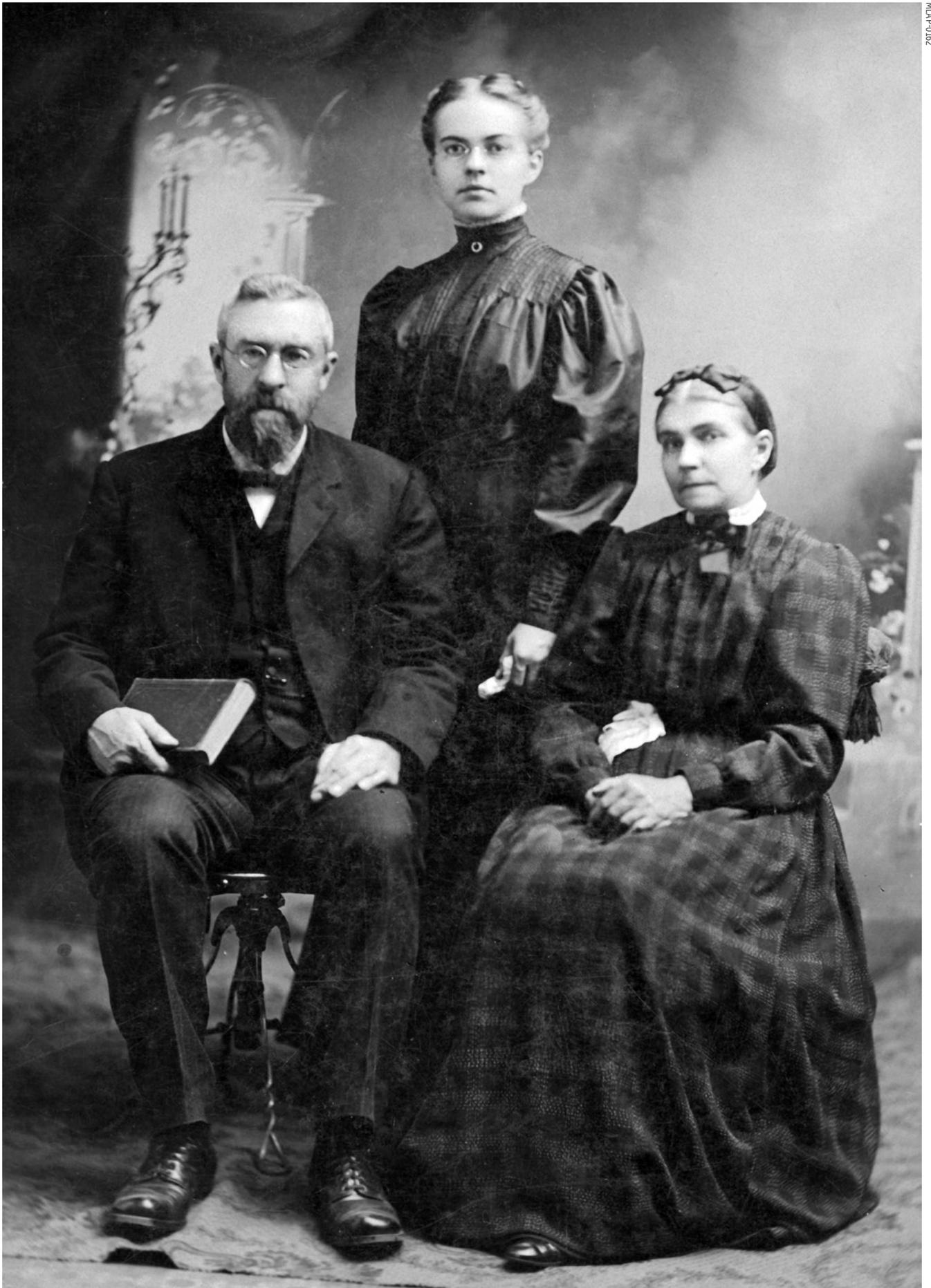
BECOMING AN EDITOR

In December 1903, after serving as a correspondent for *Die Mennonitische Rundschau* for more than twenty-two years, he was hired as the editor, which set him on the path that eventually led to his Siberian relief mission. When Fast was hired, he was concerned about his writing skills, but he learned quickly as he edited letters sent by correspondents from Mennonite communities through-

out North America, Europe, and Russia. “Thanks to the Lord,” he later wrote, “most of the readers and I learned to understand each other.”¹⁶

He also wrote editorials. In one such editorial, in July 1904, he wrote of the one hundredth anniversary of the Molotschna colony, founded in 1804 by families from the Vistula Delta.¹⁷ One of his most frequent editorial topics, perhaps foreshadowing his own future efforts, was disaster relief in places ranging from Kansas to Armenia, China, India and, most especially, Russia. The *Rundschau* index references many Russia-focused articles, reflecting the love for his homeland that led Fast to his 1908 and 1919 trips.

As editor, he also received a steady stream of letters and appeals for help from Mennonites still in Russia. In 1906, Fast sent a contribution to one of those families. Then more appeals arrived. He published them in columns such as



“Erhalten und Abgeschickt” (“Received and Sent”) and “Erhalten für Nothleidende in Russland” (“Received for the Needy in Russia”).¹⁸ More readers sent contributions for their Russian brethren.

TOUR OF HIS HOMETOWN

In 1908, Fast embarked on a visit to the Mennonite colonies in South Russia. Leaving Elkhart in early May, he carried with him messages and packages to deliver and commissions (such as settling inheritances) to perform. He toured many of the Molotschna villages, revisited his boyhood haunts, reunited with friends and relatives, and spoke in church services.

He visited schools and orphanages and one of the forestry service projects set up by the Russian government in the late 1870s as an alternative to the military service which had impelled so many, including his own family, to leave in 1877. He also explored Mennonite villages in the Crimea, the Chortitza colony, and the nearby daughter colony of Memrik.

Everywhere, he visited with community and religious leaders, many of whom he had never before met. They knew of each other only through his position as editor of the *Rundschau*. He was informed of conditions in the new Mennonite settlements in Siberia, established after the Trans-Siberian Railway was completed. In 1906, seeking settlers for the

vast territories now easily accessible by rail, the government made attractive land offers. Many South Russian Mennonites responded, establishing communities near Omsk and beyond.¹⁹

His trip took place during a time of transition for the *Rundschau*, which, along with Funk's other publications, had been purchased by Mennonite Publishing House in Scottsdale, Pennsylvania. Returning to Elkhart in early August, Fast had only a few days to bid farewell to friends and family before boarding a train to Scottsdale.

His trip reports, first published in the *Rundschau*, were later compiled into a book, “*Reisebericht und kurze Geschichte der Mennoniten*,” published in 1909. Sometime later, he left on a tour of the Midwest, attending conferences and delivering the results of the commissions he had been given. Fast continued writing editorials on disaster relief in Russia and he continued soliciting and acknowledging donations.²⁰

Fast served as editor of the *Rundschau* until October 1910, when an undisclosed health problem forced him to seek a replacement. He was loath to leave. Readership had increased under his leadership and he and his family had felt very much at home in both the Elkhart and Scottsdale communities. After he announced in an editorial that he would

have to give up the work that he loved so much, he received more than two hundred letters asking him to stay.²¹

MOVE TO REEDLEY, CALIFORNIA

Within a few weeks, Fast and his family moved to Reedley, California, near where his two sisters and many of his wife's siblings had settled. He recovered quickly and joined the newly formed Zion KMB Church, the only KMB congregation in California. He and Elisabeth were founding members of the church, established in March 1911, and he served on the first ministerial staff. He may have been ordained during this time.²²

While immersing himself into life amongst his immediate family, Fast was kept informed of happenings in Russia and on the looming conflict in Europe. Germany's declaration of war against Russia in mid-1914 sent shock waves throughout the Mennonite world in Europe, Russia and North America. The disastrous consequences of the Russian Revolution and the ensuing Civil War across his homeland reawakened Fast's youthful desire to be a missionary and inspired him to respond.

Editor's note: This is the first part of a two-part series by Katherine Peters Yamada on the life of Martin B. Fast. For Part II, see *Preservings*, issue 40.

1 Harold S. Bender, “Kleine Gemeinde,” *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* [hereafter GAMEO], 1956, http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Kleine_Gemeinde&oldid=145580, accessed 9 Feb. 2019.

2 M. B. Fast, “Mitteilungen von etlichen der Grossen unter den Mennoniten in Russland und in Amerika. Beobachtungen und Erinnerungen von Jefferson Co. Dann noch von meinen vielseitigen Erfahrungen aus der frühen Jugend bis jetzt,” [hereafter “Mitteilungen”] trans. George Reimer, in *Wahrheitsfreund* (Inman, KS: Krimmer Mennonite Publishing Committee, 1935), 63–69.

3 Fast, “Mitteilungen,” 51–63.

4 Ibid.

5 “Uncle Tom's Cabin,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, 25 Feb. 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Uncle_Tom%27s_Cabin, accessed 26 Feb. 2019.

6 Fast, “Mitteilungen,” 51–63.

7 Ibid.

8 P. J. B. Reimer, “The Sesquicentennial Jubilee of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference 1812–1962,” in *The Sesquicentennial Jubilee: Evangelical Mennonite Conference 1812–1962* (Steinbach, MB: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 1962), http://mennonite.com/pennorm/index_files/Kleine_Gemeinde_History.htm

9 Fast, “Mitteilungen,” 63–69.

10 Alberta Pantle, “Settlement of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren at Gnadenu, Marion County,” transcribed by Iln, *Kansas Collection: Kansas Historical Collection*, vol. 13, no. 5 (Feb. 1945): 259–285, http://www.kancoll.org/khq/1945/45_5_pantle.htm, accessed February 18, 2019.

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14 Conrad Stoetz, “Facebook of a Century Past,” *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 2016, <https://mbherald.com/facebook-century-past/>.

15 Fast, “Mitteilungen,” 23–50.

16 M. B. Fast, *Geschichtlicher Bericht Wie Die Mennoniten Nordamerikas Ihren Armen Glaubensgenossen in Russland Jetzt Und Früher Geholfen Haben: Meine Reise Nach Sibirien Und Zurück, Nebst Anhang Wann Und Warum Die Mennoniten Nach Amerika Kamen Und Die Gliederzahl der Verschiedenen Gemeinden*, trans. George Reimer (Reedley, CA: M. B. Fast, 1919), 4.

17 Delbert F. Plett, “Molotschna Colony – Bicentennial 1804–2004,” *Preservings* 24 (Dec. 2004), 1, <http://www.plettfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Preservings24.pdf>.

18 Bert Friesen, comp., Arn Froese, trans., *Mennonitische Rundschau Author Index*, Volume 1: 1880–1909 (Winnipeg, MB: Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies, 1991).

19 Cornelius Krahn, “Siberia (Russia),” *GAMEO*, 1959, [http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Siberia_\(Russia\)&oldid=162415](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Siberia_(Russia)&oldid=162415), accessed 10 Feb. 2019.

20 Friesen, *Mennonitische Rundschau Author Index*, trans. Katherine Yamada.

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22 Kevin Enns-Rempel, Director, Hiebert Library, Fresno Pacific University. Email July 17, 2017 on file.

KLAAS W. BRANDT

Engineer, Surveyor, Metal Fabricator

Dan Dyck

A 136 km aqueduct. A hydro-electric power plant. The Ford Motor Company. A church and a school house. Steinbach's first airplane. World War Two spy planes. These are just a few of the disparate threads that weave together the prolific professional life of Klaas W. Brandt (1876–1954), Steinbach area engineer of *Kleine Gemeinde* origins, land surveyor, and metal fabricator. He was a reserved, humble entrepreneur whose behind-the-scenes work is mostly invisible to residents of Manitoba today.



Klaas W. Brandt (1876–1954), Steinbach area metal worker, engineer and land surveyor.

Part of a large family of nineteen siblings, Klaas was the first-born child of carpenter and wagon builder Heinrich R. Brandt (1838–1909) and Katharina Warkentin. Katharina was his second

wife. (Heinrich had three wives over his lifetime). Heinrich and Katharina immigrated to Canada from the Borosenko colony in Russia, arriving onboard the *S. S. Austrian* in Quebec City on August 20, 1874.¹

Klaas was independent of spirit and motivated to pursue his interests in a technical vocation. He ran away from his home, likely in the Blumenort area, as a teen.² Not wanting to farm, he found a job in Steinbach.

In 1902, he wed Helena R. Friesen (1883–1946). For a short time, the couple farmed at Clearsprings, north of Steinbach. By 1913–1914, Klaas' engineering interests led him to sell the farm to C. T. Loewen for the sum of \$6,500.³ It was during this time that Klaas, with only a grade three education, all in the German language, studied engineering via correspondence from a university in Chicago.⁴ After selling the farm, the couple took up residence in the town of Steinbach, with three young children: Henry (1907), Katherine⁵ (1910), and Elizabeth⁶ (1914). A fourth child, Elma, arrived in 1923.

Helena,⁷ a spirited and compassionate woman, has a story all her own, which includes independently operating a café in Steinbach, while Klaas owned and operated Steinbach Sheet Metal. This shop, consisting of both existing and added buildings, was located on the same lot as the café, on the north side of Main St. near Friesen Ave.

In writing about Brandt, one cannot ignore the Friesen family. Brandt's father-in-law, Abraham S. Friesen (1848–1916), was a minister, an entrepreneur, and

Steinbach's first mayor. He owned much of the land at the intersection of Main St. and Friesen Ave., which was named after him. The intersection was an active social and business hub in the town, and the Brandt and Friesen families shared not only familial ties, but also business interests.

WATER AND ELECTRICITY PROJECTS FOR WINNIPEG

The booming city of Winnipeg had long been plagued by a lack of quality water. Mineral scale buildup in hard water from community wells was ruining everything from commercial heating boilers to tea kettles. Homemakers and domestic help required huge amounts of soap to properly suds wash water for clothing and dishes. Softer water, hauled from the Red and Assiniboine Rivers, led to more than one typhoid outbreak.⁸

When the city announced it would build an aqueduct to move high quality water from Shoal Lake, on the Manitoba-Ontario boundary, to Winnipeg, Brandt was intrigued. He began designing a sixty-ton⁹ walking dredge for the project, together with his brother-in-law, Klaas R. Friesen,¹⁰ in 1914. Consultants and engineers from New York had designed a similar but much smaller scale aqueduct in that state. They planned a route for the aqueduct that would allow water to flow to Winnipeg purely by gravity. The Manitoba aqueduct would need to traverse all manner of terrain, and be piped underneath creeks and rivers. To follow the slope toward the city, the route would pass through swampy areas that would mire traditional excavation machines.

