

Preservings

ISSUE NUMBER 41, 2020



Preservings

ISSUE NUMBER 41, 2020

A JOURNAL OF THE
D. F.PLETT HISTORICAL
RESEARCH FOUNDATION, INC.

EDITOR Aileen Friesen
MANAGING EDITOR Jeremy Wiebe
DESIGNER Anikó Szabó

PUBLICATION ADDRESS

Plett Foundation
University of Winnipeg
515 Portage Ave
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3B 2E9

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

Aileen Friesen
+1 (204) 786 9352
ai.friesen@uwinnipeg.ca

SUBSCRIPTIONS

To subscribe and pay online,
visit plettfoundation.org/preservings

ADDRESS CHANGES

info@plettfoundation.org

Preservings is published semi-annually.
The suggested contribution is \$20.00 per year.
Cheques should be made out to the
D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation.

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.

PLETT FOUNDATION
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
2020–2021

Royden Loewen, Chair, Winnipeg, MB
Kerry Fast, Vice-Chair, Winnipeg, MB
Kennert Giesbrecht, Secretary-Treasurer,
Steinbach, MB
Leonard Doell, Aberdeen, SK
Abe Rempel, Winkler, MB
Robyn Sneath, Brandon, MB
Aileen Friesen, Executive Director
Jeremy Wiebe, Communications
and Finance Officer

COVER IMAGE

St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in
Khortitsa-Rosenthal.
MENNOMITE HERITAGE ARCHIVES, PP-4-044-267.0

CONTENTS

I NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

Features

3 OUR FORGOTTEN NEIGHBOURS

Jacob Doerksen

11 SEPARATE NEIGHBOURS

Hans Werner

17 TWO GENERATIONS

Glen R. Klassen

25 REDISCOVERING A NEIGHBOUR

Ernest N. Braun

Research Articles

31 SHANTZ'S PROPERTIES IN MANITOBA AND DAKOTA

Bruce Wiebe

37 THE BARTSCH- HOEPPNER PRIVILEGIUM

Lawrence Klippenstein

43 THE GREAT PLAGUE OF 1709

Glenn H. Penner

Histories & Reflections

47 REMEMBERING JOHANN WALL IN BRAZIL

Dick Braun

From the Archives

51 MEMORIES FROM ALT BERGTHAL

Harold J. Suderman

News

Book Reviews

In the Next Issue



FROM THE EDITOR

Aileen Friesen

As we neared the large village of Neuendorf, our hearts grew very heavy. The coach driver tried to comfort me by reminding me that he would return at Christmastime to take us home for the holidays. When the tall chimneys of the mills and factories of Khortitsa came in sight, we smoothed our dresses and touched our hair. Soon the village itself became visible, especially the large sunlit cross on the Russian Orthodox church.”

These words of Kaethe Isaac Zacharias Epp, on her way to Khortitsa’s *Maedchenschule*, confirmed that by the early twentieth century, St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, depicted on the cover of this issue, had come to define the skyline of this historic Mennonite town. In many ways, the construction of this church encapsulates the theme of neighbourly relations, as Orthodox workers and Mennonites found themselves having to negotiate shared space.

Khortitsa was not alone in its transformation from an ethnically and religiously homogeneous village into a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional industrial town. Halbstadt experienced a similar reinvention during this period with the employment of hundreds of Slavic workers in its businesses. In both cases, the local Orthodox leadership expressed concerns about this development, arguing that living among Mennonites endangered the spiritual life of its flock. Not only might these Orthodox workers adopt the spartan Mennonite religious calendar, neglecting the many occasions for spiritual reflection at the core of the Orthodox tradition, but they also might adopt German cultural and linguistic attributes. To these Orthodox leaders, it hardly mattered whether “old” Mennonites, as opposed to the more evangelically minded “new” Mennonites (Mennonite Brethren), owned the factories; the absence of religious supervision over these Orthodox workers could not continue.

Mennonite industrial leaders took these concerns of the Orthodox clergy seriously. In Khortitsa, Mennonites offered to pay the teaching salary of the priest and helped to fund the building of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church. In Halbstadt, Mennonite leaders donated land for the building of Saints Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, conveniently located down the street from a dormitory for Slavic workers. The bishop of Taurida diocese, Martinian (Muratovskii), travelled to Halbstadt to consecrate this new church. Mennonites greeted the bishop by presenting him with the traditional Slavic welcome of bread and salt. During this exchange, Mennonite leaders tried to reassure Bishop Martinian

of their pure intentions by emphasizing their loyalty to Russia, their limited contact with Germany, and their desire to live peacefully with their Orthodox neighbours.

The bishop demonstrated his receptiveness to Mennonite overtures by spending time with the community. Not only did Bishop Martinian visit Mennonite factories; he also accepted invitations to see a Mennonite school and attend a service at the local Mennonite church. At the church, the bishop listened to Mennonites sing hymns in German and Russian, including “God save the Tsar,” after which a Mennonite minister gave a sermon in German. The bishop expressed appreciation for this welcome; however, he reminded them “not to interfere” in the religious life of the local workers.

These exchanges could be interpreted as mere formalities. During the entire event, however, both sides showed a willingness to cross cultural and religious boundaries, albeit briefly, to show support for courteous relations between the groups. For instance, at the evening event in which the bishop consecrated the new Orthodox church, a number of Mennonites joined the large crowd of Orthodox believers to witness the ceremony. According to an Orthodox priest, Mennonites demonstrated their respect for this sacred event by standing for the four-hour service.

In Khortitsa, Mennonites considered the ringing of the Orthodox bells as adding colour to their traditionally austere Sunday mornings and religious holidays. And when a long-time Russian school custodian passed away, Mennonite students and teachers attended the Orthodox funeral service in the church. The presence of this church also offered Mennonites a chance to learn more about Orthodoxy. Although rare, the conversion of Mennonites did occur. In 1896, the priest of St. Nicholas baptized twenty-two-year-old Maria Grunau, a native of Burwalde, into the faith.

Ultimately, the presence of these churches in Khortitsa and Halbstadt could not hide the economic disparity that would begin to define relations between the Mennonite and Orthodox populations. These towns maintained an embedded social and economic hierarchy that placed Mennonites above Ukrainians and Russians. Maps of both towns reveal the limited spaces occupied by Slavic workers, who lived primarily in barracks connected to Mennonite factories. While Mennonites grew to appreciate the decorative qualities of other ethnicities in their towns, economic power remained firmly in their hands.



LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA PA-117285

OUR FORGOTTEN NEIGHBOURS

British Home Children and Manitoba Mennonites

Jacob Doerksen

Before Mennonites migrated from Russia in the 1870s, a steady stream of young immigrants to Canada had already started. In the last half of the nineteenth century, Victorian England found itself plagued with a variety of social problems, including children roaming the streets of their cities. Although some were orphans, others belonged to parents struggling to provide for their families. The Industrial Revolution had brought a great number of people to the cities, resulting in over-crowding and poverty. As people moved, they lost the traditional support system of friends, neighbours, and family that they had relied upon in smaller communities. If disaster struck in these urban areas, they were on their own. Although workhouses offered the desperately poor food and shelter, and provided education for children, more needed to be done. A well-meaning yet cruel plan was devised whereby pauper children would be sent to Commonwealth countries. These boys and girls became known as home children.

In 1869 the children began arriving in Canada. The younger ones were sent for adoption and those over five years of age were placed with families as indentured servants. As harsh as life had been in the workhouses or on the streets, the farms and homes of Canada were not a big improvement. Some children were welcomed into their new homes, but others found their new families severe and unsympathetic.

In Russell, Manitoba, young children learned how to plough at Dr. Barnardo's Industrial Farm.

Many were overworked and abused, often denied proper food and shelter. Inspection and oversight were inadequate. Most times these wounded children would not talk about their experiences once they grew older. Psychologist Perry Stone, whose father was one of these children, wrote an extensive study on how these children were stripped of their identity so that the break from their family was permanent. Many were told they were orphans, even though this category applied to only three per cent of the children.

In 1874, a month before the first Mennonites left Russia, the Local Government Board in England sent inspector Andrew Doyle to Canada to assess the child emigration system. He spent time investigating the child distribution centres, focusing on their methods of placing children and how the children were doing in those placements. His report did not speak well of the system. He concluded that the children were placed in homes too hastily. He pointed out that not enough care was given to the selection of families and that more oversight was necessary to protect children from mistreatment.

One incident of such abuse appeared in the courts in 1895. Allan Cameron, a coroner, was called by the police to a farm home near Keppel, Ontario. Upon arrival, he found the body of a young fifteen-year-old boy named George Green. In his forty

years of practice he had never seen a body in such a deplorable state. George had been severely beaten and systematically starved. The boy had been in Canada for less than a year, employed by a spinster named Helen Findlay, who operated the family farm after her parents and brother passed away. At the trial witnesses testified to the violence and abuse the boy had endured, which included beatings with an axe handle and being chased and prodded with a pitchfork. Miss Findlay's lawyers, however, had the boy's body exhumed, and the doctors who examined it were able to persuade some jury members that the boy died not from abuse but because he had been unfit from the start. The trial resulted in a hung jury and Miss Findlay went free.

Even with such cases taking place, this immigration system continued in Canada without interruption until 1939. Anywhere from 100,000 to 120,000 children were sent to Canada. About 250,000 were sent to Australia, New Zealand, Rhodesia, and South Africa. Some of the children sent to Canada ended up with Mennonite families in southern Manitoba.

DR. BARNARDO'S HOMES

It is estimated about fifty agencies worked as agents for the procurement or the distribution of children. One of the best known of these agencies was Dr. Barnardo's Homes. Thomas Barnardo was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1845 and died

in 1905. His ambition had been to become a medical missionary to China, and while studying at the London Hospital he would go out into the streets and places of ill repute to spread the gospel. He also volunteered a few nights a week to teach in a "ragged school," which had been set up for children of the labouring class. He soon realized that there was a need for his work in London, and he started to debate whether he should still go to China.

One incident helped to make up his mind. While teaching at the ragged school he came into contact with one of the "street Arabs," as the homeless street children were called. One bitter chilly night, a young boy, shirtless, without shoes or socks, and without a hat, entered the school and did not want to leave. After a few questions he found that the boy, ten-year-old Jim Jarvis, did not have a home or parents. Thomas took the boy to his house and fed him, and in the course of the evening he also shared the story of Jesus with him. While telling the story he asked the boy if he knew who Jesus was. The boy answered, "Yes, he is the pope." As the conversation continued, the boy told of his friends and offered to introduce Barnardo to them. After seeing some of these boys, sleeping on the steel roof of a shed without any cover, in hiding from the authorities, he was haunted for weeks on end. He decided to take action. With encouragement from the Earl of Shaftesbury, a parliamentarian and social reformer, he gave up the idea of going to China. Instead, in 1870, he opened up his first mission for the homeless in London with the help of some wealthy acquaintances. At his mission he taught the homeless children about morals and cleanliness and gave them a basic education before shipping them off to Commonwealth countries to have a chance at a better life.

Over the years Dr. Barnardo's Homes grew to a vast organization of over 5,000 workers and over 20,000 fundraising volunteers. In 1888, he expanded his operation into Manitoba, purchasing 9,000 acres of farmland near Russell and establishing an industrial training farm for potential farm workers. Between 1888



British immigrant children from Dr. Barnardo's Homes arriving in Canada.

and 1907 more than 1,660 British home boys were trained on that farm. Many more were sent directly to Manitoba farmsteads. In the autumn of 1896, Barnardo's organization opened a receiving house at 115 Pacific Avenue in Winnipeg for boys.

The boys brought to Manitoba by

Barnardo's organization were mostly between the ages of ten and thirteen. Younger children sent to Canada were placed in foster homes in Ontario until they were considered old enough to start working on western Canadian farms. The process of selecting homes for the



children had improved somewhat since Doyle made his report. According to *Ups and Downs* magazine, published in Toronto by Dr. Barnardo's Homes, when a farmer applied for a farm worker, he had to supply information including his church affiliation and the recommenda-

tion of either a minister or magistrate. If found to be suitable, he was notified when a boy became available, and upon payment of three dollars to help defray the cost of bringing the child to Canada, he was allowed to pick one.

The aim of the organization was to

find good homes for the children where they would be treated with humanity and consideration, under kind and wholesome influences, and where they would be well trained for their future in the West. This did not always happen, but Barnardo still expected that the children would be well



In 1888 Thomas Barnardo expanded his operation into Manitoba, purchasing 9,000 acres of farmland near Russell and establishing an industrial farm for training farm workers.

provided for, and that their surroundings would be conducive to their happiness, health, and welfare. During the winter the organization stipulated that the child should attend school.

After the boy's placement, for one to nine months, he worked for room and board and an opportunity to go to school. The boy was also clothed by his employer. After that period, an agreement for payment would be made. His age, size, strength, capabilities, and the tasks required to be performed were taken into consideration. The farmer was allowed to terminate the agreement with one month's notice in writing. Barnardo's organization was allowed to terminate at any time if there were problems with the placement. Once the boy had fulfilled his term of employment, the farmer had to make payment. If the boy was still under the age of responsibility, payment was made to Dr. Barnardo's Homes and the money was invested on behalf of the boy without any benefit to the organization. If he was already of the age of responsibility, payment was made directly to the young man.

If the child was ill and unable to perform his duties, Dr. Barnardo's Homes pledged to take the child back to England for care.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, with an abundance of farm labour available everywhere, interest in the program dried up. In 1939, a group of twenty-one boys and seven girls was the last sent to Canada by Dr. Barnardo's Homes. Between 1882 and 1939, the organization brought about 30,000 home children to Canada.

LIFE WITH MENNONITES

At the time Barnardo's set up its Winnipeg distribution centre in 1896–97, Mennonites in southeastern Manitoba were in the middle of a process of abandoning their traditional street village system and moving onto individual farms. Some were young families that needed the help of a boy to make their start, while others were already near retirement. In my research, I was able to locate fifteen home boys who lived with Mennonites. Some had stories attached to their names, while others did not. As the following stor-

ies demonstrate, British home children experienced both struggles and successes during their lives on Mennonite farms.

Henry Strains was born in Sussex, England, to Henry Strains Sr. and an unknown mother on December 26, 1889. He arrived in Canada at age eleven on board the *Numidian* from Liverpool and landed in Quebec on July 20, 1901. On board was a large party of Dr. Barnardo's children. Of these children, 239 were sent to Toronto, 68 to Winnipeg, 20 to Barnardo's Industrial Farm near Russell, and 3 to Peterborough. They ranged in age from three to twenty-one years.

Henry's father died after accidentally falling off the mast of a boat. It is unclear when his mother died, but the records from his military enlistment in 1918 show that he had a stepfather, Harry Green, in England. He also had five siblings. His brother is believed to have travelled to the United States, but may have later returned to England. His sisters remained in England.

After his arrival in Manitoba he was placed with Isaac and Katharina

Hildebrand of Kronsthal (present-day New Bothwell). When he first arrived, Mrs. Hildebrand struggled to pronounce his name. To make things easier for herself she gave him a new name. She called him *Ei* (Low German for egg) *Strring* (String with a rolling “r”), by which he is still remembered today by those who knew him. A few years after finishing his stay with the Hildebrands, he lived with the William Christie family, west of Niverville. Eventually he came to live with my great-grandparents, the Johann Krauses in Silberfeld, and later with my grandparents, the Cornelius Krauses.

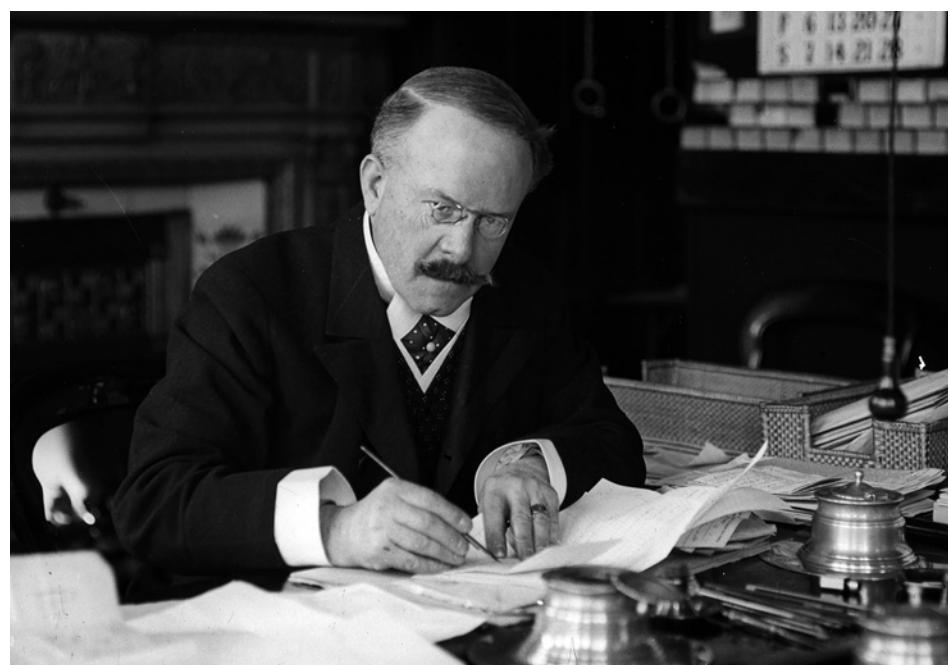
His stay with the Krauses was off and on but lasted for many years. My mother, the youngest daughter of Cornelius Krause, told me that he would often show up after all the fall field work was done, asking if he could stay for the winter. Grandfather Krause didn't have employment for him during this season, but he was allowed to stay as long as he was willing to help in the barn. In return he received room and board, laundry service, and tobacco. In spring when the farmers were getting ready for seeding, he would disappear to find employment on a larger farm, only to return again in late fall for another winter's stay. On one return, as my mother recalled, he arrived with a load of lice. It was quite a job for her and Aunt Helen to rid Henry and his clothes of the lice. Tar soap baths and baking clothes in the oven were the methods of control. At other times he stuck around and worked on local threshing gangs. He was a farm worker all his life.

Four years into the First World War, Henry presented for a medical examination at Winnipeg's Fort Osborne. His military records show he was a man of small stature, 65 inches tall and weighing 157 lb, with extremely flat feet. He was twenty-nine years old. His religion was Presbyterian. He was not sent overseas, serving only in Canada, first in the Canadian Expeditionary Force 1st Depot Battalion, Manitoba Regiment, and then in the 6th Battalion, Canadian Garrison Regiment. Nine months after he enlisted, he ended up in the Cogswell Street Military Hospital in Halifax with

influenza. After an eleven-day stay, he was discharged from the hospital six days before military demobilization took place. He was discharged from the army on February 25, 1919. After collecting his final service pay of \$72.92, he returned to civilian life. The loss of his father, separation from his family, life on the streets, and having to start a new life in a new country among complete strangers who primarily spoke a different language contributed to a life of loneliness that took their toll on Henry's mental well-being. At times he let

that young man married and moved away.

On July 21, 1942, Henry was at John Rempel's garage in Silberfeld when he suffered a mental breakdown. After someone said something that Henry found insulting, he became extremely enraged and threatened the individual with physical harm, and gave chase with an axe. After the other party managed to escape, Henry returned to the Krause's farm. His rage now turned to harming the three children living at the farm. As he was making his way across the field, someone who wit-



NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

In the late nineteenth century, Thomas Barnardo opened up a mission for homeless children in London. At his mission he gave them a basic education before shipping them off to Commonwealth countries.

it be known that the behaviour of others towards him was unfair or unacceptable. One such incident, as related to me by my father, occurred while Henry was working on a threshing gang on one of the farms south of the Krause farm. Henry confronted the hostess for not serving an adequate noonday meal. She only served a “peasant's meal,” consisting of a watery soup, without bread or anything else. She placed a large bowl of soup on the table and gave each worker a spoon, and that was how they were to eat. At other times, Mennonite young men were unkind to Henry. While working in the field someone might poke fun at him and provoke him to anger. One of Cornelius Krause's nephews, living next door, usually came to his rescue and managed to calm him, until

nessed the incident at the garage quickly drove to the farm to warn them about what had happened and what Henry intended to do. Thanks to the warning, they managed to hide the children before he arrived. Neighbours came and a police officer was called. Together they were able to subdue and immobilize him. He was admitted to the Selkirk Mental Health Centre. After he was diagnosed with a mental illness, Henry was never discharged. He died twenty-two years later, on December 7, 1964, and his remains lie buried in St. Clements Cemetery in Selkirk.

Another young boy, Arthur James Dare, lived with the Cornelius Falk family southwest of Lowe Farm. He was born in 1895, arriving in Canada at the age of eleven on board the *Dominion*, destined for a

distribution home in Toronto. According to his son, Falk had applied for a young worker and was allowed to choose the boy he wanted. He chose Arthur. Although the family remembered enjoying having him at their house, it would only be a short stay as after three years Arthur died.

Clarence Morris New, born in England on February 2, 1884, immigrated to Canada on board the *Labrador* of the Dominion Line in 1897. Indentured to an elderly couple, Peter and Anna Penner, living on the southeast quarter of section 16-7-4E in the Rural Municipality of Hanover, Clarence arrived during threshing time in the fall of 1897. He claimed that he had never seen such big machines in his life. During his first winter, Clarence mostly performed odd jobs and helped around the house. In the spring, he learned how to drive a team of horses and operate a harrow. During harvest time he helped stack sheaves and cut bundles with the threshing machine. Summer work on the farm was much the same. During the next two summers his major jobs were stooking and ploughing. In a letter to *Ups and Downs* printed in April/May 1902, Clarence wrote that he had almost finished his contract with the Penners and expected a Good Conduct Medal soon. He could read and write in German. He had enjoyed his stay and had learned a multitude of skills required in farming. He strongly recommended that anyone in England looking for a place to go come to Canada as he had done. He finished his contract with the Penners in the fall of 1902. His cash payment for his five years of apprenticeship training and service was \$100. He left the Penners and found employment elsewhere for \$125 a year. During the year he was gone Mr. Penner died. Mr. Penner's two sons, Erdman and Abraham, sold the farm and purchased the store and post office in Niverville of their uncle Erdman Penner, the well-known entrepreneur from Gretna. The brothers hired Clarence as postmaster and put him in charge of the stage route to and from Niverville. He stayed for a year, went to work on a farm for the summer, and returned to the store again. His winter wages were \$25 a month. Clarence did



Henry Strains presented for a medical examination at Winnipeg's Fort Osborne during the First World War.

not stay in Niverville. On September 20, 1913, he married Edith Alice Allen in Winnipeg. They would move to Smithers, BC, and then to Edmonton, where he passed away in 1967.

Accompanying Clarence on the *Labrador* was Henry John Coote. Henry was born in Middlesex, England, on

August 3, 1883. His father had been killed while working on a ship and his mother passed away a year later. Henry and his younger sister Florence were placed in a Barnardo home. She was adopted out and he was sent to Canada. Later in life he tried finding her but he was unsuccessful. Henry was placed with Peter and

Sara Toews who lived on section 36-6-5E, northeast of Steinbach. The 1901 census shows Henry's occupation with the Toewses as "stable boy."

On June 13, 1905, he joined the Mennonite church at Chortitz. A month later, on July 25, 1905, he married Barbara Blatz, daughter of Andreas and Barbara Blatz. In their first year of married life they lived with Barbara's parents. As a source of income, they kept three milk cows plus three extra head of cattle and two sheep. After a short stint at farming Henry worked at various Steinbach businesses: Steinbach Flour Mills, K. Reimer & Sons store, and C. T. Loewen Lumber. During the mid-1920s he purchased the Travellers Home Hotel in Steinbach from Gerhard D. Gossen. In 1927 Henry took over the teamster and mail service between Giroux and Steinbach from him. Four years later he sold the hotel to the Peters family next door and moved to Winnipeg. In Winnipeg his family operated a three-story rooming house at 223 Donald Street, in the present-day location of the Millennium Library. Their main customer base was young Mennonite men seeking employment in Winnipeg. As the father of eleven children Henry passed away at his place of work on August 3, 1943. His remains lie buried in Elmwood Cemetery.

Edward Stephen Dudman was born in 1886 to Edward Stephen and Alice Dudman in London, England. He had five siblings: Alice, Edith, George, Winfried, and Bert (Richard). Edward's father had been a grocer and oilman. He died when Edward was seven years old, and due to economic circumstances, he and his sister Alice were placed in a school with over four hundred boys and girls under the age of eleven. At eleven he was sent to Canada. He came to live with Jacob D. and Helena Wiebe in Chortitz (present-day Randolph). When he reached the age of sixteen his contract with Mr. Wiebe was fulfilled. He had an offer to stay on with the Wiebes, but decided that he could make more money elsewhere. His contract with the Wiebes stipulated that he would work for the first nine months for just room and board, and an opportunity to go to school. Edward, however, didn't

like school and Mr. Wiebe allowed him to stay home and help on the farm instead. After the nine months were up his pay was \$10 for the first year, \$20 for the following year, \$30 for the third, and \$40 for his final year.

During his stay with the Wiebes, a special announcement appeared in the January 1901 issue of *Ups and Downs* offering a \$10 prize to the boy who gave the best description of his experiences in Canada. Edward took up the challenge, writing: "I have been in Canada over three

different. They allowed the boys to have contact with their families. From time to time they organized excursions for the boys back to England or for their mothers to Canada. Individuals had to cover the cost of the excursion, which was fairly expensive at \$62.40. Many times these trips to England resulted in complete disappointment, as their families were nowhere to be found. Therefore, Barnardo's preferred to have the mothers come visit the boys instead. Other boys joined the armed forces during the First



Separation from his family, life on the streets, and having to start a new life among complete strangers took their toll on Henry's (second from left in the front row) mental well-being.

years, and it does not seem to me so long as it is. I am among the Germans, and they are a God-fearing people. I have not much to do in the Winter as feed the cattle. I can talk German better than English, and this is a very good country for Barnardo boys. They learn all farm work, ploughing, raking and so forth. . . . In the village is a school and church and the children go to school in the Winter, and they go every Winter till they are fourteen years of age." The editor added that the magazine also received a letter from Mr. Wiebe, who wrote kind and flattering things about the boy, but since it was written in German he could not publish it.

Many of the child-immigration agents worked towards a complete separation of the child from the rest of the family; however, Barnardo's organization was

World War in hopes that they would be sent to England and would be able to find some of their family in this way. After Edward finished his apprenticeship with Mr. Wiebe in 1902, his mother asked him to return to England, but in turn he persuaded her and his brothers and sisters to come to Canada. This didn't happen until 1909. They settled in Niverville and Winnipeg.

After leaving the Wiebes in 1902, Edward worked for several other farmers in the area. In his first year he was able to earn \$63. On June 6, 1906, Edward joined the Mennonite church at Chortitz. A year later, on June 11, 1907, he married Regina Doerksen. For the next three years he taught in a private German school. Following that, in about 1910, they moved to Niverville where Edward

was able to purchase the International Harvester dealership. He also bought the Penner Brothers store and the Robert Hotel. He sold the hotel first in 1919, the International dealership two years later, and the store two years after that, in 1923. After selling out in Niverville, Regina and Edward moved to Ontario to live on a small fruit farm in the Kitchener area for a few years. Before leaving Ontario, they went on an extended trip to visit England, through France, and on to the Holy Land. It must have been quite a trip, for their return journey alone, from Jaffa to Providence, Rhode Island, lasted almost a month. After their venture in Ontario and trip abroad Regina and Edward returned to the Niverville area once more to purchase a portion of River Lot 592A, located west of Saint Mary's Road and reaching back to the Red River.

In addition to stints as a farmhand, schoolteacher, businessman, and fruit farmer, Edward also established and preached in a church next door to his river lot property. He had earlier sold a neighbouring lot to a widow with a large family. He said it wasn't right that due to their location and circumstances this family couldn't attend church services, so he purchased one of the former Niverville school buildings, moved it onto an adjacent lot, and turned it into a small family church. Edward lived a long life of many experiences and accomplishments, passing away at ninety-seven years of age.

William Harding arrived in Canada at the age of thirteen on board the *Lake Huron* in 1899. He was indentured to John S. and Helena Johnsen (Janzen), living on section 36-7-6E in the RM of Hanover. In response to the prize offered in the January 1901 *Ups and Downs*, William wrote: "I like this country very much and I think it is a good climate for health. It is very beautiful in Summer and the Winter very cold. There has been much stormy weather for the last few weeks. The snow is piled up like big walls. The roads are very bad and there are many people upsetting. The nearest village is four miles from my home, and that is where I go to church.... I am going to school to learn German."

Mr. Janzen followed with a letter of his own. He wrote: "I take great pleasure in writing these few lines in regard to my boy, William H. Harding. He came to me on August 12th, 1899. He is doing very well. He is learning to farm very fast. He can plough, harrow, feed stock, cut wood. I think it is a very good thing for this country. I am going to have another boy before long. I must say my boy is a credit to the Old Country. . . . We are sending him to school to learn German. Excuse bad writing. I never learnt English."

Edward Taylor, born March 17, 1887, was indentured to John J. Wiebe of the postal district of Plum Coulee. In *Ups and Downs*, Edward wrote: "I am now going to school and I learn both kinds of speech – English and German. I can talk good German, and when I first came here I could not speak one word. There are three more boys in this locality, one of them is about a mile off."

Mr. Wiebe, Edward's employer, also wrote a letter about his charge: "He is smart, good-tempered and quick to learn anything in the farming line, although, like most boys, he is apt to be a little careless and not sufficiently thorough; but he is getting much better of that. He is growing fast and will be quite tall, I think, and I am sure if he goes on as he has been doing he will soon be, when he come [sic]

to farm for himself, an independent man."

Even though linguistic and cultural differences existed between Mennonites and their charges, the Barnardo organization supported the influence of Mennonites on these boys. This support is demonstrated in the following letter in *Ups and Downs*: "From Myrtle, Man., we have received two letters, one from William Whittaker, in which he tells us what might easily be inferred from his syntax, viz.: that he is learning 'the German'; and the other from his employer, Mr. John H. Dyck, a worthy German yoeman [sic] who has mastered the English tongue to the extent of expressing himself in a manner that leaves no room for doubt that he and William are on the best of terms with each other and in no mood to part. If, with the German language, William acquires the German thrift and the national traits which make our Teutonic cousins ever welcome to a home under our flag, there will be no cause for regret. For patience, prudence, perseverance and prosperity the German settler is hard to beat."

