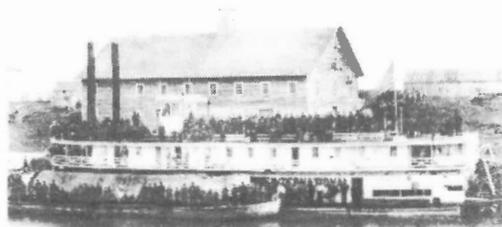


# Preservings

-being the Newsletter of the Hanover / Steinbach Historical Society Inc.



No. 4 July, 1994

## Immigration (Paraguay)

By Irene Enns Kroeker

Our local General Conference Churches have recently undergone an extensive "Life" process - a process developed in promoting the understanding of the past, present and future of the Mennonite Church. As we explored our past and came to terms with the number of times we emigrated in order to keep ourselves "separate from the world", our Church often wondered if our people would continue to find new "lands" to escape to in the future. Being the leader of one such discussion group, I shared with them the reasons that our forefathers emigrated; from Prussia to Russia, from Russia to Canada, and then from Canada to Mexico and Paraguay. We found many similarities between the decisions that our ancestors had to make when compared with our decisions we make today - decisions the government is making for us in our education system, the threat of war in various parts of the world, the affluence that we enjoy in Canada and the influence of other cultures, religions and lifestyles on us as a Mennonite people. These thoughts were enough to make some of them wish to move away once more!

In studying the past immigration processes of the Mennonite people, we find an extremely well organized and supportive Church behind the scenes. This was true in the early immigrations as well as the immigration of the Chortitzer Mennonites to Paraguay in the 1920's. I have been amazed and impressed by the bookkeeping, records, correspondence (in German and in English), the decisions made by the "Brotherhood", and the endless legal work required to make this move happen.

The decision to move was instigated by the government trying to unify the school system by changing the private schools to public schools, thereby retaining control over the subject matter. Some people of the East Reserve Chortitzer Mennonites responded to this government decision by doing what they had always done in the past - seek a new country where they could maintain control of the education of their children. In a letter to the government signed by the Church



*In Paraguay — Heinrich Penners, Mrs. Peter K. Kehler (nee Elizabeth Falk) and Abram D. N. Wiebes. circa 1929/30.*

officials in Paraguay, they state the following as their reason for moving: "Now, we leave this country, because we believe that no Christian Church can prevail without the Word of God in their schools. We do not believe that such instructions should be reduced to a minimum, but rather, that it should be the greatest and the foremost, even as our Lord said 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God.'" We as parents, currently struggling to keep the Lord's Prayer in our schools, feel a slight tug inside as we read this heartfelt letter that our forefathers wrote to the government. The commitment to their children's education was so great that they were willing to give all to keep their beliefs intact.

That is not to say, however, that things

went smoothly from that day on. Many people struggled with the decision to stay or move. Brotherhood meetings were held in every Church and a complete list of people wishing to make this move was compiled and handed in to the Waisenamit (who handled all the banking and legal work of the Chortitzer Churches). A "Fuersorge Committee" was established consisting of Martin C. Friesen, A.A. Braun, Heinrich Unrau, Abraham J. Friesen, Peter Peters, and Peter I. Dyck. They signed all the shipping contracts and land agreements as well as helping the Canadian Waisenamit work through some of the problems involved with moving large amounts of people.

See **Immigration** page 2

## Immigration

continued from page 1

The person that was to spend much time helping from the Canadian scene was the Waisenfuereher Mr. H.G. Klippenstein. He handled much of the correspondence, sending the money held in his trust to Paraguay, and working with the legalities involved in moving large amounts of personal belongings such a long way. This tremendous job did not automatically stop once the people were settled in Paraguay. The Intercontinental Company Ltd. handling all the land transactions in Paraguay enjoyed all the work the Mennonites were handing their way and so decided that they would show more Mennonites the good fortune that was bestowed on them in Paraguay. They made some films (they called them "movies") of the people settled in Paraguay, and then wished to show them to the Mennonite people in Canada, hoping to lure some more people to this promised land. The Church in Canada however, were shocked and dismayed at such a suggestion, refusing on the grounds that showing a "movie" was against their religion. Mr. Klippenstein, in a letter (in German) wrote to the Company on February 24th, 1928, politely informing Mr. Rogers (the person handling their account) that the Church had decided not to produce too much "aufregung" (disharmony) among their people at this time and hoped that the company did not think that they believed that these pictures were of poor taste, rather, that it did not suit the Church to have these pictures shown at this time. The Company was none too pleased with this decision however, and wrote back the very next day "I think you are making a very great mistake. I am sending a copy of your letter to Bishop Friesen and the ministers in Paraguay. I can see no reason at all why the people should not see their relatives and friends and what they are doing. Such action on your part looks as though someone wishes to prevent people from going to Paraguay."

Something must have happened very quickly to change the Company's mind because the next piece of correspondence dated February 27th, 1928 from the Company to Mr. Klippenstein makes a very quick retraction: "It comes to my attention that the statement has been made that the Intercontinental Co. wanted to show the pictures of Paraguay in Churches. Please advise the ministers that this is not true. The Company never wanted to show any picture in any Mennonite Church as the Company does not feel that that is a proper place." He also added "Also please let these people know that the American moving picture concerns wanted to show these pictures in all the moving picture houses in the United States and the Company refused to allow them to do this. Even though they offered to pay money for the opportunity to show these pictures the Company refused."

Not everyone wished for the Mennonite people to settle in Paraguay however. Mr. Fred Engen (who had been hired by the Mennonites as their guide) received a letter on July 18th, 1921 from A.D. Kissenger, Attorney at Law in Kansas City, warning the 60,000 Mennonites that "will leave America to settle in Paraguay . . . and plan a nation all their own." He spoke against their decision saying "This is an idle dream and will end in disaster." He becomes quite emphatic in his warning using words like "STAND! DO NOT RUN! Race clashes are brewing in the world; tremendous ferments are at work, therefore contraction is necessary for protection against infiltration by licentious fees. During war your women are safe in America and their integrity is something worth fighting for. Virtue in woman and courage in man go hand in hand."

The true reason for his desire to warn the Mennonites came through loud and clear as, at the end of the letter, he states: "The terrible waste in transportation is a senseless mortgage and is enough to buy improved land in America and save you toil and tears." It seems he definitely had an ulterior motive

through all his dire predictions.

Of course, all the stories that surround this immigration movement are too many to recount here in this limited space available. They are without a doubt however, the most interesting, terrifying and puzzling as the Canadian Mennonites and Paraguayan Mennonites work together to meet the needs of all the Mennonite people - those that wished to retain control over the education of their children by moving and those wished to retain control by working with the system in Canada. Both groups had a vision - to educate their children using the values based on the true Word of God.