By means of winches and animated skid-like feet, Brandt's dredge could be moved under power of an onboard gasoline fueled engine. Its wide and long feet could effectively float the machine on muskeg that would otherwise ensnare traditional excavation equipment. A large shovel dug a trench in which the concrete duct would be formed. The machine would then crawl ahead on its feet to dig out the next section. This process was

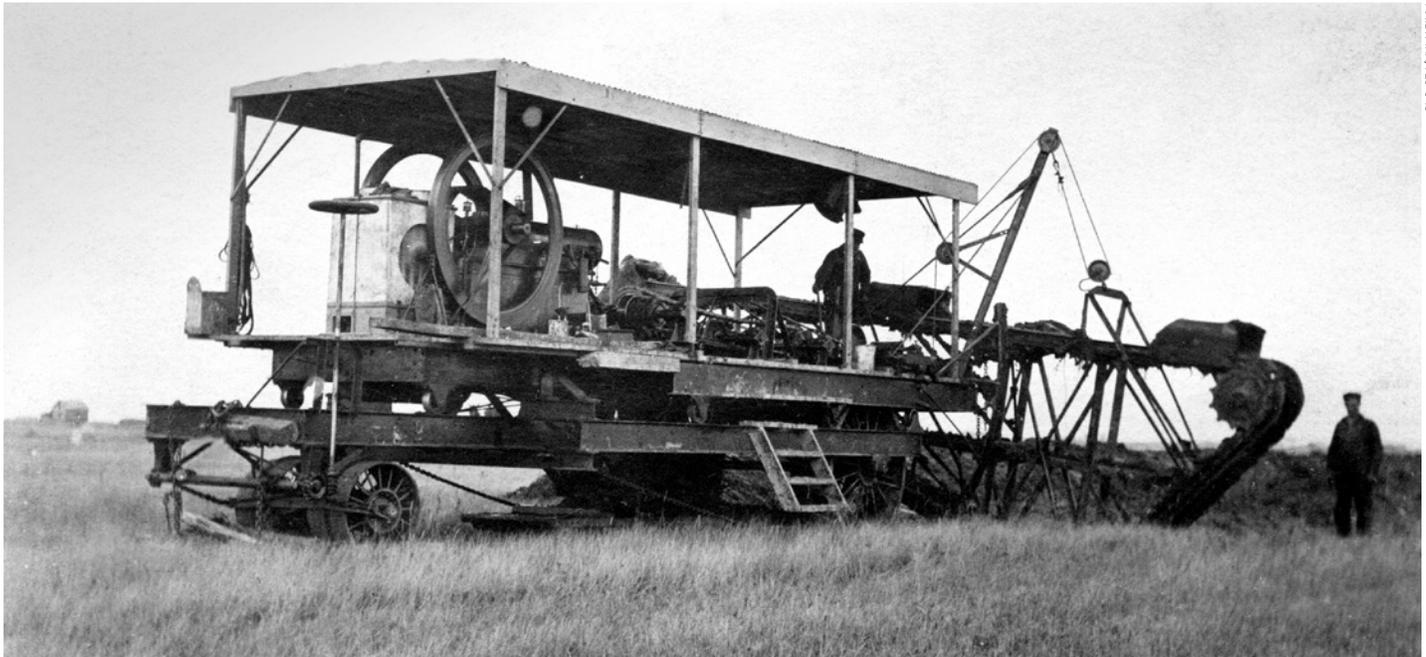
repeated for a total of about 6.5 km of unstable, soft ground.

Brandt began his section of the route in 1916. It took four years to complete. The unit was expensive to build and operate.¹¹ Though the work proved unprofitable, he gained valuable engineering experience.¹² It was during these years that Brandt worked toward his engineering degree

built for the Shoal Lake aqueduct did not begin its work until 1916. One source states that construction of the Shoal Lake dredge took place from 1914–15.¹⁶ This puts the service date of the Shoal Lake dredge fully two years later than the Forestall dredge.

In photos, the Forestall dredge and the Shoal Lake dredge appear to be con-

Lake dredge was his biggest professional accomplishment, according to eldest grandson Dave Brandt, physics professor and retired president of George Fox University in Oregon. Dave recalls his grandfather shared stories of the dredge and working on the aqueduct. These recollections were often spurred by a photo of the machine that hung on his



A dredge commissioned by James Forestall and built by K.W. Brandt and K.R. Friesen. It was used for land drainage in the East Reserve, 1912–13, and later bought back by Brandt and Friesen, as Forestall didn't know how to use it.

via correspondence. Brandt must have been a highly intelligent, eager learner. One can only imagine the math skills and English language learning he would have had to acquire with only a grade school education.

There are conflicting stories on what inspired Brandt to design and build the dredge. One source says the aqueduct captured Brandt's imagination.¹³ Another indicates Brandt was commissioned by James Forestall of St. Pierre in 1912 to build a dredge. It was needed to dig canals and ditches for land drainage in the local municipality.¹⁴ One source says the dredge was bought back by Brandt and Friesen.

This is verified by a K. R. Friesen journal entry that indicates Forestall did not know how to operate the machine, and no longer wanted it.¹⁵ The journal goes on to describe ditch digging work performed by the Forestall machine in Heuboden and Oak Forest from 1912–13. The dredge

constructed quite differently. The Shoal Lake dredge appears to be larger in scale. It's possible that components, such as the power source, of the Forestall dredge were repurposed for the Shoal Lake dredge. Could it be that the Forestall dredge continued its work of land drainage even as the Shoal Lake dredge was being designed and built? In any case, it is possible Brandt built two dredges.

The Shoal Lake aqueduct "... was not only one of the major engineering projects of its era... It was, and still is, one of the longest gravity-fed covered aqueducts built in the world since the early Romans pioneered aqueduct construction more than 2,000 years ago."¹⁷ If there were two dredges, perhaps the high profile of the aqueduct made the Shoal Lake dredge the dominant memory – and story – while the Forestall dredge faded into the background.

Whatever the case, Klaas felt the Shoal

bedroom wall. In 2019, the aqueduct will have served Winnipeg without fail for one hundred years.

After Brandt's work on the aqueduct was complete, he became a tool maker at the Great Falls power plant development on the Winnipeg River, twenty-four kilometres north of Lac du Bonnet. The project, begun in 1914, was halted due to the First World War and resumed in 1919. Little information is available on what Brandt's work entailed on this project. He was an avid photographer, however, and in his collection are numerous images of the Great Falls plant at various stages of construction.

SURVEYING THE LAND

With the completion of the aqueduct and dam projects, Klaas Brandt found employment as a land surveyor for the Province of Manitoba around 1926. Field work took Klaas to the Central Plains



Henry Brandt, son of Klaas, beside a truck loaded with heating ducts, ca 1932. The business was eventually sold to Barkman Hardware, predecessor of what today is Barkman Concrete.

In 1932, high resolution printing of magazines was still decades away. Many calculations must have filled in gaps the advertisement did not provide. With Klaas' help, they drew up their own plans – quite a feat of 'imagineering.'

To turn the paper plans into a real airplane required funds. Sawatzky and Wiebe approached their mutual father-in-law, Ford dealer J. R. Friesen. The plans called for a Ford Model A engine. The pair convinced J.R. that using such an engine would be good advertising for his cars. "If you could tell your customers that this engine will also fly an airplane, you're going to be ahead of your competitors," Sawatzky told Friesen.²⁰ J. R. was sold on the idea.

They began building the Pietenpol Air Camper in January 1932. It was originally conceived by Bernard H. Pietenpol, a designer of homebuilt aircraft, in Cherry Grove, Minnesota. The maiden flight attempt of the Sawatzky and Wiebe version was unsuccessful. The aircraft was heavier than expected. Sawatzky's inexperienced piloting skills were over-

confident. A stony pasture serving as an air strip tripped up the wheels and wrecked the propeller on take-off. A new propeller was soon fashioned from local hardwood. Skeptical Steinbach residents gathered to see the second attempt, which was successful, just over three months after construction began. This time, an experienced pilot, Frank Brown from Winnipeg, was in the cockpit.²¹ Sawatzky continued to play a key role in the construction of two more airplanes, creating enormous excitement in the community. Flying exhibitions from 1932–34 drew huge crowds.²²

In addition to being blood relations with the Frank Sawatzky family (Sawatzky's wife, Anne Friesen, was a niece to Klaas's wife, Helena), they were also great family friends. "I suspect that Grandpa and Frank Sawatzky talked about airplanes a lot," said grandson Dave. Clearly Brandt played an influential role in the project, as evidenced by the drawings in his collection. But being a reserved and humble man, his role in building Steinbach's first aircraft remained

behind the scenes.

Another of Brandt's involvement with aircraft requires some context. By the early 1930s Brandt and his family had grown weary of work that required long term absences. By now he had considerable engineering and business experience and in 1935 he decided to open Steinbach Sheet Metal in partnership with his son, Henry (Dave Brandt's father). Originally the shop specialized in tinsmith and heating duct manufacture and roofing projects. Over the years it outgrew its name and expanded to include a machine shop and foundry.

Henry's more extroverted personality was suited to sales. Klaas' reserved nature, innovative ideas, and attention to precision and details fulfilled the technical needs. The two made a fine combination.²³ This arrangement finally allowed Klaas to work near home and family.

The shop became ideally suited to manufacture a wide variety of components for diverse applications. With sugar rationed, honey taps for beekeepers was a popular item during the war years, as

honey became a readily available sweetener.²⁴ The manufacture of honey taps kicked off the machine shop and foundry expansion. The foundry began as an outdoor operation in the backyard during the early 1940s, operating only in the warm season. Soon, Brandt was manufacturing aluminum components for honey extractors and other honey processing equipment.

It was during the post-World War Two era that interviewees Dave Brandt and John Henry Friesen, Dave's long-time friend and second cousin, recalled Brandt's creative re-purposing of surplus World War Two spy airplanes. With the end of the war decommissioned aircraft of different designs could be found at air bases around Manitoba, including at Gimli and Rivers, Manitoba. Klaas travelled to inspect many of them, and found they were all priced the same. But he determined that the Lysander airplanes in Rivers, with their 890 horsepower aluminum engines, were the best value for the money because they contained the most metal.

The Lysander was designed to fly low, slow, and take off in just seventy feet on improvised airstrips. It was used to pick up or deliver spies in enemy territory.²⁵ When the Second World War ended in 1945, the government of Canada began dispersing surplus military goods, including about twenty-five Lysander airplanes located in Brandon, Manitoba.

But how to move an aircraft with a fifty-foot wing span from Brandon to Steinbach? Brandt and his associates managed to fold up the wings and towed the individual planes by road, late at night – mostly between two o'clock and five o'clock in the morning – when traffic was minimal.

The aluminum was melted down in the foundry, then re-casted and machined into new products. About twenty-seven planes were purchased.²⁶ The planes were stored in the Brandt's family garden, much to the dismay of Helena, and provided aluminum for many years. "They were marvelous toys for a ten-year-old," remembered Dave. "We climbed into the cockpits and were flying all over Germany." John Henry Friesen, playmate

and second cousin to Dave, recalls finding a leather holster for a German handgun in one of the plane cockpits. It eventually disappeared, possibly confiscated by elders. Recycling and transforming weapons of war into life-giving tools is certainly not an idea limited to the current generation.

As the war ended, so did sugar rationing. The market for honey making equipment dropped off the map. But the end of the war also meant that rubber, previously diverted to the war effort, once again became available. Abe Penner, founder

shop began fabricating a wide variety of aluminum and gray cast iron products contracted by other companies. One of those contractors was Brandt manufacturing in Regina (no relation),²⁷ a maker of grain augers and later, other farm equipment. The Brandt family of Steinbach manufactured "pulleys, gears ... and round parts – anything that rolled on an axle," recalled Dave. The Brandt-Brandt contracts developed into a strong relationship that went on for five years.

By this time the product line had



Brandt purchased surplus Lysander aircraft that were no longer needed by the Canadian government after World War Two ended. The planes were specially designed to pick up and drop off spies behind enemy lines. The aircraft engines were made of aluminum, and were melted down in the Brandt foundry to cast and machine a variety of parts and components for other companies.

of today's Steinbach Chrysler Dodge car dealership, together with brother John, recognized an opportunity to outfit tractor and farm implement wheels from steel to rubber. They designed a kit that contained everything needed for various brands of farm machinery and sold it to farmers. This required the custom manufacture of cast iron hubs machined to adapt to existing axles, a job ideally suited to Brandt's metal shop. The work led to several years of the metal shop operating for twenty-four hours, six-days-a-week.

Though the steel wheel to rubber tire transition market eventually dried up, the experience led to other work. The

changed so much that the father-son duo decided to change its name to Brandt Manufacturing. Just after the war, the heating and roofing portion of the business had become tertiary. It was sold to Barkman Hardware, a retail and heating and plumbing operation and predecessor of what is Barkman Concrete today. But before the business could change its name, Klaas passed away. Responding to these circumstance, his son Henry made the decision to close down the business and follow his passion of full-time pastoral ministry, which led the younger generation of this family to a church in Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

LIFE, FAITH, CHARACTER

Small in stature, disciplined, and a perfectionist by nature, Brandt is remembered as a hard-working man of few words.²⁸ He taught grandson Dave how to run a metal lathe at age twelve. Dave worked in his grandfather's shop one summer. Klaas had high expectations of his workers. He didn't accept Dave's "good enough" work on the lathe.



CITY OF WINNIPEG ARCHIVES

Brandt designed and built this walking dredge specifically for trenching through muskeg for the Shoal Lake aqueduct, which still serves Winnipeg with high quality water today.

As the boss of the machine shop, Brandt was not one to offer mere opinions. "Grandpa Brandt didn't speak a lot, and didn't speak very loud, but he was very precise," said Dave. Everyone had to listen closely when instructions were given.

He was also a very serious person. "I don't remember him telling jokes, or

laughing much," said Dave. "He didn't talk much about his faith, but he took those commitments very seriously, if quietly. When he committed to a person or an organization, it was with his whole being."

While Klaas was baptized as a young adult in the Kleine Gemeinde church around 1919, the family joined the Bruderthaler church in Steinbach, attracted by its Sunday school and choir. Later, Klaas made architectural drawings for the new Bruderthaler church. Initial drawings are identified in his collection as "Preliminary Plan of Bruderthaler Church Steinbach" and are dated February 25, 1928. Blueprints for a heating duct plan identified as "Def. Menn. Brethren" [Defenseless Mennonite Brethren] in Steinbach are dated November 5, 1930.