The history of British Home children working on Mennonite farms is not widely known in the community. I hope that these stories will inspire interest in this topic and that some readers will come forth with a story of their own.

¹ For more on the workhouses, see Florence Davenport Hill, *Children of the State* (London: Macmillan, 1889), available at <https://archive.org/details/childrenstate00hillgoog>.

² Perry Snow, *Neither Waif Nor Stray: The Search for Stolen Identity* (USA: Universal Publishers, 2000).

³ The full report is available at https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.9_05950. Mr. Doyle referred to workhouse children as paupers, and street and gutter children as Arabs.

⁴ For more information on the case, see <https://canadianbritishhomechildren.weebly.com/george-everett-green.html>.

⁵ Kenneth Bagnell, *The Little Immigrants: The Orphans Who Came to Canada*, new ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 89–97.

⁶ *Ups and Downs*, April 1901, 6 (hereafter cited as *U&D*).

⁷ Henry signed his surname "Strains" on his military documents, and this is how he was known to my family. Library and Archives Canada documents use the name "Strain," and Selkirk Mental Health Centre documents say "Strane."

⁸ Letters to the April 1899, May 1902, November 1903, and June 1905 issues of *U&D*.

⁹ *U&D*, April 1901, 40.

¹⁰ Most of the information on the operation of the Barnardo organization – purpose, pay scale, excursions and so on – is taken from issues of *U&D*.

¹¹ For more on Edward Dudman, see his autobiography as

told by Norman Wittick in *Niverville: A History, 1878–1986* (Niverville: Niverville District Historical Society, 1986), 89–90.

¹² *U&D*, April 1901, 34.

¹³ *U&D*, April 1901, 59, and 1901 Census of Canada.

¹⁴ *U&D*, April 1901, 55–56.

¹⁵ Other boys placed in Mennonites homes included: Fredrick Lowe, born in London, England, April 7, 1889; sailed from Liverpool, April 23, 1899; arrived in Halifax on April 13; indentured to Peter and Maria Banman, sec. 35-7-5E, RM of Hanover. Wm G. Hughes, born in England, September 15, 1885; immigrated to Canada in 1895; indentured to John and Katharina Funk, RM of Hanover. Joseph Burton, arrived in Canada as a 13-year-old on board the *Southwark*; indentured to Peter and Maria Harder, sec. 30-7-6E, RM of Hanover. Arthur Tessy indentured to Bernard and Elizabeth Wiebe of Hochfeld, RM of Hanover. Henry Delley, born in England, October 27, 1885; immigrated to Canada in 1895; indentured to Peter and Kate Giesbrecht, sec. 36-7-4E, RM of Hanover. Reginald H. W. Symons, immigrated to Canada in 1897 as a ten-year-old; because of age, placed in Toronto before coming west; indentured in Manitoba in 1901 to C. J. Loewen, postal address Rosenort. Fred Clayton, born 1887; left Liverpool on June 10, 1897; arrived in Quebec on June 19 on board the *Labrador*; indentured to C. P. Janzen, postal address Steinbach. Delley, Symons, and Clayton were among the first hundred boys placed out of the Winnipeg Home.

SEPARATE NEIGHBOURS

Jews and Mennonites in Winkler

Hans Werner

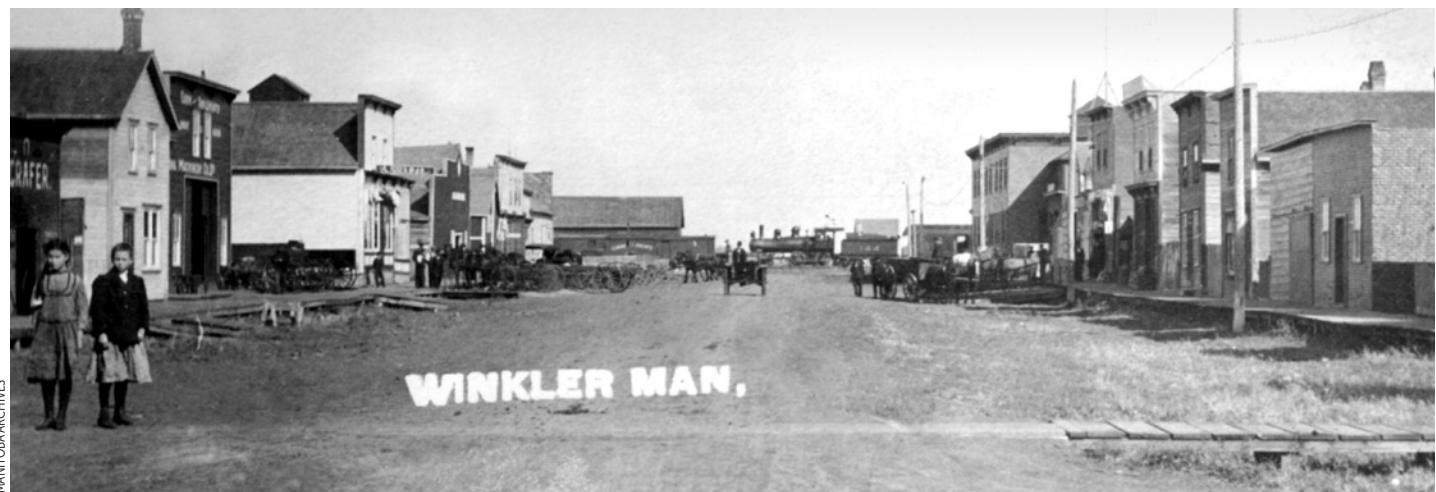
Winkler's beginnings were much humbler than its present city status and reputation as a bustling and thriving industrial, retail, and service centre. It became a fledgling village in 1892 when William Cornelius van Horne, the energetic head of the Canadian Pacific Railway, authorized the construction of a railway spur some seven miles east of Morden and eight miles west of Plum Coulee. The railway changed the economic prospects for Mennonite farmers who lived in the villages that dotted the territory between the railway tracks and the international boundary. Winkler became an immediate and formidable competitor to the primarily Anglo-Celtic town of Morden just down the track. Farmers, who lived in the most heavily populated townships just south of where Valentine Winkler's village would spring

up, now had a shorter distance to the elevator, the store, and the bank.

By the time Winkler was established the migration of Jews from eastern Europe was underway and soon Jewish merchants settled in the village. For a period of about forty years Jews and Mennonites would interact in Winkler as neighbours, business partners, customers, school mates, and competitors. Mennonite-Jewish relations were complex and shaped by the conflicting mentalities of the market-shy Mennonites of the rural villages, and of the more liberal and business-oriented Mennonites who put up stores alongside their Jewish competitors. The relationship would change over time as each community experienced its own internal developments. In the case of Mennonites, the outmigration of a large number of conservative Mennonites from

the rural villages and the in-migration of new Mennonites to Winkler's Main Street created a new dynamic. In the case of Winkler's Jewish population, a loss of orthodoxy, the pull of the Jewish cultural and religious life offered by the much larger Jewish community in Winnipeg, and the emphasis on greater educational opportunities shaped relations with their Mennonite neighbours.¹

The Mennonite West Reserve was one of the most populated rural areas of Manitoba in the 1890s and the villages of Mennonites south of Winkler constituted the most densely settled area of the reserve. The people who had settled south of Winkler were also the most conservative of Mennonites, and they wanted to maintain their agricultural villages as the form of community in which their religion could be practiced most faithfully.



Winkler's Main Street looking north towards the railway tracks. The train is spotting railway cars and it is a busy day for the merchants.

The village system supported their desire to remain separate from railway towns and the “worldliness” that was garishly on display in them. This way of life presented a golden opportunity for an intermediary who could bring them needed goods in exchange for their surplus products.

The Jews who settled in Winkler were ideally positioned for this role. Although peddling was a difficult task, Orthodox Russian Jews, who began arriving in the 1880s, undertook this work. As Henry Trachtenberg points out, Orthodox Jews were relegated to peddling because of a history of restrictions in Russia and their religious sensibilities. According to their faith, they “could not work or handle money on the Jewish Sabbath, embracing sundown Friday evening to sundown Saturday evening, and on the myriad of Jewish holy days.” In addition, their “dietary laws, involving, for example, the consumption of only kosher food and the separation of meat and milk products and utensils, also prevented Jews from becoming apprenticed in non-Jewish households.”² Jewish immigrants who started off as peddlers often managed to become merchants, and a considerable number of them established stores in Winkler. These Jewish business owners often employed relatives and acquaintances from their home *shtetls* in eastern Europe as peddlers. Eastern European Ashkenazi Jews were also ideal intermediaries because their language, Yiddish, was close enough to Mennonite Low German that they could conduct business with Mennonite women on the village street without undue misunderstandings.

In 1893, Finkelstein & Co. and Herman Steinkopf were the first Jews to establish stores in Winkler. Finkelstein & Co. completed their store in September; however, by January 1894 a partnership change caused them to sell it. The change likely signalled the beginnings of Isaac Greenblat’s general store since he was listed as a peddler living with the general merchant Calman Finkelstein in the 1891 census.³ Greenblat’s business appeared to start a chain migration into Winkler of relatives and other acquaintances from the Old World whose first activity was ped-

dling. By 1901, out of a total population of 371, Winkler’s Jewish population was twenty-seven, about equal to that of the British group in the village.⁴

A web of intermarriages and old-world connections tied together Winkler’s Jewish families. For instance, Isaac Greenblat’s wife Sarah and Aron Nitikman’s wife Etta were sisters. Their brother, Phillip Silver, was a peddler working for his brother-in-law, Isaac Greenblat. Chia, Aron and Joseph Nitikman’s sister, was married to Max Buchwald. Isaac Sirluck originated from the same village, Teofipol, in western Ukraine, as Aaron Cohen, and once in Winkler he married Joseph Nitikman’s oldest daughter, Ruchel. When Isaac Sirluck suffered an accident while peddling, he joined his father-in-law’s general store and the firm became Nitikman & Sirluck.⁵

Out of necessity, Jewish peddlers developed a keen sense of the needs and preferences of their female Mennonite customers. They also had a strong knowledge of the market for the products they took in exchange. Using the stores in Winkler as a base, Jewish peddlers loaded up their modified democrat wagons on a Sunday evening to begin a route of Mennonite villages early on Monday morning. Jimmy Greenblat, the son of Isaac and Sara Greenblat, remembered how his peddler relatives “were sent out every Monday morning in box-like covered wagons filled with dress goods and household items, for which they accepted butter and eggs as pay.” Fridays were not such a pleasant memory for the young boy. As he recalled, “Because Saturday was a Jewish holiday, observed in its entirety, those days, the peddlers always returned Friday afternoon, and we youngsters had to unpack into cases the eggs they had stored under the big box they sat on as they drove. I hated the stooping for hours.”⁶

The arrival of the peddler was an important occasion in the Mennonite village, especially for women. The peddler made his way down the street bartering with the village women who needed cloth, thread and buttons, replacement cutlery or kitchen utensils, and spices. These goods would be exchanged for chickens,



eggs, and produce from the Mennonite housewife’s large garden. Haggling was an accepted part of the process, and after the peddler left, Mennonite women compared notes to check whether they had received the “market price.” It was also customary for the peddler to exchange some thread or other household goods for a meal or a night’s accommodation, provided he could trust the Mennonite housewife to observe his religious dietary rules. With the peddler coming to their door the more conservative Mennonite households could avoid the railway towns and still have access to goods.

Interactions between Mennonites and Jews in the villages south of Winkler were



almost exclusively about business. The conservative Mennonites of the villages only wanted to interact with their Jewish peddlers to gain access to the market. Mennonites knew little of the Jewish peddler's life when he left their village and went home to his family. They had no aspirations of proselytizing. Centuries of agreements with European rulers not to foment religious conflict by striving to convert others to their form of Christianity had made them inward-looking. These Mennonites were not mission oriented; their aim was to conserve the faith of their community and its descendants. And the

peddler was perfectly happy with this arrangement. While he needed to be an astute observer of Mennonite sensibilities as they related to the goods he offered for sale – would the shawl be too colourful or the wrong print? – he did not desire any more knowledge of his Mennonite clientele. Both groups respected each other's desire to be separate from the host society and from each other.

The interaction between Jewish merchant families and their Mennonite neighbours in Winkler had a different character. While in the rural areas the Jewish peddler fulfilled the role of inter-

mediary, which suited the market-shy Mennonites, in Winkler the Jewish merchant was a formidable competitor for his Mennonite counterpart. Valentine Winkler purchased the land for the future site of the village that would share his name for two reasons: pressure from his Mennonite clientele for a closer grain delivery point, and significant interest from Mennonites who wanted to become merchants.

Just before the establishment of the village of Winkler, religious reform ideas had swept through the Mennonite West Reserve. These ideas contributed to

Bernard Loewen's store, above, on Winkler's Main Street is on the immediate right, looking south from the railway tracks. His store and the Stanley House Hotel occupied the premier sites on either side of Main Street, facing the railway tracks on South Railway Avenue.



Flossie Cohen Goldberg, S. B. Nitikman, Isaac Cohen, and Jack Shore in front of Aaron Cohen's store in Winkler in 1914.

the formation of two new groups, the Mennonite Brethren and the Bergthalers. Both groups adopted North American religious innovations such as Sunday schools. Bernard Loewen, who would become the first storeowner in the new village of Winkler in 1892, belonged to the Bergthalers group and was an avid supporter of Sunday schools.⁷ Loewen was a part of the more liberal-oriented Mennonites. These Mennonites were much more inclined to live in railway towns, to adopt new innovations such as electricity and public schools, and to participate in civic affairs. Initially, Main Street featured a rich mixture of Mennonite, Jewish, German, and Anglo-Celtic merchants. By the early 1900s, the Nitikman, Sirluck, Buchwald, Cohen, and other Jewish families had displaced many of the German and Anglo-Celtic merchants and were engaged in stiff competition with Mennonite merchants for the market of Mennonites living south of Winkler.

Competition between Mennonite and Jewish merchants was keen. In the early days, to curry favour with their Mennonite

clientele some Jewish peddlers claimed to be associated with the Mennonite storekeeper Bernard Loewen. Loewen felt obliged to place a notice in the German-language newspaper, *Der Nordwesten*, assuring his Mennonite clientele in the villages that he did not have peddlers representing his store.⁸ But Loewen was unable to maintain his avoidance of peddling. He was forced to employ his own peddlers to stay ahead of his Jewish competitors. Mennonite merchants tried to capitalize on the vulnerability of their orthodox Jewish competitors by organizing sales when they knew they would be celebrating high holy days. When Jewish merchants were forced by necessity to adapt to Saturday shopping, they maintained Sabbath observance by employing Mennonite or German store clerks who could weigh the goods and make the financial exchange while they stood beside. The competition between Jewish and Mennonite merchants was tempered by their common desire to boost the community in the face of competition from other railway towns and mail-order catalogues. Sometimes that meant sup-

porting competitors when they suffered losses. When one Mennonite merchant ran afoul of his church and was boycotted by other Mennonites, Jewish and German merchants tried to support his business by shopping at his store.⁹

Jewish merchants had an advantage over Mennonite businesses since Mennonite customers viewed them as more suitable creditors. For Mennonites it provided an opportunity to be in debt to someone who did not sit next to you on the church pew and who would keep your financial affairs to himself. Since remaining in debt to a Jewish merchant did not carry the same stigma as being in arrears to a fellow Mennonite, Jewish merchants sometimes struggled to collect these debts. At times they received help from visiting preachers. In the 1930s, the revival preacher I. G. Friesen visited Winkler. After a series of well-attended meetings in the village, Mennonites began appearing at Isaac Sirluck's store to settle up old debts and in some cases even to pay for goods that they had "borrowed." The Jewish business owner was motivated to attend one of these meetings to see for himself



A parade on Main Street was a regular feature of Winkler's summer celebrations. This parade was held on July 1, 1916.

how the speaker could effect such a change among his clientele. Sirluck is rumoured to have commented that Friesen could do things even the police and the courts could not achieve.¹⁰

The religious fervor of Mennonites, however, could also cause problems with their Jewish neighbours. The Bergthaler and Mennonite Brethren churches were inclined to challenge others in the community to accept their forms of Christian belief. This meant that Jews were sometimes the object of their proselytizing efforts. Although the motives are unclear on both sides, it seems some Jewish children attended the Sunday school held in the local train station by the stationmaster's wife.¹¹ In 1920, the Mennonite Brethren church invited Hugo Spitzer, a missionary to the Jews, to speak in the community.¹² While such direct attempts to stimulate Jewish conversion were rare, for children who interacted in the village's schools there was a sharp sense of difference. For example, Ernest Sirluck had unpleasant memories of being labeled as a "Christ killer" by taunting Mennonite classmates.¹³

On the whole, however, Jews and Mennonites lived in separate social, cultural, and religious worlds. To support their religious life, Jews built a synagogue on Sixth Street in the 1920s and for a time the community could support a *shochet* (butcher) and a *chazan* (cantor), who also acted as *melamed* (teacher). For most of their stay in Winkler, the Jewish community worked hard to maintain social connections to Jews elsewhere. Over time they increasingly looked forward to visits with family and friends in the growing Jewish community in Winnipeg. There was almost no social contact between Mennonite and Jewish adults, although some Mennonite and German young people would light the fires in Jewish homes on the Sabbath or became servants in the homes of the upwardly mobile Jewish merchant families. Most other social contact was on the level of participation in the local literary society, where people could interact without religious implications.¹⁴ Marriage between Jews and Mennonites was unthinkable, and parents from both groups wanted to keep it that way. As the Jewish community

gradually lost its orthodox orientation, Jewish merchants began participating more actively in the community's civic life. Here too, however, the division of civic duties fell along ethnic lines. Invariably it was the Jewish village councillor who was charged with approaching a reticent Jewish taxpayer or challenging his fellow Jews to organize the care of a Jewish woman suffering from mental illness. It was the Mennonite councillors who had to approach the local Mennonite church to share in the cost of relief for a needy member the church employed as a janitor.¹⁵

By the 1930s Winkler's Jewish community was in decline. This era opened up new possibilities for Mennonite-Jewish interaction. Many Jewish merchants converted their trusted long-term Mennonite staff into business partners when they moved to Winnipeg. Nitikman & Sirluck eventually became Sirluck & Janzen and then Janzen's Department Store. The land that Isaac Sirluck had acquired when some of the most conservative Mennonites moved to Mexico in the 1920s was rented to Mennonite farmers and gradually most

of it returned to Mennonite ownership.

The 1930s would also prove to be the most difficult for Mennonite-Jewish relations. Mennonites who emigrated from Russia in the 1920s tended to associate communism with Judaism. They also were pro-German, and with the rise of Hitler, some were attracted to fascism. William Whittaker created the fascist Canadian Nationalist Party, which was based in Winnipeg, and whose newspaper was printed by the *Mennonitische Rundschau* printing house owned by a Mennonite, Herman H. Neufeld.¹⁶ P. H. Neufeld from Winkler wrote to the *Rundschau* suggesting that "here in our little town a movement is becoming noticeable. Hitler is known as a striving, Christian young man, and we hope that the same qualities are present in the local organization of the Canadian Nationalists."¹⁷ Whittaker drew a crowd of 350 at a meeting in Winkler on December 3, 1933, and for a time Winkler had a local branch of the party.¹⁸ Ernest Sirluck recalls that Nazi newspapers appeared in Winkler's public spaces and a broad cross-section of the community flirted with fascist ideas. When confronted with the implications of joining Whitaker's party, Jack Funk assured Ernest Sirluck that there was "nothing personal in it."¹⁹ This confrontation shows that many Mennonites distinguished "their" Jews from the ones that were the object of fascist scorn. The attraction of Nazi ideas, however, would die out quickly and when the war broke out most Mennonites retreated from these views.

The interaction of Jews and Mennonites in this region occurred in a specific moment of each group's history. They both sought to follow strong cultural imperatives by staying isolated from other groups. Religious reasons were paramount for this separateness. Orthodox Jews wanted to maintain dietary restrictions and avoid intermarriage, while the more conservative Mennonites viewed the railway town as representing a secular world that would encroach on their religious life. As Jews and some Mennonites lost their desire for absolute isolation, participation in each other's lives increased, particularly in the village of Winkler. In Winkler, civic,



For most of their stay in Winkler, the Jewish community worked hard to maintain social connections to Jews elsewhere. Over time they increasingly looked forward to visits with family and friends in the growing Jewish community in Winnipeg.

school, and to some extent non-religious social life provided venues for interaction outside of the commercial sphere. These interactions were mainly congenial, although circumscribed. During the 1930s, new challenges in the relationship between these groups emerged as some Mennonites flirted with Nazi ideas. By

1946 the census recorded no Jews in Winkler, although the Jewish merchant Max Gladstone continued to spend at least some time in the town for a few more years, and the Gladstone Mall would bear his name long after Mennonites had assumed control of the business.

¹ Portions of this article were published as "More Than Just Business: An Historical Overview of Jewish-Mennonite Relations in Winkler," in *Jewish Life and Times: A Collection of Essays*, ed. Daniel Stone and Annalee Greenberg, vol. 9 (Winnipeg: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, 2009), 19–35, and in Chapter Two of Hans Werner, *Living Between Worlds: A History of Winkler* (Winkler: Winkler Historical Society, 2006).

² Henry Trachtenberg, "Peddling, Politics, and Winnipeg's Jews, 1891–1895: The Political Acculturation of an Urban Immigrant Community," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 29, no. 57 (1996): 164.

³ *Census of Canada*, 1891, Library and Archives Canada, Item #181183; Der Nordwesten, September 15, 1893, and May 24, 1894.

⁴ *Census of Canada*, 1901.

⁵ Ernest Sirluck, *First Generation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 5–6; Harold Buchwald, "Observations," in Stone and Greenberg, 35.

⁶ Jim Greenblat, "My Autobiography – From Jimmy to Jim," <http://www.permeable.com/genealogy/jimmy.html>, accessed February 18, 2002. Since moved to www.ancestry.com.

⁷ Loewen was part of a more liberal group of Mennonites that had migrated from the East Reserve to the less well-drained eastern portion of the West Reserve.

⁸ *Der Nordwesten*, May 28, 1896.

⁹ Frank Brown, *A History of Winkler* (Winkler: by the author, 1974), 129.

¹⁰ Brown, *History of Winkler*, 36–37.

¹¹ Werner, *Living Between Worlds*, 44.

¹² *The Morden Times*, November 4, 1920.

¹³ Sirluck, *First Generation*, 8.

¹⁴ Werner, *Living Between Worlds*, 45.

¹⁵ "Town of Winkler Minutes," May 5, 1936.

¹⁶ See for instance the documentary *Paper Nazis*, written and directed by Andrew Wall, Farpoint Films, 2011.

¹⁷ Quoted in Benjamin Wall Redekop, "The German Identity of Mennonite Brethren Immigrants in Canada, 1930–1960" (Master's thesis, University of British Columbia, 1990), 31. See also Werner, *Living Between Worlds*, 76.

¹⁸ *Morden Times*, December 6, 1933, and December 13, 1933.

¹⁹ Sirluck, *First Generation*, 22.

TWO GENERATIONS

Clear Springs Settlers and Mennonites as Neighbours

Glen R. Klassen

In 1869, about 150 years ago, a trio of young people found a big, clear-running spring in the western wilds of North America and decided to settle down.¹ The place was deserted except for a small population of Ojibwe hunters who moved through the region. Some six miles away, on the Seine River, lived a community of Métis called La Pointe-des-Chênes, in the parish of Ste. Anne. By May of the next year, the land they had chosen would become part of the new province of Manitoba. Two years later the land would be surveyed by Thomas Cheesman and his crew, who established that the young settlers had squatted in township 7, on the south-west quarter of section 13.

The settlers were John Hamilton Mack, twenty-five, his wife Bertha (Stelch) Mack, and their bachelor friend Thomas Slater. John's parents had come from Ireland in 1844 and settled in Hensell County, Ontario. Here John had married Bertha, a German immigrant girl. The young couple and their friend Thomas had come west with horses, a wagon, and a cow, first on the Great Lakes to Duluth and then by train to St. Cloud, Minnesota. From there they rode their wagon north, with cow in tow, along the Minnesota Trail to Pembina and then into Rupert's Land. Clear Springs history was preserved by first-generation residents Harry and Margaret Turnpenny and William Cohoe, and by third-generation residents Ed and Alice Laing, who published *Pioneers of Clear Springs* in 2001. Many of the facts

and anecdotes in this article are taken from this book, too many to cite individually.

There was no Steinbach, no Blumenort, and no railway. The bison skulls turned up by the plow were all that was left of the great herds that had once ranged over the land claimed by the Macks. The Ojibwe, hunters of moose and deer, would, in two years' time, give up their traditional rights and retreat to reserves meted out by Treaty Number 1. And then, after four years, during which time the settlement had come to be called Clear Springs,² the first Mennonites showed up. One of the first contacts happened in the summer

of 1873 when Mennonite and Hutterite land scouts came upon the Macks' cabin.³ A wagonload of German-speaking men in black emerged from the poplars and introduced themselves to Bertha Mack, who, to their surprise, replied in German.

Much had happened at Clear Springs in the four years before the arrival of Mennonites. Upon being informed that the Hudson's Bay Company would sell most of Rupert's Land to the Canadian government, the Métis, under Louis Riel, formed their own short-lived provisional government in 1869. In 1870 the "postage stamp" province was admitted to the



Children from the two communities, like James Keating and Bert Kroeker, became friends. Image ca. 1956.

PRIVATE COLLECTION

Dominion of Canada and, at the insistence of Riel, the Métis were promised 1.4 million acres of land for their children. Ste. Anne was one of several parishes reserved by 1872 for the Métis, although ultimately few Métis settled on the reserve. During this period surveyors converted the open plains between the rivers into mile-square sections of land, ready for a massive influx of European and Canadian farmers. These farmers came by way of the new Dawson route from Lake Superior or from the United States by the developing railway network. Some were demobilized soldiers, sent originally to put down the Riel Rebellion of 1869, and some were former Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) employees who made it to Manitoba by way of the northern route from Hudson Bay. The Clear Springs farmers were part of these historic migrations.

Clear Springs was not a settlement block like that of the Mennonites and others. It was an assembly of strangers with a few extended families (e.g., Laings, Borlands, Carletons) that gradually became a community, most of whose members gathered around the Presbyterian church and the public schools. Until the development of Giroux village the community was completely rural and agricultural. The only non-farmers were the resident minister and, later, the station agent.

Probably the first contact between Mennonites and Clear Springs people occurred when John Peterson, a former HBC employee and officer of the London and Canadian Loan and Agency Co. of Toronto,⁴ took the Mennonite scouts under his wing to help them find land. It is said that he became quite familiar with the Low German language as he related to the new farmers. He had homesteaded quarter section SE3-7-6E in 1872 and so he drew the attention of incoming Mennonites to vacant land just south of his home, where they established the village of Steinbach in 1874.⁵ Thomas Rankin had homesteaded SW11 in the same township in 1870, land that is now occupied by the Mennonite Heritage Village and the Steinbach Fly-In Golf Course. The Rankins squatted on this land until the survey was completed and then filed for the homestead in 1873.



Normally, section 11 would be designated "school lands" and not for homesteading, but Rankin's earlier claim was recognized.

The massive influx of Mennonites in 1874–75 had an immediate effect on the lives of the Clear Springs settlers, whose community was partly surrounded by the large Mennonite East Reserve. After a few years Mennonites had established retail stores in Steinbach, Tannenau, and Niverville. Steinbach also had a grist mill, cheese factory, blacksmith shop, and a sawmill industry. Farm supplies and services were now much closer for the Clear Springs farmers than when they had to

depend on Winnipeg merchants and on the HBC store in Ste. Anne. Business and farming collaboration sprang up very quickly as the two agricultural communities had many things in common.

Hamilton Mack Laing (1883–1982), son of Clear Springs pioneers William Oswald Laing (1841–1924) and Rachel Mack Laing (1851–1934), recalled relations between the two communities. When a friend sent a brochure featuring the full-size Dutch windmill at the Mennonite Heritage Village museum, Laing responded in a letter: "Steinbach was only three miles from my father's



farm. He homesteaded there barely ahead of the Mennonite invasion. We did a lot of business in the Mennonite village of Steinbach. They were a go-ahead people. There was a good general store (Reimer) and a splendid hardware (store) across the village owned by his son (Henry). The father was in the first wave of migration from Russia but Henry might have been born in Canada.

"They were wonderful people though we found their ways a bit strange. They were industrious, beavers at work, honest, sober, law-abiding. I never heard of a crime. There wasn't a policeman in the area. They

at first kept a guard at night in the village. They were used to thievery in Russia. They were non-military and it was mainly to escape conscription in Russia that they left Russia. They had a quaint, foreign look.

"At first all the buildings were thatched. They were very religious and sometimes in mid-week they went to church. They wanted to be Canadians – two sons (from Steinbach) attended the same school I did in Clearsprings. That was before I got too big for my hat and had to go to Winnipeg for further education.

"In short, no one but those people could have built that windmill. They built the

first grist mill in Steinbach. We got their flour and porridge meal locally ground. I recall the first time I got a tall view of the world. It was when I had climbed the 60-odd feet of the mill to look out of the highest window.

"I understand that Steinbach is now quite a town, has a good hospital and is modern. I come often on Mennonite proper names, third generation: Reimer, Toews, Friesen, etc."⁶

Right from the start, a dramatic difference between the two communities was that the Clear Springs farmers were all young men and women – there were

hardly any senior members. The average age of the men was 30.5, and a few of the wives were only 17 when they came to Clear Springs as new brides. There were also a significant number of bachelors who married late or never married. The Mennonites came as transplanted communities comprised of all generations, with many older farmers who often could buy land for their sons and daughters. Many of the Clear Springs farmers had some experience of farming in Ontario, and while they may have lacked expertise, they were soon acknowledged as excellent farmers. In 1880 a Montreal reporter wrote that "Clearsprings was the most prosperous settlement he had seen in the North West."⁷ In 1879, four Clear Springs farmers participated in the Dominion Exhibition in Ottawa, bringing samples of their crops. Like Mennonites, they brought with them skills such as horse-breeding, carpentry, masonry, blacksmithing, beekeeping, mechanics, and, above all, midwifery (Mary Borland delivered many babies).