"May the government have the insight to be more tolerant towards the schools of the Christian churches, and thus be a blessing for the entire world in promoting and sustaining Christianity." (July 7, 1931, signed Martin C. Friesen, Johan Schroeder, Abr. E. Giesbrecht, Johan W. Sawatzky, Abram A. Braun, Abram B. Toews, Wilh. L. Giesbrecht, Johan Schroeder)

\*translations of the above mentioned letters done by Ben Hoepfner

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## Minutes

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society  
Tuesday, March 29, 1994

Present: Roy Loewen, Henry Fast, John Dyck, Wilmer Penner, Delbert Plett, Jake Doerksen, Orlando Hiebert, Irene Kroeker, Doris Penner.

1. Update of Volume 3 - Village Histories  
The revised new publication needs the photographs and maps; copyprints may be made at any photo shop in Steinbach and reimbursements can be made by handing in the receipt to Delbert.
2. Memberships:  
Membership policy was revised. Present fee for annual membership is \$10.00 with a free copy of Oberschultz book for a new membership. Student membership is set at \$5.00. Membership is payable annually on January 1st of each year. Each issue of Newsletter to include a statement of

membership policy.

3. Newsletter:  
Donation: Each issue of Newsletter is to include an appeal for donations and tax deductible receipts are to be issued. HSHS books are to be advertised in each newsletter.

Lawrence Klippenstein has proposed that the Historian and the Preservings be mailed to both memberships.

Wilmer Penner to send copy of newsletters to Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society; Essex County.

New appointments to the newsletter:

Material Culture Series - Doris Penner  
Character Sketches (series) - Delbert Plett  
Book Review Editor - Irene Kroeker

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## Women's History Month

Did you know that the month of October has been declared "National Women's History Month" by Status of Women Canada? Women's History Month is intended to celebrate and acknowledge the vital role that women have played in shaping their communities, a role for which there has been little recognition.

While last year's emphasis was placed on the theme "HERstory of Work: Recognizing Women's Contributions", the theme for this coming October has yet to be an-

nounced.

Since 1994 is also the "Year of the Family", we, as a Mennonite community, should perhaps incorporate these two themes and acknowledge the contributions made by our "foremothers" and pay special tribute to them.

You may obtain more information about Women's History Month by writing to Status of Women Canada, 360 Albert St., Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 1C3.

# The Reverend Johann Schroeder Chronicles

By Jacob Doerksen

The turmoil caused by the war in Europe, 1914-18, the pending loss of control over religious private schools, serving as school inspector while also farming, news of the revolution and suffering relatives in Russia, writing poetry, and running a "Tract Mission" while serving as a minister of a church required great skill and stamina. One person who seems to have possessed this and more was Reverend Johann Schroeder of the Chortitz Church. Reverend Schroeder, born in Russia, was the oldest son of Gerhard Schroeder, Reeve, Miller, and Farmer of Eigenhof. In 1920-21, during negotiations with the Manitoba Government and planned emigration to Paraguay, Johann Schroeder recorded the sequence of events pertaining to the above. On December 31, 1921 he seems to have passed his chronicles on to his invalid son who continued to record his father's activities until September 5, 1943, almost 22 years. At this point Rev. Schroeder's second son took over the chore of keeping a record of happenings at the Schroeder home. The chronicle ends on September 26, 1957.

For the history research student these chronicles are invaluable. As already mentioned they contain information on aid to Russia, and the operation of private schools until 1926, well after the Government's first move to take over Mennonite Schools in their attempt at "Social Engineering" the population. They also contain information about the planning and negotiating of the move to Paraguay, the Second World War, the draft and CO's, plus much more such as deaths, dates, times, age at time of death and date of funerals. Johann recorded his father's activities in much more detail than Gerhard. In more instances he even recorded scripture references his father used in his sermons. Gerhard, although not as detailed in his recordings as Johann, has other information Johann doesn't have. He kept a record of correspondence his father and he had with others in their "Tract Mission."

The following is a brief example of what the chronicles contain (translated from the German):

Sept. 24, 1922 — Father went to Blumengard Schoolhouse (used as Church). Text Genesis 2:7

Sept. 25, 1922 — Father went to Gruenthal for a brotherhood meeting. Rev. A. Zacharias and others from Saskatchewan also attended. After father visited Peter Sawatsky's and for lunch he was at Rev. Johann Dueck and after lunch he stopped in at Hein Ungers but they weren't at home.

Sept. 26, 1922 — Father went to a Brotherhood meeting in Chortitz. Mr. Cornelius

Toews and Cornelius Wiebe from Bergfeld were here.

Sept. 27, 1922 — My parents went to Blumengard for the funeral of Mrs. Cornelius Banman. They also stopped at Gerhard Doerksens in regards to the money borrowed for emigration.

Sept. 28, 1922 — Rev. Hein Doerksen was here. Father went to Johan Heiberts.

April 16, 1923 — Peter L. Giesbrecht was here.

April 17, 1923 — Saw wild geese, they were flying South east.

April 18, 1923 — Heard a Meadowlark. After

lunch at about 3 o'clock the spring run-off water came flowing over the snow and soon bare ground was visible.

April 19, 1923 — Ducks visited this area.

April 21, 1923 — The snow is almost all gone from the fields. Father drove to Kehlers. This was the first time this spring that he used the buggy. He heard that the boy who had grabbed onto an oak tree in the water at Prairie Rose was rescued.

April 22, 1923 — Father went to church in Chortitz. Rev. H. Doerksen spoke on Romans 10:10 and half of the articles of faith.

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## Presentation at Annual Meeting of HSHS

By Irene Enns Kroeker

People interested in finding help to trace their roots gathered at the Mennonite Heritage Museum on January 28, 1994 to hear Delbert Plett, Dr. Royden Loewen, and John Dyck present the sources used in their most recent historical research.

Plett presented the sources that produced his latest 900 page volume on the Kleine Gemeinde series called LEADERS. "Biography used as a medium to relate history, is the new vehicle used in telling the story of the Kleine Gemeinde," related Plett. The volume, released in December, 1993, will make available 600-700 pages of documents and geneological information never before published. 120 pages previously published as excerpts are now included in their entirety. "This book is intended to mainstream the Kleine Gemeinde story," Plett concluded.

Sources of interest to those in the East Reserve Bergthaler/Chortitzer background was presented by John Dyck. Held at the HSHS office are records of the minutes of the R.M. of Hanover meetings from 1900; Chortitzer Church Register; Sommerfelder Church Register; village and community records and family records.

Presenting for Dr. Royden Loewen was the moderator for the evening Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein. Dr. Loewen is the author of the recently released book FAMILY, CHURCH AND MARKET. In his paper OVERVIEW OF MY WORK, Dr. Loewen outlined the central theme of his research as "the meeting of the traditionalist, agrarian groups with modern, industrial, capitalist,

integrative, urban society; that is the encounter of Gemeinschaft people with a Gesellschaft society."