Later, when the church was raised to place a basement underneath, it must have received other alterations, such as differently shaped windows, and a corner belfry.²⁹ Dave Brandt estimates the church was completed in the late 1930s. Other architectural plans in the collection include drawings for the Kornelsen School, residential building (including a home for a local doctor), K. Reimer and Sons Store (dated Aug. 26, 1923), the Giroux Hall (dated May 27, 1921), and

a site plan for the Steinbach Cemetery (located at Sec. 27-6-6E on the drawing).

Klaas' son and Dave's father, Henry, was part of a founding group that established an Evangelical Mennonite Brethren congregation in Winnipeg. Henry was pastor of the Christian Fellowship Chapel for a number of years in the 1940s, commuting from Steinbach to Winnipeg with the help of donated fuel stamps from friends and supporters.³⁰ The church remains in existence today and is located 465 Osborne Street in Winnipeg.

Dave recalls receiving a lesson in behaviour from his grandfather, for his first communion service. Baptized at age thirteen, Dave needed to prepare for his first communion. These were special services on a Sunday afternoon. Dave received clear instructions to have a clean white handkerchief to hold the bread until all were served and were instructed to eat together. "He made very sure that his oldest grandson would do it right," said Dave. In Klaas W. Brandt's world, precision and accuracy mattered in all things. Whether in design engineering, manufacturing, personal health, or spiritual life, Klaas Brandt's exacting nature defined his character and his life.³¹

1 www.grandmaonline.org

2 Phone conversation with Dave Brandt, Oct. 23, 2018.

3 Hilton Friesen and Ralph Friesen, Abraham S. Friesen *Steinbach Pioneer* (Winnipeg, Hilt Friesen, 2004). The date of sale conflicts with a reference to the fall of 1910 found on page 633 in Ralph Friesen, *Between Earth and Sky Steinbach the First Fifty Years* (Steinbach, MB: Derksen Printers, 2009).

4 Notes from a conversation between Arlene Rempel and Conrad Stoesz, Archivist, Mennonite Heritage Archives, Dec., 2017. No record of his enrollment exists at the University of Chicago, as per investigation by Stoesz, who surmises Brandt may have studied via another university in Chicago. Grandson Dave Brandt says Klaas may have had a grade six education.

5 Spelled "Katherine" here as per family preference. The Grandma's Window online database spells it "Catherine."

6 Spelled "Elizabeth" as per family preference here. The Grandma's Window online database spells it "Elizabeth."

7 Helena's story is documented in Friesen and Friesen, Abraham S. Friesen *Steinbach Pioneer*, 268–271.

8 Adele Perry, *Aqueduct Colonialism, Resources, and the Histories We Remember* (Winnipeg: ARP books, 2016), 39.

9 Friesen, *Between Earth and Sky*, 337.

10 *Carillon News*, March 13, 1953, as cited in Abraham S. Friesen *Steinbach Pioneer*, 269.

11 Phone conversation with Dave Brandt, Jan. 11, 2019.

12 Friesen and Friesen, Abraham S. Friesen *Steinbach Pioneer*, 269. We don't know why the project was unprofitable.

13 *Carillon News*, March 13, 1953, as cited in Friesen and Friesen, Abraham S. Friesen *Steinbach Pioneer*, 269.

14 Friesen, *Between Earth and Sky*, 337.

15 Email from Ralph Friesen, Dec. 17, 2018.

16 *Carillon News*, March 13, 1953.

17 Rod McRae, the city's commissioner of works and operations in a seventy-fifth anniversary article on the aqueduct published in the Winnipeg Real Estate News on April 15, 1994, <http://www.winnipegrealstatenews.com/Resources/Article/?sysid=936>.

18 In 1990 Klaas's youngest granddaughter accepted a teaching position in Glenella. One of the teachers on staff at the school, a close relative of the long since deceased hotel owners, was interested to hear the history of their family's good cooking and asked for copies of the long-lost recipes.

19 Ralph Friesen, "Entrepreneurial Legacy of A. S. Friesen," *Preservings*, 9 (Dec. 1996): 74.

20 "Magazine Prints Plans, Steinbach Pair Builds Airplane," *Altitude* (Spring 2016), reprinted online May 15, 2016, <http://royalaviationmuseum.com/article-magazine-prints-plans-steinbach-pair-builds-airplane/>.

21 Ibid.

22 Wm. J. Friesen, Letter to the Editor, *Preservings* 19 (Dec. 2001): 62.

23 Phone conversation with Dave Brandt, Oct. 23, 2018.

24 Phone conversation with Dave Brandt, Jan. 11, 2019.

25 Phone conversation with John Henry Friesen, Oct. 13, 2018.

26 Phone conversation with Dave Brandt, Oct. 23, 2018.

27 Ibid.

28 Phone conversation with Arlene Rempel, Oct. 19, 2018. He was always very careful about his weight. In his adult life

he developed what was probably Type 2 diabetes, which he controlled with a strictly self-disciplined diet. Phone conversation with Dave Brandt, Oct. 23, 2018.

29 A photo of the church taken in winter appears in *God Works Through Us...* (Steinbach: Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church, 1972). Its caption reads, "Church as it looked from 1938–1954. By this time, the fence around the church has disappeared, concrete steps spanning almost the entire front of the church have been installed, and a utility pole appears directly in front of the building."

30 The current church web site at lists Henry Brandt as pastor from 1949 to 1950. Son Dave Brandt estimates that his father's pastoral work in this congregation began as early as 1942/43, ending in 1950. Phone conversation with Dave Brandt, Jan. 11, 2019.

31 Many thanks to family members Dave Brandt, Arlene Rempel, Ralph Friesen, and John Henry Friesen for generously sharing their time, being first readers, and offering correctives on early drafts. Ralph Friesen's books on local Mennonite history were invaluable. Thanks to Conrad Stoesz, Archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Archives, for assistance during repeated visits. The Winnipeg Public Library provided useful books on the history of the Shoal Lake Aqueduct and the Greater Winnipeg Waterworks Railway. Sarah Ramsden at the City of Winnipeg Archives was most helpful in retrieving photos and documents related to the construction of the Shoal Lake aqueduct.

MENNONITE-AMISH-HUTTERITE MIGRATIONS

John J. Friesen

This article deals with migrations during the past five centuries of the three major sixteenth-century Anabaptist reform groups: Swiss Brethren, Dutch Mennonites, and Hutterites. It also includes the migrations of the Amish, a branch of the Swiss Brethren. Most of the focus is on country to country migrations, and therefore does not deal with the inner country migrations in the German states, Russia/USSR, Canada, the United States of America, and Mexico. The stories of the new global Anabaptist Mennonite communities are also not included in this discussion. These new communities, which were begun as a result of mission efforts by the historic Mennonite churches, today constitute about sixty

percent of the total global Anabaptist Mennonite membership.

In contrast to other sixteenth-century churches, Anabaptists were non-magisterial, that is, they separated church and state. Except for the short-lived Anabaptist state church in Nikolsburg, Moravia in the 1520s and 1530s, and the brief violent Münster episode in the 1530s, Anabaptist groups were free churches. As such, they practised adult baptism, refused to swear the oath, and were pacifist, often refusing to bear the sword. The governments of the day considered these beliefs threats to the political, economic, and social stability of their states. In 1529, the imperial diet at Speyer threatened with death whoever did not recognize infant baptism.

Migrations usually have reasons that motivate people to move and factors that draw people to another place. In the case of Swiss Brethren, Dutch Mennonites, and Hutterites the reason for migration was religious persecution. Had they converted to the local state churches, no migrations would have been necessary. What drew them were sympathetic rulers who were willing to give the refugee Anabaptists protection, religious freedom or at least tolerance, and the means to make a living. This usually consisted of opportunities to rent land and carry on trades.

The functional definition of migration used in this article is the movement of a significant number of people from one country to another. Most often the migrants formed a new community, or communities. At times, though, such migrants also joined existing Mennonite communities in the new locations.

SWISS BRETHREN/SWISS MENNONITES/AMISH

Swiss Anabaptism began with the rebaptism of Conrad Grebel, Georg Blaurock, and others in Zurich in January 1525. These Swiss Brethren were promptly persecuted. The movement spread westward to the Canton of Berne. Persecution from the canton governments continued for years, with Anabaptists imprisoned, executed, or sold as galley slaves. After the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), the availability of land and the possibility of greater religious freedom led to a migration of Swiss Brethren to the Alsace and Palatinate in the late seventeenth century.

In the 1690s, a major controversy over the issue of accommodation to, or separation from, the surrounding society tore the Swiss Brethren communities apart. The more separatist group named itself Amish after its spokesperson, Jacob Ammann. The other group, after making connections with Dutch Mennonites, adopted the name Mennonite, and became known as Swiss Mennonites.

Persecutions and legal restrictions of Swiss Mennonites and Amish in the Alsace and Palatinate intensified in the early



Mennonite immigrants arriving in New York city in the 1870s.

eighteenth century. They had difficulty getting exemption from military service and from swearing the oath. Worship services were forbidden. The result was that many Mennonites and Amish were forced to leave. Some Mennonites and Amish, joined by coreligionists from Switzerland, migrated down the Rhine River to the Netherlands in the early eighteenth century.

Starting in 1707, Swiss Mennonites from the Palatinate and Switzerland migrated to Pennsylvania, at that time a British colony. William Penn, a wealthy Quaker, had received a large tract of land from the English king, and to this land Penn invited Quakers and other persecuted people.

With the assistance of Dutch *Doopsgezinde*, Swiss Mennonites migrated individually and in small groups from 1707 to the American Revolution in the 1770s. Starting in 1736, Amish in the Alsace, who faced the same restrictions, migrated to Pennsylvania, settling near the Mennonites.

Swiss Mennonites were not the first to migrate to Pennsylvania. In 1683, a group of Mennonites, and some Quakers of Mennonite origin, from Krefeld in the lower Rhine region of Germany, responded to William Penn's invitation. Krefeld was overrun by Mennonite refugees persecuted in neighbouring territories. Many had lost their homes, were not able to make a living, and accepted the offer to move to Pennsylvania. They founded Germantown north of the city of Philadelphia.

Some of the remaining Swiss Mennonites and Amish migrated from Switzerland and the Alsace to Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian empire in the 1760s, and to Volhynia in the Russian empire in the 1790s to avoid persecutions and restrictions. Galicia and Volhynia offered them religious freedom, land, and exemption from military service. In the 1870s, when these privileges were withdrawn, most of the Volhynian settlers migrated to Kansas, U.S.A.

Mennonites and Amish from Switzerland, the Alsace, Palatinate, and south German states continued to migrate

to the U.S.A. through much of the nineteenth century. Many Mennonite and Amish communities in the American mid-west and the western plains were founded at this time. The English colonies, and after 1776 the U.S.A., did not provide exemption from military service. However, the generous offer of free or inexpensive land and religious freedom attracted many immigrants.

During the American Revolution (1765–1783), Swiss Mennonites and Amish in Pennsylvania were under pressure to take sides in the war. They largely resisted this pressure, but after the revolution, Mennonites in some communities were considered unpatriotic and unwelcome. Large families and an orientation to agriculture meant they needed more land. Thus, starting in 1786, Swiss Mennonites in Pennsylvania migrated to the British colony of Upper Canada, Ontario today, which was looking for settlers. Mennonites purchased land and founded three major communities: in the Niagara peninsula, near Waterloo, and Markham.

In the 1820s, Amish from the Alsace and Bavaria migrated to Upper Canada and settled west of Waterloo. They were drawn by the opportunity to own land, have religious freedom, and be exempt from military service.

DUTCH/POLISH/PRUSSIAN/ RUSSIAN MENNONITES

In the Low Countries, present-day Netherlands and Belgium, after the defeat of the violent Anabaptists in Münster (1535), Menno Simons became the leader of a peaceful Anabaptist movement. These followers of Menno, or Mennonites, were fiercely persecuted by the Spanish rulers because they were also seen as a political threat. This persecution caused many Mennonites to migrate and find refuge in the Hanseatic city of Danzig (Gdańsk) and the surrounding Polish region along the Vistula River.

Starting in the 1540s, local landowners in the Danzig area, both Catholic and Protestant, allowed Mennonites to rent lands, practice trades, and meet for worship. For two and a half centuries

Mennonites lived peacefully in this region under tolerant Polish rule. The *Privilegia* they negotiated with successive Polish kings exempted them from military service, from swearing the oath, and allowed them to operate their own schools and inheritance organizations.

This situation changed when Prussia took over this area during the partitions of Poland in 1772, 1793, and 1795. Although the Prussian government offered Mennonites freedom of religion, it was initially not willing to consider exemption from military service for Mennonite men. It finally agreed to exemptions in exchange for a large annual financial contribution to support the officer training school at Culm. In addition, Mennonites were not allowed to buy any new land, since Prussian military recruitment was based on land ownership. This meant Mennonites would soon have a large landless class. The search for more land began.

After considering various options, Mennonites accepted the Russian empress Catherine the Great's invitation to settle in South Russia (present-day Ukraine). Russia offered Mennonites free land, exemption from military service, and control of their schools, as well as their inheritance and fire insurance organizations. Mennonite migrants from Prussia established the following settlements: Chortitza (1789), Molotschna (1804), Am Trakt (1853) and Alexandertal (Alt Samara) (1859). The first two, the largest, were located in South Russia. The latter two were situated further north on the east side of the upper Volga River. By the 1870s, a number of daughter settlements had been founded, and the total Mennonite population in Russia had increased to about 55,000 people.

In the 1870s, as part of its modernization program, Russia announced it was taking control of all schools, and would require military service from the hundreds of thousands of foreign settlers. Fearing these changes would erode their core beliefs and practices, Mennonites and Hutterites in Russia sent delegations to the U.S.A. and Canada to investigate immigration possibilities. They were joined by a Prussian Mennonite from the Mennonite

Church in the Thorn (Toruń) region.

After inspections and negotiations starting in 1873, about ten thousand Mennonites migrated to the American states of Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Minnesota. Starting in 1874, another seven thousand migrated to the new province of Manitoba in Canada. Altogether, about a third of Mennonites in Russia migrated. Those who settled in Manitoba were offered freedom of religion, exemption from military service, control of their own schools, and tracts of land large enough to establish their village land-holding system.

In Manitoba the land was free, except for a nominal registration fee. Mennonites who migrated to the U.S.A. received no assurances of military exemption and had to pay for their land. However, they considered the land, markets, and climate to be preferable. Both Canada and the U.S.A. were eager for new immigrants because both countries had taken lands from First Nations people and wanted to develop those lands for agriculture.