The young Clear Springs upstarts taught Mennonites a number of tricks for coping with pioneer life. They showed them how to build log buildings more efficiently and how to produce cedar shingles. They led the way in introducing new threshing technology and in improving livestock, especially horses, through selective breeding. Stud animals were bought cooperatively and shared throughout the community. John Warkentin claims that young farmers from both communities pushed each other to excel at farming and that this contributed to the relative progressiveness of the northeast part of the East Reserve. He also suggests that young Mennonite farmers admired the independence of the Clear Springs farmers and that this contributed to the move away from the *Strassendorf* system to that of dispersed farmsteads shortly after the turn of the century.⁸

Sometimes cooperation between Mennonites and the Clear Springs community took surprising turns. In 1884 John Peterson joined the Mennonite *Brandordnung* scheme, and two years later, so did Malcolm McCaskill.⁹ Mennonites

brought over this fire insurance tradition from Russia. Claims were satisfied by payments demanded from each participant after a fire, so that mutual trust was essential. The participation of the Clear Springs farmers spoke of their good reputation as well as their confidence in Mennonite administration, even though it operated in the German language. Other financial arrangements also demonstrated the trust between the two groups. In 1893 Peter (*Schmett*) Toews borrowed money from James Steel to improve his home,¹⁰ and when the Steinbach Credit Union needed start-up capital in 1941, the money came from Steel's son James.¹¹

The rapid development of farming techniques and farm-related trade was also a result of Clear Springs–Mennonite cooperation. William Cohoe acquired the second threshing machine in the area, and together with a Mennonite partner, embarked on a highly profitable threshing syndicate which served fifty-one farmers in 1878. Although ownership of the machines was cooperative because of the capital required, the threshing gangs were not integrated. An early threshing gang included only one Mennonite, David Unger, who was part of the Acres family operation.

The Clear Springs settlers had French neighbours to the northeast and Mennonite neighbours to the southwest. The cultural divide was greater between the French and the Clear Springs people because of language and religion. Thomas and William Laing actually first settled on River Lot #1 in the village of Ste. Anne but moved quickly to the centre of the community, selling the lot to another Clear Springs farmer, James Stanger, in 1877. The nine sections of township 7-6E just north of Steinbach were part of the Ste. Anne municipality until 1890, when the Clear Springs people petitioned the government to move these sections to the Hanover municipality, even though Clear Springs stalwarts such as William Laing, Josiah Cohoe, and James Steel served as councillors in the Rural Municipality of Ste. Anne. A Clear Springs settler told the *Winnipeg Tribune* in 1896, "The municipality is largely Mennonite and while

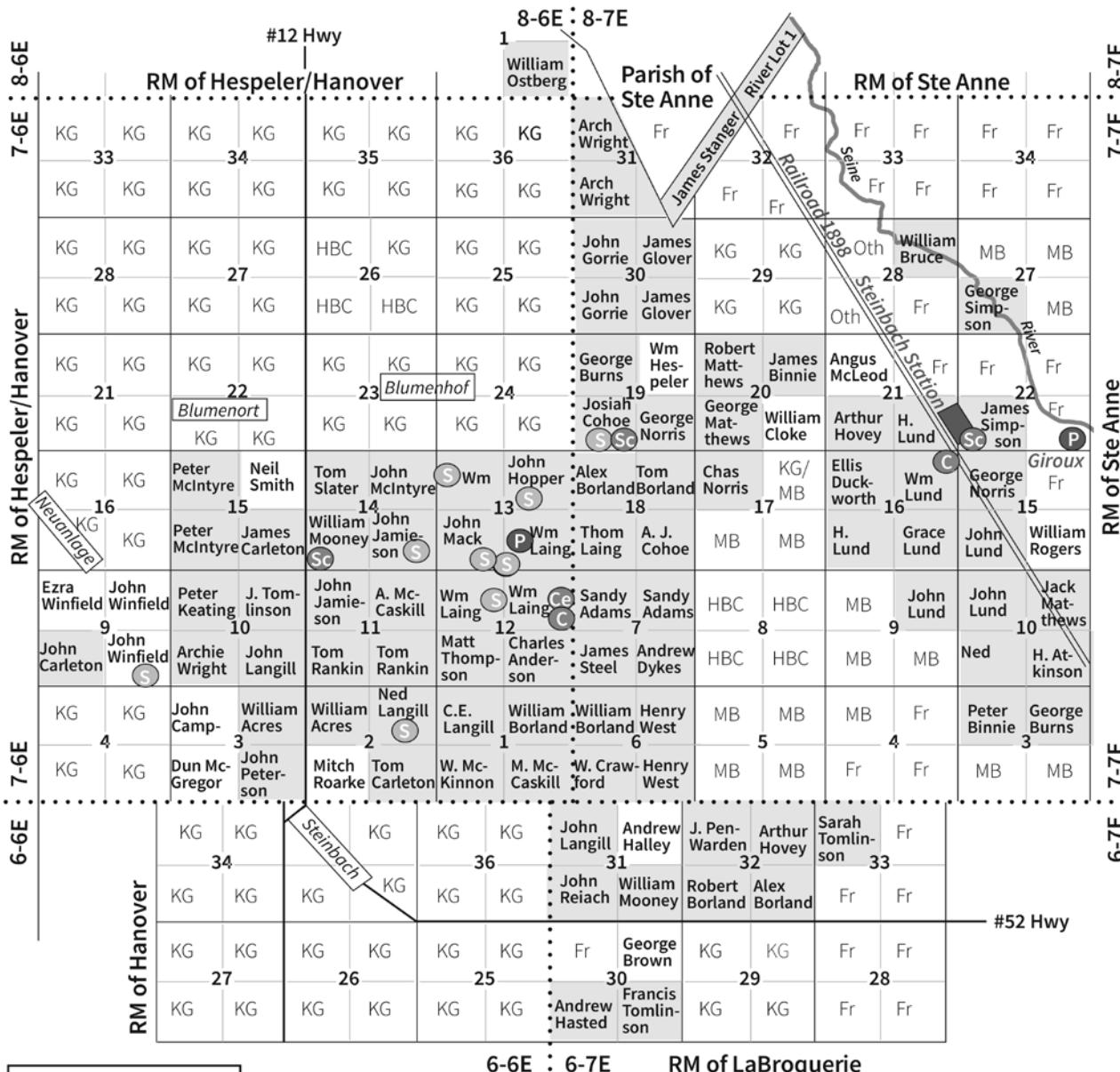
we sometimes regard them as somewhat behind the times, we agree with them in other matters."¹²

A very important geographical fact that had major consequences was that the Clear Springs settlers interacted primarily with the Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites of Steinbach, Blumenort, and Blumenhof, and after the great schism of 1881, with the so-called Holdeman Mennonites (Church of God in Christ, Mennonite) who had come out of the Kleine Gemeinde. If they had had more contact with the Chortitzer Mennonites, farther to the west and south, their perceptions of Mennonites would likely have been much different. Whereas none of the Kleine Gemeinde or Holdeman people joined the Presbyterian or United Church until much later in Steinbach, early on there was a small but significant presence of ex-Mennonites in the Niverville church. It is likely that the Niverville English people had more in common with the Chortitzer than the Clear Springs people had with the Kleine Gemeinde. The Chortitzer were less puritanical and not as stern as the Kleine Gemeinde.

Although the Kleine Gemeinde arrived in Canada in a separatist mood, especially regarding politics and religion, they were more open to cooperation with government in education than the Chortitzer. They transitioned from private to public schooling more readily and thus were spared the anglicization of their schools endured by the Chortitzer during the First World War. The Holdeman people were anglicized earlier because of the influence of American evangelists and because of their denominational ties to the United States. My Kleine Gemeinde father spoke English with a distinct Low German accent while my mother, raised by Holdeman parents and having attended the Clear Springs school, did not. These subtle differences between the Kleine Gemeinde/Holdeman people and the Chortitzer people may have shaped their interactions with the Clear Springs people. The Kleine Gemeinde were also more like the Presbyterians regarding Sunday observance, smoking, entertainment, and the entrepreneurial life.

Clear Springs Homesteads and Farms

1869–1900



Legend

- Spring
 Post Office
 Church
 Cemetery
 School
 KG Kleine Gemeinde
 Fr French
 MB Manitoba Gov't
 HBC Hudson Bay Co.
 Oth Other

Notes

1. Clear Springs homesteaders and other non-Mennonite/non-French farmers are named. Those that are included as members of the Clear Springs community by narratives in *Pioneers of Clear Springs* by Ed and Alice Laing are shaded.
 2. The names were chosen using the Provincial Homestead Records and Maps as well as the map in *Pioneers of Clear Springs*. They often do not reflect the complex land transfers that occurred and should not be used in definitive studies.
 3. The Giroux Post Office was moved to the present-day location, and Giroux replaced 'Steinbach Station' as the name of the village in 1901.
 4. This area is within Treaty No. 1 land (1871) and adjacent to a Métis Reserve to the north (1870).



Public schools offered a space for children from both communities to mix. Despite this interaction, intermarriage was a rare occurrence. Image ca. 1952.

Although there was extensive agricultural and commercial interaction between the two communities, cultural and religious understanding were not so easily achieved. However, there was never any conflict or rancour between the two communities, as they kept each other at arm's length when it came to social and religious events. There was hardly any intermarriage, and the only mingling took place in the public schools, Clear Springs and Ridgewood. Clear Springs children far outnumbered Mennonite pupils until about 1912, and Clear Springs school trustees such as William Laing, Thomas Keating, and William Mooney were on the school board. They tended to recruit mostly non-Mennonite teachers until 1928, when A. A. Toews began his thirteen-year tenure. By then the Clear Springs pupils were a small minority but "English" trustees continued to serve on the school board into the 1960s.

There were major affinities between the religious life of the Clear Springs settlers and that of the Mennonites. And there were major differences. Both Presbyterians and Mennonites were puritanical in their outlook, especially with regard to Sunday

(Sabbath) observance. Both frowned on farming activity and entertainment events on the Lord's Day. Both deplored smoking, drunkenness, and frivolous behaviour. John McIntyre and Josiah Cohoe were members of the Sons of Temperance and were extremely judgmental of the drunkenness they witnessed while visiting Port Arthur, Ontario, vowing not to get into any boats with drinkers. The Presbyterians at their provincial conferences, which were reported in detail in the Winnipeg papers, typically spent half of the time discussing Sabbath-keeping. For the Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites, and especially their Holdeman relatives, Sunday activity was just one of many behaviours that were restricted. Both groups were austere Protestants with very plain churches and graveyards. In stark contrast to their French neighbours, symbols of faith, such as the cross and religious statuary, were not tolerated.

The differences were clearly seen in the areas of language, pacifism, and lifestyle. The Kleine Gemeinde very gradually relinquished the German language while the Holdeman's free adoption of English facilitated interaction with their Clear

Springs neighbours. John Langill is said to have offered English classes for adults at the Clear Springs school. It is believed that the only settler in Steinbach who could communicate in English in 1874 was the teacher Cornelius W. Fast, but Steinbach's businesspeople were eager to learn.

The Canadian government promised Mennonites that they would not be required to participate in military service. They interpreted this promise to mean that they were also exempt from police work because it would inevitably lead to the use of force and the bearing of arms. In stark contrast, participation in the military or the police led many of the Clear Springs settlers to the area. At least ten of them had obtained their homesteads as military bounty grants, having served in units such as Colonel Wolseley's force. One of them was the immigration agent William Hespeler, who received NE19-7-7E presumably for his participation in some European military unit. He did not live or farm on his quarter.

In spite of their close proximity to the Métis settlement of Ste. Anne, the people of Clear Springs held anti-Riel feelings. William Laing claimed that he

had seen Riel and his men riding south at the US border, fleeing Col. Wolseley. Later, Wolseley “chided [Laing] for not using his rifle on the trail when he met the fugitives.”¹³ The local schoolteacher, John Code, joined the Winnipeg Rifles to help put down Riel’s North-West Rebellion and was killed at Batoche in 1885. In contrast, Mennonites had some knowledge of the Rebellion from its limited coverage in *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*.¹⁴ However, they did not view this issue as one of significance.

Mennonites did not participate significantly in the First World War, and even bristled when they were expected to display the flag at their schools. Many left for Mexico shortly after the war. The Clear Springs community was saddened when young Thomas Hasted was killed in action in France. His father, Angelo (Andy) Hasted, although too old for active service, joined up and was wounded in France. John Gorrie, 21, was killed at Vimy Ridge in 1917, the same year as the combat death of Steinbach’s Peter W. Friesen.¹⁵ Alexander Schilstra, a Steinbach doctor who identified with the Clear Springs community, served as a medic at the Tigris Front in Mesopotamia.

During the Second World War many Mennonites avoided military service by working as conscientious objectors, but many young men from Steinbach and the district went to war, and some became casualties. Those that returned to Steinbach after the war rarely rejoined Mennonite churches. If religious, they would find fellowship with the Clear Springs people. There is very little evidence that the Clear Springs people resented Mennonites because of their military exemptions. Farther west, Mennonite business owners in non-Mennonite communities sometimes suffered economically from community resentment.

There were many marriages between families within the Clear Springs community, but intermarriage with Mennonite neighbours was rare. The Mennonites were highly endogamous and the complications around church membership deterred most alliances. David Unger married Lauretta (Fenton)

Acres in 1891 after her first husband William Acres died. Unger was accepted by the Clear Springs community and joined their cooperative farming efforts and was eventually buried in the Clear Springs cemetery. The Mooneys, who had an English Anglican background, had descendants in the second and third generations who married into Giesbrecht and Barkman Mennonite families. Most of these belonged to the Holdeman Church, which only permitted marriage between members of their group, so intermarriage and change of church membership went hand in hand. It is surprising that so few intermarriages occurred even while public school enrolments were highly pluralist. The reason must lie in Mennonites’

marriage, even with other Mennonites, was frowned upon. They did not go quite as far as the Holdeman Church in claiming to be the only true church, but they certainly excluded other Christian groups. This history formed an invisible barrier between the Clear Springs people and their Mennonite neighbours.

The second phase of Mennonite exclusiveness began in the 1940s when the Kleine Gemeinde communities experienced a surge of revivalism. After that, exclusiveness did not focus on ethnicity but on religious ideology and experience. Wes Keating, who grew up during this period, says that this form of exclusiveness was even more hurtful than the former one. Now people were judged on their



A well-tended cemetery serves as a reminder of the rich history of the Clear Springs settlement.

religious exclusiveness, which persisted into the third and fourth generation in Manitoba.

Mennonite exclusiveness with regard to religion had two phases. The first phase had deep historical roots. When the Kleine Gemeinde originated in the Molotschna Colony in Russia in 1812, the little breakaway church had to distinguish itself from the larger Mennonite society, and thus became more stringent with regard to boundaries. Attendance at other churches was forbidden and inter-

spiritual status, which had been declared at a revival meeting, and on religious enthusiasm.

Lifestyle differences, mostly flowing from religious conviction, were sometimes fairly dramatic. Clear Springs women dressed in the latest fashions and had modern hair styles while Mennonite women did not. However, by the turn of the century, young women in Steinbach, according to historic photographs, affected worldly elegance in every way and the young men sported trim moustaches

and fancy hats, ties, and suits. Most of the Clear Springs patriarchs had full beards, but for the Mennonites beards and ties became sensitive issues after the 1881–82 Kleine Gemeinde/Holdeman schism. The Holdeman moustache-less beard was part of their identity. My Holdeman uncles were a little nonplussed when my brother and I started wearing beards in the 1960s. The early Kleine Gemeinde considered moustaches to be a sign of vanity.

The two communities, however, made allowances for each other. At one point in the early 1950s, James Keating noticed that his son Wes's comic book collection was a real attraction for Wes's friend Bert Kroeker, who could not have comic books at home. Fearing discord between the Keatings and the Kroekers, James confiscated his son's collection. Both boys felt very deprived, but the action of the Clear Springs father showed respect for the rules of his Mennonite neighbour. Doubtless the Mennonites were not uniform or consistent in these observances. The respect and peace between the Mennonites and their Clear Springs neighbours were probably greater than between their own denominational divisions.

Most of the pioneers who settled in Clear Springs were young men and women just starting their families. During the second generation the community consisted of nearly sixty families with enough school children to fill two schoolhouses. But by the 1920s, the English population had dwindled as the pioneers retired to Winnipeg, Steinbach, or Giroux while their offspring sold their farms and moved to Grandview, Killarney, and other farther-flung locations. The schools were

now filled with Mennonite children with a few Laings, Keatings, McCaskills, and Mooneys. The land buyers were the Mennonite neighbours. Rachel (Langill) Christie comments, "Clear Springs was a nice prosperous settlement till the young folks began to get married and moved to other districts. Their parents got too old to continue farming and wanted to retire so started to sell their farms. Now the new owners who bought the farms get the benefits of the old pioneers' hard work and labor and farms with ease."¹⁶

Why did this happen? Was there a problem between the Clear Springs people and the Mennonites? Ed and Alice Laing, who stayed, certainly did not think so. They observed that "the sale of farms from the Clear Springs settlers to their Mennonite neighbours was gradual but consistent, while many of the Anglo-Saxons seemed more restless and were moving away. A phrase so often used by the Clear Springs settlers was, 'We couldn't have found better neighbours than the Mennonite people.'"¹⁷

John Warkentin has suggested a very practical reason for the depopulation of the English farms. With the coming of the railway in 1898, which skirted the Clear Springs community to the east, land values increased dramatically as easier shipment of grain and milk was anticipated.¹⁸ Second- and third-generation farmers took advantage of this and sold their relatively small holdings in order to start with larger spreads in new locations. The boom in grain and milk shipping from Giroux was realized by the Mennonites and the Clear Springs farmers who stayed, but was soon eclipsed by Steinbach trucking

initiatives.

What's left of Clear Springs in 2020? There is one large "century farm" (Laingspring), a well-tended cemetery, and the United Church in Steinbach. The village of Giroux is now just a cross-roads without a train station. The names of the Clear Springs pioneers, however, live on in the names of local businesses and streets. A brand new middle school bears the settlement's name as do Steinbach's only shopping mall, a medical clinic, and a housing development. More roads, streets, and avenues are named for Clear Springs pioneers than those named for Mennonites.¹⁹ At least four businesses use the name.

The encounter between a vibrant "English" settlement and its Mennonite neighbours, which unfortunately lasted for only two generations, has had major effects on the economic and social reality of 2020. The farms that were hacked out of the bush and put to the plow were inherited by the second and third generation of (mostly) Mennonite farmers. Early agricultural innovation, often catalyzed by the presence of the young farmers of Clear Springs, has resulted in the efficient exploitation of a region in southeastern Manitoba that now leads in agribusiness. Early exposure to English language and culture in the Clear Springs schools was crucial for the eventual evaporation of the separatist mood of the Mennonite immigrants. Those who have inherited Clear Springs genes should be proud of their ancestors, who showed culturally isolated Manitobans of many ethnicities how to build a better Canada.

1 I wish to acknowledge the help of Wes Keating and Ray and Bertha Laing in the preparation of this paper.

2 "Clear Springs" is the original name of the community. "Clearsprings" has been used frequently since then, even in the Laing book (e.g., see inside back cover). "Clearspring" is not acceptable.

3 Leonhard Sudermann, *Eine Deputationsreise von Ruszland nach Amerika* (Elkhart, IN: Mennonitische Verlagshandlung, 1897).

4 *Winnipeg Free Press*, May 5, 1881.

5 Abe Warkentin, *Reflections on Our Heritage* (Steinbach: Derksen Printers, 1971), 38.

6 Steinbach *Carillon News*, Nov. 28, 1978. Mack Laing lived most of his life in Comox, BC, where he established himself as a naturalist and author. The Mack Laing Heritage Society of the Comox Valley honours his memory and seeks to further

his work in the study of nature, especially birds. Steinbach had a flour mill in 1878, followed by a succession of buildings that were destroyed by fire. We do not know which one was climbed by Mack Laing.

7 John H. Warkentin, *The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba* (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1960; reprinted by the Hanover Steinbach Historical, 2000), 66. Citations refer to the reprint.

8 Warkentin, 65–66.

9 *Brandordnung* records in the possession of Henry Fast, Steinbach.

10 Ralph Friesen, *Between Earth and Sky: Steinbach, The First Fifty Years* (Steinbach: Steinbach Heritage Committee, 2009), 267.

11 Linda Peters, "Memories of the Steinbach Royal Bank: 1945–1951," *Heritage Posting*, no. 96 (June 2020): 11.

12 *Winnipeg Tribune*, January 28, 1896.

13 Ed Laing and Alice Laing, *Pioneers of Clear Springs* (Steinbach: by the authors, 2001), 64.

14 Joseph R. Wiebe, "On the Mennonite-Métis Borderland: Environment, Colonialism, and Settlement in Manitoba," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 35 (2017): 111–126.

15 From *Carillon News*, Nov. 9, 1998, and *Preservings*, no. 12 (1998): 49.

16 Rachel Christie, "Memories of my Young Pioneer Days in Clear Springs, Manitoba," in *Pioneers of Clear Springs*, 146.

17 *Pioneers of Clear Springs*, 128.

18 Warkentin, 232.

19 Mennonite roadway names: Loewen, Friesen, Reimer, Barkman, Kroeker, Goossen, Giesbrecht, Penner. Clear Springs names: Keating, Borland, Old Tom (Carleton), Carleton, Laing, Lund, Mooney, Slater, MacFarlane, Clearsprings

REDISCOVERING A NEIGHBOUR

The Herdsman of Alt-Bergfeld

Ernest N. Braun

At the bottom of the memorial cairn in the Alt-Bergfeld Cemetery southwest of Grunthal, Manitoba, we see a single word: *Hirte* (herdsman).¹ As there is no name, it is likely impossible to establish with certainty who it was. According to local lore, the teenaged son of the herdsman was struck by lightning in 1907 while herding the cows on the village communal pasture.² As a general rule, at that time East Reserve Mennonites did not use concrete or stone headstones, with the result that names resided only in the memories of the villagers. When most of the villagers left Canada for Paraguay in 1926, that memory left with them and the name of the herdsman was lost. By the time the memorial cairn was erected around 1980 nobody could identify the man. He may well have been one of the early non-Mennonite herdsmen employed after many new immigrants arrived from central and eastern Europe beginning in the mid-1890s. As early as 1901, the herdsman for Alt-Bergfeld was listed in the federal census as Kost (Constantine) Kosowan. By 1906 the herdsman was Pytro Dzaman (misspelled as Gorman), but he and his family moved to the Stuartburn area where they are listed in the 1911 census, so the tragic death remains a mystery. Little has been written about the intersection of these two immigrant communities, the earlier Mennonite immigrants employing a more recent set of immigrants who spoke the same language, German, and often came from central and eastern European



The cairn raised in the Alt-Bergfeld cemetery, ca. 1980. At the bottom of the memorial cairn is a single word: *Hirte* (herdsman).

ERNEST N. BRAUN

territories such as Volhynia, Bukovina, Galicia, and Prussia.

Some background might be helpful to understand the circumstances of this employment. In 1873 Mennonite delegates from Russia negotiated the right to live in a closed block settlement and they accepted land east of the Red River, known as the East Reserve (now the Rural Municipality of Hanover). Block settlement, however, still meant that each family would be forced to live on its own homestead, and would therefore be separated from everyone else. To change this, an exception to the Dominion Lands Act called the “hamlet privilege” was negotiated in 1876, allowing Mennonites to settle in villages and perform their mandatory improvements to the village instead of to their own homestead. These exceptions, however, were time-limited. In fact, within a few years there were requests to permit non-Mennonites to apply for homesteads within the reserve. In 1889 the hamlet privilege was cancelled for the East Reserve, although existing villages were grandfathered in.

These closed villages became the hallmark of Mennonite settlement on the prairies. However, within the villages, it was not long before non-Mennonite immigrants began to appear in municipal assessment records. The earliest non-Mennonite names appeared in the Niverville area, where a station of the Pembina Branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway attracted merchants who also invested in land. By 1890 German Lutheran families had settled in Friedensfeld southeast of Steinbach, and within a decade at least ten different homesteads were registered in that area.

The census records for 1891 show domestic help and farm labourers with non-Mennonite names as living on the East Reserve. Slightly later, in 1896, the Hanover assessment roll lists Gottlieb Fuchs as a “labourer” in Schoensee. This term was likely code for the role of the village herdsman, who had a dedicated hut at the southeast corner of the village. Fuchs was assessed only on “Personal Property,” meaning that he did not have his own land. This seems to have been the begin-



ning of a pattern of employing recent eastern European immigrants as village “servants,” “farm labourers” and “domestics,” as the various federal census records indicate. Later entries narrow down the description of some of the farm labourers to “cowman” or “herdsman.” It is clear that these closed villages now included immigrants with German and Slavic names. A case in point is Alt-Bergfeld. By 1901, Constantine and Barbara Kosowan were residents of the village. They are identified in the census as Greek Catholic, and of Austrian nationality, but as having “Ruthenian” (Ukrainian) as their native language.

Alt-Bergfeld was founded about four kilometres from Grunthal at the southwestern edge of the East Reserve in 1877. It was one of the last villages to be established in the first round of Mennonite settlement. The shallow soil, scrub bush cover, stony ground, and poor drainage made grain production difficult, but with its abundance of trees, high water table,

and grassland it was well suited for a subsistence farmer. Although grain farming was out of the question, gardening and cattle raising or dairying worked well, so well that Alt-Bergfeld became a sizable and prosperous village. It was one of few villages with farmyards on both sides of the street, which was lined with rows of maple trees planted in the old tradition already known in Prussia.

Each day for about half the year the village herdsman blew his horn and gathered the cows together in the morning to drive them to the communal pasture over a mile away. In the evening he returned, blowing his horn to alert the owners to claim their cows along the village street. By the turn of the century, Mennonites living in Alt-Bergfeld hired new immigrants from eastern Europe for the job. These immigrants had arrived much like Mennonites, seeking new opportunities and new hope. On the East Reserve they often served as hired hands and maids seasonally, and occasionally year-round. Although it is



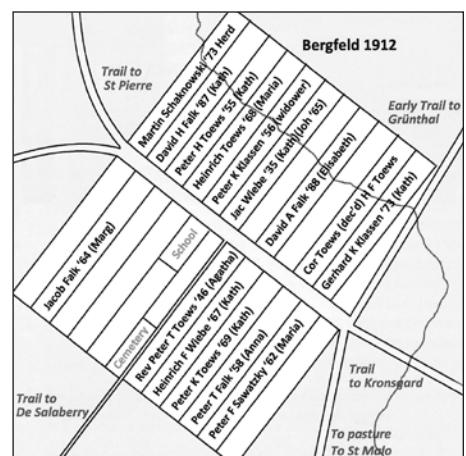
common knowledge that these new immigrants sometimes lived and worked on the East Reserve even before the turn of the twentieth century, little has been written about them.

My awareness of this was given immediacy on April 21, 2017, when a phone call from Edmonton raised an unusual question. The caller, Erna Chase, said that she had been in Steinbach six months earlier on a quest for a burial site, and had been told that I might be able to find it. After some preliminary questions, it turned out that the lost burial site was that of her maternal grandmother, whose name was Maria. When I asked about the surname, there was some hesitation. The surname was part of the problem, since there were many different spellings, but the name used today was Schanowske. I was slightly taken aback since I was expecting a Mennonite name, but I was intrigued nevertheless. I asked for the first name of the husband. It was Martin. I was in the middle of a meeting

just then, so I asked for an email address and said I would get back to her when I had done a bit of research.

Even as I walked back to the meeting, as unlikely as it seemed at the moment, something clicked in the back of my mind. I knew that name! Maybe with a slightly different spelling and pronunciation, but close enough to bear some investigation. Later that day I followed my instincts, retrieved the Martin Schaknowski reference that I knew about, and double-checked online with the 1911 federal census. Although the spelling was quite different, phonetically the name was identical. That record confirmed that his wife's name was Maria, but I also wrote down the children's names, and emailed Erna Chase with the question: is this the family you mean? She promptly confirmed that it was the right family. This exchange began a connection that has continued to this day.

Although I could not help with her immediate question regarding her grand-



This map of Alt-Bergfeld shows the location of Marin Schanowske's house. Above, the village of Alt-Bergfeld ca. 1920, viewed from the southeast. The herdsman's hut was at the extreme northeast of the village.

mother's burial site, I asked whether she knew that her grandfather had served as a herdsman in the old Mennonite village of Alt-Bergfeld. She had never heard anything like that! I sent her the 1911 census where her family and my grandmother are on successive pages, and then shared

that her grandfather and my great-grandfather had known each other very well. That was a surprise to her. I explained that my great-grandparents lived in that village in 1911, and the herdsman would have taken their cows to the communal pasture. That means for several summers twice a day these two men would have met at the gate to the village street, in the morning to hand off the cows, and in the evening to retrieve them again. It is also highly probable that my grandmother would have known the herdsman's oldest daughter, Rosa, who is Erna Chase's mother. Rosa was eight years younger than my grandmother, and lived only six hundred metres away. My own father also lived in that village a few years later, but by that time the Schanowske family had already moved on. The language of the Schanowske family was German but their domestic language was that of the Prussian lowlands, which shares roots with Mennonite Low German, so the Schanowske family would have spoken much the same dialect as their Mennonite neighbours.

It is a bizarre coincidence that I would have a piece of this puzzle of her ancestry. I added a further wrinkle to the story by telling her that I also had a colour picture of her grandparents' house. With the permission of Dr. John Warkentin I sent her the picture that he had taken of the old log house during his research in the late 1950s. Even more coincidental is the fact that as he was trudging up and down the village taking pictures, as he did several times, I was sitting at my desk in the Woolwich School (No. 1968), about a mile away. The house itself, a cozy cottage built of squared logs carefully dovetailed, was later moved closer to the village street, and in the early 1950s was occupied by a Danish dairyman who did the milking for rancher George Robertson. In 1937 Robertson had purchased the land from William McCullough, a speculator who bought it from the village in 1923.

The herdsman story took an unexpected turn a few months later, when by another strange coincidence a friend gave me a box of cards and memorabilia that somebody had dropped off at his place. Among the cards were three

sample handwriting booklets from the Alt-Bergfeld private school from 1908, 1913, and 1916 collected by teacher Peter K. Klassen. These *Probeschriften* were copy booklets of exemplary handwriting hand-bound with heavy thread designed to showcase the excellent work of schoolchildren learning to write (in German). In 1908 and in 1913 the handwriting was in the old *Kurrent* or *Kurrentschrift* Gothic script, which few people under the age of eighty can read today. However, in 1916 the lettering was Latin. One could speculate on what role the outbreak of the First World War might have had on that change. More pertinent to this story is that I opened the 1913 booklet first, and because of the uneven binding it fell open to a passage signed by "Kaarl [sic] Schekonowsky." This turns out to be the oldest son of the Schanowske family, later known to Erna Chase as Uncle Charlie.