Exploring the immigrant's private worlds, Loewen followed those historians "who look for ways in which the immigrant group developed strategies to continue old ways in the new environment." Two themes are explored within the book in the wider context of immigration and adaptation; the internal social organization that undergirded subjective self-perceptions and their sense of peoplehood; and a comparison of immigrants in Canada to the immigrants in the US specifically, Nebraska and Manitoba.

Highlighting the evening with laughter and fun was Anne Funk's Low German stage presentation. The audience identified with Hein as he endured a home visit from his teacher after a misbehaviour in school, listened with reverence to the mother's story to her children about the background of a Mennonite war refugee and chuckled at a hen pecked husband's predicament with his newly found wife and mother-in-law. The stories presented in Low German triggered memories of our past in a truly unique and delightful way.

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Quotations from the journal of Rev. Heinrich Friesen (1842-1921), Hochfeld, Manitoba

Many a person thinks what he has given away is lost. But everything you give with a willing heart you have gained.

# Century Farm Awards

By Irene Enns Kroeker

Excited chatter filled the room as 75 former neighbours of Jacob K. and Eva Goertzen settled in to enjoy the presentation of the first Century Farm Award to be given to a Mennonite from the Hanover area. Geraldine (Goertzen) Funk, the present owner of the 100 year old farm named Hochfeld Farms, welcomed friends and neighbours to the original homestead of her great-great-grandfather Alte Johann Kehler in Hochfeld, Manitoba.

Immigrating to Canada in 1874 from the Bergthal Colony in Russia, Alte Johann Kehler (widower) together with his children, settled on Pt SW 1/4 Sec 30-7-6E. This land is currently occupied by Jacob K. Goertzen's youngest daughter and her husband, Geraldine and Stan Funk. Johann Kehler's son Jacob, 26 years of age at the time, developed the original site where everyone had gathered for this occasion, and is currently owned by Jacqueline Goertzen (eldest daughter of the late Jacob K. and Eva Goertzen).

Being friends, relatives and neighbours to the Goertzens for many years attributed to the excitement as Bert Maize presented a certificate and a sign on behalf of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture and the Manitoba Historical Society. The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society presentation of a certificate was made by the president and founder of the society, Delbert Plett Q.C. Aaron Friesen, Reeve of Hanover and a friend of the family presented Jacqueline and Geraldine and Stan Funk with a book and a letter of congratulations.

Irene Enns Kroeker, niece to Jacob K. Goertzen, presented the background information to the occasion for celebration. Arriving with his father, Jacob Kehler had accumulated a \$35.70 debt along the way. He immediately went about the task to order some supplies and get settled in. Jacob was soon to marry Gerhard L. Kehler's daughter Susanna, also from Hochfeld.

When Jacob Kehler died in 1898, Susanna continued to live on the farm with her daughter Elizabeth, who had married Jacob Goertzen. Jacob had lived in their family for many years as a foster child. Elizabeth had two children Susan and Jacob, who then inherited this property upon her death. They split the inheritance and Jacob K. Goertzen acquired the current property known as Pt NW 1/4 30-7-6E. The eldest daughter to Jacob K. and Eva Goertzen, Jacqueline, continues to farm the original 90 acres.

Smiles, nods and tears were shared as the former friends and neighbours of Jacob K. Goertzen listened to Jacqueline share her memories of her recently departed father.



*Bert Maize presenting the first Century Farm Award to Jacqueline Goertzen as Stan and Gerry Funk look on.*

The final song "Daddy's Hands" became a tribute to all who remembered their father's strong yet caring hands working hard on their generational farmsteads.

In closing, Rev. Richard Martens, friend of the family and Pastor of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church offered a prayer and blessing on the fifth generation owners as they continue to farm the land settled by their great-great-grandfather.

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society is also interested in presenting a Century Farm Certificate to any family member owning land (but not necessarily occupied at that

time) that was homesteaded 100 years ago, provided that the land and the original homestead were both located in the boundaries of the same village. Phone Irene Enns Kroeker at 326-2777 for further details.

Anyone residing on a farm that has been occupied by a family member of the original homesteader for 100 years or more is asked to contact the Century Farm Award Div., Agricultural Training Branch, 810-401 York Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8.



*In Hochfeld — Suzanna Kehler, Elizabeth (Kehler) Goertzen and Jacob F. Goertzen.*

# President's Report

By Delbert F. Plett, Q.C.

I am not always sure what should be in the "President's Report." The first interest seems to be to report and comment on the activities of the HSHS. It also seems appropriate to comment on happenings in the wider community which impact upon our plans and projects.

One such event was a visit to Steinbach on May 13, 1994, by friends Abram W. and Anna Hiebert of Asuncion, Paraguay. Mr. Hiebert has been head of the Chortitzer Waisenamt Komitee for many years and in this position has done much travelling and made many friends the world over. In May of 1993 they had the opportunity to travel to Russia and Sweden as the guests of *Tetra Pak*, a multi-national Corporation active in South America. For two weeks they were able to tour the villages of Chortitza, Molotschna and Bergthal with private chauffeur and translator. See their reports published in the *Mennonitische Post*, November 19, December 3 and 17, 1993.

It is my impression that the Hieberts were able to access and properly interpret more of the Bergthal story in Russia than has previously been possible. They have also taken some 200 photos and kept a daily journal of their trip. I hope we will encourage them to publish this information as a "Reisebericht" which would be invaluable for future travellers and historians.

On a related note, Orlando Hiebert, the new Vice-president of the HSHS, returned from a trip to Russia on April 16, 1993. We look forward to reading Orlando's report of his experiences there.

A sad event is the passing of Dr. Emerich K. Francis on January 14, 1994. His groundbreaking doctoral thesis was published as *In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba* in 1955. Dr. Francis is one of the fathers of the historiography of the Mennonites in Manitoba and deserves our undying gratitude for his work.

An important event for our historical society is the appointment of Irene Enns Kroeker as book review editor for the newsletter at our last board meeting. This affirms our commitment to foster and encourage research and writings relating to the history of our area. Very seldom do we find in other Mennonite media a real understanding or even interest in historical events which have taken place in the East Reserve, and hence it is only logical that we must have the facilities to tell and interpret the same from our own perspective.

Members of our society will be pleased to hear that Dr. James Urry is scheduled to return to these parts sometime in June to continue his research on his Grunthal book. We look forward to meeting with him and hearing more about his continued work. James has single-handedly laid the cornerstone for a more balanced and positive understanding of our history and we are fortunate that he has been a friend and patron of our Society from the very start.

One of the most important projects of the HSHS is the prospective Volume Three of our East Reserve Historical Series. The book will contain many biographies, village histories, sermons and journals and will come to over 800 pages in length. Over the past months a number of people have inquired as to whether this book was ever going to be completed. Our hope at this time is that the book will be ready for the press by fall. I trust that all of our writers have their articles done and will hand in their pictures immediately.