Mennonites left the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R.) in three further major migrations. After World War One and its resulting Russian Revolution, the anarchist Nestor Makhno's terror campaign, and the establishment of the U.S.S.R., many Mennonites saw only a bleak future. From 1923 to 1929 about a fifth of Mennonites in the U.S.S.R. emigrated, some to Germany, and approximately 20,000 to Canada, 1,200 to Brazil and 1,800 to Paraguay.

A second emigration happened during and after World War Two. When the German army was defeated at Stalingrad in 1943, and the war front collapsed westward, at least thirty-five thousand Mennonites in Ukraine were moved west by the German military. Of these, about twelve thousand were able to avoid repatriation to the U.S.S.R. and settled in West Germany, Canada, and Paraguay.

The last emigration occurred from the 1970s into the 1990s after the Soviet Union collapsed. Germany allowed anyone with a German connection to immigrate and provided generous financial assistance. More than a hundred

thousand people migrated, some with Mennonite affiliation. The motives varied, including family reunification, escape from oppressive conditions, financial or career improvement, and better futures for their children.

Of the Mennonites who settled in Canada in the 1870s, almost 8,000 migrated to Latin America in the 1920s.



Mennonites boarding the train at the Lichtenau Station in Soviet Ukraine.

They moved because they believed Canada had reneged on its commitment to allow them to have their own schools and because they wanted to avoid threatening aspects of nationalism, militarism, and modernity. About 6,000 settled in Mexico and 1,800 in Paraguay. In both countries they were exempted from military service and from swearing the oath, could live in compact villages, and could have their schools, inheritance patterns, and fire insurance organizations.

The majority of the migrants who settled in Mexico were Old Colony Mennonites. In subsequent years, as their population increased, they migrated to Belize, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, the U.S.A., and back to Canada in search of land, jobs, and business opportunities. Those who migrated to Paraguay eventually developed a strong, stable, and prosperous community which largely embraced modernity.

In 1948, three additional groups migrated from Canada to Latin America: the Sommerfeld and Bergthal groups to Paraguay, and a Kleine Gemeinde group to Mexico. Because during World War Two many Canadian Mennonite men defied their churches' peace position and served in the military, these three groups migrated to escape militarism, public

schools which they felt were indoctrinating their children with nationalism, and the creeping, corroding influence of modernity.

From the 1950s to the present, thousands of Mennonites have migrated from Paraguay and Mexico to Canada for better economic opportunities, family unification, and better schools.

HUTTERITES

In the sixteenth century, Anabaptists were given refuge in Moravia (today Czech Republic) by local Protestant princes. They fled to this area from the south and central German states, Silesia, Austria, the Tyrol, and Switzerland to escape religious persecution. Of the various Anabaptist communal and non-communal groups in Moravia in the mid-sixteenth century, only the communalist Hutterites survived. By the end of the sixteenth century Hutterites numbered more than thirty

thousand in Moravia and in neighbouring Hungary, today Slovakia. In the early seventeenth century, persecution by the Jesuits and devastation caused by the Thirty Years' War destroyed all Hutterite communities in Moravia. The Hutterite communities in Hungary were destroyed by the end of the century.

In 1622, Bethlen Gabor, Prince of Transylvania (today Romania), forcibly transported more than a thousand Hutterites from Moravia eastward to his lands where they lived until the 1760s. In 1690, this group of Hutterites also gave up communal living due to persecution. However, in 1762, a few Hutterites, joined by a small number of Lutheran Pietists, re-established communal living in Transylvania.

In 1767, this group of less than a hundred communal Hutterites, fearing for their lives, fled over the mountains to southern Romania, and from there were taken to Russia by a sympathetic nobleman to settle on his lands north of Kiev. After a few decades, this group of Hutterites was torn apart by internal dissension, gave up communalism, and became economically destitute.

In 1819, Johann Cornies, a Mennonite leader, came to their rescue and settled them in non-communal village settlements close to the Molotschna colony in south Russia. In 1859 a small Hutterite communal group was established called Schmiedeleut. In the following year a second communal group, called Dariusleut, was begun.

In the 1870s, virtually all Hutterites migrated from Russia to South Dakota, U.S.A., for the same reasons Mennonites migrated. Upon arrival, a third communal group, called Lehrerleut was founded. About a third of the 1,200 Hutterites who migrated were now living communally. All communal Hutterites in western Canada and the U.S.A. today are descended from these three groups.

Hutterites migrated from the U.S.A. to Canada in 1918 because of persecution by the American government and their neighbours. During World War One, the American government demanded that Hutterites do military service, which

they adamantly refused because of their belief in peace. The result was that four Hutterites were given harsh prison sentences in which two of them were tortured to death. Attacks by neighbours and authorities led all but one Hutterite community to migrate to Canada in 1918. The Schmiedeleut settled in Manitoba. The Lehrerleut and Dariusleut founded new colonies in Alberta.



Anabaptists fled persecution in the sixteenth century. Wolfgang Pinder, a Hutterite martyr, was tortured and beheaded in 1571.

CONCLUSION

From this survey it is evident that from the sixteenth century to the present Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites chose to migrate when faced with religious persecution or restrictions. Country after country threatened them, while other countries invited them and offered them refuge from persecution.

The migrations were often for similar reasons: the search for religious freedom and for land to support their families. Over the centuries, farming became their preferred occupation. Living close to nature became their vocation and calling. Farming usually also included the ability to carry on trades related to farming.

For each of the groups, religious freedom usually included a commitment to peace and the right to control their own schools. They believed they were called to be agents of peace not war and they were committed to passing this conviction on to their children.

In their search for land, Mennonites,

Amish, and Hutterites often played unwitting roles in larger national agendas of nation building and agricultural development. This also meant that when they no longer served those roles, governments evicted them or withdrew concessions.

Frequently, more conservative branches of the Mennonite community were the first to migrate to new locations. Their convictions and community solidarity pushed them to venture into new, often difficult situations and made it possible for them to survive. In a number of cases, they sacrificed quality of land and economic well-being to protect core beliefs.

Many migration studies have identified economic factors as the most important motivator for migration. This study shows that during the first few centuries, although economics was an important motivator for Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterite migrations, it was usually secondary to the quest for religious freedom. In more recent centuries, economic factors loom larger and have often been the primary factor.

Recent migration studies have paid increasing attention to religious factors, but usually these studies have focused on the influence of migration on the religion of the migrants. Less attention has been paid to religion as the motivator for migration.

Studies have also noted that migration often becomes part of the process of modernization, upward mobility, and improvement of economic status. For the groups in this survey, motives of upward mobility and modernization played a relatively minor role in causing migration. Migrations in some cases were rather for the purpose of minimizing the influence of modernity.

Mennonites, Amish, and Hutterites have migrated from country to country due to persecution, lack of land, wars, revolutions, threats to core beliefs, and the dangers of modernity. They were drawn by religious freedom, land, a stable society, and control over their community organizations. Their migrations were most often for the purpose of defending the religious vision and commitments with which their churches began.

THE ONE WHO REMAINED BEHIND

Dave Loewen

When Abraham and Maria (Eitzen) Loewen immigrated to Canada from Pretoria, Orenburg, Russia in 1926, one member of their family chose to stay behind.¹ Jacob Loewen's promise to follow later was never realized. This is his story.

ACADEMIA OVER FARMING

In the spring of 1922, Jacob Loewen, along with brother Abram, graduated from the school in Pretoria. Unlike Abram, Jacob wished desperately to continue his studies in the city, and he received encouragement from his Russian teachers, who saw promise in him. Unfortunately,

his father did not share that sentiment; he needed his boys at home to help with farm work. Also, Mennonites tended to believe that city life would draw people away from God.

Thanks to Jacob's insistence, Abraham relented despite these obstacles; however, he made Jacob promise not to expect any financial support from his parents. With the help of his teachers, he gained admission to a vocational school in Samara where he was given a scholarship as well as room and board. His mother packed a food parcel (some pastry and several kilograms of millet) and his father paid his

third-class railway ticket. In Jacob's words, "I went out into a strange world 'to swim on an open ocean.'"

As he remembered: "Our scholarship consisted of getting five rubles worth of produce, which we would get monthly in the kitchen. Our food was one kilogram of rye bread in the morning and evening; lunch was soup with some pieces of potatoes and a little fish tail in it. It was only enough that we would not starve. The millet from my mother helped me a lot and I managed to survive."

Jacob's student life was quite relaxed. He became involved in theatre and student life and developed a reputation as a mediator; student issues were brought to him for arbitration. This caught the attention of Communist youth organization, the Komsomol, and the leaders invited him to become the secretary of the local chapter, which was only beginning to consolidate itself.

In the spring of 1924, Jacob graduated from the vocational school in Samara. His success in school and his active participation in public affairs resulted in an opportunity to continue his education in the Caucasus. Jacob arrived in Vladikavkaz with very little to live on. He was able to secure a job working in the school cafeteria, but only one day per week. "When serving in the kitchen, I usually had eaten enough for two days. Since there were many starving students who wanted work in the kitchen, I was only allowed to work one day per week. There were days when I had nothing to eat, but life was interesting."

Jacob's life was turned upside down when the school was suddenly closed. With most students moving on to school in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), Jacob had difficulty deciding what to do because of the uncertainty of a scholarship. Additionally, he had lost his interest in history and made the decision to change to the physical sciences, even though he found the foundational courses – math, physics, and chemistry – more difficult. He applied himself to the challenge and, with the assistance of fellow students,



Jacob Loewen in the back row, middle, with another student on his shoulders.

he succeeded in being accepted into the Faculty of Natural Sciences, which allowed him to remain in Vladikavkaz.

Jacob studied under the inspiring leadership of Professor Smirnov; this led him to the decision to become a geologist. Jacob became a technical assistant, which helped with his purchase of expensive text books. One book alone cost 7.50 rubles, half his stipend. Initially, students could order books from Germany, but that was soon forbidden. Since many teachers did not order any books, Jacob ordered books under their names. He developed a good German-language library on geology, which greatly assisted him in his academic research.

STAYING BEHIND

Given the extent to which Jacob had become involved in both his studies and in student life in general, it is not a surprise that he had no appetite to join his parents and siblings in leaving for Canada, with only its promise of farming and hard work. Upon learning of his family's pending departure, he shared his thoughts in a letter to his parents: "Dear Parents: Your letter surprised me a little. I can see that your plans for departure are serious, and that you will soon be leaving. I want to heartily wish you a safe journey and a new and better home country. I, however, wish to remain here in my old home country. Why? Early on I set myself the goal of learning and seeing much. I was let go quite easily in 1922 when I travelled to Samara. In the subsequent three long years I starved myself, so to speak. I denied myself all pleasures to get an education. I lived like a beggar away from home, experienced hunger and stress, and now, suddenly, just as I've reached my goal, that point where I am beginning to learn significant material – to turn around and say that all that struggle was for nothing, to leave everything, and to travel to a strange land and be shackled to work I don't like for the rest of my life – I can't do it."

His last year of study was an important milestone in Jacob's academic career. Shortly following an all-Russian meeting of geologists in Tashkent, Professor Smirnov returned home and was put in

charge of the geology faculty, which had an opening for an assistant. Jacob was one of three candidates who wanted the position – all qualified. As Smirnov did not want to part with any of the three, it was decided that all three would go and live on one person's salary – 180 rubles. Officially, Jacob was identified as the assistant, because if he did not work, he would have had to join the army. The other two were exempted from service because of their qualifications. In the middle of January 1929, in the company of Smirnov, Jacob and his two colleagues set off for Samarkand in south-eastern Uzbekistan.

TRANSITIONS

In 1932, Jacob was promoted from assistant to assistant professor, which improved his financial position. That same year, he married Lyuba Ivanovna Viktorova, the daughter of a factory worker and a student from the chemistry faculty. In 1933, Lyuba gave birth to twin boys. One died in infancy; the surviving twin was named Ernst. In 1935, a daughter was born: Eleonora Margareta. Both children pursued higher education: Ernst in geology and Ella in music.

In 1936, Jacob's work lost the interest of local geologists, and therefore, he applied and was assigned to the Institute of Mineral Raw Materials in Moscow. The authorities were well-acquainted with his work in Samarkand, and particularly with his inquiry into Iceland spar (a nearly translucent calcite useful in the production of optical instruments) which was in great demand by Soviet industry. He was soon appointed as a "commander" in the Tadjhiko-Pamirskoy Expedition.² Jacob recalled, "To me it seemed as though I was in a fairy tale." Jacob continued his search not only for Iceland spar, but in 1939 expanded his investigations to include optic fluorite. In 1941, however, his work was disrupted by the Second World War.

SOVIET POLICE INVESTIGATIONS

Although Jacob's ethnic roots had initially caused him no concern, this changed dramatically during the 1930s and, later, during the war. As he remem-



bered, "I paid a lot of attention to the police. During the first year in Samara and in Vladikavkaz, I had nothing to do with them. As a German, I never felt threatened, but felt like a full Soviet citizen. I was not a member of the Communist Youth Organization, but my influence never suffered. This continued up to Samarkand. In 1935, the political climate in the country began to worsen. They started to watch



everyone, especially Germans, who were treated as spies. In every organization there were men who worked for the police. They investigated everyone. Everyone had to be careful of what he said. An acquaintance of mine, a past chairman of a soviet, had been arrested and sentenced for a speech he had made. He had been declared an enemy of the people, which was grounds for arrest. It was evident that everyone was being

watched. Everyone had to submit a biography which was checked by the police, and every little thing was investigated.”

In the spring of 1937, while submitting his regular report to the authorities, one official questioned another regarding Jacob’s trustworthiness. The other vouched for him, saying that Jacob had been honest in admitting in his report that he had relatives outside the USSR, and

Jacob in the back row, far right.

that was good with him. Jacob was not reported. On another occasion, representatives of the university asked Jacob about his relatives in Canada and if he had been corresponding with them. Jacob replied that he had, but that he had received no letters for a year. When asked why not, Jacob had replied that he wanted to have



Professor Smirnov (centre, front row) and Jacob (back row, third from the left).

no difficulties with the authorities – to which the official smiled and the matter was put to rest.

Even though Jacob had begun to feel more positive about his relationship with the authorities, including the police, there was still one more challenge to come. He was often called by the police to give reports about the teaching staff. Despite all the questions, they could not get anything from him. The chief of police even summoned him to the city for questioning. He was accused of not wanting to help them against “enemies of the State.” “I told them that I was not aware of any and I did not want to lie. He warned me and bounced the pistol on the table and said, ‘If you will not help us, we will put you into jail.’ I affirmed to him that my conscience does not allow me to give false accusations. If your conscience urges you to take me to the cellar, do as your conscience dictates. The conversation was terminated; I felt that my fate was sealed. I would be arrested shortly. Lyuba and I

began to prepare for this event. We could not sleep at night. Any car that stopped close by scared us. But nothing happened.”