It struck me, for the first time, that the children of the non-Mennonite herdsman would have been attending the Mennonite private school. The passage that Karl had been given to copy examined the history of the very area from which Karl's family had emigrated just seven years earlier. The text, however, was remarkably Mennonite. It described King Frederick I's use of his Prussian troops as mercenaries in Europe during the first decade of the 1700s as "shameful." The text also mentioned the last outbreak of the Black Plague in northern Europe in 1708–11, when one-third of the population of East Prussia died. It seems that the teacher tailored the text deliberately to the students in his class.

As more detail surfaced about the Schanowske family, the story began to take shape: this German-speaking Lutheran family immigrated to Canada from Volhynia in 1906, on two different ships. Martyn Tchechanovsky (b. 1873 in the village of Skotniki, in the Dolnośląskie province of present-day Poland), and his wife Marianna Schanowske (nee Neugebauer, b. 1874, married in the village of Mokvyn,³ in present-day Ukraine) appear in existing local records in 1908 when the birth of daughter Olga was registered in "Steinbeck." The sizable German Lutheran settlement in nearby

Friedensfeld may have attracted the new immigrants to settle in the area.

By 1910 the family had obtained employment in Alt-Bergfeld, where Martin was employed as a "cowman." There, according to the 1911 census, he worked seventy-two hours a week for about \$10, but had Sunday off, when the villagers took turns herding the cattle. Maria and the oldest daughter Rosa (mother to Erna Chase) likely stayed at home to take care of the younger children Olga and Heinrich (both born in Manitoba). They probably tended



Rosa Schumacher and her brother Charlie (Karl) Schanowske, ca. 1960.

ERNA CHASE



YORK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: JOHN WARKENTIN FONDS, ASC5394

Dr. John Warkentin took a photograph of the old log house during his research in the late 1950s.

a huge garden and perhaps some hens or pigs. Karl and Friedrich (both born in "Russia," according to the census) attended the Mennonite private school in the village, and likely helped their father with the cows during the summer. Since Alt-Bergfeld was a large and prosperous village, with about fifteen households in 1911, the herd of milk cows could easily have numbered seventy-five or more. The communal pasture was over a mile away, and as there were no fences, keeping a herd of cows from damaging crops or straying



ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA, A. A. HERRIOTT, SCHOOL INSPECTOR'S PHOTOGRAPHS, GR8461, A0233, C131-3

This is the building of the Alt-Bergfeld private school that Carl Schanowske attended. Image ca. 1923.

was a full-time job. This was especially the case for Martin, who had less than full use of his right hand due to arthritis.

References to Niverville in the various family records suggest that for several years the family left Alt-Bergfeld over winter and obtained work in the Lutheran community just east of Niverville. Here Rosa met her future husband, Adolf Wolske, whom she married in 1915. In 1916 the newlyweds moved to Saskatchewan, where surprisingly the census records find Martin and his entire family listed as well, prob-

ably there on a visit. By 1918 the Hanover assessment roll shows that Martin and Maria were back in Manitoba, living in the Schoensee area two miles north of present-day Grunthal, where Martin again probably served as "cowman." This left Rosa Wolske separated from her family for a decade. As daughter Erna Chase puts it, "My mother often sang the 'Red River Valley' song. When she was only seventeen years old, she left that valley with her husband for a homestead in Saskatchewan. I learned all the words as a child but I

really didn't realize the significance of that song for her. Surely her heart ached with loneliness for her parents and siblings. Grandmother Maria is resting peacefully in that beautiful Red River Valley. If we can locate her gravesite I want to tell her that her strength has come down to all her descendants."

By 1920–21 the family had acquired its own land in Rosengard, living in the village. There the younger children likely attended the Mennonite private school taught by Philip Kehler until the new

12. Jahr, alt.

ERNEST BRAUN

Wir möglichen Linienschiff mit Onthorung wesen
Der Böning Ynil und yernigem gab folgen Döring
blieb aber am Landwirtschaft Döring nicht woh.
Ginn jenachlich Pastorenliste vom 1908
und 1910 sind dann wieder in der Markt wo geboren
und sind seither dort und kommen jetzt der Böning

Bergfeld am 1. Dezember 1913 Karl Schanowsky

family over those ninety years? Eleven children had been born to Martin and Maria, three of them in Europe (Frederick was a babe in arms during the voyage over), and eight here in Manitoba. After the move to Saskatchewan in 1928, the sons ended up homesteading and farming in the Galilee area, and later farther north. One son moved to Flin Flon to work in the mines after the Depression made farming difficult in southern Saskatchewan. Three of the sons were called to serve in the Canadian military during the Second World War. Four of the five daughters married locally, and stayed in the area until retirement, when one moved to Calgary. One daughter left home to enter the workforce in the 1930s, but no further information regarding her whereabouts is known to the family. Rosa, the oldest daughter, lived on a homestead in the Galilee district of Saskatchewan (36-10-27-2W) until her passing in 1971. One daughter lived to be over one hundred years of age. The last member of the original Schanowske family died in Moose Jaw in 2015, 109 years after arriving in Canada.

For a family whose name has close to twenty different spellings, this has been a journey. To Mennonites, they are nameless no more. They were, and continue to be, our neighbours.⁴



Original herdsman's horn used by the first herdsman in the village of Steinbach. Martin Schanowske would have used a similar one in Alt-Bergfeld.

Handwriting in a copy booklet preserved by Peter J. Sawatzky and Justina Harms.

government District School No. 2162 opened in fall of 1927. Four Schanowske children were listed as attending the new government-run Rosengard district school under teacher Peter Rempel in the fall of 1927. Since this was their first exposure to an English school, all four of them, aged nine to thirteen, were in Grade 1. Their attendance was somewhat sporadic, for their mother Maria was deathly ill at the time, and that fall she was taken to the Winnipeg General Hospital. Maria Schanowske passed away in early December 1927 at the age of fifty-three, after being ill for some years. Bardal Funeral Parlour of Winnipeg then sent the deceased to Carey (the closest station to Rosengard) by train. Here the casket was picked up and taken for burial, but no record of her burial site has been located. She had lived in Canada just twenty-one years. Left to mourn her passing was her husband of thirty-three years, Martin, her married daughter Rosa in Saskatchewan, and ten unmarried children, the youngest just seven years old.

Martin Schanowske then sold their things in Rosengard at auction in early January 1928 and moved the family to the growing railway town of Galilee, Saskatchewan, to homestead near Rosa and Adolf Wolske. Adolf died suddenly later that same year, leaving Rosa a widow at age thirty-one with three young children and a fourth on the way. In 1936 she married Herman Schumacher and had more

children, among them Erna Schumacher Chase. Their daughters were themselves occasionally recruited to be "herd girls" on the plentiful pastureland and hills grazed by beef cattle. Rosa continued to live in the Galilee district of Saskatchewan to the end of her life. Today Galilee, much like Alt-Bergfeld, is almost completely erased from the landscape, and often referred to as one of the ghost towns of Saskatchewan. Only the old Sugar Loaf School and an abandoned garage remain, on Highway 36 south of Moose Jaw.

From the family's last contact with the East Reserve, fast-forward ninety years to when the herdsman's granddaughter Erna learned about a chapter of her grandfather's life that she had never known. In the fall of 2019, Erna Chase, her sister, and a nephew arrived at our house in Tourond, and I took them back to the places where their grandparents had lived: Alt-Bergfeld, Schoensee, Rosengard, and the Niverville site of the original Lutheran church on Provincial Road 311, in the first two cases showing them the sites where the houses of the herdsman had been. For Erna Chase the visit to Alt-Bergfeld was emotional. As she remembers, "I too had the chore as a 'cowherd' to bring the milk cows from the pasture on our farm. As we stood in Alt-Bergfeld on a sunny day last September, I think that I heard him blow his herdsman's horn."

What happened to the herdsman's

¹ Bergfeld was established on the Mennonite East Reserve in 1877. The next generation established Neu-Bergfeld farther southeast, and the original village became Alt-Bergfeld.

² Grunthal History (Steinbach: Grunthal History Book Committee, 1974), 47.

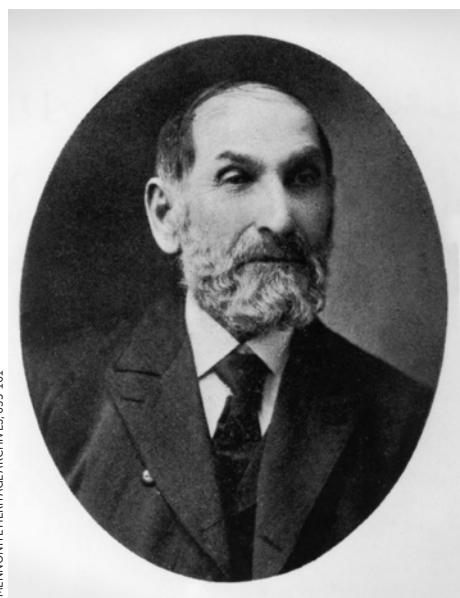
³ In the record, the village is listed as Mockvien.

⁴ Special thanks to Blake Hamm of Selkirk, Manitoba, for assistance with copy-editing.

SHANTZ'S PROPERTIES

in Manitoba and Dakota

Bruce Wiebe



MENNONTIE HERITAGE ARCHIVES 053-161

Jacob Y. Shantz engaged in business activities that extended beyond Ontario.

Among Mennonites, Jacob Y. Shantz is known for his role in helping newly arrived settlers from Russia establish homes in Canada during the 1870s. Less known are his business activities in Manitoba and the Dakota Territory. In this article, I will explore the disposition of Shantz's known properties in these regions. The existence of these properties demonstrates that Shantz's business activities extended beyond Ontario.

In late 1872, Jacob Y. Shantz, accompanied by Bernhard Warkentin of Russia, made his first trip to Manitoba. They toured portions of the province¹ with Provincial Land Surveyor William Wagner and Deputy Inspector of Surveys Milner Hart.² Their route took them northwest of Winnipeg and then to Portage la Prairie where Shantz was favourably impressed by

the lands between the Assiniboine River and Lake Manitoba. He commented that it was "principally open prairie and [was] a good soil" and noted that much of it was still available.³ The Dominion Lands Act of 1872 had established homestead policies but also made provision for the sale of land at \$1 per acre to individuals, not exceeding 640 acres.⁴ Before he left Manitoba on November 20, 1872, he made an entry⁵ for section 10 of township 13, range 7 west,⁶ situated about midway between the village of Portage la Prairie and Lake Manitoba. When the 1873 Russian Mennonite delegates toured Manitoba they also inspected this portion of the province and took note of Shantz's land.⁷ It is unknown whether any cultivation took place but the property appreciated in value. In April 1882 Shantz deeded it to Ontario merchant Samuel Groff for \$7,000 but took back a mortgage for \$4,000. Groff, for \$7,500, immediately deeded it to Portage la Prairie merchants Thomas Logan and James Henderson, but it remained encumbered by the Shantz mortgage. In 1883 Logan and Henderson mortgaged the property for \$2,000 to a third party, which was then registered as a second mortgage. Evidently Logan and Henderson defaulted on their mortgage payments to Shantz, who then foreclosed. In April 1884, under power of sale, Shantz, for \$4,875, deeded the property to Samuel Robertson,⁸ who then immediately deeded it back to Shantz and Samuel Groff for the same sum. The third-party second mortgage obtained by Logan and Henderson was discharged in 1887 and in 1889 Shantz and Groff

deeded the property to Amasa Mellon for \$6,400. They took back a mortgage from Mellon for \$5,400, which they subsequently assigned to the London and Canadian Loan and Agency Co. for \$4,000. This ended Shantz's involvement with section 10-13-7W,⁹ his first purchase in Manitoba.¹⁰

Shantz subsequently made numerous trips to Manitoba. When he arrived at Emerson on July 14, 1875, aboard the steamboat *International*,¹¹ he continued preparations related to the settlement of Russian Mennonite immigrants on what was referred to as the Dufferin or West Reserve. The town site of Emerson on the east bank of the Red River and immediately north of the United States border was surveyed in 1875¹² and Shantz acquired lot 2 in block K from the developers William Fairbanks and Thomas Carney.¹³ To store supplies for the Mennonite settlers he immediately began construction of two 18 by 30-foot warehouses,¹⁴ and by August 22 one of the buildings was already occupied and the other was nearing completion.¹⁵ Their location was most advantageous for trade, fronting on Main Street between Dominion and Park, backing on the riverbank above the steamboat landing, and also near the ferry, which provided ready access to the west side of the river.¹⁶ The intersection of Main and Park at the north end of Shantz's lot was where both streets dead-ended at the river.

Shantz purchased farm equipment, including wagons, in the United States for the Mennonite settlers, but also provided and distributed to them plows, rakes, flour, wheat, barley and bean seeds, and fruit trees,¹⁷ as well as barrels of meat including bacon and lard, much of which likely passed through his warehouses.¹⁸ The continuing inflow of families during the following year was likely the reason Shantz expended \$150 for an addition to the buildings in 1876.¹⁹

Emerson was experiencing a boom as businesses were established to service the rapidly growing agricultural sector created by homesteaders settling beyond the Mennonite Reserve. The Post Road



ARCHIVES OF MANITOBA N1690

The location of Shantz's property in Emerson was most advantageous for trade as it fronted onto Main Street and backed onto the riverbank.

brought grain to market and riverboats and flatboats continued to carry freight, despite service commencing November 1878 on the Canadian Pacific Railway, Pembina Branch, connecting Winnipeg with the United States through Emerson. Perhaps because of this increased local availability of equipment and supplies, in September 1879 Shantz agreed to sell a 35-foot width of his lot for \$350.²⁰ His lot had 240 feet of Main Street frontage but the site of his original two buildings could possibly have been towards the centre of the lot, which left much of it unused. Accordingly, on December 9, 1879, he deeded 35 feet to Alanson Harris, John Harris, James Kerr Osborne, and Lyman Melvin Jones, agricultural implement manufacturers of Brantford, Ontario,²¹ who had already begun construction of a 25 by 75-foot warehouse.²² In February 1881 for \$800 Shantz sold to the same company, now renamed A. Harris, Son & Co., the southernmost 25 feet of his lot, this being adjacent to their existing 35 feet.²³

In 1879, the Hudson's Bay Company established the town site of West Lynne directly opposite Emerson, on the west bank of the Red River, where Jacob Shantz's nephew Aaron E. Shantz built a house the following year.²⁴ Being on the east bank, the businesses of Emerson were now at a disadvantage since their trading

area was primarily to the west, although a ferry operated during the summer at the north end of Jacob Shantz's lot where Park Street dead-ended.²⁵ With the construction of a bridge over the Red River in 1880, the problems associated with steep riverbanks and mud during the summer,²⁶ limited ferry operation during spring thaw and autumn freeze-up, and sometimes unsafe ice conditions during the winter were resolved to Emerson's benefit.²⁷ To Jacob Shantz's personal benefit, the bridge was located at the north end of his property towards which purpose he donated his northernmost 75 feet of frontage.²⁸ It would appear that the approaches to the bridge proved inadequate since in January 1884 Shantz donated to the city of Emerson an adjacent triangular parcel with 27 feet of Main Street frontage.²⁹

No further dealings with the remaining 78 feet of his Main Street frontage, and backing on the river, can be located, but by 1889 Shantz was no longer listed as the registered owner in the Emerson assessment roll.³⁰ By 1891, Harris, Son & Co. was being assessed for the entire lot.³¹ Some portions of the riverbank may have eroded and reduced its value as the property was subject to seasonal flooding. It was later abandoned. Whether Shantz continued with his business interests in Emerson after the initial Mennonite settlement period appears unlikely, as the

1882 completion of the CPR Pembina Mountain Branch through the West Reserve altered transportation routes and reduced the significance of the town.

In addition to real estate, Shantz also engaged in the construction of a gristmill in Manitoba. The construction, but not the location, of Shantz's Manitoba gristmill was noted on September 28, 1876: "The Berliner Journal reported that two men from the Maude Foundry were going to Manitoba to put Jacob Y. Shantz's new gristmill into readiness, the ironwork having been constructed at the local foundry."³² Two months later, on November 28, 1876, the *Manitoba Free Press* reported, "A new grist mill has recently been erected in the heart of the Mennonite Settlement, about fifteen miles from Rat River. It is a two and a half storey building, 26 x 34, and has one run of stone, the motive power being supplied by a twelve-horsepower engine. The builders are Messrs. Maud and Co., of Berlin, Ont., and the machinery was procured from Gouldie & McCollough, of Galt. The mill will cost about \$4,000, and is expected to be in running order shortly. Mr Weins [sic], a Mennonite, is the proprietor."³³ Unfortunately, there is no additional verification of Shantz's direct involvement in any mill in Manitoba; however, from this information it seems reasonably certain that this was the mill

at Reinfeld in township 7, range 5 on the East Reserve. Whether Shantz was indeed the owner, or a partner with Peter Wiens and Johan Braun, could not be determined.³⁴ Shantz's involvement is entirely probable as Mennonites both needed and benefitted from a steam-powered mill on the reserve.³⁵

The government of Canada granted Shantz four quarter sections of land in what was referred to as the Rat River or East Reserve, in exchange for him building four sheds as housing to be at the disposal of Mennonite immigrants from Russia.³⁶ However, he only obtained patent to those lands on September 1, 1879,³⁷ and he only registered those patents on January 29, 1900. These properties, all in township 7, range 4 east, were NW 17, NE 18, SE 19, and SW 20, "excepting and reserving thereout the Public road or trail one chain and a half wide crossing the same being the Highway between Saint Boniface and Emerson."³⁸ In addition, Shantz in November 1882, via a deed, purchased for \$1,200 from Peter Dyck the nearby NE, NW, and SW quarters of section 7-7-4E.³⁹ Also that month he purchased for \$1,200 the NE, SE, and SW quarters of section 33-7-4E from Jacob Hiebert.⁴⁰ In December 1882 he acquired the SE quarter of section 1-5-5E from Johan Harder for \$75.⁴¹ These deeds were all dated prior to the lands having been patented and accordingly the patents were issued in the name of Jacob Y. Shantz. Shantz had business interests in Ontario and as additional collateral for his outstanding debts,⁴² on February 11, 1885, he and his wife Sarah mortgaged his personal Manitoba properties to the Canadian Bank of Commerce. This nominal \$1 mortgage was registered on March 11 on his remaining portion of the Emerson lot as well as all these quarter sections.⁴³ On February 3, 1890, Jacob Shantz sold NW 7-7-4E to Jacob Hiebert Jr. for \$650, but this appears to have been more of a swap since on May 20 he purchased NE 28-7-4E from Hiebert for the same sum. Shantz resold this latter parcel to Wilhelm Streich for \$500 on October 19, 1893, but took back a mortgage for the full amount; this mortgage was only discharged December 5, 1901.⁴⁴

ed April 11th 2 o'clock PM 1879

This Indenture made the tenth day of November in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy
eight by and between the Northern Pacific Railroad a corporation created by and existing under
an act of the Congress of the United States intituled An Act Granting Lands to aid in the
Construction of a Railroad and Telegraph Line from Lake Superior to Puget Sound on the Pacific
Coast by the Northern Route approved July 2d 1864 party of the first part and Joseph Shantz
of Berlin in the County of Waterloo in the Province of Ontario party of the second part
Witnesseth That the said party of the first part for and in consideration of the sum of Five thou-
sand and Forty (\$5440) and Four hundred dollars to it paid at or before the sealing and
delivery of these presents the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged has granted bargained
and sold released conveyed and confirmed and by these presents doth grant bargain sell and
release convey and confirm unto the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns the follow-
ing described tracts or parcels of land lying and being in the County of Barnes in the Territory
of Dakota that is to say All section No Fifteen (15) and Twenty-one (21) in Township No One
hundred and Forty two (42) forty one (61) West of the Eighth Principal Meridian containing
according to the United States Government Survey One thousand Two hundred and Eighty
(1280) acres more or less (being part of the lands granted to the said party of the first part by the
said act of Congress and the acts and resolutions supplementary thereto); reserving and except-
ing therefrom however a strip of land extending through the same (or so much of such strip
of land as may be within said described premises) of the width of four hundred feet that is two
hundred feet on each side of the centre line of the Northern Pacific Railroad or any of its branches
to be used for right of way or other railroad purposes in case the line of said railroad
or any of its branches has been or shall be located nor over or within less than two
hundred feet of said described premises together with all and singular the hereditaments
and appurtenances thereto belonging or in anywise appertaining
To have and to hold the said described parcels of land with the hereditaments and appurte-
nances unto the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns forever to and for the only
use and behoof of the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns forever
And the said party of the first part for itself and its successors doth hereby covenant grant
and agree to and with the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns that if the said
party of the first part shall and will warrant and defend the title to the said granted premises
unto the said party of the second part his heirs and assigns forever against the lawful claims
of all persons whomsoever On Witness Whereof the said party of the first part has caused these
presents to be sealed with its corporate seal and signed by its Resident and secretary the day and year
first above written

C B Wright

Signed sealed and delivered in his presence of President of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company
George Follitt Sam' Wilkins
Le R. Kidder Secretary of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company

In Barnes country, as this documents shows, Shantz purchased two sections of land from the Northern Pacific Rail Road.

By whom Shantz's East Reserve properties were occupied, and to what extent they were cultivated, has not been clearly documented. However, Hugh Street, who was a tenant on the property, was assessed taxes from 1889 to 1894 on the four contiguous quarter sections at the immigration sheds site. During those years his cultivated acreage rose from 75 to 110 acres.⁴⁵ Whether Street was operating the farm for Shantz is unclear, but on November 20, 1894, the Chortitzer *Waisenamt* conducted an auction sale of Shantz's assets at the farm. Horses, cattle, farm equipment, etc. were sold for cash or on credit with a three-year repayment term plus 6 per cent interest.⁴⁶ There is no record of Shantz having previously been assessed taxes for any personal assets such as cattle, but Street was so assessed as late as 1893,⁴⁷ which suggests this as a possibility.⁴⁸ There was a connection between

on November 20, 1894, the Chortitzer *Waisenamt* conducted an auction sale of Shantz's assets at the farm. Horses, cattle, farm equipment, etc. were sold for cash or on credit with a three-year repayment term plus 6 per cent interest.⁴⁶ There is no record of Shantz having previously been assessed taxes for any personal assets such as cattle, but Street was so assessed as late as 1893,⁴⁷ which suggests this as a possibility.⁴⁸ There was a connection between

them through Jacob's nephew Aaron Shantz, whose first wife, Veronica Eby, was a cousin to Street's wife, Amelia Eby. Street appears to have arrived from Ontario in 1882.⁴⁹ The auction sale grossed \$680, and after deducting expenses and \$73, which had been immediately forwarded to Shantz, there remained a total \$569 outstanding, which was repaid over the next three years by thirteen individuals, and this was forwarded to Shantz by the *Waisenvorsteher*.⁵⁰

Coinciding with receipt of the final payments from his auction proceeds, Shantz began to divest his Manitoba properties. On January 1, 1898, an agreement between Jacob Y. Shantz as vendor, the Canadian Bank of Commerce, and Peter Kehler and Bernhard Kehler as purchasers was signed. Shantz agreed to sell NW 17-7-4E and NE 18-7-4E to the Kehlers for \$1,300. The deal was structured in the following way: \$200 having already been paid, \$150 was payable every November 1 from 1898 through 1903, with the remaining \$200 due on November 1, 1904, plus 6 per cent interest, all monies to be paid directly to the bank. The Kehlers were permitted to (and did) prepay, as Shantz gave them a deed on November 13, 1900. It is not evident now but likely others engaged in similar agreements and payment terms for the subsequent sales: SW 7-7-4E to Johan Loeppky for \$250 on February 25, 1898; NE 7-7-4E to Jacob Hiebert Sr. for \$250 on March 28, 1898; SE 19-7-4E and SW 20-7-4E to Martin Friesen for \$1,300 on December 2, 1899; and SE 1-5-5E to Jacob P Wiebe for \$400 on November 3, 1902. The NE, SE, and SW quarters of section 33-7-4E were sold to Edith M. England for \$1,000 on October 29, 1901, but almost immediately, on November 8, 1901, she re-deeded the SE and SW quarters to Wilhelm Streich for \$700, and the NE quarter to David Dueck for \$500.⁵¹

It should be noted that for a time Shantz owned property about 130 miles into the Dakota Territory. Shantz had accompanied the 1873 Mennonite delegation on their land inspection trip to this area but he opposed settlement there in favour of Manitoba. Beginning in 1874, a number

of Russian Mennonite families did, however, settle in Cass County⁵² and Shantz appeared to have maintained contact with them. Despite favouring Manitoba over Dakota, the land that he inspected must have made a positive impression, since on March 2, 1876, Shantz personally purchased two entire sections of land in Cass County for \$5,620. These were sections 23-142-49 and 33-141-50, purchased from the Northern Pacific Railroad (NPRR).⁵³ Just two years later, on July 6, 1878, Shantz sold section 33 for

ment in their subsequent disposition suggests that they later had a vested interest. On February 26, 1892, Shantz sold NW 15-142-61 for \$800 and on October 15, 1892, he sold SE 15-142-61 for the same amount. Whether these monies were forwarded to the bank is not indicated. However, between those two dates, on July 9, 1892, he sold NE 15-142-61 for \$800, but extended 7 per cent mortgage financing for \$550. The purchaser was to pay \$200 on December 1, 1893, and \$350 on December 1, 1894. On October



A bird's-eye view of Emerson.

WESTERN CANADIAN PICTORIAL INDEX NO 11179

\$3,200, but on November 10 that same year he purchased a further two sections of land from the NPRR, this time in Barnes County.⁵⁴ For \$5,440 he acquired sections 15-142-61 and 21-142-61. In case the NPRR chose to construct a railway across any of the four sections, it initially reserved the rights to a 400-foot-wide strip of land across each of the four sections purchased, but this right was never exercised. On October 4, 1881, five years after having purchased it, Shantz sold his remaining section in Cass County, 23-142-49, for \$2,560. Whether these properties were occupied and being cultivated has not been researched⁵⁵ but Shantz retained ownership of both his Barnes County sections until 1892. It is unlikely that the Canadian Bank of Commerce would have known about these Dakota properties since they were not mortgaged as additional collateral for Shantz's debts in the mid-1880s, in contrast to his Manitoba properties. However, the bank's involve-

ment in Emerson assigned this mortgage to the Canadian Bank of Commerce for \$550. Finally, on July 16, 1895, Shantz deeded his remaining Dakota lands, SW 15-142-61 and all of section 21, to the Canadian Bank of Commerce for the nominal sum of \$1. The bank subsequently resold the properties.⁵⁶

Certain Manitoba West Reserve homesteads were patented to Shantz, to facilitate repayment of the original homesteaders' *Gebietsamt* (district government) debts, but they were not considered his personal properties by the parties involved.⁵⁷ However, since the patents were registered in his name, the law did not make this distinction, and to Shantz's apparent vexation he became the defendant in a civil suit, *Braun vs. Shantz*, in the Court of Queen's Bench in Equity. After a quit-claim from homesteader Gerhard Janzen, the patent to SW 25-1-5W was sent at Shantz's request to the *Gebietsamt* in Reinland, Manitoba, where *Obervorsteher*

Franz Froese sold the property at auction to Jacob Braun of Osterwick, who then resold it to his own son Jacob the younger. After learning that his purchase was still subject to the Osterwick village agreement,⁵⁸ Jacob Braun the younger filed a bill of complaint. The original deed from Shantz to Braun the elder was not made subject to the village agreement and Braun had refused to sign a document that would acknowledge it was. The lawyer for the Gebietsamt, J. B. McLaren, acting as power of attorney for Shantz, then filed a second deed to Braun the elder but now made subject to the village agreement. In the suit, Braun the younger demanded that Shantz cancel the second deed and pay all costs of the suit. In a deposition Shantz elaborated on his role: "It was understood that as I was only a trustee, I would do whatever Froese and the Committee then agreed to." He also stated that Franz Froese had told him that the land would have sold for a higher price had it not been subject to the village agreement. On January 27, 1891, the court ordered the bill of complaint dismissed without costs to either party. A dissatisfied Braun the younger then requested a rehearing, which on February 14 the court also dismissed, but now ordering him to pay Shantz's costs.⁵⁹ This case was so unusual that an 1891 newspaper reported it as "Strange Occurrence of a Mennonite as Plaintiff in a Law Suit."⁶⁰

Another documented West Reserve land transaction involving Shantz warrants clarification as it might mistakenly be considered his personal property.⁶¹ In 1883 some West Reserve Mennonites,

with the cooperation of Shantz, obtained mortgages from the London and Ontario Investment Co. for repayment of first lien sums owed to the Waterloo Society, a group of Ontario Mennonites who had guaranteed the Canadian government's loan for the 1870s Mennonite immigrants' travel and resettlement expenses. The individual Mennonites signed the mortgage documents and powers of attorney which allowed the mortgagee to obtain the patent from the Department of the Interior. Shantz notified the department that the individuals' Waterloo Society debts were repaid, and the department forwarded the patents to London and Ontario. The latter had the mortgages registered and paid Shantz the sums owed to the Waterloo Society.⁶² A similar 1885/86 plan involved the London and Canadian Loan and Agency Co., but is somewhat ambiguous in that the mortgages, in some cases, repaid only a portion of the individual's first lien debt.⁶³ Such was certainly the case of Bernhard Neufeld of NE 30-2-2W, whose \$300 mortgage was only a third of his \$917 first lien debt. Since, in order for patent to issue and the mortgage to be registered, Shantz had already certified that London and Canadian had paid the monies due to the Waterloo Society under the lien, the patent was issued in Neufeld's name and there was no further recourse. However, in June 1887, for \$1,140, Neufeld signed a quit-claim deed transferring the property to Shantz.⁶⁴ For \$1,000, Shantz subsequently deeded it to Johan Penner, who financed the purchase via his own mortgage from London and Canadian.

With 6 per cent compound interest, by 1887 Neufeld's total debt would have approximated \$1,140,⁶⁵ and this would have been cancelled by the deed to Shantz for this sum. These transactions parallel those where other patents were issued to Shantz to resolve debts, and this, plus the lack of any financial gain in these transactions, clearly indicates that Shantz's role was not personal.