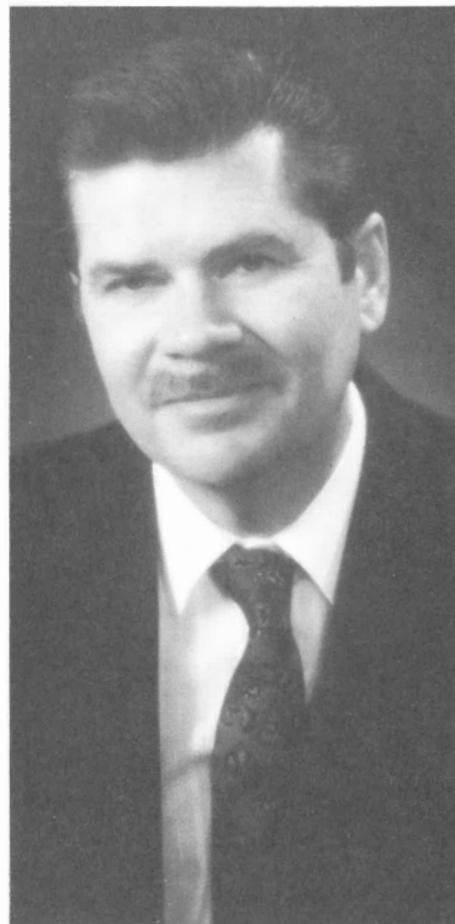
We are disappointed that the Heritage Grants Advisory Committee of the Government of Manitoba has turned down our request for a publishing grant. It seems that they have made a policy decision to put their limited resources into other projects such as building restoration, etc. They have not yet learned the lesson that artifacts without documented history are meaningless. In any event, we as a board are committed to publishing Volume Three by one means or another, once the manuscript is ready.

And lastly, I would like to comment on my visit to my Hutterian Brethren friends at the Baker Colony in MacGregor on May 8, 1994. Ostensibly my purpose in going was to pick up a quilt which the women were kind enough to make for me as a gift. I enjoyed visiting with my hosts Pauline and Jonathan Maendal as we had our dinner together.

It happened to be Mother's Day, and the day was special for me as my own mother had died only a week previous on April 29, 1994. I was touched by the beautiful acappella singing of the young men and women as the rest of us in the dining room enjoyed our desserts.

I was reminded of the many songs my mother sang for me throughout my lifetime and of the many stories she told me. I regret now, not having recorded many more of these.

I am mindful that the story of the women in our history has not yet been told. I would like to close with the wish that others might record as many stories as possible about their



Delbert Plett

grandmothers or great-grandmothers and hopefully submit the same for publication in our newsletter or Volume 4 of our historical series. This is a worthy cause.

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Quotations from the journal of Rev. Heinrich Friesen (1842-1921), Hochfeld, Manitoba

If you want to be honoured by people, then do not speak much about yourself.

The one who only has received one talent and does not use it, that one would also neglect to use 50 if they were given to him.

It is a great mistake to forget the received blessing and to remember only the difficult days.

It is very harmful if some preachers feed their listeners with sweet cookies out of their own bakery instead of the bread of life.



*Panoramic view of Bergthal.*

# ***Return to Bergthal***

**By Orlando Hiebert**

After five weeks on assignment in various parts of Ukraine the 14 hour overnight train ride to Zaporizhia looked like it would be no different from the other trips. The train station in Kiev was crowded, the train car with its four berth roomettes was hot, and

my roommates were total strangers. After our tickets had been collected and I had paid 10,000 Kupons for a pillow slip and two sheets, the Ukrainian woman in the lower berth across from me and I found that we could communicate to a limited extent in

German. We were soon joined by the two Russians in the upper berths. I began to notice that the conversation between the woman and the two Russians was becoming somewhat strained. The older Russian then turned to me and began talking to me very



*The village of Bergthal.*

## Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Purpose and Membership

The Hanover Steinbach Historical Society was organized in 1988 to research and write the history and heritage of the R.M. of Hanover and the Town of Steinbach. The emphasis is on the period 1874-1910. Through public meetings, writings and publications it seeks to foster an understanding and respect for the rich heritage of the community.

Many volunteers from this community have contributed information, collected old diaries and letters, written articles, entered data on computer, proofread data, and helped in other ways to compile material for books. The financial support of the R.M. of Hanover, the Manitoba Heritage Federation, the office of the Secretary of State, together with donations from private individuals has made it possible for the society to publish three books. Two more are in stages of completion.

These efforts have rewarded participants with a greater appreciation for their heritage. Perhaps you would like to show your support for the work of the society by donating family records, old correspondence or diaries to the society. Any of our board members or John Dyck at the office would be glad to talk to you.

The society also requires your support financially in order to continue the above activities. Your donations will help to keep the society strong. All contributions of \$10 or more will be acknowledged with a charitable donation receipt for income tax purposes. We are presently levying an annual membership fee of \$10 per annum but will appreciate you giving an additional amount of \$10 or \$20 to support the work of the society. Thank you for your participation.

Hanover Steinbach Historical Society  
Box 1960, Steinbach, MB R0A 2A0

Enclosed is a cheque/cash in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ for:

Donations to society for which please issue a receipt \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Bergthal/Respublica. After a few wrong turns and four hours of driving we had covered the 200 km from Zaporizhia or the Old Colony, to Bergthal. After hours of driving by endless fields and wondering how Sasha was able to dodge the many potholes in the road, Olga suddenly exclaimed: "There it is." There, nestled in a shallow valley just ahead in this forgotten corner of Ukraine, was the village of Bergthal. Turning off the highway onto the main street or Lenin St., as many in Ukraine are called, one sees a wide street between the row of houses on either side. The roadway is off to one side, next in the centre is a shallow ditch, a row of trees and then a grass strip which abuts the yards on the other side of the street. The yards are all fenced, all seem to contain fruit trees, and a fair number have a light steel frame made of bars and angle iron on which creeping vines climb until the short driveway is covered over with a canopy of foliage in summer.