THE LABOUR ARMY

Given the fact that Jacob was of “German” descent, it should not be a surprise that the Second World War changed his daily life significantly. He was removed from the work he had been doing and was prevented from settling anywhere. He did, however, find work at home related to the geological search with which he had been involved. He and his family were soon sent to the Samarkand region, where they had to become used to living in close quarters. Very shortly after arriving, Jacob received orders to appear at Samarkand to join German expatriates fifty years of age and younger. They were transferred to Cheliabinsk (a city in west-central Russia, close to the Ural Mountains) and turned over to the police, who took them to a camp surrounded by barbed wire and under guard. It was like a prison. Jacob

remembered that they were placed in uncomfortably damp earthen huts that had recently been built.

Jacob found himself, and the others, working in a stone quarry. Jacob remembered: “The work was just like in the book by Solzhenitsyn – *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. It was just like in a prison, perhaps worse. In the morning we would usually see the bodies of the dead, who had worked up to the last day until they collapsed from starvation. Shortly after waking up, and approaching the registration, we would see a list of names of those sentenced to be shot that day. They tried to keep us down and discouraged as much as possible.”

Jacob soon realized that hard labour could be his ultimate undoing; with help from a close friend, he was able to secure a job in the kitchen. He described his kitchen assignment as follows: “My work involved going to the bakery in the morning with a team of horses. There I would receive the necessary 60,000 loaves

of brown bread for the camp. The number of loaves was strictly controlled. I signed for the bread in the bakery and upon my return, my three bread cutters and I cut the bread according to the office records. The bread was cut according to a set scale of 0.4, 0.5, 0.8, and 1.0 kilogram. In two hours, we had to have 10,000 rations ready. I had to distribute the bread to the brigades.”

Even this work had its dangers, as he discovered when a discrepancy arose over rations distributed and remaining. The threats of jail and even execution were real. Recognizing the danger, Jacob successfully requested another transfer – this time to the building maintenance department, where he was put in charge. Jacob recalled that he always had good memories of his superior at that camp, who was consistently a fair man.

In the summer of 1943 hunger stalked the camp and Jacob realized he was losing weight rapidly. He asked Lyuba to sell anything possible to acquire food. She managed to send a parcel of “produce” which was very helpful. Again, Jacob managed to get himself transferred out of this camp to another and this time found himself doing what he enjoyed: geological research.

His new task was to locate sources of water, sand, and loam for construction purposes. No wages were paid; instead, rations were given based on work completed. This new assignment brought with it a sense of independence and freedom, as well as good relationships with those in authority. For several winter months he worked in a factory producing gun powder. The temperature dropped to -45 degrees, something Jacob had not previously experienced.

Even though a certain degree of freedom was evident, the labourers worked under the watchful eye of the police, and more than five prisoners were never allowed to congregate in one place. It was now 1944. The labourers’ food consisted of dry rations, but since they enjoyed a degree of freedom, he and his work companions decided to venture into surrounding villages to trade for food with anything they could spare. They gleaned

in fields already harvested, finding such things as potatoes and carrots. They even managed to build a house and obtain cash with which to buy their daily milk.

THE POST-WAR YEARS

The end of the war did not mark the end of his assignment to the Labour Army for Jacob. He was given permission to go home to Samarkand for a month in 1946. Jacob’s arrival at home was both unexpected and hard on Lyuba. The family had moved to smaller quarters and she was having difficulty meeting everyday needs with her office job, working for a chemist. Jacob was offered a job, if he should be given his freedom, with the MVD (successor to the NKVD) in building maintenance. This was refused. In Jacob’s words, “My situation was worse than before.”

office within fifteen minutes. His superior asked Jacob if he had applied to the highest offices in the land, to which he replied in the affirmative. He then demanded that Jacob sign a release form and presented him with an order from the MVD to proceed to Samarkand. When he asked for his permit to leave the area – which was a formal requirement – he was informed he did not need one. This fact alone convinced Jacob that there was no doubt any longer that he was trusted.

“FREEDOM”

Jacob’s perspective on those lost years: “Now I was free. I could hardly believe it. I tried to get away before they could change their minds. Miraculously and with great effort I went home. Thinking about my life in the Workers’ Army [Labour Army], it had not been too bad. It was a good



Jacob, Lyuba, Ernst, and Ella Loewen.

There was no doubt in Jacob’s mind of the importance of the work in which he had been involved. He resolved to appeal to the head of the MVD, Lavrentiy Beria, and if that failed, to apply directly to Stalin to permit him to return to Samarkand to resume his work. That was early in 1947; on August 12 of that year, he was summoned by phone to appear at the head

move to get away from the stone quarry. I would not have survived in that place. As bread cutter, I had kept my physique in a normal shape. In my research work with the engineers, it had been good, and the field work in search of water gave me a lot of experience in this area. I relied on this experience when I lectured in the university on the practical applications



The Loewen family in the early 1950s.

of geological searches. I lost five years of my life, but compared with other citizens, who lost their lives, their loved ones, and all material belongings during the war, I was lucky. I am alive, and my family is intact. The economic loss is of no consequence and did not matter much.”

Jacob soon attained a position as lecturer in the geology department at Samarkand. Notwithstanding Jacob’s stature at the university, as an ethnic German he was under constant surveillance by the MVD and was required to keep them informed of any movement away from the city. His mail was censored. In a letter from his father, however, was an enclosed note from the censor, and Jacob was finally made aware of the answer to an old family mystery. The censor in question introduced himself as a former close friend of Jacob’s older brother Johann. He revealed, for the first time, that Johann had died of typhus in Sochi. Finally, there was closure for the family regarding Johann’s disappearance and death, approximately twenty-five years after the fact.

After Stalin’s death, life for Jacob nor-

malized. The MVD informed him that he was trusted fully. He was the recipient of no political opposition anywhere. During the 1960s, the geology faculty closed, and Jacob became dean of the Faculty of History and Geography. In 1950, the authorities allowed Jacob to start building his own home. On their lot, Jacob and Lyuba had apples, cherries, peaches, and a few varieties of grapes, providing all the fruit they needed. Jacob’s wages allowed Lyuba to quit her job, allowing her to focus on homemaking.

As he reflected on his life, Jacob wrote, “Looking into the past of my life, I must admit it was good. I entered the world just at the right time. Four years earlier or later and I would not have been able to leave the village. The Revolution came during my youth and I had a plan to get away from the role of a farmer. I wanted to see the world. This brought us into the village library. The Revolution also brought two sisters into our village – Helen and Maria Petrovna Potemkin. The relationship with them opened a new world to me and brought wings into my thinking.

In the fall of 1922, I left my village and stepped into a strange city.”

Over the years, whenever we thought of our Uncle Jacob in the Soviet Union, we only focused on the tragedy of a son who had become trapped behind the Iron Curtain, never to be reunited with his parents. We lacked the full picture of his life and, particularly, the family he had nurtured and loved, along with the challenges he faced. For me at least, the thought that Jacob had lived a fulfilling life was not considered. The opposite appears to have been the case; it is quite clear that of all the Loewen siblings, Jacob lived the most interestingly diverse life. His whole life appeared to be an adventure. It certainly was not an easy life, but Jacob had successfully navigated his way through a maze of challenges that most others might very well have failed at.

¹ This article is adapted from the book: David F. Loewen, *Abraham Jacob & Maria Loewen Family: A Journey Under God’s Providence* (Abbotsford, BC: self-published, 2015).

² Editor – This expedition took place in the early 1930s and it is not clear if it continued until the late 1930s.

KHORTYTSIA CEMETERY GRAVESTONE PROJECT

Werner Toews

Imagine seeing the headstone, for the first time, of your great-great-grandmother who died over a century ago. Imagine seeing her name etched in an elegant black marble stone with gold inlay letters. The strange part, however, is that you didn't visit a cemetery to see the stone. It was in a place that you never would have imagined it to be. This was my experience on July 23, 2019.¹

A day earlier I learned through a Facebook post by Roman Akbash, that Max Shtatsky and a colleague Mykola Anatoliyovych Svydran from the Khortytsia National Reserve (KNR), had started an excavation at 61-A Zachynyaeva St. in Upper Khortytsia (Verkhnya Khortytsia). The building and property were once part of the village of Khortytsia. This was one of the first villages that was

established by Mennonite settlers in 1789.² This area is now a suburb of the city of Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine.

The excavation was a few years in the planning and, after receiving permission from the director of the KNR, Maxym Ostapenko, the project manager, Max Shtatsky, started the dig. This was no ordinary archeological dig, as I soon learned. The goal was to dig out the foundation of this old abandoned brick building or barn that had sat empty for many years. The roof had collapsed and only one of the four brick walls was still standing. The building was very close to the street and, in fact, the excavation started on the foundation of the wall that ran parallel to the street. The purpose of the dig was to uncover and remove the foundation stones that were rumoured to be gravestones of the Khortytsia Mennonite church cemetery. The cemetery had been demolished long ago by the



KATEKLOCHHO

The excavation site in Zaporizhia, Ukraine, which unearthed Mennonite headstones that had been used in the foundation of a building.



Max Shtatsky speaking to the journalist Olga Zvonariova at the site. His left foot is resting on a gravestone that was used for the foundation of the wall adjacent to the street.

Soviet government in the 1930s. This was the same cemetery where my great-great-grandmother, Katherina Koop, had been laid to rest in 1910.

Local historians believe that the building is located on the former property of a D. Pätkau. A search of an interactive map from the website of Willi Vogt, from circa 1915–1925, revealed that a David Pätkau owned a property in the village of Khortytsia on a street called *Alte Reihe* or Old Row.³

Information provided on the site indicated that the Pätkau family was evicted from the property in 1930 after being labelled *kulaks* by the local government authorities.⁴ The term *kulak* was used by the Soviets to describe wealthy or prosperous peasants. In 1929 the Soviet government, in an effort to collectivise agriculture, implemented a campaign

of “dekulakization” or a plan to eliminate the kulaks as a class. Many peasants had resisted the plan to join the collective farms and dekulakization was one means to convince them to reconsider. By 1934 many of the kulaks had been “deported to remote regions of the Soviet Union or arrested and their land and property confiscated.”⁵

It would appear that the David Pätkau family had been victims of the dekulakization campaign. No further information on the fate of this family has been found at this time. Vogt’s website does, however, indicate that a building was constructed on the Pätkau property in 1936. The information also revealed that some of the building materials used were gravestones from the Khortytsia cemetery.

Attached to the property information is a video produced in 2016 that features

Roman Akbash describing his connection to the building and the possibility that the foundation was made from gravestones from the Khortytsia cemetery.⁶ The cemetery was located approximately seven hundred meters to the northeast of the former Pätkau property.

THE DESTRUCTION OF CEMETERIES

During the years of research conducted on the fate of my ancestors in the former Soviet Union, I discovered some of the reasons why the Soviet government destroyed cemeteries and used the gravestones for building materials. Under the Soviet government’s anti-religious policy, many churches and cemeteries were destroyed. The gold, silver, and religious icons owned by Orthodox churches were looted and the cemeteries next to these

churches were desecrated. In the 1930s the Soviets estimated that there were over 40,000 tons of usable metal in old cemeteries that could be appropriated for their national industrial drive. Common grave-stones were taken for building projects and marble headstones were used to make statues that appeared as decorations in larger cities such as Moscow.⁷ The policy of using cemeteries for parks, sports fields, and building projects was implemented throughout the USSR.

Mennonite churches and cemeteries were subjected to similar abuses. With church ministers being harassed and people discouraged from attending church services, the Khortytsia Mennonite Church was eventually closed by the authorities. The official reasons were that the local "Building Commission" deemed the building unsafe and the congregation could not afford the money for the costly repairs. This, however, didn't stop the authorities from converting the church into a movie theatre in 1935.

A first-hand account of what occurred in Khortytsia in the 1930s can be found in the memoir of my great-aunt, Anna Sudermann. The date of the destruction of the Khortytsia cemetery in Anna's memoir and the year that is described by the people in Zaporizhzhia, differ by approximately four years. Information from local citizens and from Vogt's website indicate that the destruction of the cemetery likely occurred sometime between 1935 and 1936.

A quote from Sudermann's memoir on the destruction of the Khortytsia and Rosental (a neighbouring village) cemeteries:⁸ "In 1939 and 1940, the cemetery (Khortytsia) was levelled and turned into an athletic field. Later on, this fate also befell the Rosental cemetery. The land was needed for a barn. The barn housed calves for the collective farm. We found this out (in December 1966) from a report of a tourist who had been travelling in Russia, and who had visited Khortytsia and Rosental.

The report from Russia in *Der Bote* (German-language newspaper published in Canada) said that during the levelling of the Rosental cemetery, the bones from the graves were ploughed up to the surface. A

few of the German people who still lived in or had returned to Khortytsia, gathered the bones and buried them in a common grave deeper in the valley. The memorial gravestone of Johann Bartsch, our deputy of 1789, was then placed on top of this mass grave of bones from the last Khortytsia Mennonites. This gravestone had miraculously survived all the fronts of the last world war that passed over it.⁹

With deeply felt gratitude I would like today to shake the hands of these brave men for this deed of love, as my mother, sister-in-law Lena, and my brother Heinrich's little daughter, as well as many close relatives were laid to rest there in the Rosental cemetery."

A further connection to the use of gravestones as building materials was documented by Delbert Plett in his visit to Ukraine in 1998. During his *Kleine Gemeinde* tour, the group visited the cemetery in Ebenfeld to commemorate the Mennonites that were massacred in December 1919 and buried in the Ebenfeld cemetery in a mass grave.¹⁰ While at the cemetery, they were informed by a local resident that the Mennonite gravestones had been taken away during the Soviet period and had been used to build a nearby *kolkhoz* (collective) barn. Here is an account of what the group saw that day, as described by Delbert: "The building had recently been bulldozed down and we could see gravestones and parts of gravestones littered about where the bulldozer had spread them out. Hopefully they will remain there so that the next tour can attempt to do some inventory of these stones. We had to go on, the day was short and there were many more villages to visit."