The foregoing documents Jacob Y. Shantz's known assets in Manitoba and in Dakota Territory. Doubtless there are other of his activities in this province which are lesser known but also provide some insights into his motives and evidence his business acumen. One of these involved the Manitoba wheat crop of 1883, which had been damaged by frost and had no local market. Without Mennonite farmers' payments on their debts, the West Reserve Gebietsamt and the East and West Reserve Berghaler would have been unable to remit funds for payment on the loan from the Canadian government. To salvage the situation, in early 1884 Shantz spent a month in Manitoba purchasing damaged grain from the Mennonites for shipment back to Ontario, where he expected to find a ready market for it. He intended to delay selling the undamaged wheat, approximately one-third of the crop, until spring when it would realize better prices.⁶⁶ Since he had to ship through the United States, Shantz also saved the Mennonite farmers money by arranging for the use of a railway siding on the American side to load the rail cars.⁶⁷ Other such details about Shantz's involvements may yet appear.

¹ Manitoba had become a Canadian province the previous year and only extended 110 miles north of the US border and 130 miles from east to west.

² *Manitoba Free Press*, November 30, 1872

³ Samuel J. Steiner, *Vicarious Pioneer: The Life of Jacob Y. Shantz* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1988), 165–167.

⁴ The act was published in the *Manitoba Free Press*, November 30, 1872.

⁵ There was a Dominion Lands office in Winnipeg.

⁶ Township General Register, GR7666, G10494, Archives of Manitoba (hereafter AM). Approval for patent was dated May 10, 1873, and the patent itself July 10, 1873, but Shantz himself never registered it in the Lands Office. More than a century later, April 8, 1993, the District Registrar had it recorded on the abstract for 10-13-7W.

⁷ Leonhard Sudermann, *In Search of Freedom*, trans. Elmer F. Suderman (Steinbach: Derksen Printers, 1974), 18. William

Hespeler also purchased land in the vicinity: section 10 and the east half of section 15 in township 13, range 6 west, and in township 14, range 6 west, the fractional west half of section 2 and the fractional south half of section 3. Township General Register, GR7666, G10494, AM. Hespeler also made entry for the east half of 3-13-6, but appears to have cancelled or abandoned it.

⁸ Robertson may have been either the brother or father to Groff's wife Marion nee Robertson.

⁹ All foregoing entries recorded on the abstract for 10-13-7W at the Portage la Prairie Land Titles Office (LTO). Additional details from the Assessment and Collector Rolls at the RM of Portage la Prairie.

¹⁰ Manitoba registrations are recorded on the abstracts for the relevant quarter sections at the Winnipeg Land Titles Office. Document dates used are as of signing and not registration unless noted. The terms sale and deed are used

interchangeably since the transactions were prior to these lands having been brought under the Real Property Act. There is sometimes ambiguity as to sale or purchase prices since the abstract entries do not conclusively specify whether the amount recorded as paid is only for a particular parcel or for several included in the same registration.

¹¹ *Manitoba Free Press*, July 14, 1875, 3. Also aboard the International were fifty-three Mennonite families who landed at West Lynne and another forty families who landed at Rat River later that day. Although the Free Press actually reported the fifty-three families debarked at West Lynne with Shantz in charge, it is more likely that this occurred at the Fort Dufferin immigration sheds located only two miles north of Emerson and the Hudson's Bay Company Post at West Lynne. Steamboats had landing sites at all three locations according to Emerson International, June 12, 1879.

¹² A portion of an 1874 survey, #1, of the town was cancelled.

- 13 Deed # 377. On January 13, 1876, Fairbanks and Carney deeded lot 2 in block K to Shantz for \$1. Although Shantz began construction of the warehouses earlier than the deed was dated, its delay was due to the Plan of Survey (#2) only being registered December 22, 1875. The townsite developers may have initially sold lots for a nominal \$1 to businessmen who intended to immediately build and thereby create further demand.
- 14 *Manitoba Free Press*, August 6, 1875. A month before Shantz's arrival, there were only twenty frame buildings in Emerson – *Manitoba Free Press*, June 12, 1875.
- 15 *Manitoba Free Press*, August 25, 1875.
- 16 *Manitoba Free Press*, August 6, 1875.
- 17 Gemeindebuch Allerlei Anschreibung der Kolonie Reinland, Anschreibe Buch des Peter Wiens, Reinlaender Gebietsamt records, MHA; Steiner, 102; *Minneapolis Daily Tribune*, September 21, 1875.
- 18 *Manitoba Free Press*, August 19, 1875.
- 19 *Manitoba Free Press*, November 22, 1876.
- 20 The agreement, dated September 12, 1879, was signed by Enoch Winkler on behalf of Shantz, and the purchaser actually named was Messieurs Harris and Company of Emerson in the Province of Manitoba, Agricultural Implement Manufacturers.
- 21 Deed # 3215. The 35-foot frontage sold split his lot and left Shantz 25 feet to the south and 180 feet to the north. The purchasers operating as A. Harris, Son & Co., along with their other branches in Brandon and Portage la Prairie and the headquarters in Winnipeg, were retailers of agricultural equipment.
- 22 *Emerson International*, September 18, 1879.
- 23 Deed # 991, February 18, 1881, Jacob Y. Shantz to Alanson Harris, John Harris, James Kerr Osborne, and Lyman Melvin Jones, known as A. Harris Son & Co.
- 24 West Lynne Southern Manitoba Times, December 11, 1880.
- 25 *Emerson International*, February 27, 1879.
- 26 West Lynne Southern Manitoba Times, December 11, 1880.
- 27 *Emerson International*, June 3; July 1, 8; September 16, 30; and October 1, 28, 1880.
- 28 Deed # 6639, June 10, 1880, Jacob Y. Shantz to the Corporation of the Town of Emerson, for \$1. Although the 75 feet fronted on Main Street, this was a triangular wedge with limited commercial value. The ideal location of Shantz's lot was now obvious as the Harris Company leased from the townsite developers the un-surveyed property between their warehouse and the river (lease dated October 4, 1880), where their farm machinery would be visible to all traffic over the bridge, according to the *Emerson International*, June 3, 1880.
- 29 Deed # 7319, January 1, 1884, Jacob Y. Shantz to the Corporation of the City of Emerson, for \$1.
- 30 Town of Emerson Assessment Roll, 1889, GR8232, G11809, AM.
- 31 Town of Emerson Assessment Roll, 1891, GR8232, G11810, AM.
- 32 Steiner, 106. Jacob Y. Shantz had constructed a foundry in Berlin, which in 1872 he sold to William and James Maude, and for which he provided mortgage financing for four years (Steiner, 59). His interest in directing business to this foundry is obvious.
- 33 *Manitoba Free Press*, November 28, 1876, 3.
- 34 Details about the relocation and later dismantling of the mill, but no financial information, are provided in Jake Peters, "Pioneer Windmills," *Preservings*, no. 16 (June 2000): 122. The partner named there as Jakob Braun was recorded as Johan Braun in *75 Gedenkfeier der Mennonitischen Einwanderung in Manitoba, Canada*, ed. K. J. B. Reimer (Steinbach: Festkomitee, 1949), 113, and *Historical Atlas of the East Reserve*, ed. Ernest N. Braun and Glen R. Klassen (Winnipeg: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2015), 105.
- 35 Other Ontarians seeing such opportunities included Jacob's nephew Aaron Shantz who, together with David Lapp, had a grain warehouse and crusher operating in Winnipeg in 1878. *Manitoba Free Press*, November 2, 1878, December 18, 1878.
- 36 An existing steam grist mill at Emerson, built by Borrow (or Baner?), was rented in 1878 and subsequently purchased by Abraham Stauffer and partners. *Manitoba Free Press*, October 16, 1878, November 8, 1879; *Emerson, Manitoba, and her Industries* (Winnipeg: Steen & Boyce, 1882), 27.
- 37 Steiner, 93; Julius G. Toews and Lawrence Klippenstein, eds., *Manitoba Mennonite Memories* (Altona and Steinbach: Manitoba Mennonite Centennial Committee, 1974), 31.
- 38 The wording of the patent contains this exclusion.
- 39 Abstract registration at Winnipeg LTO; Jacob Y. Shantz to Department of the Interior, December 18, 1882, RG15, D-II-I, vol. 288, file 54018, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC).
- 40 Ibid. The lands Shantz acquired Nov 1882 in sections 33- and 7-7-4E were not homestead lands; they had been purchased by their owners Hiebert and Dyck. These were regular deeds to Shantz, purchases by him, whether done to satisfy a Waterloo Society debt or not does not enter into it. They were not subject to forfeiture of homestead right.
- 41 Conveyance dated December 5, 1882, and registered by the Department of the Interior December 1, 1883. Johann Harder of Reinland, Manitoba, Yeoman to Shantz, Jacob Y. of Berlin, Ontario, Manufacturer, RG15, D-II-8-I, vol. 1429, LAC. There is no explanation given as to the low value placed on this quarter as compared to the others. This Johan Harder quarter section in 1-5-5E was a homestead and the application for patent was signed Nov. 24, 1882 and appears to have been recommended on Nov. 28. As per the LTO abstract, the deed from Harder to Shantz was dated Dec. 5, 1882 and registered Dec. 20, 1882. On Jan. 9, 1883, Shantz forwarded a "conveyance," likely the same deed since it bears same date, Dec. 5, 1882, to the Department of the Interior and it was registered Jan. 12, 1883. Shantz's patent was dated Feb. 8, 1883. Harder would not then have forfeited his homestead right since he conveyed the property after recommendation for patent. Again, a straightforward purchase by Shantz with no evidence for or against it having been a transaction to satisfy a Waterloo Society obligation other than that Harder's 1880 *Brotschuld* debt only amounted to \$14.
- 42 Further details about Shantz's financial situation in Steiner, 139.
- 43 Mortgage # 7947. Thereafter discharges were registered by the bank only as Shantz disposed of the properties. Interestingly, the Canadian Bank of Commerce mortgage was not registered on the section of land at Portage la Prairie owned by Shantz and Groff.
- 44 Abstracts, Winnipeg LTO.
- 45 RM of Hanover taxation records.
- 46 *Der Nordwesten*, November 15, 1894. The notice (*Bekanntmachung*) dated November 8 gave the auction sale location merely as "bei Hugh Street," and did not specify who the actual owner was. Capital Buch des Jacob Y. Shantz, Berlin, 1895 1 Januar angefangen, Chortitzer Mennonite Church Waisenamt collection, MHA; Friedrichsthal 1869, Capital Buch fuer Shantz, CMC Waisenamt collection, MHA.
- 47 RM of Hanover taxation records.
- 48 Alternatively, but less likely, Shantz might have acquired such assets from tenants of his other properties.
- 49 Street was residing at Palmerston, Ontario, in the 1881 census but the September 19, 1882, *Manitoba Daily Free Press* reported that five packages being shipped by rail, destined for Hugh Street in Manitoba, had been transferred at Chicago (p. 5).
- 50 Capital Buch des Jacob Y. Shantz, Berlin, 1895 1 Januar angefangen; Friedrichsthal 1869, Capital Buch fuer Shantz.
- 51 Abstracts, Winnipeg LTO.
- 52 Cass County is west of the Red River, with Fargo as the county seat.
- 53 This particular section is located in Berlin Township, which suggests that it was named after Shantz's home town.
- 54 Barnes County is adjacent to the west of Cass County.
- 55 This is likely undocumented unless property tax records still exist, and provided the actual occupant was assessed for same.
- 56 Bruce Wiebe, "The Russian Mennonite Settlement in Cass County, Dakota Territory" (unpublished manuscript, 2007). Excerpts, but not the foregoing details, appear in "The Mennonite Settlements in Dakota 1874 to 1892," in *Settlers of the East Reserve*, ed. Adolf Ens, Ernest N. Braun, and Henry N. Fast (Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2009), 289–304. Since Shantz had purchased directly from the NPRA and the company had lands in adjacent counties, searches of Stutsman, Traill, and Clay were also conducted as well as of Pembina County, because of its proximity to Manitoba. No further such purchases were located.
- 57 Bruce Wiebe, "Mennonite Debt in the West Reserve," *Preservings*, no. 39 (2019): 25. This included debts owing to both the Reinlaender Gemeinde West Reserve Gebietsamt as well as the West Reserve Bergthal for the Waterloo Society debt.
- 58 "...subject however to all rights, liabilities, duties and easements, claims, interests and estates therein and thereto of the inhabitants of the said village of Osterwick..."
- 59 For the full details of this suit consult microfilm at Morden LTO, O/S 7087. The *Braun vs. Shantz*, no. 7087 (1890), Court of Queen's Bench in Equity pocket, ATG0014, GR0181, B-14-4-3, AM, contains only one page referring to the file as being located at the LTO.
- 60 *Manitoba Daily Free Press*, January 28, 1891.
- 61 E. K. Francis, in *In Search of Utopia*, 139, states that by 1889, 1,200 acres of land in the RM of Douglas were registered to Shantz, i.e., were owned by him. However, the 1889 assessment rolls actually indicate only 320 acres, 160 of which had been patented to Shantz to facilitate repayment of a Gebietsamt debt (described in Wiebe, "Mennonite Debt in the West Reserve," 25). This leaves the quarter section hereafter described to now be clarified.
- 62 It is unclear exactly when the funds were forwarded to Shantz and how soon he notified the West Reserve Gebietsamt or West Reserve Bergthal for their receipt so that this could be reflected in their own records.
- 63 The London and Canadian Loan and Agency Co. to A. M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Interior, April 11, 1885, RG15, D-II-I, vol. 288, file 54018, LAC. "We are about making a considerable number of small loans to Mennonites in Southern Manitoba to be secured by separate mortgages over each individual's property. The Waterloo Society of Ontario, as perhaps you know, gave the Dominion Govt bonds to secure moneys advanced by the latter to Manitoba Mennonites. Our present operation is designed to repay to the Govt, with the concurrence of the Waterloo Society, certain portions of those advances." Reinlaender Gebietsamt records "No. 6 Enthaltend wer an die Gemeinde schuldig ist" and "Vorschus erhalten bei Rosthern und Hague, bis dahin Regierungsschuld, alte" both have other examples of these mortgages as partial payment for outstanding debt.
- 64 One might assume that this had been voluntary by Neufeld; however, the West Reserve Bergthal church's involvement cannot be dismissed.
- 65 Both the first lien and London and Canadian mortgage balances had to be repaid to enable the sale to Penner.
- 66 *Winnipeg Daily Sun*, January 25, 1884, 5. Here it was also reported that Shantz had already purchased and shipped over 15,000 bushels of wheat to Ontario, whereas the February 7, 1884, *Emerson International* reported that 243,500 bushels of wheat and 20,000 bushels of flax were purchased. The Mennonites had also retained 100,000 bushels of wheat for food and seed.
- 67 Steiner, 201; Shantz Testimony to Parliament, April 8, 1886. From the context this would have been at Neche, ND. The Canadian elevator, Ogilvie, did not want to handle the grain and bypassing them produced the cost saving.

THE BARTSCH-HOEPPNER PRIVILEGIUM

Lawrence Klippenstein

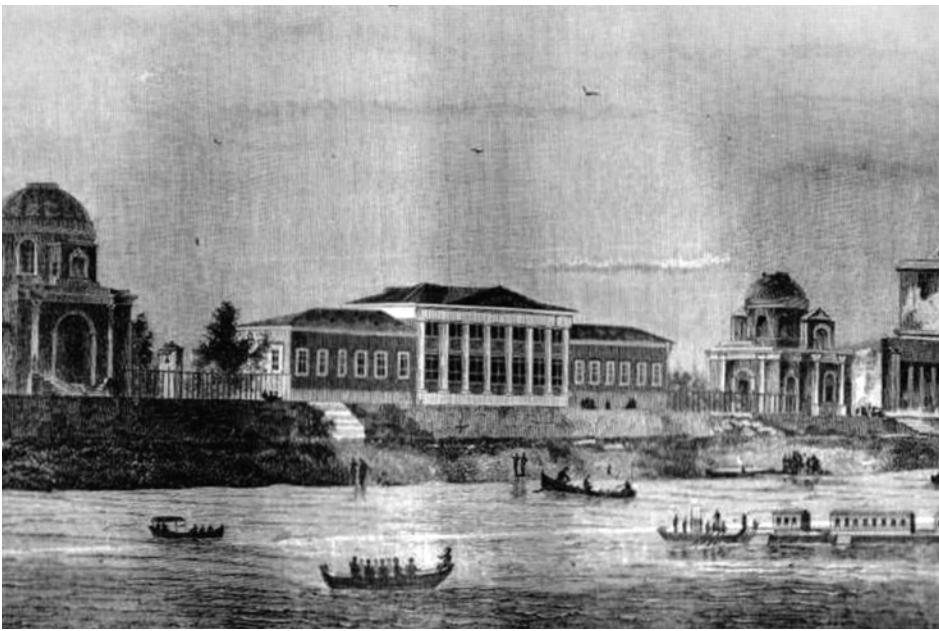
Denen werthgeschätzten und wohlachtbaren Mitgliedern derer beiden Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Danzig, vornehmlich allen, denen daran gelegen seyn kann, und welche die Vollmacht für die nach Russland gesandt gewesene Abgeordnete unterzeichnet haben, wird hierdurch bekannt gemacht, daß eben diese Abgeordnete, nachdem sie laut ihrer Instruktion sehr fruchtbare Ländereien am Dnieper-Strom ausgewählt haben, gesund und glücklich zurückgekommen sind, und am 13. May dieses Jahres neuen Styls, das ist, am 2. May alten Styls, die hohe Gnade genossen haben, durch Se. Durchlaucht den Herrn Reichs-Fürsten v. Potemkin-Tavitscheskoi in der Stadt Kremenchuk Thro Kaiserl. Majestät in Gegenwart des Kabinetts-Ministers, Herrn Reichsgrafen v. Besborodko Erlaucht, des Römisch-Kaiserl. Ambassadeurs, derer Gesandten von England und Frankreich, und noch vieler andern hohen Standespersonen, vorgestellt zu werden, und aus der allerhuldreichsten Russischen Monarchin eigenem Munde die Versicherung des allerhöchsten Kaisersl. Schutzes und Gnade für sich und alle Mennoniten-Familien von Danzig, die nach Russland ziehen wollen, auf die allergnädigste und leuteligste Weise zu erhalten. Weil nun auch Thro Kaiserl. Majestät allen Mennoniten, die von dem Danziger Gebiet Lust und Belieben finden möchten, nach Russland zu ziehen, außer 65 Dessaetinen, die ohngefehr 4 Hufen ausmachen, der schönsten Ländereien für jede Familie, solche herrliche Gnadenwohlthaten, Geldvorschüsse und Vorrechte allergnädigst zu bewilligen geruhet haben, dergleichen während Allerhochst Dero 25-jährigen ruhmvollen und ewigdenkwürdigen Regierung noch keinen Ausländern verliehen worden; als werden alle Mennoniten vom Danziger Gebiet, denen es noch gefällig seyn möchte, von dieser großen Kaiserlichen Huld und Gnade für sich und ihre Familien- und Nachkommen Gebrauch zu machen, hierdurch eingeladen, sich am bevorstehenden 19. Januarii des von Gott zu erwartenden 1788sten Jahres Vormittags um 9 Uhr allhier in Danzig im Rus. Kays. Gesellschafts-Palais auf Langgarten, persönlich einzufinden, damit ihnen die Privilegia und allerhöchste Kaiserliche Kabinets-Resolutions in originalibus vorgelegt werden, und sie sich nach ihrem Gutdünken, und so wie es freyen Leuten, deren Vorfahren aus Holland hierher gekommen sind, und die nun bei ihrem Abzuge prästanda prästirend werden, nicht gewehret werden darf, erklären können. Danzig, den 29. Decemb. 1787.

After the return of Bartsch and Hoepner from their trip, Georg von Trappe handed out flyers like the one above. These flyers invited Mennonites to the Russian Imperial Embassy in Danzig to see with their own eyes the privileges negotiated by the delegates.

In the summer of 1786, Georg von Trappe, an agent for the Russian state, appealed to Mennonites in Danzig to consider Tsarina Catherine II's invitation to settle in the newly conquered territories of New Russia. By late October, Mennonites had sent a delegation, consisting of Jacob Hoepner and Johann Bartsch, to scout these new lands and choose a spot to build a new settlement. The travel route of Hoepner and Bartsch took them to Riga on the Baltic then down the Dvina River, through Orsha and Dubrovno, to Kremenchug. In Kremenchug they were met by Grigorii Potemkin, who performed a key role in the military subjugation of the territory and its subsequent settlement. The Mennonite emigration from Danzig and West Prussia would come under his administration; hence negotiating the move was part of his duties. Potemkin received the Mennonites briefly, and handed them over to a guide who would help them explore possible sites of settlement along the Dnieper River. After weighing their options, Hoepner and Bartsch settled on a section of land where the Konka and Dnieper Rivers met, on the bank opposite the town of Berislav. Back in Kremenchug, on April 22, 1787, Bartsch and Hoepner submitted to Potemkin a petition which requested a set of privileges for Mennonites as a condition of their settlement.¹

It is not clear if these proposed terms of settlement had been worked out within the community before the delegates began their journey or if they drew them up themselves en route to meet Potemkin. Most likely the text included petition points decided on in Danzig and West Prussia and others fine-tuned by the delegates after they had seen the land and as they negotiated the wording of the petition.

The negotiations between the Mennonite delegates and Potemkin came at an awkward time because the latter was focused on Catherine's grand trip to the region. The arrival of the Mennonite delegation overlapped with the travels of the tsarina and Potemkin presented them



The Mennonite delegates met Grigorii Potemkin in the city of Kremenchug to negotiate the terms of settlement. Kremenchug, located on the Dnieper River, was a significant administrative centre for Russia's colonization of the region.

to her on May 2, 1787. The meeting included a preliminary statement on the concerns of the delegates and Catherine invited them to accompany her royal entourage to Crimea. Although they were eager to return home to their families, the scouts accepted the tsarina's invitation.

Bartsch and Hoeppner obtained an answer to their petition from Potemkin in early July 1787.² It is not clear if the two delegates checked the finished agreement, signed by Potemkin, with their superiors, ministers and others, back in Danzig and West Prussia before heading to St. Petersburg to get the signature of Tsarina Catherine, who had returned to the capital.

A survey of Potemkin's response will not be attempted as a detailed analysis of its contents has been offered by the late Dr. David G. Rempel.³ This study will bring forward a new translation of the twenty points, as they have not previously been made easily available in English.⁴

The text of the petition comes to us from Minister David Epp's 1888 work *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten: Versuch einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges*. Published a century after the Mennonites settled at Chortitz, the book constituted a "centennial project," as the foreword notes.⁵ It would appear that Epp used a copy of the original, the exact location

of which, if it still exists, is not available. That one would have borne the signatures of Tsarina Catherine II, Alexander Bezborodko, and Potemkin. It was forwarded to the Mennonite leaders in Danzig, with a copy no doubt retained for the imperial archives in St. Petersburg.

As historian Grigorii Pisarevskii pointed out in his study on foreign colonization in Russia published in 1909, this document was not entered into the empire's "Complete Collection of Laws." In contrast, the text of the Charter of Privileges given to Mennonites by Tsar Paul I in 1800, which affirmed the earlier agreement, was included. This may be the main point of difference between the 1787 document and the *Privilegium* of 1800, leading scholars to describe the latter as the "first" *Privilegium*.⁶

Perhaps the 1787 petition was seen as directly connected to Catherine's 1763 Manifesto. This could then be interpreted to indicate that Catherine and Potemkin viewed the document as a rewording suited to a specific case of a group wishing to immigrate, and hence not a new charter that needed to be entered into the collection of laws.

THE TEXT

The following text is based on a fusion of Dr. Elfrieda Schroeder's English trans-

lation of the German-language version printed in the work of David Epp, and an English translation of material found in Pisarevskii's study done by several Russian-speaking students at Mennonite Brethren Bible College, directed by the late William Schroeder of Winnipeg, and a review of the resulting combination of sources by the author of this article.

The words of the petitioners are given in regular print, and the responses of Potemkin's office appear here in bold.

REAFFIRMING THE PETITION

Ultimately, Mennonites settled in the Khortitsa region, not near Berislav, after Potemkin deemed their original choice to be too dangerous for settlement.⁷ In 1798, nine years after they arrived in New Russia, Mennonites sent a small delegation, David Epp and Gerhard Willms, to the royal court in St. Petersburg to obtain an audience with the tsar to affirm the *Privilegium*. Although we do not know their motivations, perhaps their concern to have the Charter endorsed may have had to do with Paul's penchant for reversing the enactments his mother, Catherine II.

On September 3, 1800 (some sources say September 6), they got what they wanted: a royal document, formally formatted, which restated the essential freedoms and privileges offered to the former immigrants through Hoeppner and Bartsch and indeed promised in the 1763 Manifesto. This document would be included in the empire's "Complete Collection of Laws."

Cognizant of changes taking place in Russia, it considerably extended some of the economic and social conditions of the agreement. It also reaffirmed Mennonites' freedom of worship and exemption from military service, which had always been the core of what they considered as the minimal religious protections necessary for building their communities. Overall scholars have given inadequate attention to the 1787 petition of Bartsch and Hoeppner. In this author's view, the text of the twenty-point petition demonstrates that it deserves to be recognized as the first *Privilegium* of Mennonites in Russia.

THE TWENTY-POINT PETITION

An extract of privileges granted by His Highness, Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, Eminence Potemkin Tavrichesky, to the representatives (*Deputierten*) of the Danzig Mennonites and most graciously confirmed by Her Russian Imperial Majesty, as follows:

I.

That they be permitted to practice their religion according to their church statutes and customs.⁸

Granted.

2.

A. That to each family shall be allocated 65 *dessiatiny*⁹ of arable land opposite the city of Berislav close to the Konskiye Vody River on the right side of the Perekop Road, and not including the inferior land which may be part of the 65 dessiatiny.

B. Along with the Tavan Island (of which lands have not been allocated to anyone else), located across from Berislav, along with all adjoining waters and islands surrounding it. That will provide sufficient hay for their livestock.

C. Exclusive fishing rights in the waters of the Dnieper and Konskiye Vody up to its boundaries, with the prohibition that strangers are not allowed any fishing privileges within their boundaries.

D. Since the above-described areas of land are not forested, and trees are absolutely essential for heating, they (the new settlers) humbly request that they be allowed to make use of at least half of the still existing one thousand five hundred dessiatiny of the forested area of the island of Kairo not yet allocated to others.

A. Orders will be given to make the allocation of the land official.

B. Only a part of this island can be allotted to you because a bridge is to be built over the Dnieper River there, and there are plans in place for other crown works which require a large part of that island area.

C. You have the right to use the fisheries in the waters that surround your land allotment, as stated in the law.

D. Only a small portion of this land can be allotted to them.

3.

Exemption of payment of taxes/levies for a period of ten years.

Granted.

4.

After the ten years are ended, each family shall pay a tax of fifteen kopeks per *dessiatin* annually, and for the duration of that time be exempt for all time (*auf immer unverletzt*) from quartering troops, providing military transport, and other kinds of government labour.¹⁰

This is agreed to and as soon as the ten-year exemption has ended, the crown will require fifteen kopeks for each *dessiatin* of land. They shall also be exempted from transporting supplies for the military, compulsory labour, and billeting (of troops), except for the time when military units must pass through, for which action the communities shall make sure that the bridges on their property (in their vicinity) shall be maintained.¹¹

5.

That any of the settlers who so desire would be permitted to open up shops and establish factories, and also, besides involvement in farming, be allowed to engage in commerce, i.e., trading without extra fees, and join arts and crafts guilds in the area in the Ekaterinoslav and Taurida regions.¹²

Granted, if activities noted are carried out according to the ordinances of pertinent cities and urban areas.

6.

In accordance with the published written royal manifesto of July 22, 1763, each Mennonite family that is in need of aid shall be loaned five hundred rubles in advance in order to establish its farming operation. Such remittances shall begin when they arrive in the city of Riga, with the sum of 100 rubles monthly. Such families will be obligated, after the end of the first ten free years, to repay such loans to the Crown, without interest, within a period of three (subsequent) years.

Granted.

7.

That the guarantee of the unwavering loyalty of the families and their descendants shall be received according to their religious customs and ceremonies.

To be granted as requested.

8.

That these families and their descendants be freed for all time (*fuer ewige Zeiten*) from all military obligations because the tenets of their faith forbid them entering military service.¹³

They are exempted from the obligations of military service.

9.

That after their arrival from Danzig each family shall receive all necessary materials to construct appropriate living residences according to Germanic styles. All of them shall be provided with oak timbers to construct two mills, six good grinding stones, as well as other supplies to erect two good mills, so that when they arrive they may be able, with the help of Crown labour, to construct all these buildings on their own.

Every family deciding to emigrate to New Russia shall receive 120 planks, each twelve feet long (*vier Faden*), and the needed number of beams for two mills, along with six stones.

10.

Requested that each family desiring to emigrate shall be provided with the necessary funds to pay for moving costs of such a journey, including living provisions along the way.

All costs for the journey (travel and sustenance) shall be covered (by the Crown).

I I .

That all families which have arrived at the Russian border at Berislav be given wagons and horses, and that each person from the day they arrive at this border receive twenty-five kopeks until the end of the journey.¹⁴

Horses and wagons will be provided. Concerning finances, each person, male or female over the age of fifteen, shall receive twenty-five kopeks, and that those below that age shall receive twelve kopeks.

I 2 .

That out of [the Crown's] gracious heart the colonists shall be freed from repaying the monies mentioned in Article 10 and 11 and also for the lumber used to build their houses. They shall not be obligated to pay for them even after the ten years, because the Crown will benefit from the fact that the Mennonites are bringing with them excellent manufacturers and artisans so that in a short time the industrious development of their farms and other beneficial material contributions will cover all the monies expended for them.

This will depend on Her Majesty's grace.

I 3 .

Until the construction of their own houses, the settlers shall be allowed to occupy the vacant quarantine buildings situated on the other side of the Konskiye Vody River, they shall be given tents and barracks for their construction workers, and the rest of the Mennonite emigrants shall be given accommodation within the city of Berislav.

For a specified length of time, they will be given tents and other accommodations, with the tents to be returned at the end of that time.

I 4 .

That all the Mennonites shall be given ten kopeks each from the day they arrive in Berislav until the time of their first harvest, with the condition that these sums will be returned interest-free over a period of three years after the ten years are over.