At 21 Lenin St. lives an 84 year old "babushka" named Sheve Krupchikha at whose house I, as had Lawrence Klippensteins two years earlier, had a glass of milk and some cookies. She wished that more Mennonites would come to visit her because she is lonely and said she would be grateful if I would write to her. She also told me that the four villages of Bergthal, Heuboden, Schoenfeld and Schoenthal all belong to one state farm. At the cemetery, which to my reckoning is at the east end of the village, I found what appears to be the original red granite posts with a hole through them either standing, leaning or fallen over. I also discovered one identifiable Mennonite grave marker, that of Peter Penner born 1791 died 1849. This could be the same Peter Penner listed on page 19 under A16 in the Bergthaler Gemeinde Buch. Compared to the Molotchna and especially the Old Colony villages of Chortitza/Rosenthal, the Bergthal villages have little or no buildings or landmarks of their Mennonite past. For me just being able to stand on the same ground, walk on the same street and let the soil of these same fields run through my fingers as my great grandfather Peter P. Hiebert had, was a moving experience.

excitedly in Russian and would grab my hand and shake it frequently. At first I went along with this but after a while I became suspicious and finally in annoyance I told him "neyet". The two men then left the room but returned a hour later with a bottle. When the men offered me a drink I glanced over at the woman and could see by the look in her eyes and the slight shake of her head that she was afraid of what would happen and was hoping that I would not join them. I declined and the men again left the room. Out of gratitude for my stabilizing influence in this situation, she insisted that I share the food she had brought along both that evening and the next morning. This is a situation that can and does occur when travelling by train in Ukraine and Russia.

When I arrived at Zaporizhia at 9:30 a.m., Olga, the guide I had hired, was at the station to meet me and in the next few days we toured some of the villages in the Old Colony and also a few in the Molotchna. For me the highlight of my tour came on Monday, April 11, when at 8 a.m. we set out for

# Announcements

Orlando Hiebert has accepted the position of Vice-President of the HSHS. Irene Enns Kroeker will be the Book Review Editor.

Wilmer Penner is stepping aside as Editor of this newsletter. A new appointment will be announced.

A dedication of the Mennonite Landing Site Monument at the junction of the Rat and The Red Rivers is planned for August 1, 1994. Details to be announced.

With regret we note the passing of E.K. Francis, whose book *In Search of Utopia:*

*The Mennonites of Manitoba* first brought our communities to the attention of the outside world.

The Mennonite Historical Society of Canada is in the process of publishing (with the University of Toronto Press) *Mennonites In Canada Vol. III 1940-1970* by Dr. T.D. Regehr. Tax deductible donations to support this project would be appreciated, and can be sent to Mr. Ted Friesen, President, MHSC, P.O. Box 720, Altona, MB R0G 0B0

# Book Review



By Irene Enns Kroeker  
Book Review Editor

Living in the computer era has its advantages, as it lowers the cost of printing books. Consequently, more books are being written by ordinary people and placed on the market - family tree books, diaries/journals, family stories and village histories. It is with great pleasure that I approach my new assignment as Book Review Editor, knowing that there are many out there willing to share their experiences through the printed word. It is my job to bring these books to your attention so that you too can have access to the information provided in these books.

Many people will be interested in our next issue's feature book. Having grown up as a Chortitzer Mennonite in the Blumengard district of the East Reserve, I was more than keenly interested in the book that Edna Vogt is working on for a high school reunion of the Bothwell School District. She was busy compiling history accounts of the Aron, Seaton, New Bothwell, and Moray Schools and of the Silberfeld and Sommerfeld churches. The book includes some histories of villages, businesses at Bothwell, accounts written by former teachers and individual family histories. Published in June, 1994, this book will be of interest to anyone that has a connection to the northern East Reserve area.

The following book review will be of interest to the Kleine Gemeinde families of the East Reserve.

Bernard P. Doerksen & Garth B.P. Doerksen. **"Kleine Gemeinde (Evangelical Mennonite Conference since 1952) Grave Sites of Blumenort, Manitoba and Area (East Reserve) 1875-1990."** 1991. 111 pp. Spiral bound.

This publication should attract the attention of those families whose roots lie in the Kleine Gemeinde church of the East Reserve. Although not meant to be a historical account of the early beginnings of this congregation in its new homeland, the book does provide an overview of the Kleine Gemeinde's settlement in Manitoba in 1874 and focusses on the villages initially established in this area. Further attention is given to the later settlement at Neuanlage, Greenland, and Prairie Rose.

Half of the membership left to join the Holdeman church in 1881 but continued to use several of the cemeteries listed in the book until 1893 when these families moved to Greenland.

Burial lists are divided into eight sections; these include the four Blumenort cemeteries, the grave sites at Neuanlage, Hochfeld, Blumenhof, and the scattered graves in the Blumenhof area which are identified as fourteen separate plots. (The latter includes the area known locally as "De Krim".)

Although an index of names would have proven very useful to the researcher, the entries are listed in chronological order according to individual grave sites covering a time span of 116 years.

A total of seven maps serve to heighten interest as do the several pages of photographs of the well-kept cemeteries. Containing a registry of approximately 600 graves, the book includes useful supplementary information such as maiden names and names of parents. A separate section at the end of the book gives accounts of the circumstances surrounding the accidental deaths of people buried in the area.

Although the many pages of grave listings may appear daunting to the casual reader of Mennonite history, the personal accounts and tidbits of local history relating to the cemeteries themselves makes this book a worthwhile addition to your bookshelf especially as it relates to and complements the books of Delbert Plett and Royden Loewen on this particular area.

Reviewed by Linda Buhler

*We are interested in all books pertaining to East Reserve/RM of Hanover histories for our review column, particularly family tree books, village histories, and stories. Please forward review copies to: Irene Kroeker, Box 20531, Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0 or phone 326-2777.*

## The Fasts of Fischau

By Henry N. Fast

My great-grandparents, Heinrich and Charlotte (Loepp) Fast arrived in Steinbach, Manitoba in the fall of 1874 having made the long journey from the small village of Nickolaital, Cherson province, Russia. Many questions arise as to why the Fasts had joined seventeen other Kleine Gemeinde families in this immigration. While most other Steinbach immigrants had family connections within this church group, Heinrich and Charlotte had none. In fact Charlotte's parents, Cornelius Loepps, were German Lutheran who had come to the Molotschna in 1839. Knowledge of Heinrich's background also seemed somewhat vague. Kleine Gemeinde bishop, Peter Toews, tentatively indicated that Heinrich's father was Wilhelm Fast but modifies this written statement with a question mark. Fortunately, the recently discovered Russian census of 1835 from the Molotschna as found in the Braun collection sheds new light on the Fast family.

The census of February, 1835, lists a Wilhelm Elias Fast as having settled on lot #22 in the village of Fischau in the year 1803. This corresponds to Unrau's date of 1804, and the information that Wilhelm, age 35, came from the Prussian village of Wiecker-

au, Amt Elbing, together with his wife Maria, age 38, and children Wilhelm, 14, and Maria, 11. The census date notes that Wilhelm Elias Fast died in 1831.