The following year Delbert traveled back to Ukraine for the Chortitza '99 conference and made a side trip to the Borosenko colony where the villages of Ebenfeld and Steinbach are located. Delbert was able to inspect the barn and made the following discovery: "This time we were able to stop. A quick investigation of the remnant walls showed that our fears had been correct. One of the gravestones incorporated into the wall was perfectly preserved (maroon granite stone), 'Hier

Ruht Maria Teichroeb, born 1850 Juli 12, gest. Mai 15, 1911.' In honour of her memory I took a photo of her gravestone with Harold Jantz standing beside it."¹¹

PROJECT MEMBERS

The history of the brick building in Upper Khortytsia was also known by the local citizens. After the details of the project were released to the public on July 22, Roman Akbash shared his connection to the building. Roman is a local historian who works as the creative director for the museum of the History of Weapons in Zaporizhzhia. He conducts walking tours in the city and is familiar with the history of Mennonites in Khortytsia. During his childhood, he and his family lived in a house beside the building.

Later in life Roman became interested in the history of the Mennonites in Khortytsia and learned that the foundation of the building was made from gravestones from the destroyed Khortytsia cemetery. He also related that the cemetery became a sports field where, as a youth, he played soccer on the former cemetery grounds. Years later, a school (# 86) was built on the property and is still used today.

The driving force behind the gravestone project is Max Shtatsky. I came to know Max a few years ago as we had corresponded by email on a number of occasions. We shared an interest in the Mennonites of Khortytsia and the fate of the Mennonites during the Great Terror. As a child, Max lived in a house in the former village of Khortytsia.

During his childhood, Max became interested in learning about the "Germans" who lived in Khortytsia, as well as Soviet-era architecture. After completing high school, Max attended the Zaporizhzhian National University where he earned a degree in history. After receiving his degree, Max was hired by the Khortytsia National Reserve in 2010. After attaining the position of research scientist, Max began conducting full time research on the Mennonites of Khortytsia. His goal was to learn about their lifestyle, language, religion, and cultural practices, which differed from the other residents

of Zaporizhzhia. His strong interest in learning about Mennonites and their lost history was his motivation to excavate the building foundation and uncover Mennonite gravestones. Max believes that by researching and finding Mennonite-related artifacts, he can rehabilitate their past and provide some justice to the descendants of the Khortytsia Mennonites.

It was on the initiative of Max Shtatsky and the director of the Khortytsia National Reserve, Maxym Ostapenko, that this project was made possible. Maxym Ostapenko has been the director of the KNR for the past twelve years and has collaborated in the past on various projects with North American Mennonite historians. When speaking to him about the project, Ostapenko revealed a family connection to the former Mennonites of Khortytsia. He related that one of his wife's grandmothers was a Rempel. To move the project forward, Ostapenko and his wife, Galina, made a personal donation that facilitated the rental of equipment for the first few days of the excavation.

THE PROJECT'S PROGRESS

On July 22, the first day of the excavation, Shtatsky's goal was to remove dirt and rocks from the foundation and possibly uncover a few gravestones. The property had fallen into disrepair and the lot was being used by locals as a dump site for construction materials. After removing debris from the first wall foundation, the back-breaking work of excavating the stones began on a very hot and humid day. One of the first stones uncovered was a pedestal for a gravestone with no inscription. The second stone belonged to a female with the maiden name of Siemens, 1820–1887. It became quite clear from the start of the excavation that the stones had been cut or broken to create somewhat of a uniform foundation for the walls. The top of the Siemens' stone was missing and a search for the missing piece and other missing pieces would continue throughout the excavation.

On the second day, the stone of my great-great-grandmother, Katherina (nee Pätkau) Koop (1839–1910), was found. It was an elegant black marble stone with

gold inlay lettering. The stone was in relatively good shape with some damage and, of course, covered in grout that was used by the builders to hold the stones together. It is not known whether the Pätkau that owned the lot is a close relative of Katherina but she did have a half-brother by the name of David Pätkau, who died in 1919 in Khortytsia.

The husband of Katherina was Abraham Jacob Koop (1838–1920), a blacksmith by trade who worked for P. H. Lepp. It was Lepp who helped Koop get started in producing agricultural equipment. In 1864 Koop established his own factory in Khortytsia which was so successful that he established further factories in Einlage and Aleksandrovska.¹²

As the day progressed, more gravestones were identified and removed by hand. It soon became quite apparent that to complete the excavation of the four foundation walls, heavy equipment would have to be involved in this extensive excavation. It also became clear that the foundation walls contained many gravestones. The excavation by hand continued for the next few days and some of the newly discovered gravestones were transported to the Khortytsia National Reserve property. As news of the discovery spread through the city and on social media, a press conference was scheduled for July 26 at the office of the KNR.

At the press conference, Max Shtatsky reported that eighteen headstones had been removed from the foundation wall. Shtatsky also advised that a preliminary study of the site revealed that there could be forty to two hundred gravestones in the foundation of the building. Some of the recovered stones had been taken to the museum site and displayed to the media. Information on the next stage of the excavation was also provided to the media with a plan on the scope of the work and the funds needed to complete the project.

The first priority was to excavate all the stones and transport them to the property of the Khortytsia National Reserve. The Khortytsia National Reserve did not have the resources to fund this unique project and, as a result, a request for donations was posted on Facebook. The initial request

for donations was made to citizens of Zaporizhzhia. A letter was also sent to the Zaporizhzhia city council asking for assistance with the project.

The project was now gaining interest and had many followers on the Facebook group, "Mennonite History and Genealogy." As the news spread through the city of Zaporizhzhia, so did the interest in the project. The almost daily updates and reports generated many questions and interest from North American Mennonites and Mennonite organizations.

The request for donations was also expanded to include Mennonites in North America. Due to some challenges with transferring funds from foreign countries to Ukraine, a system to facilitate donations was set up through a board member with the Friends of the Mennonite Center in Ukraine. The board also made a generous donation which greatly assisted in moving the project forward.¹³

As funds became available, the excavation continued into the months of August and September. Heavy equipment was used to clear the site of debris as well as the arduous task of digging up the foundation walls. The foundation was measured to be nine meters by twenty meters, with four layers of foundation stones. Max Shtatsky continued as the project manager with the help of some hard-working volunteers.

It should be noted that many of the stones were broken or cut during the construction of the foundation. During the excavation, all pieces of the gravestones that were found were collected and brought back to the KNR property for cleaning and restoration. One hopes that it may be possible to reconstruct some of the gravestones. There were also a number of gravestone pedestals located that will be matched up to gravestones.

There is practically no one still alive from that period that could provide information on the destruction of the cemetery and the construction of the building other than some information from a local historian who has since passed away. During the press conference, Khortytsia National Reserve director Maxym Ostapenko



A participant in the project working at the excavation site among headstones that had been broken or cut.

related that local historian, Volodymyr Shovkun, had conducted walking tours of Upper Khortytsia in the 1970s and early 1980s where he pointed out buildings that were thought to be constructed with Mennonite gravestones. Shovkun advised that the buildings were constructed at night by prisoners in an effort to conceal the materials that were being used for the construction of the building. He stated that at the same time, the Soviets were destroying the Mennonite cemetery that contained hundreds of gravestones.¹⁴ One can assume that they were using the gravestones for those buildings. At the conference Roman Akbash stated that five Mennonite settlements in the territory of modern Zaporizhzhia had their own cemeteries. He related that all were destroyed except one that is located on Khortytsia Island.

While researching the history of the Mennonites in Khortytsia, no informa-

tion, photographs or lists of the deceased in the cemetery could be found. Therefore, this project is an important historical find for the descendants of the people that were buried in the destroyed Khortytsia cemetery. For me, this project was an opportunity to see my family history come to life in a way that I never would have imagined. Finding these stones is an important part of our collective history in Ukraine.

On September 7, Max Shtatsky reported that the excavation of the foundation was complete. The excavation, however, will continue on a smaller scale in the coming weeks as it was rumored that there was a basement in the building. I anticipate that there will be further discussions in the future on the final resting place of the stones with participation by North American Mennonite organizations. This story is far from over and will be updated in further publications.

LISTS OF GRAVESTONES

On September 13, Max provided a list of over eighty-six stones that were located. There are additional pieces of gravestones that will have to be cleaned and reassembled to identify the deceased. The final list of recovered stones is a work in progress and will take a few months to complete.

The Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry (GRANDMA) numbers have been included beside the names. The names with no numbers beside them have not been located on the GRANDMA database to date.

The question marks beside some of the numbers indicate there is less than a hundred per cent match to the name and dates recorded on GRANDMA.¹⁵ Further research will have to be conducted to locate the names and proper dates on various databases or family histories.



The elegant gravestone for Katherina (Dyck) Löwen, #41 on the list below.

1. **Bergen B.** 1812–1861 #529181?
2. **Braun Peter** 6.01.1794–28.10.1851 #267133
3. **Braun Peter** 1858 #753559? or #314171?
4. **Dyck Agata** (born Braun) 22.05.1823–9.11.1896
5. **Dyck Elizabeth** (born Epp) 8.08.1849–31.12.1886 #509238
6. **Dyck Jacob** 16.03.1804–8.11.1847 #175866
7. **Dyck Helena** (born Siemens) 21.08.1814–13.11.1889 # 505902?
8. **Dyck Maria** (born Regier) 4.03.1830–3.12.1905 #506902
9. **Dyck Maria** (born Reimer) 17.02.1846–14.01.1900 #179970
10. **Dyck Jacob** 16.11.1831–19.05.1893 #506645
11. **Epp Johann** 4.12.1830–17.03.1888 #69115?
12. **Epp Elisabeth** (born Leike) 1.07.1819–2.05.1904 #198741?
13. **Epp Gertruda** (born Hamm) 10.11.1858–29.09.1880 #127021
14. **Epp Gertruda** (born Goosen) 1783–1848 #64083
15. **Epp Helena** (born Thiessen) 14.08.1797–14.04.1864 #77581
16. **Epp Helena** 7.4.1878 – 10.07.1879 #435594
17. **Epp Johannes** 18.09.1880–11.04.1881 #435595 same stone as 16.
18. **Epp Marie** (born Thiessen) 11.01.1879–13.05.1906 #127006
19. **Epp Elizabeth** (born Perk) 5.04.1830–25.01.1904 #127004
20. **Fast Peter** 29.08.1883–24.02.1890 #429335
21. **Hamm Katharina** (born Wilms) 18.08.1817–2.02.1887 #467073
22. **Hamm Maria** (born Braun) 28.08.1865–2.08.1889 #467073
23. **Hamm Peter** 18.08
24. **Hamm Justina** 1847–1907 #343347?
25. **Hildebrandt Agatha** (born Hubert) 14.07.1827–12.07.1889 #160905?
26. **Hildebrandt Gerhard** 15.10.1819–4.02.1889 #53087?
27. **Hildebrandt Katherina** 15.10.1867–6.05.1877 #265841
28. **Hildebrandt Helena** 2.04.1857–08.06.1877 #265837 same stone as 27
29. **Janzen Maria** (born Holzrichter) 21.09.1858–09.11.1910 #509263
30. **Klaassen Helena** (born Hamm) 27.12.1837–20.01.1909 #343274
31. **Koop Katharina** 27.11.1839–12.02.1910 #146874
32. **Koop Peter** 18.12.1844–17.07.1889 #148253 two stones
33. **Krager Maria** (born Löwen) 22.03.1868–17.08.1903
34. **Krahn Gerhard** 10.10.1810–10.11.1855 #396292?
35. **Krahn Katherina** 14.07.1806–11.05.1855 #765841?

36. **Löwen Abraham** 28.08.1836–05.06.1908 #353458
37. **Löwen Gerhard** 20.05.1821–16.10.1887 #89231
38. **Löwen Helena** 25.12.1862
39. **Löwen Katharina** 21.10.1838–4.03.1885 #353480; Abraham #353458?
40. **Martens Heinrich** 19.12.1819–27.02.1888 #451504
41. **Niebuhr Abraham** 31.12.1836–22.02.1893 #151861
42. **Niebuhr Anna** 19.02.1875–11.03.1881 #175118
43. **Niebuhr Eva** (born Hamm) 6.06.1853–3.02.1896 #461749
44. **Niebuhr Gerhard** 2.05.1882–15.01.1901 #508152
45. **Niebuhr Heinrich** 24.01.?–10.03.?
46. **Niebuhr Heinrich** 10.06.1880–18.12.1883 #508153
47. **Niebuhr Katharina** 6.02.1874–13.05.1884 #508157
48. **Niebuhr Maria** (born Löwen) 30.08.–10.10. #151872
49. **Pätkau Jakob** 28.06.1816–12.10.1908 #126987
50. **Pauls Abraham** 6.03.1812–9.04.1886 #196189
51. **Pauls Anna** 25.07.1886–31.07.1886 #459006
52. **Pauls Dietrich** 4.02.1844–14.10.1907 #452057
53. **Pauls Gerh. Gerhard**
54. **Pauls Kornelius** 23.10.1813–29.11.1853
55. **Pauls Margareta** (born Dyck) 5.12.1833–8.08.1907 #452207
56. **Pauls Peter** 14.08.1834–06.09.1906 #452198 same stone as 57
57. **Pauls Maria** (born Penner) 05.05.1811–05.01.1856 #196194
58. **Pauls Helena** (born Dyck) 7.02.1845–21.11.1864 #452048
59. **Penner Helena** (born Klassen) 22.08.1835 #494691?
60. **Penner Jacob** 5.05.1831–?.07.1911 #494692?
61. **Penner Johann** 28.01.1828–25.07.1914 #199527
62. **Peters Franz** 19.11.1834 #308843
63. **Regier Abraham** 1821–1888 #508242?
64. **Sawatzky Jacob** 21.1.1831–21.1.1908 #267380?
65. **Sawatzky, His wife Anganetha Sawatzky** (born Giesbrecht) 3.05.1833–5.10.1902 #267381?
66. **Schellenberg Bernhard** 2.02.1840–13.02.1888 #127042
67. **Schellenberg David** 30.10.1868–18.12.1874 #127048
68. **Schulz Margaretha** 1831–1887 #214709?
69. **Schulz Margaretha also Koop** (born Wiens) 22.01.1851–5.02.1909 #119564
70. **Schwarz Heinrich** 1790 #196217?
71. **Siemens** (born ?).16.01.1820–17.01.1887
72. **Siemens Katharina** (born Klassen) 20.01.1768–18.02.1843 #108860
73. **Siemens Peter** 16.04.1765–1.12.1847 #136330
74. **Thiessen Helena** 26.03.1883–14.04.1883 #353010



Detail of a broken gravestone, many of which were cut or broken into pieces in order to create the foundation walls.