Agreed to.

15.

Requested that orders be sent immediately to Berislav and Taurida that no wood shall be cut and no cattle be pastured (by locals or others) on the land of prospective Mennonite settlement so that they will have enough hay for their own cattle.

These orders will be sent.

16.

That Mennonite families who may decide to settle in Russia and come after the new immigrants may enjoy the same above-mentioned rights and advantages and that they may be allowed to settle in beautiful and fruitful areas as the present settlers in such places as *Staryi Krym* (Old Crimea), Feodosia, and Bakhchisarai,¹⁵ or settle in other areas which they might desire which have not been taken up yet, on the condition that they need not make pledges of monies to be repaid to the government, but be allowed to settle this among themselves.

When representatives of such families arrive, they will be treated just like the others who came before them.

17.

Request that it be decided most graciously to send Mr. von Trappe to them (the Mennonites) again with relevant needed instructions, the one who persuaded and made them willing to emigrate to Russia and who is familiar with all the related circumstances, and who is the person who can remove all the obstacles that they will face when leaving Danzig. He is the one who provided for their necessities so it is requested that according to the instructions he was given, he may again become their director and curator so that he can help them with their resettlement and make sure that they remain protected and their welfare assured.

This request will be forwarded.¹⁶

18.

Requested that upon arrival in Berislav they will have the services of a surveyor who speaks German and who is capable of dividing not only the whole possession but (also specify) each individual's tract of land.

Agreed to.

David Epp reproduced this petition, right, in his 1888 history of the Chortitz colony.

19.

Since Taurida is a long distance from their homeland, preventing them from taking along different kinds of seed for sowing, it is requested that they be given various kinds of seed for planting, with an obligation to return an equal quantity when they are able.

Agreed to.

20.

Last of all they (the Mennonites) ask that upon their arrival in Berislav, strict orders be given to give protection to persons and their goods to prevent theft, robbery, and all forms of injury, until the families are well-established.

Such orders will be given.

The former is a true translation that contains the privileges set down in the original. I attest to this by means of my own signature.

Danzig, March 3, 1788

S. DE SOKOLOVSKY,

Russian Royal Officer, Imperial Assessor and Accredited Chargé d'Affaires.

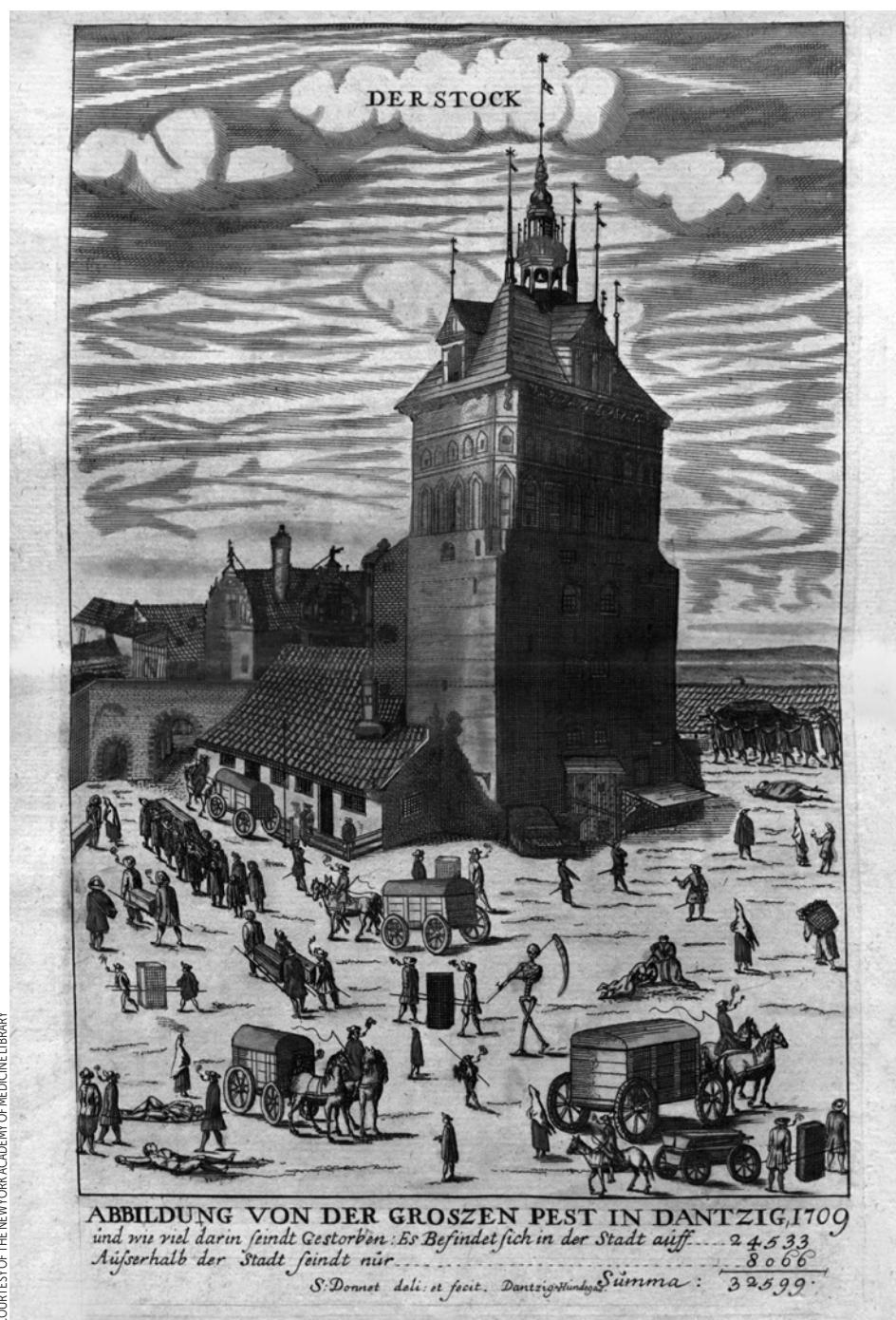
Seal of the Empire¹⁷

— 20 —	
Beklende Punkte der Mennoniten.	Entscheidung.
11.	Dieß allen den wiedlichen Bittenzen angehörmenden Familien bis Preußisch Rostow und Friede gegeben, und doch jeder Person von dem Tage ihrer Ankunft in dieser Stroge bis zur Beendigung der Reise zu 25. Zsp. entgeltlich werde.
12.	Dieß ist aus besondern Gründen von der Wichtigkeit des Landes auf dem 10-ten und 11-ten Punkte ausgesetzten Männern, bezüglich auch für die Mutterlande zum Gunsten derselben, bestätigt worden, daß sie nicht end vom Brusttag bei 10. Frühjahr nicht verholzen dürfen, weil die Arme nicht mehr Nutzen davon haben würden, da die Mennonen alle Arbeitssachen und Handarbeiten mit sich bringen, und daraus in kurzer Zeit durch Arbeitsamkeit im Geloben und anderen vorstellbaren Verhandlungen alle für sie vordem verlorenen Kosten verglichen werden.
13.	Das hängt von der Wirtschaftlichkeit des Landes ab.
14.	Wohungen und Häuser sollen bei bekommen, aber nur auf eine Zeitlang, welche als für vorbereitungen verstanden wird, dann aber sollte ihnen gleichfalls angewiesen werden.

- 1 On the planning and route of this delegate expedition see Lawrence Klippenstein, "Four Letters to Susanna from Johann Bartsch, a Danzig Mennonite Land Scout, 1786–87," *The Polish Review* 54, no. 1 (2009): 31–59. See also Peter Hildebrand, *From Danzig to Russia: The First Emigration of Mennonites from the Danzig Region to Southern Russia*, trans. Walter E. Toews and Adolf Ens (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 2000), for an account of the move by an eyewitness. The investigation of the lands available is referred to but only very briefly discussed in this account. See 6ff. An updated map of the places visited by the travelers appears in *Heritage Review* 44, no. 4 (Dec. 2014): 47 (back cover).
- 2 A useful quite recent recital of these events is in George K. Epp, *Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland*, vol. 1, *Deutsche Taeufer in Russland* (Lage: Logos Verlag, 1997), 56–58. See also David Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten: Versuch einer Darstellung des Entwicklungsganges derselben* (Russland: Rosenthal bei Chortitz, 1888), 1–23. The main outlines of the tour experiences of the Tsarina are sketched in Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Potemkin: Catherine the Great's Imperial Partner* (New York: Vintage Books, 2005) 352ff.
- 3 David G. Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia: A Sketch of its Founding and Endurance, 1789–1919," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 47 (Oct. 1973): 259–304 and 48 (Jan. 1974): 5–54. The petition and Potemkin's responses are in *MQR* 47:279–286.
- 4 We owe many thanks to Dr. Elfrieda Schroeder of Winnipeg, Manitoba, for providing this draft of the text, which Rempel located in Russian versions in several sources of his research and also possibly in its first publication in German in D. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*, 16–23. Preliminary translations of the full text of the petition into English are found also in studies of the immigration by several Russian scholars. See Grigorii Pisarevskii, *Istorii inostrannoi kolonizatsii v Rossii v XVIII v.* (Moskva: Petchatnia A. I. Snegirevyl, 1909), 299ff, and a copy of Jacob Rempel's unpublished English script of a work by S. D. Bondar, *Sekta mennonitov v Rossii* (Petrograd: Tip. V. D. Smirnova, 1916), in the author's files. A more recent translation from the original Russian into German is found in G. Epp, *Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland*, vol. 1, 223–225. The date given here for receiving the answer to the delegates' petition is given as July 4, 1787, by one or two scholars (including Pisarevskii), but here we follow the dating of most scholars dealing with this subject. The delay in obtaining Potemkin's response to the Mennonite petition disconcerted the delegates very considerably, even to the point of asking permission to go back to Danzig to see their families and then return to complete the inspection trip and negotiations in a second trip. Fortunately, it did not come to that.
- 5 D. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*, i–ii. Direct references to the Epp volume come from the 1888 Chortitzza edition. For further background notes see Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth," and Klippenstein, "Four Letters to Susanna."
- 6 A more thorough study of the Privilegium issue by James Urry is in "A History of the Mennonites' Russian Privilegium: 1800–1919," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 37 (2019): 325–352. See an email on this dated December 26, 2015, in the author's file. In Russian the Complete Collection of Laws is usually referred to as PSZ, abbreviating *Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii*. Extract would here refer simply to the wording of the text.
- 7 A popularized treatment of the Mennonites' first years in New Russia is in N. J. Kroeker, *First Mennonite Villages in Russia, 1789–1943: Khortitsa–Rosenthal* (Vancouver: by the author, 1981), with a more academic study in James Urry, *None but Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia 1789–1889* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1989), 50ff. Urry's work also includes in Appendix I an English translation of what many scholars have come to call "the first Privilegium," given by Paul I to the Mennonites in 1800. The Russian version of that document is found in PSZ XXVI, No. 19,546, and cited in Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia," *MQR* 47:302–304. See again Urry's recent article, "A History of the Mennonites' Russian Privilegium," 325ff.
- 8 The position of this item in the first petition contrasts noticeably with the inconspicuous place where this privilege was stated, among various offers unrelated to religion, as No. VI (1) in the 1763 Catherinian manifesto invitation to foreigners. It is extended to cover the right to offer an oath before the courts as a simple affirmation and is the first item in Paul's Privilegium of 1800. Roger D. Bartlett, *Human Capital: The Settlement of Foreigners in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 238, and Urry, *None but Saints*, 282. Other facets related to freedom of religious expression are mentioned in Articles 7 and 8 and will be discussed there. Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia," 47:283.
- 9 A *dessiatin* was the equivalent of 2.7 North American acres, hence designating for each family 175.5 acres. Berislav was also known at the time as Kisi-Kermen (perhaps renamed by Vice-Regent Potemkin). It had been the site of a Turkish fortress earlier, and thus served as an important post for defending an approach to the Crimea, a fact well appreciated by Potemkin, and no doubt related to his decision later on to reverse his promise of making this general area available for settlement by the Mennonites emigrating from Prussia. See G. Epp, *Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland*, vol. 1, 69. See also the maps in William Schroeder and Helmut Huebert, *Mennonite Historical Atlas* (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 1996), 13,15. The Perekop Road coming from the north led directly to the Crimean peninsula.
- 10 See Lawrence Klippenstein, *Peace and War: Mennonite Conscientious Objectors in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union before WWII and other COs in Eastern Europe* (Winnipeg: by the author, 2016), 33–54.
- 11 Since many creeks and small rivers flowed through or near Mennonite villages in the main settlements the maintenance of bridges could run up war involvement costs considerably. Just where these troop movements would transverse villages and towns might not be known before fighting began. See the Schroeder and Huebert map cited above for sketches of road systems in the various communities. There is no specific reference to the maintenance of roads in the petition's points, but that may have been assumed and would in any case be happening more carefully for periods of peace as well as in war times.
- 12 The boundaries for the permitted commercial activities in the fifth article may seem somewhat vague, and indeed are interpreted by one scholar to include all of New Russia and Crimea. Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth," *MQR* 47:284. The area thus defined would greatly expand in due time to essentially include all of Tsarist Russia. Many of the new Mennonite settler family heads did not in fact have an actual farming background advantageous for making a living in their new south Russian setting.
- 13 This exemption promise was a linchpin for the total contract as far as the Russian Mennonites were concerned. It was reaffirmed in the Privilegium of Paul I in 1800, and by Alexander I and his brother Nicholas I. The Crimean War brought about a review of this agreement but it was not altered until 1874 when universal military conscription was decreed in Russia by Alexander II and arrangements for a new alternative service regimen came into being. This new agreement lasted until 1917. Details of how this new phase of Mennonite service to the state was initiated and maintained are presented in Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service: A Case Study in Church-State Relations 1789–1936" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 1984), 85–117. The manner in which the Soviets continued to offer an alternative service option in a revised form is also discussed. The Russian immigration manifesto of 1763 included this statement regarding the issue of military service:
- D. KHODOVETSKI
-
- Reise der Kaiserin nach Cherson.
Voyage de l'Impératrice à Cherson.*
- 14 A Turkish force of around seventy-five thousand men still remained under arms about seventy miles from Berislav at the time of the Mennonite delegation's negotiations with Potemkin. The Mennonites were apparently unaware of this or might have staked their claim for land somewhere more distant from the battle zone – the results of the Turkish-Russian wars in this region were still very fluid. New clashes broke out again in 1787. See G. Epp, *Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland*, vol. 1, 68–69, 88, and Montefiori, *Potemkin*, 358ff.
- 15 Crimea had been under Turkish control until a few years prior to the visit of Catherine. Bakhchisarai once served as the capital city of the Crimean peninsula. Montefiori, *Potemkin*, 372–73, 378.
- 16 It appears that although Trappe was appointed as director of the Mennonite colonies, the renowned "caller of colonists" never did formally take up his post. He may, however, have continued in the course of the immigration to give guidance and counsel to Mennonite leaders. See Urry, *None but Saints*, 68–69.
- 17 Useful details of the story are found in David G. Rempel, "From Danzig to Russia: The First Mennonite Migration," *Mennonite Life* 24 (Jan. 1969): 8–28.

THE GREAT PLAGUE OF 1709

Glenn H. Penner

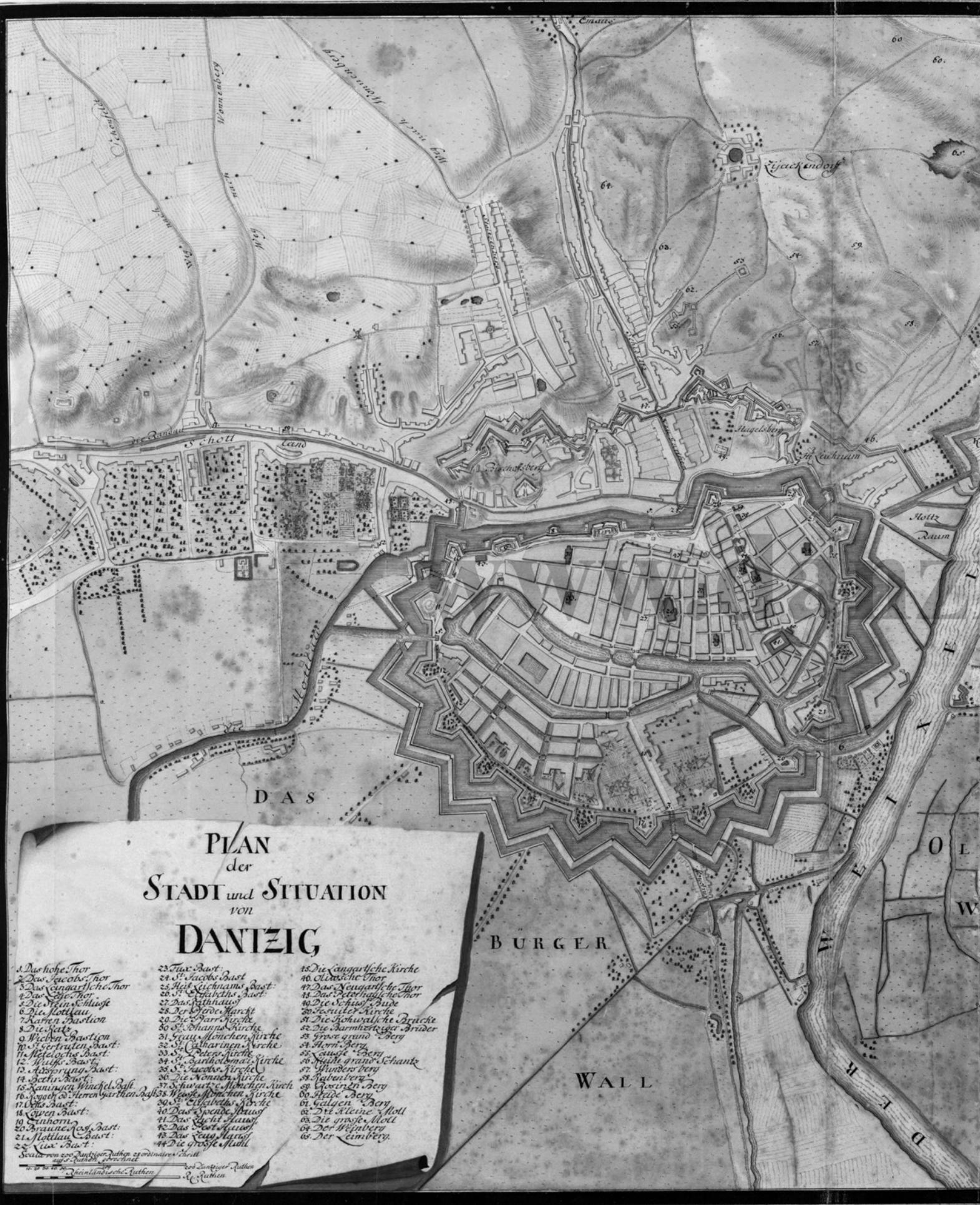


COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF MEDICINE LIBRARY

Before 1711 the entire population of so-called Low German Mennonites lived in one region – the Vistula River delta, in what later became the province of West Prussia and is now northern Poland. In 1709 these people found themselves in a difficult situation. Not only were they in the middle (both geographically and chronologically) of the Great Northern War (1700–1721) between Sweden and Poland, which had devastating economic consequences for them,¹ they had just lived through the coldest winter and spring Europe had seen in living memory.² The Danzig harbour and the length of the Vistula River remained frozen well into late spring, bringing trade to a near standstill. This, together with the destruction of crops, led to devastating price increases throughout the region. To make matters worse, 1709 brought what would be the deadliest epidemic to hit the world's Mennonite population in its 500-year history.

Many of us are familiar with the two major epidemics which had significant effects on the Low German Mennonite population: the flu pandemic of 1918, which hit nearly every Mennonite family on the North American prairies,³ and the typhus epidemic, which swept through the Mennonite colonies in Ukraine during the winter of 1919–1920.⁴ These epidemics are singed in our memory as our parents or grandparents told us about the effects on their families and communities. However, these experiences were not new. Going back through the previous three centuries of Mennonite history we can see that Low German Mennonite communities experienced many waves of epidemics of varying sizes.⁵ This was part of life in those days. The epidemic of 1709, however, stands out in terms of size and impact.⁶

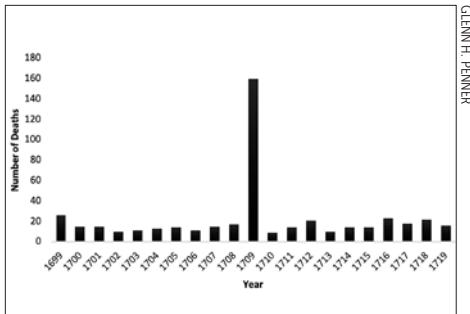
The bubonic plague (usually referred to as *die Pest* in contemporary German literature) broke out in various locations in southern Poland around 1702 and worked its way north. By 1708 it had reached the first Mennonite location, the Samuel Donnet's copperplate depiction of the plague of 1709 in Danzig.



PLAN
der
STADT und SITUATION
von
DANZIG

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Das hohe Thor | Tux-Bast: | Die Langartische Kirche |
| Das Jacob's-Thor | 24. St. Jacob's-Bast | 46. Alzlaes-Thor |
| Das Langartische Thor | 25. Alt-Lichtenau-Bast: | 47. Das Neugartliche Thor |
| Das Ede-Thor | 26. St. Gotthards-Bast: | 48. Das Petthagliche Thor |
| Das Stein-Schluße | 27. Das Rathaus: | 49. Die Schloss-Aude |
| Das Stotlau | 28. Der Große Markt: | 50. Festivitas-Kirche |
| Karen-Pastion | 29. Die St. Marien-Kirche | 51. Die Hochwaltische Brücke |
| Die Katz | 30. St. Blasius-Kirche | 52. Die Harnichterische Brüder |
| Wicken-Pastion | 31. Grau-Mönchen-Kirche | 53. Gräse-grund-Berg |
| W. St. Gertrudin-Bast: | 32. St. Katharinen-Kirche | 54. Horn-Berg |
| Meteolische Bast: | 33. St. Peter's-Kirche | 55. August-Berg |
| Wulfs-Bast: | 34. St. Bartholomäus-Kirche | 56. Mühle-granu-Schante |
| Hörspurung-Bast: | 35. St. Margaretha-Kirche | 57. Mühlen-Berg |
| Petra-Bast: | 36. Die Nonne: | 58. Rabenberg |
| Kanunigen-Windisch-Bast: | 37. Schwarz-rot-Mönchen-Kirche | 59. Rosenthal-Berg |
| Jugend-W. Namen-gut-thun-Bast: | 38. Würde-Mönchen-Kirche | 60. Ried-Berg |
| Oels-Bast: | 39. St. Elisabeths-Kirche | 61. Galden-Berg |
| W. St. Stephan-Bast: | 40. Das Speciale-Haus: | 62. Die Kleine-Möll |
| W. St. Antonius-Bast: | 41. Das Geist-Haus: | 63. Die große Möll |
| W. St. Barbara-Bast: | 42. Das Fest-Haus: | 64. Der Weißberg |
| Stotlau-Bast: | 43. Das Feuer-Haus: | 65. Der Zimberg. |
| Cix-Bast: | 44. Das Feuer-Haus: | |





Annual deaths of the Danzig Flemish church members for the years 1689 to 1720.

small congregation of Klein Nessau in the region of Thorn (now Toruń, Poland). The following year, after preaching a sermon to the invading king of Sweden and his officers near Thorn, Mennonite minister Steffen Funk died of the plague.⁷ By late 1709 it had reached Danzig, with disastrous consequences. In March, seven members of a family in the old city died, showing obvious signs of bubonic plague. Within a year an estimated 50–60% of the population of Danzig had died. Unfortunately, almost no Mennonite records have survived from that time.⁸ All we have are baptism, marriage, and death records for the Flemish congregation in Danzig and the baptismal register for the Frisian congregation of Montau, about 100 kilometres to the south. Both registers, for the years 1700 to 1720, show the usual fluctuations seen in Mennonite baptismal records. The Danzig Mennonite death records, however, show a dramatic spike in deaths for the year 1709.⁹ The total for 1709 (160 adult members) is greater than or equal to the sum of deaths of the prior decade (140) or the following decade (160). The number of deaths was so extraordinary that the church official who kept the record produced a breakdown of deaths for that year: 66 married men, 72 married women, 4 unmarried male members (*Gesellen*), 18 unmarried female members (*Jonfers*), and 249 unbaptized (these would have been those under the age of about 25), for a total of 409. The same person squeezed in a note at the bottom of the page showing that within the city of Danzig, 24,533 died, and outside the city (refers to villages that were within the city's jurisdiction), 8,070 died, for a total of 32,603. The estimated population of the city for the year 1700 was

about 50,000.¹⁰ Since there is no reason to believe that Mennonites fared any differently than the rest of the population, one can estimate that about half of the total number of Mennonites in Danzig died in 1709.

The plague created an additional problem for the Flemish Mennonite church in Danzig. After their *Aeltester*, Christof Engmann, died of the plague, the congregation needed to elect a new one. Tradition dictated that the election had to be conducted by an *Aeltester* from another church, who would then ordain the newly elected *Aeltester*. The nearest Flemish Mennonite *Aeltester* was Dirk Siemens of the Gross Werder congregation. Because of the plague it was forbidden for anyone to enter or leave the Danzig city fortifications, and Siemens had to promise that he would not stay overnight if allowed inside the city. Travelling up from the Gross Werder, he stayed in Neuendorf overnight, then passed through the “Garden” and the “Petershagner Thor” (Petershagen gate) into the city and on to the church. Here he conducted the election and ordination on September 5, 1709.¹¹

Interestingly, the number of marriages in Danzig spiked the following year. This also happened in the Mennonite church.¹² The number of marriages in 1710 was nearly double the averages over the preceding and succeeding decades. Likely this was because of the large number of men and women left without a spouse after the epidemic swept through the city. This trend reflected the difficulties of earning a living and taking care of a

family for single parents.

What were the consequences for Mennonites? The war, the frost, and the epidemic left the Mennonite population depleted and destitute. One must remember that during this time Mennonites were still expected to pay the Polish crown a large annual sum in order to maintain their Privilegium rights.

Northern Lithuania, which at that time was part of East Prussia, was hit even harder the following year. The depopulation was so extensive that Frederick William, the king of Prussia at the time, recruited Mennonites to settle in the Memel River region near the city of Tilsit to increase the population. After two false starts, this community continued until the end of the Second World War.¹³ These “Lithuanian” Mennonites made up a large portion of the original settlers of the Chortitza colony, and many Canadian Mennonites are descended from this group.¹⁴

Although it has been estimated that 50–60% of the population of Danzig died in 1709, the effects would have been somewhat reduced in the less densely populated countryside, where the majority of the Mennonite population lived. My crude guestimate is that a tenth to a quarter of the world’s entire Low German Mennonite population died that year. It is impossible to narrow this down to a reasonable estimation since we do not know either how many died outside of the cities such as Danzig and Elbing, or the worldwide population of Mennonites in 1709.

1 See, for example, the effects on the Heubuden congregation: [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Heubuden_\(Pomeranian_Voivodeship,_Poland\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Heubuden_(Pomeranian_Voivodeship,_Poland)).

2 Juan José Sánchez Arreseigor, “Winter is Coming: Europe’s Deep Freeze of 1709,” *National Geographic History*, January/February 2017, 18–21.

3 For a Mennonite perspective of influenza in Manitoba see Glen R. Klassen, “Now it’s Here,” *Mennonite Historian* 46, no. 2 (June 2020), and references therein.

4 See <https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Typhus>. For an example of the death toll see http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza_Typhus_Deaths_1920.pdf.

5 For an example see Helmut T. Huebert, *Events and People* (Winnipeg: Springfield Publishers, 1999), 64.

6 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Northern_War_plague_outbreak, and Karl-Erik Frandsen, *The Last Plague in the Baltic Region, 1709–1713* (Copenhagen: Museum

Tusculanum Press, 2010).

7 See [https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Donner,_Heinrich_\(1735-1805\)](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Donner,_Heinrich_(1735-1805)).

8 An exception is a letter preserved in the Mennonite Heritage Archives. See Kat Hill’s blog post, <https://anabaptisthistorians.org/2020/10/01/death-and-dreams-in-a-time-of-plague/>.

9 Records of the Flemish Mennonite Congregations of Danzig. For scans of the originals and transcriptions see: https://mla.bethelks.edu/metadata/cong_310.php.

10 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Gda%C5%84sk.

11 Ernst Regehr, *Geschichts- und Predigertabelle der Mennonitengemeinde Rosenort*, 2nd ed. (Elbing, 1939).

12 Records of the Flemish Mennonite Congregations of Danzig.

13 Erwin Wittenberg and Manuel Janz, “Mennonite Settlers in Prussian Lithuania,” *Preservings*, no. 40 (2020): 19–26.

14 For more information on this topic, see Wittenberg and Janz.

REMEMBERING JOHANN WALL IN BRAZIL

Dick Braun

The commemoration of the death of *Ohm* Johann Wall started when Hans Kliewer, a retired schoolteacher from the Mennonite colony of Witmarsum, Brazil, emailed in 2018 with a simple question: “Do you know anything about the Johann Wall of Canada who died in Brazil?” I replied, “Yes, I do.” I had been involved in producing the book *Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve, 1895–1995*, which touched on the story of Johann Wall’s trip

to South America in 1919, as one of six delegates sent to South America in search of a new home. These men are believed to be the first Mennonites to set foot in South America, and Johann Wall, the first Mennonite to die there. It also happens that my wife and I live six kilometres from the village of Neuanlage, Saskatchewan, where the Walls lived when this story began. My exchange with Hans started a longer conversation by phone and email.

Johann (b. 1872) and Anna (Klassen) Wall (b. 1871) moved from Manitoba to Neuanlage in 1898. The Hague-Osler Mennonite Reserve was only three years old and life on the bald prairie was not easy. Many of the houses were dug into the ground with piled-up sod as walls. The roof rafters were made of poplar logs, hauled from across the South Saskatchewan River some five miles to the east, as there were no trees on the west side of the river. The roof could have been thatched with slough grass or maybe sod.

Things moved quickly for the Wall family, as within a few months of arriving in Neuanlage, Johann was voted in as a deacon of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church. In 1900 the decision was made to build the first church building in the village, which would have created a significant amount of work for the young deacon. Later that year Johann was elected into the ministry. The letter he wrote to his parents back in Manitoba reveals just



DICK BRAUN

This Old Colony church was once the home of Johann Wall in Neuanlage.