Following is a record of Wilhelm Wilhelm Fast's family living on lot #22, as translated from the census papers.

| Name   | Age (1835) |
|--|------------|
| Wilhelm Wilhelm Fast                               | 40         |
| Wife Sara  | 39         |
| Son Wilhelm  | 18         |
| Son Durk   | 16         |
| Son Peter  | 14         |
| Son Heinrich (great-grandfather)                   | 8          |
| Son Abraham  | 7          |
| Son Jacob  | 3          |
| Son David  | 2          |
| Daughter Maria                                     | 20         |
| Daughter Katherina                                 | 11         |
| Daughter Sara                                      | 5          |
| (also listed under this family is a Jacob Kroeker) |            |
| Jacob Julius Kroeker                               | 42         |
| Wife Katherina                                     | 40         |
| Son (2nd wife) Jacob                               | 15         |
| Son (2nd wife) Johan                               | 9          |
| Daughter (2nd wife) Anna                           | 6          |

continued next page

When the information of this census is compared with correspondence to the Mennonitische Rundschau and the 1862 Molotschna School Attendance records (also included in the Braun collection) we can formulate a more complete picture of the Fast.

**Wilhelm Wilhelm Fast** The oldest son of Wilhelm evidently inherited the family farm in Fischau, first settled by his grandfather Wilhelm Elias Fast. He is listed as living on lot #22 in the school records. Two children, Katherina, 13, and Sarah, 11 are attending the Fischau school.

**Diedrich Wilhelm Fast** Diedrich (Durk) is also living in Fischau in 1862 on lot #6 together with a Jacob Peters. One son, Franz age 7 is attending school. Diedrich, his wife Maria and children Franz, Diedrich, Maria and Anna came to America in 1877 and evidently settled near Inman, Kansas. A news item in the MR says that Diedrich Fast, formerly of Fischau, died on April 14, 1890. In 1912 his daughter Maria Fast was living in Hooker, OK (MR June 12, 1912).

**Peter Wilhelm Fast** Presently, no information is available on Peter.

**Heinrich Wilhelm Fast** Heinrich married Charlotte Loepp, daughter of Cornelius Loepp, a German Lutheran immigrant. Later out of deference to Kleine Gemeinde humility she was known as Maria. In 1862 the family lived in Pordenau where their two oldest daughters, Maria, 11, and Elizabeth, 8, went to school. They moved to Nickolaital in 1865 where they lived on rented land. Probably, they joined the Kleine Gemeinde at this time. The family accompanied the Steinbach, Borosenko Kleine Gemeinde in their journey to Steinbach, Manitoba in 1874, where Heinrich settled on lot #3. He sold his farm in the village in 1882 and bought 160 acres from the Hudson Bay Co. south of Steinbach which he appropriately named Fischau.

**Abraham Wilhelm Fast** In 1862 Abraham is a settler in Neu Bereslav. Children Katherina, 10, and Abraham, 7 are attending school. Evidently the family is quite poor as son Abraham misses a number of school days because he does not have shoes. Niece, Maria Fast of Steinbach tries to make contact with the Abraham Fast family a number of times through the Mennonitische Rundschau.

**Jacob Wilhelm Fast** Jacob and his family came to South Dakota in the company of the Hutterites. He was visited here in 1883 by his niece Elizabeth and her husband Jacob Friesen from Kansas who were on their way to Manitoba to see her parents, Heinrich Fast (MR Feb. 1, 1883). His son David Fast reports the death of his father, Jacob, formerly of Fischau, in the July 22, 1896 issue of the Mennonitische Rundschau.

**David Wilhelm Fast** In 1884 a David Fast from Lindenau, Russia, inquires about the whereabouts of his brother Jacob who came to America with the Hutterites. The same letter also reports that David is "jetz ganz verkruppelt" (MR Dec. 31, 1884). No further

information is presently available on David.

**Maria Wilhelm Fast** Maria, daughter of Heinrich and her cousin Maria, daughter of Diedrich both indicate that they have an aunt, Mrs Abraham Kroecker living in Russia. This may be Maria (MR March 11, 1891 and June 12, 1912).

**Katherina Wilhelm Fast** Likely Katherina married Abraham Dueck from Orhlof (MR March 11, 1891 and Dec. 21, 1910). Abraham's father was a coppersmith in the village.

**Sara Wilhelm Fast** Sara may have been married to a David Doerksen (MR March 11, 1891 and Jan. 24, 1906).

The information on the three sisters is somewhat speculative in that I am not certain which sister belongs to which husband. Since Abraham Dueck is only one year older than Katherina I assume this data to be correct. I would be most happy to hear from anyone who can add to this story of the Fast.

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# Reflections on Mixed Mennonite Ancestry

It all began when our 13 year old daughter Rachel read Ben Doerksen's article "Kanadier and Russlaender: Tensions on the Prairies" (June 1993 issue of Mennonite Historian). Our children have, of course, heard numerous light-hearted debates at home on the pros and cons of being either which one. But this article put them in an awkward situation: were they to identify with their Dad who was from the "simple-minded Kanadier . . . who were uncultured, afraid of education and too satisfied with tradition" or with their Mom who was from the "domme Russlaenda" who were regarded "as arrogant, worldly, and unwilling to engage in manual labor". So what did that make them, oh children of mixed parentage?

Though our children's concern was quite tongue-in-cheek, I have to admit that I was in a quandary too, but in a different area. Imagine my identity crisis when I discovered that my Neudorf line hadn't begun their cross-continent trek in the 1920's but that my maternal great-great-grandfather Johann Neudorf (b. Oct. 26, 1812) had actually been a Kanadier! Could this be so? True enough, he had left the Chortitza Colony and had arrived in Canada in July 1874 on the S.S. Austrian with his second wife, his daughter Anna from his first marriage, and four children (Abram, Aganeta, Franz, and Katharina) from his second marriage. (His first wife, my great-great-grandmother Maria Hildebrand, had died in childbirth with her eleventh child. Two months later, he married Anna Olfert with whom he had another eight children.) He died on May 27, 1877 and was buried near New Bothwell, presumably on the NE 1/4 of 20-7-5E in the Schoenthal Cemetery in which there are approximately 40 unmarked graves. By 1881, Johann's widow was living with three of her children in the village of Blumenfeld, W. Reserve while his daughter Anna and husband Peter

Hildebrand were living in Sommerfeld, W.R. even though records show a Widow J. Neudorf having applied to homestead the SE 1/4 of 22-7-5E in 1874 and a Peter Hildebrand Jr. having applied for the NW 1/4 of 20-7-5E.

How was it that no one in Mom's family had known about the Kanadier relatives? It seems that Grandpa (Abram Neudorf) had never spoken of it to his children. Had he even known? And to confuse issues, at about the same time that my grandparents came in the 1920's, some of the Kanadier clan were leaving for Mexico. If I didn't know better, I might think that they had gone to great lengths to avoid meeting the Russlaender "frindschaft".