75. **Thiessen Margaretha** 26.09.1892–29.09.1892 #353005 same stone as 74
76. **Thiessen Agatha** 16.08.1895–5.09.1895 #353004
77. **Toews Heinrich** 10.09.1869–10.01.1888 #199453
78. **Unrau Abraham Wilhelm** 30.04.1813–28.10.1890 #199042
79. **Von Kampen Katherina** (born Siemens) 10.07.1884–10.04.1890 #452064
80. **Von Kampen Maria** (born Hildebrandt) 13.08.1864–9.11.1898 #452327
81. **Von Kampen Johann** 21.12.1834–14.07.1855 #452632
82. **Von Kampen Jacob** 05.07.1793–26.07.1867 #196808
83. **Wilms Peter** 1813–1863 #197298
84. **Seldner Karl Adolf** 1818–02.03.1894

1 I would like to acknowledge the following people for their involvement with this project: Max Shtatsky for his assistance with this article and his determination to find the gravestones of our ancestors; Maxym Ostapenko and his wife Galina; Roman Akbash; Mykola Anatoliyovych Svydran and Maksim Klimov; Olga Rubel; Friends of the Mennonite Center in Ukraine and board members Geroge Dyck, Alvin Suderman; Julia Slyva, director of the Chortitza gravestone charitable fund and the Khortytsia National reserve. Thank you to all the people who made a donation to this project.

2 Cornelius Bergmann and Cornelius Krahn, "Chortitza Mennonite Settlement (Zaporizhia Oblast, Ukraine)," in *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online* (hereafter GAMEO) (1955), [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Chortitza_Mennonite_Settlement_\(Zaporizhia_Oblast,_Ukraine\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Chortitza_Mennonite_Settlement_(Zaporizhia_Oblast,_Ukraine)), accessed August 13, 2019.

3 "Karten und Dorfpläne von mennonitischen Orten in Russland," *Mennonitische Geschichte und Ahnenforschung*, <https://chort.square7.ch/Karten.htm>, accessed August 13, 2019.

4 Willi Vogt, "Mennonitische Ahnenforschung in Chortitza Hof C52 und C51 wohnten...", <https://chort.square7.ch/Rosental/C52.html>, accessed August 13, 2019.

5 "Kulak," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/kulak>, accessed August 13, 2019.

6 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PTGGbrqDd58>, accessed September 12, 2019.

7 Catherine Merridale, *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia* (London: Granta, 2000), pp. 174–75.

8 Sudermann, Anna. "Lebenserinnerungen von Anna Sudermann (1893–1970)." Unpublished memoir, 1970.

9 Bartsch was one of two delegates from Prussia who negotiated the land settlement with Empress Catherine II for Mennonites to settle in southern Russia. See Christian Neff and Richard D. Thiessen. "Bartsch, Johann (1757–1821)" (2010) GAMEO, [http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Bartsch,_Johann_\(1757-1821\)](http://gameo.org/index.php?title=Bartsch,_Johann_(1757-1821)), accessed August 13 2019.

10 Delbert Plett, "Kleine Gemeinde Heritage Tour, May 3-23, 1998," *Preservings* 12 (June 1998): 43, <https://www.plettfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Preservings12June1998.pdf>.

11 Delbert Plett, "The Old Homeland, Borosenko and Molotschna," *Preservings* (Dec. 1999): 76-77, <https://www.plettfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Preservings15December1999.pdf>.

12 Cornelius Krahn, "Koop, Abraham Jacob (1838–1920)" *GAMEO* (1957) [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Koop,_Abraham_Jacob_\(1838-1920\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Koop,_Abraham_Jacob_(1838-1920)), accessed Sept 12, 2019.

13 "Our History," *Friends of the Mennonite Centre in Ukraine*, <https://www.mennonitecentre.ca/our-history/>, accessed August 30, 2019.

14 Eugene Nazarova, "Zamurovani nadrobki zasnovnikov zaporiz'kikh pidpriamstv" (July 29, 2019), <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/30081179.html>.

15 "Project Overview," *GRANDMA*, <https://www.grandmaonline.org/gmolstore/pc/Overview-d1.htm>.



A historic village scene from a Mennonite village in imperial Russia recreated by Brent Wiebe using an architectural computer program.

Trails of the Past

Brent Wiebe

The chorus of the touching song “*Wua es mien Darp?*” by Fief Meniste begins with the question “Where is my village?” This is relevant not only for the visitor to his childhood home in the Chaco, as in the song, but also for thousands of other descendants of Russian Mennonites scattered around the world. Finding our ancestral village can be difficult as many of these places in Russia, Ukraine, and other locations have changed beyond recognition, been renamed, or have disappeared altogether.

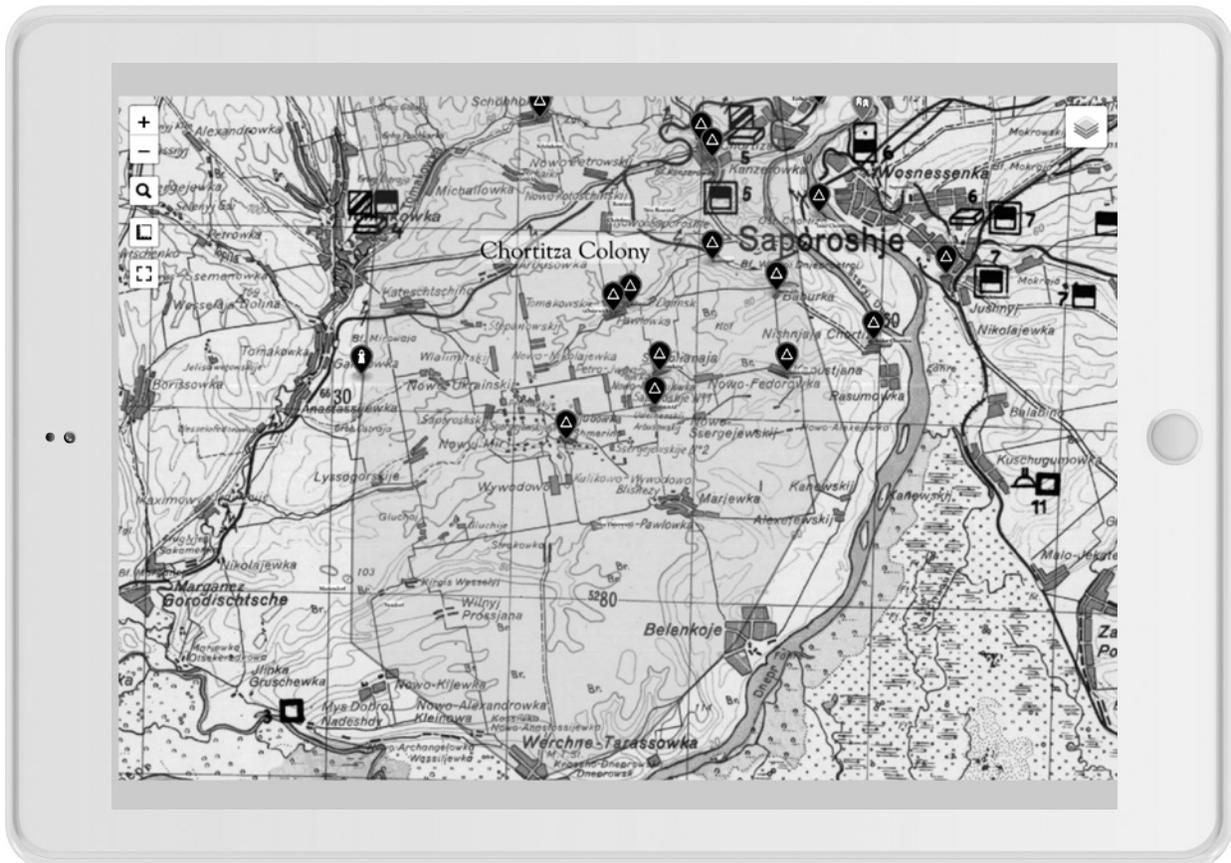
“Trails of the Past,” a project funded through a grant from the Plett Foundation, seeks to help people answer this question. One of the first objectives of the project was to compile maps from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The foundational layer of the Trails of the Past project is known as the Schubert maps. This highly accurate set of Russian maps from the second half of the nineteenth century contains details such as windmills, wells, and stockyards. The Schubert maps are carefully laid over newer maps and aligned

with modern satellite imagery. This is called georeferencing and after processing dozens of maps and hundreds of villages, we have a large area covered, including most of the colonies settled by Mennonites in Ukraine and West Prussia. Further work is planned to include Canada, as well as Central and South America. This zoomable map is available online for free access. By entering the name of a village in the search bar online, users can easily find its location and view it in a variety of maps from different eras. A similar map is also available in a mobile application for Android and iOS devices. It is designed to help travellers view their live location on old maps using the GPS on their mobile device.

Another part of the Trails of the Past project is recreating beautiful pictures of our ancestral homes. This is done by carefully looking at village maps, old and new photographs, any available research resources, and artwork.

Based again on a combination of old and new data, houses and out-buildings are redrawn in modern architectural computer programs. The next step is placing the buildings on sites created by using old village plans and topographical information. Trees, flowers, and gardens must also be located on the farmyards according to the Mennonite tradition. Some of this information is hard to come by, so any historical descriptions of Mennonite life in the 1800s are very useful to us. Nineteenth century Agricultural Society chairman Johann Cornies, for example, left specific and valuable plans on planting trees and laying out villages.

The goal of Trails of the Past is to provoke interest in young and old alike by approaching old topics from a modern perspective. A second goal of the project is to help people find and experience their village. Visit our website at www.trailsofthepast.com to find out more.



This project has placed historical maps on top of newer maps and aligned with modern satellite imagery. Through this method, we have been able to georeference most of the colonies settled by Mennonites in Ukraine and West Prussia.

A Tribute to Andrea Dyck

Royden Loewen & Aileen Friesen

It is with pleasure (but a strong touch of sadness) that the Plett Foundation and the Chair in Mennonite Studies congratulate Andrea Dyck on her appointment to the Mennonite Heritage Village (MHV) on a full-time basis as its senior curator. Seven years ago (in 2012), Andrea started in her role as the foundation's executive assistant, arriving to a dusty desk

equipped with nothing more than a pencil. Her first order of business – creating a payroll system through which to pay herself. Since that time, she has mastered many other duties, serving as a valued member of the foundation and the Mennonite Studies team at the University of Winnipeg.

At the Plett Foundation, working with Aileen and before that with

Hans, she has kept our financial books in order, paid out grant recipients, maintained our website, and performed essential duties that have allowed the foundation to function smoothly. With her keen eye, she has copyedited *Preservings*, correcting the many mistakes overlooked by contributors and inserted by the editor. As the journal underwent its recent redesign, Andrea contributed her talent and insight in producing its new look, helping to choose fonts and formats while reassuring a novice executive director of the advisability of such changes.

She also performed a variety of tasks related to the program of the Chair in Mennonite Studies, mostly as managing editor of the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, the coordinator of the annual Mennonite Studies conference, and overseer of financial services for the chair's various research

programs. In this capacity she has worked with Royden, who genuinely appreciates the order, creativity, and innovation she brings to her work. With her hard work the *Journal of Mennonite Studies* is now professionally laid out in-house, the annual conferences run without a hitch, and folks get paid, mostly on time.

MHV's gain is truly our loss at the foundation and within the Mennonite Studies program at the University of Winnipeg. Andrea has performed her duties with professionalism and humour, managing to answer any question, providing diplomatic advice, and contributing a thoughtful perspective at Menno Tea. While we will greatly miss her contribution to our programming, we look forward to seeing what Andrea will accomplish at the museum and in the broader field of Mennonite history.



Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies

The Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies (CTMS) at the University of Winnipeg is a partnership between the Plett Foundation and the Chair in Mennonite Studies. The centre has continued its robust engagement in the fields of scholarship, community outreach, and teaching. A packed room listened to Dr. Colin Neufeldt deliver the fourth annual CTMS Lecture on May 30, 2019. Entitled "Building a Soviet Utopia: Mennonites and the Collective Farm in Ukraine, 1920–1924," this lecture explored how Mennonites performed leading roles in developing and administering Soviet institutions during the first years of Bolshevik rule. Dr. Neufeldt, who is a Professor at Concordia University of Edmonton, showed how Mennonites took an active, voluntary role in organizing and operating early versions of collective farms in local communities. Neufeldt's research focuses on the experience of Mennonites during the dekulakization and collectivization in the Soviet Union. He has written numerous works exploring the participation of Mennonites in the establishment of Soviet institutions in the countryside.

CTMS also hosted Dr. Mark Loudon on a snowy afternoon this October. Dr. Mark Loudon treated the University of Winnipeg to an engaging talk on "The Meaning of the Pennsylvania Dutch Language." Dr. Loudon, who is a professor at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is fluent in Pennsylvania Dutch, thoroughly entertained us with examples of the colourful language while illustrating its significance in the formation and consolidation of identity. The lecture inspired a lively discussion of comparison

between Pennsylvania Dutch and Low German. Dr. Loudon had been visiting Manitoba to connect with Jack Thiessen, Manitoba's resident Low German expert, whose book, *Mennonite Low German Dictionary*, has recently been revised and republished. Dr. Loudon's recent book, *Pennsylvania Dutch: The Story of an American Language* (John Hopkins University Press, 2016) explores how Pennsylvania Dutch has thrived despite being a primarily spoken language.

The Centre also launched the Paul Toews KGB Archives project, which helps Mennonites find the answer to the fate of their family members who disappeared in Soviet Ukraine during the 1930s and 1940s. Families searching for information on their missing family members should send the name of the family member, date and place of birth, and names of their parents to ctms@uwinnipeg.ca. This program has already answered inquiries from nearly eighty Mennonite families. At this year's Darp Day in Neuberghthal, Manitoba, Dr. Aileen Friesen presented on her findings from archival files of arrested Mennonite men and women.

This was the first year that Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg hosted a Fall Meet & Greet for students interested in the program. This event allowed students to interact with each other and learn about the courses offered by the program. This year Mennonite Studies also started to offer Mennonite Studies I and Mennonite Studies II as video on demand courses, meaning that students from around the world can now enroll in the courses via video. In the fall

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**THE MEANING OF
THE PENNSYLVANIA
DUTCH LANGUAGE**

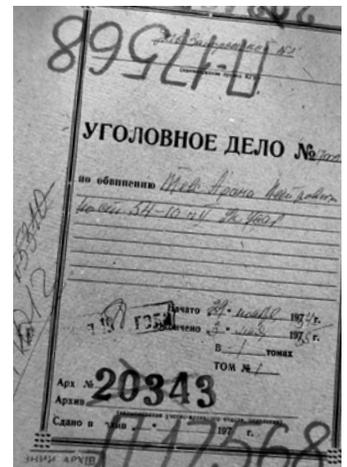
DR. MARK LOUDON

1:00 PM
UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG CLUB
515 PORTAGE AVE. 4TH FL.
WESLEY HALL
FREE ADMISSION

term, nearly one hundred students have been educated and entertained both in the classroom and remotely by the Chair in Mennonite Studies, Dr. Royden Loewen.