DICK BRAUN

At the old Curitiba train station, which contains a small museum, we saw an old steam engine.

how seriously he took this calling.

Records show that the Wall family fulfilled the requirements of the Homestead Act by constructing a home and planting crops. Life was progressing well for the family, but Mennonites began to encounter problems in their relationship with the government, especially during the First World War. The Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments legislated the teaching of school in English, in violation of the privilege of educational autonomy the Mennonites believed they had been guaranteed by the Canadian government in the migration negotiations of 1873. The heavy fines enforced by the provincial governments on families choosing not to send their children to English schools created huge hardships for conservative Mennonites. This education

issue even forced Rev. Johann P. Wall to appear in court in Warman. Mennonites put considerable effort into trying to come to an agreement with the Saskatchewan government over the language issue, but to no avail. The conservative Mennonites felt that they had no choice but to look for a new home where they could live as they felt they were called to do.

This led to the decision of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church to send a delegation to South America to look for a new home. The delegates were Johann Wall and Johann P. Wall, from Neuanlage, Saskatchewan; Julius Wiebe and David Rempel, from Swift Current, Saskatchewan; and Klaus Heide and Cornelius Rempel of Manitoba. The men packed trunks, said goodbyes to family and friends, and boarded a train for

Ottawa, where they received the proper paperwork for the journey. From Ottawa they travelled to New York, where they boarded a ship for South America. They visited Paraguay, Uruguay, Argentina, and Brazil, but nowhere could they make a suitable deal.

Then the unthinkable happened: Johann Wall became ill while they were in Curitiba, Brazil, and died a few days later.¹ The diary of Johann P. Wall, as well as that of another delegate, tell of how they tried different remedies and called on a German-speaking doctor, who advised that he would need to operate on what was diagnosed as a burst appendix. It notes Wall's time of death as 4:00 a.m. on September 28, and the details of his burial in a Lutheran cemetery in Curitiba, in grave number 1585.

Realizing that it would soon be the centenary of Wall's death, Hans wondered if this event should be recognized in some way. Armed with the diary information, Hans began his research. He was able to locate the plot in the Curitiba Lutheran cemetery where Johann Wall was buried in 1919. Hans's original idea was to place a proper marker on the burial site, but he learned that another family now owned the plot.

As I researched Witmarsum Colony, I noticed that they had a museum. I suggested to Hans that a marker could be set up there. Hans and the museum curator, Ricardo Philippsen, agreed to this idea and my suggestion that we commemorate the exact day when Ohm Johann Wall was laid to rest in Curitiba. Hans worked with people from the museum and others to set up a program.

On September 25, my wife Kathy and I arrived at the Curitiba airport, where we were picked up by Hans. A group of us wanted to get into the spirit of the event so we headed into the city, which is now home to three million people. Witmarsum Colony is about an hour's drive from Curitiba. Our first stop was the old Curitiba train station, which is now a shopping mall containing a small museum, complete with a telegraph machine and an old steam engine. We were able to view the platforms where the Mennonite delegation would have arrived a hundred years ago. We even imagined that it was the telegraph machine that sent the news of Wall's death to his wife in Saskatchewan. Historical records show that the men stayed at a nearby hotel, and indeed, across from the main doors of the former station is a hotel that is over a hundred years old.

Our next stop was the Lutheran cemetery. The diaries indicate that the delegation was able to purchase a plot to bury Johann Wall's remains. We visited the plot with a little metal plate numbered 1585, but other names were inscribed on the headstone. We had been informed that the fees for the plot had been paid for some years, but that the plot was resold when the payment stopped. No one is quite sure who was paying, the Canadian gov-



Hans Kliewer was able to locate the plot in the Curitiba Lutheran cemetery where Johann Wall was buried in 1919.

ernment or the Reinlaender Mennonite Church or maybe the family.

On Saturday the Witmarsum Heimat-Museum held an event with the theme *Bruecken Bauen*, or "Building Bridges." Heinz Egon Philippsen, a local historian, provided an overview of the Mennonite trek from the Netherlands and how some ended up in Brazil. Those of us gathered in the front parlour of the museum were a true picture of the event's theme. In addition to my wife and I, there were local people and twenty-three members of the

Wall family, including three grandchildren and some great-grandchildren who had travelled from Paraguay and Bolivia to take part in the event. The local organizers spontaneously asked the oldest grandchild attending – seventy-nine-year-old Jakob Wall of Durango Colony, Paraguay – to help curator Ricardo Philippsen unveil the plaque to commemorate Wall's death. After a few more formal greetings, we were invited to browse the museum grounds and to visit.

In the early 1930s, Mennonite settlers

started Witmarsum Colony in Brazil. The settlers had a hard time making a living in their original location. In 1951, Mennonite Central Committee helped them buy the land they occupy today. The 7,500 hectares had been a cattle ranch with one large manor house, some out-buildings, and a dam on the local river to produce all the electricity they needed. Initially the first families lived in the manor house. Later it became a hospital, and now it is the museum. They also built a new hospital, but turned it into a seniors home due to lack of use. Their large school has about six hundred students of which only about a third are Mennonites. It was of interest to us that even though the school operates in Portuguese, German is still taught as a second language. The colony has a number of large dairy farms, and a large co-operative store and a collection point for crops and milk. There is also a Mennonite who brews beer. It is a very progressive community.

A group of Ohm Johann Wall's descendants from Durango Colony in Paraguay had brought their own plaque engraved with the dates of his birth and death, which they had hoped to mount at the gravesite. When they realized that this would not be possible, a discussion led to the decision to place it at the Witmarsum cemetery.

After the formal part of the afternoon we were all invited to the Kliewer house for *faspa*. Here we had more opportunity to visit and get to know each other better. We learned that some of the Wall descendants are Walls on both sides. When the 1919 delegates returned home, the wife of Ohm Johann P. Wall died, and he married the widow of Johann Wall. When some of those children married, it led to "double Walls"! We also heard that more people from Mexico and Canada might have attended the event had they heard about it a little sooner. We spoke to one Wall descendant who is helping a colony teacher gather information on the Old Colony Mennonites before their move to Mexico, a story that many of their people know little about.

The evening program held at the Evangelical Mennonite Church started



DICK BRAUN

A group of Johann Wall's descendants from Durango Colony in Paraguay brought their own plaque engraved with the dates of his birth and death.

with some music by a local women's group. Both the pastor of the Evangelical Free Church and the Mennonite Brethren Church spoke briefly on the theme "God is the master bridge builder." Werner Braun told the story of the Mennonites' European trek before their move to Mexico. I gave a brief overview of Ohm Johann Wall's life and on the situation in Neuanlage, Saskatchewan, in 1919. We know that the house that Johann and Anna Wall lived in was later moved to the Kronstal area to be an Old Colony church, and then moved to Martensville as a church, and then back again to the village of Neuanlage to be a church for the Church of God and Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman). Today it is a personal residence and, interestingly, a distant relative of Johann Wall is living in it. I brought letters of greetings from the Mennonite Historical Society of Saskatchewan and from the Old Colony Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan, thanking the people in Witmarsum for their work in preserving Mennonite history. I touched on the reason the delegation to South America was looking for a new home.

Next, Hans Kliewer asked those attending to imagine what it was like for those men in the delegation to leave their families and travel all the way to Brazil.

He explained how diaries written by the men describe many things, including their twenty-nine-hour journey by train to Curitiba. This was followed by a presentation from the local organizers. I received a plaque just like the one unveiled in their museum, and members of the Wall family were given maps showing the trek the delegates took to get to South America. The evening wrapped up with more visiting.

The local organizers and especially Hans Kliewer were very excited that the celebration turned out to be so well attended by their local people, who were mostly unaware of the early Mennonite presence in Brazil. They were also very pleased by the number of descendants of the Wall family who travelled great distances to attend. A highlight for me was definitely the attendance of Wall's grandson, Jakob Wall, who helped with the unveiling of the plaque.²

¹ A translation of the letter Johann P. Wall sent to Johann Wall's widow can be found in *Preservings*, no. 29 (2009): 24–25

² I want to thank the people of Colony Witmarsum and especially Hans Kliewer for all the work that went into making the event so meaningful and such a success. I want to thank the Wall family members that travelled a long distance and took the time to attend. I especially want to thank the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation for sponsoring me to attend the event. I found it humbling to represent the Mennonites of Saskatchewan and Canada.

MEMORIES OF ALT BERGTHAL

1930–1934

Harold J. Suderman

I remember very little about our arrival in Alt Bergthal, Manitoba. We had come from Los Angeles in July or August 1930. Our 1927 Hudson Super Six raised long clouds of dust on the graded dirt road that passed by the school where my father, Jake Suderman, was to teach for the next four years. The school was located about one mile south and two and a half miles west

of Altona, near the west bank of Buffalo Creek, which runs roughly north-south in this part of its course. It faced east, with a view of the one-sided street village of Alt Bergthal on the east bank. In between was the schoolyard, a level stretch which dropped down to the creek. On the yard were several buildings: the white-painted wood schoolhouse built in 1904, which

housed both the one-room school at its south end, and the teacher's living quarters at the north end. On the west side of the schoolhouse was a shelter belt of trees. A small barn and the customary outhouses for boys and girls skirted the north side of the yard.

I don't recall what we slept on the first one or two nights, since we arrived without any furniture, but it was probably camping gear. My mother, Marie, probably cooked on the portable Coleman gas stove we had used during our treks to and from California. What is unforgettable is the bites all over our bodies in the morning. Suspecting bed bugs, our parents lay awake the second night armed with a flashlight. When the biting and scratching began they lit up and confirmed a multitude of the pests. The decision was quickly made to go on a camping trip to Seven Sisters Falls on the Winnipeg River. But first Dad drove to Altona to buy a large quantity of sulphur and a wash



PRIVATE COLLECTION

Harold pulling Irma and Margaret on a sleigh in front of the Alt Bergthal school, in the winter of 1931 or 1932.

tub. After checking for bedbugs in all the clothes and bedding we were going to use while away, Dad closed all the outside doors and windows and, leaving the inside doors open, set fire to the sulphur in the tub in the kitchen. When we returned after several days, he thoroughly aired the building, and we had no further problems with bed bugs.

Our living quarters were very modest in size and lacked amenities we now take for granted. The single bedroom on the second floor, under a gable roof, was cramped and lacked privacy. A standard full-size mattress on the floor slept the three of us children, my two younger sisters at one end and I at the other. Lightly curtained off was our parents' bed, next to the gable window. This arrangement grew increasingly impractical with time.

The main floor had two rooms: the kitchen with a trap door in the floor and steps to a cellar below, and the living room, which soon accommodated a heavy, upright Williams piano, piano stool, ches-terfield, and *jardinière* (fern or flower stand), plus a chair or two.

Near the south end of the wall separating the living room and kitchen was a connecting door, and beside it a curious square opening in the wall near the floor. We found out later that its purpose was to enable a cat to run from one room to the other in chase of a mouse or rat, with the door closed.

Another door opened from the living room to the central hallway in the school. This was very convenient, of course, for the daily routine of going to school, for doing the janitorial work, and for pushing the piano into the school for the annual Christmas concert. On such occasions Mother would accompany the singing of Christmas carols by the children and/or the whole congregation. This was a novel experience fondly remembered by some of the students many years later.

Among our first purchases were a cow and a few chickens to provide milk, eggs, and meat. It was my responsibility to look after the barn and the cow, and to do the milking. As soon as possible we acquired a cream separator to provide cream and skim milk, and a wooden butter churn to

make butter and buttermilk. Our father was very partial to buttermilk, claiming it was good for his health. Cranking the cream separator was always a pleasure for me. I marveled at how the milk poured into it and spun around could flow out of two spouts as milk and cream. Years later, as a biochemist, I would use the same principle in a centrifuge to separate the various components of blood into red cells, white cells, and serum.

Dad was my teacher these four years. Although I should have been placed in Grade 4 the first year, he placed me in Grade 5. His reasoning was simple. He knew my grounding in Grades 1 and 2, taken in Rosenfeld, had been good. He also considered my Grade 3, taken in four different, large schools in the greater Los Angeles area, to have been quite advanced, at least in some subjects. Furthermore, I'm sure he would have felt, as I do now, that a one-room school in which the first eight grades are taught provides a learning experience of a unique kind: a constant review of lessons one has learned in previous grades as well as a preview of what lies ahead (up to and including Grade 8). Thus, anything I would have missed by not taking the Manitoba Grade 4 could be corrected by paying attention to the pertinent Grade 4 lessons as they came up. There was usually time for such digression from assigned seat work.

As already mentioned, Dad, who had taught in one- and two-roomed schools in Manitoba for some eighteen years, had been greatly impressed with the educational innovations in Los Angeles schools which my sister Margaret and I had attended. The influence of Hollywood had been very strong there. Remembering my accounts of educational and comic movies being shown in Grade 3, usually on Friday afternoons, he resolved to introduce such learning aids on his return to teaching in Manitoba schools.

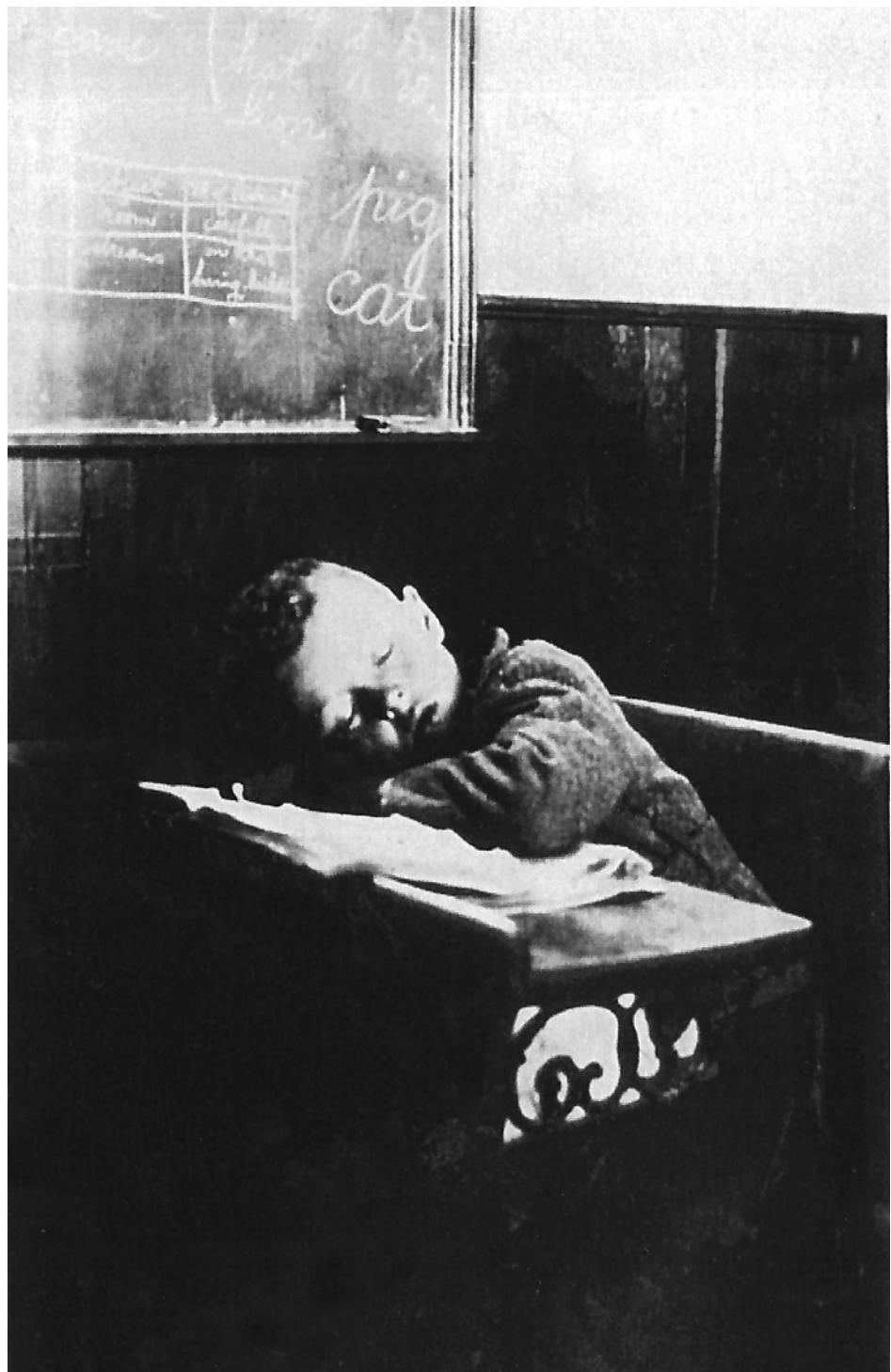
Always a man of action, Dad drove to Winnipeg, at his own expense, to contact officials in the Department of Education. After persuading them of his desire to spread the benefits of visual education via movies in the insular Mennonite communities, he gained access to many

films in the department's library. It helped that the Minister of Education was a Mr. Miller from Gretna. And so, Dad was soon showing silent movies of the United States national parks, some foreign films, and cartoons to evening audiences assembled in country schools. Charlie Chaplin was universally popular. I cannot remember whether Canadian-made films were available at that time. Dad would provide the commentary and draw attention to special points of interest on the screen. It was my job to collect the admission fee, ten or fifteen cents, at the door, and to crank the sixteen millimetre film projector by hand.

My sisters have their own recollections. Margaret began Grade 2 and Irma Grade 1, although she was only five and a half years old. Apparently the school inspector had decided in the fall term that she might as well be enrolled since she attended classes anyway and was eager to learn. All three of us thought Dad was a good teacher, albeit somewhat strict. Margaret fondly remembers how he encouraged her artistic efforts. She took up painting as a hobby in adult life and some of her work graces the homes of her children, grandchildren, and others. Irma did likewise. Corporal punishment was standard for serious or repeated misdemeanors. Irma recollects that another boy and I received spankings one day. It seems that somehow the school bell's clanger was missing when Dad wanted to ring the class to order. He was not amused. On another occasion I accidentally threw a stone through a school window, something a teacher's son definitely should not do. To make the point, Dad employed the regulation strap very effectively on the seat of my pants and had me stand in the corner for good measure. I also received instructions and practice on how to remove glass shards from the window frame and how to putty in a new pane. On a more pleasant note, one day a Grade 1 classmate of Irma, curly headed Tom Funk, had fallen asleep at his desk with his head on his right arm. Ever quick with his trusty old Kodak 1A folding camera, Dad snapped a picture. Minutes later, Tom woke up and Dad clicked another quick shot of the startled young lad.

Other former Alt Bergthal students of the early '30s have shared their memories of those times. Eva (Klippenstein) Doerksen recalled a mishap to Irma. While running down the creek bank, Irma's foot caught in a gopher hold and she fell, breaking her collar bone as we found out later. As Irma tells it, when Dad was informed and heard her cry, he borrowed a horse and buggy from the Peter Duecks after school to take her to the doctor in Altona, the road being too muddy for cars. Eva also spoke highly of Dad as her teacher. She remembers him bringing out a "large box" and playing on it some of the 78- r.p.m. records in the music appreciation set prescribed by the Manitoba Department of Education. This left her with a lasting appreciation of the classical repertoire. I too fondly remember especially certain pieces, e.g., Schubert's dramatic "The Erl-King" sung by a boy soprano who evoked the terror in the young boy's dream; also "In a Monastery Garden," by Ketèlbey, an elegant orchestral piece, and another in which all the various instruments of the orchestra were singled out to play well-known solos. We were introduced also to selected arias and choruses from the great operas. As Eva observed, this probably went over the heads of most of the pupils, who were used to simple hymns sung in German in various churches in the area.

The core curriculum, especially in the primary grades, stressed the three Rs – reading, writing, and arithmetic. The *Canadian Reader*, a graded series, with old-fashioned stories of trolls and Aesop's Fables in the lower grades, and some poetry in the higher grades, such as "In Flanders Fields," may have raised some questions in young minds shaped by Mennonite values, but no doubt helped raise awareness of the Britishness of the homeland adopted by the Mennonites some sixty years earlier. (The introduction of the *Dick and Jane* series of readers in the 1940s seemed to me to mark the acceptance of the US as our cultural model.) Daily writing practice and arithmetic drills sharpened our skills and minds. Friday afternoons were often devoted in part to spelling contests, reading stories, music, or



Tom Funk, Grade 1, asleep at his desk, ca. 1933.

drawing. The last half hour was devoted to religion; this usually meant reading from Hurlbut's *Story of the Bible*. If memory serves, the first half hour of every morning was spent on extracurricular instruction in the German language, using *Die Fiebel* as the introductory textbook and the Bible for more advanced students.

One topic not taught in those days was sex education. Although there was a

course in physiology, health, and hygiene in one of the upper grades, it left out any mention of sex. For children raised on the farm this was probably not a serious omission from the curriculum. They learned soon enough that what seemed to be a rooster beating up on some poor hen was in fact a necessary attack if they were to get fertile eggs which could be hatched by the maternally inclined hen. Also, talk



Skating on Buffalo Creek was an enjoyable pastime for the people of Alt Bergthal.

around the dinner table might centre around the necessity of getting a cow bred again if that cow was to continue giving milk. There might be talk of which bull in the neighbourhood would be a suitable mate. Not every farmer would keep a bull, since a bad-tempered one might gore its owner to death. Likewise, although much farm work was still done with horses, few farmers dared keep a stallion. It was quite common to see stallions considered to have good lineage crisscross the countryside pulling their owner or manager in

a sulky (a two-wheeled vehicle). When one of these pulled up at a farm there was usually quite a bit of excitement. The older boys and young men usually studied the action when a young filly or mare was introduced to the stallion. The success of the mission was later communicated to the older girls and women, with the expressed hope of having a new foal the following year.

And so it came to pass that when my parents noticed signs of puberty in me, Dad sent me off with our cow and brief

instructions to a pre-arranged tryst with a neighbour's bull. The bull's owner/manager did the introductions and let nature take its course. I was suitably impressed by the bull's endowments, or maybe I should say awed, and later reported that everything had gone according to plan. My father, however, must have felt he should leave nothing to chance and shortly thereafter presented me with a copy of a book called *What Every Young Boy Should Know*. This attempted to explain some of the dreams I was having

and the strange changes taking place in my body, and warned of the consequences of playing with fire. There was a series of such books, including, of course, *What Every Girl Should Know*.

In fall and spring the older boys and girls played softball or football, while the younger girls skipped rope and played other games such as "pom-pom pull away" or hopscotch at recess. In winter the skates would come out as soon as ice on the creek was thick enough. Unless too much snow covered the ice, we could skim along the creek for perhaps a quarter of a mile or more in long graceful strides. From that wonderful Grade 4 geography text *Boys and Girls Around the World* we learned that skating was a favourite pastime in the Netherlands, our ancestral homeland. Another favourite sport for us was to create an ice runway down the creek bank on the schoolyard and partly up the opposite side of the creek by pouring water on the ground and letting it freeze. Holding small sleighs, we would run as fast as we could, throw ourselves down on the sleigh, and race downhill, across the creek, and up the other side as far as we could go. We also used larger, more sedate, double-running sleighs made by Mr. John Klippenstein. On these deluxe vehicles two or three kids could share the thrill of a somewhat slower ride, sitting up and avoiding jolts to their stomachs. Sometimes the spring melt left large puddles on the land. When these froze we had more skating opportunities. Building snow forts behind the school was exciting stuff too. The windbreak ensured that the blinding blizzards we endured from time to time would leave us with the deep, densely packed snowbanks to be exploited for our play. When the weather was too unpleasant for outdoor activities, we would play indoor games such as rummy, crokinole, or checkers during recess and lunch hour.

The school library was located in the southeast corner of the school, to the left of the teacher's desk at the front centre of the room. It was a single cabinet, about three feet wide and six feet high, and held about a hundred books, I would guess. Dad added quite a few volumes, usually

bought second-hand in Winnipeg or elsewhere.

I remember reading *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *With Wolfe in Canada*, several of James Fenimore Cooper's historical novels, such as *The Last of the Mohicans*, and a number of Alexandre Dumas's novels, including *The Three Musketeers* and *The Man in the Iron Mask*. There was a series called "Makers of History" with subjects like Mary, Queen of Scots as well as less weighty mysteries and romances. Two well-thumbed favourites were *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. By the time we left Alt Bergthal I had read most of these, some of them several times. Dad read *Tom Sawyer* to the whole school. I don't recall if the library had any copies of the *National Geographic* when we arrived, but it certainly did in the next few years. Dad was also an avid reader of the news and would bring home copies of the weekend edition of the *Chicago Herald and Tribune*, purchased at the D. W. Friesen & Sons store in Altona (the forerunner of the present very successful and widely known Friesens Corporation). These found their way into the school room from time to time. I remember being captivated by a feature article on the search for Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat.

Buffalo Creek became the focus of many of our leisure time activities in summer. My chums, the three boys from the John Klippenstein family, Simon, Menno, and Waldo, and I would go swimming at the north end of the village, opposite the John Wieler residence. Sometimes their two cousins, Ted and Raymond Friesen, the youngest sons of D. W. Friesen of Altona, would join us for something to do on a warm, lazy Sunday afternoon. We built rafts out of old logs or scrap lumber and pretended Buffalo Creek was the mighty Mississippi River of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* fame. Other folks from the Peter Klippenstein family and their relatives or friends might come along in their homemade galvanized steel rowboat with its airtight flotation compartment.

The east bank of Buffalo Creek opposite the school ground became the site of at least two baptismal ceremonies during

the 1930–1934 years. The participants were probably members of the Mennonite Brethren denomination, which practices baptism by immersion, and came from another community. Local people were descendants of the Bergthal Colony in southern Russia who migrated to Canada in 1874; they practiced baptism by sprinkling. Some fifty years later, on a trip to Israel, it struck me how similar Buffalo Creek is to the Jordan River in the area north of the Sea of Galilee. Both wander lazily across flat land, flanked by tall reeds or grasses and fairly low banks.

In fall duck hunters would sometimes come to Buffalo Creek. On one occasion I was standing in the doorway of the shed attached to our living quarters when I heard shots being fired. Pellets whizzed past me, apparently having ricocheted off the water. One or two hit the door frame. We let the hunters know, and after that they moved away.

In summer or fall the villagers prepared fuel for the winter from manure collected from the barns. Manure mixed with straw and water to form a thick sludge was shovelled into a machine built on the principle of a meat grinder, and forced through a horizontal slot. The emerging flat stream, probably about eight inches wide and two or three inches thick was cut with a spade into brick-sized pieces which were piled up in rows in a sunny location to dry and harden. A pungent aroma permeated the kitchens or living rooms of the housebarns when these bricks were burned.

Our family never had to use manure bricks. We used wood or coal in our kitchen stove. The school, however, used only cord wood which would be cut up into shorter lengths by one of the men from the village. His pay was \$5 per eight-hour day, as I recall.

One of the popular events in the greater Altona area was the Altona Fall Fair. Women vied for honours in cooking, sewing, biggest pumpkin, and so on. Irma remembers our mother winning first prize for butter and second prize for lemon pie; she lost marks for little droplets on the meringue.

My entry in the fair was a Jersey heifer. I walked her all the way from Alt Bergthal,

about two and a half miles, and in due time she was awarded second prize. I then walked her back home, elated and rewarded for my participation in the 4-H Club. My heifer, I'm sure, just felt tired.

Among the amusements offered at the fair was an airplane ride, courtesy of Mr. Frank Sawatzky, who came from Steinbach with his homemade, open-cockpit biplane. Always ready to try something new, Dad donned a helmet and pair of goggles and up he went, fully confident that Frank knew what he was doing.

One summer Dad canvassed on behalf

well-to-do farmers were using thirty-two volt generators which could charge six six-volt batteries. He obtained a tall steel tower and a generator, and built his own airplane-type propeller and tail assembly. With some help from me he erected the whole apparatus in the northwest corner of the school property. The first strong wind had the propeller going too fast and it flew apart. He then obtained a properly designed airplane propeller and himself devised a governor which automatically turned the propeller out of the wind if it blew too hard. This system, with the six

because the piano had been a wedding present from her parents. It also seemed I had inherited her interest in music. Dad would therefore see to it that I could start piano lessons in Altona. How did our parents manage all this and more?

Mother did her bit. She made and re-made clothes for all of us, except Dad's clothing. (A suit, white shirt, and tie were a male teacher's uniform, a badge of authority.) She did a lot of patching. She also maintained a vegetable garden and even grew some flowers. We grew our own potatoes, beets, carrots, beans, peas, and cucumbers, and picked raspberries, gooseberries, and strawberries at our grandparents' farm in Morden. Some of this produce she preserved in glass jars for the winter or stored in sawdust in the earth cellar under the kitchen floor. When wild chokecherries were in season we gorged on pies and pancakes, a reward for the effort required to find and pick them. But moderation in food consumption was the normal order of the day. Our allotted portions were such that none of us carried an ounce of fat.

Mom also made a rich, potent choke-cherry wine. This would be shared with close friends and visiting relatives. On one occasion she threw out the leftover mash from the fermentation to our few chickens in the yard. Soon they started to behave strangely, lurching bizarrely, toppling over, passing out momentarily, coming to, and trying to get back on their feet. Their behaviour was almost as amusing as watching a Charlie Chaplin movie.

In late fall, after some frosty weather, some of the villagers would get together for a pig-killing bee. Dad would purchase part of a pig and we would then participate in the operations leading to the finished products, including mouth-watering smoked sausages.

Dad found all sorts of ways to earn extra money. He was very inventive, as I've already suggested above with his wind-electric project. As an adolescent, I thought my father could do almost anything he put his mind to. Several examples illustrate my point.

Dad would salvage lead from batteries. Not able to afford the costly maintenance



PRIVATE COLLECTION

The school picnic in 1933. Just visible above the trees is Jake's wind-electric system that predated rural electrification by 15 years. Jake was an inventor, among other things.

of Howard Winkler of Morden in his campaign to become the Liberal candidate for the federal riding of Lisgar. Mr. Winkler was successful and went on to retain his seat as MP for several terms. The two men knew each other personally, since Mr. Winkler's large residence at the south end of Morden bordered on the market garden belonging to Dad's parents. My own interest at the time was less about politics than in Mr. Winkler's elegant Lincoln sedan and its thirsty five-miles-per-gallon gasoline consumption.