But what linked the Kanadier and Russlaender Neudorfs other than a common ancestor and their interest in genealogy? Well, it seems that not only my great grandpa Dietrich and some of his children (including my grandpa) had been "trachtmoakas" but also numerous Kanadier relatives, among them "Doktor" Peter Neudorf of Neuendorf, W. Reserve, a brother to my great grandpa. There is also the beautiful choral talent shared by many Neudorfs, yours truly excluded of course. But getting back to the subject of the village of Neuendorf, I found another of the oral traditions in our family had bit the dust. After writing to the town of Neudorf, Sask. I discovered that it was named after a village in Austria. We had taken pride in thinking that it was named for one of our relatives - oops, there goes another theory, you know, the one about Mennonites being so humble.

Now, let's see, there's a place called Buhler, Kansas too, isn't there? Named after a relative, perhaps?

Submitted by Linda Buhler

# New Discoveries: Part Two

by Delbert F. Plett

In the last issue of "Preservings" I wrote about new discoveries from the Peter J. Braun Collection recently released from Russia. I focused on the 1835 census and the marvellous new genealogical connections that are made possible by this new information. I note an error in this article in that the Peter J. Braun Collection is mistakenly referred to as the J.J. Braun Collection. I am indebted to Professor James Urry for drawing this to my attention.

I would also like to note that Henry H. Fast of Steinbach has finished a rough translation of the 1835 census and that same is now available at the Mennonite Heritage

Centre. Although only a draft, Mr. Fast's work is nonetheless invaluable in making this information available to researchers.

In this issue I want to continue my discussion on new sources, based largely on my presentation at our HSHS annual meeting held on January 28, 1994. The Peter J. Braun Collection also contains the 1857/8 and 1861/2 Molotschna school registers. Thus, for example, the 1857/8 school register for the village of Kleefeld lists five of the children of Cornelius S. Plett (1820-1900) attending school, including my great-grandfather Cornelius L. Plett, age 11 at the time. Eighty-four children were registered and the teacher was Peter Doerksen. By 1861/2 the C.S. Plett family only had two children in school

but total enrolment had risen to 98. Doerksen was still the teacher and the list is signed by Banman as the village Schulz.

Many times these registers can be helpful in identifying the place of residence of a particular family. Important socio-economic details can also be gleaned from these sources. For example, of the 40 Vollwirthen listed in Kleefeld in 1857/8, 7 were KG. This makes it more understandable that C.S. Plett served as the mayor of the village.

Helpful to an understanding of the Molotschna educational system and hence the system established by the Kleine Gemeinde (KG) when they came to Manitoba in 1874, are the reports written by the teachers in the Molotschna in 1855. Several of these are written by KG or KG-related teachers such as: Johann Fast of Schoenau, Isaak Peters of Fuerstenau, Franz Isaac of Tiege, Kornelius Isaac of Blumenort, Peter Friesen of Marienthal, Gerhard Goossen of Paulsheim and Cornelius Doerksen of Alexanderthal.

Another important new source of information is a collection of documents numbering some 2000 pages located at Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. I was able to obtain copies of these documents in late 1993, just after the publication of Volume 6 of my KG Historial Series. In a sense this was unfortunate as the collection contains a good number of new items which are well worth publishing.

The first part of the collection consists of documents gathered together by Johann I. Friesen (1860-1941), one-time partner in the Steinbach flour mill. He was the grandfather of Frank F. Reimer, the founder of Reimer Express. Friesen was a keen student of our history and an avid genealogist. When I first started my research some 15 years ago I exerted considerable efforts to track down his writings all to no avail. The search was made more difficult by the fact that many of his grandchildren became American fundamentalists with little interest in Mennonite culture and so I finally gave up my search.

Now it seems that by an interesting quirk of history at least some of these writings found their way to Bethel College. In 1918 Johann I. Friesen moved to Meade, Kansas where he married for the second time to the widow Abraham K. Friesen, nee Katharina Ratzlaff. In 1952, his son Abraham, a physics Professor, donated some of his collected papers to Bethel College where they have languished till now.

Friesen had preserved many of the writings collected by his father, Abraham M.

continued next page



*Johann I. Friesen with daughters in front of the Peter B. Reimer home in Steinbach, 1941. Left to right: Marie, Mrs. Peter Rempel; partially hidden is Margaret, Mrs. Abram A. Reimer; Elisabeth, never married who was known in Steinbach as "Taunte Liesjche"; Katherina, Mrs. Peter B. Reimer; Mr. John I. Friesen; and to his right, Anna, Mrs. George W. Reimer. Missing are: daughter Helena, the first wife of Peter B. Reimer, who died in 1920; son Dr. Abram Friesen, a famous American physicist; and son John Friesen, a New York banker.*

Friesen, and even two letters — dated 1834 and 1838 — written by his grandfather, Klaas Friesen (1793-1870) a KG minister in Russia. Notable among these papers are a number of letters written from Jansen, Nebraska, during the years 1880-1910 as well as letters by Bishop Peter P. Toews (1841-1926) from Gruenfeld (Kleefeld), Manitoba, in 1882, at the time of the so-called Holdeman's secession.

The second part of this collection of documents seems to have been donated to Bethel College in 1949 by Rev. Heinrich R. Harms

of Meade, Kansas. It contains many writings of Heinrich F. Loewen, a wealthy KG farmer from Jansen, Nebraska, who later moved to Meade, Kansas, where he also served as a minister of the Gospel.

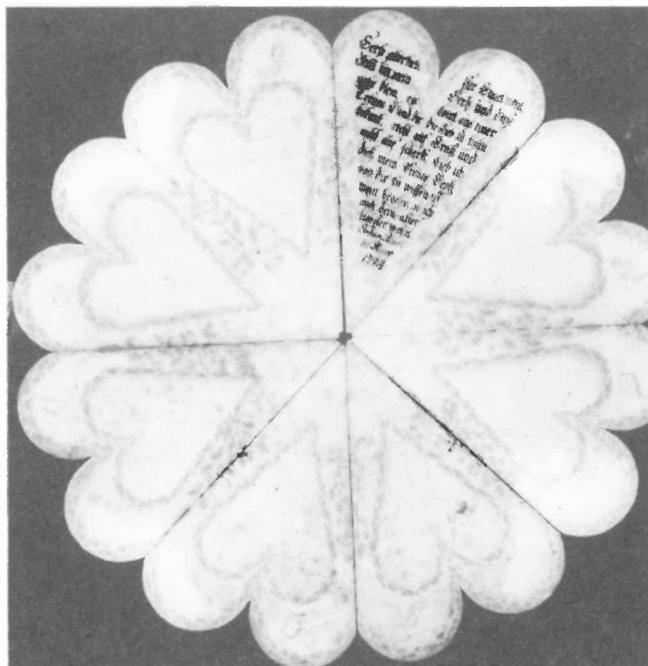
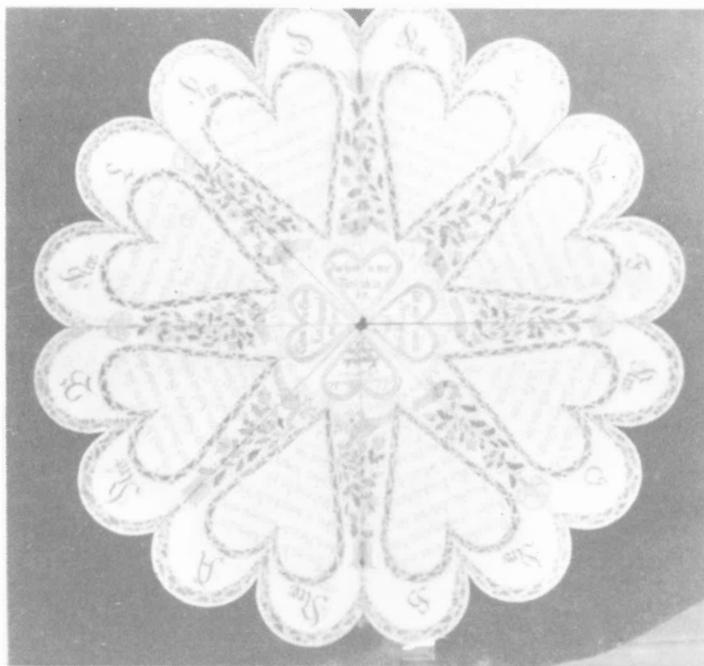
This collection includes an 1835 sermon by Heinrich Balzer which I was fortunate to be able to publish in Volume 6 of my KG series. It also contains some 12 sermons and a number of journals by Heinrich F. Loewen. One of the features of this collection are three journals which contain an excellent selection of historical writings from the Rus-