Mennonites and anthropology share a complex series of entanglements and the recent Mennonite Studies conference, hosted by CTMS at the University of Winnipeg from October 25-26, 2019, investigated all aspects of these relationships. The conference gathered together twenty-nine presenters from around the world to discuss recent ethnographic studies and reconsider the ways in which Mennonites have imagined, embodied, and enacted their religious practice. The keynote speaker was Dr. James Urry from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, who spoke about the complicated intellectual relationships between Mennonites and the fields of anthropology and history. The conference was convened by Dr. Royden Loewen,

Chair in Mennonite Studies, and Dr. Philip Fountain of Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand. Through a wide variety of themes, from the rituals that form an ethno-religious identity to Mennonites on the mission field and encountering the 'other' more locally at home, the conference examined new ways to ask what it means to be Mennonite.



Aron Toews' interrogation file from the KGB archives.

Liminal Sovereignty

Mennonites and Mormons in Mexican Culture

By Rebecca Janzen

State University of New York Press, 2018

pp. 220

Reviewed by Benjamin Nobbs-Thiessen

Rebecca Janzen's new book explores the many "spaces of encounter" in which transplanted Mennonites and Mormons engage with Mexican national identity. Historian Jürgen Buchenau once wrote that Mexican immigration history was valuable as a story of "small numbers, great impact" and Janzen's study joins a now vibrant literature on non-traditional communities in that nation.¹ Like narratives of Chinese and Syrian-Lebanese Mexicans, Janzen shows how these, "groups at the edges are an integral part of the nation."²

Janzen tackles national belonging through a diverse source base including identity registration cards, land dispute records, television shows, feature films, and photo series. A Latin Americanist by training she pairs this with a robust but accessible discussion of key concepts (racial mixture or *mestizaje*), topics (agrarianism, neoliberalism, the drug trade) and theorists (Claudio Lomnitz, Mary Louise Pratt). As such, the book itself is a challenging but long overdue "space of encounter" between two fields – Latin American and Mennonite studies – that rarely speak to one another. The book is also notable in the way it brings Mennonites and Mormons into dialogue. As Janzen explains in a concise conclusion, the rare photo or personal relationship represent, but a "few instances of meaningful contact between Mennonites and

Mormons."³ But despite the lack of direct engagement, the substantial overlap in the experience of these two religious diasporas makes for a productive comparative work.

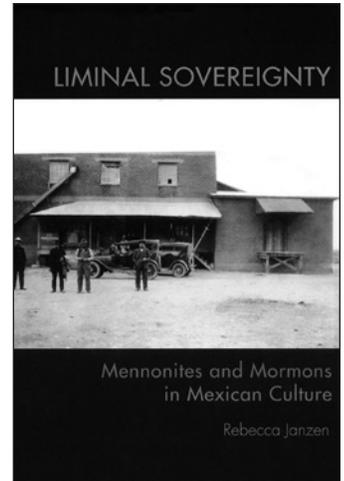
Liminal Sovereignty is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 dives into a trove of several thousand Mennonite and Mormon identification cards produced as part of the Mexican state's registration of foreigners. Janzen introduces readers to the contradictory aims of post-revolutionary Mexico which sought to celebrate national integration through racial mixture while maintaining an underlying preference for "white" or European migrants. In a close reading of these cards, Janzen shows how certain migrants exercised a degree of control over how they were perceived. State officials also betrayed their racial bias describing dark hair as "blond," and crooked noses as straight in starkly eugenicist terms. Similarly, they generously recorded "some Spanish" fluency for Mormons and Mennonites who were likely monolingual English or low-German speakers.

Chapters 2 and 3 compare land conflicts between Mexican communal farms (*ejidos*) and Mennonites and Mormons respectively. Here too a major contradiction emerges. The Mexican state advocated widespread land redistribution to landless peasants but also favored farmers that were seen as modern,

market-oriented producers. That hypocrisy was apparent to frustrated peasants who often targeted Mennonite and Mormon colonies for redistribution. With revolutionary language they called out these "foreign invaders," insinuated that Mormons carried out "murder with impunity," and that individual Mennonites held vast tracts of land. In response, both emphasized their investment in producing for the nation and Mennonites especially pointed to their Mexican birth and respect for established order. They also found support in sympathetic Mexican commentators and Janzen's account is notable for diving into the reflections of Mexicans who wrestled with these questions about privilege and difference.

The final two chapters of *Liminal Sovereignty* turn to popular representations of Mennonites and Mormons (fictional and non-fictional) including television shows, films, books, comics, and photographic series. In Chapter 4, Janzen addresses popular culture amid the escalating violence of the war on drugs. A striking contrast here is the stable representation of Mormons as victims of drug-violence while Mennonites are portrayed as perpetrators. The final chapter of *Liminal Sovereignty* turns to two other major representations of Mennonites: Carlos Reygadas' acclaimed film *Silent Light* and photographer Eunice Adorno's prize-winning photo series of young Mennonite women from Durango colonies, *Las Mujeres Flores*. Janzen raises important questions about the ethics of representation before turning to a close reading of these candid and intimate materials that focuses on technology, culture, and multilingualism. Particularly compelling are Janzen's readings of scenes of protagonist Johan singing a Pedro Infante song in Spanish while driving a pickup truck and of the bi- and tri-lingual messages shared on cell phones and written on forearms by Eunice Adorno's female subjects in Durango.

Liminal Sovereignty is not a typ-



ical approach to Latin American Mennonites. As Janzen points out, the book is not strictly chronological and may be best paired with other work that fills in some of those gaps. It also covers a wide source base and interpreting the meaning of popular representation is by necessity speculative at times. Additionally, the book is not rigidly comparative. A balance between Mennonites and Mormons in early chapters gives way to a primarily Mennonite focus in the latter half. Those caveats aside, this is an important book because it does what few other projects do – with the exception of Abigail Klassen's recent *Darp Stories project*. *Liminal Sovereignty* explicitly engages major themes in Mexican popular culture and places them in dialogue with Mennonite history. As such it is an engaging book not only for Latin Americanist scholars, but also for readers of *Preservings* interested in a long overdue, sustained and lively engagement between Mennonite and Mexican cultures.

1 Jürgen Buchenau. "Small Numbers, Great Impact: Mexico and Its Immigrants." *Journal of American Ethnic History* 20, 3(2001): 23–49.

2 Fredy González, *Paisanos Chinos: transpacific politics among Chinese immigrants in Mexico*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018. Theresa Alfaro-Velcamp. *So far from Allah, so close to Mexico: Middle Eastern immigrants in modern Mexico*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007. Janzen, xvi.

3 Janzen, 169.

In the Next Issue

Our next issue of *Preservings*, available in April 2020, continues the conversation on how Mennonite communities were shaped by their encounters with railways. The issue will focus on Mennonite experiences with the railway in Latin America and Russia.

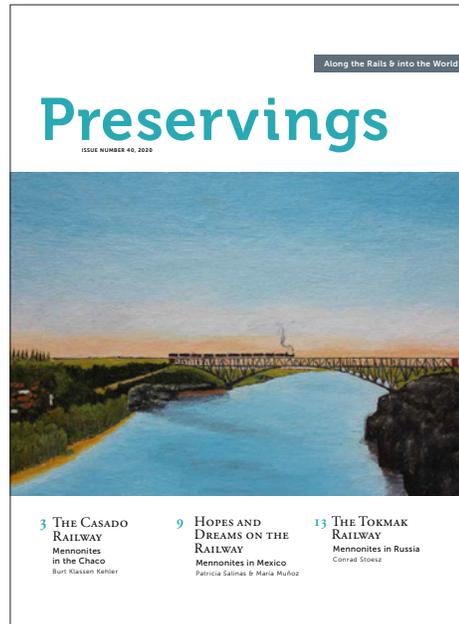
We are soliciting articles for our fall 2020 issue on the theme of "Mennonites and their Neighbours"

Submissions are Due June 30, 2020

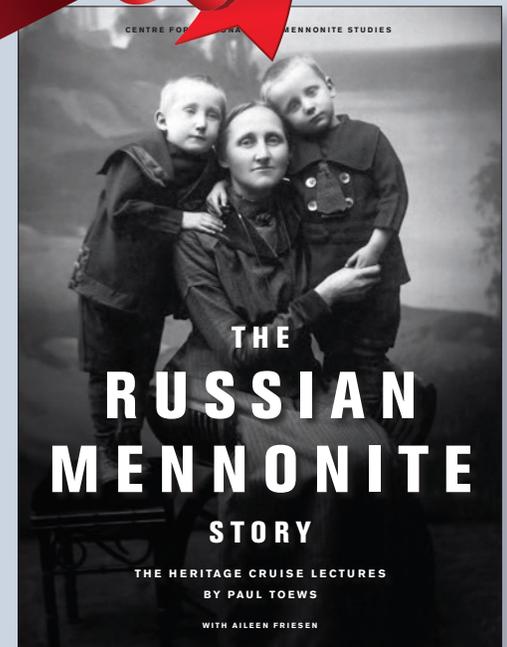
Over the course of several centuries, Mennonites have lived next to and interacted with a variety of peoples. In this issue, we will explore the relationships – positive, neutral, and negative – between Mennonites and the many different groups that Mennonites have called "neighbours" in North and South America, as well as western and eastern Europe. If you have an interest in contributing an article on this theme, please email the Plett Foundation.

We also invite the submission of articles, biographies, local histories, reflections, as well as translated diaries, letters and other archival materials for publication on topics related to Mennonite history, especially pertaining to Low German speaking communities in the Americas.

Submissions of manuscripts may be sent to the editor, Aileen Friesen, by email to ai.friesen@uwinnipeg.ca, or via mail to the Plett Foundation, University of Winnipeg, 515 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 2E9. Feel free to contact the editor by email or by phone (204-786-9352). If sending material electronically, please be sure to submit high resolution photographs. They should be at least 2MB in size.



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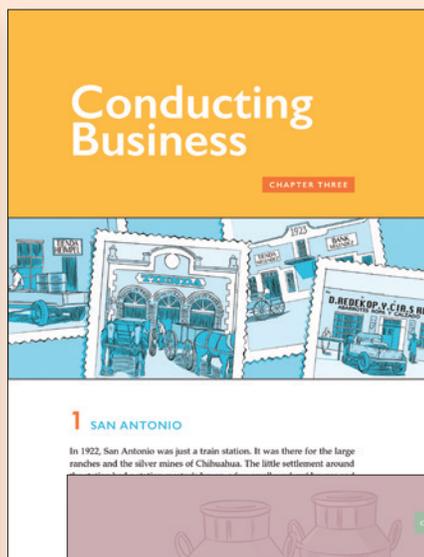
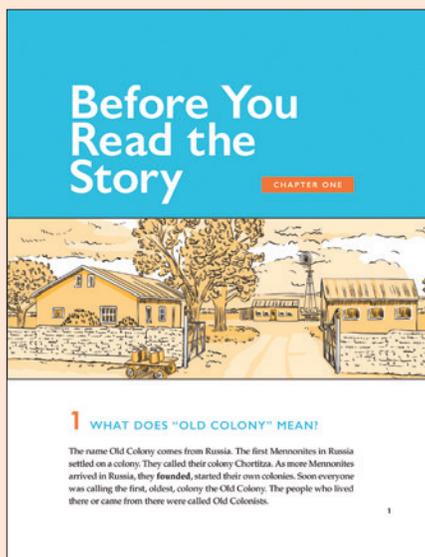
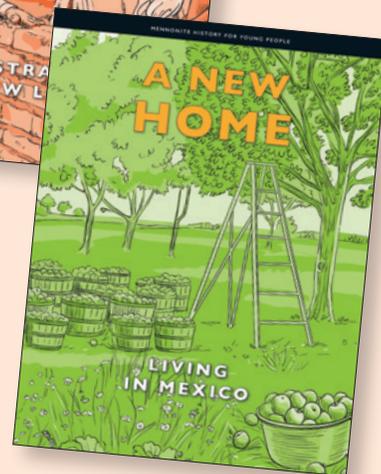
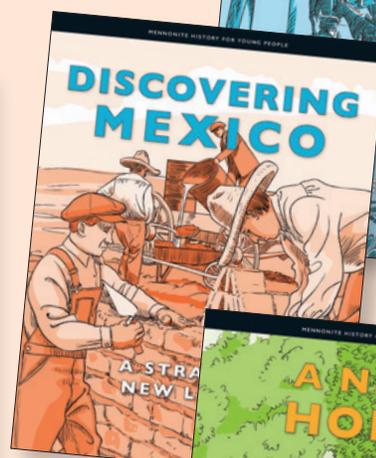
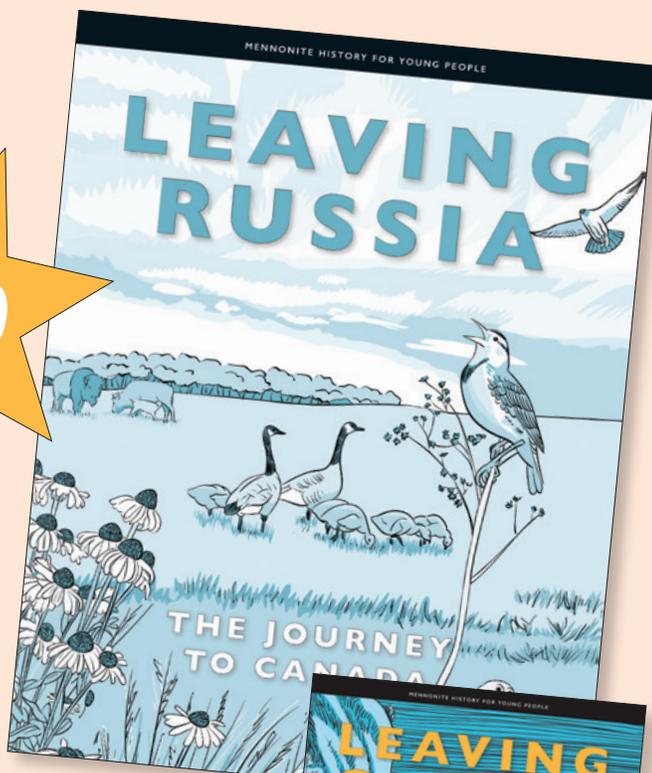
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