I came to appreciate something of the indomitable optimism and entrepreneurial character of my father during these first years of the Great Depression. I think it was after our first year in Alt Bergthal that he decided we should have better lighting than that provided by kerosene lamps. Manitoba Hydro had not yet brought electricity to rural Manitoba, but a few

car batteries located in the shed attached to the living quarters, worked well. A year or two after Dad's success, a wind charger company in the States came out with a commercial product. However, large-scale application of this concept was side-lined after World War II by mass distribution of hydroelectric power and power generated by coal-fired systems and nuclear power. Now, in the twenty-first century, wind power is coming into its own again, as it should.

Dad's salary of \$500 per year, paid in ten monthly installments, never seemed to meet the needs or wants of our family. An extra \$5 per month for looking after janitorial services helped a bit. But we had furniture to buy. And a cow, feed, cream separator, butter churn and clothes for a growing family. And we had been without a piano since leaving Rosenfeld in 1929. Mother rightly felt it should be replaced

of their cars which had not reached the reliability standards of today, some people simply converted them to horse-drawn "Bennett wagons," named after the prime minister most closely associated with the Great Depression. Surplus batteries were thus readily available for a pittance and Dad collected quite a number of them, some for use with his wind-electric system. Others were re-purposed. After simply dumping the sulphuric acid on the ground, a most environment-unfriendly act by today's standards, it was my job to break the lead plates out of the battery case and give them to Dad to melt in a large iron ladle over an outdoor fire. Each ladle held about ten pounds of the molten lead. This he poured into some kind of mold to cool and solidify. He would sell the bricks on the next trip to Winnipeg. I still have a forty-pound dumbbell made from ladle-shaped pieces.

Dad also hauled cordwood. He and Mother's brother-in-law, Jake Hiebert from Kane, who owned a two-ton Ford truck, headed into the forested area east of the Red River, around Richer, to buy cordwood for re-sale back home. They made quite a few successful trips, but the venture ended shortly after a near-disaster, when the loaded truck began sinking into the swampy terrain.

A similar, short-lived undertaking involved buying surplus boxcars in Winnipeg or Transcona and selling them to farmers to use as granaries. I sometimes marvel at how hard Dad and Uncle Jake worked and what marketing strategy they used, all for so little profit.

Having been raised on a farm in the nearby community of Neu Hoffnung (New Hope), Dad was familiar with grain harvesting. In August he would confidently exchange his teacher's suit for a threshing master's overalls and direct the crew of a local threshing operation. The outfit belonged to Mr. Peter Klippenstein. Dad himself drove the enormous tractor, a steam-driven model if I remember correctly, hauling the threshing machine from field to field. On occasion he had to cross Buffalo Creek over the wooden bridge near the school. The bridge would shake mightily as the heavy cleats on the huge

steel wheels hit the decking. I would cling to the railing and hope for the best. On that same railing I burned my initials with a magnifying glass, using the focused rays of the hot sunlight.

Due to depressed financial circumstances after two or three years of drought and grasshoppers, some farmers could no longer afford telephone service. Seeing an opportunity to earn a few extra dollars, Dad bought a disused section of telephone line somewhere southwest of Alt Bergthal and dismantled it. His method

our neighbours and advanced institutions to the south. And so, for an all-expenses-paid fee of seventy-five dollars per person, he would introduce three teachers per trip to the wonders of places like the Grand Canyon and Petrified Forest in Arizona, Redwood and Yosemite National Parks in California, Zion National Park in Utah, and Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks in Wyoming. He was driver, tour guide, photographer, chief cook, and bottle washer, and the one who pitched the big green tourist tent



Buffalo Creek, 1995, where Harold had many happy memories of swimming, rafting, and boating during the hot prairie summers.

was very simple. A long chain was hooked around the base of the telephone pole to be removed, then strung over the top of a two-pole fulcrum and attached to the front bumper of our Hudson. While Dad reversed the Hudson to tug the pole out of the ground, I guided it to a safe fall. I can't remember how many poles we brought down this way. We sold them to the railroads for recycling into railway ties, and found buyers for the wire, crossbars, and glass insulators. The profit was meagre at best.

My father also conducted sightseeing tours. His insatiable curiosity found an outlet in taking teachers on trips. Having been to California and Chicago, and having visited many national parks in the western US, he thought it would benefit other teachers in the Mennonite community to be similarly enlightened about

for the night in campsites along the way. Among his clients, all old friends, were Bernard Klippenstein (Peter's son), John Schellenberg from Neu Hoffnung, and Frank Brown, a former student of Dad's. In a role reversal, by the way, Frank taught Dad some Grade 11 or Grade 12 subjects in Altona at some point during the early '30s to enable Dad to upgrade his teaching certificate; later Frank taught in the Winkler High School where I became one of his pupils in high school. These guided trips lasted at least three or four weeks since cruising speed was only about forty-five to fifty-five miles per hour and roads were not as wide or safe as they are now, particularly through the Rocky Mountains.

Dad also conducted shorter tours to Chicago in both 1933 and 1934. The major attractions were the wonderful

exhibits of advances in science and technology at the 1933–1934 Chicago World's Fair and the magnificent displays at the Field Museum of Natural History and the Chicago Zoo.

The rest of the family was more or less in limbo while Dad was away. Mother had her gardening, washing, meal-making, mending, and dusting. Since there were cracks around the doors and windows of our living quarters, any Dust Bowl wind blowing over the parched fields all around would leave everything in the house with a coating of fine dust, much to Mom's disgust.

I did a lot of cow-herding along road allowances, since there was not much grass on the school yard. This occasionally took Bessie and me as far as the old Indian Mound to the northwest of the school. It seemed to be much higher than when I revisited it several times some fifty or sixty years later. I always wondered then, and still do, what stories lie buried there.

Bessie had a mind of her own. Probably upset by my rough milking, and thinking the grass was greener in the USA, she headed in that direction one day when I wasn't paying attention. Problem was, I hadn't seen her escape and didn't know how long she had been gone. After looking for her frantically, and concerned for the seat of my pants, I finally told Dad what had happened. To my surprise, he didn't seem too upset. Together we cruised around for a while in the Hudson asking people whether they had seen a Jersey cow on the loose. Finally one person remembered seeing one heading south on the road almost a mile east of the school. By the time we caught up to her she only a mile or two from the US boundary, somewhere in the vicinity of the old Post Road. After being fitted with a halter and tethered to the back bumper of the Hudson, she was marched home in a no-nonsense style. The heavy flywheel of the Hudson kept us moving smoothly in high gear with hardly a pause when Bessie balked. Neither of us were much the worse for the experience.

I had lots of time to observe nature in Alt Bergthal. Red-winged blackbirds and meadowlarks were everywhere. Every so

often a blue heron would stand poised on one leg among the reeds in shallow parts of the creek. Water under the bridge teemed with crayfish, tadpoles, salamanders, and small fish. One summer the grasshoppers were so numerous they stripped a whole field of green grain in hours. I saw how they arrived in clouds, flying high, their wings glistening in the bright sun. The road was littered with battered carcasses of the voracious little beasts which had been hit by passing vehicles.



The Suderman siblings, Harold, Margaret, and Irma, in front of the school in winter, 1930–31.

How could I forget the gophers, moles, and garter snakes? Gophers provided plenty of excitement and amusement. And income. You would see one of these cute striped ground squirrels stand up straight at the entrance of its tunnel and look you squarely in the eye as if to say, "Okay, Sampson, throw your stone." If your aim was good but missed, it dived into its tunnel. A few moments later it would pop out of the other end of the tunnel and dare you to try again. This could be fun at first, but kids like me soon got serious about the business at hand. Gophers had a price on their tails, namely one cent per tail. To capitalize on this we needed to end

their saucy taunting. We would fetch some creek water in a pail and pour it into one end of the tunnel and then quickly run to the other end to club the poor soaked gopher to sudden death in the manner now decried by animal rights activists concerning the killing of seal pups. We also used spring-type leg traps, especially farther away from the creek, to increase our yield. Sometimes we would find only a leg in the trap, chewed off by the escapee. We would take the gopher tails to the municipal office in Altona where the clerk would reward us according to our industriousness or cruelty, as you please. The general public in those days was not squeamish. Gophers and their treacherous holes were considered a threat to the well-being of humans, horses, cows, sheep, and goats. Humane society and animal rights organizations were not known in that part of the country. The much larger moles were in one sense not quite as bad as the gophers. At least one could easily see the piles of earth next to their large holes. These were more of a threat to horses with larger hoofs and a hazard to farm machinery which might bump into the hole or over the little mound. The lurching could throw the operator off his seat. A mole tail there fetched five cents. A paper bag full of gopher and mole tails paid for my first skates, a pair of learner skates that strapped onto one's shoes and had bobbed-like double blades for stability.

Harmless garter snakes were very common. They seemed to slither out from nowhere when you least expected it. You might even encounter them in the creek, making their way across the surface faster than on the ground. As kids, we treated them with the disrespect we thought their due as biblical tempters of humankind almost from day one. We might stuff the smaller ones into our pockets only to let them out to startle some poor unsuspecting soul, such as the girl you were trying to impress.

Sundays were days of rest, at least for most of the Mennonite folk in southern Manitoba. A church service in the morning was *de rigueur* for the majority. Our family's attendance was sporadic, no doubt because Dad's membership

in the Mennonite Brethren church was a bit sub-standard. He had married a Bergthaler and she was not allowed to take part in communion with the Brethren, so from time to time we would attend almost any church.

Once or twice we visited the Rudnerweide church a few miles west of the Alt Bergthal school. Services started early, at 10 or 10:30 a.m., and were conducted in the Low German dialect commonly spoken in the West Reserve, except for Bible readings or quotations which were given in Luther's High German. One or more lay ministers sitting on a raised platform were separated from the congregation by a low railing across part of the front of the room. Two *faiah saenga* [Väasenja] (*Vorsänger* in German, song leaders in English) were seated in front of the railing, one to the right and one to the left. On cue from the presiding minister, they would stand and begin to sing the melody of the prescribed hymn with a peculiar, ringing nasal voice (to my ears), which many years later I came to associate with the sound of bagpipes, and which sounded like drawn out "hinnahh...hinnahh...s." The correct pitch having been set, the congregation responded in unison, singing the words with an intensity of feeling I will not forget. Musical instruments, such as a piano or organ, were not used, being considered too worldly.

Sunday afternoons were often spent visiting neighbours or having them over. These were nearly always impromptu affairs, since few people had phones. They might pop in, attracted by Dad's latest innovations or Mother's delectable meals. One frequent drop-in was another teacher, the bachelor Bernard Klippenstein, who enjoyed Dad's take on the events of the day and Mom's chocolate cake.

We might visit Dad's parents in Morden, where they operated a market garden on Railway Street, on a site later occupied by the Aylmer Canning Company. It was in the workshed attached to the modest two-storey house that we kids learned about many of the different jobs associated with a market garden. Usually we would meet uncles, aunts, and

cousins there, some of whom visited me and my wife, Wilma, fifty or sixty years later in Guelph.

Sometime in 1933 it was decided that I could begin music lessons. I believe I had twenty-five lessons over a two-year period, but it was a start. These entailed a walk or ride to Altona and, if I remember correctly, thirty-five cents per lesson. My piano teacher was Hilda Buhr, who came from Gretna weekly to accommodate her Altona students. Her father was Mr. Peter Buhr, a well-known Chevrolet dealer in Gretna.

The Eaton's catalogue listed bicycles for some \$20 to \$25, sometimes on sale for \$18.95. I really longed to have one. Well, after two or three years, I was the proud possessor of an Eaton's Road King and began racing up and down country roads, occasionally to Altona.

Dad had a weakness for big cars. New ones were out of the question, but good used models were available in Chicago. So one day he drove down and traded the aging Hudson for a Chrysler Imperial, the largest model available from Chrysler. It was a gorgeous, spacious car in its day, but soon proved to be too thirsty for gas. So he made another switch, this time to a most impractical but sporty two-door coupe, either a Ford or a Chevrolet, with a rumble seat. I think Mother must have thrown a fit after a few dusty trips with two or three kids crowded into that rumble seat. We soon had a more humble Ford sedan.

After four years in Alt Bergthal, Dad seemed to think it was time for a change. He used to say that four years in a one-room school was the limit. Very few teachers, he argued, had all the qualities required to produce well-rounded students. He himself lacked musical ability, he would say. Better to give the school a change. The next teacher might make up for his deficiencies. That's what he said, at any rate. Anyhow, Mother always seemed a little dissatisfied with the isolation and limitations of village life.

My own view for many years has been that Dad was thinking about our future schooling. Although he never said so to me, he may have thought I could continue into Grade 9 in Alt Bergthal by

way of correspondence courses from the Department of Education. More likely, however, he thought back to my year in California, which he had considered so broadening in educational terms, and therefore decided it would be better for all three of his children to receive further schooling in a larger school with more facilities and opportunities for extracurricular activities.

A completely different reason for our departure from Alt Bergthal was advanced by one of Irma's classmates, Eva (Klippenstein) Doerksen, in correspondence I had with her in 2003 concerning our four years there. She claims that Dad got into trouble with certain people in the district who objected to the Sunday School classes Dad had started, resulting in his contract not being renewed. About the same time I learned from other sources that Dad had also started a Sunday School in Burwalde many years earlier. Thus it may be that Dad was seen as trying to introduce Mennonite Brethren Church – inspired dogma. The MB approach, with its emphasis on a personal conversion experience may have clashed with the thinking of some, such as the Russellites in the local community. Although Dad wasn't preachy on the subject, he didn't shy away from expressing his views. I did memorize two hundred Bible verses one year in a Canadian Bible Institute program.

Whatever the reasons for leaving Alt Bergthal, and they probably included all those given above, the decision was made to move to the town of Winkler. Mother's brother-in-law, Jake Hiebert, came from Kane with his truck to take our furniture and belongings to a modest, older residence. Moving the large, heavy piano was the toughest part of the job, but he and Dad managed it, with a bit of help from me. I have no idea what happened to Dad's wind-electric generating system.

Mother was the happiest to make the move, but for us three children, there was some sadness in leaving a community where we had made some good friends. What Dad's private thoughts were, we don't know. I don't even know if he had his next job lined up.



Resurfacing Mennonite Floor Patterns

Margruite Krahn

This project pays tribute to my female forebears who often built, designed, and decorated the floors of their homes within the religious and economic restrictions of their time.

In 2001, during my involvement in the restoration and presentation of nineteenth-and twentieth-century housebarns in and around Neuberghthal, Manitoba, I uncovered wooden floors that women had hand-painted in bright, regular patterns, geometric and floral. These wonders were preserved under layers of carpet and linoleum in remaining Mennonite homes. I have found layers of hand-painted patterns on floor boards and even on linoleum.

Over the years I've researched, documented, and restored many of these floors and patterns, and learned about the lives of the women who created them. In addition to presenting their work through the research elements of the project, I have been inspired to re-imagine and re-work these women's visions and patterns on heavy cotton canvases, creating

floor-cloths that are both functional and bring life and beauty to a home. This is my way of continuing their story and exploring the pleasure humans find in beauty, as observed in and inspired by this feminine element of early Mennonite culture.

Thanks in part to funding from the D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation and the Manitoba Heritage Grants Program, my project has grown to include exhibition panels that feature the personal stories of women who decorated their floors. I have also demonstrated the practice of making patterns of sawdust and sand on earthen floors, and mixed the original yellow ochre paint recipe created by Johann Cornies in 1846 in South Russia – the traditional base paint of pre-1920s design in southern Manitoba.

"Resurfacing: Mennonite Floor Patterns" exhibited at Gallery in the Park in the summer of 2020. There are plans to bring the exhibit to the Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach and to other locations in Canada and the United States.



Through her research, Margruite Krahn captures, documents, and preserves the beautiful floor patterns created by Mennonite women in their homes.

A Tribute to Dr. Royden Loewen

Aileen Friesen

After serving as Chair in Mennonites Studies for twenty-four years (1996–2020), Roy Loewen has retired from the University of Winnipeg. During his tenure as chair and as director of the Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies, Roy took a strong but inward-looking program and gave it global standing. Through his personable nature, his sharp intellect, and his genuine love of research and teaching, Roy has left his mark on the university and on the field of Mennonite studies.

Many people within the community had the chance to get to know Roy during Mennonite Studies conferences, which became an annual tradition at the university for over twenty years. People marked their calendars and planned their pilgrimages to Winnipeg to hear the latest innovative research in Mennonite studies. Under Roy's energetic leadership, the conferences engaged with such diverse themes as Indigenous-Mennonite relations, "Mennonites and Medicine," and "Mennonites

and the Environment." Roy presided over these multi-day events, always ready with a quip or a disarming question to steer the discussion in a new direction. At his final conference in the fall of 2019, "Mennonites and Anthropology," a grateful audience showed their appreciation for his dedicated work as they serenaded him in celebration of his sixty-fifth birthday.

These conferences not only offered Mennonites a forum to collectively address historical issues but also gave the opportunity for emerging scholars, myself included, to participate in the conversation. Many of us shared our research at these conferences, turning these presentations into publications in the *Journal of Mennonite Studies*. As editor of the journal, Roy championed our work, shepherding our research into print. He also hired us to work on his multiple government-funded projects, providing funds to keep our careers alive and build our resumes. Through these experiences, he taught us

to have the confidence to ignore the obstacles in favour of the possibilities. In the long list of Roy's professional legacies, this is often overlooked – how much he inspired the next generation. To borrow from the Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky, many of us have come out from under Roy's overcoat.

Roy's prodigious scholarship set a new agenda for Mennonite history and made significant contributions to migration and ethnic studies as well as environmental history. He wrote and edited an astounding ten books (with more in the pipeline) along with over twenty articles and over ten book chapters. Roy refreshingly gave voice to the dynamic social histories of the Kleine Gemeinde and other conservative Mennonite groups associated with the 1870s migration. His scholarship pushed forward sophisticated arguments about diasporic groups like the Mennonites, which focused on the internal workings of community and the environment they inhabited rather than the nation-



ERIN KOOPUNGER

Roy hosts his last conference, "Mennonites and Anthropology," at the University of Winnipeg.

states within which they lived. Most importantly, these communities could see themselves within his narratives. This is a hallmark of a great historian: someone who never loses sight of the essence and humanity of his subjects.

Roy's scholarly career began with an impressive 600-page examination of his home community, Blumenort, Manitoba, where he was born and raised his three children, Rebecca, Meg, and Sasha, with his talented wife, Mary Ann. His book, *Blumenort: A Community in Transition*, explored the village's origins as a Kleine Gemeinde settlement and its transformation into a centre of business. Roy would continue to examine the history of the Kleine Gemeinde through his award-winning second book, *Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and New Worlds, 1850–1930*. Roy offered a new interpretation of the 1870s migration, arguing that the Kleine Gemeinde did not shun the modern world but rather strategically engaged with it.

In his book *Diaspora in the Countryside*, Roy continued to explore the social and cultural transformation of the Kleine Gemeinde by focusing on their responses to the rise of global markets and new technologies during the mid-twentieth century. This book challenged a simplistic portrait of a countryside emptying into cities by showing how Mennonites formed new cosmologies as they engaged with this transformed rural environment. It also marked Roy's foray into an explicitly transnational approach to history, which he deepened in *Village among Nations*. Using a variety of source materials, including oral interviews, diaries, and newspapers, Roy followed the waves of migration that took Low German-speaking Mennonites from Canada to various places in the Americas. He demonstrated that these groups formed a transnational village joined together by a shared history and their ethno-confessional sensibilities.

For his next book, Roy explored the responses of horse-and-buggy Mennonites in southern



AILEEN FRIESSEN

Roy offers words of wisdom while cooking farmer sausage at Menno Tea.

Ontario and Latin America as they faced the modern world. Featuring the authentic voices of Mennonites through extensive oral interviews, *Horse-and-Buggy Genius* takes seriously what communities say about themselves. This approach is also at the heart of his forthcoming book, *The Mennonite Farmer: A Global History of Place and Sustainability*, in which Roy uses the lens of environmental history to compare how Mennonite farmers from seven different places have responded to global changes in agricultural production through their interaction with the land.

These projects have taken Roy to Mennonite communities all over the world, from Indonesia to Zimbabwe to Bolivia. And he made an impression wherever he went: people from all walks of life naturally respond to his innate curiosity and infectious enthusiasm. Roy is a rare type of person. He is equally at home giving a lecture at Cambridge University as a visiting fellow as he is speaking Low German around a kitchen table in rural Siberia. There isn't an *Oma* or an *Aeltester* he couldn't befriend. Roy has also been a popular professor at the University of Winnipeg, entertaining students with jokes and stories of growing up in rural southern Manitoba, while inspiring them with his vast knowledge of Mennonite history. It isn't only his outgoing nature that draws people to him; Roy is a person who lives out his con-

victions. Like the groups he has made his career studying, faith and family ground his universe. In an iniquitous world, Roy's integrity stands out.

Roy has always made time for the Mennonite historical community. He has also brought his experience and patience to committee work at the University of Winnipeg, earning the respect of his colleagues. This collegiality, in addition to his scholarly excellence, assured succession after he made his retirement plans known. Roy leaves behind a program on more secure footing than when he arrived. Not only has Roy managed to provide his successor with the proceeds of a significant endowment for the activities of the chair, he also spearheaded the Paul Toews Professorship in support of Russian Mennonite history. The Centre for Transnational Mennonite Studies, created through the poetics of Roy and the structural engineering of Hans Werner, guarantees an innovative and bright future for Mennonite Studies at the university.

In retirement, Roy will now have the chance to turn his abundant energy towards his beloved grandchildren and his organic farm. Roy will, however, continue to contribute to Mennonite history by writing books, serving on committees, and providing leadership as the president of the D. F. Plett Historical Research Foundation's board.

Call for Artefacts Mennonites at War Exhibit

Mennonite Heritage Village in Steinbach, Manitoba, is planning an exhibition for 2021 entitled "Mennonites at War" and is looking for your participation!

Mennonites have a long-standing history of meeting violence with nonresistance. At various times in their history, such as in the 1870s, Mennonites have migrated when faced with the threat of the loss of military exemption. At other times, they have responded by performing alternative service or becoming conscientious objectors during wartime.

We will explore a number of themes including martyrdom in the Reformation; violence and migration; alternative service and conscientious objection; military service (either as soldiers or non combatants); and the stories of Mennonite women during times of violence and war.

If your family has artefacts that highlight these themes, and you would like to include them in this exhibit, Mennonite Heritage Village's Senior Curator Andrea Klassen would like to hear from you!



You can email your inquiries to andreak@mhv.ca or reach her by phone at 1-204-326-9661, ext. 226.

Dad, God, and Me

Remembering a Mennonite Pastor and His Wayward Son

By Ralph Friesen

Victoria: FriesenPress, 2019

pp. 275. Softcover

Reviewed by Glen R. Klassen

Ralph Friesen presents a well-researched biography of his father, Peter, entwining it with his own autobiography. Peter grew up in a tranquil community of Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites, second-generation Canadians who were navigating the transition from farm life to entrepreneurial agribusiness. They were confident people, very aware of a supervising church and somewhat wary of the God it represented. They lived in hope of salvation but never presumed to claim it absolutely.

The author does not pretend to speak for his father. When Peter speaks it is from his diary or his letters, in direct quotes. There is no doubt about what he believes and what he passionately preaches. It is not a pretense; he is not a hypocrite. He may at times be uncomprehending and inadvertently cruel, but this is how parenting was done in those days.

In the 1940s and '50s church life was disrupted by revivalist bombshells. Many emerged with changed and joyful lives, but by the 1960s, when Ralph was a teenager, a darker vision dominated these gatherings, as evangelists began to focus on fire and brimstone. The early converts of the era of revivalism, often leaders within their congregations, had to go along with this drama as the terrified people came forward. Not until the transgressive Sutera Twins in the 1970s had their stints in Steinbach did the church

leadership wake up to this travesty of the gospel.

Nevertheless, the Rev. P. D. Friesen was one of the best-loved ministers in the Steinbach Evangelical Mennonite Church. He wanted to be "traditional" like bishops Peter P. Reimer or David P. Reimer but he also ran with activists like Ben D. Reimer, John Peters, and Archie Penner. Not that these groups of men were antagonists: they gladly washed each other's feet. And both traditionalists and activists were very confrontational. Traditionalists would question your lifestyle to your face ("We heard that you chaperoned a high school dance . . ."), while the activists would think nothing of ganging up on a thirteen-year-old at Bible camp. But "Rev P. D." was loath to confront.

I looked for judgmental or sarcastic references to the many Steinbach men and women named in the book, but found little. Even the notorious Hyman Appelman, who held sway at the Gospel Tabernacle, gets a pass. Several Steinbach grandes are lashed with a wet noodle. Others get grateful acknowledgement: Cornie P. Loewen, Henry B. Peters, and Wilma (Toews) Doerksen, among others. My dear brother is the bewildered Sunday school teacher who has to face hostile questions from Ralph and his best friend Patrick Friesen. I myself feel that I let the boys down by not revealing my own doubts, espe-

cially my disbelief in hell. At the University of Winnipeg Ralph finds surrogate fathers in Jack Thiessen and Carl Ridd.

This biography/autobiography necessarily becomes a family history, at least as it was in the 1950s and '60s. Thanks Alvin, Donald, MaryAnne, and Norman for letting your kid brother reveal so much about your childhood and youth. The Friesen home was traditionally patriarchal but the members sensed that they had quite a bit of freedom to go their own way. They were seldom confronted directly and were not forced into anything. The force that did exist was emotional and religious. As Ralph writes, "Religion bound us together, and kept us apart" (13).

This dysfunction was blamed on "religion" or "the Church" or even "God." Who is this "God"? The book's cover picture shows the 1950s Steinbach EMC church between the father and son, and the title has God, presumably the EMC God, between "Dad" and "me". Could it be that this God, by inspiring fear, gets in the way of human flourishing? When the church building burns in 1960, Rev. Peter is anguished while 15-year-old Ralph and his friend Patrick mock the loss, openly celebrating it.

It is puzzling that a congregation which loved to sing "Gott ist die Liebe . . . Er liebt auch mich" should be afraid of God. This fear of God distorted everything in Ralph's teenage world. Upon entering the Gospel Tabernacle in Steinbach you were immediately confronted by a giant banner quoting Amos 4:12: "Prepare to Meet Thy God." Amos's God was extremely punitive toward a wayward Israel, promising the most horrible suffering, but never does that God promise eternal torture. Yet this is what was routinely threatened from the revivalist pulpit. No wonder that it crushed the normal happy interplay between parent and child. In his final dialogue with his absent father Ralph reassures him that he need not worry, that his son, Peter Ralph, will be all right.

Of all the things Ralph reveals about his father, what I found most surprising was that this Mennonite man, although seduced by a fundamentalist vision, was a romantic at heart. Released from his inhibitions by the stroke, he shows himself to be deeply emotionally attached to his partner and his family. Earlier we sometimes catch glimpses of a soul in love with the world of nature and sometimes deeply moved by the works of humankind. Although firmly pacifist, he allowed his son (Vern) to display a huge balsa model of a fighter jet in his shop's front window. We saw only the beauty of its sleek lines and did not think much further.

The book ends with mixed outcomes. The scars remain but the three generations of Friesens, after calling on God, return to the machine shop, the watch repair and book shop, and to the world of nonfiction writing. I hope we get more of the same.

Henry E. Plett Memorial Award

The Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society invites submissions for the Henry E. Plett Memorial Award for Family and Community Histories. The goal of this competition is to promote and encourage the writing and publication of family and community histories among high school or university students in Manitoba.

Two cash prizes of \$300 will be awarded for the best essay (2000 words, or 10 pages, double-spaced) and the best multimedia (painting video display, etc) submission. Submissions will be evaluated by originality, innovation, and creativity.

The deadline for the contest is April 30, 2021. For more information, email mmhs@mmhs.org.

In the Next Issue

Our June issue will continue the discussion of Mennonites and their neighbours by exploring Mennonite engagement with neighbouring communities in Latin America as well as Mennonite interaction with their Muslim neighbours in Russia and Canada.

We are soliciting articles for our fall 2021 issue on the theme of "Mennonites and Alcohol"



Submissions are due June 30, 2021

This issue will explore how Mennonites have historically addressed the spiritual, social, and economic implications of alcohol production, consumption, and sales in their communities. From Mennonite-owned distilleries in Danzig to temperance movements in North America, Mennonites have exhibited a range of attitudes toward the permissibility of alcohol in their communities. If you are interested in contributing an article on this theme or on any of our future themes – the 1922 Mennonite Exodus to Mexico, Mennonites and Natural Disasters, the Making of the Russlaender, When the Kanadier Met the Russlaender, or Mennonites and Humour – please email Aileen Friesen.

We also invite the submission of articles, biographies, local histories, and 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. 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 2 MB in size.

Interested in Studying Mennonite History?



Apply for a Plett Foundation Fellowship

The Plett Foundation offers graduate and postdoctoral fellowships to students and short-term visiting fellowships to scholars.



PLETT FOUNDATION

D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation

DEADLINE JANUARY 1
plettfoundation.org



Interested in Telling the Mennonite Story?

Apply for a Plett Foundation Grant

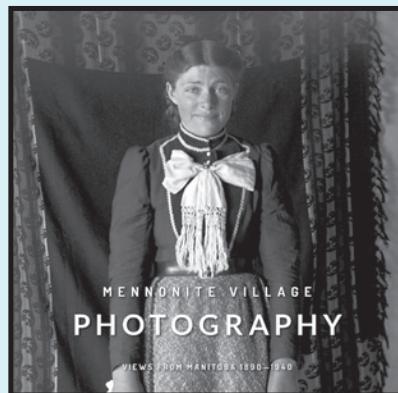
Offering grants in support of historical research and projects related to the foundation's mandate. Past projects have explored Mennonite history through exhibits, books, films and research trips.



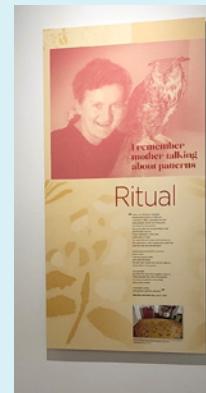
PLETT FOUNDATION

D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation

DEADLINES
OCTOBER 15 / MARCH 15
plettfoundation.org



The Mennonite Historic Arts Committee produced a beautiful collection of photographs by four Manitoba Mennonite photographers.



Margruite Krahn's exhibition celebrated hand-painted floors created by earlier generations of Mennonite women in their housebarns.