sian period, including an 1825 "Admonition to the brotherhood" by Aeltester Klaas Reimer which I had not seen before.

It is the first major collection of such documents from the American KG that I am aware of, and as such will provide valuable information regarding those settlements. Copies of all this material are being deposited at the E.M.C. Archives in Steinbach, Manitoba, where they will be available to researchers.

## A Valentine Heirloom: The Bartel Family

by Delbert F. Plett



*In 1967 Abram A. Vogt, a great-great-grandson of Johannes Bartel and Agaetje Quiring had a full colored, full size copy of the document made by Walt's Studio, Steinbach. The eight sections were then reconstructed and folded in the original fashion to form a heart. Courtesy of Margaret Kroeker, Mennonite Genealogy Inc., Winnipeg, Manitoba, May 17, 1994.*

In the second issue of our Newsletter, July 1993, I wrote about the need to document the material culture of our community. It is important to collect the artifacts and to have facilities for their display, such as our local Heritage Village Museum. But this by itself is not enough. An ancient artifact without a history or story is valueless. I am still hopeful that many of our members will write

about and document the story of their family heirlooms and treasures.

In the second issue of our newsletter I told the story of the Koop "New Year's Wish." Today I want to write about a Valentine written in 1794 by a 20-year-old for his 17-year-old lover Aganetha Quiring as a wedding present. The name of the young man was Johannes Bartel of Tragheimerweide, West

Prussia, in modern day Poland.

The story was published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* on February 14, 1994, and reprinted in the *Mennonite Reporter* on May 2, 1994. Neither of these reports included any history of the document. This is unfortunate as the same is very relevant to the history and culture of the Hanover area.

See **Valentine** page 12

"Preservings" is the Newsletter of the Hanover Steinbach Historical Society Inc., Box 1960, Steinbach, Manitoba, R0A 2A0, published semi-annually at Steinbach, Manitoba. Editor, Wilmer Penner, Box 1305, Steinbach, Manitoba R0A 2A0. The publication of the Newsletter is funded by "D.F. Plett Foundation Fund."

## Valentine

continued from page 11

It turns out that Johannes Bartel moved to Russia in 1797, where he became a Mennonite minister in the village of Kronsgarten. In time two of his sons, Peter and Jakob, moved to the Molotschna colony where they or their descendants became members of the Kleine Gemeinde (KG). Peter's daughter Anna married Cornelius P. Toews, one of the two KG delegates to America in 1873, and another daughter Maria married Klaas F. Reimer the son of Klaas Reimer, founding Bishop of the KG.

Jakob's daughter Helena married Cornelius W. Loewen, and they were the grandparents of C.T. Loewen, founder of some of Steinbach's most prestigious businesses. Jakob's sons, Jakob and Johann, settled in Jansen, Nebraska, with their mother and

founded large families. For further information on these Bartel families, see my unpublished article "Johann Bartel 1764-1813 Kronsgarten."

The story of what happened to this beautiful valentine is told by Margaret Kroeker, director of Mennonite Genealogy Inc., Winnipeg, Manitoba: "... this family heirloom was passed on for three generations through the youngest daughter in the family ... " It eventually became the property of Mrs. Peter Martens. "Apparently the love letter (heart) stayed in the Peter Martens home in Russia. During the Revolution when the bands were destroying homes and properties, his daughter Anna, born 1900, discovered it among the rubble. She brought it to Canada and cherished it until her death on December 28, 1993. It was then given to her oldest sister's son Herman (Hank) Peters, Winnipeg."

## News Release



Royden Loewen

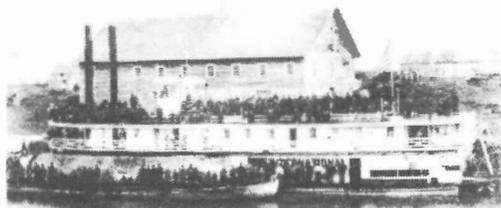
Royden Loewen, lecturer in history at the University of Manitoba, has been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship by the Foundation for the Educational Exchange Between Canada and the United States. The Fulbright program began in the United States 45 years ago and has funded exchanges of scholars between the United States and some 130 different countries. Loewen was one of three Canadian scholars to receive a full nine-month award. The fellowship will enable him to teach a graduate seminar and undertake the writing of a book-length manuscript at the Department of History, University of Chicago. The course will be a "Comparative History of Immigration and Ethnicity in Canada and the United States, 1880-1960." The writing project is entitled, "Mennonites in Canada, the U.S. and Central America: A Comparative History of Social Adjustment, 1945-1975." The study will focus on how conservative, agrarian-based Mennonites of three communities - Spanish Lookout (Belize), Meade county (Kansas), and the R.M. of Hanover/Steinbach District (Manitoba) - undertook various strategies to maintain their communities in the increasingly integrated and commercialized world of the post-World War II period. Loewen, his wife Mary Ann, and their three children - Rebecca, Meg and Sasha - will be leaving for Chicago at the end of August.

Quotations from the journal of Rev. Heinrich Friesen (1842-1921), Hochfeld, Manitoba

Some people are very amiable and polite as long as they have their own way.

If one wants to do right, then one must first cease to do what is wrong.

# Preservings



*-being the Newsletter of the  
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